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[The North Avenue Review](#) is a student publication of the [Georgia Institute of Technology](#). It is published four times a year by [our staff](#) composed of people who write for us, submit art, help with layout, show up to meetings, etc. for the students of Georgia Tech. It has become a (relatively) long-standing tradition as an alternative form of expression.

Mail suggestions about this page to [unreal@cc.gatech.edu](mailto:unreal@cc.gatech.edu).

Mail questions or submissions to the North Avenue Review at

[dsadmp@prism.gatech.edu](mailto:dsadmp@prism.gatech.edu).

North Avenue Review

A Georgia Tech Publication.

As a lowly freshman in my first quarter here at Tech, I don't consider myself worldly or wise. However, after spending the previous summer in virtual solitude following one hell of a senior year, I feel confident enough in a few bits of knowledge I have stumbled upon to share them with you in the hopes of sparing you a little grief. After three months of reflection and sudden bursts of sagacity, I humbly submit to you

## Sara's Six Adult Insights

by [\*Sara Wilson\*](#)

1. Stability is relative. You create your own based on how secure you are in yourself. (This is the most serious insight I came up with.)
2. Reading nourishes more than just your mind. Your soul grows with inspiration. Your heart can be pacified by the lives of the characters. (This is the most intellectual insight.)
3. No one who tells you to move on with your life after a tragedy is experiencing a tragedy. They are probably very content with their lives and just say that because they think they have to say something. (This is the most bitter insight.)
4. Everyone has to face himself sometime in his life. It's better to discover yourself while you are young than to be scared to death by your true colors in old age. (This is the deepest insight I had.)
5. The older you get, the more situations you will encounter over which you have no control. Accept this and move on. (This is the most pessimistic insight.)
6. If the end really does justify the means, either the end or the means better be fun. If neither seems possible, find another goal or method. (This is the most logical insight I had.)

Well, that's about it. Of course, being merely a freshman from a relatively small town, these revelations may be somewhat pathetic to an older, wiser upper-classman who has seen far more of the "real world" than I have. I can only hope that none of these little pieces of philosophy are so flawed that they lead someone off to a path of reckless fun-having at the expense of the rest of the world. Create your own fun. Bye!

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# Musings of a Divine Sufferer

by [Steven A. Mazur](#)

The corruption of the mind is worse than the annihilation of the human soul. As I sit upon my prison of metal and wood, listening to bitter clichés and falsehoods best left unsaid, the veil of sanity ruptures from my naive perception of reality. With a banshees' keening wail I leap away from my confines, screaming the horrors of a malevolently neglected psyche. Charging through the gateway of my own personal hell, I crash it asunder; the exhilarating taste of freedom on my tongue like a drug. My cries for a quick, painless end to the torment of my being reverberate unanswered through the lifeless halls.

My God, the blood flows through my temples as demons bent on liberating themselves from my God forsaken skull!

I dash from one cell to another, prophesizing like a madman about the end of all creation; watching with a detached sense of awe as my fellow inmates are tortured unendingly by compassionless slavedrivers who tear at the very fabric of their collective reason. Bent figures, frayed images, fragments of their true selves, blinded by their own pious self-certainty. The master puppeteers, actually themselves marionettes on the strings of yet another. These abominations spew forth their own half-begotten truths like the vomit of so many abysmal creatures.

Legion they are, possess you they shall.

What is their truth? It is the sublime hallucination used to guide the meek and the helpless into the arms of eternal damnation. Realizing their promises to be bittersweet lies, I lunge into the freedom of the sun, drowning in a pool of myriad light; laughing in the wake of my triumph. No longer shall their ways be mine.

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# Things I Liked

by [JoPe Montagnet](#)

For all that I bitch, there were things I did enjoy hugely as a kid: Getting doughnuts from Mary Lee's every Sunday morning, with it's run-down 70's-relic appearance (as many things in Baton Rouge are) and that simultaneously grotesque and enticing fuchsia-colored roof, fake shingled appearance molded into it. There was a snow-cone stand built into one corner of it, always stocked with its assortment of syrups, so I knew it had to be active. And yet I never did notice it to be open, not once did I get a snow-cone from there.

Not that I didn't like snow-cones, mind you. That used to be our big treat in New Orleans. Momma D, Don or Debbie, whoever was taking care of us would bring us, at some point or another, to one of the many stands dotting the city, like little oases of sugary juvenile wonder in a town seemingly populated with nothing but old people.

Sure, Don wasn't old, nor Debbie, nor Jimmy or Ricky, the Duncan boys. That didn't matter though. I don't rightly know why, but they just somehow didn't figure in. Not like the Old Ones. The ones who were old then and are even older now, or are they? They were the ones who always seemed a part of the city.

Odd that they're not as jolly as they used to be though. Why is that? Now that I could finally appreciate it for its uniqueness, why have they suddenly chosen now to grow old inside, after avoiding it for so long? Have they somehow passed some crucial threshold of age, unseen to my eyes? They don't laugh anymore. They almost seem bothered to have us there.

We rarely receive cards, let alone gifts, any more. But then, we always have neglected to send or own. "Write your thank-you note right away!" Mom always chided us.

*"Dear Aunt Flo,*

*Thank you very, very much for the knitted nose warmer.  
It will help keep my nose warm when it is cold.*

*Love J-"*

Did that ever really mean anything to them? Did they ever see those notes for what they were worth, the attempt by parentless mother to fulfill her rites of politeness via her children? Do you think they really cared about that, even if they did know? I miss the Old Ones. They used to be happier. They were always gnarled and old. They were still taller than me though.

I also miss the trees. They seemed to be everywhere, and everyone had their one particular twisted old giant in the yard. Momma D's is right between her driveway and the neighbors', and you have to be careful not to hit it with the big family car when you're pulling in on Christmas night after twelve hours straight on the road. Uncle Donald shares the one on the front curb of his late brother's house, just across the street from him in Metairie. If those branches were just a bit lower, if the grooves were just a little deeper in the bark, I could climb it, I know I could! Pa-Pa, two houses down, next to the railroad tracks, he had a monstrosity in his yard too, I think. Right at the corner of his property, where the street abruptly dies at the foot of the gravel ridge holding the train rails.

In that old house, with those two old women, or were there three? And were they his sisters? That's how I've always seemed to remember it. A house full of elderly siblings. Two brothers who lived across the street from each other until one died. And Jimmy still spending entirely too many evenings at his mother's house as he tries to sweep his few remaining hairs over that inescapable bald spot...

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# Hell

## Chapter 2

by [\*Julia Eaton\*](#)

If you were walking towards the club from Market Street down Seventh Avenue, about the time it would be opening, you would get a chance to see the church across the street in the sunset. It was a large three story building with a bell tower and a steeple. The white paint, which was beginning to peel off, would almost glow in the orange hue of the setting sun.

The club itself was an old gray warehouse with no windows. The front door was ten feet tall, heavy and steel. In front of the door, there was always stationed at least one large man who would accept the money to enter the club and strictly reject anyone that tried to get in without appropriate proof of age. Twenty dollars to get in - no exceptions, no discounts under any circumstances. There were strict rules that no one was to enter at the same time. In fact no one was to enter within five minutes of the person ahead of them.

Jane's door to her office was a smaller, more normally proportioned one. It stood about twenty feet to the left of the main entrance. Occasionally, Jane would come out and walk past the line of people and casually chat with them. Her suits were finely tailored and the heels she wore sometimes made her stand taller than the men watching the door.

The club had been opened for four months when two San Francisco Police Officers were sent to check things out. Six different missing persons reports had been filed, with the club, Hell, being the last place each person had been seen. Rumors had begun to fly through town. Rumors that the people had been kidnapped, that by some sort of technological error they had been electrocuted and their bodies shipped away and hidden.

Fred Costello and David Kreiger drove by the old warehouse around six o'clock on a Thursday night. There was no sign to show this was the place. Only the street number, painted in black above the main door. A line, half a block long, spread out from the front door.

"This must be the place," Fred commented.

"Somehow, I think I expected a bright neon sign flashing "Hell". Something in more of a Vegas style," David said.

"And blond, buxom babes in red spandex beckoning you at the door," Fred added.

"Yea. With Pitchforks."

"With condoms on the pitchforks."

Fred stopped the car at the stoplight and scanned the street for parking, "What?"

"Never mind," David said, "Isn't that a space right there?"

Fred absently looked in the direction of David's gaze, "Guess it is." Fred pulled the car up to the curve as David folded up the paper with the directions on it and stuffed them into the glove compartment. On the seat next to them was a flyer for the club.

"What is this place supposed to be again?" David asked.

"They bill it as Hell," Fred replied, looking at the line of young people stretching down the street.

"I see that," David said.

"I guess the idea is that it is as close to Hell as we can get, or something like that, " Fred said, getting out of the car, "I think it's some sort of high-tech funhouse. You've heard the rumors going around haven't you?"

"I just know what they told us back at the station about the six missing persons in the last four months. And how they were all last seen here," David said, "Otherwise I don't pay attention to that kind of crap. It's usually just a bunch of hype that turns out to be started by the people who own the places just so they can get publicity."

"Yea, but I still think if you took your nose outta your computer once in awhile it'd be good for you. Then maybe you'd know more what was going on in the real world."

David shook his head, as he slowly started walking towards the entrance, "I'd hardly call a place like this the real world. This is more of a high tech fantasy than anything I ever do."

The crowd was diverse. Kids in torn jeans, with tattoos and silver rings protruding from various parts of their bodies were mixed in with young professionals who were skeptically eyes the building that they were waiting in line to enter.

A large man in black jeans, wearing an old, black baseball hat and a Misfits T-shirt, stood in front of the door. As he reached out to take each customer's money and hand them a waiver to sign, a silver ring on his left hand flashed in the sunlight. It drew attention to the enormity of his dirt stained fingers.

"You have your ID on ya?" he stopped a small girl with green dreadlocks by putting his hand on her



shoulder. His hand seemed to cover almost half of her bony, black-clad arm.

"I'm eighteen," she spoke up, defiantly.

"Prove it. Show me our ID," his voice was booming from the mere size of his throat, but his tone was gentle and firm.

"I lost it," the girl tried to shrug his hand off, but his grip was unflinchingly solid.

"Then you can't go in."

"Come on!" the girl whined, stomping one of her small feet.

"Hey, don't challenge me on this," the man looked directly into her young, dark eyes, "It's nothin' to do with the law or any kind of government imposed age restriction. You're not eighteen - you ain't gettin' in. This is not a place for kids."

"I'm not a kid!"

"Look," the man let go of her shoulder and pushed her off to the side, "You're not old enough. Get out of here! You're not getting in and that's it!"

"But..."

"No!" he pushed her away from him with one sweep of his hand and turned to the next person in line.

The boy hesitantly held up his driver's license, afraid of doing something inadvertently to upset this large man. The man handed him a piece of paper and a pen. The boy skimmed it quickly and signed it, handing it back to the man with shaky hands. His ragged black hair hung in his eyes and his gaunt face was set in a defiant expression as though to prove he wasn't scared.

"OK, it'll be twenty bucks," the man stood patiently, waiting for the boy to dig out two ten dollar bills from the pocket of his old, torn Levi's.

"Put these on," the man handed the kid a pair of glasses that looked like black Raybans with a strap around which wrapped around the back of the head. The young man looked at them skeptically, then put them on.

"Just go into each room in order. Follow any directions you may run across. It's all very simple. Just stay calm and try to have fun," the man held open the large steel door and the boy took a deep breath before stepping through it.

The man slapped him on the back as in a gesture of support, then let the door slam shut behind him. He calmly turned to the next person in line, a tall, skinny blond boy in baggy overalls.

"Excuse me," David approached the man with feigned confidence. Fred stood closely behind him.

"Yes," the doorman didn't look up at Fred or David. Instead he took the ID. of the next person in line and after approving, handed him a sheet of paper and a pen.

"You're really twenty-nine, huh?" the doorman said as the boy signed the paper.

The boy shrugged, "Yea."

"Don't look it," he waited until the boy had pulled a twenty out of his wallet and handed it to him, then gave him his glasses and the same instructions as the last person to enter had gotten.

"What if I don't follow the instructions," the blond boy asked.

"What if you don't follow the instructions?" the doorman repeated the question as though it made no sense to him.

"Yea, what's going to happen to me if I don't do what it tells me to?"

"Well," the doorman looked impatient as he opened the big metal door, "I guess we annihilate your soul. Now go have fun."

He let the door slam shut again and turned to the next person in line. David and Fred both stepped a little closer to him.

"Excuse me, " David said again, this time a little louder, "I'm David Kreiger and this is Fred Costello. We're with the San Francisco Police Department, Precinct Forty-seven. We'd like to speak to the owner of this establishment if we could."

David looked back at Fred, realizing he did not know the owner's name. Fred furrowed his brow in thought and shrugged.

"Jane Hawthorne," the doorman said, turning away from the line to face David and Fred, "If you want I could call her for you."

A tall woman with a copper red bob and large dark glasses walked out of the smaller door to the left of them. David looked over and saw her before Fred did. He nudged Fred's arm and gestured in her direction. Fred's eyes widened when he saw her. She was at least six feet tall, and wearing heels added at

least three more inches. Despite her height, she stood up straight with her shoulder held proudly back. She was wearing a gray sharkskin suit from the 40's and a white silk blouse. She stopped directly behind the doorman and stood quietly as he reached up to the black phone to dial the office extension. Her bright red lips were set in a sarcastic smirk.

"Jane," the doorman said into the phone receiver, "Jane, could you please come to the main entrance?"

"Donny, I'm right here," she said from directly behind his shoulder. Her voice was low and husky but seemed to flow into David's ears like thick honey. He felt himself instantly attracted to this woman.

"Jesus, woman! You're always sneaking up on me like that! I hate that," Donny complained with a deep sigh, as he turned to face Jane, "These officers here would like to talk to you."

"All right," Jane reached her hand out to David, then to Fred, "I'm Jane Hawthorne. What can I do for you?"

Fred was surprised at how large her hands were and how firm her grip. Her skin was rough and leathery and seemed to have a permanent tan from years in the Texas summer sun. He let go of her hand before she let go of his and took a step back from her, without realizing it. He looked her with suspicious curiosity.

"We'd like to take a look around the place if that would be all right with you," David said.

"And your names are...?" Jane put her hands in the pocket of her slacks and rested her weight casually on her left leg.

"Fred Costello. This is David Kreiger. We're from the San Francisco Police Department. Precinct Forty-seven," Fred told her.

"We just need to take a look around. Nothing to be alarmed about," David spoke up, "There's been some reports of missing persons and this was just the last place they were seen. We were asked to come check it out before the case is sent to the FBI. There's really no evidence showing this has been anything but a small bout of hysteria on the public's part."

Jane smiled, "That's fine with me. I'm not alarmed at all. I've got nothing to hide."

"Well, that's very good. It will make our job much easier," David said.

"Donny," Jane put her hand on Donny's shoulder, "Would you mind taking these men on a quick tour of the place? And make sure you don't interrupt any of the guests."

"No problem," Donny turned toward the line and raised his hands above his head, "Listen up! There's going to be a fifteen minute or so delay! We're not letting anyone in for the time being so these officers can take a look around. Hang tight, you guys!"

Many people in the line groaned. A round of boos came from one section in the line. Fred shifted his feet uncomfortably and looked down at the ground. David looked straight ahead, his face showing no emotion. He resented the fact that Fred's young face showed all the emotions that sped through his body. David found that very unprofessional. David was a couple years older - nearing his mid-thirties. His prominent German features seemed to have molded into a blank expression. Fred on the other hand had soft, pale Irish features which seemed to change with each thought and feeling he had.

"I can take you through the main hallway, but I can't let you in any of the rooms. These people have paid good money to go in here and unless you have a really good reason, I don't want to disturb any of them," Donny said, firmly.

"Is there any way we can see the rooms they're in without disturbing them?" David asked.

Jane looked at them before she turned to go back to her office, "When Donny is done showing you around in there, come back to my office and I'll let you see the monitors. We have hidden cameras in all the rooms so that we can make sure everything is running smoothly."

Fred and David both watched as Jane turned and walked back to her office. Her high heels clicked on the pavement in a smooth rhythm. David felt mesmerized by the way she moved.

"Let's get this over with," Donny said, impatiently, standing with the large metal door open next to him.

David and Fred followed him into the main hallway. Its long dark walls and strange lighting made it appear like a confusing maze. Donny reached up and unlocked a padlock which held shut a small trap door in the wall. Pulling it open, he flipped a large industrial switch and hallway was illuminated with fluorescent lights. In that light the walls looked smaller and were painted a dull, matte black. The doors looked like normal sized doors and the at the end of the curve in the hallway was another large steel door.

"This is it?" David asked.

"This is it," Donny said.

"People pay twenty bucks for this? It's much smaller than I thought it would be," Fred spoke up.

"It's all in your head, really," Donny said, "They pay for what they think they see. You know - the illusions they get."

"And it's all through virtual reality?" Fred asked, walking up to the wall and looking closely at it - as if to maybe see some sort of trick wire or something.

"Yea, I don't really know exactly how it works but it has something to do with computer generated images. Virtual reality. Holograms. And it's all wired in to the person's subconscious so it creates the things that you think of in front of you, " Donny said, "Jane worked for ten years to create this place. She's a genius, I tell you."

"I'll bet," David commented, watching Fred as he ran his hand across the black wall, "What're you doing, Fred?"

"Nothing," Fred turned back to them, "Can we see the glasses you give them when they come in?"

"Sure," Donny reached into the black canvas bag slung over his shoulder and pulled out a pair. He handed them to Fred, who turned them over a couple times in his hands.

They were a thick black plastic surrounding a very thick, reflected glass for the lens. Still, they were really no bigger than the average pair of sunglasses. Small wires ran from both lens back and forth with a rubber coating over them. They were almost invisible next to the black plastic.

"How do you turn them on?" Fred asked.

"There's some sort of infrared ray which activates them. They have it coming out of the ceiling in this whole building - in the hallway and in all the rooms. As soon as these lights are on it cancels it out. You gotta ask Jane about that stuff though. I don't really understand it."

"So, if I put them on right now, nothing would happen?" Fred asked.

"If I turned the lights back off it would. I'm going to have to do that soon anyway. If anyone comes out of those rooms right now this would really disrupt their whole experience and I don't want that to happen."

"Well, can I give it a shot?" Fred asked, trying unsuccessfully to hide his excitement, "Just for a couple minutes to see what happens?"

"Look, we're trying to run a business here. You can't just walk in here and start fucking around. If there's something you really think you're going to find then just do your little search and get it over with, OK?" Donny said, irritated.

"We're really sorry for the inconvenience," Fred said, handing Donny back the glasses, unable to hid his disappointment, "I don't think there's anything more here we need to see."

"He's right, Fred. We're on duty," David said, then turning to Donny, "I apologize for the inconvenience. We'll go talk to Jane and then we'll be out of your hair."

David had already started walking towards the door as he finished his sentence. Fred hesitantly followed him. Donny shook his head as they both passed him and grabbed Fred's arm, holding out the glasses to him.

"You know, you aren't bad guys. Why don't you give it a try. But only for a couple minutes. And don't tell Jane about it," Donny said.

"I don't think so. We're still on duty..." David started to protest.

Fred had already taken the glasses though and put them on. Donny went back over to the switch in the wall and turned it off. Fred looked around the hallway. It looked exactly the same as it had when they had first walked in.

"It looks exactly the same," Fred commented.

"Give it a couple minutes," Donny told him, "Sometimes it's pretty subtle. It's not like an instant psychedelic light show or anything."

"OK," Fred turned around and looked down the hallway. He was almost expecting to see some sort of monster alien or robotic destroyer to appear before him.

"Excuse me," a woman's voice said behind him. Fred turned quickly as a blond woman came out of the door behind him and bumped into him. Her hair was long and dreadlocked and she was wearing a plaid jumper, much like a little girl's. The front bib barely covered her large breasts. Her bare arms were skinny and sinewy in contrast. There were bruises in the crook of her left elbow, turning the pale white skin there a bluish black.

"Sorry," he said, "What are you doing?"

"What are you doing?" she snapped back at him.

"Um ... just trying out these glasses," Fred looked over where David and Donny had been standing and saw that they were no longer there, "I was with some people who were waiting for me, but they seem to be gone."

"Uh-huh," the girl leaned back against the wall and crossed her arms, "You're a cop, aren't you?"

"Yea," Fred looked around himself again. He couldn't imagine where David and Donny had gone. And it

seemed strange that nothing was happening with the glasses. He wished the girl would go away so he could put his attention into figuring out what he had to do to the glasses to get them to work.

"You know what I always wanted to do to a cop?" the girl asked.

"What?" Fred realized he hadn't noticed she was still there as he was thinking about how to get the glasses to work, "Hey, where are your glasses?"

The girl let out a frustrated sigh, "I don't need them. Don't you want to know what I want to do to you?"

"What?" Fred was confused by her question, but chose to ignore it, "I thought you needed these glasses in order to see all the stuff that is computer generated. Isn't that how virtual reality works?"

"It doesn't come from the glasses. It doesn't come from a computer. It comes from your own mind," the girl took a step forward so that she was standing directly in front of him, "It all comes from inside you. That's where Hell is. It's in the human brain."

"Yea, right," Fred took a step back and the girl followed him with a step forward. She smelled of vanilla and sweat. When she spoke, her breath smelled of mint and cigarette smoke.

"Well, regardless of where it's coming from, nothing is happening. I don't understand what you're supposed to do to get this thing to work," Fred told her.

"You don't have to do anything. You just walk in. You'd be amazed how many people walk into Hell and don't even know what's going on," the girl's voice was quiet and harsh, as though she'd been up all night drinking whiskey and smoking.

"Yea. I'm sure I would notice, though," Fred said, absently, "I better get going. I was hoping something would happen but I can't wait around all day for it."

"Hey! You know what I've always wanted to do to a cop?" the girl took a step forward again, causing Fred to back into the wall.

"Huh?" Fred looked at her, a little frightened, "What?"

The girl reached her hand up and put it behind his neck and leaned over so her lips were only inches from his, "I've always wanted to suck a cop's dick."

"Shit," Fred exclaimed, without meaning to.

The girl leaned forward and kissed him, running her large, bony hand down his chest and stopping at his

belt. Fred pressed himself harder into the wall, trying to resist her. He had put a lot of energy into resisting situations like this. He felt that women were to be respected and he felt guilty for the average men his age who expected and desired women to be like this. Sometimes he even felt guilty feeling lust for his girlfriend. He remembered how his sister had suffered after she had been raped when she was sixteen and he had never felt safe with his own feelings of lust after that. Something in him had always blamed the male sex drive for causing his sister's pain.

"What's wrong?" the girl whispered, feeling Fred's resistance, but starting to unzip his pants anyway, "Don't you like me?"

"Uh... I just don't think this is a good idea..." Fred tried to say before she started kissing him again. Her hands had already unzipped his pants and had grabbed onto his erection.

"That's not what I feel," she whispered.

Fred shut his eyes and held his breath so he wouldn't groan as she began to stroke him with slow, strong motions. She dropped to her knees and began to alternate running her tongue up and down his penis, then stroking it again.

"Maybe it's the power," she whispered hoarsely, "Maybe I just want all the power you guys have to come in my mouth. Maybe I just want to have that power in me."

"Yea... whatever..." Fred groaned, grabbing onto the back of her head.

"Oh yea..." she cooed, "This is good... oh yea..."

She took him all the way in her mouth and slowly began moving her head back and forth with the movements of his hips. Her fingernails began to dig into his buttocks.

"Oh god... this is great..." Fred moaned, as she began moaning along with him.

He began to feel his body tense up and his breath come in quick gasps. Much as he had been resisting the situation he knew it was only moments before he would come.

The girl's moans had become louder. In fact, they had begun to sound like growls, Fred thought. She began to dig her fingernails into his skin until they drew blood.

"Hey!" Fred snapped, opening his eyes as she scratched his back with her nails, leaving a long bloody mark. Fred had suddenly ceased to be aroused.

"Fuck you," the girl growled.



When he looked down at her, Fred was shocked that she had transformed into something almost inhuman. Her face was contorted in a surreal grimace and her teeth had grown long and yellow with dark brown bloodstains.

"God! What's wrong with you!" Fred pressed himself against the wall and slid away from her, his pants still around her ankles.

The girl's hands had turned into claws and her eyes were glowing wild and maniacal. She slowly crawled along the floor toward him as he struggled to pull his pants back up and cover himself. He felt nauseous and repulsed by this creature who was slinking towards him.

"You wanted me to eat you," she said, laughing and growling simultaneously, "What's wrong with that? I'll eat you whether you think you want it or not. Come back here!"

"Get away from me," Fred was shaking uncontrollably and he looked around the dark room desperately for the way out.

Suddenly the room was lit up by the fluorescent lights again. Fred was still pressed up against the wall, his hands covering his groin and shaking violently. His face was sheet white. David and Donny were standing in front of him, with questioning expressions.

"Where'd she go?" Fred gasped, "Did you see her? Fuck! Where'd she go?"

"Who?" David asked, calmly.

"That girl!" Fred's eyes were darting around the room in a panic, "Didn't you see her? There was something really fuckin' wrong with her!"

"Must be part of what he saw with the program," Donny explained to David.

"Pretty scary stuff, huh?" David asked, punching Fred in the arm.

Fred ripped the glasses off and threw them at Donny, "Get these away from me!"

"So, what'd ya think of it?" Donny asked, picking the glasses up off the floor and putting them back in his black bag.

"I swear to god that was real," Fred said, rubbing his eyes, "That was fuckin' grievous."

"Nope. None of it was real," Donny said, calmly.

"God," Fred closed his eyes and leaned back against the wall, "I think I'm going to throw up."

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When they were back out in the cool, evening air, Fred felt grateful that the sun was almost completely down. He felt raw and exhausted. As he looked at the faces lined up to go in and experience something similar to what he just had, but eight times, he felt a sense of empathy and dread for all of them.

"Are they going to be OK?" Fred asked, numbly.

"Relax, man," Donny slapped him on the back, "It wasn't real. Most of these people know fully well what they're getting into. They're looking forward to it. They're looking for a thrill and that's what we're going to give them. We're hoping to give them a thrill that they're not going to be able to top anytime soon. And they all know it's not real."

"Yea," Fred muttered, staring blankly at the crowd.

"So, what the hell did you see in there?" David asked.

"I'll tell you later," Fred's voice was strained and harsh from his recent trauma.

"You guys still want to talk to Jane?" Donny asked. As he was speaking, Jane walked out of her office door and approached the three men.

"You guys wanted to talk with me, didn't you?" she asked.

"Yes," David flinched when he heard her suddenly behind him. Fred just stood silent and numbed to his surroundings.

"You want to come into the office then," Jane raised her eyebrows in a gesture of condescension.

"That's what we had in mind," David said as both he and Fred followed her submissively through the smaller door.

"And you can see our office area is not very large, but we keep it high security because of the equipment we have in here." Jane gestured to a wall of monitors hung from the ceiling running across the far wall. Each monitor seemed to be wired into cameras from the ceilings of the rooms in the main warehouse. Another door, with four large locks on it was under the monitors.

"What's behind that door?" David asked. Fred had found his way to an overstuffed, old velvet couch by a small coffee table near the door. Jane had already seated herself in a large wooden chair behind the

desk.

"That's where the main computers are," Jane said, "We spent ten years researching and developing the system here. We're not going to take any chances on anything happening to it."

"Can we see it?" David asked.

"What are you looking for?" Jane opened the top drawer of her desk and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. She pulled one out, lit it, and leaned back in her chair.

"We won't know until we find it," David said.

"Why were you sent here?" Jane asked, through a cloud of smoke.

"Routine inspection," David said, flippantly, walking over to the door to check it out. The locks looked like they had been specially constructed so that nothing could break through them.

"That's bullshit," Jane scoffed with a cynical laugh, "There's no such thing. What are you doing here?"

"We don't really have a solid reason for being here," David admitted. "We were sent down here just to look around. There's been several missing persons reports in the last few months with this being the last place the people were seen. Our Sergeant thought we should come look around and see if there was anything that might warrant turning the case over to the FBI for a serious investigation. There obviously isn't. We pretty much knew that when we came here. You have all the legal licenses and the Board of Health has already done an inspection. All of the equipment meets safety standards. There's not much we could find."

"But I would imagine you still want to look behind that door," Jane said, showing little surprise when David nodded in agreement.

"So be it," she pulled open a side drawer of her desk and punched a code into a small panel on the inside wall of the drawer. Moments after she did that, all of the locks made a loud clicking noise in progression from top to bottom. Jane took a silver ring of keys out of her jacket pocket and unlocked each of the locks the rest of the way.

She pulled open the large door, to reveal a long room filled with various types of computer equipment. Some of the terminals looked like nothing but huge plastic boxes. Others had all sorts of keys and lights of different sizes and colors.

David walked up to the doorway and stared into the room in amazement. He didn't recognize any of the equipment in relation to the small personal computer he had at home. Though he couldn't even begin to

guess at what all the equipment was and what it did, he could tell that inside that room was more power than any individual human could conceive of or imagine.

"These are the main generators. They are hooked up to computer outlets in each of the rooms. They also control the infrared light system which activates the glasses that each person who goes in, wears. Through these machines are created all the images, sounds, and tactile sensations each person experiences," Jane said, standing directly behind David, "The terminals that we have within the walls in the main warehouse are sent signals from the glasses, which pick up a persons thought patterns. Those patterns are replicated and sent back to these machines, where it is deciphered and duplicated in a form of virtual reality. The images are then sent back to the individual terminal in the room the guest is in and the waves are transmitted back to the glasses which create a realistic image for the guest wearing the glasses."

David just stood and stared in awe, unsure what to say in response. He was a little bit amazed that one woman had put so much energy and time into the research and development of such a thing.

"I hope you don't want me to explain exactly how it works," Jane said, "Because that will take about a year."

"No, I'll take your word for it," David said, stepping back from the door and feeling a little bit more intimidated now.

Jane pushed the door shut and relocked it. Fred was still sitting on the couch, transfixed by the television monitors. David went over to where Fred was sitting and followed his gaze up to the monitor to find out what was so fascinating. He was watching a thin girl with long, curly black hair and pale skin. The girl was stomping around the empty room, flailing her arms and yelling, as though she were very angry at whatever she was seeing.

"What do you think she's seeing?" Fred asked.

"I have no idea," David said, staring up at the screen.

"We rarely ever get to know what the people who come here experience," Jane said, "Sometimes people come back and tell us. But since the computers are set up to formulate images from each individuals own mind it's never the same experience for anyone who comes through here. And there's no way to record any of the images or experiences except in each person's memory."

"So there's no way to prove what the people see," David commented.

Jane looked at him, puzzled, "Why would anyone need proof of what they've experienced?"

David shrugged, "It was just a thought."

"Isn't this kind of dangerous?" Fred asked, "I mean, isn't this going to psychologically damage some people?"

"Are you thinking of yourself?" Jane asked with a smile.

Fred sighed. His expression was strained from his emotional exhaustion and he did not find Jane either charming or amusing. He ran his hand through his short pale brown hair and tried to look at Jane with an air of authority, although it came off just appearing as irritation.

"I'm thinking of public welfare," he said, "I'm wondering if everyone who goes in here is ready for what they're going to experience."

"Probably not," Jane said bluntly and without concern, "But isn't that the benefit and the price of a free society? It's up to each person what they want to do."

"That's true," David agreed, "They are not doing anything illegal or immoral, technically, by running this club."

"Ironic," Jane's smile seemed to get bigger, "Considering it is Hell."

"I think that's about the only thing that I agree with you on," Fred muttered.

"Look, we've taken up enough of your time," Fred said to Jane apologetically. Then turning to go, "We better get out of here."

"Well, it was certainly nice meeting both of you," Jane sauntered over to David and took his hand in her strong grip.

"Likewise," David feeling his breath catch in his throat, "Perhaps we'll meet again under less formal circumstances."

"That would be lovely."

"Come on," Fred walked out her office door without shaking her hand. David followed a few moments later.

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# Atlanta '96: No Room at the Inn, but Plenty of Room in the Jail

by [CopWatch Atlanta](#)  
submitted by [Gavin Guhxe](#)

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**ATLANTA** - Next summer, for two magical weeks, millions will sit in their living rooms and watch televised images of Olympic glory: the lighting of the Olympic torch, the running of the marathon, athletes from around the world swimming in perfect synchronicity, Nike ads. Several thousand lucky ticket holders will witness the spectacle live in one of many recently constructed sports venues. Those of us that actually have to live in Atlanta will probably be stuck for most of the time in absolutely gridlocked traffic, cursing.

But if you ask any one of Atlanta's estimated 20,000 homeless persons where he or she will be during the Olympic games, you will most likely get one unequivocal answer: jail.

The 1996 Olympic games are the crown jewel in plans by the Atlanta's business elite to showcase Atlanta as a true international city, past all racial tensions, a veritable capital of the New South worthy of your tourist dollars. For nearly a decade, Atlanta's corporations, working in tandem with government agencies, have pursued a strategy to revitalize the downtown business district into a 24-hour hub of shops, restaurants, and high-income apartments. The idea is to firmly establish Atlanta as a choice location for conventions and high-profile sporting events, as well as to attract suburban exiles (and their tax-dollars) back into the fold.

Spearheading this effort is Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), an organization of elite business interests (or, as a former CAP chairman bluntly put it, "white economic power") such as Coca-Cola and Turner Communications. CAP has made it perfectly clear that the poor and homeless have no place in its vision for downtown Atlanta. Its Central Area Study II, a cooperative effort between CAP and the City of Atlanta, ranks homelessness a "high priority concern," and recommends a number of measures to assist the police in safeguarding the image of downtown, including the creation of a new police zone solely for the central area, the employment of "undercover methods of surveillance," and the construction of the new zone headquarters in CNN Center, as well as a mini-zone headquarters in Underground Atlanta, a theme shopping mall. The study also outlines the creation of a "safeguard zone," which would include the hotel and business district. Such a zone should have "strictly enforced laws forbidding panhandling, loitering, and public drunkenness." One CAP member put it in perspective when he said, "It is not an attempt to round up the homeless and move them to a concentration camp... But I think everyone agrees

that in order to have economic development in the central area, we really have to do something about homeless people walking up and down the streets."

The Olympics have presented downtown planners with the golden opportunity to do just that, all in the name of international hospitality. One of their tactics, used successfully in many cities around the nation, was to make it easier to arrest homeless people by passing laws that criminalize behaviors necessitated by the status of living on the street, or which are vague enough to be selectively enforced against undesirables. In 1991, shortly after the International Olympic Committee awarded the games to Atlanta, the City Council enacted three ordinances that effectively constitute a de facto vagrancy free zone. The new laws outlaw soliciting alms by "forcing oneself upon the company of another," entering vacant buildings, and walking across a parking lot without owning a vehicle that is parked there. The three ordinances also come in addition to an arsenal of other laws, one of which is the decades-old and absurd DC-6 violation, which makes it illegal to be in a "known drug area." The laws are clearly ambiguous, and duplicate existing laws. For example, the begging ordinance is supposedly designed to protect the lives of pedestrians, but threatening behavior was already a crime in Atlanta. It's called assault.

Adding to the horror, the City Council also voted to increase the maximum sentence for a municipal ordinance violation from two to six years. And, last year, the city completed construction of a new, \$56 million, 1000-bed jail. At a recent public safety task force meeting, Tom Pocock, director of Atlanta's Pretrial Detention Center, declared the jail to be "the first Olympic project completed on time."

Local media pundits have engaged in a mean-spirited campaign to sway public perceptions of the downtown homeless population. One of the most notorious, Colin Campbell of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, has devoted several columns to the invention of lively metaphors for the homeless people he sees as he commutes to and from work. Some notables include "crazies," "screamers," "lurchers" (?), "urinators," and, perhaps most tellingly, "obstructionists." The police are also extremely clear on their role in CAP grand vision. As one officer confided to a member of CopWatch, "the city's goal is to run them out of town. The city is not going to do anything to help."

Many of the homeless people CopWatchers have developed a relationship with greet this knowledge with a kind of resigned fatalism. After all, most are already intimately familiar with the workings of the city's criminal justice system. Those that can't find a bed in the city's limited shelter system, and must sleep in a park or on a sidewalk, will inevitably be woken with a 5 AM nudge from the boot of a police officer, just in time to disappear before rush hour. During large tourist events, the situation becomes worse. A study conducted by the Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless concluded that the number of homeless arrests rises significantly shortly before large business conventions, most for violations of "status crimes." One particularly bad night, during a convention of 35,000 Lutheran teenagers, CopWatch witnessed eight police cars and two paddy wagons surrounding a centrally located park where many people slept. Among the arrested that night was one particularly vocal homeless man whom the police busted for carrying an unopened bottle of beer. Sergeant S.R. Traylor of the APD explained to us that if the Christian students "see all of these homeless people, they'll never come back to Atlanta."

Fridays are a popular time for arresting the poor, because it ensures that they will remain in jail until their court date on Monday. Typically, the arresting officer doesn't even bother to show up for the trial. The case is dropped by default, but the mission has already been accomplished: the defendant has been effectively removed from public sight for the duration of the weekend.

One Friday night, a homeless man we know made the mistake of trying to make a phone call from the Omni parking lot. He had just started a job, and so he had a little money, but no change. He asked a couple walking to their car to change a dollar. The parking lot attendant misinterpreted this action and called the police, who arrested the man. The arresting officer actually showed up for the Monday hearing, so the defendant faced two choices: plead innocent and spend another week in jail until the trial date came up, or plead guilty and get off for time served. Simple math told him to choose the latter, but because of his weekend stay in jail, he lost his job. He also accrued a new charge on his criminal record, making it even harder for him to get another job.

Atlanta's poor and homeless are beginning to fight back. In the month preceding the 1994 Super Bowl, a small group of homeless people, anticipating the inevitable police sweeps that would occur during the much-hyped event, demanded a meeting with Mayor Bill Campbell to address the problem. After several tries, Campbell finally consented to a public hearing with the homeless, at which he stated publicly that the police sweeps will stop.

Not surprisingly, in the week before the Super Bowl, sweeps occurred as usual, but nobody could predict the sheer intensity of the police presence. Atlanta's elite drug squad, the Red Dogs, were deployed on every street corner. CopWatch received reports of massive numbers of arrests. Typically, the Red Dogs would order any man or woman who looked homeless and had less than ten dollars off their beats. Homeless activists, enraged that Campbell had not held to his promise, organized a march during the Super Bowl. Although it received no media coverage, shortly afterward Robert Ferrell, one of the marchers, started the Atlanta Union of the Homeless.

The idea of the homeless organizing for themselves is a potentially powerful one here in Atlanta. The thought of all the poor people made homeless from Olympic development uniting with thousands of sisters and brothers on the street into one united organization may be distant, but it is the ultimate nightmare for the business and political establishment, and it is, we feel, the only way homelessness and the problems associated with it will ever cease. It is the homeless themselves, not advocates or students, who have felt first-hand the unwarranted blow of a police officer's baton, or the humiliation of being jailed for sleeping in a public park. Those of us who are not homeless have an important role to play, but we must always bear in mind who ultimately owns the struggle to end the criminalization of poverty.

Working in a rare partnership, Empty the Shelters, the student organization that founded CopWatch Atlanta (hats off to the folks in Berkeley), has begun to unite with the Union of the Homeless around issues of police accountability. Although CopWatch's base is still predominantly young people, during the times when Union members have gone out on street patrols, we have witnessed a remarkable change in the attitudes of many members of the homeless community. Imagine the difference between college



students passing out know-your-rights pamphlets and actually homeless or formerly-homeless people doing the same. In the latter instance, the action becomes not just a service, but an organizing tool as well!

Realizing, however, that street patrols alone are not enough to solve the problem of police harassment, CopWatch has begun work with a legal team to repeal the anti-homeless ordinances. Empty the Shelters has also inaugurated an innovative media campaign named SpoilSport. SpoilSport is the mythical half-sister of official Olympic mascot Izzy. She's much smarter than her half-wit brother, though, and is on a quest to publicize Olympic-related human rights abuses. SpoilSport has already received enthusiastic media coverage around the world, everywhere from Chicago to Tokyo. She hopes to come soon to newspaper or television near you.

Whether or not we get prime-time coverage during July of 1996, CopWatch knows that even when the Olympics end, our work will have only just begun. The number of homeless in Atlanta continues to grow, and CAP recently announced plans to implement a Business Improvement District, which would finance a private security force downtown. Even more ominous, the 400 security cameras that Olympic planners are going to install at various points around the city are staying -- permanently! CopWatch will continue a strategy of direct street patrols, legal pressure, media zaps, and grassroots homeless organizing, and we will not stop until Atlanta's war on the poor ceases once and for all.

**Update:** Central Atlanta Progress has been pressuring Judges to allow offenders of crimes to be imprisoned for the maximum amount of time of six months without being sentenced. How much is anyone willing to bet that homeless people will be "rounded" up in April of '96 for breaking certain ordinances? CAP is currently trying to get the panhandling law changed to where one can not ask for money after dark or within a certain distance of a business. Sounds like infringement of the first amendment to us.

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