Stop the presses!
And trash collection.
And permit processing.
And stop giving out federal loans, too.

The best ones, though, are on the upper levels, away from the bustling bottom floor. By Nick Patyk

The government shutdown

American Anarchy: Inside the Government Shutdown

By Nick Patyk

Washington come to an agreement? At the center of the stalemate is the Protection and Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare—the controversial healthcare reform bill requiring all uninsured Americans to purchase some form of health care, with lower-income-bracket families receiving subsidies from the government.

If the president and Congress can't agree on how to finance the budget... the government will cease all but essential services.

Essentially, the Republican-controlled House wants to defund Obamacare, and the Democratic-controlled Senate would prefer to see it implemented quickly. Chris Chocola, president of the conservative, anti-tax Club for Growth, said Obamacare is "one of the biggest assaults on individual liberty in history [and] stifling economic growth." Thus, Republicans seek to delay its rollout for as long as possible.

Yet regardless of political agendas, a government shutdown is considered undesirable. On Wednesday, September 25th, the U.S. Senate voted 100-0 to move closer to passing a temporary funding bill that would avert the shutdown. Though Republicans seek to delay the enactment of Obamacare, their goal would not actually be aided by a government shutdown. Because the funds have already been set aside for the health care policy, it goes live on October 1st regardless of whether the government is fully operational or not.

But why should we even care about a shutdown? I mean, who the hell needs a government, anyway?

By Marilyn Moro

I slept with a stranger on the 3rd floor of the Davis Center. It was, needless to say, delicious. We left the bookstore at the same time, our footsteps fell in sync as we both headed in the same direction. I glanced over and our eyes locked; we both knew what was up. We ducked quickly into the little alcove off to the right and we both headed straight for the couch. I slowed down, faltering. I gave him the once-over. Stubbled face from days gone without shaving, wrinkled and stained plaid shirt like he had left his house in a rush and put on the first thing he found, dark, deep-set eyes, with such intensity, such hunger, like he needed this badly, so I conceded and let him have it.

We tossed our backpacks to the floor and while he threw himself on the couch I ambled over to the plush red chair and settled in. He fell asleep instantly. Sprawled out on the couch, I could see more clearly that this student was much more sleep deprived than I. Silent congratulations myself for being the better person and just letting him have the couch, I finally managed to find a comfy position to nap in and soon enough we were both dozing away.

With the semester well underway, finding the time to manage my social life and increasing schoolwork is difficult at times. Do I spend three hours doing homework or do I go to this awesome concert instead? Why not both? First concert, then homework? Perfection!

By the time I finally roll back into my room after a night of revelries to get some schoolwork done, it's morning and I'll probably be running on very, very little sleep the next day. That's why napping is so important to me. Yet, with the air getting chillier and the sun being a little less friendly with its nice, warm rays, napping places are in short supply. Lacking grassy beds to lay on, I'm not going to hike back to my room to fit a nap in. So here's a list of some awesome indoor spots to get your napping on:

The Davis Center has a bevy of nooks and crannies that are perfect for napping. The best ones, though, are on the upper levels, away from the bustling bottom floor.

By Julianna Roen

... read the rest on page 3

... read the rest on page 4
Dear Cat Lady,

I love film, and my favorite movies might be the most important things in the world to me. Well, besides the girl I’ve been seeing. The only thing is, she can’t seem to stand watching movies together. Twenty minutes in, she always complains of a headache and wants to go do something else. We’re planning a date next weekend and I really want to end the night with The Last of the Mohicans because it’s my favorite film of all time (if I were forced to pick just one…). But I’m worried that I’ll be awkward if she doesn’t have a good time. I don’t want this to come between us, because she’s really great and also I want to continue to see breasts in real life, not just the Internet.

Sincerely, The Last Mohican

Dear Lonely Mohican (I paraphrased)

I think the real question here is whether the movies are the issue, because there are plenty of reasons films aren’t everyone’s thing. Some people prefer books or music, or just can’t sit still for that long, or they fall asleep, or they’re of the more simple-minded persuasion and can’t take all the new plotlines. So are there things your girlfriend does like to do, or does she mysteriously get a headache twenty minutes into every date? And beyond that, is she really bored with you or just a hypochondriac? You’re gonna need to buck up and ask some questions here, because it seems your differing feelings towards movies are already starting to come between you if you’re this worried. Maybe explain to her how important this particular film is to you, and if she can’t make one exception for you…? That’s your call. If nothing else, all the free movies and porn in the world are—well, you know where to find them.

Go get em, tiger! —Cat Lady

Sometimes reading the water tower makes our readers want to get naked and fight the power. But most of the time, they just send emails. Send your thoughts on anything in this week’s issue to thewatertowernews@gmail.com
Another fall, another iPhone release. This season, however, Apple featured not one, but two new phones. Over the release weekend, Apple sold 9 million iPhones, a new launch record. Prior to last Friday’s release, Apple let loose its latest mobile operating system: iOS 7.

iOS 7 marks the biggest change Apple has made in its mobile platform in years. The obvious change is in the aesthetics: everything is flat. With new icons to boot, iOS 7 is pretty as fuck. Other than some issues figuring out multitasking, my experience has been extremely positive. iOS 7 is snappy, with no glitching or lagging. Some users have complained of reduced battery life and reduced life expectancy—oh wait, that’s what doctors say about smoking. The only thing that has really bothered about iOS 7 is the response from the public, specifically on Facebook. The most irritating comments I have seen thus far are the good of “iOS 7 you have changed my life!” ones. I shit you not; this is one of many hyperbolic Facebook status updates that have been littering my wall as of late. My thoughts: 1) What the fuck do you actually know about mobile operating systems? and 2) if it has legitimately changed your life—oh wait, that’s what doctors say about smoking. 

The first time I held the iPhone 5s in my hands and circled my thumb around the new touch ID sensor, I had to go to the bathroom to clean the jizz out of my pants. Yes, I love Apple products and will continue to overly praise them, but do not let that distract you from the truth: the iPhone 5s is Apple’s best phone to date. Updates include new and improved flash, improved camera with 120 fps slow-motion capture, the touch ID sensor, and a 64-bit processor. I won’t get into the specifics of the implications of such a beauty, but the 64-bit processor is like the one in your computer and it is one efficient motherfucker. This means improved loading speeds as well as improved battery life. As for the touch ID sensor (fingerprint scanner) I was unable to personally test it, but reports say that it is extremely responsive and can even scan a toe if you’re into that sort of thing.

For those of you who live under a rock, the two new phones Apple released are the iPhone 5c for the thrilling color options, respectively. At $99 and $199 for the 16 GB and 32 GB versions, respectively. The iPhone 5s is one of the sturdiest I have ever encountered; it helps that the polycarbonate backing is steel-reinforced. The 5c features an improved processor as well as an improved front-facing camera. The iPhone 5c will replace the 5 as the low-cost model, retailing at $99 and $199 for the 16 GB and 32 GB versions, respectively.

Answer: hell yes. However, if you can’t swing the investment right now, there are many other great products out there. I think the new iPhones are great by both design and functional standards, but if you’re not into iOS then this isn’t going to change your mind. And as for the corporate machine: let’s make as much money as possible. Yes, first and foremost they are a business and turning a profit is the goal, but this is no longer your father’s Apple with the Mac II and Macintosh. The Apple where people wait in line for: should I buy one of the new iPhones? Now Apple has abandoned that position to perfect the corporate machine: let’s make as much money as possible. Yes, first and foremost they are a business and turning a profit is the goal, but this is no longer your father’s Apple with the Mac II and Macintosh. This is the Apple where people wait in line for days, and for what? A phone or a computer. They’re still making the best products, but they’ve abandoned whatever set them apart.
I feel like the time has come, and I need to share the experiences that I've had at a hole-in-the-wall bar down on Pine Street. I've never been able to find it when I've been looking for it specifically, but on nights when I've happened to be wandering, it suddenly appears somewhere around Leddy Park near the chocolate factory. The fact that nobody seems to know what I'm talking about when I bring it up is seriously vexing me, so I figured I should throw the details out here.

On the first night, I saw the Japanese characters, glowing dimly in the back of what otherwise appeared to be one of those sketchy gravel parking lots on the south part of Pine Street. Why the fuck not, reasoned my less-than-sober mind, and I found myself peering through the doors into another world.

I could see clearly, but the light was dim, effervescent even. Paper lanterns were suspended around the spacious, low-ceilinged room. Hushed voices rose to my ears, speaking carefully, calmly—no barroom chatter here. The steady silence of the situation. When you venture up there you must respect the seriousness of the situation. When you examine your foe, who proved to have been playing dead, springing back up and kicking out her legs. This contest went on for what must have been 5 minutes. Someone handed me another cup of tea at one point. Finally, the girl landed a hard gut punch and pounced as the old man fell, tearing at his flegding horse. When the gravel dust cleared, she stood above him, holding up a lovely six-petal flower as bits of the old man's paper fluttered down around his vanquished frame.

Every night I've gone since, the same thing has taken place, with contestants sparring and folding. I've been practicing both my fighting techniques and my folding skills; I can do a crane with my eyes closed now. Soon it might be me in that circle of death and glory that forms each night outside Burlington's only full-contact origami bar.

NAPS - continued from pg. 1

My favorite place (mentioned at the beginning of this piece) is the D&E Unity Lounge. Located right across from Henderson's Cafe, if you're not looking for it you will miss it. It is a recess of peace and tranquility. Two velvet red chairs and one soft bouncy couch make it the perfect hidden spot to get a great nap in. A balcony overlooking the atrium of the Davis Center allows the muddled noise to drift in making the perfect indistinct background sounds to lull you off to sleep.

Of course, if you're the type of person that needs absolute silence in order to hit the ZZZ's then I highly recommend taking a quick trip over to Billings. Billings is a dusty old building that never seems to have anyone around. With a monastery-like atmosphere, it feels sacreligious to even think about making any noise in there. The lovely little study nooks built into the walls create the perfect environment for your own private napping corner. Bring a sweater to roll into a lil' pillow and hit that table hard with the much needed sleep you deserve.

We were massed around what at first seemed to be a fight. Well, it was a fight, but something was different. I did a double take. Then a triple take. A grey-haired old man and the pigtailed girl I'd seen earlier were wrestling, trading kicks and punches, shouting, cursing… and folding. She was making some sort of flower, and he was working on what could have been either a dog or a horse at that point. Each was trying to complete their project, while simultaneously doing their best to disrupt their opponent. I watched as the girl added a few petals, curling the tips delicately, then whirled swiftly around and delivered a roundhouse kick to the old man's chest. He cried out and fell back, motionless on the gravel. The girl, fingers still working, bent to examine her foe, who proved to have been playing dead, springing back up and kicking out her legs. This contest went on for what must have been 5 minutes. Someone handed me another cup of tea at one point. Finally, the girl landed a hard gut punch and pounced as the old man fell, tearing at his flegding horse. When the gravel dust cleared, she stood above him, holding up a lovely six-petal flower as bits of the old man's paper fluttered down around his vanquished frame.

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the (not so skinny) scoop on soyo froyo, yo

by lizstafford

I wouldn’t say that I’m huge “froyo” fan. I can appreciate that it’s a healthier alternative to ice cream, but nine times out of ten, I will forget about my growing waistline and down a pint of good ole Ben & Jerry’s. However, being the health conscious individual that I am, I decided it wouldn’t hurt to go explore the ever-expanding world of frozen yogurt. As I tend to shy away from chain establishments, I sauntered on down to independently owned SoYo on Pine Street.

Before we go any further, you should know that this place is not a self-serve frozen yogurt shop. Instead you tell them what you want and they serve you. I know, it’s a crazy concept, this non-self serve froyo, but that’s what they do. Thankfully, that means that you don’t pay by weight, unlike establishments like Orange Leaf, so go ahead and choose those dense heavy toppings you’ve been avoiding. Also, there are only four different flavors including original. Granted, they’re delicious and they do change every week, but different only four different flavors including original. Granted, they’re delicious and they do change every week, but don’t go in expecting a wide array of flavors. Instead, expect a small, delicious, handmade batch of Apple Cinnamon or Nutella. Don’t worry though, the topping choices are quite good so you’ll still get to cover that entire swirl of local VT goodness, you can compost your leftover trash.

“No, it’s not Ben & Jerry’s, but it’s just as Vermont-tastic and definitely just as delicious”

So basically, this place is the wet dream of any froyo crazed UVMer.

If composting and deliciousness were not enough to persuade you to check out this froyo-astic establishment, maybe their cow mural will. As an Art History minor and cow appreciator, I was pleasantly surprised by a whimsical and utterly adorable blue cow painted on one of the walls. And all that dairy in your SoYo froyo? It’s fresh and local too. If you don’t pay by weight, unlike establishments like Orange Leaf, so go ahead and choose those dense heavy toppings you’ve been avoiding. Also, there are only four different flavors including original. Granted, they’re delicious and they do change every week, but don’t go in expecting a wide array of flavors. Instead, expect a small, delicious, handmade batch of Apple Cinnamon or Nutella. Don’t worry though, the topping choices are quite good so you’ll still get to cover that entire swirl of local VT goodness, you can compost your leftover trash.

So, you’re thinking, “Well, that’s great, but how do I get there?” Well, you have a few options. If your asses and go walk down to SoYo before the weather gets too Vermont-y. No, it’s not Ben & Jerry’s, but it’s just as Vermont-tastic and definitely just as delicious.

happy hour: dr. who

by rebecca laurion

First off, if your first impression upon reading this week’s show title is “Oh god, not another one of those nerdy-ass people,” then you can fuck right off. Doctor Who is not only the longest-running show in history, but it’s one of the best. Seriously. Aliens, time travel, the occasional romance and enough tears to sink the Titanic all over again; this show’s got it all. Now, for this game, I’m basing it only on the New Who episodes: Eccleston (Nine), Tennant (Ten) and Smith (Eleven), to clarify. I wrote this game in mind that you could play it with any of these three doctors. But as always, keep it classy, keep it safe, and Allons-y!

Take a drink:
• Something goes wrong with the Tardis (again)
• The companion gets into trouble (again)
• You have no freaking idea what’s going on with the plot, but you’re still invested
• A person you vaguely remember from your 10th grade History textbook shows up.
• You can barely handle the sassiness (mostly works with Nine and Ten)
• The Doctor uses science/technical terms you’re pretty sure don’t exist in the real world.
• An actor from Harry Potter shows up
• Someone you love dies.
• “WHAT THE FUCK” plot twist.

Finish your drink:
• “Fantastic!”/“Allons-y!”/“Geronimo!”
• Someone asks, “Doctor who?”

by ben berrick
**in defense of...**

Do you ever look back on your most recent embarrassing moments and get thwacked ... be game to eat food off the floor. (I did drop the cookie, and I did eat it)” (a snacking snafu)

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This Land Was Made For You and Me (and Your Clothes)

by staceybrandt and lauragreenwood

True to a fault, the real icons of American Apparel are nipples. No matter the tank top, bralette, or bikini top one might bear, the store has made sure to allow little to no fabric to interfere between your breasts and the rest. As a girl who doesn’t shy from negligence for those power days, nipple exposure is something I’m not afraid of, but—like all simple pleasures of life—moderation is key. As erect emblems of our country’s clothing line, I’m not sure exactly why American Apparel is always encouraging nip-slippage. Walking around the store, I often find myself perplexed at how a seemingly innocent storefront transforms into the X-rated, adult section of Good Stuff so rapidly and unannounced. Maybe the head designer just artistically interpreted our national anthem America “the land of the free” a tad too seriously for casual wear.

The key to any well-balanced wardrobe are the basics, and at American Apparel you can get basically the same shirt in over twenty colors and fifty minor style adjustments. They throw in the occasional pattern to spice it up, but truly the company has formulaically designed clothing conformity. Fuck diversity or individuality; let’s blend that melting pot real well until only minor divergences from the norm are visible. I will use the example of the multicolor, spandex ballerina-esque dress. Mentally scroll through your newsfeed or think back to Halloween, Spirit Week, or semi-formal event photos. Ladies, I know you’ve seen it (or even worn it) and, fellows, you know you’ve done a double-take if for no reason other than it’s shiny and soft. A simple enough dress, fitted on the chest, A-line skirt, three inches too short, fabric that shines from sea to shining sea. Fuck that dress. All at once, teenage girls flocked to American Apparel to purchase this dress and don their acute fashion sensibility. Flattering enough, but that dress lacks character, flair, and dammit, an appropriate length! But aval, American men, women, adults and teens eat those simplistic styles up because in corporate gods we trust our individuality (or lack thereof).

American Apparel has a multitude of accessories ranging from moderately functional to ostentatiously decorative to ironically non-functional. Here are a few.

**Bi-“faux”-cals**: These are glasses with non-prescription lenses that, due to glare and smudging, actually impair your vision. Because sometimes your vision needs to be humbled, you’ll hear comments going around like “I hate her, her vision’s perfect!” America really rocks at reversing and glorifying a person’s weaknesses—yay, everybody gets a trophy…and glasses!

**Old-timer Watches**: On the functional end, we have an array of watches that seem to have been recovered from a desk drawer that hasn’t been opened since 1952. These watches are only semi-functional, however, because the time is constantly projected on our phones, laptops, etc. Also, I’m not even sure if I can read clock hands anymore.

**Mini-top-hat Headband**: I have actually seen baby monkeys wearing this accessory, except for baby monkeys it is not a mini top hat—it’s just a top hat. This cranial decoration is pseudo-classy, kind of like America in general.

**Fanny-Packs**: Functional for both carrying small valuables and making you look like a mom, if you think fanny packs were ever or will ever be considered cool, you’re probably wearing one at this very moment. The economic prosperity of America in the early 90’s will not reemerge because people start wearing fanny packs again, but American Apparel believes it’s worth a try. If you’re interested, the only appropriate social situation for wearing a fanny pack is at the zoo.

**Website**

The internet presence and overall message of American Apparel are what really confuse me. The first time I took my shopping curiosity online back in middle school, I remember abruptly becoming flushed in the face and shutting off the computer for fear my parents would assume their little girl was now a porn addict. But hey, sex sells, doesn’t it? However, the company has concocted a perplexing combination of corporate morality, capitalist globalization, national pride, and nudity. It’s really brilliant how just one store has so artfully conglomerated an idyllic and prosperous American business that does no wrong. Hell, they’re so proud of this multifold marketing lovechild that their daily stock market values are fucking published online. God bless success where you can have your winnings on display alongside your sexual supremacy.

**Price**

[Patronizing parental chuckle] This one is too easy. It seems in America, and quite abundantly in Vermont, that there exists a large population of wealthy, dare I say over-privileged, youth who would like to fit in with the lower-class population to appear “edgier.” They accomplish this by wearing hobo-inspired outfits that come at extreme costs. Noticing this trend, American Apparel constructed an ingenious business model that goes something like this: sell grandma sweaters for $75, worn-out looking white v-neck t-shirts for $30, and giraffe-print leggings for $50. They are making bank off of merchandise you can find at a yard sale.

**Customer service**

American Apparel employees are resoundingly ambivalent to what you purchase at the store, and they kind of have to be. No matter how much the cashier’s inner fashionista yells “Don’t let her buy that! It’s heinous!” they must remain composed and pretend like a spandex maxi skirt with a slit is a casual article of clothing. In addition, employees may be apt to provide impromptu fashion advice while ringing you up. For instance, I had one cashier recommend that if I found my scarf to be too heavy around my neck to cut it in half and make two scarves. Yeah, I just paid three million dollars for your scarf and now I’m going to destroy it. Good idea; I’ll sell the other half of the scarf at a yard sale.
I am:
I saw:
Where:
When:
For now my love can wait
And when you are not near my heart sinks to the floor
You make me want to be more, do more
And plant upon your lips a kiss
I am:
and then where will your plotting go, your giant-sized board,
you're always a step behind.
Not knowing where to start with you,
I am:
and this is crazy but hey I just met you
and I'm not trying to be rude
you may not remember i want you so bad
and then came the morning light.
we had some fun that night,
then you said you like the snow
so here I am making these rhymes.
you told me you climb sometimes
so on we danced in the room of blue.
I liked your lisp too,
and I quite liked your smile.
it was kinda fancy,
you bought me a PBR.
so this one time at a bar,
a terrible dancer
A true lady
I hit my head on the wall because I don't want to quit.
And those who are afraid to live.
Yet, you spend your time with those who are asleep
and true.
I thought he said 'Dump him in the bathtub, or duct-tape him to a chair'.
Bespectacled Hottie
Bright-eyed English Student
Living and Learning
me gay!
Okay, start again with me.
Girl 1 to Girl 2
Crossing Main Street, 10AM
Girl 1 to Girl 2: And the weirdest thing to think about is, like, God is WATCHING you have sex. Like...weird, right?
Cook Commons
Creative Girl: Would you, like, rather live inside a kangaroo pocket, or would you rather have your OWN kangaroo pocket?
Dumbfounded Jock: What?
Girl: Think about it. Like, you could effectively be a kangaroo.
Stoned Friend: Man, that would be so hot.
Simpson Dining Hall
Boy 1: Dude, I was so deep in the friendzone. she made me her brother on Facebook.
Davis Center Pool Tables
Someone: Today I had the Dim Sum woman for lunch. Well I didn't have her...but I had her buns and her dumpings.
Green House Hallway
Dazed and Confused Kid: Why do we even celebrate Thanksgiving? That's like, an Indian holiday.
Cook Commons
Girl 1: Hashtag manchild
Boy 1: Dude, not true.
Boy 2: Hashtag so true
Outside UHeights
Distressed Man: I've been hooking up with a Republican.
Distressed Man 2: How do you not know? Have you been tested?
Distressed Man: Sigh
Distressed Man 2: Seriously, is your dick Republican now?
Living and Learning Dorm
RA: Hey guys, we could hear you downstairs...
Steadfast Gentleman: i will NOT be silenced!
Fireplace Lounge
Girl: If JK Rowling dies, I'm going to lose my shit.
Boy: IF?
L/L-C Lounge
Girl to Guy: Your penis is a bit more useful than your fingers.
Mercy Hall, September 28th 2:15 am
Guy: I suck a dick once in a while, but that doesn't make me gay!
Living and Learning
Bright-eyed English Student: Reading is a collaborative effort!! We need to examine metaphors!
Outside I/L
Bespectacled Hottie: I think he said 'Dump him in the bathtub, or duct-tape him to a chair'.
Cute Friend: He said something more about the bathtub. Hottie: I don't even know.

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Aaron, oh aaron
the male+female perspectives on carter's comeback

by julianaroen
Aaron Carter. Now that's a name you probably haven't heard in a while. The man is back, though, after an eight year hiatus. Why did he come to Vermont? That's a question I ask about a lot of big names stop- ping by the land of the Woodchucks. Since I was anticipating to see some washed-up has-been perform in front of a small and bored audience, seeing Aaron Carter at Higher Ground was much better than I expected. About 100 people were at the show, complete with its fair share of hyper-ventilating females, including myself, and a good proportion of males.

What surprised me the most about the concert was the amount of energy that Aaron exuded. He came bursting onto stage in a Mickey Mouse pullover with a Sha- quille O'Neal jersey underneath, complete with vigor and a genuine sense of apprecia- tion for his audience, making the over- all experience much more fun. He looks exactly the same as he did eight years ago—only taller and a bit worn from age and inevitable partying.

As for the music, I was impressed by his singing and was especially taken aback by his band who were more than just manu- factured musicians. Aaron was actu- ally a good singer and his band was a funky group of guys full of soul. He bal- anced the set with a variety of his old hits from the early 2000s such as "I Want Candy" and modern covers of songs such as "Blurred Lines" and "Get Lucky." More so than being a good singer, Aaron was an excellent performer and really knew how to work the crowd. He was quite charming which made it easy to see why so many ladies gawk over him and why he rose to be as big as he was. He dedicated one of his pieces to "all of the pretty girls" in the audi- ence and would often reach out his hand where a sea of longing arms flocked to greet him.

Not having been to a concert in several years, it was amaz- ing to see the differ- ence in concerts from four years ago to now in terms of the use of cell phones. Dozens of phones were poking out of the crowd to take photos and videos of Aaron, which made the concert seem somewhat ephemeral and less meaning- ful. He embraced this fad wholeheartedly, though, and grabbed random phones from the crowd, filmed himself performing then tossed them back to their owners.

Although the show was short (lasting only an hour), seeing Aaron was overall en- tertaining. What's impressive about Aaron is that unlike most child stars who try to change their image in the music industry as they grow older, Aaron has been able to re- main relevant by relying on his older songs which originally made him famous. He ad- mitted to the audience that it's been hard to make a comeback due to a lack of support, but despite such hindrances, he's still trying to make his dream happen.

by zackpensak
All I wanted was for him to acknowledge me. Just a simple point or wave would have left me bragg- ing to all my friends that I made eye contact with the legendary, age- less, ten-years-past-his-prime Aaron Cart- er. That was all I wished for when walking into Higher Ground Thursday night. But Aaron Carter, or AC as I can now affectionately refer to him, gave me far more than I could have ever imagined.

The concert took place in the smaller of the two Higher Ground showrooms, meaning that even though we got there five minutes before Aaron took the stage, we were still only about twenty feet away from the stage. The first indicator that it would be a good night was the fact that Aaron ran on stage wearing a Mickey Mouse sweater. I don't care what your feel- ings are about Aaron Carter's music—that part is irrelevant—what matters is that you can't be hating on Mickey Mouse, so right off the bat AC won the crowd over.

Everything was going according to ex- pectations until the final song: the classic of classics that is "Aaron's Party." Right as I heard the first few bass lines of the Party, I was immediately lifted onto my friend Connor's shoulders. The reason for this is that before coming to the concert my friends and I each put on a plain white tee and wrote the names of different AC songs on them. Needless to say, I was "Aaron's Party." I have been on a friend's shoulders at other concerts before, and have received a wave or point, so I was hoping for the best. What I wasn't expecting was for Aaron to look me dead in the eye, extend his arm, and beckon for me to get my jorts-covered ass on stage. Holy shit.

The only concern that went through my mind as I leapt forward into the air off of Connor's shoulders was that hopefully the girls in front of me had been getting yolked at the gym, because before I knew it I was crowd-surfing my way to the stage. Luck- ly enough, the overwhelming density of the crowd made up for any lack of strength, because I made it to the dreamboat safe and sound. As he pierced my soul with those chestnut-brown eyes and put his arm around me with the chorus approaching, I knew one thing: I was home.

The next five minutes or so consisted mainly of two things: Aaron and I danc- ing with my arm tightly around his left shoulder, and me pumping up the crowd while the superstar took center stage. The only exception to this trend was when the chorus hit for the third time and Aaron handed me the mic as he walked off to the side. Luckily enough for big AC, he picked the right man for the job, because I have the voice of not just one angel, but a whole fucking choir of them. And modesty too.

Now, you must be thinking, wow Zack, that experience really could not have got- ten any better. Well, you are wrong! As the song wound down and my euphoria reached a breaking point, the greatest pos- sible thing that could have happened hap- pened. My hero smiled at me, and pulled me in for a bro hug. To quote Urban Dic- tionary's definition of a bro hug, it is, "an epic hug between brofriends. It's so epic it's awesome, and nobody will ever lampion a brohug for fear of social annihilation." And just for icing on the cake, as we bro-ed it out, he whispered, "That was a good time man," in my ear.

Obviously enough, while I crowd-surfed back to my friends, I did not feel the hands underneath me; I felt like I was lying on cloud nine.
I fall in love for the first and only time in my life when I am fourteen years old. She has yellow green eyes, fluctuates between overweight and too thin, and looks at me like I hang the moon. Her name is Baby and yes, I do put her in the corner. Though to be fair, it's more her choice than anything.

I met her two days before my first day of high school. This summer I am intensely lonely, and am settling it firmly in my mind that it's time to find a companion. Numerous visits to the New Hampshire SPCA yield no results, and I am beginning to realize that I might never find a furry little feline to call my own.

It's the fifth or sixth visit, and my frustration and sadness at the failures so far are reaching an all-time high. My father is with me, and he strolls around one of the rooms where cats run free around scratching posts, cushions and climbing towers. I sit on a bench in the corner next to a tiny little blue bed, ready to cry.

And suddenly there's something on my lap. I look down, and an underfed little lump of black and brown tabby fur settles on my legs, curling in on itself to sleep. It looks up at purrs, paw reaching for my hand, batting it gently in encouragement to stroke its fur; and I'm a goner.

I pet the soft fur, amused at the stripe of black down its spine, and jokingly tell my dad this cat has a mohawk. The cat stays on my lap, refusing to move for nearly an hour. We learn her name is Baby, and she is ten years old. Mum meets her the next day, and both she and my father adore her. We take her home that afternoon.

“Thank you for finding me,” I whisper so only she can hear me. I know she can't, not really, but I want to pretend.

The vet comes back before I let go of Baby and wraps her in a beige blanket, carrying her gently out of the room. Mom holds me as I cry later that night under the covers. I don't remember what Dad says to Baby, but Mum whispers something to Baby that to my poor lip-reading skills looks like “Good girl.”

I've never seen my father cry before, and he and my mother hold each other in the corner as I say my last goodbye. I press my nose to her neck, and she still smells the same. I cling to the scent, petting her gently as I move the blanket aside to feel her fur one last time.

Two weeks earlier I was given a prescription for Celexa, and it's around the time I lose Baby that the buildup in my system is over and the antidepressants kick in. I become numb, which I'm told is normal, but I know I look as lifeless as I feel. I've never lost anyone before, not even another pet. Death has never touched my heart before now, and even though I've read enough to think I know what to expect, I really have no idea.

It takes a long time before I can hear the word of her name or think about her without breaking down. It takes drowning myself in schoolwork to get my mind off of things, and I have the best semester of my academic career because of it, classes dispersed with phone calls to my mother as I sob my heart out. By the time summer arrives I am intensely lonely, and am settling it firmly in my mind that it's time to make an unearthly cries in the night and sometimes when the sun was up. The vet tells us it's her death cry, and I can't deny what's happening anymore.

It's January 3rd, my father's 54th birthday. I hold Baby's carrier as my mother and I drive the two miles to the vet. Mum is already crying and I'm on my way. Baby is scared and wants to go home, and I promise her that everything's going to be okay, my own voice shaking with fear that I hope she doesn't pick up on.

The next half hour is a blur with a few last brief clicks of my camera phone, until the vet holds down Baby gently. We're allowed to touch her. Dad's hand is on her lower back, Mum's is on her belly, and I'm cupping her tiny head in my palm. She looks so scared. I might have watched the needle go in, but all I focus on is how Baby slumps in our arms, all the tension in her body gone. I watch her yellow green eyes turn a hideous shade of blue that reminds me of the fish on sale at Hannaford's and I nearly vomit. My girl is gone.

And even though I've read enough to think I know what to expect, I really have no idea.
Tip o’ the Week

Buy tickets to go see Chance the Rapper in Montreal... Oh wait, it already sold out. Sucks to suck.

And now for a product of my laziness and lack of creativity

I wish someone would bring us back. Yeah, it has been a long time. Whoa, I thought you guys graduated.

What are you supposed to be.

I think I’m supposed to be a convenient waste of space.