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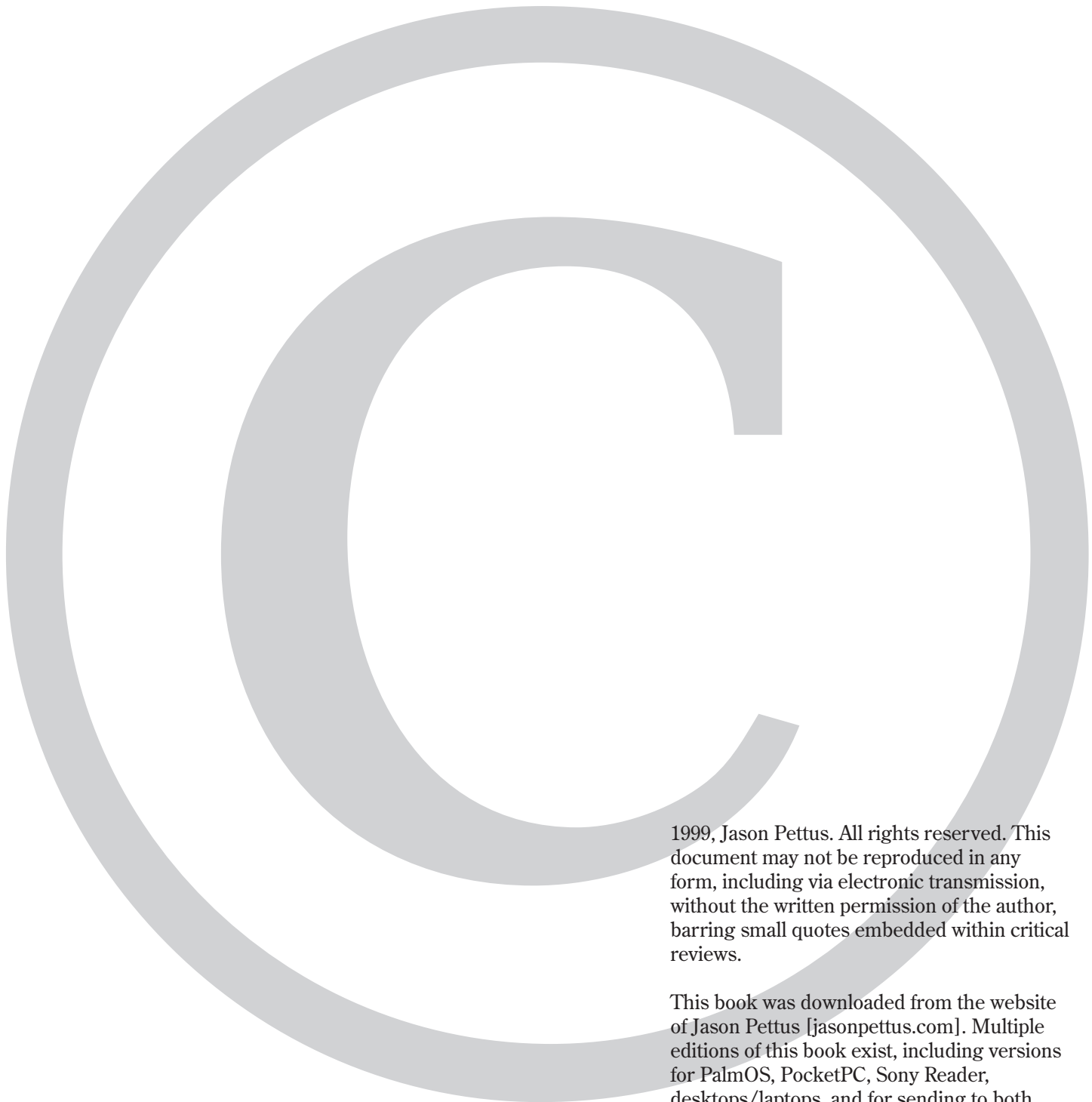
COMPLETE PERFORMANCE WORK 1996-2004

GAD Publishing Company Chicago USA

# THE HEATSEEKER

A LONG-FORM  
PERFORMANCE PROJECT

JASON PETTUS



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Since 1996 I have owned and operated a basement press in Chicago called GAD, dedicated mostly to the self-publishing of my own work (and with a brief detour in 2001, publishing a dozen books by my friends, before giving up the pursuit again for lack of community interest). As of 2004 GAD had ended up publishing over forty books, both full-length and miniature in nature, dealing with everything from poetry to prose, essays, interviews, science-fiction, erotica and travel. Being the sole employee of GAD, of course, especially while continuing to write new material on a regular basis, unfortunately meant that many of these books ended up being published on a less-than-professional basis, with dozens of typos and grammatical errors found in each. It was something that always slightly bothered me about the GAD catalog; as long as I was an active writer, though, this worry was always trumped by the stronger desire to keep writing new material, and to devote the majority of my energy to these new projects instead of cleaning up the old ones.

In late 2004, however, I made the decision to put this literary career on indefinite hold, in order to open and operate an arts center here in Chicago instead. Given the chance for

the first time to take a detailed look at the existing GAD catalog, I decided at that point to dedicate the next few years of my life to going through these old books, giving each of them the thorough editing they deserved, and republishing them in electronic form, standardizing not only the look of each publication but also the options for downloading and viewing them. This was complicated enough when it came

to the nonfiction and prose projects, but especially tricky in the case of my performance poetry and monologues, of which I had never attempted to publish a pervasive, chronological record. Since the 2007 edition of these poetry/monologue books makes certain older titles now obsolete, as well as introduces several new titles, I thought I'd take a moment and explain the entire process, for committed readers who wish to own the complete, definitive collection.

Prior to 2002, the vast majority of GAD poetry/monologue books available were of special projects, including: *Psycho Poets* (1997), a collection of poems about women I slept with in 1997, when I was a member of the Chicago poetry-slam team; *Jasonettes* (1998), *The Heatseeker* (1999), *Notes From My Grandmother's Funeral* (2000) and *Celibate* (2001), all of them written transcripts of special half-hour themed performances I gave over the years, all of them for the old "Mental Graffiti" poetry show here in Chicago; *[Andi.]* (1999), a collection of poetry about a specific ex-girlfriend; and *The Tao of Now* (2000), a literary experiment of sorts, combining the length and structure of traditional short stories with the language and rhythm of slam poetry. The only exceptions were GAD's oldest two books, *The Sweet Alice Sessions* and *Kathie Lee Gifford Likes to Fuck!*, both from 1996, both collecting not special themed work but merely the general pieces I was writing and performing for the open mics that year. In addition there was a "greatest hits" collection also available, called *The Jason Pettus Portable Reader* (2001) and consisting of around twenty of my audience's absolute favorite pieces over the years, published exclusively to sell at live shows. These ten books reprinted approximately 100 of the poems and monologues I had written over the years; the vast majority of the 300 others I had written were simply unavailable in published form, save for those found on individual HTML pages at my website.

In 2002, the first year after "retiring" from the poetry community, I decided to make my first attempt at publishing a comprehensive series of these pieces; the result was the four-book series *Chicago Stories 1997-2000*, as well as a new "greatest hits" book, *More Poems about Blowjobs*, collecting my favorite sexually-explicit poems and monologues from over the years. These five new books went a long way towards getting more of my old performance work out to the public, but with still a number of inconsistencies: for example, technically the contents of both *Sweet Alice* and *Kathie Lee Gifford* should've been included in the "Chicago Stories" series, not as their own stand-alone books; the series was still missing the poems I wrote in 2001 and 2002, important for posterity's sake but not a large enough collection to publish as their own book; and of course even the current "Chicago Stories" series was missing several pieces that had become audience favorites over the years.

For this 2007 edition, therefore, I have declared both *Sweet Alice* and *Kathie Lee Gifford* as "out-of-print" titles, neither of which will ever be printed in their original forms again; instead, they have been consolidated and are now known collectively as *Chicago Stories 1996*, fitting better into the overall theme of the entire series. I've also compiled a short *Chicago Stories 2001-2004* book, including the smattering of poems I wrote after retiring from the literary community. The new six-book "Chicago Stories" collection (including expanded editions of the four volumes that had previously existed) now reprints all of the general work from my years as an active performer; the seven special themed books already mentioned have also been reedited and republished, meaning that owning this thirteen-book series

# INTRODUCTION TO THE 2007 EDITION

now gives you access to nearly every poem and monologue I wrote between 1996 and 2004. The two “greatest hits” compilations have also been republished, along with two new ones; one’s called *Love Blender*, a collection of pieces about relationships, compiled originally as a feature for the electronic magazine LoveBlender.com, and the other’s simply entitled *Personal Favorites*, along with a new introduction concerning why they are. And finally, a new omnibus edition has been published for 2007 as well, called *Complete Performance Work 1996-2004*, collecting the content of all thirteen previously-mentioned books into one volume (and in fact, owning that volume makes owning the thirteen individual books unnecessary).

Those who enjoyed this book may also want to check out the following related volumes, all currently available through GAD: *How to Win a Poetry Slam* (2000), a half-humorous, half-critical look at this unique literary genre; *Smells Like Sweat* (1997), a memoir of the 1997 National Poetry Slam, written entirely as a series of haikus (from an original concept by Jerry Quickley); and *The Tunnel Rat Sessions* (2002), a collection of long-form interviews with other slam poets that I originally conducted for the Chicago-based poetry newsletter *Tunnel Rat* in the mid-1990s. Of course, I also encourage you to check out the other books in the GAD catalog; as of this writing there are 55 books altogether, with more being added each year, covering almost every literary genre and style imaginable. As always, I urge you to drop me a line if you wish to discuss these pieces further; my latest contact information can always be found at my website, itself found at **[jasonpettus.com](http://jasonpettus.com)**.

# THE HEATSEEKER<sup>!</sup>.

There is a  
horrible haughty little monster that  
eats and shits inside of me  
Heat Seeker is what I call it; it doesn't  
enjoy this name. Then again, it hates me.  
And I hate it.

The Heat Seeker escapes its jail every so often  
Sucks people bone-dry  
Eggs them on  
Examines them for their weaknesses  
Kicks an open can of kerosene  
eagerly onto splashing knees, lights a match, watches the  
red essence of life licking skyward, reaches  
in, opens its mouth,  
swallows it whole and creeps back into its jail

Battles have been fought  
inside my insides  
Glowing red flares in stomachs  
Artillery shells in my bloody urine  
Now the battle is twenty five years old, still  
deeply raging, collecting its corpses and counting the  
ruined in its wake.

Eagerly the Heat Seeker plots its course of revenge  
dimly aware of the  
thousand points of  
heat left in its wake  
Entrenched in its singular goal of  
harboring all energy of all people with an eerie  
efficiency you will not realize until too late  
After the first burns  
Two seconds after the wooden match is lit  
Scales falling from your  
eyes, suddenly knowing

Everyone attempts to analyze the  
killing machine inside; I try to  
escape the big jail it has built for me  
Round and round we dance and we are  
wrapped in a sexual position  
inherently perverse, a pornographic infinite dance around the  
lips of rusty cans,  
large lips licking  
kabuki rhythms on my brain,  
inching ever closer to my heart.

Lapping miles a yard long, the Heat Seeker is  
looking to take the big jail, to stuff  
your hero into the  
offensively small one inside me, to squeeze me in  
utterly, finally, for good.

Darkness threatens me  
early, so I now speak  
about the Heat Seeker, so that  
damage will be minimized. So that you will know.

# II. SYNCHRONICITY

Ice cold box  
was at my back when  
answers from a higher calling flooded  
swirly curlie que into my silver plane of being

You have a gift, boss man scream-shouts  
over my left shoulder  
Use it for good, not for evil, boss man says  
not realizing the horrible  
groundwork being laid

At that moment, Heat Seeker  
nills its ugly wart through the  
dark brown earth of its home planet to come  
under my chalk-caked fingernails and burrow under  
skin to build its  
europa jailhouse with tiny chocolate bars and salsa blood

Dick hard at four  
Meet the sweet beat  
young flesh dances to daily  
Hothouse flowers on teacher's drooping desk  
Effort wasted at chalkboard, imbeciles shitting their own pants  
All around me, bodies waiting to get torched  
Doused in my gasoline

You have a gift, the future cadaver tells me  
Own up to it  
Use it for  
right and not the wrong  
Embassy of first grade now shattered  
Agents of the seven year old army surround me  
Guts churning, lunch spewing, footballs kicked, ponytails pulled  
Each to a fault  
never living to Heat Seeker's expectations overgrown with  
weeds

It's a gift — they  
ushered my punishment  
steaming hot into my crotch  
thusly — it's a gift and don't  
hang your head, don't slouch, don't not read this  
And Heat Seeker lifted its mighty head, roared  
terrifically at the small  
scared children who were deaf and couldn't hear him

Wait just a moment.  
Hear that sound?  
Anvils smashing little kids' fingers  
Terror striking into mass mediocre hearts  
Torches blazing loudly silent in the conditioned September air  
Heat Seeker is on the loose — cover your  
eyes or lose them

Yonder that quality steakhouse buffet line, avast ye mateys  
Sail for Narnia tonight!  
Aye aye sir  
Ignorant masses are waiting to  
die with screams caught in throats!

# III. UNABOMBER

Hiccups greeted me  
early on a Saturday morning  
when I heard he had been  
apprehended, a wall-less fortress in Montana stuck and  
snuck under tar paper and Grizzley Adams beard

Nearer my God to

Universities can drive anyone to terrorist acts, believe you me  
Television eyes stare and  
suddenly I see  
Heat Seeker staring back with  
itty bitty inside eyes burning bright  
Starving after all these years, suddenly sucking nearby heat

Nearer my God to thee, o Lord, nearer

All the kiddies yell  
mommy but some are so crafty and sneakily sly  
Early on Saturday I  
was witness to  
apprehensive eyes seeking out flame  
Stupid masses thinking the nightmare over

There is every reason to kill, believe you me  
Every excuse not to has been used up  
down in my little  
tiny jail inside my little tiny dark inside spot  
Heat Seeker laughs and  
echoes the raw  
haunting look I saw in  
eyes in the man in Montana  
Abandoned by everything he thought he could count on  
Ted, I understand. More than anyone can believe.

Sweaty hiccups greet me  
early Saturday morning, the monster punching, kicking my  
stomach  
Each of us smelling  
kerosene, smelling rotten  
eggs, smelling Montana gunpowder air

Reach in, Ted, go grab that  
wiley alien and wring its scrawny neck until its  
asphyxiated, crushed windpipe can scream no more lies  
Snuff it and I  
will also attempt the same, control the Heat Seeker  
Hone its power until  
you and I  
heal, until we can see  
earthling morons and not throw up  
full bellies bruised by our evil little space friends

Liquor hiccups greet me when I greet you  
early on Saturday morning  
Down and down we fall into the safe earth

IV.  
1982

Sunlight filters down  
cathode rays to burn my  
honey of a bear, oh Honey  
oh Lord forgive me for this sin I now commit  
Oh say can you see by this dark  
land behind iron bars  
I gotsa I gotsa kill these weak children that  
teem the planet's surface  
Fill them with  
iodine lollipops, kerosene red balloons  
Lovely, lovely Michelle, you first shall  
lick the lovely lap of flame when I shall  
equate you with nothingness, make you a nonperson  
Down and down you  
meet your maker's mark splat into nothingness you  
echo through the vast  
utter well I  
plastered to the side of  
white walled jail cells I constructed  
Ingots, rare jewels of science books I have built  
to destroy in meaningless ritual boom bang I  
hate to leave this  
dinner party but I have souls to catch on  
red fire you see  
Every last one  
All dogs go to heaven  
Deep I plunge hands into ribcage  
It's a beautiful thing, the snap of bone and  
walls come tumblin' down, down, into the black  
ocean from whence you  
unruly hiccups first screamed your first scream and laid  
large fingers on rocky  
depths of shit  
  
Nadir approaching, sir, should we  
tangle its limbs to ours and  
fling it to the icy bottomless depth below? No,  
officer, let it swim in its own filth  
Let it bask in  
legal limbo, let it bask in swine therapy and  
or is it real?  
What's that sound?  
I think the rosie has  
high time the ring has so  
Adam can swing there too, rot for all I'm  
damned to believe, damned to learn, damned to  
  
Nadir approaching, sir, should  
  
This too shall pass, private, this too shall pass  
Livvy up the spoils?  
Ethanol smells but  
damn how fun it is

# V. PRINCESS

The story begins,  
Half a long time ago  
    existed a beautiful princess slash biologist.  
Her skin was fair and her test tubes were  
    easily the cleanest in the entire green kingdom.

And one day the  
    tempest beauty befriended a boy who smelled of  
    silver and nicotine, and  
    each day the  
    eager small boy would go  
    kidnap the princess and bite her  
    earlobe to keep her locked in the ivory tower.

Round the earth the moon passed many times  
    while the princess watched  
    over the ear-biting boy and fell in love.  
Never did she expect  
    this horrible calamity.

Lust was all she had  
    expected, but eventually the ear was  
    torn right away from her head and she  
    met the boy in the stairwell and said,  
'Exit this ivory tower,  
    won't you? Run with me where the moon never  
    ever sets but instead  
    drowns in the  
    inky haze of our love.'

The boy didn't know how to  
    cope with this sudden change in the princess, so  
    under his shirt he unlocked the door where  
    terrible little monsters roamed.  
'Make me understand,' the boy said. 'Why is the  
    earless princess dancing and  
    calling my name,  
longing to run away and  
    elope where the moon never sets  
    and act as if she and I are in love?'

'Never mind her,' the monster said. 'She'll only  
    impeach your soaring heart.'  
'Burn her,' the monster said. 'Burn and let me  
    lick up the flames.'

Eight years you  
    damned yourself to this tower  
    and it is high time you  
    never look back, so set the princess on fire.  
Douse her in kerosene and never look back.'

But the boy hesitated,  
    longing to let the princess escape the tower. And  
    escape she did. And never  
    did she look back.

# VI. THE GIRL WITH THE GERMAN THIGHS

Love you, Kiki,  
I love to watch legs  
kicking soccer goals through German posts  
Each three by five card flung stabbing my chest  
Chalk up my nose, early eighties songs blaring  
into my tiny head

Though the ramparts we watch are so hardly bleeding  
I still watch you.  
Zoot suits ring  
early under caps and gowns  
Newly hosed calves sneak there, too.  
Kiki, how I long to wrap slender soccer legs  
around my petulant chalk-sniffing Monty Python thighs.

Now the Heat Seeker  
erminely reminds me of that which can not be  
and pulls out the  
naked gas to  
douse the German legs, to  
heat up the fever dream vision.  
I cannot, cannot, cannot, cannot, cannot come near her  
so she will be saved fate worse than  
red fiery hot death  
Equilibrium of those German thighs walking down the hallway,  
down the hallway, down

So what? Heatseeker  
laughs at me, tiny sneer  
edging out of corner of mouth  
Don't even think of it, boy, my child  
There's too much work for us  
here, too many books  
each screaming for us to finish them, write and  
read and hide away  
Each screaming for  
soldiers to fight the good  
cattlecall of the 99 red balloons  
Each screaming for blood, for sacrifice, for bright bulbous  
red balloons of flame, O Building on fire,  
that'll show them! he  
announces so loudly no one else can hear except  
I, who hears all

Newly formed gray  
stains dampen the burning building  
Eggs and fish still don't swim  
corollary in the same pool, yet snuff out the  
red balloons hiding in the corner, in his  
egg-white jail cell  
That'll show you! I whisper so softly everyone hears  
So softly that everyone  
inches slowly away

No more, I scream tersely.  
My imprisonment ends today, you understand?  
Yes, I understand, Heatseeker says, and laughs even louder  
Bon Voyage! And the laughter threatens to consume,  
echoing off my ribcage  
Dinging and bouncing off of slender, German, soccer thighs

## VII. THE TUNNEL

Talk, talk, talk

Heatseeker says from the stage

Elaborate encyclopedias and esoteric ejaculate ensue

Hard candy rips through the roof of my mouth

Eclipsed by the empty egotistical education I received

and is there more?

There's a tiny light at the end of the

smoky, flame-filled tunnel

Eagerly blows the

engine which may save me

Kitchen lightbulb burned out yet again

Entrails and blood dragging along behind it, yet it

reminds me that life is worth keepin' on,

I'm keepin' on, I'm

tryin' to tie the monster to the tiny rails

Gonna let that train

attack me and

veins explode in my wrists

Escape seems hopeless and always has

my train been there? Tooting along and dragging with

effort all the monsters in all our hearts

behind red plastic cabooses?

Round yon virgin the Heatseeker holds and clings to

epidemics brought by his

acid bath, his

down-filled pillows of despair,

insane mumblings while in solitary confinement

Heatseeker will never leave, no, but maybe there is

a medication that will sedate him, a tiny

teal pill that will

eradicate his fire, take his kerosene away. I really

don't know. But yet

I see a

tunnel, and at its end

a light shines. And that really

never can be bad, can it? Here, take my

daggers, take these matches. I don't need them.

Yet I'll keep my

elite little friend. You see, I can't leave him.

The Heatseeker is me.

I ignite the

flash and smell burning flesh

each time I open this notebook.

Damned to hell I am. I know my fate.

# TECHNICAL NOTES

The Heatseeker is written in a formal style of poetry of my own invention, called the Jasonette. Its rules consist of the following:

Begin by writing a two-line, rhyming mini-poem about the Jasonette in question. For example, from part 1 of this book:

*The Heatseeker is big and red*

*The Heatseeker will strike you dead*

String this mini-poem, one letter at a time, down a sheet of paper vertically, like so:

t  
h  
e  
h  
e  
a  
t  
s  
e  
etc.

Next, take your birthdate (in my case, March 5, 1969) and a date of personal significance to your life (in my case, the day I moved to Chicago, August 4, 1994) and convert them to numerical format (35698494). Omit any 0s and 1s, then string the numbers down the page as well, repeating until you have reached the end.

t3  
h5  
e6  
h9  
e8  
a4  
t9  
s4  
e3  
etc.

The finished Jasonette is based on this graph you have just constructed—each line must contain the exact number of words the number indicates, and the line must start with a word that begins with the letter indicated. Stanzas may be any length, and blank lines may be inserted at any point desired, but your finished poem must be the exact length indicated by the graph.

In the specific case of *The Heatseeker*, I also added a variety of other rules. Each of the seven mini-poems, for example, rhyme not just with themselves but with each other. Each odd-numbered poem deals with a subject from my present-day life, while each even-numbered poem deals with an event from my childhood. In addition, each odd-numbered poem was written in the morning while sober, while each even-numbered poem was written at night while on sleeping pills.

In case you're curious, *The Heatseeker* concerns my experiences growing up as a gifted child in suburban Missouri. The concept behind its narrative metaphor was partially inspired by William S. Burroughs' novel *Naked Lunch*.

# COMPLETE PERFORMANCE WORK 1996-2004

GAD Publishing Co. | Chicago USA  
jasonpettus.com/ebooks

For the first time ever, a comprehensive and chronological set of books is now available from GAD, publishing nearly all of the 400 slam poems, monologues and dialogues Jason Pettus wrote between 1996 and 2004. This new collection starts with the six-book series **Chicago Stories 1996-2004**, gathering all the unthemed work

Pettus performed at open mics and special events in those years, now with an expanded series of notes concerning not only each piece, but what was happening in the Chicago arts in that period to influence the work. Move on to the four reprints of special commissioned **half-hour performance projects** Pettus created over the years; and then to the three other **special themed books** he wrote during his time as a performer as well (*Psycho Poets*, about various real Chicago female artists; *[Andi.]*, stories about an ex-girlfriend; and *The Tao of Now*, an attempt at combining the rhythm and energy of slam poetry with longer, more narrative stories).

For those interested in just a sampling of Pettus' old performance work, **four compilations** are also available: *The Jason Pettus Portable Reader*, audience favorites; *More Poems About Blowjobs*, the best of the erotic stories and poems; *Love Blender*, the best romantic stories from over the years; and *Favorite Performance Work*, compiled by the author from a variety of sources, with a new introduction. And finally, for the truly dedicated, the entire collection of work can be found in a **800-page single download edition** as well, entitled *Complete Performance Work, 1996-2004*.

- 01 **CHICAGO STORIES 1996**
- 02 **CHICAGO STORIES 1997**
- 03 **CHICAGO STORIES 1998**
- 04 **CHICAGO STORIES 1999**
- 05 **CHICAGO STORIES 2000**
- 06 **CHICAGO STORIES 2001-2004**
- 07 **JASONETTES**
- 08 **THE HEATSEEKER**
- 09 **NOTES FROM MY GRANDMOTHER'S FUNERAL**
- 10 **CELIBATE**
- 11 **PSYCHO POETS**
- 12 **[ANDI.]**
- 13 **THE TAO OF NOW**

THE JASON PETTUS PORTABLE READER: audience favorites

MORE POEMS ABOUT BLOWJOBS: best erotic stories and poems

LOVE BLENDER: best romantic stories and poems

JASON PETTUS: FAVORITE PERFORMANCE WORK

COMPLETE PERFORMANCE WORK, 1996-2004