# 6 Stories

*So it is very deep to be a writer. It is the deepest thing I know. And I think, if not this, nothing—it will be my way in the world for the rest of my life. I have to remember this again and again*

- From Natalie Goldberg WRITING DOWN THE BONES, 1986

## 6.1 Crossing the Street

### 6.1.1 Introduction

*CROSSING THE STREET* is a collection of first-person stories I wrote in 1994 for the Agent Stories prototype. Since the prototype had less functionality than the latest version of the tool, the stories written for the prototype had a simpler structure. *CROSSING THE STREET* began with the stories of Anne and Michael, two adults recounting a date they had when they were teenagers, each one remembering the events in their own way, with different details. This parallel structure is often called "He said - she said" for obvious reasons.

In wanting to expand these two stories, I wrote a third segment from the POV of another character, The Cab Driver, whose story crosses those of Anne and Michael. Once the third story was complete, the collection was expanded further into the theme of journeys. I wanted to address what it is like to take a journey—a short one, like across the street, or a long one, like across an ocean. Two more stories were written—The Little Girl and The Waitress. The story of The Little Girl addresses the issue of what it is like to take a journey

across an ocean to another culture, where one does not speak the language. The story is about a young woman recounting the time when she and her family immigrated to the United States from Russia when she was 10, and when she got lost in the train station during her first day. The story of The Waitress addresses the issue of what it is like to decide to leave one's home on a long journey. In the story, a woman recounts the time when, at the age of 19, she deeply longed to leave her dead end waitressing job in her home town, for a life of her own far away. All she needed was a catalyst, an inspirerer, to get her moving.

These stories are included in this document because they are a good example of how *NOT* to write metalinear stories. In fact, they are not metalinear stories. *CROSSING THE STREET* is a collection of *multilinear* stories. Each story has a strong linear plot line. Events within each story are in a particular order, and would not make sense if they are rearranged. Parts of the stories can be excluded, but not resequenced. The job of the story engine in this situation is to switch back and forth between the plotlines at appropriate times. Multilinear cinematic narrative development tools continue to be an active area of research. Heidi Gitelman of the MIT Media Lab is working in this area, for instance.[26] The goal of Agent Stories from the beginning, however, was to achieve create metalinear cinematic narratives. The stories were represented simply, with each granule having only one narrative primitive and one link. Because of this simple representation, the Agent Stories prototype was able to produce a multilinear result with two characters. As more characters were added to the database, the results became less desirable.

Four of the five stories written were shot in video, digitized, and added to the prototype's database for playback. The Cab Driver was the only one that was not shot. Anne and Michael's stories are included here in their entirety. For the remaining stories for brevity

[26] See: http://www.media.mit.edu/~heidi/

sake, only the speaker introduction, character introduction, first conflict and first resolution are included.

Fig. 32 Michael describing the scar on his arm. Michael was played by the author.

### 6.1.2 Michael

**Introduction** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Some people have asked me how I got this cut on my arm. They think it must have been quite an accident to have left such a large scar. So when they say that, I tell them the story about crossing the street.

**Just walking down the streeT** [CHARACTER INTRO]

I was about 17 years old and was walking downtown in Philadelphia on a balmy summer afternoon with my first serious girlfriend Anne. We had been going together for about a day. And boy she was cute, with a thin little body, a bright smile, and such gentle hands. Anyways, we were walking along Broad Street right before rush hour. The traffic was just starting to build and people from the office buildings were just starting to leave for home. I had my left arm around Anne's waist, which I remember felt so good - like it always belonged there, and I had my right hand on to my most prized possession, my bike.

**Fire hydrant** [CONFLICT]

So Anne was on one side and the bike was on the other, when Anne gets excited seeing this department store window across the street and insists on taking closer look. Well everybody J-walks in Philly, so Anne abruptly turned to cross the street in mid-block and we did this graceful tandem couples move toward the curb. But I'm paying so much attention to Anne that I almost don't see this fire hydrant right in front of me.

**Call me Gene** [RESOLUTION]

And see -- you've got to understand that I was walking down the street with my girl on my arm. I had to be cool! So I do this little Gene Kelly side step maneuver and my shin just barely misses the hydrant, one arm still around Anne, and the other hand still guiding the bike. I'm

not letting go of either. Though the peddle of my bike wasn't quite as nimble and it slammed into the hydrant. But anyway...

**Targeted in the middle of the street** [CONFLICT]

We got out into the street and, checking the oncoming traffic situation, we saw that the cars up at the corner had the red light, so crossing the first 3 lanes of traffic should be a cinch. So I figured I'd use this opportunity to say something sweet to Anne. So I said, "Yeah, you'd look good in that bathing suit." And she said, "No - not the bathing suite. The pants outfit, dummy." Just then I heard a screech of tires and looked over to see a car which had turned onto Broad street at top speed and was headed straight for us.

**Pushed her along** [RESOLUTION]:

The car was clearly going to hit us too, I mean, there was no question about it. But I had to be cool, ya know. I mean, Anne and I had been serious for about twenty four hours, already a personal best for me, and I sorta wanted to see what forty eight hours felt like. But I was cool. I said, "Oh that outfit! Yeah, let's get over there fast and take a look," pressing on her back a little. So we rush over to the traffic island with that car just missing us and the back wheel of my bike – the Jerk! I don't think Anne even noticed the car.

Fig. 33 Michael describing Philadelphia potholes.

**Philadelphia potholes** [DIVERSION]

Oh, did I mention the pothole? There was this pothole in the middle of the street the size of Newark. And it had these little shiny sharp things in the bottom, just waiting to eat my bike tires. I think the city's streets department puts them there to thwart bicyclers from not polluting. I don't know.

**Tripped on something** [CONFLICT]

There must have been something sticking out of the cement on the traffic island, because as soon as I hopped up with Anne and the bike, I tripped and started stumbling really bad. But like I'm not letting go of my girl nor my bike, so we stumbled off the traffic island and into the second three traffic lanes. I guess I was a little too heavy for Anne because it didn't seem like she was able to hold me up very well – we just kept going more and more out of control,

careening across the asphalt. But not fast enough because as I struggled to get my composure, I noticed this great wall of Buick front grills heading right toward me... uh, us.

**Shoe laces** [DIVERSION]

Oh, did I mention my shoelaces? Once I starting stumbling I noticed that my shoelaces were untied. How did my shoelaces get untied?!

**Anne twists her ankle** [CONFLICT]

So I'm struggling to control the bike, I'm struggling to control my feet, I'm trying to keep my hand where it belonged, they're these cars heading right for us, at which time Anne yells out real loud, "OUCH!" Apparently as we stumbled, she twisted her ankle or something. So now she's no longer holding me up, and I'm trying to pull myself up by my bike, which had by this time started to veer off to the right—and there's still this little matter of Buick grills baring down on us—Buicks with Philadelphia drivers, who will run you down and never look back.

**Made it across** [RESOLUTION]:

I tell you, when we made it across, that sidewalk never looked so good. The front wheel of the bike bounced hard against the curb, then swung around and slammed into a pole. At that point I had to let go of it. But I didn't let go of Anne. I stepped up onto the curb with sort of a limping Fred Astaire move, and pulled Anne around in a sort of a sweeping ballroom dip, and then up toward me just as graceful as you please. But, I guess Anne was still a little freaked because as I pulled her up, she reached out and grabbed my arm like a diving eagle grabs for trout. The nails on those gentle hands of her's dug into my arm and I just stood there, stunned, in pain, but smiling, and very cool.

**Never dropped her** [ENDING]

So to me, the important thing is that even though my bike laid sprawled on the sidewalk, with my arm bleeding from the manicured grip of death, I never dropped her. And that's how I got this scar.

### 6.1.3 Anne

**I teach dance** [SPEAKER INTRO]

I teach dance in a high school where every student has to take at least a half year of my class before they graduate. And sometimes I get these jock types who complain about having to take a dance class. So to help win them over, I tell them that dance is important if you want to learn to be coordinated, especially around women. They usually laugh and say, "yeah, right." And that's when I tell them my high school story of when I went out with an uncoordinated guy.

Fig. 34 Anne describing her date with a truly uncoordinated guy. Anne was played by Sara Elo.

**Walking down town** [CHARACTER INTRO]

I had started going out with this guy Michael during the summer before my senior year of high school. In school I remember that Michael was smart and kind of fun to talk to, but once summer vacation started, we had to look around for things to do together. So the day after we started going out, we met down town to spend some time together. Michael had his bike with him for some reason, he always had that bike with him – I didn't know why. That day my mom had given me money to buy a new summer outfit, so I was also on the look out for something nice, something cool -- because in Philadelphia, where I grew up, it gets really hot and sticky in the summer.

**Walks into a hydrant** [CONFLICT]

As we walked along looking in shop windows, I see this outfit in a window across the street that looked perfect. It was very light fabric and open in the back. I mean it was exactly what I was looking for. So I point it out to Michael and turned toward the curb to J-walk across the street -- everybody J-walks in Philly. That's when Michael nearly walks right into a fire hydrant.

**Think nothing of it** [RESOLUTION]:

So I should think nothing of it, right? I mean, even though he nearly knocks me down getting out of the way, I'm thinking it's just an honest mistake. It's alright, it could happen to anybody.

**Pushing me** [CONFLICT]

So we step off the curb and start to cross this fairly wide street – just the three of us: me, Michael, and his bike -- when he points out a two piece bathing suite in the store window next to the one we were going to. Yeah right, like he really expected me to go try on a bikini while on a date -- uh huh. And that's about when I started to notice his hand on my back. I mean, he had had his arm around my waist all along, but once we were in the street, it was like he was pushing me – as if he was uncomfortable with the idea of crossing. So I'm thinking: is he afraid of cars? Is this too many lanes of traffic for him to cope with? Has he only recently stopped holding his mommy's hand when crossing? It's not a pretty picture I'm getting.

**Let it slide** [RESOLUTION]:

So I decided to walk a little faster toward the street's center traffic island, since that seemed to be what he wanted. Then I thought, well, maybe I'm being a little hasty in judging him. I mean we had only just started going out, so it seemed a bit early in the relationship for me to be making judgements. Maybe he was nervous about dating, I don't know. I know I was a little nervous. So I let it slide and hurried along.

**A little unusual** [DIVERSION]

Now keep in mind that I hadn't gone out on dates a lot of when I was in high school, so at the time I didn't have much to compare this experience to. But already I was getting the impression that this was becoming a little unusual.

**Trips on traffic island** [CONFLICT]

When we got to the traffic island, twinkle toes hops up onto the curb and trips -- I don't know on what. I didn't see anything. Looking back on it, I'd say that he probably tripped over a cigarette butt, he was that uncoordinated, but who knows. Whatever it was, it put him completely out of control. Worst of all, he was hanging on me, and it was not romantic. The guy could no longer walk upright, so he started using me as a cane, as we both went stumbling off the other side of the traffic island and back into the street. Now I was wearing my favorite rayon blouse. I was worried that by clutching on to me to regain his footing, he

Fig. 35 Anne reliving the entire episode.

was going to tear the blouse. Well, that was one of my worries. My other worry was that if he did tear my favorite blouse, in the middle of the street, right in the middle of downtown, I would have to kill him! And I didn't think that killing my date while crossing the street was the proper way to start off the summer. And darn it, I looked down and saw that the blouse starting to go.

**His shoe laces** [DIVERSION]

Oh, did I mention his shoelaces? When I looked down to see what he could possibly be tripping over, I saw that his shoelaces where BOTH untied. How can a guy leave his house, ride his bike a couple of miles, and then walk down the street with both shoelaces untied?

**Ankle goes out** [CONFLICT]

So we're in the middle of the street, Michael's hanging on me and starting to rip my blouse, his bike is wobbling all over the place, so he's trying to control his bike at the same time that he's trying to control his feet, I have no idea if there are cars coming or not, and all of a sudden my ankle goes out from under me. I must have let out quite a loud scream of pain because... I think I scared him. I was scared too. Because now I was trying to get across the street by hopping on one foot, with him hanging on me and my blouse about to go.

**Pulled myself up** [RESOLUTION]:

When we make it across the street, his bike goes flying off onto the curb. So he let go of the bike, but he was still hanging on to me. By that time, I couldn't even hop anymore, let alone walk – and I was sure that I was going to fall on my butt on the hard sidewalk, and that Michael was going to come crashing down on top of me. But at the last second before I hit the ground, he yanked me about half way up and I did what came natural – I reached out and grabbed his arm as hard as I could and pulled myself the rest of the way up. Meanwhile, he just stood there with this stupid look on his face.

**Why I teach dance** [ENDING]

You can well imagine that our relationship didn't go much further after that day. I decided to set my sights on guys that could successfully walk upright, even on a bad day. And from

then on I have always felt strongly that if guys could learn to dance even a little, then perhaps they could also learn to walk. And that's why I teach dance in high school.

### 6.1.4 The Cab Driver

**See it all** [SPEAKER INTRO]

I've been a Philadelphia cab driver for about ten years now. I've seen crooked politicians come and go, I've seen housing problems, unemployment problems, education problems—I've seen it all. But the one problem that never goes away is drugs. Drugs are everywhere, man—I mean it's terrible! To show you how bad it is, I'll tell you this one story of something that happened to me a long time ago, when I first started driving a cab.

**Nervous fare** [CHARACTER INTRO]

It was in the afternoon in the summertime. I had just picked up a fare downtown, going over to city hall. It was only about a mile or so, so I knew that I wasn't going get rich off this guy, even though he was dressed real nice, ya know? He had on an expensive lookin' suit, handkerchief in the breast pocket, matched his tie—like that. So I figured this guy was some sort of city hall big shot, ya know? So he hops in, and before I can say, "Where to?" he says, "City hall—fast! I'm in a hurry." So I don't say nothin', I just pull out into the lane. Now traffic's getting pretty heavy by this time and I'm looking all over; side view mirror, rear view mirror, over my shoulder, what ever. And in the rear view mirror I see this guy is lookin' kinda nervous—like he can't keep still. So I think nothing of it, ya know. To each his own, dig? I got my fuzzy dice hanging from the mirror, I got Tito Puenté low on the radio, I'm rocking out, hittin' the gas, thinking maybe at city hall I could get one of those big wig fares out to the burbs. I'm cool.

**He pulls out this bag** [CONFLICT]

Suddenly, the traffic gets thick, man. I don't know what happened—it just came out of nowhere. And that's when this guy starts getting really nervous. He starts babbling—talkin' about how he can't be late for this interview and this is his last chance and stuff. Like that, right? So I tell him I'm going as fast as I can, but I can't go through these cars. I mean, what do you want me to do? Meanwhile, he's still squirming around back there, and that's when I

noticed that he pulled out a little bag of something and a straw, and was about to take a big snort. In my cab—in my cab, this guy was going to do drugs.

**I could be a cop** [RESOLUTION]:

Now what was I supposed to do? I was just a young punk driver—hadn't been on the streets three months, and this guy was putting my butt on the line. 'Cause if we got caught, you know the only person going to jail would be me. Yeah, man. Anglos got the cash and always walk free. But me—a cop sees a Puerto Rican and they just know he's guilty. No question. So I had to tell this guy, "Look man, I'll take you to city hall, but I can't be going to jail 'cause of you. I need this job, man." Then he tells me, "Nobody's going to get caught," with his head down and that straw up his nose. And that's when I told him, "Man, there are cops everywhere. This is Philadelphia! Hell, I could be a cop." His head snapped up and he looked at me. He put that bag away, though.

### 6.1.5 The Waitress

**Those eyes** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Fig. 36 The Waitress describing the day she had to decide – stay or go. The Waitress was played by Maureen Costello.

My daughter Falice is growing up so fast. She's really becoming quite the independent and self assured young woman. It's just wonderful to see, especially in a teenager, you know? But she gets so much of that from her father. There's a lot of him in her—you can just see it. In fact, when I look into Falice's eyes, I can see the eyes of her father the very first time I looked into them some fifteen years ago. Those eyes.

**Dead end job** [CHARACTER INTRO]

It was June back in Philly—the kind of hot and muggy summer day when everybody's sticky, irritable, and half the people on the street wanted to punch the lights out of the other half. That summer I was working behind the counter at Doug's Diner on Broad street. It was one of those dead end jobs a person takes right after high school, ya know, when you're not going to college and you have no idea what you're doing next. And I had absolutely no idea. I didn't know whether to leave for a new life in some distant city or stay home and sign up for some meaningless community college courses. On that particular day, there were two

other girls working the counter with me in the late afternoon. We were taking turns baby sitting the old crusty regulars who were nursing their coffees and shootin' the breeze.

**Just quit Charlene** [CONFLICT]

I remember that was a really bad day, ya know? I was this close to quitting my job. Doug, the owner, was a pig. Workin' around him made the days seem endless—god! There was this voice inside my head saying, "Just quit, Charlene. You don't need this damn job. Just tear off Doug's little candy ass costume right now and walk out."

**To leave with means** [RESOLUTION]:

But then the other voice inside me would pipe up and say, "Four-fifty an hour, Charlene—and you need the money. Just stick it out until you have a few hundred saved and then walk with money in your pocket." That's what I had always wanted to do: hit the road with means, ya know? No problems. Starting a new life scared me, but leaving with just two dollars in my pocket and a hope in my heart was ridiculous, you know what I'm sayin'? I wanted to run to something. I just didn't know what to or who with. I mean, I knew I wasn't going by myself. I needed someone I could trust to help me cut my umbilical cord. But who?

### 6.1.6 The Little Girl

**Keeps on hitting you** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Sometimes things happen to you that change your life, and then go on changing your life forever. In fact, you can feel them effect you every time you tell someone the story of the thing that happened. Understand? It's like, it hits you once and then keeps hitting you for the rest of your life. I had one of these kind of things happen to me when I was small.

**Cab to the train station** [CHARACTER INTRO]

My father is a scientist. And through some miracle, he was allowed to get our family out of Russia and to America when I was ten years old. After so many planes, we landed in Philadelphia late one evening and spent the night at the house of a friend of my father. The next morning we took a cab to the train station to finish the trip to our new home in Pittsburgh. I was so amazed at all the new things I saw through the cab window. And

Fig. 37 The Little Girl, now a woman, recounts her story of landing in America and getting lost in the crowds of the train station. The part was played by Natalia Tsarkova.

different—lots of things different. For one thing, there aren't as many cars in the small town where I come from. And I remember that the cab driver was so funny. He made me laugh, even though at the time I understood little of what he was saying. But I do remember these two big fuzzy dice hanging from the rear view mirror. He talked all the time that he drove, and the dice just swung back and forth, waving at me. My parents, I remember, where really very tired of traveling. So was I.

### Don't you move [CONFLICT]

When we got into the train station, there was a long line at the ticket counter. I remember wanting to look at everything in the station. The station was big and old fashioned, with a ceiling that went up like a cathedral, and all this open space with people scurrying around like ants. After a while in line, I got tired of just standing there, so my mother sat me down on a bench near the ticket counter. "Now don't you move *(IN RUSSIAN)*," she said. "Stay right here and don't talk to anybody. I don't need you lost in a strange city." So I sat there on the bench like a good little girl, my white dress shoes dangling over the gray floor tiles. I tried to sit still—I really did—but it was hard. I was dying to get up and see how far I could slide across the shiny floor in my good shoes.

### Quite a team [DIVERSION]

My parents stood in line together because in America, my mother and father always talk to people together. My father, you see, speaks English—and very well. My mother doesn't speak any English, nor has she ever wanted to learn. She's always said there was no need. "I speak body language," she would to say. "I know what people are **really** saying." So my father would talk to people with words, while my mother would watch what they said with their eyes, their hands, and their bodies. Together they make quite a team.

# 6.2 Case Study Stories

## 6.2.1 Introduction

The work from each of the writers discussed in chapter 5 are included here as an example of what was written in the current version of Agent Stories. Here on paper, it is difficult to get the true flavor of a dynamic graphical writing tool. Yet each writer's work is included here in the state in which it was left. None of the writers felt as if they finished their stories. All of them could have used more time in composing, shaping, and linking their clips. Metalinear narrative, however, is never fully finished. The writer must have freedom to rethink, revise, and evolve their work. The stories included here are merely the beginnings of an evolutionary process which would stretch long beyond the bounds of this research effort.

## 6.2.2 Glorianna

***Mom***

What is she saying (NO PRIMTYPE)

Mom bends down and picks up the corner of the burlap trying to straighten it. She vaguely realizes that her daughter is getting angry. She does not know why. "I only want to help. I want to be part of this adventure. I feel like I am too slow. No one wants to wait and do things with me, not only the children."

***Amy***

Enters azalea bed [NEGOTIATION]

"I have arrived, truck and all. What shall I do? Mom that tree looks beautiful."

***Amy***

**Walks down to Azalea bed** [CHARACTER INTRO]

Amy hears Mom and Susie tussling over something even before she can see the two figures in the Azalea bed

***Susie***

**Rejection** [NEGOTIATION]

"No, no, I can do this easily. Just stay where you are." Susie swallows her aggravation. "I will get you a new plant in a minute." She attempts to speak more soothingly.

***Mom***

**Mom intro** [SPEAKER INTRO]

"What" says Mom, struggling up from where she was sitting, pruning an azalea bush. "Here, I can help you with that."

***Amy***

**Rents the U Haul** (NO PRIMTYPE)

"Is that my truck out there?" Amy remembers asking the person behind the counter. The rest of the morning had not gone well. The first truck she was given sounded like a submachine gun. She waited in the sun, while the owner went to pickup another truck. Finally, she entered the drive way, maneuvered the tight space between the wall and the garage, and went to join the 2 workers down in the azalea bed.

**Evan Drives**

**Title** (NO PRIMTYPE)

(no StoryClip)

***Susie***

**Remembers Mom walking down** [SPEAKER INTRO,CONFLICT]

Susie remembers mom holding on to the rope rail, feeling her way down the hill. She wanted to hold her frustration in but she needed to give a clear sign. "Mom," she felt she was shouting but that was the only way mom would hear. "Mom, please stand back; I will get you a new plant in a moment"

***susie***

**Susie intro** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Susie sits by an azalea bush, looks over at Mom lovingly and laughs: "It will unfold" she says quietly, as if under her breath

### 6.2.3 Raelinda

***Cory***

**Intro: Yep, I'm a ghost** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Yep, I'm a ghost. I'm ectoplasmic. I sleep late every morning but I don't rest in peace. My two main problems are one: being harassed by new age baby boomers on an out of body field trip going, "Walk into the light!" Hey, loser, YOU walk into the light. I'm not leaving this earthly plain until I see all 9 episodes of Star Wars. My second problem? Oh, yeah. I seem to have amnesia. I can't remember who I was before I died. Cory

***Simon***

**Conflict: I want to be a bird** [CHARACTER INTRO,CONFLICT]

I want to be a bird. I spend my afternoons at Au Bon Pain in Harvard Square watching the little sparrows hop about my table eating the crumbs from my croissant.

**Cory**

**Environment: Cory's After life** [CHARACTER INTRO]

What's the after life like, you ask? Well, it's ok I guess. There are two types of dead people. The ones who are just passing through and the ones

**Cory**

**Conflict: Amnesia** [CONFLICT]

I cannot remember who I was before I died. I can't remember how I died. I am a being without memories. I exist entirely as a personality.

**Cory**

**Environment: time** [CHARACTER INTRO]

Time moves in a funny kind of way here.
Once you go into the light time still exists. But that's all it does. It's just one big happy NOW. But in m around. You could be hanging out in tomorrow and suddenly it starts raining yesterdays. You just never know. The tides of time.

**Cove**

**Intro: I want to be a ghost** [SPEAKER INTRO]

I am an angel. I blew into time like a dandelion seed. My job is to witness events and then forget them unconditionally. Pure forgiveness. I am the way that events leave this universe. I wanna be cool like those ghosts who hang out in the cafes. I'm tired of wearing white.

**Simon**

**Intro: I feel like a ghost** [SPEAKER INTRO]

...bitter and nibbling on croissants that are too sweet.

**Simon**

**Conflict: Why isn't life like a book?** [CONFLICT]

Why isn't life like a book? The beauty of books: time is so malleable. You can make it move backwards, forwards. You can make it slow down, stop. A reader of a book is the omnipotent observer of a micro universe. I have the power to dwell on a single paragraph. I have the power to flip right to the last page. They have the power to make notes in the margins of reality itself.

**Cove**

**Environment: The world** [CHARACTER INTRO]

Moving through time is a lot like sailing. You can move pretty fast going along with the flow of it. But you can move even faster through a memory, traveling against the grain of it. Only in time do memories exist. Memories cannot exist where all is now. Only in memories can books happen.

**Cory**

**negotiation: enlist an angel to write a book** [NEGOTIATION]

If I could find out who I was, I would know what to do next. Angels know everything. But they don't know how to know what they know. how to unwind it into time and see. It's all a bunch of meaningless now to them. If I could find an angel and teach it how to write, I might be able to get it to write about me.

**Cove**

**Conflict: It's hard to find souls in the flow of time** [CONFLICT,ENDING]

I would like to find out where people keep their souls. I only understand what is happening now. People live in what just happened and what is about to happen. The NOW of mortal life is deserted. It is a ghost town.
That is why books are so often mistaken for souls.

### Simon

**Conflict: Afraid that if I reenter the flow of time I will cease to exist** [CONFLICT]

I can only be myself when I'm doing nothing. When all is still. The moment I start doing things I stop being myself and become what I am doing. I can only be myself when I am living in the now. The moment I reenter the flow of time I will cease to exist.

### Cory

**Conflict: Afraid that if I leave the flow of time I will cease to exist** [CONFLICT]

All that I have left of myself is my personality. I am a series of reactions to a series of events. There can be no events without time. Without events there can be no me.

### The book

**Simon** [DIVERSION]

The flow of events was building up outside the cafe doors like a great storm. Time was going to come into the cafe. I reached out my hand as if to gesture, 'stop'. And one of the cafe sparrows flitted out of my blind spot and into the air in front of me. I turned up my hand and the little creature landed on my palm. It jerked it's head up suddenly so that it was looking directly into my eyes, and then it simply died. Time crashed into the café through the door and carried it's spirit away. The little thing gave it's life to save me from time. I look down and there on the table is a book. I place the bird in my empty coffee cup and pick up the book. It falls open to a story about a meadow.

### The book

**Cory** [DIVERSION]

[text lost...] from one country to the next, cast from the branches of the strange, swaying trees that thumped across the worlds and rooted themselves around the lands, casting shadows from shore to shore. The flakey, buttery fruit of these great trees.

I lived a longtime, a long stretch of life. And then one day I landed in the outstretched branch of a tree. I could feel the tree's heartbeat pounding through it's veins. I could feel the great

breath of the tree gusting through it's trunk. I stared into the two eyes of this great tree. I stared into it's eyes for one thousand years. And then my own

### The book

**Cove** [DIVERSION]

Cory, the ghost, asked me to write a story about her. She said, just relax your golden thoughts and write whatever comes to you, whatever you start ternoon souls. Cory is sitting at a table next to a man who is not a ghost, although time is rather sticky around him, like taffy.
She is wearing a gown that is made of feathers. Her eyes dart back and forth from the man to a book he is reading. She says, will you stop reading for just one lifetime?
He says, I want to be a vessel for stories. I want to pour myself full of stories. You know that's what I want.
She says, the life of a bird is so short it's almost like punctuation. Last time around I was a meadow. That sounds so boring unless you stick a bird after it. Then it's, last time around I was a meadow!
He says, uh huh. She says, talk to me Cyemoon.
He says, I want to be a vessel for souls. People are rarely themselves [text lost...]

## 6.2.4 John

### Alex

**The bathroom wants Che Guevara** [SPEAKER INTRO]

Most cultures have, throughout history, had some process for dealing with those people who stepped too far outside the bounds of reality. In at least some of these cultures, they were considered sacred. Seers. God speakers. Lakota medicine men and seekers would prepare for weeks for their vision as they began their journey would be there to support them upon their return.

Nowadays, it can get pricey to walk in the places off the edge of the sidewalk where the streetlights don't reach. I haven't left the house in three weeks now. But it's taken me this

long to really come to terms with how strange that night was. You see, it all started when I realized that the bathroom wanted Che Guevara.

### Michelle

**Dorm Room** [SPEAKER INTRO,CHARACTER INTRO]

I'm not a person that believes in ghosts. I'm not. My life has been too perfect to believe in death, much less the existence of life afterwards. Oh sure, I've had people I know die, but nothing, I don't know...immediate, I guess. My parents are alive, both grandparents. I lost a pet once, but I don't think that counts. That's what made this whole thing so weird. After last night...I have no choice but to believe that world makes less sense than we think it does. And in my own way, I'm glad.

### Alex

**Exposition** [CHARACTER INTRO]

It sounds strange I know, and until recently, I'd be the last person to argue with you about it at all. I'm a stockbroker for gods sake, or at least I was. My world made sense. I could add it up, count it, and at the end of the week, everything happened pretty much as I expected. And y'know what? I liked it that way. Nowadays I'm walking through a world that makes just a little less sense, a little bit less explainable.

### Michelle

**Why the poster** [CHARACTER INTRO,DIVERSION]

I don't know why I like the poster. I just do. I'm not a radical. What little time I spent with the causes upon arriving here made me wonder if there was a third group that would let me protest what I was protesting while simultaneously picketing the big mouths and huge egos that were protesting what I was protesting. Um...does that make sense? I don't know, but it does to me. I'm still doing stuff, but with people who take themselves a little less seriously and I'm happier. Still, I leave Che up. Somehow, the face, those eyes, he makes me feel.....protected I guess. I know it sounds crazy, it does to me too. Or it did. Now I don't know.

### Alex

**The Other rooms** RESOLUTION

The other rooms of the house are quieter, but there's still traces. The living room wants a leather recliner. The kitchen should have a single print hanging on the pine paneling of a ship in distress at sea. The library wants a small ball of jade, carved with smaller concentric balls growing ever smaller into it's center, of all things. If I think about it, I can even feel the way my thumb would slip in the small fracture that must have occurred when someone dropped it. I don't know. I've never seen a ball like the one I described. For that matter, I've never seen the recliner or the ship print either. They're just things the rooms seemed to want. When I moved in, I chalked it up to the insanity of moving bringing on a bout of bad taste, ignored it and moved on.

But every time I used the bathroom, I realized it wanted Che Guevara.

### Tammi

**Michelle is different** [SPEAKER INTRO,CHARACTER INTRO]

She's so different now and nobody really knows why. She used to spend so much time out, bouncing, having fun. She was a real party girl which is weird because we all thought she was such a hippie when she moved in. Have you seen that room? We figured she'd be one of those types, y'know the kind that never shave their legs and eat that tofu stuff? But everyone loved her, especially the boys if you know what I mean? If I could have some of those men sniffing after me like they did around her I wouldn't be this boy here, let me tell you! <nudges Mirin, her perfectly normal but obviously not up-to-snuff boyfriend>

### Michelle

**I've been staying in more lately** [SPEAKER INTRO]

I've been staying in more lately, and I know the girls on the floor are starting to wonder. They've been sweet about it actually, but really, nothing that bad really happened to me, and I wouldn't tell them about it in any case. It's like trying to describe a dream, or worse, a drug experience. Internally, it was fascinating and I feel different for it, but to share it with someone....it sounds like the Twilight Zone. So I'm staying in and I'm kind of enjoying it. In

some ways I'm glad; it's an excuse to pull back I didn't even realize I wanted. I never liked the party scene much, never wanted to drink, smoke, and rub up against a drunk foretop every Friday night, but somehow that's the kind of role I fell into. It's amazing what a single scream will do to break you out of your old patterns isn't it?

### Tammi

#### What happened that night [CHARACTER INTRO]

We all FREAKED OUT when she screamed, omy god it was so loud. And when we saw A.J. come streaking out of her dorm room, naked and bleeding we knew why. He must have gotten a little too fresh if you know what I mean? Michelles a little slip of thing, not like me, but she must have gotten a boost of that stuff, y'know, adrenaline or whatever. 'Cause he's in a world of hurt, let me tell you. He was still in the hospital for the Spring Formal.

### Michelle

#### Describing AJ [CHARACTER INTRO]

AJ was my sort of boyfriend, in that I usually spent at least some of my time with him on the weekends. To say that AJ was often drunk was an understatement, or at least a missing of the fundamental point of the description, rather like saying "the fish was often wet". He and I dated a little bit, and he was kind of sweet early on. He could really dance which is something you can't get most boys to do, scared of it, like they're going to be called fags as soon as they loosen up their tight asses. AJ was so big that no one dared even suggest it so now and then I could actually dance with a guy. You overlook a lot for that. He was also good in bed, which I'm loathe to admit, you also overlook a lot for. He wasn't my first lover, but he was the first that really....released me? Made me let go, let me scream out what I was feeling and to hell with the 60 people on the floor and the paper-thin walls. I didn't love him, but until that night, he wasn't the worst person I'd ever known. Sometimes that's enough.

### Alex

#### I Don't know who she is. [CHARACTER INTRO]

Realization that this was more than a bad taste lapse came really slowly and in small ways. I'd wake up in the morning, groggy, still half blind, that state where you're still not sure the

world is really there and you're not dreaming, and find that the bathroom smelled of stale beer. Little things like that. Or late at night, stumbling to the toilet I'd catch a whiff of incense or a taste of feminine perfume no woman I knew wore. And always, the feeling that the bathroom was fundamentally lacking something, that it was incomplete, that underneath the black and white tile and the Krohn fixtures, there would be that soulful gaze staring out at me past death.

Eventually, I began to hear her, just a little. Small noises. The scratch of a pencil. A laugh. I admit somewhat shamefully that I spent far longer than I should have one evening listening for another hint of her sighs, either from herself or a lover, I was never able to tell. She could have been anyone, or anywhere.

## Alex

### Describing AJ [CHARACTER INTRO,CONFLICT,ENDING]

Then there's that night, the evening that things crossed over from weird to capital W Weird. This had been going on for weeks at that point and I'd gotten used to it, almost enjoyed it. I didn't know her name, but the little touches she added to my life were....rather like having a roommate while living alone. I'd wander into the bathroom and suddenly catch the scent of Ramen Noodles, or on a Sunday morning have the tactile sensation of sleeping on flannel sheets washed too many times but not recently. Small things they made the house feel less empty.

One thing I did discover, and didn't like, was that she had a boyfriend. Or rather, I didn't like the boyfriend. At all. His spoor would occasionally pass through whatever membrane separated us and he smelled like trouble, the sour smell of old beer and a well practiced backhand that made me nervous deep in the animal hindbrain. He was somehow wrong and after his existence became apparent, I would leave the bathroom when the sensory evidence suggested they were making love. I only hoped she would figure it out and dump the loser before she had to do it the hard way.

**Alex**

**Lying to myself** [DIVERSION,RESOLUTION]

And even that last is something of a lie to myself. I really became more than fond of her, I began to care. And that was really the start of the downhill slide. I never became obsessive about her, never tried to figure out where or who she might be. I didn't want to know. But the boyfriend was trouble, I knew it even then, and in my own way I felt a protective instinct to pull her away from him. And that, perhaps, is why that night happened the way it did.

**Michelle**

**What Happened that night: Prologue** [CHARACTER INTRO]

the window was open, the semester was ending and I felt pretty good. I'd made it through a year. I'd managed to fit.

I was drinking tea and reading when he finally showed up.

**Tammi**

**Describing AJ** [CHARACTER INTRO]

The weirdest thing was, no one could believe that AJ would do something like that. I mean,....he's sooo cute! And smart too! He's majoring in business and there's some kind of thing his dad does that involves getting other people to sell stuff for you and AJ thinks that he'll be a millionaire before he's forty if he's lucky and he doesn't fail out 'cause he's on academic probation this quarter. I was like, "No way!"

**Alex**

**WHTN, prologue** [CHARACTER INTRO]

I came home that night in the worst possible mood. I don't remember why. Maybe it was traffic, or something at work, or just the shaking off of the hibernation of a long gray New England winter. I'm miserable when I get into these type of moods. I'm a bear to live with and my friends and lovers, bless them, know it so that night I came home alone.

Walking into the bathroom for aspirin was like walking through a cool wall of mist on a hot summers day. The room felt.....right. Like someone was happy, smiling behind me, that they'd be sitting there if I turned around. I could smell the warm steam of tea, the soft breeze of a spring wind even though the window was painted shut and I couldn't open it if I wanted to. It felt good.

**Michelle**

**What Happened that Night** [CHARACTER INTRO,CONFLICT]

AJ came in really drunk. He'd been at a trashcan party on the third floor and he was in that bizarre stage where everything seems much more funny, important, sexy, to you than everyone else in the world. He'd already vomited once and he smelled pretty bad. I tried to get him seated and pulled my trash can out from under the desk so I'd be prepared for any "accidents" that might happen. But he really didn't seem that bad. Yes, he was drunk. AJ was always drunk. I wasn't worried.

**Alex**

**What Happened that Night** [CONFLICT]

I could feel the shift in the room when the boyfriend arrived, a subtle change in the way the air moved, the disappearance of everything that had made it pleasant the moment before. He was drunk and dangerous. I could feel it, the subtle dropping of an emotional barometer that suggests the sky is going to bust wide open any second and heading for safe harbor is your only chance. "Get him out of the room and lock the door, darlin'" I said aloud, hoping that whatever barrier that had so strangely linked out lives would, for once work both ways. I was scared for her, but my anger was building too, something I couldn't define or explain. Possessiveness, Love, delusion? I didn't know then and I don't know now. All I could do was sit and "watch" as the event unfolded to an inevitable conclusion.

**Michelle**

**WHTN II** [CHARACTER INTRO]

He pulled me towards him and started fondling me, and that's when things started to get uncomfortable. As I said before, AJ is a big guy. He'd never treated me like a china doll but

he'd always at least been gentle. Tonight it hurt. I pulled away and suggested he might be too drunk but he kept coming...kept pushing his slimy tongue into my ear, slurring at me in his foul breath how sexy I was. I pushed at him, lightly at first, then harder. I was being quiet; I didn't want the whole dorm knowing what was going on. But he kept coming and coming until I pulled back and slapped him hard across the face.

His face screwed up and got redder than I'd ever seen it and that's when he hit me.

### Michelle

#### Ending [RESOLUTION,ENDING]

I never did press charges against AJ, although perhaps I should have. There wasn't any evidence, and ultimately he didn't have time to do anything before.....whatever it was that happened happened. And since he failed out this semester anyway, he won't be returning in the fall.

How do I feel? Like Pandora, except I didn't want to know what was in the box. I can't explain what happened that night. I'm not sure I want to. But the world is a more interesting place than I supposed and I can't help but look around corners and underneath toadstools for other bits of magic that might be skipping around through the Goblin Universe. I bought some flowers this morning, as much to cheer me up as to cover the lingering scent of AJ's vomit which still lingers outside the hall despite a bunch of attempts to get rid of it. It smells wonderful in here and the sun is shining through my window, lighting the poster of Che on the far wall. I'm moving out in a couple of weeks, heading back home to Rhode Island, but I'll definitely be taking it with me. It's not much of a talisman, but something happened that night, and you've got to play the odds in experiences like that. Che is as good a guardian angel as any.

### Alex

#### WHTN Hit [CHARACTER INTRO,CONFLICT]

When he hit her, I exploded. I don't know what happened then, but everything that was so hazy before, small hints, things sighted out of the corner of my eye were suddenly in clear

sharp focus. I could see the room, the tiny little cube in which she lived. I could see her, young, younger than I'd expected, curly blond hair, a few extra freshman pounds. She was sprawled back against the bed, holding the side of her face which was swelling. She was weeping. And standing over her I could see him, wavering drunkly, reaching out to touch her again. And that's when I snapped. What I could see I could effect. I remember moving towards the kid in a red haze. I remember yelling at the top of my lungs. I woke up the next morning a mass of aches and pains like a bar fight gone horribly wrong, although there wasn't a bruise on my body. It took nearly two hours with my hands in ice for the sensation of swelling to go down, although they were unbroken, and completely free of any evidence of violence. I still don't know if I killed the little prick. I hope I didn't, but there's no real way for me to know.

### Michelle

**WHTN Hit** [CONFLICT]

I was against the bed, holding my face, trying to cover myself if he tried to hit me again, when I realized that the noise behind me was louder than it should have been and AJ was yelling at the top of his lungs. I turned and he was slamming himself around the room, against the wall....into Che. Or it seemed that way. Looking back, it was as if someone was beating him badly. Someone he couldn't touch, couldn't see. And neither could I. It was over mercifully quick, and he slumped over on his side whimpering. In the logic of crisis, I used the last of my own strength to haul him out of the room leaving him slumped over on his side on the hall carpet, where he promptly vomited. I felt my face and felt my anger rise. Despite my own fear and the Israelite of the moment, I brought my foot back and kicked him squarely, as hard as I could in the testicles. Then I darted back into the room, locked the door behind me, and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep until the pain in my face work me the next morning.

### Alex

**Ending** [DIVERSION,ENDING]

I think a lot about that evening. It's getting towards May now and she'll be leaving soon, not graduating, but maybe moving on. The poster will be taken down certainly. Oh yes, I now know why the bathroom wanted Che; the poster hung proudly on her wall, although it took

some abuse during my rampage. Will taking it down remove the link between us? I don't know, although I hope not. For a time there was a bit of strangeness and charm in my life, a subconscious pen pal that I'll miss, even though we never spoke. I know she came out the other side of our brush with the bizarre okay. This morning, flossing my teeth, I caught a wisp of her laughter. Raising the water glass, filled with tepid tap water in toast, I wish her well, the scents of spring air and honeysuckle fresh in my nose.

### 6.2.5 Teresa

**eye**

**tender light anew** [CHARACTER INTRO]

as a girl watch umbilical tender light anew. Galapagos. Mediterranean. sister in half light, kneel where stones cut. Sensation. continent of ligament notions we storybook inter. Apse. of the cornea kneel where stones cut. Dusk. palatial interstice half hold vision. as a girl watch umbilical tender light anew.

cage of the thorax

I am crying

conflict

any roses. I am crying. Fall. I am crying absence the turn of banisters counter clockwise. listen listen the turn of fathers. clock. a backwards communion. measure and breath. counter clockwise insurrection. vegetal elevation. a trance we cannot write for fear of missing. birth. amnesiatic fluid. a plateau of oxygen heavy. discover.

**spine**

**respiration spiral** [CHARACTER INTRO]

accumulation. of suns situated above the orbit of the eye. a cellular revolution unsupervised and unsolicited. respiration. spiral of horizon crossings. he holds a mirror to his mouth and

finds no sign of. accumulation. a sonic barrier. the sudden aerodynamic drag as breath approaches

sound.

## vertebrae

### innermost whorl [CHARACTER INTRO]

blue is not the sound of harvest. blue unsound. spiral fluid trace a breath that does not come. breath come. breath carpenter, carriage maker, calyx. a cup like animal structure. build blue stamens supraspinal. articulation the vertebrae between themselves. cup like structures in a seed plant comprising the innermost whorl. spiral sound. articulation, the vertebrae between themselves trace. a harvest that knows no dusk or dawn a harvest of seed plant comprising the innermost whorl.

## synapses

### when constellations weep [NEGOTIATION]

triosome axial sym etris town send sah sah sah sahling shirosote selingual celestial agape tantalize wrist seal luck in happy hector rant harmonic inhale telic vibral rest i tution wheel of rosebud sellnic reed desire gnosis navel knell ostrich doctor deal an egg case heart hold heal week-kneed spine cry I can't do this anymore I can't do this anymore. celestial rant the ear escape bright flight we near terrestrial gates.

trespass pattern of the supple truth shafts refract distant beckons archaic when tissue forgives solar meander through veins a plenty, channel castings seed the ear.

trespass pattern sutralingual locks a plenty place the mind impasse break tide a plenty plaints that print insist on every cell. stitch forgiveness under dermal scent.

flood flood flesh a beckons mediatrix please convey terror to its rightful breast, archaic stars sink my pain and I shall hear your flight.

### lacuna

**absence chasm** [NEGOTIATION]

lacuna dura dura. lopsided meeting place heal the seven. atonements capsize injurious governance. dura, dura dura lacuna. claws drag the ice. regardless I send water. water drag injurious place. water drag injurious place. dura, dura dura lacuna. before we go under Papa. before.

### ilium and ischium

**transmission** [RESOLUTION]

a heaviness and tickle on the temple brow and ear drum. a dog licking his belly. listening breath. unfinished claws tapping the sinus. unfinished sneeze from two years back. fear. erasing on the page and two brushes with the back of the hand. a scream that rips all the drapes from their axes. gravity. and grievance descending a univalve stairwell. the spleen slowly filling up with blame. erasure. two brushes with the back of the hand. sleep and a barely perceptible pulse. the head slowly nodding on its stem. a garden and no time to tend that which will decay. decalogue. a transmission of semen and stamen. narrative. and field mice that gnaw on the edge of this bulkhead.

### the heart

**you don't listen** (NO PRIMTYPE)

stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay...see we're beating again. you forget and then I can't move 'til the door cracks and splinter. if only you'd remember me we wouldn't come to violence.

### ear drum

**echo** [CONFLICT]

a ladder upon which the cranium aches. ask her what she cannot hear. tonight the words climb up and in. subaqueous memory fills the drum the ear has broken once again. ask me what I cannot see. a backward glance will tear the spine. and send the heart each time

anew. subvocal grievance desert valley know my name this is the last. echo of my burning sands within this empty drum.

**uterus phonograph**

***press*** [CHARACTER INTRO]

uterus phonograph she

closes the floor of the drum

shake

our sun

when the needle begs

one

revolution

promise to break

lips that return when

light

takes the ear

there is no press save pulse

amnesia

wake the pyre

diversion

heliophyte overturn treason

a stunted grain waits her suns

demise

aperture of profligate order

pharahos turn to glass

one silicate heart cracks

dispensation

her hours

tributary

amnesia

wake

the pyre

the throat

aubade

negotiation

I tell to no one continually.

I do not tell I beg.

I beg I tell I tell I beg.

I can no longer beg I can no longer tell.

head rush let this be the aubade.

when we call grievance enthroated.

the call is the collapse is the call.

when a spine discerns summer in rage song.

and the heart turns this clock asunder.

heart quake

I can stay softer now

ending

softer now we don't want to scare them the rattle of saucers. door shut shake in the heart. won't be back she's gone out to tend tundras. deep interwhirl of. good-bye, I can't stay for tea the sun is crossing and my shadow is gaunt. it's time to tend absence my home now the door shuts and silent the echo. she crosses my valley floor. floor of the heart quake she crosses railway ties hold railway heart beat the ground my gate to rest beating home of. good-bye tell tell it when sundown tell tundras my heart now. absence, echo, hello I can stay, softer now.

### 6.2.6 Ian

**Sid Braun**

**Waking up** [SPEAKER INTRO,CONFLICT]

(no StoryClip)

**Sid Braun**

**Happening** [CHARACTER INTRO,NEGOTIATION]

I toss a buck into the collection plate and I'm blasted with this music that makes no sense; it's like a dead channel. I must be getting old because I never had that problem with jazz before no matter how out the cats would blow, my friend the poet is saying something about bubble gum and drummers that makes no sense to me. That little altercation with Louie must have him shell shocked; he must be throwing all the musicians off too.

**Sid Braun**

**Happening.a** (NO PRIMTYPE)

The detective hears the poet speaking over the drummer's riffs. The bassist and the guitarist occasionally comp along, implying the song structure ah. The band takes five. I climb up the warped wooden stairs, grabbing onto the handrail as I stumble, my hunger must have made me dizzy, so dizzy that I don't even remember grabbing for the handrail. I guess my reflexes aren't completely shot; I don't have to think to save my neck. I thank a couple of billion years of evolution for that. I toss a buck into the collection plate and I'm blasted with this music that makes no sense; it's like a dead channel. I must ubble gum and drummers that makes

no sense to me. That little altercation with Louie must have him shell shocked; he must be throwing all the musicial. I must have taken a beating.

I climb up the warped wooden stairs, grabbing onto the handrail as I stumble, my hunger must have made me dizzy, so dizzy that I don't even remember grabbing for the handrail. I guess my reflexes aren't completely shot; I don't have to think to save my neck. I thank a couple of billion years of evolution for that. I toss a buck into the collection plate and I'm blasted with this music that makes no sense; it's like a dead channel. I must bubble gum and drummers that makes no sense to me. That little altercation with Louie must have him shell shocked; he must be throwing all the musicians off too.

After they're all done with their set he walks up to me, guess he's glad that I made it to his gig. He's saying something about my hat,. I must have taken a beating. I climb up the warped wooden stairs, grabbing onto the handrail as I stumble, my hunger must have made me dizzy, so dizzy that I don't even remember grabbing for the handrail. I guess my reflexes aren't completely shot; I don't have to think to save my neck. I thank a couple of billion years of evolution for that. I toss a buck into the collection plate and I'm blasted with this music that makes no sense; it's like a dead channel. I must be getting old because I never had that problem with jazz before no matter how out the cats would blow, my friend the poet is saying something about bubble gum and drummers that makes no sense to me. That little altercation with Louie must have him shell shocked; he must be throwing all the musicians off too.

After they're all done with their set he walks up to me, guess he's glad that I made it to his gig. He's saying something about my hat,. I must have taken a beating.

### Tapper Joe

**Description of the drummer** (NO PRIMTYPE)

I am up on the stage with the mic in my hand and I am staring straight into the eyes of the drummer and shout out, "Be-bop bubble gum bubble blowing snare drum rolling stick pounding jester blows time into a sweet pink expanding sphere," because that is what he is

and that is what he does. The horns and the guitar come back in on the head and I say, "My friends, we're gonna take a break here and bebopin' at y'all inna bit or a byte."

**Tapper Joe**

**Hello, Sid** (NO PRIMTYPE)

As I get off the stage I notice Sid Braun. I'm glad to see my hero, my amigo, he's saved this dude's ass not that long ago. So without him I'd be a shade of my current self. He hasn't been returning my mail lately though. "My man, what's with that wrap under your cap?" and he's like slippin' his fingers under his fedora and looks at me going, "What are you talking about?" and I say "Man, the bandage. Somebody hit you since I last I had the pleasure?"

**Tapper Joe**

**Wrap under the cap** (NO PRIMTYPE)

"What bandage?" he barks, and he reaches under his hat again with his other hat and suddenly his expression changes.

**Sid Braun**

**Bandage?** (NO PRIMTYPE)

After they're all done with their set Joe walks up to me, guess he's glad that I made it to his gig. He's saying something about my hat,. I must have taken a beating.

**Sid Braun**

**Art Space Staircase** (NO PRIMTYPE)

I climb up the warped wooden stairs, grabbing onto the handrail as I stumble, my hunger must have made me dizzy, so dizzy that I don't even remember grabbing for the handrail. I guess my reflexes aren't completely shot; I don't have to think to save my neck. I thank a couple of billion years of evolution for that.

**Sid Braun**

**Checking Messages** [CHARACTER INTRO,NEGOTIATION]

Must have slept all through the day. It's night. Don't know when was the last time I saw the sun. I look at the footlocker that serves as a coffee table when my futon is folded into a sofa. My bip is bleeping; I've got mail. I put on my private-eyes which are sitting on the footlocker and check my messages. Looks like I haven't logged on in many moons. Strange, I think, I'm always checking my mail could I have been out for that long? You know that you've got a healthcare crisis when you're being discharged and dropped off at your space before you even regain consciousness.

**Sid Braun**

**grunts and sighs** (NO PRIMTYPE)

Sid Braun grunts and sighs as if awaking from a long but unpleasant slumber.

**Sid Braun**

**Joe's invitation** [CHARACTER INTRO]

In my state I don't feel like dealing with most of the messages I see listed on my private eyes, but there's one from Tapper Joe. Tapper Joe is a poet, a sweet guy who was in trouble not too long ago. It was a pleasure to help him out. He's one of those special types whom I'll help as a public service– not that he has the money to hire me out anyway. My name is Sid Braun, and my computer interface is a pun on my profession.

Joe apparently invited me and forty something of his closest friends to attend a loft party where's he's reading with some jazz musicians. It's only a few blocks away.

**Sid Braun**

**waffles** (NO PRIMTYPE)

w days. I head to the freezer and pull out a box of waffles that I have lying around in case of an emergency. Given the number of emergencies I have, I should buy stock in the waffle company.

**Sid Braun**

**Bip Bleeping** **(no PrimType)**

Braun's computer pager beeps, telling him that he has email. He starts humming "Mr. Postman."

**Sid Braun**

**stumbling on the steps** [NEGOTIATION]

Braun stomps up the old wooden staircase, the pace of the steps sound regular at first but suddenly the two feet sound out of sync. and he can be heard to stumble, muttering "woah!" before regaining his balance and continuing up the stairs with a regular rhythm.

**Sid Braun**

**Shower** (NO PRIMTYPE)

(no StoryClip)