

THE NUMBERS GAME

Dayvid Figler

I'm old enough to remember a time before the war.
Before the rift. The schism.
When we were one.
Area.
Big as we were.
Seventh largest in the U.S.
Area.
When we were one.
United under the same code.

Despite our differences.
Rural and urban.
"Biggest Little" and "Sin City."
North and South.
Wolf and Rebel.
Tiny joints and lavish dens.
Cows and Casinos.
Wheeler and Charleston.
Walker and Mead.
Pinyon Pine and Joshua Tree.
Picon Punch and Dirty Martini.

We were one. We hung. We found commonality.
We were all ...

The 702.

I know you take pride in your 7-7-5.
But I don't blame you if you resent having to have it.
Our shared identity in the 7-0-2, lost.

Do you ask:

Why'd *we* have to change?
Start over?
Who do *you* think you are?

No begrudging if you think we turned our backs on the relationship.
I didn't vote for it.
But we are to blame.
Flooded our market with pagers and fax machines in the mid '90s.
Bowed before a king, the king...

J.J., the King of Beepers.

With his crass ads on every TV station (there were only 4).
With his catching jingle on every radio station.
With his billboards in every line of sight.

Scantly clad ladies
Gyrating around
Stradling giant beepers
Gracing playing cards floating through the air
Hanging on the King in his garish royal cape and crown.

And beyond lawyers and doctors and drug dealers.
The King beseeched everyone in his new kingdom to own one.
Everyone who was anyone down here had a beeper.
Everyone who wanted to be someone had a beeper.
A 702 beeper. How very – Vegas.

An invasive species that consumed all the numbers.
That made it necessary for all of you to change, so that we could stay the same.

It was 25 years ago and nothing has been the same.

I'm sorry.
We became others.
Rivals.
Separate worlds.

We visit each other.
We may even support each other.
I may adore your offerings.
You may enjoy an in-state vacay.

But when we're about to become friends.
When we exchange numbers.
There will always be that moment.
That knowing look. The us and them fissure.

I'm sorry.
We should have tried harder.
To maintain the cohesion and camaraderie.

To bet on the same numbers, together.