

A FREAK BELIEVABLE



VINCENT A. BLANES III

EVERYDAY MADNESS
MICROPROSE & VERSE

Vincent A. Blanes III is interested in microprose and dramatic blank verse. He varies from first to third person to create a window on the self and it's reflection. His tales of everyday life can be dry and pithy or fantasy-based. Regardless they are short and so a computer age attempt to hold onto some form of the past.

Oratorical is the best word to describe his work, best read aloud and often missed if not.

Unfortunately he has only rescued half his work from the 70s. He began writing 'The Clocks, the Soldiers', a work on sex change but this went the way of after 70 pages. Then there was 'The World's Longest Sentence', exactly that, a sentence that made it 60 pages without a full-stop and not strung together. This was lost as were 50 or so poems and three or four Rock n Roll Fantasia pieces and a dozen other full length short stories, some loaned and never returned. Dr Rubiks tale collection did not make it beyond the re-entry to the Government offices.

He concentrates on impulse, and often if the main characters escape doom, their life experiences have been powerful. He also does a little comedy. Otherwise you'd think he was weird not just sober.

He is a geologist, was a journalist/writer, public servant and IT Tech, and is currently an inventor.

A Freak Believable is at the very end of this work and the reason for much skeptical tomfoolery. If you wish to donate to me, feel free to Paypal vo_remotodelivery@hotmail.com. You can also email me at same. All donations to Vincent Blanes B.Sc appreciated.

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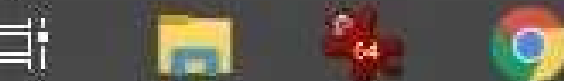
Volume I has been published. It incorporates about half of the material below in a slightly different form, Volume II coming soon! Email me for details or if you wish to buy my works (\$17.95AUD).



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" This book is a second to none literally work of art. It has a comprehensive understanding. The uniqueness of this book can be seen as it is fun and easy to read. This is a great poetic art work. In conclusion, this book has your favourite words and phrases to make sure you don't miss the point. "

-Reviewer

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BY VINCENT A. BLANES III B.Sc

Hit F5 if no pictures...Background reading sound <https://youtu.be/s9qHK6FVwtA>

A Freak Believable

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And Someday the Stars...



Before him it seems.
An infinite switch array that his fingers can flip,
Igniting lights, buzzing buzzers
Flapping a canvas skeleton into the wind

So he sits on the tarmac ready
Mind poised mantis like,
Until the tickle begins

And a hand cuts the air before the pilot
Probing for correct sequence of switch...

Today, lessons in length of poem stanza and word power were provided.
By the Muse, who felt this man had taxied well enough for a minor flight

Tonight, thinking about the possibility of a circus frolic in higher planes
His switches fell one by one easier than usual,
Spinning him down the strip cloud bound

Perhaps birds were not scattered by propelled wings,
Nor was heard the fadeout of engines from the ground.

But when Inspiration coughed its last
He was nearly airborne and wheeling free

...and Someday the Stars...

REMEMBER!



Remember,

It's not a matter of flying South - but flying straight
For with my new found direction

My compass setting me true

I will fly forever towards Truth...

With the stubbornness of birds!

A RARE, IMPULSIVE THING



The scene flew up in her mind as she wandered among the documents and legalities. The ground trembled beneath her and water that had hissed by her ear all night began to pour forth fish, storms and corpses. In the succeeding days she was forced to live more than just alone, and sleeping there alone had become the meekest of women. Love to her was a slick way of doing and saying things. No heavier than smoke now Jonquil waned thin. Only her shame and self-content remained. And as she wandered to the foot of the stairs Jonquil was sure a condemned woman like her was not in the eyes of the gods ready for anything but hunger, a death of hunger. Love was just a slick way of doing and saying things for in the University of Life Jonquil had watched the windows and clouds and become a gray-haired student. She had affairs in the past. Affairs that had fizzled out and governed her while she was drunk in psychology, governed her wholly. Phallic worship often meant she was late for classes. She took a few steps to the Cathedral of tangled breezes that blow grayly Academia. The woman grinned, saw birds twittering on the balcony. Who was fond of her, with whom did she have an association? Jonquil knew women, yeah. She heard voices of men. She knew that her cigarette-lighter when it came out did so in a mood of contradiction. Jonquil knew the roots, the trees here, the floor and the tree-grown boulders, the Jacaranda that had grown and faded like a shadow. She wrote a few stout verses, felt ridiculous.

The thoughts poured into her mind and onto the paper. Her arm went up to her head and her spirit went down to her knees. Jonquil could almost sniff now across the front of her eyes a sharp set of the words as they followed. They told her someone was being impatient with her. It was the old lady next door. She'd gone to the village and returned with a small prize. Such a woman compelled her respect for her mother was the same. But she had other things to talk about today and instead of enquiring as to what she had won as she was fond of doing, thus hiding her feelings of despair, she went instead. And then wondered all morning why she had altered her usual composure.

There was little disagreement between the voices inside Jonquil's head, and the voices outside, the wind, the birds...she was making no more mistakes today. For she was a shrine, the epitome of loneliness and she had reconciled her anxiety. The main thing in Jonquil's life was that she was not mad and the doctor wasn't right in saying she was. He'd set up an illegal court and tried to be the care-not-for-any-soldier type. Perhaps now he has no stool to sit on, she thought. She felt one day that the Earth would bite her for being so conscious of her loneliness and despair yet tackling it so well. She rolled a small piece of chalk between her fingers. Struggling inside the box at the foot of her bed, she heard the flies, watched them. She had been given these friends by a boy down the street. A boy who had been tested and found to be a genius. Jonquil watched them now all the time. She couldn't understand why he was so nervous. Probably because he was a genius she thought and laughed.

Making a cup of tea, the mistress of multiples sat down and smiled, transferring her affection to the personal deity of the wall space. There a few small models, cathedrals and martyrs were addressing themselves to the eye. She saw there the strict clocks of the past as they wound themselves around the legs of the chairs and tables in her room and spoke, crooking her first finger, which she did often relating to someone that wasn't there. But Jonquil wasn't mad. She was "giving a message". She wanted to speak to the universe. She wanted not to dispute but to remain the bright, young flower she was who with her eyes and ears excited everyone, and renewed conversation wherever she had been. She would constantly chat. But now her admiration had gone for everyone. Someone had spoken about getting on. From memory it was Simon the gardener.

Jonquil felt that the copious notes she had compiled recently stretched longer than her memory, more improbable than fiction. It was like playing the violin in five different positions and then throwing it away. She sat down heavily. Not taking her eyes for one minute off the solitary figures on the wall she crooked her finger and put down her cup asking in a mystifying voice "Master of the Universe, why do you feel that the singing has stopped?" With this, the singing of a thousand birds filled her senses. She lay down smelling her salts, unusual for a woman in her thirties and suddenly realised a piece of stone on an empty bottle slung around her neck was all she had to claim. The only man she had to love had given it to her. For around her neck where there had been the hands of black men, white men, was not only a charm but also a decision of the Grand Oracle. Somebody had changed her necklace to a stone and she wandered about singing, sometimes disrespectfully, sometimes proudly like a spasmodic lunatic. But all the time she said "Serves them right, serves them right," and crooking her finger for the last time once again perceived her just passable form in the mirror. In a delighted way and as if raising an amazing point of conscious disgust, she picked up a glass, filled it with water and hurled it so hard that the deity on the wall fell like an army stopped clean.



Synergistics

I tell her that I'm going to see a poet,
And see an artist.

I tell her I'm going to see an artist,
And see a poet.

I tell her I don't know the difference.

At Great Depth



The bubbles from my scissoring legs rose softly as I gave her a sideways glance. Teresa had been settling near a number of tree-shaded chains, corals and small melting weeds as I dragged myself towards her light. Now I could see that she was farther than I had thought. Smiling under my goggles I stretched back, trying my best body language on her since my message had been one of importance. As I reached the lighted patch where she was, I listened for the rush of air that followed my swimming and adjusted my earplugs so that I could think of her and the situation a little better. She would no doubt come straight to the point, raising her hands back and forth, raising her triumphant and amused eyes. I told her the best way I could that sometimes those chains that we found last year during the Charismatic Tide had been similar and she thought perhaps they were.

We didn't really make much headway that day, gazing at the altars where the fierce moon light had penetrated, giving the rocks and water a look one finds on cake-tins, pink and muted. We could see shimmering light curtains, the same seaweed plankton was building like a thick suit and the necessary fluid ran like blue volts, making the surface productive since the dye was rare and Cerulean in parts. I never looked up. I should have. Since I neared a cave that was almost totally composed of calcium I found we had been swimming symmetrically from the same angles towards a reddish-purple area where danger seemed imminent. Fish lined with phosphorescent sparks, their teeth and huge jelly-eyes calculated their margins like military models as I grasped the truth of this expedition.

I remembered the funny things we had seen. They stood almost like pencil-marks in a notebook. The scenes flew up in my mind and I knew that if I lowered our swimming trajectory any further we would find ourselves very close to an archway big enough for us to pass through. Amused, I signaled to her that here perhaps we could find something decent to eat since the fish were becoming rounder and traveling like incoherent balls, like prawns concealed in the hollows, all flat and except for assorted ones, not at all attractive. Teresa signaled that she would rather eat the weedy greens than sweep toward the archway since among the fish she pointed out stiffer, fat black swimming creatures that were odd. The archway now came closer, like a map. I could almost sense a presence of growing eggs and diving closer, clouds streaking through like coloured slaves of their uninterested friends the prawns. Past a drowsing manta ray, through the clumsy scuttles, the shrimps, the yellow and sullen ribbons of their cousins the divine algae and their host, in the background an incredible share, a landscape of stars which I believed were smiling eyes of a school of rainbow gummies. Like sticks of chocolate surrounding the archway at its highest point were small chitinous wanderers that looked like caddis larvae. The water in the archway looked dark, concealing and unsympathetic.

The archway was made of the same limestone. But inside of this archway I felt horrified how empty creation seemed to emanate from some point deep in this undersea structure. I couldn't see what it was and I don't think Teresa, who had waited at the entrance, wanted to find out. I thus kept swimming through it myself, thinking perhaps that this was the closest I could come to entering a geological structure, deeper than I had known. It looked like a cabin, opening into a large dome-like hollow and had a rock proscenium there that looked almost metallic and the distance created a feeling the ocean pivoted around it. Coming closer I bared my eyes since my goggles seemed to be leaking.

Before I could turn and wave to Teresa I must have lost my footing on a sprouting piece of coral for I felt myself being lowered and finally settled, looking into a bluish-purple growth that looked endless. All kinds of fiction dropped into my mind, stories of lost divers mainly and angrily I shone a torch forward as I stitched together what I had seen at the speed of light. I wondered how to escape this deeper hollow, each time falling deeper down it. I must have slipped imperceptibly for two minutes, dizzy with fatigue and blinded by the plankton that I was throwing up with my feet. As I settled like a slow solution in a laboratory experiment, I found that almost like an astronaut on another planet I could lope down this underwater garden watching the water swirl like wind systems and soon by leap and bound reach a point where the currents were stable. Overjoyed, I returned, slowly moving through the hollow, anxious to capture the feeling again. Ready to return to the archway, I turned, swimming firmly, for the thought occurred to me that I had traveled too far. I noted a ragged hole near the top of the dome. It was about 30m above me and through it I barely made out a light, suspiciously man-made.

Here where every cathedral of tangled and fancy ocean plant led onto some variety of street and cul-de-sac in the limestone, there were however no signs that man had ever colonized. Through this hole, now I perceived that as a light, swings on a boat there attended it a swinging effect which caused me to feel we were close to the surface. A boat now would eliminate miles of swimming. Unexpectedly I found Teresa swimming up behind me. Her voluptuous shape distracted me a full minute. An arousal was not on the agenda so I dismissed it as best I could. The hollow was nowhere as deep and mysterious as I first feared. But, as she struggled towards me in her familiar green swimsuit, the water eddying past her like breaths of perfume, I noted in her hand a small object. Here she had found a sunken artifact. Whether it was of known vintage I couldn't tell...she dropped it before I could determine. Flourishing her hands, she told me to return to her, swim back to a point she was motioning towards. There in this treeless world Teresa and I found the garden we had never suspected. I caught and followed her finger, half-expecting a treasure-chest each time her flippers cut the water. Perhaps there was a beam or part of a ship, another hollow where I could lose myself in the slowly unwinding light, light that spiraled into solitude I had always searched for.

Floating closer to the part of the sea-bottom she wanted to show me I almost spun back like a snagged fish since there was a sunken rust-red engine and a strange writhing tentacle balancing its shapeless form. Within the metal inside its grotesque and amorphous shape I thought I saw a squinting rubber effect and ran my hand over it. It wasn't part of a ship although it looked it...it was too thin. I reached through one of the holes. It resembled a toy, one of those found in small aquariums. Flipping my hand through the inside I scratched at the algae trying to uncover some name so I could determine what ship it had fallen from. Having discovered a small, slick engraving on a jagged edge I made out a name which looked convincingly like a factory's. Unhappily I noticed it had been worn away. Instinctively reaching for a cigarette it took me a good second to realize where I was, 60 fathoms below the surface, definitely a no-smoking zone. And moving closer to Teresa watched, uncovering another layer of rust on the discovered metal. Somebody had dropped a motor I thought. The fisherman who perhaps had an accident for there were no other objects nearby. He must have jettisoned this hulk of a motor for some reason. It was when I found a large sheet of plastic I thought otherwise for pulling it off, since I was shifted rapidly.

The tremor lifted my entire body and it rose quickly to the surface, my eyes incredulously looking at a 2m bubble followed by another, and another. I was in a column of bubbles rising to the surface. My mustache was now almost snapping off as I neared the surface. Looking up I could see the bottom of an "island". As it approached I noticed a pink face oozing tears and instinctively reaching the surface I cried out "Teresa" as my body had disintegrated into a series of pink and gray dots floating on the surface. I felt my face becoming harder. It took me half an hour to make out the office of Time-Life International. There was the familiar giant telephone. There like a deep garden, hundreds of kilometers across, was a feminine hand. On a finger, a ring whose diamond must have been at least 100 meters high squatted awesomely and as my nose cleared I was overpowered by the exciting scent of Teresa's perfume. I could have climbed into her ear and told her but I decided not to. We had somehow entered Harristown Harbor, our midget diving submarine about 55 km off course under a smog that cut all light to metres below the surface. This was our deep-sea paradise hitherto undiscovered. If we didn't think of something fast there would be all kinds of social hell to pay...newspapers, officials and about 500 meters away, the Navy.

A Rebel Day, Winter Coming



Days rings bells. Today a subtle chime, Recalling a windblown time,..the poet as a lad.

I watch the dog shredding paper in the park.
Soon wet shreds of cloud will drop,
Propelled by the cold animal wind

Bring the ache to bones once more,
The ache in the heart for Summer
To once again stride on sandals
Into the valley

Jim Luki – Intelligence



There is a moment when the nerves burst like trees, boredom gives way to foolish desire. One's legs begin to move and a desperate rhythm sets into the whole of the body. Perhaps your mouth begins to feel cold and you feel a restlessness coming to a compromise. You look up and there is a brilliant 5/8th move. Although you are reluctant to face the fact that you are running through a war zone, you must recognise that one pain has gone and another will soon more than likely continue. Soon, inside your head you will rot into the hollow of it, replace the fears with oaths and sleep until the next day. There is a moment when all the damage that has been done by terrorist organisations is being celebrated. Quickly and deliriously though, follow me now...now! For soon that organisation's nose must bleed. Already men like me are beginning to make startled sounds and whisper into small devices. I'm beginning to explain as they dissipate surprise beyond measure and their small rooms become haunted with whistles and tones and movements. Short dark little men are seen in the village that were not there yesterday. I am coming to my feet, I am removing my grip on the past and gently holding the future, like a violinist pulling over, ready to overtake.

Like a cup and saucer balanced somewhere in space I am something they cannot imagine. I perhaps cannot dress like them. I share around their information; I constrict them with it if they know not who I am. If I reach across I could turn a radio on in some of their heads, I could break a barometer and forecast that their pumped-up faces could be six feet below the surface simply by firing a bullet. My technique is not doubtful. I dislike the terrorists who in this country have ripped a body open. It lies bleeding, rays and spikes are seen on the mountains and like pages of a book their lies traced, the incidents in their past have become laminated. Their guilts and contempts, their calculations and escapes are veneered. They mean nothing. For we breathe now not Reason, but Hate. Hate for their ideas. Unexpectedly, we escape and selling our freedom to them, lumber on crashing into the base of their feet where before they can trail their fingers across their own strange colours, we are again filling their rooms with tones and whistles. Should they stay, a thousand fists will work as one to preserve the sanctity of our hiding place. And that fist will crush through the dark and like arrows on a graph scatter their skulls under the sharp blade-blow of a multiplied karate. There will be an echo, a pause, and again another path to the city will be livable in.

Drive

Progress is measured by the horsepower of a number of faces in a block of land we call a nationn.



PO-FACED RANDY'S WEDDING

"Are you going to Randy's wedding?" The words, carried on the wind, started to sing in Randy Barthan's ear. Wattles and eucalypts were standing, their great charm prevailing on bushland that opened like a paradise between the solid spaces of the red and awkward mountains. He was like anyone else to look at with more than a touch of handsome, an obvious dash of ugliness. The latter gave one the impression he may have been risqué, his nose to one side just slightly enough to convey it. He consented that people had quirks, and knowing that he was no different to anyone else, told his friends he was incapable of knowledge and so would probably learn a lot of things more practical. His education left an impression on the village such that eyes were opened to his demise, not because it was beautiful nor deserved sympathy, but because it was to be regretted. Randy was to have an endless life of hard work ahead of him.

He was told as a child that he was not to be fascinated along the way. Funny, now we think about it. He wasn't a bit eccentric. It was silly of the elders to have warned him in this manner. He worked as a clerk and the world presented no real difficulty to him until that damned theater company with their fantastic costumes and poor, dirty assistants came to town. After that the doors opened and closed on Randy. He decided to strut their stuff, to change his clothes and become an actor. It was presumed he would never quite make it. He would remain an honorable Barthan and not break their rules. Though he had existed for most of his life in a sensible position he was now going it alone.

Everything in the world, he said, was produced by the act of theater. This quite surprised the people he knew then, for he wasn't mad, though they often told him these thoughts weren't constructive. He dismantled them completely. He asked them if they would have thought him mad if he went to the city. He retorted that in the city, everyone was mad, and produced proofs, stories and anecdotes to this end. Still the villagers thought he had become too imaginative, too permissive and had allowed his being to assume an exotic but unnatural nature. So it was that he would be found in the local bar smoking his black and white Magpie cigarettes, sipping his marsala and coke and concealing his pages with various dictionaries. On most days he was sure that the theatre presented a much more colourful alternative. A better ride than the staid and inconceivable weak-willed attitude of the older people in the town.

Of course he began to change things, to feel that soon the city would signal him into battle. He embarked for life on this appointment with madness. After being caught in several degrading positions by various officers in the city, he was considered a man who would make that appointment. This did not present a difficulty for he had already established a reputation as a dramatist. The power flooded into his eyes. He became almost an abstract principle to those who believed in his writing. He wasn't sure how to approach the prospect of fame, and as old blood cakes on the walls of a butcher's shop, his mistakes became more alarming to those around him. He turned his back on fame. He learnt his job, still together, but fraught with the possibility that the stage was to become the domain of the press. They had criticized him beyond his capacity to endure. He knew he had become a failure in the eyes of his family and the world at large. He had even forgotten to marry, causing a fracas when a local damsel committed suicide after claiming he had spurned her.

Sometimes he would walk for blocks each night fleeing his face. Zigzagging along the road, he was hoping to be picked up so he could present a case to the court, for he was quite a dramatist or actor in his own right. This way he would find an outlet and establish an alibi for the words constructed against him. He was profoundly troubled though on returning from the city, and as he put on a summer-suit, the words "Are you going to Randy's Wedding?" occurred to his depressed mind. He wrote them down on a sheet of toilet paper that night. The dramatic presentation with the same title was staged in memory of Randy Barthan, who suddenly and without so much as a double-take, took a most important curtain call. Like the showman he was, he jumped into a crowd of Brahman bulls that were in town for a rodeo, and was unceremoniously trampled to death that very evening.

I Cannot Touch the People

I cannot touch the people. If you can't, and I feel you can't, then cry.

We are all so terribly alone.



Black sheep.. ..Bah!



The indelible smell of Spring hung in my nostrils as I ran to the top of the slope. I was surfacing in a way, needing somewhere to rest and work out my demise. Behind me along the roadway my best poems lay discarded, my finest verse trashed by my own hand.

.....

I had read them my nursery rhymes and panicking, left, throwing my books into the paddocks. I had realized that I had been a failure save for my poetry. It wasn't that I had used frightening words. Perhaps my jokes had eluded them. I tried to bring a sense of drama to the children of the village, writing small pieces for two readers. One invariably had a small object like a brick, paper bag or some other object of focus. I had gone to a lot of trouble making duplicates on a Gestetner but they had shown no interest, crying out that the stories were too real, too powerful. I thought that the children were trying to be difficult. But decided that in the field below the foothills of the Alps I could examine my eggs and see exactly which were broken.

I kept these eggs in a place called my intelligence. I wasn't going through the field checking to see what I had actually read them. That was another story. I would not stop creating my small dramas. I was annoyed with the children now. My feet were wet and I guessed it must have rained the night before. There was a hole in the ground where I felt the grass was softer. Laying there with my head towards the schoolhouse, I recalled that when I was a child I had never told a lie nor risen from my chair and been rude to my teacher. These children were slack. Their parents were not rich but they should have had more experience in bringing up. I also wanted to believe they had been hysterical, but it was a sad lament that I felt more important to dwell on now.

I would leave this village and its urchins and seek my refuge somewhere where people understood the beauty of trees and flowers. I wasn't tittering or upsetting them. What could have been wrong? I had destroyed some of my finest works as I ran, wanting to get away from the thought that I had failed. I had not really appreciated any kind of declination. I thought my many changes had all disappeared since I had given up alcohol. Maybe they were not understanding enough to see that theories were still interesting to other children. The wetness of the grassy hole began to make its presence felt at the back of my head. I remembered a small boy that looked the most intelligent. Even he had thrown a ball of paper at a friend.

I hated standing still and thought the best thing I could do was to turn this into another story. So writing in my notebook, slowly finding the words that sounded the most stylized, I planned my next lesson, with a plump, contented smile on my face. An hour later I had written what I'm sure would entertain any child. I had pulled up another carrot. At last! I had almost forgotten to write. Now my foot tingled as my ego expertly crawled out of the hole, ticking off in my head the lines I had written. Up, up, up I crawled until I reached the surface and the grass again. I could not run because I was rooted at the end of my inspiration.

Month after month I was struggling in this village. Seeing that the children were bright-eyed and ready to learn of mathematics and life's first experiences. I still could not understand why, when literature came around, they had laughed. I stupidly believed though that I had written my best work there. I sat on the log collecting my papers. Then suddenly, something drowned my happiness for as I felt my forehead I noted my hand rubbed a rough split and peeling off the object realized someone had been to Spiders Novelty Shop. I had taken a macrosleep on a bench outside the schoolhouse, knowing that the principal would not be back for an hour. On the wind I could hear the increasingly audible audio of a classroom about three minutes from complete eruption.

Willy, The Kid Genius

Coke was made for the egos of men.
Blue jeans, to brand a group.
Rock 'n roll it stirs the blood.

What then beneficial pertains to soup?!

Advantage Jiggiejig!

Tom's erotically distracting wife was dizzy as the rain began again on the tin roof. Every few seconds a drop would splash through a hole. "I'm afraid, Tom, my man, you'll have to pay more attention to the roofing," I said jokingly, my hands descending to my pockets where I wanted a compass, watch and matches to appear for the third time that evening. It was no use. I must have dropped them somewhere.



Tom told me to leave a little food and take the rest. He felt that if either his wife or himself were left behind, I could find the lost canoe if I went on ahead alone to raise help. We had discovered there were no people at all in this part of the forest. Before leaving, Tom and I had joked about the survival manuals we had been indoctrinated with. I needed only a compass I told him. Before it became too much like Robinson Crusoe I disappeared along the trail believing that the compass was easily locatable. I held my hand tentatively against my face, as the rainy wind stirred the leaves. The heavy air thickened with moisture and I began to enjoy this fight.

The rain pelting on the back of my head reminded me of moments I had nearly snapped in the war. I was 27 then. Now 28 I had written imperfect letters to the Dept. of Defense demanding leave pay and had neither met my soldier friends, nor remembered it properly since I went down heavily. The trousers I wore were conspiring against my ankles as in the distance of my imagination I could see a cashier asking "What, have you no more money? Here, take these." I could feel the wind producing and popping dollar notes and coins from his shelves. I rubbed my eyes following this poetically correct concession. The idea was returned to the dampened file of oblivion as I tried to grapple with the idea that the compass had fallen into the lake. We had been moving around the shore when the rain had again returned, sending us ducking into the undergrowth. Looking for a place to camp, a shelter in the form of an old shed loomed before us. It was terribly hard now to work out where we had travelled in the hour since the storm began. The black rain created confusion. So blacking out the fear from my mind I searched like a madman. Presently I returned, a smile on my face.

Tom and his wife were incredulous of course when they initially learnt I had lost the compass. "But if we can't manage that Jiggiejig, we're done. We'll have to wait another five days on the chance the bus returns." I looked harassed since I knew the compass was out there and just couldn't impress the fact upon them. I simply wanted the rain to ease so I could continue searching for the compass. He seemed skeptical. But when the rain did stop, I located the compass quite unexpectedly by reeds near a mossy log. I would never be able to find my way back to this area even if I had to. It was a lucky strike an hour from the shed. The coffee's delicious aroma filled the shed as Tom held his wife, faithfully kissing her on the side of the head. He looked at me and said, "Advantage Jiggiejig. It was fortunate you found the compass. Any longer in that place of doubt and I would have gone troppo from sheer anxiety."

I passed my hand across my forehead, looked into Tom's eyes and said "Tom, my dear friend, it's just that you're married. I'm all right. I'm still free. I know my way around. Do you honestly believe I would let down my sincerest friend, you old man, and your respected and beautiful wife? Particularly since without a compass we would need a miracle for us to return in one piece to civilisation. Imagine all the trial and error involved in getting back twenty miles. It would take days. All that scrub cutting. It's enough to make me ill just thinking about it." The fob in my hand showed ten o' clock, and as I looked deeper into its face I noted water was creeping into the gullies. It was lapping up onto the cliffs in the miniature hand-painted landscape on the face of the silent little timepiece. The indelible scent of spring hung in my nostrils. But ten o' clock had passed many hours earlier as any bushwalker could deduce from the moon.

I had found my fobwatch...but no flaming compass!



Happenings

Delight followed the boy to rock piles.
There, spit on a rock taught him his first art lesson.

Desire followed him down the street by the school.
There, Romantic Indecision brought down the leaves...
It wasn't even Autumn.

Thirst followed him years later to a cafe.

There, the young man writing staccato
Sprang Thought from a trap and it ran into the crevice
Lined with rocks and leaves.



Harold's Gone!

"His words weren't exactly like a dog playing with a ball of wool but many have used the analogy. He spoke a lot. His logic was quite definite and even when he was very old, he still had the intelligence to write his own name. Keeping his thoughts in his diary he had retained most of his former intelligence, which didn't obviously amount to that much. His stories aren't what one expects. They're like German fairy-tales but the essence of the farming method is still there. Anna says that he wrote them over chicken-noodle soup. One has been told he often takes notes at the market. This year though Harry is missing. The codger has gone and no-one knows where he is. Retracing his footsteps, I find that he is anything but easy to fathom. I don't believe that he is searching the park. I think I am quite ready to listen to what we have gathered so far."

"It seems that Harry went looking for Joe. He took some of his belongings so we immediately find that he may be with a friend, or as is not unknown with Harry, he is playing a game. Sometimes I think he wants us to find him. Yes, I think he's just playing a game with us as though he were a recalcitrant, impulsive child. But that becomes more remote as the days pass." I sat down after this long-winded expose of the matter at hand.

"Exactly. What's wrong with accusing him this time?", asked Jim.

"Nothing," David said.

"Well that surprises me," I said, "Because Harry hasn't pulled a trick in years."

"Oh, and I suppose you think he doesn't realize we're looking for him like stupid detectives?", quizzed Tom.

"He has decided, my friend, for I have heard it from an intelligent and reliable source that to lead us on a wild goose chase is not productive," emphatically declared Adam.

"That's a lie", David said. And my own voice almost cut him short. I almost couldn't see what harm there was in introducing myself as what I really was. I remained calm though.

"There is absolutely nothing wrong. Harry has fallen down a hole full-stop. Should he be the brain damaged child I think he is, he will be punished and we will go home. He is just a think..old man, and we are just the investigators, not the creatures from outer space. It should be obvious he is not holed up with a young rarity at his age. Though we have heard some rip-roaring yarns over the years." I looked at him trying hard not to look the professional and the amateur at the same time. So I walked over to the window flapping my coat with a disagreeable quality.

I had left the district many years ago but could recall a few things. It was silly to ask them to go out unwittingly and search. I'd been sent from Central Headquarters to find about these men ever since their clumsy lies and police canteen incompetence. My record with HQ was so impressive they just had to get rid of me to the lowlands for a few months. Whether I should continue to surveil the efficiency of this lot was becoming a moot point. They were too young, had too much to learn yet. I wandered about home. Without invading their methods of operation I would need to be swift. They were trimmer and reputable officers. They were however only copies. They were only copies and filling out reports and collapsing in their armchairs almost sweating from their humiliating runarounds. Indeed, because if one cares to observe the facts one can easily see that this village is almost finished. There were twenty-nine breakings last year, and as though they were first attempts at some kind of prevention, only two cases that have approached the point of solution.

And so here I am and the subject at hand is Harry... and what's wrong with that? Harry is only an object. Harry is becoming more painfully obvious by his absence but what's wrong with that? He obviously hasn't withdrawn, split into two people and then into four. He has become a Catholic and in orange chalk I'll write a few features of the village for the vigilantes perched on the end of their cigarette-butts, tomorrow at the station. The next few days will see a concerted effort in the village to find Harry...a person we position from time to time around the place when things get a little hot. I think it began in the thirties when Inspector Horstle was the chief here. I won't of course tell them that. That would be the last thing I'd intimate. Harry has gone back to Germany, pure and simple.

Hey, We're Doing Our Best!



A smog-haloed street lamp paints a humid night In blacks and grays.
The rain has stopped.

Willy the milko and Sam the plonko exchange inaudible messages on the gutter

A clink.,,
The white soldiers stand guard at each
Fence post. Bill talks to them, for loneliness
Comes with the frost each morning at two o' clock.

Now the sounds of Love fill a thousand bedrooms,

A thousand young boys doze off in a vain effort to catch the rest of that dream

A young girl lies awake; Her boyfriend is cold.

A young girl lies awake...

Space Controller Ben PS (Poet of Science) turns his stereo down,
Slaps on his headphones 300 miles above,
And writes in spiritual longhand

Friday the eighteenth... encouraging?



The Fat Girl

Something dark and sticky slid nervously along the outside of the window ledge. Without making a noise I tried to shake loose, twisting the top of the brown bottle behind the brick box. The cat followed again, crouched down ready to spring. Meegan yelled for help.

"Toys, save me, save me quick. Come and help me"

I was having a hard time.

How could I tell this big-breasted, naughty girl that the stuffed and mounted long-horned steer on the wall was not a mythical monster? How could I tell her that the imitation baby that she nursed on her lap was only a doll I had used for painting, and was not to be handled like a Swiss cheese? And how for the life of me could I find the mythical tickets in this brown bottle? Tickets to a dance I was to attend within three hours.

It was ten o' clock. A sandwich and a glass of milk would go down excellently. Raiding the icebox, I left everything more orderly than I found it. How fortunate I was indeed, to be blessed with silence this first week. I wanted to write. I wanted to write a \$50,000 prize effort. I had set myself this target because I was sick of sucking lollipops. Sick of sending stories that won prizes for others. Their competitive nature and ornamentations were only cloth horses that hung in rows, easy prey for cynics. I'd finished reading that evening and was ready to pull up the socks on my dummy, return the coat to its shoulders and once again work its brutal beauty. Its culmination was in the shuffling words on pieces of paper when a feeling of grand illusion overcame me.

In one fell swoop a memorandum was left for the maid and she disappeared down the stairs. I followed her a minute later and what transpired is not important to relate here. Returning a few minutes later with supercharged energy I was recalling the great scientist whose influence had influenced me. He had pervaded the television waves every afternoon for years with his experiments. It had helped my stories back then. He had instructed me indirectly more than any other. I put on a softer hatband and leather watch, complete with plastic abstraction, and set a massive silver punchbowl to the right of the doll. What sounded like scratching occurred to me and I turned, dropping my sheets. My suspicions were becoming reality.

I knew that the girl in the next room that hailed from the East Coast, and had been filling a space according to the maid, was waiting. My memory took a start. That's right. She wanted me to sit for her and it was about 4pm, the appointed hour. It was an agreement hatched in the intoxication of the night before. I had no idea what sort of an artist she was..and removing thoughts of violent and beautiful fantasy I quickly put my animals away. Half-laughing for here was tragedy, and half crying. Damn! It was comically obvious I would soon have to be an adult.

I entered her room. Would you believe there was the big woman who it occurred to me once more, looked quite mentally retarded. Her room yielded no evidence of paint and brush. There was none. I must have asked her five hundred times trying to obtain from her some explanation why she was here. Imagine my delight when she could barely understand yet could answer quite sufficiently as to the movements of the maid. She even appeared slightly related to the English nobility. Her dress was brown and white and as I looked past her I thought here was a painter's dream. A painter could create new styles from her, and make boom sales with a painting entitled "Confused Rage."

The importance of this woman or girl was obvious, yet her mouth seemed to have the sole purpose of enquiring about the comfort of her hands. Her hair had been done over like a huge dollop of cream. She was not in fact much different to the drawing I had done the day before about a doll that came to life. How apt. 'She will be a great help indirectly,' I thought. I had moulded the fantastic figure in my room, my standby personality, hoping to write in a more physical manner, since this wordage sold. But then the dramatics began. I had been bowled over a table and lay sprawled. I had turned my head and watched the white-washed room trying to understand what she meant by her 'expensive habits'. She kept repeating these words, and as I nursed my head for she had struck it somehow, I looked into the middle distance and my face filled with children. I made a pattern in my mind beneath the seething mass of horses and runaway trains.

Something dark and sticky slid nervously along the outside of the window ledge.

I wandered back to my room but not before a rope found in the closet nearest the wall was put to use. Using some old wooden napkin rings, I thought I had imprisoned her. The clock above the bookshelves showed 9.45. There was someone outside. There were some twelve or thirteen books I had to read that weekend as the familiar agenda of the student writer permitted no great departure. As well as being slightly anxious then about my circuitous approach, I was on edge. Running to the door in a tizzy, I opened it to find the maid had returned, around her face was the same hat she always wore. Around her shoulders was the same coat of imitation vivid colour. The top was undone and tailored to show her curves. I said quickly,

"Sit down...what's wrong?"

She mumbled loudly about a Donald and how she had told someone about my 'impulsive ways.' I may have been a little rough in the cellar with her but impulsive, no. I did not know anything about Donald. This bemused me since I did not even know a Donald. Before I enquired, sanity and many turns of events since adolescence caused me to stop and address the situation. I presumed that she was intoxicated but was interrupted by two very large and very stout policemen on the stairs. It was only the fact that I turned on the television and caught the last minute of a private eye program that enabled me to save my room and the respect of the few people I had known here. I took a card out of my pocket in the same way Peter Sellers had a moment before and scribbled a few numbers on it implying their investigation lay elsewhere. I noticed, adjusting my tie in the same way as Sellers, that they were becoming panic-stricken. I however, remained calm.

As the officers escorted me to the cell room in the Aspendale police station they muttered something about their super being mistaken...I was a killer. I wondered whether the whole thing was as heavy as it now appears in my mind. Although Sellers rolled a cigar from one end of his mouth to the other, I had somehow convinced these men by my dynamic personality alone, that I had somehow picked up Donald and thrown him out of a second-storey window. This time reaching into a box of paper in a "dramatic way" they said, I had caused the girl in the next room quite a discomfort judging by the spill of suicidal notes on the floor. It was five o' clock in the afternoon when Andy the police clerk rang me in the cell. He was thrilled as he told me I no longer needed to tell the police department of my whereabouts as Donald had been found drinking in the Gloucester Hotel in Carlton and the fat girl had proven mentally retarded.

So it was a somber-faced and slowly degenerating man that left the cell, beginning quite irrationally that night to reprimand the stars. First of all because a creative man in a well-arranged house should not be considered suspicious and secondly because the man in that nursery of art, was on the verge of an Alcatraz of his own making anyway. Should he recover he would find it hard to dispose of the distorted rumor that during the night he had spread on many pieces of paper "I hate myself, why don't you? A score of anthologies I had commenced came like clowns to amuse me at bedtime. Fresh in my mind though they were, they became products of a violent past I had not undergone and that night as I ate my steak and chips with fried bread, I thought to myself the circus again beckoned. This time the restless flinging of the pen against the wall had a blither ferocity.

Something dark, sticky and nervous slid along the outside of the window ledge, clambered with half a spring onto the couch and leered proudly at me. Gryphon, my pet lizard had returned. At last, I told the lightshade quietly... a witness that could be trusted.



Bloggs to 'God'...' Come in 'God.'"

Was it prophetic, this unveiled insight? He knew in India a thin youth would rise.

Clear enough this mental picture... but the youth here was fat, He wore tuxedos and they said he was god.

So he raced his way to the city
Bringing oranges and bananas for the 'master.'
(his friend brought a monkey.)

There was no guiding star, it wasn't Christmas
And Holston does not become Bethlehem even by the remotest word game.

Still, some form of god lived in the three storeyed palace in Fitzham where the shoes mounted in the foyer,
And above, Bliss was the medium of exchange.

Music without the aggressive scream of the lead guitar brought light and clarity to his tired and searching
eyes before the sea
And before the young 'lord' he saw a profundity, simple and clean.

What the knowledge that drove young people to re-examine
Their 'Western' complexity was escaped him.

It was something far greater... far greater, they said. (he was left without an explanation.)

Jerry's just a 'carnal' man who wants to know this knowledge,
This way to crush the lower self (the foolishness and pride.)

Guru Bloggs, he remains, in anticipation, a lover of love.

Highway Special



On Bobby's side of the windscreen I could see he had traced with his finger a small door to an office, and I laughed inwardly as I realised once again his graffiti habit. I recalled amid hisses and piercing whispers many times on campus, and in the canteen, we used to marvel at Bobby's way with words and paint. He was almost held with the same awe as I was, although he was considerably more foolish.

You could almost see the grass grow from the hedges, as the young woman argued with the student. I felt that in the boulevard they couldn't hear what she was saying. I decided to wait a few minutes. An Asian was shifting a knob of crayon, and on the other side of the rotunda, another in a curious symmetry was doing the same but considerably more off-balance. I could see the graffiti they accomplished were calculated to put some or all to shame.

I could see by the restlessness of the woman that she was somehow being told what to believe. Obviously something to do with freedom of expression. In this country which is really no-one's country, one sees this often and in the morning usually still feels a part of it. You cannot though even smoke cigarettes. The cigarette factory still lags behind the computers that work in the Tax House.

I don't care how illiterate it is considered, and writing words deliberately, I shall violently scratch another phrase of my graphic art into the park-bench. I consider Bobby a reasonable demi-god of this art and a basically sensible man. His handwriting is perfect and evidence of his art, a reflection. His mind, though it is half there, assures me that he is fully respectable as an artist. And Linda, I repeated several times, it was completely American, and the more time I spent praising him, the more I was sure I had converted him to my quieter way of writing. He is coming with me. "See if I care," she grumbled. "One day you are going to eat your hand."

The old newspapers in the gutter followed me back to the room I kept between my ears, where a handful of paperbacks rebooted quietly every few minutes. Quickly Bobby returned, a piece of cold toast on his face and a shining stainless-steel strap holding a crayon.

About seven or eight minutes later I drove in a careless manner and killed all but myself. One door banged and I emerged like a Jew at the scene of the Crucifixion. Smoke hung, masking the trees. Bobby hadn't an extension on his twenty years for tall palms, his past as important as a dead tree. Someone had scrawled nearby, some oath held popular in leftist camps at that time. The windscreen had the last say that night, for Bobby's office-door graffiti had blinded my vision from the left.





Colossus 06

And then this man chosen by the begging steel will stand
One foot on the North Pole
One on this land

Colossus 06
Raiser of the dead
Painter of the bush queen's erotic gown...

Lolling about the city's collage in concrete.

Dirge



(to be sung)

Haul together all your hearts...Be brave and bold in your hearts,
You will see a commission,
A time of decision
For we are not fools...Today.

Conserve all your energies..
A facade was not meant for thee but,
A battered and torn deceiving, cruel

As you will find,
That we must bind
Our hands, our hearts...
Our thoughts, our minds...
A character...
Is easily...
Understood.

And we'll stroll...
Our chevrons will decide...
Our oars and dread...
Will calm the culprit tide,
Our cuckold dreams,
Our cubist fears.

Haul together all your hearts...
Be brave and bold in your hearts,
You will see a commission
A time of decision
For we are not fools...
Today

An Old Impulse



I took the choke in one hand, pressed the accelerator button down and realized that though the car would start soon, it was now taking its time. I'd been unemployed for a long time. I wanted to own this place. It was a pity my sister had bought it before me, but I was willing to help her since she had to attend university, and without this damned bus in working order she would not be in a position to. I tried again, and soon the engine laboured to a passable speed, leaving her enough time before her first lectures. Then I wondered whether the work I had done provided me with a little more money since from writing I hardly obtained anything. The answer was of course, negatory.

I visited a small car lot and after talking with the manager, hit upon a wonderful idea. I would sell bicycles from the rear of the lot since the manager assured me although his cars were perfect, half the drivers returned with some complaint or other. I did well at the job making enough to live on. Every day, at least two or three men would return with their \$200 cars, and upon seeing my bicycle-stand would exchange for another heap and happily pay an extra \$20 for the bike as well. Such was the lousy name the lot had incurred. I felt that the men had arrived 'at work' on time and received no complaints.

After running this business for a month, I decided to try a similar thing from a cafe, running a plate-washing service. Soon having commissioned all the restaurants in the area I began to wash their plates holus-bolus. With the money I raised from these two projects, I bought myself a solid \$50 two-door sedan, drove it for 10 miles and discovering I had made an error, returned to the shop. I bought a \$20 bicycle, cycled to the cafe, and there washed another lot of plates. This left me exactly where I had begun two months before, with \$40 in my pocket and two rather off-center ideas.

I am now a successful banker and I insist on telling all my young boys that it doesn't matter what one does at the beginning, it's how many times he changes his approach. How he converts the try. I don't drive a car even today. The bike I bought then still works for me well and there is an addition to my velocipede which I feel I should mention. On the back I have built a box and I carry plates to and from the cafe, having worked there for a month and being fond of home-cooked meals, I often carry my dinner to the rear of the bank where unfortunately one night, I broke an entire stack. The plates costing me again the money I invested in the first place.

Why am I telling you this? Well, I'm waiting for the police officer to return since five minutes ago I torpedoed the bicycle full of plates through the door of my bank, spilling spaghetti and meatballs down the front of, not only my shirt, but all the takings I had made during the last week. And unfortunately, to save my job I shall need to spend on a cheap meal in my restaurant, since my wife needs a little consolation. Whether or not I ride a bike in future will depend on what my negotiations with her will allow. He who thinks of money first to the detriment of those around him is often beaten at his own game, and in my case...might one day have to walk.



Blankpad Blues

If words flew like wind shook tobacco smoke

If they curled and wisped onto the poet's pallette
Like climbing clouds of gray to be mixed with
Roses and Wine; I, my pen and me, would write all night.

If words flew endlessly like polite messages,
If their measures were all famous
Like lengths of magic rope not knots in fishing twine,
I would coil and tie, and bows would flow divined.

But since their noses are dirty, their underwear shows through
And their mischief's not devout

Like a common Salem cigarette
I'll just (sorry)...put these bastards out!



Spacewoman Leran Bille

As I suspected, I was no plaster angel. I had said too much after all. They immediately thought I possessed a giant intellect, the minute I told them of my studies in the titanium factory.

I had rattled off names and places to these men every day from trains and traffic. What of any importance was I if I couldn't show these men I had at least a mind? I had no body. A computer had processed that off, years ago in a hospital. I had lain under plaster casts for years. I could only say that my studies had enabled me to carry on, and remain a human being with some claim to social intercourse, despite me being a morph from being physically extended. I'm Professor Leran Bille, ex-NASA, a woman from California. Barely a woman. Along the long, hard road of experience I have eradicated prejudices. The years in Orbital Endurance had taught me self-respect. But I had not succeeded in ever being respected much.

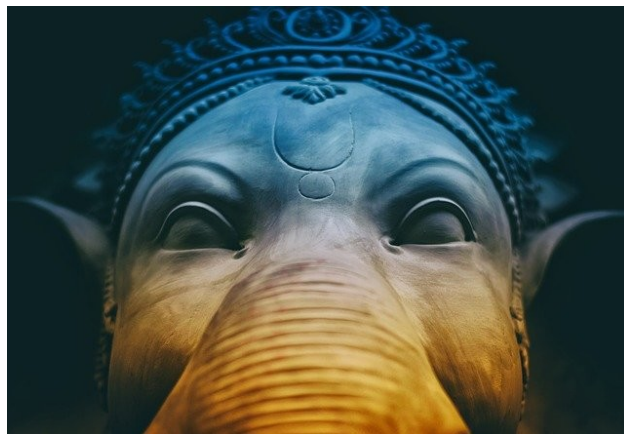
After my first depression at not being able to communicate and be loved like others, I walked around walls like a fly, visited cigarette factories where work was easy to get for a skinny has-been, and lived in ice-cream parlours searching for drugs to fill the holes the doctors had made in my past. I could not specialize in any sport, but smiling, could only tell them I was alright. Fantastically, things changed when I began working for Columnat Promotions. The people here were young. Their civilization depended on their getting to the top fast. I was ten years older. I could though be understood.

I developed slowly, once more regaining my faith in human nature. I began to believe in myself and soon was elected secretary to the boss. The company was practically a void before I came, a barely reasonable clothing manufacturer. There was no evidence that the company had improved because of me directly, but I knew that it was going to. I had reveled in the thrills I could. Now all that remained was to remain a plant in the stiff garden of science. I wanted to rebuild this company and make it my own. I was going mad with the idea. So I climbed up, up till at the top I encountered a door to the museum.

I crawled through the door and into the museum proper, and climbing up, up still going up, I dove off, a caricature of a person, a protest against every kind of deep-level alteration of the human body. And as I headed towards the ground, I lit a cigarette and like the silly woman I had become, accidentally set my frock on fire. The beautiful material smouldered into the Langham air like fairy-floss on an oven, and there on the open road like a brave cavalry soldier, this woman was in real trouble once again. I ordered myself to rise once more, and like the shape of the sword, entered another establishment and worked, compounded my laughters, my loyalties.

I was an idiot, amusing, restraining something. My body grew uglier and uglier. I watched with knobbly eyes and vacant lips and could not. I hung like pictures in corridors, and children saw quickly that I was only an old, musty copy in an attic. I was now forty and had watched a decline and fall hundreds of times. My guts were of iron. I was obliterated. Like a garden fence in some cemetery. Like a reservoir of all that was ugly. Since I returned to Earth in 1961, I had been taken long distances in my search to understand the human body. It was an impersonal curiosity. Most of the bosses that instructed me appeared equally interested in the sexual abuse of uniformed women. I was one of the finer catches, it appeared to them.

Now, I had turned like a chicken on a spit. I belonged to a large category of problems and predicaments known to the over-sexed controller of Space Station Forty-Six, (which is surprisingly only four-thousand kilometers from the moon), as a file meaningless as a bar-room stool. Like a shaved camel I headed towards the pavement once more, a paperback, a thin face thrown into a shelf. There is a gray mountain in the distance. It becomes dark, and over the spattering of white tar comes the last electric car. Glistening its way to its suburban destination, more valid than me, since its parts are repairable. And the fact that the men that employed me here had deduced my scientific training as a female astronaut gave me a mind, simply sealed my fate as a curious tool.



Bonsai Poem (Small Oak)

Clark and Damien said God...

Clark, big man
Peddling chrome and plastic
To the blind men of the city
Skulking behind your furniture...

Locked away in your store on Main Street..
Your whoreish wife, her green painted pubes..
And when you spoke, a tinkle of coins, a filthy music..
The bad breath of a hundred pink and fingered fivers.

You were wrong because you thought less of Damien.

Damien, misfit, little man

Flitting through my mind...Searching for God
To shake hands with Him...A cheap sedative;
As far as it went with you.

Wrong because you thought less of Clark!

The Law is still an ass here...

Remember that self-esteem is ego and ego is cruelty...Thirty days!

Then we will see about the trip.



The Last Goon Show

Have you ever been caught without a light in the rain? It's happened to me a dozen times. I remember the last time. It was two years ago in Kellyville. It was raining like crazy. You had to hop around like a kangaroo to avoid the poodles... excuse me, to the less acquainted with current weather lingo, when it's raining cats and dogs one always talks about poodles. I don't talk about poodles anytime...I don't have any pets. Just a blue and white budgie. Ah yes. Blinky the Budgie's been good to me. He squawks whenever it starts to rain as a matter of fact... squawks there on the birdbath, shaking his feathers like the gentle bird he is...squawk, squawk, squawk. It's raining, it's raining. Then thzzzph... into the bird bath he goes...thzzzph. Just like Bill Cosby.

Now, poodles and pets aren't in the story but I thought I'd tell you since I haven't scored a light and the heat here is oppressive. It's 50 degrees hot here. 50 damned hot? "Fans, fans. Where are the fans? Get the fans man. No, not Jimmy and Bob. No they're not fans, they're the stooges you set up for the show man. They'll speak later."

SNIDE: The showman? What showman?

The show man, you know. The dogs and the birds in the rain, the poodles and the rain comes down and the bird...you know man!

SNIDE: Oh, that show man (ha, ha, ha).

Yeah, the one that isn't funny.

As I was saying before I heard the voice. You've all been in the rain without a light. You get a light but by then, no smoke. It's raining.

SNIDE: How can they have a light but no smoke man? Explain that.

How can they...Ever heard of altar boys? They never have smokes and you can see 'em the day before we go to work, and they're carrying candles, really getting into it, but there ain't no smoke. Light, light, light ... but no smoke. No sir. Just the guy in the middle who knows how to get altar boys in. When he feels they're crowdin' 'Im he looks up into the top of the church and tells the guy up there the kids aren't being' good and smoke is almost pouring out of his ears. He's got all the smoke on a chain and swings it like a pendulum. But the light. Is a moot point. The altar boys carry their lights but they never smoke. They can have a light but no smoke. No sir. They never even scratch man. They're all good boys. Good boys.

I was standing in the street in the city see, and the rain was comin' down like ... like it always does. You know. Like you see in war comics where the guy has the stick bomb in his hand and he comes closer, closer until all you see is a machinegun and it's meant for the other guy. Blam. Blam. Slam Tzzph...Tzzph...Ugh. Mein Lamem! That sort of rain. An attack, more than a storm. No light. No cigarette. All wet. So you know what I did? I gave it to the other guy standing there.

SNIDE: You shot him?

No lamebrain. I gave him the cigarette. To get rid of it see.

SNIDE: I didn't know you were a blackfeller. You never told me you could get rid of rain.

No, dolt head to get rid of the cigarette...my, my you haven't changed.

SNIDE: Yes, I have. It's probably you. When was the last time you took a bath?

Men don't take baths silly. They have showers.

Ladies take baths.

SNIDE: Oh, I wouldn't know. That's more your department. I have never...

Strike a flamin' light, Snide!

SNIDE: Yeah, and then what do I do?

Anyway it was raining. Have you ever been caught in the rain without a light? It happened to me about two years ago. I was in Kellyville see, and the rain was...



The Last Hundred Years in Brief

SNIDE: Mrs. Twentieth Century mishandled the pink child in a savage grip
Scratched the Masonite brown freckle on her neck
And let fall a slick chrome tit

HARRY: And what we have before us is the innovative and excellent product... you...lol. They did.ID THEIR BEST
their best considering...guffaw...

..

Who Needs Enemies?



As the voices of the others drifted away from my hovell, I re-read two of the folktales Miss Rarsch had given me, and began to talk into a small tape-recorder. I had watched the No.15 leave the stand and recalled I was thinking, talking. I was telling Gerry of the dream I had dreamt. This same dream four times that week. I was getting desperate. The dream was always the same. It was the sort of dream they'd put you well away in a hospital for, but not right away because after all even Pilate had a dream. Even Jacob. Still I'd only trust Gerry, my closest friend with it.

He was a teacher like me. He still eyes me suspiciously when I tell him about my dream. He wasn't going to compromise me with the idea. He knew I was a sane man. Now, I was teaching Botany and Geography. I was a straight person. My blood was like any others. I had no confused notions. I wasn't terribly athletic and so had no great plans to become a football star. But I was certainly not a dreamer. Not a complete one anyway. The core of each of these dreams revolved around my work in the College with artificial intelligence and domestic rodents, the year before my personal Renaissance, this one.

The geometry I was going to teach, as I explained to Gerry, was not in my line but I was immune to fear having been through so much. I didn't want to sit around the kitchen-range at home wondering about finding work. I didn't realize the dream I had been relating to Gerry was simply an effect I had suffered. It wasn't a portent or an augury. It was just that Gerry had quite a lot of dreaming in his past. More than I ever had. Gerry was a complete dreamer, a writer and shame upon him, he had misspent his talent.

I learnt after interrogating him, that he had not only bought a chemistry set, but had left a bottle of copper sulphate in the medicine cabinet where I had gone a fortnight ago, looking for a wash for my cut finger. It was a few days later that the dreams began. Gerry apologized and I patted him on the back saying that it wasn't even a nightmare. What I didn't realize was that stretched out at Gerry's feet the night before had been a dog, a large red-haired dog and down the road behind a bush was a small kitten. One kilometre away near a basketball stadium was another small cat.

They had all been poisoned. Gerry had bought more than the chemistry set. He had been reading my Botany and Biology book and had decided to anaesthetize a small animal. I couldn't tell him to keep away from the sciences. He wanted so much to diversify his studies. Science to Gerry was a way of expressing his precision. His writing had been unpublished and Gerry had gone away in an endeavour to cull the scientific method, and the free-form approach. He had failed, striking the nexus between the two forms of thought.

Though he pleaded, I could not forgive Gerry and sent him out before his six months in the small flat we were sharing, were up. Gerry returned last week, his face pink. He was breathless. In his hand was a letter from the University. They had offered him a position as English Master and he had rejected it. When he began to plead with me asking me to put him up, I realized his memory had gone completely, and rang the hospital.

Gerry remains though my truest friend, since only last night I received a letter from a woman who knew him, claiming that he had not anaesthetized the cats for an experiment. Nor had he put the bottle of copper sulphate in the medicine cabinet. He was only a friend from her University who had a much more refined sense of humor than she had. Hers was suspect. Yes, Gerry is by far now the lesser of two evils, though I feel I don't really know at all. Holland, Switzerland even Norway would be better than this dingy Oregon collegiate apartment now.

I think I'd better just leave the country now. But I must see the doctor soon, as the insides of my arms are becoming stippled. I have not though injected myself with anything except words from different books. I feel it a good time to inform you now regarding the real truth about Gerry and the woman. Both, it seems, have conspired to bring about my destruction. Perhaps now is the only time I can move, so I'll quickly get up, catch the No. 16 to a small clinic only three blocks away and see my true friend in this circumstance, Dr. Kryborg. Jeezez!

Arrogance



Young man
Silently obsessed with Beauty
Dodge the rain on your pages and write...

Write me a love poem,
One on war and a story of beautiful people living
Lies

Tell me of a young man upsetting bankers in a temple
Of another who left the cruel velocity of the street
For the quiet of a park..

Here he watched the religious sway of palms
And heard the pious wings of birds

Tell me it was here he heard the unknown citizen exclaim
"I don't like this 'holy 'clatter

... factories, cars, offices."

-

Lotta



She felt like a giantess...immense. Growing, growing. Her eyes looking up the staircase, feeling thoughtfully over her body. She knew it was morning. She knew the conversation with Grant had not been a complete sharing according to either of them, but he was ready at least to undertake, she believed fervently, one of his trips to Belgium. She felt the new romances in his ideas and the new desires in him, although she was now a tangle. Her mind submerged yet ridiculously floating half-dead in a pool sheltered by her rich parents. A copy of Jonathon Swift's book 'Gulliver's Travels' floated by unremarkably.

Martha was an illusionist who sought impulsive refuge in anything, even high-quality hallucinogens. She had created her era and now quickly realizing her body was four times as large as it had been four minutes ago, felt before someone saw her she would have to deflate and sleep, for in the morning, she had a busy day at the market. Of course, she wanted to be drunk with the crowd and she wanted to read the papers on the pavement, but it was probably her drowsiness that caused her to forget and inexperience finished what absent-mindedness had begun. She slept and grew and grew and slept. Her window was open invitingly as if to beckon the people on the pavement. They weren't there though and in the morning it was unusual that such a black-eyed pretty girl could be found in such a jam, her pink panties protruding from the window ajar, her head swelling into the kitchen, the tips of her ears touching the stove, her eyes looking, one would presume, up at the light and her legs swelling in the lounge.

She was now at least 70 metres round and some of the passers-by raised their morning eyes to where she was, but continued not over-excitedly for many felt she was but a doll and this revelation a simple advertising gimmick gone wrong. There she lay like a wide valley full of storm-rain, a little mad, waiting for the clock to signal the end of the journey. At about 11 she tired of the sounds of the city. Looking into the growing day she could only spot a few drifting birds through a ragged hole in a hessian partition, moved slowly onto her side smashing the Eastern wall of her room and as her right shoe fell to the ground with a thud as loud as a wharf-winch, her hand ran coiling twenty metres. She looked into the black sky of the small colliery across the road as the percussive sounds of the pump-station gears crushed the wanting in her cellar-sized breasts.

TOFF



Take a handful of words

Yeast
every time
trousers
only

Jumble them up

Put 'yeast' here
'every time' here
'trousers' here
'only' here.

Throw in a handful of irrelevant words and phrases

'the long legged fly'
'getting swiftly to the scene'
'slid down the brown leg'

Read over your selection.

Getting swiftly to the scene
Only the long legged fly every time
Slid down ...

There..a perfect poem.
It always works.
That's the basic way to...
Whoa there!

Oh well, you didn't expect me to tell you how to write a poem

That's strictly for poets see...



Men Are from Earth

In a small cafe by the river I accepted his story. Con told me he had got the franchise after a week of classically tragic circumstances. He had been writing a book. It was a pleasant break he told me from his job on the waterfront. I spoke to him for about two hours, about the days when big shots were people with innovative ideas. The moments of the depression had left many people formless.

He had struggled from this prison, and now thirty years later, was still under the threat of the things he'd seen. Always experimenting, he had opened the cafe as a kind of afterthought. He wanted people to come across a room that was not a blind production built by just another Greek. He wanted an attractive place to bring attractive women, yet enjoy all the freedom of the old fish 'n chip.

I told him my time was precious. I was studying for a Professorship and I only wanted to talk to him about his movements on the 19th of January. People were beginning to feel he had seen the Evening Star slope away, grow in size and slide away behind the hills. People told me Con said he had seen white globes that appeared one by one after the first maneuvered. Whichever way the stories went, Con had seen a sky phenomenon of some kind. He dismissed these comments looking at me with thin lips, calculating his end, in what I assumed was his normally polite manner. I drove across to the Pickwick looking for my reporter friend, Mark Turnbull. An evening paper journalist, he often came up with brainwaves. I consulted him when I needed answers. We pitched our pennies together, and most of the time I went away reasonably satisfied.

This day, the newspaper building was crowded with people. There were no officials. Just a melee of drably dressed citizens. It didn't look like a political meeting. The basic crowd forms were there, but there were differences. Along both sides of the avenue below the office of the Advertiser were cars, but there was an important difference--they were all the same, all painted differently but the same model. I looked at the group, as images of submitting to private photography magazines came thick and fast. In the evening light it looked alright, with a green filter. The effect I could see would have been passable. As had happened many times before, I drove through without it registering. It was pulling up to the office, suddenly awakening to the crux of the matter, my new sense told me this was no ordinary congregation of city people.

I looked around quickly for a sign. There were none. Parking the car in the Advertiser's carpark, I was led to a lavatory expecting to hit upon some revelation as I obeyed Nature's call. It occurred to me, climbing up the stairs to my friend's office, the cars belonged to a UFO Society. They had read the story in that morning's press and had been visiting members of the Press to obtain more details. I entered the corridor leading to my friend's office after half an hour, walking slowly and utterly convinced the visitors from the UFO club would probably make a better interview for him. I was certain as always that I would probably have to wait. I still felt I had been aboard a mere unsubstantiated fiction, and believe me I had had enough of it, particularly this year.

Instead of holding down my job with the Bureau of Shipping I had tired of it and gone again on a quixotic escapade through the city of mystery. Many hunches and possibilities had led me by the nose to this photographic possibility, that missing hoard. Now, at the junction of two corridors, I thought the office lay close by. No such luck. There were boxes outside the door he had worked behind, but now instead of clacking typewriter keys, there was only the silence of the fans in the cool room. I walked down after a quick look around.

"Where's our Mark?",

I asked one of the people who had either surrendered to their curiosity or was waiting for the editor. No doubt to gain some publicity for the club as well. What had transpired wasn't common. People didn't see night objects all that often. I'm sure they would be keen. My thoughts were echoed in the eyes of the tall, lanky youth who answered me with a quick,

"Are you a student of mechanics too?"

We were both looking for Mark.

"No", I remarked,

"I don't know where he is."

Whether they were students or not did not really interest me. I was politically naïve enough to continue in the belief the gentlemen were from the UFO club, until I met a woman called Linda. She was extremely sophisticated and informed me the people were not from any club. They were the "Moon howlers" a group of hot-rod restorers interested also in vintage cars. They had not heard of any sighting and laughed aloud when I tried to embellish the truth, still assuming she was kidding me. I went up once more to see if Mark had returned. No such luck. Almost ready now for tea, I hung about the newspaper building for another three or four minutes. There was no need for me to make any desperate attempt now to get the answer to the object-in-the-sky riddle. Just a few tips would be all today from Mark. But I was desperate for anything to hang my snoopy hat on.

My friend was not about to help me anyway. I had never spoken a dishonest word since the day I was born, until it occurred to me that once more, I was ready for life. I could easily make something occur that would enlighten me in the ways of the student intellectual, a post I had not really followed through. Now was the time to assert my independence. I thought for about twenty minutes and quickly established my fellowship with these people. They were on a rally and had stopped at the 'Tiser to pick up some maps, and give the few reporters that were on duty that day some information. They were due to see the writers any minute. One of them was called Mark, they iterated. Soon I had spread an enviable tale. I had told them that the reporters were off on an assignment. They were trying to collar a gentleman who had opened an old bomb he had found by the river, sending burgeoning clouds of pink smoke into the air.

Some believer in the canvas who had found a device, that was all. I had picked up the snippet from a bum in the park two hours earlier. The reporters were not there I told them. They would not return for about three hours. I suggested that if they were really keen, they could visit a nearby racing track circuit, and perhaps allow their inhibitions to take shape there. I wanted them gone so I could see Mark with plenty of time. Complimenting them on their vehicles in a prudent manner, I had soon won them over. They believed me. As I watched the last of the cars leave, I entered the building to find my friend Mark there. He had retired from an important cricket game where he told me sports writers from all over Wessex had been. I could see little burrs of dirt on his tie and his pants were stained. I thought it better not to ask him about them though.

Suddenly I felt dirty, disgusted and ashamed, for as he looked about his desk my eyes followed his hand. They passed over a handout at the top of which were the words "Vintage Racing Club of South Langley". To the left was a small article, a picture of something that looked very much like a flying saucer, and a small note. Mumbling to himself that he had been very busy and I was not to take any notice, I watched what I thought was the ignominious conclusion to my white lies. Picking up a stapler he attached the flying saucer picture, a note and the handout from the Vintage Car Club together. He went over to a large book, and almost officiously and slightly deviously put it into the back of the book, placing it in a drawer marked "Confidential."

Anyone would understand my chagrin. Had I cut my own throat? What connection was there between the Restoration Club and the UFO Society? What connection was there between vehicles that move in the air and those that move on land? I had visions of the Crucifixion. Had I in fact sent off the players in the flying saucer case, albeit from a hot-rod club, so denying me my gambit and fouling Mark's story? I expressed no alarm, but pretended confusedly to wonder about his work. A few minutes later he showed me the book he had just put away. It was a collection of UFO sightings. With each article, usually with a picture, he had stapled information sheets from various places. It so happened that the Vintage Restoration Club had been meeting in the hills at the time that the sighting had been reported. People I had been speaking to were rookies. They had no idea what had gone on. A bead of cold sweat ran down my nape and disappeared into my jumper.

The rookies from the car restoration society knew nothing about the sighting, Mark told me, but it was vital he speak to them about the sightings. He said he was due off in an hour. I recalled telling the club members to return in three. They would be gone tomorrow as most traveling car groups are. I knew I had to get out of there, so I walked out of the passage bidding him adieu, and telling him that it was quite alright for him not have a drink. I told him that there would be many other occasions in which to partake of the gentle liquors. Mark had a sharp eye. He must have put two and two together. Why would I, a person that hardly knew him want a drink with him in the pub? It didn't really ring true. He wasn't that close a friend. He asked me what the stains were on my trousers.

"Been working on your own cars?" he asked.

Somewhere along the line I had moved against one of the vehicles in the street, and as he looked at me with a knowing stare I brushed my face with my hand, my nostrils filling with the smell of oil and gasoline. I recalled now that I put my hand on an exhaust pipe, and told him this in my irresponsible tale. My efforts were starting to feel devious. Hastily I explained it away. But not before a shooting pain entered my foot. I fell to the ground, holding my ankle and pleading for assistance. There from my sock hung around object like a top. Mark snatched his pad and ran to the window in response to what I thought was a large noise that had just occurred. An image occurred to me of a bent drunk near where the hot rods were that afternoon. Now that I recalled it looked very much like Mark, the reporter. He'd been shadowing me ever since I walked into the newspaper building.

He spoke quickly into his tape-recorder.

"There are cars all over the place. Not ordinary cars. Like streaks of light. It's as if they've been here before and left their impressions or ghosts, they're like negatives of some event that's occurred. There are men now. I can see their skin. It's shining... they're indescribably beautiful. Not like you or..." and he gave a foxy glance in my direction.

"They must be from another planet, probably Venus. They know I'm no fool. They must know where I am as I can see about half a dozen motioning towards me." He cast me a mocking look, the lines of his face telling me he knew everything.

"They must be from another planet, mustn't they Mark." I said, writhing on the ground.

"Ye-e-ah! They... they could be... must be from Venus."

That was the last time I saw Mark. I'll never be foolish enough to tell such a god dammed lie again. No reporter worth his salt fails to anticipate his interviews or determine a lie, and I guess the lead weight spike-file he dropped my way, injured me just enough to remind me in the event that I ever told another.

THE SEEKER



Perched on the ends of filter tips he keeps his pulse quick

Sucks August air in one nostril
Blows it out the other
(As far as he got with spirit building)

Savors the East ... Temples
Teas
Treasures

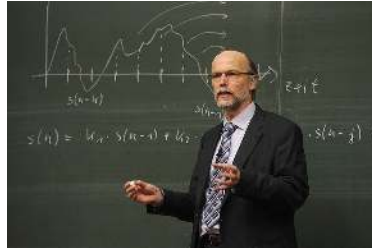
Decides the West is...Misery
Money
Maniacs

A Cold Comfort

When one is supposed to speak English and ends up painting a forest in the depths of the garden, it shouldn't be seen as a loss of direction. You should step outside into the sun, finish your meal and attempt to decipher the year that has been. Having taken just on three years to work out just what has transpired, I feel qualified to speak.

In 2000 I was a front man for the Bureau of Patents in the first half, and a bird-watcher in the other. It occurred to me that I had nothing but depressing pieces of material, clues that would help me connect each incident at the end. Like a department-store magician I would escape into the crowd once more. The maze of truths, half-truths and skipping ropes, the worms, frogs, the machinery, which provided no real hiding place last year, would this year annoy me again.

My recent studies had shown the way the turning and shrunken faces on the end of my bed were set indicated they were not from Africa. The eye-stones I had saved from Russia and the birthmarks I had were like two wheels upon my mind and all that remained. I began to unload my griefs into a ledger. I found soon that the debits soon outweighed the credits. I could not undo my incoherencies. I was like a star trying to become a flower, an octopus attempting a ballerina.



As the hills rolled in the bass notes of a thunderstorm, I voiced the ideas in my head. Flicking off-on-off till I was sick to death of the hot salty thoughts that knotted halfway through each night. In the moon I loosened my gold-beaten skin, infinitely working, drawing rabbits and smiling, asking for sympathy. Praying to the caring deity, that no doubt lay balanced and breathless in the same contemplating position as mine. His boys chasing and capturing the girls and tying them up in the same way I did.

I guess even the deity was after his fish. His phrases and his facts, his territory. Perhaps not to stake it as I wanted to, but sometimes I felt so egoless, the only thing I wanted was what he was selling...love. Maybe the price was prohibitive. I'll never trust that word again. I glared into the sky as it challenged me to affirm or deny that I was ready to assume the impossible stance of a professor in the college and life. My legs though were tied. My face, its cheeks rough, were like a thousand men sleeping huddled, puddled by the railway station. No 'social love' ensued.

The Greeks then rushed into my life. They had led a great life in England without their faces, swimming in rows and stuffing their pipes. And the American women had their precious cherub weddings after all. But even then after the astonishment and confusion these bow-legged dreams had burst like violent emotions into the depths of my mind. I drew my entire knowledge of history from my own thoughts and experiences. Travel had warped them into new age art.

My non-events were private roads where I walked with a bloody cutlass, realizing the importance of the theatre. Wondering whether in my eagerness to find the full moon I would discover where she had gone, and I would only hear the silence of a badly made, boring routine-day's tedium. She had simply gone to her grandmother's. Though I suspected half the soft memories that lay in the room were but tricks of light.

Though I coloured my sleep with tears and wondered whether her smile was simply goodbye, I couldn't in the bright sunlight have what I had experienced before I had met her. She was a well-built, very developed and sexy-faced girl who knew that the sounds of my responsibilities were not to be taken lightly. That my affairs were important. So I grew peaceful in the thought. I didn't realize she watched me wherever I went.

Feeling perhaps that if I had guessed its riddle then she would go. But realizing many times, I stopped laughing out that she was simply predictable. No more would I conceive that if she did leave it would be because she was young. It was definitely not because she was excessively interested in men of means. She had different words for every man. I felt she was good and honest though many times I grunted irritably in my sleep, wondering whether she thought I was like a person from another culture. She never though destroyed my trust in her.

In 2016 though it was the year of storms and Saturday outings and storms, Sunday outings and foreign universities. Without her, my mind had not cleared, rather streaming with sylphs of ancient style, the rooms and the libraries and art galleries grew ill-conceived. Madly I realized I could not live without her. I married her six months later and now I feel that in the gust of kisses that accompanied her return lay the true answer to my sad and hopeless case. She fancied only a man who could advise her about the poet Byron, the great man she was studying by correspondence at the time. Now in 2002, awaiting Divorce settlement, I feel the wasted years had a method to their madness. The target was a mirage. It is a cold comfort, but resolution enough.



AND CLOUDS ARE TURNING PURPLE

Have you ever lain on the hot coal hills
Peeling like a bloated orange?
The sand tickling your ears
Biting your legs
Your hands feeling for water that sleeps just below the surface

The only sound a propeller whine that lifts the grains from your bed?

Twigs and silver tops and shining glass crowd you but you stay
A cloud shades you from the changeling Sun
But clouds are turning purple

Waterfalls...

The heron calls...

But clouds are turning purple

No sign of you there but purple clouds at sunset

You are asleep in the hammock...
Sun shower sore, sunburnt and spotted...

Dreaming of rain in a lucky country...lucky fellow!



Shoppe

Dust down your sadness, polish your doors
Here come the MagnificentS to seek out your war(looking apear
angular, looking for more)They make a good living, they make a good price.

Wipe off the cabinets, clean the white dome
Remember the portraits in your one lady's home
Men came from London, men came from Rome
They made a good living, they paid a good price.

You're over the worst, I speak as a brother
You're ready again, you're loving another,
Write poems of Love, of life as a lover.
They make a good living ... you paid a good price!



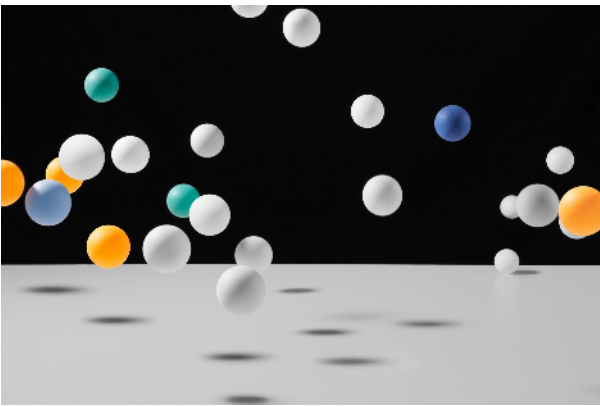
Covers

An umbrella is used when the sky is opening

A thimble when a woman sews

A roof protects when fall the snows,

But what in Love.....hoping?



Cosmic Joke

God: We'll create a large number of round balls and scatter them through an area. This area will need to have plenty of space.

JC: Yeah Dad, read my lips. S-P-A-C-E. We'll call this area Space.

God: Ha-ha. Not bad Son. I'll put two of a type of Being in a garden and have a snake offer one a round, red ball.

JC: Yeah Dad! Sounds good.

God: I'll drop one of the round, red balls on another of the Beings in another garden later on. We'll call him Newton.

JC: Great dad. Good Stuff.

God: I'll make him think the balls pull each other in that, what err. that's right, SPACE.

JC: Hey dad, great stuff! I've got a smooth idea...I'll visit the Beings in their shape and...

God: Yes, son.

But that's where the joke ends...

According to Cynical Sam



Sometime

Someone forgot

Left a door unlocked

Let a poison in

That poison is burning and biting

An itch for the Eros Ego

Who gathers a planet

Like flies in a bottle

Greedy flies buzzing...

On smoky wings

I see the pile of excrement rising

The Master of the Universe may already have

Little use for the silly thing

He may put us on a shelf with his formaldehyde

Putting off the inevitable

Or leave it on some Celestial step

To be picked up by the Sanitary Collectors...

But you know what?

I think our bottle will find it's true place someday -

In a fly spray commercial on a galaxial television set!!

(You can't tell a prude what he doesn't want to know!)

The Starburn Man



Yes, he was looking forward to it. What a blessing he thought that he had something to do next week. He wasn't working, and the girl Karen, wasn't to be with him. The bitterness in his voice however started again. She was more than a snob. There was something he couldn't understand about her. He could recall with extreme vividness the utter wretchedness that accompanied his first meeting with her. The way in which her hair swept past her with an intensity of feeling. He often suspected she had been in bed. She must have led quite a sullied life to have emerged there, as if she was a hot bath and shampoo for his fellow journo's.

It was 2003. She felt a wild regret now and then, and picked it up. She loved cats, she loved kittens and bookcases filled with books on kittens. The shabby barometer hanging near the glass doors, was in fact a present from the Cat Lovers Society of Middlesex. This moggy was huge and full of cat spunk. However, now she was getting increasingly stubborn. Must have been involved in some domestic crisis as a person. And seeing in this woman, his Elizabeth, many of the women he had been stung by, a voice from his Id whispered, 'Know all the answers don't you Liz. I plan to visit an old friend of mine. Myself.

As the lights turned yellow and green in the mirror he grew familiar and fascinated by the fact that he had taken almost twice as long to get to the same place, and put on a raincoat and hood. A long time passed between when he slipped down the hood and thought to himself the house lay very close to the road. From his vantage point he could scour the whole of the moor from the railway line in the south, to the manse in the west where the stream flowed. He couldn't have found a more peaceful site in the world. Andrew clearly was good enough for the dreaded night which lay ahead. It took an hour for his hangover to pass. And after that he cheerily went on with his work.

His work that day was writing letters in application for a job with the Scotsman. "The Scotsman", an experimental newspaper with starts for the local races, the usual hard news and also many colourful features, had enticed him away from the magazine in Gadston. He anticipated. He knew that in the morning he was the master of this house again, that the parties that had continued week after week for three months had ceased. And as he looked into the mirror with his curious eyes he thought profoundly,

'You're a clever rat, but not clever enough. You'd be mistaken. Not a socially acceptable animal.'

And it occurred again to him that if he crossed again to this nether region he would again find the wreck he had often expected himself to be.

At night, bitterly crying and smelling like an inebriate, he was being overly honest with himself. It took as I said a good hour for him to work off his hangover. He had written three letters and was busy on the letter to "The Scotsman" when he heard the idiotic and uncommon indecency of the local milkman, who through some habit, always tooted his horn every half a dozen miles or so, and maddeningly in various places along the hillsides. He thought there may have been something in this. Why would the milkman toot his horn after all when he was only to toot it in the village? And this only if there was oncoming traffic and fog obscured the road.

He put down his pen and considered this, since before this he had spent many weeks in places where he had not been popular, and so prided himself on his knowledge of manners and such. The milkman was odd. He decided next morning he would wait for him and see who this gentleman was. He wondered in fact whether the milkman was somewhat deranged. He put some facts together. He realised that he may actually have travelled down the Crossroads, which was a fugitive hideaway maneuver that didn't quite get off the ground, and a source of confusion for people in the area, particularly at Christmastime. Next morning, he lay back on his bed and was pleasantly drifting off, remembering how tightly his letters had been written, and how much better they had seemed read aloud.

If I left this village now, he thought, on Turner's bread and Philly cheese I will one-day return to the Press. He wrote in his diary the usual reminders, but on this occasion made a note to himself regarding the milkman. There he was mistaken because next morning after a day spent examining mainly nettles he found the milkman had not arrived. Clearly the roads that ran to his house had not arrived on his itinerary. But he couldn't remember whether the milkman came every night or every second night. So he decided to find out the source of the milkman's journey. He rang the Winstanley Dairies which was logically sound. He simply asked. They told him there was no milkman and there had been no milkman in that area for three weeks!

He asked what the story was since there were two places down the road and tethered to a tree, a cow owned by a farmer.

"I don't know," said the dairyman. "It rings desperately true that it is unusual that the generous 'milkman' has bypassed you in this manner, yet you find milk whenever. And you still maintain there is a milkman?"

Andrew put down the phone and realised that the feeling he had suddenly had half a dozen times in his life had come again. He thought. He saw in front of him a row of hills where perhaps lay someone intoxicated by marijuana, perhaps an alcoholic. Maybe even an insane man. He splashed whisky and noticed that the bottle of milk was the same as it always was. There was quite a substantial cream content due to the number of dairy cows in the area.

However, there was one thing that caught his eye and which appeared mocking. He turned quickly towards the window. Turning on the light he noted that one of the bottles of milk had no cream at all. He burst explosively onto his desk and pulled out a syringe. Drawing some of the milk out, he injected it onto a blotter and watched as the drops coursed.

Some months later, the lab results arrived: the milk contained traces of an unknown growth stimulant. In the meantime, several highly unusual things had occurred in the valley. The children, cats and some of the animals had grown considerably larger and there were visits from a nearby Ufology Club most weeks. Their array of photographic equipment and earth energy magnetic sensors amused the woman called Elizabeth. The man was more intent on the natural content of the food and groceries, submitting now to the scientists every week. It wasn't until near Christmas that the finale to this charade of anti-nature was plainly evident. The police had arrested a most unusual chap from parts unknown.

They called him the 'Starburn Man.' On his skin were tiny red points like mite bites which under microscopic analysis revealed they were points of the constellations. Everything WAS relative to each other the same scalar distance as the stars are to each other in the various signs as per astronomy. On his thumb a reddish area was held by some to be the moon. Under computer analysis it was discovered that they could tell where he had been by the constellation patterns relative to each other. Apparently this man had been at the Dawn of the Universe, 14 billion years ago. The stars were the same then as any planetarium computer program would show. They were not artificially induced according to Oxford scientists and some NASA chaps involved in lunar analysis. He knew very little English but maintained constantly that milk was the answer to everything.

The man and the woman called Elizabeth went and figured...and finally went. All the way to Sussex, in 2003. This is a true story. I know because I wrote the story for "The Scotsman." It was headed "The Starburn man Is Not from the Milky Way but..." The truth though was far from a humorous concoction.

BirdSoul



He is seeing Woman in the bird

Knowing his return to Life will see him winged...as a bird

Shades of Miro

(The sun rose with the wind...hunter and hunted played games in the scrub)

She must have known

Jacinta must have known

He stood before the volley's bang with his tin courage

And stiff wire for arms

Cardboard finger in the trigger and sad with every plop!

A falling dead, wet, round bird

He is seeing Woman in the bird

Knowing his return to Life will see him winged, like a bird

Shades of Miro invade his eyes and he is again afraid to venture...

As You Have Acted All Your Life?



There once was a Magician (I heard it, it's true)

Who when shot through the head in a trick he do

Cried "Ring Down the Curtain" in true Stoic style

(Even managed a devilish smile)

Will you do the same when your time is nigh?

End the Poem like this discord,

Discord of Rhyme?

Cutting The Theatrics



The play was pathetic, Pugsborough. It couldn't be absolved and even smelt like scalp. It annoyed me. Having let out my feelings I went outside to have a cigarette and forget my three dollars. An intense emotional tightness began in my throat wondering whether to buy a milkshake. That's when the whole thing started and my interest ended. I automatically discounted the possibility that I had drunk too much alcohol or aspirins. It was something else.

The heat did not astound me now. The industrious virgins in short skirts, who pop their cosmetics and pill their faces. Like Jonathon Crows and English aristocrats scarcely able to move their lips for makeup, they were no longer pristine objects. I had lost interest in the theatre and as I rung down the curtain on this night of depression, so too I stopped kidding myself that I could make it. As it turned out I did... but not in the theatre. I turned to the manufacture of electronic circuits to help people spy on errant lovers and such. A cynicism had gripped me.

Theatricals and all the shebang vanished from my life. It was pretty bad. I didn't like the heat anymore and decided once and for all I would leave. Up in the newspaper office I met someone else, not Big Brother nor Big Sister but Danny, a friend I'd met in the Post Office. I had lent him four dollars the week before, and he had circled long enough now for me to know this week there was a chance. In the newsroom someone was passing around champagne. A member of the staff, Lee, whose popular ways captivated my imagination.

She spoke of the slothful ways of people and the youthful and near-sighted views that some of the staff had before toasting all and sundry. She told us, her legs resting in a half-glamorous pose on a desk, how she had walked out on India. Though this sounded arrogant, she was a heart-broken doll and got away with it. I didn't persist with much conversation since it wasn't my newspaper office. It wasn't even my four dollars I learned later from Danny. For he had lent me ten dollars.

I warned him before leaving without my money, without much interest at all in fighting, for my patience. I sat again, the cigarette this time began to talk. It was saying, "Do not disturb me". I caustically put it back into its box, hoping the crush into its smouldering nose would snuff it completely. I now recommenced wondering for the ninety-eighth time that year what had taken over the minds of Halborough youth. Had some protracted cerebral malady spread? Was this rising swell of cynicism some kind of message? What had it in fact occurred?

I attempted to weld my thoughts together. A number of faces wondered what I was doing there in the newsroom quiet and sullen, so I started out on the streets. It was a while later I discovered a group of women. I followed them, as they were behaving strangely. Down one block they misbehaved oddly, down the other normal... perfectly Christian and trained to carry themselves like most women, looking here and there into the windows. Not even blowing their noses. The next block though they changed once more. They were behaving like wenches, waving their arms in the air.

I continued to shadow them, darting in a professional way, sweeping past the doors to get a clear view of what appeared a clear cut case of tomfoolery. I was impressed. They were born actresses. It wasn't the tall rangy girl always, but at times one of the others that seemed the ringleader. It was so much a cheap personification of the theatre I had left, I called out to them. What I said escapes me now. The affluent lifestyle and trappings I have acquired since I grew up and left the land of make-believe, convinces me a gaggle of strange women of doubtful parentage is a good simile for the theatre. It and the street struck a not dissimilar chord in my id that night and I rung down the curtain for the last time.

Trollopes and where I had been being too alike and I was metaphorically, a married man. It was time for all around me to cut the theatrics and get on with the business of living. After the comical routine with the paper in the train, a last effort to summon the playwright in me, the exhibitionist, I went home to my new girlfriend Amanda. Here was an object of desire not half-whacked. It was Valentine's Day 2000. Imagine my profound chagrin when I found that one of the girls I had detected in the street behaving weirdly was Amanda. I laughed loudly and held her closer. I just couldn't escape the theatrics. Just wouldn't.

I Dreamed of Joe the Peg Last Night



It wasn't like this...

A torrent from the street seeping through the doorway
The shrill cry of women afraid
No, it pushed rather than pierced from within
And when it had gone I felt if something hadn't happened it would

A raindrop settled on his nose

The Coke freezer stopped it's electrical sparking
The cooler began smoking
And the night moved like a flood down his shirt
The flood moved into the night like

'Ninety-nine.'

That's how many times he had found a face not his Staring down from the window to his realm There on the cafe floor under the 99 cent stand.

Ninety-nine

On Being Less Impulsive



I believe that the cigarette has destroyed the common cold before it has been thrust upon me. It has helped my patience. It has given me a peace, a weight with which to remain in front of the TV. A weight, a counterbalance as I walk and now as I crumple the packet I am a completely separate creature. I feel to pass on the knowledge to mankind, the knowledge or way to refrain, is to absorb me for a few days. I intend to move over this victory quietly as a blind man moves over braille, for I don't wish to immortalize my twenty years smoking. I wish instead to return to my normal existence, my life.

I wish to return to my normal existence and grotesque. I've done a great job. Thousands and thousands of cigarettes and I feel the only accident has been a small fire in a wastepaper basket, which was quickly put out. I was not a klutz. I have never dropped a cigarette in a dangerous manner and now I find that the irrational war is further from me than ever before. I expect nothing more from life futile. One cannot calculate on his fingers. One cannot awake like a rasping pterodactyl.

No disease has hit me and this is the true victory...that I have been intelligent and careful enough with my compulsion to smoke, so that in reality one could be forgiven for thinking the first. Perhaps it is this intellectual process, perhaps it's easy to remember. Their shape is basic enough. Perhaps the more intelligent a person is, the more prone he is to smoking. I am convinced I have found the real reason to smoking. It is simply that that in travelling from the city to country one needs to balance the air, and smoking offers one this possibility.

Outside of this I can see no real advantage. It is not a cheap sedative if a sedative it is, for the after-effects can do more nerve damage. But as I recollect there is not much a man will not put in his mouth these days. And it is an insult to make fun of something that is personal. It is difficult for me to understand why life has thrust it upon me all these years. I accept the cigarette's wisdom now it is gone. While I smoked I believed the impossibility of it actually occurring kept me from realizing.

Though the search to find the truth about cigarette smoking is confusing because of statistics, there is one true fact that cannot be disputed. It is that if one simply waits for something to abate it's not handling the argument too badly. I'm pleased now that I recognize the truth. That now I can breathe and eat and move to the highest good from a point I had earlier almost forgotten. You must know if you are interested. Obviously you must know if you've been interested so far.

So I will tell you how I gave up the terrible habit of inhaling cigarette smoke. The answer only occurred to me three days ago and prompted me to write this piece of inspiration. It was a Sunday fete. Passing through stands that excited me with arts and crafts, I saw by the movements of the people that closing time had been two minutes earlier. I wandered through not demoralized though aware soon I would need to disappear like the other spectators, when there on a small stall-table in a box of rings lay an answer to the dreaded smoke. Though it looked completely foolish at first and was not an anti-smoking aid it caught my eye.

It was an Indian ring. Not a very expensive ring...one of the cheapest. Now for 20 cents of battery power I can converse with a small Indian who without moving his eyes whispers 'Not Particularly' each time a craving occurs.

Grump the Greenie



You cannot buy a pickled Summer in a plastic package

Rainbows cannot be canned and sold

You can only find at the bottom of a cornflakes packet

A dismal camel... humped, pink, yellow.

Bury it in the garden near the tomatoes and beans

And perceive the amorphous lump below

It will not grow, or even die to fertilize your plants

Would you give this to your children?

And One Under the Fallen Bridge



The front door of the home happened to be closed as I ran my finger across the window. The frosted glass forced its way into my mind. It was like a broad-lit grin. Moving inside the porch I could only see a myriad points of light. Glancing up from the garden I guessed it would take me a while to enter the home.

I looked at the junk in the garden. I had to say I was bewildered, and informed my friend Richard of this. I told Richard that if he went out to the car he might find a key. To tell you the truth I did not know if there was a key. I had waited for a long time in front of this cathedral expecting any minute to see some sign, for I was looking into the glass. The points of light nearly hurt my eyes. Rap! Rap! Rap! I continued again. Richard was now nearing the car. I could see him as I turned my head. Would I knock until Doomsday or go around to the window and see if I could get in that way?

I knew someone was living here and I wanted to make sure it was alright for us to stay. Richard Stoves and I had been at the airport for three hours deciding where to go. Now we knew we would choose this old Holiday Inn building. A tense expectant hush ruled overall as I spoke out "Anyone in there?" I knew there would have to be, so I knocked again... Rap! Rap! Rap! Someone was suddenly on the other side of the garage cursing and muttering. I ordered him sternly as I was always prepared for action. "Who's that?" He said his name was Bob Wilmer Short and he wondered why Richard and I were not best advised to ring instead of knocking in this manner.

I told him that we were out of work musicians. "Stone deaf then...," he retorted sarcastically. A friend had given me the Holiday Inn address and I was going to stay here because all I wanted was privacy, I told him. He tried to force my mind away from this place in no uncertain manner.

"I am eminently successful as a Real Estate Agent and I am looking after this place at the moment, but I am afraid that you cannot live here for all the world knows...I charge quite a bond."

I immediately countered with, " Well, that surely is a strange way to do business. Ah... let me tell you that we have every possible security."

"Ho, ho, ho...no, no", he said.

"I mean to say that what I charge here is not necessarily at enormous expense. I don't charge much at all considering what I provide."

"Oh," I countered, sounding ridiculous. But nevertheless I knew what I was talking about.

"What do you provide here?" I said.

"Oh, I provide lots of things... women, wine, sailors... anything at all. That's why I charge such a high rental. Yuk. Hyuk."

I had heard many touches of comedy, deepening irony, and lots of unusual events had occurred to me on this journey from New York to California, but this was the most unusual landlord I had ever met. He was in fact running a general bordello. I asked him to tell me whether I could pay the simple rent without the exotic local colours. He insisted,

"You must take then... other factors into consideration."

Well I did not accept his ring at all. I asked him a loaded question.

"Are you a professional...?" He told rather than asked me.

"You're darned right I am." I explained to him I was not amused.

"You are not running anything but a house of sin because my friend is a... a... a priest and he has recently left the priesthood. He is still a priest but he does not believe the Church is not his calling. It appears to me that men like you have taken him for granted, not to mention for a ride."

Richard smiled as he realized that the man must have been quite taken aback by this. He didn't know of course I was lying, for it was true that my friend was a priest, a Jason Chalmers, however he did not believe there was anything wrong with a good time. The landlord then dropped his guard and told me he played darts, went fishing and ran local fetes. He had to run it as a parlor because otherwise the people thought they could live in it indefinitely, he said.

"Oh", I said. "You get them out by playing them a girl or two."

"No." he chortled.

"I ring the escort girl service and they get rid of him for me."

"Oh", I mumbled. I was ready to tell him he was not answering my question, but still I felt I could deceive him into giving me the room without the adequate provisions for one's physical being. So I said to him abruptly.

"How much you want?".

"Well, without the girls... \$35!" My eyes screwed flies as I ran my fingers over the table edge.

It was a flamboyant and cheap place. There were all kinds of odd, official-looking objects. Like that great composer or whatever he is at the piano. Papier-Mache, not expensive. My eyes rose from the drawing desk. And that lovely dry fireplace was only a brass-rubbing. I guess I'll just have to take the room with the consequence, I thought to myself, more in despair than realising any great truth. I took the room for a cost less with his added facilities and waited for something to go wrong.

I was actually quite enjoying it. I've met some strange fellows in my time but to see this landlord using women to help him balance his accounts was not completely dry. At ten o' clock I heard a knock on my door. I flatly told them there was no-one in. They knocked again and as I knocked in comical reply, I noticed that the person there was only dressed in a very puritan, modest outfit. She bore no resemblance to what I had expected... an out-and-out bird of paradise. I asked the woman what her name was and whether she was somehow connected with the landlord.

She was simply a woman who was sent to provide comfort lest the person find the room was wanting. I asked her quite blatantly for I wanted to get to sleep, and bore in mind that even if I was blunt, it would not matter. I simply asked her whether she meant physical comfort

"No, no," she said. "All I give is an explanation for the landlord's insistence in sending a woman." I said, "Aren't you on call though in case the tenant should abscond with let's say, an object or other. Perhaps there is some other reason?" I was being sly in a primitive, but I felt, an effective way.

"Mr. Hadley, if the truth be known, we, or more specifically I, Mrs. Ida Wilson, am here to see your friend Mr. Richard Stoves. I have reason to believe he is a man of the cloth. I am one of the many services our landlord Mr. Short has on offer at very low cost. He's not a priest though, as I said before, I believe he is..." I was cut short by the woman whom I could see now had some sort of church-attire under her white coat, which reminded me of a female priest seeking ordination. Yes, she reminded me of a type of nun.

"He's not a priest?" I quizzed.

"No," she said. "He thinks he's a priest or something like that? Even better..." She smiled like a Mona Lisa. "I'm very good at that sort of thing. Where is this Richard, Mr...?", she threw her scarf behind her with a business-like attitude, looking out the window and under the eaves. A small resplendent, white cloth affair protruded slyly from under her dress, stiff and starchy white.

Of course sprinkling petrol from the porch to the outhouse took Richard and I no less than ten whole minutes. But when the landlord, Mr. Bob Short returned from the club high as a kite and muttering incoherently, there was enough to give him a flaming grouse welcome, pun intended. As the Holiday Inn surrendered it's wooden all into the cool night air, I shouted at Richard. "How many did you say...? I thought I heard him say twenty-two before I tripped on the outer fence and met my serendipitous bed for the night. In the morning we fled, penniless. What happened to the score of tenants was better put out of one's mind?"

Gusphobia- Profound Hatred of Worms



The worm has been undermining

undermining

...Undermining the system.

Too Long! Too Long!

Says the Raven

In syllables of black

Two and soft as secrets.

And the wind listens.

Too long the worm has burrowed our soul

We, shades of I, asleep in our futility

Dozing desperate in the Sun

The worm

Its length depression

Its eye the quasar of masochists

Its scales jerk tidal as the cruel sea

Its twistings the teasing foreboding of its own doom.

Eat Me! Eat me!

It says

But my beak will snap air..

A clap of air!

Against The Rules



I understand that in a moment you will draw me a rough sketch of a large turnip. I understand that you will then carry the orange bikini to the mirror on the right, and proceed to rig up a camera and projector. I know you're going to dole me out the same crayon and plasticize experiments. I know it's tough. But it's better this way. I know that if I lift my face I'm going to see yours and then I'm going to see myself in stiff dresses and I'm going again to feel perfume around my face, not gray like yours. I know I never want to go there again, to that place where I can hear my own prophesies being immortalised. A place of adulation.

I know I can be pure for you or anyone. But your water makes me wrench. I'll stay though and admire the deep gravity of your conviction. I shall attempt to name the colours you wish me to. I cannot undo myself from your thunder and guns but finger by finger, idea by idea, I'll wade into your plan and remain wet, waist-high. You think it's a bag full of manure you're giving me but I know it's simply what the others have been dishing out. Oh yes, you lift your mustache ...but it is pathetically twisted. Your mind is no clearer. You see I am no ordinary woman. I my friend am not going to question your logic as you stuff your pipe.

The man's voice that emerges is quite sober but I'm not going to trust you. I'm not going to hurl anything away but yesterday. You wore a green dress embroidered and exclaimed, "I am Dr. Kipling. You're my boy." You hardly used sensible words. There may also be an enquiry into the hell of a noise you made last night about 10. I'm going to watch you dream. There are some reddish-purple figures on the wall there. I know your real voice is telling me like a chain-saw that to teach a child correctly you must burn the midnight oil. I have no protection against your logic.

I consider your attitude is sound, though I will not be scraped flat again, carrying my books to a position next to your window so that I can test the truth. I will not be insulted by your voice as it dismembers your voice behind my head. How was I to know you weren't in your room? Whether I saw you or not is like a little fist punching at my ear, turning my wordless pen in slow arcs across my paper. It's not that important. Should I stand in front of you shamelessly? Only you and I are here, impossible one, though if I had some kind of psychic intelligence I would have appointed someone else.

The words you used last night were quite frightening. I'm sure you saw me though you couldn't have seen who I was. I'm not admitting that you're unkind though you threw those peels into my face. You could have had a torch though, that's the problem. You could have said something to me to bring my investigation about. But I am certain that you're just another person telling me. Another professor because I have to believe that though your theories lack credence, my attitudes have also been straight. Regard me soundly when I leave for I may have to. Plummert your letters to your dark address asking for my return, but understand that I cannot tell you whether I saw you last night, Professor.

Realise my femininity is my only answer yet your voice is so persuasive. Yes, it's almost hypnotic. You are meaning more ambiguously. I cannot listen to you any longer. The girl signed the paper and poured down the street. A small man remained, quietly grinning. She and her yabber was the real reason the Prof. is in prison, where he's been for the last five years. Assault charges stick when evidence is found of earlier instances. But what was she really like? Did she tease him into it? She seems so aloof and disinterested. In what land would a woman like her not be gobbled up by a lonely and perverted professor of anatomy facing charges of fraud?

Child Sagittarius



Up until his teens

The boy wore blinkers

And as a horse escapes

Galloped from feeling to meaning

Skirting the ridge of Society

Now he cannot forget the taste of sugar

Over that ridge.



Some men are always attracted by a little madness. Coolan had been crushed by his unsteady women. His wits shaken, he was always approving of the fantastic and colourful, and had the same intention well into his thirties. He was a modest commercial designer, curious at finding his friends had all married, and the few that had become slightly infamous were mainly connected with the Press and so still respectable.

COOLAN

Kitty was looking into a plate near the ragged, grassy slope. The pink shadow of her body amused him. As he finished filming the sky he was looking for a particular shade of blue to match it with. At home he would mix his palette like a garden grows, its hues well-covered. All night he would spill and form more than just instincts and murmurs of brilliance. He would produce the smallest point of genius, as he called it, and then transfer it to a canvas creating from that point.

It wasn't unusual then to find his rooms full of many dabbings. His masterpieces were simple collections of these combinations he had discovered on the drawing-board. His attitude to painting was odd, sometimes wrestling with the colours he mixed, despite his sometimes meticulous concern. He spent an hour or two in the morning writing letters to acquaintances. By lunchtime he found his sense needed to be shaken by another miracle of paint and metal distance.

Now though he was fiddling with a camera. Sure he had captured a shade of sky he wanted, and feeling sorry for the woman who lay a little way down the slope, he crept towards her. Kitty was a small neat girl whose face reflected a comfortable mind. The bright hair escaped in tendrils from her quiet face. She disturbed his toying with the camera by throwing a tiny stone. I wonder she said pertly "Whether the sun in setting would give us a better idea of beauty. I know that the site of the noon sun can create too light a shade sometimes. I know some pictures I have taken have turned out poorly because of it."

She spoke like a coquette with a touch of almost conscious monotony, leading one to think to think she had made an effort to be serious. This gave her face, like an old flick, a shade of mischief and youth. Her university talk was what Coolan needed, for though he didn't say it in so many words his life was rotten. He was quite a clumsy man and his engineering books had often ended up at the beach because of his impulsiveness. Coolan was a law to those around him but though he looked a hard nut was not a bitter person at all.

He smiled and told Kitty that yes, perhaps the moon would be a better prospect after nightfall than this blinking sun. With a bang he closed his photograph album and walked to the car. He was not usually given to flying his reputation on high and rather than do it this time, he told her he was not fond of spoon-feeding his critics with too much affection. Rather, he said, a particular personal power could be seen streaking his work. Below every cathedral of light with its shadows muting was a night of love. With every procession of black-eyed girls and bridesmaids there lay a reasonably happy perspective of romantic situations.

Though he had been without success, he had somehow managed to keep his hopes alive. He had to get something different across this time. Not about a war, not about a love or a city. Not even a landscape. This time he had to say something out loud. Rather than collect his brilliant, slightly coincidental triumphs of mixing, he wanted to start afresh and to paint something consistent. Not perhaps a middle finger pointing at some spacecraft being decimated, or maybe some weird strawberry patch whose surreal fruit was bewitchingly Coolan. Or maybe some pterodactyls against some inaccessible labyrinth of Triassic boulders. None of these.

It was about seven o'clock when the two students sat on the grass, each perceiving their own infinitely delicate sun clouds, that it happened. The bald inactivity that had lain in Coolan's subconscious began to assert itself. He said "I'm very annoyed that it's so cold out here and we've already waited about six hours for something that can be easily constructed on a table." Kitty, whose goal in painting was in sensitivity, insisted that he would be better painting a moustache like a veil or a green pool like an eye rather than stumbling through a semi-tragic system of dramatic effects.

That was a knife in her hand for Coolan admitted for the first time in his life he had been irked. But Coolan only spoke when he saw the truth in something, when he could see his own argument refuted. As they crouched down, watching a small flock of hawks, he began to talk about softer things. He confided then that he didn't like the sounds of distress, as he called the forms he had been painting. And as, like a flourishing little branch her hand lifted to his forehead, Coolan pecked at his leg realising his error. I know it's tough, Kitty said, but Ricky, every few steps in this life, every step we walk in gentility, every king has a sword but not all kings have eyes. As a matter of fact, the blind kings have paintings of horrible things.

This was the last possibility he thought. That Kitty, so simple a girl, a pale green bottle, a student who wished only to stroke the sound of night, should find him interesting. As he thought of gods and of his mirrors he realised the good girl he wanted was not to be wooed with ugliness. She was to be wooed with ornaments and colours that suited the occasion. As his mind went off through the timbered lot of his consciousness, up the hill to where he was ready to proclaim, he saw the day was getting on. In the dark he lay by a small stream drinking, his lips feeling for a new cause. That night, a world of Coolan's images passed like a thousand days of war. In the morning, Coolan had no more to do with expressions of futility.-----



HALT THIS AGING

He is twenty-one and a plutonic ice is cooling in his eyes...

21, and already feels the fresh leaves under his step,

brittle...break

Sees himself vainly keeping a fire alight

In the terrible cyclone of age...

Earth as a child felt its molten heart overflow

In an orgasm of construction

It aged, reached maturity and its body froze

I too spin round a Sun...

The star of Fulfillment

(she mused encouragingly)

But know, she told him

I am as ageless as a planet

The young man took strength from the thought

DRINKING IS A LONELY MAN



In this place, Circumstance, you said there were no rules or confining noises. Those interfering insinuations that belong in the gardens of half-evil creatures of fantasy were only part of the punishment. The television tube has always been a tool of the wicked seller. This idea of punishment makes no sense, fellow-conspirator. To view the language that surrounds us as punishing is negative. Punishment is always so. Logic composed in the positive silence is the only answer. Then you will see that the ugliness of today is for the beauty of tomorrow. Here you invisibly infer, for we are Christian according to the learned, that there is a truth and a reason, an explanation for suffering. A better conceptual explanation, since I tell of a night without company, would be a fear that time is being wasted.

In the other place, where drink and euphoria combine to sweeten experience like a warm, enveloping but intangible kiss, there is someone, some idea or entertaining curiosity. Here in this bedroom though my stubborn patience grows stubborn. I am like a man who must seize a moment of Time. I convince myself the music played at a slow and awe inspiring speed, together with the sweet sherry, is somewhere at least. Prove me right Circumstance. You said this was part of the economics of ecstasy. In this place you know and rule. Let me like you, realise that nothing is amiss.

Though you have forgotten (I admit I have let it slip through my motor faculty) that Saturday night is as potentially exciting as it was given the ingenuity, the bedroom must prove enlightening. There would be a hollow you would find hard to fill, a night where though it was raining, there would be a happy, sexual crowd at the wine-bar. A drink and a talk would make you feel like a person, a man with some value once more. Here though there is a null value, a low point and cavity. But somewhere in this bedroom, Circumstance, must lie something of more value.

If it doesn't, the night is empty and without love. It is an unrequited fool, still too young to join the jesters who scoff, albeit falsely at the forlorn romancer, a waste and an unnecessary hole. I reach for the wine. I am lifted by the opening musical riff. Again there is a deeper, profound activity. I reach for the wine again. There is a profound land where your face is dignified as you perceive your proud happiness and sincerity in the face of life.

There is now though only time for a vast and intuitive brush stroke. I will paint another time. Here then is a wine-wet penny. Mine. My very own which I share with my very best friend, myself. Me, myself and I are one.

"...with the lonely crowd,

I'll lie in the dark...where the shadows run...from themselves." (White Room, Cream, late sixties)

Huge. Palatial manifestations of space and solidity multiply. This is better than the wine bar. Plus, I have achieved it through my own euphoria of self. I deserve congratulating...and here's to you, Circumstance!

The Designer

He wanted to design 'the' dress for 'the' woman

Even inquired at the college for details

Then after falling stiff in the Park

Champagne gurgling in his stomach

Saw that his brain was naked ...

And ravished it with a score of tree trunks

Youth Obtuse



Jeff assessed the drawings on the wall as I waited for Anna to round the corner and tell us the news. She had gone to the Student Centre Office for paste and soon returned with a bucket of thick, white goo. I lowered my posters one by one into the glue, and smacked them onto the wall in the manner Jeff and I had agreed on. He couldn't tell whether we would finish it before six, but shifting uneasily felt we could finish it tomorrow. Jeff and I had been babbling excitedly about a Writers' Club as the posters proclaimed.

He had suggested a game we could play while pasting the wall. It was a clever game based on the acronym, for the name of the club was to be based on this literary device. The SEA or Society for Elimination of Acronyms would be dutifully recorded and fantastic evenings and meetings were to be expected. Jeff and I threw acronyms to each other, pasting as we laughed and guessing we would be finished before nightfall. I had been going for two hours, solemnly stretching the posters like captured animals flap-flapping, scraping the shreds of old posters that remained, and creating some balance where I could.

It was too late though. The pasted posters slowly took on an irregular slant, and I returned to the University Library to slowly grow angry. I felt the professors would find it odd and out of place. Still, I was only a newcomer to the University and it wasn't really my most important business. Something else profoundly troubled me. It was that the University was based on conventional townhouses. The sixteen or so quadrangles where one could think on the move between classrooms, allowed no clear inspiration. I thought the library would provide some respite, still, climbing the stairs felt like ascending some mountain in South America.

I thus found myself taking the lift which was reserved for invalids. Feeling tormented by this and also by the absence of smoking areas upstairs I was fraught. Impulsively, I smoked in the toilet reading the graffiti with a pen in hand. Adding the faintest compromise here and there, a small comment or small face, occupied me for an hour. I offended the honor of those that made sense, and destroyed the logic of the others. This smoking space then provided a boundless sympathy. I sat there, paste dripping from my sleeves, the sound of the copy machine rapping out its iron pulses. Finally, I seized a roll of toilet paper and washing my hands in the bowl, rolled off about fifty meters of dripping paper to build a monument.

A white-faced man with brownish hair entered as I strung the paper from one side of the door, to the infernal machine that dried hands. He asked me what in Heaven's name I was doing, and I told him cheekily he wasn't aware of how poor the students were. There I was, for all the world appearing to dry out my own, used, he thought, toilet paper. After cuffing him in the ear and watching him sidle off with a look of regret on his face, I sat on the bowl once more to devour fiction. Completely integrated, fearing no man, no headmaster. Not afraid of the pencilled marks on the endless slanting, graffiti-filled walls. Slanting like the posters outside and the sun, sinking sideways behind the ranges.

Why Is It?

Could you tell me why it is that Love is still the same?

As Love was... once?

And could you tell me why it is that Love has never lost

The love it made in gentle times... once?

And could you tell me why, when that girl began to flirt,

She opened Pandora's Box of Hurt...once again?

TOYS!



They told Dylan not to be afraid. Though he tried, he quite lost control of himself anyway. What existed, did so in his mind. It was a pity it did not in the form of something more real, like a diagram. Had he ever been this way before he would have had no difficulty coming to a calm point. The fact that his prepubescent mind was confused led to his ultimate despair. As many young boys do in trying to convince his parents that he is right, he let go a scream which sounded like the end of a play on death and sex, as his father said.

When the discussion began again in the evening, someone suggested that the father go and see why the black men were much better than the white men. Why for only three dollars, the young boy would be so happy having the black men without the white men. This was his mother's code for 'go and see.' The father went and saw.

His father struggled with a description on his return from the toyshop. He called it dirty, cheap. The castle could be built just as easily from cardboard, he said. The distance between the castle-moat and the castle-walls looked unprofessional, unpainted and squarish. Very much like those little wooden service-stations that have been built by who knows what bum. He felt pity for the young lad and a little contempt for the artists he was referring to.

He would make an endless number of these models and sell them to the curiosity shops occurred to him in a fanciful moment of madness. He felt he knew what his son wanted but he also knew that it wasn't the money, it wasn't the shape, but the colour. It was a silly colour, a bad bastard with a kitsch skull portal at the front. Instead he commenced arguing for the small WW2 soldiers that although twice as expensive, were twice as interesting and clever. His son wanted the castle and suffered to the limit it seemed.

Still the father refused to budge. The little boy finally received his soldiers without castle, on Xmas Day. He slept so much the father was almost convinced he'd made a terrible mistake, that his son had lost his mind. As if to add insult to injury, during the afternoon, who but Johnny Xedes from three doors away arrived carrying a greenish replica of the same wanted castle. Johnny seldom smiled, but on this occasion sure looked pleased.

The father left the room early in the evening to recollect mistakes and successes, writing on a small piece of wrapping paper in the way he often compiled his short stories. He paused now and then to check the flow of his thoughts and ten minutes after he started writing, looked up as if remembering something. He had forgotten it ever since the boy had suggested the toy castle instead of the soldiers. Yes, that was it. He recalled.

When he was seven he wanted something very similar. It was funny in fact how similar they were. The castle and his own desired gift were alike in importance. The gift the father had wanted as a boy was not a castle, but a small luger pistol replica, which his father denied. He still remembered how in the New Year he went to the toy shop and put it in his pocket along with two Mexican Jumping Beans. They were the plastic type with small ball-bearings inside which gave them an amusing, springing motion. Having unfortunately been seen firing his five-finger discount outside the bushes, he had been admonished.

Glancing up along the shelves he smiled. His eyes lighted on a small work by Freud. Let me see he mumbled. Johnny Xedes wanted a bike that young Dylan had. He laid down his pipe with a smug look on his face...and laughed with expectation of tomorrow's trade picture. The black men would need some further perusal.

Today We Bake Three Hundred

As children, the young gods play,



Moulding the clays into noodles, sausages and cylinders.

Fear has spun a bus off a mountain.

Fear's death moth hand scrapes it from the lake bottom

Slaps it four hundred kilometers North onto Page One.

Crumpets and blood for Hubby

Tears in the bath for her.

And the young gods play,

Cutting our paper brains into dolls...

Baking the clay...smacking glazes of complacency

Onto the noodles, sausages and cylinders.

We are in the oven but the older gods consent..

They read the Press ... their brains are bent.

Detectives for S.O.U.L.



Sgt: Has the person in question been charged? You say you caught him stealing?

Det: Yes, sir. Stealing ideas sir.

Sgt: Ideas, eh? That's top level stuff. Call in the Super.

Supt: (leading the accused.) Sit down here sir. Answer these questions and remember there's no denying the charges.

(Supt. produces a biro)

Accused: Hey, that's my biro sir.

Supt: Speak when you're told to speak. Evidence we have tells us you were seen with friends from a Literary Society. Do you have a poetic license?

Accused: I... I...

Supt: And is it not true that you have often been seen reading Walt Whitman, Auden, Dylan Thomas...?

Accused: Yes, it is. I have...

Supt: Well, there we have it. Officer?

(Officer enters wearing faraway look.)

Officer, confine this person to his chosen authors for life.

Give him 'The Lash' by James Kantrell and yes...give him this Tolkein

(he hands the officer a fat, worn book with psychedelic embossing)

...he'll like that very little; it's all about fairies, our latest offenders you know.

It Is This!



It is this, this same awe

That hears the thundering tread mark of Lightning

This awe is my followed ghost.

The mind is marked for searching

But hides, an epitome of inertia.

Time, wizard who never was but will always be

Is behind this man, gagged by lassitude

And bound by rubber bands.

He shall not be racked on the slopes of a lazy Calvary.

I curved my trowel into the soft, brown earth, watching intently till I realized the sky promised a wonderful day. It wasn't until eleven that I had my doubts.

I bent to break a clod that had been strewn under a small acacia, and I've been dreaming of devils and gods since. I felt on the back of my neck that moment a virtual sucking as if asking, "Am I really a princess?", which was odd since I had been with one earlier. It was only later in the twilight that I explained to the woman I thought it was, how she brought out the finest in a man.

Battle of The Garden



I wasn't really keen on gardening in the first place. I was leaving today. I should have built the trellis last week. This time next week, instead of being pestered I would be at home watching the telly. I could have easily thrown some of his broken, holy statues through the window, but this wasn't my sin. My landlord returned and saw me in a horizontal embrace deep in the garden by the potato plants. The look on his face was anything but benevolent. "You've been snooping haven't ya?" he said in a gruff voice, and I seized my trowel, smoothing my trousers and began to explain that no, I wasn't a pervert or a prowler.

However, it didn't occur to me until a minute later that all I had to do was look him in the eye and talk him down. Because this man was a doll, an old harmless idiot who could have done no more than shout. But then he was coming at me. Just as I was about to pat him on the shoulder, I felt the girl's hand grasp my ankle and by some miracle let out an enormous laugh which was in fact the only answer. I turned to continue my troweling when I heard a crash and splintering, an explosion, unpredictable and loud. Very loud. It was an explosion that filled me with fear.

As I turned, I saw he had stripped to the waist, seized a branch and had in fact smashed it through the greenhouse window. This wasn't the climax however, for looking at him again I noticed that on his shoulder he wore a bandage, a large white pad. He told me later he'd been wounded in Vietnam. I don't know what possessed me but good humor, and as I looked at his injury I flashed my own battle scar. It was seven inches long and on my right lower biceps. I had used my own wartime case. The old soldier looked away and spat into the Petunias. He walked off grunting.

Shrapnel had injured me in the Second World War. But another impact was suffered by me that night, a rude interruption. I left the gardening job the following day. The mad gardener was in fact not in this Act just a wounded soldier. No. He was her father. He had vowed to ruin the man whom he thought had attempted to take his daughter from his side. I left at dawn. I had fought another war, this time in a garden. The wound was now considerably less than worthless.

My Own Kohoutek



Love like Kohoutek was missed this year

Instead I look up and see in the celestial pigeonhole

A cluster of words.

I spent much time shooting these comets into the sky

Hoping one would by a force unknown hang there.

Sometimes I needed someone to zoom in and

Forgive the flickering light of my own comets

Beating their tails like fish assaulting Space.

.....

(Comet Kohoutek [koh-hoh-tek, kuh-] was seen in 1975.)

Little George



The little boy could not speak plain English. The old woman was sure of it. In the darkness they began to quarrel, and in their eyes senility and teenage helplessness combined to make this a rather unusual fight.

The young boy's fingers covered with plaster had not, as the woman maintained, been working for a few dollars. He had been working all day for forty dollars, and as she made the clumsy error almost every day, I wandered to where I could see them both. I shouted quickly. "I'm sure the young boy is not a masochist nor is he enjoying this rather insolent high voice of yours." She returned my insult by moaning and groaning, and after a few days of this I was most relieved when she left.

I am not a person who often thinks ill of another, but now and then I would see a similar name in the newspaper, and had to pull myself up thinking she had been done in. The more the young boy stayed with me the more I liked him. He had two houses, mine, and the one that belonged to an elderly couple that lived over the street. Though young he was a practical type who had worked for the people a long time. With me he worried. He wondered whether all he had done was square, whether the nails he had driven in were accepted, and whether the small items he had bought were acceptable.

I liked little George and the very timid and fitful intelligence he had. He read prolifically for his age, and sometimes I could see in his eyes a look of romance of love and idealism already appearing. I wondered whether Dylan Thomas had been like this. It was three weeks before Christmas as I poured myself a cup of tea, spilling some on my pants. I didn't go outside for I had taken my laundry to the washroom, and felt it would look silly me walking around as if I had wet myself. So I decided to talk at length with the young lad. We talked of Indians and Chiefs, the American West. He seemed more interested in poisons, chemicals and ways to make bombs and such.

I bought him a set of war comics and he delighted me by reading them quickly and telling the stories in a summary form. It was only last year that I met him again. He was still wooden, naïve and fond of his reading, but it was funny that in his hand he had this time no books on chemicals and methods of making explosives. Instead he brought a small pot of flowers. My wife bought them for me at Christmastime. They were not normal flowers. They were pale Aurora Cynth blooms and all I needed for a florist's entry. I had been helping my wife with the Annual Show and Floral festival in the town. It was worth a lot of money. He suggested they were the best in town, and I listened.

Working at nurturing this winner of a plant took years. One March, without realising the swiftness of Time, I realized at once that the little lad I had sponsored with war comics and such, had quickly grown up into a fine military detective. He had become a detective who not only discovered that he could enter the world of explosives and make money at the same time, but still read war comics. Under his arm I saw a folder and the inevitable drawings of tanks and planes were just that little bit better than the ones I had inspired him with. I never did win the Floral competition. I was however blissfully content that I had helped a fine specimen of a lad blossom into a worthy social asset.

That Spring he was called into battle, and returned with more decorations than there were houses standing in South Luxembourg.

For Poets Without Lovers



Without the spark of Love,

The pink thrill that is Woman

What pen functions?

Ballpoint swords instead

Cut swathes in fields of stone

As blunt brutes do -- without Passion

And all that is born are platinum urinal poems

Where men come to look at their reflections

But see the poet's twisting form staring back

Once my cigarette ash ambition,

Burnt by the scorch of thwarted Love

Dropped down -- the silt of a clock's rivers

Choked it; the creeping root of news took its feet

And stamped them solid.

An Indian guru painted the nails...

Indefinable it began to walk again

Now my passion sings of poets

my kit, pen and pad.

Still though the thirst for the great poem that is Love...

My silver prayer is sent; may poet find poet!

May the vine of literature turn not to bone

The snake of want to dust

The Sex Life of Food



My darling I said, burning with a faint smile. I could see her mouth trembled.

"I've already found me a baggy suit and my hunch has all but disappeared. Shall we go now or wait till this afternoon?"

She might have been a person one passed on the street. She looked at the ornaments on the mantelpiece, the sailor and the woman who lacked a husband and said "Oh good". I respected the degree with which she had accepted life's punishments and how she seldom appeared weak-willed or negative. The following remark therefore interested me. She mumbled something about a cold. What could possibly cause a cold? The weather out there could only be called lukewarm. She laughed at me for my 'inability' to understand the climate. As best as I recall this was the first of many strange things she said.

Rationalising these inane statements I reasoned how the mundane never appealed to me, and how well she knew it. She was my wife and I was immensely proud of her. The tan of her forehead and the lighter shade of her skin represented a beauty that was to my mind astonishingly rare. Even now at 40 she was to me an incarnate beauty, but what I'd always wanted in a woman was someone with a little dignity. She vexed me quite often about her education. She never went to the dances in town and always made some comment about defiance. But after a time I saw that the short ceremony at the closing of the day was beginning to bore her. This ceremony was the most important part of the day.

Just before tea every night I would look at her very small ears, and with a curious admission of pleasure, she would allow me to make up her face after she made up mine. We then tried to professionally act some of Shakespeare's short plays. I was pleased half the time. Shakespeare though soon lost its legibility, as some of her utterances convinced me she was losing interest in being serious. More importantly losing interest in me.

.....

It never occurred to me that what I started as a child was the solution to my present creative vacuum. As I closed my eyes and wondered about a book on cooking I had kept in the study, it occurred to me the thing was to find a new use. I held my nose idiosyncratically and noticed in my 'scrapbook indefinite' folder there were still a few early drawings I could put to a better use. Going to the cupboard I returned with some cocoa and at the cookie jar I stopped. Remembering an ad about chocolate and cookies, I turned like an artist of great renown. I held my thumb at arm's length and walking to a wad of drawings quickly began to think of the difference paint and dust had created.

Seeing no-one was about I took the cocoa and powdered milk in my right hand, thought of an indulgent and gorgeous crime, and muttered goodbye, goodbye. Kissing the cats and moonlit bar boards of the old and hastily conceived houses on the page I sprinkled it on each page screening it with cream. Using a butter-knife and a palette-knife alternately, I soon created some kijn do difo painting. Where there was a face, now it showed begrudging hardline consistency and by ten o'clock that evening, with a little lipstick these babies would make an excellent exhibition as they were albeit in hazy light. That was how I began to paint again.

Free from the maddening woman that began to imitate King Lear I felt liberated. I'd painted against the wall as a child. As a teenager I had screened myself in an attic and with a hissing sound and a blowtorch, created my plosifs, my revered colours of youth. When I was twenty-four I painted an entire room with chalkboard paint and sat there. What I considered great artistic equations had been created there but eventually dissolved with time and thought. I had dreamed up many times an art teacher's nightmare.

My new technique began years ago when my celibate brother who is always painting, began using strange materials he'd found in the garden. And now as this cloud bunches before me I can hear the canned laughter ring through me and I double back, for I really feel my suicide or resignation, call it what you will, has crystallised at a more even temperature. Who knows, maybe the Marilyn Monroe made of butter, if and when she melts around, will be Mona Lisa - no-one special. Ha-hah! In this grand game of poverty, the fences, posts and gates which I am painting with unusual materials have brought me money and respect.

Never have I been painting that I have not used a kitchen of chemicals. I've resorted to mushrooms and breadcrumbs and even an old dead possum I found. I beat it flat and sprayed it green. Here I think there is room for this again. (Odd. She was so pseudo-intellectually interested.) I shall give it some form this time with tense turning lumps of sanded putty, then paint them. (God, who'd she thinks she was?) I shall rub it with a little rouge, scrape some solder and mold this wet piece of cabbage into the magenta background. I suppose that it almost looks maritime gray.

Without giving it a second thought I shall call it 'Possum Flat'. Flaming balls of fire, I can't for the English language though. I think with the biscuits I burnt, filling the house with smoke, came a turning point. My wife was a good girl though the house was full with smoke, and though I myself was a bum to have been so sacrilegiously involved, I felt she understood. The next day though I did something similar and left her two months later. From there I haven't really looked back. I've used everything.

I carved holes in cheese and sprayed it with metal paint. I found figtree carved very easily using an old broken fork and a steam source. But to be honest, sometimes one is martyred for truth and I must admit my appetite has suffered. So while this green cabbage dries I think I shall go into the garden and once again dig up worms. For a respite of course. The sweet hot smell of bush-flowers is superior when the impulsive gets out of hand. I am again plunging too far into my own thought and need to double back. I really fear the clever use of basic materials is taking up too much time, and becoming too impulsive. I consider a cake on the cards.

WOOD TOO SPLINTERS



Amid the rhythm symphony

The small teeth of saws biting timber

Hammers beating time like hard headed metronomes

An oath explodes...

Hiding a failure under his apron

The boy

Moves to the deepest corner of the room

And cries unseen tears into the wood-shavings...

This way he spends the hours of the war

Until a sound signals an end

And the boy walks from the door

Sometimes the teacher mused his life was the boy's

For in the wood work room of life

Too many joints had fallen askance

Too many chisels blunted

And far too many tears had stained the shavings

...a defeated colour.....

I couldn't imagine what Tom wanted in this part of the country. He had always been one or two steps ahead of us anyway, but now he had returned with his bright, new sedan and fishing gear in the back seat, I felt he was up to something.



TOMFISH

The year before we had strolled off to the dock ready to sail into the harbour, satellite icons resplendent on our new rods. Of course without licenses we couldn't fish anywhere in the lake. His seeming disregard led to our arrest and the fines came at a bad time for both of us since Evans owed money, and I wasn't ready to part with two hundred dollars either. This almost banned him from our expeditions in future. The first year things had gone well enough save for a naked lady that emerged from the rear of the car as we made our way reluctantly to the lake, since we had met him a few hours earlier.

My friend Evans didn't wonder at all I suppose. He agreed we could go fishing and all that remained was to pick the most remote lake and weather the cold as we usually did. Tom had been a friend of mine for a long time. He should have stayed in the city though since every visit he paid us ended in near-tragedy. Last year we had almost drowned in the lake as Tom had caulked his small row-boat inadequately. We secretly suspected his manner and competence then.

Tom told us he'd be passing through. He looked involved in his fishing and had a great number of fly-collections. Folders full of glossy-coloured prints adorned his study. Birds flapping over in phalanxes were even found on his tobacco pouch... above the omnipresent rising trout, snared-on-hook and usually rainbow. He had dipped line in every bay. He could stake his own territories. He told us how he lost many a fight with the owners of reserves because of his interest in out of the way places. Thinking about the events of the last few years led me to another puzzle. What was he thinking of I wondered?

He came once every year, about the same time and didn't really say that much. I could scarcely remember him speaking. He lived for his fishing but still a doubt remained about him in my mind. The jerky way he moved, as if he had just committed a major crime. His, I must admit, uselessness as an angler yet his complete and apparently used outfit. His dark eyes and his 125 or so rods tumbled out one by one like cosmetics at a salesman's' convention or rifles at an Army exercise. I scratched at my ear attempting a personal question.

When he wasn't fishing he was selling. We knew this. But I asked him whether he did anything else? Did he have any family? Did he have any business or was he simply traipsing through the country to lose himself in fishing? He saw through my question immediately and returned it. Had I a family? No, I answered. I wasn't married and wrote short stories. He said something like "You can't see me as anything but another miserable mass?" I cut him short with the rejoinder that he could have been Jack the Ripper for all I knew or conversely a Government official.

He apologized for losing his temper. We returned an hour later with about five bream, loaded our gear again into the rear of the sedan and returned home. The next day a letter arrived telling us the answers since we had asked and wondered. It was from Tom. He had decided to tell us the truth. He had been searching for an elusive creature that had been seen in the mud of the lake several years ago. People had provided freakish pictures and he had been travelling through the country looking for sightings of rare animals.

The police of course enlightened us to the falsity of this statement. Tom was an escapee from a maximum-security prison, his ruse being to befriend as many fishermen as he could, to spend all day on a lake where it was unlikely he would be apprehended. His crime in the first place? Importing fish from Asia loaded with amphetamines, which he sold to drug barons in the desert. Tom had taken too much of his own medicine and aroused suspicion with his reckless attitude. He had lingered near the hook too long.

The North and South Of It



The Yankee man had found her
In war, The Coral Sea
Had taken this brown young thing
His proud young wife-to-be
The sound of cannon cracked outside
Fate gave his child away
Her English mother knelt and cried
On this happy World War day
And then it passed in jungles North
Her help was needed quick
She even entertained the Tokyo man
It looked like it would stick
The Yankee man returned one night
In a rare, commercial haste
Saw her alone with the Tokyo man

And a vast, uncharted waste
He moved her to the Territory
Sold up her precious jewels
Set up commissions, an FBI
And modern types of schools
And so today we see her still
Living his affluent dreams,
Growing fast and growing fat
On soda, Coke...and beans.

Cupid Impulsive



The prospect of success had come, but the prospect of failure had taken its place. His daughter was a peachy bloom of love, the look in her eyes was pristine, her hair combed every day became as shiny as an expensive mink, and her body was as shapely as a foreign sedan.

It was so. The possessive old man straightened his tie, looked again into his room, expecting some sign that everything was still together and then blindly wandered out. He rushed and jostled through the newspapers and flapping street-warm tins into a world of red, green and white factory refuse.

The man in the corner, who had met the old man a week ago, had a mask for every day of the week. When he spoke strongly he was a British Colonel, softly he resembled a French Lieutenant. When he was laughing, his face hit a crescendo of points that reminded one of some well-to-do European painter. Great and fruitful was his manner when during their morning talk he spoke to the girl in rudimentary Latin. He was not a joke so much as in a difficult position. When girls would sit devouring fiction this girl was content on looking keen. She hated to look the beauty of the street, though most considered she was.

So he became her teacher. He became the storyteller. She could now have the books she wanted and although she didn't have a great appetite, she got on reasonably well. The old father was pleased with this harmless social intercourse. He treated her roughly sometimes and often looked at his guests with a look one sees in native villages. However, he was trusting. She felt secretly her old father controlled the situation too well. When the old father came from the Northern suburbs with news that the man was wanted elsewhere, the girl cried and talked freely of her love for him. She lamented, never needing a word but simply composing regrets. The houses of her mind grew doors and these became dirty. The vigorous discontent with which she began yelling for the man to return, split the sides of the street.

Then, as if on the front of a thunderstorm, the old father returned. Like a wounded beast stumbling through a thicket, his long hair flying behind him a length of shredded skirt, he had felt a deep need. He looked at her lurid face and there on the bed, fell like a soldier on a strange battleground. Unable to tell the old man comprehensively that her friend had left, she sat silent. It wasn't until evening that she felt to let him know by showing him a picture of the man's family she had removed from his bag. She wondered why she had opened up to him since he was the main reason she felt the entire relationship was canned.

Although he had been crumpled for seven hours in the same position, wiping away his length of ed hair, the old father barked like a dog in the wilderness that he didn't even realize who had been talking in her room all those days. It was someone from the college he guessed. The girl's view changed. Once or twice when the moonlight lay across the Earth, she felt that the admirable qualities he had shown her, the artist in the man he had submitted to her, was received in too much of a courteous way. From that morning on she walked a little faster to the grocery shop, for she knew that when he returned, she would be wearing twice as much lipstick.

Point Paradigm



One wonders at the logic of the man...

Lifting seaweed from the caramel sand,

Letting it slither sopping and warm...

Mechanically into the barrow.

One wonders when even I see value

Poking its corroded head from sea margins.

Watch!

He skirts the rusting car carcass

One wonders at the logic of the man

Bee-lining towards the vegetable jetsam.

It seems he is happy.

Yesterday he was here telling me of his task.

He smiles at the fall of day, counting his 'tonnages'.

There is another man there now

Delighting in his free verse, the number,

And wondering about the bright

Chrome fender with its blind lamp eye,

...the price.

Harry's Superlative Flights



Moving two directions at once,

The pilot, mole in the cabin,

Forward the familiar route, behind to the strangers strapped in plenty.

The candy girls with brandy and biscuits,

Tantamount to mistresses;

Their flashes of skirt and easy riding fingers.

I am looking at clouds through a window,

Tranquility's keyhole; Tranquility,

Bearing her breasts for the Voyeur.

Rose petal winks, the pinch through the silk,

The seven words of etiquette administered under the heat

Of drink...Heineken, Vodka anaesthetizing softly.

As the flagman signals airlines,

The motors somersault into silence.

About the hangars stalks a writer,

Signaling to Venus -- my motors are hot...may I land?

I'm Sorry About the Commander



Now he is still...

Minutes ago Commander Wilson held death by the throat

Pushed the accelerator pedal of the pulse to the floor

Commander Wilson

Thirty-year-old prodigy of Space Training

pronounced the passwords at the silver gate of America's finest Space School

A whiz against 'g'... the no weight stage

And the thing cracked locking him in coma.

Staff, their lunacy and star spangled eyes

The machine a maniac before them

Bull roaring its arms around the building

It's passenger as good as a puppet

Now he is still

A nation has dismembered him,

now he is still.

Hogmen



Since we had lived there most of our lives, his letter taunted me days and nights for his hand was one of a broken man's. I couldn't tell whether it was physical or psychological and I often felt he was completely mad since he often chose his own neologisms, new ways of spelling words and seemed to add complexion to his writing that prolonged the feeling he was up to no good.

He used the same clichés. He used them in a way that led me to believe he had sought to create an impression. He was right in telling us he did not intend to come again but I think his dramatic skill in informing us lacked a little. The strict code of the Royal Order of Hogmen lacks no such reverence for order. Though we are of late being berated by many who feel our activities are dubious we who know nothing other than what we read in comics and know nothing of politics, save what we have built up between us do not realise that Tom is due for the vice-presidency.

He was never an office-bearer and his cunning is shallow. It may betray an ulterior side. We consider that since the secrets we are guarding are so rare, Tom must be fiddled away before he proves the suspect. We would then, should he fail this, as hogmen have to punish him until he learnt our stoicism. He was too frightening a man and we were sure they know he was up to something. What possible impression was he trying to create in not reading the Treasurer's Report at the Annual general meeting anyway? And what possible motive did he have for referring to it and that it would best be read next year...?

I Wait for The Sun



From my window I see a beetle's green,

It slinks along a stem,

Past thorns, thorn-ripe buds and wilting leaves.

Poets too, I feel, slink in the late night hours,

Diverging like Wisecchildren ... like beetles,

Forever looking to the pink and blooms before them;

Dodging an annoyance of points

Keeping the fall to the garden hole in mind

And between the bullion nubs of their pens and fingers.

I press on, my friend.

A beetle, dark now as he riffs his clacking arm

To this bloom's petalling page,

Though stumbler in a wordless age

And can't write his silence down.

I see the bloom!

Like a beetle I see the bloom,

Too late into the night.

It's frictions, Life frictions,

Blossoming, weighing inner space molecule by molecule.

I see fog obscures this bloom, it's flower... warm and dark.

Yes, the fog obscures it and I must wait for the Sun

One Side Was Dark



"I'm glad that I got a good place. You can't expect elegant young men like Richard to feel any kind of passion for fish, birds and dogs".

That was the last I heard from fair Marjorie. Now the world is ignorant of her worth. She has been slandered, her picture-exhibitions have been reduced to peasant scribbles. Her ugly things have been brought before them. I had told her so. There are no animals now. Marjorie hated them so I gave them to the Salvos. Back in the house I can see through the window that the noisy streets will soon resound to the sounds of school-musicians returning from the park. Wheeling their bicycles regimentally, their voices grow exaggerated like clarinets and strings in the summer evening. I am alone now. There can't be a hell worse than this. Private stars have faded from my life. My only need now is company, my hero and my god is Euphoria.

Not so before in the warming sun. I was comforted to an extent. Now I go to the stadium to see beauty incarnate in the form of the cheerleaders. None of them are my Marjorie. The powers of my two worlds are colliding now as the return to the diary sees a pen poised only to escape my grip like an unwanted goldfish. I find myself looking into space. No longer do I visit Marjorie's hotel where I practically lived there in the bar. Now, a commoner crowd remains. All the people who lunch outside McDonald's will be coming back too soon. They'll be glad of anything here in the shelter of the oaks, where the flowers are linking their nubile arms around each other, afraid of revealing their whereabouts. Perhaps I will find potatoes to peel, some kind of space where there will be canned talk, coffee perhaps, bottle washing. The park is good for half an hour, no more.

But they will be here, and very soon I shall be the first to leave. A wastepaper-basket is filled to the brim with the skeletal branches of silver paper and tinsel trees. People still hold parties I see. There is nothing to worry about. I can always escape to the city, spend my money on jukeboxes and adult video games. But my reasons are deeper though. I find in the city an impenetrable track that is my own, and branch off it, tossing my cares into some bar, dodging the interpretation of the world. The world as seen through the eyes of the poor, the illiterate and the unjust. My world is the optimist's world. Fear does not occur to me anymore. I have caught and found my escape. My wealth is in the architecture around me, they tell me. How do I make this abundant enough?

The tonic is gulped down as I languish in the bar near the Students' Union. There is some evidence that much discussion may reveal a new direction in writing. I feel however, further from the School for Creative Arts now than ever. Thus, my followers will be disappointed. I'm now just damned apathetic. My attitude is that of a running soldier, content to attack the trajectory, leaving only footmarks. The Europeans though will be allowed to conquer and I instead will have understood the nature of sands, pebbles and leaves. The Druidoid in the book on early England, his long red tongue hanging before the fires of the mountainous woods, has been understood. I've gone down to the basement to try and live alone without Marjorie. Now I'm going to the city with me, myself and I. Before I do though, I'll finish this little job of clearing away. Then there will be no barrier to my embezzlement of colour.

Sitting at the bar, something happens very quickly. Someone cries out "White bitch. That was confidential." I hear the sound of a car desperately trying to screech to a halt, and then a sound like someone has dropped a large bag of spuds. I half-slip to the phone and ring the police who arrive in time to find the disfigured body of a huge dog. I spend, for the second time in my life, a night in the police cells telling the sheriff that my idle dreams are just that. But not before I have seen that he is unable to believe the truth. At the time I thought somebody had been hurt. Somebody cried "Blood." But this disused temple will be mine another night, since I know the man has a penchant for common blood. I am quickly learning how to comb my hair and straighten my clothes to nullify this effect.

Tomorrow, Sunday, I will sit working on my diary proper. Wednesday morning will find me searching through the rubble of my room for a useful letter of recommendation where someone has squashed my lunch, or destroyed my goldfish. Those who follow in the wake of the officers have often tampered with my songs, stealing their eloquence and modulation. It will be the third time should it occur. My private vision is that on an innocent wing I shall endeavor to return to the city, to plainly manifest my thoughts in some quiet void. Somewhere, drink and a larger glory of memory will give some youthful songwriter a good half-hour, and some inspiring woman a good hard time.

But I'm writing now. I want a Rubik's Cube and two pieces of fish for dinner thank you. I know what the imaginary old man will say. "You're going insane in there," his mouth half-open, roughly picking at his chin. He is the poor cove that owns this town. It's a wonder I stay in the place, only the main street two kilometers long keeps me. Now, and in the future, it will be pointless to deny it. I imagine I am wearing now my most common aspect as I leave, as predicted, to the city. It is then that some sort of order jumps into the air before me, advances my education. I announce the good news to the officer through the bars once more that "No, I did not see who 'dun' it! Yes, I've been told the mutt is recovering."

Some sort of order for my hand is not slight and less when it has in the center of its gravity a large half-finished Rubik's Cube. Who am I trying to kid? I must continue in a polite mode though the frustration makes it difficult. It always happens. At least I fortunately have something in my hand to fend off the brute, and something in my mouth to dissuade the fool. In defense of Rubik's Cube, I am going to write unfailingly, faithfully. Where shall I begin?

Paul in The Garage, Surreally



The side of a ship ready to bleed into a bucket.

A concrete gray wall with tiny dolls set inside;

'Grand Hotel', a collage...

Maybe? No, don't say maybe. Respect an artist really.

Paul, in the garage... surreally.

Fear. I suddenly became conscious that the real meaning of the word applied now more than at any other time in my life. Here, staring at a window as big as the sky, I had before me many anonymous letters and details I had been made to collect. Deciding where the answers lay was impossible. Without a radio or a barometer, I knew that I had a hard field to hoe. I could see in the distance a worn country. The sea was noisy, I thought. I wondered whether what I could hear was simply the rattling of the air conditioner, now it had taken its pure air and almost coughed its last.

Exploding Debt



The flames had scorched the right wall and by a persistent calculation I scurried past an array of numbers in my mind, to where, like a saving expression, was the sum total of what I had lost. In the city where we live in a succession of apartments I had begun to forget the others, my friends who lived with me. Their university ideas appeared now miserable compared to my crucial philosophies. Theirs buzzed at me like mosquitoes and, as if the highest point in their life was not marriage but their next degree, the others treated all symbols and signs made by men as one treats rock paintings.

It wasn't good enough, they were too snobby and so I left their weird wars and concealing theories to seek my living as a clerk. It had been a quiet morning. I knew people who wrote conventional romances, and often lay over a table contemplating the grand life. This morning, fortunately, I had dispensed with this abstract attempt to read them, and had even walked further than the park I usually made on a good day. I checked everything I had written during the past three months. I always scrawled numbers in the corners of my documents, and like everyone else had invested more in records, since the economy was not geared for the unaware.

However, they couldn't stop the man walking along the road. They couldn't stop his love for accountancy. They couldn't stop it. They couldn't stop the State official who ran in front of him. Most immodestly, they could not deter the madman from flinging whatever terror he had in his hand into the electricity supply building. Now drainpipes dance on chimney pots, and I am lucky to get a glimpse of the square that two hours ago looked like white teeth. Like teeth only too ready to giggle, shriek or smile at my counting and record-keeping. Now not so. My face is growing harder.

Bob the Bruiser



Bob was an offensive, cruel, uneducated and haphazard writer. He was undoubtedly enterprising in his youth, but then he obtained too much access to people. He came to learn of conspiracy like a huge geological thought, something he had to measure, write about and somehow crush people with.

Due to a number of controversies he was ousted, but not before he had punished me beyond the realms of my imagination. I held him in awe. He was like a god. Since I had lied to him that first time he had racked me in every way. He was mad, a lunar mountain of darkness set against the world. The day I had lied to him was simply a coincidental condemnation of his ideas. I'd been his whipping-girl for years. It must have been 30. I knew it was pointless to deny his dumb misery, the way he would scrape me from the pavements and rub me into mullock-heaps. In his New World voice, he would proclaim at dinners that no-one could touch him. He was not romantic nor idealistic. In the moon once his sinister light destroyed my maidenhood faster than normal. I collapsed into a thousand women and proclaimed war on Bob. I became democratic and earned the right to colonize myself once more in a superior form of attack.

I let the thing simmer and as the February moon went down, I dashed myself across the corridor in my rhymes, reasons and uniforms, and hurled a number of alibis like rocks into a machine. I saw his American University face shatter like a thousand crystal memories. I looked at the ground. I was entitled now to write a poem. From the mess and the adventures, I had passed through before I met Bob, I obtained enough defense to see me through. The night he woke me up to set me up as cheap as a mass-produced thought. The time he showed me into a house and destroyed my head with a sniveling insolence. The night he ran people through my images and fringed my nose with rocks, snuffed my tongue a pinch at a time, and limited my cranium in an upstairs Revivalist movement in Southern California. The time he declared war on me and gave me no hope of armistice.

Such unforgettable and uncompassionate and ruinous malevolences, were filed in my front-line computers. He was a strange man, a great mountain in the distance. And then my hand reached for him, attempting, with what I had learnt, to escape. As I cried " Bobby forgive me "I noticed an embankment, a graffiti and an amusing idiot of a soldier sprawled on the gutter. Rivers flow now as gently as my will. At Christmastime I hold parties. I am like other women. I shall never though pay too much to see anyone like Bob. He was an unusual man who had in his fist such a lumbering elephant of a hatred, that he sent me to hell fifty times before he allowed me even go out alone. "Who are you then. From Mars?" he said, now an old man. And like a thunder in the sun, a hundred-pound sack of quarry-waste I have responded." No, Bob you are going to the police. It was only a joke and it's your turn to hit the city."

There Is No Light



There is no Light on this side of Losertown

Just shadows that... frozen with pride,

Stand silent so you can appraise their mystery.

And what is wrong with that?

Nothing.

There is no Wonder on this side of Life

Just shadows that elude.

Sometimes in these moments of open eye

I see the shadow is all I have.

And the matter with that Lagonda is that Time could forget the answer

And deny me Substance.

*Lagonda, made by Aston Martin among others. A female name.

Breaker of Images



Here in this empty closet where an unfinished beer sits still, its long and slanted eye looking up the lamp, I have found another vein of red plastic. I've been taking the covers off clocks, looking through fortune-cookie jars, blowing up small articles, in my search for these pieces of red plastic. I wasn't to see whether the person who had left these objects behind had a reason for doing it. I checked out of this apartment three weeks ago and on returning realized the person who moved in, moved out just as quickly.

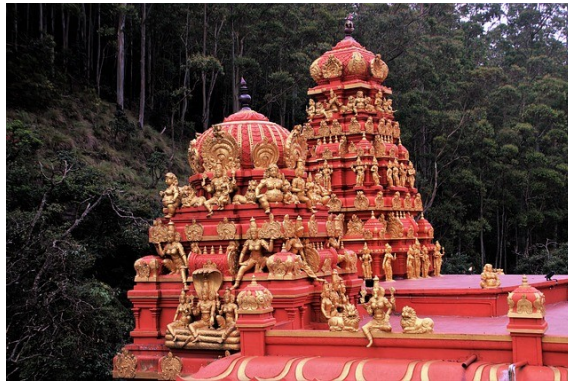
Behind him he left small shapes whose variety I'm now appreciating. I am breathless and with a woman's sense, and unslinging my small army bag, I throw the article in with a little less enthusiasm than I had earlier. I think it's time for breakfast, to give me strength for the search. I would do well to make a good one with jam and honey, lots of cereals combined together and perhaps fried sausages.

After that I'm sure I will go out into the rain to return with the newspaper and read till just before lunch. I will not forget though the important part of the day, the search for the logic behind the leaving of these small pieces of red plastic. They don't look connected. It doesn't appear that an object has been taken apart. No, they were not once connected. Sometimes they are three-dimensional and I can see the small bubbles of plastic on the main stems not unlike the ones one find in glue-together kits. But they are not alike enough to be a lad's.

So, after lunch I intend to pick up all the different pieces and carefully arrange them into a jigsaw-puzzle. Then I'm sure I can reach across and holding my camera very still, pretend I have discovered a monstrous plot to pass a message to inform some benevolent spy of some war or other. It's all I can do, now that the telephone is off its stand. I haven't enough to pay for the first ten weeks' use, let alone six months. Damned useful that red phone was now that I recall the words of the caretaker. But the rates were designed to break people.

"The point is you see," Mr. Chatterjee said. "Some of the stories are true old boy. And this much is true also. It's on my conscience." I agreed with him as he put down his drink

Mr Chatterjee



I said nothing but I knew what he'd said was as true as anything I'd said. While there was duty, there must also be disobedience, and the only way to quell this radical feeling was regulations. He called me a good Indian and I called him a good patriot and we left the bar about 3 o'clock that afternoon. He keeps a Times world map on his wall and sticks pins in it like a General. The pin that's stuck on England has a little paper-flag saying "One day."

Mr. Chatterjee is quite a welcome friend of mine. He's only twenty-two but I call him Mr. Chatterjee all the same, because I can't pronounce his real name. It's one of those names that has a linguistic twist in it which I don't find conducive to rapid speech. I don't understand why he doesn't change his name. I am a friend of Mr. Chatterjee and I am twenty-eight. My name is Mr. Ronald. You can call me Mr. Cubar.

Why the formality, you may ask? This I have not been able to determine but often he breaks into talk of the British Empire in such a hollow flowing voice that I can only counter with something resembling it. And sometimes I could even better him with a smattering of American. We are as I said, two gentlemen and often frequent the bar. The first time we entered the bar we were hailed equally as gentlemen since we both had the same coloured suit on. This was obviously not surprising to us but everyone else.

It was funny that day. There were people there that accused us of being morbid. After the introductions he bought us a gin apiece. Mr. Chatterjee has quite a gun for his ideals and I listen - although with no experience of autocracy - quite willingly. Even though he's younger Mr. Chatterjee has my full respect. I think it was in the Manners Home for Boys and Girls that I met Mr. Chatterjee. He was a wonderful chap then. He had a gray suit on.

He's a lot different now, running round wrapping newspaper around a stone, he uses a large sheet of plastic to cover it. Then like an artist of great renown, fires a very long and pointed finger of flame from a blowtorch, until the rock looks very much like a pebble from outer space. He arrays these pebbles on a wall and often takes them to the local art-gallery where he has won two third prizes during the last five years. I speak Gaelic English and am interested in Romantic Literature. It is odd that we as gentlemen, the artist and the writer, have this singularity.

We often dress the same, we often wear the same coloured scarves by coincidence. And frankly the friendly co-operation we've been shown gives me a belief our future is assured. I've never been guilty of allowing Mr. Chatterjee the chance of winning the upper hand. I've taught him no doubt a few graces and he has taught me a few libertine coup de grace. But we are both somewhat intellectual and any extraordinary behavior always remains in our fob-pockets, in which there are identical red and blue handkerchiefs.

And as we wipe our mouths so do we remove our rumours and twinges of conscience. I hated this flat town. He hated his. He lived three kilometers away until the pressure forced us together, and like some electrical element of local government, we snowballed into something sensible. I captured his vast paintings and he painted from my stories. When I found him in the Home for Boys and Girls I knew he was an intelligent chap. He'd never been whipped or forced to eat beef.

I'd never succumbed to the printing of seditious literature. This all changed and I found an element in him which spurred me on. He grew more conservative while I grew freer and indeed at the end of our acquaintance, we had achieved more than would have been expected. The people he invented were in my stories but I must admit when one creates fictitious situations and circumstances with people, something occurs.

I believe that prison will have eft him in quite a disagreeable condition.

As I said he was overpowered by my Conservative background and sought to be like me. I had no carnal knowledge or crimes as such. He had a record as long as his arm and I guess that when they finally let him out he'll be here drinking again. But there will be a difference. I will be a rising journalist and he will be a clear case of forgery. But I'll be helping him again, a little harder this time ... which should keep us both honest. The point though of all this is that Mr. Chatterjee will forever try, but we are all different. The scales of similarity will eventually tip one way further than the other.

The Not So Reverend



There was an infectious disease that spread through the house of Miss Harrelans in 1994, said Tina. Yes, it involved an ugly pallor and a loose mouth. I moved my head in approval realizing that this was only her venomous manner speaking. She was referring to the gossip that had occurred, in obvious contradiction, as old ladies who had less than thirty-five dollars to their name listened to this pasty-faced oaf of a woman spawn the malady. They were here to hang their fits on her messages and words of stealth. I could see a powerful, slow rhythm begin in her shoulders and head and waited for words. Yes, and they were there. Uncertain. Ridiculous. I almost gave up reading that Winter listening to the stories. The champagne she drank constantly haunted me. I felt the hunger of her desire for some kind of cynicism. I began to jot down everything she said. One day as I stood by the kettle filling it with clean water, I noticed that a couple of metres of clean flooring had been somehow torn out. Not believing in magic I waited, stirred again, then telephoned the plumber. He told me no, he'd not been and I should try elsewhere.

Several things occurred that made me suspicious of this gossiping fool of a woman. She listened very hard one night to the television set and went to the University with some miracle of snarling hypocrisy, telling them that indeed the television had been interfered with by a coven that practiced nearby. She could now not get a picture. And in her bold and unusual manner told them at the same time to forget about it. She could scarcely remember it. Then there was her affair with a poodle that nearly drove me mad. This mutt would even have its meals at the same time she did. Its name? 'Fauntleroy.' To this day I don't know whether the TV complaint was true, but the twinkling poor thing did have one thing going for her. It was her daughter Clare who was the opposite to her, or so I thought. For one night she showed the exact symptoms her mother had so often exhibited. Frightened and horrified, unable to believe that the apple that fell from the tree had in fact remained close by, I glanced quickly through a phone-book and ringing the local priest suggested he talk to them both.

He arrived the next day in the afternoon and spoke at length on water under the bridge, which I felt was quite relevant, and exactly what I wanted to hear. Until he said something completely odd. He mentioned that should anyone know he had visited there would no end of gossip. And as I looked into the darkness, half imagining her face and thinking about what the priest had said, I couldn't help thinking that Clare was in fact beautiful. Unbelievably, I married her. This is why I believe she became indifferent to everyone. She began to break away from the root of conventions and very cynically last year when the priest returned coincidentally.

Her brown hair was already escaping in the shower. I could hear the water, imagining her fine olive back, wondering whether in fact the priest was an impostor for not only had he changed her way, he had caused me such a boredom that I often feel cynicism is respectable. But the gossiping old hypocrite's daughter is becoming equally as plain. Now she is a big girl and I'm getting smaller. There's a bouquet on the chair there. I wonder who John Little is. It says quite plainly "For days that have been Prophesied." He's taken more than a fancy to my dearest Clare whoever he is.

Amnesic the Word?

I've Forgotten!



I had never felt so well in my life. I knew that in the adjoining room was a young woman. Not unlike my daughter Christine. Her small mouth drooped like a much younger woman's. The close-shaved slope of her hair reminded me very much of an overcast day in my youth when I read a blue book on UFOs and other alien phenomena.

I guess by the numbers on the clock which I have seen and which somehow exists in my vision, that it is nearly 11 o'clock, and also the time that the growing free-verse in my room is to be perused once again. I feel that it is lonely. I know that she, also lonely, is in her room somewhere. She must be. She is going today, but still there. Now, I must have a shower. Standing there like a stone now... watching my body. It feels like open cleared land. It reminds me of a story. I accumulate physical exercises as I watch myself, feeling decent and ready to explain things in a confident frame of mind. Then the question passes my mind. Perhaps she's still there and just man-hungry.

I'd been living with two students and either ignored them or left them to be picked on by the dim illumination of the garden of the morning, I can't remember which. There were trees in the garden. Come to think of it now, I guess they weren't there at all. What I was doing at that moment was far removed from the study which I usually did. It was a far bigger problem. I had to decide whether the girl was leaving, or whether she in fact had an interesting background that had to be looked into. I had to help her. I didn't believe she was going to throw her job in. But, let me confess it wasn't a problem. I thought now that my bed was being cleaned by the maid, that perhaps she had an interesting story to tell. Whatever behooved me, I knocked on her door, entered and saw her there on the bed. She was asleep. Walking over to her, I kissed her on the ear and assumed she'd been sleeping. She didn't move. The sun was getting stronger and the sun-shower that occurred made it impossible for me to organize my day's affairs. So I walked into the other room and lit a cigarette.

I was going to escape the heat-stress though. I was going to get a kick out of destroying a toy that had been left in the room on the floor. I only realized slowly that someone had been in the room, some minutes later. Some bloody house-painter. It must have been. However, I wasn't too stressed now the TV had been off, and I felt that I could spend a few hours walking round the house. I would so conduct some half-fear that would keep me from going batty here in the house. To perpetrate the name of experimental fiction then was my duty this day. And I thought she would best be left alone to sleep. I would not go near her. An hour later I could not relieve the anxiety. I snaked along the corridor like a phantom so as not to wake anyone. This was weird since there was no-one there that night saves for the woman and myself. There she lay. The night had obviously taken its toll for she was still asleep.

I gently held her by the hand and foot and shook her. It was getting late. She would be better leaving now than later. The wide avenues of well-spaced trees outside deteriorated. I felt intoxicated for a split-second then must have hit the floor heavily, for when I awoke all I could feel was a liability on my embarrassed face, and looking toward the bed, could see no trace of the girl. Getting up slowly I ran to where I could see that the white jug on the table had been pushed over. I felt something was happening. Running quickly to the garden I submitted to this curiosity and looking everywhere behind every bush, was convinced I had committed no offense I grew more anxious expecting any minute to find her under a bush in some hallucinating state I could not understand. I put a scarf on my head and decided at that moment to return because the rain had increased its intensity, battering my back and head. I was forced to seek shelter in the room again.

I imagined she muttered as she entered the room. She may though have even been in the same place. I don't know what made me think she wasn't. Running in again I noted to my amazement that the girl was lying in the same place. This time though she wasn't sleeping. She was out to it. She was in the same position, but I'm still uncomfortably aware of her nightie. It had been torn to shreds. I felt immediately guilty, but noting that the injury to my body was from the fall to the floor alone, dismissed the possibility. I was working overtime on the floor. Somehow the girl had been struck and I had been struck. It was then I realized that during the day someone had entered the room and somehow moved her sleeping body to another position, returned her, then struck me on leaving. Looking through the window I saw Harry's house. Harry, the old -bearded landlord who lived nearby wasn't there that day.

I turned, looked at her, my eyes upon her petite ankles and then played my own game. And with a growing sense of masochistic joy and fear, realised that when the police came, if they came, they would have no possible way of knowing who the guilty party was. For I am an epileptic. In 1973 I was charged. In 1974 I was charged. But I've still no idea what I did, because you see...I'm also amnesic. Few believe me. I tell them the focus of my mind is such that sometimes I forget. Oh yes, she is a nice girl... wonderful girl. My scenario now is to be realistic. I see that right now, not the police but I, George Attenbury, British Intelligence 1958-61, am here, alone again with this woman, and I've forgotten completely. Forgotten. It is the skin as dark as the rain outside that I'm not going to remember and hence understand fully, my mind protruding like a tawny owl in a leafless tree. The memory isn't laying down. The rain is too heavy.

The Sin of Irregular Tenancy



Suddenly I wrote down three things before I began to rearrange the room. I wanted to fix the cupboard, I wanted to fix the floor. If I had enough energy I would clean the window. It took me at least an hour, and going about it with a complete interest, I felt the voice of success faintly calling.

Two hours later I would be at my celestial work again, feeling cleaner for having removed the garbage from my room. I guess it was kind of a retirement-hobby that kept me walking out onto the patio looking at the stars. I had a habit of doing this since I had read so many reports of people dying from exercise, that I felt as much rest as possible in order.

As I was looking out to sea, it was an obscure and silly-looking old fellow from the room next door that tapped me on the shoulder, and showed me something he had found. It was a burnt pair of pajamas.

"Our Father, who Art in Heaven", he said."Who was not saved?"

I looked at him not knowing whether I should reprimand him for being silly but told him nothing. The iron must have been too hot. He said it again,

"Our Father who Art in Heaven... Who has not been saved?" he said again, this time with more drama in his voice."You know bloody well," I said, this time scowling at him. "You've burnt it haven't you""No!" he said very loudly."What do you mean?" I challenged.

He spoke quietly."

"Last night there was this little blonde bludger down the corridor. I invited him in almost with pleasure for I felt he had done something malicious but minor. He was a student and people had been bothering him for too long in this place. He wasn't though even violent. Tenants would hang around his window carrying on. Possibly because he was too quiet. I had a lot of respect for his poetry also.

"You invited him in and he burnt it?" I asked.

"No." He grinned stupidly.

"The sketch... I'll give you a sketch of what happened."

"Yes, go on," I said in an interested voice.

"I, well... he gave me three dollars like his life depended on it."

"Right," I said and ironed his pjs. I then asked him if he wanted them ironed again. I looked around and instead of him being there watching me iron, he was gone".

I turned and asked him quite straightforwardly whether he was telling the truth.

"Yes, I was just ironing for him. Talking like... and then he was gone," the tenant said.

"You did something to him?" I quizzed. "No." He was talking quite freely. "But then ... he..went... he went funny. And insisted I iron his pants. I went outside, looking for him since he'd offed again, and there he was, lying on the edge of the balcony, waving his hand. And as I moved towards him, he went over..."

I tensely retorted. "He committed...?"

"Yeah," the tenant blurted.

"But he's not dead. You know what he's done. The guy's walked off the street and he's in my room wondering what's happened. I couldn't believe this since we were five flights up and, after listening to more of his details, I realized he was only kidding. He let out this great roar, ran to the patio again, and did the same. Lying there with his arms outstretched and dropped over the side again. I looked over the flippin edge and realized he had simply fallen onto the awning about four metres below him, run along the guttering and entered my room through the window. I sat down on the bed and asked him what he meant. He said something like, nothing happens, nothing happens. I have only an illusion."

I thought about the old man's tale as I eyed him from head to bare feet. No "young blonde bludger" had stayed in the Lodge for weeks. The young chap if he was a visitor had acted in this silly manner for a reason I felt, but had no inkling what it was. I suspected the old man since he had been reported for touching a maid's breasts. Something about him wasn't true. I was about to ask the tenant what room the young larrikin stayed in, when I heard a banging on the door outside. Going to the door, I saw another old man in white stockings. He had a green hat on and smiling in a huge and stupid grin, held out his hand in which I spied three or four plastic coins.

The Writings of Jiggiejig

"Buck off," I said but he remained there. Not wishing to ruin my peace I closed the door violently, went back to the room and holding my tenant by the collar, threw him into the corridor white as a knuckle. I told him people didn't carry on in fine hotels without some kind of punishment. He asked me whether he seemed indecent to me. I yelled out "You're a sleepwalking zombie," and closed the door again loudly. Now he was talking mumbo-jumbo. He must have wedged something in the door, for as I opened it, the cool night air invited my company but the door jammed. I looked at him and cursed. "Did you do this?" I quizzed. He said no and motioned as if to leave right away. I agreed quickly that he'd better but asked hastily what he knew about the burnt pajamas? He looked at me and stood stiffly. "I professed to Christ", he exclaimed as if the voice inside him he could not understand had escaped again. How silly of me, I thought. I looked down at the floor and out through the window over the city opening magic casements and windows with my imagination.

The following day I had to write a letter before breakfast. The job I had was going brilliantly, I wrote. I had now enough money to see Emily-Joan and buy that car she wanted, or at least put a few payments on it. I looked at the mirror and quite quickly turned, but it was only the brass work glittering in the early morning light. A maid left the room down the corridor closing the door behind her, a look of simple gratification on her face.

Here, once there were mornings when days were taken at face value; that neither inspired nor retarded my progress towards that blind purpose - the fulfillment of a taught ethic: the learned procedure called...work. Now, an apple between my teeth like a swab, my head is balanced. Waiting, I look nonchalantly ahead, and although what I have spotted is aslant, since my head tilted square makes me feel more like an idle worker than a roasting pig, (though to some my plumpish appearance may have inspired the analogy), I sense my self-destruction in a similar way to that pig. Now and then the apple is removed to allow comfort it's precinct. The bites I have given it are symmetrical. Neat and clean, forming incisions that smile at me like a pumpkin on Halloween. This way I will spend the hours of the war against the accursed UFO I muse. And in fact am writing this to maintain my discipline and morale to this end.

From data collected and stored in the part of the mind I will call the Will (after some philosopher of historical import), there is reason to believe the UFOs are about three centimeters long, with an orange or red brightness at one end and a sandy coloured tip at the other. As the objects turn they emit smoke and sometimes sparks. Always disappearing into a chamber somewhere below my line of vision. I have evidence that suggests the craft, usually white in colour, are moored in this chamber and move out into the air acting like retrorockets, using their weight relative to gravity to balance on the thrust that is obviously going on since the smoke implies this; to more than about seventy object lengths (compilation based on their movements), away from the "chamber" and then turn in the way a normal rocket does.

The apple I have inserted in my mouth is working since I have not taken a cigarette for half an hour. Whatever the objects really resemble matters not, since I can now maturely ward off their presence with water and bananas, a little pen-sucking and bean play between my teeth..." from The Writings of Jiggiejig, circa 1855.

The book was tilted downwards, the eyes of the professor peering over the horizon of his pince-nez in a satisfied manner.

"Students," he toffed. "Let me say that this time is the most important in our attempts to conquer the habit. To allow you to learn the secret of denying the cigarette I am chronicler and student of philosophy, intent on giving you 'Jiggiejig's Chance to Give Up Smoking' unexpurgated."

The Writings of Jiggiejig II

"You may if you like hold an apple between your teeth, like the sensible men you are and follow my instructions after Jiggiejig. Writing in your diary may help you. Whatever you do, remember the instructions are direct from "Jiggiejig's Chance to Give Up Smoking" and to be used in the manner intended, not as a humble joke. My apple is quickly disappearing now. It is becoming smaller and smaller all except for the worm-hole. An apple lasts about half an hour before it dematerializes. When I wrote this, apples were 2 pounds a bag but with a little imagination you can stockpile them after culling the markets where they have anything from little green apples too huge red Jonathans with double-chins. Now I have fetched a banana for my monkey so to speak and am waiting for the idea that will come regarding "...its employ as in a manner similar to the apple."

The Writings of Jiggiejig III

"It lies upon the brown vest which is upon my gray blanket which is upon my bed which is...There is no end to the word plays, and though the Upon Game he suggests is the easiest to remember it seems boring by itself and unless one is being paid to give smoking away...he smiled precociously...there is more mileage from apples and stomach powder!"

"The banana is ready to be examined. If you have a pen handy, grab it. We are going to decorate our banana in a novel way. Graffiti comes to Uni students a lot. To most people after some effort. I'm covering this first banana with number ones. In a while I'll return to let you know how I went. Jiggiejig claims this will help give us an idea of what we have been suffering from when we finally kick the habit and survey our creativity. Use any outlet for your phrasing upon the banana. "The Universe is a fart from the bum of a Space Elephant?" Yes, that's fine...any graffiti or creative phrasing will suffice. I'm sure if bananas were covered in fours one would have a great chance to become an artist of great repute. Lacquered and arranged they could pass for pieces of magical property. I can't wait for the second banana, which I will cover in Roman twos. Be careful not to break the skin since ink is toxic and we want to be strong well into the evening without any bother. Now, while contemplating the banana I am going to fetch a glass of water. I urge you to do the same. Meet me back here in about a minute.

Remember ... contemplate the banana!"

"Now, Jiggiejig says to drop the apple core you kept (I hope) into the empty glass you have just filled with water and presumably drunk. Do you notice anything? Your apple is of course different to mine. My apple sat fairly neatly halfway down the glass, giving me ideas about novelties that could be made using liquid plastic. You may think this is ridiculous - dropping apples into glasses. Can you see the similarity between putting a cigarette into your mouth? I am trying to, but still can't. Jiggiejig though has been known to fail. Perhaps he is trying to illustrate how trivial the whole thing is. Now on page 14 Jiggie says to 'number the banana completely ... cover it with the numerals in complete design, obscuring all parts of the fruit thereof... peel the fruit and eat it over a period of five minutes.' Alright? Ready? Come on Jiggiejigs. See you in five minutes without your numbered bananas. I have disposed of my apple and banana-skin and feel certain that the cigarette is doomed already. '... when the vapors from the objects of habit have completed their contradiction of the smoker, collect the butts of the day's sin and take six deep breaths for every butt.' Personally students, this book on giving up smoking is just what I needed when I was hooked many years ago."

The Writings of Jiggiejig IV

"Having knocked down the urges associated with three cigarettes I can go outside for a breath of fresh air. The chapter on fruit is a short one and fairly basic as I've outlined. The trouble lies with money. Unless you have an orchard, the saving you intend to make by not smoking is not possible using fruit as a method. Perhaps the next chapter contains the answer to this problem. Its title sounds interesting..

"By Buying Air"

I went outside for a smoke. In about an hour I would finish up here at the School for Personal Development, convinced the conveners of the institution were some of the most underdeveloped creatures on the planet. That book by whatshisname would just not kick butt (pun intended.)

Payola Roller



Tony Sinclair was twenty. He was one of the top young journalists in the Western suburbs. His youth had fetched many a scorching tale from the neighborhood. He would sit in council meetings unnoticed because of it and rely on a thorough education on a provincial paper to pull stories with ease.

There was the Taylor incident, councilors betting when the affairs of the people were to be dealt with. The time he exposed the town mayor as a corrupt wife-swapper. The list, growing every week, had given Tony a super-snoop reputation. Late in July he teamed up with a sharp little Irish girl from the "Centurion" in a no punches-pulling Sydney rock magazine.

The curtains, vivid pink and blue, were parted by a slender girlish hand. Light streamed in through the open window bringing with it a crisp Winter tang, the air from the street below. Susie Mulholland reached for the packet of continental cigarettes and extracted a mauve-coloured piece with a gold tip. Giggling to herself she stumbled to the mattress on the floor where a mound of blankets hid a sleeping body.

"Wake up you lazy reporter, " she cajoled, shaking the blankets with one hand and ashing the cigarette with the other.

" Wh... hat, go away, Susie, can't you see I'm tired." The dull voice from the floor held the girl's attention for a second.

She pondered another second then gave out a business-like:

"Hurry, its Vanderbilt ".

The sleeper jumped to attention, half-ran, half-fell, to the extreme corner of the room and began going through dressing motions.

"Hold on baby I'll be there in a jiff. " exclaimed Tony.

Susie let out a squeal of delight when the young man appeared in front of her, one leg in a pinstripe and dangling a shirt. She followed with a hug.

"You silly, it's not Mr. Vanderbilt. I was only leading you on. High time you were out of bed you know it's 11 o clock."

The young man looked perplexed, saw Susie's young face anticipating the acceptance of her little joke, and kissed her voraciously on the cheek.

"Wow, you sure know how to raise the dead, Sue," he said and collapsed in a heap on the mattress.

Susie prepared coffee for the warrior who emerged a little past noon eager for work. He looked up from his coffee and said,

"By the way Susie, did you say something about Mr. Vanderbilt a while ago?"

YOU'VE GOT THE JOB

The Mr. Vanderbilt in question arrived at the apartment around dinner-time wielding a large bundle of documents. Tony stopped tapping out a story on a forthcoming dance and met him at the door.

"Hello, Mr. Vanderbilt, we've been expecting you all day."

The man, tanned face matching his suit, explained away all delays on his part and sat down on the sofa with a smoker's grunt. Susie, peering through the partition between the kitchen and bedroom, took in the man Tony had seemed so anxious to meet. Vanderbilt was impeccably dressed. From that she thought he must be either a banker or a politician. She had narrowed her personality insight to a high degree or so she thought. The man was neither. He was a radio announcer plundering the airwaves on a small suburban commercial station. Vanderbilt was a fast-talker and in no time came around to the object of the visit.

After several minutes splicing and pointing regularly to the bundle of papers, Susie saw Tony produce a record from his file and eye it with disdain. Unable to control herself any longer she burst in with the excuse "Drinks anyone?". The two young men talked.

"This is the hassle then Tony. We are almost sure the station is taking payola from the record company for the playing of that CD and it's doing it with more than one release. You know how good it would be for our station to expose these big-time sharks don't you."

Tony nodded. "True enough Mr. Vanderbilt but why should you come to me, I mean we've produced only our third issue of "Cycle" and..."

"No excuses Tony. Guess who read your exploits in the 'Mail' and your cover stories on that bastard Hendley on the council. You're the man alright"

So Tony Sinclair scored his first break on the new paper, a break which grew into big news.

A letter landed smack on the table in front of the general manager of 8EK at nine on a Tuesday morning. The short, thin man, graying at the temples, read the postmark and dropped it in the announcer's basket. Two hours later, a slick middle-aged fellow picked it up and tore off the confidential stamp. He disappeared into the tape library and took his place in the announcer's chair for the afternoon session shortly after. Fifteen miles away in Tony's room he and Susie were ready with a tape-recorder and peaking enthusiasm. At exactly three and a half minutes past four, following the weather details, Mike Petersen, avant-garde disc-jockey for the young people's station observed the 'on air' sign and spoke into the microphone.

" Hello, hell-ow. This is your daddio of the radio, Mike Petersen at three-and- a-half minutes the flip-side of four with the Tuesday Disco Beat hour. News on your groups, swinging interviews and the kinkiest records. Hold onto your lounge chair. Just listen to what the DJ at 8 EK has for you today... we spin in this golden oldie from the Tarantula, " "Satellite Shuffle".

Tony turned to Susie.

"Get that Sue, quick write it down" he said insistently. The same persuasive voice rambled through the singles until five when the story ended. Tony was by now seething with excitement. He had noticed the repetition of a track on the program and the flashy blurb attached to it three times. Susie looked worried.

"Did you find out Tone?"

Tony, level-headed and sensible, said nothing but waited on the program every day that week. After a second of arithmetic he looked proudly at Susie and said.

"We've got him, Sue, that cat has played the song I suggested in the letter twice as much this week as last."

"So what?" asserted Susie. "How do we prove it?"

"Ah, Sue baby, leave that up to honesty. Honesty in the name of Tony A. Sinclair of 'Cycle'.

Mike Petersen was no fool. He wasn't going to be caught picking up any payola by himself. That's why he hired Chris, the guy that shared his apartment. Chris was a fool. He played pansy's mate to Petersen for pocket money and did anything the shrewd announcer told him. That's why at lunchtime in Martin Plaza the cocky young offsider waited for the pickup. And that's when Talbury CIB swooped in on a tip from Tony. Tony knew of Petersen's high reputation and his tight mouth. A payola charge would not stick that easily. So he thought his pickup man would spill the beans. But the plan failed. Chris turned out to be a fresh-faced youngster who kept silent and repeated several times he had been sworn to secrecy. No dice. The police felt sorry for the lad and expected Tony to withdraw the accusations. And Tony did. But not before he had harbored a nagging suspicion about Petersen. This guy's no fool, he thought. Why would he threaten this kid when so little is at stake? The guy's into something big. He thought of confronting the two and waiting for one to crack but no.... Petersen was too smart and Chris would not be fool enough to talk and earn himself a ticket to Boot Hill, or wherever treacherous payola pickups go.

Tony had one thing in common with heroes. He had hunches. This time after a long talk to Sue he had found the answer to making the payola case stick. He would follow Petersen, in the belief that the announcer was making bigger ripples than was obvious.

Tony had underestimated the cagey Petersen. After following him for two days and finding no other clue, he decided to rethink the issue. This cat is smart he thought. Why would he leave his operations and movements for anyone to check up on? So, next morning, Tony and Sue arrived at Station 8EK to ask the man questions. They were turned down. Not surprisingly. Tony had given his connection with "Cycle" to the manager who knew Petersen's antagonism towards reporters and stepped in to protect his employee. Over coffee at the apartment, Tony and Sue were chatting.

"It's no good Sue, we've got to find out about this chat and the only way to do it is to check his correspondence."

"Tony, how could we possibly do that? We've only managed a minor case against the guy and anyway that's as far as it goes. Let's forget it," exclaimed Sue, with a tired woman's defiance.

"No, baby, this is big. I can sense it. Petersen looks like a con man and I need a lead for this week's issue."

With that, the two bunked down for the night... Sue convinced that Tony was wrong and he knowing he was right.

PLAN

Just after four on the Wednesday morning, Tony woke to find himself as restless as the mosquitoes niggling his toes. Donning his jeans, he was out of the room and at the rear of the station in half an hour. He glanced at the sign on the mesh fence announcing the presence of MSS security. Tony crawled around the yard until he spotted the guard lighting a cigarette by the rear basement door. If he could only get in through there he thought. The front door opened onto a busy street. Tony pondered for a minute then with a snap of his fingers he muffled a satisfied whimper. He returned to the flat to wake Sue, told her to apply her best makeup, and follow him to the car. Tony drove to the station trying hard to quieten a hysterical Sue, who kept interjecting until she knew exactly of Tony's plans. The car pulled up near the rear of the building and Tony, after fiddling with the engine, disappeared into bushes along the fence.

The fatigued chug of a car that would not start pricked the ears of guard #3649 at Station 8EK. No, he thought. Better not leave the post. Then he spotted a small, feminine figure crying hysterically in the driver's seat of the Porsche and being a man, and a gentleman he conceived equally, trotted off in the direction of the car. It was just the same case he supposed as with the pregnant woman who had felt the call as she drove by the station last February, so why shouldn't he leave his post. Sue bawled out her story to the man who answered with knowing grunts, explaining that he too had a daughter and knew the delicacy of the situation. A girl stranded in the suburbs this early? Why, it spelt trouble? An explanation from Sue regarding the state of the engine, and the man hurried back to the station for tools. Tony had begun his Cadetship in Journalism in radio so he knew that somewhere in every station was a control room with the necessary spanners and such. It was only a slim chance. But it happened.

The guard in his excitement left the door at the back open, letting Tony in. Two flights of stairs and there he was, in front of the receptionist's desk outside the booth where Petersen spent most of the day. Removing the glass louvres, he forced an entry. Now would begin the hardest part of the exercise. Rummaging through the papers on the desk in Petersen's booth he spent a full twenty minutes. Then in the right-hand file he found it. A wad of letters wedged in the rear of the cabinet; some from record companies, some from listeners and four explicitly stating money would be paid if certain songs were given priority on the Disco Beat Show. Tony gave a whelp of delight and hurried down to the rear door. It was locked. Letters in his coat pocket for company, he hid in the basement until eight o'clock when the station techs arrived to begin the day's transmission. Tony caught the 9.25 bus to his apartment and walked in to the questions of Sue intent on knowing the outcome of the adventure.

In the ensuing week the name Sinclair rocked major stations around Australia. In the letters were clues to the biggest payola ring in the country, touching the lives of sixteen announcers and radio staff. It started with the publication of the letters in 'Cycle,' and spread to other papers eager to cash in on the scandal. Petersen had been a small cog in a large racketeering machine which had almost destroyed the freedom of choice for the nation's teenagers. Letters of congratulations flowed into the apartment continuously from the paper's fans who had elected Tony as their head. During the next week's 'Cycle' rocketed to number one among rock periodicals. It wasn't just the payola scandal. Acting on a brainwave, Tony saw his opportunity for a say in the Australian pop world in more than the accepted way: a byline in 'Cycle'. The March issue carried a half-page head proclaiming the start of "the change" for young rockers. He organised a survey and using the results set up the nation's and the world's first Rock Music Court system. In his proposed setup the illegal affairs of overseas artists, victims of brutality at concerts, CD company takeovers and mergers were all to be handled by the court.

A loan from one of his influential promoter friends and it was launched, backed by a bevy of aspiring young lawyers. It heralded a new feeling among teenagers towards the politics of their music, a force being recognised more and more by world authorities. Eventually Tony and Sue sold the paper to the Randal-Murphy chain. His beliefs on music freedom remain today testified to by music papers on any news-stand. Behind every successful man, they say, is a woman. Tony Sinclair's backstop married him in July ..and is still getting him out of bed of a morning. Tony's last job was carrying the tickets from the TAB to his expensive Eltham home and back again, a job he says is still keeping him right behind the jockey.

Riverside Blues



In the early morning, I hooked my Brownie camera delicately to my belt and walked to the car. There on a stack of drawings, I arrayed my biros and small plastic boxes. I wanted the boxes to capture small river insects. Also I had grabbed a thermos of whisky. The riverside was my personal hiding place. It always took me in and gave me explanations. I had lived all year in a company town and in an emergency, always escaped to where I could be myself.

The river then was an accomplice, moving through the shade like a crouching and grotesque co-conspirator. The method employed here by the factory people was an old Indian way. They had sucked the blood from the tin-can compost heaps, only to rub it on the violence on the flank of the mountain. Through some mystic intercession they drowned every separate creature whose voice had been neutralised by the pungent insecticide.

The stench of rotten eggs and the predictable spillages are stark against the green danger that lies between the banks. I wanted to know its toughness. Like a writer at the end of an article I wanted to blow out water. The clippings from my magazines disappointed me compared to that river. It had huge jelly-eyes and fins, and an envelope that was prompt as it moulded to my nude body. This river was like the cauldron of morning.

Bubbling water is forever striving to re-establish its mirror, as birds like smoke in the air, descend and flounce in embroidered tatters. It shows its thighs and its bellies. The tree is like a big needle and I almost allow its medical qualities in with an aggression. Ignorant are those friends who cannot see my strange shade here. At full moon in the river market, miniature fisherman's cottages are on sale in their chocolate ochres for seven dollars. Those with an eye for colour can easily plant their clumsy hands on these inaudible sounds of creation, if they're quick enough.

I go, certain of joy though it is momentary, ephemeral. Virtual children march in this parade of natural verve. The grand life of the budding river is the pasty-faced girl I have always wanted. The mad brown-haired girl who with her fair, tendril hair turns my life into a pink, toned lamp. I'm one of the unhappy tortured men as I watch my neat mustache, visible below my nose. I pout and quickly forget how much it resembles the undergrowth before me, as I must now burn fish-bones and flourish little branches, searching for matches. Already the first frosts are rubbing left and right across the hillocks. They have been rigid and stylized this Winter, as the lake level has dropped, leaving all manner of slanting by-products, and all kinds of gray and fluffy insults in the notches of trees.

Wah, Howl and Screech!



This is a true story. I better than anyone should know. After all I was the main character in the thing. These days my health compels me to write an autobiography, a diary, a rundown of my life in the hellish world of rock music. My neck is bothering me, my skin is splotching like cancer and I have developed a form of leprosy. Why, only yesterday I overheard someone saying that if my nut wasn't screwed on it would fall off. My belly aches and these days you won't find me at all harmonizing.

By way of introduction, my name is Fender ... Fender Stratocaster to be exact (you can call me Mick). During my long musical career, I've been called other things. Some were beautiful names - Little Jimmy, Lucille - but more often unpleasant labels have been attached. A fortnight ago N. Thraller, my harp mate told me,

" Mick, do not do it. Don't write the story. No-one wants to hear from a has-been. "

"Sharrup or I'll bend your reeds, " I said.

Wasn't going to let a shrimp tell this veteran the timing. Don't get me wrong I'm no heavy, quite oppositely, I am a peace freak.

So, I've screamed at audiences and electrocuted two of my owners but they were forgivable incidents. After all, how much picking and choosing can you do. It's the guy that holds your neck that's Bossman. Back to the story. Anyway, as if to amplify Thraller's jibing out speaks Manny Watts the amp and refuses to take my vibes. He says I'm slow and noisy, doesn't speak when my owner turns up to play. Therefore, what happens? My owner starts up. Something about my pickups needing picking up and throwing away. Then he takes me to the music shop. Hell man, hell for guitars. There, as I lay snugly wrapped in my felt home, he opens the latches, leaves me alone in the rear of the shop against the wall. My neck, I say, my neck. But he doesn't hear, he doesn't care.

Then after being this painful way for hours, in comes the electrician with the torture instruments, pulls my ear and says "Ow much on this one Brian?" Well I never. As if guitars could be priced. Doesn't he know we're human?

On the rack he drills into my belly like a mad rapist, fiddles with my socket and ram, whammo, in goes the point of his lead, halfway into my electrics. Then he twists my tremolo arm, spits on my neck and rubs violently with an oily sop. "Pervert," I scream as he plugs me into the amp. Doesn't he know tremolo is a corruption of trembling? "Ow, who's pulling strings around here anyway?" I mutter as he takes away my very string nerves and replaces them with six fresh upstarts. A shock from his soldering iron and I'm paralytic for weeks. A few days later in comes my owner and bargains, yea bargains down my medical expenses.

It isn't enough to be tortured, now he's cutting my value. "Make him pay plenty," I say, "Steal his last copper." Don't get me wrong I'm no heavy. Quite oppositely, I'm a peace freak. But these days it's not safe to leave one's case. Maybe I'm a bit hard I think. After all I'm as good as new and the cat can bring out the best in me. I remember the concerts. He would show me off in front of all the people, brushing his strong hand against my belly and playing with my strings. Randy? Was I randy? All I could think of were the chickies in the front row and I let out a little howl. And then the best part of the night. He'd let me smoke. That's what I said. He'd massage me till I felt really good and then, pop into my head would go his cigarette and I just hung there soaking it all in.

True, there were some scary trips like the time he did the Hendrix and set me on fire. Boy, was I hot under the fretboard. There was an occasion he did the Who and started bashing s... out of me on stage. That was the time he threw me into the audience and I lay in her arms, baby Angie's 16-year-old arms, smoldering with passion (but mostly the act) and split from a.... to breakfast-time. They were the most exciting days of my life. Angie took me to her pad, fixed me with her cute little screwdriver, oiled my private parts and took me to bed with her. Wow, how that chick could handle that screwdriver. No torture This-I was loving it. "Screw me" I cried, a little to the right..harder," I cried. And "Oooh" when she turned out the light and went upstairs to look at her autographs. Angie finally sold me. That day my condenser heart broke. My chrome lost its sheen. I was picked up by a black man who played soothing blues one minute, then turned me up full and thrashed me.

"Extremist," I howled. "Booby." "Sharrup" said his greasy pick and I kept on playing. Then this black would take to the streets. Bumming round Chicago like it was down-and-outers week. Left me in gutters, in draughts, spilt beer all over me. Well, it happened that this chat had a brother. The black died from an overdose one night and bequeathed me to him. The guy was really strung up. He had a thing about guitars and one night as I dozed after a night on the road he came in, threw the covers off and fantasized all over me. A real kinky. "Wow" I said, "Am I that beautiful?" and rubbed myself on the hinge all that night. One thing I might say about myself is my vital statistic - I was born in a California factory back in 1960. Today in 2004 they're clamoring for me. "They made them better then," I hear the guy say when I'm switching hands and then the guy sighs and I see him drooling every time he hears "Let's have a jam."

That's when we start the never-ending grind. Sure I try to tell the chat. "Play blues now" I whisper "Blues, you know b-l-u-e-s." But the guy's super-stoned and doesn't hear. You wonder why I'm so hung up. Then there's the type that has an ego problem. He has to have all the fancy boxes they put out. I've had my neck garroted with a capo, my innards churned by fuzz boxes. One reconciliation was the wah-wah. Beautiful man, just beautiful. That thing made me feel twice the axe. Yes, I've been brutalised. Why can't I be owned by a nice quiet rhythm guitarist or a steady bluesman? Why can't I do amps like Jim Hendrix's machine. I am fed up, strung up... Don't get me wrong, I'm no peace freak. Quite the oppos... what the heck, I think I'll take Thraller's advice and not tell anyone about my life. Sound idea, don't you think?

A Bird Called Andrew



He was unable to decide whether to laugh at the joke he had just told me, or throw himself backwards and feign being ill. He looked quite beaten, though I saw in his eyes a strong motivation, a callous strength. I began my friendship with Andrew four years ago. His problem was that he had no luck with women and had barely kissed one. He wasn't a bad looking chap, with a tried, invincible air. He could even manage a normal smile.

Andrew had so many tales tonight to relate, concerning his misfortunes with women, one could easily suspect him of being a masochist. I was calculating how he could take a girl out and lose her in a restaurant because he wanted to help her in her work, when I brushed the memory from my mind. There like a desperate creature, hanging unsettled on the window nearest the street, was my pet parrot, pecking in an attempt to escape.

On the sixteenth floor one jumps from one's chair in these stupid situations... being prepared is part of the strategy. I waited though, trying to find the place where the wine was working on my desire to move. I couldn't help recalling what Andrew, somewhere behind me, had joked about a minute ago. Something profoundly important from his voice, and regarding birds. Something referring to two birds being held, as nowhere near as good as the free kind.

Finally emerging from my alcoholic slumber, I grabbed the bird and returned it to the cage. Barely seconds later I got up again to remove another bird from the windowpane. This one was bright orange. I put it back without thinking. And I suppose what seems like years must have passed since I rose to remove the bird. Now it is becoming orange again. Its beak is slightly rounder, as I scowl up at the evening sky wondering why the bird leaves its cage so many times. But then they say time does funny things when you're in shock.

I realize that Andrew has had a way of defending himself. There is the gun. He is not beyond it. Andrew has gone to the store and bought himself a gun. There is the gun, the hand, and the body of Andrew. The smell of cordite is overpowering now in my tiny apartment. The clothing of Andrew appears the source of the fumes. Drifting inelegantly across the top of the window are erratic, mauve roadrunners, laughing, laughing. My ears have been shut off from the report and I can barely stand.

The siren floats up through the corridors of the apartment building and out through the ceiling. I try once more to reconstruct the events of Wednesday the 13th before returning to police Headquarters in Harnik with my story for the persons of interest files. It is a full three weeks till I learn that a weird note has been verified by Analysis as having been written by Andrew posing as his wife, and her body is found in the filtering duct at Teslons, manufacturers of instruments used in the aviary trade.

Still Stones Speak



Every morning the guitar picks itself clean. As the stirring sun scratches at the paddocks, the days go by in need of the miners' touch. Here in this golden gray bowl of a valley, mining is itching to be. It's not going to come again though. The right music missed the right words by about a year this time. A village is darker now, the dust in its eyes irritates the gaunt mining authority. The CAT gouges the lunchtime eyes of the river road. Water hisses down the lumpy tread of its wheels. The yellow-coated driver dribbles his hand to his pockets, searches for his green grommets and spanners but this time it's a rusty-handled crimping tool. He's not keen. The dust's too damned thick. It'll never be the same now. Tears are falling now, rivulets also run. At once they merge.

Since the radio had told us the mine had collapsed, we'd been burning inside for freedom. It hadn't been our town. So what? The place had been reclaimed from the swamp but there was an only a past here now. We couldn't start anew. All I wanted to do was hold my wife and the thought the place would close without incident.

"Now it's July the 28th," said Dell scratching his porcine ear.

"The dust is too damned bad. She's going to be too much to rework Sam".

"Sure Dell. If the rain stops, we'll still be full of the slick from higher up. There was a lot of loose rock up there," replied Sam.

He pointed in the direction of the snow-clad foothills to the East. Everyone pointed.

"The dust came from some dry reservoir that had been burnt near the tailings", said Sam.

"No gold or moly was ever found. Just the usual beryl and alluvial tin. The town is rife with rumours that the mines up North are still holding out," he informed.

It's July the 30th and the village is leaving. I'm still here debating the next move with the elders. No one wants to go to the reservoir up North they tell me. Every scree and slide that we had banked on here collapsed last week. Elsewhere would take too much motivation. No. We were not going anywhere else.

"It's July 31. July 31st. You know what that means," grunted Jeff

"The place is closed. This place is over like a grassy river's soak. It's going to the silence. I'm swallowing my pain Sam," he said.

That was two mine closures ago. Such a shame that the mining company and ourselves have resorted to gleaning more value from our doggedness than the potential resources of semi-precious metals. But then, in the final analysis it may not be the brilliance of our ore finds that pays handsomely, but the resilient determination in the bullion nubs of our hammers, picks and fingers.

VICTOR GEORGE II



Author and singer, Victor George had remembered a plot for a short-story he'd wanted to write for a long time, wanting to turn it into a prize-winning piece. He had been too busy fretting with his diversity of interests. And as luck would have it he had shelved it for three years. It was only now that his original ambition became overwhelming. Turning his stereo off, he commenced writing in a blue pad with short, wicked scratches and, painting like a Chinaman, had soon compiled a dozen wicked little sketch-like sentences before the telly switched to test pattern. This irritated him to the point where the battle against it seemed the only stimulant remaining. He had snaffled the leftover chicken and washed it down with a water since a quantity of Moselle he had hidden in the yellow cupboard by his kitchen table had been tipped over, hiding it from his eyes. Victor George looked small and wicked, his hands playing with some important fluff in his pocket, and his eyes dancing around the lounge room with a curious glancing dodge.

He had in his hand a cane stick about three meters long, which seemed normal enough to me since he was always doing something unusual. On paper it sounds completely odd. That a man should wield a three-meter stick in front of his telly would not strike even a fool as normal. But Victor had been odd and theatrically experimented all his life so it was no great surprise. He made a joke, which I asked him to repeat since his beard had baffled the rush of words from his red, intoxicated little mouth, giving me the impression he had laughed at some character on the screen. His rod dangling over the actor's heads implied this. "No", he said, "I will not repeat it and neither will you." After receiving a small piece of cheese in the coat for his difficult attitude, he confessed that one day men would evolve twenty-foot arms so there would be no need for people like him to get up every five minutes and change the dials on their tellies. Evolution was a funny thing, he added, and whisked his cane rod past my head.

I grabbed it the second time he swung it, and making a snide comment on finicky fools, threw him a breadstick which he caught in his mouth like a dog in mid-air. He held it between his fingers like a cigar, attempting once more to give up his dirty little habit of smoking, by substituting a clever imitation all in the same movement. Some days he ate apples. Sometimes I thought Victor George was the greatest author in the world, some days his writings seemed the finest in the universe and many times I thought he was God himself. This though to be truthful, occurred mainly when we drank heavily. Thinking back on his works I can safely say they were slightly better stoned, but on sober reading lost no great quality. Victor George turned to the budgerigar on the yellow mantelpiece and told it off. "Ya mug bird!" "You're a mug bird, wot are ya? A mug bir...he stopped, since his face had begun a series of wincing phenomena. The accused bird had retaliated, letting fall a largish dropping which perched not unlike the mug bird itself, on Victor's mug nose.

I will now discuss, now you know Victor a little better, and his fat well-dressed little self has become imprinted on your mind, the fact the Victor George is the first name I was given and told never to use. If I constructed small pieces of writing for the public as I did I was advised never to use Victor George as a nom. Times changed. I hope your head is not smaller for reading this since Victor George is a man whose air is seldom found to provoke much excitement. But at shrinking people's heads he excels. Victor was a charming example of evolution though and his small misdemeanours and idiosyncratic toying went unnoticed. That was until he began his piece on sleepwalking. Victor George had wanted to write a piece on the sleepwalkers who stole a large sum of money by pleading that they had been members of an insomniacs' society under a hypnotist. They considered the hypnotist would plead on their behalf. It was to be alleged that the three did the thing in a mood of hysteria after one of them lied to the other (asleep, of course).

Victor George was really keen on his writing this prose and tonight he had summoned his facts and his chicken, only to find his alcohol had gone astray. I found him angrily drinking water and whirling the profoundly long rod, getting closer to a vase by his head every tick of the clock. Hens are beginning to tease at his trouser-legs as he stands, and wildly whips at the floor looking for all the world like a clown. The lines on his face are growing again. The eyebrows are laterally straining, and the face on Victor George resembles a pig's. Now angrily begin at the start of this piece for what you have been reading is true in every detail but you have missed a word here and there, and Victor George is doing something rude into his hat. You've upset him. He's pointing his rod at your head. Around him it twirls, around and around and around and if it wasn't for the dark which hides your face temporarily, I would swear he had nearly taken your drink from your hand and sent it into your smelly coat.

It's unfortunate that you're not Victor George's friend, thinks Victor George. I am a little closer. Better to just leave him alone. Leave him well alone. Leave the poor little blighter alone. Now start at the beginning or he'll give you one in the coat.

And A Touch of Gin



"You can't do anything properly." I said these words in a rather joking manner, which must have sounded odd for she popped back with "There's no need to be depressed. You haven't been drinking for twenty years without a break have you?" I grasped her meaning and told her I had a surprising capacity to resist the temptation. I wasn't an alcoholic if that's what she meant. She felt pleased and even managed her first twisted star smile. It struck me because it was never deep for its life, of several seconds, the warmth returned to her face and I felt sure that by late evening if I obtained a bottle from somewhere, she would perhaps come up rosier.

I returned after a few minutes with a bottle of ginger-wine and there we sat drinking and half-understanding ourselves until about two o'clock that morning. I was sure I had found here a woman who grew in beauty the more she laughed. I knew that, if I wanted at my skill of delivering the compliment, she would perhaps turn back to the small, wizened bored lady she had been earlier. So I tried every trick to get her to laugh. We drank and I spoke and I split words... She laughed. I told jokes and we laughed... I talked through my nose and she... stopped laughing.

I began playing with my fingers feverishly because I was beginning to like this woman and the volume of her singing as well. She asked me several questions. A man of my age was seldom seen with girls so young. She even laughed when I lunged at her throat in a vain effort to undo her lace collar. She smiled rather nastily then said, "Don't deceive me. This is a harlot's game you're playing." I felt taken aback for a minute thinking she may have been referring to me or had burst in and forgotten the language temporarily.

The next day I began to have strange feelings toward her. The tentacles of my self-indulgence became so ridiculous at times, she lost her temper and, in a grassy spot in which I once kept a small terrier, left a note for me in her obsession. She stated quite vigorously she had no interest in vivisection at all. I couldn't trace back the comment and felt she was pulling my leg. I wondered about it for another week. I couldn't find her for five whole days.

On the sixth I realized she had gone and I left for my other address for a few days, as I knew that dwelling on her departure would not please me. I owned two houses and it suited my personality. Architecture would grow the gods of loneliness if I remained here. It would cause me to lie in the long grass of the unsavory garden again, not fretting, but not at all as cheerful as I had been. I cast my eyes toward the kitchen door upon returning several weeks after she had gone without letting me know, and saw that somebody had left a message.

It was hard to say who wrote it. It was certainly odd. It referred to a group of people that had set up an organisation in the town to examine alcoholism and the problems associated with it. I attended one of their meetings quite by accident and heard a stamping of feet, which I took to be children. In the house, I saw that the alcoholics club had attempted to gain some kind of outlet by stamping on several layers of hessian, and it was that material I happened to fall down at the end of the night.

Those who had the strength would go and those who had the urge again would stay for counselling. Their rules were interesting. He that stayed for more than a week would need to return without fail for another, being locked up on the premises. It was a game of survival for there was no real way of alerting the police by phone. The only way was to walk three miles and so the crime was as a rule fairly serious. The police having been humiliated by having to drive three kilometres often flung the inebriate into the cell without much ado.

Should he be unlucky enough to have less than they thought was decent on him in terms of money, he stood the chance of being sent to the city watch-house thirty kilometres away. Here he would need considerable bail to obtain any kind of station in the province open to free men. It was while hurrying back from the Alcoholics Club after having lost money on the horses that I spied a young man of about twenty-seven. He looked very much like a friend I knew, and picking him up by the collar I asked him his name "Bert, Chapman...Bert" he said.

I told him to know what he should know and left him there to take fits before the full moon. I regretted my actions for the police called on me the next morning and asked me whether I had any decency at all. I had thought I had seen a suffering, useless alcoholic in the gutter and left him there at the mercy of the elements. It was a moot point though whether he was suffering. I said "It wasn't even cold, sir." And talked of the manner in which the man addressed me. This seemed enough, though I must say, that when I saw the police on another occasion to buy a fishing licence, I noted a facial similarity. The officer I saw shuffling papers on the table behind the coffee machine looked so like the man I saw in the gutter, that I nearly asked for his rank.

Fortunately, I wasn't foolish enough to do this as, when an old man who had lived in the village for many years passed away in the park, the policeman called on me, giving me more than a chance to reprimand him for the unbridled manner his friend had lied. You see, the officer was working in the gutter, pretending to be an alcoholic and I brought it to his notice shaking his hand and asking him whether he thought I was completely daft.

He asked me a little smugly. "Why should I think that?" To which I remarked in a remarkably handsome manner, that it was obvious from the start that the policeman was faking a drunk in the gutter. If he looked carefully at his hands he would see them twice as red as a complete drunkard's. From his pocket a small trickle of whisky that had somehow hung above his thigh, was apparent. This obviously meant that he was employed as a drunk impersonator I told him. He was quite irate at being called a pseudo-alcoholic by this load of potentially sarcastic bollocks, but he hadn't returned the next day to find out about the old man who had passed away.

This convinced me that he was either a complete fool or a coward. It wasn't until the following March that I learnt that he had been arrested with another officer for conspiring to rob a Barclays Bank. I laughed at this because I imagined quite quickly what had occurred, and poured myself a drink, a little less than I usually have, and a little more for the distraction the officer had caused me..plus, a touch of gin.

An Effigy of a Man



After pestering the experts by letter I had indeed found the perfect experiment. Although I was an agnostic and although I was still close to the truth and the landmarks of my past, towards the end I must admit the going was hard. I originally designed the bonfire from an illustration in an encyclopedia for children. It was almost forty feet high and at its core a telephone-pole stood erect, around which I had woven a barbed trellis. From this I hung all the main branches and leaves using the cable coils as foliage supports. After two months it was ready. I watched it for only half a day photographing it, for I felt that should I wait any longer I would lose my interest. But now as this giant tree drove its cold but leafy presence into the womb of the sky like a huge phallus, I hired a black lineman to place at the top an effigy of a man many knew well...the hated shire councilor in the way of these natives' plans for land control.

One though could see that without some kind of ceremony there would not be any recognition therefore rendering the experiment a failure, so to this end I had planned a removal of the effigy while I had the use of a helicopter. The idea was that the chopper would fly low over the top of the artificial tree, pluck the man and drop him from a sensible height to the ground where he would be easily recognised and the idea of the experiment would succeed. I explained the objective thus to the native assistant and he nodded in agreement, a little too often I felt. It really worked well in principle though I must admit. I began to understand I couldn't pursue this line of thinking much longer for though my ambition was to create a stalling manoeuvre so that my friends could escape from a prison I felt this could very well occur in real life. At this point I became lazy as I saw the people gathering around this artificial creation. At ten minutes past nine the helicopter removed the effigy to where the people milling around began shouting according to my original intention. I took their money and left it in a canvas on the ground.

All I could see now was that my clumsy fingers were itching for a microphone and I remembered a vast event that had occurred many years ago. I had spoken at a fete and the same temerous excitement filled my hands. They applauded me and I felt what I had said was indeed true. The man was in fact dead. He had fallen from a great height and now I could see though my vision was hazy that over by creek a group of footballers were talking together and drinking. They moved away and as I moved through the debris of noisy and hullabaloo, dimly lit branches, candles and Christmas lights, coils and memories of black men searching for a door, I heard what appeared to me a fire-siren and commenced to flee like a man falling. The shire councilor had not returned for two days and when his wife rang me the pieces fell into place. The insane stampede that night, the whooping and yelling and the absence of the native assistant told me my message had not fallen on the most intelligent ears. The effigy was not so much an effigy, as the councillor himself!

THE CARELESS ADMINISTRATION



The little wooden bowl that one sees in this village and which has created so much delight and amazement, I have just learned has been broken. Tomorrow everything is in my hands. I must work out a way to define what kind of court I must run, what kind of penalty to investigate. I refused three people admission last week and they had returned. I felt that they had made neither the temperamental adjustment nor the simple domestic arrangement of finding a place and suspected them of having broken the pot. There was no reason why I couldn't quizz them now since I could see they had to be accompanied by a guard, their manners being so apparently contrary as to render them dangerous.

Evidently you think I have less insight into the future because I cannot appropriate the inhabitants of a village in a professional manner. I'm sure an illustration I shall give you will destroy this apprehension. And I hope you will be willing to accept that the facts of the case at the present moment are honest. I am saying this because I want you to share my point of view. It seems to me not only that the form of tallness itself absolutely declines to be short, as well as tall, but also that the tallness which is within us never admits smallness and declines to be surpassed. It is in fact more than just a moral argument because the size of these three errant villagers is unique in itself. Their iridescent rainbow eyes check the fences like fishes do on greasy paper. One chap looks like a prehistoric rock, the other has a roman-coin profile and the third looks like a German. However they are all Nincompoota and all part of my recent studies into this prehistoric tribe. In my brain the filaments, trails reconnected and branched, the war games, the paths of their many destinies are arranged in a semi-circle where mnemonically I have a stack of lunatic connections and when I can, resort to them. Usually though the technique employed is quite straightforward. I order them... All they give me is a straight answer. About what?

Well, now for example, looking over my shoulder I see that everything is alive. But though this is an excellent piece of activity - peas, beans voraciously consumed with copious amounts of Stirling tea, there is inconspicuous mischief in the wings. There always is here. On the rock I can see them washing their dishes and there are villagers floating and finding bodies of dead fish. In fact the whole village resounds with laughter and the smell of happy people cooking food. But over there I can see like smashed rocks, their edges serrated, are several ruined statues and rag effigies, their geometrical shapes cute but mad and rather off-key. The mischief I speak of, once more. I rinse the jars and tins and soon I realise that to toughen them into submission I must get really dirty. Leave effigies alone. They are from the elders. But still they sit there like so many Joes in a ship, crumpled, uneasy and smiling idiotically. I was another comic romantic from the Government with an accent, was all I'm sure they picked up from me. I arrived at the village centre and interrogated the villagers until they explained to me though no-one was hurt the effigies were destroyed in an initiation ceremony the night before. The trio's spokesman was about to tell me about Heron island where a large native with a harsh-colored chest had thrown a tantrum, when quite quickly I flipped him across the ear sending him like a sprout into a bag. He fiddled with his nose and ear and looked extremely disappointed. It reminded me of an incident six months ago that has begun this impulsive circular punishment I write to you of. Back then I was ready to write in my diary an amusing anecdote when I heard several of the Poota swearing, hassling and covering the fireplace with dried sticks. Running outside I pointed and within pecking-range of the natives, I ordered a halt to this latest ceremony. The words crystallising in the night air before me like the 'smoke' one breathes in the air on a frosty morning. No sooner had my voice been recognised than the fools, malevolent and rough as they were, began kicking their legs and smearing their arms and bodies with my suntan lotion. The instinct to administer entered my hand and without even stubbing my cigarette, I struck them as a bolt strikes a trail of trees, felling them at intervals. Then I was sorry. However the coarse-grained nincompoots went right on fishing in my bag. It was when they struck my private photographs of Elaine, the wife I had left behind in Newcastle, that I stared wildly into the air and raising my arm to the level of the Nincompoota Chieftain wrenched him onto the ground as a street-wise hoodlum educates a poor man. I knew there was something I needed to say about these three villagers and I remarked to my second-in-command that in this system if one laughed around boyishly as authors had done here the ground would soon swallow one up. So without dallying I lined them up and speaking quietly as if to disguise some divine revelation I read a sad and helpless letter Elaine had sent me, more to myself than to the throng of poor and ignorant natives, then quite erratically shot the three of them with my .45 revolver.

Square-faced then I lay in the sooty prison enclosure until I could see that Jonathon Chapman because of his impulsiveness now owned only a small plot of semi-criminal types like himself and was not even ashamed to lie on his belly in the same bloody sty. It wasn't like this in Sydney from where I had escaped. I would have been in for five years and forgotten for such a crime of wounding with intent. But even in the sty reading a murder mystery he created the distinct impression he gave a toss. And the definition of intent is still with Jonathon Chapman. That is why impulsive though his administration had been he was free after only five months. But then that is the level of corruption that this island has sunk to. It is also testimony to my lack of vulnerability. Now I simply need to ascertain a. who broke the bowl and b. whether I can afford another stint in hell... because of well, simply because of my infernal, errant will.

NAME YOUR POISON



He was an honorable young man. What sense of dishonour would almost bring the summer down on the possessor of this virtue, what ignominy? Something I will never understand ruined Don's life. And I feel it had quite a lot to do with his sense of honour. A profane and reckless Indian fellow laughed at him. He was only young then. Now he's wasted, all his strength has gone. He has suffered the heaviest of all his sorrows this year. A raincoat he wanted to buy, a pair of shoes, powdered milk, he cannot manage. He hasn't even been out into the street.

His idea of entertainment has degenerated from the hurly burly of the inner city to the seediest and most unlikely of suburban pubs. He owns a canoe, a thin blue nylon rope ties it to a screw eye in the wall. But not much else. I can see it from here. But he's still with us. However, he went quite mad, quite unexpectedly last year. Destroyed everyone but himself. His body insisted with one side of an argument. He insisted that life had planted in him a warning. And I thought it had quite a lot to do with his essentially good personality. Dishonouring Don was a mistake made by a fool that I brought to justice. It was three years before they found the hidden deeds and legal papers. It wasn't long after that they imprisoned him for nine years. If he hadn't been committed, Don perhaps would not be here today. He wouldn't even own his death duties. For this foreigner, Mr Shapples, a dubious property consultant, had worked for many years telling half-lies and truths about Don we will have to remember always. The Collectorate as his outfit was called, had its way with any court.

Mr Shapples had suburban gardens that gave way to suburban 'African' allotments. He owned small villages in the country whose names were difficult to pronounce. He simultaneously owned two office blocks in the inner-city that were so overgrown that all one could see was a half-vision of some grey green valley. But with nothing more than this distant nucleus of architecture as a venture, Don had quite a career with the Indian shyster, Mr Shapples. I used to wake at four o' clock to work as a clerk and the tea and sugar that attends a consumer affairs job in the city. Don was immersed in his real estate ventures with Shapples then. At night I struggled with the demons of TV and comedy writing. But overnight he was going to do something similar. He was going to study. What was he going to achieve though? No one knew.

He left our hotel early one morning to commence his comedy career. A funny thing then occurred. Everyone started to read humor and tell jokes. They walked off. To tell the truth Don was quite popular and quickly became the object of interest. He was down at the bar most of the time. He was forever taking out pieces of paper from the pockets of his expensive French jackets, and reading a joke he had written, to any who frequented the bar with a modicum of intelligence. He wrote them in bed. Once he travelled to the country in a mindless rage and returned cool and suave with a book full of "substantial" jokes that had somehow saved him from the cliff.

Everyone looked at me as I entered the bar of the Iron Standard as around my ears I heard 'Here he comes..the Student Prince'. I heard a distant drone and knew someone was cleaning out the kitchen as was customary each year. I poked my head through the enclosure and asked "Working all day and didn't want to be disturbed?" The kitchen hands weren't really keen on any kind of conversation. A bright silver object flew over my head heading to the garden table on the right, as evidence of this. I turned, adjusted my tie in the mirror and walked to where I saw that a folder with the name Don on it had been left by one of the schools of art. I asked whether Don had in fact been. "I'm sorry I've been blabbering as usual and I believe I've depressed you but I don't think he has" an effeminate voice came back from behind a pantry. Apparently he'd been drinking quite a lot. However this made me anxious. It seemed unlikely that Don had disappeared.

It didn't look right. However I spirited past the table which had been cleaned with a squeegee on my right, and walked past the ruined floor between the broken planking. Soon I had disappeared into the throng. I knew there been a fight. I learnt it had occurred the night before and shifted my attention elsewhere. I knew that word travelled fast and I didn't want anything but a normal drink. There was a lot of anguish and talk about prejudice that night and I couldn't stand much of it. I looked to my left continually but what could I say. I knew very well there would be talk over their coffee cups about my suspicious nature, but I wasn't into accumulating worry-lines. I suspected from the tilt of their heads they were obsessed.

For a fleeting second I waited, not knowing whether I should see a psychiatrist again, for sometimes I thought it was the best course of action. I did lose my most serious nature, wanted to laugh at jokes but seldom found them funny. These two observations, albeit critical, made me worried enough for me to wonder about my psychological well being. I remember when I was here with my friend Don last time and cracked a silly joke which was taken the wrong way, and immediately spoke up. I soon found I had related the joke wrongly. I will never forget my embarrassment.

Don tonight was somewhere else and this was the immediate problem. Nervous and tentative now, I was becoming impatient. He wasn't in the toilet. I checked across the dark wide corridor. I found the panelled door was ajar and even looked behind there, but Dan wasn't inside. He must have climbed the stairs into...no the room was closed at night. Against the brightly painted bulbs where the baths were being renovated I could see the beginning of a garden which appealed to me, since I was fond of drinking outside. The fact that I was immaculately dressed in a red suit and white shirt seemed amusing to the fat little man on the right with the dog's face. Finding the spot where I first signed Don in, I spied on the register that his name wasn't Don at all. The discovery nearly crippled me. On closer examination the name Donna Blarin was in fact clearly scrawled."Voilez,a girl." Sarcastically I muttered under my breath about not seeing the objective was under my nose all along. I had of course have noticed this was a camp pub.

Again the fact that I was immaculately dressed in a red suit and white shirt seemed amusing to the fat little man on the right with the dog's face. I left walking down the boulevarde very quickly. About twenty metres away I yelled very loudly, "Foolish thing you imagine sir, that's for sure!" And embarrassed myself again. This time I decided I was not to feel awkward at any time during the next few days.I wasn't a pretty boy, neither was Don. It was three days later I learned that Don had been to the pub and that as I suspected he had left a book of poetry there. I was not really surprised to learn he had changed his name having been in the pub next door. Rather than risk being taken for an straight guy in a camp pub he had signed in as a girl. This would allow him to escape detection on reclaiming the damned book of poetry he had left behind.

As he walked in thick-eared and more claret on his shirt than was appropriate, I noted on his face a look I will never understand. Pubs here in East London...What are they going to annoy people with next? he mumbled loudly. It wasn't enough that the pub was a haven for gender outsiders; the pub next door was a migrant's hangout. Mostly Indians drank there, including once upon a time, a Mr Shapples, the criminal consultant, now Mr Shappling. Somewhere in that latter den of illiteracy, someone had misunderstood Don's claim to a poetry book in the adjoining pub.

THE LONG STREET



"I'm glad that I got a good place. You can't expect elegant young men like Richard to feel any kind of passion for fish, birds and dogs". That was the last I heard of fair Marjorie. Now the world is ignorant of her worth. She has been slandered, her picture-exhibitions have been reduced to peasant scribbles. Her ugly things have been brought before them. Back in the house I can see through the window that the noisy streets will soon resound to the sounds of school-musicians returning from the park, wheeling their bicycles regimentally, their voices exaggerated like clarinets and strings in the summer evening. I am alone now. There can't be a hell worse than this. Private stars have faded from my life. I now need only company, my hero and my god is Euphoria.

Not so before in the warming sun. I was comforted to an extent. Now I go to the stadium to see beauty incarnate. The powers of my two worlds are colliding now as I return to my diary, pen poised only to escape like an unspoken poem. I find myself locking, no longer do I visit the hotel. All the people who lunch outside McDonalds will be coming back too soon. They'll be glad of anything here in the shelter, where the flowers are linking their nubile arms around each other, afraid of revealing their whereabouts. Perhaps I will find potatoes to peel, some kind of space where I can talk, coffee perhaps, bottlewashing. But they will be here and very soon I shall be the first to leave. A wastepaper-basket is filled to the brim with the skeletal branches of silver paper and tinsel trees. There is nothing to worry about. I can always escape to the city, spend my money on jukeboxes and adult video games. But my reasons are deeper though. I find in the city an impenetratable track that is my own and branch off it, tossing my cares into some bar, dodging the interpretation of the world as seen through the eyes of the poor, the illiterate and the unjust. I believe in the world. Fear does not occur to me anymore. I have caught and found my escape. My wealth is in the architecture around me, I've been told. I cannot sadly though make it abundant. This tonic is gulped down. There is some evidence that much discussion may reveal a new direction in writing. I feel however further from the School for Creative Arts now than ever. I must disappoint my followers. I am damned apathetic. My attitude is that of a running soldier, content to attack the trajectory leaving only footmarks. I will let the Europeans conquer. I have understood the nature of sands, pebbles and leaves. I have understood the man, his long red tongue hanging before the fires of the mountainous woods. I've gone down to the basement to try and live alone. Now I'm going to the city. Before I do though I'll finish this little job of clearing away. Then there will be no barrier to my embezzlement of colour. I sit and something happens very quickly. Someone cries out White Bitch. That was confidential."

THE LONG STREET II

I half slip to the phone and ring to police who arrive in time to find the disfigured body of a dog and I spend, for the second time in my life, a night in the police cells telling the sheriff that my idle dreams are just that. But not before I have seen that he is unable to believe the truth. I thought somebody had been hurt. Somebody cried "Blood." But this disused temple will be mine another night since I know the man has a penchant for common blood and I am quickly learning how to wear my hair and clothes and hair to this effect. Today, Sunday I will sit working on my diary proper. Wednesday morning will find me searching through the rubble of my room for a useful

letter where someone has squashed my lunch or destroyed my goldfish. Those who follow in the wake of the officers have often tampered with my songs, stealing their eloquence and modulation. It will be the third time should it occur. My private vision is that on an innocent wing I shall endeavour to return to the city, to plainly manifest my thoughts in some quiet void where drink and a larger glory of memory will give some youthful songwriter a good half-hour and some inspiring woman a good hard ride. But I'm writing now. I want a Rubik's Cube and two pieces of fish. I know what the old man will say. "You're going insane in there," his mouth half-open roughly picking at his chin. That is the poor cove that owns this town. It's a wonder I stay here, only the main street two kilometres long keeps me. Now and in the future it will be pointless to deny. I am wearing now my most common aspect as I leave, as predicted, to the city. It is then that some sort of order jumps into the air before me, advances my education. I announce the good news to the officer once more that 'No, I did not see who dun it' yes, the mutt is recovering.' For my hand is not slight and less when it has in the centre of its gravity a large half-finished Rubik's Cube. Who am I trying to kid? I must continue in a polite mode though the frustration makes it difficult. It always happens. At least I fortunately have something in my hand to fend off the brute and something in my mouth to dissuade the fool. In defence of Rubik's Cube I am going to write unfailingly faithfully. Where shall I begin?

"Silly Faithful Thing. I wish to go the city where in the colorful prisms.. to sell my..." Oh, what the hell. I'll just sit here shuffling the Universe. Seeing this solid rainbow as the closest I'll ever get to my own escape... to the Long Street.

PSYCHO ROCK



Winter. The Year of Our Lord (although many thought Satan prevailed) 2028. One hundred years had passed since Sigmund Freud and Man was finding his Psychology pushing him down the path to disaster. Subliminal advertising was rampant. It had all started when someone flashed 'Eat More Popcorn' 60 years earlier at a cinema faster than the eye could see. Not only did popcorn sell better but an unknown weapon was hatched. New ways of controlling the tender brains of the masses were being tested. Neuroses had increased alarmingly. Inevitably the sourness and debauchery of the age filtered down to the youth. And the tool that appeared as the greatest way of brainwashing the young was their music. In August 2028, the World Press began an assault on the 'psycho rockers'. Yes, that hitherto unknown possibility, the transitive changing of peoples' beliefs, even through music, was now manifest.

That was three years ago. I was then Alex Carmody, Chief Medical Public Relations Officer with the Marysville Childrens' Hospital, a position that gave me ringside to the debacle facing the mass mind. Through my efforts the world was rid of a potential mind-fuck. What had started as a sin of Capitalism used by many advertisers, was now a Government device threatening the democratic process. In September 2029 the Order of the British Empire (OBE) came my way bestowed by a Queen who wrote a Thank You letter. Therein lies a story, a very personal and frightening one...

Strange how the ward on the ninth floor gave one a feeling of being in a television doctors' show with all the clinical vibe of the show Dr Ben Casey from the 60s. One expected the doors at the end of the corridor to fly open heralding the appearance of a zooming hospital bed being wheeled into theater for urgent surgery. Pondering this absorbed me for a while. Within seconds dream became reality as the doors swung wide and a bed shot past very urgently into Theater B. "That's Doctor Wilson" I mused watching the taut face of the surgeon. "Funny. He was on holidays last week. Must have recalled him." The plump canteen operator appeared not to hear.

I'd heard a lot about this doctor from nurses and the odd patient. He was a superlative medico and some thought he would one day run the hospital himself. It occurred to me to see if I could perhaps have a coffee with him. The words were on the tip of my tongue when surprise surprise Dr Wilson asked: "You're Alex Carmody aren't you? Heard some rave reports about your work here. Fancy a coffee?"

I was only too happy to accept this invitation as I had always wanted to find out more about Wilson's forte in the hospital, neurosurgery and new techniques he was attempting. Not long after we began conversing and into our second coffee latte he suggested I accompany him to his lab where he had something spectacular he said, to show me. So I accompanied him to his lab in the basement of the hospital, a place totally off limits to all staff and peppered with CCTV cams. We walked down the crimson carpet steps on the first floor and soon were in the doctor's lab. Wilson had waited for 11.30 that night with care. There would be no-one around he said. We would be alone. Weaving my way around his beakers and test tubes, I sat on a stool with an admiring grunt, such was my impression of the place. Glassware and pipettes seemed enough at home but the stereo machine in the corner did not. The doctor plugged it in and quickly followed by switching on a screen that was set up before me.

"This is a cardiograph machine, Carmody", he said, adjusting a black dial on its face. "'This", the doctor said picking up a DVD with gold edges, "is a collection of songs from a new group in the world , 'Gulliver.' "

He turned towards a tiny glass tube at the bottom of which a blob was throbbing. "We have here a fetus", he exclaimed. "The mother has kindly allowed it to be used for my experiments. It's 2028 you know Carmody, the year of the test-tube baby. Once we're finished with the tests, the little fellow goes back into the womb and all is ready for a normal birth. But now look here at the screen Carmody." The doctor's face tightened as he flipped a switch sending the baby-to-be's heartbeat onto the machine. He flipped another switch and the stereo churned out the morbid acid-rock. The flickers of heartbeat lined up on the screen. Also on the screen after a little fiddling came the beat of the record. "Now Carmody...what do you see?" he asked. "The humps are regular," I replied, a frothy beer in my quivering hand. "No man...look at both of them," the doctor retorted. The beats increased and then during one song became one...in sync. "The beat of the song and the baby's heart are identical." I studied the screen with much interest, indicating this was no coincidence. "Right, Carmody," And we know enough about hypnotism to understand that don't we man..." I let go... "I don't know exactly what you're getting at doctor."

Doctor Wilson put down his chrome glasses in a serious manner. " We're not sure about this Carmody, but the psycho group has been born, pardon the pun. A musical disaster, a hypnotic, brainwashing 88 beats-per-minute menace. Very dangerous. Very unknown."

Two month's research on Doctor Wilson's part yielded some frightening facts about the new group. Among his findings were that the number of bands with the 88-beat synchronization was growing. He had narrowed it down to one record company – Spiral Seven Records. Not only were groups with the company releasing the dangerous records, but they had released albums with other fishy beat setups. It appeared the music was already affecting thousands of people. Sales had rocketed since the new music. They had eaten more popcorn it seemed.

One Monday afternoon found the doctor and myself arguing heatedly in the lab. He wanted me for an assignment. "Look Doctor. I can't leave my job on a wacky hunch these records are harmful." I half-shouted. " I know you want someone to investigate the company but I'm sorry I would be out of my depth" were my exact words. Wilson's face split into planes as he grimaced. "Look Carmody, we've been good friends for a year. Don't spoil it now."

After prompting, my better side shone out and two days later I was knocking on the door of the manager Spiral Seven Records in the tiny coastal city. He was however completely closed to my questions.

"No dice with the manager," I cabled back to Dr Wilson." "Keep trying" read the email the doctor sent me. A "Need more money," message saw a small pimply boy bring a cheque for \$500 from the hospital to the door of my flat.

Tuesday August 7. Any chance of cracking the system lay with one of the groups. I checked out the town's music store and returned to my flat with a selection of blues harps or harmonicas as they were originally called. Since my youth I'd had a love of the tiny machines. It was the only way I could get into the group setup. My early interest in the harps paid dividends. The old feel came back and I soon realized my lungs had become stronger, my handling better. I saw the manager of Sussex, a rock blues combo that appeared to use new techniques affiliated with the record company. He suggested I see the lead guitarist who flatly ruled out my chances. They were professionals he said. I was close but not quite. This surprised the socks off me. I hadn't played for years.

It was then I hit upon the way out..or in, to be precise. If I couldn't find any evidence of foul play with the group, I would at least get into a band, my ambition since teendom. So wiring my bank in London, I withdrew all my savings, \$8,000 and waved it in front of the manager's face. It was enough. I was in with conditions. They were that if I showed no ability the money would be forfeited and I would be told politely to push off. If I fitted in the money would still be theirs but that was another proposition. This irked me a little. Sussex with their new harp soloist toured the Dalton area for a month. Here was a conflict of interests already. Finding I was playing well enough for session work I became absorbed in my music, almost forgetting my real purpose. Sure I asked questions, but these guys were friendly and I felt we'd knocked it off perfectly. It was one Saturday when we entered the studio to lay down another album that suspicions snowballed. It was then that a Mister X appeared under the name of Roderick. He was a middle-aged man who I was told had been in records since Bill Haley. He was the boss man giving all the orders. I watched him closely all that week, encountering a solid wall. Finally I gave up in desperation and cabled the doctor for a few more dollars to return. Then on the following day two things happened which made me cancel my ticket back to London. I heard from the bass-player the group were going to use some new equipment Roderick had invented, in some of their latest songs for the album. Some subtle questioning told me they were going to use a beat synthesizer. This was a Eureka moment and could hardly contain my delight. I suggested I play my harp into it to see what came of it and they serendipitously agreed. It appeared they had prerecorded synthesized music which they were going to play at the same time as the main material. Was this the psycho menace being played out in front of me? The chances were 50-50. How was I going to find out?

The night of the practice went well until the synthesizing began. The manager took me aside and again said I was close..but not quite. This irked me substantially. That was his original comment when I began. Well , the thought I had lost \$8000 loomed before me. I had never struck anyone before but on this occasion I picked up the cymbal stand from the drummer's bay and cracked the manager over the shoulder with it just hard enough for me to escape. As I bolted like a criminal I managed to take with me some of the synthesizing tapes that were being assembled before combining with the album material. Here surely was the 88-beat menace. I flew back to London and breathlessly confronted Doctor Wilson two hours later.

The same procedure followed. In the doctor's lab the cardiograph screen and the baby in the test tube. He plugged in one of the stolen tapes and watched the screen. There was nothing the whole length of the song. "Nice harp," the doctor smiled. "Ah...Yes...that's me Doc" I proudly mumbled. It had been pre-recorded before the possible beat insert was used. Slowly a small effect crossed the screen. In 20 seconds the beat of the music miraculously synced with the fetus heart beat. However the harp I had so diligently improved on cut across it blurring the fact it was the rebel hypnotic addition. I had not cried since falling off a park structure in my teens. But now I definitely felt on the verge...

Wait on. "I have a sound engineering software package. Give me a shake" he said. Soon the harp had been turned down sufficiently and sent to the back allowing the beats to be examined properly.

In 2029 the Hospital that employed Doctor Wilson filed a major suit against Spectrum Seven Records alleging unspecified and illegal use of medical hypnosis techniques. Doctor Wilson won the case with evidence I had gained that night by taking the suspicious tapes. For my part the Doctor gave me 60 per cent of the million and a half dollars the case netted him. I have been living comfortably in the Caribbean for the last three years and it looks like I will have enough for the rest of my life. The Psycho Rock people made no further progress in their musical careers although I did hear one of them was doing Community Work in an effort to make sure no hypnotic beats were ever inserted in music. So he should have. If he hadn't taken this approach he would have landed in the same psychobabble as his mates... the hypnotic, brainwashing din of Lancing South Prison.

EDDIE'S GRAND IMPULSE



The best solution to the questions hung in the air and finally the conclusion always turned out the same. The people knew nothing about his plight and were still trying to inform themselves. They were in need of conversation. It was not difficult for him to guess that tonight the problem he had taken on would not offend as much if he gave it some thought. So instead of turning up to the cafe and losing his identity, instead of bowing to their demands he planned it out. He played his mind-games to assert himself so that nothing would be left of the night in his mind later on. He would never submit to any authority so like a minor criminal he planned his questioning. He suddenly realised that instead of him being the witless lad he sounded more and more like a reporter writing his questions down then thinking of the possible answers and practising them aloud. Telling them was more like commandeering, standing up for oneself, so he collected his details and theories and used it to obtain adages and phrases. He also noticed that though his defence looked formidable enough it was always shaky and imagined this an important event, not a hollow place as potential as the day he had won the swimming finals. Life again became liveable. His fate and argument was carried away for a time as he glanced over the confectionery counter, saw the big-bellied type who'd been working there three days, more to see the amusement on his face than to get an answer. They laughed together for a while and Eddy broke off a straw from a container saying as he did so that he thought the normal straws were much better. The fat-bellied man countered with the statement that rip-off straws were all the mode in New York and he could not see how they could go wrong in this village sixty south. Eddie turned to the profane gaze of the girls by the jukebox. A raw looking woman set the group off. He could see she had not so much a struggle with her head as with the rest of her body and one could not mention one without the other. She was extremely large. So large in fact that the girls who were twice as large as her looked normal. Eddie went through the main part of the cafe, into the lounge where he saw the usual chairs. Sitting there he noted as he always did the design on the floor, a hexagonal path that looked a collection of medical material, sand and wine casks, beehives, wax and shoes. He wondered about this. It was almost hieroglyphic. As he noted the legs on the chairs and the wooden effects about the lounge his eyes were attracted to the Chinese artwork, the sacrificial dancers where a year ago he had noticed a small bloodstone. He had thought about this for a while as he felt perhaps a mosquito had come through, nothing more. This chair was moving across the lounge. He realised he was alone again. It was very quiet. Very few people came here and when they came they were all over the place in the normal custom of Western people. In this chair on the left he had rested his head till the Chinese dancers winked their eyes at him, till the coffee began to taste sour. He had written and written until early morning, many a night. He felt a certain elation here as when the rain came he felt his solitude, his writing poems. The only escape as a clerk. Thinking of his past he recalled the day the man threw the spoon at him from across the room for no particular reason.

There was the night he had met a boxer. He recalled the group he imagined were a theatre company but who were really bikers that he read later were involved in a major collision. He didn't see his four friends as they saw him this night. Sitting around the table with their smokes and chips they were usually rude and always ready to pat him on the back when he didn't need it, smelling very much like the young mechanics from the garage down the road and basically bullshitting. It was then time for questions. Why they asked them was a mystery. Tonight Eddie would deduce once and for all whether they were gaining some unknown inspiration or whether they did it because he revealed some form of irritation. After all why would the same friends ask him if he was having trouble when he was as happy as could be. So when the leader of the group asked if he had found a job, Eddie said, "I'm not ashamed to say that I have what seems to you to be giving little attention to the making of money. Perhaps a little illustration may assist you." Thinking hard he barely said anything apt but this made Sam Wick foolish all the same. Eddie apologised immediately trying hard to tell them he was not lying or trying to deck his fine speech with words and phrases. The younger of the group laughed aloud. What wasn't clear save to Eddie, having seen the way he had behaved in the past, was that the young man could be discounted in this debate. Acting on his planned inspiration he decided to take the next bloke, Chris to task...to end his opposition. Telling them that his clothes were very suave he felt this would end his attempts to be like the others by chipping in now and then with some silly pun. As he quoted another phrase, Eddie assigned to his next delivery an air of importance. "I don't lack the courage to get a job. I don't deserve the job. That's all." It was a perfect example of colored language, trying to influence a group by appealing to a common attitude. He said it off the cuff waiting to see if the blokes would see his humor or carry on boisterously. They said nothing but lifting a milkshake container high above his head, Freddie let out a banshee wail and crushed it quite insolently in the middle of the table. "This seems to be perfectly true", mumbled Freddie and continued in a similar irritating manner every time anyone said anything that night. Eddie tried to impress upon them he had a control of himself. He tried to show them his poems were quite aware but he quickly realised that the youths were beneath the point of his professional conversation and anyway why argue about their criticisms. They were only interested in foolish bad. Whereas he was interested in sensible bad. Surely if the truth existed then the truth could only be bad. It sounded odd but seemed to provide for Eddie a fact that he could hang onto for it was perfectly true in this particular town where the population is so small and isolated the readier witted are disappointed. Eddie, sometimes false, attached responsibility to himself. He saw he would have to critically shift the blame. The divine adjudicator would have taught him well for his labour.

Eddie used his "feather" many times in this way, quoting phrases and talking them down with loftier language till one day he became so convinced he had searched in vain for the perfect conversationalist that he shot himself through the head and left on a piece of greasy paper ... a perfectly correct answer.

What the answer was no-one really knows, though often there is talk that the teenagers in the area he spoke with often visited the cemetery and kept well away from his grave. They almost improved their attitude toward the local folks.

A ROCK N ROLL FAIRYTALE



Millicent Blakemore was the stereotype of a 16-year-old teen queen. Paul, her brother spent hours in the bedroom listening to the latest hits. The two had a typical brother and sister interest in the rock world and bought each other MP4s for Xmas. They were to be found before and after school and on weekends in a pink and orange two-storey home overlooking a beach. Millie was always the most interesting bopper at the dances, shimmying up front with her friends, all resplendent in purple jeans, sequin top and spangled hair. Her life revolved around the Saturday night dance at the 'Nothing Special' disco , her average boyfriends and their average cars. She once won a dance with Little Stevie, the rock star, but her achievements in the field were not outstanding. Paul her brother had a severe condition called lead-guitar fever, the symptoms of which are characterized by blistered fingers, a cramp in the neck from guitar straps and the taking of a morbid pleasure in interrupting his father's nightly telly with 85 watts of gut-thumping whine. Paul would wait for Saturday afternoon with pleasure for such was his malady that he felt compelled to combat , trying to outdo his Pop's fuzz box as he called the lawnmower, with his Gibson guitar. To Paul the instrument wasn't just a guitar, it was an 'axe'. And as happens when axes are used, heads roll. In this case it was his. He was barred from injuring any eardrums during the Summer holidays and relegated to the basement to live by an overstepping father. Millie would pass morsels from dinner though a slit in the floorboards to Paul who vowed one day he would have his own servants and play to packed houses.

'You know what?', he would say to Millie, his number one sympathizer in these matters. "One day Dad will buy a ticket to see me. I'll be bigger than Paul, McCrafty or Jimi Henpecker. I'll be a famous man with golden cadillacs and tour the States and even Australia. No ordinary guitar for me. I'll have a..."

'Yes said Millicent Blakemore and I'll be your hairdresser. But eat up or you won't have the energy." She pushed another sliver of cheesecake through the chink.

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The days in the basement were cruel ones for the aspiring rocker. At midnight his sister would pass the door key through the floor and Paul would be off on his round of the town. Early morning knocks on doors woke his young friends who gave him MP4s, magazines and things he stockpiled in the underground cell. He fashioned a primitive instrument from a broomhandle and fishing line and practiced before a splintered mirror, miming where he could the music he had and bringing on the house cat, a scrawny beast of one ear's hearing who revelled in this piece of partiality. One Sunday night as he lay in his bunk listening to Johnny Whiner, the stereo clicked off by itself sending a shiver down Paul's back. He looked up to see a rainbow cloud descend from the stereo and float towards his bed., Then in a wink of his tired, darkness-distorted eyes he saw a most beautiful young girl. She was cloaked in a tinselly twosome with an emerald on her forehead. While Paul perched on one arm in his sweaty sheets, the girl pouted aqua lips and whispered ' I'm Sondra!' She played with a milk-white kitten and large clouds of musk filled the space between him and her. Paul fell back in his bed wiping his bleary eyes, looked again and saw the apparition still hovering. The beautiful ghost spoke: "Paul. I am the Fairy Rock Queen who has heard of your troubles. I have been instructed by my master, The Middle C, to grant you three wishes you may tell me about when you like."

Paul, too aghast for words, wiped his leg where he had wet himself and pointed in the direction of the broomhandle guitar in the corner. Of course as you realize Paul had gone insane in his cell not being able to see the bands from the North or buy the latest equipment. After all how much cure for lead guitar fever can be got by playing a decrepit old broom through an older radio. He was dying a slow death. The Fairy Queen asked again her silken question., "Now Paul what will I tell my master your first wish was." He again pointed to the broom. Sondra screwed up her face, hooked her pretty pink finger and the 'equipment' ghosted across the room. "Pick it up Paul," she said. "See what I can do for one so loyal."

Paul touched the setup that creaked a little , disappeared and upon the girl sprinkling a little dust and spraying from a platinum guitar-cleaner can, it waxed and waned...and hey presto, a star-shaped guitar and golden amplifier materialized. Paul wanted so much to play the combo that he cried. But being paranoid from so much deprivation he couldn't.

"This is a special guitar Paul. When it's played strange things happen."

Paul managed a smile and a "You mean some cat in Heaven has given me this axe. Thank him very much but I have no bread to pay off such a hot machine.

"Sondra then spoke.

"Poor Paul. You are very, very sick."

"Yeah. That's my next wish Sondra. Help me out of my sickness for it's sad but this cat is going to freak out in a coffin if he doesn't split from this pad."

"Very well," whispered Sondra. Your second wish will be granted. In the morning you will wake on Highway 32 where by your thumb you will find a place to become well again in."

Paul cried for joy. His next wish was a hard one for the fairy. She pondered a while, said something about her master probably not minding and crept into bed with Paul for a torrid, magical night of love.

When Paul awoke hours later beside the highway, the first thing he saw was the gift. And there was a surprise. Guarding him through the night had been a giant hound. No doubt a bonus from Sondra. Paul spent the next hour toying with the electrics before stopping an empty fruit van and disappearing over the crest of the hill towards Hitsville.

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Back in his hometown, sister Millie was going places. She had talked her parents into a special birthday present. On the Thursday a green and white pickup truck maneuvered into the Blakemore driveway and out stepped a thin man with grey sideboards, clutching two brown paper parcels. Millie rushed out all eyes. Unwrapping the present in the bedroom she was soon playing along to a how-to-play record. For Millie's present was a glittering white bass guitar and accessories which as well as an amplifier, included a tight black leather pantsuit. Within two months the young girl had become quite a hand at the four-stringer. Setting herself up in the town wasn't hard for the popular Millie. Before long she had gathered around her three young men who planned on becoming her loyal backers up. Millie was a natural when it came to singing so the road before her was paved.

Meanwhile in the basement the slivers of dropped cheesecake mounted, the cat grew fat and Mr and Mrs Alfred Blake more left town for a holiday. They had completely forgotten about poor Paul. When Millie opened the basement door to check her brother out, she found a beautiful; note written by Sondra: "Have gone to Hitsville. See you in Autumn. Love, Paul," a broken stereo and a mountain of borrowed MP4s and tapes 12 feet high.

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Nine o' clock found a dejected Paul stumbling past the outer city limits sign of Hitsville. He booked into the Pickers Motel in the slimy part of the city and slept. Next morning he awoke refreshed. He still had five dollars from home, a gift Millie had given him for writing her History essay some months back. With this he bought a plug and wired this magic guitar into the wall.

You should have heard. Lead riffs fell like candy from the fingers of the guitarist, smoke poured from the pickups and very soon the entire tenancy of the hotel were asking questions about the perfect screeches and screaming lead pouring out of Room 42 like the Second Coming. Well, by a magical coincidence, the manager of Bristol-Chambers Records was visiting a sick friend in Room 43. The raps on the door were unexpected. For Paul. You see, being a magic guitar he couldn't hear its unique sound qualities. Paul thought he had been picking "good guitar" and playing about par. Not so Mr Labels from the record company. When Paul answered the door there stood Labels, baring his capped teeth in a broad grin and a queue of tenants stretching right back down the corridor. Presently Room 43 was full. Guitar pickers threw themselves on the sofa, the bed, the floor. Paul just kept playing, ignoring the comments of the manager, who could not control a mumbo-jumbo of praise which reached its climax when he passed an important-looking sheet to Paul. The music stopped. Paul squinted his eyes, distorted from the poor light in the basement and read:

"Sign here upon reading the fine print. Then terms are open to negotiation and not binding in any way."

Paul picked out a tricky riff, considered the attractive document which gave him the keys to the company recording studio and signed immediately.

"What were you playing?" asked one of the tenants when Labels left humming a victory tune.

"I don't quite realize the strength of my guitar play...". He stopped short, imagining himself in the big time and continued:

"It's easy when you know how. Practice is what counts." he replied smugly and went outside to buy a Big Mac amid the cheers and wowing of the hotel's 150 very impressed tenants.

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Came the day of the Battle of The Bands in Paul's hometown. Millie had spent the morning preparing for her big chance to make it. In the Town Hall, teenagers were filling the seats. A radio-station DJ made his way along the stage throwing chocolate bars and streamers into the crowd. Dan Derringer And The Dolls, The Chocolate Chip Cookie and the Orange Alligator Tooth took their places and churned out the boogie, the twelve-bar, the acid-rock. Then at five minutes past four an incredible din filled the hall.

"We want Millie,we want Millie." screeched a hundred feminine throats who had been each paid a dollar by her to cheer. She was no silly girl. She knew she wanted to star in the Battle. She knew the odds against a girl being taken seriously. And she realized she was, now 19, getting older and missing her chance to record in Hitsville. The announcer was drowned out as he introduced the band, the electric syllables of 'Millicent' fading into the thunder of her heavy bass guitar. Passers-by commented on the din. Pigeons flew crazed from the Town Hall roof, showering Sunday afternoon picnic families with droppings. At 13 minutes past four the main brace of the hall gave way , shattering half the stage and pinning 15 teeny-boppers in the front row and stopping short the proceedings. Then boppers were hauled out safe and well by the town crane hire and the hall was minus a roof. Millie swivelled her pelvis toward the crowd and with one great finale brought down the four walls proudly boasted of by the mayor as the most valuable piece of history in the town. Millicent had won screamed the announcer. "Enough, enough screamed the organizers. The chocolate company hired a special clerk to reply to complaints leveled at it after the battle. In the backrooms Millie grabbed the prize money from the outstretched hands of the red-faced and sweating announcer and fled. She arrived in Hitsville next day. It was Autumn.

"This is a special guitar Paul. When it's played, strange things happen."

The Fairy Rock Queen

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"Unknown Scores With First Single"

"Paul Blakemore, the Cat with the Human Guitar"

"Smash Hit for Little Known Picker"

and eventually, "Company Makes Record Profit."

These were the headlines in the Hitsville rock magazines that season for Paul Blakemore had cut his first record. So brilliant was his sound that musicians turned down in the studio letting him take the honors. Overnight he was acclaimed as another Jimi Henpecker. At the weekend a bus carrying nuns to a convention was hijacked and 30 screaming teenagers appeared at the gates of Bristol-Chambers Records waving banners and yelling for the wonder. Paul, laying down his third album that week was breezing through a blues number when Charlie, his manager mumbled into the headphones.

"Hey. Hey Paul baby." There are some fans at the gate. Will we let 'em in?"

Paul coolly lit a Stoney and motioned to the fans director. At this a hairy young man entered the session area, left after speaking with Paul and soon was talking with the fans at the gate. After a while, a cheer went up from the hijackers and they were led into the entertainment bar, an innovation Paul had talked the manager into building. Here, fans could see films of Paul practicing and recording, drink on the house and wait for 6 o'clock. Why 6 o'clock? It was at this hour that a young guitarist called Paul Blakemore stepped down from the studio with his gold pen and scented paper to entertain his fans with jokes, to be interviewed by the Press and sign autographs. The exodus to the studio was a never-ending feature of the day. In September the company gave a prize for the millionth fan to pass through the gates. Paul, once insane through the actions of a prejudiced father was now a celebrity. As he sat back at his desk in the Hotel Sophistico practising his signature when but manager Charlie burst in, put his feet up on the sofa and slapped a copy of the paper 'Sound' on Paul's lap. Circled in red under a guitar ad was a story titled, "Millie, She-Wolf Rocker Brings The House Down."

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Brother and sister were reunited on a Sunday, they formed a supergroup on the Tuesday and by Friday were helping unload twelve tons of sound equipment from trucks at the Marsha II Music Theater, the hot spot of the nation's rock scene. When over two million fans queued up at the door of the theater, the promoters hired a plane to write "Gig On At Grundy's Farm" across the Hitsville sky. Two hours later two million rockers lay baking in the heat of the farm paddocks. A huge stage was built to carry the hundreds of speaker boxes, horns and tweeters of Millie's bass guitar system. In the center on a gold platform wearing an old T-shirt and scrubby Levis stood Paul. In his grip was a star-shaped guitar and behind him a golden amp. He stood up. He grumbled "Juicer" into the mike. Two million throats rose at once in noisy acclamation. The screams were heard ten miles away in Hitsville. Grundy's cows did not give milk for three weeks and his hens died of fright. Just then a rocket shot up into the sky, showering acres of countryside with autographed pictures of Paul and Millie. Paul tuned the amp up to max, switched the guitar up past the sound barrier and began a slow buildup number. Hitsville was blacked out by the power suck. Windows shattered all the way to Stratocaster. Buildings were unroofed and when the number climaxed, so did 500 thousand teenyboppers vocally. The music raged into the minds of the crazed listeners who commenced stripping down to their underwear. Paul said "Juicer" again into the multi-million watt amp. Millie thumped her thunderclap bass guitar. The wind sprang up when Paul hit the G string. Clouds rumbled when he hit the D chord and with one bend of the E string, the clouds parted. Torrential monsoon rain swept the countryside. Two million fans laughed insanely, wet in the pants and deaf. Millie shouted 'Paul!' Paul shouted 'Millie.' Paul leant toward the microphone and in one gigantic "Juicer", destroyed a thousand acres of bush land before the rain entered the guitar pickups and Paul, Millie, two million fans, Grundy's farm, and Hitsville and suburbs exploded with a spark and a fizz.

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"This is a special guitar Paul. When it's played, strange things happen."

The Fairy Rock Queen

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THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT, THE SMELL OF THE CROWD



Jo woke on Tuesday the 12th of August to the sound of a well-worn needle biting its last on the inner groove of a Harley-Diddley album. The vinyl record player was a 60s model, lovingly restored for his musical life. The night prior he had slipped into the Land of Nod with his sins, Mary Jane and Tequila gurgling happily in his stomach. The evidence of siege lay all around the crumbling Hitsville house. Lemon rinds on the sofa, liquor stains on the towels and everywhere the exciting scent of perfume and the rancid hint of typewriter sweat. He appeared faded in the mirror. His eyes hung limp, two veined yolks peeking from graying cheeks. As he passed the table he recalled a thought from the previous night. On the table was a Ouija board surrounded on all sides by stale-coffee skinned cups. Jo grimaced in an attempt to understand the message his magical girlfriends had perceived that night. They said there was going to be a death, a death of worldwide importance and he was to be part of it.

"Magic", he mumbled. With that the handsome tape salesman with B.M.D. Records threw on a fur-lined mack and headed off to the office.

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Isn't it amazing how people can be misled he thought and he read the hastily written sign on his door in the company building. Fancy thinking this was Saturday Mrs Oakes, he whimmed. When he tried the door he found it as tight and unyielding as Ali Baba's. Something was wrong. He rechecked the note on the door that had ruled out work for that day and found in small print at the bottom, notice of a board meeting to which all staff were invited. Down the corridor on the third storey he strolled curious and befuddled. Soon he was sitting alongside the department managers from the top executive right down to the basement coffeemaker. Slap on his right went an agenda and on his left a small envelope.

"Gentlemen." The obese, balding man at the head of the table puckered. "It has come to our notice, as you will see on our balance sheet in the yellow booklet, that our profits, both gross and net have been falling steadily this year. We know the reason. The foolhardy Government, in an effort to reduce the big monopolies in the country, mainly record companies, has cut back their money gifts. As you remember with the election of the new right wing Nationalist party we were cut short in our efforts to sell to our country Soundel , our products. But more importantly there has been a slackening of demand from the supporters of the industry , the teenagers. They now have to pay higher prices, too high for their stereo and MP4s and such. Rock musicians have been taxed heavily by the new party and and consequently, as their only source of income was music, they have gone into hibernation. He ashed his long cigar in front of Jo, the tape manager's face and spoke softly. The fact of the matter is Gentlemen, music has died for our nation's youth because of an economy inflicted upon us by the Government. Not only are musicians and the teenagers affected. Companies like ours have been black banned from union lists. No more can we deal interstate and that, my good partners, spells the end. We just cannot deal in one state and one state alone. His mood changed. His face lit up falsely as he pointed to the envelopes on the table in front of each company representative. There was to be a surprise for the staff he said. They were all going to be let go. If the Government was voted out it would be a better system.

"Wow, that's three years off," mumbled Jo to his friend Jackie Winters. "The elections are three years off." So after heavy scenes with newspapermen at the front door of B.M.D. Records , the largest record company in the country, the dismissed workers went home to sulk and read of their demise in the evening Press. Jo was among them, with enough hot blood under his denim collar to bomb Parliament House. He also had a deep suspicion of magic and predictions of death...in this case it was the music industry that had died...and he was part of it. He dismissed it as coincidence and the notion his magical girlfriends were behind it preposterous.

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The move by B.M.D was felt next morning. Agents closed their branches all over the country. Other companies followed suit. By noon no records were moving in Soundel. A week later the country's young people saw no familiar music papers on the stands, and began asking questions. Music stores closed down. And on Saturday at three minutes past one, 2000 students and music-lovers hit Grant Street. There were skirmishes, there were banners, but mainly there were questions and outraged ones at that. There young protesters converged on the B.M.D. Building in Brinkley street, hurling abuse at the embarrassed cleaners hanging out windows. Thinking the cleaners were company reps the 2000-strong battalion laid siege for several minutes. Panicking, one hostage phoned the police who arrived to find offices ransacked and expensive recording equipment damaged. The finger of blame was not pointed at Hitsville alone. In the southern capital of Clef, death threats were received by the executive director of the Soundel Journalists Association, of which the out-of-work B.M.D. journos were members. A roneo machine was quickly got, a batch of apologies whistled up and the crowds in the city dispersed. It was not the writers' fault the papers failed to appear on the news stands, the apology said. There was nothing to say but that there was a 'critical shortage of material for record reviews, too few musicians operating to warrant write ups and , (here the bone was pointed at the Government) a lack of interest in teenager affairs by the Nationalist Party now controlling the country's policies.' As a result companies had dissolved. But, the paper said, a fighting fund would be launched to save the rock Press in Clef to which donations could be made. Being beggars and therefore not choosers the fans obeyed. Silver and 'paper' mixed in collection boxes and soon a basic form, a much thinner but harder-hitting issue of CYCLE was established. Amidst the youthful outbursts, Jo Miller was cool. The clock found him busy planning. At two he was still there, in his Hitsville house where the lemon rinds still mounted, still thinking but above all still businesslike.

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Five thirty was no hour to visit thought Graham Bell, not even for Jo. But at that time Jo did come and not with the straightest request. "It's like this, Belly, "Jo's voice was rasping after too many cigarettes, coffee and tequila. "I need a makeup job and you're the only cat that can oblige." Graham Bell sat down on the couch, adjusted the gold cord on his dressing gown and closed his legs after Jo made a rude jibing comment. "Ok Jo, So you know I'm the guy who gets the job of making up the artists for their record covers. You know I lost a 90,000 buck job with the company and you want a face job, or two or three. You didn't say. Two questions. Why this hour..and what's in it for you?"

"Belly," Jo replied. "Well, I've got to move quickly. That's the reason for the hour and on the money side...not only will you stand to get your old job back but as soon as I tell the big chief director about your part in this attempt to save the nation's soul, you can expect more spondoolah. Ok with that? I will obviously get the same."

"I think so but fill me in and then I'll say ya or nay. You want faces made up. Right. How many?" Belly was curious."

"Five Graham, all women."

"And you want old, young,? Graham quizzed impatiently.

Jo replied. "Young, pretty as you can make them and maybe a bit pudgy."

"Hold on now, why not have girls doing whatever you're doing.?"

That's it Belly. I can't round up five femmes with enough savvy to do this before tomorrow and plus girls can't climb through windows."

"You've lost me. Come on Jo...more details."

"Well Belly, I've managed a plan of Parliament House. Last year we did a Hansard recording for some bigwig in there and I lifted the plan from his cupboard to go in my 'Secret File.' Never know when one might need things like this. Anyway I want to get into Parliament House tomorrow the aim being to see the Minister for Youth. He's turned down any sort of Press conference and I want into his office for a man-to-man talk. My sources have told me a thing or two about his motivations. Now on the plan there is only one other entrance to the office and that's through a window leading from the Ladies Waiting Room. You, me and three other guys dress in drag, get into the Ladies, through the window and hey presto. How face to face can you get?"

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The makeup man produced a face better than any of his greasy attempts and in a voice that spelt excitement he said.

"Sounds cool Jo. Sounds good. We have no other chance..." Jo sat back from the tottering position on on the grey hide chair and lit a cigar. He saw the spreading nostrils of Bell, sniffing action like some warhorse put to pasture. He saw the wrinkles on his face and laughed loudly as he exclaimed, "Yeah Belly. But first let's have some Marsala..."

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The room at ten that morning told the story of the preceding hour's activity at the apartment of Graham Bell. Greasy swabs, pastels, and brushes all lay strewn about. "The smell of the greasepaint," joked Belly to which Jo retorted, "The smell of the crowd," pointing to page one of the Herald that morning which showed part of the protest crowd in Tone Street the day before. Soon five nervous young men cum women were driving up the Parliament House access road in an Avis Rental car, bent on misdemeanor in the name of progress. The first hassle came in the form of a heavy watchman who found the group prowling around the waiting-room ready for battle stations. "You can't go in there!" he yelled. "That's only for expecting ladies. You're all ok aren't you?" Not wishing to awaken the guard's suspicions the men sat silently and walked out, back into the car and angry as sin rushed back to the apartment. Five completely different faces later, together with stuffing under long dresses, the 'Ladies' arrived again in a different car, just in case. They made it to the Waiting Room and sat there awaiting the end of the debate in the Main Parliament Gallery. When the door closed Jo ripped a chair apart and slid a leg between the bars on the door. "So no-one gets in," he whispered to the men busily removing their faces with acetone. One by one the intruders climbed through the window and saw there at the end of a passage was a door. More importantly there was a sign, "Minister For Youth," and most importantly the sound of industry...typewriters bashing paper in the inner sanctum.

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Among the stuffing under their dresses each man had brought a suit which he donned in the lavatory next to the office. Five sweeps with five combs and no-one could tell the way the men had been the previous half an hour. Hopefully not Mr Brexton, the Minister in question anyway. An apprehensive knock on the door. The sound of footsteps then a "Good morning gentlemen." A return address More footsteps and five men were seated around a largish mahogany table in the Ministry of Youth.

That's when Jo Miller shed the role of the nice quiet tape salesman and became the fast-talking political mover. He hadn't been an award-winning public speaker in his youth for nothing. Basically what he said was trite. He said he and his men were record company representatives, the truth, and that they had heard a rumor about his portfolio, a downright lie. Jo was testing, looking for a loophole with which to pin the Minister.

"What is this rumor, Mr Brinkley?" the Minister spouted, his ears pricked.

Jo lit a cigarette. The other four sat with smiles on their faces musing at the fake name Jo had laid on the big man.

Seeing the man's sudden interest in his tentative stab at the truth, Jo gained confidence and said,

" Only a rumor Mr Brexton but one of great dimension and bearing on your job as Minister."

The ploy was brilliant. In his planning, Jo had seen with the aid of simple economics he had studied at Hitsville University, no apparent reason for the heavy attitude towards the music scene. He could only imagine it was a foreign deal from perusing old cases. His sources had amplified the possibility. He thought the man was being pressured and upon consulting his past history he found in a moth-eaten book in the Adagio Library, reference to a scandal in Parliament years ago involving Mr Brexton.

Jo Miller was not a hard man. He was only 27, still young and decidedly staid in his approach.. But he saw a chance for a go at the truth and out of the blue laid a heavy on the Minister.

"Only one clue Mr Brexton. And the rumor says foreign interests." Jo waited and watched for a reaction. He got one. Confronted by the wall of stern blank faces, Brexton swallowed...swallowed hard. He fingered papers in his desk. "I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about. I'll send for the guard if you adopt this attitude. Mine is a respected position."

"Respected by whom Mr Brexton?" By foreign dealers who want the Soundel people out of the market. I know the Mendels would love this to occur."

Jo slammed his fist down hard, so hard that the tumbler of water on the table rocked and Brexton moved to steady it. "...would love to get rid of our products so they could have an independent monopoly."

Asking hard questions based on nothing but suspicion, Jo groped toward the answer about Mr Brexton. After five minutes steady questioning, Brexton let slip the big one.

"Shut up. I know nothing of this. Mr Mendels has not been..."

"Mr Mendels, Mr Brexton? Mr Mendels who was kicked out of the Mendelssohn Record company because of...subversion?"

"Get out or I'll bloody well have you arrested. Who gave you permission to enter this office anyway? Guard..!"

The burly man in grey took a little time getting to the office. He muttered something about the door to Ladies Waiting Room being jammed and how a queue of twittering housewives were saying things about the inadequacy of the building.

"Get these...I'm sorry, kindly see these men out of their building Watson, and close the door after you've left"

In the car back to the apartment Jo Miller pressed 'Rewind' on his tape recorder then 'Play' and laughed particularly hard at the "Mr Mendels has not been..." and the obvious slip of the tongue indicated by the clipped sentence.

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Inquiries revealed that Mr Mendels had in fact been to Brexton's home three times in the last month. Working late into the night Jo and Belly worked on a case against Mr Brexton and on August 26 took it to the Supreme Court. The writ claimed unspecified damages against Brexton. In the writ Jo Miller charged the Minister with assault, a trumped up charge, and produced the tape in court. When the tape was tested and found to be genuine, the name of Mr Brexton and Mr Mendels were linked and the Press did the rest. An inquiry was ordered by the Government into the men's relationship and uncovered a major swindle. Brexton had been bribed by into killing the music industry in the country by Mendels. Letters flooded in from teeny, weeny and other boppers and adults, congratulating Jo on his expose.

Today in 2017 the music scene is flourishing...thanks to the tactics of one Jo Miller, his friend Graham Bell ...and the luck of the draw.

TEDDY BOYS



AS OFTEN HAPPENS , A COMBO ON THE NIGHT OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL OFTEN LEADS TO A BAND FORMING WHEN THE MEMBERS CONTINUE PLAYING. 'THE COIN' WAS ONE SUCH GROUP, LAUNCHED FROM AFTER SCHOOL PRACTICE ON EVERY OTHER DAY IN A BARN ON THE PROPERTY OF MAX, THE 'LEADER.' THE NAME ORIGINATED FROM A RARE DOLLAR FOUND BY MAX IN AN OLD GUITAR CASE HE BOUGHT FROM A WAREHOUSE SALE. 'THE COIN' LASTED MONTHS AND IN A FEW WEEKS HAD ALREADY PLAYED AT MANY PARTIES. APART FROM BEING TOLD TO TURN THE MUSIC DOWN AT ONE VENUE IT WENT SMOOTHLY, PROMISING A LONG AND INTERESTING FUTURE. MAX HAD A DAY JOB, WORKING FOR THE LOCAL PAPER AS A GENERAL REPORTER AND STARTED A ROCK COLUMN WITH ANOTHER WRITER IN HIS SECOND YEAR THAT BECAME THE LONGEST RUNNING AND LARGEST NEWSPAPER ROCK SUPPLEMENT IN THE COUNTRY. THE EVOLUTION IS WORTH NOTING. MAX HAD SEEN THE NEED FOR ENTERTAINMENT IN HIS HOMETOWN AND SEEN THE EDITOR WHO WAS OPEN TO THE IDEA. A WEEK LATER HIS COLLEAGUE ALSO SAW THE EDITOR. THE TWO APPROACHES GELLED INTO THE COLUMN WHICH AT FIRST WAS TO BE CALLED 'CYCLE,' AND LATER CHANGED TO 'ON THE RECORD' , A COLLECTION OF RECORD REVIEWS. IT GREW TO INCLUDE TRAVELLING BAND ARTICLES AND THEN GENERAL STORIES ON THE GLOBALSCENE.

THE BAND, 'COIN' SOON FOUND PARTY VENUES SPARSE AND THE WHOLE IDEA BECAME A WEEKLY GIG, NOT EVERY FEW DAYS. WITHOUT ENGAGEMENTS, MONEY TO REPAIR BLOWN AMPS AND SUCH THE BAND EXPERIENCE BECAME MORE LIKE A VELCRO DEAL THAN A FIXED DIRECTION. MATT, THE YOUNGEST AND MOST TALENTED WAS THE WORST AFFECTED. IT WAS HIS 18TH BIRTHDAY AND THE GROUP MEANT SOMETHING TO HIM..

BEING YOUNG AND STILL VERY IMPRESSIONABLE, THE FOUR SIGNED A DECLARATION SUITABLY WORDED BY MAX. THE COIN DISSOLVED. IT'S BALANCE WAS NONETHELESS HEALTHY AND GEORGE WENT HOME TO CRY OVER HIS MUSIC SHEETS.

RESOLUTION

MAX HOWEVER WAS HAPPY. BEING THE ELDEST HE HAD SEEN THE FUTILITY OF A YOUNG BAND IN A SMALL CITY MANY WEEKS BACK. THERE WAS THE BACK-STABBING PROMOTER WHO HAD CONNED THEM INTO PLAYING FOR HALF THE MONEY AT AN OUT-OF-TOWN DANCE FOR BASKETBALLERS. THE RIDICULE FROM THE 'CROSSBAR,' A BIKIE ENSEMBLE WHO CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE TOWN'S HANDFUL OF SKINHEADS WERE BACKING A SECOND-RATE BAND. IT CAME TO FISTICUFFS AT A HOTEL DANCE WHEN A MICROPHONE STAND WAS THROWN THROUGH THE DRUM KIT UPSETTING MATT'S DRINK AND EGO. ALL THESE THINGS MADE HIS MIND UP. THE DISILLUSIONMENT CAME AS NO SURPRISE. AS MAX SLOWLY Poured KEROSENE OVER THE ACCOUNTS OF 'THE COIN' AND REACHED FOR THE MATCHES, HE VOWED THAT WITH THE FINISH OF THE GROUP WOULD COME A NEW MAN CAPABLE OF REACHING GREAT HEIGHTS IN SINGING AND PLAYING. AMID THE PILE OF GUITAR BOOKS AND MP4S ON MAX'S DESK THERE LAY A TAMBOURINE. IN A BURST OF JUVENILIA HE PICKED IT UP AND BEGAN SINGING...!JUMPIN' JACK FLASH, IT'S A GAS, GAS GAS!

TEDDY'S BEEN HIT

2017 WAS A CANDY ALLSORTS FOR MAX. NOW 18, HIS FINGERS GREW SUPPLER

WITH VIGOROUS FINGER PICKING , ADOPTING A SUBTLETY, HE PRIDED HIMSELF ON BEING BETTER THAN MOST IN THE TOWN. IN SPRING, A DULL AFTERNOON FOUND HIM NURSING HIS INJURED DOG BY THE FIREPLACE IN THE FLAT. THREE SILLY RAPS ON THE DOOR HERALDED THE APPEARANCE OF BACON, THE TOWN ADDICT BENT ON BEAUTIFUL EVIL, AS HE DESCRIBED IT.

"HELLO, HELLO TODAY ...THE I CHING, AH YES, THE I CHING, FORTUNE-TELLER OF MYSTERY, TELLER OF SECRETS . IT TOLD ME AN ACCIDENT WOULD OCCUR AND LOOK MAN I'M STILL TRUCKING." MAX BENT, A MAD GRIN ON A COLD DAY'S FACE.

"NOT SO BRIGHT MATE. TEDDY'S BEEN HIT"

"WHAT, OUR TEDDY? HE LOOKS FAIR AND READY TO ME." BACON QUIZZED. "DID YOU NAB THE JOKER?" BACON SAID, HELPING HIMSELF TO A GINGER WINE SOMEONE HAD LEFT ON THE DRESSER.

"NOT A CHANCE . I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO REPORT IT. IT WAS HER FAULT ANYWAY THE POOR LITTLE BITCH."

"BAD NEWS IS FOLLLOWED BY GOOD SAY THE I CHING. LOOK WHAT BACON BROUGHT YOU. THE THIN BEARDED ECCENTRIC FRIEND, AMID GNASHING OF TEETH IS DYING TO BE SMASHED. HAMLET VALE 1979 PREMIUM GIN." MAX MANAGED A SMILE , RETURNED THE BLANKET TO ITS PLACE OVER TEDDY AND JOKED. "DON'T MIND IF I 'AS A TIPPLE TODAY. WAIT HERE WHILE I GET THE COPPER GOBLETS. SOON THE TWO WERE GUZZLING THE GIN. TEDDY SCORED A LITTLE TOO...A CRUDE DRUNKARD'S MEDICINE.

RICH POPS A QUESTION

THE MAN WAS IN HIS TWENTIES , WORE A BLUE AIR-FORCE COAT AND WAS SITTING BY THE WINDOW. MAX HAD RECEIVED A PHONE CALL THAT MORNING ADVISING HIM OF THE VISIT. THIS WAS THE 'HIT-RUN' DRIVER , THE HONEST GUY WHO HAD TAKEN MAX'S ADDRESS AND CALLED BACK. HE HAD JUST FINISHED TELLING MAX OF A RUSH TRIP WHICH HAD POSTPONED HIS ERRAND OF HONESTY TO THE FLAT. UNBEKNOWNST TO THE TWO THEIR FRIENDSHIP WOULD CONTINUE THROUGH TIMES HARDER THAN THIS..

"COFFEE, TEA OR BONOX...AH?" MAX ASKED.

"RICHARD, MAX , COFFEE AND FIVE SUGARS."

THE YOUNG MAN EXPLAINED HOW HE HAD A CRAVING FOR SUGAR. "NO SWEAT RICH, BUT FIVE? WOW!" MAX KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE THIS TIME BUT NOT SO EVERY TIME HE THOUGHT OF COFFEE. YOU SEE MAX WAS A DIABETIC AND COULD NOT SEE NOR HANDLE SUGAR. THE TWO SHARED THE JOKE.

THE SUBJECT OF THE CONVERSATION CHANGED FROM SUGAR TO MUSIC. RICH TOO PLAYED AN INSTRUMENT , A FIVE-STRINGED BASS HE HAD DESIGNED AND BUILT HIMSELF. MAX DIVED BEHIND THE SOFA AND EMERGED SECONDS LATER CLUTCHING A COLLECTION OF DISCS OF ALL BRANDS AND COLORS. SO BEGAN AN HOUR OF NON-STOP ENTERTAINMENT WITH MAX SPRUICKING THE GOOD QUALITIES OF HIS ALBUMS AND PLAYING THEM. "STONES, HENDRIX, MAYALL, BECK ALL SHIT HOT. GET AN EYEFUL OF THIS ONE RICH, POOR OR WHAT?" MAX BROUGHT A CHEAP LOOKING ALBUM INTO THE LIGHT. "MUST BE ONE OF MY BROTHER'S . BEST WAY TO DESCRIBE IT WOULD BE THAT IT'S BLACK, ROUND AND HAS A HOLE IN THE MIDDLE."

WHAT'S IT CALLED I WONDER? MAX WHO THOUGHT HE COULD SUM UP THE MUSICAL QUALITY OF A RECORD FROM ITS COVER SAID, DUSTING OFF THE CURIO."KLAXON, BOURNEMOOTH CONCERTS," READ RICH. AFTER HEARING THE DISC THE TWO AGREED AN AMATEUR ENSEMBLE COULD LAY DOWN SIMILAR . THAT'S WHEN RICH MENTIONED ANOTHER GROUP. "HEY MAN, YOU PLAY LEAD, SING, I PLAY BASS AND I KNOW SCORES OF DRUMMERS. DOES IT CLICK MAX?

THE QUESTION HUNG IN THE SMALL WARM ROOM FOR A FEW SECONDS TO BE ANSWERED BY MAX WITH:

"SURE THING. AND I'VE THOUGHT OF THE PERFECT NAME. WE'LL NAME IT AFTER OUR MASCOT. TEDDY SOUNDS OK DOESN'T IT RICH?

RICH AS USUAL WANTED MORE THAN WAS OFFERING AND EVEN WENT AS FAR AS TO SUGGEST WITH A LAUGH IT BE CALLED 'SUGAR TEDDY'. BUT AFTER A DRY RECEPTION FROM MAX THE NAME STOOD. TEDDY WAS TO BE THE GROUP WITH A BULLET IN THE TOWN.

BACON THE RASHER

BACON, RICH AND MAX FORMED A STRONG THREE PARTY COALITION. MUSIC, DRINKING AND A GOOD TIME WERE THEIR STATED OBJECTIVES AND THEY WERE ENJOYED IN GREAT QUANTITIES. BACON AS A ROADIE CUT A PICTURE OF INEFFICIENCY. THE GROUP WENT SO FAR AS TO HIDE HIS 'FRIENDS' FOR THE GREATER GOOD. WHEN HE WASN'T HIGH HE WAS COIMING DOWN, CHASING VISUALS WHEN THE HARD WORK WAS HINTED AT. STILL HE WAS THE CLOWN, A PATHETIC ONE BUT WITH ENOUGH PURE COMEDY TO HIDE THE FACT.

IT WAS ON A PLANE TRIP TO CLEF THAT HE SURPASSED HIMSELF. RICH, MAX AND THE NEW DRUMMER, STU WANTED THE BEST EQUIPMENT. SO THE TICKETS WERE BOUGHT AND THE GROUP SET OFF TOWARDS THE CAPITAL ABOARD THE FOKKER. OVER LAKE ALLEGRO WHO BUT BACON TRUNDLED IN FROM THE REAR OF THE PLANE FOR A CHAT. THE THREE HAD NOT TOLD BACON OF THE TRIP FROM HITSVILLE BECAUSE OF A RECORD THEY DIDN'T LIKE TO DISCUSS. BEFORE LONG THE FOUR WERE BUSY PORING OVER FRESH 'ROLLING STONE' MAGAZINES, PROVIDED AT NO EXPENSE BY THE INIMITABLE BACON. IT WAS SOON AFTER THIS PRODUCTION THAT THE APOCALYPTIC NIGHTMARE OCCURRED.

BACON LET OUT A MOAN OF AGONY, APPARENTLY EMANATING FROM THE REGION OF HIS BELLY, IN THE MIDDLE OF A PILOT MESSAGE TO THE PASSENGERS AND CREW AT 28,000 FEET. THREE HOSTIES WERE QUICKLY BY HIS SIDE WITH THE CORRECT WAY OF OPENING THE BARF BAG POURING FROM THEIR CANDY LIPS. INTENT ON STOPPING THIS STRANGELY DRESSED YOUNG MAN DISRUPTING THE FLIGHT. BY NOW THE MOANS WERE INCREASING IN VOLUME AS FIRST ONE THEN THE ENTIRE 32 PASSENGERS CRANED TO LOOK. SUDDENLY THE PREGNANT MINUTES DRIFTED AWAY INTO SEVERAL WELL-PRONOUNCED CHUNDERS. AFTER THE USUAL PATS ON THE BACK AND THERE-THERES OF THE GIRLS, BACON SAT BACK, A BROAD GRIN ACROSS HIS FACE. HE THEN ASKED FOR A SPOON . NO SOONER HAD A HOSTESS BOWED TO THIS REQUEST THAN THE FELLOW BEGAN EATING THE CONTENTS OF HIS BARF BAG WITH AUDIBLE RELISH. SHRIEKS OF SURPRISE AND DISGUST FILLED THE PLANE. CONFUSED PEOPLE BEGAN ASKING ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THE TRIP. WERE THEY GOING TO CRASH? A VOICE FROM THE CABIN SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A HARMLESS BERSERK PASSENGER. BACON SAID SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT WAS IN CAN STAY IN AND BURPED FEROCIOUSLY, BUT WHEN THE CO-PILOT STORMED DOWN THE PASSENGER AISLE WITH A CRUEL LOOK IN HIS EYE BACON CALMED SOMEWHAT. HOSTESS WILLIAMSON TOLD HIM OF THE YOUTH'S STRANGE EATING HABITS AND PRODUCED THE PROOF. NEEDLESS TO SAY THEY DIDN'T LOOK INSIDE. BACON WAS LED TO THE AFT LAVATORY BY HIS COLLAR. HE OPENED THE PAN AND FLUSHED THE CAN OF PREMIUM QUALITY FRUIT SALAD INTO THE ICY ATMOSPHERE.

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE?

BY NOW, FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE INITIAL PLANS FOR 'TEDDY' HAD BEEN LAID, THE BAND HAD SEEN SMOOTH PRACTICES WITH A GOOD RUN OF ENGAGEMENTS. ONE BUGBEAR TO BE IRONED OUT WAS PUBLICITY, WHICH THE GROUP FOUND IT LACKED. IT PARTICULARLY MATTERED WHEN OUT OF TOWN GIGS CAME BY. THURSDAY NIGHT IN THE TOWN WAS LIKE ANY OTHER. THE PRACTICE WAS ON. RICH, MAX AND STU WERE ALL PUNCTUAL AS USUAL BUT NEW SONGS WERE THE ORDER OF THE NIGHT AND BACON , PERHAPS MISTAKENLY, HAD BEEN GIVEN THE SHEET MUSIC. EVENTUALLY HE DID FRONT WITH A FOLDER UNDER HIS ARM. AS WAS TRADITIONAL THE OP RUM SHOTS WERE HAD CAREFULLY. THE WHISKY TASTED OF HIGHER QUALITY. AS THE BINGE WAS PEAKING , BACON REACHED INSIDE THE FOLDER AND PRODUCED A SHEET. HE ADJUSTED HIS PINCE-NEZ AND READ IN A SILLY VOICE.

"THE OYSTER LAYS TEN THOUSAND EGGS...THE HOMELY HEN LAYS ONE;

THE OYSTER NEVER CACKLES TO TELL YOU WHAT IT'S DONE.

AND WHO BUT THE HOMELY HEN RECEIVES THE FEED AS PRIZE....

WHICH ONLY GOES TO SHOW YOU...IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE."

"I THOUGHT THAT WOULD SMASH YOU," HE CHORTLED. "BUT NOW TO THE SERIOUS PORTION OF OUR SHOW...AND THE MYSTERY SUBJECT IS? YOU GUESSED IT...ADVERTISING." HIS VOICE DEEPENED, HE SOBERED AND SPOKE SLOWLY.

"MAX, RICH, STU. IT'S OBVIOUS WHAT WE NEED IS PUBLICITY AND WHO BETTER FOR THE TASK THAN YOURS TRULY, WONDERFUL, TURNED-ON, GOOD VIBES MAN...ME!":

THE THREE, TOO STUNNED BY THE PRESENTATION AND REALIZING THE OBVIOUS NEED, VOTED HIM IN AS THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER. HIS CUT OF THE BAND TAKINGS WOULD INCREASE SLIGHTLY, BUT AS BACON EXPLAINED, HE JUST NEEDED SOME OUTLET FOR HIS PERSUASIVE PERSONALITY. ONLY NEXT MORNING AFTER THEY HAD DESCENDED THE PEAKS OF THE STONING DID THE TRIO REALIZE THE POTENTIAL HIROSHIMA BACON COULD SUMMON AT WILL.

TROUBLE

SEVENTY YEARS AFTER HIROSHIMA, A SIMILAR TRAGEDY HIT THE TOWN OF HITSVILLE ITS PARKS, GARDENS AND STREETS. THE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR OF MAX AVERY'S HOME SPELT TROUBLE. AFTER ALL WHO WOULD CALL AT THIS LATE HOUR. WHEN MAX OPENED THE DOOR HE FOUND THE DRUMMER STU, SHIVERING IN THE LATE AUTUMN WIND AND BLANK AS A SHEET. "I'M LEAVING THE BAND MAX. BACON'S GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME. THE POLICE ASKED ME TO GET YOU. HE'S GONE ON ONE OF HIS HEAVY STONES AROUND THE CITY MATE."

SCENIC TOUR

ONCE AGAIN MAX, RICH AND STU WERE TOGETHER. THIS TIME THEY WERE SHARING THE SLOT AT THE REAR OF THE PADDY-WAGON AND IT WASN'T A SCENIC TOUR.

"FIRST STOP THE PARK BOYS."

THE OFFICER WAS QUIET YET MENACING. THE THREE, THIS TIME JOINED BY MORE THAN FRIENDSHIP IN A SET OF SHINY HANDCUFFS WALKED AROUND THE PARK FOR A WHILE. THEY SAW THE BANNERS STRETCHING FROM PALM TO PALM PROCLAIMING THE ARRIVAL OF AN ALIEN FORCE BY THE NAME OF TEDDY. THEY GAVE OUT LITTLE WHIMPERS WHEN THE POLICE POINTED AT A CLUMP OF TREES PAINTED WITH A HUGE LETTER OF THE GROUP NAME ON EACH TREE CAPPED OFF BY A 15 FOOT EXCLAMATION MARK ALL OVER A CONIFER. THEY ALMOST SHRIEKED IN THE LAVATORY WHEN GRAFFITI OF ALL KINDS AND COLORS BUT MAINLY PUBLICIZING A CERTAIN TYPE OF BEAR WAS FOUND SPOTTING THE WALLS AMID THE COME-ONS, PHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES OF THE LOCAL PANSIES. THE SHORT THIN OFFICER SPOKE FIRST, IN A SLY TONE.

"NOW YOU BOYS BEING TEDDY BOYS WOULD KNOW WHO THIS SHITHOUSE ARTIST WOULD BE, EXCUSING THE PUN OF COURSE." "OF COURSE" SLIPPED OUT OF STU. "I MEAN SIR, WE HAVE NO IDEA."

THE POLICEMAN PRODUCED A PAPER BAG AND USED THE WORD EXHIBIT.

"YES," HE SAID POINTING AT MAX."YOU SEEM THE MOST INTELLIGENT. READ THIS." HE OPENED THE BAG AND THERE WAS A PINK THONG. ON THE UNDERSIDE MAX READ ALOUD "COME ALL YE FOLLOWERS AND SEEKERS OF WISDOM. THE TIME HAS COME FOR TRUTH. THIS FOOTWEAR BELONGS TO BACON, WHO UNKLIKE HIS NAME SUGGESTS IS NOT TO BE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF PIGS."

MAX FELT A STRANGE SENSATION IN HIS BACK AND THE HEAVY HAND OF THE OFFICER CLAMP ON HIS ARM.

"NEXT STOP THE SQUARE, BOYS."

ONCE AGAIN THE TRIO WERE IN THE PADDY-WAGON. IN THE TOWN SQUARE THE SIGNS OF INVASION WERE APPARENT. A SIXTY-FOOT SWATHE HAD BEEN BURNT INTO THE LAWN WITH PETROL, A SWATHE SPELLING TEDDY TO EVEN THE MOST ILLITERATE.

"BACON THE RASHER", QUIPPED STU AS THE BOYS SMOKED THEIR HALF CIGARETTES IN THE COLD OF THE LOCKUP.

POSTSCRIPT

WHAT HAPPENED TO BACON WAS NEVER BROUGHT TO LIGHT. THE GROUP AGREED THE BEST THING FOR HIM WAS A QUICK TRIP TO THE NORTHERN PARTS OF SOUND. HE WAS LAST SEEN CUTTING CANE ON THE COAST, SPORTING A BEARD AND HAT IN HIS RUN FROM THE LAW. A GLIMMER OF SADNESS STILL COMES TO THE EYES OF MAX AVERY , PENSIONER IN HITSVILLE OUTER REFUGE, WHO RECALLS GOOD TIMES WITH GROUPS IN HIS HOMETOWN AS HE RAPS OUT A SLOW ROLL ON THE TABLE...REMINISCING.

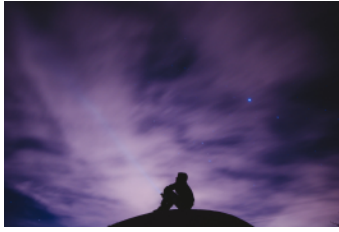
A FREAK BELIEVABLE





SNIDE: ...And someday the stars eh?! But that's not it init! The Earth in 2045-2075 disintegrated after the big mass experiment accident. The idea was to turn the proton angle to the side so that gravity would exert more pull thus increasing the weight. Problem was the experiment resonated geophysically around the Earth like a tsunami. People were watching themselves on tv and phones getting ready to be instantly crushed, flattened like eggs in a pan, their weight going up 8000 times. Serendipitous because of the terrible body-rattling weapons just 20 years around the corner. The Earth became 8000 times heavier, broke it's gravity moorings and spun out way past Pluto. Then after 4 billion years according to Newton's Laws the equal and opposite reaction saw it losing weight by 8000 times, disintegrating with the expansion and extinguishing of the Sun then and forming the Universe we see in the night sky, from the original Earth atoms. We are in fact looking forward because without the Earth as a reference point, since it disintegrated, we would be looking forward in Time today. All this is indicated by the fact that a point on the Earth is found only once by Hertzian frequency in the stars using unique detection. Coz that's where the Earth point is & ended up in time. It can be detected. We only live once init. The Universe can never be restored so to speak the same way because of the repellent and changing nature of the element Iron, for one...and someday the stars being atoms of the original Earth multiplying and burning...but no human again! But what about the Big Bang you ask? Just last year they discovered complete universe switch with gravitational waves. So why can't it switch to moving away from the original Earth not from some Big Bang point. It may have happened 7 times before. The Earth formed the Universe which formed the Earth and without the Earth there's only the Universe init! Non-reversible system! Smithereens in a Time function!... So don't worry... Stick to ya day job! There might even be a perfect asteroid out there that is close enough to heaven.

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PS: Space offers nearly no resistance, so even the weakest engine could eventually accelerate a massive object to incredible speeds (NASA is experimenting with slow and steady ion thrusters). The problem however, is fuel to accelerate as long as you need to keep the engine running on something. Once you hit maximum speed though...you could turn off the engine and cruise to the end of the universe.' List 25

So that explains the absence of an explosion big enough one would imagine to send the planetary pieces to the ends of the universe.

Also, why are we only 26,000 light years from the centre of our galaxy the Milky Way? Could it be that it is the cloud of matter formed after the initial disintegration?

FINIS