

Untitled

From the start I feared trouble. Why is it that some professors *insist* on actually *using* the first day of class? Everyone knows that it should be a day to get a syllabus and walk out the door. But no way. This instructor meant trouble, and I had no choice but to sit through a brief history of the web (would this be on the midterm, anyway?). Finally, 351:349 was over, which was a good thing, because there were things I needed to do, things far more important than noting the release of this browser or that version of html. [Barclay]

But at least we got out early, and what's more, the day was warm--for January (though that did mean lots of sloshy slush). [Barclay]

When I stepped out of Murray, I took a deep breath of fresh, cool air. It was the beginning of a new semester with new professors and new students in class. Rain or sloshy slush, I thought to myself, "I'm gonna make this semester count!" [Jen]

I really needed to bolster my GPA after that debacle with the Latin department last semester. "Perfideo, Perfidere" I murmured, then coughed as I passed Scott. Even in the slush random students stood smoking. I was glad I had quit. [Beth]

But not so glad that I didn't still crave a smoke or two. Or three. Or whatever. I crossed the road, toward the grease trucks -- how palatable could the food be at one of those places, anyway? Aren't they called "grease" trucks for a reason? Debating whether to try my luck with some grease, or bum a cigarette off of somebody, I guess I wasn't looking where I was going. [Namiko]

I walked right into my friend, James. "Good thing he's a buddy," I thought, while contemplating the possible fist I could have received for not watching where I was going. "Where you off to?" He asked in that 'I-don't-really-care-but-suppose-I-should-ask' tone. I shrugged and searched my frazzled mind for an answer. [Tom]

"New York." It was the first thing that came to mind, spurred by the site of some kid in a Yankees cap. But, once I said it, it seemed to make perfect sense. I said my goodbyes to James, grabbed grease grub, and headed for the train station. [Barclay]

When I arrived, I purchased my ticket and then walked toward the track outside. There were some interesting characters standing there waiting for the train. There was a frazzled-looking man, swaying back and forth as he muttered to himself, "'curtains,' I told them, 'curtains,' but did they listen?" Twenty feet away was a homeless woman, making her rounds through the station, asking for money. I'd seen her here many times. I reached into my pocket to see if I had any change left. [Andre]

Let's see... A quarter. A dime. A few pennies... And Dear God, what is this doing in my pocket? Disgusting! [Scott]

Note to self: Putting Grease Truck food wrappers in my pockets should definately not be on my list of "Things to Do" in the future. After I threw that disgusting garbage away, I grabbed all the change I could muster, and gave a few coins to the homeless woman. "Thank you dear, you're too kind," the woman said with a half smile. I

nodded in response, and waited for my train. As I waited amongst the multitude of interesting characters, I heard a pair of loud, booming voices behind me, and they seemed to be arguing. How could I resist a little bit of eavesdropping? [Meredith]

I glanced over my shoulder and saw two men engaged in a heated conversation. One was dressed in a scruffy old Army jacket and looked like he hadn't bathed in a few days. The other man looked very familiar—it was the Latin teacher from last semester. He didn't seem to notice me and I wanted to keep it that way. "I already gave you the money," my Latin teacher argued, "now you have to do what I hired you to do. I don't want my wife to get off this train alive!" I glanced from side to side and realized that I was the only person on the platform that had been paying attention to them. Everyone else was absorbed in their own little worlds, or mumbling about curtains. What was I to do?! [Adam]

I risked another glance at the two men, just in time to see the scruffy-looking man shove my Latin teacher roughly. Again, I looked around to see if anyone had noticed, but either they hadn't, or had and didn't care. "I'll double what I gave you," I heard my Latin teacher say, his tone slightly pleading. The other man hesitated, as if considering the offer. I strained to hear his reply, but the arrival of the train drowned out his voice. [Ingrid]

My mind raced in thousands of different directions. Should I warn his wife? Or should I kill her? I really need the money. She knows me, she trusts me. So many options. [Shawn]

I had to do what came naturally, so I got on the train and followed the man. He sat towards the back of the car, and I sat adjacent to him. As the train rumbled through its stops, I kept a watchful eye on him. I saw the ticket collector begin to walk towards us, and I noticed the man becoming nervous. He hadn't bought a ticket, and was thrown off at the next stop. I followed, not thinking twice. "Great, now I am in Newark, following this hitman" I thought to myself. [James]

I followed the man down the stairs from the platform, but fearing that he would notice someone shadowing him, I ducked into the McDonalds on the concourse. From the windows, I could see him leave the station and head straight to the payphone. Though it was impossible to read his lips at that distance, I had a good idea of his mood, seeing as how the passers-by gave him a wide berth while he held his heated conversation. After hanging up, he headed back to the platform to board the next train bound for the city. Seeing my opportunity, I dashed out to the payphone and asked the operator to redial the number of the last outgoing call. Sweat beaded on my forehead as the line was picked up on the other end. [Bill]

"What now?!" the voice said. It was the voice of my Latin teacher. I stood stiff. What could I have possibly said to him? At this point, I wasn't sure what to think. If I got involved in whatever was going on, he could have me killed too. Quickly, I slammed the receiver back onto its cradle as the voice of my Latin teacher on the other end started to become agitated. My curiosity still strong, I decided to continue following the man and as I turned to head back to the station, I planted my face into a scruffy old Army jacket. I stepped back and crept my eyes slowly up to his neck and then to the silhouette of his face. He appeared to grin a menacing grin. [Ryan]

would have stammered an apologetic phrase, if not for the seeming presence of a rubix cube chunk of fear in my throat. I could almost see the outline of a small child, twisting it futilely and into increasingly complex shapes. Talking was not an option, but cleaning my drawers would definitely have to be. Returning to the platform I hovered over the yellow line, mulling it over. [Vance]

"What am I supposed to do now?" I thought as I peered over at the tracks below. Following him didn't seem like an option now that he had noticed me--and this seemed even more apparent as I noticed him standing near me, staring at me strangely. "You know miss, it's not safe for a nice girl stand so close to the edge of the platform. You wouldn't want to fall over," he said in an English accent with that same weird menacing grin. "Um...it's ok. I'm ok here," I stammered as I wondered what he was up to- was he hitting on me? [Tricia]

*As I stood a moment to ponder that eerie grin, still remarkably clear; emblazened in a pattern of neuro-polar electricity, her natural photographic memory combined with the latest in solid-state Neurowave™ memory chip implants. [SAVED] Sarah sighed and looked at her watch, "something to ponder later, but now I've got to figure out which of these paintings at the Met. I want to use for my art history project." As she bent over to open her bookbag she felt a slight breeze and for a split second, she realized that her dialog with the man was no more a cryptic come-on than a warning... *SWOOOOSH* ... [Nick]*

Nearly toppled by the sheer force of the 270 mile an hour Amtrak Photon hovercoach, Sarah reeled backward, her bookbag absorbing most of the shock of falling. Its 'rails,' as well as the coach that glides over them, a vestige of technological competition between the Earth Sphere Alliance and UREOC (the United Republic of Earth-Orbiting Colonies) in the years preceeding the disastrous Great Apocalyptic War, which later came to be known as the 'second cold war.' Lying outside the traditional tracks that guided it past the station, Photon passenger line often conjures up a wind that is capable of briefly and simultaneously numbing all senses of anyone who dares cross the yellow line. As the train fades into the distance, quickly as it came into existance, Sarah collects herself as quickly and gracefully as possible and stares in disbelief. The man who she had been following had thrown himself into the tracks, all that remained of him were tattered pieces of cloth and the ocasional glob of organic material.. oozing its way adown the path assigned by the relentless force of gravity. Before she could organize her thoughts enough to comprehend what had just happened, the next NY/NJ/PA Metrorail to NYC arrived. She boarded, partly due to instinct, partly the desire to leave the terribly saddening, yet confusing, set to the second act of her journey. Sarah takes a seat toward the end of the car; her head drops into her hands and she begins to rub her eyes as if in disbelief, yet subconsciously knowing - fearing - her inescapable role in the events that will unfold. "I need to get my mind off of this craziness. And I sometimes wonder if we would have trains that are capable of mach-4, privatized social security, insurance regulation, automobiles that use little fuel and produce NO pollution... all of this spurred by competition over the better place for

*consumers to live, would have been as successful, or even exist, were it not for the 'second cold war.'" Her usual political banter, "*sigh* Well I've got to choose, Baroque, Rococco, or Cubism. Should I go with Picasso? BAH.. I need a magic 8ball." Sarah smiles, tilts her head back and lets out a breath that seemed to be her first bit of relaxation since the semester started. And as she drifts into unconsciousness, the split second before she slips away into darkness, the man, that grin... for a split-second, infinitesimally smaller than the rising end of a clock-cycle, his ominous grin.. now burned permanently into her photographical; Sarah, unaware left her waking life behind. [Nick]*

...All this seemed to make sense, the future, the hovertrain, and the 2nd Cold War. However it didn't matter as she soon was awakened by the bright lights of a hospital room. An onlooking nurse ran to her side as she saw Sarah begin stirring. "What happened, and where am I?" Sarah muttered. "You are in Saint James Hospital in Newark, you were rushed here after some onlookers saw a man with a green jacket knock you unconscious" the nurse said. Sarah began to get out of bed, and stumbled to her belongings. "Where will you go now?" said the nurse. "I was trying to get to the city" Sarah replied. "Are you alright, from what I hear you took a nasty spill?". "I think I will be okay" Sarah explained. As Sarah left the hospital she was unsure of what to do, find her Latin professor, find the man in the green jacket with the english accent, or go about her daily life... [James]

"I knew you were gonna be OK..." The man—although he looked vaguely familiar—startled her.. "Who are you?" "Look, we boarded the train together: I saw what happened to you. I called the ambulance after that man knocked you out." "Great, I owe my life to nut who talks to himself about curtains," she thought, but at the same time she felt somewhat relieved now that she remembered who the man was. "I think I know who your attacker was." Sure. Elementary, Dr. Watson. "I know you don't believe me. OK, this is my story: I work on Broadway, I mean I used to work there... I was a stage manager until yesterday. I got fired because the goddam stagehands didn't lower the curtain at the end of act four... The bastards hate me—long story. Anyway, they claim I forgot to give them the curtain command." [Jules]

"Look mister, I'm really thankful for, well, saving my life, but you see, I was busy trying to get to the police to report a freaking attempted MURDER! Now if you really know who psychoboy was, than stop whining about stagehands and come with me downtown. Where the hell do you know him from, anyway?" [Jules]

He seemed at a loss for words, and I didn't have time for him to find them. I breezed past him and out into Newark. I was tired and sore and scared and a little confused. To be honest, I was hoping someone else would tell this story--I just wanted out.

And so someone will . . . [Barclay's Continuity Fix One]

And then a phrase popped into Sarah's head - one she hadn't given a shred of thought to since finals of last semester when she drilled it into her head while studying. Carpe diem - Seize the day. "Ironic, isn't it," Sarah thought "that stupid Latin saying would pop into my head just now. Perhaps I've just been so consumed by this Latin professor affair..." She ambled down the crooked streets only half aware of where her feet were taking her. "Then again, it does seem silly to think a thought like *Seize the Day* unless the brain intends for the body to act upon the

construction of the mind." Though lost in thought, Sarah became aware of a growing noise to her right, and it was rapidly approaching. "Nothing but the train," she thought. "The train..." she remarked with a bit more incredulity "...without realizing where I was or where I was going, I ended up back at the station! But surely that's still the same train? How can that be, since I was in the hospital for hours?" Screwing up a bit of courage, Sarah took the stairs to the platform by twos, and nearly bowled over a newspaper man and his photographer. "It's a shame," said a passer by "a poor man jumped in front of the train. And I'm not sure, but it looked like this other man in a green coat knocked some poor girl senseless while trying to prevent the man from jumping." [Bill]

As Sarah realized that the train had never left the station, an NYPD officer approached her. "Hey, shouldn't you be in the hospital? We just sent you there a few hours ago." Sarah thought, this is perfect, I can tell him about my Latin professor! [Dora]

Doubt began to flood Sarah's mind. Maybe she had misheard something. Why had this murderer tried to save the jumper? Who was the jumper? She looked around for the stagehand, he at least knew who the man was. Where did he go? [Shawn]

She was sorry she had left him back at the hospital now. [Barclay's Continuity Fix Two]

Sarah was more confused than ever with what was going on. But she knew one thing for sure; she wasn't ready to tell the police officer what she knew. She mumbled something about being released with a clean bill of health from the hospital and walked away. Sarah stuffed her hands into her pockets in desperation. What was this that she felt in her pocket? She had emptied her pocket of the grease truck garbage a few hours ago, and now there was a crumpled up ball of paper in her pocket again. She pulled the balled up piece of yellow lined paper from her pocket, and flattened it out in her hands. It read, "Sarah - My name is Peter Anderson. I am the man who was wearing the green Army jacket in the train station, the man who saved your life. There are certain people in this world that want a woman named Penelope Van Hoiten, dead. This includes her husband, who was your Latin professor last semester. Somehow you have become involved in this conspiracy, although I am not quite sure how. They tried to push you onto the tracks at the train station, but I stopped them. Believe what I am telling you when I say that your life is in grave danger. There are more people involved in this than you realize. You must trust no one but me. I would have stayed with you, but you banged your head on the platform quite badly—and the police insisted on calling an ambulance. Now you must come to me. Meet me on the front steps of the American Museum of Natural History at midnight. You must trust me. Your life is in serious danger." Sarah finished reading the note as another train to New York City arrived at the platform. She scanned the crowd of people and saw a well-groomed man in a black suit eyeing her. His hand reached into his jacket and emerged with a small handgun. Sarah screamed in terror as most the people on the platform dove to the ground to avoid a stray bullet. Almost instantly a train station rent-a-cop screamed into his walkie-talkie "WE NEED POLICE UP HERE!! And get the train out of the station NOW!" A shot rang out on the platform, and a bullet whizzed past Sarah's ear. Sarah dove through the closing doors onto the train as a second bullet broke the train car window. The train quickly began accelerate. She realized she had no where to go but the American Museum of Natural History. Could the guy in the green Army jacket really be an

undercover CIA agent? She would soon find out. She glanced at her watch, and realized that she had just enough time to get to Peter Anderson. Someone wanted to kill her, and right now, he seemed to be her only hope. [Adam]

Or was he? Sarah sat on the train, her head floating in a sea of paranoia, thinking "who exactly is this Peter Anderson anyway...and why do people want to kill me? What do they think I know?" One thing was certain- Dr. Van Hoiten was more than a professor of Latin at Rutgers University, and his wife was more than the sweet, plump translator of Spanish, Russian, Chinese and German that Sarah met in Dr. Van Hoiten's office one day last semester. "I wonder why anyone would plot to kill her?" Sarah thought as the train pulled into Penn Station. [Tricia]

The night was dark and cold as the train made the quick trip into the city. She had been in the hospital for hours, but at least she still had time to meet this mystery man by midnight. [Barclay's Continuity Fix Three]

Sarah found herself dazed and confused throughout the train ride to the city. Suddenly, she found herself emerging from Penn Station and getting into a taxi. "American Museum of Natural History, please." As the taxi arrived, she searched the front steps to see someone in a green Army jacket but couldn't find anyone in sight. As she climbed the front steps of the museum she heard footsteps echoing her own. She looked back to see if anyone was there, but saw no one there. She shivered slightly and realized her teeth were chattering. Wondering what she was doing there, she waited for Peter Anderson to show up. Then, suddenly a hand grabbed her shoulder tightly and spun her sharply around. [Hannah]

"Hey! Watch it-" "Sarah. It's me." Peter Anderson peered at her anxiously, then looked around. "No one followed you?" "No," she snapped. "I took a cab." "You what! We have to get underground. Quickly." Peter pulled her toward the subway entrance, but she shrugged him off. "Listen, I have NO idea what's going on, somebody's trying to kill me, I have NO idea who you are, my roommate's probably out of her mind with worry-" "I'll explain when we're underground," Peter said tersely. "We have to get to Lincoln Center first." "I'm not going anywhere until you tell me what's going on!" "We don't have time-" Peter began. Suddenly, shots rang out; it sounded like they were coming out of the darkness of the park across the street. Peter grabbed Sarah and pulled her to the ground, under the shadow of the silent museum. She tried to free herself from his grip, but immediately smelled copper as her mysterious contact rolled away from her and half sat, half lay on the concrete steps. "Shit, you've been hit!" "Go," Peter hissed, breathing heavily. "Take the subway to Lincoln Center. Pagliacci is one of the performances tonight. Meet the clown by the main entrance. Got it? The *clown.* Give him this." He pressed a small metallic object in her hand. It was sticky with his blood. "Tell him what happened to me. Tell him I failed, but we may still win the war." He struggled to his knees and drew out a snub nosed revolver. "Go. I'll cover for you." Damn. What a time to quit smoking. Sarah ran in a crouch, staying in the shadows as long as she could, then sprinted toward the subway entrance. Another shot rang out from the park, but this time an answering shot came from the darkness where Peter sat, dying. She ran down the stairs, and prayed that the C Downtown would arrive soon. [Namiko]

Her prayers were answered as the subway train roared into the station. She boarded and took a seat towards the front of the subway car. Still clutched in her hand was the small, bloody metallic object. She wiped it off on her coat—for once she had

more to worry about than staying in fashion and looking good. The metallic object looked very old, like something out of an Archeology textbook she had seen a few semesters ago. It was a bit larger than she had initially thought, about the size of computer mouse. It was covered with all kinds of etchings and markings; none that Sarah, with her brief knowledge of Latin could even begin to interpret. Maybe this was how Dr. Van Hoiten was involved. Had she been trying to translate these etchings? The bottom of the metal object had some unusual bumps and markings on it—like it was a key or something. The subway car came to a quick stop at the next station. As the doors opened, a dozen or so men in dark suits rushed into the subway car. Sarah had no where to go, and she knew she was in big trouble. [Adam]

"Oh my God, help me!" is all Sarah could think as she nervously tugged on her curly black hair and watched as one of the men in the dark suits made their way towards her. Apparently God was listening to Sarah's plea- because when the man came over to her, he said "God is here to help you." He held out in front of her a pamphlet on how "The Lord saves lives" that Sarah took, confused and stunned. "Ok, so they're just a bunch of Jehovah's Witnesses or something," she concluded as she realized that the men were going around to everyone on the train handing out the pamphlets and speaking of God in this world and so on. This gave Sarah a chance to reflect on her day so far- and to realize that it was only 7PM. In a few hours her friends would be making their way to some party or another- as Thursdays were party nights on campus. "Damn! I just want to go home! I don't wanna be involved with this shit anymore! I should just go home." Sarah seriously considered this, just passing by her stop, taking the train to Penn Station and going back to her dorm. But she knew she couldn't. More than just trying to save the life of her Latin professor's wife, or her own life, she was just curious to see what would happen- and why was it that Mrs. Van Hoiten should be killed? She took a deep breath, examined the bloody artifact and got off the train at Columbus Circle. [Tricia]

As Sarah stepped off of the subway, and onto the platform, she looked around. Didn't seem that anyone suspicious was around, this put Sarah at ease. She walked through the rest of the terminal, and began looking at the walls. As Sarah passed a clock she noticed the clock said 12:30. This made more sense since she had met Peter at midnight. "Then why does my watch say 7:00..6:45...6:30..?" the hands of Sarah watch began spinning backwards. "What was doing this?" Sarah took out the cryptic Latin, blood soaked artifact, and noticed it had a strange effect on her watch. In fact the clock on the wall began spinning backwards too. Sarah figured its rightful owner might fill her into the secret origin of the artifact anyway. She ran through the streets of the city, and got to Lincoln Square. Out of a dark alley Sarah heard a whisper. "Who's there?" Sarah called. [James]

Looking around with wide, terrified eyes, Sarah whispered a little louder, "Who's there?" As she turned around, a hand covered her mouth and dragged her from behind into an alleyway. Too startled to scream, Sarah froze and stood still. "Don't worry. I'm a friend of Peter's. If I let go, do not, I repeat, do not, scream. I'm not going to hurt you, ok?" Sarah nodded and he let uncovered her mouth. She turned around slowly and saw the clown! [Jen]

Her natural first instinct was to scream and run, which drew unwanted attention. "Sarah!!" [Walking down the street] was one of Sarah's classmates, Spike. "Hey Sarah, you in the city for that project too?" Sarah was quite the attractive college [Junior], and Spike had always kept his eye on her. "No, Spike, get away, it's not

safe he-" Two shotgun shells hit the floor as Sarah's stomach makes its way up her esophagus. She turns to confront the clown, and unfortunately, the gunman hit his target. [Some cops, fortunately, were nearby.] The NYPD was able to restrain the gunman, as the clown instructed Sarah what needed to be done. "Get to Italy, Università degli Studi di Firenze, find professor Giovanni di Napoliano. Don't go alone, you're more involved in this than you had ever believed. GO NOW...." Sarah hadn't noticed, but Spike had eavesdropped on the entire conversation, "I won't let you go alone Sarah." [Nick][Plus Barclay's Continuity Fix Number Umpteen]

[The "Nick Clause" goes into effect here]

...:Break:... Interlude. A surprising number and diversity of languages have Indo European roots. Celtic, Germanic, Romance and Slavic are obvious. However children in Albania and Greece both call their parents by similar stemmed names. Ancient Persian and Sanscrit also have the same background. The inscription on the artifact was mundane Latin however. "Magister Mundi sum! Utinam logica falsa tuam philosophiam totam suffodiant! Nihil curo de ista tua stulta superstitione." In english that comes out as " I am the Master of the Universe! May faulty logic undermine your entire philosophy! I'm not interested in your dopey religious cult." Although real Latin and written by a scholar with a sense of humor (however poor) the inscription must clearly have been recent. ...:Resume:.. [Beth]

"Spike, you don't understand...you have no idea what's been going on...how crazy this all is!" Sarah, on the verge of tears, grabbed Spike by the shoulders and told him to go home and pretend he never saw anything. "How can I do that when I witnessed all of this? I can't let you go to Italy alone...it sounds dangerous. Plus, I want to help you. I don't care how ridiculous it sounds...I'm your friend, Sarah". Noticing that the cops were approaching them, Sarah darted away into the alley, over the fence, hailed a cab down and headed for the airport. Spike, of course, was at her heels.

In the cab Sarah and Spike sat slumped down and with their wide-eyed faces turned inwards, away from the cabs dingy windows. The pungent seat covers of one of the city's older automobiles was nonetheless comforting after her hurried pace, and she caught her breath for a few seconds after hushing the bewildered and inquisitive Spike. After a minute or so, she concluded that the driver was oblivious to her brewing adventure, and so she confided the days events in a half-whisper to her willing sidekick.

"Wow....that's quite a story. How do you expect to get to Italy, though? I mean, that's not exactly something you up and do all of a sudden. After all, we go to Rutgers, so it's not like we can afford to do that sort of travelling. Well, if you do go, I'm going with you," Spike exclaimed. Sarah, who had been looking down at the cab floor for most of the ride, turned to Spike with a half-smile and asked, "I don't get it... you don't *have* to get involved with this mess. Why be concerned with it.. or me?" Spike then replied, "Isn't it obvious....?"

"Isn't what obvious?" Sarah thought to herself as she ran through Spike and her dialogue over and over again in her head. Nothing is obvious any more. Here she was, a twenty one year old college student, who up until a number of hours ago was

planning to go to a party or spend her evening at Cafe 52 listening to her friends question the meaning of their lives, in that 'I'm a brilliant philosopher who drinks excessive amounts of lattes and obsesses over pre-adolescent depressive poetry' sort of way. All of her "I wish I had gotten into Brown and was capable of spitting out words half as artistic sounding as this funky scarf around my neck makes me appear to be friends" probably would have been too wrapped up in their existential lives to even over hear her Latin teacher's words. And yet here was this boy whom she hardly knew, jumping at the notion of putting his life in jeopardy in order to spend some time with her. Maybe some girls would consider that romantic but it just seemed crazy to her. Then again, I'm the one thinking in different tenses...

"Damn the lattes," she thought, "today is at least as exciting as all of my friends' lives put together." Despite the danger, Sarah was taken by a certain pride that upon her the gods had bestowed an escape from the everyday, the mundane, "the RUT" as the nickname goes. At school, her life revolved around everything she had to complete, everywhere she had to be, and everyone she had to answer to. She realized the lives of most people are thus in the hands of many. Sarah decided then that her story would be under the control of only one person. "Let's go," Sarah said in a new boldness to Spike as they pulled up to gate B of the airport terminal, "We need to find a plane tonight."

Sarah and Spike arrived at the airport sooner than expected. "No matter what," Sarah said, "we have to find this Giovanni di Napoliano guy." "Where do we start?" Spike asked. "The Università degli Studi di Firenze I think...not that I have any idea what that means," replied Sarah. As the cab pulled up to the international departures section of Newark airport, Sarah spotted the swarm of cop cars. "Oh shit, I hope for our sake that's not because of me," she said. The radio answered her question... Fzzz...police are on the lookout for a young girl named Sarah with curly black hair, about 5'4" with fair complexion...possible suspect for a murder that occurred earlier today...she is believed to be extremely dangerous and is not to be approached...Fzzzz Sarah had heard enough, before the cabbie could ask any questions she grabbed Spike's hand and darted out of the cab, dragging him behind her.

Sarah noticed one end of the airport that the cops had not seemed to reach, yet. She figured if she was to get on a plane, that would be her best bet, down there. Still dragging Spike with her, they darted towards the terminal. When they reached the desk, Sarah began rambling incoherently to the lady behind the desk, demanding to get a ticket no matter what it took. Suddenly Sarah stopped her exclamation. She looked again at the woman behind the counter. It was the same woman from the beginning of her day.. the homeless woman she had given the coins to! The only different was her appearance; she now had on completely normal airport attire, and seemed not to smell, this time. Apparently this was no homeless woman. "Don't worry, I have everything you need, Sarah," the lady spoke softly. She handed Sarah an envelope. Sarah hurriedly opened it. Inside, she found two tickets, and a large wad of money, both in American and Italian currency. "Go," said the homeless / airport lady. "The professor is already expecting your arrival. Remember... God is here to help you." The lady used the same half-smirk when speaking this line, and briefly glanced towards Spike.

It seemed like everything was set, until Sarah realized something important was missing. "Passports! Spike, we're going to need passports to get to Italy." It seemed like the adventure would end prematurely.

"Bribery," Sarah thought. "We could bribe the flight attendants." Letting Spike continue to ponder their dilemma, she surreptitiously counted the cash in the envelope. They had enough to bribe an Italian, but no American would let them on an out of country flight without a passport with the police closing in for \$176.34.

Panic-stricken, Sarah cried, "Spike! What are we going to do?! We don't have enough money!" Spike's mind was turning like wheels, but couldn't figure out what to do. Suddenly, Sarah got an idea and ran back to the homeless/airport lady and asked her for help. "You said everything I need is in this envelope, but you forgot the passports! And my friend, Spike needs one too. Can you help us?" The airport lady just winked and said, "Trust me." The cops were still a little off in the distance, searching for Sarah, so she was safe for at least another 5 minutes. What felt like an hour later, but in actuality it was only 2 minutes, the airport lady handed Sarah two fake passports. Astonished, Sarah asked, "How did you do that?" The lady just winked and with that now familiar half-smirk, she said, "I told you...I have everything you need. Now go before the cops catch ya!" Speechless, Sarah got Spike and headed towards their gate.

Sarah and Spike made it to the gate just as the flight attendant prepared to lock the door. "Tickets please," said the woman (obviously annoyed by the late arrivals). Sarah hurriedly handed over the two tickets, and with that the woman told them to hurry on board. "Airline policy is to check in at least one hour prior to flight departure time. Please do so for future travel and thank you for choosing Virgin Airlines." Sarah and Spike barely heard the last words the woman spoke as they ran down the corridor leading to the plane. Once inside Sarah began to panic realizing that Virgin Airlines did not fly to Florence, Italy. She looked at her tickets and relaxed seeing that this plane would only take them on the first part of their trip. Once the plane landed in London Gatwick, they would have to transfer to an Alitalia flight that would fly them directly to the Aeroporto di Firenze. The flight itself was rather uneventful. Spike attempted to calm Sarah's nerves by joking with her about joining "The Mile High Club". This did not really help much, but gave Sarah insight as to Spike's true motives. As the plane landed in London, panic set in once again. The passports that the woman had given her looked nothing like Sarah or Spike. "Well, we can't turn back now. Let's just see what happens, customs officials are notorious for not really taking much time to check these things," Spike reassured her. As they passed through the line, the man checking the passports barely glanced at them. He just almost mechanically stamped the booklets and handed them back to the passengers. "We have three hours until our flight, what now?" Sarah asked.

"Suivez-moi. Vous n'etes pas sur dans l'ouvert. Je vous cacherai jusqu'a vos flight," an old woman shouted as Sarah and Spike walked by. Neither of them spoke French, but they could see the urgency in the woman's eyes and decided that they should trust her. Sarah suddenly remembered one phrase that might help them better communicate, "Parlez-vous anglais?" The old woman responded, "Non...Parlate italiano?" Spike quickly responded, "Parlo italiano. Non molto bene comunque. Parlare prego lentamente e forse potro capirli." "What did you say?" Sarah asked, awed by Spike's ability to speak Italian. "I just told her that I spoke Italian but not very well and to please speak slowly." With that the old woman began chattering

away to Spike. She led them into an airport lounge decorated like a set from the Brady Bunch. It looked as if it had not been used in quite a while with dust covering everything and the soda machines dispensing Coca Cola for two pence. The old woman reached into the vending machine and produced an envelope. It was marked, "Non aprirsi Fino A Firenze". Sarah immediately wanted to open it, but Spike told her that it said to wait. Sarah looked at the clock and realized that over two hours had passed and that they should really get to their gate. The old woman suddenly muttered, "a morte non e la malvagita piu difettosa, ma piuttosto quando desideriamo morire e non puo. Ciao." Spike shuddered and translated what she said for Sarah. "I believe she quoted Sophocles. She just told us, death is not the worst evil, but rather when we wish to die and cannot." "That's pretty morbid, but we cannot worry about her," replied Sarah, "let's get to the gate." E

Sarah and Spike each grabbed a "Yorkie" chocolate bar and a bottle of Ribena each and made their way to the gate. As they approached the escalator, they heard someone screaming frantically, and stopped dead in their tracks. "It sounds like Italian," said Spike, "but he's speaking much too fast, where is it coming from?" His question was answered by a deranged looking man with a thick grey beard running towards them. He continued to rant in Italian much too quickly for Spike to understand, but the madness in his eyes and waving arms told both Spike and Sarah that this could not be good. "This is drawing serious amounts of attention to us and I don't like it," said Sarah. Before Spike could respond, the crazy looking Italian pulled a large silver medallion from his jacket, and a strange looking knife. The combination of the knife and sickening cries told Sarah and Spike to run up the escalator as fast as possible, but it also told airport security to take the guy down. As the Rutgers students reached the next level of the airport, the Italian was grabbed by a local "bobby," but not before he could throw the medallion towards Spike and shout, "Portare questo, è per la sua propria sicurezza."

As the man was taken away, still screaming in a different language, Sarah wondered what on earth that was all about. She looked down at the medallion. Upon inspection, she realized that it was really a small, metal container of some sort. She opened it up to find two small, irregular shaped contraptions about the size of her fingernails. "What the heck are these things," she inquired of Spike. He took them in his hand and responded, "Hmm...they kind of look like earplugs or something. Well there's one way to find out." He went ahead and stuck one of the contraptions into his ear. At this point they reached the desk to check in for their connecting flight. The person in front of them was speaking to the man at the counter. "Wait a minute", Spike said. "Their lips are moving but the words aren't the same--it's weird." "Huh, what are you talking about", replied Sarah. "They are speaking in Italian." Spike exclaimed, "What! No they aren't! I hear English!" He then took out the earplug and to his amazement, the person was speaking Italian. "Wow. This little earplug translated what he said into English. Here, Sarah, you try." They each stuck one of the little contraptions into their ears, and they looked at each other in amazement. They were both hearing the man's Italian as English!

As their attention seemed to be diverted from their new linguistic discovery, Spike left Sarah's side to go use the bathroom. After finishing his bodily functions he approached the sink. He washed his hands and fixed his hair that was reminiscent of his namesake. "Oh bathroom attendant, please hand me a towel!" exclaimed Spike. "Coming right up sir. And while your at it, try one of my special mints in the basket to the right of the cologne." replied the bathroom attendant. "Wow, thats mighty

kind of you sir...and by the way, I really like that tatoos of Mussolini on your forearm. Where did you get that?" Spike asked. He placed the special mint into his mouth. Soon afterwards the bathroom attendant scattered out of the bathroom. Meanwhile all Sarah could hear from the outside was an instant explosion. The pieces of Spike's tortured body gave the interior decoration of the bathroom a bloody theme.

Sarah popped the earplug into her ear and listened to the man at the counter. "I need a flight to Florence and I need it for today...the first flight out," said the man. The man caught Sarah staring at him and shouted something in Italian. Once again, he was speaking so rapidly that Spike could not understand, but Sarah, with her metal earplugs understood every word. "It's you! Oh my God, it's really you! Get out or here and go somewhere safe. Go wait in the Duty Free store...quick! I will meet you at there as soon as i get my ticket and explain everything!" Petrified, yet alert, Sarah told Spike what he said and they ran off to the Duty Free store in the airport. They tried to look nonchalant and waited for 10 minutes. The man came in and approached the two students.

[see previous two paragraphs for continuity problem... spike has been reassembled and resurrected? barclay, are you still fixing this stuff?]

[there is no deus ex machina now. The "Nick Clause" dictates the class finds a way to fix it, or the story falls apart and everyone suffers.]

[doh!]

The man puts his hand on Spike's shoulder, with an almost fatherly demeanor. The motion that followed was so fluid and accurate it seemed as if the man could predict spike's hand grabbing his shoulder, leaving his left abdomen wide open to the small 22 pistol... *** It's over. Spike, who was busy playing with the earplugs, his attention drawn to Sarah, "You ok? You nodded off for a second there.." Sarah stumbles to get up, "They're becoming more frequent..." Spike isn't concerned in the least bit. "Come on Sarah, lets get to Italy." Sarah's eyes open wide in shock... "W-w-wait up!" Sarah exclaims as she runs after Spike.

As the time passed, Sarah and Spike patiently awaited their flight. Sarah told Spike of the daydreams she had. "Wow, 22's and exploding breath mints, both leading to my downfall, am I sure I want to go with you?" Spike asked. Sarah giggled slightly. "It is nothing against you, I guess I was just heavily influenced by the events of tonight. I've been shot at, I saw a man get murdered and I am so overwhelmed and sleep deprived, I am sorry". Spike embraced her. "I guess this is very Bond like".

But these daydreams seemed more real than any daydreams she had ever had before. And justly so. Half way across the world, atop a mountain, somewhere in South America, a group of men were quietly listening to their every move. Although the hidden camera inside the decoy artifact only showed the grease truck stains in Sarah's pocket, the sensitive microphone heard everything that was going on. It also contained a locating beacon that could pinpoint Sarah's location by the use of satellites to square mile, anywhere in the world. Unexpected to the group, the signal that decoy artifact sent to the men seemed to cause the inner workings of nearby clocks to malfunction. Among the men was Sarah's Latin teacher, Professor Van Houten. This was the group who had orchestrated the incident in the train station,

where Sarah had all-too-conveniently been knocked unconscious. With the help of a few dirty cops and an out-of-work curtain operator, the group was able to implant a number of hypnotic suggestions deep into Sarah's mind – one of them was to kill anyone that got in the way, i.e. Spike. Spike's appearance was unplanned, and he was likely to get in the way of their ultimate plan. Sarah had no idea that the conspiracy ran so deeply, and that many of the people she had run into in the past day were agents of this group. Sarah also had no conscious idea that her mind was urging her to kill Spike, the boy that was quickly becoming much more than a friend.

The very thought of Spike living, and the continuing shriek of his voice urged Sarah to find the quickest way to destroy Spike without making a huge scene. "Hey Spike," Sarah exclaimed, "Do you want to grab a bite to eat before take off." "Sure, lets go grab some food at Nathans and go outside by those picnic tables. The pair proceeded to the picnic tables. Spike and Sarah sat down and began to eat. "Oh, Spike I almost forgot that I got you a present from the Souvenir Shop. Close your eyes and act surprised," Sarah instructed. "Okay, I just love surprises" Spike replied. Right at that moment she took her fork and stabbed Spike in the throat six times. He died instantly. She then placed a jacket over his face to make him look like he was resting his head. Then, she took all the money from his wallet and proceeded to board the plane. She thought to herself, "Man, that kid really sucked. I'm glad I got rid of him, he would of had us both cooked eventually anyway. It actually felt good taking his life. I hope I'll be able to kill more in the future. By the way I really need to get laid..."

With no remorse, Sarah boarded her flight and sat down. She found it strange that killing her friend did not leave any kind of negative feeling inside her, but it was all forgotten the minute the stewardess asked, "Peanuts?" Hungrily, Sarah took them and opened the package to find another surprise. They were small metallic "peanuts", but Sarah could not figure out what they were. She looked around for the stewardess, but the lady had gone to the back of the plane and did not appear again for the rest of the flight. "What could these be?", Sarah thought. She put them in her pocket and waited for her plane to land in Italy.

The plane jolted, and Sarah was awake. "Sarah, are you alright?" Spike asked. "But I killed you..." Sarah was confused. She had been having this feeling again and again. First she had been knocked out at the train station. Then there were her daydreams, and now she had fallen asleep on the airplane. Every time, she had a strange vision--and lately, she had been killing Spike over and over again. The plane jolted again and Spike was knocked into the aisle of the plane. "Spike!" she screamed as the plane quickly rocked to the left and then to the right. To Sarah, everything seemed to be in slow motion. The beating of her heart was loud in her ears. She tilted her head back, and looked upwards as the lights in the plane flashed on and off a number of times. Something about the flashing lights made Sarah remember the dark room where her eyes were held open and she was forced to stare at a flashing movie screen. Afterwards, she had woken up in the hospital bed and had remembered nothing. It seemed that someone had hypnotized her, and the flashing lights in the airplane reversed the effects. Sarah blinked and realized that the airplane had touched down on the runway. Spike managed to get back into his seat as the Captain's voice was heard over the intercom. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. As we were approaching the runway, we had a number of technical difficulties, but I assure you we are now safe on the ground at the Aeroporto di Firenze. Ambulances are standing by for any medical emergencies."

"Thank God we're safe..." Spike said as he looked into Sarah's eyes. "And alive," Sarah whispered.

They turned away from each others gaze both a little embarassed. Sarah sighed with stress and a bit of curiosity. As they decended the ramp from the plane into the foreign airport, Sarah wrestled with the idea of revealing her most recent death dreams to Spike. Also she wondered if she should talk about the images, the lights, the clues her mind seemed to be giving her about her mental violation. She knew now she could confide in Spike, and so told him that her mind continually returned to strange homicidal thoughts and subjects that she seemed to have only known in dreams. "Am I crazy?" she asked herself. To Spike she said, "Ever since I left class I've been losing my grip. The dreams I have are more and more like real life. Let's get to this 'Università degli Studi di Firenze fast."

Having managed to get a cab Spike and I sat watching the strange places rush by through the grimy windows. Out of curiosity I opened the envelope to see what other wonders were inside. A photo slid out. I studied it then poked Spike. He glanced at it then looked more carefully. "I didn't know you'd ever ridden a horse Sars." He looked at me curiously. "I haven't." Yet he was essentially correct. We both examined the picture of me smiling in the sunshine at the camera from atop a brown non-descript horse.

"Just Joshin you" Sarah said. Of course I have rode a horse. Spike slightly chuckled. With all the seriousness, it was a nice break in the mood. The cab pulled up to the university, and they paid the fare. "Here goes nothin!" Spike said as the entered the courtyard.

As Sarah and Spike got out of the cab, they looked around them and saw beautiful flower gardens and bright green lawn sprawled around the campus. "Italy's university is nothing like Rutgers," said Sarah. "You got that right, Sarah," Spike replied. The cab rolled away and the two went to what looked like an academic office building. Once inside, they went to the front desk and the same lady from the airport was there! "Good to see you two made it safely," she said with that familiar smirk. Before Sarah or Spike could reply, the lady whispered hurriedly, "Come, follow me. It's time. He wants to see you". Wondering who "he" was, they followed the lady behind the desk, walked through double doors and entered a dimly lit hallway that looked endless...

Sarah and Spike were directed into the first office on the left. As Sarah opened the door, she realized that a familiar face was sitting behind the desk. "Daddy?" Sarah gasped and put a hand over her mouth in shock. Sarah hadn't seen her father in many years - her parents had divorced when she was young. The last time she had seen her father was a number of years ago, on a backpacking vacation in upstate New York. That was where she had learned to ride a horse, and where the photo had been taken. But after that wonderful summer, her father had slipped away. The letters became few and far between, and the phone calls had totally stopped. What was he doing here?! In Italy of all places? "Honey, I'm so sorry that you were dragged into this whole thing. I never meant for it to happed..." He was sweating, nervous, and was thinner than Sarah had ever seen him before.

"It is true that you are in danger," he reluctantly but abruptly began. "There are people in this world that believe that what is in your mind could cost them a lot of

money. Sarah i cannot tell you how much i didnt want us to meet like this if we ever met again - and seeing you so grown up and independent - and knowing you are in such danger because of my greed...i...i'm just so sorry..."

"I do not understand...after all these years of nothing, replied Sarah." Sarah's father appeared to be a little worked up."Well, you see its your mother. I could never deal with her constant nagging. And i couldn't control my temper. Sometimes I used to hit her just to shut her up. You understand right honey, I mean a man needs certain amount of respect," replied Sarah's father.

A sick feeling rose in Sarah's gut. She'd spent most of her life wondering what became of her father. Now, seeing him, in an Italian University of all places, it seemed like he'd pulled his life together, and made something great of himself. Hearing him defend his behavior, though, made Sarah sure that she couldn't possibly have the loving reunion and return to normalcy she'd always hoped for.

Swallowing down the hot tears welling up in her eyes she stared blankly at her father. 'What's going on? What do I have to go now?' she asked herself. As if Spike read her mind he led her away from her father for a second. "Are you okay?" he asked with so much worry in his eyes. "Yeah. I just had something in my eye." Sarah replied. Now more than ever Sarah felt safe with Spike. Not looking convinced Spike softly said, "I don't know. Something about this doesn't seem right. It's as if.." His words were cut off with a loud gunshot in the background.

Sarah felt as if she were watching The Matrix for the hundredth time as a bullet flew past her shoulder and struck her father square in his chest. "Sarah, take this," he muttered as he handed Sarah yet another envelope. Sarah quickly grabbed the envelope and turned around to find a corpse on the floor. The masked gunmen lay still as the mysterious woman from the front desk stood over him, gun in hand, eerily smiling. "You must go now," the woman shouted. "In the envelope you will find airplane tickets, new passports, and more money. Good Luck." Sarah and Spike hurried past the woman, hailed a taxi, and were on their way back to the airport. The tickets indicated that they were flying to Amsterdam on Swissair flight 9673. Sarah realized as the cab made its way to the front of the terminal that they had only 15 minutes to catch their flight. "Here we go again," Spike said as they dashed from the cab and into the terminal.

Once onboard the plane, Sarah and Spike settled down again and prepared for takeoff. "Alright, I've always wanted to go to Amsterdam. The buds there are wicked," Spike said thinking aloud. "Well Spike, you're going to need to smoke quite a bit. According to the letter I found in the envelope, you have to go to the Blue Boy Brothel and pose as a call boy," Sarah replied snickering. "What's so funny?" Spike retorted. "Oh nothing, only the Blue Boy is a gay brothel and our contact has arranged for you to be his date."

Sarah's laughter was only overshadowed by the laughter from the seat in front of her. "What's so funny?!" Spike yelled at the man dressed in a dark suit. The man turned in his seat and looked at Sarah and then at Spike. "Young man, my name is Professor Van Houten. And don't worry, you're not really going Amsterdam..." He leaned his head back and laughed again as the airplane banked hard to the right, and reversed its direction. He then looked down at Sarah and said, "We're on our way to Ecuador. Oh, and don't try anything funny...everyone on this airplane works

for me." Sarah and Spike felt the muzzles of handguns press against the back of their heads. "Now we're just going to give you both a little shot, and you'll both sleep the rest of the way Ecuador. When we get there, Sarah, there are a lot of important people that you need to talk to. And Spike, when you get there, I'm going to shoot you in the back head." Professor Van Hoiten tilted his head back and laughed again, as a stewardess injected a blue liquid into Spike and Sarah's arms. The two quickly fell asleep.

When Sarah awoke about 24 hours later, she was tied to a chair in the middle of a large room. Men in black suits surrounded her, each standing motionless and staring at her with questioning eyes. Professor Van Hoiten and Spike were not among them. A single tear rolled down Sarah's cheek. She suspected the worst.

"Where am I? Where is everyone? And who the hell are you people!" Sarah exclaimed. The men just continued to stare at her as one of the them stepped forward. "I am just a girl from NJ, what do you want from me?"

"Where am I? Where is Spike? And who the hell are you people!" Sarah exclaimed. The men just continued to stare at her, as one of them stepped forward. "I am just a girl from NJ, what do you want with me?" she pleaded.

Sarah blinked in shock. She had just heard herself say the same thing twice. She remembered saying it once. Then a black cat ran through the room and disappeared THROUGH the wall. As Sarah passed out again the men in suits reached for syringes as a voice over the intercom said "Not so much dimethyltryptamine this time. She's beginning to hallucinate." A gaunt man in the uniform black suit quirted the excess chemicals out onto the floor, where the liquid hissed against the cement for a second before evaporating.

For Sarah, the next few hours were a drugged blur of images and sounds. From what she could remember, the men questioned her about all different things, but had seemed particularly interested in the hallucination she had after she had been hypnotized. They kept digging for more details about Neurowave memory chips, Amtrak Photon hovercoaches, and the second cold war. But when it was all over, they tossed her in a room, locked the door, and left her to die. At least that is what she had convinced herself of, right before Spike kicked the door down. "Spike! You're alive! – I was sure that Van Hoiten would kill you!" "What, that fat old loser? You think I couldn't take him? He stuck me in a room just like this—but not before he went all Dr. Evil on me..." "What? What are you talking about?" Sarah questioned. "The freak explained their whole plan to me, and then left me behind a locked door with one inept guard! So I busted out, and have been looking for you ever since!"

"You see, Professor Van Hoiten is part of this big Time Machine cult. That's what all these other guys are doing here. It's a bunch of old me that think they've found some time machine temple, here in Ecuador. Van Hoiten and his wife had been translating the markings in the temple, but his wife started asking too many questions. So the guy hired somebody to have her killed. Your Dad had also been working with the cult, but he was threatening to go to the Ecuadorian government. It seems that the Ecuadorians have some stupid law against time travel, or something, I don't know... Anyway, when Van Hoiten made the connection between you, his former student, and your narc Dad, he figured he could use you to keep your Dad from going to the government. So they grabbed you in the train station, hypnotized

you, and have been tracking you ever since with that fake artifact you've been carrying around. When they had you in Italy, your Dad was deemed expendable, so they killed him. Then Van Hointen brought us here, I kicked his ass, and they drugged you all up and questioned you about some futuristic hallucination you had. Seems they think you actually saw into the future. What a bunch of morons." "Van Hointen told you all that?!" Sarah asked in amazement. "Yeah, he's pretty dumb – actually this whole story is pretty dumb." "Yeah, I feel like I'm in an episode of Scooby Doo and I should be pulling someone's mask off right now." They both laughed.

"So how do we get out of here?" Sarah asked, suddenly remembering that they were in the middle of Ecuador. "I've got that all figured out—it seems that this translating ear-piece is more than just a translator." Spike pulled the translator out of his ear. "I've already used it to radio to that nice lady that's been helping us out the whole time. She actually worked for your Dad. It also seems that she can fly a helicopter." He said this as a helicopter leveled off and hovered outside the room's window. Spike kicked out the window and they jumped aboard the helicopter. "It's good to see you kids are alright!" the woman shouted over the noise of the helicopter. "And I'm so sorry about the tickets to Amsterdam, I had no idea that Van Hointen and all his henchmen were on the plane! Now we've got to get out of here fast because that temple is rigged with an ancient booby trap explosion device. Your dad had figured it all out, but never told them! As soon as they activate the time machine, the whole place is gunna blow!!" As the helicopter flew away a series of explosions occurred, burying the temple in a mound of rubble. The woman smiled at them and yelled "So where to, kids?" Sarah looked into Spike's eyes and said "I guess we better get back to Rutgers; we've already missed..." Spike kissed her mid-sentence. As their lips parted, Sarah looked away and blushed. "You know," she said, "There was a little Nathans in London we never had a chance to try..."