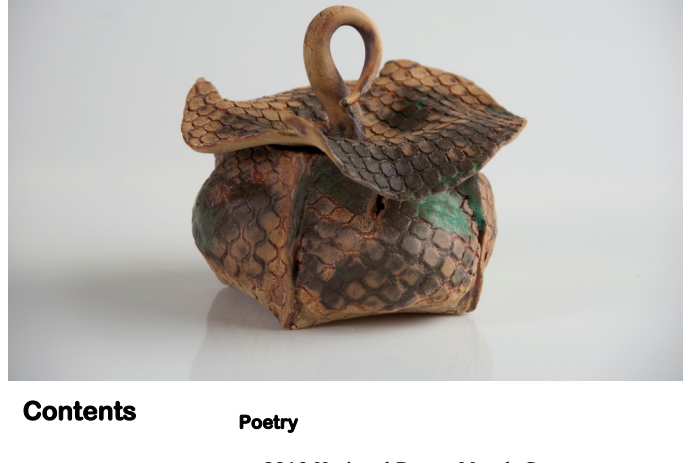

Legacy

Legacy Spring 2010 Online



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Legacy

Spring Issue 2010

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Running Home in the Dark and Tripping in a Hole
by Michael Boyles

Going out to run
My feet attempt to pace
My racing thoughts.

Sun's already going down,
I'm already going down.

There is our old school
I remember seeing you there.
I take a right jogging past it,
It's getting hard to see.

The Sun is down for good
I've ran several miles.
I'm almost there now,
I just turn here.

There it is – your street
Your house is on this street,
My heart is on this street.

Running home in pitch black night
Tripping in a crack on the road,
My ankle is sprained.
I limp back home.

One, Two, Zero
by Michael Boyles

One so wild and fair,
Too far from me
If only I could be
More than just a passing phase.

One could only hope
To find and keep,
But only in one's sleep.
You cannot be tamed.

Career Day

by Michael Boyles

I want to be a cowboy
I want to be a fireman
I want to be a doctor
I want to be a fraud

Teacher asks
The child acts
What would you like to hear?

The child fakes
Teacher takes
The things that he holds dear.

I want to be an astronaut
I want to be a soldier
I want to be a lawyer
I want to be a joke

Teacher scolds
The child holds
His dreams aren't "immature."

The child lies
Teacher sighs
Her students are a bore.

I want to be an adventurer
I want to be a cop
I want to be a CEO
I want to be a drone

I want to be myself.

Words

By Michael Boyles

Was it all for naught?
I know not.
But I do love you.
Isn't that enough?

Enough for what?
And what is there but –
My love?
Was it not true?

True? False? Words. Who can know?
Love? That is a word although
It comes from a dead language
That no one can speak today.

Today I saw your face
There – my life, my disgrace
I know the soul behind it –
At least – I wanted to know.

Know that I love you,
For whatever that means, it's true.
There is still truth,
I know, I have seen it.

It was in your eyes.
Did you not realize?
Surely you felt it too,
But you could not say the words.

Words! The Beginning and End!
On these I cannot depend.
Words tore us apart,
But words are all I have...

And one word in particular,
Love. And is it not peculiar
That it is this word that keeps us
Apart?

Byzantine Mosaic

by Lisa M. Freeman

His eyes stare out of his face at me
As if plucked from a Byzantine mosaic;

Absorbing countless images most eyes release,
Burning to ruin in brightness and light;

Offering active cadence and compliment
In elevated position to each expressed word,

Seeing horrors unimagined and seeing events yet to come
And staring down the passageway of certain death;

Receiving accolade and defeat in equal measure
And everything with unacknowledged grace.

Accepting failure and potential in those around him,
But perceiving flaws real and imagined within himself-

Viewing a world of both beauty and heartbreak
In a reality of debatable merit.

His eyes stare out of his face at me
As if plucked from a Byzantine mosaic.

End of Semester

by Lisa Freeman

There is no other warmth like that from a copy machine -
An apologetic reassurance, as if to say:

"I know I was the one
That copied the page wrong.
It was not you, it was me",

"I'm sorry you have to write that stupid paper,"

And

"I hate that bitch professor, too."

And, last but not least, my favorite:
"It will be alright. Someday. I promise.
Until then, let my paper warm your hands."

Dickinson-esque

by Lisa Freeman

Morning dreams make darker days
When life is hard to live;
Springtime bring your winter with you –
Night is all we have.

The Crash Pad

by Liz Long

Before dawn the clock stirred us up,
thirty people in sleeping bags, blankets,
and each others' arms.
In line for the bathroom
we shared wilted cigarette butts
and pale morning jokes,
and waited for the coffee to heat.

After we swept and mopped and
hid the sleeping bags,
we locked the doors,
and piled five or six deep into my
four-person car,
breakfast beckoning our stomachs
that hadn't known dinner the night before.
If we were lucky
we could get cheese and bread and beer –
sometimes even salami.
Others called it a Continental Meal;
we called it survival.

We'd sit among the trees and
grandfather stumps,
blackened by long-ago fires,
and watch the sun getting up to
office time between the branches.
We each had our own perch;
it was very important
not to violate the private spot
that brought a personal view
to people so constantly together.

We had so many unspoken rules,
so necessary,
and yet so trivial to outsiders
that outsiders never knew
they were there.
One of them was to never tell the others
where you were going
to be alone.
So now I don't know where any of my
early-morning beer brothers are living,
or if they are.

Anonymous
by Liz Long

Discarded poems and letters,
lying as pieces of my soul
in the ever-waiting
circular file.

It seems only fitting
that in some future age
they'll dig my bones up
in the remains of an
open-ended garbage can
under a gravestone marked
"Anonymous."

The Open

by Wesley M.

He came into the open,
The valiant Coronado,
And looked for El Dorado.
He found a sea of *amarillo*
But left the golden *llano*.

They came into the open
On horse and covered wagon,
A hopin'and a prayin'
They could make a better livin'
Under the wide arch of heaven

He came into the open
Without a pot to piss in,
Searching for a reason
To make a new beginnin'.
The son of a black freeman,
Bones is what they called him.

He came into the open,
The mighty Quanah Parker,
The son of kidnapped daughter
And a revolution's father.
For saving a culture
They called him a White farmer.

Anonymous **2010 National Poetry Month Winner**
by Wesley M.

These rhymes,
These rhymes are the same,
Bastardized Eliot ad infinitum.
One does not move me any more or any less than it moves
you.
A few sullen lines wrung from a tired hand...that is all.

Where is the shadow which haunts Locksley Hall?
Where is my coy mistress?
Where is the beautiful one who walks like the night?
Where has the tender nightingale-voice gone?

O Mnemosyne!
You who gave birth to passion,
Where have you taken your daughters?
You are the mother of the muses, and I remember—
I remember too well what once was, and what will never again
be.

La Nebbia di Memoria

by Dani Mortan

The fog of memory rolls under my door
Even though I bolted it shut against the elements.
Fate meant to have his way.
The moisture seeps into my perforated lungs.
Silently, I mouth your name to the yellow haze.
He only lingers to watch.
I dream of you answering my silent call
In a melody so soft
That angels doubt the fiber of their wings.

You are the disillusion locked away in that box on the top
shelf of my closet.
When the day seems to stretch on without the promise of a
peaceful night,
I stare at that top shelf,
Wishing I could remember how my palm slid over your bare
skin.
Then the wind whispers obscure reasons about why I left.
I can blame perpetual flow and omnipresent force until your
ears burn
(and you know I'm really talking about...)
But we both know why the caged bird finches at the hand
that feeds.

Here's the tale:
I fell ill and fell away,
My blood poisoned with frustration and guilt.
Tired of being constricted in your embrace,
I pull away,
My feet anxious to create space between your eyes and mine.

Now memory confuses reality with possibility.
Some days it's not worth the effort to convince myself
I cannot go back.
Your lips curve differently now,
Conveying more than you may know.

The fog of memory rolls under my door.
I breathe you into my perforated lungs
Struggling to remember what life felt like
When you took residence in my heart.

Sometimes it's not worth the effort...

Poetic Justice
by Dani Morton

Dear Beloved,
Years have I toiled
Underneath your thumb
Trying, dying
To be everything you held me to be.
Long have I lived as an ideal,
Laboring to make you smile
As I ran circles in your imagination.
My only desire was
Acceptance.
On the twisted stage of your whims
I changed costume & character,
Praying only for a satisfied nod.
And surely as the hour glass' sand fell,
My mask slipped.
Under your expectant gaze
The portrait of perfection you created faded,
Exposing my blemishes.
I am not the stone angel you envisioned,
Hiding you in the shadow of impenetrable wings.
No, I have suffered the blows meant for you.
My stone countenance marked with violence & deceit.
Stars I once wished upon fell from the sky
As you illustrated your abhorrence of me.
My inability to emulate your unattainable ideals aroused your
anger.
In my vulnerability,
You mercilessly raped my self-worth,
Taking special care to magnify my every flaw.
For years we perpetuated the same horrific scene
Until I recognized which of us was truly faulted.
I stand before you changed,
Final note in hand.
Darling, I leave you with this:
As I take my final bow out of your pathetic life
You will realize the error of your ways.
When the door closes behind me
You will feel the agony of my absence,
And your pleas for absolution will fall on deaf ears.
Keep your eyes off the horizon,
For I will not return.

A Cold Night in London

by Dani Morton

Her long, delicate fingers grasp at my coat tails
Like the vines choking the last rose buds outside my bedroom
window.

"Stay with me. If for only one night more."

Her voice broke on the oak floors
And scattered under my right sole.

To leave her so helpless should be a sin,
But Gideon leafed through the diary of Leviticus last night

And couldn't find a verse to justify this statement;
My conscience is crystalline

Unlike the black tears that streak her porcelain cheek.
"I need you."

So softly her sobs sink
To the pit of my stomach,

Rocking my insides into nauseated numbness.
A twinge of regret?

A pang of remorse?
No, my gut tells me to run.

"What need I do to convince you stay?"

Darling, to remain in these walls would be suicide.
Her fingers tug at my coat tails,

Robbing my throat of breath.
And she begins to pull harder.

My own fingers, slippery with anxiety,
Explode out of my pockets,

Singeing the ties of the buttons at my neck.
The coat falls to the floor,

Her elbows crack against the oak.
A final, tormented moan follows me into the littered street.

She Had a Face Meant to Smile

by Dani Morton

A worthy cause
And one more night in the red-light district.
How could I refuse?

However, your lackluster sexual escapades
Leave me wanting
With a sour taste in my mouth;
And your addiction to a demise
Drains my sympathy.

Go ahead, darling.
Take the whole bottle.
Show those watchful eyes what you're made of.

Drum roll please!
And hold your applause
Until the starlet harlot faints to the floor,
Facedown in a puddle of her own deconstruction.

Reconnect.
Play back.
Slow motion.
Every tear glistens in the limelight.
Mascara-streaked cheeks
Paint a portrait entitled "Self."

Go ahead, darling.
The cameras are aimed and ready.
Show those watchful eyes what lies inside.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Step right up!
This young lady
(If you can call her that)
Is here to make an example of our generation.

Hit the lights.
Cue the music.
Take the stage.
You're playing to a full house tonight.
Wouldn't want to disappoint.
But that **is** the name of the game,
Isn't it?

Go ahead, darling.
"Tragic" is your middle name.
Show those watchful eyes the beauty in destruction.

Motherly Shoes

by Garret Yeats

In time, shoes start to cradle the feet they hold,
curving and arching into loving symmetry with our footfalls,
knowing the steps before they're taken.

Our shoes console us, reminding us
that stickers, nails, and glass still lurk in shag carpeting
grass;
old shoes are our mothers, shielding us from the world
as they shelter our steps; as we sleep, they wait
dutiful and ready for the million steps the lifetime of a shoe
can bring.

From the moment they're worn, shoes begin
the gradual dulling of soles down to toothless gums,
like the goodnight kisses given by doting grandmothers,
even from infancy--rarely remembered or considered,
but still felt in the wearing of shoes so comfortable that
they are not worn, but slipped into, so the road is felt, but not
touched.



Bit By Bit

by Lisa M. Freeman

Creative NonFiction

"So this place really must have meant something to you, then, didn't it?"

I was ashamed of myself once he had said it. I realized then that I had bought the insensitive construction worker stereotype without a second glance. In his hard hat and neon vest - at the throttle of a piece of machinery I could not even name - this guy had just proved me completely wrong by reading me like the latest issue of *Demolition Weekly*.

I nodded, wondering if I would start to cry.

"I was a theatre major here," I told him, "so I basically lived in that building for about four years."

He chuckled and smiled knowingly. I was suddenly aware of the camera in my hand and my rudeness.

"You don't mind if I get some pictures, do you?" I asked.

"Actually," he replied, "no one is supposed to be here this far out without a hard hat."

They were words of prophecy spoken eighteen years too late. After my profuse apologies I exited the enclosed area but not before grabbing a broken piece of brick that had once helped to hold up the Fine Arts Building on the campus of West Texas A&M University, home of the Branding Iron Theatre. I knew he would understand.

Honestly, I have never been one to let go of buildings very easily, even those I have never seen standing. In my pursuit of what I like to term my "Urban Archeology" I have spent hours scouring my hometown comparing grainy black and white photographs to the present day street corners desperate for remains of the past. A few years ago I even gave my father - an avid Rock Island Railroad memorabilia collector - a box of dirt and rocks because they were the only remnants of the Rock Island depot in downtown Amarillo he had loved so much as a boy. I will never again see someone so happy to receive a box of rocks in all of my life. He understood, too.

It was not as if I ever wanted to keep the old building - or any of the abandoned brick and mortar which stands empty and useless on this campus. The condemned held so much space on this land when I first stepped foot here as a bright-eyed freshman in the fall of 1992 that I would have bet the old relics outnumbered the structures wherein actual activity occurred at this school two to one. Thankfully, that has changed. The population has doubled since then and with it so has the traffic, the parking being the subject of many a rant of mine on many a day. If the school was not willing to expand the campus borders and pave a bit of this prairie we are surrounded by, the least they could do is expel

some of their abandoned property in lieu of a parking lot or two; much as I actually hated to let them go.

So I get what I paid for. The first building to meet its end on this campus in what I must speculate as years just happened to be the place where my college career began. They just had to put my money where my mouth was.

Back in the day – that August day in 1992 – surrounded by leftover metal heads and girls with bangs spiked so high I could see them standing at attention as I sat behind them in class, I stepped foot on this campus a newly-minted musical theatre major; a frightened little Christian-school freshman sheltered from the world and scared to death. I had white-knuckled the entire Canyon expressway because it was the farthest I had ever driven on my own in my life. I remember it rained the entire morning. I saw a beautiful boy standing in the JBK that actually locked eyes with me (because I was staring at him) and I knew I would never see him again. I thought I was about to take the tiger by the tail - the world by storm - or at least to begin. I was finally taking the reins of my life inch by mile and I was frightened out of my mind.

I soon discovered throughout the day that auditions for the year's only musical would be *that evening* and with no warning or preparation I had to find a performance piece immediately. If I was ever to do what I had come to this school to do – pave my way to Broadway - then I had to rush home, change clothes and grab some sheet music. Once again I white-knuckled my way to and from Amarillo, shaking the entire trip. I forget how my audition went (dismal became my standard impression of all of my auditions in years to come) but I do remember each of us being lined in a row onstage in what is so fittingly called the “cattle call” and being placed next to a tall, model-thin freshman with the most delicate features I had ever seen. Accustomed as I was to being the smallest in a crowd (this was a long time ago) I could not get over her. I took her hand next to me and without stopping myself as I knew I should I exclaimed, “You have the tiniest hands I have ever seen!” Sometimes I am not one to hold back. She stared at me with her large green eyes from what felt like several feet above me as if I had just shot milk out of my eyeballs. She has been my best friend ever since.

In the upcoming weeks she would introduce me to The Posies, The Sundays, and of course, The Smiths, as we sat on her dorm room floor on a Saturday morning in Cross Hall where her country-loving roommate was MIA and the biggest poster of Morrissey – of anyone – I had ever seen was tacked above her bed. As the 10,000 Maniacs sang back then, “*These are the days*” . . .

A preference for kooky music would not be the only

discovery I would make about myself. I circled that building today and could see so plainly Mr. Brantley's office; the classrooms I took theatre history in and rehearsed in when space was limited; the old radio station where we would gawk at the gorgeous mass communications majors as they jockeyed the discs late into the night; but it was what was between them – the space I could not quite make out at first, it was so dark – that I truly could not believe. Stripped bare, I realized I could see into the bowels of the Intimate Theatre, affectionately known as the "IT". Wow; did I ever do my time in there. I took my first acting class in there that first day (Brantley had us staring at the palms of our hands for about an hour and a half, on purpose, as an "acting exercise"; he told us it was to develop our "focus" but he probably just wanted some freakin' peace and quiet). Later that year I would get to play the part of Laura Wingfield on that Intimate stage in a production of *The Glass Menagerie* that would have killed poor Tennessee Williams had he not died already. Cast as my gentleman caller was Bruce Shatney, all eight feet of him. We must have looked ridiculous, but worse I was dating the student director at the time who kept berating Bruce to "stop kissing [me] with a fish face!" My first onstage kiss was with a man who could have been both an actor AND a basketball player (and who did not kiss with a fish face) and whose wife sat graciously on the front row.

I wanted so much to impress all of my instructors, but something about Brantley took the cake. I never had a crush on him as many a young student actress had; he was just too fatherly and authoritative to insult with anything less than awe from me. Having just been cast in *Menagerie*, I remember pulling double-duty as Brantley's assistant director and stage manager on a very difficult mainstage show (which was when I learned that stage managing was the legal theatrical equivalent to waterboarding). I was having a difficult day - quite plainly a difficult life at that point - but I had agreed to be the onstage stand-in while the techies tested the show's light design that afternoon. I remember being on the BIT stage - in my WTSU sweatshirt (I was fully opposed to the namechange until Brantley told us the A&M would stand for Actors and Musicians), tearstains drying on my face, the light shining into my eyes so brightly I could not see into the audience - when I heard his voice emerge familiarly from the back row.

"I heard you were cast as Laura Wingfield, is that true?" he projected. I nodded proudly.

"I think you are completely wrong for that part," he declared. My face, and my heart, fell.

"You're too pretty to play Laura Wingfield," he then said. I still count that as one of the best compliments I have

ever received in my entire life.

When I returned as a sophomore I got the part of a lifetime playing Helen Keller opposite D'anne Dupree's Annie Sullivan in the BIT production of *The Miracle Worker*. For awhile I proudly held the title of "actress who has spent the most time on the BIT stage never uttering anything but a muffled "Waaaaaaa - . . ."

My junior year I would perform in two student productions in the IT and direct one myself, which was its own nightmare. I remember attending a rehearsal for the mainstage musical (the one where I got to twirl from the rafters on a rope) at 7:00 in the evening, conducting a rehearsal for my production at 9:00 that evening and then rehearsing for another student show in the IT beginning at midnight. I kissed my future husband for the first time that semester onstage in that Intimate Theatre. Sure, he was soon to be my future ex-husband, but who is counting, really?

On my drive home this afternoon I asked myself, "If you could tell the little eighteen-year-old you something before she stepped into that building that would change her life, what would it be?"

My first answer, half-jokingly, was "Leave! Leave, go to L.A. like you always wanted, just leave now before you can't later."

Then I reconsidered. "No, I wouldn't recommend leaving," I thought, "just staying in school and maybe majoring in something you can earn money with while waiting to be 'discovered' out there in L.A. Just follow your heart. And never, ever get married."

In truth, hardly anything about my years spent inside that building were about reality; which would be obvious to the objective onlooker since so much of what we accomplished within those walls dealt with nothing but make believe. What I realize now is how much time I spent in that building confronting what I thought should happen with actuality: I was not the voice of Broadway, I was not God's gift to acting. No one was approaching me exclaiming "Get thee to an agency!" I had to reconcile my dreams with the truth in that building. Some days it made me want to tear it down myself. Today, to see it in tatters of wood, brick and steel, I just felt sad. It was beautiful in such an imperfect way – mahogany-lined walls adorning the auditorium several feet high as if we were all royalty, marble steps up to the front door; green everywhere in a shade that should never be reproduced and absolutely no space for anything; Mr. Brantley teaching us just feet from where his father taught his students decades earlier. It was magical; it was humiliating; it was the theatre.

Fortunately for me the grand old BIT was hidden in

rubble by the time I appeared on the scene this afternoon.
Seeing it, I really would have lost it in front of that sweet
construction-worker guy. On that stage lines were spoken,
dropped, forgotten, or improvised entirely on the spot.
Beneath the glow of those hot lights flames were started, stars
were born - those nearby and faraway, lighting eternity or just
a blink of time - and dreams like mine died at the clap of a
hand; or rather, they simply played themselves out. Today I
am exactly twice as old as I was when I first came to this
building that August day and I am bit by bit finishing my
degree - in psychology.

As The Exies sing, "*These are the days . . .*"

Electrochemical Responses
by Joseph Ammons

Fiction

I saw a man and a woman facing one another. They were studying each other's eyes. Their eyes twitched from left to right rapidly, looking from one eye to the other. Their eyes twitched and twitched. They were looking so hard. They were searching so hard. How did he feel? How did she feel? What was he hiding? What was she hiding?
Does he feel the same way?
Does she feel the same way?

I saw men and women in white coats, in an enormous white room. There were doctors of philosophy; there were doctors of medicine; there were writers; there were psychologists. On tables arranged haphazardly there were human bodies. One psychologist was watching a video of a man watching a video. He was trying so hard, his eyes twitching across the screen, to understand the behavior of the man in the box. He applied the theories of other men and women; he ran the behavior through his education filter. He documented his results.
A doctor of medicine was poking one of the bodies on the table. It twitched in response.
Two doctors, in the corner, a man and a woman, would embrace periodically. They pressed their lips together and made soft noises. They would stop from time to time and document their results.
When I entered and shut the door to the enormous white room everyone looked at me, their eyes twitching up and down my body, then they quickly looked down.
They documented their results.

I saw mirrors. So many mirrors on the other side. I would see so many me's in the mirrors, stretching infinitely. O infinite me. I moved my arm up. They moved their arms up. I flapped my arms like a bird and appeared as Kali, many armed. I decided to look in the mirror, into my twitching eyes. I studied my face. I touched my face. I touched the reflection in the mirror.
My face is soft. It's mushy.
I documented my results.
I stepped back and started laughing, flapping my arms again.
I am Kali, made of mush.

I saw a collection of writers. They sat in a circle, as is customary, and they talked, talked, talked. They talked in circles, in a circle. Then they documented their results.
I saw them pass papers, ruffling and shuffling, to one another.

"Here, take this, read this."
"I like this. I see its significance."
"Okay, here, read this."
"Alright, let's talk about this. This isn't doing this."
I asked them what they were doing.
They said they were trying, they were trying so hard, to get to
the meat of us all.

!

When I decided to return to the white room there were white
coats strung out on the floor. More doctors were embracing. A
handful was standing over the other doctors with clipboards.
They were many-armed. They were twitching and twitching.
They were trying so hard. They were mushing their mush
together.
They documented their results.

!

The man and the woman decided they felt the same way.
Their mush twitched. They twitched and twitched like the
meat of us all.
Until the absence of twitching did they part.

!

I left the room of mirrors. I went to bed.
I twitched in my sleep.
The doctor watched it on tape and told me. He documented his
results.



Beach by Suzanne Mullenix

The Man with No Problems

by Michael Boyles

John lived in a two story house in the nicest part of town. He lived an honest life, and was considered by all who knew him to be a "good man." He had three cars, despite the fact that there were only two drivers in the family. He kept only one of these vehicles in the garage. His wife's minivan and the car he drove to work were forced to sleep outside.

The privileged car, which slept in the coziness of the garage by itself every night, was the most worthless of all the three cars. This is not to say that it had no monetary value, he poured much of his wealth into it, but the car did not run and had no practical value to the man or his family. It was an old Corvette that the man wanted to rebuild. Unfortunately, he didn't know anything about cars, he just wanted to impress his other friends who also knew nothing about cars, but liked to talk about them anyway.

This type of man is very worried that one of his other friends will one day discover that he is actually not the mechanical mastermind that he portrays himself to be. To compensate for this, he goes overkill with tools, purchasing tools to do jobs that he will never set his hands to. He doesn't even know what most tools are, he only knows that the more expensive the tool, the more he wants it. Once the man gets the expensive tool that he had wanted so badly, he puts it in a corner to collect dust. This is generally how men are with things they want.

John had a lot of tools. While he had no great knowledge of how to use his tools, he was a master of organizing them. He would often watch home improvement shows. He wasn't at all interested in building things, but he always got excited observing how clean and organized these television handymen's work areas were. He had the best organization of all his friends. This was proof enough that he was a real man.

John worked a white collar job shuffling papers for a large faceless corporation that had owned his soul for the past ten years. He was frustrated that his work was rather meaningless and had no real value to anyone. The job paid him a good salary which allowed him to live in relative luxury and support his family.

John had a little girl. She was six years old, and the apple of his eye. He devoted all of his time to her, well, at least all his time that wasn't already devoted to his job, the renovation of his Corvette, or the organization of his tools.

He had a beautiful wife that worshipped the ground that he walked on. He loved his girls very much. He thought about them now as he finished organizing his garage.

"All done, there is only one thing left to do."

He had finally made something, a true work of art, which he learned how to make from the internet. Now, finally, he would take the fruits of his labor and put it to practical use. He stood up on his stool putting the noose he had crafted around his neck. He then kicked the stool out from under his feet. His daughter found the man several hours later, hanging, without a care in the world.



Legacy wants your creative efforts!

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