Abyss
by Ghost Gabriel

And they may say to me
Do you still love her?
To which I can only reply
The heart I wore for her
Fell somewhere in the chasm
Between wanting something
And having it
That it catches the lamplight
As I pass it on my way home each night
And on certain wreckless nights
Of the soul I dream
Its not irretrievable
Like a bridge more worthwhile
Than the other side

Here is a truth
That would not be truth
Were it not written
On the backs of napkins

'It's not the cards you're dealt, it's how you play them'

BY COLE MERKEL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

At 19 years old, Jacob Anderson may look young, but a difficult past has forced him to grow and brought him a lot of wisdom in the process. "I've said it many times before: It's not the cards you're dealt, it's how you decide to play them," Jacob says. "I could see myself doing so much better than being at a homeless shelter, and slowly I'm taking that step to making it in society."

Jacob just achieved five months of sobriety after battling addiction for more than two years. "I was just tired of the drama and bullshit. I got tired of waking up

VENDOR PROFILE
Jacob Anderson

every morning and thinking about how I was going to get money for that day." Anderson can trace the roots of his addiction to the age of sixteen when he was admitted to the hospital for pancreatitis. Doctors gave him a morphine drip to help with the pain but for the two weeks that followed, he had delusions and very little sleep as he experienced withdrawal. Within a year he was using marijuana and abusing prescription drugs.

Being a homeless youth, Anderson has had difficulty finding advocates that treat him like an adult. He says, "There are a lot of people, it seems, who look down on me when I am sleeping outside because I am so young – that I haven't been through as much as them, when really, when it comes to that, age doesn't matter. It's experiences in life."

Jacob had a difficult childhood. He says he often had to be the primary caregiver for his young brother and he got in trouble with the law many times before turning 18. In spite of this personal history, one of the biggest signs of Jacob's maturity and

PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

wisdom is his personal decision to get sober while living on the streets. "It's a hard thing to do," he says.

Jacob finds the strength and will to stay sober through his family, especially his mother. "I want to prove to my mom that she didn't lose her son to drugs and the streets. I don't want to hear the disappointment in my mom's voice." He says that since he became sober his relationship with his mother has improved dramatically.

Anderson recently was invited to a family dinner at his mom's house and got to spend time with her, his little brother and his mom's boyfriend. "It wasn't a big feast, but it was a home-cooked meal, and it was time with my family and the ones I love. That's what matters to me. Even if it's just peanut butter sandwiches, I'm still with my family," Jacob says proudly.

Jacob is approaching his fourth month of living at the Clark Center. Soon, he will need to move on, and he is currently in the process of securing permanent housing and a social security check to help him thrive. Anderson describes all he has been through as part of the process of growing up and becoming a self-sufficient adult.

In twelve months, Jacob says, "I want to see myself having a year and five months clean and sober. I want to see myself with a place to live and an income. I want to see myself off the streets, starting to get back in shape, continuing with my recovery, and building a closer bond with my mom and little brother and her boyfriend. I want to be able to sit back in five or 10 years and say, 'I did this, I made it. I'm comfortable where I am. I'm comfortable with who I am.'"

Jacob Anderson can be found selling Street Roots most days at Bipartisan Café on SE 79th Avenue and Stark Street.

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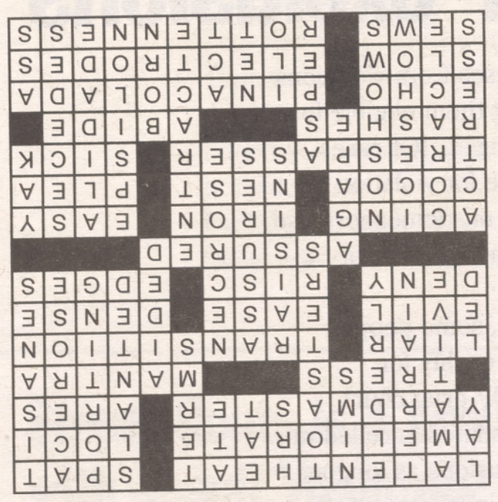
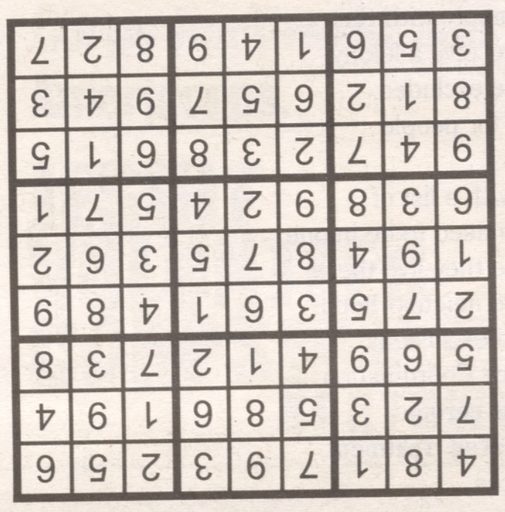
Answers to puzzles on page 15





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CORRECTIONS

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