

# Gravity

(The Seduction of the equator)

Sept 17, 2004 - Dec 31, 2004

journals... kris, temp  
(confessions of a restless insomniac, burdened  
with guilt, beset with ideas, embracing  
life below the radar)



a booklet  
of quotes

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a journal by kris kemp  
sept. 17, 2004 - dec. 31, 2004

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the chronicles of a 35-year old pizza delivery driver who decided to be intentionally homeless, dropping out of rent and dropping into his car, living life as an outsider and writing about it

it's not what you do, it's who you become  
an interesting account from an active observer,  
an indictment of comfortable complacency, and living without conviction

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The Untied States of America

In America, some people are slaves to jobs, corporations, bills. Are we merely cogs in the wheels of progress, grinding our lives away to pay for car and health insurance, using the bulk amount to chip away at a mortgage? Ironically, a large percentage of purchases fall into the category of luxuries, unnecessary items that demand upgrades, repairs, warranties. Once we step onto the treadmill of consumerism, these catalog items battle for our attention. At best, we live a modern lifestyle. At worst, we work at jobs we despise to buy things we don't need to compete with people we don't even like, or know. As a result, many people suffer stress and anxieties from

mounting debts. Perhaps they don't recognize the chains that bind them, but they feel their effect--the weight around their ankles, their limited mobility, the unsettling conclusion, whether real or perceived, that they are trapped. Because of long hours at work, we eat fast food and convenient store snacks, which weaken the immune system, resulting in physical stress. At the end of the day, have we traded a life for a living? If we're willing to shake off the baggage that limits us, our self doubts and irrational fears, if we're willing to move forward and have faith in God, then the novel of our life will be written as we advance toward the next blank page. If we're willing to free ourselves from the comfortable and cumbersome ties that bind us, adventure lies in our reach.

There's little room at the top. But there's plenty of room at the bottom. Be a bottomfeeder. Welcome home. Relax.

Sept. 17, Friday, 12:54 pm

I'm at the City/Gov't Building in downtown West Palm Beach, across from the courthouse. I'm sitting on a comfortable chair in the customer/service center--the place you pay water and gas bills. On the way here, I saw Sam Perry, a local artist, in his beatup, two-door hatchback (like mine), at an intersection. I crossed him, then pulled over to the side. He parked behind me. We got out and talked.

He asked how I was and what I was up to.

"I've been working, saving up money, trying to get out of here, travel up to New York City."

"Oh yeah? Wow, cool." He paused. "What about this place? Are you involved in the scene anymore?"

"No. This place has become something that doesn't hold my attention." I explained.

"Yeah, I see what you mean. You've always been a revolutionary. I'm serious. That's what I admire about you. For the Glory of God," he smiled.

"Yeah man," I grinned.

"That's what's interesting about you--the fact that you're a homespun Christian but that you're also an artist and a bit of an anarchist that runs around creating events."

"Thanks Sam. That's encouraging."

"I mean it, man."

"I have difficulty maintaining relationships with Christians who fail to see past George Bush, to see that he's evil. They're just duped - "

" - because he says he's a Christian." Sam finished.

"Yeah, exactly."

"Christ wouldn't agree with this war," Sam mused. "Bush always says God's on his side. Just so Christian's'll vote for him."

I nodded in agreement, then told him I have to split. If you keep conversations short, the other person will think you're more valuable, even if you don't have anywhere to go. Also, this prevents the conversational lawn mower from straying toward the areas which are best left alone--the weeds and camouflaged stumps that sprout from bitterness and orphaned dreams.

Usually a conversation with Sam veered in this direction if it had lasted more than five minutes. I know because I've gotten in conversations with him before, lengthy ones that unearthed his latent bitterness at a community that failed to recognize his artistic talent. Besides, this time I did have somewhere to go, the courthouse, to pick up something for David.

We parted ways. I'm at the utilities building, writing this, waiting for 1:15, to meet Laura on the fifth floor, to purchase the Downtown Masterplan and the Pleasant City Masterplan for David Knight.

My own private 9-11

On September 11, midnight on Saturday, I was sitting in my car, idling in traffic, with my windows down, on Rosemary avenue between Evernia and Datura. The streets were congested with cars and roaming pedestrians. Traffic was backed up and at a standstill. A sea of kids roamed about, mainly teenagers, most of them black.

Apparently, a curfew, due to the recent hurricane, banning the under-eighteen-crowd had been lifted and the kids were out on the streets looking for action. Traffic was backed up from Clematis Street, two-and-a-half blocks north. The cars sat thereon the road like beached whales. The kids swarmed between us like smaller fish waiting, as we did, for high tide,

in this case, a green light. In front me, a small car bounced up and down. Inside this asphalt submarine sat four or five blacks, all throwing their bodies around to the music. One of them was a big dark-black guy with dreadlocks.

Earlier, work had been an ordeal of scary areas, cheap tippers, and stress trying to understand my Spanish-speaking manager. So I decided to visit Respectable Street, a progressive dance club on Clematis to blow off steam. Usually, I avoid these side streets, including this one--Rosemary, because of traffic. I didn't expect traffic to be this bad. I should've driven further west to Tamarind, then headed south to Clematis. Most of the drivers on this street drove expensive sports cars or luxury sedans.

They wanted to be seen. Even the sea of people flooding the blocks between City Place and Clematis were decked out in the latest fashions, participating in a stroll that could be best described as a saunter. In the ghetto, that kind of slow gait is called a "pimp stroll", characterized by a nonchalance that's may indicate boredom, pride, marijuana use, or any of these.

"You got any pizzas in your car?" A black teenager asks, noticing the Papa John's sign on top of my car.

"No." I reply. "I'm off work. Sorry."

I see an angry-looking gold-toothed black with short dreads and a hand under his shirt. I turn away and look ahead of me to see if the traffic's moving. Then, I black out for a few seconds as my mouth and nose area is hit with a clenched fist, hit so hard, in fact, that my head swings back and forth as if my neck is on a spring. When I was struck by this fist from one of the black kids in the crowd, I was stuck so hard that I actually blacked out for a few seconds. When I open my eyes, I look around the car and all the kids that were passing me are gone, screaming, yelling, laughing.

Instinctively, I throw the car in reverse, race down Rosemary in the wrong lane towards Clematis, make a left at Datura, then drive west, crossing Sapodilla, and parking on the side of the empty street between Sapodilla and Tamarind to examine my face. Slowly, I move my head towards the rearview mirror, afraid of what I'll see looking back at me.

Bloody nose. Split lip. My lip is aching something fierce. It stings whenever I move it, even slightly. My nose is tender when I touch it. It feels so fragile, in fact, that I'm reminded of the flower I saw on that film, when the flower is dipped into liquid nitrogen, then tapped against a hardtop counter. At the point of contact, it breaks into a million little pieces. Like that flower, I feel like my nose will shatter if it's touched too hard.

Why'd that guy hit me? What a fucking coward. One day, he'll taste the fruit from his own bitter harvest, when he's suckerpunched. That fucker. I hope he gets beaten by someone like he did to me. If he would have been alone, I would have done something. I would've pummeled that racist

coward. He would have been hospitalized after running into the propeller of my fists. I might have even killed him. If he would have been alone, I could have retaliated, but blacks don't fight fair. I know that from personal experience.

Years ago at the Palm Beach County Fairgrounds, at the fair, I saw a white guy play-fighting with a black kid. The fight picked up speed as other blacks joined in the melee. Soon, a group of black descended on him in a hurricane of fists. Angry at witnessing this, I cried out for some cops who happened to be standing far off. They ran to the scene and the fight dispersed. The white guy was in a daze, holding his bloody mouth with one hand, and clutching his chest with the other. The blacks were laughing as they wandered off in tiny clusters. In groups, they exhibit an animal mentality. That's why white people don't trust blacks. Bad experiences leave bitter memories.

That racist asshole, I think to myself, swabbing my bloody face and bruised, split lip with my Papa John's shirt. I was furious. Yeah, I'm leaving you Florida, with all your black racists. The ghetto can collapse under its own weight and take with it all those racist blacks that abuse the welfare/food stamp system while they spend their paychecks on gold teeth, expensive hair weaves, flashy rims, and overpriced athletic trainers. That fucker. I wish I could have frozen time after being hit, to keep all those niggaz at bay, while I descended on him with a beating that he'll never forget and barely survive. The worst feeling is one of powerless, knowing who the culprit is, understanding what the crime is, but not being able to do anything about it. What a messed up society we live in, one in which I can't retaliate because of a real and present danger known as political correctness.

11/29/04

My life seems to be a revolving door of coming and going, arriving and leaving, then returning with a different point of view until succumbing to the never ending conveyor belt of restaurant jobs and overpriced apartments in downtown West Palm Beach. This time I returned from Brooklyn, nearly ten years since my last escape there.

Yesterday is a stain on a T-shirt.

11/30/04

Today I work a double, an O/C (open to close) shift at Papa John's, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.. That's about 17 hours. It's okay, though, because today, or tomorrow rather, is the final day that Lynelle Forrest is letting me crash her couch.

"Lynelle, I'll pay you the majority of your rent to stay here," I offered, during a discussion last night.

"Kris, I need my privacy," she answered.

Lynelle's an artist, DJ, and computer guru, a graduate of FAU who lives in Flamingo Park, an historic district downtown. She rents a 2nd-floor apartment on a sloping, tree-lined street.

11/31/04

It's Wednesday morning. I'm at my cousin, Scott's house. Last night, he installed Dreamweaver, Flash, and other software on my laptop, a Sony Vaio that I bought used for \$380. For his work, I paid him \$100, a charge he suggested, cheap for installing Windows XP-corporate version, a fast running OS (operating system).

This is my second day being homeless and it's not bad at all. Of course I slept on a comfortable couch in a quiet, air-conditioned suburb off of Forest Hill west of Haverhill. Maybe having no permanent address opens wide the door to options. Last night, I received a call from Charles Paul, a tech nomad who's visiting from Frisco. He's here for a week, staying with his parents, off Cresthaven Boulevard. When I told him about my plan to buy a rundown two-story house in Buffalo, then rent it out to college students, he suggested I check out Missouri.

"I met a couple who moved into an abandoned house in St. Louis. Apparently, there's entire suburbs with no people, because jobs went overseas. So, there's groups of people moving in, making the place cool."

"Wow," I listened eagerly.

"Yeah, St. Louis man."

12/03/04

Slept at Aunt Ruth's house last night. She lives with her son, Scott, a chubby freeloading 40 year old who repairs computers, installs Dish satellite TV systems, and hooks up stereo systems in his spare time. Like an unhappily married couple, they bicker frequently, exchanging verbal punches in this incestuous boxing ring they've created for themselves. Even being there for a short time, you'll experience cabin fever minus the lunatic, with a lot of subtext and suffocating bitterness.

When you're homeless, you discover that life becomes a series of rituals, a collection of patterns. At night, you need a place to sleep, so you begin calling old friends or relatives, demonstrating value conversationally by listening (a lost art, or a forgotten or ignored one), then lighting the fuse by mentioning that you have a spare pizza and would hate to see it go to waste, not their waist, which will expand proportionally to the number of nights they invite you to stay. In the

morning, you wait for the fog to clear and try to remember where you're sleeping. But, even if you can't remember, you do the next thing--go to the bathroom. Then, brush teeth, shower, shave, or shave first. Descend on the kitchen. Wash all the dishes & clean kitchen. Reward yourself by making breakfast. At this point, you relax and wait for the homeowners/residents to wake, while you read, watch TV, or clean. Or, you split and leave a thank you note. Your next stop is your sister, Kim's house, where you sift through your personal items--clothes, shoes--stored in her shed. Then you're off to a number of locations that double as an office desk--Clematis Street library, Palm Beach Atlantic University library, Dunkin Donuts, Denny's, or McDonald's. If you don't look nervous, the world is yours. If you're willing to couch surf, you, too, can be a "gentleman homeless".

12/3004

I'm surrounded by a sea of SUV's, many bearing "W" (George Bush) bumperstickers. How ironic that they're advertising for their choice of presidential candidate while driving a gashog. No, that's not ironic. It's appropriate actually. How many Iraqi soldiers, American soldiers, and Iraqi civilians per gallon?

Those SUV's only get about 12-to-15 miles per gallon, so that's probably one death for every 1,000 SUVs on the road. Their conscience is fenced in by their comfort. Otherwise, they'd drive a Geo Metro, Suzuki Swift, Ford Fiesta, VW Cabriolet, take public transport, leg it, or bicycle. It's hypocritical to witness all these Bush supporters cruising around in their gas guzzling civilian tanks. Consumption: the silent killer. Another major form of hypocrisy is Christians voting for George Bush, because he's pro-life. Yeah, Bush is pro-life unless you're an Iraqi soldier, citizen, or American soldier. President Bush gives Christianity a bad name.

12/04/04

On a pizza delivery to Baxter Hall, the girls dorm at Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBAU), I met Kate Letton and a guy friend sitting on the lobby couch. After calling the student who ordered the pizza, I came up with an idea.

"Kate, put on my Papa John's shirt. Pretend you're me."

"Okay," she laughed. "But won't they recognize my voice?" She asked.

"Use a low voice," I instructed with a smile.

Kate's a super adorable college student with pretty greenish-brown eyes, and red lips that look pursed up, like the lips owned by a beauty pageant contestant from the 1950's. She's tall and lean with milky skin and this relaxed eyes that have a sexy, drowsy look to them.

She donned my shirt over hers, put on my hat, and holding the pizza in one hand, stood near the elevator. I hid behind the Resident Advisors desk. The second group that emerged from the elevator saw Kate and announced, "I thought you were a guy." Then a companion of theirs broke the con wide open. "I know you. You don't work at Papa John's. Where's the guy?" I was laughing as I crouched behind the counter, watching everything.

Kate pointed at me. I stood up, pointed at them and said: "You're on MTV's Boiling Point."

After chatting with Kate and her friend, I left and jumped into my dented Suzuki Swift hatchback, then headed down the road. As I turned from Olive onto Okeechobee to head east towards Flagler, I noticed a group of students sitting on the courtyard steps to my left. I looked ahead and saw Kate's cute face floating ahead of me, hanging in space. I didn't notice that I was in the turning only lane as I continued straight ahead, plowing my car into the curb. Immediately, my tire popped, the one I had just gotten replaced. How embarrassing, let me tell you, to run into a curb about 100 feet away from a group of kids. I felt like such a jackass. I haven't even gone on a date with her and I've already let her wreck my car.

Sheepishly, I slowly drove forward, hearing the flip-flap-flap of the flattened front-left wheel. Slowing the car, I turned into the parking lot behind the Seventh Day Adventist Church. I called Corrie, the manager at Papa John's, explaining everything. What a beautiful tragedy my life has become. Lovely. Then I called Auggie, a co-worker who agreed to pick me up. At work, I explained the entire incident and Torrie and Auggie had a good laugh when they heard that my wreck was caused by a female. After work, I ambled along Flagler, with my shoulderbag carrying my laptop, a thin crust pizza in one hand, a 20-ounce Coca Cola in the other. Here I am: an intentionally homeless romantic, hiking along the waterfront of the Intracoastal, to my temporary home that's caught a flat. It wasn't all that comfortable though, as I settled into my car to sleep. The humidity, the mosquitos, my own dried and caked on sweat, competed for attention to keep me awake. Still, I made the best of it, adjusting the seat to a sleeper position and balling up a sweatshirt to use as a pillow. After two hours of putting the ponys to bed and finally succeeding, I drifted off to sleep.

This morning, I dressed inside the car, jacked it up, removed the wheel, then made phone calls to nearby friends for assistance.. No answers. As it was 7:45 Saturday morning, people were in REM sleep, I'm sure.

I strolled north on Flager to Papa John's (closed), then across the street to Makeb's Deli where I ordered a toasted "everything" bagel (\$1.17) and relaxed on a couch while perusing today's edition of The New York Times.

"You have a Yellow Pages?" I asked the counter person.

Moments later, he held one out.

"Thanks."

The nearest shop that sold used tires was located on 25th and Tamarind, in an industrial area adjacent to the ghetto. Having scribbled the tire size on my palm, I asked if they had my size. They did. Praise God! :-)

Fabiola, the general manager at Papa John's, arrived in a Makeb's uniform. Here, she works part-time as a clerk. She's an attractive bilingual lady, a single mom with a young daughter, from Peru.

"Krees," she smiles with a puzzled look. "What are you doing here?" It's early and I don't have to be at work 'til 5pm this evening.

"My car got a flat last night near PBA. So, I slept in my car and I'm here making phone calls to get a tire."

"Awwww, you slept in your car. That's no good. Why?"

"Temporary. Until I get a place."

"If you need a ride, tell me." She offered. As she was working, I figured I'd use her as a last resort.

Makeb's deli a comfortable place to park your weary butt. The restaurant is large and has two main sections--one for dining that has cafe-sized tables, chairs and a tile floor, and another for relaxing and reading that has couches that are so soft they almost swallow you whole. The reading section has a large coffee table with stacks of magazines underneath it, and a wicker receptacle overflowing with magazines and newspapers. As long as you buy something, the place is yours, that's the beauty, even if it's a hot chocolate for a buck-fifty. Because it's on Fern Street, several blocks from City Place and Clematis, it doesn't have the pretentious atmosphere or touristy hurried buy-something-and-leave vibe common to restaurants in high-rent districts. The bathroom here is terrific--spacious and clean, with an actual working lock on the door to the toilet. Another thing, if you're an art aficionado like me, you'll appreciate their daily edition of The New York Times sold at cost for only a buck.

Sinking into the monster couch, I relaxed, perused the New York Times Arts & Entertainment section, and nibbled on my bagel. Inbetween reading theatre reviews, I made some phone calls. The first one was to Lynelle Forrest, the Flamingo Park based illustrator/artist. No answer. Then again, it was just after 8am and she was probably sleeping. The second call was to Jon Drummer, a photographer and professional finish carpenter, who answered in a groggy voice and listened to my tale. He lives in the same apartment building that Lynelle lives in, two spaces behind her on the second floor. He agreed to pick me up.

"Where do you need to be picked up?" He asked flatly.

"Where my car is--behind the Seventh Day Adventist church, in their parking lot, on the corner of northwest corner of Flagler and Okeechobee."

"Is that where you are?"

"No. But I'm headed over there. I'll be there in a few minutes."

"Alright, but I don't have time to wait. If you're not there, I'm not gonna wait for ya, I'm gonna go."

"I'll be there. Thanks Jon."

Grabbing my shoulderbag and wolfing down the rest of the bagel, I left Makebs and began running down Olive Avenue. Having slept in my car all night, in a church parking lot that sits between two major streets, I was pretty filthy. The passing cars kick a lot of dirt around, and gravity brings them to the nearest object that remains motionless.

Since the street was closed due to the fact that it's being turned into a two-way street, major construction debris--large cement pipes, orange netting, and heavy equipment--peppered the road. The street was more or less an obstacle course of junk. Memories flooded my mind of running track in high school, jumping the hurdles, competing in the 440 relay, a run that involves baton passing to the next team mate. Looking around at the rubble, I was also reminded of the movie "Escape from New York" with Kurt Douglas as a cop that tries to escape from New York City, which has been converted into a prison.

As I was running into the parking lot, I spotted Jon's van circling the street nearby and waved him over. He pulled over. I got in. We drove to "Economy Tire" on the corner of 25th and Tamarind. The place lived up to its name. The tire and the cost of setting it into my rim was only fifteen bucks, a real bargain. Of course the tire was used, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I prefer used. My whole life is used. Not only is it cheaper, but you get items with a history to them. And if items don't have a story to tell, then what's the point? After getting the tire, Jon drove to Dunkin Donuts where I offered to buy him whatever he liked. He only wanted a coffee, which I paid for. I got the number three special, which is two donuts and a hot coffee (I got two donuts and a hot tea). Happy Day! When Jon dropped me off, I thanked him and told him I owed him one.

"I could use some help moving if you got some time," he said.

"No problem. Anytime. Just call me. You have my number."

After cranking the jack as high as it could go, then gingerly sliding the tire rim into the exposed

bolts, I quickly tightened the nuts before lowering the car. Using the lugnut wrench that I borrowed from Mike Smith's bodyshop, the one that I haven't returned yet, I jamed the nuts tight, then took it for a test drive. Later today, Henry replaced my belts. He's a mechanic who also does plumbing and electrical work. Because he's such a music fan, specifically obscure jazz-fusion, he's usually tinkering with a number of computers, upgrading them on a near-daily basis so he can download free music faster from the internet.

12/05/04

I was parked at my sister Kim's house, unbolting the passenger seat and the backseat so I could lay a board inside the car. Why? The board would allow me to sleep in my car, carry more pizzas for school deliveries, and pick up curbside finds, like the 10-speed I threw in the back a few nights ago that barely fit. The main reason for laying a deck in my car is to create a space for me to sleep.

"Why are you doing that?" My sister asked.

Immediately, I returned to my teenage years and felt a flood of guilt sweep over me, as if I'd just been caught destroying an expensive gift in order to call it my own. But, this time, now that I've crossed the 30-year bridge into adulthood, I wouldn't use the word destroy, I'd choose a word that's less abrasive, more tender, like modify.

"I'll tell you if you don't tell anyone."

"Okay," she agreed.

I explained my choice to live in my car in order to save money to buy a piece of real estate. Maybe a two-story house in upstate New York, like Buffalo or Niagra Falls, a place with hardwood floors, an attic, and a basement. A place where I could live in the attic and rent out the rest of the house room-by-room. The rent would be used to fix up the place, support more missionaries, and for my own expenses, allowing me to work a part-time job and use my free time to finish my writing projects--editing these journals for online publication, finishing a musical and a screenplay, and submitting my book of quotes for publication. Economically, I would be investing in an asset--a house that goes up in value and provides residual income through rent--instead of a liability (rent to a landlord). After reading two books suggested to me by my dear and brilliant friend Carrie Snyder (formerly best friend, gal pal, girlfriend Carrie Cutlip before her marriage to the writer Matt Snyder), I tend to look at my money differently. The two books she recommended are: "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" and "The One-Minute Millionaire". In a nutshell, they said this: Learn the difference between assets and liabilities. Invest in assets. Secondly, if you want to make money, invest your money and time in three areas: 1. Real estate. Flip for a profit, or rent out.  
2. Publish a book. Steady income.

3. Start an internet business, or idea (put it in book form, and sell it online, earning commissions or a one-time payment fee)

Kim listened, then countered: "I don't see why you put people you don't know, missionaries, above your own family. You're causing us to worry."

"Don't," I answered. "That's why I rarely keep the family updated about what I'm up to, because I don't want them to worry. When they disapprove of my actions, they worry, and I'm penalized for being honest with them. I don't want to be held hostage by their fears. I have places to crash, couches to surf, and dreams to fulfill."

We debated the merits of my plan. Then, she handed me a key to the house. "Feel free to come in, watch TV, hook up your computer, shower, eat, whatever during the day when Heather (her roommate) isn't here."

"Thanks Kim." I smile, taking the key.

Praise God!

After reading two books that Carrie Snyder recommended, Rich Dad, Poor Dad, and The One-Minute Millionaire, I learned there are ways to generate money that will generate income in a more efficient fashion than slaving away at a McJob and putting half my paycheck towards rent.

## **Christmas Time**

it's Christmas time  
in a country that is not ours  
i hear your prayers  
your letters behind bars

your not alone  
this time

it's Christmas time  
not gifts to receive  
no gift to receive  
The Gift of Jesus  
is a Reason to Believe

in Hope  
this time

it's Christmas time  
in a country that is not ours  
prayers spoken from the faithful  
under the stars

the snow falls down  
in a country far from ours  
you gather outside the city  
singing under the stars

one family, one body  
a thousand miles apart  
but i feel the cry of my brother (sister)  
when i touch my heart

it's New Years Eve  
another year slips by  
let's not forget  
our brothers and sisters die

will we  
pass them by

### **New Creation in Christ**

verse:

B

Fm1

A

E

Fm1

A

E

B

bridge:

A

E

B

lyrics:

verse:

1. Are we Christians clinging to straws?  
collecting things for the worlds applause?  
fighting ... for the wrong cause

2. Are we Christians living in sin?  
quenching The Spirit Who lives within?  
returning to, the place, where we've been

chorus:

We're a new creation in Christ ... He's alive (3x)  
The Stone has been rolled away

3. Are we Christians who tend to forget  
that Christ (on The Cross) paid the price for our debt  
live your life, with no regret

bridge:

the old world, can't keep us anymore  
there's a new world that's worth working for (Heaven)

chorus:

We're a new creation in Christ ... He's alive (3x)  
The Stone has been rolled away

## **Reality Show**

My life as a pizza delivery driver  
Chronicles of a 35-year old dropout

This show would be less effacing and more about making a sacrifice for one's dreams, providing a kind of living indictment against the materialistic consumption-driven society that has sought after mainstream folk.

At the moment, I'm living in my car, so I can save money for a house in Buffalo or Niagra Falls, New York, then rent out rooms for a steady income stream. In my spare time, I'm writing a screenplay "The Last Pizza Delivery Driver on Earth", a love-story comedy that I hope to sell, and I'm developing ideas to sell/pitch before large, progressive-thinking corporations. That's my goal--to use my creative

gifts to create an income flow, then use that money to support more indigenous missionaries, while enjoying the quiet life of an anonymous writer, living in an attic space somewhere up north, maybe upstate New York, maybe Rochester, writing, composing music, fasting, and drinking hot cocoa.

Maybe I'm getting ahead of God with my own desires. I'm beginning to think, though, that he gave me those desires for a reason, and that, unless I run toward them, my talents will be laid to waste on the sidewalk of my life, left to be picked over by street vultures and turned in for psaltery cash sums at nearby pawn shops. I don't want to live life with regret. If I waste my time in trying to make my entire world safe, and rubber-corner the sharp edges, how will I be able to see things for what they really are? There's summits that beg to be climbed, there are caves that cry out for exploration, there are paths waiting to be discovered ... a sober dose of skepticism keeps me guarded. A romantic sense of adventure keeps me wreckless. Gravity keeps me down, barely.

Life is beautiful, if you're willing to make sacrifices for your dreams. Every other option is a conveyor belt of existence. Hah!

12/06/04

It's about 1am? I think. Anyway, I'm sitting on the toilet, in the bathroom of The River Church of God. I hung on to Sister Vera's key to the church so I could visit this place after work to hash out some songs. They have a grand piano here that I use to work on different songs that God is giving me. "Christmas Time" is the current song I'm working on ... about Christmas overseas, celebrated by Christians who are in a labour camp in North Korea, comparing their Christmas to those of a Christian family in the United States, reminding us to pray and fast for them, and support them financially.

My laptop is running in the copy room. Maybe I'll wash my face and shave here. Might as well since there's a bathroom. Praise God! My fifth? day being apartmentless and it's truly a wonderful experience. As long as I don't wear out my welcome, this plan may work. Tonight, I made \$94-dollars in tips and gas mileage driving around delivering pizzas. Actually, I made more, but I spent \$13.50 on gas and \$2 for a pair of crinkly-old hotdogs for a \$1 each at the Mobil Gas station on Palm Beach Lakes in front of Home Depot. Tomorrow, I plan to try my wireless internet connection at Palm Beach International Airport. The airport lobby area is hotwired, according to my cousin Scott. If that works, I'll have a free place for high speed wireless. Nice.

As I deliver pizzas, I get a tourists-eye-view of the best places to watch TV for free. Many hotels feature first-floor lobbies with Titanic-sized couches docked around a giant TV--Holiday

Inn on Belvedere just west of I-95 offers comfy couches and a big screen TV, Radisson Hotel (an elevated large-screen TV above the bar), Courtyard Marriot (lavish couches set up in a cozy living room style around a large screen TV). One of the most interesting places to watch TV, the place where you'll get the least hassle, is in the lobby of St. Mary's hospital, at 901 45th street. An army of plastic chairs faces the TV set, which sits elevated above a bank of candy and soda machines. On busy nights, nearly all the chairs are occupied. On slow nights, you'll find a few scattered viewers, friends and relatives of the sick, injured, and pregnant, all camping out beneath the fluorescent lights, their eyes fixed on the glowing box, letting television do what it does best, pass the time while distracting them from their present situation. While the hotels promise dim lighting, comfortable sofas, high-definition (HD), large screen TVs, and a nearby bar that serves snacks & drinks 'til late, the hospital lobby offers fluorescent lighting (that usually flickers which causes headaches), hard-plastic-chairs, and an older TV, remoteless, fastened atop a shelf. At the hospital lobby, though, the crowd is dishevelled, tired, smelly, an Indian corn melange of ethnicities, brought together by the common bond of tragedy and entertainment, anchored by the mumbling box of stories. Whenever I visit the hospital, though, especially late night after a frustrating journey through anonymous hallways on my search for the customer, I visit the TV room, buy a Strawberry sprinkled ice-cream bar, watch a few moments of TV, and promise myself that I'll return. It'd be a fun date, but the only girl that would probably join me would be a junkie needing a place to rest for a few hours. Maybe that's why I'm so attracted to that type--they're such wrecks that they're willing to enjoy the beauty of the ordinary.

I hope I don't jinx myself by writing all this down, the happy scribbles of a 35-year old dropout, intentionally homeless for the purpose of saving money for an asset (a rundown \$4,000 - \$7,000 house somewhere) with the long term goal of supporting more missionaries. If this plan works, living marginally to make my dreams real, I'll dance for joy. Even if it doesn't work, I'll dance for joy anyway. Praise God! Praise Jesus! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Glory to God in The Highest! The Name above all Names!

I think I know how Chris McCandleless felt when he began roaming around America, only I'm confining my field of travel to Palm Beach county. Nonetheless, I experience the sheer joy of freedom, even if it is in bitesized morsels. Sometimes I wish I had a girl to share my adventures with--a cute, short girl, someone who wears glasses and reads, who is quiet, wise, cautious, independent, chubby with nice round boobs, pale soft milky skin and red lips. Hello. That would be nice. Preferably someone from another country, someone with a dual citizenship, maybe Canada, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Germany, or Russia. Is that too much to ask, God? Maybe here in Florida I can't expect to find a girl like that. Maybe those kinds of girls are in Miami, visiting to assist in a model shoot or an avant garde ballet performance. Maybe those girls are in New York City. Then again, a lot of girls that are here in college, particularly Palm Beach Atlantic University, are from other states, even countries. Then again, those girls are eighteen and I'm thirty-five years old. Sure, I may look and act 26 as most people say, but you can't lie when it comes to mileage. Maybe there are girls around here that fit that description and maybe they feel as disconnected as I do. Perhaps I'll meet one one day. That would be beautiful.

Thank YOU, LORD JESUS! YOU know what to do!

"is there someone out there,  
looking to connect?  
chasing dreams around us,  
that we both collect?"  
- someone out there

Places to sleep ...

1. Carrie & Matt's - 932 32nd st., Northwood
2. Scott & Ruth's - Queen Ann Street, off Forest Hill, west of Haverhill, left at Sherwood, left at Queen Ann
3. Kim's backyard - Winter St., use key to get inside to shower during the day when Kim & Heather are gone
4. The River Church of God - SE corner of Georgia & Palm, Flamingo Park
5. Rodney Mayo's house - Lake Clarke Shores (Forest Hill, west of I-95)
6. Cara Jennings - Lake Worth, downtown, E. of I-95

Places to use electronics (laptops, re-charge cellphone), bathroom

1. Dunkin Donut's - w. side of Dixie, between Palm Beach Lakes & Quadrille
2. Denny's - Belvedere, w. of I-95
3. The River Church of God
4. Palm Beach International Airport
5. Clematis Library (free magazines, CD's, DVD's, videos, internet, books, a/c, bathrooms)

Places to play piano ...

1. River Church of God
2. PBAU - Wayneberg, above cafeteria
3. PBAU - Recital Hall (Rinker School of Music)
4. PBAU - Johnson Hall lobby

B F# C#1 Ab/E1 F#

E1  
F#1  
B  
F#  
Ab

E1 He's  
F#1 watching  
B you

B F# A E / A E A E F#

B  
F#  
A  
E

F#  
B

12/707/04

Tuesday, around 10:30 am. Carrie and Matt kindly let me sleep at their place last night, at 932 32nd street in the historic Northwood district, the area of West Palm Beach that's bordered by 25th street (south) and 45th street (north), and east/west by Windsor and Broadway, respectively. The house that Carrie purchased is a lovely, 1930's era two-story, with stucco exterior, with three bedrooms, one bath upstairs, and a large living room, dining room and kitchen downstairs, with a guest room connected to the living room. For my makeshift bed, Carrie pulled out a mattress on the dining room floor with a blanket and a pillow. Last night, after getting off work at Papa John's at around midnight, I called Matt, her husband. Earlier, Carrie gave me the okay to call him, explaining that he'd be up late working on a writing project for his honors class at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). He picked up the phone quickly and said, "Come on over." He's a nice guy, an award-winning poet and writer. When he grows his beard, he looks like a young Stephen King. According to Carrie, once he graduates, they're planning a move to North Carolina, the triangle area, where he'll attend Wake Forest University to pursue his Masters degree.

Right now, I'm writing this in Palm Beach, where I sit on a bench along A1A facing the ocean. Earlier, I took a dip - cold and refreshing as it is December in Florida. This morning I received a call-back regarding an apartment complex on the northwest corner of 25th and Dixie, at the border of the historic Northwood district. \$795 a month for a 1-bedroom and \$695 a month for a studio

efficiency. F-that. That's 28 missionaries a month, \$ to save for a foreclosure and invest in an asset instead of a liability (renting), or both. Living even with the radar is too expensive, so I'll live below the radar. And sometimes I wonder, driving around in my little blue spaceship dropping off pizzas to planets that are well-manicured, with foreign-model sport spaceships docked out front of a luxury-gated community apartment, then greeted by a young & beautifully-dressed couple, how do these people get their money? What, exactly, do they do for a living? Let's see ... expensive apartment or house. Check. Fancy car. Check. Name brand clothes. Check. How do they get their money? Dumbfounded, I'm curious as to how they arrived at this point. Or, do they have good credit? Maybe they're like most people, dogpaddling the stormy seas debt to keep their head above water. I wonder. I'm not jealous, well, maybe a little if they do have that kind of money. The money would be nice. I'm curious, wanna peek in their lives, see how they pull it off.

Yesterday, I was online reading at [www.rense.com](http://www.rense.com) an article about the devaluing of the American dollar. According to the article, which was culled from the BBC, foreign investors are dumping the dollar in favor of the Euro, the yawn (Japanese) and other currency. Overseas investors, in general, are appalled by Bush's economic policies, specifically his carelessness regarding the U.S. federal deficit, around one-hundred zilliontrillionfillion. And the U.S. continues to go into debt because of Bush's cowboy imperialistic actions and antics. That's another reason to avoid paying rent--if I can buy land or a foreclosure before the dollar drops and we're all forced to get chipped to buy food, I can have a resource engine--a house to rent--to use for incoming money, goods, or services. By the time I do get my foreclosure, I'll probably be asking my tenants to pay me in food, if the chip is mandatory by then.

Last night at Papa John's my last three deliveries went to Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBAU). All three went to Baxter Hall, the girls dorm on the opposite (west) side of Ocean View, which is the guys dorm. Inside the lobby were Kate Letton, a pretty girl who's involved with B.A.S.I.C., Brothers and Sisters in Chains, a group that prays for the persecuted church, and Mary, a vocalist who tips well and usually orders pizzas twice a week. Kate looks like a taller Drew Barrymore, with soft brown/green eyes, pale skin and red lips. She's a quiet girl and seems pretty introspective. Mary, on the other hand, is short, has long, straight black hair and freckles. She looks like she's from Iceland with 1/4 Navajo indian thrown in for good measure and minority status. Anyway, I deliver the first two orders in the lobby, one to Mary, another to a pair of girls sitting on couches, but can't find the customer who ordered the last pizza. The phone number on the box was wrong and the manager hadn't bothered to get the dorm number, figuring I wouldn't need it because I can just call her. Without the phone number and the dorm number and the name of the customer, I'm stuck. There's nothing I can do.

Mistakes like this happen frequently with the other shift manager. The one that works tonight speaks English fluently. The other one, from Peru, is fluent in Spanish, which worked fine when she ran the store in Miami, but this is West Palm Beach. This is not Miami. Not yet. Getting there, though. I expressed my frustration to Kate, who stood nearby with a bevy of beautiful

young college girls. They listened and offered suggestions, all which I had tried, but my patience was beginning to run out. I wasn't angry with the customer. I was frustrated with the fact that I didn't know what to do next.

The girls, including Kate, coaxed me to leave the pizza for them.

Earlier, I told them the story about a pizza sliding out my window en route to a school cafeteria delivery. "Eighty pizzas were in my car," I elaborated, using my hands. "I drive a Suzuki Swift hatchback, a car that has the same body as a Geo Metro. And it begins to rain, so I roll my windows up. But to make matters worse, my a/c doesn't work. So, after I load the pizzas in the car--they're stacked to the roof--the windows are fogging up from the steam. From outside, it looks like a fog machine is going off in my car, like my car's about to float off like a hot air balloon. The school's about ten minutes away so by the time I arrive, I'm drenched in sweat and smell like pepperonis. At the school entrance, there's a short, steep hill and on the way there, it quits raining so I roll down both windows and on the way up the hill I hear 'hooooop' and look and a pizza slides out and then another slides out."

Kate and Mary, along with some of their friends, are laughing at this point.

"What'd you do?" Kate asks.

"I parked, ran outside, and put them back in the box. The cheese was all on one side, but I shook the pizza around, like I was panning for gold, to move the cheese over it more evenly. It worked, barely, because the careteria worker came out with a cart to help me load the pizzas and she almost saw me. They didn't fall on the ground, but they were close to touching the asphalt."

"She's not gonna come," a girl piped up.

"What are you gonna do with it? You're just gonna bring it back to the store? You should just leave it with us." Another girl says.

"Tell your manager it flew out the window," suggests Kate with a smile. Man, she's cute. She looks like Drew Barrymore. Her friends joined in the chorus. So, I caved in. With a gentle toss, the pizza landed on the front desk.

"There," I grinned. "It flew out the window. Enjoy."

Feeling sheepish, I called my manager on the way back to the store, explaining my inability to say no to the girls, then apologizing for allowing romanticism to override reason. "No problem," he said.

After twenty-or-thirty minutes back at the store, though, the phone rang. It was the phone number of the girl who ordered the pizza. "It's her," the manager said with an embarrassed smile.

"Don't pick it up," I told him. He didn't.

Feeling guilty, I imagine the scenario that plays out like a grainy high-school film in my head: The girl who orders the pizza loses patience and finally rides down the elevator. When the doors open to the lobby, she's greeted by a flock of birds surrounding an empty pizza box, each with a slice in their claw, puffed cheeks, chewing away merrily. Assuming the best, she asks: "Did my pizza come yet? Did Papa John's arrive?"

Yes, you're right. I should've taken the pizza back to the store and waited for her to call, or at least picked up the phone, then made her another one. But in a way, she shares the blame. She could have been waiting in the lobby for the pizza. Then again, the area code for her phone number was wrong number. So, in essence, it was Torry's fault. He's the new manager who took the order. At worst, she won't order from Papa John's again. At best, she'll complain and receive a free pizza. No big deal.

Most of those college kids, when ordering a pizza, have no idea how difficult it is to deliver it. First you have to find the right building, then knock on the door until someone buzzes you inside. Then you sit inside the lobby and call them on your cell phone. If they don't pick up, you have to wait for them, or ask a nearby student to slide his ID card down the swipe pass so you can ride the elevator up to the kids dorm. Not many people know the trials and triumphs of a pizza delivery driver because they haven't delivered pizzas themselves. Frustration nips at you all night, as most of the customers aren't watching for your car, leave the outside lights off which prevents you from seeing the house numbers, don't have numbers on their house, or take their time answering the door. It's like, 'You ordered a pizza. Do you want it? Well, how about getting some numbers for your house, and, uh, leaving the lights on so we can see those numbers. Is that too much to ask?' I don't get too frustrated with the college kids, however, because they're just kids, bombarded by schoolwork, freedom from living at home, and a sea of beautiful people that comprise the opposite sex. I'm just the the pizza guy, the dude that brings the cheese wheel of death.

I wonder what my life would have been like had I stayed in Fort Greene, Brooklyn? By now, I'd be working at British Commonwealth, a juice & coffeebar or at Greater Performances, a restaurant next to Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) or delivering food for a local restaurant. "Dumpster Diver ... the musical" would be near completion. When I lived at 181 Franklin Avenue, renting a tiny upstairs room from Aimee Burg, a student at Pratt Institute, I felt plugged in, focused, and spent hours writing. (That doesn't happen too often in West Palm Beach, Florida.) But if I would have stayed in New York, how would my spiritual life have been? Maybe it would be more developed as I would have met a number of Christians that I can relate to, creative insomniacs who are swallowed up by dreams bigger than their own abilities. Perhaps it would have atrophied in the face of a developing creative surge. I don't know. In any case, this effect--the effect of environment and its ability to encourage latent tendencies--remains a hypothesis that deserves more study.

Maybe God wants me to return to New York, particularly Brooklyn. Sure, it's a hassle, but the people there are interesting, and there's so many of them that I'd be likely to find some people with common aspirations, whether musically or artistically. I need to spend time in prayer, and wait for God to reveal His will to me.

12/07/04

Being homeless is like being on vacation, minus the hotel. You end up outside a lot, connecting the dots of the library, the beach, the park, Dunkin Donut's, McDonald's, hanging out at these public living-room-type-spaces. Every table becomes your desk, especially when there's an outlet nearby to power your laptop. Every decision you make arrives after careful consideration of its benefits. By no means can this be called mooching because in most cases, you are the customer and the customer is always right. Even if you are ordering water or a #1 (2 donuts + a coffee or tea) at Dunkin Donut's, then occupying a table for six hours. If they didn't want me to sit there for six hours why'd they leave an outlet so close? Besides, you notice, no one sits inside at McDonald's or Dunkin Donut's anyway. 95% of the tables are vacant. (Those tables are lonely, and I'm codependent.) The other 5% are occupied by gray-haired folk enjoying a coffee with the morning paper. These are the same gentleman that occupy benches along the waterfront at obscene hours in the morning, then shuffle down street watching the world go by, ignored by the masses, lost in their overcoats, remembering.

Whenever I have an apartment, a restlessness sets in and I try to change the apartment in some form or fashion. Living in the same space for some time, the walls close in. Living in my car, however, my apartment is wherever I drive, wherever I'm standing, sitting, or resting my head. And when I'm driving, my apartment is the whole world that moves in front of me like a movie across my windshield, every moment another scene in the film of my life. As it stands now, Dunkin Donut's is my study, complete with free water, clean bathrooms, cheap donuts and tea, and floor-to-ceiling windows all around. The Salvation Army community center on the northeast corner of Sixth and Rosemary is my gym.

Christmas time

it's Christmas time  
in a place far from ours  
Christians worship  
underneath the stars

this is their gift, to You (2x)

snow falls down  
in a country far from ours

Christians worship  
behind prison bars

this is their gift, to You (2x)

we are one Body  
a thousand miles apart  
we feel your suffering  
when we touch our heart

you're not alone, this time (2x)

let's remember  
our family in chains  
brothers and sisters  
suffer for your Name

your not alone, this time (2x)

12/07/04

Maybe my dad wouldn't have been as restless if he'd lived in a Winnebago or a VW van. Maybe I inherited his restless gene. Hmmm.

Today was productive. Wrote in this journal at Palm Beach, visited The River Church of God (on Palm and Georgia, Flamingo Park). God gave me lyrics & chords to a song about The Persecuted Church. It's called "Christmas time", about a Christmas overseas, through the eyes of prisoners behind bars of a labor camp in North Korea. I returned a call to Daisy of Voice of the Martyrs, asked her to mail me the form necessary to switch my current monthly donation to automatically withdraw from my checking account. Praise God! I'm fasting today. I'm praying for musicians/vocalists to help with Out of the Wilderness, a music project to raise awareness of The Persecuted Church.

6:52 pm

Delivering pizzas ... the 6 basic food groups of the ghetto: 1. churches 2. convenient stores 3. coin laundries 4. beauty salons (barbershops) 5. pawnshops 6. funeral homes.

10:42 pm

Saw Chris the pianist and Hanna, both PBA'ers at Rinker, on my last pizza delivery. Hanna's beautiful, fat lips, chubby cheeks, looks like Nicole Greenwald, another beautiful PBA'er. Hanna

reminds me of that adorable girl who played the lead in "Lost in Translation". Kind of like if you mesh a super cute girl with a squirrel--beautiful dark eyes, dimple cheeks, an unpredictable mind, ready for adventure.

Out of the Wilderness speech

Your brothers and sisters overseas are suffering. They need your help. You can do one of two things. You can make a difference, or you can make excuses. My challenge to you is this: consider making a difference, for eternity.

Share the burden, the beautiful burden, that is the persecuted church.

12/08/04

4:11 pm

I'm in my car, parked at the multi-level parking lot on the SE corner of Banyan and Olive, downtown West Palm Beach. For the last 45 minutes, I occupied a comfy sofa at the library, my home away from home, reading magazines, then later checking out four DVD's that, energy permitting, I'll watch tonight at the church where I plan to sleep.

Last night, actually earlier this morning, I didn't get much sleep. I was a mess--sweaty, smelly, nervous, restless--as I sat perched on a cold aluminum chair in the copy room of the River Church, an tiny room that adjoins the main sanctuary with a hallway in the back that leads to the nursery and youth group room. Because I hadn't showered after work, I was sweaty and smelly. Because I feared being interrupted by the pastor, maybe visiting the church to retrieve some notes for the following Sunday's sermon from his office, I was nervous. Because of the gnawing feeling that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, an imposter in this world who's failed to confront the responsibilities of adulthood, I was restless. "Guilty! Guilty!" I heard the voices cry out from dark corners in the room.

Even though I had avoided the trap of rent, a lease, or a mortgage, I still felt trapped. Outside the bounds of responsibility, there's no rules. Without rules, there's no safe place to go. Thus, once you jump the fence of normalcy, everyone turns into a potential threat. Acting marginal is one thing. Becoming marginal is an entirely different animal. You end up more caged than you were before, in a kind of animal shelter for humans. A part of you, though, becomes more cognizant. You see past the obvious. You recognize that the woman you see sitting in her car every night at the park, flipping through the newspaper, isn't merely enjoying the newspaper before heading home. She's homeless, like you, and she's living in her car, like you. What's her story? What brought her to this place? Was it a choice that she made? Is she doing what you're doing--living in her car to save money to use as a downpayment for her own place? With the eventual plans to fix up extra bedrooms, and rent them out in order to pay off the mortgage and establish equity, in order to escape the slavery of paying rent to a landlord?

There I was, 35 years old, a mess of smelly hair, onion-smelling hands, wading through internet web pages about the end of the world, slowly going mad, in a small room of an old fashioned church. Even in this church, I can't find refuge from the restless insomnia that nips at my heels. I need to find a place to camp. Somewhere outdoors, with fresh air, near a source of water to clean up, maybe a community swimming pool or the ocean. Being indoors, alone, I feel like I'm suffocating. Not all the time, just sometimes. Maybe I need a girlfriend to share my rollercoaster life with. Sure, I may not know where I'm going, but the view, constantly changing in front of me, remains captivating. Like a hang glider ... hang out and enjoy the view.

The bad angle of delivering pizzas is this: when you receive poor tips, you take it out on your driving, at least I do sometimes, gunning the gas pedal to the floor, racing around sharp corners without slowing down, tailing drivers on cellphones then, when they look in their rearview holding your hand to your head to mimic their behaviour or waving them ahead with your hand. Because you're abused economically, you end up abusing yourself even more when your car requires inevitable maintenance. You end up punishing yourself. A revolving door of auto cannibalism. This job turns you into an animal. When you deliver pizzas, roads become your racetrack. The combination of careless drivers in their cars, using cell phones in their self-contained, air-conditioned, living rooms on wheels while listening to blaring music and watching DVD movies, potholed streets, thunderstorms, careless or drunk pedestrians that cross dark intersections, ghettos, and unlit front porches connected to houses with no address numbers on front make delivering pizzas an ordeal. At best, the job is a hassle, with constant frustration coming at you from all sides. At worst, the job is a nightmare, on nights where you drive long distances to unsafe neighborhoods, where you navigate crummy streets and endure the threats of loitering teenagers, only to receive no tip for all your work. So why do you do it? Despite the hassle, there's a certain freedom to this job. You are your own boss, listening to the haunting melody of "Secret Garden" (the accomplished musical duo from Oslo, Norway), mapping out routes in your mind in order to drop off four pizzas to different areas of town, talking to friends the phone, sipping tea while nibbling on donuts while maneuvering the car around the curves of Flagler Boulevard, enjoying the full moon that peeks from behind a backlight cloud, drinking it all in--the beautiful and tragic landscape of America as it unwinds before your eyes in full view.

5:30 pm

So, I got a #1, a medium tea with cream and sugar, and two donuts--one French crueller and one chocolate glazed, for \$2.29 at Dunkin Donuts. Then, sat and munched idly for ten minutes to cool myself off, calm myself, after four deliveries with poor tips, driving in rush hour traffic no less! It's a week after Thanksgiving in West Palm Beach, Florida, meaning it's season--everyone's down here from up North, visiting relatives short-term, escaping the snow for the long-term, or a both. I called my sister Kim about my tree apartment idea, left message.

12/09/04

5am

When was the last time I slept?

After work, earlier this morning, it was the usual routine: circle church twice to look for signs of life, taking my foot off the gas pedal and slowly coasting into the church parking lot (guilt), backing up car, turning off lights, grab quilt that I borrowed from Andy Cotter that he hasn't asked for back, yet!, grab hooded sweatshirt that I use as a pillow, exit car, lock doors, slowly walk toward church building, quietly open door, open quickly and close gently as the alarm tweets loudly in staccato intervals, turn on hallway lights, press in code to disable alarm (1-4-1-6, then hit "OFF" button), lock hallway door, turn off hallway light, and stroll to the copy room where I set up my makeshift writing/reading room before laying the quilt onto a pew and falling to sleep for a few hours. Inside the copy room, I plug in my laptop, plug in the phone cord, then sift through the internet, usually visiting [www.rense.com](http://www.rense.com) to read about the news that goes unreported or underreported in mainstream media, news that's far more entertaining than the talking heads attached to suits that populate major networks.

I like the internet. It's like television that you control. It's immediate. It's entertaining. The internet provides information and entertainment, along with well-written editorial content. Sifting through the internet is kind of like sifting through a giant thrift store, except you don't have to pay anything. If you're a dumpster diver like I am, you're likely to become an internet addict, as there's curbside finds waving at you from all sides. The only drawback with the internet is that there's no editor, and you have to discern truth from fiction, fantasy from fact, separating the reality of what happened from the perception of what happened. Sometimes, websites blend the truth with fiction. Like cream that separates from the milk, you have to let the truth rise to the top. The Bible is The Truth. Everything else is moot.

At the church, though, I heard footsteps and quickly turned around to peek my head into the hallway. "Hello?" I sqwaked in a scared, guilty cry, sounding like Big Bird if he'd been caught in an act of ... well, let's not go there. Ahem. The footsteps seemed to be coming from inside the church. I imagined the pastor skulking through the building like a miniature giant, his broad shoulders ready for combat, his white shock of hair glowing like a flashlight, his bright blue eyes scanning the shadows, his widows peak plowing ahead of him like the point of a hoe finding rich soil, then turning the corner to find me--a nervous mess of a middleaged man, biting nails, saucer eyes, arms-around-my-knees-with-feet-off-the-ground in frightened anticipation.

"Hey Pastor, it's just me, Kris," I'll apologize in a soft release.

"Brother Kris!" He'll announce, extend his meaty paw for a polite handshake.

We'll make small talk, then he'll disappear into the night and I'll return to my writing, worrying, reading, recording, pushing my stories through the keys of this keyboard, throwing out my liferaft, looking for someone to save, someone to swim against the tide with, straining to catch a glimpse of the dreams that God has set before us.

But the pastor never appeared. Every few minutes I heard creaks and groans from the second-floor, as if someone were walking around up there. In a building this old, probably built in the 1930's, noises like that can be expected. Even wood has a life of it's own. And this building contains lots of old wood, that breathes (expands, contracts) as humidity and moisture ride on both ends of an atmospheric seesaw. Despite my rationale, though, my imagination runs in a direction of its own, pummeling the empiricist in me. Still, I felt a presence at the church, like the weight of the air had changed. An hour or so later, I rolled out my quilt on the front church pew, and fell into a deep sleep.

Sure, I'm homeless, but I'm intentionally homeles. Paying rent is the real crime. Why work at a job you don't like? Then, spend most of the money you earn for a place to sleep? Just sleep in your car. That way you won't need furniture or decorations. Shower at friends houses. Or the beach. Or use the shower beside that swimming pool, one of many in the apartment complexes that you deliver to every night. Poop at the local restaurant that has the cleanest restrooms. For me, that restaurant is McDonalds, although the latch needs fixing. If you miss TV, visit a friend that has TV, or drop by the lobby of any nearby hotel, like Radisson (the east side of Australian just south of Okeechobee), Holiday Inn (the north side of Belvedere just west of I-95), or the Courtyard Marriot (Australian to Centrepark Boulevard east, make 2nd left and you'll see it on the right). There, you can order a soda, get refills for free, and watch a giant TV set while overhearing bar gossip shared by lonely out-of-towners and hospitable bartenders. Out of all these, the Courtyard Marriot wins--comfy couches arranged in a semi-circle around a mammoth TV, reminding you of the living room you would like to have.

Poverty welcomes creativity. And when you choose homelessness, you put yourself in a position of poverty. It forces you to think differently. Being apartmentless forces you to be creative, see the options that you overlooked before. You learn to borrow what you don't have. And that's not a bad thing.

I shouldn't be here. I should be in NYC, Brooklyn. Here, I'm an asteroid that circles a planet but fails to land. In NYC, most of the inhabitants are asteroids.

People say that New York City is more like Europe than the United States. It's definitely different in New York City--an enormous amount of people confined with a small space, living on top of each other, all of them a dizzying array of nationalities. My friend Fernando Michelletti, an energetic and strong Italian that ran a moving company I used to work for, said: "If everyone in New York City went outside, you wouldn't be able to move." When I returned and mentioned my amivalence about being back, artist-friend Lynelle Forrest mused: "New York City has a pulse."

Consider these scribbles as a document. If they sound like I am complaining, then please accept my apologies. My life is amazing, on the verge of something bigger than I can fathom. And as long as I move towards my creative visions, insomnia notwithstanding, what I leave behind will

outlast what I have suffered for. At the end of the day, I hope my life will have counted for something, influencing and inspiring others to use their gifts to glorify God, serve humanity, and live cheaper to support indigenous missionaries.

I need to publish the poetry God has given me.

12/10/04

12:49 am

I just got off work. I'm parked on Flagler, along the intercoastal. The trees that line the median have been circled with pretty yellow lights, tasteful, reminding me of The Electric Light Parade that Disney World would present in the mid-eighties. As a kid, I'm pretty sure I saw that live. I think. Then again, I might have only seen color pictures and, leaving those to simmer in the crockpot of my imagination, made up the rest.

For some crazy reason, my memory's fallen into the rabbit hole. My short term memory is really bad. I'll be driving and forget where I'm going, and then I'll deliver a pizza to someone who I've met numerous times but whose name has taken a bus to West Texas. Ironically, though, as my memory decreases, my creativity swells. Like a lawn that's been burned up by the sun, my mind seems ravaged by some sort of foreign agent, perhaps the mercury amalgam fillings in my mouth, some broken and forming tattoos, that seep through my nervous system into the freeway of blood vessels that eventually reach the tollbooth of the blood-brain barrier, passing through with ease and reducing my brain to a mild case of someone that suffers from BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), or CJD (Crutchfeld-Jacob Disease). Maybe the root cause is different. Whatever the case, though, my short-term memory loss doesn't bother me. Rather, it's a blessing. More room is left for the characters that fall from the orchids of my imagination. I didn't plant the trees. I merely collect the fruit.

I'm so saddened by the superficiality of our culture. To see how we spend our money, and time in pursuit of more money, so that we can buy more things that, more often than not, we don't need. I feel like we're all dogpaddling in an ocean of consumption (commerce, too), clinging to credit cards like large chunks of styrofoam that slowly fill with water, barely floating themselves. Across from Papa John's is an assisted-living facility, St. Something-or-other. Driving from work, I spotted a sight that has yet to leave me alone: An elderly, gray-haired man in a blue sweatshirt, his head hanging down toward his lap, his eyes closed, sleeping. By himself. Solitary. Does he have relatives? Do they visit? Does he feel useless. What does he do all day? Is he dating a lady that lives in the building? Is he a veteran? I want to chat with him. More importantly, I want to listen. Looking at him, he reminded me of my dad, Michael Kemp. Perhaps I feel guilty for my neglect, my lack of attention given to my father while he lay in Hospice dying. What was I thinking?!!! I regret not spending more time with him. And I deserve to feel guilty for it.

12/10/04

1:45 am

Because this world with all its quiet criminals that skulk the sidewalks, the ones that answer your "hello" with silence, that travel in groups, a covey of cowards, absorbing residual energy into the the collapsed star that they've become, has proliferated American cities with growing populations like West Palm Beach, I usually travel alone. Anyone can be in a group. Being alone, and forging through the swamp of conformity that our culture has birthed over the last twenty years, forces you to see things differently. I don't choose to be alone, but most of the time I am alone. For some reason or another, I don't share the same interests as most of the people I meet. Sure, I could fake it, and feign interest, but if you continue doing that past thirty, you're solidifying your status as a hypocrite, one that you yourself won't even be able to recognize after enough time.

New York City, as I've mentioned before, is different. Even my recent experience there confirmed my suspicions. People are nicer there, at least where I was, in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, they were nicer. At the grocery store, I chatted with a lovely lady who had just quit her job at NBC and was starting a new job at The Wall Street Journal. We we're both deciding on what flavor of Hagen-Dazz to buy. The pints were on sale for two-and-a-half-or-so bucks. There, in Brooklyn, New York, people actually talk to you. Here, in West Palm Beach, you talk to someone and they look at you like you want something from them or they want to kill you. If you're a bit of loner like me who stays here long enough, you have a pretty good chance of becoming jaded.

Here I am, tired, but restless, amped from work, wanting to hang out with some friends but I don't have any friends. It's true. It's a fact, not a bid for sympathy. Even the acquaintances that I do share interests with, the Palm Beach Atlantic University students, are the 18-22 crowd, busy working, studying, and believing the garbage they watch on TV news. I know I can't change them, or change anyone here. That's a given. What I can change is my proximity to this place-- an environment that has helped to foster the seeds of malaise, the weeds of bitterness, that cook slowly beneath the burning summer sun of Florida.

I occupy a booth at Howley's, an historic diner that wunderkid and creator-of-tornado-caves Rodney Mayo restored in a deco style. He enlisted the talents of local West Palm Beach painter Lynelle Forrest to paint a mural on the outside wall. She also sketched abstract shapes along the counter. Here I sit at the far side of the dining room in a comfy wraparound wall seat. While I ate, I read the New Times review of the premiere of Bug, a play that's being staged in Coral Gables and running currently, successfully, off-Broadway in New York City. I want to see this play. Judging from the review, it sounds like True West, a memorable drama written by Sam Shepard that premiered in Chicago at the legendary Stephenwolf Theatre. And who were the main actors in True West? Jon Malkovitch and Gary Sinese.

Hey, I'm still here. Man, I'm such an insomniac. I've been sleeping for what? 3-5 hours a night?

What's going on? Hmmm. Surprisingly, I felt the same way in Brooklyn, renting that room at 53 Franklin Avenue in Fort Greene, sharing that attic loft with Aimee Burg, an art major at Pratt University. She was nice. And cute, a bespectacled girl who dressed in an eclectic thrift store getup common to girls who live in Brooklyn: tight jeans rolled up at the bottom, reminiscent of a 50's style, long-sleeved collar shirts with ivory buttons on them--the kind you'd expect to see on a cowboy riding through Nevada, socks, always socks, and beautifully-scuffed shoes, with low years but high mileage. Aimee, like many other girls I spotted during my stay, had dark black hair cut short in the back with chopped bangs in the front. Physically, she was short, very pale, and curvy--the kind of girl that turns my head. New York, at least Brooklyn anyway, seems to be occupied by friendly people that have their stuff together. No doubt they have to have their dreams in line. The city would run them over otherwise.

Florida ... where the loose change of America--the nuts, the bolts--eventually settle, unable to resist the pull of gravity, the seduction of the equator.

Did I tell you? Okay, listen up, booger breath. This afternoon, from 2-4, I set up camp behind my sister Kim's house, putting up a tent in her backyard. That's where I'll sleep.

I looked at two apartments today. Both apartments were in the under \$600 range. Most properties downtown rent for \$675-and-up a month. Apartments east of Dixie begin at \$750.

The first, a dump on 14th Street, west of Dixie, two blocks north of Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard, was only \$425 + utilities a month--a bargain considering that was rent went for 10 years for places closer to Clematis Street. Anticipating anything semi-bohemian and gritty-cool turned out to be a letdown. The place was a cement block nightmare, replete with linoleum tile kitchen and a carpet that looked as if it had been given a bad haircut--big patches missing, the rest hiding cracker remnants and entire villages of bugs. The windows were closed with broken blinds allowing slivers of light to reveal an atmosphere of dust. After being inside for a minute or two, I had seen enough. The place left me feeling fatigued, as if I'd been on the last leg of a promotional tour of a factory that produces rubber seals for refrigerators.

The second apartment, on Monroe, between Dixie and Olive, sat behind a two-story Spanish mission style house and had large forgotten trees surrounding it. Inside, one large room--a combo living/bed room connected to a small kitchen and tiny bathroom. The size made the dwelling attractive. The smell, pungent fumes of cat urine that saturated the atmosphere, did not.

Victoria, a producer/writer/artist who showed me the place, had plans to move into the front house. Two years earlier, I had met Victoria, a chronically sad-faced, defeated-looking shell of a woman who was, at the time, planning to move to Kansas to live with her boyfriend.

"Did you ever go to Kansas?" I asked her.

"No," she replied flatly. "No ... I - "

"Didn't work out, huh?" I filled in the silence.

"No."

So with these two prospects behind me, living in a tent seemed a reasonable conclusion. If anything, the tent will be an inexpensive solution to a nagging restlessness (one that's been plaguing me on and off for years) that prohibits a more permanent one. At least for now. :-)

12/10/04

It's 7:04 am and I'm awake, feeling refreshed. Last night, I went to bed around 3pm, more like 3:30 pm. That's 4 and 1/2 hours sleep. I told you I'm an insomniac. Maybe I should invest in naps. Sleeping in a tent wasn't that bad at all, with my Chinook sleeping bag and strip of eggcrate beneath it. Since I lacked a pillow, I curved the bedroll, flipping it over at the position where my head rests. And it sufficed. Still, I'll probably buy a car pillow, those 1/2-sized cushions they use on airplanes. The "Flying J" Truckstop in Vero, in Vero Beach, on the corner of the turnpike, sells them. That place is worth visiting, too, for their delicious breakfast at the Iron Skillet, which boasts steaming grits and the best sweetened iced-tea I've ever tasted, as good as the tea served at Golden Corral, another buffet favorite for their Bunyan-sized servings of food. At Golden Corral, the buffet, a collection of islands overflowing with steaming casseroles, potatoes, rice, fried chicken, steak, fish, vegetables, salads, pies and puddings, looks more like a trough than a buffet table. Despite my penchant for hyperbole, life is still beautiful. God is good!

12/10/04

It's 8:30 and I'm running towards a clay-colored, five-story building, the first of three that make up the address of 2100 Australian Avenue, the projects south of 25th Street. Outside, there's a heaviness to the air, as if the oxygen itself has left for greener meadows. Inside, the building smells like marijuana, reminding me that it's Friday night in the ghettto. The hallways are painted in a flat, light green color, with a stripe of dark green paint running horezontally, like the type of paintjob you'd see in a correctional facility.

The elevator doors are closing and I'm relieved. I don't intend to ride that steel box anyway. Elevators have a clausterphobia all their own. In government sponsored apartment housing, though, the elevators usually lack proper ventilation and wreak of body odor. I'll pass.

As I push open the steel doors to the stairway, I'm greeted by a wave of odor--a mix of vomit, marijuana, urine, sweat, and fried chicken that has been trapped inside, each scent competing for

attention. Like a ghost with cabin fever, the fumes rush to escape, blasting me in the face as I make my entrance.

Racing up the steps two-at-a-time, I pause in the hallway, glance at the numbers, make a right, then another right before finding 315. This place is a prison. The walls are a solid, flat yellow. The overhead lights cast a fierce glow, eliminating shadows and all other traces of identity. Standing beneath them, I feel like a labrat involved in some gritty realty show.

I knock on the door. A Jamaican man, sporting long dreadlocks and a basketball jersey, opens the door, eyes me cautiously, then hands me a twenty-spot. The pizza is \$15.49.

"You need change?" I ask.

"No man. Keep it." He answers in a sober baritone.

"Thanks." I smile, then dash off.

Outside, as I'm jogging to my car, I overhear two black ladies talking about me.

"You see," says one. "He ain't gotta be running. Why's he gotta be running?"

"Na, uh," says the other. "He should be running. This place is no place to be delivering pizzas. He knows what's going on."

2100 Australian, West Palm Beach, Florida, the ghetto, on a Friday night, December, between 8-9pm

The Jamaican guy tipped me \$4.51. Praise God! Praise God for His generosity and protection! :-)

My life is beautiful. As long as I recognize that I'm here to make a difference for the next world, it will always be beautiful. What if there were glasses that gave us an eternal view of everything we did. That would be a real awakening. All of us would change our habits, behaviours, actions, patterns, lifestyles, and, in effect, alter our destinies.

Thank YOU, GOD! I met, at 701 New Jersey Street, a group of PBA'ers, including Igor, a web designer who agreed to help me with the OOTW website. (561) 543-1586 is his #.

Anyway, I set up a tent at my sister's house, Kim's and she's upset. She wants me to live with her, which is impossible as her roommate cannot live with a man for religious reasons. So Kim, in a phone conversation earlier, expresses her frustration in a rhetorical statement.

"I know that you don't want to pay rent so you can support more missionaries, but I don't understand why you care more about people you don't even know than your own family."

"Kim, it's not like that," I answer. "This is what I want to do. Should I behave differently because you're worried about me? I can't be held hostage to your fears," I added.

Maybe I am being irresponsible, I thought to myself. Maybe this whole missionary-support justification is merely an excuse for remaining in a state of suspended adolescence.

Living in a tent in Kim's backyard is fine with me, but I resent the fact that she's not comfortable with it. Sometimes empathy can be a form of control, even if not intended that way.

"We all agree it's too big to keep up with, that we're surrounded by life, that we'll never understand it."

- Jack Kerouac, Big Sur

"... but once again i've unconsciously sabotaged all those great plans of mine to be kind to living beings even bugs, once again I've murdered a mouse in one way or another."

- Jack Kerouac, Big Sur

"This is the first time I've hitchhiked in years and I soon begin to see that things have changed in America, you can't get a ride anymore"

- Jack Kerouac, Big Sur

"I've seen it all raving before me in endless yakking, kitchen mouthings of life, the long dark grave of tomby talks over midnight kitchen bulbs, in fact it fills me with love"

- Jack Kerouac, Big Sur

Delivering pizzas in downtown West Palm Beach, Florida, has its share of benefits and risks, both exxagerated by the fact that you're out in the field--not confined to the four walls of an office. A major benefit is the freedom--being able to drive around, listen to music, chat on the cell phone, pick up a bag of chips or a cheese burger at a drive-thru, or even a pack of smokes for the manager at a late night bodega congregated by swaying Mexicans. Every night is a new movie, as you watch each scene blur into another across the face of the windshield. The music accompanies each colorful episode. Then you realize that you are getting paid to watch movies all night. This is your movie, the motion picture of your life. Every delivery experience is another plot point.

All night, I'm knocking on doors in environments both awe-inspiring and frightening. Last night, I

delivered some pizzas to 730 (or was it 720?) South Ocean Boulevard, to a mansion in Palm Beach. This place was mammoth. The driveway led me through a tree-lined cul de sac surrounded by behemoth Mediterranean-styled architecture. A huge patio, inset with coquina stones, centered by a pool, sat on one side. Adjacent to the pool was a large, window-filled pool house and cabanda. The mansion itself was a three-story castle, fronted by a cylindrical tower that had windows running along the spiral staircase inside. On the inside, I later observed, artwork decorated the walls. On the opposite end of the castle sat another building, a stone monstrosity of epic proportions, that served as the garage. Man, this place was spectacular. It reminded me of the mansions I've seen on The Travel Channel, in Europe. An amazing Italian/Mediterranean edifice. Whoa.

An hour later, I find myself a 1/2 hour northwest, in West Palm Beach, at 2100 Australian Avenue, in a housing project so rundown and crimeridden that my Haitian co-workers refuse to deliver there. 2100 Australian is comprised by a series of five-story buildings, each box-like, lacking the signature aesthetic flairs often seen in high-rent districts. From the outside, the place looks like a prison--three, flat, dull-colored boxes jutting up like tombstones from the withered grass, encircled by a potholed river of asphalt (blacktop). Even the air seems desparate, as if the sense of defeatedness has taken on a life of it's own, an energy that threatens to suffocate you the moment you drive inside. Some of the residents sit outside on the bench that runs along the wall, near the entrance to the lobby. Like birds on a telephone wire, they sit in row, chatting to each other. Ocassionally, they pause for a brief interval to light a cigarette or take a drink. The air is heavy with the smells common the ghettos across America: reefer, beer, cheap perfume, sweat, fried chicken, urine.

"Be careful, those niggaz at that building don't know how to act," warns a middle-aged woman attached to a cigarette. She inhales. The embers glow. She's camped on a chair outside the lobby door, sitting beside another woman.

I make the delivery to the north building only on the condition that the customer come to my car, alone. At the entrance to the second building, a small crowd of black youth have gathered, talking, yelling, laughing loudly. It's a sea of gold teeth, dreadlocks, white t-shirts, oversized, low-hanging shorts, and namebrand athletic trainers.

"What are you wearing?" I ask the customer.

"A white t-shirt." He grunts.

I nearly laugh. "Everyone's wearing a white t-shirt. Are you a big guy? Older? Younger?"

"A big guy. Do I sound like a small guy? Damn. I'm in my thirties. I'm comin' down now."

"All right."

Minutes later, Leroy is spit out of the elevator and lumbers to the car.

"You scared to come up?" He asks.

"Yeah," I reply flatly. "I been robbed before."

He gives me a \$2.25 tip, generous for a black person, as they usually tip nothing, unless you count change rounded up to the next dollar a tip, well it is, but it's negligible. Of course I'm scared, not really scared, but more cautious than anything else, having been robbed, assaulted, threatened, and thrown rocks at by blacks in the darker part of town.

And that's the interesting part of this job--the dichotomy of being at a \$40-million dollar mansion one moment, then sprinting up the stairs of a piss-smelling housing project the next. At the million-dollar mansions, I stare in awe at these massive castles of marble and stone, mouth open as if I'm taking a drink of the picture before me, lost in a tug of war between marvel and sadness. The marvel comes from the architecture, the curiosity behind the craftwork--how did they move this coral column into place? was that rock shaped into a lawnchair or did that occur naturally? how long did this mansion take to complete? The sadness comes from the realization that the money spent for shelter could have been used to spread The Gospel of The Lord Jesus Christ, save countless thousands from starvation, or even both. The irony is that the occupants of these mansions, at least the ones I've met en route on pizza deliveries, usually number no more than three-to-five people.

I wonder what the extra rooms are used for, or are they guest rooms for people who seldom visit. Before leaving these lavish castles, I take a last, long look because I don't want to forget. And my spotty memory is often filled by the pictures in my mind.

That's the irony. From the ghetto, punching in sober-voiced phone calls, requesting working-class blacks to meet me at the car because I don't want to get robbed or harassed by a group of blacks, to the palace at the end of a long, swirling driveway of inlaid coquina stones. That's the irony. And another comical aspect is this: pizza is the common denominator. Eaten by both poor and rich. Pizzas are the link that bridges the gap, the common object of desire. A silly cheese wheel of death! A circular piece of dough layered with marinara sauce and sprinkled with mozzarella cheese--this is what connects everyone. And what do we do with this popular snack that connects the categories of people? We eat it.

12/12/04 2:38pm

Carrie and Matt were kind enough to let me sleep at their place last night. They have a two-story, 1930's-era house at 932 32nd Street at the top of a hill in historic Northwood, an area peppered by two-story houses from the 1930's, Key West styled bungalows from the 50's, and large CBS homes built in the 60's and 70's. Carrie's house sits at the top of a hill. The surrounding streets are winding and hilly as well, adding to the northern flavor. Some of the

streets are lined with enormous trees, another plus.

Carrie said she'd put out a mattress and blanket for me in the kitchen. When we spoke on the phone, Carrie requested a tablet of Alieve. I stopped by Flamingo Park Groceries, purchased the Alieve and purchased two quarts of Haggen-Dazz, strawberry, ice cream. Hey, why not splurge? They are letting me sleep over and it's way cheaper than a hotel. Although Carrie wanted me to sleep on the couch, where she had layed out a blanket, I fell asleep on the mattress in the dining room. Before sleeping, though, I looked around me and imagined that I was on a raft in the middle of a small pond, except this pond had hardwood floors.

Here I sit and here I ... ha, ha, ha, at Papa John's on the toilet. Hey, I'm the king on my throne. A few things you need to be homeless ... a slacker job where you can 1. eat 2. use your cell phone / charge your cell phone 3. use their toilet.

A pizza delivery job like Papa John's is perfect because they're corporate, so they're not all up in your business 24-7. As long as you stock the make line, fold boxes, wash dishes, make sauce, prep cheese, stock the cooler, clean, and deliver pizzas, you're left alone for the most part. In your freetime, you can hang out, like I do, in the bathroom and write your journal like I am now.

Here at work, I can shave, brush my teeth, floss, eat a bunch of vegetables (pizza toppings), pizza, chicken wings, barbeque wings, hot wings, drink water, or buy soda. Then, when I'm on delivery, I can make phone calls, meet new friends--the customers, listen to music, park and write down an idea or note to myself. It's all about the freedom. Like earlier, fifteen minutes ago, my last delivery to George's Music at the Palm Beach Mall, at 1801 Palm Beach Lakes. There, I saw Chad, an acquaintance who happens to be a manager there.

"What are you up to?" I asked him.

"I have a recording studio I'm involved with. Me and Glen run it. So, we've been doing that." He explains.

"I need some music recorded. Can you help me out?"

"Sure," he smiles. "Let me get you a card."

He did.

"Thanks. I'll call you." I said, then left.

Isn't that great? I need three songs recorded, professional quality, for a demo CD to give out at the Palm Beach Atlantic University presentations/concerts February 7,8,9,10, Monday through Thursday.

Another point about being homeless--you need a place to store your stuff. I have three. My sister Kim's shed behind her house, Carrie and Matt's for my suitcase of journals, and The River Church of God for my music recording equipment. My clothes, tent, sleeping bag, and foam cushion (to place beneath the sleeping bag) are strategically stored in the backseat of my Suzuki Swift hatchback, each in it's little compartment.

TLPDDOE idea - Jim Wheeler attempting to remember the #'s of gate code when he hears #'s all around him.

Sure, delivering pizzas is fun, but it can be a an ordeal as well. Why? Due to the fact that so many people live in suburban prisons. Delivering a pizza to them is like running an obstacle course through security checkpoints. Along Executive Center, a street that runs east of Congress, gated subdivisions occupy both sides of the street. At one of them, there are three entry points. And I'm not making this up. The first is a crossing gate similar to those at railroad crossings. To get in, you have to know the owners last name, find it on the electronic entry box, punch it in, let the phone ring, identify yourself, then they buzz you in and the gate lifts. What makes this difficult, though, is that the person's last name, is rarely on the box sticker (the sticker attached to the side of the pizza box that identifies the address, customer, phone number, price, and order number). To get around that, you have to call the customer from your cell phone and hope they're not on the internet, or, if they're using the telephone, have call-waiting. Otherwise, you sit and wait, letting the frustration rise to the point where you laugh and realize that, at the end of the day, what you're doing is downright inane. And that's only the first security checkpoint.

After getting through that gate, there's a security door on the first floor of their apartment building. Once there, you have to look up their name again, and dial in the code numbers that are beside their name. Often, these code numbers, if they are the press-on kind that are inserted into the cottony bulletin boards, have fallen off, or this phone is broken, probably by some other frustrated food delivery driver who smashed the receiver to bits, then laughed to himself while calling the customer telling them to meet him downstairs. At this point, I usually call the customer again, to get the second code into the lobby of their building. Once you get that code, you enter the building and take the elevator to the respective floor. The elevator's in some of these buildings are small, hot, slow-moving boxes with flourescent lights. You feel like a french fry ascending to some esoteric level of the food chain.

12/13/04 8:19am

I'm at McDonald's, on the SE corner of Belvedere and Georgia, facing a "hotcakes and sausage meal" for \$1.99 and a small, hot tea for another buck. Total price: \$3.06. (I'm not cheap because I'm single, quite the opposite.) That's about the cost of a gallon of gas nowadays and this food, this McMeal, is fuel for the body, all the carbs and sugar to give you gas, ha, ha. Instead of

placing the teabag into the water, I dump a packet of Swiss Miss into it, add four creamers, and enjoy hot chocolate. I believe you get re-fills of hot water, too. I was hoping this McDonald's would have free hot water dispensers, but I don't see them. They do have the station for free refills of soda and cold water. That's okay, I'll ask if I desire another cup. "Oh waiter, excuse me ... " :-)

Last night, a cold front sweep into West Palm Beach. After work, I parked at an industrial area in Grandview Heights, just north of Flamingo Park, in a parking lot that houses bays for artisans, craftshops, and businesses for generally boring enterprises like air-conditioning repair. Around the perimeter of storefronts is a large parking lot that's shaded in places by towering trees. That's the beauty of sleeping in your car--the shade obscures the nearby streetlight, although they both compete for attention, providing both darkness and privacy. I've slept there before in my car. This time, however, it was so cold I nearly turned into a popsicle. After an hour of rolling around on my reclined bucket seat, I fell asleep. When I awoke, the windows were covered with ice, so much that I couldn't see out of them. I laughed. My car, a 1995 Suzuki Swift, resembles the Geo Metro. It's like an aquarium on wheels, with windows all around.

This McDonald's, by the way, is hilarious. The music blasted over the speakers is Spanish flamenco, I think, compete with trumpets, percussion, and some guy yelling in the background, sounding like a cheerleader, yelling mantras in Spanish. He's probably saying "eat at McDonald's everyday". Maybe that's why I visit this place every other day for breakfast. It's also a nice place for an early morning poo.

Sitting in a booth on the other side of the dining room is a gray-haired lady talking to someone beside her, who happens to be invisible. Perhaps I shouldn't be so judgemental. Maybe I just don't see him, or her, or both of them. Maybe that's what happens when you eat at McDonald's everyday--you begin receiving visits from the Hamburgular or Grimace. Only thing is, no one else can see them, except you. Special friends. Maybe Grimace will be paying me a visit soon. Oh, there he is. Hey Grimace!

Breakfast spots / day hangouts with cheap eats ...

1. McDonald's - semi-clean bathrooms, free refills on soda, water
2. Dunkin Donuts - on Dixie, west side, just south of Palm Beach Lakes; clean, private bathrooms, two outlets for laptop
3. Makeb's Deli - on southwest corner of Fern and Olive; very clean and private bathrooms; comfy couches; free magazines and day-old newspapers; cheap bagels - 'everything bagel' toasted with butter - \$1.06
4. Denny's - 24-7, private booths; late night crowd may consist of lonely males, half-drunk and angry that their nightclub hunt didn't yeild any attention from the opposite gender
5. Howley's - okay breakfast, open 24-7 on weekends by trendy-looking clientle who are less attentive than the former staff

## Libraries

1. Palm Beach Atlantic University - free, high-speed internet with unlimited time limit, barring unforeseen emergency use by students, this library has about eight computers in the main floor, and about fifteen computers in the second level, comfy couches, lots of magazines; possibility of being distracted by very cute girls, like Nicole Greenwald or Kate Letton, is very high
2. Clematis Library - free, high-speed internet with one-hour maximum time limit; lotsa books, magazines, CD's, DVD's, videos, newspapers; their DVD selection contains interesting obscure films like Faces, by Jon Cassavettes

## Friends to crash ...

1. Carrie and Matt Snyder - 932 32nd Street, clean private bathroom, comfy bed, clean, fresh-smelling sheets, two pillows, interesting DVD collection that Matt owns, snacks, yeah!

## Cheap gas ...

1. Hess - \$1.95 - Dixie between Forest Hill and Southern
2. Sunoco - \$1.99 - Forest Hill and Dixie

## Cheap fruit ...

1. 54th and Broadway fruit stand

Hilarious, remember how I just wrote about the lady talking to herself. A phone rings. She picks it up and starts talking loudly. It turns out she is a landlord! She's yelling loudly into the phone, telling a prospective tenant, Raphael, about a room she has available, that she's on her way to meet him, but she's running late. If only Raphael knew why she was running late, because she's having breakfast with Grimace. Hilarious. My life is the best reality show ever. No wonder I don't miss TV. Because nothing beats real life. As long as you're willing to take risks and see the humor in situations and trust God for His Providence, you will be okay. Perhaps real faith means letting go of what's safe and braving the elements for a while.

I just went to the bathroom here. It's impressive--tiled floors, a stall with enough space to be a good-sized apartment in Manhattan. One major glitch: the door to the toilet doesn't have a lock. So I'm sitting on the throne, minding my business, and some guy walks in.

"Um, it's occupied," I announce. But as I had turned on the air blower (hand cleaner) to camouflage the sound of my bomb-dropping, the guy doesn't hear me. He's a construction worker type of guy wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and work boots. When he walks in, he has his head in the direction of the mirror, opposite the toilet. Finally, he glances in my direction. His face flushes red with embarrassment. "Sorry," he exits quickly. I wave my hands. Hurredly, he leaves. I hear the bathroom doors slam close.

Ever since I've been homeless, I've been writing a lot more. Remaining free from the distraction of having to buy home furnishings, and unencumbered by the pull of network television, I spend

more time creating output. In my free time, I stay busy while being productive. Call it lessons from living in my car.

As long as we're all watching television and as long as we're flipping through store catalogs, we'll always be buying stuff we don't need--junk that, in the long run, chains us to a treadmill of consumerism. At the end of the day, the only thing that's been consumed is our dreams, our life, especially if half our time is spent maintaining, upgrading, and protecting the junk we collect.

A nice walk, or a good chat with a friend over a cup of hot tea can cure most anything.

Today, I accomplished something cool and beneficial. I spent 3-4 hours at The River Church mixing down songs and recording them to CD-RW (CD-Recordable, Writable). All in all, twelve songs were mixed at a loud volume and satisfactory enough to hand out or sell at concerts. Praise God!

I feel like I'm coming out of my body, like I'm coming up from a waking dream, but the dream is my life? Okay.

LORD,

Help me to raise a voice for the persecuted church. Help me to be in Your Word, in prayer, fasting, obedience, repentance, surrender. Fill me with The Holy Spirit. Thank YOU, LORD. Amen

Wow, Praise God. \$89-dollars in tips tonite (12/13/04) working from 4pm - 12:30am, at Papa John's, Monday night! One customer, a black man, gave me an \$18 tip. I stood there looking at the tip, then looking at him in amazement. "Thanks," I said. "Thanks," he replied, returning inside and slamming the front door. Wow - \$18 dollars! Praise God! Thank YOU, JESUS. Help me to use this money wisely, for eternal things. :-)

Where are my friends? I feel like I have more non-Christian friends who are encouraging to me than Christian ones.

Other places to crash ...

1. Hattie - 920 35th St (Northwood)
2. John Martin (piano, SW corner of Poinsettia and 26th, top, center apt)
3. Gregory (gay, nice, 255 Evernia, The Strand, apt. 901)
4. Kim's (Winter Street, SW of Forest Hill)
5. Carrie & Matt's - The best! 932 32nd St, Historic Northwood
6. Steve & Emily Large (700 block of Kanuga, in Flamingo Park) The most comfy bed! :-)  
Hallelujah! Like a bed and breakfast. Steve & Emily invited me to spend the night on Jan. 2, 2003. They're very kind.

I like clothes that have a story to tell, that have been places, that have eavesdropped on low-whispered conversations in anonymous restaurants, that have travelled across state lines spotting glimpses of familiar friends that have been adopted by bargain hunters at flea markets. That's why I like thrift stores. Why are they called flea markets? They don't sell fleas. Maybe some of the clothes do have fleas. That's not a very pleasant thought.

Being homeless isn't that bad. It's kind of cool in a way. It forces you to be outside a lot, and explore the free rooms of the world--diners, donut shops, bookstores, malls, music stores, libraries. So far, being apartmentless is like being on vacation, minus the hotel. It forces you to use your brain, be nice to others, and make the most of every opportunity.

Thank YOU, GOD, for this beautiful life, for the moon, the stars, the ocean, for your creation, for your kindness and patience. Help me to live for YOU Alone because everything else is grabbing for straws or trying to hold a cloud. Thank YOU, GOD!

12/17/04

I feel so disconnected from everyone and everything, like there's no one I can relate to. It's not a feeling of loneliness. It's more a feeling of separatedness, the beginning stages of isolation. I feel like I've crash landed on this planet. Everyone's talking but their words are meaningless. Like a stranger, I've got to find the way home.

No matter how fast I move, introspection catches up to me, walls me off, and keeps me further from who I am, eventually reducing me to a state of paralysis. You can try to outrun time and even kill it, but it eventually catches up to you, a stranger that demands your attention, your company, your life.

From the cradles to classrooms to cars to cubicles to careers to coffins, we spend our lives in boxes only to end up in one.

"There are places in our heart where we grow claws."  
- Beverly Brian, NYC artist, from her journal

"You can work the system, or you can let the system work you. I'd rather work the system."  
- Kris Kemp (from Dumpster Diver ... the Musical)

12/18/04

My life is perfect. Thank YOU, GOD! I love my life. I'm 35, happily single, and don't own a

home. In fact, I don't even own an apartment. Nights, I couchsurf, camp on the abandoned half-acre lot fronting the intercoastal between 43rd and 44th street, off Flagler, or sleep in my car or sleep at The River Church of God. In my spare time, I write, compose songs, and am working on a musical--"Dumpster Diver ... the musical"--and a screenplay--"The Last Pizza Delivery Driver on Earth". What a great life ... full of wonder, curiosity, spontaneity, toasted coconut donuts, visiting old friends. I'm living the dream, pure unadulterated freedom, dismissing the forgotten yesterdays with a smile, a wave, and embracing the moment as it unfolds before me in a Niagra of wonder. This is my life, and I am living it. Thank YOU, GOD! Donald Trump has nothing on me. He can be my apprentice. I've got a few lessons for him. :-)

12/19/04

I asked Kim, my sister, what she wanted for Christmas.

"For you to get a place of your own," she replied, in a slow, deliberate exhale. "I know I shouldn't worry about you, but I do."

"Well," I sighed. "That's a legitimate request."

She may receive her gift sooner than anticipated. Last night, while walking to my car parked in the church parking lot, following a four-hour session of mixing down songs for CD recording (to be used for the PBAU Out of the Wilderness presentation), I bumped into Alex. He's an entrepreneur and rapper who attends our church. After he told me about his flourishing cleaning business, he said: "I'm not gonna take that apartment that I was planning to move into."

"I'll take it," I piped up.

"I'll call him and let him know you're coming." He said, then gave me directions.

It's a one-bedroom efficiency, including electric, for only \$425 a month, a deal, considering that apartments in this area, east of I-95 rent for \$650 without electric. Being a couch surfer has its role in this society of modern day rent slaves, but it's hard to establish any output via the internet, specifically publishing websites, an endeavor I did years ago that I miss.

Then, Alex tells me about the Christmas dinner party at pastor's house. He tells me that he can't go cuz' he's got plans but that everybody would love to see me there. It's actually later that evening, and I have the night off, so I decide to go. Arriving at the party, though, I feel kind of foolish, for a few different reasons. One, I'm by myself. At this point in my life, as a 35-year old, single guy who's nice, I don't understand why I don't have a girlfriend, or even a gal pal. It's only slightly humiliating, but it's always good to have someone to bounce ideas off of, to listen, to watch the world from a corner that you both share. A girl who's a good friend would be great

for attending church events like this. Most of the time, I feel like I'm on the outside anyway. Still, that journey is more tolerable when you have someone to share it with. Two, I'm unshaven, unshowered, grubby, smelly--two days without a shower. Two days in which I've worked, then stayed up into the wee hours of the early morning mixing down songs and wading through the internet at The River Church of God, in the copy room. After I park the car across the street from the pastor's house, I slip outside on the passenger side, and change my clothes, slipping off my filthy shorts and sliding on long pants, khakis. Hoping to cover up 48-hours of caked-on sweat, I pepper myself with cologne. Then, I walk into the party.

About fifty people squeezed into folding chairs on the front porch of the pastor's house, talking loudly, eating, laughing. When I entered, they inundated me with a chorus of hello's and welcome's. Inside the kitchen, aluminum trays, deep and sturdy--the kind you see at catering functions--lined the countertop. Man, this was a good old fashioned feed ... pies, cakes, lasagna, spaghetti, vegetable mixes, salads, fried chicken, assorted sodas bobbing around in the cooler with half-melted ice, meatballs, casseroles ... mmm. Even the inside of the house was alive with 'joie di vivre', crowded by feasting church members parked wherever they could, on sofas, the arms of sofas, leaning against the wall. Everyone was happy, stuffing their faces before the inevitable food coma that begs for sleep. Overall, the party was well-attended by assorted rednecks, suburban dreamers, and people who've been wearing sideburns since before they were cool.

At the party, I called Patricia, a 37-year old mother of two from North Carolina who I met delivering pizza's one night. Her kids, two pre-teens, took to me. Judging from their use of words, they both seemed very bright. I joked with them. The kids enjoyed it, Patricia laughed. She seemed slightly drunk, swaying while staring at me with a knockout smile. Her face reminds me of Rachel Ventura, a teenage girl from New Port Richey, Florida, that I dated a long time ago.

Earlier, I invited them to "A Series of Unfortunate Events", a new movie with Jim Carey. It looks like a modern-day fairy tale. In this call, I left a message to confirm directions. After helping pastor and his wife clean up following the party, I said my thank-you's, then left for the movie theatre in Lake Worth.

The Lake Worth Drive-In is a beautifully run-down drive-in on the south side of Lake Worth Road, about a mile west of Congress. They have two movie screens playing two different movies. If you get tired of the one you're watching, you tune your radio frequency to the other station, switch positions in your car or better yet re-park your car, and watch the other one. A concession building, serving cheap, buttery popcorn, hotdogs, and cold sodas, sits in the middle of the parking lot. Inside, this place has some real history--scratched and signed benches and tables, and a wall of old arcade games on one side. I really dig this place. It would be great for a future scene for the screenplay that I'm writing.

The trailers were starting when I saw Patricia's car navigating through the sea of autos around me. Stepping outside, I waved her over. She parked her car beside mine, cleared off some room for me in the front seat. Her kids sat in the back. She's pretty down to earth. Toward the beginning

of the movie, she pulls out a tray of chinese noodles and starts eating.

"You hungry?" She offered.

"I'm good, thanks though," I smiled.

It was fun. Kind of. She smokes. Stepped outside of the car to do it. Returned inside wreaking of nicotine. Her kids are brilliant, readers, telling me stuff during the movie that I don't know. I felt my IQ shrinking in their presence. Yeah, I guess you could call it a date, for a 35-year old living in his car in Florida. NYC or up north is where I'll meet my next gal pal. The girls are friendlier there, and they're more artistic. All this to say, the reason I'll eventually need to find an apartment is to find a stable place to design websites. At the Christmas party, Rick, a husband/father who plays drums and sometimes sings, told me he's getting website jobs that he's not interested in doing.

"I charge \$250 for the first page and \$200 a page after that," he revealed, eyebrow floating above his head in a cartoonish revelation. \$200 for less than a days work, I'm thinking. Wow. I've gotta dump this Papa John's job, or work it part-time and return to web work. :-)

Man, I'm really happy with the CD, especially the song "World of Tears" which I mixed without vocals. The song has vocals but the microphone makes a clicking sound so the vocals need to be re-recorded. Instrumentally though, the song reminds me of The Smiths, "A Light that never goes out", and The Chamelions, "Tears". Both are beautiful melodies. Music is all around me. My CD player is a portable one that has a tape player attachment. Music is a big part of my life. Even without an external source, I still hear music in my head, an ever present soundtrack to the panorama that unfolds before me.

Last night, I slept at 43rd Street. It was about 2am when I steered the car into the abandoned acreage on the east side of Flagler, between 42nd and 43rd Street. Surrounding the yard is a six-foot fence. Someone tore down the gate at the entrance. One of the gates is lying on the grass, appearing to have been run over a number of times. The other gate is still hinged, but pushed so far back that an army of weeds and small plants have grown up between fencing, standing like sentries, guarding their territory in a silent defiance as if saying "nature, in the end, wins out". Of course it does because unlike manmade construction efforts like walls or fences, weeds are living. That's why you'll see solitary shards of grass finding their way through a thick layer of blacktop. Nothing can prevent nature from taking its course, and finding its source of nourishment, the sun. Similarly, we should let nothing prevent us from reaching our dreams.

I've been writing this at Makeb's Deli, an early-morning-opening breakfast & sandwich shop on the southeast corner of Olive and Fern, in downtown West Palm Beach. This place is a real delight, adorned with couches, magazines, newspapers including The New York Times, a corner kids play-area, and very clean bathrooms with two private toilets, something that's rare for men's bathrooms in downtown West Palm Beach.

It's 9:30 am, Sunday, and the non-church-going yuppies are beginning to stream inside, lining up at the counter, ordering bagels, tap water. I'm gonna go check on this apartment soon, the one that Alex mentioned. If I don't get it, that'll be great. I'll save more money for a five-day trip to Carrollton, Texas to visit and volunteer at Gospel for Asia. I'll test the waters, see if God wants me there. If I don't end up there, I'd like to revisit Brooklyn, or upstate New York, the Finger Lakes area, Lake Placid, and Buffalo. While in the northeast, I'd also like to visit Maine. Aimee Burg, my former roommate in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, told me there's cheap living spaces, warehouses, in Maine.

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It's afternoon, Sunday. I'm delivering pizzas and happened to be near, just east, of the apartment that Alex told me about. So I drive on over to Ardmore, find the green house, park, walk to the door, which is open.

"Hello? Anyone home?" My query echoes unanswered. As I'm returning to my car, I spot a chubby kid and his chubby mom idling in the living room. Returning to the door, I greet them and ask about the apartment. The kid tells me his gonna ask his dad out back, and disappears. Moments later, he returns. "It's been rented," he says. He's lying.

"Alright. Thanks anyway."

"You're welcome."

"Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas."

So, it's six days before Christmas, 2004, and no apartment. That's okay because I have an apartment strangely resembling my car. It's multi-tasking for the 21st century. It's city living on four-wheels, on a budget, baby. Everything's okay. Yes, valet. Can you please park my car, I mean my house, I mean ... okay, my housecar, my HUV, House Utility Vehicle. Great. Terrific. Super. Sweet.

evening ... I'm tired of trying to move forward in life, saving money, finishing projects. What's the point when you have no one to share the adventure with? My life is both beautiful and somewhat tragic. Beautiful in that I've freed myself from the treadmill of consumerism enough to make choices based on long-term effect. Somewhat tragic in that I remain alone most of the time while experiencing the triumphs and valleys as they come my way. Even the people around me speak in a language that either bores me or reduces me to a paper doll. This is the same feeling I succumb to when walking through Home Depot, a blended result of nausea, sadness, and despair. For that reason alone, I must live outside, sleep in my car or in that tent on 43rd and

Flagler or in the church lying on the pew beneath an old quilt I borrowed from Andy Cotter, or on an available couch in downtown West Palm Beach. I have to live outside because I have to feel ... something. Living indoors all the time, breathing in piped air and standing beneath the steady hum of vibrating fluorescent light tubes leaves me numb. Onlookers might view my lifestyle as a form of narcissistic self-punishment, an economic self-flagellation. Perhaps they'll nod their heads in pity, and dismiss this merry-go-round of broken-down cars, dead-end jobs, and go-nowhere relationships. Maybe they're right. I suffer for those choices, no doubt. Perhaps I will look for an apartment and go for that web work job that Rick told me about. Perhaps.

3:38pm, Monday, 12/20/04

In terms of productivity, today was fantastic. Perhaps it was the rest I got last night that enabled me to accomplish these tasks. Yesterday, I left work around 10pm - 10:30pm and drove over to Lynelle's at 815 Upland, #7, where I lived four years ago. I had to use her computer. Lynelle seemed happy and explained that she's on pills, prescription meds for depression. "You can't stay too long," she cautioned. "I'm gonna take some now and they make me sleepy."

"Okaaay."

For ninety minutes, I used the internet, checked my e-mail, erased a large amount of spam, around 7,500 e-mails. After joining an online, affiliate program for \$25-bucks, then following their directions to sign up for free newsgroups, my e-mail box was inundated with hundreds of e-mails a day. Apparently every other affiliate seller has the same idea. Uggg.

After using the computer, saying goodbye to Lynelle, I drove to the church, circling the parking lot twice before parking and cutting the engine. The lights were on at Sister Vera's house next door to the church, and I didn't want her to see my car and get suspicious. Inside the car, doors closed, I shuffled around for the toothbrush, dental floss, and quilted handmade blanket that I got from Lynelle. I think the blanket, originally, is Andy Cotter's. Then, slowly, quietly, gently, I exited the car, locked it, and walked quietly to the church. After shutting off the alarm in the hallway, I went into the main sanctuary, and spread the quilt onto a pew, folding myself into it like a burrito and falling asleep quickly. I slept soundly and well.

When I woke, I saw the light bleeding through the stained glass and shuddered. Where am I? Have I been kidnapped? I felt like I was in Mexico or something. Oh, I remembered, I'm at the church. What time is it? It's after 8? When does the cleaning crew get here? What's that noise? Not wanting to be discovered as a squatter, I stood, eyed my bed, and broke camp. Still in a fog but physically refreshed, I tossed everything into the back seat and sped off to my sister Kim's house. It was about two years ago that Kim purchased her house on Winter Street, in a quaint neighborhood south of Forest Hill, east of I-95. At Kim's, I spent two hours sorting through my gear, and cleaning out her shed.

12:44pm Tuesday, 12/21/04

I'm listening to 90.7 FM, this crazy big band station, driving around feeling like a beatnik trapped in my own caricature-laden story of my life. It's cool outside, maybe mid-60's, slightly overcast, breezy. I'm cruising around town in my blue Suzuki Swift with wraparound windows. Imagine a fishbowl on wheels and you have a picture of my car, jetting from house to condo to a million-dollar mansion to the projects--all levels of the economic scale--connected by strips of asphalt and cheese wheels. A few days ago, with the help of Clint, a carpenter friend of John Drummer, a cabinet maker/carpenter/photographer/designer, I modified the interior of my car. Using channel locks, I removed the passenger and back seats. In their place, I installed a piece of 3/4" plywood, that Clint cut from a cardboard template that I sketched after taking measurements of the interior. To use the space below the plywood decking, I used a jigsaw and cut three removable hatches, one near the back, one near the middle, and one near the front to serve as storage for my clothes and sleeping gear. Hey, just because I'm living in my car doesn't mean I want to look like I am.

Along the back windows of my car, I taped my own political slogans, placing them on the inside facing out. The last time I delivered a pizza at PBA, I returned to find my Kerry stickers stolen. Apparently, some Bush fans didn't like them. For the next two weeks, angry that my ability to voice my opinion had been maligned, I peeled off numerous George Bush stickers from expensive SUV's, and destroyed about twenty pro-Bush lawn signs. They started it. That's why I have these handmade stickers on the inside of my window, so they can't be stolen.

Unbelievable. Three deliveries so far, only two people tipped me. The tipper gave me a buck-and-a-half. The second delivery, to 4333 Windsor, a well-kept housing project near 45th Street that backs up to the RR tracks, I'm greeted by a cigar-stinkin black man with a huge gut hanging from his T-shirt, falling over his belt. He stands about a foot away from me, and huffs as he breathes. After he gives me a twenty, I count out eight one-dollar-bills and turn to leave.

"Wait a second," he grunts in a low baritone. "You owe me 'nother dollar."

"I owe you 93-cents. You don't wanna leave me a tip?" I ask flatly, clearly irritated by this heart-attack-waiting-to-happen ingrate.

"I need my change." He huffs, staring at me with a look in his eyes like he's asking for a fight.

"All right," I sigh. "Give me 7-cents and I'll give you a dollar."

"Give me a dollar," he snorts.

"Get the 7-cents first." I demand politely.

He disappears inside. I hear him waddle upstairs, shuffle around, descend the steps as they creak in protest, then reappear with seven cents. He dumps the pennies into my outstretched palm. He takes the dollar. I leave.

The last delivery was to One Lake Trail Circle, a five-to-seven bedroom house in Palm Beach. The pizza was free for some reason or another. Maybe he complained about the last one. I don't know. An elderly gentleman who looks like a shorter, paler version of Bob Barker, the host for "The Price is Right" game show, opens the door. I smile and say, "Here you are," as I give him the pizza. Smiling he says, "This is the place", takes the pizza, and closes the door. No tip from this guy. And he lives in a house that's probably worth \$650,000. Perhaps it's his friend's house. Whatever the case, he should've tipped. If you can't afford to tip the pizza person, then you shouldn't be ordering a pizza.

Last night though, an incident happened that really bothered me. I had a pizza delivery to the 800 block of 43rd Street. This area used to be ghetto, but over the years has been improved. For the most part, the houses in the area have been painted, the yards spruced up, landscaped, and fenced. At this house, a dark black guy opens the door. He wore an oversized white T-shirt, long denim shorts, and high tops--pretty much the uniform for black kids, hip-hoppers, and wiggers (whites that dress/act like blacks). After he paid for the pizza and didn't tip, he asked if I had change for a twenty. Normally, customers ask you to break a bigger bill so they can give you a few dollars. I took his twenty-spot, pocketed it, and counted out twenty bucks of my own to give to him. "Aww-ight." He says, closing the door. Usually, as I mentioned, we get tipped, but not this guy. Maybe I was too white for him. Whatever. Jerk.

That's the major drawback with this job--the uneven pay that you receive in tips, determined by the area, the customer, their mood, and a host of other factors that would be more hypothesis than anything else. What's frustrating is the fact that customers usually don't understand why their pizza order takes so long to arrive. There's a number of reasons for this, especially when delivering pizzas from the downtown Papa John's.

To begin with, Flagler, the main route for making deliveries north and south, is often closed down during major festivals like Sunfest. During events, more people are driving in the area, and the traffic is detoured. Thus there is more congestion at a slower pace. Also, downtown West Palm Beach, in its slow metamorphosis to becoming North Beach (the north equivalent of South Beach) is littered with construction areas, many which impede the flow of traffic by converting double lanes into single lanes, or stopping cars altogether for bulldozers to pass. Once runny, like grade A maple syrup, the auto flow is now more like molasses. Another reason for late deliveries is the language barrier. Two of our managers (and we only have three altogether) are bilingual. Their Spanish is fluent. Their English is conversational, at best. Their English speaking needs work. This creates further confusion. Sometimes, they get the addresses wrong. Sure, we can call them, but that's another delay. Sometimes, the phone number is wrong. Then, it's a matter of honking the horn or getting out of the car, determining where the house is, and yelling into the wind "I have your pizza! Did you order a pizza?!"

The beauty and the terror that lies behind the corner of every unexplored avenue ...

The day is getting better, the clouds are parting and the sun is coming out.

David Knight called and needed for me to deliver a package.

"I'll give you ten bucks." He said.

The package needed to be delivered to Melissa Galouche, an acquaintance of mine whose name I couldn't seem to remember so I called her Jackson, referring to that girl on "Charlie's Angels". Recently, Melissa got married to Brian, a TV production assistant who sings for the band Doorway 27. I was working when he called. I drove over to David's. We chat. He hands me ten bucks. He looked good, healthy, happy, as if he just woke up, which he probably did as he's a late night person. So, with package roasting in the sun on the stained passenger seat of my car, I drive to Flagler, south to Banyan, then west to Dixie, south to Clematis, and west on Clematis, where I park across a new wine shop advertising "\$3 meat pies". Yeah, good luck on that venture. Where do they think they are? England or something? This is Florida. The way to make money is sell burritos or empanadas to construction workers during the day, and college students and clubgoers at night. Meat pies. Hmmm Yeah. Great.

The Downtown Development Authority, where Melissa works, is above Ultima Gym, on the southwest corner of Clematis and Dixie. After getting buzzed in (another feature of the gentrification of downtown West Palm Beach), I run up the retro-aluminum staircase to the second floor, which yawned into an open, high-ceiling'ed area, loft spaces for different businesses.

Melissa greeted me, all smiles, surprised at the large gift, telling me that Brian and her bought a large house. She invited me to a free show at Palm Beach Dramaworks studio theatre, an intimate theatre in downtown West Palm Beach known for its provocative performances like Marsha Norman's "Night Mother". She was on the phone, but handed me a theatre card and a business card. "Call me," she whispered, holding the phone away. "Tell David I said thanks. It's good to see you."

My next pizza delivery was to Michael Morris at 224 Datura, room 301. He's was nice, a lawyer or something I think. At two-dollars he's not the biggest tipper, but he's consistent. I grabbed three mini Mr. Goodbars on the way out. Someone had to rescue them from the conformity of the candy dish.

It's night-time. I'm on Ridgeview Avenue, on the island of Palm Beach. My last pizza delivery to Ridgeview Avenue was free. The lady tips me a buck-and-change. On a pizza that doesn't cost her a penny. On the island of Palm Beach. Wow. Praise The LORD. Anyway, Cem called earlier. He used to work at Papa John's. He told me about an opening at his job, City Pizza, a

restaurant in City Place that delivers italian food.

"They only deliver to good areas," he explained. "You'll really be glad you came." He told me to show up, dressed nice. "The tips are really good," he said.

That job sounds promising. God was listening to my frustration spilled from ink a few paragraphs before this one. Thank YOU, GOD! :-)

12/22/04 7:45 am

I worked from 10am 'til close, 1am, and made only \$43-dollars. In actuality, I probably made only \$15 in tips and about \$12 in mileage (80-cents per delivery). Where the difference arrived is anyones guess. I mentioned this to Zelly, the stand-in manager from Wellington and she said: "Keep it." Four customers stiffed me, meaning they didn't tip me. Three were black, typical as they usually don't tip anyway. One was an older fellow who lived in Palm Beach whose pizza was totally free. People shouldn't order pizzas if they don't plan to tip.

I've been sleeping at the church, The River Church of God. After work last night, I circled the building twice, looking for signs of life--lights, parked cars, noise--at Vera's house which sits next door to the church. Attached to the church is a nursery that Alex, a church-goer is using for a temporary living space. Fortunately, it's quiet. No lights. No noise. No people around. Satisfied that they're both asleep--it is nearly 2am on a Tuesday night--I park my car beside the main building, retrieve Andy Cotter's soft, handmade quilt blanket that I have rolled up like a sleeping bag, my shave kit, zip my phone charger in my left pocket, and take another look around to see if the area is clear. It is. Then, I exit the car. Once outside, in public view, I place my belongings on the car roof, lock the door, then push the door closed, using my leg to nudge it gently. I don't want to slam it and wake anybody up, especially Vera and Alex who happen to be sleeping nearby. Like an Indian or an escaped slave making an attempt to recharge by finding a safe place to sleep, I make a quick dash to the hallway door, inserting the key, opening the door, and pulling it closed in one quick motion.

Wait a second. I am an Indian. My tepee has wheels. I'm camping east of I-95. The year is 2004. No, I'm more of an escaped slave, running from the plantation of rent, electric bills and cable television, working the underground railway of couches and keys to unoccupied buildings as I make my way toward freedom. Then again, there's a fine line, a tightrope that must be balanced, between freedom and irresponsibility, between autonomy and mooching.

Maybe I am mooching. I guess it depends on how you look at my situation. Then again, why not? Look around. All these available buildings that remain unused throughout the week, all these available swimming pools absent of swimmers that are begging for divers, all these available lots waiting to be camped, all this free food at church events, entire pizzas--still warm--in the garbage at work (I'll save you ... incoming!), dumpsters. Am I mooch, or am I using my head to

live differently, and exit this rat race? The problem with the rat race is that if you win, you're still a rat. There may be unlimited supplies of cheese to fight over, but at the end of the day, there's only so much that you can eat. So, why bother fighting the crowd, when you can be happy with less, and live off the crumbs of others. If you're willing to be a bottom feeder, if you're willing to take risks, you'll find that there's plenty to go around.

By now, the church alarm is beeping, steady staccato bursts of piercing, high-frequency squeaks. In a flash, I switch on the hallway lights and tap 1-6-1-4, then hit the "off" button to turn off the security system. Next, I shut off the hallway lights, walk to, and through, the copy room and into the main sanctuary, where I unroll the quilt onto a church pew and use my Adidas hooded sweatshirt, the one I got for \$5 bucks at World Thrift, as a pillow. Tired at this point, I lay down, roll up like a bug in a rug, and fall asleep without fear. Usually, though, there's an avalanche of thoughts and ideas that keep me awake.

I think about the church pew that I'm sleeping on. It sits near the altar, with rows of other pews behind it, in a single file line like an army awaiting orders. There must've been a thousand prayers made on this pew over the years. Maybe 2000 prayers were released from churchgoers sitting, or kneeling, right here where I sleep. I take comfort in that thought. This church bench has seen a lot of action, witnessed a lot of miracles, endured the company of both saints and sinners I'm sure. Throughout its residency here, this pew has absorbed the echoes of confession, the harmony of choirs, the rebuke of prophets. And, like any useful piece of furniture, this melody of fabric and wood has eavesdropped on intimate conversations among old friends. Knowing this, even with my status as intentional couch surfer taking advantage of a situation (as I copied the church key to use the facilities for music-recording purposes in my free time), I feel comforted and fall asleep.

This morning, though, is a different story, a new chapter in my bohemian free-loading adventures. As usual, I wake up with a question. Where am I? Who replaced my car windows with stained glass ones? Why am I sleeping on a church bench? Am I in the midst of the tribulation, and Christians, for safety purposes, hide in churches? These questions hound me in a barrage. A moment later, the rain of reason descends in a downpour, dissipating my fog of forgetfulness. As I come I roll up my quilt and my pillow, give the sanctuary a once-over to make sure I haven't left a footprint (even though I'm using the place like a hotel) and walk into the copy room. There, I unplug the cell phone charger, then gather my belongings which are sitting on a nearby table. After a fast bathroom deposit, I grab my gear and scissor down the hallway, turn on the alarm by pressing # - 2 - "on", and exit the building, locking the door behind me.

This is my routine, early morning at 1am or 2am, when I arrive from work, 'til 7am or 8am the next morning. At first, living like this was exciting, but that's worn off. Still, I make a mad dash to the car in the morning. I wouldn't want to run into the volunteer cleaning crew, composed of faithful churchgoers. That would be embarrassing.

In a way, my pattern has become a bit of a routine, albeit a risky one. Am I taking advantage of

the church? Yes. At the same time, however, I have nowhere else to sleep, sans my car or that abandoned lot on Flagler. This is my life. This is my network of living spaces. These are my essentials--my gear bag, my journals, my laptop--stowed in my car. The keyboard and additional clothes are at three different locations. I am a lone pirate piggybacking the kindness of others. For now, I pitch my tent wherever I park, living a life of freedom and faith.

3:35 am 12/24/04

I'm surrounded by a sea of S.U.V.'s, many bearing Bush/Cheney bumperstickers, perhaps to justify that their vehicle gets 12 miles to the gallon. How could so many people have voted for this monster in a suit? Just because he says he's a Christian doesn't mean he's a Christian. In voting for Bush, Christians have thrown their judgement and any sense of reasoning skills out the window. George Bush gives a bad name to Christianity. At best, he's a fake Christian. Judging from his behaviour, he's not a Christian.

Let's see. He started an illegal war, one that violated international laws, based on a false premise, a lie that he continued to echo preceding the war to drum up support. The lie? Weapons of Mass Destruction. Where are the WMD's? There are none, and soldiers continue to die. Bush has allowed money to be his god, sending U.S. servicemen and servicewoman to die for oil. In Iraq and the surrounding areas, people are dying. Every week, the death toll rises. Even worse, soldiers are beginning to get sick from being in the vicinity of weapons of depleted uranium. I think it's called D.U. sickness. Bush doesn't care. His fans don't seem to care, either. It's a sad indictment of the stupidity to which the American public has plummeted.

Bush stole the election in 2004 with pirated voting machines and long lines in heavily Democratic areas, while heavy Republican areas had so many voting machines that the lines didn't extend for hours.

Cheney, according to massive evidence in a book called Crossing the Rubicon, engineered 9-11. Bush knew about 9-11 as well. That's why, in the early morning hours of that tragic day, when he's told of the event, he sits there for a number of minutes without doing anything? Why'd he sit there? Because he thought it was a drill. He forgot that, this time, it has actually been carried out. Carried out by whom? By Israel's secret police, Mossad, and top officials in our government. For what purpose? To give the United States an excuse to invade Iraq, or liberate Iraq, and an excuse to pass the Patriot Act, which eviscerates the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. By invading Iraq, we could secure oil, stabilize the middle east by establishing American bases, and protect Israeli interests. Plans were to run the oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea, through Iraq and Afghanistan, to the Persian Gulf, where we can transport it. The country that controls the oil controls the world. And Bush is all about control. Bush is a liar and a murderer. So is Cheney. Yet Christians vote for him because they think he's moral. Because they think he's pro-life. Yeah, Bush is selective pro-life. Bush is pro-life, unless you're an American soldier, Iraqi soldier, or Iraqi civilian. It's a sad indictment of America's intelligence level to see so many

people vote for him.

Christians ought to be faithful to God and use their brains at the same time. Instead, the majority slip into a coma when it comes to politics, hating Kerry because the gays are voting for him, but voting for a guy who's sending soldiers to die for a lie. The irony is that Bush used his privilege to escape Vietnam. And now he's sending soldiers to die for his lies. He's not even apologetic. He's arrogant.

It's so depressing to see so many Christians duped by this clown. It's also depressing to see them driving around in their giant, gas-hogging SUV's, buying all their stuff at Wal-Mart which uses slave labor in China. It's like they want the good part of Christianity without having to live differently. They want the ticket to Heaven, but they don't want to change their lifestyle. Sometimes I wonder. Are these Christians really Christians? Or, are they convenient store Christians? As long as it's convenient, they'll be a Christian. Whatever happened to living differently? Living for the next world? Setting aside the pleasures of this moment, the extravagance of this world--a mere twinkling of an eye--for the wonders of the next one? Whatever happened to sacrificing the comfortability of this world for the glory of Heaven?

Consumption is the silent killer. Ignorance is what keeps people blind. The combination of these two leads to destruction.

Sometimes I just want to escape this place. Sometimes I just want to leave Florida. Maybe my next land purchase will be 40-acres in Canada, about 45-minutes from town. I'll work in town and set up a small campsite or shed in the woods. There, I'll write, compose music, maybe meet someone in town, fall in love, marry, and raise a family. Maybe Canada's far enough away from the materialistic sheeple that inhabit the United States.

It's afternoon, December, and I'm driving around like a maniac delivering italian food for City Pizza, chasing paper nickels.

12/23/04

1:46 am. I just arrived from a number of errands. After leaving work at around 1am, I drove to St. Mary's hospital to deliver a thin crust pizza, a freebie I made after we closed, to a cop who's doing security guard duty in the emergency room. Earlier, I was there on another delivery and he asked me if I had another pizza. I told him I'd try to bring him one later.

"Wow," he beamed. "A man of his word. I have a lot of respect for that. Here you go. This is for you." He hands me a ten-spot.

"Wow. Thanks a lot," I gush.

Then I head to Flagler Avenue, to my tent that I pitched on the abandoned lot on the intercoastal. Arriving there, I steer the car onto the driveway, a path recognized by gravel, sand, and overgrown weeds. I cut the engine. With my mag flashlight in hand and cell phone hanging off my shorts, I step outside into the cool, salty air and hike east. Residential areas sit on both sides of this lot. To my north is a strip of two-story apartments. To my south are one-story bungalows connected by a strip of asphalt. The twigs and dry leaves crunch loudly as I make my trek east, sounding like the sound of someone munching potato chips. When I round the corner of the bushes and overgrowth, which served to camouflage my waterfront home from the casual glance, I see flattened grass and an empty spot where the tent was pitched. It's gone. Someone actually took the tent. Hoping it would be nearby in a pile, I scoured the area. Nothing. The tent's gone. Is this the first in a sequence of events? Is my house of cards collapsing into a pile of pragmatic routines. That tent was great, lightweight, easy-to-setup, costing only \$30.00, from Tex-Sports, came with it's own carrying case, too. Where is it?

I'm at the church now. I'm exhausted. Time to sleep.

2:04 am 12/24/04

It's early morning and Patricia, the shift manager at Papa John's, just left, driving her Nissan Xterra west to Dixie, then heading south out of view.

On one of my last deliveries to 1700 North Congress, apartment 401, I met Rachel, a curvy 19-year-old black girl who told me to call her, mouthing the words silently, her hand beside her head as if she has a phone. Her friends and number of family members were there. It was her birthday.

"I'll call you," I blurted out in return. I don't have her number, though, I thought as I left. It's on the sticker on the pizza box.

"Oooo-ooo. Foxy's got a boyfriend. Foxy's got a boyfriend." Her siblings chanted, laughing merrily.

One of the benefits of delivering pizzas is the opportunity to meet girls. And you do meet girls--sober, drunk, single, dating but flirtacious--of all ages. The ones who usually respond to me, though, at least in a potential girlfriend kind of way, are usually black girls. Maybe they see something in me that white girls overlook. I don't know.

I'll call Rachel and we'll go see a movie. A friendship would be cool. As she's 19, how could I expect anything more. Every week, while delivering pizzas, I get one or more phone numbers from girls. Most of them never return my calls. They're probably sponsored (in a relationship), were drunk at the time, or changed their mind. Still, I'm beginning to realize that everything boils down to a numbers game, even dating. The more girls you know, the better chances you have of

actually going on a date. Okay, I'm a late bloomer. I'm 35. So sue me. You can have all my assets, a moon car and a fridge full of week-old pizzas. Even with all its complications, life still has simple laws that, if followed, lend the pilgrim an advantage in passing through this place.

3:35 am 12/24/04

I found a place to bathe--the swimming pool at Hotel Biba. Hilarious. Who know being homeless could be such an adventure. Does this qualify me for "Survivor"? Sure, it was risky. But I was getting bitten by itchy bugs when I attempted sleep at one of my usual spots--the parking lot of Robert St. Croix's art studio. (If you ever need to sleep in your car, there's a nice spot beneath the shadow of a tree that eclipses the streetlight the occasional car passing car.) Fortunately, the wooden gate to the pool area was left unlocked. Being a sweaty mess of living bacteria and funk on two legs, I had no other choice.

The hotel, which sits on the southwest corner of Olive and Belvedere, was the former location for a rundown hotel frequented by hookers, drug addicts and travellers looking for a cheap place to stay. Elizabeth McNelly, an acquaintance of mine that used to shoot heroin, remembered a party there.

"It lasted three days," she laughed at the memory. "We were high the entire time." (Elizabeth is mentioned in "bicycle days" and "Pictures from the Leftover Generation".)

A few years ago, however, the old hotel was completely gutted and refurbished in a hip, mod style that combines the best of art-deco with a 50's-60's era minimalism. A night at Hotel Biba will leave you \$150 poorer. Drinks at the hotel bar start at \$6-bucks. But taking a bath in their swimming pool, at night, is free.

Cost of staying at Hotel Biba for one night: \$150 dollars

Cost of buying a glass of wine at their bar: \$8

Cost of swimming in their pool after a night delivering pizzas to the far ends of the earth: Free

There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's debit cards.

My Papa John's shirt, unwashed for the last several days, and filthy from old pizza dough, splattered pizza sauce, and spilled soda, has become more of a calendar than an item of clothing. Each stain signifies a particular day. The newer stains are still damp. Call it radio-cotton dating, determining the age of a shirt by its condition. By now, no doubt, my shirt--a rugged, cotton collar shirt--is home to a colony of bacteria, squatters that fill the cracks until the next eviction, the eviction being, in this case, the washing machine. For them, a flood. For me, a fresh calendar.

Even though the pool was cold (it is December, even if it is Florida) I slipped into the water slowly, submersing myself completely, then emerging quickly and climbing out onto the patio.

Without even bothering to dry myself off, I returned to the car dripping wet, like an escaped aquarium creature at the zoo. Praise God! I feel so refreshed. H2O. Amazing.

Living in my car has forced me to be resourceful in ways having an apartment never did. Okay, so I'm borrowing a pool here, a church pew there, a couch, cable, free internet at the Clematis library or PBA library every now and then. So what! Chronicles of a 35-year old bottom feeder. It's great to be alive.

7:12 am 12/24/04

I'm at work and while dressing a pizza I notice little streams of ants marching between the lexans (storage containers that hold pizza toppings). Maybe hundreds of those little sugar ants stroll toward the backside of the pizza make-line. I watch them while continuing to top off pizzas. Of course I don't kill them. They've got families. And I've got codependency issues. Like me, they're just looking for some food is all. Okay, okay. My codependence has crossed the species barrier. One giant stepdown for Kris, one giant excuse for Kris Kemp.

Even though it's somewhat fun roughing it here in West Palm Beach, I almost feel like a ghost, as if I'm passing through, unnoticed by the influx of new arrivals. There's a flood of foreigners descending into this area, lots of Spanish speaking people that can barely speak English. Many are illegal immigrants. There's also large numbers of black people that are converting the nicer parts of town into ghettos. Everywhere I drive, I hear either Mexican mariachi music (sounding like some Latino band playing drums on speed) or gangsta rap (inaudible grunts peppered with expletive, salted with lyrics about violence and sex, over a low frequency drum machine throb). As this place becomes a hodgepodge of ethnicities, the violent crime rate soars. Over the last two months, 13 people have been shot in the area of the Palm Beach Mall parking lot. According to local law enforcement, the slayings are gang related. Last week, August (Auggie), hard-working Hatian coworker was robbed at gunpoint by three blacks and one mexican. Max, another driver, was nearly robbed last night in a botched robbery attempt, by a gang of black kids in a black, upper-middle class suburb, off Sixth Street, west of Australian.

In West Palm Beach, the middle class seems to be evaporating. The rich continue growing circling the plates while the poor cling to first base. I see this on pizza deliveries. One moment, I'm at a half-million dollar cottage in Flamingo Park. The next moment, I'm looking for a house with no address numbers on it, with the front porch lights off, in a rundown section of town populated by blacks and Mexicans. Often, pizza customers are either rich or poor. The best tips come when the middle class orders, people like security guards, small business owners, hospital workers, or people who wait tables or bartend.

Driving around six-nights-a-week gives me a perspective on the development of downtown West Palm Beach. This area, judging from the construction of new condominiums (there are at least four, with two that are nearly completed) is becoming a smaller version of Miami. Housing costs

are rising substantially as well. Crime rates have soared. This place has all the crime without the coolness. This place has more crime, per capita, than New York City. New York, even Fort Greene, Brooklyn, where I lived recently, has a pulse, a kind of energy that's undeniable. Being there invigorates you. The energy changes you the moment you arrive. Living in New York is like being in a pressure cooker, pushing you to produce something. Being crowded into such an environment where everyone lives stacked on top of each other in tiny apartments, where there's throngs of people on the street, below the street, and living above the street creates a constant rhythm, an electricity that keeps you charged.

If you can collect those streams of light into the magnifying glass of your dreams, focusing them into a single dream, then you will be able to start fires, and leave the world converted, changed around you.

Tears fell to the ground like homesick earthworms.

The bus turned the corner. It began to rain.

Naomi shuddered.

TLPDDOE - excuses of him trashing a pizza. have him giving excuse while you show flashback of what really happened. him tossing it into the air. "it flew out the window". "left it on top of the car". "dogs ate it". "stolen out of car".

Jim Wheeler always tells tall tales (cuz he hates this world as it's mean, cruel, and far too routine), so his coworkers and manager don't believe him when he tells them he saw a UFO

9:30 am 12/24/04

What can I say? I'm excited, to feel, to touch, to create, to compose songs, to develop concepts and ideas, to write plays and screenplays, birth friendships, and scribble my journey down into a compendium of notebooks in one big confessional where I'll tell you everything, what it's like to be me, Kris Kemp, in entries from 1994 (bicycle days) to 2004 (gravity - the seduction of the equator). Others will come, encircle this campsite after seeing this smoke from a distance, unless they decide the fire was set to burn the existing trees, purify the soil, and make rooms for new ones. Others will come. In the meantime, I'm compelled, in one way or another, to connect with these settlers as they slowly roll forward in their convoy of covered wagons, venturing west, sleeping outside under a canopy of bajillion stars, sipping hot coffee and chewing on roasted salt pork, swapping stories around the campfire in the high desert of Nevada or Utah or Colorado or Arizona. I'm compelled to share my story, to leave something behind, even if it is anonymously. Perhaps that would be better as fame tends to corrupt the host. Somehow, someday, somewhere, someday. I want to be part of this generations lust and rage for life, assembling all

the forgotten ones into a big puzzle, tender and strong, as we move toward the dreams that God has laid out before us.

Somewhere is here.

Someday is now.

Someone is you.

It's about 11:30 am, same day. I visited The River Church of God and worked on a song that God is birthing in me. It's about a Christmas from the perspective of the persecuted church, specifically Christians imprisoned in a labor camp. Praise God! Glory to God! Thank YOU, GOD, for this song! May it glorify YOU!

10:30 pm 12/24/04

So after work, I drove to The River to work on that song--the Christmas song about the Persecuted Church. Carrie Snyder called. Her last name, Cutlip, changed when she married Matt Snyder, an award-winning poet and English major at Florida Atlantic University. Matt's really cool and bright. He's in their honors English program. Carrie told me of her plans regarding a possible move to Durham, North Carolina, if Matt attends Duke University. Carrie said that houses are cheap in the area. Beautiful, large ones for \$120,000. Here in Florida, you can't get a house for under \$250,000. And this is for a 3/1 that's kind of dumpy. I asked Carrie if she'd like to sing some tracks that I recorded. She agreed. I asked about Matt singing and she told me that he has a great voice, similar to the lead singer of "Third Day". Sounds promising

when the sparrow falls, you'll make it land  
you're holding out your hand  
i know You understand

when the stormy seas are all around  
i look to You, i'm found  
lifting me to higher ground

12/25/04

Merry Christmas! Received "Sarah Kelly" CD, a \$50-dollar check from Kev and Gina, a nice basket of UK treats from my Kim. I haven't opened Mom's gifts yet. At 4pm, I opened more gifts. At 4pm, I worked until about 11pm.

12/27/04 7:50 am

Writing this parked on the roadside on Georgia Avenue, between Southern and Forest Hill. Earlier, I plan to stash some of my heavier gear in Kim's shed, to reduce the weight on my car to limit gas consumption. I've gotta sit here for another half-hour anyway because Heather is still at Kim's. Heather Blecher is Kim's roommate, who doesn't leave the house until about 8:30am to go to work. At around 8:45, usually, I show up, enter, shower, nap, clean their kitchen, and raid their fridge taking small amounts of food that they won't notice. Concerned for my safety and comfort, Kim gave me a key to her front door, but I can't abuse the privilege when her roommates are there. Besides being a place to sleep and a means of transportation, my car serves as a waiting room while I connect the dots of available vacant spaces. It's okay, though.

Even if I do get an apartment and settle in, will I be selling out? I ask the question in all seriousness. Will in my introduction into the world as a paying tenant reduce the opportunities that are afforded to me living in my car, couch surfing, existing spontaneously, drifting around mute anthropologist. Having lived without an apartment for a month, will finding one only serve to distract me from reaching my dreams of being a writer, playwright, musician, screenwriter? Anyone can live in an apartment. How challenging is that? Where's the adventure in paying rent? Does that take faith--coming home to your place every night? Will that really inspire you? Or will it only slow you down? I want to live. I want to feel alive. And I've felt that way, bombarded by sensation, swallowed up by a sense of wonder, since I abandoned the creature comforts of certainty that's afforded by a safe lifestyle. Then again, maybe I'm tricking myself into believing I can only be inspired when I'm in a crisis situation, as my senses become more acute in order to survive.

Then again, perhaps I'm on to something. Perhaps I've discovered a kind of loophole in the code of normal (or expected) human behaviour. And here's the loophole: we all pay rent and/or buy houses, but we don't have to do this. Given the right motivation, we could all live in our cars. By paying attention, we can chart the constellation of couches available as a method of shelter. (If you wanna follow your dreams, make some sacrifices. Live cheaper. Save money by living like you're in a third-world country, on your friends couch. Living cheaper allows you the freedom to work less, so you can focus on your dreams. Of course, you'll be expected to live minimally and perhaps do some cleaning or cooking in exchange for rent, but that's inevitable. The minor inconveniences are small potholes on your path to success. Understand that, and keep moving forward.) Granted, this loophole looks extreme, even absurd to the average reader. But making the transition, although difficult, can be done. Sometimes, in order to change the world, you have to let the world change you first. First, see the need. Second, develop a way to help. Third, find your dream by challenging others to join you. Fourth, move forward by making things happen.)

Maybe I am onto something. Maybe the whole lot of us are so tied down by the weight of material anchors, by the gravity field of expectations, caught in the orbit of routine, that we have little strength left for ourselves. The absence of a motivating force leads to a kind of numbness that renders dreamers deaf to their own destiny.

Maybe I'm not such a nutcase after all. Anyway, from out of nuts grow great trees. Or is that seeds? Is a seed a nut?

There's so much inside of me ... ideas popping around. My heads like an automatic tennis ball machine, spitting ideas out like a machine gun, so fast that I'm running around the court trying my best to return them. Still, I swing, hitting some over the net, and keeping track of other ideas to add to the general conglomeration that occupy the corners of the fence behind me. The goal is to continue hitting the balls, drawing my arm back as far as possible and connecting with each ball half-way. Below me is the tennis court, my field of vision, my surroundings. That represents my limits. The fact that the park will soon close indicates the short interval of time in which I'm allowed to play, a mere moment.

I've noticed that, at night, everyone seems to be connected by the lowest common denominator known as television. The electronic babysitter. It's a pretty tragic testament to the depths that we have plummeted. Outside the United States, millions starve, fighting for crumbs, working their fingers into bloody nubs at labor camps (factories) in China so America, the great whore covered in makeup but rotting from the inside out, can remain plump and dull, laughing and amused, comatose to the world outside, entertained into a state of hypnosis.

1,300 U.S. soldiers killed  
17,000 U.S. soldiers injured  
17,000 Iraqi soldiers killed  
100,000 Iraqi civilians killed  
Weapons of Mass Destruction found: zero

Pro-life? Join the anti-war movement.

[Internationalanswer.com](http://Internationalanswer.com)

Support our troops. Bring them home now. From this illegal war.

BUSH: Pro-life, unless you're an American soldier, Iraqi soldier, or Iraqi civilian.

Pro-life means all life, including U.S. and Iraqi soldiers.

Hell is real. Repent and turn to Jesus before you die. Acts 16:31

"your kingdoms rise, your kingdoms fall  
and from your eyes, the scales will fall  
the scales will fall, and then you'll see  
on the other side is Me ... "  
from: "the seas will part"

song/poem: kris kemp c. 2002

12/28/04

Wow. 50,000 killed in a Tsunami in Asia, specifically Sri Lanka and other nearby islands. Wow. 50,000. That number is hard to fathom, as it's so huge. 50,000 is an enormous number. Dead. Each had his own story, a novel now unfinished, it's ink-stained pages washed away by the crushing salt-water wave, a mountain of seawater that opened up like the palm of a hand before closing in on the islanders like a clenched fist, suffocating them in a death grip. Horrible.

12/28/04

Some people get paid under the table. I live under the table. My whole life is under the table. I don't pay rent. I don't have an apartment. I have no health insurance. All this to say, I'm not like everyone else. There's options, sure. There's little room at the top, but there's lots of room at the bottom. And the food is free. Okay, okay, it's crumbs, but there's plenty of crumbs. And the clothes are used, but hey, they have stories to tell. So, relax. Dive in. Become a bottom feeder. Welcome home. What's your story?

12/28/04

Working at Papa John's, with all the aggravation that accompanies driving around narrow streets trying to find houses that have no house numbers or whose numbers are obscured by bushes, with their front lights off, calling the customers only to hear a busy signal, racing down stairwells in questionable areas hoping not to get jumped when you reach the bottom and turn the corner, is still an alright job. Why? You can eat, listen to music, write in your journal, talk on the phone, drive, even all at once while you deliver Italian UFO's, cardboard-entombed cheese wheels, to hungry patrons.

Another benefit to delivering pizzas is the curbside finds you discover, especially on garbage nights. So far, I have found two bicycles, and a self-help course on tape cassettes with a cover picture of a guy sporting feathered-hair, straight out of the eighties - yeah! Basically, the beauty of delivering pizzas is this: you're getting paid to dumpster dive all night. Dumpster diving, by the way, is the art of discovering treasures in the dumpster. If you find stuff on the side of the road in garbage, then you're shopping at the swale store, or curb crawling. Know this, if I get shot on a delivery, I just might die happy. Remember to publish my journals and copy and distribute the music that God has given me. Live for JESUS CHRIST. Everything else is just existence. Life is for living. Real living comes when you live for the next world, once you're sure that the next world is Heaven.

12/28/04 around 3:30pm

i think i'm gonna put a skylight in my car. cut out a circle in my roof. remove the aluminum top. replace with strong, clear plexiglass and seal with a rubber strip around the frame. pop it into place. check for leaks. make it detachable if possible, for quick escape in emergency situations. since i'm living in my car, maybe i should install a smoke detector. that's something my mom would do. she would put a fire extinguisher hanging from the side, below the window. hey, it's really not a bad idea. now, would that lower the cost of my car insurance? or would that be covered by my home insurance? maybe i could get a deductible from both. it's good to cover all your bases. oh, i forgot, i don't pay car insurance. henry, an interesting vegetarian friend, music fan, mechanic, plumber, electrician, copied the registration sticker off of his car, and made an extra copy for me. car insurance is such a sham. whenever you get in a wreck, the burden of proof is on you, even if you've been paying your insurance faithfully for the last fifteen years. it's such a joke. it's like flushing money down the toilet. it's not likely to return. anyway, i digress.

12/28/04 5pm

I'm on my way back to the store, writing this as I drive (even my car has become my confessional - talk about making the most of what you own! Ronco has nothing on this kid!), returning from 3901 Court, a rundown housing project that defines the word ghetto. This place is so ghetto, in fact, it deserves a picture beneath the word in the dictionary.

Sandpiper Park, the name for the apartment complex that's gone missing for who knows how long--only the unfaded paint that sits on the side of the building outlines the letters--consists of about forty units, in a cement, two-story string of apartments split by a potholed strip of blacktop. As usual when I arrived, a small flock of unwatched black children scurry between the cars, running in front of my car while lost in a joi' di vivre all their own, blissful in their youthful adventures.

This time, the customer had a one-hundred dollar bill. I had twenty in change. I took a deep breath and drove to a nearby "International Food Store", bought some overpriced bananas and gave the clerk the one-hundred spot. Fortunately, she had change. When I returned, the customers thanked me, tipping me three bucks for my effort. On the way down the stairs, I noticed four-to-five black teens milling around, one on a bike circling my car. That's not a sight that a pizza delivery driver wants to see. Idling teens are like a car at a red light. They only need the green light to spring into action. Cautiously, I walked through the gauntlet, said "hey, was up" in the lowest voice I could muster, and got into my car. Thank God.

I've got to quit delivering to the ghetto. The experience isn't worth the white hair.

12/28/04 15 minutes later ...

I don't know what's worse, that I'm homeless or the fact that I don't care.

Why don't black people tip? I just delivered a free pizza (they had a coupon) to two, twenty-something black girls at 816 Hampton. No tip. No thank you. No apologies. Two shiny cars sit in the driveway. One of them has new rims, the fancy kind you see on tricked-out cars. Frustrated, I turned and left without saying a word. These kids have the money. They just don't have the class.

And what is it with these clowns who drive \$30,000-dollar SUV's at two-miles-an-hour through the construction-heavy, potholed-scarred roads of downtown West Palm Beach? Hello! You have an SUV! Why don't you drive it like an SUV? You've seen the commercials, where they drive that car, the same model car that you purchased, into the mountains at a 30-degree angle. Why don't you, uh, pretend you're in the mountains, okay? Just roll down the window, turn on the a/c and pretend it's the cold, mountain air rushing in, and press that pedal more than a 1/4 inch, alright? C'mon, you can do it. Great. Then there's the owners of the Hummers who drive the same way--like 10 miles an hour over an intersection. What's up with that? When I expressed this driving behavior to my chum Ryan, he explained that those vehicles, expensive Hummers and namebrand SUV's, are an investment. Well, then, I argued, let them keep the car in a temperature-controlled warehouse. If they wanted an investment, why didn't they buy real estate, gold, something that rises in value. Some consumers mistake a status symbol with an investment. If they want to look rugged, they should've went to Cowboy Land and purchased a hat and some Levi's. Instead of buying an SUV, they should've developed some self-esteem, bought a beatup Honda, and put the rest of the money into real estate. A car is for driving. An SUV is for driving, for breaking in, for pushing to the limits as you test its strength and your own mettle. The irony is that I, in my battered Suzuki Swift two-door hatchback, fly over the broken-down streets, taking my foot off the gas at corners while the streets laugh below me. Even the ants laugh. I laugh with them, watching the street disappear beneath the snout of my Suzuki mooncar.

12/28/04

Gave a ride to a twenty-year old kidman from New Jersey who ran out of gas in Palm Beach.

"I deliver too," he said.

"Oh yeah. What? Pizza?"

"No. Pot. I got a lot of customers in Palm Beach."

Everything's a blur when you're delivering pizzas, racing around like a banshee, sprinting up stairs, balancing a pizza in one hand and pulling yourself along the handrail with the other.

You're moving fast so you feel like you're accomplishing something, when, in reality, all you're doing is wearing yourself out for a paper dollar and destroying your car at the same time. That's why I use the phrase "feel like you're accomplishing something". That's the difference between perception and reality. Reality is. Perception is a reduction of reality, distilled and filtered by our worldview, shaded by our prejudices. Perception is the tint on reality.

"beautiful to me"

from: dumpster diver ... the musical c.2004 - kris kemp

you're the light at the end of the tunnel  
a raised surface for the blind  
you're the quiet dog in the kennel  
the one who's left behind

you're the shadow in the picture  
that i can't identify  
but the future that i've seen  
holds its breath for you to try

chorus:

you're beautiful to me  
let the world be blind if they can't see  
you're beautiful to me  
your eyes, they hide mystery  
you're beautiful to me  
you've left the cage and you're flying free  
you're beautiful to me  
a future page of my history ...

Sometimes i hate this whole world for not caring, for ignoring the armies of the old, the senior citizen brigade, the gray-haired troops left forgotten in waiting rooms of America--nursing homes, Hospice--waiting for visits that rarely come, hugs that seldom happen, and the occasional listening ear of a friend or relative. i want to run through the multitudes locked into the hypnotic treadmill of consumerism as they roam the malls drinking their absurdly overpriced Starbuck's coffee. i want to shake them and tell them to wakeup, that there's a world that needs their attention, their time, their touch, that one day when they exit the freight train of passing years they may end up in a similar state--alone, isolated, feeling useless, watching the clock. God, help us to wake up to the need of the widow all alone, to the sick dying of isolation from the windowless hospital room, to the veteran pushing his legless body around in a wheelchair at the VA, to the orphaned kid still waiting for a foster parents. God, please forgive me for my selfishness and wanton self-indulgence.

12/29/04

Borrowing my sisters jigsaw, a Christmas gift from my mom, I cut out a section of plywood behind the driver's seat, so I can recline the seat all the way back. This will allow me to sleep in my seat, out of view of passing cars and possibly even non-observant pedestrians. The wooden deck extends toward the front of the car beneath the glove box, allowing for a second person to sleep there. So, two people can sleep in my car. Crazy? That depends on your view.

As long as I don't need a place to stay, then I don't have to be tied down to an apartment, a year lease, exorbitant move-in fees, and steep rents. This means I don't have to be tied down to a job that I don't like. That's where freedom lies, in being able to make choices. Of course, this freedom doesn't guarantee routine, nor is it safe. And safety and routine constitute major ingredients in the recipe that is normalcy.

God, help me. I'm besieged by ideas, hounded by dreams that come at me from all directions, each working their own scheduled shift, some arriving at dawn, others breaking in just before midnight. Like vociferous orphans with endless energy, they raise their voices, introducing themselves in a chorus of catcalls, some friendly, others downright annoying. There must be a thousand of them, an sea of carnival barkers., tender and naive, full of hope, wonder, and energy. All day and all night, they ply their trade. This is their carnival that's alive in my mind. This is my blessing and this is my burden. The blessing lies in the fact that God has inundated me with a myriad of ideas that run along the playground of my mind. The burden is that I must answer to them, postpone them, bargain with them, make compromises to quiet these children down. Ignoring them does not work. Eventually, each child will be attended to.

12/30/04 1:22 am early Thursday morning ...

Sitting in my carhouse at Papa John's on the northeast corner of Military and Northlake, waiting for Akeeba, an acquaintance who is training here as a manager, to get off work. Listening to "Coast to Coast AM with George Norry" on 1290 am, where the host delves into the paranormal--UFO's, chubacabras (goat suckers), psyops, black book projects, etc. Earlier this week, Akeeba, a Jamician girl who's training to be a manager, asked if I'd be able to give her a ride home from work. She's used to work as an insider at my store. She's training at the Northlake Papa John's. At first I was reluctant, because giving her a ride home meant driving from the Papa John's in downtown West Palm Beach to the Papa John's on Northlake, west of I-95. That's after a 7-9 hour shift. Then, waiting for her for another half-hour to hour to get off work, as she's being trained. "I'll pay you twelve-dollars each time," she offered. I agreed.

8:34 am 12/30/04

After dropping Akeeba off last night, I drove, bleary-eyed and completely fatigued, to The River Church, where I vegged out in the copy room, watching DVD's on my laptop. Around 5am, I returned to my car, backed into a corner area of the church parking lot, and fell asleep. Outside, the air was breezy and cool. I slept well.

I'm a stowaway, lurking in the shadows, living in the storage compartment of a cruise ship called the suburbs. The edge, though, is where you get the best view. Assessments are easier to make once you step outside yourself, away from your given surroundings. There's a sense of clarity once you jump from the diving board of shelter. Sure, it may be irresponsible, but the whole act does require faith.

Am I stored memory from the attic of your mind?  
Flickers from a campsite that we left behind?

Emotionally, I'm in a washing machine, tumbling around, becoming tangled in lost socks, rubbing shoulders with strangers who I want to save. Even delivering pizza, I feel sorry for most of the people I meet, imagining that their apartment complex is a prison, that the pizza I'm transporting is actually laced with chemicals that, when combined and ignited, becomes a bomb. What I can't actually prove, I'll make up in the parenthesis of my mind, believing my own story, no matter how fantastic, rendering myself unable to differentiate fiction from fact. Introspection has made his home with me, nearly putting me in a state of paralysis.

12/30/04

On a delivery to Palm Beach, I met a cute girl, Loren, who's down from New York City. I told her she was cute. "You're cute, too," she replied. "Do you have a boyfriend?" I asked. "No." She said. "Do you wanna go out?" I asked. "Sure," she said.

12/31/04 Friday, 10:40am

This morning I heard shuffling around in the copy room. Sensing the pastor or cleaning crew had arrived, I bolted awake, tiptoed to the door, and looked through it, as it was partially open. Alex was talking on the phone. Sweet! Like me, Alex is apartmentless too, so the pastor is letting him live in the nursery until he finds a place. Unlike me, Alex has permission to live in the nursery. The pastor doesn't even know I'm sleeping in the church sanctuary, but I think he suspects something.

"I start two jobs today," Alex boasts with a smile.

"What about your cleaning company?" I ask.

"It's slow. I start at Home Depot and KFC." He said.

"Cool." I lied.

"I gotta take a shower. There's one in the smaller sanctuary." He pointed in the direction of the building adjacent to the main one. A shower, I thought to myself. Nice. I'll have to try that out.

Planning to make use of the shower, I drove to Howard Park, on Lake Avenue, and took a fifteen minute nap. After waking, I returned to the church, used my church key to enter the smaller sanctuary, and took a shower. Thank YOU, GOD, for the shower. Great water pressure, nice and hot and cathartic. Living in my car, I really feel blessed with all these hookups that fly at me. God is GOOD. Feeling refreshed, I stopped by John Drummer's woodshop to borrow his shop-vac to clean out my car, and offer Clint and Jon 12-hour-old donuts, an assortment of Krispy Kreme's I purchased the night before. There still pretty fresh. I inhaled one this morning for breakfast. Hallelujah.

Turns out the 50,000 killed by tsunamis in Indonesia is too small a number. Current figures indicate the death rate at 120,000. Wow. That statistic is hard to get my mind around. Imagine the pain endured by the people who are missing relatives and friends. I need to pray for them.

4:02pm 12/31/04

It's New Year's Eve. I'm working, sitting in my carhouse facing the pool inside Ballet Villages, an apartment complex next to City Place, off of Fern Street. Why do I feel so guilty? God, I can't even fall asleep at night, beset by some kind of surge, some kind of tug that compells me to get moving, as if I cannot sit idle for a moment. I'm beseiged by a monster called restlessness, the hubris of desire, something I can't put my finger on but whose presence is real, an unseen visitor that leaves evidence behind him.

About an hour ago, I was puttering around the store at Papa John's when the strangest sensation overcame me, a feeling of warmth, then heat at the back of my spine that moved upward toward my shoulder blades. I entered the bathroom and looked in the mirror, checking to see if it was me on the other side. To settle myself, I masturbated. After I ejaculated, I felt like I had landed softly back to earth after a harrowing, hot air balloon ride. With me, you don't necessarily arrive, but you do get a good view.

Doubt bombards me. Maybe I should have gone to visit Sabrina Wells, that cute Bahamian girl who secured a job and an apartment in San Francisco. Years ago, she invited me to San Francisco. I replied with a few vague promises that tumbled like lint beneath a laundry list of other oncoming obligations. Sabrina's an independent, free-spirited girl, short with freckles, ruby red lips, black curly hair, and blue eyes--a real cutie! I'm hoping to see her again, but unsure of how it's gonna happen. Her phone number's changed, so I'll have to pray that an opportunity will surface. Sometimes I miss her

One opportunity is to return to New York City. Laura Lee Kelly, a friend who's living in Manhattan, is dating a guy who repairs and fixes up old houses in Brooklyn. The guy needs help. And apparently, there's a free place to stay. Sounds like a great opportunity: work with my hands, learn a skill, live in a city with a pulse that has a plethora of cute girls running around. The inevitable result of that move may promise a pantheon of self-published journals, an off-Broadway musical, and two plays, along with the formation of a drama and music team for "Out of the Wilderness", a ministry to raise a voice for the persecuted church.

Then there's a girl in Miami who looks interesting. She's a yoga instructor who is Dutch. I was contacted by her when my picture was up on the personals section at [www.newtimes.com](http://www.newtimes.com). I think she'd make for a cool friend, down to earth, smart. I'm going to contact her, via e-mail.

11:34 12/31/04 The weight of being needed ...

It's 26-minutes shy of 2005 and where am I? Standing beside my house on wheels in the parking lot of The River Church (SE corner of Palm and Georgia in Flamingo Park). This neighborhood is quiet, aside from the sporadic bursts of fireworks with their pops and whistles. Instead of being here, I could drive to Respectable Street, the club I frequented in the early to mid-nineties, in downtown West Palm Beach, and hug old friends, flirt with cute strangers, and maneuver through a forest of bodies clad in black, slender limbs attached to beer bottle and cigarettes. Like them, I could lose myself in the anonymity of it all--the smoky, dark atmosphere, the low roar of conversation, the tidal surge of music (the music throbbing through the speakers like an artificial heart that's declared itself autonomous in a mutiny from the body), the orange dots of light--miniature nicotene flashlights--that glow brightly whenever put to the mouth, the easy laughter triggered by the consumption of alcohol and the forgettable smiles that accompany them, the vague-but-persistent feeling that something big is going to happen once this year, but I choose to be more honest with myself, and go it alone. Because even among them, in a crowd of acquaintances whose company and approval I once sought, I am still an outsider. But that's okay, because I've always been an outsider, befriended by, and accepted by a world of characters inside my head, each with a story to tell, a dream to pursue, a life to live. One by one, through writing stories, crafting plays, composing music, I'll let these characters loose on the world. Even more importantly, I've come to understand that this world, with all its tragic heartbreak and triumphant beauty, races by at lightning speed, and all our best intentions to anchor ourselves to this spinning planet, to fight gravity by accumulating mall treasures or forget gravity altogether by losing oneself among the noise of music, TV, and partying, come to nothing in the face of eternity. If only this generation could lift their eyes upward, away from each other, away from the horizontal view, and towards the vertical view. If only this generation could see past the tide of garbage that's considered necessary in order to live, and cut their losses, relying on The LORD Jesus Christ for their Salvation and finding their identity in Him, then they may know the real meaning of living, in this world and for the next one. Although my past has its share of potholes and detours to nowhere, I'll pray that the LORD will use me to bring this generation towards Him. God, help me to rescue them and introduce them to YOU. Thank YOU for my beautiful life, full of wonder and joy. Thank YOU. Thank YOU.



...to the copy room.  
...people  
...to the  
...open, and  
...Alex  
...lets  
...smile.  
...  
...KFC. "He said.

...in the smaller  
...direction of the building  
...a few blocks away,  
...New Jersey street,  
...of a road that  
...Reclining & Nirorest, I  
...to the inside  
...back to the church.  
...sachary opens

the door to the smaller building, the chapel, where Spanish speaking services are held. So, I ~~went~~ went inside & took a shower. Thank You, GOD, for the shower -- great water pressure, nice and hot and cathartic. Living in my car, I really feel blessed with all these hookups that fly at me. God is GOOD. After showering, I headed to Jim Drummer's wood workshop to borrow his Shopvac to clean out my car, borrow his drill to secure the inside wood deck and to offer Clint and Jon 12-hour old ~~fresh~~ donuts, an assortment of Krispy Kreme's I purchased the night before. They're still pretty fresh. I had one this morning for breakfast. Hallelujah.

Tons of 50,000 killed by ~~tsunami~~ tsunamis in Indonesia is a horrible number. So far, 120,000 deaths/war. Thinking about that, that is hard to digest, ~~hard~~ difficult to even imagine the pain endured by those misty relatives and friends I need to pray for them.

4:02 pm 12/31/04

It's New Year's Eve. I'm working. Sitting in my carhouse ~~at~~ facing the pod, inside the Ballet Village, an upscale apartment complex ~~and~~ next to City Place. Why do I feel so guilty. God, I can't even fall asleep at night, beset by some kind of surge, some kind of tug that compels me to get moving, as if I cannot sit idle for a moment. I'm beset by a number called restless A&S, the hubris



the roots of coincidence  
the currency of chance

does.

Still, there's opportunity. Larra Lee Kelly, a friend who's living in New York City, is doing a guy who repairs old houses in Brooklyn. The guy needs help. And apparently, there's a free place to stay. Sounds like a great

opportunity: work with my hand, learn a skill, live in a city with a pulse, etc. that jumpstarts my creative battery. ~~As~~ The inevitable result of that move may prove a pantheon of journals self-published at ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> website of my own name, ~~and~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~and~~ off Broadway musical and two plays, and the formation of a musician & writer's & dramatist's to make Out of the Wilderness a real ~~pop~~ music/drama project, not a solo effort as it is now we'll see.

There's a girl in Miami, a yoga instructor, who looks interesting. I was contacted by her when my picture & profile was up at [www.newtimes.com](http://www.newtimes.com) personals section. I think she'd make for a cool friend, down to earth & smart. I'm going to contact her, maybe tonight, if I can get online.

~~The weight~~  
11:34 pm 12/31/04 The weight of being needed...

It's 26 minutes shy of 2005 and where am I?  
Standing beside my house on wheels in the parking lot of the River Church (SE corner of Palm and Georgia <sup>in</sup> Flamingo Park). This neighborhood is quiet, aside from the sporadic

born  
out  
with a  
why  
freckles  
cutie!  
is  
-pray  
-usually

bursts of fireworks ~~that~~ with their staccato pops and whistles.  
Instead of being here, I could drive to Respectable Streets, the  
club I frequented in the early <sup>to mid</sup> 1990s in downtown West  
Palm Beach, and see old friends, flirt with cute strangers and  
hug old acquaintances, maneuvering ~~through~~ <sup>the</sup> a forest of  
bodies ~~and~~ clad in black, slender limbs <sup>(arms?)</sup> attached to ~~other~~  
beer bottles and cigarettes. Like them, I could lose myself in  
the anonymity of it all - the smoky, dark atmosphere,  
the low roar of conversation ~~that's~~ <sup>(barely audible <sup>with</sup> the)</sup>  
tidal surge of music - the music throbbing through the  
speakers like an artificial heart that's deduced itself  
autonomous, a mutiny from the body in which it's been placed,  
refusing to return to its occupant, AWOL from a war in which  
his convictions prevent him from carrying out orders, the orange  
dots of light ~~miniature~~ <sup>miniature</sup> nicotine fixalights - that glow brightly  
whenever attached to the mouth, the easy laughter triggered  
by the consumption of alcohol and the forgettable smiles that  
accompany them, and the vague but persistent feeling  
that something big is going to happen ~~once~~ <sup>this year (is advanced</sup>  
for next year) moves into the filing cabinet of history (and next year  
becomes the currency of now), but I ~~can~~ choose to ~~quit~~  
be more honest with myself, and go it alone. Because even  
among them, in a crowd of acquaintances whose company <sup>can</sup>  
and approval I once sought, I am still an outsider. <sup>Even with them, she</sup> But that's  
~~okay, because there's a better world (Hawaii) worth working~~  
~~for, one that pays about double, with a steady~~

to paps and whistles.  
respectable streets, the  
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I could lose myself in  
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lights - that glow brightly  
easy laughter triggered  
forgettable smiles that  
but persistent feeling  
this year (is advanced  
of history (and next year  
choose to ~~it~~  
alone. Because even  
aces whose <sup>company can</sup>  
still an outsider. But that's  
~~the way~~ ~~working~~  
~~history~~

okay, because I've always been an outsider, befriended by, and  
accepted by a world of character inside my head, each with  
a story to tell, a dream to pursue, a life to live. One by  
one, ~~escape~~ through writing stories, crafting plays, composing  
music, I'll let these characters loose on the world.  
Even more importantly, I've come to understand that this  
world, with all its tragic heartbreak and triumphant  
beauty, races by at lightning speed, and all our  
best intentions to anchor ourselves to this spinning planet, to  
fight gravity by accumulating heavily-weighted material things  
or to forget gravity altogether by losing myself amid the noise  
of music, TV, <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ higher education, come to nothing in the  
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cut their losses, relying on the Lord Jesus Christ for their  
salvation, and finding their identity in Him, then they  
would know the real meaning of living, ~~in~~ in this  
world and for the next one. Altho my part has its share  
of potholes and detours to nowhere, I'll pray that the Lord  
will use me to bring this generation toward Him. God, help  
me to rescue them and introduce them to You. Thank You  
for my beautiful life, full of wonder and joy. Thank You. Thank You.