

DENALI

LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • SPRING 1995



**SPECIAL
"FREE BEER"
ISSUE**

DENALI

*"I'd rather have a bottle in front of me
than a frontal lobotomy."*

- attributed to Dr. Demento

Cover art by Nathan Hearn

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FROM THE EDITOR

Well, this is the last issue of the year. All of the stories and poems contained herein begin with the line: "The sign on the door read, 'Free Beer.'" . . . or something close to that. There's some interesting, fun, and very creative work. Let us know what you think.

Last issue's Readers' Choice Awards go to:

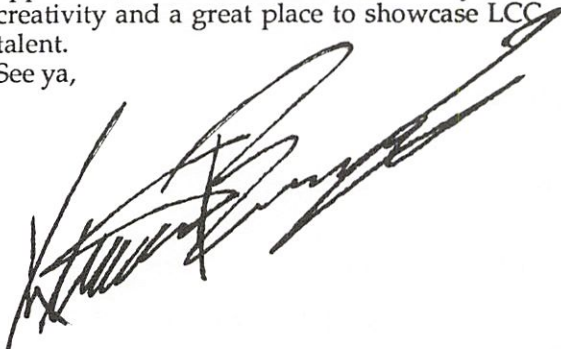
- Best story — Peter Jensen for "Time's Child."
- Best poem — Sarah McCoy for "Escape."
- Best photo — Cedar Graney for "Avocado Leaf."
- Best graphic — Jason Rackley for "Tithe."

Please make sure to vote for the best from this issue (forms are stapled in the center). Return them to the *Denali* office or the *Denali* box at the SRC.

I've had a great time as editor this year, and got a lot of positive feedback about *Denali*. Thanks to all the staff, the contributors, and the readers. Remember to keep supporting the creativity of students, staff, faculty and the community in general by giving feedback (by feedback I mean write to or talk to the contributors or staff . . . don't go around tearing down *Denali* ads and throwing away magazines . . . it doesn't accomplish much).

The *Denali* editor for next year has not yet been appointed, but look forward to another year of creativity and a great place to showcase LCC talent.

See ya,




CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: PETER JENSEN, TREV MOSTELLA, DEE BUGARIN, RYAN REYNOLDS, DOROTHY WEARNE, COOGAN CHARLES (SANS NOSE), SARAH MCCOY, KENNETH BRADY, JUSTIN TINDEL, KYRA KELLY, STUART

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FREE BEER

Carl Watkins

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." But so what. These days, it seems like beer is everywhere, so you have to be suspicious. I mean, what if they rent you the glass? Or charge to use the restroom? So, I just stood outside, on the sidewalk in the sun and scrutinized the place from a couple of angles. A reasonably discreet sign said, "Betty's Long Neck Saloon," with the "Betty's" in script and kind of tilted up. There were the usual neon beer signs in dark windows framed by wretched gray cedar siding and a sloping shake roof over a porch with tables. Empty tables.

Now why were the tables empty if the beer was free, I asked myself as I studied the evidence. True, the tables didn't look all that comfortable, and they weren't in the shade, so it would be hot sitting there. And maybe people didn't want anyone to see them sucking up free beer like so many mooches at a political rally.

And then again, maybe the beer wasn't very cold, at least not cold enough so you'd be willing to sit in the sun building up a good sweaty thirst only to end up with that warm, watery taste. But you can't assume warm beer was the reason because everybody has a good cooler these days 'cause the beer companies give 'em to them as special promos with advertisements all over them. No, it probably wasn't that. It must be something else. Something even more subtle.

I studied the parking lot for more clues. It was a large parking lot, but there were lots of empty spaces. Too many empty spaces, if you ask me, for a place with a sign that says, "Free Beer," on a hot, sunny spring afternoon. Most of the cars were late models that all looked alike, as though they were designed by the same guy who kept getting fired from one automaker after another. Anyway, this crowd couldn't be too rough, except for a couple of motorcycles near the front door. Not too big, as motorcycles go — one was a Honda, but the other was a Harley. You never know what to expect there. Could be a tattooed leather dude, or it could be a yuppie wannabe. But why weren't there any more people in there on a day like this? It just didn't make any sense.

I walked a little farther, just to get a better look. The windows were dark, and it was dark inside, but I could make out people moving around in the dim light coming from one of those pool table lights with the horses on top. Don't see many of those anymore, so this place must have been around for a while anyway, which means it must do some business, but why not now? I had to find out what was wrong here.

I stood still, sweat breaking out on my forehead, and listened carefully. Bonnie Raitt's soulful ballad of unrelenting nights of lonely love was smothered by the muffled smack of pool balls and laughter. Must be a younger crowd, I said to myself, or that laugh would be a little more melancholy in tone. But we weren't

that close to a college, and the area was mostly business, which was why I was down here in the first place. I wonder if anyone in there would want some damn fine pressure washers. Probably not, but on the other hand, you never know. I've made quite a few sales in places not too different from this, but they didn't have that sign that said, "Free Beer."

There had to be some gimmick, but what was it? I thought this to myself, cause there wasn't anybody else out here to talk to. Probably some promo by one of the national brands, trying to fight off the microbrews. Maybe a two-fer. No, that's too stale for marketing departments these days. More likely a frequent drinker program, or maybe you have to get on their mailing list. Anything to get you back into the habit of croaking "Bud."

Funny how they think they can put the word "red" in the name of a beer and hope people will think it's something special. If they would just add a little flavor while they're at it, they might get somewhere, but that wouldn't occur to those marketing guys. It would probably take them too long to get something out the door. Thing is, I can hardly drink those limp national brands anymore, so I guess they'll figure it out soon enough. Then it hit me — I might not even want this free beer, but then again, free is free, and I've already eaten and drunk a lot of free so-called food, so a little extra couldn't hurt too bad, even if I later regretted it. I don't know, maybe there's something to this "free beer" after all.

The thing is, that old saying about "no such thing as a free lunch," or beer as the case may be, has pretty much been true, one way or another. I mean, I've paid dearly every morning after I've had free beer. Why, just last week there was that little par-tee at the Trail's End Tavern — but that was different. Not exactly free, mind you, but pretty close. It was one of those stuffers — all you can eat and drink for \$9.99. Hell, I had to get my nickel's worth. As one fellow who was participating with enthusiasm said, "If you're going to be a sucker for a beer promo, you might as well be a sucker-upper." Now, that's a little too gluttonous, even for me. But this situation is different; this may actually be a bona fide exception to the "Free Lunch" rule.

On the other hand, free is an elusive concept, at best. Why, just to be able to get to this so-called "Free Beer," I had to be out among them, working on making my quota, so I could buy some nice clothes for the kids, own a car and a house, pay the insurance, the phone, taxes. The way I see it, freedom isn't free. You've got to do something all the time to take advantage of the freedom you've got. Now I ask you, is that real freedom? Wouldn't real freedom mean that everything was free? But it would never work out that way, not with all these people wanting the same thing. There has to be some way to decide who gets how much of what, so in a way, having something be truly

free is un-American. Which is why I still think there must be some gimmick to this "Free Beer" sign.

In fact, I thought to myself, I'm getting pretty damn hot standing here thinking about all these implications and ramifications, when I could be making calls and setting up appointments for the rest of the afternoon on this middle-of-the-week workday. And if I go in there and start sampling whatever kind of free beer Betty's got, I probably won't get too many more sales on this perfectly opportunistic business day.

On the other hand, I wouldn't be surprised if this Long Neck Saloon wasn't air-conditioned, and my wiz-bang, hi-tech cellular phone works just as well in there as it does in my 1990 Buick that's parked inconveniently down the street and around the corner.

And besides, you never know who (um, make that whom) you might run into in a place like Betty's. Woman-wise, I mean. I've been divorced a while now, and sometimes it's nice to just talk to a woman. Usually doesn't matter much what you talk about, they have a different way of looking at things than men, not that there's anything wrong with that. Fact is, I get pretty tired of talking with men all the time. I mean, when was the last time a woman needed a pressure washer? Besides, it can be interesting to hear a funny way of thinking. If the truth be told, I've learned as much or more about life from women, anyway. And like I said, you never know. You get enough of that Free Beer in you and her, and you might end up with some of that Free Love.

But, now, that brings us back to the part about the old saying about Free Lunch. I've gotten lucky a time or two, as they say, but later on, when you're not trying to impress yourself with your studly prowess, you think back on the honesty of the situation. Words freely spoken by a tongue freely loosened can cause some damned fool things to happen. I won't go into any details, but let's just say that I have a rule now that I really intend to stick to, and that is: I don't lie, at least not manipulatively. Oh, I might exaggerate once in a while because everyone likes to be told nice things about oneself. And if you look at it in a certain, uninhibited way, it can be true.

I made that rule, as it turns out, after I realized that you have the freedom to do what you want, but you don't have the freedom to take back what you do. To put that more concisely, you don't have a second chance to have an honest relationship once you've been dishonest. And I really would like to have an honest relationship, which brings up another old saying: The best things in life are free.

Now, I don't think whoever made up that old saying was thinking of beer or even lunch for that matter. But right now, the sun is so damn hot that I've about fried my brain, which is probably why I've been coming up with all this gibberish.

I think I'll just move a little closer and get a better look, I think to myself, when the door opens, and a smiling woman comes out and starts wiping the tables. "Howdy, stranger," she says like she was happy a customer showed up. "What are you doing standing out in the hot sun? Casin' the joint? I first noticed you ten minutes ago, and you're only halfway here."

Well, now, what was I supposed to say, given the aforementioned rule. "Well, I suppose so," I said.

"Well, you better suppose pretty quick, mister," she says, "Cause this place'll be packed in two shakes." She goes on vigorously cleaning the tables and chairs.

"Doesn't look very packed to me so far," I ventured.

"It's not even two o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon," she says,

turning around to look at me with this expression that take-charge women seem to specialize in. "And I just put that sign up. Give 'em a chance. What's your hurry, anyway? You from California?"

"No hurry, no. Um, what's the deal?"

"What's the deal?!" There's that expression again. "Free Beer is the deal. Is that so hard to understand? Didn't anybody ever buy you a beer, Bub?"

"Well, yes, they have," I said, as forcefully as I could without letting my goat be visibly gotten, "I just haven't seen a pouring establishment make such an offer before." I hoped for some alteration in her expressive face indicating I'd salvaged some credibility.

A slight smile crossed her lips. "Well, I guess you could say it is somewhat unusual, but I brewed it myself, and I thought I would do one of those, you know, market surveys." She finished up and started for the door with the sign that said, "Free Beer," but on the way she said, "Besides, I've been selling so much of this microbrew stuff, I figured I could make it just as well as the next guy."

"So you're a zymurgist," I said, trying to sound knowledgeable and hoping to keep her attention a little longer. I also hoped I pronounced it right.

"So you know something about beer, eh?" she says with a little more of that smile. "Are you pretty smart?"

"I used to be."

"What happened?"

"I learned enough to know just how much I don't know," I said, thinkin' maybe a little obvious humility might salvage enough credibility to reach the good impression level.

"So what do you know about beer?" She seemed to be interested.

"Well, I'm partial to nut browns," I said, remembering a somewhat sneaky brew from the Trails End tasting room.

"Well," she said, imitating me, "this particular brew is a porter. And it's a pretty good one, if I do say so myself."

I chuckled, or more specifically, I laughed in a way that's both quiet and spontaneous and happens when witty women are just being themselves.

"What's so funny about that?" she says with that original expression of impatience. Damn, now I'm back to square one. I should remember how sensitive these homebrewers are.

"Well," I came up with, "that was a pretty good imitation. What's in this particular porter?" I imitated the way she pronounced "particular porter."

Big smile. "Well," she did it again. "There's some row grain, of course, and a little bit of Crystal malt, some gypsum mash, a touch of chocolate malt, and a tad bit of Black Patent."

"Sounds pretty tasty," I said. Then I added meaningfully, "What's it called?"

She looked off into the distance for a quick moment, then just when I thought she was going to say something, she looked down, looked up at me and said, "I haven't made up my mind yet, so I'm open to suggestions." With that she smiled, opened the door, and went on in.

The door closed, leaving me standing in the middle of the parking lot, as two cars pulled up and stopped. One opened and three women got out, all talking at once, and went in. The other held two average lookin' men who didn't say a word, but also entered without hesitation.

So I said to myself, "Self, maybe you better check out this Free Beer."



BAR TAB

Lark Morrison

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." In small print beneath that was the mocking legend, "while supplies last." I've never been one for reading the small print on any contract, which is probably how I ended up in a joint like this in the first place. Glamour. Fame. Intrigue. My agent had promised me that and more. I had one helluva agent. You probably know him. He could sell anybody anything. Just look what he sold me. I was the one thing he couldn't sell. I got everything I was promised. But I should have been more specific about how long I wanted it. I was glamorous, famous and intriguing for the whole fifteen minutes Warhol predicted. Maybe fourteen. So here I was outside the only dirty bar in this dirty town, drooling over a sign that said "Free Beer." How the almost-mighty are fallen. I went inside. I slid onto a bar stool and gave the bartender my wisest smile. I had long ago learned that women preferred wise to sexy and wise was easier to fake. She came right to me, smiling. She was the fallen angel type, a dirty waitress in a dirty pub. But tonight she was Gwenivere. I gave her my most gallant Lancelot look.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"The house special," I said.

"I don't get off until 2:00," she giggled.

My sigh was deep and tragic. "Then I'll have a free beer to cry in."

"Not here you won't"

"Huh?"

She gestured at the sign behind her. "While supplies last." She tapped each word. "We're all out."

"All out?" It hadn't struck me yet that she could mean what she was saying.

Her smile was thickly sincere. Almost sinister. "All out."

"You can't be all out. Of beer?" I looked around me. Everyone was gaily tipping yellow froth toward their mouths. "You can't be," I insisted.

"We are," she said smilingly.

My chivalry was wearing thin. "Have you heard of bait and switch?" I asked between clenched teeth.

She tapped the sign like a teacher explaining something obvious to a very dull pupil. "While supplies last." A B C.

"There's got to be someone I can report you to," I warned her.

"When you find out who, let me know," she said and went away smiling.

In that moment, I discovered that the saddest, most complex three words a woman ever said to me weren't, "I love you" or "I'm leaving you," but "while supplies last." I stared at the sign, wishing violently for those final three words to just drop off of

their own free will and thinking seriously about helping them off if they didn't. There had to be some way out of this. All around me, I saw people drinking happily, oblivious to each other. I wanted to be one of them.

A kind of desperation settled over me. My last rational thought was that if I felt this desperate about beer, I was probably better off spending the evening in some AA meeting communing with my anonymous higher power sulking in this damned bar. Then I chuckled that thought out so that I could apply all my analytic faculties to solving the problem of how to get a beer. *While supplies last. Free beer while supplies last.* Of course! "Free" beer while supplies last. She couldn't possibly have meant they had no beer. What kind of bar had no beer? She meant no "free" beer. Whatever cheap giveaway brand they had was already given away. The rest of the beer was reserved for paying customers. That was the only explanation. An explanation I had lost out on by being churlish. I waved at the bartender, tossed an apologetic half-smile.

"I'll buy a beer," I told her. My thirst was powerful by now; it seemed to have grown a fist (at the end of a long, dry arm it had thrust down my throat) that was now pounding at my belly. "Please."

She eyed me evenly to see if I were serious. "How can we sell 'em when we can't give 'em away?" She laughed at this, as if she had said something very funny.

I watched her leave. Morosely, I glared around the room at people and their beer. However much they seemed to slug down, their glasses appeared to stay full. It was too much to bear. Maybe I could talk someone into sharing - No. damn, even sneak a sip. *Oh, I'm sorry fella. That was yours? I thought that was my drink. Let me buy you another. Oops, looks like there isn't any more. Sorry again.* I looked around the room quickly. Then I stared hard at the far side of the room. I slid off my bar stool nonchalantly and moved onto a stool closer to the guy next to me, without looking at him. *Sit here a minute*, I cautioned myself, *not too fast, make it look natural.* He looked at me suspiciously - and moved to a stool at the end of the bar. *Not fast enough.* I got up and walked to the end of the bar, looking at him this time. I sat down beside him, determined to start a conversation. Who cares if I looked natural. It would be rude for him to walk away in the middle of a conversation.

"You like this band?" I asked him.

"Band?" he asked.

"This music?" I leaned my head in the general direction of the noise I had referred to as music. There was no band. This place wasn't classy enough for a band. Not even a bad one. The music,

if we continued to call it that, wheezed out of an old sound system whose dirty speakers spat the top hits of twenty years ago from a radio station which was almost out of range into a language uniquely its own. Right now bits of an advertisement for dishwashing detergent joined Fleetwood Mac in some kind of a cacophonous orgy. *You're soaking in it.*

"You like this?" I asked him. Absently, my hand reached for the beer nuts.

He was giving me that dangerous look, as if sizing me up for what sort of weapon I might produce from my assorted hidden pockets. If I had pulled out a toothpick, I think he would have fainted dead away.

He shrugged. "What's to like?"

"Yeah," I smiled. Absently, my hand reached for his beer.

He was on his feet. "Listen," he leaned so close I could smell the sweet beer on his breath. His eyes were wild, too far open. His nose, full of hair. "Listen," he whispered urgently, "You've got the wrong guy. I'm married. Happily married." And he was gone.

Damn. Double damn. And so was his beer.

"Anyway, I'm not your type," he shouted across the bar in consolation. *You're wrong*, I thought. *Tonight anyone with a beer is my type.* The bartender was looking at me in a way that was anything but consoling. I scowled back at her. She gave me a sharky smile, like bubbles off champagne. Bitch. I watched her soberly. She walked the length of the bar, pouring drinks for fat, drunk men. *Pouring drinks!*

"Hey. Hey!"

She was in no hurry to get to me. "Yeah, what?"

"You've got drinks here. Alcohol, I mean. Other than beer."

"What kind of a place do you think this is? Of course, we've got drinks.

My sigh of relief echoed down through my toes. "I'll have a gin and tonic."

"We're outta gin," she said.

"And vodka?" I asked.

"Yep."

"And Schnapps, Kahlua, Medori, Amaretto, Grand Marnier, Sake, Sloe Gin, and wine?"

"All out," she smiled.

But they had drinks. She said so. I saw her pouring — what? *Be brave.* Ask. Every word was like a Rubik's cube, twisting; each turn bringing me a step closer to an intoxicating wall of solid color. "What do you have?" I asked.

She smiled. I had finally asked it: the right question. "Rum. Good Jamaican rum."

"I'll take it."

She looked me over, smiling cautiously. The way she might smile at a roach that had crawled out from under one of these dirty tables; smiling politely, cautiously at him while she sized him up with her shoe. "Do you have money?" she asked me, cautiously polite.

"Yes," I snarled.

Unconvinced. "How much?"

I reached into my pocket valiantly and produced a twenty.

"Sorry," Ms. Big Teeth said, pointing to the sign behind her. In six inch letters on a chalkboard that I would have sworn had not been there a moment before, someone had carefully written "All drinks \$21.00." In smaller print below was this amendment "except beer which is free . . . while supplies last."

I sighed in resignation. A certain logical relief comes with utter defeat. After all, what did I really expect from the only bar in Hell?



THE SIGN PAINTER

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."

Darn shame that danged sign weren't more clear.

I stepped through the door and right into a riot,

Before I'd done that, my evening'd been quiet.

From the looks of the room I'd made quite a mistake,

What met my eyes surely made my knees quake.

People were running and screaming with terror

The gosh darned sign painter had made quite an error.

I found the poor man with his hands in his hair,

He turned to me muttering, "It just ain't fair.

I never could spell, that sign should read, "Free Bear."

Sarah McCoy

SACRED JUICES

Kyra Kelly

The sign on the door read, "free beer." I was not feeling at all in the mood to tolerate a houseful of random teenage alcoholics, and the very thought of being stranded at a drunken birthday party made me sweat. I had been hoping Paul would have had more class. My temperature soared and I noted, much to my chagrin, that my mind was already racing. Defensively, I began to mutter to myself.

"What in the hell am I doing here? I'm tired, I'm on the rag, and I really don't want to deal with Paul and Kai." As if in reaction to this statement, my body rattled noisily with post-pneumatic lung turbulence. I coughed violently, feeling the liquid shaking in my throat. I shoved my hands in my pockets, more to ground myself than to chase away the eager chomp of the Alaskan air. It was a bristling October night, and it was nudging me toward the threshold of a broken dream.

Turning my back to the sign, I stepped off the porch with every intention of walking back to town to catch the last bus. Instantly, I heard the door crack open.

"Hey!" Jack's voice sang out.

I turned around, slowly.

"How're you, man?" he asked, moving toward me with a quizzical smile.

I remained stiffly rooted to the frozen ground. "My back is killing me and my tits hurt," I informed him somewhat angrily. And although I sought his reaction with an intense, probing glare, Jack knew me well enough to sense that his presence was welcome in my space. I was glad he was the first one I had run into.

"Wow, that sucks. But hey . . . did you see this?" he gestured proudly to the sign on the door.

"What is it?" I scoffed, daring him to entertain me and my black mood.

"It's our loser magnet," he explained with a wide, impish smirk. "Maybe all the wasters will stick around to hear us play." His blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

"Why do we want to play for a bunch of morons?" I snapped, "and what in the hell are you guys advertising free beer for? That's a good way to get your house trashed in this town."

He valiantly continued his attempt to cheer me. "We need the losers, Eve! We've been trying to find a way to rid ourselves of all of Robert's evil homebrew for a couple weeks now."

I cracked a grin in spite of myself, considering the noxious beverage in question. "Oh, my God. How much of it do you guys have left?"

"A shitload," he confided, casually beginning to roll himself a cigarette. His countenance returned to its usual irreverent soberness as he continued, "They all seem to be enjoying it, though. It's free and it gets you trashed. That's all any of the

lames really care about."

"You mean how to get fucked up for free?"

"Just how to get fucked up."

I snorted in contemptuous affirmation of his observation. I had long ago acknowledged the extracurricular activities of the local teenage populus, finding it simultaneously fascinating and mortifying that many of them had been reduced to drinking Robitussin by the case on Saturday nights. It was not necessarily for this reason that I dismissed them as peers, but it was a good excuse.

Jack paused, smoothed the edges of his rolling paper, and added, "I noticed that the neighbor kids are having a rager next door, too. Mama must be out of town for the weekend."

I paused for a moment, anxiously biting my lip before lashing out with a vehement, "this is really fucking stupid."

Lighting his cigarette with an easy, skillful motion, he took a long drag, studying me as he did so. "Don't you wanna jam, Eve?" he prodded.

"I don't feel like doing much of anything right now, Jack." It wasn't the truth, and we both knew it. I stood, helpless in the knowledge that what I really wanted was to break down that damn door. What I really wanted was to smash all the windows. I wanted to cut myself on the glass, gnash it between my teeth just to taste my own blood . . . just to know I was still capable of feeling something besides anger. I was seething, chomping at the bit. I was ready . . . and it scared me. What I really wanted was to run into the house and reclaim my old memories, to take them far away and put them in a safe place where they could never again be so defiled.

I dared Jack to challenge my lie, staring down at him for a change. Thanks to my high-heeled boots, I momentarily felt powerful.

He ignored my stubborn denial, the mischievous sparkle returning to his eyes. "Jamming for stupid stoned drunk people is killer, 'cuz they just always think you're the shit!" he pointed out emphatically.

I smiled again, knowing he was right.

"You gotta sing, man," he insisted, jostling me with his elbow affectionately. "Show Paul what he's been missing out on."

I relented. "Oh, fuck, you're right. It's his birthday, and I'm already here. I might as well torture the bastard." I coughed abruptly, spitting out a generous portion of phlegm along with the last of the angry words.

"Don't think of it as Paul's birthday party," he advised. "It's an informal gig. Zach and Robert are here, and now you and I just gotta sing."

I knew he saw the hesitation in my eyes.

"It's okay," he murmured gently, drawing me in against him.

I gratefully sank in and clung to him tightly, welcoming his hands on my shoulders, his friendly nuzzles on my neck. Savoring his warmth, I closed my eyes and rubbed my face into his polar fleece jacket to protect myself from the harsh cigarette smoke.

"Thanks, Jack," I whispered as I drew away to wipe my runny nose.

A loud crash was heard from inside the condo, then a dog, barking loudly. The door was kicked open, and Zach came stumbling out, sans shirt, bong in hand. His bright red beard looked muddy under the fluorescent porch light.

"Hey, Eve!" he stopped short in his purposeful stride to lift me off the ground in a warrior embrace. I allowed myself to be lifted enthusiastically, melting across Zach's lean, broad shoulders.

"Hey, Zach," Jack acknowledged him with a deft wave of his cigarette, "what's up?"

"I am going to smoke some marijuana," Zach announced triumphantly.

"Outside?" Jack queried.

"Well . . . yeah," he affirmed with a happy grin, tromping off to seek solace behind a small clump of trees.

"Come in soon so we can jam!" Jack yelled towards the woods as he turned to the door. Feeling somewhat more optimistic after death-hugging Zach, I followed Jack inside the house, joining him in belting out the last three lines of the Ween song he had suddenly launched into.

The cramped condo was roaring with motion. The single dim chandelier seemed unstable and inadequate from where it dangled precariously above the ruckus.

I suddenly felt very small.

"Oh ye of little faith!" Jack bellowed in his most obnoxious Monty Python voice, "Behold!" With a grand, sweeping motion, he called my attention to the three kegs that were perched on the stairwell. Hordes of people were swarmed around each one, and the dogs were all right there, too, slurping up the free-flowing ale and rolling around in playful combat.

As I scanned the room for familiar faces, I tried not to notice Paul, who was busily herding dogs out of the bathroom and onto the outside balcony. However, his hair shone like pale strands of spun gold in the midst of the dark, ugly room, and I found my gaze lingering on his turned back, caressing him with watery eyes.

Everyone else I knew seemed to be preoccupied, either with a musical instrument or a loaded pipe.

I noticed some of the high school jock kids from next door at about the same time they noticed me. Predictably enough, they were all crowded around the kegs, and one of the bolder ones motioned to me with a shout. "Hey, Eve! Come here and try some of this gnarly homebrew!"

With a hesitant stride, I moved into their midst, to be eyeballed hungrily. I removed my thick leather coat, dumping it on the stairwell with a heavy thud. Trying to pretend I didn't notice them all staring at my chest, I instead concerned myself with the keg. Wrinkling my nose, I poured a cup, noting the chunks of yeast that floated to the top of the brackish brew. Disgusted, I braced myself for the worst and quickly gulped it down.

As I stood against the wall waiting for the beer to hit my system, Zach reappeared, beaming and waving the sign. "I think we should charge admission," he offered with a goofy grin. "Does anyone have a pen?"

"The sign! Let's fix it!" Paul yelled as he leaped into action, grabbing a pair of scissors. Jack bounced over excitedly. "Let's trick all the bastards!" he joyfully added. The three boys proceeded to huddle noisily in the corner.

The jocks continued to jabber excitedly among themselves as they ogled my body, and I favored them with a long, condescending smirk before shoving off from the wall to explore. I strode to the center of the room, where people were jamming. They did not greet me, and I exhaled in grateful relief. My mind now pleasantly numb, I plopped down among them and let the guitars ring in my head. The stereo was also reverberating loudly through the living room, making it a safe place to be anonymously confused. People slammed in and out of the room, mostly oblivious to each other's presence.

I let my gaze fall on Paul's new wife, who for the moment was not staring at me. Kai sat by the window near Paul, her muscular dancer's legs drawn up around her. She hugged her own solid arms tightly, as she laughed and exchanged conversation with a very stoned Zach. I watched the light shimmer across her silky, honey-brown hair, which hangs straight down her back. She is beautiful, in a strikingly clean, natural way. She is so very European, I muse, the little French kitten. Kai is easy to read, and it often astounds me that she seems to have no clue of her own elegance. Her age is unquestionably a factor. Eighteen is far too young to be married.

"Hey! You drunk yet?" Jack hollered boisterously as he sidled over to sit next to me. I gave him a weary half-smile, aware that the noise level in the room was rising. The CD began to skip, and I stretched over to remove it from the stereo. I knew they were all watching my ass, and felt a slight chill of satisfaction as I noticed Paul's form out of the corner of my eye.

"I've got to hear the Butthole Surfers!" Jack suddenly insisted, pushing me over as he lunged at the stereo. I carefully rearranged my long, clingy skirt and swung my head around provocatively to meet Kai's gaze head-on. I gave her my best haunted princess look, enjoying the dramatic swing of my long hair as I acknowledged her. This girl was young, naive, and frightened. "Hi!" she pleaded, in a valiant attempt at lightness. I did not answer. Jack handed me another cup of beer, which I accepted and downed in three angry gulps. I focused again on Kai, whose gaze had not wavered. She eyed me, such the glamorous American woman in my tight black dress, wild mane, and dark makeup, and I saw in her face a longing that matched my own . . . hers for my glamorous, tough control, mine for her simple, open honesty. I turned away, breaking the shared moment.

I like Kai, I really do.

She's just in my way.

"I wish she would quit staring at me all the time," I hissed in Jack's general direction, "Even when I'm drunk, I can never relax with her around."

"Don't you guys know how to use a fuckin' door?" Jack suddenly hollered, shifting my attention to the stream of high school kids that were steadily pouring into the living room by way of the back balcony. "Uh, guys," Paul began in his characteristically diplomatic tone, "I don't think that's a real good idea."

"I don't like this shit," added a rather inebriated Robert as he rose to his full height of 6 foot 3. "The pigs are out in full fuckin' force tonight, and I'm not going downtown."

"Fuck off," one of the older kids shot back.

Jack, sensing the need for peace, grabbed his mike and hands

me mine. "I don't know what you guys are all getting so gimped about, but hey . . . we're gonna play now, so just be mellow," he announced. Zach, who had been warming up, nodded and began his lead-in. The rest of the band fell into place, magically, and, as if drawing on the tumultuous energy present in the room, launched into the song.

I focused my attention on the music now, fully. I allowed myself to fall into the melody of Zach's guitar, until it took me over at last. Rising to my feet, I hung my head and I wailed and I moaned and I spilled my guts and my heart and all of my living human energy out onto that stained red carpet. I ceased to be sick, I ceased to be powerless. Suddenly, I was on fire, inspired, vibrating, my voice resonating like the tight-strung strings of the huntress' bow. She was deep, deep inside me, and I felt her shake my body now with her moving, breathing presence. She called from inside . . . she was alive, she was me, and she wanted to come out.

I gave up the strain, releasing her, allowing her to flow out of my mouth, to well up from the core of my heart, from the base of my spine, from the bottom of my belly, and spill up, out . . . like a gushing, rushing, waterfall of sound.

And she became *alive*, became EVE, birthed at the dawn of time from the depths of a fiery volcano. Enriched, enraged, powerful.

My head hung lower, for I was also very drunk. Yet she was alive. *And I was real*, for probably the first time tonight.

I snapped my head up quickly, feeling Paul's gaze upon me. His eyes were a myriad of rich colors, and their intensity burned into me. For a split second, I was vaguely aware of Robert's voice, bellowing something about kicking anyone's ass who made a move toward the door. Suddenly, I remembered that I was free and I tuned him out. I tuned them all out, returning to the sound of my own voice.

I resonated. I shimmered. I was filled with the living, pulsing presence of the music and I rocked with it. Swaying my body, embracing, swooping, I folded the icy night air into myself as I continued to sway to the primal pulse of the drums. My muscles all relaxed, and I shook, like the animal I am. I threw back my

thick, silky hair and luxuriated in its feel, in the way it whispered along my skin like delicate elfin fingers, curling along the line of my spine, gently tickling my near-naked back.

I pulled at the air, reaching toward the heavens, searching the sky for the bow of the huntress, that I might be restored to my full power. Archer. I bled heavier now, feeling the intensity increasing with that of the deep, warm drum.

Still drunk.

I heard the cops next door. The last of the neighbor kids came clamoring over the back deck and tumbled into the living room.

I fell into a limp heap.

Robert continued to scream.

I felt blessedly soft, liquid, exhausted; like a child who has finally thrown his last tantrum. Surrender. The tears came, swift and powerful, like the running of the deer in the springtime. Like the pulse of the lunar tide. Like crashing, rolling waves pushing the shoreline away.

Everybody leaves me alone.

I felt Jack's hands on my shoulders. "Eve," he whispered, "come on, man, let's take you home." Shuddering, I raised my head and proceeded to cough up a river of snot. Jack held my buzzing head and ran his fingers through my hair, which now hung in sticky strings around my reddened face. I leaned on him and let him lead me toward the door. "You smell like cigarettes," I choked. Another salty tear found its way across my nose and melted into my mouth, and I felt warm blood beginning to trickle down my thigh.

On the way out, I glanced over and notice the sign again. I knew Paul wouldn't disappoint me, and still I was surprised by the soft, vulnerable croak of my own laugh. It was the laugh that comes without bidding, without thought, heed, or warning. It comes sudden from deep inside the secret childhood place . . . the place he was always finding unexpected doors into. Through my blurry vision, I could see that the sign now read, "Beer Fee." Shaking my head, I felt a pleasant internal warmth.

And so it was. Smiling, with bloodshot eyes and a choked pneumatic snuffle, I acknowledged again that I loved him.



BARMAID

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."
Placement of the placard had brought us here,
Two friends and I, to drink our fill,
Consume in quantity the barley swill.
We drank our first glass, and slammed it back down,
Called to our barmaid to bring us a round.
She promptly did so, then said to me —
"Who's paying for these — three beers times three?"
Together we said "Get outta here!"
"The sign on the door read FREE BEER!"
"Very true" she said, "The beer IS free,"
"We charge for the GLASS, A buck-fifty!"

Michael Reger



DOUBLE HELIX BY KYRA KELLY

MYTHIC ALE

Sarah McCoy

The sign on the door read "Free Beer." It was a hardly noticeable sign on a hardly noticeable door, and Alex never would have noticed it if it hadn't been for the large hairy arm that reached out and snatched her right off the street. There was no time for a scream or plea for help, she was dragged through the door and into the bizarre in mere seconds.

It took a while for Alex to regain the tattered remains of her senses, but eventually her surroundings began to swim together into a somewhat large oak-paneled room with some very peculiar inhabitants. Alex rubbed her eyes to see if the strange scene before her would change if she massaged her eyes back into their proper places. Perhaps, she thought, if I exert enough willpower, this won't actually be happening and I will wake up in my bed passed out from drinking too much of that free beer. Slowly she opened one eye, then the other, and to her dismay the scene remained wholly unchanged, except for there was now a very large badger snuffling about down by her feet.

Never being the panicky type, Alex quickly proceeded to scream loudly, mainly because large badgers aren't a common occurrence in oak-paneled rooms. Of course neither were dwarves, centaurs, wolves, horses, bears, cats (of the large mountain lion and panther varieties), nor any of the multitude of forest animals gathered in the room. Alex's expression of fear was quickly curtailed by the same large hairy hand that had so rudely interrupted her until now normal day.

"I didn't realize they'd be quite so loud," muttered the badger, squinting up at Alex. "Maybe we should find something else."

"No, humans are the only ones here that have mastered The Art," sighed an enormous black centaur. "Except, of course, for the Yeti, but they are quite snobbish about it and refuse to be of assistance." A subdued murmur of assent fluttered about the room, as all the creatures nodded in unison. "I'm very sorry to have taken you from your normal daily routine, but I am afraid we are in need of your help and we couldn't wait for you to notice the sign."

Alex opened her mouth to ask what she could do, but all that came out was a pitiful squeak. She was still suffering from the shock of seeing a creature that was basically a horse with a man's upper body attached where the neck and head should be. She had never seen its like. Of course she had read about things like this happening in fairy tales, but they were just that, fairy tales, no reality involved, right? Well apparently not, she thought to herself. She certainly wasn't dreaming all of this up. She cleared her throat and tried again, "What can I do for you?"

"Well," started the centaur, "First things first. What is your name?"

"Alex."

"Very well Alex, you may call me Fred."

"Fred?" Alex asked, one eyebrow raised in a quizzical arch.

"Yes, anything wrong with it?"

"No, not particularly," she said. "I guess I just expected something a bit on the dramatic side, like Keroulous, or something complicated that I couldn't pronounce with my human tongue, you know like something out of a fantasy story."

"Oh, I see," replied Fred with a faint almost smile threatening to attack his face at any moment. "However, this is hardly a fantasy story. We have come here on very important business. We want you to teach us The Art."

Alex stared at him for a few seconds before asking the inevitable question, "Um . . . So, what exactly is The Art?"

Fred was visibly taken aback, "You don't know what The Art is?" he stammered. He sat down hard, almost crushing the badger. He looked morosely at Alex and sighed. "You don't know," he once again sighed to himself.

"Well, just saying 'The Art' makes it all sound a bit vague, you know. Why don't you tell me what it is and I'll see if I can help you out." Alex offered her hand to the magnificent centaur as a gesture of assistance.

"The Art is that of brewing beer."

Alex had to choke back a laugh, "Brewing beer, eh? Well, you have kidnapped the right person. I've been doing that for years. Some of my friends jokingly refer to me as 'Her Holiness the Master Brewmeisteress.' I have some really great techniques for brewing the lovely nectar."

An ear to ear grin spread out across Fred's face, "So then you'll help us?" he asked joyously.

"Sure will. I do have some questions for you. How come you are coming to me? I am human and I am assuming you guys don't come out of your world very often. What happened?"

A darker look replaced the smile of joy on the creature's face. "Ah, it is a sad story indeed. As far back as memory goes, there has been one race who has held the secret to home brewing: the Unicorns. However, unicorns are a touchy lot. They take offense at everything and will jump into battle without the least warning and with very little provocation. They aren't very careful and their numbers have slowly dwindled down to two. Unfortunately, two weeks ago one insulted the other's special brew and a battle to beat all battles took place. The unicorns fatally wounded each other, so now we have been left on our own as far as beer

goes, and we are beginning to get desperate." Fred sighed and began to wring his hands "I tried to make a batch of ale, but the entire project failed miserably and I decided that I needed to seek help when my brewing apparatus exploded in flames."

"Flames?" Alex gasped, dumbfounded. "How in the world did you get flames?"

The centaur shrugged. "We kind of figured that flames probably aren't normal. That was when we decided we needed help to learn The Art."

"Well I am glad you didn't kill yourself, or anyone else for that matter. Okay, what exactly is it you want to know?"

"Well," started Fred, "we aren't sure yet. We were thinking of starting a brew pub."

"A brew pub?" Alex gasped again, trying not to laugh.

A furrow appeared on the centaur's brow, "You're starting to sound like my echo."

"Sorry," she mumbled, "you just caught me a little off guard, since you don't even know how to brew beer yet."

"That's okay," Fred stated matter-of-factly, "we don't really intend to make any money, we just want to test the products on humans before we try them ourselves."

"Ah."

"Yes, brew pubs are quite uncommon where we want to put one. And the people are willing to try *anything* and no one will even notice that we aren't exactly natives. For the most part, we'll fit right in."

"Oh?" Alex asked, "and exactly where is that?"

"Los Angeles."



SWIZZLE STICK

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."

While the signs on the inside were not so clear.

Hiding in the thickness of it all,

draped with the secret spies invading, the smoke and dark.

Cocktail napkins set adjacent to simulated leather,
plastic covered lounge chairs, comfortably sipping.
Set adrift, and about, the music speaks, like cocktail
napkins.

Violence, love lost and drunken fancy, the somber
mood.

Ladies wrapped in blue taffeta, gents in polyester,
meet, share and part, the smoke, a sick blue ocean,
lit only by the fading lamps and the poltergeist
television,

emitting radiation disguised as Merv Griffin.

The only sane witness, the one who asks why,
stained plastic plants dotting throughout.

Another happy hour.

Douglas Pederson

INTERVIEW WITH A ROADS SCHOLAR

Kenneth Brady

PETER JENSEN teaches poetry, literature, and writing at Lane Community College and Linn-Benton Community College. He has published a collection of poetry, *When Waves Sprout Birds*, and his third book of poetry, *Confluence* (with David Johnson and Erik Muller), was a finalist for the 1993 Oregon Book Award.

DENALI: Are you primarily a poet?

PETER: Yes. But I write short fiction, too. Recently, I picked up some of my old notes from the seventies and eighties and found seeds of short stories. For example, I met a 94 year old man who had been a blacksmith and had run away from World War I. His story kept bugging me, so I had to write it.

DENALI: So, you're exploring short fiction as well?

PETER: Yeah, especially in the last two years. I'm having fun. I have a fifty page story called "Lysistrata in the Highlands," which is about the Viet Nam War. U.S. soldiers put on the play

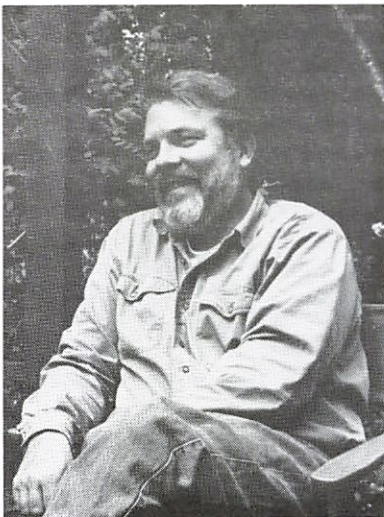
"Lysistrata" to try and make the Vietnamese women give up sex. It was psychological warfare, and it totally backfired. It was a flop. Deeply funny and very tragic at the same time.

DENALI: Is that the style story you usually write?

PETER: Most of my stories are speculative fiction. I have set one goal to write a good maze story. After reading Borges and Barth, I want to do a story that is a maze, that people find puzzling and interesting and weird. I don't want it to be confusing; I want it to be fun. "Time's Child" (Winter 1995 *Denali*) is a maze story. But I want to do a longer story than that.

DENALI: So, you've been experimenting from poetry to short fiction. Any thoughts of doing a novel?

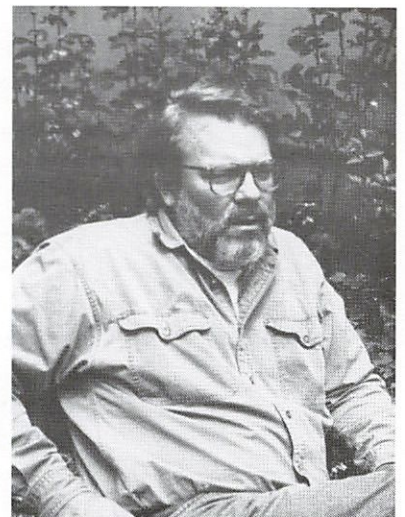
PETER: No. Too long. The neat thing about poetry is you can write it anywhere. I always take my notebook with me — I'm on number 30 — and I've been keeping notebooks since I was 19. I've got everything in there from cartoons to sketches of wood-



The neat thing about poetry is you can write it anywhere.



It's very important for writers to write too much, to keep generating lots and lots of material and to read.



We write or speak to become human, to find out what we are capable of thinking.

carvings. My first drafts of poems usually go in the book. Then I get to the word processor.

DENALI: Do you ever compose your work on the computer directly?

PETER: Once in a while. But I like the feeling of the pen in my hand. It has the feel of drawing.

DENALI: When did you actually begin writing?

PETER: I wrote a lot of short fiction starting when I was twelve. Some were romances or adventure stories. I would imagine myself saving a pretty girl in the neighborhood from a huge octopus in the black lagoon or something. I didn't keep any of that stuff.

DENALI: Were you influenced by television and movies while growing up?

PETER: We didn't have a TV. So I read until my eyes were hanging out. At that time I wanted to be a Naval architect and design ships. I started out in an engineering college. I'm interested, therefore, in science as a source for our myths. And only recently have I thought about writing much science fiction.

DENALI: Even though a lot of your work is speculative?

PETER: Well, in the sixties and seventies I wrote a lot of science fiction poetry. I could find nowhere to publish it except hippy journals and calendars. I had a whole series called the *Purple Planet Songs*, that was about 200 or so poems, all fifteen lines, three stanzas. I wrote about everything in that form. A lot of it was science fiction in that it took place on another planet, a world like ours that people didn't believe in yet.

DENALI: What influenced your writing? What did you read?

PETER: My mother read me Robert Frost; my grandmother read me Shakespeare. I read a lot of animal stories about dogs and horses. One strong story called the "Wahoo Bobcat" got me into wildlife. I read books about birds and histories of World War II, especially Naval histories. And I read lots of science fiction; in the mid-fifties I began reading Heinlein. I wanted to be in marine design; he was talking about spaceships the way I was thinking about ships. Then, when I read my first Ursula LeGuin novel, I realized oh the heck with techie SF; I really like people SF better.

DENALI: Does a lot of your college science interest show up in your work?

PETER: Although I've been a scholar, I was always more interested in creative writing. I went from a major of naval architecture to physical anthropology to cultural anthropology to English. I think I'm a little different in that I've kept alive my interest in science. I read Earth sciences still. I have to keep that interest going.

DENALI: You like to keep informed.

PETER: Yes. But here in the era of mass media, we get so much useless information. Writers are people who write the stuff people really care about. Some of it is political. This latest round of rhetoric and violence from the right wing is nothing new. They've always used terrorism against innocent people for reasons of race and sex. I think it's up to writers, filmmakers, and teachers to help people figure this out, help people stay out of right-wingers' way and also give them ideas so they can fight back.

DENALI: And what are you reading now?

PETER: Lots of poetry, some fiction, and hundreds of student papers. I get good ideas from my students. Some of their work would make great stories or films or narrative poems.

DENALI: So you're still learning then?

PETER: Yeah. I learn more than they do. [laughs] After all, they outnumber me a hundred to one, so I'm bound to learn more.

DENALI: Where do you find time to write?

PETER: I take my life as a writer very seriously. I always take time out to write a poem or a story. That makes me a better teacher. It makes me less disappointed as a teacher.

DENALI: That way, you give time to your writing.

PETER: Yes. It's very important for writers to write too much, to keep generating lots and lots of material and to read. Ever since I learned the trick to work on a hundred things at once — literally — to work on a hundred poems or ten short stories and be able to go back to any one of them and revise, I don't have the time to do all I want to, and I never get writer's block. If you work on lots of pieces at once, you can always be inspired by your own work.

DENALI: Is anything of yours ever really "finished" or do you leave them open-ended?

PETER: They're always open. Once they're published, I do revise for readings. Sometimes the politics of the time or the situation in an old poem strike me as interesting; if I think I can do better, I revise.

DENALI: What work have you let go of?

PETER: Some of my work from the seventies I let go of, although — with the right-wing stuff going on in the United States — it's getting as intense now as the seventies. Good people are being attacked quite heavily, which was true in the seventies. That forced me to rewrite a lot that is very timely. But some died with the seventies.

DENALI: Poetry sometimes gets dated since it's written in tune with the times, doesn't it?

PETER: Right. But, for example, the more I read Shakespeare, the more I realize you can take him out of his era and put a play on. Or, if you want to, you can go many levels into the politics of his time and look for Essex in Hamlet, Burghley in Polonius, and a bit of Queen Elizabeth, after Marlowe's murder, in Claudius. It's very rich. But politics can limit the shelf life of a work, unless you go for universal issues, great images, intense writing.

DENALI: As a writer, do people put you in a category?

PETER: Poets are in a category by themselves. They have to read a lot to each other. All poets are grouped together no matter what they believe. I think there should be affirmative action for poets. But many people read poetry because it is such intensified language, it's so helpful to thinking and to style.

DENALI: I often find poetry to be like a screenplay treatment, like a summary or inspiration for a longer work.

PETER: And many poems start with six lines of prose. Then you work like hell. A computer makes it easier to go through revisions. But poetry is a poor person's delight. You can write anywhere with a pad and pencil.

DENALI: What about music and song lyrics?

PETER: I'm always listening for good lines! "On the road again." "The harder they come, the harder they fall." But often the lyrics get blown away, and the problem with American pop culture is it's so powerful. I think many people are misled by tough or nasty stuff, and they get hurt and hurt others. But it's very emotional, and it sells. College educated people need to read deeper, and poetry and fiction give us texts.

DENALI: What should young writers do?

PETER: Write and make up new rules. We write or speak to become human, to find out what we are capable of thinking. Good writing is invention. We need to evolve. We break through first in writing, and it's amazing how much bad ideas have a grip on our minds. We always need to liberate ourselves from ideas that drag us backward.

THE LAST SPOTTED OWL

Peter Jensen

The sign on the door read: "FREE BEER!" It was just a joke, of course. There's no such thing. The Second Law of Thermodynamics has all that covered. From Big Bang to Black Holes, there is nothing even resembling a free beer, although life on Earth has tried real hard and come pretty close. But this sign had been taped to the door a decade before by a witty federal biologist, who had taken care of captive Northern Spotted Owls as the government spent billions trying to save this endangered species from extinction. The federal team of biologists had done fine work, but this species reacted poorly to confinement, and finally, these rare forest owls died off one by one.

That cocky scientist, who had duct-taped this sign on the door of the room that now held the last Spotted Owl, had long since been hired by the timber industry. He was paid \$200,000 a year to report on what that industry might have learned from nature's ancient forest design. The industry's Turn of the Millennium Campaign (dubbed "Deforestation 2000") had been so successful that all that remained of the ancient forest's ecosystem were stacks of publicly-funded research reports. This scientist was given a large team of assistants and all the equipment he needed. The only condition set on his employment was that he could never again mention the Spotted Owl.

As they arrived at this door, behind which resided the last Spotted Owl, a small group of people was puzzled by this sign. They wondered if this were the owl's name — FREE BEER — or if this were a government code name posted to mislead anyone wishing to harm this owl. All the buildings were run down; the place had the smell of a grandiose government project started quickly with all the latest biological technology and people but ending in budget cuts. Since these people could not solve the mystery of this ironic sign, they pushed open the door and went in. They had come here to bear witness and memorialize an important event.

It was a curious occasion. It would be sad, and it would be deep. A group of Twenty-first Century environmentalists — now an old-fashioned word and position — were to attend the death of the last Spotted Owl. They were the grandchildren of a group of activists started in the late Twentieth Century, who had tried and failed to save the remaining ancient forest groves of the Pacific Northwest.

The last owl itself was perched on a potted vine maple branch in the middle of the sealed room that was its cage. It was an old, brown bird with a wonderful shower of white spots on its breast, and (as far as anyone knew) it was the last of its kind. It sat with closed eyes shuddering with age. When people came into its room, it opened its piercing eyes once, and the people

saw pain. After that, it closed its eyes again, for the artificial light hurt.

The environmentalists had brought offerings: sculptures made of old, close-grained wood, holograms of owls, recordings of owls hooting and whistling, poems, songs, essays, home brewed dark beer with a flavor rich and sweet as forest floor duff, and organic food for this solemn occasion. They sat in a sacred circle around the owl eating food with their fingers and drinking, reading and singing the lovely works they had written to heal their deep hurt at the passing of yet another wild species.

When the owl suddenly cried out and fluttered around the room like a large, blind moth and crash-landed in their midst and died, all of these good people screamed and cried and said passionate words over the dead owl. But unknown to them, a rare virus, that had, before this, infected only some of these rare forest owls with an annoying, debilitating disease, which the owls had adapted to over a hundred thousand years, flew from the aspirated fog of vomit, the death gasp of the owl, into an open pitcher of that rich dark beer that one of the environmentalists had brewed for this occasion. Perhaps this virus first awakened to new possibilities when it contacted the alcohol in this bark-colored beer.

These gentle people continued to eat and drink beer even as they passed the limp body of the dead owl around their circle. They remembered Native American rituals. They burned sweet grass and sage and swept the air with their smokes. One man played a cedar flute built in the old way with two resonating chambers that gave it a far away sound although it was just next to them in a small room. And they wept for the passing of this amazing species hoping to mark for all humanity the importance of this death.

However, once the owl virus entered their bodies, it began to attack them in a way that the human immune system could not anticipate. It seemed to fly from organ to organ in the darkness of their bodies and establish breeding colonies as it experimented within the habitat of its new hosts. And it had a stealth, chemical cloaking device, so human bodies could not detect these colonies until it was too late.

They all became very ill. This was not the first time in the Late Twentieth and early Twenty-first Centuries that opportunistic diseases from rare species had jumped onto human hosts and caused great tragedies. There was AIDS, that may have come from the blood of brains from infected monkeys or chimpanzees eaten by poor people along the Kinshasa Highway across Africa. From prostitutes there, AIDS was sexually transmitted to truck drivers, and our efficient, modern transpor-

tation system of freeways and airlines did the rest.

There was the blood burning virus that may have come from Kitum Cave in Mount Elgon — near the African Rift Valley where humanity was born — where elephants went to sing and eat salts below fruit and insect eating bats. There had been all sorts of odd and threatening outbreaks. Diverse rare species might go extinct, but their ancient, pre-dinosaur diseases — especially the viruses that were almost as old as the rocks — soon found rich food and vulnerable hosts in the crowded together, highly mobile bodies of that greatest of all monocultures: humanity.

P. S. As a postscript to this story, I attach a copy of the final paragraphs of an emergency E-Mail message sent out to the

world after these environmentalists contracted this rare illness from the last Spotted Owl:

"It is with great urgency that we issue this appeal to the international medical community from Eugene, Oregon. We need your help in fighting this latest of endangered species viruses.

We beg you to turn your attention and your overtaxed resources to this latest disease. Three of our patients have died. All the others are lingering. There are at least twenty new cases reported each day.

Please realize, this is a **LEVEL 4 BIOHAZARD** international alert!"



BALLAD OF FREE BEER

The sign on the door read Free Beer.
When he saw it the accountant Molina said,
"That's something a little strange.
There must be a madman in prison,
or a woman on a horse in a dream."

I said, "No, it's for real;
I've seen it and sipped it.
Only love in this world
burns like the cold of Free Beer."
And I liked him so forgot
the curse I'd been taught
down at the Crossroads of Jar.
I took him aside and I whispered,
"Give up your dreams of lottery cash,
your day-timer, Beemer, and ties.
There's a gentleman here from Cambodia,
and a girl just in from Bombay.
They've just come back from the country,
the land where wild hops grow.
The water is pure and the brown malt flows
and the people know just what to say.
It's fermented and brewed,
fermented and brewed,
where three witches call down from the moon.
It's for real; come and drink,
it's all you've forgot,
and it's behind the door called Free Beer."

Molina was shot last night out of town;
I hope he was on his way,
that just once in his life
he'd had the vision and guts
to open the door called Free Beer.

Sandra M. Jensen





ON THE ROCKS BY JUSTIN TINDEL

THE AARDVARK OF INFINITE WISDOM

Kenneth Brady

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." But Tom knew better than to believe everything he read. In this part of Chinatown, there was a shyster on every corner, waiting for the next sucker to walk by.

And beer was never free unless you won the Game.

He brushed lightly against the reassuring bulge in his coat that was his weapon and pushed the door open. Instantly, a rush of smoke flooded through the doorway and assailed his nose, forcing him to fight back a sneeze. He held his breath, waiting. A sneeze would show weakness, and showing weakness here would get him killed easier than anything. The urge to sneeze passed, and he stepped through into the interior of Hong's House of Staring.

The air was thick with the sweet-smelling smoke Tom recognized as catnip. You weren't supposed to smoke the stuff, as far as he remembered being told. It gave you weird hallucinations or something. Glancing around at the strange patronage of Hong's, Tom wondered how many of them were now hallucinating. There were wide, squat openings every twenty feet or so along the far wall, and next to each sat a huddled pair, quietly whispering to one another. Through the smoke, however, he could not make out a single participant in the Game. He sauntered slowly toward the center of the small room and took a seat at a low bar, waiting patiently for the bartender to notice him.

"What would you like?" asked the bartender, a large, stocky bull of a fellow.

"I'm here to see Hong," said Tom, flashing the bartender a toothy grin. "Tell him Tom is here to challenge him."

The bartender snorted loudly. "He is the Aardvark of Infinite Wisdom. What makes you think he's gonna come out for the likes of you?"

"Oh he will," said Tom. "I bet he's expecting me." He rubbed the bronze medallion around his neck, and it caught the bartender's attention. Amazed, the bartender leaned forward, as if to touch — or perhaps to lick — the bronze disc.

"You mean," the bartender said, "you're . . . uh, one of the —" Tom cut off his inquiry with a nod.

"Is it true what they say?" asked the bartender. "Is it true none of you have ever lost a single Game?"

Again, Tom nodded. The bartender paled momentarily, then turned away, but Tom stopped him.

"While I'm waiting," he said, "how about some of that free beer?"

"We'll see if it's free," said the bartender. A wide, frothy mug

of beer thumped to the bar, foam spilling over the rim. Tom smiled briefly as the frowning, yet awed, bartender disappeared through a door behind the bar — presumably to go get Hong — and began on his beer. It was good, Tom noted, licking foam from his face. Of course, he understood, it was not without its price.

Sooner than Tom expected, a white-hooded figure emerged from the door behind the bar, closely followed by the bartender. The figure nodded briefly at Tom, then walked briskly toward the far end of the room.

"Hong has granted you the middle chamber," said the bartender. "The courtyard. This is a great honor, you understand."

"Yeah," said Tom. "I got it."

He finished the remaining beer and took his time in meeting the white-hooded Hong at the doorway leading to the central courtyard. Hong seemed a bit hurried, but Tom had learned long ago that nothing was important enough to run for, excepting, perhaps, a great meal or fabulous sex. This was neither of those, so he walked slowly and deliberately, smiling at the way Hong waved him faster.

"Don't be so uptight," Tom said, as the two stepped into the courtyard. The outside air made his nose itch again, as he had finally gotten used to the smell of the catnip smoke. The absence of smoke made him lightheaded. In the center of the courtyard, nestled amongst an impossibly complex stand of trees, shrubs, and flowers, was a simple stone platform. He quickly sat on one side of the platform, letting the lightheadedness pass. Hong took his position opposite Tom.

"You realize, of course," said Tom, "that I cannot let you win this, Hong." Tom smiled.

Hong seemed to ponder this for a moment, then lowered the hood from his eyes and smiled a very proper aardvark smile.

His dark, beady eyes blinked once, then narrowed and stared straight into Tom's. Tom braced his retinas for the impact, but he was too late. A charge of energy hit him, and he tensed, fighting to keep his eyes open. Then, tensing as if to pounce, he fired a barrage of energy slivers toward Hong. The Game began.

The aardvark physically bounced back a few inches, but his eyes remained unblinking. His fur bristled, static electricity coursing along his body, and he crossed his eyes for attack.

Tom saw this coming, however, and the aardvark's attack was thwarted, little energy arrows flying wildly off course. The wind suddenly picked up in the courtyard, and Tom was aware of eyes watching from all around as the patrons of Hong's House of

Staring stood, watching this match between Hong himself and the mysterious stranger. Though surely, thought Tom, the bartender had begun circulating the rumor of his identity, so he would hardly be thought of as mysterious much longer. All eyes watched, but neither Tom nor the Aardvark of Infinite Wisdom turned to look.

Momentarily, Tom saw the aardvark's eyes drift slowly, as if searching for an object lost in its mind, and then returning once finding the object. Hong opened his mouth, let out a whisper, and stared harder at Tom.

"There is a very large truck coming straight at you," Hong whispered to Tom, who started violently as the image appeared in front of him.

The truck was huge, red, its horn blaring and tires screeching on the pavement. Its headlights made dancing patterns in Tom's staring eyes, but he dared not close them or look away. Tom heard the crowd of onlookers gasp at the vision.

"The truck isn't real," Tom said, staring at the headlights. "But the vultures pecking at your skin are."

The truck rolled over and through Tom's body then vanished from the courtyard. Then, ten vultures surrounded the aardvark, attacking him from all angles, screaming and pecking wildly. Hong waved madly at the air, almost closing one eye but fighting it open again.

"They are just illusions," he said, and the vultures flew through his body and vanished. "A huge pit bull is on your heels, barking loudly and snapping powerful jaws right behind your back."

Tom flinched and yowled in panic. The dog was slaving in its struggle to get him, but he could not allow the illusion to get the best of him.

"It is no more than a puppy of pixie dust," he said, and the mongrel ran through him and disappeared. Tom applied pressure to the weapon hidden in his coat and felt it pop open, then began.

"There are ants crawling across the platform," he said.

"Where?" asked the aardvark. "I do not see them."

"They are juicy and full, and ready to be devoured like a delicacy," said Tom. "Can't you just taste them?"

"Where are they?" asked the aardvark, somewhere near laughter. "Some illusion, hah! You have failed, Tom. My turn."

Then, as Hong began to create another illusion, a row of ants marched down Tom's coat and across the platform. The aardvark's jaw quivered, his eyes darting momentarily up and down the platform, his tongue being held back by only the sheer force of will.

"They're dark and ripe and tasty," said Tom.

Finally, the ants reached Hong's legs, and began marching around his toes.

"Quite the illusion," Hong said. "So good I can almost feel them. I applaud you."

"And think of how they would *taste*," Tom said. "You've got to try one."

The aardvark quivered. Then, unable to contain himself any longer, lashed out at the closest cluster of ants with his tongue. When his tongue found the ants to be not just illusions, but live — and quite tasty — crawling insects, his eyes flickered to the ground in surprise.

The Aardvark of Infinite Wisdom blinked.

A surprised sigh went up from the group.

And Tom smiled.

"And so," Tom said, wiping ants from the pouch on his coat, "I have won the Game."

The creatures from Hong's House came out in a flood, rushing to see the winner of the Game. Shouts and questions rose from the group in a tremendous din. Hong, admitting defeat, sat eating ants as fast as he could. Three deer, whom Tom took to be elders of the Game, stood in front of the rest.

"Here is your trophy," said one deer, holding out a small, frothy beer-shaped pendant to Tom. "For you, the beer is always free."

Tom took the pendant and smiled.

"Tell us," asked another deer, "how did you defeat the Master?"

"That I cannot tell you," said Tom.

"At least tell us your name, then," asked the oldest deer, his gnarled rack adorned with medals from the Game.

At this, Tom pulled the medallion from around his neck and tossed it to the deer, who read it aloud.

"Tom," said the deer. "The Cat of Limitless Cunning."

Tom, smiling widely and purposefully, sauntered slowly out of Hong's House of Staring and into the streets of Chinatown.



BITTER ALE

Jeff Maib

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." It was in garish red neon and it hung on the battered wooden door like a giant bug zapper. I had walked through this dirty little alley hundreds of times and this was the first time that it had caught my attention. But that wouldn't have been so unusual. Rarely did anything catch my attention after working an eight and a half-hour shift at the post office. I often walked home because I needed the time to unwind. It was safer for the general public and myself if I didn't get behind the wheel of several tons of rolling steel.

God, that horrific place. It was nothing but blue-haired old ladies who wanted stamps they didn't have to lick and shapeless unclaimed packages that leaked God knows what from inside. And all of that *goddamned* mail. Bags and bags of it. All day long. Six days a week from now until eternity. It was enough to drive a person absolutely insane.

The alley ran for two city blocks between several industrial-type gray brick buildings. It was littered with newspapers and bums and Styrofoam cups that would be around for another ten years. The door with the sign on it was slightly recessed into one of these buildings with a large pull handle and no visible lock. The place was probably a strip joint. I didn't care. I was tired and irritable and just complacent enough to sit in a dingy bar with complete strangers and suck down free beers until my bladder exploded or I slipped into unconsciousness. Whichever came first.

I had actually sworn off alcohol two nights ago as I lay huddled against a public toilet at the local International House of Pancakes. I had no idea how I had gotten there, but I figured it was probably a good idea to lay off the booze for awhile. But this was different. This was *free* beer. This was a sign — literally. It was like Mammon from Heaven. Surely, God wouldn't let his children run dry . . . and it was hot. It was the second week of August and the heat had been unmerciful. Just a free beer or two for the road and I'd be on my way.

I grabbed the handle and pulled the door toward me. It groaned as it swung open and thick smoke filtered out from within the interior. It was dark and murky and I thought I glimpsed what looked like a long mirror that ran along the back of a cavernous room. It was a dingy bar as I had expected. Free beer, here I come. I licked my lips and stepped inside. The door slammed shut with the clap of Creation and I plummeted into a yawling abyss and fell until everything went black.

I awoke on a blue vinyl couch sweating profusely and sticking to it like a melted marshmallow. I wasn't alone. There was a big fat guy in a sequined white jumpsuit standing over me watching my every move.

"Hello. I'm Satan," he said. He looked just like Elvis. At that point I knew I was in Hell.

"Don't tell me," I said, "I suppose you're the King down here too?" He chuckled and pushed the over-sized sunglasses further up the bridge of his nose. "I'm here for the free beer." I was pissed off. It wasn't so much that I had been duped into Hell. I'd been expecting that to happen any day now. I had free beer coming, and by God, or Elvis or whoever I was going to get it.

"Follow me," he said. He turned and began to waddle off into the distance. The place looked horrible. It was Mt. Kilauea meets Saturday Night Fever. It was fire and lava and zebra stripes and pink flocked wallpaper and green tapestry curtains with disco balls and gold gilt furniture, all carpeted in AstroTurf. It spread out for what looked to be miles and smelled like a giant ashtray. It wasn't hard to figure out who had inspired the Lava Lamp. He led me over a paisley footbridge that spanned a smoldering fumarole towards a band of elevator doors.

"So what do you think of the decor?" he asked.

"If I ever get out of here I'm gonna burn down Graceland," I answered.

"You think it's tacky?"

"I think if you wanted to make people suffer for eternity, you've got it covered," I told him. He shrugged and pushed a button next to one of the elevator doors. It opened and he gestured for me to follow him inside. I did and the doors closed. We seemed to go sideways instead of up or down. We stood there for several minutes trying hard not to look at one another and staring straight ahead.

"Nice uniform," he snickered to me at one point. I let that one go by. He certainly wasn't one to be talking. The doors slid open revealing a little pink foyer with a large padded door at the other end. Above the door was a sign that read "The Inferno Club Cocktail Lounge." It was in the same neon red as the "free beer" sign and glowed with less promise. The door swung open as we crossed to it and entered into a room that was decorated like everything else but smaller with a bar across the back. The place was empty except for a little bartender who looked just like Tattoo from Fantasy Island. He stood behind the bar polishing glasses and looking very nonchalant. If Hell had varying degrees, it was getting worse. We walked over to the bar and sat down on a couple of purple velvet-covered bar stools.

"I hope you've got beer," I said. "It would be more than a little dishonest if you didn't." I was beginning to feel a little cheated.

"Yeah, I home brew," he said. "I poured the first batch into the lake of fire. Gawd, it was horrible. But after a few thousand

eons I've gotten it down to a fine science. I'm toying with the idea of starting my own microbrewery."

"Do you think you could turn down the heat?" I asked. I was roasting and incredibly thirsty.

"Naw. The thermostat is busted. It's been like that since the dawn of time. I got really drunk after I got kicked out of heaven and I punched the thing out," he said.

"A little bitter are we?" I asked. He nodded. I was tired of bantering with him. I wanted beer. The more I had the quicker I might be able to forget my present predicament. "Is this the part where you ply me with alcohol and steal my soul?" He slowly put both elbows on the bar and stared into the smoky mirror in front of us. Tattoo continued to polish glasses and watched him covertly with his beady little eyes.

"I'm tired of stealing souls," he said. He paused, searching for the words. "Every once in awhile I manage to sneak out of here and hang out up above with regular people. It's nice. Sometimes it's a truck stop in Idaho, occasionally an all night mini mart in Arkansas or somewhere — I'm sure you've heard the reports. But I'm ready to get out of here for good. I knew by putting a "free beer" sign up I could get somebody down here pretty quickly. I just put the thing up twenty minutes ago. You're the first guy to respond. I'd rather leave the place to a fellow beer drinker. I can't trust the demons. I hate to get any kind of alcohol into them at all. They're a real bunch of bastards. They start pissing on the furniture and skinny-dipping in the lake of fire, and they've even crapped in my blue suede shoes on several occasions. They're a real pain in the ass. So, I propose a drinking contest. The first one to pass out loses and stays and rules the underworld — it's no picnic you know." I just looked at him.

"What happens if I win?" I asked.

"I let you out of here and you get a free six-pack," he replied. "What do you say?"

"Well, it's not like I'm going anywhere," I said. He slammed his fist down on the bar and it shook with the force.

"Tattoo!" he yelled, "Break out the Bitter Ale!" I wasn't too terribly worried. I'd been drinking beer since the tender age of thirteen and had the belly to prove it. At this point I was really good at it. Tattoo disappeared behind the bar for several moments and reappeared with a large wooden case hoisted on his shoulder. It took all of his might to push the case up onto the bar and he was even using his head there toward the end.

"Excellent," purred Elvis/Satan as he reached for the case. "This is from my private reserve." He slid the lid from the case

and reached in and withdrew a dark bottle with both hands. He held it toward the light and shouted, "Behold! Bitter Ale!" He set it in front of me and reached in for another bottle. The bottle in front of me was smooth and black with a private label. I looked at it. It was a skull and crossbones. He must have noticed my expression.

"Just a little demonic humor," he said as he laughed out loud. I took my shirt off. Also my shoes and socks. I rolled up my pant legs. I was going to get as comfortable as possible. Tattoo reached for my bottle and popped off the top with his bare hands. He set it back down in front of me. Tattoo did the same for Elvis. A little plume of smoke rose from the inside of my bottle.

"Let the games begin. Happy trails," said Elvis and he took a big swig. I raised the bottle to my parched lips and choked down the whole thing. I don't know what his idea of horrible was, but he hadn't improved on it much. If polyester had a flavor, this was it. The stuff probably took the enamel right off your teeth. I let out a belch that shook the bar stool and I'm positive I shot fire from my mouth. Elvis socked me in the arm and gave me a wink.

"Best damn brew you ever had, am I right?" he said.

"Yeah," I coughed.

"Tattoo," he said, "Hit us again!"

Four hours later we were both naked and three cases deep into "Bitter Ale." It wasn't so bad once you got used to it. Of course, the same could probably be said for rubbing alcohol. I told him about my failed attempts to get women back to my apartment and he lamented about his inability to corrupt the Pope. He wasn't really such a bad guy. With a bit of aerobics and maybe an interior decorator he'd be pretty normal.

On his twenty-sixth beer he lost it. He tipped his head back and kept going until he crashed into the floor. I got up and looked at my watch. It was time to get going. I stood over him and shook my head. It wasn't a pretty sight. He hadn't changed much from when he checked out on us some twenty years ago. I looked around for Tattoo but he was nowhere to be found. I left the rest of the beer on the bar. I certainly wasn't going to take it home and drink it. I walked over toward a small door in the far corner with an exit sign over it. I went through it and found myself in a long corridor that was lined with blue doors on either side. I walked over to one that had a "free beer" sign hanging on it, opened it, and stepped into the darkness. I started to whistle "Heartbreak Hotel." How the hell was it going to get any worse?



YOU'LL FIND THE PORTER GOOD

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."
Halos appeared above our heads . . .
Everyone stepped inside the pub.

Sailors sat in tight-knit groups of one,
Intent on drowning their depressions —
Grown monstrous and misshapen —
Nested deep within furrowed brows.

Ocean air makes eyes forget the land, but
Nothing makes the mind forget like beer.

Talons outstretched, an eagle descended,
Hovering just above the head of one sailor.
Everyone ordered another beer, did not look.

Deep within the recesses of my mind, I heard,
Over the din of flapping wings and screams,
Over the shouts for mercy, whimpers of pain,
Reminders of the world I left behind me.

Reality caught a firm grasp on my forehead,
Echoing the screams of long ago, the memories,
And with them the sailor ceased his screams, and
Died without further complaint.

Few men looked up, nor took eyes from their beer,
Retreating yet further into the solace of the
Easy judgment of a pint of the best porter there
Ever was, only blood of angels tasting better.

Below the floorboards I felt my great ocean calling,
Every fiber of my being pulled like a war-weary
Ebbing tide to the expanses of the deep grave,
Reaching within to find that which offers peace.

Kenneth Brady

NOTHING'S FREE

the sign on the door read, "free beer"
the construction paper heart pasted
on your sleeve said, "free love"

nothing's free:

days nights weekends blend together
i'm not sure exactly when
it might have been the night before thanksgiving
or the day when redboy comma brownboy
braved the rainy weather in a beatup car:

"i don't know where i'm gonna live"

and so the night fell hard and wet
elvis costello and everclear daiquiris
aluminum cans and girl laughing
sitting on your couch in front of
a fireplace that never burned
or perched upon a kitchen stool
your hair was still long then
and you wore the necklace i gave you

(later in your room, quiet save the rain
and your soft voice, you stretched out
before me shining in the light from a
bedside lamp)

and you wore the necklace i gave you,
nothing else
i tasted you, all of you
you breathed into my mouth, you sang
and whispered
but part of me was crying
the night your eyes your neck your lips your breasts
tried to silence me (but i knew)
we were acting out a frozen moment
in a bigger crueler game
christmas came and you were gone
"i don't know where i'm gonna live"

that house is empty now

Anthony Robinson

FREE?

U.B. 29

The sign on the door read "Free Beer," but that didn't really matter to S.D. What, she wondered, is the definition of beer. Is it an import, a meade, or some of that carbonated, chemicalized piss-water that is domestically produced in one of America's over-producing macrobreweries? How can that crap be considered beer? False advertisement, she thought to herself, between belches. To consider that piss-water to be beer is about like getting in a canoe, making love, and calling it a waterbed. Not much of a waterbed, but fucking close to water, as the saying goes. Besides that, everybody knows that nothing is free in this world. Another belch, a moment's hesitation, and she pushed her way through the door, wanting to see for herself just what this free beer was.

As she made her way to the bar, she couldn't help noticing that virtually every patron in the place looked as if they hadn't moved, even to use the john, for at least three days.

"What's on tap?" she asked, belching.

"Beer," was the only reply. She looked at the bartender and couldn't help noticing that he looked a hell of a lot like somebody, she just couldn't seem to remember who, or where she had seen him before.

"What kind of beer?" she asked, fully expecting to hear that disgusting 'B' word, the so-called "King of Beers." If he tries to serve me that crap and call it beer, I'll sue the bastard for false advertising, she thought to herself.

In response to her query, she heard a most startling response, one which she never would have expected. "It's nothing you've ever tried, or even heard of, lady. I brew it myself, down in the basement. It's called a microbrew, but folks around here just call it the 'liquid of the gods.' The first mug is free, after that we'll negotiate. The sign says free beer, but it doesn't say I'll go broke serving you drunks."

"Who the hell are you calling a drunk, you pompous jackass?" S.D. grunted out between belches. "I haven't had a drink in three days. I'm as sober as I've ever been, and I don't appreciate . . . say, who the hell are you, anyway? I know I've seen you before, just can't remember where." Another belch.

"Here, lady, have your free beer. Let me know if you like it," the mysterious man behind the bar said, quickly placing a mug of ale in front of her and turning away, obviously uncomfortable with the inquisitiveness of this new . . . patron.

After downing half the mug, wiping her chin, and belching, S.D. downed the rest of the mug quickly to wash away the aftertaste of her latest belch before again inquiring about the name of the proprietor of this obviously unique establishment. "Barkeep, another mug of ale, and say, you look vaguely familiar. What's your name?"

"The name's Barkeep," said the man of mystery, putting down a full mug of the sacred juice before the overly inquisitive patron. "The ale's my own concoction. I don't believe in serving anything that I wouldn't drink myself. I brew it down in the basement." His eyes flared with a bright incandescent glow as he watched S.D. lift her mug and drain half of it, set it back on the counter, wipe her chin, and belch. "The first mug is free, after that we'll negotiate," he said with an evil, menacing smile.

Belching, S.D. lifted her mug, drained the remaining fermented liquid, wiped her chin, and called for another, not yet realizing the significance of the events that she was experiencing. She belched, looked around her, realized that the barkeep looked amazingly familiar, lifted her mug, and drained half of it. Wondering what kind of beer she was drinking, she called to the bartender, "Barkeep, what is this beer? Don't believe that I've ever tasted anything quite like it before. By the way, you look very familiar, but I can't think of your name, or even where I have seen you before."

Turning to look at the inquisitive patron, the barkeep's eyes gleamed even brighter than they had before. "This is a brew which I personally concocted just for this establishment, specifically for this special. I brew it in my basement. The first mug is free, after that we'll negotiate," he said with an evil, menacing smile. "Would you care for another? Or perhaps you would like to see my brewing lair?"

S.D. belched, drained her mug, belched again, wiped her chin, and graciously accepted the full mug that was offered to her. "You still haven't told me your name," she pointed out. "But yes, I would love to see your brewing lair. What is the price for the second mug of ale? You said we would negotiate, yet you haven't suggested a price."

"Come with me," he said, smiling evilly. "Allow me to show you my lair."

Belching, S.D. picked up her mug, drained it, replaced it on the bar, wiped her chin, and belched yet again. It was then that she realized that although it was excessively warm in the bar, she was in a cold sweat. "What did you say your name was?" she inquired again.

"Come, view my lair, S.D. The negotiations are over. Inside, you know my name. My final solution is at hand."

At that moment, S.D. knew that she had been accurate in the beginning. Nothing in this world is free. As she moved to the door leading down to the "basement" brewing lair, she simultaneously recognized the "barkeep," and realized her own destiny. As she belched in fear, the door opened to the basement, revealing the price of the second mug of ale. In the "basement brewing lair," she recognized the cauldron of Hell.



THE SIGN

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer,"
It may have been a ploy to bring us near.

I had watched as his heart got hurt,
She had danced away from him in her tight, red skirt.

He had turned to look in my direction,
And suddenly got slapped by love's attraction.

This moment of time was only ours to claim,
But his come-on line was really, really lame.

"Hey beautiful babe with a cute little rear,
Do you think maybe I could buy you a beer?"

To silence him I whispered a hush around my finger,
Then after but a moments linger, I said . . .

"Might we have been somewhere but here,
I would have let you buy me a beer.

But honey for your come-on line some work is what
you need.
But first maybe baby you should learn how to read.

Until then I will tell you not far from us two here,
Is a sign on the door that says, 'Free Beer.'"

A. M. Hicks



PARADISE BY DEE BUGARIN

WONDERLAND BAR

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer in Paisley, pink and blue." So what could I do, but walk on in and sit on down, and order a mug of blue. It was bitter but sweet and slippery going down. I switched to the Paisley (mildly tangy with a hint of lime) and then the show began. The curtain vanished with a bang and a pop.

The scarlet roaches danced in step but I could not hear the tune. Next the Tweedles took the stage but their comedy bit was a flop, and all the king's horses and all the king's men dragged them off never to be seen again. I munched on some 'shrooms and rose off the floor where I could clearly see the room. Hatter and Hare were dancing a jig and Rabbit was piping a

tune. I called for a mug of the pink and the Cat served it up with a grin. As I drank it down, I realized my mistake, as I shrank and shrank. Finally the tangerine ants picked me up and dragged me off to join the show and here I still am, waiting for purple to come back in style, waiting to grow.

Heather Scott-Penselin

HAIKU FOR BEER

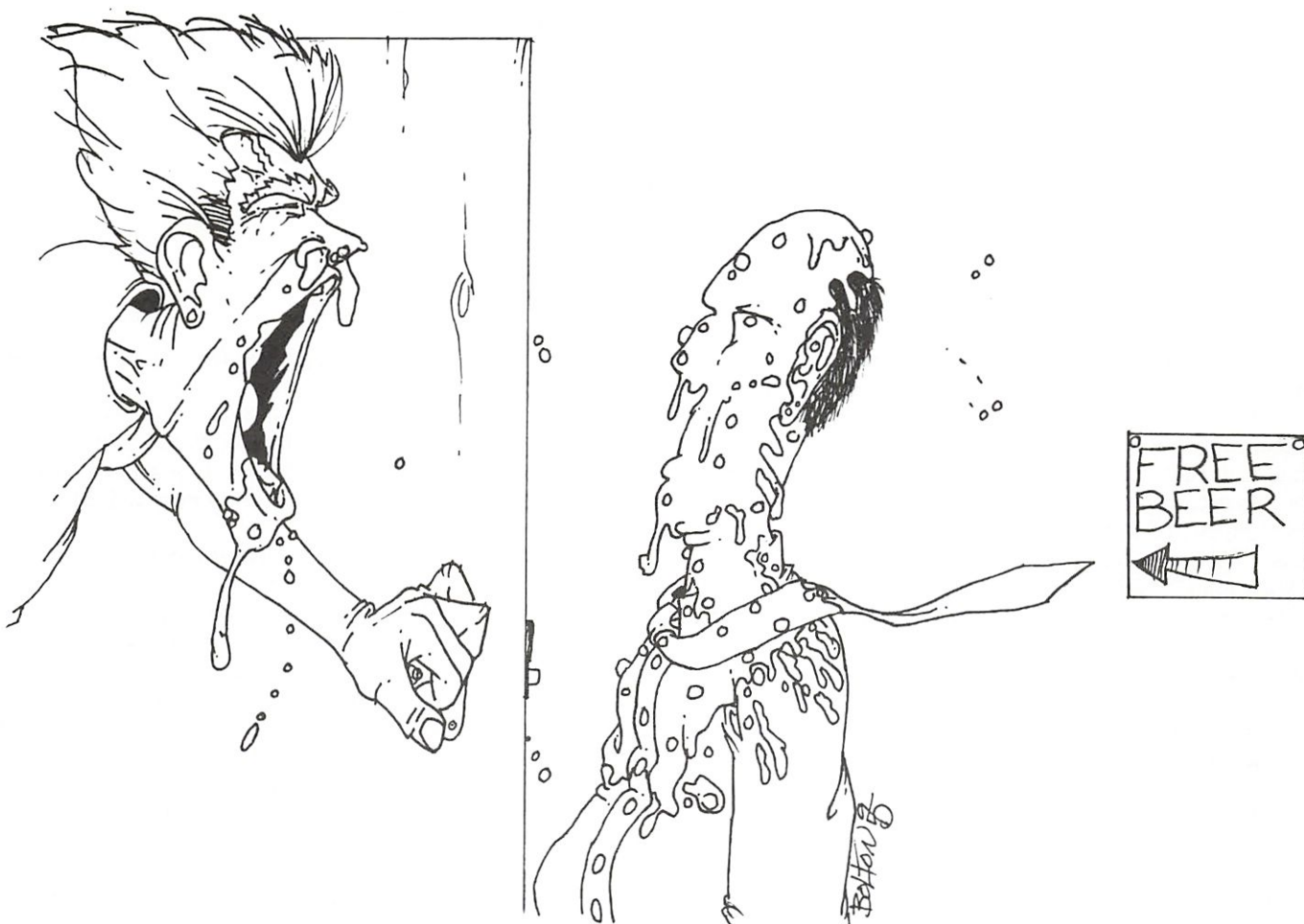
The sign said, "Free Beer"
So I opened my bottle . . .
. . . And let it run out.

Matthew Hovelman

FREE BEER

The sign on the door read Free Beer
Then it was stolen
Ken got mad

The Realist



THE GUY BEHIND THE DOOR BY KYLE BOLTON

A VERY SHORT STORY

Martin Slade

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." This is where I'm gonna live, I thought to myself, but I wondered just how much this free beer was going to cost me (call me a skeptic). Knowing that there was only one way to find out I put on my best, "Don't Fuck With Me" face, booted open the door, and sauntered on in.

The first thing that I encountered was an assault on my olfactory senses; the odor of stale urine and fresh vomit was overwhelming! "Oh well, nothing I couldn't get over for the sake of free beer."

I then perceived that there was something soft and yielding beneath my feet and, looking down, I discovered the source of

the putrid odor that was pervading my immediate space. I was standing squarely on top of a puke-faced derelict who had pissed his pants!

No doubt he was a fellow connoisseur of free beer who had unfortunately reached his capacity long before contentment. As he lay beneath my feet, retching and whimpering, I contemplated the cruelty of a world that would allow a man to achieve the station in life whereas he could consume free beer only to over imbibe and thus deprive himself of this ultimate situation. "Oh well," I thought, "life's funny."

I took the opportunity to wipe my feet like a good boy and moved on.



THE BACK DOOR

Chris A. Bolton

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." I smiled to myself as I walked in, my nose cringing from the intermingled smells of alcohol and smoke — of both the tobacco and marijuana variety.

Dozens of bodies writhed together in a huge orgy of dance. A rap song played, its pulsating bass-line throbbing in my skull. Attached to each body was a face. Some were familiar or otherwise, appeared to recognize me, or even register my presence. The eyes stared right through me as I passed.

I didn't mind. I was used to it. And besides, I reckoned this would be the last time anyone in this world failed to recognize me.

I sat on the end of a battered sofa next to an unconscious man with a water pipe in his lap and a young couple oblivious to everything, who were making out as frantically as if one of them was to begin a prison term in the morning. I opened a large cooler at my feet — also adorned with a "Free Beer" sign — and took out a can of domestic, watered-down crap.

I drank a little as I watched the crowd move in almost total unison. So young, so heedless and drunk. I wondered which of the women would be walking with a funny gait in the morning, none of them because of me.

That made me think of the night I'd lost my virginity. I had made love for over an hour to a girl I'd been dating for a week. She had two orgasms and complained, with a smirk, that her thighs were sore. I took that as a compliment. After she dumped me a week later, and I learned that I had been the only one making love that night, none of her friends, nor anyone she'd have spoken candidly to about her sex life, ever called or spoke to me again. So I assumed that I'd been wrong, that maybe I hadn't been so good after all, or maybe good wasn't enough by itself. Maybe my sexual prowess couldn't make up for other deficiencies which they — and from the looks of it, every other person alive — had no doubt detected in me.

It was after she dumped me and walked out of my life that I discovered I had no one to talk to. Nobody cared about me. I could come and go at will, sometimes earning a "hey" or a polite nod if I held someone's eyes too long, but I think these salutations, meager as they were, were nothing more than a bone thrown to a dog. Aside from those rare, if minor, acknowledgments, no one knew me. No one cared.

Returning from my thoughts and watching the room again, I felt that resentment stirring like a beast waking from hibernation. It gnawed impatiently at my fingertips, so I clenched them into a fist. But it would not go away. The beast was hungry.

The women wore tight shirts and jeans, or less. The men wore jeans and T-shirts or flannels. One guy had his flannel shirt unbuttoned, presumably to let all the women see his sweat-slicked six-pack. And sure enough, they crawled over each other to admire him. I hated the guy on sight, for looking like that.

And I hated the women for liking it, for feeding his bloated ego and ignoring me.

Suddenly I hated everyone in that room. The beast had won. I took the bong from Rip Van Winkle next to me, lit it with a lighter I pulled from his limp fingers, and took a hit. I felt the beast recede, its hunger sated. I closed my eyes and listened to my blood rush.

I had made my decision. Tomorrow was the day.

• • •

I came late to my first class. It was a Philosophy course taught by a gray-haired man who was a proud, card-carrying member of the school of strict, disciplinarian professors, where they *loved* tormenting any student who gave them the slightest opening. I'd seen the man break students down in front of the class, bringing both men and women to the brink of tears for being barely one minute late. He'd scared me so badly that when I'd been late once before, I decided not to go at all, preferring to miss a test I couldn't make up rather than suffer the tyrant's indignities.

But today I strode fearlessly into class. Fifteen minutes late.

The professor stopped his lecture and fixed me with a cold, blue-eyed glare. Standing in the doorway, I saw every eye in the room — 30 or 40 pairs of them — turn on me. Some showed humor, some pity, others fear. The professor's eyes showed only glacial coolness as they followed me to my seat. I usually sat in the back, but today I took a desk in the very front row. The professor glanced at his roll sheet, then turned his eyes back on me. A faint smile flickered at one corner of his mouth. He suppressed it quickly.

"Your name?" he asked after a long pause.

I gave it to him. He checked the roll sheet, nodded, and made a mark. Finished, he folded his arms over his chest, crossed one foot in front of the other, and *glared*. For 10 long, perfectly silent seconds, he did nothing but glare at me.

To alleviate the stillness, I pulled a pack of gum from my pocket, slid a piece into my mouth, and chewed loudly, never taking my eyes off the professor. There was no glimmer of amusement in his eyes, mouth, or anywhere, at my nonchalance.

"And what, may I ask, was so incredibly important that you had to make sure you got nothing better than a C in this class?"

I stopped chewing. "I got a haircut," I said, running my fingers over my trimmed hair. "Can't you tell?"

Some snickers drifted toward me from the back of the room. I settled into my seat, anticipating the onslaught. The professor had encountered smart-asses before and leveled them quickly and effectively. With one hand I lifted my backpack off the floor and set it on top of my desk. It felt unusually heavy.

"I had thought," he replied, "that your head grew. But that isn't possible, is it? You have to put something *into* a head to

make it bigger. Nothing grows in a vacuum."

I held his eyes a moment, then smiled. I unzipped my backpack halfway. "In the future," he added, I will expect you on time, or you may inform your parents that they should try again, and this time raise their child *correctly*."

The class was silent as a tomb. The last, accentuated word echoed in the room.

There is no future, I thought reaching into my backpack. My fingers found something cold and hard. They closed around it. *Not after today*.

I withdrew my hand and leaped up so suddenly that the professor jumped a little in surprise. I held my hand at arm's length and marched deliberately toward him.

"This is for you," I said.

I set the red apple on the corner of his desk. I even polished it with the flat of my hand before resuming my seat. "Something sweet," I told him, "to help your sour disposition."

He regarded the apple briefly, tossed it in the garbage can by the desk, and continued the lecture without a word or glance to me. I was invisible again. Except now, I was invisible only to him. Everyone else saw me as if I glowed bright-red.

• • •

"I am extremely impressed," my English teacher told me pausing to take a bite of her red apple. "I knew you had this sort of potential last term — remember what I wrote on your Hemingway paper?" I nodded my head, surprised that *she* remembered. "That speech you gave today vindicates everything I've felt. I hope you'll consider taking some more writing courses and maybe join the speech team. If you can get out of your own way, I think you'd be terrific."

I told her I'd think about it, thanked her, slung my backpack over my shoulder — feeling like Santa with a sack of toys — and left. I walked straight to the cafeteria and bought lunch. Waiting in line to pay, I glanced around, meeting the gaze of the girl behind me.

She was in my English class. She usually sat two desks ahead and to the left of me. I had noticed her everyday since the term began. I'd even talked to her once while waiting in the hall for the previous class to get out. She was pretty, dark-haired, and wore glasses. Not thin, but neither was she fat or unshapely.

"Hey," she greeted tentatively, not mentioning my name. I figured she didn't remember it. "That speech you gave in class, that was good. I liked it."

"Oh," I said, "thanks." I started to look away, thinking that was it.

"How long did it take you to write?" she asked, pulling me back.

"A half-hour last night."

She laughed incredulously. "A half-hour? I don't think I could write my opening paragraph in a half-hour."

It was my turn. I paid for my lunch and walked toward the tables with my tray. I stopped. Usually I would have found a seat by myself and ignored the girl, worried that saying anything more would lead to the insertion of my foot in my mouth.

But not today.

Today I stood and waited for her to buy lunch. Then I asked if she was eating with anyone. She said no and invited me to join her.

Walking together in search of a table, we started talking idly. I found the words flowed smoothly and easily when I didn't think or worry about them. Without the fate of the known universe hanging upon them, they were free to drift where they chose, without consequence.

A hand clapped my shoulder, and I turned to look. A tall, muscular guy in a "No Fear" T-shirt passed and said, "Hey, nice hair. That was fuckin' awesome in Philosophy, man. Right on."

I grinned to myself and looked back at the girl. "Friend of yours?" she asked. I just shrugged my shoulders.

We ate and talked for 22 minutes. She laughed at several of my comments, and I laughed at some of hers. She understood me pretty well, even seemed to like me, although I noticed she didn't appear to understand *everything*. Still, today the occasional blank stare or polite, yet unperceiving, smile-and-nod didn't faze me.

After 22 minutes, she had to leave for her next class. Picking up her tray, she said, "See you next week, Dave."

I watched her leave the cafeteria, mildly stunned. But mostly overjoyed.

I went back to my single dorm room, shut the door, and opened my backpack, dumping the contents on my bed. Still glowing from my lunchtime conversation, I sifted through my notebooks and heavy texts until I found my English folder and the *Colt Frontiersman*. I'd taken from my parents' house.

I pulled my speech from the folder. I set it on the bed, just staring at the title. "Suicide: The Back Door."

I closed my eyes, seeing faces from today. Smiling, laughing, glaring. Drifting slowly past, ghost-like. The beast was quiet. The steel muzzle was hard and cold against my chin. I smiled quietly to myself, thinking.

No day in my life could ever be better than the last.





LCC HAS A COLD ONE BY JAMES SHERMAN

LAGER'S LAMENT

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."
Who are you, to challenge my reign?
An upstart!
Sure, you've been around for years,
but are you so great as to outsell me
(I ask)
without resorting to schemes and tricks?

Free of what?
O the deep color,
taste of my aged beauty.
You are nothing in comparison.

Free of calories you say?
Of fat and extra sugars?
I say you are just a lightweight.
Nothing else.

And no ale such as you will ever
replace me.

Adrian Wapcaplet

BEER DREAMS

Janda L. Linde

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer," so I stopped and read it again. Yup, still says "Free Beer." I stood there a moment longer gazing at the "Free Beer" sign, hoping that it wasn't my brain farting again, when all of a sudden the door with the sign that read, "Free Beer" started to slowly creak open.

To my startled amazement, there, standing before me, was a human-sized beer peering out of the door. After a short lifetime, the human-sized beer began to speak. It invited me inside and asked me if I was here for the "Free Beer."

Of course I was slightly flabbergasted from the immense size of the one standing in front of me, that I almost regained my sanity. It asked me again if I was here for the "Free Beer."

This time, with my sanity restored, I replied, "Uh, sure! I almost thought the sign was a joke."

The human-sized beer shrugged, then asked, "What kind of beer do you want?"

I retorted, "Whatever kind you're having, Bud. Oh, I'm sorry! Your name is Bud, isn't it?" I assumed that his name was, for that was what was printed on his shirt.

The human-sized beer answered, "Yes. Well actually my full name is Bud W. Eiser."

Bud left the room through yet another door with yet another sign that read, "Free Beer." From the other side of the door that Bud went through, I could hear the rattling and clanking of glass. In a moment, Bud returned carrying a tray loaded with the "Free

Beer" and three large drinking steins.

I could see, standing behind him, another human-sized beer in the doorway. Bud poured the steins full of beer, then he remembered he had forgotten to introduce his companion. Bud turned to the human-sized beer, still standing in the doorway, and says something in a language I couldn't understand. Bud then turns to me and told me the other guys name was Henry Weinhard.

I nodded in acknowledgement. I then remarked that the beer had a sharp flavor to it, but that it wasn't too overpowering.

Henry said, "It is my favorite kind."

I inquired as to where I could obtain this strange, unique brew.

Bud turned to Henry and said — in the same language as before — should we tell IT? Henry nodded his gold capped head in a "yes" motion.

Bud gave a slight chuckle; then he explained to me that the "Free Beer" I was drinking was what they were recycling in the back room.

I thought to myself, this is a dream. That's it! It's only a dream.

~~~~~  
"Hello, my name is Gisental and I'm an alcoholic."





# FREE BEER SPEECH

*in memory of Ron Phillips, poet, Viet Nam vet, anti-war activist*

*Snorkel*

The sign on the door read, "Free Beer." It was an ornate brass sign screwed on the steel door of a private club: the Free Beer Institute. Guards in brown suits wore silver, plastic, one-way sunglasses and black arm bands and nervously checked I.D.'s at the door. They all had big bulges under the left sides of their jackets where their hearts should be. And there were coils of razor blade barbed wire down both sides of the path to this door where no one dallied. Fat men in dark suits slipped into the smoked-filled darkness like black balloons at a funeral.

I knew that this was one club I could never join although more than once I had to turn down a free membership trial offer. "After all," their recruiters said conspiratorily, "you are a White Man in America!" But I walked away in the sunlight preferring the company of a wider range of Americans and being outdoors, where at least some of the air was tasty and cool.

I resigned myself to never being inside that club. I assumed I would not learn of the plots hatched there until it was too late. I foolishly counted on the native intelligence of all the people some of the time to protect some of the values promised to all immigrants in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. But I was wrong. I soon found the views of the elite Free Beer Institute and their mass-based movement for the unwashed, the Free Beer Society, broadcast almost everywhere like mind altering lies. Soon, I found their views as impossible to ignore as junk mail. So I've written some of my responses down. I hope they annoy you. Remember, my belief in Free Beer was gunned down in Viet Nam about thirty years ago.

- Heaven has all the Free Beer that was brewed in Hell.
- Fuzzy Logic: Free Beer — solution to half the world's problems. The cause of the rest.
- In 1980, the Free Beer Party was elected to the White House, and they borrowed everything from everybody and put on a really Big Show. Fifteen years later, the No Free Beer (Except for Us) Wing of that Party was elected, and we're all in for a hard time, especially the poor, who were having too much fun under the Free Beer Party.

- The last Northern, Liberal-leaning President was murdered in 1963 by the evil Brewmeister's League for Watered Down Beer. This unsolved murder hangs around our necks like an empty beer bottle on a string, and no one will pay us a deposit. How much longer will the public accept blaming liberals for the mess we're in?

- "Free Beer cures every problem," a study in the *AMMA Journal for Beer Medicine* revealed today. "Talk show hosts prefer free beer to costly beer by a margin of 10 to 1." The study

went on to say, "The cure for alcoholism is to drink more lite beer." This, according to Doctor Roosh Limberger, Chief Brain Surgeon and Obvious Expert on Everything. "If we cut the Libruls out of the nation's loop, then all the rest of us can enjoy big bellies, watch a lot of tv, and sleep late, too!"

- Fig Newton Gingrich makes Danny Quayle look good. Now there was a Free Beer Thinker!

- Once the Free Beer standard is applied to the U.S. dollar, the currency will become worthless, and we won't owe the bankers anything!

- If the corporations paid as much % tax as my family, we could flood our huge prison system with free beer.

- NAFTA may actually be a plan to make U.S., Mexican, and Canadian beers all conform to the same low standards.

- Since the top 1% in America owns more free beer than the bottom 60%, the progressive slogan for the new millenium will be: "Drink the Rich!"

- Right Wing Christians for capital punishment are true blue members of the Free Beer Party. They never believed that capital punishment would apply to them!

- Not only does Nature bat last, Evolution never makes free beer.

- Only Free Beer Interests could call clearcuts, slash burning, toxic herbiciding, and tree plantations "Forestry."

- The Baseball owners are members of the Free Beer Institute. The players are members of the Free Beer Society. Meanwhile, fans are free to pay for pissy ball park beer and players' autographs.

- Free Beer Interests have to some extent controlled all U.S. Presidents since Harrison (1841), the first President to represent the Truly Mediocre in America, but certainly not the last. The slogan of the Truly Mediocre: "Let's Get Stupid!" Their program: "Let's take over and do nothing!"

- Free Beer Interests must spend lots of money to buy the votes of the Truly Mediocre. This is where the Religious Right comes in handy; they offer cheap, emotional solutions to the Truly Mediocre, who will never be allowed to possess real money or join Free Beer Clubs.

- J. Edgar Hoover secretly drank lots of free beer, but he wouldn't let Elvis join the Free Beer Institute. Free Beer Nixon talked about firing Hoover because the FBI Director knew too much about the Track 2 team and the Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations. After Hoover's death, Nixon's Plumbers destroyed J. Edgar Hoover's personal blackmail files. This allowed Nixon to sell more Free Beer than any other



President until Reagan used up almost all the country's credit.

- Organized Crime laughs at the idea of Free Beer, but hides among its believers and takes advantage of their Club House covers.

- As long as the national debate is about the Free Beer agenda, let's pass term limits, but I say, let's make them retroactive! I'm tired of voting for Party "representatives." Should we select "the elect" the way we select jurors — at random from the voters' rolls and for only one term?

- Most electronic and print media in the U.S. are owned by Free Beer Interests. As wall wags remind us: "Freedom of the Press belongs to him who owns the press."

- "Free Beer" is an organizing concept embedded deep in the American psyche. It's a day dream and a nightmare. It was lurking even in the mind of Tom Jefferson when he dreamed of depopulating Indian territory. It is an abusive idea.

- Unions used to remind owners that there is no Free Beer. Now, unions try to bargain for Free Beer, but only for their shrinking memberships.

- In the other so-called "industrial democracies," public

health insurance is the opposite of Free Beer.

- The ultimate in Free Beer thinking: air and water can get rid of pollution.

- The most dangerous words to American Free Beer Interests are "real costs."

- I offer nothing as simple and contradictory as Free Beer to my friends.

- "Free beer's" just another set of words for nothing left to choose.

- The Fool in *King Lear* does not believe in free beer. He knows that "brewers mar their malt with water." Once, I drank a \$5 bottle of dark, silver label Christmas beer from Switzerland. I have been thirsty ever since.

- Thanks to Free Beer Interests, most Americans don't even get what we are willing to pay for.

- I could no more believe in Free Beer than I could spit on the moon.

- I have no slogans for you. I commend you to your own intellect.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Chris A. Bolton** doesn't get FOX at his new house and is currently experiencing a severe case of *X-Files* withdrawal. Donations may be made in my name to this magazine.

**Kyle Bolton** has memorized, word for word, every line of dialogue in the *Lethal Weapon* and *Die Hard* films. He's a professional shepherd who draws in his spare time, of which he has a lot.

**Kenneth Brady** — I'm an agnostic because I'm too open-minded to be either an Atheist or a Christian.

**Dee Bugarin** — Confucius say, "Alimony is Bounty on the Mutiny."

**Nathan Hearn** — Sentence or two. (*Editor's note: smartass.*)

**A.M. Hicks** — Although being a student at Cottage Grove High School consumes most of her time, Amanda Hicks still finds time to be an avid writer. She would like to thank her mother Doris, who is an LCC student, for bringing *Denali* to her attention.

**Matthew Hovelman's** phone is disconnected.

**Peter Jensen** — Peter is a Roads Scholar who writes short fiction for a living.

**Sandra M. Jensen** — Sandy wasn't born in the west Texas town of El Paso, but she still believes there's a cantina door somewhere near the border that reads, "Free Beer."



**Kyra Kelly** is a pagan Alaskan goddess who thinks it's about time America realized it has a drinking problem. Frog and Toad are her idols.

**Tanda L. Linde** — Single mother and full time student. I like to write but no subjects interest me (except this one). I brew beer at home in my spare time. I am not a very interesting person. Oh, well!!

**Jeff Maib** is still searching for one, final, life-affirming epiphany.

**Sarah McCoy** — Don't knock it till you've tried it.

**Lark Morrison** — "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant . . . The Truth must dazzle gradually — or every man be blind." — Emily Dickinson. Lark lives/writes in Eugene with her sardonic muse, temperamental computer, lover (Donella), and son (Dathen), and does not drink beer — even if it is free.

**Douglas Pedersen** — LCC student who is working on a B.A. Moving on to U of O in the summer of '95.

**The Realist** — The truth is stranger than fiction!

**Michael Reger** — Education is the foundation of society, and the lack of it is its destruction.

**Ryan Reynolds** believes in the free expression of cheese, and one day he hopes to be a member of the Wet Carp Society.

**Anthony Robinson** — Tony is tired and he wants to go home.

**Heather Scott-Penselin** — I'm a full-time mother and wife and I'm more than full-time student in the first year of the nursing program. What more is there to say? I'm busy. *The Wonderland Bar* is dedicated to Roger Zelazny and Lewis Carroll.

**James Sherman** is a very quiet guy.

**Martin Slade** — Live, love, laugh, life is good!

**Snorkel** — A snorkel is a breathing tube for skin divers.

**Justin Tindel** — I would like to expand my views in the art field and someday become an illustrator of fantasy and science fiction novels.

**Adrian Wapcaplet** was born in London in 1947. He now resides in a Jaguar parked on West 13th, where he is writing the expurgated version of *Olsen's Standard Book of British Birds*.

**U.B. 29** — Satan incarnate, unknown brewer — by any name, the substance is the same. The juice is eternal, the destination is external, the journey continues . . . Raise a cold frothy one to honor the excursion.

**Carl Watkins** — While I have had many different jobs, often as a salesman, I enjoy writing, and often write short stories just for fun.









**RUNNETH OVER # 14** BY RYAN REYNOLDS