

The Next Stanley Kubrick

by Kathy Fish

One of the most gratifying aspects of documenting my brother Ray's life has been my growth as a filmmaker. Some of that early stuff, when Ray was a junior and I was in eighth grade, well...it's embarrassing to watch. But one year of intense study and trial and error has made all the difference. I have, for example, watched Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining" 117 times.

My dad says Ray's got the world by the ass. He rolls his eyes to the heavens when he says it like he can't believe his good fortune. My dad sells seed corn. He has a chicken neck and shaky, useless hands. Ray's hands are golden. He plays quarterback for our undefeated high school football team. Around here, that's big time.

I taped all of Ray's Ray's football games this past fall, my dad constantly asking, "Did you get that?" The whole project had become stultifyingly boring until I experienced a creative epiphany. It occurred while taping "Ray Gets A Visit from the College Recruiter."

A man came all the way from the University of Alabama. He kept telling my mom how she didn't look old enough to have a kid in high school.

"Two kids in high school," I said, sitting on the floor.

The recruiter said, "Excuse me, darlin'."

I pointed the camera at him. "Well, now." He sipped his iced tea. "What's this?"

My dad said, "For God's sakes, Emma, leave the poor man alone and go find your brother."

Ray had excused himself after dinner. Said he'd be right back. I found him sitting on his bed leafing through a Hustler magazine. I flicked on the camera. Ray grinned.

It's a side-angle shot of Ray, sitting on his bed, slowly turning the pages. There's laughter from downstairs. Ray scratches his nose. He shows the naked woman with the massive breasts to the camera. Dad bursts in and yells at us to get the hell downstairs. I zoom in on his chicken neck. "Turn that damned thing off," he says, blocking the viewfinder with one trembling hand.

Finis.

I call it, "Ray's Got The World By The Tits."

Forensics Club takes time away from learning my craft, so I quit. I watch "The Shining" in the basement and take copious notes. I go to Harlen's Cafe on Saturdays. I drink coffee and pretend it's a Starbucks. I wear a black turtleneck and my dad's old checked hat. Some of the freshman girls walk by. They point at me. They point at their heads. What is that I see in their smiles? Admiration and respect.

I have this whole library of Ray tapes my parents haven't seen. There's "Ray Pukes in the Hydrangeas" and "Ray Makes Out In the Driveway with His Best Friend's Girlfriend" and "Ray Steals a Twenty from Mom's Purse." Ray loves the secret tapes. We watch them in the basement when Mom and Dad are asleep. He sits on the couch, drinking beer and laughing. He crunches the empty cans and drops them into the paper sack at his feet.

Ray knows nothing about motif. He doesn't realize I am making a *statement*. Like trigonometry, the concept of irony is lost on my brother.

Over dinner, I casually throw out the question "Who's going to videotape my high school career?" This is a classic awkward moment. I wish I had the video camera. My dad pretends he didn't hear, totally focused on trying to spear a lima bean with his fork. Mom coughs.

"Joking!" I say, and they all laugh. It's pretty damned sad, but in a funny way, that there exists but one videotape of me--a shaky five-minute blurb from my fifth birthday party.

A recruiter is on his way from the Air Force Academy. I get a tight shot of Dad's hands as he attempts to straighten Ray's tie. He's telling Ray he'd better not screw this up. Mom pushes him away and fixes the knot, her back to the camera. Ray stares over her head, this hulking dark figure backlit by the sun through the picture window.

Right after graduation, Ray plans to steal Dad's car and drive all the way to California. He wants me to film his getaway. He wants to call it "Ray Fucks Up Again." But in return he's got to take me with him. I want to go to Hollywood. I want to blow people's minds. Ray just wants to see the ocean.

