

Blank Disks

by Morgan Heintz

I remember back to two years ago . . . He sat there in the wooden chair, bonded to the Macintosh by the white glare of the screen reflected onto his face. His fingers furiously typed, then slowed down. He thought, biting his upper lip, closing his eyes, with his head tilted back. And then . . . Wham! His eyelids sprinted back, revealing life, exhilaration. He typed again, now more wildly, rushing, making sure that he got all his ideas on the screen before he forgot them.

I remember back to two years ago . . . The sound of the ImageWriter creeping through my door—*connnndggo-in-do-ee!*—as I tried to sleep. I see the carriage sliding across the paper, leaving tracks of words from my brother's English report, then sliding back to the left and beginning again.

I remember back to two years ago . . . Walking into the small room with the windows on three of the four sides. The sun leaked through mini-blinds, bringing life and energy into the room. I brought my brother Nestlé chocolate chip cookies, warm from the first batch that I had just baked from scratch—a studying high-school student's vital survival food.

But that was when he was a part of Ms. Busy's English class.

My brother is leaving now. Accepted at Trinity College.

"Everything is packed," he says. When he says everything, he means tapes, posters, compact disks, stereo system, and some cologne to attract the girls.

We sent him his forgotten toothbrush.

Dad drove, Mom tried to tell old stories: "Remember the time you cut your hair and said that you were going to fire your old barber? . . ." Grover tried to sleep but I poked him, tickled him—anything to stop him from going to sleep and leaving me and his old life at home before we had to say good-bye. And even after that, I chased him to the dorm.

We went home. I cried while my parents thought I was sleeping under my jacket.

My brother is gone now. Off to college. He's taken the computer to his dorm room. I don't hear him typing anymore. He has graduated from his senior European History class—no more midnight essays to write.

My brother is gone now. Off to college. He has taken the ImageWriter, too. Falling asleep should be easy now. I have nothing to distract me but fond memories. And wishes.

My brother is gone now. Off to college. He's taken himself. Away. As I walk into the computer room, it's no longer a place I go to laugh. No glow fills the air, no cookie crumbs on the floor for Mom to yell about, no Grover. I have tried to fix it up. I have painted it, got a new floor, hung a picture of a beach scene, bought an upholstered chair, and even put in a

bookshelf with colorful books that I don't read. Nothing can make it as special as it used to be.

My brother is gone now. Off to college. Cookies aren't very fun to bake when you have only yourself to share them with. Grover's not there anymore. No friendly person with eyes full of thanks, no brother smiling and telling me he'll do anything that I want for the rest of my life and that I'll always be his life-saver.

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