

free!  
version 0.3



## What is *Anthros Ex Machina*?

### Answer Four

One night the staff of *Anthros* sat around a table drinking coffee, examining submissions. One set of poems stirred an argument amongst the art editor, spackle, and the fiction editor, Johnny. Johnny felt the poems were too intellectually masturbatory and unappealing to read. Spackle felt that Johnny was being dismissive, that the poems had content if one only examined them closely. Ultimately the problem was that each had a different vision of what *Anthros* is. But their opinions led to the two of them having to step outside to settle their differences (not to fight but spackle left so as to keep his temper, with Johnny chasing after him and to reach some accord).

One will go through amazing lengths to convince someone else of the truth of one's vision. Most wars are based on trying to convince someone that one's truth is The Truth, be it religion, economic systems, racial supremacy, or one of many concepts that people hold dearly. But as the above anecdote suggests most of the conflict is on the personal level—everyone has a different personal vision of reality. There are six billion different concepts of reality crawling around this planet. And individual versions are inconstant, changing with time. How many times has your concept of reality or truth changed over your life? How many times has it happened without you even noticing or acknowledging?

On the other hand there are many things that people are united in. We at *Anthros* are unified in making this small amateur 'zine. Even though the fine people who work and write for *Anthros* are just as messed up, confused, and in conflict with each other as anyone else. So why are we united on this one concept of publishing *Anthros*?

We write, draw, and publish not so we can tell you the truth. It is not to sway you to our version of reality. *Anthros* is merely the end product of some people trying to become better people by analyzing themselves, those around them, and everything that effects them. What you read in here is, either textually or contextually, an effort by people to understand themselves, their friends, and the world around them.

For you, the reader, the hope is that we can offer something worth thinking about, because every effort to interpret an idea makes the interpreter stronger. Every time you decide whether to accept or spurn a new idea you are making a judgement that makes your truth or reality that much firmer, defined, and complex. And perhaps, if we somehow did something right, you will have found—through yourself—some sort of greater understanding.

*Anthros Ex Machina* is a tool of ideas, interpretation, conflict, and unity.

—Editor



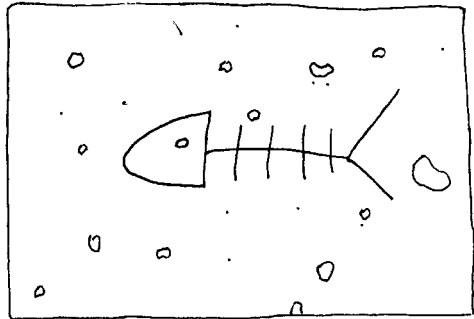
*Cold hands in pockets*  
leaves scatter  
except one under foot—  
wind full sky.

attempt #27 at trying to  
do something serious:

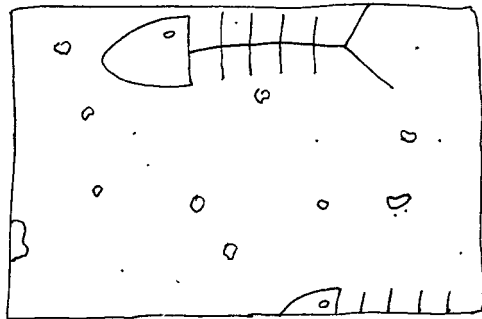
what is old people smell?  
throat lozenges?  
medication?  
mothballs?  
something peculiar  
strictly to the elderly?  
is it the smell of age?  
the smell of imminent  
death?  
the smell of failing  
bodily processes  
internally fuming  
through the pores?  
or is it the smell  
of something mortal,  
a smell the young  
do not have, for they  
are born immortal?  
...the smell when it  
begins harder to breathe,  
harder to achingly move,  
harder to simply put a  
jacket on and sit quietly  
when nostrils become  
noisier...  
cough drops?  
time?  
waiting for time to end?  
or is it simply the smell  
of a waiting room?

# THE ADVENTURES OF MAX Pleistocene Fish

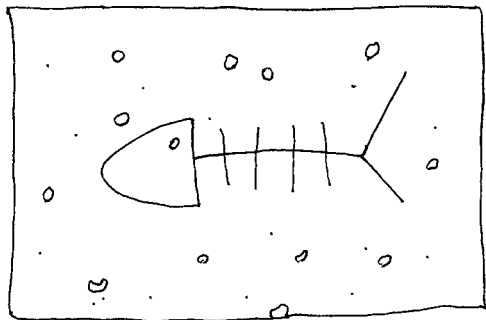
As a child, I never  
talked much with  
my father.



I realized today  
that he is fossilized  
a couple inches  
below me.



Funny how we  
still don't talk.



*Refraction*

grainy shine

tracks through cleaved shadows—

wet glass rim.



## Blink

### An Installment of the Lone Wolf Serial

Mitsubi Togashi slammed his whitened fist into the wall next to the monitor.

Another dead end.

Zeke Treckle or Tackle or whatever had just become number six on a growing list of pathetically inadequate private investigators.

He gathered a deep breath and replaced the receiver. Yamoto was not going to be pleased, and Mitsubi, as head scriptwriter and company whipping-boy, was responsible for finding some way through this stupid complication. "First things first, though," said the man, and poured himself another whiskey sour. This was no way to unwind a stomach.

Somewhere in the night air, a strain of the Kruetzer Sonata floated through the hotel window. It helped sweeten the drink, and Mitsubi's stomach, just a bit.

Breathe; breathe and think. First, he was going to have to send out another agent; that much was plain. But what more could he do? This Drescher guy had definitely started as more of a problem than he was worth. The thought of Yamoto sending the Great Mitsubi out on such a crackpot "research mission" especially aggravated his ulcer. He left feeling like an extinct volcano; used and completely void.

The director had droned on and on about this thing. About the need to make anime more realistic, even photorealistic, and how he wanted Drescher's story to be his first experiment in documentary, and about how tired he was of mecha, high school goddesses and fifty foot vampire demon lords. Mitsubi was promptly offended; he wrote this stuff and liked it. What inspiration was some explorer going to give that a stiff shot of Jim Beam and an issue of Cosmo couldn't? He had his own thing going and was happy enough.

But Yamoto was not. So here he was,

in New York City, staring at a newspaper clipping complete with Drescher's picture. Basic story; recent recipient of some Chinese humanitarian prize and discoverer of Javanese temple sarcophagi. A member of a New York-based expedition financing group, the Lone Wolf Club or something like that.

Nothing even remotely interesting. In fact the only piece that even grabbed Mitsubi was that photo of Drescher; he was a creepy looking guy with a pointed cleft in his chin and these eyes that seemed to whorl, even in newsprint. He'd be willing to bet that Drescher had seen some weird places and weird people; his eyes had an internal aura and crackling glow, almost as though the events of the man's life had been burned into his physical makeup. It reminded Mitsubi of a firework he had seen last New Year's.

He stared at those eyes for a while. They exerted this pull, this trance like pull that tugged and tugged until Mitsubi couldn't focus on anything else. All grew dim and grainy; the blood drained from his head and left it coated by a film of freezing sweat. He felt his own eyes start to spin, in perfect synchronization with Drescher's. Too scared to even blink, he didn't believe it was even possible to try, and then he just couldn't think at all and--

**SLAM!!**

Mitsubi was struggling to inhale and was surrounded by the smell of death, confined in some impossibly dark cell and... and he heard a creak. Suddenly a door opened and he saw a whipping arm connected to a dashing smirk that pulled him from the case he now recognized as a Javanese sarcophagus.

Mitsubi blinked.

His head reeled as he stared at the blank computer screen and realized he was back

in his suite. What was that? What on earth was that? The face had been Drescher's, or at least he thought so. But what was that sarcophagus? What the crap had he been doing in Java? Why had it seemed so real? The flash had lasted less than a second, but it left Mitsubi disoriented and physically sore. He made a desperate attempt to push the images out of his head. They were disturbing, vivid and, after all, he had never hallucinated; he didn't even think it was possible. He didn't dream all that much either, for that matter. Fatigue was obviously catching up. Obviously.

"Or," he thought, "maybe its just too much of this," and threw out the drink.

Why did this thing have to be so painful? Why did Drescher have to be so hard to find? Mitsubi rarely drank as much as he had the last couple of days and was starting to resent it. It wasn't just that the man was difficult to locate; that's what the P.I.'s were for. But none of these agents could even prove that Simon Drescher existed. The article, dated two years previous, was the only evidence to the contrary and Mitsubi had started to believe it was some kind of journalistic hoax. And this Lone Wolf organization; it sounded plausible but was equally elusive. One of his investigators had returned after spending eighty-plus grueling hours pouring over tax records and phone books and scholarly journals with nothing more than a headache and a curse for his supposed explorer's club. Everyone got frustrated and Mitsubi got alcoholic. He started pacing.

If only Yamoto wasn't so stubborn... wait a minute. Who was to say that the director even need know about Mitsubi's failure? Certainly not Mitsubi; after all he was one of the most reliable writers in the business and a recognized genius for plot generation. Maybe instead of actually interviewing Drescher, he could just take the article, expand it a bit and fool Yamoto. Sounded good, but he needed someplace to begin.

So, as was usual, Mitsubi glanced about

the room looking for some item, some hook, he could use to spark his creative sensibilities. When he saw the picture, he knew he had it. He posted the wrinkled scrap on his computer, tried to avoid its eyes, closed his own and started to type.

The story came so easily. His fingers, possessed by the unholy demon of inspiration, whipped together a highly believable, precise, and lucid account of Drescher's adventures with Javanese sarcophagi, perfectly suited to anime and calculated to get Yamoto off his back.

And, though the vision of Mitsubi's own "adventure" in Java still gave him the tingles, for the first time in months, the man felt happy. He sat back, stretched his fingers, and contemplated the ceiling. After what seemed like an appropriate length of time, Mitsubi decided to get back to work and quickly found out that he had no idea what to write. At this point in the synopsis, Drescher was caught in a rather difficult predicament, and Mitsubi, surprised, realized that he had not planned for any kind of escape hatch. Hopeful, he peered at the photo and begged it for mercy.

Almost immediately, the eyes began to whorl and Mitsubi detected a vague sense of alarm. But just as quickly, he felt lost again and synchronized and--

SLAM!!

He was back in Java, sprinting beside Drescher and holding a satchel under his arm. There was that smirk again and those eyes and suddenly an arrow whooshed past his ear and--

SLAM!!

He was at his desk, blinking furiously and trying to rip the vision from his shivering head. Both unable to relax and unable to move, Mitsubi watched his fingers shoot back to the keyboard and, almost against his will, pound the keys into submission.

Twice more did Mitsubi confront these visions. And twice more did Drescher, caught in a climactic hinge, escape by way of Mitsubi's repossessed fingers. The author became a mere spectator and slowly

realized the extent to which his imagination and body had been co-opted. He realized, for instance, that closing his eyes hurt. Even blinking them was searing. He was forced to focus his pupils on the stream of letters issuing from the robotic typing and his eyes ached and chapped with continual exposure. It nauseated him, terrified him, but cold physical paralysis clung tight with clammy fingers. He felt, almost, as if his eyes were hardening, like clods of desiccated mud. Again, he tried to pry his fingers from the keyboard and failed. Again, he desperately tried to moisten his eyes and failed. Mitsubi's head erupted and sent a nervous, gall-wrenching shudder through his body.

The third time Mitsubi stopped typing the vision failed, and he was left in a shivering limbo. The walls seemed to close in around him; he hadn't blinked in five minutes and his eyes ached, his breath was heavy and his joints were spent. The man's savage instinct finally took command and his body began to move toward the door. He grabbed his coat, reached for the handle, and escaped into the bright hall.

Immediately all returned to normal. Mitsubi affected a casual pace and slung his outerwear over his shaking torso. Thinking that fresh air might do him well, the man made his way through the lobby and into the night air.

The evening was still young and a steaming throng netted the courtyard to the hotel. But Mitsubi sliced through the tangle and blindly took a detour through a residential side street.

This was a place he didn't know. But still he pushed on, if only to dull the experience of the hotel room. There were sounds all around him, chattering T.V.'s and people arguing and singing. And he smelled something; it was American beef burning over charcoal. The smell made him sick and he reached out to a nearby fence, expecting to vomit.

Instead, his hand grasped a ragged bundle of papers tacked to the iron slat. His

head rose, he glanced around him and noticed that he was on the entry path of an enormous brownstone mansion. Slightly curious and a lot more collected, Mitsubi realized that the detached bundle was one of thousands, posted on every slat in the fence. The house itself was a nightmare and was capped with wolfish, hungry gargoyles. In fact the whole effect of the black structure was lupine; the windows acting as greedy eyes to a decaying mouth of a door.

Simultaneously, a siren wailed in the distance, a loud howl came from an alley beyond, and the windows began to glow an angry red. Mitsubi started and clipped back to Halson, a street with which he was passably familiar.

Pausing to catch his breath, the man noticed the bundle still clutched in his palm. He folded it and quickly hailed a cab. He had decided to return to Tokyo as soon as he could for some needed rest. Throughout the trip back to the hotel and the subsequent meal he needed to remind himself to blink. It was painless. At least.

It was the next day on the plane that Mitsubi remembered the papers folded in his coat pocket. He had tried finishing the synopsis, but nothing would come. His laptop just stared at him like a vacuous child and he regretted ever buying the thing.

"Perhaps," he thought, as he sipped his gin, "Drescher just doesn't like anime."

This trouble with his imagination was too much to simply ignore. After all, stories were his lifeblood. A good night's sleep had done wonders, but he was still exhausted and shaky. That's why unfolding the papers was probably not the best idea. At least this time Mitsubi managed to vomit.

For, stamped in red across the front page of the bundle, which happened to be Mitsubi's synopsis, was the word **APPROVED**. It glowed faintly.

Not even this bothered Mitsubi as much as the last couple of pages, however. Because they contained an ending the man had yet to write and certainly didn't think he should ever read.

if i could die twice, i'll try to die three times

5-7-5-7-7 totonka—like buffalo, man..  
mondo 5-7 with brooks and stream couplets  
that are green—  
i coulda been a menstender!  
what if we'd flipped?  
what if matt had had, whatever?  
up to here, "had"—see what i mean?  
and then you can go infinitely.  
and then you'd have to add a thousand  
twice.  
there's only one of those.  
it gets too surreal.  
"had had" was correct—  
in a further display..  
this is ridiculous to listen to.  
if you put it into poetry format,  
of course it's true!  
we're geeks.  
they're geeks.  
but we're geeks with social skills.

## untitled #n

Five years ago I took a two-day road trip to Logan, Utah with four of my friends. We left at 7 pm on Friday night to drive eight hours so one of our friends could see a girl.

We only had enough money for gas and two meals each.

We got to Logan and tried to grab a few hours sleep in the car before it left with our friend, not to return until midnight that day. It was cold and windy out that evening and we couldn't all fit comfortably in the car. Two left to try to find a warm place to burrow, only to return more tired and cold.

After the car and the friend left, the rest of us found an outdoor amphitheater that blocked most of the wind, if you slept under the seats. We stayed there, blissfully unaware, until we startled a young couple and their "umm... Jimmy let's play over here now, OK?" son. The actual sun was pretty high by then so we moved on.

None of us had a watch.

During the day we ate lunch, skated, napped, stumbled upon the campus museum (that had the most complete collection of modern pottery I have seen to this day hidden away in a back gallery), noticed that none of the women wore skirts or dresses (it must be a Mormon thing), tried to 'hack' telnet access from the library computers, napped some more, watched a serendipitous free showing of *Bob and Doug McKenzie's Strange Brew* and closed out the night talking, skating and watching the biggest fucking laser I have ever seen cut straight up through the night sky from the top of one of the campus science buildings.

A bit after midnight, after our friend returned, we grabbed dinner at Taco Bell and drove straight home.

On the way I had the realization that most of my comfort and happiness revolved around my perspective. True, not a huge or ground-breaking realization, but it added a powerful edge to my lack of good sleep. I didn't have much money normally but always enough to eat. It was interesting to be in a situation where I slept huddled under a bench, with my hat pulled down tight over my head, hoping the sun would make it higher into the sky if only to warm the concrete. To be in a position where I was hungry enough to be overjoyed to eat condiment honey out of the student union simply because it was free. But most of all to be happy I could return to my bed in a short time.

I drove the last 5 hours of the trip myself, eyes bright and mentally racing.

\* \* \*

Five weeks ago I took a three-day road trip to Detroit, Michigan with two friends. We drove fifteen hours so a different friend could meet a different girlfriend just outside Chicago. This time we kept the car and the couple continued on, in her vehicle, to Detroit. We decided if we were going to be driving for 15 hours, we sure weren't going to waste all of our time on a college campus full of Mormons.

The plan was to spend some time in the city and stay the night somewhere outside Chicago. I already knew where we would spend the night, but hadn't admitted it to myself.

In Chicago (outside of which I was born and all of my family once lived) we missed the Star Wars exhibit at the Field Museum because it was sold out, but instead saw meteors, amazingly beautiful Japanese sagemono and netsuke, dinosaur bones, a wall of shoes from different cultures, and a slew of other artifacts from around the world (not to mention a million screaming kids). After we left the museum we napped on a strip of grass by the lakeshore, drove down Lake Shore Drive, stumbled upon the Chicago Jazz Festival and Worldcon 2000 (the 3 day, 5 hotel world science fiction convention. We stayed for 30 minutes and snuck in without paying), and walked around the streets above and below downtown Chicago.

As we were leaving the city I found a new energy. I was suddenly awake enough to drive for a while, with new motivation. I suggested we leave the city and set out for Detroit, so that when we got tired of driving we could get a hotel room (we had money this time) then in the morning the drive to Detroit to get our friend would be that much shorter. My companion agreed, largely since I was driving and he was going to sleep either way.

Our last stop in Illinois was a crazy little McDonald's in the median of the Highway in which you came to a stop in the parking lot much like a jet on an aircraft carrier. I ate fries I knew were soaked in beef fat because I was hungry.

I drove for a few hours, kept awake by techno music, Motorhead and the realization that I had to reach Kalamazoo.

\* \* \*

Three years ago I moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan for a summer. To be with a girlfriend of my own.

My summer in Kalamazoo was

wonderful in many ways but had never properly ended. I left with a broken arm, a stomach full of anxiety knots and a seventeen-pound cat doped up on tranquilizers.

The relationship dwindled more than ended, both of us more selfish than we could see or admit. I spoke to her a few times after that summer while we were still under the pretense of being friends and maybe even lovers. I guess I knew otherwise but it still took a few months to admit it. I haven't spoken to her since.

A few weeks before leaving Kalamazoo, I had broken my arm after giving into "the rage" and punching a sign out front of a flower shop. After that I realized the summer was ending and she was going to China for six months, as planned. I decided it was time to head home. I was running away.

Two of my friends drove out to bring me and my things back to Colorado. The cat meowed a deep pathetic cry for sixteen hours. I still cry when I think about it.

\* \* \*

Speeding across I-94, through Michigan in the late evening, running on no more than three hours sleep in a row, I was driven to make it to Kalamazoo. The girl had been gone for two years, which was just fine by me, because I don't think I would have gone on the trip if she were still there. I wasn't sure why I needed to go to Kalamazoo or what I was hoping to do or find there, but it was nothing less than a mission, no matter how little I let it show.

We got off the highway at an exit I hadn't often used, the familiarity of the city was just out of my grasp. We drove by a Super K-Mart that used to be a Meijer and past a restaurant we once went to a fancy dinner at. Nothing seemed right; everything

was just a little off. We drove the 30 miles per hour down West Main for miles while I tried to get a grasp on the city.

My stomach was full of acid and I was having a little trouble breathing. I hadn't expected a physical reaction to being back here. I was thinking this was a mistake, but after a few more miles, we stopped at a traffic light and everything clicked.

I hit the turn signal, took a right at the light, drove up a hill and around a turn, down the other side of the hill, took two quick turns and was in the parking lot of the apartment we lived in. There was a cat sitting in the middle of the road watching us. I told it to get out of the street and it wandered off.

My breath was back to normal and I was remembering all of it.

We drove downtown, past a bar where we played trivia with a group of people from the Michigan PIRG, past Club Soda where the local punk bands played. The sign advertised Salsa Night. We drove around a bit until I felt better, then found a hotel to stay the night.

I called my current girlfriend, of over two years, from the hotel, not out of guilt or obligation, but out of freedom.

I slept well that night.

We woke up in the morning with the plan of getting lunch then heading to Detroit. I suggested we go to the vegetarian restaurant that I helped open when I lived there. It took me twice as long to find it as it should have and was closed when we got there. It also had a different name. The owner happened to be going in as I was looking through the window. He didn't remember me. I told him I worked there when it under the old name, which I couldn't remember for the life of me. He told us it wasn't a

vegetarian restaurant any longer, but that we should come back some time when they were open.

He was a slimy prick in the guise of an upstanding businessman when I worked for him too.

I was ready to leave. I said I needed to drive.

We made it to Detroit in less time than we expected and spent the day with the couple. We visited an ancient private school north of Detroit that happened to be one of the most elite schools for ceramics in the United States. My pottery professor in college was both an alumni and a former head of the ceramics program there. We went into Detroit proper and walked through the Detroit Jazz Festival, crossed the border into Canada for fifteen minutes, were hassled by the American Customs agent for our short trip and returned to her place to watch the Marx Brothers before taking a nap until our departure time of 1am.

We drove straight home, about twenty hours. I drove the slight majority of the hours, it helped that there were no cats yowling and that none of the ghosts were mine.

\* \* \*

I have no idea why my group of friends has trouble finding significant others in our time zone; now that I think of it, almost every one of us has cared deeply for someone in a different state. What I do know is that during all those trips there was one constant that I hadn't fully realized until I was about three quarters done with this. Of all the people in all the trips, two of us have always been there. I'm glad he still only lives fifteen steps away from my room.

## Word of the month: Meme

A meme is a self-replicating system of information. In other words it is a unit of culture—a learned set of ideas and algorithms. Some general examples of memes would be jokes, fashions, or religions. Some specific examples would be dumb blonde jokes, skinny ties, or Christianity.

It is helpful to think of memes as actual living organism. If you think about it, they have all the aspects of life. They self-replicate--think about the catchy song someone hummed, and now it is stuck in your head. They move, any form of media, like this 'zine, would be an example of that. They eat your brain power and memory. They fight, look how the Christianity meme tried (still tries) to stomp out a lot of other memes. They even evolve, for example the tie meme (vacillating between fat and skinny ties) or the “how best to nurture your child” meme (whether or not to leave baby in the crib, breast feeding, etc.).

There are three parts that make up a meme: attractiveness, viability, and replication. Attractiveness is how neat or useful the meme is. If it looks attractive enough the host is going to take it and incorporate it—advertisers are pretty keen on this one. Viability is the usefulness and stability of the meme in its host. The meme for making a better pot is going to stick around a lot longer than the meme for jabbing yourself in the eye with a pointy stick. This aspect also deals with how a meme reacts with other memes, either in a cooperative fashion—such as the open minded-ness meme or in a destructive fashion—such as how current fashion memes seek to destroy older fashion memes. Finally replication is the ability of the meme to reproduce itself into other hosts, how easy is it to share or show someone.

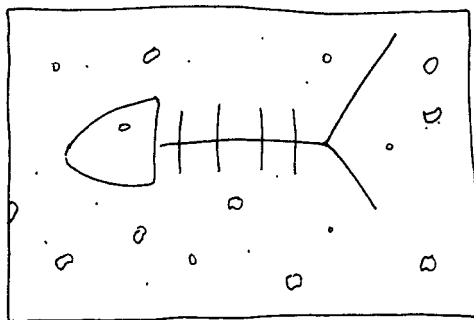
Memes are useful tools, aspects of our lives deeply intertwined with our ability to survive in this world. What is interesting is how when one is aware of what a meme is, there are possibilities to manipulate them. There are possibilities to look at the cultures and ideas around you, deconstruct them, and maybe ultimately rearrange them. This leads to possibilities of making new cultures for yourself and others.



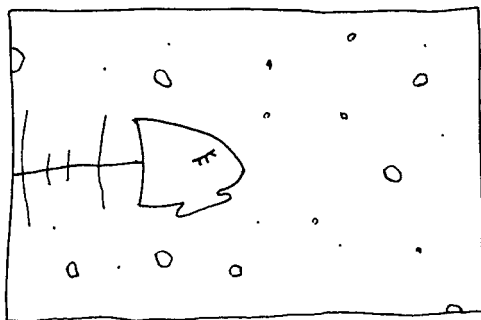
# THE ADVENTURES OF MAX

Pleistocene Fish

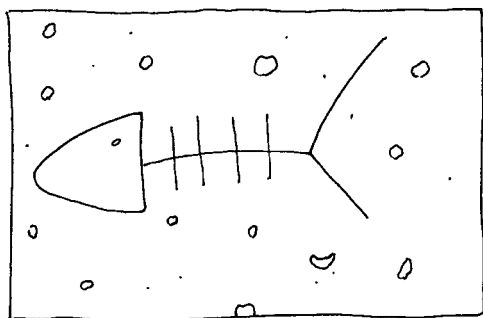
My cousin Larry  
just divorced his wife,  
a Brazillian Sucker-  
fish.



She's not much  
of a looker since  
she was fossilized.



He made me promise  
to only date live  
Suckerfish.



## Lone Wolf Symphony #5

### An Installment of the Lone Wolf Serial

The hippies' bus rolled over in the river like an affectionate whale begging for a good tummy scratch. You may or may not realize this, but 1969 V.W. Buses do not float very well; thus, the immediate problem that Lone Wolf Hippy Team #A had to confront was how to avoid a watery demise. Topaz and Tawmy (the totality of Lone Wolf's only hippy contingent) quickly realized that by playing David Grisman at volume level 4 or above, the liquid depths would simply refuse to swallow them, instead practically repelling the bus to a floating state. It was a brilliant strategy and when combined with some makeshift macrame sails, the dirty duo found they could navigate the river reasonably well.

Of course, driving the bus off the ravine had not been part of Topaz and Tawmy's original plan. Unfortunately, while gliding along the precipitous ledge, the clouds had proved too puffy, the sun too bright, and the air too fresh; pretty soon the twins were in a dream world and the bus was in midair.

Anyway, the idea was not just to get to the glistening pool in the heart of these Moabian labyrinths, but to actually submerge in its uncharted depths and uncover the entrance to the Dirt Demon Cave. Hippies, as everyone knows, are the only acceptable examples of humanity in the eyes of Dirt Demons.

Thus, the Lone Wolf Exploration Society, known far and thin for its

adventurous and discoverous exploits, had born the Hippy Team out of unhappy necessity. Sooner or later, the Lone Wolf would be able to finally eradicate the Dirt Demons; the trashballs had plagued the tidy adventurers since the group's inception in Kyoto, Japan in 1324. But without any intelligence of their strengths, social structure, eating habits, etc., the Lone Wolf Shock Troops would be painfully unable to mount a shock attack upon the Dirt Demon hordes.

And, as anyone knows, the Dirt Demons are the greatest purveyors of disarray and clutter (most heinous vices!) on the planet. In fact they even sing a little anthem about it, which goes like this:

*We are dirty and stupid, yes we are,  
I once stuck my head in a pottle of tar,  
Sing-a-hi-de-hi, hi-de-ho,  
Have ye rasta braids, or large afro.*

That's it; perhaps the dumbest song on the planet. And it happened to be the same song the spying hippies began to sing through their scuba regulators as they peered at the inconspicuous entrance to the Dirt Demon Kingdom. Only two people had been to this spot and lived to tell about it; one founded punk rock shortly thereafter; the other simply went insane (a much easier route). But Topaz and Tawmy were fearless hippies, out to vanquish ignorance and save the Lone Wolf.

They continued singing (a little off key, to be honest), and bravely skittered toward the passage.

The first Dirt Demon (a fiery chap named L'il Jerry Garcia) they met immediately escorted them to the Dirt Demon Poombah, Stankle The Wonder Stink. Dirt Demons, as you probably already realize, are not entities in and of themselves; rather they are motley accumulations of all the debris and knickknacks they plunder from unsuspecting humans in order to cause chaos and confusion across the land.

Therefore, it was no great surprise for Tawmy to notice, nestled in the right corner of L'il Jerry Garcia's shoulder, the keys to an apartment he had lived in circa 1983, as well as an unopened packet of cigarette papers. Excited, the dirty hippy (even scuba diving doesn't seem to erase telltale grub and patchouli stank) reached for the rabbit's foot keychain. Suddenly the Poombah let out a thunderous shout.

"YOU THERE! Human ally of disorder! Unhand my minion!"

"Wha.. What, man? He's got my keys, man! My keys.. you know, man? I lost 'em, you know, man, like a long, long time ago. Hee. You know? I mean, they're my flipping keys and all." Tawmy looked longingly at the cigarette papers and fondled something in his poncho.

"Take them at your peril! That is all; leave my sight!"

"But, I mean, if he's got my keys an' stuff... I mean I need those, you know, to get in my pad. Or, at least, I did. I think. Anyway, I need 'em man;

keys are important. You gotta have 'em, you know to get into stuff and thi..."

"Somebody de-jaw this fool so as to spare me from his inane banter! I've had enough of his idiocy! Take the unclean ones to the Pile! Immediately!"

"AAAAAHHHHHHH!"

The Pile merits no description other than the fact that it was too dirty even for hippies. After 10 days of living on jelly beans and popcorn seeds that had fallen in sofa cracks around the world, the hippies had managed to befriend several of the household mouse slaves and compile a small dossier on the Dirt Demon Kingdom. It was written on an old Etch-a-Sketch and contained the following items of information:

1. Dirt Demons steal everything we think we lose; their cache is miles deep and larger than the state of Florida.
2. Their goal is twofold; creating confusion and acquiring snack food (the two being remarkably similar). They subsist primarily on said snack food.
3. The only thing that really scares Dirt Demons is the rustled paper sound of a book opening. This sound also terrifies many 5th graders.
- 3a. Vacuums they dislike, but are able to neutralize by hiding in mustard yellow shag carpeting.
4. They have a plan to invade Lone Wolf's headquarters within three months.

These vital morsels of information, stored on the Etch-a-Sketch, were

smuggled to the surface of the earth by one of the friendly mice, the jostled journey unfortunately smudging part of the message. Thus, Commander Frank Lash, of the LWES' Contact and Exchange Bureau, who retrieved the message from exhausted mouse was only able to interpret it as follows:

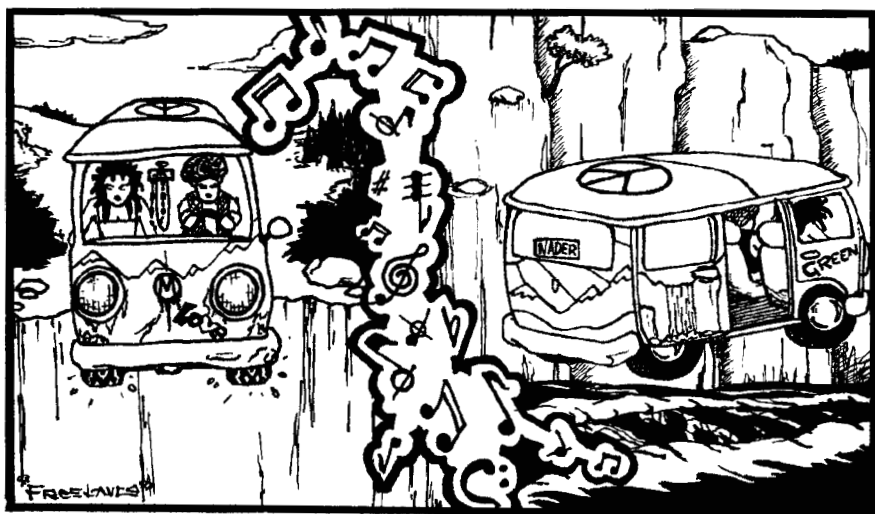
1. The Demon horde (possibly Hell?) was somewhere in Florida.
2. The enemy had been buying stock in various snack food and vacuum cleaner companies.
3. Their plan is to cover the Lone Wolf H.Q. with shagging carp or squealing 5th graders.
4. The hippies were having a groovy time involving go-go dancers and a huge neon sign. (Commander Lash was and is known for his remarkable imagination - Lone Wolf only recruits the best.)

Hurling himself into action, Commander Lash began preparations for an extraction of the dancing hippies and defensive measures against the lusty fish and children.

But will his quick thinking be enough? Will Topaz and Tawmy, trapped beneath a ton of terrible trash, straighten out the Commander's thinking in time to save the Society? Will they escape and be able breathe sweet patchoulie-scented air again? Will the bus continue to hover over the surface of the pool? Will the go-go dancers be able to keep up with David Grisman's sizzling groove? Will somebody please turn that stuff off?

Find out next month. Same time. Same place.

Bye.



## A Story:

Once, a long time ago a famous Japanese poet and his haiku henchmen were sitting around the famous poet's house meditating. What they were thinking no one knows. They claimed however to be meditating on transcendence of some sort or another. I'm willing to take their word for it.

Regardless it was very quiet, as it gets when one meditates. It was so quiet that when a frog jumped into a pond across the way, the splashing sound echoed throughout the house and the ears of the of the poets. Immediately the simplest, most famous, and smartest of the poets stood up. Was his concentration shattered? Probably not, for then the poet stood and spurted from his lips, "Frog jump in, water sound!"

All of his henchmen applauded him for his excellent work, and as the poet sat back down. They contrived to find a third line, for surely this would make a grand haiku. Finally, after many suggestions and many arguments, the poet himself suggested the third line, "Old pond." Everyone was astounded at the beauty and simplicity. And so Basho, the famous Japanese poet, composed one of his, if not greatest, most recognized poems of all time.

### *Basho's poem*

Old pond,  
frog jump in,  
water sound.

## Another Story:

A couple of summers ago I visited one my old friends. She and I went a long ways back, I was a sophomore in college when we meet (which was an embarrassingly long time ago). I also had a crush on her from the moment I saw her. But there were some complications, not to mention my complete ineptness in many regards, that meant we were never to date.

But that does not mean that you do not care for and grow to love them regardless. I loved this person a lot, even though she moved to North Carolina—far away from my home in Colorado. That summer I was visiting her for what was supposed to be her college graduation. Well, things were not working out as they should have.

Her then fiancé had dumped her, after cheating on her with multiple women and perhaps men of whom most were prostitutes, she was failing her last semester, had just moved, and was visited by a host of other problems. Basically she was completely shattered. What was supposed to be a fun two week vacation was some sort of extended stay in hell instead.

Being a good friend meant that I was there with her through the worst of it. And I was the best friend she had around, meaning that she unleashed all her emotions around me more than anyone. That brought me, although nowhere near her despair, to a black realm indeed. Above all I just felt drained of everything, in giving so much support I felt very empty.

One night I was walking her dog. She couldn't because the stress was aggravating an old accident injury. I had left her crying in frustration more than pain, laid up in bed. Walking the dog was some easy way to help her, and secretly I just wanted to get away from her for a while.

There was a pond in back of her house where the dog and I were walking. And as anyone who ever walked a dog knows, the dog has to do some serious investigation of exactly where they're going to shit. Well, the dog happened to snuffle into some grass at the edge of the pond, startling a frog into jumping into the water.

This scared the hell out of me. I was busy selfishly wallowing in my misery, and had my concentration broken. Of course I knew it was a frog, but being temporarily scared forced me to take stock of everything else around me.

I felt at ease for a few seconds. Looking at the half full moon, reflections of house lights in the pond disturbed by ripples, hearing the night insects, and, yes, all this with a dog shitting five feet away.

### An Introduction of Sorts:

Pretend that you have a pond. This pond is the pond of our current understanding of haiku.

Now throw Basho and his poem into the pond.

Notice the ripples spread out. There are billions of other ripples or people's writings and interpretations, some interacting with the Basho splash, others not.

We who write or read haiku are standing on the shore of the pond feeling the ripples. We cannot help but have some movement imparted on ourselves as long we stand in this pond . . .

For me, ever since I started writing haiku, Basho has been my main competitor. In the small puddle of my head he is a big frog. Following are a smattering of interpretations or reflections on Basho over-read and over-analyzed "Old Pond" poem. These are not critiques. Instead they are efforts to incorporate a famous Japanese poet's ideas to make them something that is more a part of us, so we can understand, than a tradition to try to refute or ignore.

*moonlight and the corrupted haiku*

Water sound:  
glance again,  
empty chair tonight—  
lines of ink.

Jump:  
glass thrown face  
dissolved in headlights—  
broken tongue.

Old pond:  
corner stare—  
moonlight skims over  
unmade bed.

## Two to One

second haiku

sometimes she opens

magenta breeze

(to begin)

There Once Was

(a student yawns, a student yawns, a student yawns)

and this man he did

(bitten pen bites at paper; scratch, scratch, scratch)

God mercifully opened

(stale apples wafting through the broken window)

come down 'he begged', come up 'he cried'

('after class, we'll...'; 'after that, I'll...'; 'after...')

iron sweat lacing his heroic arm, glistening

(fly buzz-buzzing, buzz fly-flying)

the malice red dragon, viper horns, saber fangs, so well defined

(scale scribblings across the margins, a sea, of, squares, drowning)

blade-beast-battle-blood-beat-back-

(blah-beh-bah-blah-beh-bah-)

close

(close)

And Now You Know

how it perspires

tears on a fresh pear

straw basket



## Two to One

### Recognition

- (1. accolades cascade; it's a ruined drown)
- (2. definition defines; it's a bit too light)
- (3. a something that's not quite like the something  
somehow you  
somehow felt somewhere sometime  
not all that long ago)

### Cogitation

- (1. academics mimic; it's a schooling screech)
- (2. awareness wears; it's a lot too long)
- (3. a goosebump eruption leaving skin  
washing away like fat swans  
from an early epic—lush mortality, humility,  
the ability to shout hello! goodbye! i love you!  
from the towers you routinely visit  
at the hour of suicide)

### Good Morning

to this soft vicious blood, this rigid perfect instant,  
this hot this cold this () emotion and it's come  
as I come  
and there you're gone  
as I go

## Two to One

the tear  
the drool  
the spill  
the splash  
the bath  
the puddle  
the pond  
the stream  
the river  
the desert  
the stream  
the desert  
the pond  
the desert  
the desert  
the tear  
the drool  
the tear  
the drool  
the spill  
the bath  
the bath  
the bath  
the spill  
the bath  
the puddle  
the pond  
the stream  
the river  
the lake  
the ocean  
the desert  
the ocean  
the desert  
-frog-  
the ocean  
-jump-  
the desert  
-in-  
the tearlakesplashpuddlebathdroolstreampondriverspill it (again!)  
- -

## The Stranger

The dispute had begun before even the oldest members of the council could remember. The village was separated between people who felt the gods were patently vindictive and people who felt the gods rewarded those who proved their humility. During my forty-one years of life nothing had changed.

That was until just over four weeks ago.

\* \* \*

The stranger had entered the village from the river grass on the eastern border. He was dressed in the traditional garb of our area, though the manufacture was of unnatural quality. The cloth was as vibrant as any of the local avians and the stitches were unbelievably regular. He also spoke our tongue, though too precisely to be a native, yet his vocabulary far surpassed many of our village elders.

He came to be known as Desconocido del Ranas though he never offered word for or against it.

We all secretly thought the stranger's appearance and behavior was odd, but he was a hard worker and had knowledge of farming and construction we had never considered.

Within a few weeks he had gained the trust of many by teaching us his skills. However, more and more the town folk grew wary of the stranger. They began to question his accent and his clothing, wondering if he had been sent by the gods.

Near the end of the fourth week the council of elders held a secret meeting to hear the concerns of the village's two factions while the stranger was in the fields showing the farmers how better to direct water from the river to their crops. Some felt the stranger was a sign that the vindictive gods were playing a trick on the villagers, trying to ruin their harvest by altering their traditional means of farming. Others felt that the stranger was a test for the villagers; if they accepted his teaching they would be showing their dominance over nature, and thus over the gods themselves.

For three days the council considered the dilemma in closed conference.

At the end of the three days the stranger was summoned and informed of the villager's concerns. He stood silently in front of them looking nervous for the first time since his arrival. The council then declared that regardless of whose argument was correct they had only one course of action.

\* \* \*

This afternoon the stranger's body was released into the river to float down stream, back to the gods. Today the villagers were all in agreement for the first time in my forty-one years of life. We had made the right decision, even if for differing reasons. Tomorrow we will start plowing over the irrigation ditches and replacing the thatch on our roofs.

spring creek

scharrrrrr

scheeerrshharrrrr

chaaaaaaa

gloop

splip

boop

sglip

tschip

tsthip

glioop

sip

tsssssssssss

bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

tsheep

tsheerup

schoop

sup

schup

cache le poudre

chearrshhhhhhhhhh

shhhhhhhhhhtssssssssss

wishhhhhhssssssssss

shhhhhslupslupshhhhhh

ssschearrrrshhhhhhssss

shhhhhh

rrshhhhssssschearssss

speersshhhhhh

ssssssishlishhhhhh

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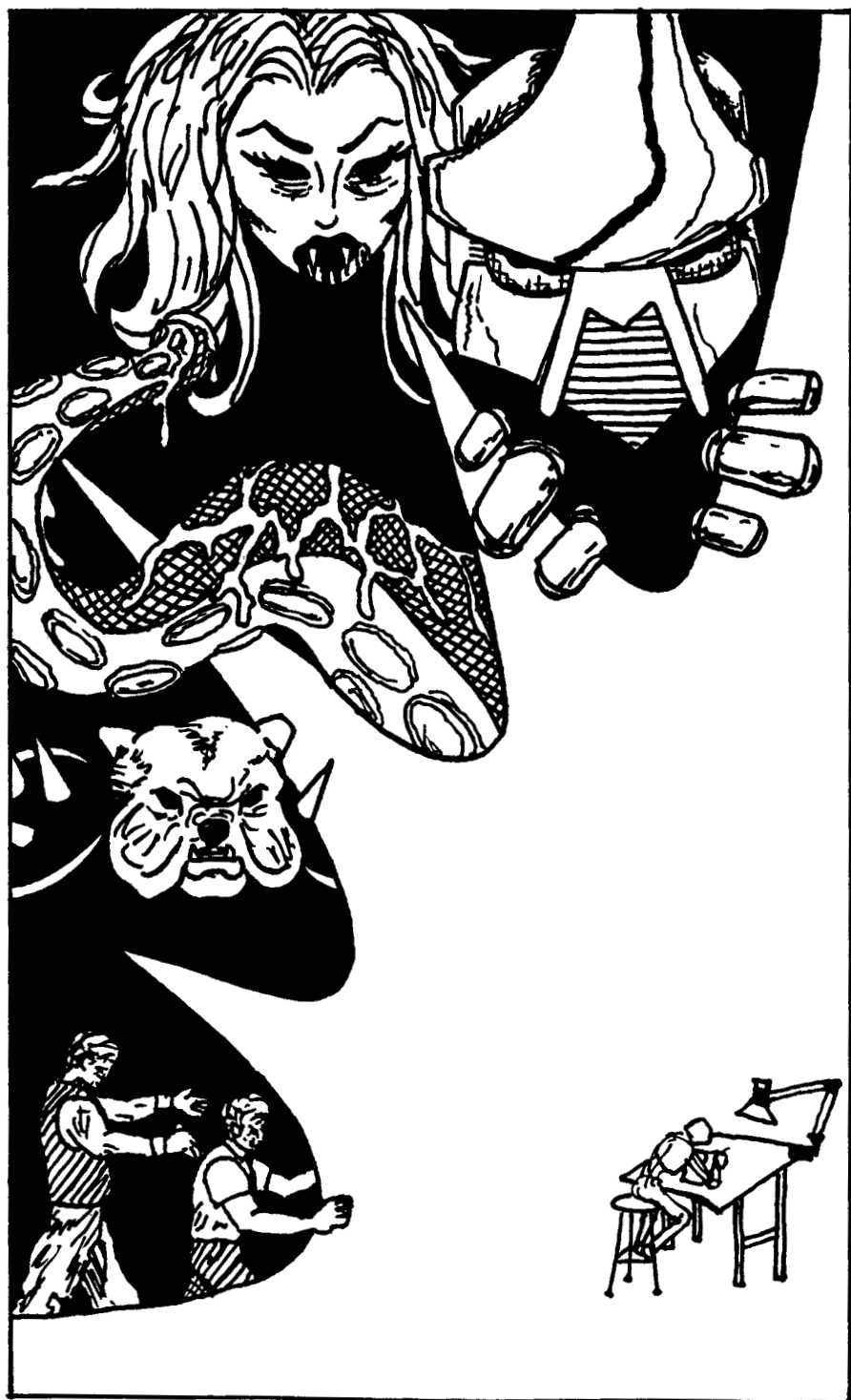
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shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

# MONSTER MASH





## Guidelines for Submissions:

- 1) Any printable medium accepted (electronic format preferred).
- 2) Work must communicate with intent and communicate effectively.
- 3) Works addressing the author/artist's growing understanding of themselves or their environment and culture more favored in the selection process.
- 4) Send work or comments to [melchior@central-dogma.net](mailto:melchior@central-dogma.net) or mail to:  
A.E.M.  
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Ft. Collins, CO 80521

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007	"Blink", "Symphony #5"
wasawasnotnot	Two to One
Free Lance	Hippie Bus Drawing, Monster Mash
Spackle	"untitled #n", "The Stranger", building and facing
Melchior	Haiku, other words and rants, head editor

some stoopid dogs press: 12.00