

-SYLVIA-

Parabolic polynomial formula: $y=ax^2+bx+c$

When the hell will that ever be important in my life?

I check my math.

The account balance is \$4,526.47. That was up until last night, according to my cheque book.

Welfare: +\$800

Disability: +\$270

Unemployment: +\$600

Sixteen-hundred and seventy dollars. That's a bit, but that's for the whole month. Then I have to take out the bills and living expenses.

This is the only math I will ever need: plus-minus.

By substituting the value of y as $y=0$ I can establish the parabola's x-axis interception points. This is done by utilizing the quadratic equation.

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

The \pm Sign indicates that the result may have zero, one or two outcomes, thus the problem will have to be solved in binomial form.

I was almost raped yesterday, huh. Still hasn't really sunk in.

Zero outcomes can be found by the equation yielding imaginary numbers. One outcome will result when both values to solve for X in binomial form are the same. Two outcomes will result if they are different. The X values will indicate points on the curve that contact the X axis. Curves may be positive or negative as well. The vertex of a positive curve is its minimum. The vertex of a negative curve is its maximum.

Here's how it works:

A positive parabola extends to positive values for infinity; a negative parabola will extend to negative values for infinity. You can remember it because a positive

parabola looks like a smile, and a negative parabola looks like a frown.

I ignore the teacher to do my real math.

Sixteen hundred and seventy dollars is not even close to enough money to last me to the end of the month. Mom hasn't worked in two years now. I have to make the difference myself. I pay credit card, gas, electric, rent, cable-phone-internet, groceries It's \$3,500, minimum. With math that is actually useful for something that means $\$1,670 - \$3,500 = -1,830$ These are round about numbers. Plus or minus (\pm) \$120. I'm sure it's at least fairly close to what Mom and I will pay for by the end of October. I know I'll have enough money in the bank to pay off everything for next month, but I'm trying to stay in the green. The last thing I want to do is fall behind. So I have \$1,830 to make and I should be able to make it all tonight at the kennel.

Shit.

I was going to make preparations for this yesterday. Dammit, Loopy.

I caught that idiot at his pad, and I gave him some good whacks with that baseball bat. Nobody screws with my camera. Next thing I know he's got the bat, and he's pinned me down.

I mean, really, He was 25 at least. He was just an angry thief fresh from the shower pinning down an innocent seventeen year old girl with a bat. What a creep.

So I panicked pushed the bat away as hard as I could and went straight for the stairs. I rattle on down, and from behind me I hear his door shut.

"How'd you get in here?" He shouted from inside his room, "I locked the door."

"Yeah? Well, I un-locked it. I got a talent."

"Cat burglar?"

"Photojournalist!"

I should have run. I should have called the cops. He's got my camera, sure, but he might be getting a gun. I walked down the stairs and into his living room-If that's what it was supposed to be.

He had a computer mounted on a desk, a beanbag chair and a bookshelf that

wasn't even half-full. Maybe it was in there somewhere, if not, I'd have still earned the right to screw up his stuff. I tore thought his drawers, but they were all empty.

"I've got your camera up here, you know." I heard him call from his room.

"Miss Jenks," The teacher tells me. "eyes to front for this."

In binomial form it is simple to determine if the curve is positive or negative. If the second values are both alike, the expression is positive. If they are different, the curve is negative.

$(X+n)(X+p)$, $(X-n)(X-p)$ Positive
 $(X+n)(X-p)$, $(X-n)(X+p)$ Negative

This can be proved by distribution.

Fuck.

The extra money I need to make for this month I'll get from studding. I work at a kennel. Kennels take care of dogs, and some dogs have a breed that other owners would like to make puppies out of. This sounds simple, but it is not a cheap affair. Usually an agreement is struck between two owners on a stud fee. A stud fee is what the female dogs owner pays the male dog owner to have him fuck the bitch.

The stud for Perry: A west highland terrier will be \$500 - the stud for Browning, a Shetland sheepdog will be \$720 – The stud for Epi, the Heidelberg German Shepherd will be \$630.

Let me tell you, these prices are incredible bargains. Each puppy will be worth well more than these chump-change stud fees. They would have to pay thousands going through owners and handlers. Well, for these dogs they would, anyway. Working in a licensed kennel we have all the pedigrees on file. It's all very official paperwork to make copies of. I handle the whole scheme myself. The pooches book weeks in advance, and I contact owners from as far as three states away to come by and knock up their dog. It's actually very violent to watch. Once he's inside; the males' penis enlarges so much it's impossible for him to pull out until he's shot his load. The dogs whimper and wine bite and yelp. Pedigree hounds with gold nut sacks pounding, pounding. I get tax-free cash going into my wallet.

You could call it matchmaking, I just prefer to think of it as pimping. It pays, and I

can make ends meet.

What I'll make on it comes out to be Five plus seven-two plus six-three: \$1,850. So I'll be cutting it close, but I'll get at least one more stud lined up for the month.

The kennel does pay me pretty well, too. I won't be going hungry. The numbers all work out, after all. Addition and subtraction.

Then there's Loopy.

This guy he called to me from his grate balcony:

“Do you want your camera back?”

I came out, he was dressed in pj's and dangling my camera over the banister. He was gonna try to break it. It took me so long to afford that digital I got it with the pimping money.

From behind him he pulled out my camera bag. He read off the tag.

“Sylvia Jenks” He says “1136 Dwight Ave., Apartment 303, oh and here's your phone number?”

“Yeah, that's me.” I said, smirking, “and who the fuck are you?”

“Call me Loopy.”

“Loopy?”

“No, no, no. Lupé. Lupé.”

“Yeah, right. Loopy. I love it.”

“Tell me, Sylvia, how many collections of naked boy pictures have you made.”

“Look, mind your own business.”

“It is my business, now. You see, Sylvia, my living-how I get by is I steal shit. I live a wholesome, godly life otherwise.”

“Screw you. Give it back!” He wound up like he was going to chuck it on the ground from the balcony. “Woah! Stop! Stop!”

“Shut up, and just hear me out for a second, kid. I've seen what's on here, and I won't have you squealing to the fuzz about my lifestyle. I'm keeping your photo card. You speak one word about me to the cops or anyone and I'll tell them your dirty little secret.”

“Loopy, you little puke!”

Blackmailing shit. I hope he dies.

The cool air that was in his warehouse was like the sudden breeze that just blew over my desk from outside. The patchy clouds and sky shine bright outside, and I have to squint at my math as the sun clears a cloud and shoots a big pool of light on my math.

“Ms. Jenks.” Says Mr. Mullings, my math teacher, “Those don't appear to be notes, Ms. Jenks.”

I sigh. I can't believe he caught me. Class is out and I didn't even notice. I was too preoccupied with real problems.

“No Mr. Mullings, I was half writing my notes and half working out this month's budget.”

His eyes scan from left to right on my desk from my notebook to my loose leaf budget. Parabolas on one side, welfare's on the other. Vertex on the left, my stud fee is on the right. It's just positive and negative.

“So why are you doing your budget during my class?”

“Why?” Suddenly I feel spite. Indignant spite.

“Ms. Jenks, I won't have you drifting off during my lessons. I don't care what you've prioritized otherwise.”

Okay. You know what?

“Mr. Mullings, your lessons don't teach me anything useful.” I hold up my budget. “You see this? Addition and subtraction: no exponents no radicals or imaginaries, no parabolas. For the last few minutes, I've just been adding and subtracting. I worked out my budget for all of next month with the math I learned in 1st grade.” I slap down on the notebook. “All this crap? All of it is useless to me, and I will forget it all in less than two years. I don't need the quadratic equation to get by.”

He frowns.

“Does it make you happy to bore us with math we aren't ever going to use?”

“Come with me.” he says

Mr. Mullings opens a photography book. It's of American Landmarks. He flips open a shot from San Francisco, and he points.

“Do you know what this is?” He asks

“The Golden Gate Bridge.” I answer.

“Right.” He says, holding the page with his finger. He flips through the pages once more. Now we're in St. Louis.

“You know what that is?”

“The St. Louis Arch.”

“That's correct.” He flips again until we are somewhere near Las Vegas.

“What's this?”

“The Hoover Dam.”

“Very Good. Ms. Jenks, I have to tell you something we both already know. You are very bright. You have a lot of potential, yet you lack focus. All of these places, these huge super structures: They're all parabolas.”

He traces the curve of the support cables of the Golden Gate Bridge, the structure of the St. Louis arch, and the deep bowl of the Hoover dam.

“When we call a curve a function, it isn't just a name. It has a real meaning. It functions in the real world. I want you to learn this math, I want you to focus. I know for a fact that most of the students I teach will forget everything I teach them. I'm sorry, but I don't teach it for them. The fact is all teachers are just looking for the one student who can take what they learned and really build something out of it.”

He closes the book and scoots it aside.

“I don't know if you are meant to be an architect. You have the ability, but not the belief, or the focus. My only point was showing that what I teach matters. Newton said that he saw broader and clearer because he stood upon the shoulders of giants. We need people to become those giants. We all rely on that to see what we couldn't before.”

The overhead bell rings, and I am late for my next class now, but he writes me out a late pass. He handed it to me with an honest look in his eyes.

“Sylvia, make something of what you are taught, I don't know what. You can be whatever you want to be.”

I leave nodding and rolling my eyes, and thinking again about the incident.

Yesterday, after all my arguing with him, Loopy finally comes down the stairway and hands me my camera.

“Now lets get going.”

“Going? Where?”

“I'm bringing you back to the train station.”

“No, no, no, no like hell you are.”

“This is not a safe place to be after dark, Sylvia.”

“Where do you think you're going to take me and what are you going to pull?”

“Hey, I already had you pinned to the ground with a baseball bat. If I was going to do something, I would have done it by now. I'm getting you back to the train station.” He walked to the door, and opened it. Outside was an empty dump of an alleyway hued with electric orange against onyx black. Already it was darker than before. I was thinking that staying inside actually sounded like a better proposition.

“Let's move it.”

So he took me back to the train stop, and waited with me there until the next train pulled in. The whole time he leaned up against the wall, not saying a word. Then just as the train stopped, and the doors slid open, without looking at me, he spoke.

The Three Weasels 1-3

<http://www.14rivers.com/threeweasels.htm>

“You’re the first person to ever catch me, Sylvia Jenks. That’s why I hope I never see you again.” Then he walked away. I got on board, and watched him as he climbed the stairs. The doors began to close as he made it past the threshold of the stairwell.

“Get fucked!” I screamed just before the doors sealed me in.

-DAVE-

Today's big catch is a briefcase.

Coffee shops and grocery stores can be goldmines. No, I am not above purse-snatching. I don't even feel slighted about it. Like using someone's credit cards:

If your credit card is stolen, and purchases are made on it; you are liable for a maximum of \$50. I could buy anything with one, and when the sap I stole it from wouldn't suffer more than a parking ticket.

This sweet little find was an ignored briefcase in the mall.

You know how it can be sometimes, some guy walks by he pretends to tie his shoe. Nothing out of the ordinary, you ignore him. Read your book.

Thanks.

The hardest stealing instinct to break is hovering. It's always a dead giveaway, too. A bad thief will circle his target one or two times before committing. The longer you circle a target, the longer people can get a good look at you. There is no waiting for the right moment. The moment is now. That's life, after all.

Another dead giveaway is looking back. Once you steal something: its yours. You can't give it back. You can't look back. You have to take it and go.

Breaking these two habits were the hardest and most rewarding things I've ever done. I've prayed about it so many times.

'God, I can't get by unless I change. Please God, help me to stop circling and just go in there and get it. I don't want to be someone who looks back, Lord Jesus. Help me take what I must, deliver me from these faults.'

Amen.

It took hard work and faith but I swear I am a better thief today. Now more than ever, I'm in my prime. As a pure opportunist; method is based on social skills. It's the same when knowing when to not talk, or when a bad joke can break the ice. There's a time to steal. When someone looks away, when you see the distraction, don't think. Take.

You can see it in their eyes. They'll drift off, or light up. They're absorbed - a girl

across the room, a newspaper clipping, a deal for half off on ground chuck. That's the moment. You've got at best 5 seconds.

- 1) Assess the target: Do you see anything you want? Bag, purse, briefcase loose wallet, anything they've put down? In a cart perhaps? If you don't see anything, or nothing you can get will go unnoticed just move on. Can you get in? I've had to pass up on some really fat purses because I had no angle. But it's not worth getting nailed. Another factor of target: Are they helpless in any way? Blindness? Old age? Physically weak? Slow? Inebriated? Don't pass up what's essentially free.
- 2) If you want it, if you can get it, take it: There is no thought involved. Your window is always small, and your escape is never guaranteed. He who hesitates is fucked.
- 3) Vacate: Don't run unless you have to. Don't look back. No matter what is happening behind you keep your cool. Someone may be screaming. There may be calls for the police. No pressure. Be faster than any footsteps that follow you. Be stronger than any footsteps that catch up. If you hear "Freeze!" Run your ass off.

This guy in the mall neglected his briefcase for a few moments, and I took advantage of that. He's reading a book thick as a brick. His eyes scan across the page with an aggression that can't move fast enough to get to the next line. I bend down next to him, and act as though I'm tying my shoe. Silently I slide the briefcase behind me and to the left, where he can't see. My fingers wrap tightly about the handle and I walk away holding a tan-leather gold trim Samsonite.

I take the bus out of there, and head to the park to examine my winnings. The sky is patchy blue and clouds. It's 1:00 PM when I open the case. I have to break into it with my pocketknife. Breaking into locks I think of Sylvia, the little blonde girl I met the other day.

The case opens, and what do you know? Business papers!. I ignore the main compartment inside, and start shuffling through the side pockets. Inside one I find a money clip. More importantly I find money attached to a money clip: \$280 cash. I'll sell the clip for at least \$30 since there is gold in it. It's a score. The nooks of this case all hide treasure. In one I find -Oh, love of the heavens- one of those new iPhones, still in the box. There's another cell-phone that I can have chipped for cheap and swap out my current dog of a cell. Here's a gift to the worlds best daughter. There's a birthday card with \$100 cash. Happy 13th birthday: a Gold locket. Happy birthday to me.

“Thank you, oh Lord of us all, for such a great bounty this day.”

Before I even sell the briefcase (Which I will fix the locks on) I'll have made over \$800 not including cash. It calls for a big meal, and I haven't had good Thai food in a while. I head out from the park and go to The Jasmine Lotus, which is the best curry in town. It's a five minute cab ride, and I'm there.

I step in and the air is thick with rice-boiled steam and the fragrance of oriental spices wafts in from the kitchen. Two white pillars in the middle are decorated with antiquity knickknacks from Thailand; broad silk-screens of mountainsides, woodcarvings.

What I like about Thai food is that Thailand is between India and China. Not directly but roughly. So eating it is like having Chinese and Indian at the same time like for example curry with bamboo. The heavy delicious spice that feels so weighted and filling in your belly and the delicate crunch of reed shoots. It's splendid stuff. The only question is what color I want: Red, Green or Yellow.

The waitress comes over. She's a cute-little Asian chick. I want the red curry beef, the green tea, and the yellow girl. She takes my order and smiles at my wink.

Bored as I am waiting for my food, I flip through the papers in the briefcase. I'm trying to look professional...And rich and impressive. These papers are mostly drab, but in them I come across stock records. He follows the stocks, and the trading thereof as it goes up and down in the market. There's a pattern in it. It's like he's got inside advice on when to buy and when to sell. There's a name attached to every trade.

Arthur Delobb.

-ARTHUR-

Mike calls into the office. He still hasn't found his briefcase. This briefcase had everything in it-everything. It was stolen yesterday. Not lost, stolen. He put it "Right there!" he says. He looked again and "It was gone!"

Aside from his daughters birthday present, and card, and the latest apple tech-wank he also managed to lose the folder that had all my stock advice from the last 8 months. During that 8 months I have bought and sold the stock 12 times, all with annotated advice from Mike who is a compulsive document and note-taker.

"Mike," I say to him over the phone "Do you ever wonder if who you are and who you will become are based only on when and where you were born?"

Mike is 42. When it comes to insider trading he knows enough to have known better. He's also so well-off that he doesn't need the extra cash. Despite this, I managed to recruit him. As a bureaucratic neat-freak he just wanted to spice things up. Mix drab daily grind with something dangerous. James Bond of the desk jockeys, if you will.

When I first brought him on board he wanted me to do him a favor in return. All I could think of at the time was I could give him a better deal on his Health and Car insurance. He got excited. He was strangely excited about discount insurance. Like he was joining a secret society.

What Mike has lost is only the most incriminating and well organized document that could ever be used as evidence against me. I can't think of anyone else who's made this kind of paper trail. I know. I've read it.

"It was all in there." Indeed it all was. "I can't believe I lost it."

"It wasn't lost, Mike," I tell him "It was stolen. We have nothing to worry about."

Seriously, look at it. Somebody steals the case to get at some top-notch stuff and the result? His kid's locket gets stolen, and the thief gives it to his girlfriend over dinner. End of story. What would some stupid teenager do with business papers? I should add that as of today I am still king of the fucking world and it makes it easy to downplay his panic, while I drown a pill of Zyprexa.

"It's not like it's in possession of the FBI or that it's on its way to a public court. You just lost the case. Some two-bit hood snagged it away from you and he probably couldn't even jimmy the lock properly."

"But what if--"

"Ever tried Zyprexa, Mike? Great stuff. No matter how worked up you are, it smoothes you over like cake frosting. Come on over and I'll let you try some."

"Look, Arthur. I'm sorry. I didn't know. I should have--"

To Hell with this.

"Call me later, Mike." I hang up the phone.

Under different circumstances I might be nervous, but as of now I just cannot be bothered. I wait out my day, bored and wanting to go outside and shop, or run red-lights or scream. I go to lunch. It's a dull and drab chicken sandwich and I head back and wait around answering calls for another few hours. I look up at the clock, expecting to see five, and it's three. I'll wait around a few more minutes, I will leave early. I turn on the automated answering machine in anticipation.

A gentleman walks in with a button shirt, but no suit. He's in a tie, but no pants. Not like that, of course. He's in blue-jeans, a white shirt and no v-neck underneath and a red burgundy-print tie.

Strangest thing I've seen all week. He's even wearing trim leather boots. Below the waist is all cowboy, and above it is all business. He is a ruggedly handsome man in his mid-twenties. He has long dark hair that I saw when he came in, tied and rubber-banded in the back to form a pony-tail. His eyes are the brown of polished wood. He's built, not buff. He's large, not flabby. His face has unintentional beard and mustache scruff from not shaving this morning.

I am supremely comfortable with my bisexuality. It's not a cop-out. I'm not gay. I'm not straight. If anyone else is not comfortable with that, they need not worry. It's my life and it's my heart; as gay as that sounds. Still, I love the soft, emotional, quirky nature, that comes along with the driven and intense ferocity of women, and I love the firm, confident and bullheaded but simultaneously insecure and vulnerable boyish ways of men.

I don't believe in love at first sight, but I do believe in heartbreak at first sight. The sight of this young man breaks my heart. He's a few years my minor, and has the undreamed of audacity to walk into an insurance office wearing a tie and blue jeans.

He approaches me, glancing left and right.

"I was told to come here. I'm supposed to see Arthur Delobb"

"OK." I reply. My luck is turning around today. "I'm Arthur Delobb how can I help you?"

He blinks, and stares, turning his head unsurely.

"I'm sorry, say again."

"I'm Arthur Delobb, what do you need?"

"Hm." He murmurs with his wayside glare.

"This is the Delobb insurance agency, correct? Are you Mr. Delobb, the Owner?"

"No, my father, Charles Delobb, he's the CEO. I just-"

Shit. I just admitted to working for my father. I hate having to say that; admitting that I'm still under his umbrella.

"I'm just working here for the time being."

"So you're the one I came to see."

"Well...Perhaps," I say with an intentional pause "what is this about?"

He smiles, steps up and puts a briefcase on my desk.

"Mr. Delobb, I'm coming to you today representing my client, the wrath of God."

"The – What?"

"The wrath of God, Mr. Delobb: Divine retribution. I'm here for an amends and a

tribute for your wrongdoing. Do you recognize the briefcase, Mr. Delobb?"

"Arthur," I reply. I don't recognize the case, but I can bet whose it is. "Call me Arthur."

"My name's Ken. What I found in this case was denoted evidence that you have been committing insider trading. There were great details on the purchase and re-sale of stocks whose value has more than quadrupled since original purchase. They were always sold high, always bought low, and always done under annotated advice."

If I didn't find him attractive, I'd probably wring his neck.

"Should I call security now?"

"Well, you could." He opens the case. It's empty. "If you do I'll have my associate release the files to the police."

"So I'm looking for two people, then?"

"Mr. Delobb--"

"Arthur."

"Artie, The stock itself is pretty valuable at the moment. We've calculated a net worth of no less than \$80,000. Here is what you are going to do: You will sell the entire stock, and donate the amount to us."

I try to sit motionless. I'm getting angry, and even a little shaken. Then for a moment, I try to see his chest through his shirt.

"I don't have any details yet. I'm going to give you a week to sell." He hands me a card with a hand-written number on it. "Call this number, which rings this cell-phone." He holds up a phone which I'm betting is Mike's.

This stock that Ken is going after is, as he says, at least 80 Grand. Still, it's not my biggest stake. Not small pickings, either. One way or the other, I'm confident that I'm going to stop this guy from walking away with my cash. I was very tactical with this particular trade.

When you trade stock and you know just when do sell, the cash you keep stays

the same, as the market may plummet. The further down the stock goes, the better. If at some point prospects come back, or you find another company that is ready to inflate, just move your sum back in or over. You just repeat this process and the money you make grows more and more. Your \$5,000 can buy what inflates to \$12,000, which can then buy \$30,000 - so on and so forth. Buy the cheapest eggs, sell the finest hens. Here's how effective this technique is: The 80,000 that this guy is after? Earlier this year it was originally a \$1,500 investment. It was fifteen-hundred measly dollars that I nursed into a year's salary in eight months.

It's only one of well over 200 stocks for which I've done the exact same thing for a decade. Ten years. My God, has it really been ten years? I was in the market to sell this stock in a few days, anyway. Mike says that the stall comes around mid-October. He was going to get a 15% cut, and the rest of the money was headed into the doomsday fund, my overseas account. It's well into the millions at this point. I'm not tempted to spend it, though. I'm going to need every cent, pretty soon. I can't turn over \$80,000. Not to a two-bit crook, and no matter how sexy I think he is.

The card I take with his phone number is the only link I have back to him. I will use it to the best of my abilities. I'll start right from here.

"The wrath of God, Arthur. Not something to be taken lightly."

I look up at him and his scruffy face, and mahogany eyes and smug smile. I imagine killing him, but the murder veers towards erotic after I rip his shirt off.

"I don't believe in God, Ken. After all, Marx once said that religion is the opiate of the masses."

He just slides the phone in his pocket. Turns without a glance.

"Opiates are for atheists."

I get my first good look at his ass as he walks out the door.

The Three Weasels 1-3

<http://www.14rivers.com/threeweasels.htm>

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