

2-3-93

GRANGRAN;

HERE IT IS! FINALLY!

I included a few others also, (I hope you don't mind,) and they are in chronological order - but feel free to read them in any order you choose. The post-it notes (I think you gave them to me,) are small blurbs on each one.

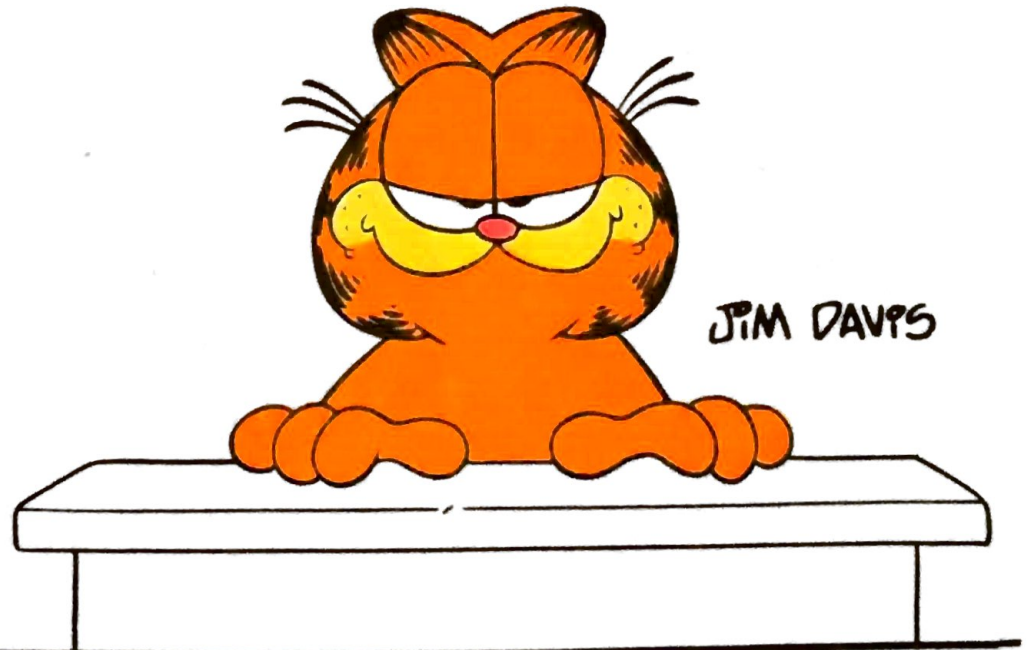
After you read them, please write me back with your comments. I'd love to hear 'em! Well, I'll see you soon I hope.

LOVE,
Dad

FROM THE DESK OF ME

Also written in 7th grade:

This is the actual, unrevised text of one of my first outside-school fictional writings. Partially based on a dream.



Matt Temple
June, 1991

A Wedding in June

I had just arrived, but wasn't sure if I had walked. I sat and ate my thin, hot slice of pizza as I observed my nearby surroundings. It was the thursday of the last week of school but the school was strangely calm, a nice change from the usual hustling and bustling around the hot building. Everything seemed normal, routine, indifferent, and there was nothing out of place.

Then I saw her, but I didn't find it unusual. I saw her every day. She was in my class and I considered her my friend, even though I didn't know her very well. She had pretty, blond hair which she wore short and I had liked her as more than a friend at the beginning of the year. But that was over. We were just friends now, and it was nothing more than that.

She walked from the junk food line, soda in hand, and began a slow and respected stride back to her table. Then she saw me. Her path curved naturally and she strode towards me. Nearing the table, she popped the tab on her soda. As she continued towards me I heard the familiar sound of the release of carbonated air quickly escaping the thin, metal can. Placing her arm on the table she sat down with a curving motion which seemed very natural to her. With her right hand, she placed the soda can very evenly upon the table. Then she clasped her hands together and looked into my eyes and smiled.

It was a warm, embracing smile. It seemed to say, "Hello, how are you, it's great to see you, you can trust me, I'm your

friend." But then her expression changed. It was now more serious, yet still inviting, open. With sincerity and a hint of knowing advice, she said, "You know, you should get married."

Even though it was quite uncommon to get married at the age of twelve or thirteen, I thought about it seriously. I had never thought seriously about marriage before, nor of getting married to her. Was this a proposal? Did she want to marry me? I decided to play it safe, so I chose my words carefully.

"Who would I get married to?," I asked her with a look of wonder in my eyes, yet a smile of knowledge.

Quickly, she responded with a remark I never would have imagined her saying.

"Will you marry me?," she asked plainly.

And now, I felt myself having to make a very serious decision. I answered "yes" in my mind and then thought, "why not?," Why not marry her? At this point I made the decision that yes, I would marry her, and my decision was solely based on the fact that I could find nothing wrong with the idea, and not that I had previously wanted to marry her. So, with no further adieu I said, "Yes."

She held my hand and smiled, then turned and left, returning to the table from which she had previously come.

As I sat alone, considering why I had so willingly said yes, my head lowered and I began to stare at the red and blue lines and words on the soda can she had left on the table. I thought about the reasoning I had used to decide and the reliability of

it. I thought about the silence of the day and the oddness of the four- line conversation that had taken place shortly before.

I sank deep into a state of thought as I sat and stared at the can of soda. I enjoyed the calmness for a while and then thought of the can of soda. She had taken only one sip, there must be some left in the can. I wondered if she wanted it. It was very hot. I decided I would just get up and take it to her, without drinking any. But it was very hot. Just a little sip. Just one. Who cares, she'll never know, or care for that matter. Why am I thinking about this? It has no effect on anything.

So I took one sip of the soda and got up. I walked toward the table at which she was sitting. As I approached, she looked up from a conversation she was having with one of her girlfriends. I handed her the soda and she said, "Thank you very much, I must have accidentally left it over there." She asked me to sit down and gently patted a place to the right of where she was sitting. I sat down and she looked at me, she looked deep into my eyes and smiled. I smiled back but then she looked disappointed.

Suddenly I felt a deep choking inside my body and I let out a cough which sounded much less painful than the force which motivated it. She patted me on the back and, from an angle at which only I could see her face, she let out a cruel, curling smile. I coughed once more, this time it seemed my heart was racing faster, and once again she patted me on the back and from where her girlfriend couldn't see her she let out yet another quite cruel and very chilling smile. I began to wonder why she

was doing this, if she was doing it, and (finally) what she was doing. Holding out the can of soda, she said, "Here, drink some, maybe it'll help." Her eyes seemed to wince as she flashed me an icy gaze. Thinking of nothing except the horrible cough and my racing heart, I took the soda and drank.

She offered some more soda, but now I realized. I politely declined and explained that I would be leaving now. I got up and began to leave to try and save my own life, but she stopped me, and said, "Will you sign my yearbook?"

In the split-second after she said those ironic words, I felt the cruelty of the whole thing. And I felt the questions. Why propose to me before poisoning a soda and trying to kill me? Why does she want to kill me? I've known her since fifth grade, she's my friend, right?

"Will you sign my yearbook, please?," her soft, clear voice sharply penetrated my thoughts.

"Why, of course," I said, as I sat down once again. She handed me her yearbook, and I grasped a pen from my shirt pocket and began to write. I signed her yearbook with a flourish and a message. She closed the book as I handed it to her. She slipped the blue-backed book into her backpack and looked at me, smiling. I looked back in horror, as I felt my internal organs sporadically flexing and contracting, as my heartbeat became increasingly rapid, as she grabbed my hand and screamed, and as I fell and died, right there on the lunchroom floor in a strange mixture of trash, old food and blood. And my killer cried. Her tears diluted by blood and my blood stained her shoes.

An hour later, in a hellish, would- be geography class, a blond- haired girl sat crying along with some of her class and teachers, who were wondering as to the cause of this bizarre death.

The next day in morning advisory the girl opened her backpack and did something even she hadn't been able to do before. Out of her backpack she pulled her yearbook and opened it to the inside of the back cover. A single tear fell from her right eye and the entire class turned and watched in silence as she read her last words aloud.

"I know what you did," she read, her hands shaking, "Now Face Up." And then she read my name, just as I had signed it.

She placed the open yearbook on her desk and slowly removed from her backpack a red and blue soda can, still containing some soda, and placed it neatly on her desk. As everyone watched in wonder, she picked up the can of soda with her right hand, and took a sip. She coughed, then fell upon the floor. Her body began twitching as her heartbeat became increasingly rapid and the pretty girl died, blood spurting violently from her broken veins. And the blood stained her once pretty, blond hair as it slowly seeped in between the cracks of the hardwood floor, forever staining it with the essence of death.

-Matt Temple

FROM THE DESK OF ME

Written in 7th grade as a response to the book Goodbye Tomorrow who's author's name escapes me.

This recieved the highest grade I got all year in 7th grade for English writing. - It wasn't necessarily my best writing, but it recieved the highest grade.

My teacher loved it.



JIM DAVIS

Matt Temple

Shannon

Alex's situation has forced me to face my own mortality as well as his. He doesn't have AIDS yet. Alex gets sick more than he used to but he can still attend most of his classes. John and Alex and I stayed here in our home town for college. It's a small school and Alex didn't like the idea, but we talked him into staying here with us. John and Alex are roommates. Alex is learning to accept devotion and help from others. We all really pulled together this past year. I think it's good for Alex to have me and John with him. Alex and I are still going out. My mother hates it. She hates me, too, I think. I'm glad I'm living at the dorm. I dread going home for holidays. For thanksgiving I went to Alex's house. My parent's were infuriated, but when I'm at home all we do is fight. I can't stand my parents. Alex's parents are handling the issue very well, I think. They don't mind me going out with him but they wanted to make sure I knew what I was doing so we (Alex and his parents and I) had a talk last year and it was really great. I wish I had them as parents. Alex and I talked a lot last year and decided that we do truly love each other, and should continue to go out. Its been really hard for me. I love Alex, I truly do. But he's going to die some day. Soon. I'm going to die, too. What will happen when he dies? Am I just wasting my time, just setting my self up for devastation? It will be hard for us when Alex dies but I guess it's better to have and lose than never to have at all. True friends are always there for you, and

as long as he's on this earth, I want to truly be Alex's friend,
because that's what he (and everyone else) needs the most.

FROM THE DESK OF ME

This story was written in 7th grade but I think I dusted up the sentence structure in 8th grade last year.

It's different from the rest in that it's a no-moral intended action script meant for a movie scene.



Matt Temple

Kim put down a book she had been reading and looked up. She was sitting on the hood of her Mazda Miata which was parked in an empty parking lot in North Philadelphia. A large overhead light shown down on her and her partner, Eric, who was sleeping in the front passenger seat.

Suddenly a bullet zipped past Kim's ear, striking the iron pole behind her with a loud "bong". Kim instantly dropped to the ground and plastered herself to the side of the red car. More gunfire cracked in the air as Kim heard the screech of tires and saw blue and white flashes exploding from the barrel of the MAC-17 assault rifle which was blasting five-millimeter shells towards Kim and Eric, and their borrowed car.

The BMW, which was carrying two snipers, a driver, and an electronics engineer, sped up as the killers turned the corner on to a back street. The car's automatic windows slid closed as Kim stood straight up, reached into her coat pocket, pulled out her F.B.I. issue RT-9, and fired two shots at the retreating BMW. The first shattered the rear windshield, and the second pierced the spine of the main gunner, sending him crashing forward.

Kim vaulted over the right-hand side door of the car, sending her atop the sleeping Eric and landing her in the driver's seat. She slammed her foot on the gas almost before she turned the key in the ignition. The car barely strained as Kim quickly accelerated to fifty. She made a sharp turn which stirred Eric.

"They're not getting away this time," Kim said as she turned off the headlights.

"Oh, you mean the hit-men. Those aren't the dealers, Kim, they've probably just been hired to do us. Are you sure we want to follow them? We don't want to aggravate Boskiki again..."

"I don't care how the hell aggravated he gets, Eric, they tried to kill us- and they at least deserve a little scare." Kim sped up. Now they were doing sixty.

"Kim, the lights, were going sixty-what? Oh my god, Kim, slow down. If we were on a highway-," Eric began.

"So what? I don't want Boskiki's boys getting away with murder."

"Attempted murder," Eric pointed out.

"Especially if we were their target," Kim continued, seemingly unaffected by Eric's comment.

Kim pressed her foot harder on the accelerator, putting the car's 116 horse power to a formidable test. They seemed to move closer to the BMW. As Kim crossed a red light, their car was barely missed by a Honda crossing behind. Kim quickened their pace, which was now about eighty m.p.h.. There were no other cars in sight. The time- 1:45 a.m.. Another set of shots came from the BMW, this time shattering the passenger-side rear-view mirror.

"Kim," Eric said forcefully, "stop the car."

"No, they'll get away," Kim responded as she followed the BMW onto a highway entry ramp. More gunshots came, this time missing the Miata. Kim put on her sunglasses as the car phone rang.

"Will you get that, please?" Kim seemed annoyed.

Eric answered the phone. "Hello?...Oh yeah?...Well he can shove that up his...what do you mean, 'watch this'?...Yeah?, well you boys better quit with this...What?...Hello?" Eric hung up.

"What did they want?" Kim asked.

As his own gun was not immediately accessible, Eric grabbed Kim's RT-9 and stood up in the front seat of the speeding car. He fired at the car in front of them, shattering the BMW's front windshield. The nine-millimeter bullets exploded on contact with the car, sending shards of glass and flaming particles through the air. Kim accelerated on the highway, as did the BMW. The two cars' positions remained synchronous while travelling at around one-hundred miles an hour. Eric sat down and shot twice, aiming for the tires of the BMW. The two left tires shredded against the asphalt, reducing them to small rubber strips which scattered across the road.

Eric turned around and reached into the back seat of the small car. Dropping Kim's RT-9, he grasped an AK-47 automatic assault rifle as Kim sped past the stalled BMW. Eric snapped together the solid pieces of the gun, producing a series of metallic "clinks", which sounded flat. Kim slammed on the brakes and turned the steering wheel sharply as the Miata spun around and stopped so that it was facing the BMW, which lay still in a cloud of smoke and dust. The BMW's battered doors had not opened. Kim lay down low on the seat. Eric cautiously sat up and fired a few tracing bullets, which exploded in bright flaming spots on the dark night sky. Then he let a round of twelve-millimeter exploding bombs escape from the barrel of the variable-ammo, multi-purpose, fully automatic assault rifle. In one swift movement, the BMW's doors folded inward to permit the incendiary projectiles' passage. Eric shifted his laser sight to the gas tank and pulled the trigger back. The bullets exploded inside the tank, creating several sequential explosions of increasing magnitude. The sides of the BMW exploded outward, and the seats and whatever else was inside the car erupted to form an infernal explosion whose powerful intensity shook the ground where Eric and Kim now stood. The heat from the fire singed the hair on Eric's arms and made Kim's eyes ache.

The twosome departed promptly to avoid being seen. Kim made another backwards u-turn and sped off away from the former sniper's former BMW. They headed in the direction of their team's current home base location, a South Philadelphia home. Eric put away the AK-47 and went back to sleep, asking Kim to consult him before she decided to chase Boskiki's employees again...

FROM THE DESK OF ME

This was written for a friend last year.

Several of the verses were later
recompiled and used for a literary magazine
entry.

My favorites are 1-6; 11-12.



JIM DAVIS

June 18, 1992

Yesterday; I began a journey—
Early yesterday I went to meet my friends;
You greeted me with words of laughter,
Courageous hearts, and joyous grins.

Yesterday; we left together—
Embarked upon a glorious day;
The sky was clear, the sun was shining,
An endless road did mark our way.

Yesterday; we stopped our search—
To rest, to play, to have some fun;
We stopped, to use our busy time,
To laugh, and dance, to fly, and run.

Yesterday; we cared too much—
And fought, and cried, and tried to see.
We saw the grief, we saw the pain,
Now I know that you do love me.

Yesterday; we set off as a team—
You trusted me and I trusted you;
We ate, we drank, we slept together,
Our commitment was as if brand new.

Today; we start an endless journey—
A journey of the bread of life;
This voyage to the land of truth,
Will cleanse the killer's bloody knife.

Today; I look upon my goal—
To follow 'till thy will is done;
But of myself I ask this question,
Is my deed a tainted sun?

A tainted sun, an unclean thought—
Could be the moon we see, or stars;
The sun is not so much a sun,
But that which causes pain and scars.

Considering our warm embrace,
And all the things we do for fun;
I, on this day, must ask myself,
Is our love a tainted sun?

So, my truth, I must hear now,
Is our love a tainted one?
'Cause what is painful for another,
Can not, for me, be half as fun.

Tomorrow; We will live forever,
And have no hates, or hurts, or pains;
We'll live in timeless virtue,
Without the fights, and earthly strains.

Tomorrow; I can love you,
In splendid bliss and perfect peace;
Then we'll live together,
And all the wars and bombs will cease.

But now, once more, I ask myself,
Is our love a tainted sun?
I want it too, but still I ask,
Is this joy a tainted one?

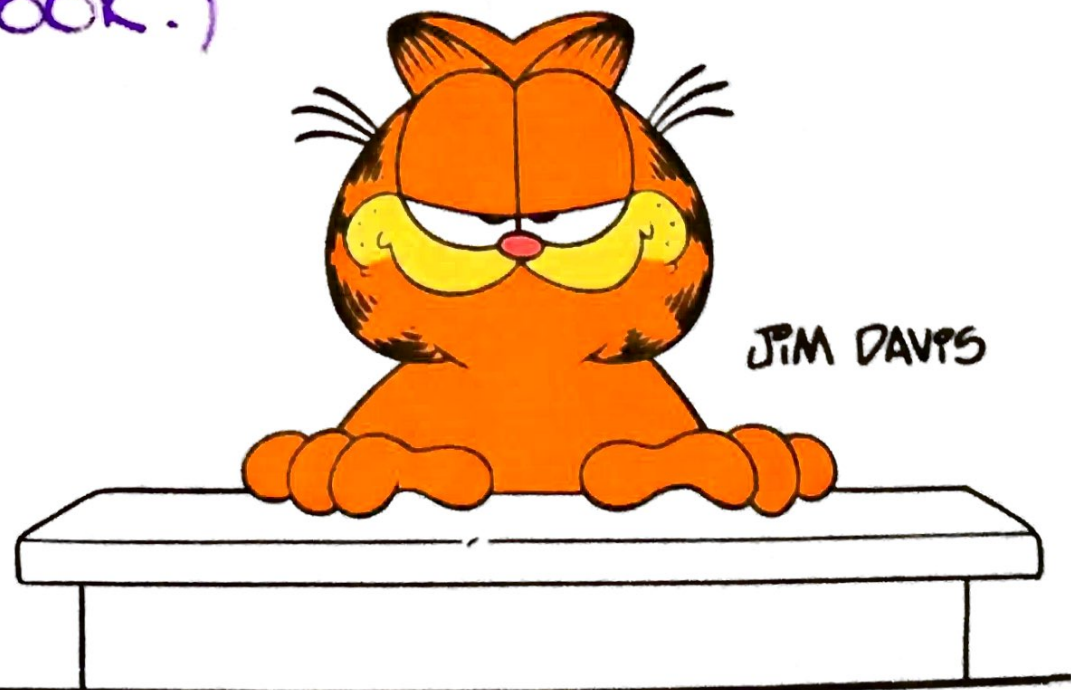
I've looked, and searched, and questioned,
A hundred thousand times before;
But today I think I've found my quest,
So I will search no more.

The answer is upon us,
This is my reply:
Our love is not a tainted sun,
But a pure sun- in a tainted sky.

-Matt Temple

FROM THE DESK OF ME

Written quite recently, this was intended for a Lenten devotional I was asked to write for; but my piece is twice the length they wanted. (I'm currently writing something else for the devotional book.)



January 26, 1993

The Call

Jesus was by the sea preaching the Word of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Simon was fishing when he heard Jesus. He thought it would be admirable to follow Jesus, so he did, leaving all his fishing equipment by the shore.

Jesus walked on, not looking back at Simon, who walked directly behind Jesus. After a while, they had come to the top of a big hill. Without turning around, Jesus asked Simon, "What do you want from me?"

Simon stopped walking. "Teacher," he asked, "Where are you staying?"

Now Jesus stopped walking. His head turned to the distance and that dreamy look came over his eyes. For a while the two of them stood there in silence; Jesus looking off towards the horizon and Simon wondering what he was getting himself into. The mystery and wonder Simon had felt down by the sea was now gone from him; he felt uncomfortable, inadequate to be standing there.

Jesus turned around and looked at Simon.

"If you want to know where I'm staying, why don't you come with me?"

Simon looked down at the ground, then deep within himself. Now he knew what Jesus was asking. Simon raised his head but could not bring himself to look Jesus in the eye. Instead he looked at the sky, then to Jesus' cheek, then back at the ground.

Jesus put his hands on Simon's face, and lifted it. The Love of God was imparted upon Simon, and he was made free of his burdens. The shackles fell from his ankles; the weight from his shoulders. The Love shot through his being, and it transformed him. He could be seen as Simon, then Peter. Simon. Peter. Simon Peter.

Peter.

Yes, this was definitely Peter.

Jesus lifted Peter's head and looked into his eyes. Probing.

Peter's emotions exceeded human control, and he burst into tears, laughing. He put his hands on Jesus' hands, overflowing with irrepressible Joy.

"I love You, Jesus!" he proclaimed, "More than anything else I know."

Peter looked straight up and was overcome by the Power of the Living God.

"And I will, my Lord Jesus; I will go with You."

We are co-creators of history with God.

We write on the pages of time.

We've been invited to write a chapter in God's Book.

What story will we choose to fill our pages with?

-Matt Temple

FROM THE DESK OF ME

My cousins and I do a writing session every once in a while where we give each other basic ideas and then take an hour to write a short story and this is what I came up with this year.

The clue that I had to write about was:

"The grand opening."



JIM DAVIS

Matt Temple
January 1, 1993

The "Spiffy" Man

He awoke just before the alarm went off. He threw off the covers and leapt out of bed. Wow, he was slick. If only those construction workers could put the railing on his balcony today.

The man danced around his room singing about himself, and thinking pleasant thoughts. He was so cheery. And cordial. All his friends thought so. He was always the life of the party; the social trophy of the year. The decade.

Thus his selfish thoughts ran.

He grabbed a towel and made his way to the bathroom. Upon entering he was caught by that handsome face in the mirror. He stopped, and turned, and looked. Gosh, did he look good. He was the best-looking guy he knew. Yes. His looks were far superior to those of his friends.

"Well," he thought, "I can't be late. I can't be sacrificing my perfect reputation for mirror time." So he resumed his morning activities.

He stepped into the shower, being sure to have achieved just the right water temperature beforehand. "We can't have me singing my perfect skin, now can we?" he thought. No, surely not.

The man washed his body carefully with nothing less than the finest cleansing bar money can buy. He shampooed his hair with some French stuff his stylist had suggested. "Perfect," he thought. "So perfect."

He rinsed his hair and stepped out of the shower onto his white bengal tiger bathmat. "Nothing but the best," he remarked to himself as he dried off with one of the softest towels on Earth. Nothing but the best. He looked out of the second-story window and saw a squirrel scatter down a tree.

The man began his daily shaving routine by making sure his precious skin was dry. When perfect face-dryness had been achieved, he whipped out his surgical quality, stainless steel razor (which he had sterilized the night before) and started what

would soon be another flawless shave. Thirty minutes later, after having gone through a process which could have been done no more thoroughly if surgeons had removed every hair follicle in his face, the man began the hair-combing sequence.

I will not describe this in detail, as it would take all night, but I will say that not a single hair was out of place, by which I mean, quite literally, that not a single hair was out of place. And oh, did he feel good about himself.

Then came getting dressed.

When he was done, he stood back and admired his work in a mirror. Wow. And then he had a thought: , Was it possible that on this very day he looked better than he ever had before? Now you see, this was a very difficult thing for him to comprehend, since he felt quite sure he had looked awfully good every other day of his life as well. But when he had finished scrutinizing his image, he decided it was true. He had achieved perfection. In every, single, way. He was the most handsome, the most daring, he had the best business instincts of everyone on Earth, he was the most liked, and on top of all that, he was simply the smartest person ever to live. "Wow!" he said aloud. "I look pretty spiffy!"

Spiffy. It truly described him in every way. The Spiffy Man was so full of himself it was difficult to walk, almost hard to see.

Well, now that he had achieved perfection, there was only one thing to do. He decided to go to work. And it was then that the grand opening occurred.

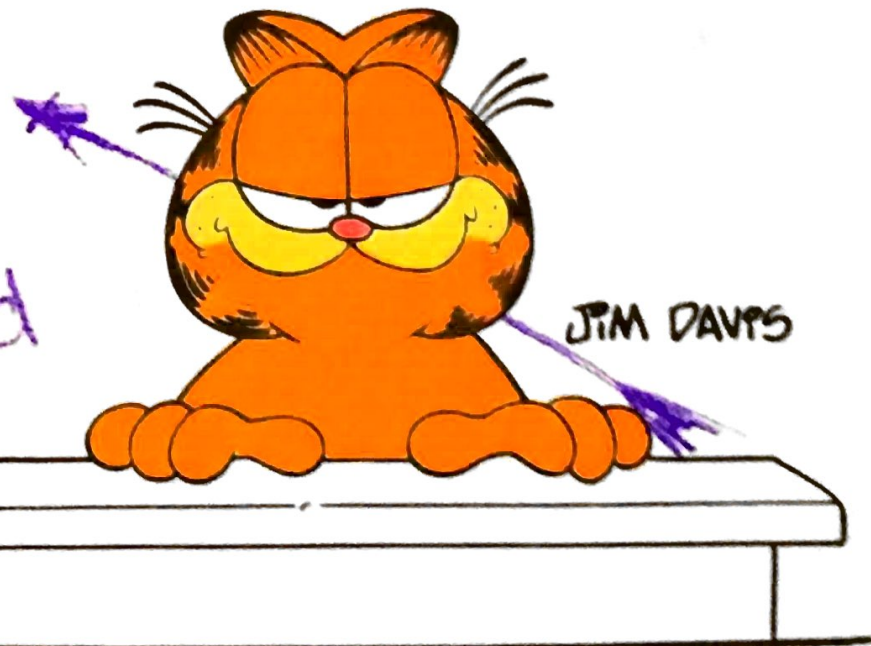
The Spiffy Man picked up his briefcase, opened the door, and stepped out-- over the edge of his second-story balcony.

FROM THE DESK OF ME

Ah, yes; the story that you asked for.
Well, I don't like to say anything about
this story before people read it so — —

I WONT!

— But write me back and
tell me what you think!
— Matt



Matt Temple
Matt Temple
October 13, 1992

The Three

I stepped out of the house. It was a Tuesday in mid-October and the cold Philadelphia air bit my face. I shivered. My cat was nowhere to be seen. I paused, and looked around. It was very quiet. Not as quiet as when it snows, but still very quiet. I didn't want to go to school.

I began moving. My legs were cold, but standing still wasn't going to help that. Within a minute I was standing at the bus stop, waiting. If there's one thing I hate doing on a cold day- it's waiting for a bus. I stood for a while, thinking about fire, and other warm things. A bus arrived. I entered its warmth, paid the fare, and rode to the subway. The brief trip from the bus to the subway was chilling, but it was nice to be underground in the station. I paid a second fare, and waited for the train to come. When the rumbling beast finally came to rest, its doors opened and I stepped aboard. A sparse crowd was around me and it was unusually quiet. There was the normal roar of the train but I didn't hear anyone talking. We passed through several stations, stopping momentarily at each one. The train started up once again, slowly accelerating to about forty miles an hour. I looked out one of the windows at the black walls we were passing by. Graffiti covered them, even far into the tunnel. My mind wandered, and I faded into the relentless monotony of the subway.

Suddenly, all went dark. I heard a loud pop and then the screech of grating metal. I felt myself being thrown forward. It tried to cover my head with my arms but I was not fast enough. My head hit the glass partition in front of where I had been standing. Then silence.

When I came to, I was lying under a tree. At the time, it seemed odd that I should be lying under a tree, when I clearly remembered being in a subway train just before. I picked my head up and looked around. Where was I? There were people walking around on brick paths. And there were log cabins, like the ones they had when the United States had just been started, back in the eighteenth century. Had I gone back in time? The thought raced across my mind. I looked up. I cleared my eyes, and looked again. No, I wasn't in the eighteenth century. The people strolling about were wearing modern clothes and some were pushing kids in contemporary strollers. Yes, this looked just like good old 1992, but *where*? I started to stand up, and realized that I had shorts on. And a tee-shirt. But it was warm. The sun was shining and I found the cool breeze to be refreshing and relaxing. What month was it? Certainly not mid-October. I got up and stepped onto one of the sidewalk-like brick paths. The clouds rose up above me like mountains. I tried not to look too wierd stepping off the grass where I had been lying like a bum. My head! I felt my forehead where it had

struck the glass. Nothing. Oh well. It was certainly hard to accept the unknown world where I was, but I was happy that my head had been mended. The sun was bright in my eyes and I stumbled into a woman who was walking with her three children.

"Excuse me," I said. "I'm sorry." I tried to get out of the way.

"That's Ok," she replied. The woman and her children walked on, seemingly unaffected. I tried to be more conscious as I continued along the path. I had no idea where I was going, but it was comforting to see the usual sights of life. I must be in some kind of historical location, I thought. I saw a public restroom and headed toward it, feeling the need to relieve myself. Inside, I noticed it was a particularly well-cleaned public restroom. I wondered what I was going to do and I pondered calling my house from a pay phone. As I walked outside into the blissful sun, I heard a familiar voice call my name.

I squinted, and tried to recognize the owner of the voice. I stepped into the group of people where the voice was coming from even before I recognized who they were. My eyes adjusted to the light. My aunt! My family! I was overjoyed to see these familiar faces.

"Louise! Mom! It's good to see you." I said these things not thinking of how awkward I sounded.

"Well, it's good to see you too," my aunt Louise said half-sarcastically. "Its been, oh..., twenty minutes?"

"Honey, are you Ok?" my mom asked.

"Yes, of course. I'm fine." I didn't want to appear too out of place. Did they know that I had been in a subway accident? And then, was I really in a subway accident? My family members seemed to think that I had seen them just twenty minutes ago. And it was summer. I mean now, now it was summer. And I had just been in winter a half-hour ago.

We were walking. We walked around the place for a while and I tried to figure out where we were, without revealing to my family that I didn't know. I already knew that we must be in some type of historical sight. There were restored log cabins, signs labeling lime kilns and streams. I didn't recognize the names of any of the streams, and limekilns can be found just about anywhere on the east coast. Of course, I had assumed I was still on the east coast of the United States. But should I have?

We walked past a museum and my cousin Jamie remarked that "it sure was a pretty museum that we went in." I agreed, having no idea what was in the museum, or what it looked like. I assumed we were going back to the car, to drive home- wherever home was.

"Where are we going next?" I asked furtively.

"Shopping." my aunt Louise answered. Thanks a lot. That helps. Shopping. We could go shopping anywhere in the world. We continued on, walking along the stone paths past a good number of people. Then I saw it. "Information" I almost ran to the information booth but stopped myself so I wouldn't look suspicious. When I got to the booth I grabbed a map but didn't

look at it until I had rejoined the family as they walked on. Then I looked down at the map. It was titled "Colonial Williamsburg." Ok. Now I knew where we were. My cousins lived in Richmond, Virginia and we had often visited Colonial Williamsburg together. I was surprised I had not recognized it already.

While my parents and cousins and my aunt Louise had stopped to look at some old fishing boats, I noticed a natural rock wall that looked like fun to climb. I've always liked climbing rocks. I climbed the wall and looked around. There was a field before me that looked endless. I paused for a moment and then began to walk. I was facing the sun, and walking in its direction. I continued walking towards the sun for the longest time. My aunt and family slipped from my thoughts as I tried to satisfy the inexorable desire to keep going. When I had walked a good ways, I stopped and looked around. What I saw then was more beautiful and more powerful than anything I had seen before. Enveloping my whole being was a sun-saturated field of grass. I felt bathed in the warm glow emitted by the whole sight and wanted nothing more than what I had. I felt wholly satisfied and content. I turned all the way around and lost all notion of from which way I had come. I could see nothing but the blue sky and the green grass and the glowing sun. I turned all the way around again, and to my surprise, the horizon was not clear. I stopped. About one hundred yards in front of me I saw a huge castle, like the ones in the Legend of King Arthur. I blinked. I felt overwhelmed by

this presence and I didn't know what to do.

Suddenly, I became aware of the sound of horse hoofs striking the ground with a thud. More specifically, I heard the sound of galloping, and I thought it was the galloping of more than one horse. I looked around. The drawbridge of the castle was being lowered slowly. To my left I saw three knights on horseback approaching me. At first they didn't appear to be going very fast, but as they came closer, I realized the enormity

of their speed. One of the knights drew its sword and headed toward me. I wasn't sure, but it looked like the knight had the intention of killing me. I became unnerved, and frantic, but I did not move. Something inside me held my feet firm to the ground. Instinct told me to move. The knights grew closer and closer, and as they did, the image of the sword became clear in my mind, and again I felt compelled to remain. As I stood, all the passion and feeling was swept from me. I lost control of my own self and became that of another presence. I only looked up and into the clouds, asking them for help. I pleaded with the sky, vowing not to look towards the knights again. I was so removed from my body that I knew not when the steel had pierced my skin, or that it had, except that after the knights had rode away, I witnessed as an observer the wound which now resided in my chest.

I knelt, and looked far into the distance. The hatred inflicted upon me tore deeper into my heart than did the wound

delivered by the sword. And I lay there for hours, thinking of nothing but the meaning of life, the uselessness of hate, and the futile nature of evil. I died then.

Slowly, ever so slowly, I perceived an object of unintelligible shape. It appeared to be flying, but not really flying, like an airplane does. It looked more like it was dancing. In the air. It was very high up in the air and it seemed to not only be coming from within a cloud, but was it possible that it was being formed *from* the cloud?

I was lying on my back, looking upward, studying this object and I could tell that it was coming to me, for me. It was in no hurry, and it was not even taking the shortest path to me. I was not worried about myself, now overwhelmed with curiosity about this entity.

As it came closer, I realized that it was a sailboat painted blue and white with a light gray stripe running along the hull. I became fascinated, and could not take my eyes from it. I also noticed, as the boat neared, that it was singing a song. It didn't have a mouth, like we do, but it was definitely singing this song. I *knew* that. The song also fascinated me. It had no words, but it meant something to me. It was all I wanted. It was peace. It was love. It was joy. My heart leaped and I felt a surge of energy flow through my being. I was lifted up as all I am, and accepted as that which I am.

The sailboat was slowly making its way down to me. Its sails were full of the day's air. The boat slid into dock beside me and I realized that there were three aboard it. They talked affluently, with a dialect which sounded almost musical. The words they were using seemed secondary to their conversation and they gestured for me to get on the boat.

Me? I pointed to myself and raised my eyebrows in question.

"Yes," they seemed to say. "Step aboard. Join us. We are going to the land of truth."

I looked down at myself. The wound caused by the knight's evil sword was gone. I looked around myself. The castle was gone. The grass was gone. The sun and the clouds, were gone. There was nothing but me and the flying sailboat.

I stepped aboard. The three other figures in the boat greeted me warmly and we all conversed for the longest time. The boat continued on it's journey, and its song was magnified. The song's earlier beauty was far surpassed by its current existence. I felt new and cleansed, and the boat carried a new meaning known both to me and the three.

Of course, only they were perfect. I, being simply human, had a narrow field of view and was unable to fully comprehend the day's earlier events, or the present one. I had tasted of the Living Water for reasons beyond my understanding, and now I must swim the Rivers of Wrath. I knew that the three knew, and of course, the three knew that I knew.

I said only "I'm sorry," and then fell head first over the

side of the boat.

Finally, I was in a hospital. I was sitting in a chair in the waiting room. There were old magazines sitting on a coffee table in front of me but I dared not pick one up. I did not want to be disrespectful. But I was bored, so I stood up and walked across the room and into a small gift shop. Here I could hide. I picked up a magazine and flipped through it. I still was not satisfied, so I looked around the small room. There were a few trinkets, and a clerk. The place seemed empty, hollow, void.

I left, and as I crossed an open hallway, I saw three girls standing there, talking softly. I didn't think of them as three people the first time I saw them, and now I curse myself for that. Instead, I thought of them as three bodies. Three babes. My conception of them was brutal and thoughtless at the least. How wrong I was. My view of them, my ideas as to who they were, didn't come close to encompassing all that they were, all that they are as people. Judgement is not ours.

I walked by them, and dwelt on my false assumptions. I crossed the room and took a seat where I had been earlier. I looked at the three girls, and as they stood and talked; from somewhere deep back in my self I had an inkling that I had misjudged them.

I knew the ending to this story. It was a story I had read many a time before. I was the paper-cut and the lemon juice. I

faded into the background and watched what I already knew.

A doctor dressed in a white coat walked from a door which he closed behind him. He walked towards them as the girls watched in nervous anticipation. He paused shortly, and told them the news. It was what they had subconsciously known he was going to say, but were desperately hoping not to hear. One of the girls broke into a violent sob, clinging in vain to the other two. All three were crying. I felt a pang of grief but only wanted to help the three. I was willing to do anything, in spite of myself, to help the three.

One of the girls ran to a pay phone and hysterically tried to find a quarter to use to make a call. She could not find the change. The other two sat down in the middle of the hallway, indifferently.

I got up and walked over to the girl at the phone. I handed her a quarter and she thanked me. She dialed the number wrong because she had tears in her eyes. She asked if I had another quarter. I gave her my last. The call went through this time, and when the girl was done, she went over to her two friends in the hallway. She spoke to them shortly and then came over and sat down beside me. I asked if I could do anything to help and she broke into tears. I just sat with her for about half an hour while she thought. I said nothing. I felt that I knew these people. They seemed like family. She got up, and motioned for me to follow her. I did, and we walked without words. We walked outside and she sat down on a bench in the middle of the hospital

garden. I sat down beside her. A while later, after the sun had dried her tears, she began to speak. We talked about her friends who were still inside. She said that one of them had been especially close to the person who had died. He had been a friend to them all, and the four of them had gone to school together. Their friendship had been a source of great joy to all of them. But occasionally the deceased had also been unfeeling, callous, and cold. It sounded familiar.

The air was warm. It was a sunny, blissful day.

She mentioned his name for the first time. Then I knew. I had been the cause of pain, the messenger, and the cruel onlooker. I had been the innocent victim, as well as the brutal killer. I had formed the cut, worsened it, and also been the one injured. I had been part of the healing, too.

The name she had mentioned was mine.

The Neighbor's Dog

Matt Temple

27 October 1995

TUESDAY COULDN'T SLEEP. She had had a long day and was looking forward to the restful peace of her silent room, lights off, door closed, snug in the favorite comforter on her bed. The girl undressed and slid herself beneath the heavy down, tucking her head underneath the covers, pulling her legs and arms in close around her body, curling into the snugly ball of an infant child. Her lips parted slightly with the outgoing breath, eyes drifting sleepily closed. The fingers of the weary girl gripped her blanket without her knowing. She was already nestled sweetly between asleep and awake, thoughts present but beyond her control. If someone had shouted she would have come back to the surface of life and realized what she had been thinking about. As it was, Tuesday lay in the bed of oblivion and thoughtlessness, and it was wonderful, wonderful, and even more wonderful for her not knowing how wonderful it was. She was not tossing, she did not roll. Her body was still and her spirit was elsewhere, rolling lovely on the plains and beaches, soaring ever through the wind.

Outside her window the sidewalk was empty. A yellow street lamp shone through the springtime leaves. The shining hollow it formed was rustled by a traveling wind. Far below her shafted blinds, long across the swaying grass, three houses down, the fur of a sleepless animal rustled in the wind. His chain drug across the concrete as she slumbered in her bed. The sleeping girl cooed unintelligibly to herself. The furry beast lifted its head to a starry sky, eyes twitching in the wind, and howled a chilling howl into the air, over the houses, above the trees, swirling like smoke into the heavens, sliding itself a serpent round the crescent moon.

howl into the air, over the houses, above the trees, swirling like smoke into the heavens, sliding itself a serpent round the crescent moon.

In her room, safe under the heavy quilted blanket of her mother, Tuesday's eyes opened. Everything else was so quiet she wasn't even sure she'd heard it. Silently the young girl lay, waiting for the sound to come again. She was still for a long time. The room was motionless, clean and empty, and her mind searched down the stairs and through the hall, past the night light and the VCR into the kitchen. There it lay, skimming across the floor and coming to rest upon the counter by the sink. Underneath, it felt the hum of dishes being washed late into the night when everything else was done. She could see the light above the sink shining dimly on the floor. The mopped linoleum mirrored a deep blue haze, cool electric digits of the Kenmore microwave.

Outside the glass a breeze blew swiftly. Padded canine paws helped mark away the seconds of the night. A dog's spiraling howl swept upward towards the window, but when it met Tuesday's ear, her feet were already on the floor. Padding slowly down the stairs, the girl brushed wispy nighttime hair out of her face, yawning sleepily. She went to the back door, pressed her face against the glass, and stared. Hot breath glanced the window pane and stuck as steam. Tuesday's fingers loosened their hold upon the sill and her arm fell limp down by her side. Wide, relaxing eyes glanced across the yard and fence. They caught no movement except the breeze, soft and tickling even when she only looked at it. She turned away back into the kitchen, stopping to gaze across the room, taking in a polished floor, scoured counters, above-sink light. She reached a hand out to the freezer, leaning back droopily and straightening when it opened. Cold frost flowed down on her like waterfalls. Tuesday stood staring for a moment, still only half-conscious, enjoying the cool on her toes, feeling the frost slide down her shirt. The dog howled once more, and she snapped to

life. Tuesday chose a well-wrapped treat, frozen ice vanilla in a chocolate shell. She took it with her to the door, turned the key, and stepped out on the softening lawn.

Her skin was cool, humid breezes leaving wetness, drying it, curling through her hair and around her legs. She stopped to stretch her arms, and breathed in deeply. Every forgotten pit of her lungs was filled right then, and, exhaling, she walked on. Grass came up between her toes. The street lamp shone upon the glistening girl as she trod across her yard. She came to a fence, walked slowly to its edge, felt a gate, opened it, and moved through. Her footfalls left an imprint in the grass. Coming to another gate, she stopped and seemed to smell the metal in the air around it. Bending some on her knees, Tuesday dislodged the clasp and passed on through. She crept along under the windows of her neighbor's house. A breeze swished the curtains of its open windows in and out. Coming around, the young girl saw the dog. He was laying on his side with his eyes open, staring at the moon. Tuesday stepped closer. The dog looked at her without turning his head. Tuesday pulled the chocolate ice from out behind her back and tapped it on the ground; the dog's ears perked and he sat up straight.

"Here Laddie."

Tuesday did not look at the neighbor's house; she moved silently towards the dog. He stood up and went slowly in her direction, chain dragging on the concrete. When she got within reaching distance the dog yelped slightly. She bent down low and knelt before the dog. He rooted his head around the treat and sniffed its package. Tuesday unwrapped the paper and held it up away from him to tease. Lowering the candy, she took the first bite, then held it to the dog. He bent his head down and licked the cream. She dropped it on the ground before him and the dog's attention snapped to the chocolate.

"Yes," she said sweetly, "that's a good boy."

Tuesday bent her body over, leaned across the animal, and unhooked his chain. He went on eating unaware. Tuesday grasped the dog's collar with her hands and rubbed him neck and ears.

"Oh yeah. Is that good? Do you like that?"

The wind blew through the trees and down the trunks, across the house and through her hair. Fresh green leaves dangled on their stems. The street lamp's shining when it reached them was a dim bleak stare. When the dog had finished eating, Tuesday took his chain and led him back across the yard with the scent on her fingers. She carefully closed the gates behind the two of them and traveled silently across the lawn. This time six feet marked their way along the grass. They reached the girl's own gate and through they went into her yard. The street was quiet now; the wind was still. They went into her house and Tuesday closed the door behind. The dog's claws clacked distinctly on the floor, shiny clear linoleum taking traces of the dewy fur. Tuesday hugged the dog around its neck and squeezed and whispered in his ear, "You'll never wake me up again."

Then Tuesday smiled. She straightened to the freezer door. Inside she found another chocolate treat. She opened it and tossed it down in front of the dog. Standing there watching him lick the frozen chocolate shingles off the floor, Tuesday couldn't help but smile. She tried to stop at first, wiped it away. But her hand was no longer on her face and the smile returned, starting at a crack in the corner of her cheek, breaking the pristine goddess sculptured shape of her lips like a virus, sweeping through her solidity and taking root like a vine. It wound itself finally over the girl's entire body, and she stood in the corner of her kitchen twisted and retching with giggles, gaze leveled down at the dog.

His eyes moaned for pity, mouth drooping to be loved, but it was too late. The young girl was already hunched over the counter with her back to him. His head had dropped when she pulled open a drawer and the glistening blues and greens of the late-night kitchen shone straight vertical lines up and down the stainless blades of a dozen knives; and by the time she had reached in with greedy fingers and chosen the sharpest and longest of the set, felt the knot in her throat, and turned around to scope her prey, he had already forgotten her and returned to lapping up the melted chocolate on the floor.

The next morning Tuesday's house was clean. The sun rose on her street yellow and silent, brightening the nighttime's subtle hues to perfect primary greens and blues. Her neighbor Mr. Johnson—down the street—had just stepped outside in his bathrobe and slippers. He came to the end of the walk and bent down to get his paper, but stopped halfway through the motion and squinted to see what that was. He picked it up and held it toward his face. Just then a boy came riding by on a bright red bicycle. He rang the bell.

"Good morning, Mr. Johnson!" he shouted cheerfully, and the boy rode on.

Mr. Johnson stood up slowly, his old knees creaking, his face wrinkled with disbelief. In his hand he held a tattered dog collar, damp and soiled. The tags were unmistakable; it was Laddie's number, it was his address. But now Mr. Johnson turned around, and there, dragged across the white clapboard siding on the front of his house with some crude instrument, in thick strokes of deep bloody crimson, was the name *LADDIE*.

Upstairs in her bed, three houses over, Tuesday Walker lay peacefully beneath the covers, burrowed deep in a pocket of warmth where she had been cozy for six hours now, free at last from the usual disruptions. It was eight o'clock on a Sunday morning. She was hoping to sleep till twelve.