

## The Sentences

by Kurtis Davidson

1	I have numbered all my things.
2	The sunlight in the car made the sleeping children's heads shine like burnished gold coins.
3	I didn't start stealing from my grandmother until I knew she was senile and wouldn't miss anything.
4	My boyfriend's scream told my mother one thing: something was going on in my room she should know about.
5	She fell in love down a flight of stairs.
6	The quarter rolled to the farthest part of the room, right under the chair of Aunt Melinda, who, at 24, was eight years older than me and knew all about marijuana.
7	She was like a Dickinson poem—short and difficult to understand.
8	Stubby Flynn failed as a coach because he inspired in his players neither love nor fear but indifference.
9	None of us children had ever seen our mother naked, not even accidentally, as is bound to happen at some point in the lives of four daughters and three sons, so it was a surprise to see her laid out like that under the glaring light and to see the seven puckered, long-scarred-over punctures that the coroner described as gunshot wounds at least fifty years old.
10	An impatient custodian is an accident waiting to happen.
11	Why do I kill them with hammers?
12	Annabelle Lewis, who had never actually read a book before, found herself hired as a book critic for <u>The New York Times</u> .
13	We will never know for sure whether it was nerves or anger, but in any case Buck Larson, the famed Negro League pitcher, got one shot at the big leagues in 1949 and succeeded in beaming the first five white batters he faced.
14	The last straw came at Christmas when Mother gave my twelve-year-old a crib toy.
15	Can he be a hermit if I've already seen him twice?
16	Leddy Gaston figured they wouldn't put a seventy-three-year-old in jail for sneaking onto the golf course.
17	When all the airplane's cabin lights suddenly went out, I thought, So this is how it happens.
18	He was a sad man, so he became a clown.
19	Their suspicions were confirmed when they found the ticket stubs and photographs in his desk drawer.
20	When the refrigerated truck flipped on the outskirts of Phenix City, Alabama, the locals lucked into a ton of free bagels, which seemed to them so many tasteless donuts.
21	My father was a tall man, so tall that I could never look down on him, not even when he was sitting.
22	Driving through these woods you could almost feel the presence of the Atherton Indians gliding through silvery winter-stripped stands of walnut, oak, and sycamore.
23	He wore the expression of a man watching a foreign film with illegible subtitles.
24	Walker, fourteen and hung like a horse, leaned against the chain-link fence, smoking a cigarette and eyeing the fat girls riding ponies.
25	It didn't smell like my toothbrush.
26	No one is fond of putting the animals down, but it's even worse to run the chamber during the Christmas season.
27	The woman in front of me in line had thirteen items—one more than she was allowed.
28	Reynolds is the best man I've ever been with, ever going to be with, so when he comes out of the doctor's office with the bad news, we just drive around in his truck silent and sit real close and don't talk about what it all means.
29	I'm in love with Linda, which is why at the end of the month when her commission is on the line, I go down to Industrial Fencing and Container and buy 2000 feet of storm fencing.
30	After the Laotian family had adopted their fourth dog in as many weeks, the people at the animal shelter began to get suspicious.

31	When the earthquake hit Japan and killed 14,000 people overnight, I called the psychic who had predicted serious problems ahead and asked if this was what she meant, but she only sighed and said, "Keep watching."
32	The woman's hair was dark, though not as dark as the blood that pooled around her head.
33	She lost her virginity when she was seventeen, and she looked for it the rest of her life.
34	The cheaper the motel, the more he wanted to stay there.
35	Reverend Pinks is a Holy Ghoster, which means that once you walk through them doors, you ain't walking out for three hours.
36	"Girl," Mama says, "you got the legs most women dream about, so when you go for that interview, you wear that new dress with that hemline up here."
37	Her boss had indeed made her a proposition, and, yes, it was what you think.
38	Sammi Jo knew things would get better once she could afford a double-wide.
39	I was first arrested in a toy store on December 20, 1987.
40	He leaned into the bar between me and my roommate, ordered a beer, said he was from Alaska, and mumbled something about a pipeline.
41	I was at a stock car race—the Talladega 500, I believe it was—when I noticed that the guy in front of me was watching the cars circle the track without moving his head.
42	Charlie Cline slept for a living.
43	The Atherton Valley was carved out by a receding glacier ten thousand years ago, as witnessed by its broad antediluvian sweep and the rocky soil that has frustrated farmers there for two hundred years, and if you didn't know any better you would think that the backward, superstitious people who live there had likewise been left by the retreating ice.
44	My people waited for a sunrise that never came.
45	After the tanning salon failed, Missie moved back home with a U-Haul trailer too small the carry the chip on her shoulder.
46	We were in high school when me and Buster started making crop circles.
47	When you're missing a finger, some people ask questions.
48	Her eyes said, "No," but her contract said, "Yes."
49	The teacher looked surprised when I explained why I had been absent the day before: my father had got drunk and hid my shoes.
50	I work the night lever.
51	For several weeks now the library has been plagued by a vandal who puts chewing gum between the pages of our most expensive reference books.
52	The man was ugly, though not so ugly you would whisper behind his back.
53	Some men rent pornography when their wives are out of town; I rent Busby Berkeley musicals.
54	There are few things sadder than working the scene when a circus truck jackknives.
55	Every year on take-your-kid-to-work day, I had to go and sit for eight hours in the corner of my father's bail bonds office.
56	Embellishing isn't really lying.
57	Rudy went to the wholesale club and bought every battery in the store.
58	Art paused in mid chew, the fork still touching his lips, and said, "You've never seen a Hitchcock movie?"
59	There was no way we could get all the hay in by dark, but Poppa said to keep on going.
60	The latest word I have from my wife is a salsa-stained postcard from Tempe that reads, "It's about as hot here as they make you think on TV, but the food is pretty good and the sex is great."
61	My mother has become an animist.
62	No way succotash is an Indian word.
63	I loved Jesse and wanted to be at his funeral, but while the services were in progress, I was in jail for his murder.
64	Call me Isabel.
65	They were all dead before the sound of the accident reached us.
66	Millard lied with such sincerity that he was offended when people refused to believe him.
67	No matter how you tell them—frankness, sweetness, euphemism—and no matter who they are—friends, acquaintances, lovers—you regret telling people they have bad breath.

68	Atherton, the town, had started as a bad idea and turned into a worse one.
69	When women joined the corps, you first noticed a change in the jodies that echoed across post: above the usual low rumble of the soldier's chants, there floated an occasional siren song, the voice of an angel of war.
70	At the end of the hall, I could hear the kindergarten teachers whispering: "Let's just kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out!"
71	Twelve Finger Louie could play a guitar like nobody else.
72	What do you think are your chances of getting laid when you tell the woman at the bar that you work as a hose guy for the septic service?
73	I still get a letter from her every now and then written on her perfumed, parchment-heavy stationary in a calligrapher's hand with jet black ink.
74	As my grandfather was fond of saying, "When it rains, it rains."
75	My bet, had you asked me in advance to describe a fever monkey, would have been a flying monkey from <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> , but fever monkeys exceed expectations.
76	The next time his mother saw him, he had legally changed his name to Zero—no last name.
77	When you're a doctor, people think you don't get sick.
78	Ten minutes into their blind date, she realized she had forgotten his name.
79	They were two big men who didn't realize they loved each other until their knees touched under the table.
80	London, Arkansas, was a disappointment.
81	It was Flag Day, the first one since she had sworn she would never celebrate Flag Day again.
82	Charles Ellerton had been working for two decades on a machine that would record and preserve smells.
83	The King was late, so he stopped Johnson and asked him to do a few things.
84	My father no longer likes to bathe.
85	Nolan never told anyone, but he had written his own theme music, and hummed it to himself as he went about his day.
86	In retrospect, this is the one moment I cannot forget: While nurses hold me at a distance, doctors crowd around my baby, and I hear one of them say, "She's CTD," not a fancy medical term, I later learn, but doctor slang for "circling the drain."
87	Every time my aunt talks about meeting Elvis, the story is wildly different than the time before.
88	There are so few people anymore, mainly robots and machines, that the natural impulse when you finally see someone is to latch onto them for dear life.
89	We know for a fact that the Barbie was transferred from the father to the daughter in the car en route from the grocery store, and that, therefore, the Barbie must now be somewhere between the car and the house, or in the car or in the house; of this we are absolutely certain.
90	Welcome to Atherton High, Home of the Underdogs.
91	In the spring, after the snow has melted away and the sun is shining every day, it becomes clear that once again our lawn is dead.
92	She was standing in the doorway in the rain.
93	In my earliest memory of my mother, she is standing in our living room, backlit by our fireplace, ironing.
94	Phil took an especial pride in his versatility: whereas he punched with his right hand, he fired a gun with his left.
95	E-mail has been bad for our relationship.
96	My life has gone steadily downhill since the seventh grade, when I was elected president of the junior high school chess club.
97	I began exercising for the same reason I do anything: because <u>he</u> wants me to do it.
98	One Saturday afternoon in May, a rickety homemade boat washed ashore on Jekyll Island, Georgia, manned by seventeen impoverished, sunburned white people who spoke a language no one could identify.
99	My sister-in-law from Minnesota, Patty, likes to prove what wimps we are about snow here in Tennessee by snowblowing her driveway after the occasional three-inch "dusting" in her bikini.
100	I'm from California, which means more to those I tell this fact than it does to me.

101	My mother said it was only a warning shot, so I have to believe her.
102	My parole agent, Lucius, wallpapers his office with celebrity obituaries.
103	We had a betting pool on which would get Bruno first: lung cancer or mattress fire.
104	There's six kinds of fish you can catch in Harlan Lake, four of which'll kill you and one of which will make your manhood shrivel up and stink like seaweed.
105	She was a child conceived in anger.
106	He wasn't a cute dog, and he smelled pretty bad, but his previous owner had taught him how to fry eggs.
107	It was like some kind of Whitman poem the way he was talking, all squawks and stutters and run-on sentences replete with nasty bits, parts of bodies thrown in there for good measure or titillation (I couldn't tell), and when it finally occurred to me that he was being Whitmanesque (as they say), I reasoned that (1) he was gay and (2) he was coming on to me, so I punched him really hard (by mistake) right over his left eye.
108	The ladies come for the love, but they stay for the rice and beans.
109	Fuck nature.
110	I know there are cool senior citizens; I've seen them.
111	She was seven months pregnant but I gave her a shovel anyway—we had a grave to dig.
112	Michael has the unnerving habit of holding eye contact only when he tells me a lie.
113	He leaned close and through oleaginous lips whispered thickly, "I am your mother's African nightmare!"
114	Before they drained the swamp just north of town, the majority of Atherton residents were mosquitoes.
115	"Was that a cat sneezing?" my wife asked.
116	He was wearing a suit it would have taken his father five months' salary to afford, and it felt good.
117	Little Robicheaux, the rag peddler, pushed his cart down the side street whistling the tune he had overhead coming from the whorehouse back up Thierry Street way.
118	I open up the back door of the car and the first thing I notice is brains everywhere, like somebody tripped and dumped a bucket of brains all over everything.
119	In my first memory of my Uncle Hosea, he is wearing his penny loafers with the one-tenth-of-an-ounce gold pieces stuck in the little slots.
120	The fourth-floor, west-wing maid of the Denver—Airport Holiday Inn had the habit of ignoring "Do Not Disturb" signs.
121	I've been working on it for a week now, and I still can't get the stain out of the carpet.
122	Lying on his back in the slowly widening pool of his own blood and looking up at the gently fading night sky, Lenny realized he had gone wrong when he wrapped Mitchell's head in shipping tape and then set the tape on fire.
123	"This," he said, "this ain't nothing, just a box of knuckles."
124	He was a practitioner of the combover, that odd combination of vanity and despair.
125	The best part, the part everybody loves, the show stopper, really, is at the end when Necron and Mobitrexia, the robots, copulate.
126	The discovery was breathtaking: any comatose patient could be brought back with full faculties if only the doctor could discover that patient's secret word.
127	I wasn't sure what Eddie meant when he said, "I was just with your wife."
128	It was probably in 1581 that Sir Philip Beecham wrote the first English-language dental sonnet: each line of "Julia's Pearls" is dedicated to one of his lady love's fourteen remaining teeth.
129	Groundhog Day held a special significance for the town of Atherton even though none of its residents had ever seen a groundhog.
130	"Well," Lieutenant Warren said, "I don't care who he is, you just don't do something like that to a dog and walk away clean."
131	For emergencies, my mother had a sponge she kept in a secret location.
132	When his next-door neighbor, the one he suspects of being an alien, leaves on a long weekend, Harlan breaks into the house and scours the kitchen, finding in the cupboard a box of toothpicks, an unopened fortune cookie, and a can of oily squid.
133	Weeping, he climbed the stairs to the prostitute's apartment.
134	Every night after work when Jason stared in the mirror at his pectorals, he was certain he could see

	them beginning to sag.
135	They say that serial killers are almost always men.
136	The kitchen was a nightmare calculated to offend both Martha Stewart and Julia Child, all lime green formica and linoleum from decades ago and stocked entirely with dishes, appliances, and gadgets purchased at random from cable TV.
137	Fink was a clever and angry thief, not the best combination.
138	When you hear the paramedics swearing, you know you're in trouble.
139	My father's silences became the calendar by which I tracked the passing days.
140	At the end of my first day at my new school in Waterbury, the teacher handed out crumpled up pieces of aluminum foil with something inside them the size of a golf ball.
141	It is true that men tire of lovers the way the day seems to tire of the dawn, but I must say, in my own defense, that the glow of love's first light is all the brighter for its transient allure.
142	It was the shortest inaugural address in the history of the presidency; it was, in fact, only a limerick.
143	Had he known any French words, he would have said them about her.
144	He was a lachrymose lad.
145	Sturgeon Street is where you go if you're interested in the not-so-slight chance of getting shot for no reason.
146	It's illegal to carry a gun in these parts, but a gun is nothing next to what I've got in my trunk, so I'm keeping a Glock 9 on the seat beside me.
147	Men responded to her like linemen spotting a loose ball on the ground and becoming instantly inflamed with visions of serendipitous glory.
148	I knew from the mess he was making all over Ralph's ass that Orville wasn't really a graduate of the Tulsa School of Tattooing, but I wasn't about to tell Ralph.
149	"Rosicrucian," she said, lying in the dark beside me, and wouldn't explain what she meant.
150	Before the family reunion, my mother had warned me not to say anything about Aunt Jessie's nose, but she had neglected to prepare me for the fact that Aunt Jessie hadn't any nose at all.
151	If he had been only six inches shorter he could have joined the circus as a dwarf, but as it was he was condemned to live among tall people in the real world.
152	We tried to dissuade him, but he was adamant: it would henceforth be known as <u>The Sausage Opera</u> .
153	Sure enough, I looked out into the lobby and there he was in the flesh, Jesus Christ.
154	The first thing I did when I got out of prison was contact my parole officer; the second was put a contract out on Frank Dudley, the man who put me in the joint in the first place.
155	We measured time in Atherton by the increasing angle of Doc Johnson's shoulder-forward stoop.
156	I tried to pinch her butt, but she was packed into those jeans so tight nothing gave.
157	The girls were out on the quadrangle playing a languorous game of Frisbee with the notorious bisexual lech, Professor Alvin Muldoon.
158	The trajectory of the second bullet is still a topic of hot debate among the coaches of the Little League team.
159	Five thirty, a late summer afternoon, amber light filling the kitchen, Mary Tennyson stood at the sink trembling with anticipation of the arrival of her husband of twenty-two years, Al, who had for three days in a row burst through the front door, rushed into the kitchen, yanked off her panties and made passionate, no, almost violent, love to her right there on the floor, not even bothering to remove his pants.
160	"Delaware?" Larouche said, "I shit bigger than Delaware."
161	He had never confessed to anyone the true reason he had become a doctor: the giddy pleasure he felt when skin and flesh melted away from the tip of his scalpel like the proverbial butter under a hot knife.
162	Never had I kissed a man before.
163	Reggie was too ashamed ever to tell anybody what really happened to the puppies that summer.
164	You ask me, one monkey is one monkey too many.
165	He had written what was to be understood only decades later as the perfect book, that amorphous, genre-bending compendium of the best and worst thought, said and felt by his countrymen, transcending modes and shattering expectations and finally recoverable, finally only complete, when engaged, enfolded, violated by the critics, and these permutations engendered and exploded in the minds of readers, especially those not yet born.

166	Thinking back, I can pinpoint exactly the moment the crowd on the subway platform panicked.
167	One look at his clothes and you would have sworn he had just fallen from a moving car.
168	I came home to find the thieves still in my house and enjoying a pancake and sausage breakfast they had made for themselves.
169	It was the first time I had ever punched a man, and I could tell it was the first time he had ever been punched by a woman.
170	When I found the broken scale that morning, I knew it had not met with an accident.
171	In the dead man's pocket we found only a drill bit.
172	He walked with that head-down, shoulder-forward, tensed-arm gait of a man continually on his way to meet some grand disappointment.
173	The mission of a small-town newspaper is not to tell the truth, and the job of its editor is not to worry about it.
174	I was the new guy at the realty agency, so they made me try to sell the house where the Walkers had been murdered.
175	Our track coach, Mr. Cortez, jokes that the only thing better than winning a medal in the Special Olympics is not being retarded—though I don't think he's ever said this to his son.
176	We were lost in the woods, but I didn't give a fuck anymore about anything, so while she watched, I took the matches from the box one by one and burned them all down to the quick.
177	Rollie Judkins pulled six fifty-dollar bills from his cummerbund and laid them flat and crisp on the table in front of the redhead.
178	I hadn't thought anything of it—we have the same meal every Saturday night—but when our dinner guests, the Hendersons, the first black family in the neighborhood, learned that we were having fried chicken, everyone in the room froze.
179	While he works out, Wade, the best looking guy down at Atherton Fitness, always carries around a volume of Tolstoy.
180	You could tell by the way he steered his sled he was from Florida.
181	If Julio was God's gift to women, Linda wanted to know where to find the return counter.
182	Without his shirt he looked deformed, as if he were perpetually sucking in his stomach in a misguided attempt to look ten pounds lighter.
183	Millicent Fitzsimmons, maverick Shakespeare scholar, blew dust from the cover of her Holy Grail, a bound manuscript written in the Bard's own hand, and now all that remained was to find a way to smuggle it out of the monastery.
184	He stood by the door in the light of the last candle, sniffing the air, touching his beard, nodding silently to the beat within his head, thinking, now, now.
185	It took six years and the arrival of Jean Baptiste Renard, the Haitian immigrant sponsored by the Presbyterian church, before we realized that Dr. Menefee didn't know a lick of French and had been speaking nonsense to us all along.
186	Looks like I have to pick up and move again, seeing as how funambulism has been outlawed in this state, too.
187	You reach a point in your life when a twenty-dollar bill stuffed into your hands by an older relative becomes not a treat but an insult; I have yet to reach that stage.
188	Lou, my second husband, has unspoken expectations.
189	Alice North wrecked her lover's car swerving to avoid a woolly caterpillar.
190	The old-timers were tight-lipped about the crater in the middle of the town square.
191	His skin was brown and cracked like a football left outside through the winter.
192	The third time our son fell down a well, my husband refused to help haul him out.
193	My sister, Zelda, was wild about roller coasters.
194	Everywhere he went, Roland wore kneepads.
195	She had found that life was 95% perspiration and 5% disappointment.
196	She could never have imagined that a man who would take her to the ballet would also rape her.
197	When he was old enough to understand that his name was Little Johnny Griswold, he knew that his would be a storybook life, and as he grew older still, all the pieces were falling into place: In addition to his name he had his red brick house behind his white picket fence that enclosed his neat green lawn that never required trimming by his pipe-smoking father who came home each evening to trade his

	wing-tipped shoes for more comfortable slippers but never changed from his suit until he retired to bed with his cake-baking wife who wore a dress even while washing their mixed-breed dog who never had to be walked because he belonged to that rare breed of canine that neither urinates nor defecates.
198	I sat across the long library desk from him and watched as he raised and lowered his head, raised and lowered his head, blinking quizzically at the overhead lamp as if he had never seen a bulb burn out.
199	My sister, the one who married Marco, the Cheese King of Atherton, is on the phone again, crying.
200	When I was a schoolboy in Macon, Georgia, our textbooks were hand-me-downs from the white schools, and before the books were sent our way, the white kids would write us messages inside.
201	The cicadas were thrumming and whirring and chirring, the air liquid with their pulse, and she moved into the sound, threading through the trees, until she found the small hummock of earth and squatted there, hunkering down, listening to that air-furry insect jive.
202	Quite frankly, the thought of eating anything even remotely related to the marsupial family is enough to queer my stomach, so you can imagine my abject horror when our hostess brought to the Thanksgiving table a roasted, steaming possum.
203	On my third day at my new school, Marshall Wilson hit me on the very tip of my nose with a ruler and brought blood to my nostrils and tears to my eyes.
204	He preferred to use his short-wave radio to listen to BBC coverage of the war because he loved the way the British said "missile."
205	Ah, Myers thought, the cruel wrench of fate had again twisted the nut of dread one quarter turn tighter against his soul.
206	Stocking the vending machines in one dormitory can be a full-time job.
207	"I'm telling you," Roy said, "I seen country, but when you used the word 'yokel,' you had to pay this kid a commission."
208	Last summer as punishment for what he called "one of your usual fuck-ups," my father made me work as a woodcutter in Nelson County.
209	Life is a game young men play to win and old men play not to lose.
210	After all these years, I still get excited over a fresh pot of coffee.
211	Enid left her basement efficiency unit and walked to the church on the corner where she hoped to get some free cheese but instead found a bingo game.
212	My father lies before me in his coffin, his skin translucent like wax paper.
213	She was an old woman who died with one cat in her house for every dollar she had in the bank.
214	He was the fat kid from your nightmares.
215	Like a miniature clothesline, a piece of red yarn stretched across one corner of my grandmother's kitchen, and there she would hang paper towels to dry.
216	Never hire a junkie to housesit.
217	He annoyed his colleagues at the lab when he started referring to himself as Dr. Big Brain and to his wife as Wife of Dr. Big Brain, even though it was completely true.
218	I knew before I opened my eyes that morning that she was gone, long gone.
219	The children were out on the porch smashing butterflies with a fork.
220	When you live in Hawaii, where do you go on vacation?
221	Our adult children are settled around us now, and I pat my husband's hand and begin: "On our first date, your father forced himself on me, an event that has hung over our relationship these past forty years."
222	Emily Starr, editor-in-chief of the <u>Atherton Herald</u> , has written her own obituary, which is on file at the <u>Herald</u> and which she updates weekly.
223	My cousin Ellie, the family genius, has never owned a bookmark because she always finishes, but we're twenty-two now and she still hasn't had sex.
224	My father was crazy, so we were crazy, too.
225	Her faded strawberry blonde hair looked like it had been used to strain tea.
226	To err is human; to forgive is to risk annihilation.
227	At least once a day, confronted by an unexpected mirror, he looked at his obliquely revealed self with the knitted-brow, double-take expression of the recovering amnesiac.
228	When our office terrorist first struck, he melted a slice of American cheese on the drum of the new photocopier.

229	My granddaddy had the hard-earned distinction of being the only white man in the state lynched by black folk.
230	Loving Sylvia was hard work.
231	“Reason,” the professor said, “is stepmother to desire.”
232	I haven’t always been a werewolf.
233	The traffic had been stopped on the interstate so long that people were beginning to get out of their cars, which, the state police later said, was the crucial factor in the events that followed.
234	Every Christmas Eve, my father would lovingly assemble all of the presents he had bought over the past months and take them to his workroom where, using the usual tools of the wrapping trade, he would create the most hideously distressing packages eyes have ever witnessed.
235	My grandmother, who is eighty-six, keeps a loaded .38 on her wheelchair between her thighs.
236	For two years Ellis Whatley and Holly Hamilton courted each other in the Barnes & Noble, moving up and down the aisles—Sociology, Self Help, Religion, Travel & Leisure—never saying more than a perfunctory “Excuse me” or “Beg your pardon,” but each always mindful of where the other was, always stealing glances when the chance offered, blushing when their eyes met, until finally, arriving at the cash register together on Christmas Eve, 1994, they reached for the same pen to write their checks and touched hands.
237	Jerry always wore the pants in our relationship because they were the only pair we had.
238	For several seconds she didn’t know where she was, the curve of the road ahead, the old country store, the picturesque arrangement of ragged-looking cows all foreign and stereotypically familiar at the same time.
239	It was on the day of our golden wedding anniversary that Elliott asked directions of a stranger for the first time.
240	My father-in-law keeps calling me Spud.
241	Before I left for college, my parents, independently of each other, gave me the same advice: “Close your eyes, and you can kiss just about anyone.”
242	My idiot son idolizes Jimi Hendrix, and I’ve been telling him for weeks now that he ought to learn to play guitar with his fingers before he tries to play with his teeth.
243	The children marched in sing-song single file down the murky path beneath the hovering branches of the oldest sycamore in the state.
244	She was well preserved.
245	Men were always the last to stand to sing hymns in First Presbyterian Church of Atherton because the minister, the Reverend Beatrice Goodwin, was the most gorgeous woman most of them had ever seen, and as they sat and listened to her sermons their thoughts were not of the prodigal son or the wise and foolish virgins but of her sizeable breasts and her splendid legs.
246	Ahead of him, Delilah swung back and forth down the mountain, her easy grace on skis belying her stolid thighs and pigeon-toed gait.
247	Sissy had picked up lots of guys in her time, and lots of them had tattoos, but never one like this: BEST WHEN USED BEFORE FEB 22 77.
248	Barney bought an oversized mailbox to hold all the magazines, and as his life’s savings melted away, he remained convinced that the sweepstakes soon would be his.
249	The building’s system of heating pipes and vents was the drunken nightmare of an angry angel.
250	Even for a Puritan, Philip was dour.
251	Asa was a rare timid New Yorker who would not cross a street against the signal.
252	The baby was a month overdue, but the doctors were oddly nonchalant.
253	When you proofread phone books for a living, the pay isn’t good, but you can set your own hours.
254	Clark is back up on the roof again, searching for that elusive patch of bad shingles that lets the water into the attic every year about this time.
255	He hung up the phone and said, “That was a \$50,000 conversation,” but he wasn’t smiling.
256	No one gave Chris Felch any trouble until high school.
257	She was so unreasonably attractive that anything you said to her was an obvious lie, unless, of course, you came right out and said it: “Will you sleep with me?”
258	She said kind things about people only behind their backs.
259	Had her Ph.D. been in any subject other than art history, Lurleen would never have become a

	professional Royal Watcher.
260	Illinois is flat for a reason.
261	My grandparents had the annoying habit of funneling cartons of buttermilk into unlabeled milk jugs.
262	Helmut vowed to climb Everest not because he thrilled at the thought of standing on top of the world but because he thrilled at the thought of suffering.
263	I had no idea that Mike had bought a gun until I found a box of bullets in his sock drawer.
264	It's my best joint so far, so I hand it to my mother with pride.
265	My roommate and I had gotten Chinese take-out, and we were sitting in the kitchen and fumbling with our chopsticks when she noticed that our microwave was gone.
266	Tina shudders, for it is spring again, the time of worms on the sidewalk, hornets buzzing under the eaves, gnats clouding the air and searching for her eyes, moths crazily fluttering and banging against the screens at night, maggots boiling in creatures dead by the side of the road, the time she is reminded that the insects, ultimately, will win.
267	It's our first date, and all my husband-to-be can talk about is Sinatra.
268	Communicating with the dead is much easier than anyone has let on.
269	Mrs. Gwen, the district vice president, realized only at the end of the meeting that Darcy Chance, Den Mother to Den 38, had a stud through her tongue.
270	In 1971, when I was 12 years old, my parents, for reasons still undetermined, bought me a Honda 70 motorcycle, a glorified dirt bike that, nonetheless, weighed over 150 pounds and could and did achieve speeds of 50 miles an hour.
271	I finally felt I had been in a real fight when I lost my first tooth.
272	My daughters, the lawyers, are suing me again.
273	Mrs. Thompson, eighth-grade social studies, felt she had lost her final shred of dignity when her students learned her maiden name.
274	People took one look at her and said, "Once a cheerleader, always a cheerleader."
275	I grew up in an era when the great fights were free for the watching, when boxers were not just rich but also famous.
276	I had read enough web pages on seducing women to know that the way she was playing with her earrings meant something.
277	Soon after we got the baby parrot home from the store, we found she already knew three words, one of which was a big surprise.
278	The man in the hotel lobby fell into a fit of spectacular acrobatic convulsions—or at least the horrified bystanders believed they were convulsions.
279	The first thing you notice when you enter the Crumbley house is that all their furniture is white wicker.
280	The Masons moved to Kokomo hoping to make a new start, but everything they saw reminded them of Atherton.
281	When I was growing up, my parents would not let me have a trampoline or a skateboard or a pellet gun, which, I suppose, explains my occupation now.
282	After the freezing rain the garden cried out to be broken.
283	My grandfather's will had one last stipulation: since his children had all demonstrated, through their various commissions and omissions, that they were in part, in not fully, addle pated, they were required, before they could come into their inheritance, to sign a letter of intent donating their brains to science.
284	Had my wife not found the Ouija Board in our attic, we would still be married.
285	The defining moment of our relationship came when we pooled our money and purchased an <u>Oxford English Dictionary</u> .
286	When Ian and I met for our Wednesday coffee, we discussed little other than Loch Ness.
287	The internet has made it almost inevitable that one day you will see someone you know naked on your computer.
288	Mel Grayson had one earlobe.
289	Momma never played the lottery until she learned the Widow Rollins had won fifty bucks.
290	Our newest network is the Pope Network, all Pope, all the time.
291	He was awake, he realized, his eyes still closed, the light pink through his eyelids, drawn up out of sleep, summoned back to wakefulness, by the scent of vanilla.
292	I often remember the drunk beggar I met that Christmas in Milwaukee, and I regret I did not give him

	every dollar in my wallet.
293	Alexis liked her name, which is why she never told anyone, not even her closest confidants, that her name was Betty.
294	He called me a solipsist, so I slapped him.
295	The worst haircut I ever got cost me my job.
296	Michelle spent seven lonely hours watching the mailbox before she remembered it was Veterans Day.
297	The cat seemed to have grown fat overnight.
298	For years after Greg died, we would find little pieces of him—a rubber band for his braces, a pick for his guitar—scattered in odd places around the house.
299	As Josie felt the dizzy spell coming on, she realized she had gone another day without remembering to drink something, anything.
300	Even though he couldn't pronounce the word correctly to save his soul, Denny persisted in saying he was from Massachusetts in order to maintain the fake life story the DEA had given him when it relocated him and his family to Iowa.
301	For years Atherton had paid little mind to the sporadic reports of its citizens being abducted by aliens, but this quickly changed when the police chief and the homecoming queen disappeared on successive nights.
302	Standing in line cooing, smugly congratulating each other on remembering their airline tickets, the honeymooners independently and simultaneously realized they had forgotten their passports.
303	It was a long shot, but she figured if the hurricane arrived when it was supposed to and where it was supposed to, the damage to her mother's house would hide the fact that she had just broken open her head with an electric can opener.
304	Shelley relished the moment: for the first time she had succeeded in using all the ink from a ballpoint pen.
305	It wasn't until fall, when the leaves had finally been blown down from the trees, that he noticed the hundreds of pairs of old shoes hanging from the bare branches.
306	"Size 17," Chad shouted to the sales clerk, and he looked around to see if any of the ladies in the shoe store had heard.
307	The dire consequences of the children's experiment had not been foreseen in its simple premise: how much force would a roll of quarters generate when dropped from the fourteenth floor?
308	When I knew for sure I was taller than Daddy, I went into his shed and told him that he couldn't call me boy no more.
309	From the moment he pulled me over to the moment he walked away, closing his clipboard, neither the State Trooper nor I said a word.
310	Little Richard: has ever another performer assumed so modest a name?
311	Harry was a loanshark, and as a loanshark he had principles, one of which was that anyone who tried to pay a debt with a bag of Susan B. Anthony dollars would be shot.
312	The band could march well and play well, though not at the same time.
313	I believe in plumbing.
314	When the police announced they were loading their rifles with rubber bullets, Frankie thought, if only for a moment, Hey, this might be kind of fun.
315	In Atherton, everyone believes statistics.
316	I wanted to buy a car that no one would ever steal.
317	Darlene, who was a miserable lover, believed that Ricky never masturbated, and Ricky, who was little better, believed that Darlene came every time.
318	Grady was modest only when his incompetencies were too gross to conceal from children.
319	To live with Hank, Sung Mai soon discovered, was to know both the best and the worst Western Civilization had to offer.
320	Lawrence's midlife crisis hit him the week of his thirty-eighth birthday when he disappeared from the auto parts store, moved to Kansas, and got a dog named Toto.
321	Kit has two lines in his little black book—"Live" and "Mammorex."
322	Jubilation shifted abruptly to concern when my father realized that I was only stunned.
323	Gary Wofford looks bleary-eyed at his desk clock and realizes he's been up all night playing Crash Ranger on his computer, realizes he's missed the review session for Physics, the class in which he needs

	the most help, realizes he doesn't care because he finally beat his all-time best score in Crash Ranger, yeah, motherfucker.
324	My grandfather's dying words were curiously vague: "Never trust a man wearing rubber gloves."
325	You'd be surprised how many people think my father looks like Mussolini now that he's shaved his head.
326	To deny the humanity of a dog is to deny the humanity of my husband.
327	Spring teased us that year.
328	Every locker room has one guy who brags that he never has to service himself, and I'm not talking about pumping gas.
329	Chocolate is my drug of choice.
330	In the bleak future that faces America 75 years hence, the landscape will teem with geriatrics named Brianna and Tiffany.
331	I was headed to Borneo, all expenses paid by the National Geographic Society, to investigate sightings of a creature the natives called Wabuji, reportedly a tiny humanoid, three feet tall, that leaped like a kangaroo and communicated through whistling and squinting.
332	If you need to cut out a man's tongue and you need to do it quickly, it makes the job easier if you first widen his mouth with cuts at both corners.
333	She has a certain allure, that girl does, yes indeed.
334	He told his parents that his rebellion was not specific to religion—no, he refused to read <u>any</u> book whose pages reminded him of toilet paper.
335	My sister was born the day the first Barbies arrived on the shelves of the Atherton Sears, and there the comparisons end.
336	He had his first heart attack while watching Monday Night Football, discovering only years later, after his second attack, that the first had not been an incapacitating bout of indigestion.
337	When I refused any more chemotherapy, my husband angrily informed me that suicide is a sin.
338	I sweep chimneys and my husband tunes pianos, and we work only for people who will hire us both.
339	Francine Orton, our town's eighty-four-year-old librarian, always forgets me between my weekly trips to the library, which is annoying as hell for me but a source of wonder and excitement for her.
340	One look around that crowded display room, complete with tilt-mirror cases, new digital exhibits, and multi-speaker sound system, and there is no doubt that Phil Marshall is, indeed, the Wrench King of Kentucky.
341	The office consisted of twenty-four cubicles, inside of which diligent employees worked busily each day, and inside of which at least five tone-deaf drones hummed at barely audible levels, inflicting upon their officemates lugubrious buzzing renditions of hymns, show tunes, and advertising jingles.
342	My father, the schizophrenic, has two jobs.
343	It is a secret and exhilarating pleasure to be the lone bearer of bad news, Roberta realized, so she paced herself, smoking a cigarette between each call to members of her extended family.
344	The pilot announces that we have reached our cruising altitude of 37,000 feet and that we are free to unfasten our seatbelts and move about the cabin, but I stay put, wanting that feeling of security around my waist, wanting to feel secure for her, our Deborah, Zhen Lai a few hours ago, our new daughter, swaddled in an afghan, dreaming her way to America.
345	When we first met, my future father-in-law shook my hand and said, "By God, I think Ronald Reagan is the best president we've ever had!"
346	You don't know about me, without you have visited my web page, but that ain't no matter.
347	I was down at the end of the drive using the weedwhacker to trim the bushes when I heard Martin Lowbury's propane refrigerator blow.
348	When you send your film to be developed, you send it to me, and I, of course, can keep copies of pictures at my discretion.
349	Two nights a week, Earl rises silently from the bed, pulls his robe around him and soundlessly descends the stairs to the kitchen, where he uses Pam to coat the frying pan and then fixes a four-egg omelet.
350	Judith longed for a job, any job, for which skill with a plunger was not required.
351	Scoliosis means that whenever we form for inspection, the sergeant is on my ass like enamel on teeth.
352	The next day when I heard the news, I remembered that I had seen her dark figure walking down the mountain road as I was driving up and that I had wondered what in the world she was doing so many miles from town.

353	He wasn't the man, but he was one of them.
354	She wasn't all that, but she was some of it.
355	Every year Libby scrimps and saves in anticipation of Labor Day and the Atherton Jaycees' Annual Bachelor Auction.
356	I can identify four flowers by sight: roses, tulips, sunflowers, and carnations.
357	I open the door and the boy's standing there wearing sunglasses and I know already there's gonna be trouble.
358	He loved the smell of her apartment.
359	For the third time the investigator questioned the toddler, and he had nothing new to ask her, but he had his orders from the captain, so he sat down beside the three-year-old and asked yet again, "Now what was it that boy said before the bus hit him?"
360	Rome wasn't built in a day, but Beauregard, Louisiana, was.
361	All romantic notions about the sea disappear the first time you are out in bad weather in a boat that is too small.
362	"As you can see," our sixteen-year-old tells us with the sweep of an arm as we walk in the front door with our luggage, "the house is just like you left it."
363	He heard a bird chirping from somewhere but kept turning in the dry empty space looking for a bobbing head or a flutter of wings but finding nothing.
364	The manila envelope was filled with a mostly uninteresting collection of newspaper clippings—classified ads, baseball box scores, restaurant reviews—but these clippings, the sergeant soon learned, were merely wrapping paper for a severed human nipple.
365	Shattered glass was spread across the parking lot in an abstract design of blue and green shards.
366	My husband left home suddenly on a Sunday afternoon, mumbling something about going to the store to buy a big funnel.
367	She said yes, she guessed she would marry me, maybe.
368	Every morning we wake up together, Lucille and I, and she refuses to kiss me because she has not yet brushed her teeth.
369	My wife pokes an index finger slowly into my stomach and says, "Okay, now I guess you really are fat."
370	The girl arrived at the patent office with her mother and a contraption that seemed equal parts baby teether and mouse trap.
371	Only by looking at the photograph carefully, and from a slightly oblique angle, can you tell that the two small boys holding the woman's hands are blind.
372	Celia has been probing the Pentagon network for 45 minutes, trying to find a way in, when she hears the cars pull up out front and sees men in black running around the side of the house.
373	It was a contagion, this unfounded happiness infecting doorman and dentist and debutante alike, so the city fathers commissioned DownTime, a 24-hour dial-in service with prerecorded, depressing messages, and required everyone to call once a day.
374	The alarm clock was set to go off every ten minutes.
375	Patients are not surprised to meet a black neurosurgeon, nor do they seem to doubt my skill as a physician; that said, it is clear that many of them still would rather die than have me put my dirty hands in their brains.
376	Baby monitors can be used to listen to adults, too.
377	Dead Man's Run, where the local kids ride their bikes down a steep hill across a seldom-traveled road, hasn't killed anyone yet, but this is small consolation to Freddy Wilbur, Atherton's only grade-school quadriplegic.
378	After church one Sunday when I was a kid, I was eating lunch in a cafeteria with my folks when I saw Governor Wallace, whose wheelchair would not fit through the bathroom door, wash his hands in a glass of water.
379	What would you do if Kenny Woods, five inches and fifty pounds bigger than you, called your mother a slut and a ho in front of everybody down at the rib joint?
380	He was going to Maine, he said, all the way up to Maine, going hunting, going to kill something big, hopefully a moose, but a bear would do, too.
381	It was my youngest daughter, Mandy, who discovered the yellow jacket nest under the eaves.
382	My wife was talking about something having to do with car insurance while I was wondering how

	many pairs of fingernail clippers I had lost in the last forty-odd years.
383	Under the magnifying glass it became clear what was happening in the web: the bloated mother spider was slowly pumping from her abdomen hundreds of frantic, ravenous young that were turning on her and eating her alive.
384	When my folks get home from the textile mill every night, they barely have time to read the paper before they go to bed.
385	Alex is rummaging through his father's sock drawer, looking for long-lost quarters, maybe some dollar bills, when his hand touches something hard, and he pulls out from under an ankle brace a stack of rubber-banded CD-ROM's with no titles or graphics printed on their silvered faces.
386	Ted was going to write a book, and not just any book—it would be the history of the world as told by water.
387	In his will, my Uncle Lars left me his only belongings that I cared to have: 611 petri dishes of mold cultures.
388	My car stereo knocks out, so I head for a pothole to knock it back in.
389	Chasou, the African engineering student who lives downstairs in my basement apartment, has asked me how I feel about tenants keeping goats.
390	I'm no Muslim, but I for one think Salman Rushdie got what he deserved.
391	The fat guy, Albert, has been up there working on my roof in the blazing August sun for three hours when he stands too quickly and begins to sway like a drunken sailor.
392	In the bread factory I bake identical loaves of sandwich bread that are sold under a dozen different brand names.
393	Bobby drove women wild with his Barry White voice until they noticed his Gomer Pyle vocabulary.
394	I found Tuck Johnson out back of his place blasting away at a human torso target with an AK-47 on full auto yelling, "Yeah, Jesus, come on and get some, Jesus, come on, Jesus!"
395	He was an artist with a pen knife, so deft, so precise, so elegant that you almost wanted him to carve you up.
396	I have spent most of my life standing bleary-eyed in front of vending machines and wondering whether coffee or cola will give the jolt I need to get through another night.
397	She had a swing to her walk that even the women liked.
398	Just outside Atherton proper, beyond where Main Street becomes Route 441, you find all in a row the orphanage, the old folks' home, the animal shelter, and the armed forces' recruiting center.
399	Jake's parents never married, and that's not the only sense in which he was a bastard.
400	My cousin Rick was disappointed I didn't know where the prostitutes were in Baltimore.
401	Contrary to what the others think, I have played poker before, and tonight this fact may get me killed.
402	The memory club, the salesperson on the phone said, was designed especially for busy people like me.
403	For nearly a week now, the widow upstairs has been sitting by her window and watching them pave the YMCA parking lot across the street.
404	His name is Richard Margolis, and he is a wonderful man with one annoying habit.
405	Dr. Adams, my cardiologist, presses the stethoscope against my chest and listens to my heart as a dedicated priest hears a good confession.
406	To my children: If you are reading this, then I am dead and have avoided your reprimand and hatred for the events I am about to relate to you; know first that I loved you and did these things in order to protect you and to give you a better place in the world, and that if there were any other course I could have taken while retaining my dignity and my hopes for you and your futures, I surely would have chosen that path.
407	We were sitting on opposite sides of the darkroom in blindness when I touched him accidentally.
408	She was middle aged and not particularly attractive, a woman of thick waist and sausage fingers with deep lines creasing her face and teeth stained by too much nicotine and not enough toothpaste, but she was a famous writer and could do much for my career.
409	My parents first met in a grocery store two weeks after I was born when my father happened to see my face.
410	Frankly, Aurora bores me, Alice.
411	I am allergic to water.
412	The darkest secret of Doc Johnson's life was that during the night of the Blizzard of '37 his first wife,

	Eldena, gave birth to idiot twin sons, and the darkest secret of mine was that I was the fellow he paid to kill them.
413	My maternal grandmother knew every other Bible verse by heart.
414	There were eleven adults at the dining room table for Thanksgiving dinner, yet not one of them saw the baby climb onto the table and put her hand into the flame of the centerpiece candle.
415	In the full-length mirror at the foot of the bed, I see the top of my daughter's head appear.
416	She has had less husbands than I, and I have had fewer fun than she.
417	In the earliest morning, when the house is asleep and the cars in the cul-de-sac are quiet, I hear cows mooing in the distance.
418	He was so insubstantial that people never mentioned it.
419	For six years I have worked as the state dentist at the maximum security prison outside of Atherton, and for a not inconsiderable price, an aggrieved relative of, say, a molested child can count on me to perform the most excruciating root canal surgery on an inmate whom they considered to have "gotten off easy."
420	The walls of his bedroom were green, and the floor was parquet.
421	His professional goal, he realized only after two decades of toil, was crafting the perfect examination, that test that was so structured, so nuanced, so phrased as to represent to the students taking it, even the best of them, a taste of both heaven and hell, joy and despair, pleasure and pain.
422	Her name was Charlton Heston Chang.
423	My son, Andrew, has not slept a day in his life.
424	Within a month after opening his garage, it occurred to Ray that he need buy only one new air filter: after that first one was used, he could eternally rotate the dirty ones.
425	Today, as he has every week for fourteen years, Jocko will take his wages in quarters.
426	Of course, given his education, his upbringing, his innate wisdom, he should have known better, should have expected the outcome, but there he stood, or hovered, rather, shocked, aggrieved, insulted, staring down at the mangled car, the shattered glass, the multicolored liquids, the thing that used to be, would be remembered as, him—dead dead dead, unrecognizable, like a hot dog blown apart in a microwave.
427	Jackie stole from his friends, but because they were his friends he didn't steal much.
428	Bert had had the telescope for a week now, and having discovered neither an asteroid hurtling toward earth nor a neighbor exercising in the nude, he was going to take it back to Wal-Mart and get a refund.
429	Keesha, worried about her ability to fend off an anonymous attacker, wished she could learn to vomit on command.
430	You could hear the neighborhood gasp when the new tenant raised that flag on his front porch.
431	I find it hard to sleep when the moon is full.
432	In my line of work, constipation is an occupational hazard.
433	You know things are bad when the white people start to riot.
434	If Nora Schultz has a conversation, any conversation, even a conversation with a stranger, it begins with these words: "So, like I was saying."
435	Yo' dog so ugly, people think she yo' girlfriend.
436	His doctors insisted that everything was okay, but he was certain he had come to the hospital to die.
437	Twelve Finger Louie made cars by day and played blues by night with only a shower in between.
438	My cousin Nick discovered in his sixteenth summer that standing on street corners with his hand on his crotch made an impression on absolutely no one.
439	Randy was my flavor of the month.
440	It's our first fishing trip up here on the panhandle, and I know the boy is excited, so when I hear him get up in the middle of the night and creep not so quietly out the front door and onto the porch, I know that he's going to wend his way in the dark down to the river and sit there listening.
441	The Women's Club of Atherton went bust shortly after the "Cupcakes for Convicts" disaster.
442	The sky, streaked with curving, crisscrossing contrails, recalled a rink carved by the blades of an Olympic skater.
443	From my front porch I watched the search lights for the better part of a week before I finally had to go find them.
444	The first time we made love, she made me wrap my head in cellophane and breathe through a straw.
445	I pick up the phone and it's my sister, Clementine, who's been dead for fourteen years.

446	In Zalaché you can have a man murdered for a case of Coca-Cola, and for two cases and a carton of Marlboros, you can have the event videotaped.
447	He was home alone with the baby, his wife said, changing diapers for the first time and no doubt filling out his application for martyrdom.
448	“I’ll tell you the story,” he said, “but you gotta promise you won’t put none of it in the paper.”
449	He was one of those artsy types with his glasses smaller than his eyeballs.
450	Miranda waited for the train in the fog.
451	Newton has run his phone line through his computer and changed the ringing to a robot’s voice that declares, each time a call comes through, “New-ton, New-ton, answer me!”
452	You listen to Mudfoot and it’s all just some easy thing, but some of them little ones a bitch to catch and the motherfuckers keep you running all night.
453	The worst thing about being a ghost is the hours.
454	His love for Gladys burned like a bulb—fluorescent, not incandescent—but Gordon could never have told her this.
455	“Now this here rifle is a bit much overkill for a groundhog,” the salesman says, laying the assault rifle gently in its case, but I just ignore him and hand him my credit card.
456	My first official dill pickle, a six-inch, lip-puckering delight that had been sitting in its little plastic bag for who knew how long, nearly cost me my life in the getting of it.
457	The party was BYOH—bring your own handcuffs.
458	In my recurring dream of hell, I am forever having my hand slammed in a car door.
459	In the mental ward of Atherton General Hospital, we have rubber rooms for a reason: the creativity of those bent on self-destruction—or at least self-mutilation—is a wonder to behold.
460	“What <u>is</u> gossamer anyway?” Sandra asks, flipping through the AM stations on the radio as we cruise into St. Paul.
461	The rippled muscles of his abdomen reminded her of a pebble dropped in a puddle of stagnant water.
462	As a professional killer, he divided people into three categories: those he would shoot, those he would stab, and those he would blow up just to see the pieces fly.
463	Our waiter has gone, disappeared from the restaurant certainly, and the longer we sit here the more we become convinced he may even have left the country.
464	My father talks to strangers in elevators.
465	My second husband, Dale, would discuss nothing but hypotheticals, hypotheticals he was certain would never come to pass.
466	He bolted up in bed in the middle of the night, suddenly realizing why he could so rarely understand his boss the Dean: the man was a blooming idiot speaking Latinate prose.
467	The first product of a virgin birth was Jesus; the second, of course, was me.
468	Soon after Jenny moved into the sorority house, all the other women fell into the rhythm of her monthly cycle.
469	He was the only man I ever dated who waxed his face.
470	The debate, no doubt, will go on for years: Was he pushed, did he jump, or did he merely fall?
471	Babies are my business.
472	He worked with the intense concentration of children and the insane.
473	I handed the bouncer my ID and knew I was in trouble when he asked me to spell my last name.
474	For Christmas last year, Mrs. Mendelssohn, my ninety-two-year-old upstairs neighbor, brought me a half-dozen bran cookies and a glass of Ensure, which she insisted I drink on the spot so she could take her glass back to her kitchen.
475	His chief regret was that he had survived.
476	None of us realized how sick he was until he told us of his project to count the number of times the ball was bounced in the average NCAA game.
477	Even though he doubted he would ever meet a blind restaurant manager, Theo paid the extra five bucks to get the Braille business cards, too.
478	Their honeymoon was simple, but it was what they both wanted: they stayed in the local Super 8, watched TV all day, and had pizza delivered for every meal.
479	By the age of ten, Jill had decided that she would be a supermodel or no model at all.
480	Some men suffer through their lives because they should have been born as women; other men suffer

	just as much because they should have been born in Mississippi.
481	To her mind the mere concept of the bread machine was an affront to womanhood.
482	The toughest choice Percy ever made was his last meal.
483	Had he owned any underpants, he would have worn a pair that day.
484	To a certain breed of traveler, the smell of diesel exhaust is the siren call to romance and adventure.
485	For years Janelle's girlfriends urged her to flaunt it because she had it, and she resisted; as she grew older, however, when her girlfriends urged her to flaunt it <u>while</u> she had it, her resistance broke down.
486	She was too pretty to be Edna, so I called her Marie.
487	I am an antibiotic connoisseur.
488	Another fundraising dinner for the Atherton Museum of Art, and once again Hamlin J. Shuttlesworth, Chairman of the Board of Directors, is perplexed by the profusion of forks.
489	I have spent most of my adult life struggling to keep my friends from realizing the size of my bank account.
490	He was one of those chubby kids who wore the same clothes all the time and spent his lunch period reading sci-fi novels in the corner of the cafeteria.
491	Eighty-one years ago, I could never have imagined I had so much time left to live.
492	The ball was hit back to our pitcher Linc so hard we all knew he was dead before he fell off the mound.
493	To Mary Ann a prime number was more attractive than a man.
494	In grade school, he was the kid who couldn't do a pull-up, who couldn't climb the rope, who couldn't do a cartwheel.
495	Olivia could never resist a man who wrote with a fountain pen.
496	The first frog of the season appeared on our screened-in porch, all bulging wet eye, glistening skin, and throat-distending bellow.
497	My gimmicks have more soul than her technique.
498	The bombardment began at 0500 hours and lasted three days.
499	"You're a fantastic reporter," said Dean Marshall, vice president for programming, "but—" and here he faltered and cast his eyes around the restaurant, Gretchen knowing full well what he was trying hard to find the words to say but couldn't— "but you're ugly as sin and people will change the channel rather than look at you."
500	Just after breakfast my great uncle Nelson left his home in suburban Atlanta, headed for the podiatrist, and by nightfall he was in Missouri.
501	Something is not quite right with the gorillas at the Atherton Zoo.
502	Since getting laid off, Kermit doesn't do anything but sit in his Lay-Z-Boy and wait for Charlene to bring his next meal.
503	Sister Yolanda from Manila has been speaking in tongues for a week now, and Father Schenkel says she's speaking eighteenth-century Yiddish.
504	Bobby Lee Jones can cook so good it makes you want to slap your mama, which is why we put together a scholarship to send him to chef school up in New York City.
505	Dr. Miriam W. Irons has never lost a patient.
506	He walked like a man, but that was about all he had going for him.
507	Claire came home to find the poppy seed muffin untouched.
508	The first wave of refugees comes scrambling down the mountain in the snowy darkness, a pathetic convoy of ox-drawn carts, ancient tractors, and dazed men and women walking ankle deep in mud.
509	My finger was broken, that was for sure, but what bothered me was that I wouldn't be able to take my wedding ring off for the trip to Pittsburgh that weekend.
510	Clyde's goal as a writer was neither a best-selling novel nor a Pulitzer Prize-winning play but something more lasting: a new cliché.
511	In the days of my great grandmother, "How are you today?" was not an empty question.
512	We kept running into each other at the movies.
513	Mother always claimed that because her children needed her, she couldn't afford to work a full-time job, so she kept an ever-changing collection of part-time jobs that worked her 60 or 70 hours a week.
514	Benjy was equal parts adorable Hollywood pooch and Faulknerian idiot manchild.
515	We hear the pizza guy out on the porch, sneezing and coughing, before he rings.
516	Mrs. Wilson, our children's nanny, is either a nymphomaniac or a murderer or both.

517	Maureen didn't own a regular pen; she had only yellow highlighters.
518	It was so hot that year that the peaches were cracking open on the trees and had to be harvested at night, so we worked three shifts straight through the day trying to salvage what we could.
519	The front of my refrigerator is covered with post-it notes, hundreds of them, mostly appointment reminders and shopping lists, so many small squares of yellow paper that their very number defeats their purpose.
520	A body can walk for a long spell in Montana without seeing a camel.
521	"Talk to me, Judith, just talk to me."
522	My cousin's daughter left one of her toys behind, a little tiny rubber baby with most of the painted off hair chewed off, and wants me to send it back to her, but try as I might, I can't bring myself to part with it.
523	I found Matt Washburn sitting on a corner in downtown Atherton, and when I asked him what he was waiting for, he said, "The Holy Ghost."
524	Jimmy Kessler was back from boot camp and wanted to see me before he got shipped off somewhere, some place beginning with a V, but I didn't care how many weeks he had spent in the heat and the rain, I never liked him before and I wasn't going to now on account of feeling sorry for him.
525	My brother-in-law doesn't tell the usual jokes, but he has never tired of calling me "The Pole," which may be a joke itself.
526	I knew I was in trouble when my daughter, listening to my heartbeat and mimicking its sound, said, "Ba bump, ba bump, ba bump, ba bump, ba————"
527	When Jodi yells I have no idea what it's like to be her, I have to tell her, no, I know <u>exactly</u> what it's like to be her.
528	Uncle Leo says he wants a flag to drape his coffin, any flag will do, he just wants to go out with panache.
529	When we saw the tiny penis on the sonogram screen, Stephanie screamed.
530	If you turned your head just right and made slits of your eyes, the silvery bare trees slipping by looked like ascending souls on a ladder to the heavens.
531	No florist in town had black roses, so I began to experiment with food coloring.
532	Ricco dropped me an e-note: he was coming through en route to Rangoon, staying overnight, and could we get a cow butchered in time?
533	She was the only woman I ever knew who never fell asleep during the Academy Awards.
534	Stopping at the vegetable stand she has a vision of her future: a slow dissolution, a decline into dryness, papery flesh, withered breasts, lovelessness.
535	Two kids playing around Piper's Creek found two heads and a decayed, decapitated body that may have had two necks.
536	Where I come from, the only flowing water is water we steal from the mountains a hundred miles away.
537	He could tell she had been coached from an early age.
538	Leonard is walking noisily through the house, still bleeding, the pistol hanging loosely, though not purposelessly, from his hand, calling out, "Mother, oh, Mother, come out, come out, wherever you are!"
539	I am reevaluating my relationship with insects.
540	I didn't think the color of our skin mattered until a waitress in Ogallala, Nebraska, refused to serve us lunch in a diner half full and obviously needing the business.
541	In a little-known 1959 interview, Marilyn Monroe explains that she changed her name to evoke the alliterative Merry Mount of Nathaniel Hawthorne.
542	Daryl slept through class the entire semester, so I was surprised when on the last day he shook my hand and told me that he really enjoyed my teaching.
543	Roger Chapman earned tenure when he proved, mathematically, that novella becomes novel with word 40,001.
544	We were halfway through the abortion when the police came in and said that there was a bomb threat and that we had to evacuate the building now.
545	Myron denied being a vegetarian; he insisted, rather, that he was an herbivore.
546	Atherton Grocery ran Super Wal-Mart out of business with its drive-thru window; if you needed just a few items, Mabel or Vern would fetch them for you while you waited in your car.
547	Toni found out the hard way that waving goodbye was a local gang sign.

548	The color we were so interested in was antique, the salesman said, and it was all that.
549	At first Daniel's parents assumed that their son's bouts of echolalia were nothing more than an irritating childhood game.
550	Sitting in the classroom in his special seat by the window that overlooked Franklin Drive, Marshall gazed down at the traffic and realized, three years into his college career, that he had been wasting his time and that the only recourse was to leave that night without telling anyone.
551	I was sitting at the lunch counter reading the sports page when the stranger dunked his donut in my coffee.
552	Cold heartless stars presided blindly over the murder in the orchard.
553	I first made love to my husband in a pumpkin patch.
554	The morning my grandfather Colonel Lucius C. Bolton IV USMC (ret) tried to kill himself, the weather was unusually warm for March.
555	Dimitri squatted by the crime-scene tape, touched the ground, rubbed his forefinger and thumb together, and said, pursing his lips, "Is sex jelly."
556	His fantasy was to steal away with a waitress from Hooters, to fly with her to Dallas, to make like dogs with her on the Grassy Knoll.
557	These were not the fifteen minutes of fame that Cleo had always imagined.
558	Counting, my two-year-old daughter reaches nine and then says, softly, "X."
559	In junior high, I was the only guy with guts enough to take dance lessons, and I have been reaping the rewards ever since.
560	He wanted to be cool, to strut into the casino as the highest of rollers, but as he climbed from the dark limousine, the sudden brightness of the lights overwhelmed him.
561	We had been in the woods cutting all day and it was threatening to snow, but Tommy said we could get one more tree down before quitting time.
562	The city is dark, people moving silently, shuffling, their sibilant sighs of anguish and anxiety a susurrus of loss.
563	Because Elizabeth had been an art major, she stacked her house high with coffee-table books I never saw her read, and, while I will admit that she had better penmanship than I will ever have, I must also report that she wore the ugliest clothes I have ever seen.
564	"Rodney, if Jesus was in the fight game, what class you think he'd box in?"
565	My friend Stan Dennison, attorney at law, made a mistake a few years back on the O'Brien estate, such that the patriarch of the clan, one Nestor O'Brien, rather than having his assets protected while he's in a nursing home, is having said assets slowly drained away by the Atherton Health Maintenance Organization, a fact which isn't much appreciated by the O'Brien offspring, and which has necessitated Stan calling me in to "rectify" the situation by killing Old Man Nestor.
566	I was standing in the classroom doorway drinking a quick cup of coffee when I noticed that all the children on the playground had stopped cavorting and were looking up at the sky.
567	In 1948 my grandmother was sentenced to eight years in prison for killing her father, an injustice she still rails against at family reunions.
568	Two weeks before the wedding he received an anonymous letter that read, "Your fiancé used to be named Lance."
569	At first I thought it was a rash.
570	It was only after three weeks as her lover that he realized, with a kind of giddy horror, that many aspects of her were manufactured.
571	After unpacking shipments of meat, the ladies in the school cafeteria do nothing before destroying the empty boxes.
572	Satan, it can be said, is a wily motherfucker.
573	We spent most of our first six months in bed together, and while we were going at it, he never said a word.
574	The meanest woman I ever met sold fresh tomatoes from the back of her pick-up.
575	Jeremy's mother fantasized that when her son grew up, he might find work as a royal food taster.
576	My sister-in-law fears nothing more than salmonella.
577	Franklin was behind the wheel, windows open on an arctic February night, screaming at the dodging taillights ahead, when he felt the bile rising and whipped his head around to puke out the window, blasting the cars behind him with a frozen beer-vomit fusillade at seventy-five miles an hour.

578	He ignored the more mundane signs until one night in the shower he suddenly found he could smell the stench of the tomb.
579	The résumé did not seem to match the woman who now sat in our offices.
580	After me and Simpson come back from capping the family in the woods, he looks at the license plate that says “Live Free or Die” and starts laughing.
581	Under a bench in Washington Square Park, Maya Kogan found a shoebox of audio cassettes, all without labels.
582	Eldon was not surprised when he found transmission fluid on his parents’ bedspread, thus confirming his suspicion that they were robots.
583	He was our first priest to do mass in camouflage.
584	My wife is convinced that our female dachshund, Lula, spayed six years ago, is pregnant.
585	Most anywhere you looked in his apartment, you found a replica of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.
586	“You fast, boy, but my bullets faster.”
587	Before we left on vacation, my pregnant, fat-fingered wife hid her wedding ring, and now that we’re back she has no idea where it is.
588	He stood in the rain, shoulders heaving, and watched the clouds of vapor rise from his own hot head.
589	If there was a time before they started carrying me, I don’t remember it.
590	Giddy, throat-catching thrills, these: the seedy motel pretending to be otherwise, little surprises awaiting the weary traveler after a long day on the road: toenails in the coffee pot, sex stains and cigarette burns on the sheets, blood and sputum on the bathroom mirror, a small marijuana roach pressed between the pages of Jeremiah in the Gideons; it was for these glorious remembrances of the condition, humane, that I escaped from the “institution.”
591	Soon after my mother retired, she sold her dishwasher so she could afford a small photocopy machine.
592	The girls were out there playing hopscotch, and I could tell it was a serious affair because no one was saying anything.
593	Around the perimeter of backyard, jammed up against the chain-link fence, my husband has planted sunflowers, plants as tall as he is with blossoms as big as his head.
594	As she glances around the kitchen at the unfinished homework on the dining table, the half-empty cups of old orange juice on the counter, the chicken nuggets fresh from the oven, she realizes she will be forty in six weeks, and she asks herself, How did this happen?
595	Unthinking, Russell goes home to his wife that night humming “Back in the Saddle Again.”
596	The West was never won—it was merely borrowed—and now the principal and interest are due.
597	A man is considered handsome in our town if he has no facial scars longer than four inches.
598	In 1620 William Brewster came to America on the Mayflower with two sons whom he had named Love and Wrestling.
599	Milton is sitting in the spectator gallery of the courtroom, half asleep even though it is the trial of the century in Atherton, the trial of Nolan Crenshaw, the Baby Basher, when he realizes with a spurt of hot adrenaline that the deputies searching people at the courthouse entrance missed his small Swiss Army knife.
600	If only we had videotaped that Christmas Eve family gathering from beginning to end we could have determined whose glorious idea it had been to make the next family vacation a five-car caravan from Browns Mills, New Jersey, to the Grand Canyon, a trip that is now referred to among the Griffins as “a week that will live in infamy.”
601	3 a.m. and I need a cigarette, but there are no matches in the house.
602	Only a select few—and these are young children—find the idea of elephantiasis attractive.
603	The odd look on Senator Garrison’s face reflected his growing realization that he was hemorrhaging.
604	Outside my daughter’s window, there lives a creature whom she calls the Bad Monkey.
605	The neighbors have shaved our dog again.
606	There’s a man who pushes a cart up and down my street hollering, “Hot Roscoes, Hot Roscoes,” but I have no idea what a Hot Roscoe is.
607	It wasn’t until after her funeral when I was leafing through her Bible and a fine dust sifted from the pages that I remembered watching my aunt leaning over Philippians, one hand on the Bible, the other on her nail file.
608	If Patrick had died of AIDS or in a drive-by, I might get some sympathy, but when I tell people that

	Patrick died in the Gulf War, as often as not they laugh.
609	“Little Boy Found,” the headline read, and I knew I was in trouble.
610	Old Man Grand, the widower who lives on the corner of Main and Vine, keeps both doors to his house propped open but all the doors inside bolted shut.
611	My father was a poor businessman, which endeared him to people and, ultimately, made him rich beyond his dreams.
612	Tying Louis to the railroad tracks was our idea of a joke—we just assumed that any knot we could tie we could untie.
613	We were Catholics, so we expected disaster.
614	Her greatest pleasure was to dine in a fine restaurant alone.
615	Sir Francis Drake discovered our islands on his last voyage and wanted to keep their location a mystery so that he might have our beautiful women as his own secret harem.
616	Within a month of Stephen Reyburn’s death, his family was forced to sell his BMW because they could not get the smell of his cigars out of the upholstery.
617	Father Kevin is one of those handsome, athletic priests who drives the teenage girls and their middle-aged mothers wild and hits singing line drives to deep left when the parish plays St. Bonaventure’s in softball.
618	Linda Ho has seen thousands of movies but no comedies.
619	<u>Thursday, October 6:</u> I can no longer afford to take chances with my pants, so I wear both belt and suspenders.
620	A man of my character should never have moved to a town called Truth or Consequences.
621	Had Clarissa not been late to her piano lesson, she would have been at the keyboard when Mrs. Stouffer had her embolism.
622	Another Georgia winter: the radio calls for an inch of snow, and every store in town sells out of milk and bread.
623	Of all the residents of Atherton, Dottie hated Spunk so much and Spunk hated Dottie so much that Spunk would never go east of the railroad tracks and Dottie would never go west of them, yet Spunk and Dottie were the only two residents of the town to contract Legionnaire’s Disease from some unknown source.
624	It was now official: someone was shitting in the office after hours.
625	This is the third time this man has walked around the block, and I’m wondering when he’s going to get up the courage to ask me for a price.
626	I asked the cabbie to slow down.
627	It was a sudden sunrise, an impatient firework of color against the sky.
628	Standing on the subway platform, I consider stepping in front of the onrushing train, but knowing she will insist I was pushed, I decide to find another way.
629	She looked like a woman Rubens would have loved to have painted, except for the dime-sized hole in her forehead.
630	The news Pappy had died was bad, but the news he had left a will was worse.
631	My grandfather, when he began to lose his mind, imagined he was back in the old country, the islands, and was nine years old again, suffering with the others from drought and rasping, day and night, “Water, please, water.”
632	Billie has a folder in her locker in which she keeps permission slips for every foreseeable occasion.
633	Our son’s soccer coach told him to sleep with a soccer ball so that he could bond with it, appreciate its special smell and feel, but now, years later, the orthopedic surgeon says this was a grave mistake.
634	I come out of the convenience store, a root beer in one hand and a Dr. Pepper in the other, asking Mabel which one she wants, knowing she hates both.
635	“Peanut butter and jelly on pumpernickel,” said the waitress, laughing.
636	You order two sandwiches, you’re hungry; three, you’re a pig.
637	When Frankie says he does odd jobs, you don’t know what he really means until you see one of the jobs he’s done.
638	I will never forget two moments in my life: the moment I learned JFK had been shot and the moment I tasted my first Diet Coke.
639	Mr. Scribbs, the barber, is not known for his wit, but every once in a while he says something that puts

	the boys in stitches.
640	I had planned to see so much on my trip to New York—the Statue of Liberty, Yankee Stadium, Greenwich Village—but for reasons that I cannot fully explain I spent most of the week sitting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and staring at a giant canvas by Jackson Pollock.
641	Somehow the order got messed up at the printing shop, and ever since La Nita Mexican Restaurant has had on its walls a series of Chinese watercolors.
642	Her first time, she decided after the fact, would be her only time.
643	Every time, she swore it would be the last time.
644	Every Friday night she went to O'Hara's and wondered why no one spoke to her.
645	The first Monday of every month, the Atherton Country Club closes its golf course ostensibly for maintenance of the greens, the real reason being that Chantilly Lysistrada, Atherton's richest woman, likes to play an occasional 18 holes with a tennis racket.
646	When the doctor gave him his death sentence, he first regretted the extended warranty he had just purchased on a new riding mower.
647	Depending on the job at hand, my husband has at his disposal five different staple guns.
648	Georgette valued looks more than brains, yet she developed an impressive intellect analyzing methods to turn her homely features to best advantage.
649	Seen from the street a hundred yards away, the activity in the Lewis dining room looked like Mr. and Mrs. Lewis practicing a particularly acrobatic dance step when in fact Mr. Lewis was killing his wife with a chair.
650	Saturday before last we found the parachute hanging in a tree.
651	I have broken Michael's arm for the second time now.
652	He does these things just to drive me crazy—now he's insisting there's no difference between jam and jelly.
653	When the Big Bad Wolf huffs and puffs, my six-year-old thinks he's inhaling gas and smoking weed.
654	Men were not meant to squeal.
655	I am blind now and the photographs of my family I spent so many years accumulating are just so much paper under my callused fingers.
656	At the mall, people treat me with fear or pity, depending on whether they take me for a skinhead or a cancer victim.
657	No one likes a smartass, but with Billy McKee people made an exception.
658	We communicate more with our silences than with our words.
659	My Aunt Julia was a tiny woman, 4'10" if she was lucky, and during the war she worked at the Hingham Shipyard doing seam welds in the prows of battleships where no one else could fit.
660	Jess Weede drove from Oklahoma to North Carolina just to buy a pack of smokes.
661	She sits in the parked car listening to the engine's final pings and knocks, and reaches over to touch the child's head, the hair so wild and unruly now, the hair of a manchild, a stranger.
662	Regina Friski made the biggest mistake of her life on the morning of January 11 <sup>th</sup> , 1997, when she raised the hood of her black Ford Escort and filled the windshield wiper fluid reservoir with tap water.
663	He's out there again tonight, walking up and down the rows of vegetables with his flashlight, talking to the crops, saying, "Come on, now, pretties, come on, Daddy knows you can do it."
664	I do not know who feared the number more, Mom or Dad, but their collective fear of 13 was such that if a hotel skipped that number, my parents would sleep in the street before they would set foot on a floor that bore a deceitful 14.
665	Ever since we bought our second cat, my mother calls my wife and me "The Cat Lovers," and she takes every opportunity to mail us the "cutest" cat item she has found at a garage sale.
666	Last night Elena burned a tortilla and Maria saw the face of Jesus in the burn.
667	The usenet flame war went back and forth between Deronda Edmonds, cosmetologist, Detroit, and Professor Larch Allwyn, Sociologist, College of Atherton, until Deronda boarded a bus to Atherton, walked to Professor Allwyn's class in The Pathology of Poverty, and, in front of a stunned class of 200 undergraduates, shot the professor in the nose with a .38 special.
668	Lying in bed and holding the new baby, I feel the soft spot between the plates of her skull, and I worry about her and about me.
669	My first clue is that someone has strained the pulp from the orange juice.

670	In profile he looked like any other man, but when Myles looked you in the face, he became something else entirely.
671	Whenever you awoke in Amanda's loft, you had the dreamy feeling that you were underwater.
672	Every time Angela gets a new job, she insists we get a new phone number.
673	I can't get over the fact that my gynecologist looks like Joe Namath.
674	The first time I met my contact, Yevgeny, face to face, I was surprised to see that he bit his fingernails.
675	I lie down beside Grace and put my hands on her abdomen, feeling for the soft flutter and twitch of life, my life, her life, our mistake.
676	After the syrup factory burned, we spent weeks peeling amber shellac off every building in town.
677	It is no coincidence that the first sixteen-year-old boy pulling up in front of the Matthews house to pick up the elder Matthews girl for her first date finds Mr. Matthews on the porch cleaning his extensive collection of guns.
678	It was a modest goal, he knew, for even with his eighth-grade education and his 105 IQ he was smart enough to realize that modest goals were all he could afford.
679	I have not been able to catch her yet because she is, after all, a clever woman, but I have the suspicion that in the three months she has worked here, Karen has done nothing more than play solitaire on her company computer.
680	There's this guy at the end of the hall, we can't find out anything about him except he's from North Dakota, so we call him Rushmore.
681	We were chucking those sandbags up to the fellas on the levee, just heaving, getting a good rhythm going, not paying no never mind to the wind nor the rain, when somebody shouted above the noise, "Do you hear that?"
682	He wanted to be in an all-female band.
683	As we shook hands, I saw the tattoo, a faded green number on his right forearm.
684	The tightly knit vines of ivy hid the decay of the brick beneath.
685	He kept falling asleep in the car as his father drove, then waking up confused, looking at the blurred landscape, but it was Nevada, so it didn't matter.
686	Mabel Taylor uses only one-cent stamps, but she uses them by the bushel.
687	The elevator, the slowest in the city, is suspected by those who suspect such things of actually being designed slow as part of some kind of socio- or psychological experiment, and those who are suspicious in this regard are correct.
688	As a letter carrier for the United States Postal Service, I am daily faced with a burning ethical dilemma: is it permissible for me to read other people's postcards?
689	The first Bitch Slap in American cinema occurs in the film <u>The Roughhouse Gang of Philly</u> (1909; George Wayland, dir.).
690	Eleanor spends her days behind the circulation desk of the Atherton Public Library, rating male patrons on her own esoteric five-point scale, and wondering if another eight hours will pass without her seeing a man more attractive than a crumbling pulp paperback.
691	"A ricochet," the coroner said, pulling up the sheet over the dead man's face, "a conjunction of physics and bad luck."
692	As he stood stock still in the stale air of the southside pool hall, fans on the ceiling turning slowly overhead, bright lights hanging low over the tables, Leroy studied the nine ball against the rail and wished, if but for a moment, that he had done his geometry homework.
693	While André went to turn on the lights, Glenda waited in the foyer where she became aware of a great rustling of wings in the living room beyond.
694	The knife was sharp enough.
695	When I learned my mechanic had seven daughters, I knew I wasn't getting out of that garage for less than \$500.
696	Five pets in five weeks died in hit-and-run accidents seen by no one.
697	The house seemed to have been designed in a fit of petulant anger.
698	Already strapped into Big Bertha, Woodrow "Little Al" Capone was asked if he had any last words, to which he replied, "Everybody's a critic."
699	It was an ordinary pale green 1975 Nova, one of thousands, but it was her car, so every time I saw it, I felt the weight of dread.

700	For their Lenten observance, the children of St. Patrick's prayed daily for God or the pope to bring NFL football back to Cleveland.
701	After nearly forty-six years of marriage, he still saw constellations in her eyes.
702	What at first appeared to be a tennis racket was, in fact, a snowshoe.
703	He poured into the exam booklet everything, every last little damned thing he could remember from the book the professor had warned them would be the most important one read during the term, but it was obvious even to him that all he was doing was practicing his penmanship.
704	Divorce is, of course, a difficult decision, but when your wife is carrying triplets, the decision is a wee bit easier.
705	The space station is crashing tonight, so we pack a basket with wine and cheese and a warm blanket and head up to Willow's Hill with the hundreds of others, hoping to see the brilliant flare streaking across the night sky that will mean that four more men have burned to death in the stratosphere.
706	Her sighs were ambiguous.
707	Jimmy is one of those guys who has done everything at least once and knows how to solve every problem, but when he suggests that the best way to castrate my coon dog Monroe is with a fork and a blow torch, that's where I draw the line.
708	The school board unanimously voted to fire me because I pointed out to one of my students that her name written backwards spells "I moan."
709	I've been a state trooper 18 years, and this is the first time I've seen someone killed by a pork chop.
710	I was there the first night the Jewish cemetery got vandalized, but I had nothing to do with it, I swear.
711	My daughters are homely, which is no small comfort.
712	He survived four years in the Pacific as an Army officer during World War II, battling disease and the enemy and the heartache of separation from home and family, then two years in Korea with its own special brand of horrors, and a tour in Vietnam when he was near the end of his career, a general by then, all this in order to be right here, right now: sitting behind the wheel of a massive sports utility vehicle and turning into my path as I take the children to school, oblivious to our impending collision because he is blinded by age and the morning sun.
713	Oh, sure, Jack the hero chopped down the beanstalk and killed the giant, but did Jack clean up the stinking carcass that lay in the valley for three years, ruining the groundwater and poisoning the streams?
714	Knowing nothing about exchange rates, Mindy indiscriminately trades dollars for yen, pounds, rubles, anything, anything to make a small-town girl feel more cosmopolitan.
715	Atherton's first gay marriage caused little stir, as people in town had always assumed that Micki, the cross-dresser, was an unattractive woman.
716	I made a wrong turn in Chicago, and some kids mugged me and stole my sense of humor.
717	Every once in a while a real smart kid does some real stupid things; this is that time, and I am that kid.
718	We are here at the child psychologist's because of what my son, Neal, did to his ant farm.
719	My grandmother has always said that she doesn't want to be a burden at the end of her life, so now that she's been sent to the nursing home, she calls and asks me if I'll do her a favor and kill her this Saturday, right after "Wheel of Fortune."
720	Against my better judgement, I told my dad he could caddie for me in the Oklahoma State High School Golf Championship.
721	Since the daily inspections started, I have taken to scrubbing myself with kitchen cleanser.
722	The coroner said he could not determine a cause of death until we found the head.
723	When I was growing up, I was often told—erroneously, I now realize—that nothing is more painful than a gunshot to the kneecap.
724	I was doing lazy laps around the court when the two kids came through the chain-link fence, bouncing a battered leather ball, looking for trouble.
725	My sister and I didn't realize until we were in our thirties that we had been having the same dreams since childhood.
726	"You call this beer?" my father says from his hospital bed, making a face you might find carved on some kind of totem.
727	I invite the new guy at work, Jared, over for pizza, and he doesn't eat anything but crust.
728	The DeLongpre twins were dead, that was certain, but no one could tell if it was a murder-suicide or vice versa.

729	Duncan prepares for retirement with what he calls his 50-50 plan: 50% of his weekly pay goes to his checking account, and 50% goes to the lottery.
730	When the Samoan football players from the junior college show up at La Nita Mexican Restaurant for the Wednesday night buffet, gathering on the walkway and clapping their hands, Angelina, the hostess, makes the sign of the cross four times.
731	The moment I was born with a penis between my legs, it was determined I would be a lawyer.
732	I was down at the station when the police brought in Waybad Easton for the murder of Little Milton Hargrove, and you could tell it had been a rough ride because all of Waybad's teeth were missing.
733	Pawnshops are keeping my family afloat.
734	Every Friday night Jim and Lucy Phipps wage war on a Scrabble board to determine whether they have sex on Saturday morning.
735	Inspector Joseph Chandler squeezed into the ballroom knowing that Jack the Ripper was somewhere in the crowd but knowing little more than this.
736	Jalapeño Day at the Atherton Retirement Village was, the board admitted, a failure.
737	When she winks, her face remains expressionless while one eye gently falls shut.
738	Harry would never do anything five minutes or hour from now but after the next cigarette or the next crossword puzzle.
739	My uncle Hubert, a World War II vet, had in his half-bath a field manual that gave explicit instructions for gouging out a man's eye.
740	When the Klaxon sounded from the tower high above the coastal town of Hauser, Oregon, people looked up from work and play as though regarding a new kind of bird or airplane, unaware, most of them, that the alarm was the last thing they would hear before the tsunami hit.
741	There never seem to be any fresh batteries in this house.
742	I have to warn newcomers that my mother is given to histrionics and that when she yells "Oh my God, it can't be!" she's probably referring to the first snowfall of the year.
743	No one remembered until the Easter Egg Hunt was in full swing that the meadow had once been a minefield.
744	My eldest swore that if we took the last of this month's check and ordered the cheapest metal detector in the catalog, well, that puppy would pay for itself in a week.
745	In its early days the typewriter was a heavy piece of machinery, too heavy, it was said, for a woman to handle.
746	When my husband invites our new neighbors over for a game of Twister, I know at once he's hitting on them.
747	I wear ten thimbles.
748	When people hear my given name, Corncob, I have to explain how much Daddy loved Faulkner.
749	During the winter, calls to the station pick up because there are always kids dumb enough to answer the dare and to lick the monkey bars.
750	"Roll over, roll over!" Johnny keeps shouting to the cocker spaniel, but his grandparents have forgotten to tell him that the dog is deaf.
751	Baby Tyler is in the hospital again, and this time his room is equipped with a hidden surveillance camera.
752	I had waited all afternoon for the window salesman to arrive for our one p.m. appointment, and when he finally showed, I let him unload his six sample triple-pane windows before I let him see the BB gun.
753	Daddy was a short-order cook at a truck-stop diner, and Momma turned tricks out in the parking lot.
754	I'm about to rob my first bank, and what I'm worried about is not getting shot or shooting someone or ending up in prison but whether I left the stove on when I walked out of my apartment this morning.
755	He tells me he's from Belgium, but his French is too good.
756	My husband and I smelled the smell, traded glances, and pictured the diaper bag sitting on the kitchen table at home.
757	From the sounds coming up the valley, it was clear the police were still killing people in town.
758	I don't know what the joke at the children's table was, but they were laughing so hard little Inky had spaghetti coming out his nose.
759	Technically, I suppose that our breakfasts do vary, as we alternate between pancakes and waffles.
760	In the City of Brotherly Love, I live in a neighborhood where nobody is related.

761	The food at a Jenkins funeral was so good, people around Atherton checked the obituaries every day hoping that one of the older members of the clan had gone to that great buffet in the sky.
762	The Cincinnati-bound greyhound pulled into town long overdue, like a phone call from the governor coming too late.
763	I challenge him five times—"You're joking," I keep repeating—before he convinces me that the keys are locked in the car.
764	Forty years old and adamantly not trying to prove anything, Landon Edgerton, associate professor of English, author of two inconsequential books on composition, recently divorced and exceedingly horny, planted his right foot, turned and pushed toward the free-throw line in the intramural basketball game and said "Oooh!" as his Achilles tendon snapped like a pretzel stick.
765	Randall is a stand-up comic with a gimmick: he has one joke but thousands of punch lines.
766	I take Traci's money, she little realizing I would kill her husband for nothing.
767	When he came back from the war, my father laughed a lot, but the laugh, people said, wasn't quite right.
768	As long as I live in this town, I will be known as the girl who peed during the kindergarten Christmas pageant.
769	He finally admitted he was going deaf when Led Zeppelin just didn't sound right anymore.
770	I was the star of the original Menudo, and look at me now.
771	What do the 42-year-old physicist and the 14-year-old babysitter talk about on the five-mile ride back to her house?
772	I am a professional polluter.
773	The Reverend Joshua J. Smalls peered over his black reading glasses on their gold chain and whispered to the mass of eager, upturned faces, "God's last name is not damn!"
774	It was a mistake, I know, to force the local school district to stop celebrating Christmas, but it was a mistake that a Christian needed to make.
775	The auctioneer speaks so rapidly Colleen cannot follow the bidding, but she needs the juju so desperately she bids at every opportunity, even if it means outbidding herself.
776	At Pentagram Publishing, we have a simple marketing tool: every book that rolls off the presses is slapped with a large pink sticker proclaiming NATIONAL BESTSELLER!
777	Halloween Week descends again, so the shelves of the children's section at the Atherton Public Library are stocked with such classics as <u>The Kitten Who Was Buried Alive</u> , <u>Mrs. Johnson's Bloody Bones Soup</u> , and <u>Frankenhamster</u> .
778	I see a long line at the pizza counter, so I place my order on my cellular phone.
779	The moon was late that night.
780	In 1964, Twelve Finger Louie debuts at Newport, but when he takes the stage and looks out at the pale faces, he cannot think of any songs he is willing to sing.
781	I was standing in line at the grocery store when I realized VHS would soon bury Beta, and I left my full buggy behind as I ran to a telephone.
782	Somehow, in the mad crush of the party, he finds himself in the corner behind the front door pressed against his accountant's voluptuous wife, and the woman looks him directly in the eye and reaches down and gently grabs him through his pants and says, "My husband tells me your accounts receivable are out of balance."
783	I awake surprised at the brightness of the room, and when I notice I cannot hear the hum of the refrigerator, I realize the power is gone.
784	Neither Kurt nor David could believe just how bad the sentence really was.
785	The old man pulls off his trifocals, sighs, throws the sixth draft of my report on the desk, and says, "Well, Rogers, I guess it ain't no sense in expecting you to polish a turd."
786	It doesn't take an Einstein to figure out that Tab Reardon, our weatherman, and Rob Edwards, the anchor, hate each other's guts.
787	I've just traded a candle for a can of beer.
788	The report he was delivering to the board of directors was the single worst bit of news he had been associated with in his thirty-two years in business, but it no longer mattered because in approximately half an hour, the gel cap he had swallowed would dissolve in his stomach and he would be dead, or so he hoped.
789	The next-to-last thing you wanted to do was to challenge Rocco Graza to a game of tetherball, and the

	last thing you wanted to do was to win.
790	Lena likes to get liquored up before she flies as a way of calming her nerves, and this is why she has found herself drunk and in the wrong city three times over the past year.
791	I am unnerved by the new chocolatier on the corner, the one that sells its wares by the gram.
792	My wife was away on business the night our twelve-year-old, Denise, called from the bathroom, “Daddy, it’s happening!”
793	The man who invented the Happy Meal is a genius; nevertheless, he must die.
794	You could tell he thought he had gotten away with it when he opened the door and saw us on the porch, weapons drawn, and his face just went blank.
795	We courted in Morse code.
796	What I want to know is, who died and made Oprah Miss Thing?
797	The lab technician shakes her head and states flatly, “No, somebody already dropped off your sample—we sent out the results this morning.”
798	I tell Frankie he gots to make up his mind ‘cuz I ain’t driving around no more with Chachi No Nose in my trunk.
799	After her husband passed, old Miss Hazel Rennick took to standing on the street corners of downtown Atherton clutching the leash of her dog Tony and staring at each passing car as though she expected the imminent return of a long-gone houseguest.
800	The morning Lance Childress was honorably discharged from the Army after eight years of service, he got drunk on tequila, then dressed up in his Battle Dress Uniform and went on a personally forced march around the perimeter of the base in the ninety-two-degree heat of the South Carolina August day.
801	He was born older than his mother.
802	As she stood over his lifeless body, smoking gun in hand, she glanced out the window to the thermometer and saw it was 108 degrees outside and thought, Shit, it’s hot.
803	My wife pirouettes in front of the full-length mirror: “Don’t these boots make my ass look huge?”
804	There have been lulls during which significant aspects of the air raid—the exploding bombs, the wailing sirens, the sweeping lights, the pounding AA fire—have been absent, but these lulls have been declared statistically insignificant, at the most those 11 minutes in 1985.
805	My vacation was derailed by the candiru, that Brazilian creature of God with a penchant for swimming up a man’s urethra and lodging there with the spikes of its spine.
806	In the blues, sunset is the moment of truth: after the workday is done and the night is closing in, have you got somebody to be with?
807	Yvonne has out the butterfly net again, so I know another argument is coming.
808	Through the shimmering heat waves of midday you could see the tractors crawling over the corn stubble in the distance, plowing the withered stalks under the parched earth.
809	I spend the morning raking the front yard, gathering the dead leaves into equal piles on either side of the big sycamore, and then, just before the boys get home from school, I spread the leaves out again.
810	In the snowy darkness Elder Franklin strokes his mistress while his children cry and miss him in their home across the state.
811	He was chief among the circus freaks of his day: The Man Who Could Tickle Himself.
812	“It happens every spring,” Lieutenant Warren said, pulling off the forensic gloves, “so you better get used to it.”
813	My father never put in less than ten hours a day at work, so when he died of a heart attack at his desk at two that afternoon, we left him there until six before calling the ambulance.
814	I been an engineer more than thirty years now, and I ain’t never seen no cowcatcher catch no cow.
815	It was a small, irregularly shaped patch of ice, easy enough to see, but impossible, he soon learned, to miss.
816	Carmine can live happily in any town, he says, where he can buy tacos and rent videos.
817	Phyllis comes in my office without knocking and lays down the law, either I close the Yoyodyne account today, TODAY, or I’m out on my ass, son-in-law or not.
818	I’ve been trying to remember whether I started losing weight before or after I started feeling sick.
819	Minnie Lorretto stood in the doorway, arms wide, beaming, as the young couple came obligingly up the brick and mortar walkway, her blood astir with her mantra, “Be the house, sell the house.”
820	Why do they need a South Dakota, too?

821	Ricky is at the worst age for a punk, fifteen, that age when he thinks he knows more than you know he doesn't, that age when he hangs around with the older punks who teach him new tricks, that age when he is just beginning to teach his own tricks to the younger punks, that age when life is a chain of corruption with him the vital, nasty link.
822	Tuesday night is domino night at the church, and if the Bakers miss out, it doesn't sit too well with them, as the Sweetwaters can tell you, because I, for one, have got to start minding my own business.
823	"I feel divine!" Susan exclaimed—a scandalous sentiment to issue from the mouth of Atherton's only confirmed atheist.
824	I am convinced that my parents' generation overrated pie, but I am equally convinced that my own generation underrates it.
825	In my experience, the half-life of love is roughly six months.
826	Another November, another election, and again I find myself candidate for an office I have chosen more or less at random.
827	Mrs. Ware, our banker, never looks you in the eye when she talks about sums over a thousand dollars.
828	The phone rings at 3 a.m. and I pick it up and say, "When's the funeral?"
829	I was raising the cup of coffee to my lips when she threw the Pynchon novel (you know which one) and hit me square in the temple.
830	I'm at the park hitting fungoes to my kid when the sky starts to cloud over and I feel that my keys aren't in my pocket.
831	This is a restaurant where everyone whispers.
832	On those moonless nights downtown, where the streetlights burn barely brightly enough to illuminate the ground, the wind pushes butts and leaves and crumpled paper haltingly through the gutter, and the stray motorist prays her car will not now sputter.
833	This story of mine ain't too long, but it's interesting, because right now, at the beginning, is where I find a real live diamond—that's right, not a pearl, a diamond—in an otherwise unexceptional oyster I bought at the fish market.
834	If you had gravy, a Tilson would have a fork.
835	Walter told me we were getting the video camera because he wanted to record the lives of our kids, and I thought, How sweet.
836	I could spend my whole life setting mousetraps in this house.
837	No one knows it yet, of course, but in six days Albert will go completely insane and cause a fair amount of trouble in the small town of Lazbuddie, Texas.
838	I remember my grandfather joking to my grandmother that a sick wife is no wife at all, which he thought was a hoot because she could no longer understand a thing that he said.
839	The sweating plumber, leaning over the toilet, looks up at me and says, "You might want to bring the kids in here and confront them with the evidence, so to speak," which rubs me the wrong way because I'm the cop around here and the plumber makes twice what I do.
840	Late afternoon on a rainy Memphis day, 42 degrees and the wind is blowing, and Little Stevie is hugging the storefronts on Beale Street, dragging his bad foot behind him, ducking under awnings to keep out of the rain, making his way to Omère's, where a man with a long scar on his cheek and a gun in his boot is waiting to see if Little Stevie is going to make good on his debt.
841	Richard tried not to show the strain as he lifted his lemon-flavored seltzer water to his lips, but he had just pressed a button to execute a trade that could, in half an hour, mean a hefty commission or his head on a platter or both.
842	I have been housesitting more than a week now and still I have not found a washcloth.
843	My second-best friend, Romaine Montrose, is executive vice president in charge of projects for the Efficiency Guild, whose members earn points for such things as making just enough pasta for a party of fourteen, finding the optimum "mouth life" of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum, and discovering the "best" point of orgasm for sex with an almost-but-not-quite stranger, this, of course, being different from that optimal climactic juncture with a spouse or longtime companion.
844	After an eighty-three-year lay-off, I'm wearing diapers again.
845	The mattress I bought at Goodwill has dreamed through me again.
846	"No one ever said life was meant to be fair," my sister told me the week after she married Atherton's richest bachelor.
847	At first Randall's attempt to surf the internet reflected a noble intellectual interest, but now he had been

	dragged down by the undertow and swept out to sea and was adrift, half waterlogged, in a flood of pornography, paranoia, get-rich-quick schemes, and death.
848	Though he had lost both legs in the war fifty years before, he still dreamed of dancing.
849	The contractor was three months late completing the addition, and now the lawn guy, standing in the shadow of the new study and bath, looks around at the rock-studded muck and furrows of the backyard, shakes his head and says, "This shit looks personal."
850	It is difficult to imagine a world without pizza, but if not for the courage of one woman in Little Italy in 1953, pizza as we know it today would not exist.
851	"There," my father said, snapping the kite in half, "now are you ready to go home?"
852	At the lunch counter she was making up for lost time.
853	Though my parents were against it, we named him Oscar.
854	Before I realized my mistake, I watched the waiter disappear with his \$20 tip and my cab fare home.
855	We made the deal on the house on a lush summer's day and moved in in the fall, just in time to see the leaves blasted from the trees by a windstorm and to realize that the cluster of buildings five miles away and visible for the first time was a nuclear power plant.
856	My crazy Uncle Earl has a million-dollar stamp collection, which the family is trying to convince him not to laminate.
857	Looking at the amateurish artwork on the side of the ice cream truck, the flavors offered seemed to be orange, grape, and turd.
858	Yoyodyne Corporation fired me on a Monday, and when I went to clean out my desk on Tuesday, an armed guard escorted me to my office.
859	He was ashamed because he could not remember his father's face.
860	The only explanation for the fact that my son, John, is an inveterate exaggerator and liar is that he was conceived in Texas.
861	The Indians around these parts were known by their enemies as the Gnawheads.
862	He looked at the football player in the front row and realized, to his horror, that the kid's neck was thicker than his head.
863	My mother was a wonderful woman, but she was impatient and unyielding, which explained the basement full of broken toys.
864	I was stopped at an intersection when I sneezed and the traffic light turned prematurely green.
865	When you're finally breaking ground on a \$200 million development that took three years to configure and the foreman stops the bulldozer and comes back to the trailer, announcing that he has to call the anthropology department at the state university before he goes any farther, you know, pretty well, that your life has been fucked.
866	My official title is Associate Vice Dean of Student Affairs, but what I really am is Dean of the Dead.
867	DISK ERROR.
868	At the Information Desk of the Atherton County Health Department, there is a wicker basket piled high with condoms free for the taking.
869	He couldn't remember if he had thrown up, so he did.
870	For once in your life, will you listen to your accountant?
871	Our new president, Flight Lieutenant Albert Nuthumbay, is partial to jazz, so I, being a classical oboist, and the other members of the national symphony will die by firing squad at first light.
872	As I pass the alleyway, the figure in the shadows whispers, "Function over form."
873	The sun burned through the smog-shrouded valley, a morose crimson orb, the bloodshot eye of a drunken cyclops.
874	We have to run a gaggle of dehumidifiers in this place, twenty-four hours a day, just to keep the walls from crusting over.
875	Everyone always asks how I'm doing, but the real question, the one that only the very brave are able to ask, is if it hurts.
876	She was the sort of woman who thought, <u>Jesus Christ, not again</u> , even when something had never happened to her before.
877	My grandmother, participating in the first agricultural labor strike in America in the cranberry bogs of Cape Cod in 1937, fled to New York after hitting a strike-breaking cop, and stayed there for ten years, not knowing that the penalty for hitting a policeman was only eight dollars, no time served.

878	After the diabetes got bad and they had to amputate my feet, my brother suddenly began wearing sandals.
879	My grandfather chose being a cop over joining the mob, and to this day he doesn't know if he did the right thing.
880	With a flourish I gave Rosalind the bouquet, tragically unaware that the sego lily is the state flower of Utah.
881	Two years after coming out of her coma, not only could my daughter still not walk, but she could not be made to understand that there was this thing called walking she could not do.
882	We don't have anything in the shop worth stealing, so we keep the surveillance camera pointed out back to make sure no one puts anything in our dumpster.
883	The only thing straight and unequivocal about my Uncle Theodore's life was his tee shot.
884	Their marriage resembled nothing so much as an eleven-year bout of mutual motion sickness.
885	Fumbling into wakefulness, I blinked back to life memories of last night's confused coupling and one word formed itself out of the series of images: rape.
886	Camille has been burning incense again.
887	I am awake in darkness and I don't know where I am, but from somewhere up above me comes the distinctive whumping of basketballs dribbled on a hardwood court.
888	Mrs. Crandall Q. Trent IV took her morning constitutional swim at the Atherton Country Club, deliciously unaware that the ink introduced into the water to discourage the infant children of club members from peeing in the pool was now turning her churning wake a brilliant, bloody red.
889	Tad walked in on us again last night.
890	Falling wetly from the night, the magnolia leaves struck her windshield and held fast as she banked into the turn.
891	Something big has died in the heating ducts of my grandmother's house, but she wants me to leave it alone because she's convinced it's an angel.
892	Whenever a student asked a particularly challenging question, Professor Alfonse DiPajama would remove his glasses and wipe them with his tie to a count of one hundred, then put the glasses back on his nose and resume his lecture as though the question had never been asked; eventually, the questions stopped.
893	The longer men knew Sippie, the better looking she became, which mightily confused her new acquaintances.
894	Sour cream is the world's whitest food, whiter than mayonnaise or cream cheese by half.
895	I had no idea what she meant when she narrowed her eyes at me and growled, "I'm gon' get Edwardian on your ass."
896	Since we can bring only a set number of products to market each calendar year, my function at the Yoyodyne Corporation is simple: I am in charge of frustrating, diverting, subverting, and/or destroying a random number of engineering projects, at various stages of their completion, each month.
897	Folks have got to realize, it ain't the ends of escalators that snag kids, it's the sides.
898	The double dose of Viagra, Jack Preston realized too late, was a mistake.
899	The Uvula Fairy has struck again.
900	The one time I almost got laid was in Vermont.
901	World Championship Tiddlywinks is everything you imagine and more.
902	That lady from church is out there on the porch, holding a basket full of something and tapping timidly at the door like a sick woodpecker on a frozen telephone pole.
903	I was sitting behind the counter in my pawn shop and reading the racing sheet when this guy came in with a cardboard box filled with stuff that he had stolen from my house.
904	Jimmy moved us to this town on account of the job his uncle said he could arrange and because I'm pregnant with his kid, but he's just left the apartment now to go to the store and something tells me he isn't coming back and this is why he moved us 1000 miles from home.
905	This year, my mother resolves, she will kill the deer herself if they eat her petunias.
906	The child, in all its iterations and permutations, has been waiting millennia for just this convergence: hot dog, microwave.
907	The day Charlie Watkins walked into the meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Atherton Branch, of which his mother, Eudora Watkins, was the presiding president, and opened fire with his grandfather's World War II vintage M1 rifle, I, in a not unrelated event, was scheduled to go

	on trial for making lewd public comments about Francine Orton, our town's eighty-four-year-old librarian.
908	I cultivated my addiction to internet pornography so that I would have less time to gamble.
909	Dennis, my step-nephew, is obsessed with the Arctic Circle.
910	I tell people I am an attaché and let them think I have a fancy government job when in fact I am a human briefcase, a glorified gopher for my company's CEO.
911	Half the men who heard her name fell in love with her sight unseen: Natasha.
912	Jack made no secret of his reluctance to attend the industry meeting in New York, complaining to everyone from the mail boys to the executive VP in charge of his division, but secretly he was beside himself with lust, for he had dreamed of screwing a New York City prostitute, not a white one, all his life, and now he had his chance.
913	If you want to know what real Americans think, check their mudflaps.
914	I ask Melissa, my fourteen-year-old, about her math teacher's request for a parent-teacher meeting, and Melissa says, "Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah, Dad."
915	From the start, their relationship was high concept.
916	For the longest time we thought our parents didn't speak Pig Latin.
917	When Eileen told us she could sell any book to any publisher, at first we didn't believe her.
918	Sometimes part of my job as a forensic scientist is reassembling dogs.
919	Todd King changed his first name (legally) to Coach.
920	Mr. Menander is dying in Virginia in a room overlooking the Rappahannock.
921	When I kissed her cheek I found that her tears were not salty like mine.
922	Sheila goes to the comedy club and laughs at all the jokes, good and bad, then goes home alone to her apartment and soaks in a hot bath, where she tries to keep smiling.
923	Everybody loved Nanny Charles and we all stood up for her against the Social Services people, even though we knew that they were right and that she was slowly losing her mind.
924	If the clock above my bed had a second hand, time might seem to move.
925	Rodney shoots me a look meant to shut me up and heads for the door for his evening's wild entertainments and says, his voice drifting back in a wreath of smoke, "I'll sleep when I'm dead," which I know will be soon.
926	We've been in the walk-in cooler for three hours, the strain definitely starting to show, when the kid with the gun suddenly sits bolt upright and says, "Anybody know any camp songs?"
927	I was at the park enjoying the birds when a well-dressed man—a foreigner—attended by two employees, approached me.
928	Ernesto, a dock worker, spends his weekends home alone in bed, eating chocolates and reading romance novels.
929	Elden turned and took a short step back toward the living room, feeling that special kind of annoyance engendered by someone speaking unintelligibly from another room while you're trying to get something done.
930	The Women's Auxiliary Book Club of Atherton met monthly for 23 years until that fateful November when Ruth Judd's husband discovered that the women had been reading different books from the ones they had been showing to their husbands for lo those many years.
931	His sign said WILL WORK FOR FOOD, so we offered him work, and he refused.
932	I am lying on the ground, trying to hold in my guts with my bloody hands, and the cop looks down at me, laughing, and says, "Looks like you're gonna die, nigger."
933	He stands there in the doorway, silhouetted by the hallway light, and I pretend to be asleep as he watches me, the stink of gasoline and char filling the room with despair.
934	For the child of an orthodontist, I have fucked up teeth.
935	"Come on, girls," shouted Murray, "let's sing this one like we really mean it!"
936	My daughter furrows her brow: "What do you mean, Michael Jackson hasn't always been white?"
937	Jurgen sat and watched in wonderment at the ease with which the morning news anchor segued from war to cellulite removal.
938	Lettie Douglass had long regretted the flatness of her bosom, but when fighting broke out between North and South, her manly figure was suddenly her chief asset.
939	Oversized snowflakes floated to the earth like an army of paratroopers.

940	I worked my way through college by pretending to clean pools for computer geeks over in Redmond.
941	It was the fourth inning of the district championship, and we were getting beaten so badly that to protest even having to take the field in our half of the inning, we did so without our gloves.
942	I have a twin cousin, which has led to much whispering at family reunions.
943	Tonight was Rollo's big night, the night he would prove to the world once and for all that he could unhook a brassiere with one hand—and his left hand, at that.
944	She smelled like vinegar.
945	"Wait, wait!" was all he could get out before the hammer came down sharply on his forehead.
946	My four-year-old twins hover near the towel-filled box, gawking at the four kittens, two black, two gray, and in their beaming eyes I can see the future: a smothered kitten, a broken kitten, a crushed kitten, a drowned kitten.
947	Sitting in the conference room minutes before the other faculty and his protégée were to file in for the thesis defense, Professor Loam leafed through the 264-page document and realized that it was the work of a complete and militant incompetent.
948	It's a mistake to plan a funeral too far in advance, especially if the cops find out.
949	Shari gives the same explanation as always, but we know her fasting has got nothing to do with religion.
950	Over the course of our thirty-three-year relationship, I had suffered insults too numerous to enumerate, insults that had run the gamut from playful verbal abuse to carefully calculated physical torture, and at last I had decided that the time had come to find a new dentist.
951	His buns were tight, so tight that walking was well nigh impossible.
952	We were sitting on the front porch of my cousin's farm house, drinking tea and watching the intermittent traffic on the road, when the swarm of Amish boys came swooping over the rise, arms swinging, heads tucked into the wind, riding the asphalt on the singing wheels of their inline skates.
953	The word spreads quickly through town: there's been an accident at the corduroy factory.
954	My father and I buy out failed business for pennies on the dollar and then resell them; when I started out with him he told me, "Remember, scavengers start at the ass and work their way up—it's smelly work, but scavengers are the last to go hungry."
955	"You are probably asking yourselves, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, if my client fired in self-defense, then how can we account for the fact that the dead man was shot in the back seventeen times?"
956	His primary goal in life was never to make a hasty decision, which meant, among other things, waiting for just the right moment to get in line at the sub shop so as not to be pressured into deciding too quickly because there was a hungry, clamoring crowd behind him.
957	Nimby is laid out on the cooling board, Mattie standing by his side, and the kids are keeping a safe distance, scared though they can't tell you why.
958	I've seen things on the internet I didn't think God allowed.
959	Mom has hauled down my boxes from the attic, and she says she's giving it all to the Salvation Army if I don't come and get it.
960	We will have made it, we know, if my wife can get through West Virginia without going into labor.
961	I never thought I could love a man whose big toe was not the longest on his foot.
962	When Liam laughs the spittle flies and he throws back his drunken head and goes "Awk awk awk awk awk!"
963	Technically, the babies were identical twins, though only one of the girls had a flagellum.
964	At the annual children's Christmas party at the Atherton Country Club, parents gather in a back room and play Monopoly™ with real money.
965	The guys made fun of me because I took Home Economics, but when time came for flag football, none of them laughed when they realized I had sewn my flag securely to the waistband of my underpants.
966	Clark Lenoir has maggots in his soul.
967	An integral part of my plan to drive Erik crazy is to decrease steadily the wattage of every light bulb in the house.
968	When the escort service said they had a girl from Russia, I said, "Yes, sure," thinking of Lara from <u>Dr. Zhivago</u> , of Julie Christie, but when the knock came on my hotel door and I opened it, I saw instead a scared seventeen-year-old who tried to sound tough by saying, "You gonna let me in, buddy?"
969	When I was in the fifth grade, I cut classes for a month to attend the trial of Nolan Crenshaw, the Baby Basher, and by the time of the closing arguments, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up, if not



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