Confused?

Keith Ellis
Josh woke up with a familiar feeling in his head. Not the pounding hammers or the nice, quiet comfort of a child awakening on a summer morning, but the feeling Josh was getting more and more every morning of this his seventeenth year. He felt hatred. He hated to get up and come to the realization that he had to arise and get out of bed and into the world. He told himself, just as he did every morning, that he should have a better disposition. He told himself that today he would actually see good in things and try to help others in need. Maybe contribute to some charity. In fact, he’d get a job and donate half his salary to a charity and keep the rest for college....

College. F--- college applications gave him a pain. Why was it that whenever he tried to feel good, something bad had to come up in his mind. He also realized that he had English homework due today that he didn’t do. He hated the dreaded feeling of not having work done, but he still couldn’t bring himself to do it on time. Today, he would actually do homework that was assigned (just like every morning, right?). To quote Shakespeare, he thought, "Methinks thiseth will bequeath a new day and not a night and if nay, then nay and nayeth again...." Maybe I should study that stuff better. That doesn’t sound right. Hell, who needs Shakespeare, anyway. Willie, Wild Bill, Billiam, Billy. He smiled to himself. Real funny, but it won’t get you on T.V.

His father called him down for breakfast. "Dead chickens ready, Josh!" What couth. The man has some concept of life. I’m a tax write-off until I’m eighteen so I can’t commit suicide, and we can eat dead chickens every morning, and not feel guilty about throwing away seventy-five dollars for a pair of shoes. Such is life, he thought in conclusion.

He had to get to school. He had to see his girlfriend. He had to face the world again for another day. He didn’t like the idea at all. He hated the fact that somehow he knew he would get through the day without dying of some terminal disease (somehow you just know you won’t), and no unusual accident would happen (somehow you just don’t know but since nothing unusual happens usually, you just know, you know?). So off he went.

He sat in his car in the school parking lot at 9:27 a.m. He stared at the blue sky outside and wondered about a cartoon he saw last night. What did Dr. Seuss get his Doctorate in anyway? Rhymology? Is he a rhymocist? I wonder if I could study that in college. Nah. I never could rhyme or write any kind of poetry. I never think deep thoughts like "Green eggs and Ham, Sam I am." He laughed to himself.

He felt the heat from the sun through the windshield and wondered how dumb he would look if he spread a towel on the hood and lay out right there. He stopped think-
ing about that when a gorgeous girl walked past his car. She had a deep, dark tan. The last few months had not been very sunny so she obviously went to a tanning salon. What stupid things, those salons. It makes you wonder how much people are willing to pay to look good; they're also paying a lot of money to get skin cancer. People are dying of cancer and some are paying to die for cancer. So who's sane?

He thought about making out with the girl and feeling her blonde hair with his feet. He thought about slowly putting his hand under her sweater and feeling up her stomach. Then pulling his hand away just before he reached her breast and finding a load of dead peeled skin all over his hand. Not only did this scare him, it also made him realize that he had a girlfriend and shouldn't be thinking these things 'cause he was supposed to be in love with her.

What is love...what a goddamned cliche. Should I ask, he thought, "define love" instead? Anyways, do you know you're in love when _____? When you get the strange urge to rip her clothes off when she's around? No. Is it when she's the only one who listens to you and understands you? Maybe. Is it when you're around her, you think about how sad you'll be when she's dead? YES! That's it. I've found love! What's love got to do with it, Tina Turner asks? It's got to do with death! He turned on the car radio. Billy Joel sang, "Tell her about it, let her know how much you care, when she can't be with you, tell her you wish you were there..." He decided to go to his girlfriend's house.

Josh hated ringing doorbells. He thought he looked stupid whenever he stood by a doorway. Just standing there with no fake personality to hide behind. He felt naked and open to the world. Pretty crazy, he thought. He was afraid of someone opening the door and cracking up. "You just look so stupid standing there, c'mere honey, look at this kid. Doesn't he remind you of Goofy?"

Her mom opened the door and said, "Upstairs." At least if she was laughing she would have said more. Which is worse? He went "upstairs" into her room. She looked sick (obviously, she had stayed home from school for that reason). He thought about crawling under the covers and messing around and then he cursed himself for thinking dirty thoughts every time he saw her. After all, he loved her and he should think more about her dying....

"ARE YOU OKAY?" She said yes and why do you sound so worried and he replied 'cause I love you honey and she said thanks. Silence. He hated silence between them. He felt like maybe they weren't right for each other if they didn't have things to talk about all the time. But then he thought of his parents. They don't talk all the time. It's mostly, "What's wrong?" or "What's for dinner?" type talk between them. But then again, he thought, I don't hear them in the bedroom. Maybe they talk there. We are in the bedroom! I have to think of something. Then she said something about breaking up and she was sick of him not talking and it was too late.
He went home feeling terrible. He felt like he did when he was young and his mom threw away his Pink Panther doll because she thought it was dirty. He wanted those times back. The Pink Panther times. That sounds like a newspaper. He lay in bed, and fell asleep. Dreaming about sunglassed Christ figures skateboarding on crucifixes...

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