





*As our guest, we want to provide you  
with the utmost experience.*

*While we strive to meet all your needs  
away from home,  
allow us,  
to fulfill one more.*

*We know most guests love to read before  
retiring for the evening, and we appreciate  
that everyone has different tastes.*

*From true crime novels to love stories,  
from history books to science articles,  
from horror stories to lighthearted fare,  
reading preferences are diverse.*

*Within these pages we submit several genres  
to accommodate your tastes.*

*Enjoy.*



## CARDBOARD BOXES

I live on a small working class island off the coast.  
We are fishermen and carpenters and masons.  
We are restaurateurs, taxi drivers, and gift shop  
owners. We are independent operators and  
independent thinkers.

We are small business. Visions of franchises do not  
dance in our heads. We are living our fragile dream.

Sacrifice is easy.  
Politics is important.

Budget cuts put eldest children on ferries heading  
west. Hidden agendas spring new resorts with paid  
off permits and overflow sewage lines heading  
straight into our sea.

We are every small town in America that feels  
victimized by political machinations.

In November 2000, I entered our elementary school  
and had to smother an outright laugh. It was my first  
election since moving here and I was more than  
amused to discover our voting booths were  
compliments of Sears.

I was instructed to enter an empty Kenmore  
refrigerator box, mark my ballot, exit, and  
deposit my slips in the appropriate appliance carton.

Local:	in the Maytag washer
State:	in the matching dryer
National:	in the Whirlpool stove.



I had spent my early adulthood bouncing around our nations' cities.

I was no longer urbane.

The mayor we elected was young; dynamic.  
And instantly absent.  
His political aims were high. Obvious.

He approved a downtown renewal project then fled  
to expand his political network.

While our mayor wined and dined cronies around  
the capitol and across the state, unregulated,  
unsupervised contractors tore up our downtown  
streets.

The elderly and the young and the able-bodied  
tripped over unstacked pipe and strewn cable.  
Water spewed unchecked for hours while we  
negotiated around it and slid and fell in the mud.

Small town mayors need two terms to achieve their  
political foothold. Our young mayor sought reelection.  
Just four more years and he would be up and out.

In November 2004, I entered an empty Whirlpool  
refrigerator box and noted my upgraded surrounds.  
"Look at all this extra footage," I said to myself.

I struck my ballot. The mayor fell.  
He was suddenly nobody from nowhere.

His network of movers and shakers  
shimmied and strut, right over his soul.



Politicians are climbers by nature. That's fine.  
That's good. What elected officials have forgotten is  
that we, your constituency, are your hands and feet.  
I am your necessary appendage.

Serve me and I will help you climb.

Gladly. Freely. Proudly.

Forget me and I will sever my attachment.

Swiftly.

Ambition is good. Needed. Necessary.

It's blind ambition I detest. I am not alone.

Don't just look at America's recent voting record.

Hear it. See it. Feel it.

When Americans unite in a common goal the media labels it a "ground swell." In regard to ousting politicians, I'd say "rip tide" is the more accurate analogy. I will cast my ballot and WE will rip you from your post. I will stand firm in a cardboard box and WE will send you careening out to sea, bobbing and flailing in the smashed confusion of your election headquarters.

Strong words? Strong currents are teaming through our bank accounts. Sluicing away life savings for: health care, education, retirement. Scattering our hard earned coins across barren shores our government promised to protect.



To serve.

I am not a left wing anarchist.  
I am not a right wing zealot.  
I am a middle-of-the-road,  
middle-aged woman,  
wanting nothing more than  
elected officials to work  
for the common good.

It is a reasonable request.

As we approach November 2008 and candidates  
start counting everything in sight,

a word...

Don't count on support you haven't earned.  
Don't count on your cash.  
Don't count on the polls.  
Don't count on your blind  
ambition to see you through.

Count on me in my cardboard box.





## A VIEW FROM A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD

### STUCK IN THE 60'S

iPods,  
electronics  
and  
MP3's.

I just want to live  
when life  
was simple,  
like in the 60's.

Boots,  
saddle shoes  
and the jive.  
Big cars,  
bell bottoms  
and the beehive.

All I want is to live  
when kids had Cadillacs  
and rally poofed up hair.

Watch American Bandstand  
on my black and white TV.

Don't you see people.

Life was great and simple.  
We should all live like in the 60's.





## STELLA

I was navigating an unfamiliar street teeming with  
9 a.m. workers on an 8 a.m. schedule.

It wasn't easy.

Throngs circle,  
dodge,  
jostle,  
wind and  
whine pass.

It's already a hectic day.

A quick glance toward a street sign when reaching  
the curb seems to be the only time a breath of air is  
ever really taken.

Then a roar,  
more agonizing than proud,  
erupts.

Straining my neck I can see him half  
a block down.

He stands over 6'5".

Enormous.

Brown skanky hair falls shoulder length onto clothes  
that have had two too many owners and a body  
which has seen too few showers.

Settling on his reflection in a store window, people  
are giving this man wide berth as they reposition  
the flow of pedestrian traffic.



'This is just my luck'.

I lower my head, take a half step onto the curb and walk along its edge.

'Figures'.

Placing one foot in front of the other to ensure no misstep into traffic, my attention focuses on the task at hand.

Considering the width of the sidewalk and the sheer number of people jostling for position, it would take a miracle for him to see me but 'chuckle,' it would take a miracle for him not to see me.

No matter the time, place or setting it seems a certain type of person is attracted to me.

No problem.


It's just a few of them - like the roarer up ahead - that make me squirm.

"Stella!" "Darling Stella!"

A mammoth hand is placed on my shoulder.

I look to see what it is attached to (as if I don't know) and follow the tattered arm sleeve of an old army jacket to this hulk of a man.

His pleading features house a pair of eyes that search for recognition or at the very least, a connection.



Given a line of passersby still twist between us,  
it's incredible how far his reach extends.

"Stella, Stella where did you go to?"

"Um, I had to go see my folks.  
I'll catch up with you later okay?"

"I've missed ya Stella."

"I've missed you too. Okay, see ya later."

The stream of passersby ensures the contact is short and sweet. I hurry along propelled by a tad of apprehension that this chap might not let "Stella" go so easily.

Then, a smile crosses my face.  
Once again, I was chosen.

Not to be conceited or anything, but it's nice to be considered approachable.

Certainly I do not want to be seen as approachable to telemarketers or serial killers, but surely this guy doesn't fall into either one of these categories.

Oh alright, I'll admit if it were dark with barely a soul around, the encounter would have had a lot more tension and bite to it, yet there was no harm done all and all.

And that is how the encounter gets chalked up.

No harm done.

All and all.

All in all.



## RANDOM THOUGHTS

Try doing a lengthy  
mathematical equation with  
Roman Numerals

Being cynical gets you nowhere.  
When someone tells you they smell a skunk,  
don't take an industrial-size whiff to confirm.

We are the stories we tell.

Only, not lonely!  
That's a statement for the  
single people in this world.  
Unite!  
Oh, that's right we can't unite or  
then we won't be single any more.  
Only, not lonely!

Never get directions from someone  
sitting on their porch.  
Unless those directions are about life.

When worries overwhelm,  
remember what true friends  
will tell you to do...  
Put another dime in the jukebox.

Good day

**Piece:**

Cardboard Boxes  
Stuck in the 60's  
Stella

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