

EXCLAMATORY STATEMENTS

I'm down to my last exclamation point.

When you're born, an English professor appears at the hospital and issues you five of them.

The exclamation points come in a cubic-foot glass box. On the bottom of the box is a notice that reads, "For cases of strong emotions or feelings. And by 'strong,' you better use your absolute best judgment because these are the only five you get."

They are sculpted in black Impact font, and they hop about like Mexican jumping beans. The box is soundproof, but if you so much as crack open the lid, you'll hear unnecessary BAMs, GASPs, and POWs.

By federal law, your parents can withhold your exclamation points until you turn eighteen, although some parents relinquish them earlier. You'll recognize the adults who received theirs as children. These are the people who hang out in front of bars, asking you if they can "bum a point." The ones who are exclamation pointless at the age of thirty because they paired their punctuation with equally ineffective adjectives, such as "Awesome" or "Cool." Some try to buy more on the black market, but the grammar police have broken up the major exclamatory cartels.

I used my first exclamation point the first time I had sex. I promised my then-girlfriend I wouldn't, but it slipped.

The second, at an AC/DC concert.

The day after the concert, my ears still ringing, I asked my friend to pass me a bagel, and my request came out louder than expected. And that's how I squandered my third point.

The fourth I employed the day my son, my first child, was born. "Give that man a cigar and an exclamation point," they say. "Let 'im celebrate."

And now I only have one left. I'm fifty and have been pretty careful these last few years. I almost let it escape when I dropped that bucket of paint on my foot about six years ago. Having three children hasn't helped either.

I sometimes lie in bed and wonder how I'll use my last one. Every once in a while, a terrible scenario, like a car accident, will pop into my head, and that's when I turn to my wife, who sleeps beside me. (She spent her five over the course of three childbirths.)

I imagine us down at the racetrack and our horse, odds seventy-five to one, has just finished first. My wife and I embrace as ripped tickets swirl



around us. I pick her up and, right before we kiss, I tilt my head back and shout a YES! to the sky above us. 🍷

