

# dumpster earth

by [kris kemp](#)

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dumpster earth  
a journal by kris kemp  
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November 28, Wednesday, 2001 1:20 am

I cannot sleep.

Even though I've built a comfortable loft above my desk, which houses a bed, a television, a VCR, and a stairway to this nest, rest escapes me. Foolishly, I thought that once I had gotten this room in order, I would be able to think straight. I spent hours scoring the drywall, putting in a recessed window so I can look, from my pillow, to see the world outside, partially obscured by a fence and vines, but the world nonetheless. And I am beginning to realize that the entire creation of this room has turned into a metaphor for myself. On the outside I may appear healthy, optimistic, holding the torch for the future, but on the inside I am afraid, shy, alone. Every night I look out through the window watching, waiting for something to happen. And every day and every night I do the same with myself, holding fort in my incubator, watching, waiting for someone to need me in some way. In this giving to others I am losing pieces of myself. It is not responsible behaviour. I have become the plumber for other people's pipe dreams.

Several days ago, John, a young, good-looking homeless guy, and I built a makeshift roof for Ana, an abstract artist that rents a studio here. In return for my labor, I had asked Ana to give me rides to the 3rd hand store--the dumpster--behind Wild Oat's. Earlier tonight, Ana offered a free meal at Denny's and a ride to the dumpster afterward. How could I refuse?

Ana is a bright girl, with a round, pretty face and a smile that should have an advertisement below for her orthodontist. On the way to Denny's she began to express her feeling about her art and this place, called "the hut". She unloaded her complaints about the lack of privacy, and the negative attitudes common among the people who live here, who for the most part, ironically, are not artists. She described them as "dysfunctional". Unfortunately, we concurred that most are too stubborn and arrogant to change their attitude, as being miserable is the comfortable category with which they are happy to call their own.

Ana had a gift certificate--buy an entree, get a free entree--at Denny's. She ordered a chicken parmesan sandwich. I ordered a salad with chicken strips. It was delicious. Afterward, she ordered a vanilla shake, which we split. The waitress, Gretchen, a big, tall woman with a pleasant smile, told us: "I didn't charge you for the shake", as she laid the tab on the table. Ana tipped her four dollars, which was nice of her. After leaving Denny's, Ana drove down Dixie to the Wild Oat's dumpster. The main street lamps were on, illuminating the dumpster from all sides, which is a mixed blessing in that we can see what we're looking for, but so can everyone else. Ana stood foot patrol nearby, while I headed in head first, flashlight in teeth, hands swimming through the refuse. Since Wild Oats discard their bagged trash at the end of the night, it is usually on top. Below is where the treasure hides, in the produce boxes. Tonight was a real blessing: 4 loaves of 7-grain sunflower bread (each is priced at \$5.99 a loaf), several apples, three bunches of scallions, one bunch of romaine. Praise The Lord Jesus Christ! Two dumpster dives ago was also a major blessing, discovering 5 bottles of Spectrum brand flaxseed oil, which I promptly refrigerated. A week ago I found out that flaxseed oil is very beneficial in diet. When combined with cottage cheese or 3x the amount of yogurt, it has been known to cure cancer and a host of other diseases. Praise God!

I opened my door and looked out toward the kitchen, in the middle bay. Alan and Heidi (the model for the drawing class on Tuesday, a pretty, troubled girl who told me earlier she's going to check into CARP for a week to overcome her alcohol addiction) and Wendy (who I care about so much it hurts) are talking.

I miss Wendy. She is this beautiful, bright girl that's been living her for the last two months. She is really imaginative, probably the most imaginative girl I have ever met. She is petite, pale, with short-dark hair and piercing brown eyes accented by sharp eyebrows. Her lips are red like the lips of someone that was born in a northern state. I think she told me she was born in Massachusettes. She hangs out with Alan a lot. He's brilliant, too. Like her, he's interesting, whimsical, articulate, and creative. I think they are dating. I know he loves her. He told me that. A few days ago, I told him: "I'm falling in love with Wendy." He said: "That's your problem. That's my problem, too." She's a rare person, an unpolished stone, a diamond in the rough. She overflows with energy and creativity, so much that I'm trying to encourage her to put it to good use. I would like to buy a video camera and videotape her talking, without telling her. She's the type of person that can't be complimented, it seems. You know the kind. The kind of people that, when you compliment them, they are shy to bring out the quality that you complimented them on, and even when they do bring it out,

the fact that you gave the compliment has ruined them, as they are not sure whether the quality that they are acting on is intentional, or one that is put out there to live up to their compliment arsenal.

Three nights ago I heard a whimpering outside, like that of someone that had gotten beaten up and was physically hurt. I opened the door that faces east and saw Wendy, curled up like a cat, dirty. I crouched down and put my hands on her shoulders to bring her up. She smelled like sweat, stale beer, urine. Her face was dirty. "What happened?" I asked her. "Are you okay? Come inside. You can sleep on the floor. I'll get you a blanket and pillow." She looked at me with eyes that seemed to have lost hope. "Hold me." I put my arms around her, silently praying for her, and rocking her. Eventually, I led her inside and tucked my blanket around her (the blanket is actually a comforter that Audrey, this cool lady who is the worship leader at a nearby church gave me). I grabbed my pillow and placed it under her head, then sat beside this lovely, lost creature and rubbed her head softly until she fell asleep. At the same time, I prayed that she would come to know The Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour and Lord. I know that only Jesus can save people from the inside out, but I like to try saving them as well. Perhaps The Lord will use me to point people in His direction. That is the only direction worth going in anyway. This world is not worth working for; the next one is, as long as it is Heaven.

I wrote this song about Wendy. It moves from D to G on the piano for the verse. The melody is borrowed, in part, from the Ben Fold's Five song "She's a brick". Here it is. I titled it: A Song for Wendy L.

verse: Late afternoon, in September  
I saw you on the kitchen floor  
Your downcast eyes, your silent gestures  
You found a new world to explore

verse: Then later on, you made connections  
In this cave of broken strings  
You were quiet, but in the spaces inbetween  
You seemed to make the whole world sing

chorus: Gravity can barely keep you down  
Your dreams take flight above the stars  
Dry hearts find rain when you're around  
Your friendships turned my life around

chorus: Your imagination spreads its wings  
sailing like a bird above the street  
You've left a window in my mind  
Gravity can't keep you on your feet

Last night, I heard the cry of a banshee, an indian, outside my window. I looked and saw Wendy yelling at no one and nothing. Her mouth was open and the cus words fell to the ground like homesick earthworms. Concerned that a cop might try to arrest

her on a noise disturbance, I shoed up and walked outside. I didn't see her so I said a prayer for her, then returned to my room, and laid down. Minutes later, she opened the door to my room, closed it behind her, climbed the steps to my bed above the desk, and slipped beside me under the covers. She was hiccuping and quite drunk. "Hold me." She demanded. "C'mon, put your hands on me." I did. I held her and we held each other until she fell asleep. She has the softest skin. It's milky smooth and creamy white. I haven't felt at home in a lot of places but, laying there beside her, my hands on her soft shoulders and stomach ... it felt like being home again. She has changed my way of thinking, about what to value in girls. I feel like I cannot tell her as she will resent the compliment, or feel responsible for feelings she would rather not be responsible for. Still ...

It's 2:24 am. Life is good when you are 32, and can be happy with less. Life is not any easier, but your time can be your own when you are not willing to own that much. Maybe poverty is the price of sanity.

November 28, 2001 8:03am

I cannot sleep.

Wendy opened the door to my room about an hour ago. She climbed up the steps and slipped under the covers.

"I'm sorry, Kris. I just want you to hold me."

"I love you, Wendy. That's fine. I love holding you."

"Say it again."

"I love you, Wendy."

"I know you don't, but I'll pretend you do, just for now," she whispers. "Just pretend to love me for one more day."

"Okay."

"I can't do this anymore. Alan's mad at me."

"Go talk to him. He loves you."

"No he doesn't. He told me: 'I'm going to fuck a perfect stranger.' (The perfect stranger Wendy referred to is Heidi, an attractive girl with an attractive figure that was playing cards with Alan and Wendy until about 4am this morning.) That's why I stayed up with him playing cards."

"He loves you, Wendy. He just needs to know that you're his girlfriend."

"I'm a whore. I destroy everything. I'm going to destroy you, too."

"Cool. I'm ready to be destroyed," I smile groggily. "What do you mean you're a whore?"

"I was just kidding."

"That's why I have to leave. Because I'm going to destroy this place," she repeated.

"Go talk to Alan."

"Alan's mad at me. If I go talk to him we'll probably get into a physical fight."

"Wendy, where are you?" Alan yelled from the middle bay. His voice--bellowing and scratchy, like 80-grade sandpaper--sounded like the voice of a sailor on board a ship in the midst of a storm. (He is in the midst of a storm. Alan is a Captain Ahab navigating through the restless ocean of creativity in search of the gentile beast that is peace, freedom, love. "My fair Winifred! Where are you? Quit hiding. If you care about the three cats, they will be out by the tracks.")

"Wendy, go talk to him. Don't let him see you here, or he'll really be mad." I whispered urgently. "Wendy, go."

"I can't talk to him now. It's like talking to a Miller bottle," she said. I laughed. She walked outside my door.

"Oh no, here he comes," Wendy said watching him coming toward my room from the outside of the building. She stepped inside.

"Wendy! Where are you?!" He yelled, battering the door. I opened it for him. He had a big stick in his right hand.

"Hey Alan," I said. She just left. I don't know where she went. "What's with you and her, Alan. She needs to know that you like her. She thinks you like Heidi. You need to tell her that you like her."

"Huh." Alan replied.

"What's with the cats? They're on the tracks?"

"There down at Robert Saint Croix's (a sculptor two blocks north of here), near the tracks. Let's push the car to the gas station so we can fill it up. I'll drive down there."

"Alan, we can't push the car to the gas station."

"Then I'll push it myself."

I opened the door to Alan's room to check for the cats and Wendy. Sitting on the bed was Tega, unruffled. I suppose that if people were treated as kind as cats, petted, given attention to, and cared for in that fashion, they might be as unruffled. I returned to the front of the West Bay. Alan was standing by his car, a convertible Renault he

checkerboarded as a gift for his former girlfriend who, later became his wife, and even later became his former wife.

"Alan, Tega's in your room. I thought you said the cats were near the railroad tracks."

"No, not our cats. Homeless cats," he emphasized with his hands outstretched as if he were holding an invisible bag of sympathy. "We've got to save the homeless cats. That's what we do here. They don't need to be homeless."

I started laughing. "Alan. Okay, I'm gonna bike over there and look for them." I borrowed Wendy's blue bicycle and pedaled along the RR tracks, over the sharp rocks that line the side, trying my best to stay on the grass patches and avoid a flat. I did not see any cats there.

It's 8:34 a.m.

A glass crashed nearby. I looked out the peephole in my room (left, incidentally, by a drill bit as it seems to be a near-perfect circle) and see Alan sitting in the set box for one of Adam Kowalsky's sculptures. He's stroking someone's hair ... Wendy! He's talking in whispers to her. I pray that they are okay, that Wendy and Alan will come to know The Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. That is my desire for them.

Wendy made some interesting comments last night while playing cards with Alan and Heidi.

"I love Frankenstein, because I can totally relate to him. I was Frankenstein. I still am. That's the way people look at me. Like I'm this fucking monster."

It's 11:55 a.m.

Robert Wellborn, a former landlord of mine, called me earlier. He picked me up in his truck and drove me to a hotel that he does maintenance for in Lake Worth. The hotel is this semi-famous, historical monster that across the street from Bryant Park. Robert gets a free room with hallway kitchen, micro-closet and tiny bathroom in exchange for doing two hours of work a day in maintenance. We had planned to meet so I could look over some items for a yard sale. "I'll give you fifty percent of the profits," Robert agreed, pointing out his stuff that needed selling.

Carefully, he slow-stepped his way to a small closet that was filled to the top with boxes of what appeared to be unsellable garbage, the kind of stuff Goodwill would not even take. I nodded, offered a limp smile, shrugged, then followed him into the kitchen. "You want this cable box?" He offers. "Sure. Does it work?" "Yeah, it gets every channel except for five, and except for the movie channels." "Thanks Robert." He also showed me a storage closet near his room filled with stuff. "Whatever I don't sell I'll take to Goodwill," I stated unenthusiastically.

"Let me show you the pool. I want to get some pictures of you." I followed him to the courtyard of the next apartment complex. "Touch the water. It's warm." I did. It was,

is, whatever. I stood by the pool railing that leads to the shallow end. He shot of three pictures of me. I shot one of him, and one of both of us that only framed half of his face, since I was holding it in my left hand as far away as I could.

I told him I had to get going. We got back into his truck and drove to A1A, heading north towards South Ocean Boulevard in Palm Beach. The entire time, he muttered about, a spoken word connect-the-dots that led to an abstract picture at best. "Jack ... yeah, he's got a big beard now. Looks horrible. He's fat now. Got four kids. Just got a divorce. The Post mansion ... how'd you like to live there. The beach is beautiful. I wish I had a video. I'd send that to my parents. That place used to be an empty lot; remember that?" He drove like he spoke--deliberately at times, jerky at times, staying in second gear for too long, swerving along the street as he pointed toward mansions and making comments like: "How'd you like to live there?"

November 29, Thursday, 2001 8:46pm

Ana visited my bunker and asked if I wanted to get chinese food with here. "Sure. Let's go." She drove to Fong's Garden on Dixie. She ordered an egg roll. I ordered plain, fried rice, which is the cheapest thing on the menu. It's tasty and filling as well, and I planned to mix it in with pan-fried broccoli, along with olive oil, a liberal amount of sea salt and a conservative whisper of black pepper.

Ana is an abstract artist who has a studio here, at the Unarmed Underground Art Centre, in the east bay. She is kind. I told her that. She said thanks. I said you're welcome. "I'm not an abstract artist anymore," she announced today. "I'm a post-modernist, abstract artist." Okay, I said. "Cool." After ordering, we waited outside. Sitting on the curb, she sighed, then explained her concern about the future. "I had everything perfect in Santa Fe," she looked off into space. "Then I had to leave. I left. By the time I went back, everything had changed. I expected it to be the same. All my friends left. I didn't have any connection. I couldn't get a job. No one would hire me. I finally got a job at a theatre for five bucks an hour. Santa Fe's expensive. You can't live on that there. But I want to go to school. But I am in school. I am in the school of life, right? But I want to travel, too. I want to go to Paris, and I want to go to Scotland. There's a group up there. A community. They're spiritual."

We returned to the studios and talked at the kitchen table. Wendy, the clever and whimsical street fairy, and Alan, part-scientist, engineer, artist, and reluctant spoke from which this bicycle wheel turns, joined us at the table. Nancy, a nice lady who is dating Weazel (who's real name is Keith but only allows his girlfriends and mother to call him by that name for some reason) sat down at the table.

The subject moved to dreams. I asked if anyone had a dream recently. I asked them to tell us about it. Wendy did. The rest declined or said that their dreams were forgotten a minute after they awoke. "I had a dream that someone was opening a box and all these spiders were crawling out and I'm afraid of spiders. That's the only thing I'm really afraid of," she confessed.

Earlier today, I hammered the cement floor of the old shower in the middle bay

bathroom. I prayed: "Dear Lord, help me to get this out in big chunks so I won't be here for hours. Thank you, Lord." God answered my prayer. In an hour the entire cement block, 3 feet by 3 feet, and about 18 inches deep had been lifted from the floor in three chunks. Praise The Lord Jesus Christ! God is Awesome!

November 30, Friday, 2001 9:52 am

David Knight, a Bahamian who I do some work for on occasion, called me this morning. He sounded groggy. "I'll be over in a few hours with the paint supplies," he mumbled like a slow-moving cement mixer. "You can paint this afternoon or start tomorrow." David is a good guy to work for--he's friendly, kind, pays \$15 an hour.

Last night, Jana, mom, and I went downtown to set up a table with water bottles, gospel tracts, her Scripture Series Bible Study flyers, and flyers for The Refuge. We arrived after 10pm and the drummers were milling about. Only one drummer was playing lightly. "What's going on?" I asked this blond-haired fellow who had a Beatle's haircut--the same guy who I had met two weeks earlier that is a friend of Cara Shea's. "Someone complained in one of those houses up there," he pointed toward the apartments that are located on the north side of the Clematis Street library. "What are you gonna do?" I asked. "We're gonna go to the Meyer Street Amphitheatre."

Jana, mom and I went over the options, then decided to return next week at 9pm. Apparently, a noise ordinance goes into effect at 10pm.

After returning to the warehouse and unloading the table, tracts, water, flyers, Jana and mom spoke about Jennifer and Matt's situation. Jennifer and Matt are living together and mom banned them from property functions as she believes that Christians living in sin should be warned to change their ways, or be ostracized, according to certain Bible verses.

I disengaged from the conversation after a half-hour, and returned to my room. Wendy came in and asked me to test her. I did. I gave her the psychology test in which the participant is walking through the woods. Different items, key, vase, dwelling place, wall, body of water, bear represent how they view things, such as death, sex, material possessions, themselves. Wendy viewed the key (which represents how one views themselves) as "magical, comes out of nowhere, mystical, beautiful, not an everyday key that fits into an everyday lock". So Wendy sees herself as coming out of nowhere, magical, beautiful, not an everyday person that fits into an everyday, or normal, life. That description suits Wendy. In describing the key, she said: "We can go, 'Hey, what do you think it opens? If we don't have a door that opens, we can build one.'" This is really telling. Wendy sees herself as getting people to open up ... to dreams and possibilities that they may not have recognized before. And if the person is not willing to open themselves up in that way ("if we don't have a door that opens"), then Wendy can figure out another way to get them to open up ("we can build one").

After taking the test, she left the room. I crawled into bed. Someone knocked on the



door. "Come in." Someone crawled up the stairs. It was Wendy. I was hoping it would be Wendy. She had a Miller bottle in one hand and a video in the other. She put down the beer and put the video in the VCR and sat down beside me. "You're gonna love this movie," she said.

The movie was "High Fidelity". It was okay. Funny in some parts. "This'll be our date," I told Wendy. "See, we're at the movies now." I had asked her if she wanted to go on a date with me. "We'll go see a movie," I said. Sure, she said. Praise God! I put my arm around her and we watched the movie. We kissed. "Kiss right here," she pointed to the section of skin between the shoulder and her neck on her left side. "Bite it hard, then suck on it, then bite it." I did. She leaned her head back and breathed in punches of air--huh, hu, huuuuuuuu, hu!, hu. I know that sounds superficial, but it's true. We kissed and touched each other. After the movie was over, I turned off the TV. For a few minutes more, we hugged and kissed, then she left.

Someone arrived into my room and placed a flower by my desk in a glass of water. It is Wendy.

"Thanks Wendy," I tell her.

"Hey," she speaks in a whisper. "I'm never gonna come in your room drunk and make out with you anymore. I'm not. Okay?"

"Wendy. That's okay. Hey, come here. Give me a hug." I stand and hug her. "You're still my friend. I'll still love you."

She turns before leaving the room, gives an uncertain, close-mouthed smile, then exits.

Wendy came back into the room, then stepped outside, through the east door. I stood behind her and put my arms on her shoulders.

"Did you sleep okay?" I ask her.

"Yes. Did you?" She asks.

"Yes." Pause. "Do you like kissing me?" She asks.

"Yes." I tell her. After a pause, I ask: "Do you like kissing me?"

"I don't know."

I turn and face the tracks.

"You've got some fairy dust on you," she says, wiping something from my cheek.

"Thanks. Yeah a fairy came and visited me last night. I like this fairy," I confessed. "She's uncertain about visiting me. Once you get to close to something you own it. This fairy needs to be free. When you own something, it eventually becomes extinct."

This fairy has to only visit on special occasions. That's what's so beautiful. That way no one can trap it or tie it down."

Wendy kisses me on the cheek. "I like kissing you, too." She says, then walks toward the door, turns, smiles, than disappears.

She is so adorable. Streetwise, tough, strong, independent, clever, imaginative, soft, tender, and meant. When describing the key in the psychology test she said: "When you hold it, you know that it's meant." That is true of Wendy. When I hold her, I know that it's meant. Something is meant. Meant to be real. Meant to be soft. Meant to be different, and clear. Meant to feel like home again.

November 31, Saturday 9:43 a.m. 2001

Last night, Refuge was a mess--different colors of acrylic and latex paint in an arranged marriage on canvas.

Alan, the brave and humble sea captain of this groaning enterprise, this aching wooden ship that has been at sea for forty years, with an ever-rotating cast of crew members, some that stay on board entertaining ideas of mutiny, others who abandon ship at the nearest sight of a more comfortable port, organized a Purple Door Night. Originally founded in Denmark, Copenhagen by dodge drafters during the Vietnam War, the Purple Door Night began as their form of expression. Eventually, it turned into a regular gathering of artists, poets, writers, political mavericks and renegades who would sit on a stool beneath a bare lightbulb, and engage in spoken word, poetry, acoustic music, and open confession. Original thought and free expression acted as the rodeo clowns to keep this bull from stomping those who tried to saddle it.

Janell arrived around 9:30 p.m. I was sitting outside with Krissy Iverson. "Let's hide in the van and watch what goes on," I suggested, breaking into a sprint for Alan's dormant vehicle. I opened the gate, then the side doors. Krissy began climbing in. "Wait a second," I said. "There's someone sleeping here." I pointed to a body-shaped blanket, untied shoes nearby. "Oops," Krissy whispered. We laughed, then closed the doors.

I returned to talking with Krissy. For the most part, I was complaining about downtown, how it doesn't draw any interesting people anymore. I was griping about Refuge, how I had hoped to draw the people there who felt left out at Palm Beach Atlantic, much as I had felt left out at high school, and I expressed my disappointment that the numbers at Refuge could be counted on one or two hands, that people did not volunteer to help, that people seldom visited. It's frustrating, I told her. Patiently, she listened. Krissy Iverson is a good listener. That's a good quality.

We returned inside. A bearded gentleman was playing the guitar. After he played, Alan walked in, and stepped to the front. He announced the origins of Purple Door Night, then told everyone that the floor is open, the lamp is on, encouraging them to step up to the plate and swing at their softball dreams. For a while, the chair sat

empty. The lamp cast a warm glow. The chair, a dark-orange, comfy single seater, seemed to breathe as the moments passed, waiting for the first occupant in this hayride confessional. Someone took the stage and sat down, sighed, and began to speak.

Kathy, the next door neighbor, a lawyer, walked up, sat, placed two thick hardback books on her lap, opened one, and began to read James Joyce. "I wish I could write like that," she admitted, after finishing the poem.

"You can," Alan replied. "You just don't have the time."

I laughed.

Kathy has a soft spot for criminals, bad judgement, or both. Perhaps those two qualifications make for good lawyers. That, and a lack of conscience. (Maybe I should start eating at KFC more often.) Last year, Kathy suggested, then encouraged Alan into letting Jeff stay here, at the Unarmed Underground Art Centre. Jeff, a 21-year old petty thief, had been in the rotating door of jail, courts, the justice system. He arrived and converted an art space in the east bay into his room. Little by little, electric tools started to disappear, including a circular saw, power drill, car battery that was used by the PediCab guys. Eventually, there was a showdown. Bob King, an artist who lived in the middle bay, was threatened by Jeff. "He threatened me with a gun," Bob King said. "I'm calling the cops." The cops showed up, talked with Jeff outside, then searched his car. In it, they found a 22 replica that shot BB's. I saw them handle this outside, while they talked with Jeff. I ran up the steps to Candice's studio in the east bay, and told Candice, who's a glass, ceramic, and mixed media artist, and Mike, her boyfriend who works for the state attorney's office, and who is an actor in his spare time, about this. You see, Mike had purchased the gun for a recent production of a play by Sam Sheppard and Patsy Cline (Lobster Mouth). The gun had disappeared before opening night, so Mike had to buy another one. Mike and Candice ran downstairs and confronted Jeff, who remained tight-lipped, eyeing the invisible world of answers between his feet. The cops left, and after Jeff received a much-deserved scolding from Mike, he walked outside. I grabbed Andy Cotter, a lost soul cartoonist turned professor from the east bay, then rounded up Bob King and Candice and Mike. "Let's shut the bay doors," I suggested. "Let's not let Jeff back in here again. He's a thief. And Alan won't kick him out, so we have to." Bob immediately nodded in agreement, then left toward Jeff's room. "You close the west bay doors," I told Mike. "Make sure they're locked." I looked to Andy. "You close the middle bay door, the green door. I'll close the warehouse doors for the middle bay and east bay. Andy, make sure the door in the back, near your room, is closed and locked. When Alan gets back, we'll tell him we kicked out Jeff." We dispersed. After locking the doors, I went to Jeff's room. I heard banging and scraping. I saw Bob King pulling a table with a CD player on it. Wires were snapping, the speakers were falling off. I helped him move other items to the space outside his room. The front door was opening. (I thought it was locked. I guess he has a key. Uh-oh.) Bob, Andy, Mike, Candice, and I stood outside the room, waiting for him to come see the progress we made. We wandered up, taking slow steps to examine the damage. He didn't say a word, then grabbed a steel pipe in his right hand. "Who did this?" He asked. "I want

to know who the fuck broke my stereo. Who broke my stereo?" He asked, looking at me. "We all broke it, Jeff." I told him. Then Mike faced him. "You took my gun, you fucking thief! You took my gun!! You're a fucking thief, man! You stole my gun!" They circled each other, both waiting for the silence to break. Jeff put the pipe down. I walked in cautiously, picking it up, then stepping outside. "You're out of here," Bob declared. "You are so out of here," Bob smiled, nodding his head up and down. "I'm not letting you back in." More silence followed. Jeff wandered from us and made a phone call. His girlfriend arrived. Alan arrives. By this time, Andy, Bob, Mike, Candice had disappeared. And Jeff and his girl sat at the front of the east bay, remaining silent, sitting near Alan, hoping to win sympathy before we told Alan what had transpired. I got Bob and told him we need to talk to Alan right now and demand that Jeff be kicked out. Bob and I went to the front. Andy joined us. "If you don't kick this fucking creep, this criminal, this guy who steals things out right now," Bob huffed, a thick finger stabbing in Alan's direction, "then I don't know what I'll do. I'm not going to be responsible for my actions if you're going to continue to let Jeff stay here." Alan was unaffected, putting a Lucky Strike to his lips, one leg up on his work table. He didn't even reply. "Jeff, you gotta go. It's not that hard to stay here. You did this to yourself. You're a thief. You've stolen from people here. You've taken from people that have tried to help you. You have to leave now. You have no one to blame except for yourself. It's time for you to go." Jeff got up and walked outside with his girlfriend. That afternoon, they left.

The chair was empty again. The light, on. Andy Henchel, a union-working stagehand and welder, who creates industrial art in the middle bay, a muscular fellow who resembles a 1940's-era, circus strong man, plunged into the chair. "There was once a man from Nantucket, with a dick so long he could suck it ... " I secretly glanced at the Palm Beach Atlantic College girls to my left. Jannel had her ears covered, so did Deanna. This was embarrassing.

When I noticed Jannel entering Refuge, I followed her in. "I've invited the college girls who I'm RA (Resident Advisor) for this semester. They're seekers."

"Jannel," I explained. "This isn't an ordinary Refuge night. It's a purple door night, a night of spoken word, poetry, and original acoustic music. This isn't going to be a Christian gathering tonight. I sent this out in the e-mail last week, explaining what this would be."

"I told you that I was going to invite the girls here. Remember? A few weeks ago I told you I was going to invite them here. I know I told you that."

Inside, I was becoming angry. How does she expect me to remember what she told me a few weeks ago. Do I change my life because of her schedule. Does my life revolve around her whims. I have plenty of things to remember. Does she expect me to remember that, and to cater to her girls on the nights when she invites them. She rarely even visits Refuge. Was she trying to make me feel guilty. Give me a break.

"I'm sorry, Jannel. I forgot. I can't remember what you told me a few weeks ago. That's why I send out the e-mail, with the schedule. On the e-mail, I explained that

tonight would be a mix of Christian with non-Christian. I guess you didn't see it, though."

She remained laconic. What a snob, I'm thinking. She can't even meet me half-way and admit that she made a mistake by not looking at the e-mail, and not giving me a two-day notice to say she was inviting girls from here college tonight. I can't remember what she told me a few weeks ago. Besides, often people at PBA tell me that they'll be at Refuge in a few weeks, then don't show up. She didn't even say sorry. I don't understand young people, in the 18-22 year old category. They seem to think the world revolves around them. Even a teacher friend of mine lamented, "Young people are so empowered these days. It's dangerous. They'll argue you for the most minor of points, even though they're only 13 years old. It's really ridiculous. No one's ever told them they're wrong."

Nicole Greenwald, this adorable PBA student sat down with her Bible. She spoke about uncertainty, and lack of purpose in this life, then explained that God has a purpose in our life. If we'll let him be a part of our life, he'll show us his purpose. Good word.

I played piano. "Shout to the Lord" and "Seek Ye First". Later, I played "Underneath the open sky", a working title for a song that God helped me write, which doesn't have a chorus yet, and "Pilgrim". Praise The Lord Jesus Christ!

The best part of the night came when Alan read a poem by Lou Ferlinghetti, a famous beat generation poet still alive and living in San Fransisco, California. Toward the end of the poem, Alan, the gentile seafarer, looked at his map, and paused for reflection. He reached the turning point in his approach toward choppy waters, his voice somewhere between a crackle and a whisper. A storm formed somewhere in his memories. Waves of emotion washed over him. A tear streamed down his lovely, weatherbeaten face. He wiped his face. More tears gathered on the horizon of his glance. A longer pause. A knee propped on the chair. Silence. He was bathed in the soft glow of lamp-light. "Take me back to Manisfree ... " More tears crawled slowly across his cheek. "That's it." He stood, dropped the arm that held the book of poems to his side, then walked off the stage. Everyone clapped.

Later on, I began to clean up. Rick was on the piano, letting the piano play itself. Ana, the modern, abstract artist was playing drums. I sat nearby beating a bongo. Wendy was at the microphone, rambling her versimilitudes closely, as if she needed it for oxygen. Jana, my cousin, sat on a car seat with Joel, a neighbor who just got a job as a trucker. He comes over once a week to talk about himself and collect validation stamps (not available at just any art studios, hah!).

Today, I'm supposed to be painting a fence for David Knight, a Bahamian who manages property here in West Palm Beach. David is keen, business smart, and drives a yellow jeep. He pays well--\$15 an hour. The work is only a few hours a month, if that. Still, it's a good contact.

David recently purchased a Jupiter synthesizer from Ebay. It was the same brand of

analog synth used by groups like Duran Duran. He hasn't let me play it, yet. "It's not just a regular keyboard, you know." He keeps repeating. One day, he'll let me watch him play it. Hopefully. Maybe even let me play it. God bless David Knight. Help him to come to know you as his Lord and Saviour. Thank you Jesus.

Dear Lord Jesus, please forgive my sins, my moral crimes and misdemeanors. My lust, my complacency, my arrogance, my unworthiness. Just clean out the toilet bowl of my thoughts. Dear Lord Jesus, please be with Wendy and Alan. Help them to come to know you as their Lord and Saviour, please. Please let them see that sin is only fun for a while, but has no lasting pleasure. Help them to replace guilt with conviction, and to find peace and sanctuary in the Rock of Jesus Christ. Please Lord, I love them both so much. I'm burdened with them, Lord. I don't want to see them go to Hell. Use me in any way possible. Take my life if you have to, Lord. I give myself to you for this purpose. Oh Lord, you're so beautiful, more beautiful than anything we can imagine. Your love endures forever. Thank you for reaching them, Lord. In the Name of The Lord Jesus Christ, please save them. I ask you this, Jesus: Can you save them? Can you please help them to find a turning point in their life where they look to you? Thank you Jesus. Help them not to turn back at the former things. When you look back, you turn into a pillar of salt. Help them to be strong in the faith and look to you for hope in this world, and hope in the next, in the name of Jesus I pray all these things. Thank you Jesus for listening to my prayers, the humble beggings of someone who is overwhelmed by your grace and mercy. Amen.

December 3, Monday, 9:06 p.m. 2001

Saturday, David Knight, this Bahamian acquaintance, asked me if I wanted to do some work for him. He buys, restores, and rents out buildings and seems to be making some good money at it, judging from the way he carries himself--easygoing, casually and cleanly-dressed, unaffected. He met me here, at the warehouse, in his yellow Jeep and drove me to the building at 901 Dixie. After painting a fence, I joined him and Eric, another friend of his who's doing some plumbing work for him, upstairs in the building. They were putting in floor in an abandoned elevator shaft. "We're going to use this for a storage room," David explained.

Eric and David are friends. Both are musicians. Eric plays guitar and drums. David plays guitar, drums, and bass. In his house, David set up a sound recording studio with a drumset, keyboard (Jupiter 6, a sought-after, analog synthesizer--the same kind used by Duran Duran), and 64-track mixing board. It's a playground for a musician.

At 10:15 p.m., I was back in my room. Cool. I started at 1:15 and worked until 10:15. I needed the hours. Thank God! I stayed up for a bit, played some piano, then wandered out to go to the bathroom. Wendy was lying in the wicker couch beside John, the homeless guy she introduced to this place. I returned from the bathroom and walked into my room, softly leaving the door ajar a foot so it would not slam. I climbed up the stairs. I looked out the window near my bed, watching. John and Wendy were lying side by side now. I saw Wendy's hand slide beneath his blanket and reach for his midsection. John turned. They moved around like slow-moving

snakes. Then Wendy stood. John stood behind her and put his arms around her. She sat down. She went to the bathroom. I heard a crash. Concerned, I exited my room from the east door, walked near the tracks, and returned to the east bay warehouse through the front doors. I grabbed a roll of toilet paper from the middle bay kitchen, walked to the east bay bathroom, quietly knocked on the door. "I'm in here," Wendy hushed. "Sorry," I replied. "Do you need toilet paper. I have some. I can leave it by the door." "No," she answered, "I'm all right." I returned to my room. Yes, I wanted to help her out of concern, but while also letting her know I was awake, if she decided to pay me a visit. I returned to my room. I watched through the window. She returned and slipped under the covers near his midsection. Either she was having sex with him or making him feel good. It was none of my business, I suppose. It made me sad, knowing she was in bed with me less than a week earlier. Knowing that I had felt her warm, milky skin and we had kissed. Knowing that she had asked me to kiss the space between her neck and her shoulder ball, first hard, then soft. So I did. I placed my mouth over that portion of her skin and inhaled deeply, then slowly licked it, all while keeping my lips from letting any air escape. She moaned. Knowing that she had moved her tongue across my body before placing it over my portion. "Wendy, it's about to happen," I warned her. She kept her mouth over it, until it did. Then she moved her tongue over it again. Knowing that Wendy had been asking "I want you to be inside me" when my portion was ready to operate again. I used my hand. She used my hand. "I want to, Wendy, but I don't have a condom," I told her. Boy, did I want to. Knowing all that. Missing her being close to me, physically, more than anything else. More than the physical exploration, even. Missing that feeling of being home again. Knowing that. Now, watching this. I felt my heart sink as she curled up beside John. I went to bed. A giant sigh. A shrug. A pointless gesture.

Sunday, I awoke before the alarm rang, surprised, since I had laid down sometime after 2 a.m.. After getting dressed and grabbing two bottles of water, I sat out front, waiting for Ryan, this Palm Beach Atlantic College student, to pick me up for church. He did. On the way there, we stopped at Burger King, went in, for the #2 meal, a sausage-egg croissant, two beverages, and tater-tots (which they call hash browns since it's breakfast). Church was enlightening. Pastor John spoke about the verse in 2 Chronicles 7:14. "If my people, which are called by my name ... " I like verses like that--if, then statements. They seem to be formulas for making things happen.

After church, I returned home, was doing some research for health on the computer. Yule walked in. "Hey Kris, how 'ya doing?" He asked. Yule is this friendly guy who visits Refuge at times. He is a Christian, and a homosexual. I'm not sure if a practicing homo can be a Christian, though, because of the verse in Hebrews 10:26-27. "You want to go out for lunch? I'm hungry." Praise The Lord! I was hungry, too, but did not have much to eat. God is so Good, all the time!

Alan allowed me to borrow the checkerboard Renault. We arrived at Denny's. Yule ordered a cheeseburger. I ordered a salad with a piece of grilled chicken on it. "Kris, you're one of the reasons I go to the hut. I love you. I do. You are so kind. You have such good energy." Yule gushed. "I mean that. I'm so happy I found that place," Yule explained. "But I do, Kris. I love you, emotionally and mentally. I love Sue, too. I'm

sad that she's leaving." She'll be back in January, I told him. "Good."

After two forkfuls of this late-afternoon lunch, Yule's cellphone rang. It was this guy who he used to date, someone who he hadn't seen in two years. "We gotta go," Yule said. We took the rest in a to-go-container, then left. "He's going to meet us at the corner of Park and Belvedere." I turned into the gas station. "That might be him," Yule suggested, pointing at a man bent over a spare tire near the air pump. We drove closer. "No, that's not him. There he is." Across the street, in the parking lot of the 301 Lodge Building, a sunglassesed man, standing beside his car, waved. We crossed, then turned a circle, and motioned for him to follow us. He followed us to the hut. I thanked Yule and left them talking in the kitchen area.

At 5:20, Audrey arrived, honking the horn in her mini-SUV. I ran out with two water bottles in one hand, and the manilla envelope with music notes in the other. At her church, she pulled out two songs I had not practiced, nor could learn in time. One was "Beula Land". Then she gives me the music for "Our God is an Awesome God" which is in a different key than the music I have. "Just talk to Peggy about it," quipped Audrey. Peggy is the organist, a portly lady, smartly-dressed straight from the late 70's polyester, the now-you-can-find-it-at-the-nearest-Goodwill wardrobe, with bifocals so small they could nearly be contacts. "Peggy," I gently asked her. "Do you think we could play "Our God is an awesome God" with these notes. This is the way I've been practicing it." She eyed the sheet of music cautiously. "That's going to be too high," she surmised. "The vocalists couldn't sing it that high. You can't play it this way?" She asked. "It's B flat, then C major, then F sharp minor - " Hmmm. "Uh, no. I don't know how to read music." She persists. "It's just B flat, then C major, then F sharp, and so on." She was not paying attention. "I'll just sit it out, Peggy. I can't learn it that fast. I'm not that good. I have to have more time to practice. I'll just sing or something. It's cool."

Audrey let the worship team in five songs. The two that I played along with were "Shout to the Lord" and "Seek Ye First". Playing piano in church is a serious enterprise. The piano itself, a grand, demanded respect. At some points, I had to quit singing along, as the effort to place each finger on the right key took all my concentration.

Following the worship, the in-house pastor walked to the platform, led us into prayer, then introduced the speaker, a visiting pastor, along with a recent convert who played guitar. The audience numbered about thirty people, an eclectic mix of indians, spanish, islanders, and whites from the northeastern states and deep south. They are an enthusiastic group, whooping to the music, saying "Amen!", and encouraging the musician with quips like "C'mon now!" and "Praise The Lord!" Even an elderly lady sits behind me. Every three minutes, she'll open her mouth to express herself. "Thank you, Jesus." She says with conviction and regularity. In fact, her comment is so regular it reminds you of the toy you have seen, no doubt, at a nearby thrift store, the plastic, round Fisher Price toy that emulates the noises of certain animals, depending on where the dial points. When you release the string, the dial spins ... "A cow goes: 'Moooooooooo'". It's a fun group, and sitting there, witnessing this, I feel as if I'm looking through a camera lens and the image is slightly grainy, like that of 16mm,



and we're filming a segment for "In Search Of", that cool show that Leonard Nimoy hosted. This segment would be called: "In Search of Spiritual Revivals".

After the singer left the stage, the visiting pastor began to speak. He made a comparison to eagles and Christians. Apparently, eagles go through different stages in their life. They are only able to move through these stages by the Grace of God. "They shall mount up with wings like eagles ... " the pastor said. The sermon was terrific. Afterwards, the in-house pastor walked to the front and began laying hands on people. I sat at the pew, praying. I sat on my pew seat, hands clasped, and prayed. Audrey walked near me, put her hand on my hand, then whispered: "The Lord wants me to tell you something. Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you." Wow. I needed that word. I sobbed, then thanked God for Audrey and for this word from The Lord.

(That night, I had been worrying slightly about confronting Jimmy, the bike taxi guy who inhabits a tiny living quarter in the West Bay. Over a year ago, I let Jimmy borrow a VCR. A month later, Jimmy was kicked out. I saw him near his bike on Clematis one night, and asked him for it "I let Bob King use it," he said. "He never let me borrow a VCR," Bob King said. Then later on, Alan allowed Jimmy to rent space-bike storage and a living space. David Knight asked about the VCR. It was his, the one that I had let Jimmy borrow. I told him the situation, and David had planned, tentatively, to meet me at the warehouse after church. Inside, I dreaded this, since I knew Jimmy had this street punk side to him, a fighter, who would claim that the VCR was his, even if David could identify it. After Audrey told me that word from The Lord, I felt like it didn't matter what happened. Incidentally, when I returned home, I called David, left a message, and told him to forget the whole thing. "The VCR is my responsibility. If you want another one, I'll buy you one. They're cheap. Let's not worry about this anymore.")

"C'mon now, brother Kris," he said, taking me by the hand and leading me to the front. "In the name of Jesus ..." he beckoned, one hand toward heaven, its palm outstretched, another hand on my head, "fill him up with Holy Ghost fire ..." He began to speak in tongues. Slightly, he pushed me back. I returned forward, rocking on my heels. He pushed again harder. I felt the hands of someone behind me, so decided to enjoy the ride. I collapsed gingerly in his arms as the person behind me ushered me to a spot on the floor. I laid there for a few minutes saying praises to Jesus. I felt good.

At the warehouse later, I was boiling a bag of yellow rice, and heating up Castlebury's beef stew. Alan and Ana arrive in Jimmy's bike taxi. They sat around and talked. Jimmy ordered a pizza from Papa John's. Thank God that I had called David Knight and called off plans to confront Jimmy. Why? We were all talking. It was really nice. Even Jimmy, who's often laconic and negative, was talking, smiling, and laughing. Perhaps it was the bottle of beer in his hand that loosened his lips. Whatever the case, I felt that our conversation was a step in the right direction, a positive bond between people who live and share studio space together.

Alan told me that him and this other guy, Rick, had deconstructed and reassembled

some microwave ovens and hooked them up to the phone line. "We put an apple in it," Alan said. "Then we sent it to Fort Pierce. Rick was in Fort Pierce. He called me and said: 'It didn't work. The apple's all mushy and brown.' and I'm like 'What do you mean, it didn't work. Of course it worked!' I was here in West Palm Beach, and he was in Fort Pierce." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. This was incredible. "Wait a second," I demanded. "You're telling me you created something - " Alan's hand went up "Rick and I created something, yes!" " - that moved an apple through time and space from West Palm Beach to Fort Pierce? No way. Are you for real?!" Alan nodded. "It can definitely be done," Ana agreed. "It can." Alan leaned back, his face widened into this weird, knowing, but humble and boyish grin. "Yes. All it is is radio waves, and they carry the signal. We were going to build a free energy machine. That's why I wanted the field across the street. All we'd need is copper, buried a few feet in the ground, 80 feet apart, and a PVC pipe running down the center with a crystal atop of it. We could power this whole place, and sell the excess power back to FPL."

"You're a scientist, and an artist, Alan," I said.

"No," he waved his hand down in a karate chop, "I'm just an artist. I ... think about the possibilities. The dreams ... can be real."

It's 10:23 am, still Monday, still December 3, 2001. I'm going to begin work on a diet plan today for my dad, and also work on a book I'm writing called "Foods that Harm, Foods that Heal".

December 6, Thursday, 2:07 a.m. 2001

Tonight I did some work for David Knight. We worked from 7pm until a little after midnight. I cut 3/4" plywood into two sections, then screwed them into an 2 x 12" studs to make a floor for an elevator shaft that he's converting into a storage room. The final floor piece was tricky, as it had to be cut around four vertical sections of wood that shot up through the floor. I prayed that it would go smoothly and safely. God answered my prayer. Minutes after praying, I picked up a ladder to bring to rest it on a section of wood, lost my balance, and fell shoulder-first into the brick wall. It was either take the fall and bruised shoulder, or try to correct my balance by lifting a foot from the floor joist, and risk falling 16 feet to the ground, down into the elevator shaft. Praise God for His mighty protection.

Toward the end of the night, David was securing pvc pipe for a sprinkler system. He asked me to drill a hole. I did, but the drill was not going into the cement. David crouched down beside me. "Now Kris," he said kindly. "When you drill you have to make sure the bit is facing the right direction." He took the drill from my hand, loosened it, took it out and put it in the right way. "Oh, I'm sorry David. That was stupid." He looked at me. "You just need a good dive." I replied: "Underwater, yeah, that would do me good. You're right." He smiled. "No, a good dumpster dive. To get your blood flowing. That would be good for you." I laughed. "Yeah," I agreed. "That would be cathartic."

David dropped me off at around 12:30 a.m. I thanked him. He said he'd probably call me tomorrow.

I asked Wendy if she could help me for a minute. She was sitting at the kitchen table, along with Alan, Bob Mulner, and Su Van Exel. We finished attaching the walls for her room, closing it off for privacy. Later, a train went by slowly. I jumped on it, then jumped off. Then I jumped on it again, and jumped off. I returned inside, and glanced out the window. It was slowing down. I walked into the kitchen. "Wendy, can I talk to you a second?" I asked her. "Sure." I led her into the east bay. "You wanna jump that train?" I asked her. "It's going real slow."

"Yeah," she said. As we approached the train, we noticed the last car was coming up. Wendy ran alongside it. I ran behind it. She jumped on, then I did. We rode it a few blocks, then I looked at her. "This train is picking up speed, Wendy. We need to get off." She looked so pretty and lost and certain at the same time, I felt like hugging her and riding it all the way to Georgia. I climbed down on the side of it. "I'm scared," she said. Those words made me scared. "I'm not going to get off until you do, Wendy. We have to get off. You get off first. Then I'll get off." She climbed in front of me. "Do you want me to hold you," I asked. "And I'll jump off?" She leaned her left foot toward the ground. "Jump to the left when you jump off," I suggested. "Not now, though," I said, noticing the rails below splitting off. If we had jumped, our legs may get tangled up, or we may be thrown to the ground so fast, our head may hit the iron rail. Not good. "Okay, now we gotta jump Wendy, the rail is single again." She jumped to the left. I jumped and landed running. I looked back. Her body was limp on the ground. I ran toward her. "Wendy, Wendy, are you all right?!" I crouched down to examine her. "Yeah, I'm all right," she smiled genuinely, eyes shining happily. "Are you sure?" I asked. "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. I jumped to the left," she stood up, wiping herself off, "and landed on my left foot and just went 'Whomp' and went straight down. Yeah, it was bad," she laughed. (Wendy's cool.) "I feel like just running in and touching everyone in the kitchen. They'd go 'Aaaaa' cuz they'd get shocked by all the electricity that's runnin through my body right now."

Life is like a train. Sometimes you just gotta get off.

December 6, Thursday, 10:57 a.m, 2001

After hanging out with Wendy earlier this morning, I crawled into bed. It was around 2:30 a.m. I could not sleep. I returned to the kitchen and made a sandwich, a tomato, lettuce (romaine), and Miracle Whip assembled between two slices of toasted Wild Oat's Honey Wheat bread. All of it, except for the Miracle Whip and sea salt, came from a dumpster. It was delicious. I made another one. That too, was tasty.

Sitting around the kitchen table were Alan, Wendy, Su Van Excel, and Bob Mulner were chatting about poetry. Wendy had put in a Jack Kerouac CD, his poems recited by different musicians, artists, even his mother. Interesting words. "Kicks Joy Darkness" is the name of the CD. Morphine played music to one of his poems, while the singer sifted through Kerouac's mind-photo-album.

"I need cigarettes," Su Van Exel announced.

"We can go to the store," Wendy suggested.

"I'll drive," Alan said.

"No, you can't drive," pleaded Wendy. Slowly, the heads turned toward me, mouth half-full with the contents of the recent dumpster dive. "Kris'll drive."

"Yeah," I'll drive. "Let's go."

I drove Alan's checkerboard Renault to 7-11. Two police cars were sitting outside and the officers, standing beside them, were talking. The clerk told us he couldn't sell beer between 2am and something-am, so we wandered through the aisles. "I want ice cream," I said. "Okay, let's get some," Wendy agreed. "Let's pretend like we're on our honeymoon, Wendy." I said. "Okay," she smiled.

We wandered to the back of the aisle and she put her left arm around me. She slid her right hand across my body and came close. "You want some ice cream baby," she inhaled, her eyelids dropping lazily, her mouth open. "Yeah baby. What kind do you want?" I asked.

We flirted more, then moved toward the door that leads into the storage area. "You wanna make love to me? Here? Right now? Let's go." She led me by the hand into the storage area, where our bodies met into a hug. Fondness for her overwhelmed me. The fact that she's daring enough to become an actress in any given situation, her creativity, her eyebrows pencil sharp accenting every expressive glance, her voice tones--soft and tender--wow, they do it for me. She has terrific and unreal gestures. Wendy, in all her uncertainty, is meant. Gestures are the hinges to the doors of the heart. We hugged and moved our hands over each other, her play-acting, me play-acting but wanting to mean it because I like her, am fond of her. She's vivid. "Hey, hey, hey, c'mon you have to stop," the clerk said with a smile, hurriedly running back to meet us, his hand in the air.

We got the ice cream, cigarettes, and Wendy got a candy bar for Sue, and we split. "Do you want to pull over and make out?" Wendy asked. I couldn't tell whether she was acting or not. "Sure. Cool." I said.

I turned the Renault into a side street, parked in front of a house, and we ate the ice cream and fed it to each other with our fingers. We did not make out. She didn't want to. I put ice cream (Haggen Daz strawberry) on her face and licked it off. She took my fingers, which had a glob of ice cream on them, and sucked them in her mouth. Whoa ... it felt really, really good.

"We better get going," she said, after nearly 10 minutes. We headed back to Alan's and delivered the goods. Then Wendy and I ate ice cream in my room. Both of us sat cross-legged on the carpet. She grabbed a strawberry, ate it. I put my fingers in her mouth trying to get it out. Then she kissed me and pushed the strawberry from her

mouth into my mouth. It was sexy. Then she returned outside to watch Alan and Su part. Su was leaving on an early morning flight to return to upstate New York for a few months. Twenty minutes later, I was in bed, hoping Wendy would come visit, and sleep beside me. She did not.

It was a fun night, nonetheless. And everything is terrific when you're willing to free your mind to the possibilities.

6:05 p.m, Thursday evening, December 6, 2001

I've been practicing piano for the last hour. In trying to find the chords for "El Shaddai", I broke down and started sobbing. Thinking of how much God loved me, enough to send His only Son to die for my sins ... the thoughts overwhelmed me. Lying facedown, I laid on the floor. Still, the tears rolled down, as I thanked God for his goodness, mercy, love, patience, kindness, and the Sacrifice of his Son.

Alan just walked in and asked me to scan some images for him. I did, printed them. Natasha, Alan's assistant peeked her head in the door. "Kris, I'm sorry to bother you," she started, an outstretched hand with the cordless phone in it pointed my way. I felt sheepish like all the sudden I had gotten popular. "It's okay, Natasha, thanks." I took the phone. It was Robert St. Croix, this accomplished artist that has a foundry a few blocks north of here. He's a sculptor. He does some wonderful work. He wants me to help him layout a brochure for an upcoming art show. It's a 16-pager. "I need you to talk with the printing company to find out what their specifications are," he relayed. "I'll pay you like ten to twelve dollars an hour." I told him that sounds great, and since I'm loading a truck with Alonzo tomorrow, I'll try to meet him around noon on lunchbreak. "I can show you everything in ten minutes," he said.

Praise God! Hallelujah!

4:40 a.m, Thursday morning, December 13, 2001

It doesn't feel like Christmas.

It's cooler weather for sure, but something is amiss. The only place where it feels like winter is inside my thoughts. And the winter snow that's settled along the banks of my mind is not the pristine gentle powder that lines the streets of a quaint northern town that has yet to be affected by the scars of progress. This snow is stained, dirty, in bitter chunks that have fallen lopsided against abandoned buildings in an area where progress has arrived and left, looking for a better exchange on the dollar. Think of Buffalo, New York in a state of beautiful urban decay. Even the snow, collectively, sympathizes with its landing place--an abandoned nest of chipped brick and rusting steel. (Perhaps this sounds as if I am depressed. Don't worry, folks. It's nothing a good bike ride, dumpster dive, or Cadbury fruit & nut won't cure. It is easier to see things for what they are when you are sad. Sorrow clears the head. Being sad gives focus. All emotions exist for a purpose. Even anger is the microscope of reason. Emotions put a magnifying glass on feelings. They can be useful in helping you cut to the chase. Why beat around the bush when you can jump in it?

Last night Audrey visited. She appeared, dressed like Carol Burnett in breezy slacks, heels, smiling, eyes widening and squinting to accent her words. She followed me like a giant bird, her eyelids flapping wildly, her face expanding and contracting in youthful vigor. "Kris, Kris, Kris, I just have to tell you ..." she started. "Oh my gosh, Kris ..." the plane was turning down the runway. "God," she touched my shoulder, "is so good." The plane was in position and its engines were accelerating. "This lady who is a friend of mine works for the Hearst family. Have you heard of the Hearst family. They have a house in The Hamptons, a house in Palm Beach. Very, very rich people. Very wealthy. Anyway, she told me that Mrs. Hearst was getting rid of some clothes that she didn't need. Kris," she paused for effect, closed her eyes, reached out and touched my shoulder again. Wanting her to be able to share her joy, although I feel like I do this with about 6 people a day, I smiled, nodded, leaned forward like a codependent Pinocchio, eyebrows raised, (cue the music ... where's Gepetto when you need him? Abandon ship. Gilligan! Yes, Skipper.) "Kris," she repeated. Her eyebrows fluttered like butterflies struggling to be released. "Are you familiar with name brands?" She continued to tell me all about the clothes, the name brands, that they are the perfect size. "We wear the same exact size. Is that God or what? God had her pick out these clothes for me? Isn't that, uhhhh, awesome?!" Me, still nodding, like a marionette dumbass, feeling an inch tall, sitting in my head, looking out from my eyes, and controlling my movement like a crane operator safe from within his booth. Meanwhile, Audrey is the construction woman on the ground, hardhat on, cuing me with hand-signals--her expressions and dramatic flair. "Move hand to one o'clock. Move head back. Laugh. Nod. Say: "Cool. Wow. That's great, Audrey." Inside, I'm evaporating into this wilderness of fat-free, flavorless enthusiasm. Like a broken automaton, my mouth opens and out fall adjectives of encouragement, my eyes widen, my head leans closer. Then, I repeat the animated response.

I was in the east bay. I wasn't in a particularly positive mood. Neil, Tony, were talking behind the television. It was blurred onto a sitcom. Wendy and John sat on the car seat in front of it. And Audrey was there, as if she just appeared. "Hey," she said. "Hey Audrey," I enthused, exhaling, coming up for air above the waves of depression whose undertow I had been feeling recently. I smelt like a dumpster. As I had just returned from a dumpster, that was expected. Earlier, fifteen minutes earlier, I had been exploring the depths of the Wild Oat's dumpster, carefully selecting abandoned oranges, apples, greens, bunches of grapes, while Jeff Buckley crooned into my headphones. I had biked over there quickly. By the end of the third song on Buckley's Grace CD, I was at the foot of the dumpster. This time I came prepared. I had a flashlight. After gathering what I could, and feeling the grip of paranoia that rises from the thought of being arrested and placed into a holding cell (no windows ... please don't let me be arrested ... please God help me) I quickly exited the third hand store, loaded the fruit from a nearby carton into the backpack and pedaled off, heading north on Georgia at a steady clip of 15 miles an hour. It took three Jeff Buckley songs to get to the dumpster (12 minutes) and three to return home. Praise The Lord for bicycles. The world looks better from a bicycle. If everyone had to ride bikes for a month instead of drive cars, the need for psychologists would plummet.

I miss Wendy. I miss hanging out with her. I miss her needing me. Then again, I am not sure if she really needed me. I guess I'd like to think she did. She hangs out with John a lot. John's this former homeless guy she met when she left this place and lived on the street for a while. For a while, Wendy was kicking it with me and Alan. She was protected then, from the darker motives of others. Then John was her friend. Now, it seems as if everyone is her friend. Attention is the can opener for reluctant relationships. It's electric. And before you know it the lid is off and you're being added to the plate to round out the dinner meal. When you become friends with everyone, you begin to lose a part of yourself. The individuality wears thin. You become a paper plate, discardable and left only with the stains of everyone else's dreams on you. When colors are mixed, they start to run and form new colors. Individual colors fail to stand out, as they did before. The marriage of pigments create a new color, something flat, less bold in its endeavor, cloudy.

Inside the belly of overturned ship, it is the lonely crowd. People mouthing references to poetry that is not their own, crying out from the crow's nest, waving their arms whenever they spot land in the distance. Behind fish eyes, glassed over and cautious, this lost crew press their hands against the aquarium wall, comfortable with free food yet desperate for something more. And like them, I am not restless, I am desperate. I can trick myself into thinking that I'm part of something bigger than myself that is headed toward a lofty goal, an island at the edge of the horizon that promises unthinkable wealth, adventure, and exploration. The ship's captain staggers, clutching a bottle of gutrot in his hand like a compass, finding direction in his consistency between work, the bar, and gallery openings. Even through the storms, captain Alan remains focused in his search for that elusive Moby Dick, his dreams. Like captain Alan, we pretend that we share the common goal--each looking for our own dream to reach and be part of--while in reality we are afraid to admit that we keep the dreams at bay for our own reasons. These reasons have tethered us to the ground and left us paralyzed in a continual state of caution and apprehension. Fear, it seems in this case, is a stronger motive than love. In perfect love, there is no fear. But this love, a love that we cannot quite gauge or control, is not perfect. This love is a strange animal, always moving further away, teasing us by staying just out of reach. Our search propels us forward. Our stubbornness refuses to let us call it quits. Our dream-fires continue to be stoked by motives that have been forgotten some time ago. We keep moving.

I've been writing music. Sadness provides inspiration. I wrote a song a few days ago. It has similar pacing and chording to the Simon and Garfunkel song ("You bruise me") that Neil introduced me to the evening before. It's called "The seas will part". I really like it. Here it is.

The seas will part

verse 1:

G Em C G

your eyes and laugh, betray your fear

G Em C G  
don't deny, that I'm not near  
E D C G  
I am near, to let you know  
G Em C G  
that feelings do, from friendships grow

chorus:  
G D C G  
from friendships grow, the seed i sow  
G D C G  
do we both know, should i let go

verse 2:  
G Em C G  
that careless thought, is often heard  
G Em C G  
i cling for hope, to every word  
G D C G  
to every word, i dearly hold  
G D C G  
let you unfold, i am not bold

verse 3: (this next verse follows verse 2, 2nd time around)  
G D C G  
to every word, i dearly hold  
G Em C G  
together we, can just grow old  
G D C G  
can grow old, in each others hands  
G D C G  
don't let go, please understand

verse 4:  
G Em C G  
gestures the hinges, to your heart  
G Em C G  
an offhand glance, the seas will part  
G D C G  
the seas will part, and then you'll see  
G Em C G  
that on the other, side is me

(after the second time, repeat 3x the last two lines of verse 4)



December 25, Tuesday, 2001 1:22 a.m.

I just returned from the bus station on Tamarind. After returning home at around 9pm, and giving Rodney and Kelly, Kevin and Gina, and Kim a short tour of the east bay, I played drums, then some piano. A knock on my door. Come in, I said. It was Tom, a beer in one hand, a cigarette in the other. Tom's this guy who works at Robert St. Croix's, a nearby sculpture studio. "Hey man," he mumbled. "Where is everybody. No one's here. Where'd they go? I heard there was something going on at City Place, some Christmas thing."

"I don't know. You want to go down there and check it out?"

"Yeah. You wanna go?"

"Yeah. Let's go. I gotta get out of here."

I walked out the front door, bike in hand. Then Tom said: "I don't know man. How 'bout I meet you there in half-an-hour. I gotta go do something."

"Tom, don't do it. That crack's no good, man."

"No but it kind of brings out my personality. It makes me so I'm not so shy. I can talk to girls easier. Then I'll go get a whore. Ha, ha, ha."

"Why?"

"Cuz it makes me horny, so if I go down there and get some, I'll get horny. It feels good. I'll meet you down there in half-an-hour."

I biked downtown, passed Tom biking a pedi-cab in City Place. In his cab was a husband, wife, and a kid, or they appeared to be a family anyway. I biked to Evernia, then headed west to Tamarind, cut across the street and arrived at the Greyhound Station. Earlier I had heard from Alan that Wendy was gonna pick up some money he offered for her to get a bus ticket. On the north side of the bus/train station, I saw them. Wendy was huddled, knees up. John laid out on the ground, legs out. Hey, I said.

"Heeyyyyyyyy," Wendy sighed, smiling.

"Hey Wendy. Hey John. How you guys doing? When's the bus leaving? You guys all right?" I asked. We talked for a while. I asked them if they needed anything, like warm clothes, writing pad, food, etc. Wendy asked for writing pad and John asked for a Christmas meal and beer. I returned to the hut and nuked Publix mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, and Turkey, and portioned it out on two plates, saran-wrapping them. I grabbed two pairs of socks, the writing pad that Wendy left in her cubicle, along with two larger writing pads she gave me, included 3 Pilot V5 or V7 black ink pens, a bag of mixed candy taken from an after-Halloween sale, a "This was your life!" Gospel tract, two bottles of beer--one Miller and one Samuel Adams,

plastic utensils, napkins, and a bottle opener. I placed the goods carefully inside a large wicker picnic basket I had found roadside about two months earlier, then put on my helmet and biked back to the Greyhound station. I thought that Wendy had said they were leaving at 12:05 a.m. It was around 12:10 or 12:15 a.m. when I left, so I hustled, considering that the bus would probably be late anyway. I arrived with the food. Wendy was suprised. "I didn't think you were coming," she sigh-smiled. John ate his plate. Wendy and I split hers. They drank the beers. John smoked a cig. So did Wendy. Then the bus arrived. I gave them a hug, stood there, gave Wendy another hug and kiss on the cheek, said goodbye, and biked away. I biked to the northwest corner of Okeechobee and Tamarind, stood under the streetlight, propped my bike against the cement pylon, and waited, hoping the bus would approach. Slowly, I saw the behemouth lurch from the busstop area and make the slow turn into the street. It was heading my way. Cool. It was 100 feet away, slowing to stop at the red light before turning. I waved my right hand in the air. The bus stopped at the light. I looked in the windows, it was hard to see since the glare was reflecting off from the streetlight. Halfway between the front of the bus and the back, I saw Wendy against the window. John sat beside her. She smiled, nudged John, and waved. He waved. The bus was beginning to turn the corner. She blew me a kiss. I blew her a kiss. She waved. The bus slowly hugged the corner, accelerating as it straightened out onto Okeechobee, heading west toward I-95. It's a beautiful Christmas. Dear Lord, thanks for your kindness and your introduction to Wendy and John. Please be with them Lord, protect them, and lead them into paths of righteousness and mercy and peace. Help them to come to know you as Lord and Saviour. Thank you Jesus for your love, justice, and kindness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Maybe I'll visit Wendy and John when they get a place, individually or collectively, in Portland, Oregon. I paid rent for two months in advance here at the hut. I paid for January and February. So I have two months free to travel. Why not? I need it, I think. And if I think about it too much, I will talk myself out of it. Thank you, Lord!

December 28, Friday, around 10pm, 2001

Carrie offered me a ride to my mom's, where she was scheduled to cook a dinner for us. This, I was looking forward to, as I love Carrie Cutlip. She is bright, pretty, interesting, a great conversationalist--full of insight, wisdom, and candor, and honest. She's also a terrific cook. We arrive at mom's house and Carrie immediately begins preparing the food in the kitchen. We eat. Then sit in the living room, where Carrie, Kim, Rodney and I are sitting. Some friend of Kevin arrives with his wife or girlfriend. He's this college student who's going for his masters degree at Wake Forest University. Rodney wanders up, introduces himself, and starts asking questions about the college. Rodney's hands are waving around, seeming to be dislocated at the wrists, carrying across the conversation like an injured softball pitcher, ironic, since Rodney's questions are softballs that can be answered with light-hearted and meaningless replies, ambiguous to the point of being invisible. In the living room, Carrie and Kim are talking. I go out to the campfire, where Kevin's playing guitar and Gina's sitting nearby. Paul and Sue are out there, quiet, sitting beside each other. Jana, mom, and I get in a conversation. After about 10 minutes,

Kim wanders out. "Carrie wants to talk to you," she says. I excuse myself and walk inside the house. "Hey Carrie, what's up?" I ask. She shoots me a glare. "Are we gonna open the gifts?" I ask. She shoots another glare, eyes full of disappointment. "Don't say anything else," she whispers firmly in my ear. "Sorry," I say. "I'm leaving. Right now. So, if you want to stay and can get a ride with someone else, that's fine. But if you want to leave with me you need to get your things." I grab my stuff, slip into the car. She starts it without turning on the lights. "I don't even want to say goodbye to anyone. I just want to leave. They don't deserve it. They don't even deserve the gifts I bought them." I looked at Carrie lovingly, and asked: "Carrie, what happened?" She reversed the car. "I don't want to talk about it until I'm out of the driveway." She exits the property, and then slowly begins to tell me what happened. "I am so mad. I can't even talk. First of all, your mom invites me over to cook tonight, which is fine, but no one even talks to me ... " Listening to Carrie speak, realizing the extent to how she had been ignored by people who had eaten the delicious food she had so carefully prepared, the tears began to well up in my eyes. I realized how much I still love her, and always will. "Everyone was nice, no one was mean to me, people were polite, but I'd at least like someone to ask me some questions or take an interest. No one did. Even in the kitchen, I at least like it when people are talking to me, showing they care by asking questions. But no one did. If people like that are calling themselves Christians ... " she sighed in frustration, then began to cry. "Awww, Carrie, I love you so much," I said. "They just don't realize how valuable and how beautiful you are. It's their loss ... " Carrie was abrupt with my empathy. "I don't need your sympathy," she said. "I know you mean well, but it doesn't help. I swear I don't care if I'm ever invited to anything there ever again. I'm not going. It's humiliating. I got gifts for everyone there. Even when I dated you, I always got a gift for Kevin every year. He never got a gift for me. He's so selfish." Even though Kevin's my brother, I had to agree with her on that one. Years ago, when I was in a band called 'One Rabbit' with Paul Lebel (guitar), Glen Nelson (bass), Paul would ask me what's wrong with my brother. "What's wrong with your brother?" He'd ask. "You're so nice and he's such an asshole." Carrie Cutlip is a great and wonderful person, whose friendship I cherish and treasure more than she can understand. She helps me to view the world in a more rational way. That's one of the things I love about Carrie Cutlip. Dear Lord, please bless Carrie Cutlip with a wonderful life and bless her economically, too. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

December 29, Saturday, 1:12 a.m., 2001

Worked today at Emilie-Marie's, an antique store in antique row, on Dixie, in downtown West Palm Beach. Emilie-Marie and her husband Jeff run the store, along with their assistant Charley. I was there to help rearrange antique furniture--sconzes, commodes, etc--and hang chandeliers. Jeff and Emilie, especially Emilie, are extremely generous, buying lunch, buying a late afternoon snack at Dunkin Donuts, of which I gratefully accepted, yet refused, kindly, the munchkins, opting for a glass of apple juice.

Tonight, JR, Heather and family came over. JR and Heather are leading worship Sunday. We went over some songs, including an original song by JR that is terrific,

and an original one of mine. If all goes as planned, JR will be playing acoustic, Heather will be singing, and I'll be playing piano. After they left, I asked Andy for a ride to Wild Oats dumpster. We drove over. He stood watch while I dived. God is soooo Good. Found a pineapple, some red onions, a red pepper, lettuce (3 different kinds) and 3 apples. Praise The Lord! We returned home. I thanked him. He offered a ride to Wild Oats the next morning for the food pickup for The Lake Worth Food Re-Distribution. Nice kid, that Andy Cotter.

December 29, Saturday afternoon, 2001

God is awesome! Andy drove to Wild Oats where we had a massive food pickup of rice milk, pita chips, yogurt, tofu, meatless lunch slices--turkey, salami--an entire crate of organic eggs, probably about 12-15 dozen. Praise The Lord! What a God-send Andy Cotter is to be so generous with his car. (Dear Lord, please bless Andy Cotter with a girlfriend, and a purpose in his life. If it's your will, God, give him a calling so he can occupy his time with something meaningful. And place someone in his life that will recognize his talent, worth, and beauty as a human being. Thank you, Lord! Amen.) We arrived at the villa de vulva, the anarchists house at which the radical cheerleaders were birthed, and brought the goods inside. Two college-age kids, feigning unenthusiasm, dressed in black what else, stood listlessly, morose, with bullets for pupils, eyeing the food. Melody, a villa resident, wandered from the hallway "Hey Kris" gives me a hug. She's adorable. She's smart, too. Then Tanya, Waffle's honey steps out, another hug. Melody introduces us to a girl on the couch, her face erupts into a genuine grin, she extends an hand. We shake. I smile. I encourage her to help herself to the food. I ask Tanya about the loft. She smiles. I lead Andy into the room to show the loft Waffle and I built. "Wow," Andy says, a hand immediately reaching for the goatee that he had shaved a week earlier, searching for the stubble that once had resided at the end of his chin, but had been evacuated by the promise of lower rent on someone elses chin, an attempt to rub the chia-pet to prove his faith before the genie appeared, asking him for wishes for which he feels too guilty to partake. Sigh. (Andy. I'm not sure what motivates Andy. About a month ago I told him I was not interested in trivia or politics, and that when he talked, I wanted to hear about him--his dreams, sorrows, victories. He put both hands up like a man with puppet signaling no spare change. "I don't know, I don't know. I'm kind of lazy." He's a bright kid. Somewhere along the way his wings got clipped. Maybe he's never been motivated enough to fly. Then again, perhaps his laziness overrides any ambition. Some people begin riding in the hearse years before their death. Inside, watching through tinted windows. The coffin, within reach, keeping their dreams undisturbed.) Her hand directing our eyes, Tanya shows the room that her daughter, whose name escapes me, had built beneath the loft, which serves as a bed for Waffle and Tanya.

We say our goodbyes. I lead Andy outside of the house, to 7 boxes of fruits and vegetables, clothes, books. We both bag some. I grab a bag of tomatoes, onions, a pepper or two, and select some books and clothes in the other. I didn't see what Andy got. Maybe he didn't get anything. Waffle, a blonde-haired, project-oriented, clever, and hard-working activist, organized The Lake Worth Food Distro, a crew of

volunteers to pick up surplus food from various food stores in Lake Worth and West Palm Beach. What they don't distribute among the neighborhood, they place in cardboard boxes near their house. Signs in front say "comidas gratis" or "free food". The boxes of vegetables and fruits were extra, from the food distro.

December 30, Sunday, 10:18 p.m., 2001

This morning I had the privilege of playing piano to JR Lawsons original worship song. Heather, his wife, and Claire, his daughter joined in the vocals. Jason played guitar and Chris Paul played bass. I really like the song a lot. It reminds me of an early 80's style worship song--minimal, sparse, with lots of room to play around vocally. Mike Toby would love this song. I played a song I wrote called "In Jesus Christ" on piano. I fumbled twice while playing. The microphone was in my face and I had to look at the lyrics and notes above them, so chalk it up to interference.

I rode my bike to City Place tonight. Parked it outside. Escalator upstairs. Found a health book. Nice, with lotsa info about foods and their benefits, all pages were magazine style with lotsa pictures. Marked down from \$50 to \$18. At the checkout, I was 18-cents short. The cashier told me that, very soberly. I took it as a sign. Perhaps I'll return tomorrow, spend more time looking at it before deciding on it. Biked to Rosemary and Fifth street to visit Alonzo. Deborah came to the door, "Hey Kris, hold on, I'm comin down." I waited for a few minutes. She exited rapidly and we talked at the phone booth beneath Alonzo's apartment. She seemed in a rush. Her hands smoothing her hair, adjusting her clothes, tightening her belt buckle. "What are you doing?" I asked her. "What do you think I'm doing?" She replied. "Getting ready to go out." Hmmm. "Go out and do what?" I asked. "Oh, c'mon. You know." I didn't know. "I like to get high. I'm gonna get stoned." She said. "Lemme borrow ten bucks. Just between me and you. Don't tell Alonzo." Against my better judgement, I fished two fives out of my pocket and gave them to her. I felt careless and wreckless anyway, why not. Then I realized I was a white guy, in the ghetto, handing money to a black girl, who's skinny and hyper. " ... take two steps forward, and two steps back, we stay together 'cuz opposites attract ... ' thinking of Janet Jackson's song, if that's even how it goes, I start laughing. Maybe an arrest on suspicious charges would be good for me. I need the texture in my life. I feel numb. Like I'm under a spell. Like I'm aware, all of the sudden, of my own mortality. If you let it get the worst of you, being introspective will starve the best of you. I think I will get a steady job at night, working in a restaurant, making salads, anything to keep busy. Perhaps I'll meet some college-aged people, at least I'll be around them, instead of rounding up stray-dog-thoughts and keeping them in the humane society of my mind, to be held for a future fate of adoption or being put to sleep. Perhaps I should wallow in this self-indulgent swamp of doubt. Then again, work, especially work that tires the body and occupies use of the hands, is often the remedy for doubt, as it justifies free time. Work, spending hours being obedient while creating a good or service, provides something to work against, and serves as a pressure cooker for dreams in that it shows the value of time. If doing nothing is a waste of time, then doing everything is a waste of time. Time is precious. How ironic that we work fervently to do as much as we can, in as

little a timespace as possible, in order to save time. But in the end, has time been saved? And what have you given, of yourself, in order to save that time? And what do you do with the extra time, do you enjoy it. Probably not. You try to do twice as many things as you did before in the same amount of time. When you finish the job early, and you have extra hours, your mind races. You have hours ... what will you do with the time? Even this becomes another source of stress. Sometimes, people are so unaccustomed to having free time, that when they do have it, they look for ways to kill it. Similar to putting a pet to sleep, this relieves them of the responsibility of having to make a decision, or do something about it. Modern America is drowning in options.

December 31, Monday, 2:35 p.m., 2001

Tomorrow will be next year.

Earlier this morning, I perused some more information about urine therapy, made a sandwich, went to the bathroom, peed in a cup, filling it halfway, then sat on the toilet and peed the rest. Sitting there, I looked at myself in the bathroom mirror, flushed the toilet, stood up, crouched in front of the bathroom mirror, looked at myself, said "You're insane", then stood up, held my nose, drank the urine, swallowed it, then drank the rest in a single gulp. Keeping my nose held, I poured water into the cup, swished it around, then drank that. Grabbed the gallon of water and drank some more. Moments later, I felt a boost of energy, and also more relaxed. Why urine? I've been reading about it on the internet. It's been practiced for hundreds of years, especially in cultures outside the United States. Apparently, urine is 95% water and the remaining 5% are minerals that our body can assimilate without digestion. Also, the baby inside the mothers womb feeds on the mothers amniotic fluid, primarily composed of urine. Books have been written about it. In one, a man that was over 400 pounds, went on a urine and water fast and at the end of 7 weeks was down to 130 pounds. Another man survived for 14 days, buried under the rubble following an earthquake, by drinking his own urine. Urea, which is used in many healthcare products, comes from urine. I even got dad, Michael Kemp, hello, my name is Bond, James Bond, to drink it. Last night he called and left a message. I called back. Helena answered the phone and fluttered to get him. I was laughing when he reached the receiver, as I had the expectation that he would tell me he had done it--drinked his own urine. "I did it," he said. Then I started laughing. So did he. We couldn't stop. "Helena told me to drink more of it. She wants me to drink hers. Her urine." We both started laughing. I'm laughing now, just thinking about it. "Don't drink Helena's urine. Not OPP, other people's pee, only your own. Just drink your own urine." I told him to drink some everyday. "How much should I drink?" He asked. "About half-a-cup should do you," I suggested. "Helena says that I should drink a lot of it. What do you think about that?" "I'm not sure," I told him. "If you want. But I think half-a-cup will be enough." Life is good. At least it's funny, that's for sure.

I biked over to First Union, on Lake and Southern, to cash two checks. There was a line. I listened to Steve Rullman's local band compilation. I'm particularly fond of "Remember the Ocean", "A Kite is a Victim", and "One Line Drawing". Moody and

atmospheric music, like Ride, The Cranberries or The Smiths. Rodney Mayo, the tornado-cave designer and architect for the clubs--broken elevators with better music--in downtown West Palm Beach and South Beach and Delray Beach--said that I would like A Kite is a Victim. He knows my music tastes, which is flattering, since he's the underground, behind-the-scenes maestro of 7 clubs and Closer magazine, among other things, and has more things bubbling in that creative and enigmatic mind of his.

I returned to the warehouse, where Daria is touching up antiques for Alan, and Ana's mom is sitting, holding court and talking with her. "Are you hungry?" Ana's mom asked. "I bought some fried chicken, if you want some. Help yourself. It's on the kitchen table." She's a sweetie. "Thanks. Wow. You're so kind," I enthused.

Daria's this bright Polish girl who visited me last week. We talked and drank red wine in my room. My head was spinning. She told me to quit wasting time at this place, that what I was doing, by cleaning up after these lazy people that live here is an offense to God, because I should be using my talents to reach more people that are worth reaching, not these unappreciative slackers. She is right. I'm trying to take her advice and put it to some use. So I have been working more on this health book, the musical "Dumpster Diver - The Musical", and my mom's web site, where anyone will be able to read her Scripture Series or Bible - Book by Book outline. My mom is brilliant. She has a bigger influence than she is aware of, as she is a reproducer, birthing Bible teachers who will continue to sow The Word of God.

Daria and I hung out in my room and chatted. She confessed that her boyfriend seemed be cool with her, in that he didn't call her for a few days. I gave her some advice, advice that Carrie had given me. I told Daria: be aloof with him, don't give him everything so freely or he will not appreciate it. As Carrie Cutlip said, "If it's free, there wouldn't be anything at stake." Then I added, "Make him earn your smile." We spoke about goals and she asked what mine were. To write this musical about dumpster diving, post a health book online along with a website, and quit biting my nails. I probably need to move out, too, I added. Yes, she agreed, you should. Daria's cool. Really bright. She's articulate. She used to be a teacher in Poland. I don't know if she likes me as a friend or more. I know she needs to get married in order to stay here, or she'll have to return to Poland. She has a green card, or whatever it is that let's you stay for 6 months. So, in the back of my mind, well, that's where I seem to spend most of my time as of recent, I am slightly wary of her interest, if she has any interest, in me. Oh well. I'll try to be careful. She is nice, and a good cook, and adorable. Praise The Lord! Dear Lord, I think I'm going crazy. Help me to get back on track. Lift me from this spell I have been under. I don't know what's wrong. I feel so isolated. Where is everyone? This place is a ghost town. Should I move away, move out. This place is closing in on me. It's becoming a large tomb of middle-aged-men, most of whom are destructive and lack motivation. Doesn't anyone have any passion anymore? What happened to a sense of urgency? Is it just me? What's going on? Thank you Lord for the fog that I am in. I know it will serve a purpose. Praise The Lord!

January 1, 9:30 a.m., 2002

A new year. This morning I went to the toilet and did a massive dump. That was probably the source of my angst last night--undigested food. The hostage release was easy. Standing up, I felt 10 pounds lighter. In all earnestness, there's not much that good bowel movement won't cure. Chalk it up to fiber. So many wrong foods are put into our mouths that cause us mental turmoil. Shrinks would be wise to get their patients on an all vegan diet--raw vegetables, fruits, juicing, and whole grains.

Saw Tom wandering around. If Tom's any indication, Florida is full of girls who are looking for the wrong guys. Why? Tom is smart, attractive, kind, considerate, and has a good sense of humor. And he doesn't have a girlfriend. Go figure. I asked him what he did last night--being that last night was New Years, so people earn the right to party--dance, drink, hang with friends. "I went to Miami with Lynelle, her new boyfriend, and Lynelle's friend, this girl. We went to this tiny, tiny apartment in this high-rise condominium on South Beach. These guys were down from New York, who owned the apartment, and they were friends of Lynelle's new boyfriend. The guys were really pretentious. The apartment was really tiny. It had a bidet. It was a tiny apartment. The entire apartment was the size of your room. I drank a bottle of whiskey, then stood on the balcony and flipped pennies into the pool. Then we went to a bar and this girl tripped me, so I made an ass of myself and fell. I walk up to the bartender to buy a drink. He puts up his hand and says 'No, no, no, enough for you. If you want me to, I can call a cab', and I'm like 'I'm not drunk, that girl tripped me'. So we leave the bar and I walk into the street to hail a cab and Lynelle grabs my arm like this and is yelling at me to get out of the street, but I'm like, that's the way to get a cab--you know--you walk out onto the street, but she was yelling and making a scene. So we get back to the van and they drive me all the way back to here, to West Palm." I looked at Tom, tilted my head, "Were you mad? They actually took you all the way back here?" "No," he sighed. "I was sleeping because the day before I had only gotten like 4 hours of sleep because I had done the bike taxi. Still, I didn't expect them to drive me back." He paused. "I guess I made an ass of myself. But I didn't make an ass of myself. I'm gonna call Lynelle's friend and apologize, because I guess I did something wrong. At least I'll find out what I did wrong."

January 1, 9:09 p.m., Tuesday, 2002

Tonight is the march of the lonely men-children. Nicholas dropped by, his usual self, hairstickingupandpaintedsilver, complaining about the lack of people, especially girls, to do stuff with in downtown West Palm Beach, Florida. I'm pretty tired of everyone living here. I liked it better when the people that lived here, at the warehouse (aka the hut aka the unarmed underground art centre aka flamingo art studios) were Alan, myself, Joel Kelly, the nudists, Bob King (at least he stuck to himself and minded his own business). Now, Neil Hoag lives here. Andy Cotter lives here. Tom lives here. Weazel, this con-artist who fakes a limp leg then works 2-3 hours a day collecting aluminum cans for recycling and refuses to pay rent yet always has money for beer and smokes, lives here. Jimmy, the thief who stole my VCR lives here. It's becoming a real drag, like a slow-motion funeral parade in the mid-1980's, memories of mousse, highlighted hair, wide belts, and penny loafers.

In a fit of rage, Alan kicked Candice Murphy out. I'm planning on moving. First I'm



going to get a job, maybe two jobs and save some money. Maybe then I'll appreciate this place more, if I'm only coming here to sleep. The bottom line is that there's a bunch of weird guys living here. About the only guy who is cool is Tom. Andy's kind of cool, too, except he's a gossip. Anything you tell him, he'll tell someone else, until it gets back to the person who was being talked about in the first place. This has happened on more than one occasion with Andy. He's got greasy lips. Neil's this in-your-face limo driver who lives above me. He doesn't wall off his room so has his eye on this whole bay, like he owns the whole bay or something, which he doesn't. He's very condescending, even though he tries to hide it with explosive bursts of laughter that follow his comments. It's a sad parade of lonely souls, emaciated in their own self-doubt, without the patience or ambition to uncover latent dreams beneath the rocks over which they step. These people drag their feet when they walk. For some, a sigh is called poetry.

Perhaps I'm being too judgemental. Why am I thinking about these people anyway? Because, at the moment, I don't have much of a life of my own. I'm a bit lost at the moment. For the last several weeks, motivation has eluded me, and I'm not motivated enough to look for it. That is why I must work. At least when I'm physically busy, I can think straight. I will stay busy. When I am here, at the warehouse, I will stay quiet. Praise The Lord. I know I need to trust God and read The Bible. That is where and when God will reveal himself to me, as I draw closer to Him. This world, with all of its promises and pretty material things, cannot provide peace. True peace can only be found through The Lord Jesus Christ.

January 3, 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, 2002

Praise God. The clouds have parted. The sunshines bathes me in overwhelming mercy. Listening to the The 2nd Chapter of Acts CD "Hymns II", "A Mighty Fortress is our God". What an awesome truth. Something nudged me to read The Bible, so I picked it up and opened it. The first Scripture that I came upon was Luke 14:7 - 11, the parable regarding humbleness--that the humble shall be exalted. Wow. Maybe God is telling me that I need to live humbly among everyone here at the warehouse, being quiet, meek, a hard worker and not angry at those who do not work. Praise God. My failure to focus on The Lord Jesus Christ clouds my vision and distorts my worldview. Only when I look at Jesus Christ can my paths be straight. Even then, it is up to me to begin walking in His direction. Praise God. Let my entire life be a prayer to you, Jesus. Take my life and use it for your purposes. Let me have the privilege of being rejected by this world so that I can share in the solidarity of those that are being rejected around the world for the sake of You. Thank you, Lord. Use me to find those that are seeking you and tell them about you. Use everything I have to reach souls for Your Kingdom. Bless me financially so I can give it to indigenous missionaries to further The Truth of The Gospel. Teach me how I can make money in order to better steward for The Next World. Thanks for telling me that you are still here. Thank you!!

Sunday, January 6, 1:15 a.m, 2002

Returned from skating at Ramp 48 with Ryan, this Christian who I met at The

Refuge. Nice kid. Reminds me of a Christian singer that was big in the 80's, as he looks similar to Michael W. Smith, slim, with a beard. After we skated, we went to Miami Subs, ate, and talked. He told me a story that was pretty hilarious. He used to drink a lot. For three years, he worked all the time, and when he wasn't working he'd be bar-hopping. One night he gets a DUI and has to serve time. He's in the slammer for three months. He told me about a guy in there who would tell him all these stories about how he would hustle people for crack. He had a \$15,000 dollar a week habit, Ryan said, so he spent all his time hustling people and getting high. He never slept. He would hustle anything, Ryan said. He'd see a lawnmower in someone's yard, get it, roll it down the street and sell it to someone a few houses down for twenty bucks. He was always hustling. One day he gets into this ice cream truck and can't get out. Apparently, the guy who owned it lived in this nice neighborhood and him and his wife went out for the night. So the crackhead, trapped inside, eats all the Mr. Goodbars. Then he sees the scratch-and-win game, so he scratches off all the cards and he doesn't win anything. The chocolates making him hyper, he's frustrated because he didn't win in the scratch-off game, so he tries again to get out of the truck. He finally makes it out. Instead of leaving, he walks over to the neighbors house and rings the doorbell. When the neighbor comes to the door, he tells him that he's the repair man for the generator that's on the ice cream truck, and that it's broken and he needs to get it off so he can repair it and he needs to borrow some tools. So the neighbor goes back inside his house and comes out with his tools, offering to help him. By now, Ryan is laughing. So am I. So him and the neighbor are taking this generator off the ice cream truck and the guy who owns the truck comes home. So the crackhead says to the neighbor: "I gotta go to the car to get something. I'll be right back." And he takes off running down the road as fast as he can. Ryan is laughing. So am I.

Ramp 48 is free on Monday nights, if you arrive at 7 and stay for the Bible study, then you skate afterward. Praise The Lord! Nice place.

Sunday, January 6, 10:08 p.m., 2002

Great day. JR, Heather and their family picked me up for church. I liked the worship. Bill Shea, the worship leader, and Heather, the backup vocalist were very passionate. The message, delivered by JR, was powerful. He spoke about the fear of The Lord. Wow. It really convicted me. JR spoke with zeal. He has a delivery that is riveting, and very real. After he spoke, Stacy went to the front and told the church she was leaving for Maui, to be trained by Youth With A Mission. From there, she'll be journeying to Asia for a few months. The church prayed and laid hands on her. I was at her back, my right hand on her shoulder blade, and the tears rolled down my eyes. Wow. Dear Lord, please bless Stacy and keep her safe in her efforts to win people for Christ. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you Jesus. Amen. After church ended, people talked in small groups and munched on cookies or cake, I think it was a going-away cake for Stacy. This lady, I think her name is Penny, approached me. "I have that keyboard I told you about last week, if you want it," she said. "It's in the trunk of my car." "Wow. Awesome. Yeah, let's go see it." I followed them out,

expecting the keyboard to be a \$50-kind. They opened the trunk. I stood wide-eyed. It was a synthesizer, almost as wide as it was long, full of buttons and knobs, a DBK, from Italy, according to the instruction manual. Praise The Lord! It came with an instruction manual, sustain pedal, and power cord. Praise God! Originally, the mom explained, the keyboard was given to the mother's daughter, who was taking piano lessons at the time. Apparently, the girl had no interest in piano, so wasn't interested in the keyboard. A note attached to the keyboard said that its original price was \$1000 dollars. Praise God! I thanked them profusely, a huge smile that could barely fit on my face. Later, this evening, playing it ... wow! Thick, analog-style synth sounds, full of oscillating waves and weird tones. Beautiful. The most beautiful thing is how God told me, about three months ago, not to buy a keyboard, when I had been wanting to buy a synthesizer on Ebay for \$100 - \$250. I felt a small voice tell me that one would be provided to me later. Praise The Lord! Thank you, Jesus! I could not have asked, or ever expected to receive a keyboard this nice. And to buy one like this? It would probably cost about \$700-to-\$1000 easy. Praise The Lord! And God gave me two keyboards, one about a month ago from First Baptist that Troy gave me, a Yamaha DX7, one of the top ten synthesizers in the world, and now this. Wow! Praise God! Thank you Jesus! I'm humbled by the way you treat me so well. Thank you for your mercy and your patience with me. I do not deserve this. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Praise The Lord Jesus Christ!

I arrived at my mom's this evening for a birthday dinner, although I arrived late. Carrie made a delicious salad (she's the best salad maker I've ever met ... and she's cool, too) and Gina made some tasty finger foods--tortillas, tomatoes, a sauce, and baked potato. Tanya got her hair cut. She looks really pretty. She is really pretty, actually. I gave Kim this Mary Engelbreight book with photos and biography. She was delighted. Mom and Kim can share it. Kim began making copies from it on mom's color copier. Cool. I bought mom this book I purchased at Barne's and Nobles, it's a from A-Z Bible names and places reference book. She said she likes books like that. "It's simple. If I want names ... just zip," she mused, smiling. Mom is so cool. She's so practical, but she knows how to have fun, too. Carrie got me this wonderful fruit basket--with a pineapple, apples, oranges, a plum, a tomato. Carrie is a sweet girl. Not only is she smart and attractive, she is a great conversationalist and very insightful. I like her legs. Their so cute. The way she walks is cute, too. And she has expressive hands and eyes that light up when she becomes excited. Her gestures are hard to shake off ... not that you'd want them too. Being with Carrie changed my view of women. No longer do I look for someone who only has outside beauty. That's like falling in love with one side of the penny. With Carrie, I learned to fall in love with both sides of the penny--the inner beauty and the outer beauty, both of which she has in abundance. Praise God!

Sunday January 12, 11:59 p.m., 2002

The time has just changed, so now it's Monday. Time moves fast when you are retired.

Tuesday, January 13, 2:59 p.m, 2002

Something dark has come over the hut. Empirical evidence aside, this place has turned into a negative black hole, absorbing anything positive.

I'm going to wall off my room tomorrow, so Neil Hoag won't be able to peek in. He's a nice guy, but something about him scares me. I think he may be a split personality. He may be demon possessed. He smokes a lot of pot. He acts like he's on medication for depression or something, like he's half-awake. Often, he's manic--swinging from being depressed to overly euphoric. Something seems disconnected.

This whole hut has become dark. There's no art here. I wish everyone would move out. Let some girls move in. Even Tom tells stupid, dirty jokes out loud in the middle bay. And Jimmy's not even paying rent. Tomorrow, Neil, Andy, and I plan to throw him out. He's a troublemaker anyway. This place has become a residence for middle-aged men. No wonder no girls visit. Move everyone out, I say, except for me and Alan. Let a few girls move in, who are artists. There'd be enough guys visiting the girls to bring enough guys into the picture, that's for sure.

Tonight Neil shot a possum. He tells me from upstairs. I became annoyed. "It was bothering Tom, too," Neil explains. Then why doesn't Tom take care of it, I ask, exasperated.

Dear Lord, tell me what to do. I'm feeling alone. Perhaps I will apply at Cheesecake Factory at City Place. I spoke with a chef there a few nights ago, in the middle of putting tracts on cars. He said to come in and apply, between 2:30 and 4:00 pm. At least it'd be keeping me away from this ship that is floating belly-up, carrying slackers and talkers who fail to swim ashore.

I should quit complaining about this place. Life is too short to complain. And I do not have any major worries. So what am I complaining about?

January 22, 7:17 p.m., 2002

When we don't trust God, we call off the flow of power. Trust God and act on the belief that He loves you and He wants the best for you. Then be obedient. Go forward with God; give Him glory, honor, praise, thanksgiving. Give Him everything. Give Him time and attention.

Dear Lord Jesus, Please bless me financially so I can forward all the money to support indigenous missionaries in other countries as they travel spreading The Gospel to people who have never heard of it before. Thank you, Lord. Please bless me with good dumpster finds and food pickups so I can save money on food and send that money to support your saints that are being persecuted abroad. Thank you God for putting this idea in my head so I can serve you. Thank you, Lord Jesus! Praise The Lord Jesus Christ! Amen

Thank you for Scott Toreau! Cool guy. Wacky. Activist. Christian. Dumpster diver.

