

[back...](#)[next issue...](#)

The Crux

October 2002

HALLOWEEN EDITION

Elizabeth was a student at the Amherst Regional High School. When her hair was wet it reached down to the tops of her armpits, but when it was dry it just kissed her shoulders. She didn't like it that way, though; it tickled her whenever she changed her clothes, and she thought it was annoying. But her mother thought it was the perfect length, so her hair remained the same.

If she'd really wanted to, she probably could've gotten away with cutting it or letting it grow longer (each were equally appealing), but it wasn't worth the battle with her mother.

Elizabeth had an older brother. She didn't like him, because she thought he was stupid and insensitive. He always talked and drank, and he couldn't listen to her tell even one story without butting in under the pretense that he was giving her advice. Elizabeth didn't think it was real advice, though, she thought that he just wanted to hear the sound of his own voice. Not that he liked his voice; he probably hated it, like most things about himself. But he hated his silence even more.

When Elizabeth is in public, she keeps her hands by her sides, and doesn't ask too many questions. She sees how her older brother makes a fool of himself, and she desperately wants to be different from him. Elizabeth's mother never answers her and her brother's questions, and when she does, she talks down to them as much as she can. Her brother's curiosity dried up, and now his unwillingness to take in information manifests itself in loud, rude, and selfish behavior.

This did not happen to Elizabeth. Her curiosity about the world remained alive, despite her mother's attempts to poison it. And Elizabeth knows that if she keeps this life hidden from her mother, she will be safe from her. So her hair gently brushes her shoulders, and Elizabeth just thinks about what she's going to do next.

In addition to her annoying hair length, Elizabeth found another downside to her quiet curiosity. When she was little, she quickly learned that if she wanted her questions answered, she was going to have to answer them herself. To do this, she needed to pay much more attention to the world around her than most people do. She had no guiding hand to show her the answers, and she had no other minds to interact and reflect with.

Elizabeth was never sent to the psychologist's

In school the next morning, upon hearing the bells and the jabbering of the crowds of teenagers, Elizabeth began to pay for her freedom.

She suddenly saw the school building as simply a building, not an all powerful institution as she had seen it in the past

She saw the tiles on the floor, and the brick walls, and the glass windows.

The rules of the school had had a tight grip on her just minutes earlier, but now they were rapidly unwinding themselves from her and dropping away. And she saw that almost all of the children around her were unhappy people.

Elizabeth was just beginning to cry, but then she saw that her English teacher was approaching her.

"Good morning, Elizabeth!" he said.

"Good morning, Mr. Turner." Elizabeth collected herself, and met his eyes, trying to smile pleasantly.

"How are you doing today?" Elizabeth stopped smiling because his eyes were black. Not just the iris, but the parts that were supposed to be white were as dark as ink.

"Good," she answered, because she didn't know what else to do. People walked

by them in the hall, on their way to class. Elizabeth dropped her eyes, and looked in both directions, hoping someone would ask Mr. Turner what was wrong with his eyes. No one seemed to notice. She looked back at him, her heart racing.

"Is something wrong?" Elizabeth felt like she was having a nightmare, but she was sure she wasn't.

"No, I'm just- I think I'm just sort of tired. I didn't really..." Mr. Turner was licking his lips, and he was looking right into her eyes. A liquid almost identical to molten tar had coated his tongue, and it slid between the gaps in his teeth. Elizabeth took a step backwards, and looked around again. No one was watching.

"I'm tired, too." Mr. Turner's voice was suddenly low and raspy. "I think it's because I haven't eaten a thing all day." He licked his lips again, and his chin was smeared black and dripping the thick substance onto the floor.

Elizabeth turned and ran as fast as she could, screaming for help. Her bag banged against the small of her back, so she took it off and threw it to the ground.

None of the other people in the hallway even looked in her direction. She even hit a few people as she ran past them, but they hardly reacted at all.

Elizabeth felt something heavy on her shoulders, and adrenaline shot through her, and her knees hit the ground with a crack. She tried to fall forward onto

office in elementary school- though she thinks she probably should have been- because no one ever noticed her. She had a few good friends in middle school, but many people found her to have an unpleasant grounding effect on them. Just being around Elizabeth made people examine themselves and each other, and they couldn't stand her for it. Frustrated in her loneliness, Elizabeth did eventually cut her hair. Her mother saw it and told her she was worthless. And Elizabeth asked her, "Did you ever think you'd be telling your daughter that she's worthless because you didn't like her haircut?" She'd had no idea that she was going to say that. Her mother started crying. Elizabeth didn't stay to watch, but went upstairs and fell into a deep, relaxed sleep, instead.

her arms, but something jerked her back up to a kneeling position. There was a stinging pain in her upper arms, and she looked to see two wet, black claws dug into her skin. The claws were trembling with excitement. She tried to shake herself free, but it was as if she were locked into a vice. A moment later something warm was on her neck, and she felt a dull sting. Elizabeth grabbed at the monster's shoulders, trying to push it away, but the unrelenting strength that she felt in its tendons caused her hands to fall weakly to her sides. Her collarbone emitted a muffled crunch, and then there was an aching, collapsing feeling. As Elizabeth fell asleep, her heart squeezed its last strong beat, and her shirt turned a deep red. And no one noticed, because they didn't want to see.

Three Important Things to Think About

- 1. Mr. Wehrli stopped saying hi to me. I think he's so cute when he's shy.**
- 2. In fact, I think he deserves the non-conformist superlative... I'm not the one who broke all of the rules.**
- 3. I can't stop thinking about Mr. Wehrli.**