

If a Gun is Introduced, it Must Eventually Fire

by Sean Lovelace

A professor named Harvy Amsterdam bought a revolver. Its beauty scared him, so he buried it in his freezer. Beneath a month's supply of fish sticks. That night he took 214 Extra Strength Tylenol.

His note said: "I'm sick of low attendance."

I had Dr. Amsterdam's class once, Victorian Poetry. Tedious. Bland. Note taking and regurgitation. I made a B plus.

In recognition of his tenured service, the faculty and students held a formal observance in the William Wordsworth auditorium. Before the event some friends and I went to Jenny's Tavern and drank five pitchers of Killian's Red. Several of us were tipsy, others drunk.

The chancellor read a section from Dr. Amsterdam's textbook. The Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs read a Matthew Arnold poem. Dr. Amsterdam's graduate assistant said the professor was old-fashioned, in a good, gentle way. She told a story about the time she spent an entire weekend typing in by hand over two hundred pages of research, since Dr. Amsterdam thought scanned documents, "look shiny."

A wave of giggles broke across the room.

Warming to the audience, the graduate student smiled and said, "He wouldn't use e-mail either. He said he thought it all might just go into the air, and disappear."

The room exploded in guffaws. A skinny lady in front of me cackled, then belched.

Then the graduate student leaned into the microphone and yelled, "One day"—several people chuckled—"he wore his glasses and contacts at the same time!"

That one killed. A man started coughing in fits. The room rocked with laughter, like everyone was huffing gasoline. Finally, the

chancellor led the graduate student from the podium. An organ played a requiem.

We all went back to Jenny's, and someone had the idea of everyone telling their favorite Dr. Amsterdam story. My head felt low and large, some form of sadness, I don't know. I couldn't recall a one.

