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A Star has Died

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NOVEMBER MORNING

Morning can't separate you from the lake. One of those days keeps the streetlights on noon.

highway into Allendale meadows are the toast at summer's sun.

usually bright barns visible e cattle tly fur.

rk-tilled fields riped with narrow snow ose two horses e other side of the fence heir backsides to me, e sharp air.

ever froze over tight. t move. oods of migrating birds ll disappeared.

e windows antique church e Eastmanville intersection ining -out.

A STAR HAS DIED

Rich Starr sat back drunk in his chair before a smiling energetic young girl in tight blue jeans who was applying the finishing touches of paint to his face.

"Cheer up," she said to his numb face and giggled suggestively as she brushed her fingers back and forth across his relaxed lips, causing them to bounce limply. "I'm all done! You look bomb!"

"Well, you're not looking that bad yourself," said Rich. "Why don't you meet me here after the concert and we can party at my house."

"Sure," she said and giggled.

He drank the rest of the beer beside him and pushed himself out of his chair onto unsteady feet. His body teetered until he adjusted to the change of position. He walked clumsily on six inch platform shoes to a lighted mirror, dodging a back-stage hand pushing a huge amplifier. His face, bright red except for the two black circles around the eyes, stared back at him as he inspected it. His long black hair and the midnight blue velvet body suit he wore created a border around the red face, accenting its evil look. He smiled at his absurdity and stuck out his tongue and bugged out his eyes for his own amusement.

A hand slapped down upon his shoulder, and Rich searched in the mirror for the face which accompanied the hand. There behind him stood Geno, grinning through a bright green face and wearing a replica of Rich's suit.

Geno spoke anxiously, "I'm fired up. We are going to kick tonight, man. We are going to kick~"

"Really," said Rich agreeing. "Where is the Bud Man, Geno?"

"Talking to some chick," said Geno, his green face gleaming. "Grab your axe and let's go get him. We're on in a few minutes."

Rich grabbed his guitar out of its case and followed Geno towards the front of the large stage. He listened to the drone of voices and the commotion being created on the other side of the stage curtain as they approached it.

/Kristen Jordan/
Smoke was beginning to form in clouds about them, and Rich's eyes began to water. In the dimness of the stagelights, they spotted the lemon yellow face they searched for, talking to a young girl in tight blue jeans. Geno grabbed the Bud Man by the arm and pulled him rudely away from his conversation.

"Let's go Bud Man," said Geno. "We're on."

"I'm coming. I'm coming," replied the Bud Man and returned his attention to the young girl.

"Come on Bud Man," said Rich. "Time to feed the animals."

The Bud Man reached for his bass guitar as he concluded his conversation with the young girl. She stood smiling after him as he walked away and joined them. They walked joking amongst themselves to the front of the stage in the huge auditorium. Directly behind the curtain, they took their places at their instruments. Geno sat behind his drum set, tossing his sticks in the air and catching them. "CHAOS" was spelled out in energized letters on the face of the bass drum. Rich and the Bud Man stood in front of each side of the bass drum, with a microphone stand before each of them. There were amplifiers and speakers stacked like building blocks on top of each other, forming a half circle around them. A few scattered stage hands wandered off stage as the final preparations were concluded. The house lights faded to darkness. Dozens of round little red lights glowed like ttes about them from the amplifiers and equipment. The crowd quieted down. Rich was swelling with excitement and energy. He felt he would burst. The Bud Man with his bass slung over his shoulder, stepped up to the microphone in the darkness.

He shouted into the microphone, "Are you people ready to rock and roll?"

An uproar of howls, shouts, screams, claps, and whistles echoed across the auditorium. The curtain opened slowly but the band remained invisible in the darkness.

"Well we're Chaos," he continued, "and you can bet your ass we are."

As he finished speaking Rich struck a note on his guitar. The power of all the electronics behind them burst from the amplifiers and screamed across the auditorium. He fingered up the neck of the guitar and the note and shrilling, gathering feedback from the equipment. The note transformed entirely to feedback, with emotion, and he arched his body back, his hips. He shook the string violently and it wavered uncontrolled. He thought with delirium he controlled at his fingertips. The fire restrained within him, now burned unregul to the Bud Man and shouted into the microphone:

"One, two, three, four."

A multitude of spotlights struck the band on and off. Rich and the Bud Man simultaneously, the air and landed. They slammed their hands of the guitars, launching a chord into the ears of the screaming crowd. Rich, from the cheers, and he felt chills rising from his gravel voice said the lyrics of the song while his gravel voice shouted out the lyrics of the song between the blasting chords.

He sang, "Honey you told me things were hazy, but the way you shake your ass you make me crazy. All right!"

The Bud Man and Rich jumped, danced, across the stage, making grotesque faces to the crowd. Geno's green face looked on and continued to pound his drums. Rich's head was drinking and he was not in full control of his fingers. As they finished the song his fingers struck several sour notes. The volume dissonance more than enough to pass unnoticed over the audience.

Rich became more and more aware of the of his drinking. The evening seemed prolonged from the intensity of the music. He remained enthusiastic, and clutched and shook crudely, as if to rape them. The time arrived song and the highlight of their stage show...
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Rich, said Geno. "We're on." I'm coming," replied the Bud Man and to the young girl.

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Rich reached for his bass guitar as he conversed with the young girl. She stood as he walked away and joined them. They put themselves to the front of the stage. Directly behind the curtain, they sat their instruments. Geno sat behind him sticking his sticks in the air and catching spelt out in energized letters on the drum. Rich and the Bud Man stood in front of the bass drum, with a microphone stand before them. There were amplifiers and speakers stacked like a half circle. Scattered stage hands wandered off stage when the curtains were concluded. The house lights shone. Dozens of round little red lights glowed through them from the amplifiers and equipment. Geno's green face looked on smiling as he continued to pound his drums. Rich's head felt light from drinking and he was not in full control of his playing. As they finished the song his fingers slipped, and he struck several sour notes. The volume distorted the dissonance more than enough to pass unnoticed before the crowd.

Rich became more and more aware of the adverse effects of his drinking. The evening seemed prolonged, as his head pounded from the intensity of the music. Despite this, he remained enthusiastic, and clutched and shook the strings crudely, as if to rape them. The time arrived for the last song and the highlight of their stage show. His head
rattled as he struck the first notes of the song. Realizing it was time for his part of the finale, Rich glanced at the other members of the group. They looked on with laughing smiles as Rich fell to his knees, and a spotlight centered its beam on him.

The technician at the mixer turned Rich to full volume. A loud gutsy blast shrieked from the guitar as he struck the strings. Rich looked out to the crowd and popped his eyes open and laughed insanely. He began to masturbate his guitar, slowly sliding his hand up and down the neck. He progressively increased the speed of this movement, until he had created what sounded like an attack-warning siren on a ship, multiplied to fifty times the volume. Rich stared up at the ceiling attempting to appear in ecstasy as he continued to move his hand up and down the neck of the guitar. He thought with delight of the innocent minds he might be exposing to his exhibition, and he laughed to himself at their innocence. When he could move his hand no faster, he flipped a switch on the back of the guitar, causing a cloud of smoke to ejaculate out of the end of the neck.

Most of the crowd had risen to their feet also and were cheering as the spotlight moved from Rich to Geno. The light gleamed off the cymbals as they clashed from Geno's blows, during his improvisation. Rich gazed out at the crowd, visible now with all the spotlights on Geno.

A few rows from the front, he noticed an old man wearing a suit, seated next to a woman in a blue dress. The unlikelihood of such people being present at an event like this caused him to inspect them further. He squinted his eyes to avoid the glare, and discovered to his horror the stupefied faces of his mother and father; he had not seen them for at least a year. The horror was soon washed away in a flood of embarrassment as he considered their thoughts. He imagined how he had appeared a moment ago. In a daze, he detected the shouts of the Bud Man, whom he soon came to realize was wondering why he had ceased playing. His mind was drowning in an ocean of turmoil and he struggled to allow his senses to remain afloat. The eyes of the Bud Man's astonished face stared angrily at him, questioning him. Regaining his composure, Rich reenacted his playing mechanically.
the first notes of the song. Realizing part of the finale, Rich glanced at the group. They looked on with laughing to his knees, and a spotlight centered at the mixer turned Rich to full volume. Rich shrieked from the guitar as he struck the d out to the crowd and popped his eyes up and down the neck. He progressively of this movement, until he had created an attack-warning siren on a ship, multiplied in ecstacy as he continued to move his neck of the guitar. He thought with mind he might be exposing to his laugh to himself at their innocence. His hand no faster, he flipped a switch guitar, causing a cloud of smoke to Hriekd had risen to their feet also and were light moved from Rich to Geno. The light goals as they crashed from Geno's blows, Rich gazed out at the crowd, the spotlights on Geno. In the front, he noticed an old man wearing to a woman in a blue dress. The people being present at an event like this Rich to them further. He squinted his eyes to discovered to his horror the stupefied and father; he had not seen them for at horror was soon washed away in a flood of considered their thoughts. He imagined a moment ago. In a daze, he detected Man, whom he soon came to realize was I ceased playing. His mind was drowning oil and he struggled to allow his senses the eyes of the Bud Man's astonished face, questioning him. Regaining his composure, playing mechanically.

His mind wandered grievously back to his parent's home. He remembered when he was a child sitting quietly in the living room putting together a puzzle. He could hear the consoling lull of his father's guitar being played softly in the background. He remembered the comfort of the house. He remembered his father teaching him to play the guitar, and the enthusiasm with which he had learned.

What had brought them here, he asked himself mournfully. They would not have embarrassed him by coming here if they knew what it was like, he thought. They had always allowed him to make the decisions concerning his life, and never tried to shame him for them. He had called them two weeks ago, he remembered, and told them his band had finally made it, and was playing here before nine thousand people. They must have flown from Maine to New York for a surprise visit to hear him play, he thought. He overflowed with embarrassment.

Perspiration beaded on his forehead as it trickled down from his hairline. The music was no longer invigorating for Rich. It seemed to drill into his skull and cause his head to throb with distress. This was noise, he thought to himself and grew irritated.

He looked out at the drunk and drugged, dumbfounded faces of the crowd. They clapped their hands and rocked their heads rhythmically to the music. They seemed vile and alien to him. The young girls were looking to the stage with stardom gleaming in their eyes. Rows and rows of them in tight blue jeans dreaming bright eyed. And for what, he wondered?

He looked at the people he shared the stage with. Geno's green face was grinning as he beat his drums and finished his improvisation. The spotlight shifted to the Bud Man, who now to end the song pulled a knife from a pocket and thrust it into a pouch of goat's blood underneath his shirt. He acted out a long spasmodic death before the screaming crowd, as the blood gushed down his blue velved suit.

This was sick, Rich thought to himself, enraged. He gaped with disbelief at the bedlam about him. He was nauseated from the sudden realization that he had witnessed and contributed to this madness reverently for years, yet had remained blinded from its impact. He could not bear to look at the group or the crowd, for he loathed them both. In a frenzied rage he ripped
his guitar off its strap and raised it in the smokey, choking air, and threw it onto the stage with all his force. A clashing metallic clamor sprang from the amplifiers and pulsed as the guitar smashed upon the stage, snapping the neck and breaking off the knobs and tuning keys. He turned and stormed off the stage glancing with rage at Geno on his way. Geno's green face smiled with pleasure at Rich as he passed by.
"Hey Rich," he said. "That was great man!"

/Chris Brooks/

Janury evening

Under the last wing of sun
the frost-bitten road
collapses under the snow
spreading long into the cold
I walk north on an edge of sheet
as the evening begins
to disappear into a blanket of wayworn night.

There is a spray of pink
over the houses wall after
over the barns board after
between the leafless trees
branch after branch after
A steam of sun stammers out
behind a web of sycamores
three miles away on my left
I can feel it sing like a song
upon the chill of my skin

There is a white post leaning
don the lame side of the road
I rest against it
until all has flexed from a pink to a grey
to the beginnings of black
The moon comes up full
on an insipid stream of still
and with a curious vapor
I wonder if I can see you
Leaping about in its shadow

/Marlene Vitasinski/

/Kris Jore/