

First Class

Knocked down,
in the best alleys and gutters
12



**ALL CONTENTS ©1999
FOUR-SEP PUBLICATIONS**



**FIRST CLASS IS PUBLISHED THREE TIMES PER YEAR
BY FOUR-SEP PUBLICATIONS. FOR INFORMATION
REGARDING SUBMISSIONS SEE "CATTLE CALL" NEAR
THE REAR END OF THIS ISSUE. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL
CORRESPONDENCE, QUERIES, CASH, AND SUBMIS-
SIONS, INCLUDING A SASE WHEN APPROPRIATE TO:**

**FIRST CLASS
pobox 12434
MILWAUKEE, WI 53212**

www.execpc.com/~chriflor

ALL RIGHTS REVERT BACK TO AUTHORS

SUBSCRIPTION INFO:

**IT'S SIMPLE. SEND \$5 FOR THE VERY NEXT ISSUE MAILED
DIRECTLY TO YOUR HOME, OR \$14 FOR THE NEXT THREE.**

POSTAGE IS INCLUDED.

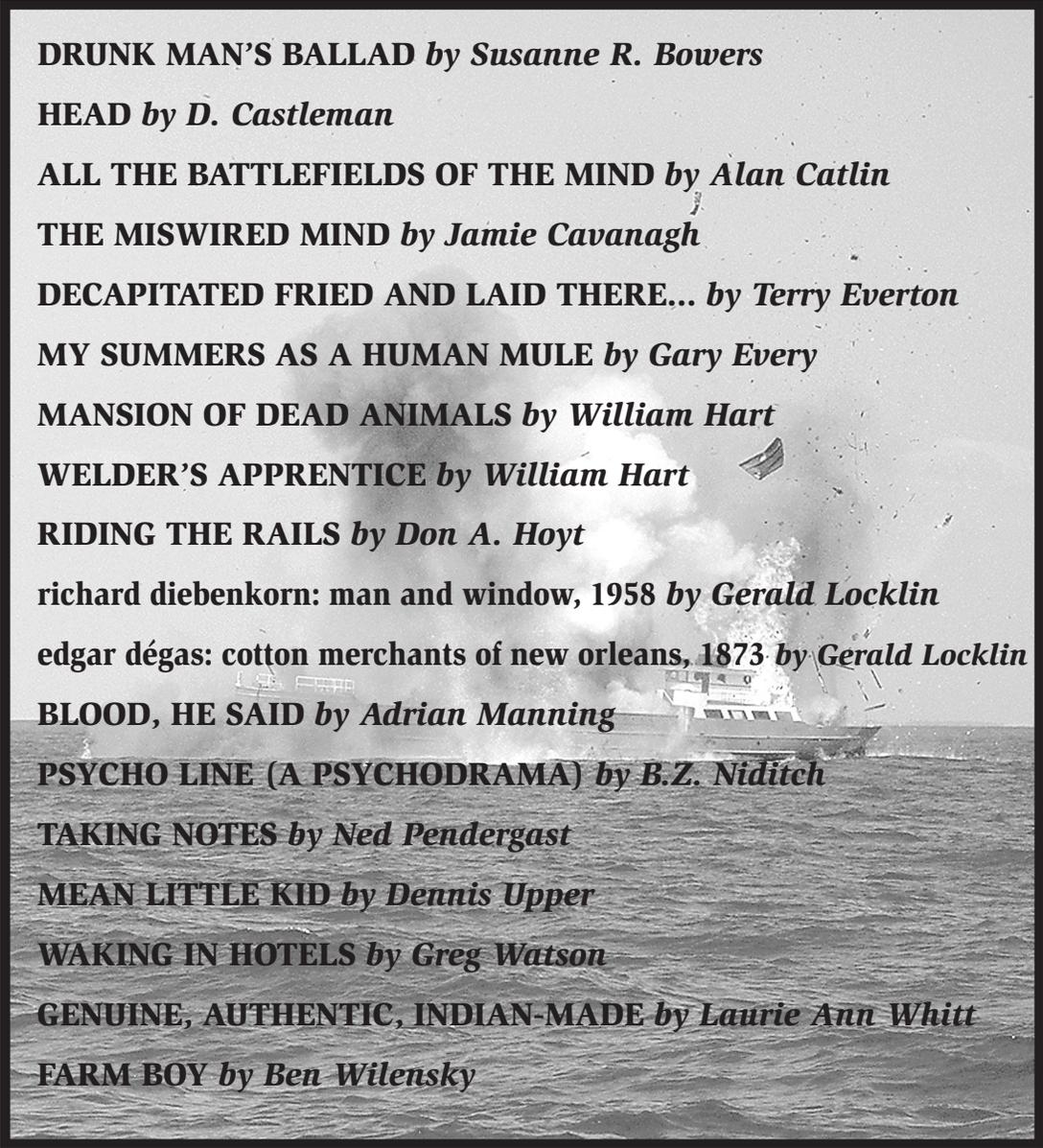
CASH OR CHECKS PAYABLE TO : CHRISTOPHER M.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.



**ISSUE
TWELVE**

FIRST CLASS CONTENTS

- 
- 1: **DRUNK MAN'S BALLAD** by *Susanne R. Bowers*
- 2: **HEAD** by *D. Castleman*
- 14: **ALL THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE MIND** by *Alan Catlin*
- 18: **THE MISWIRED MIND** by *Jamie Cavanagh*
- 19: **DECAPITATED FRIED AND LAID THERE...** by *Terry Everton*
- 20: **MY SUMMERS AS A HUMAN MULE** by *Gary Every*
- 24: **MANSION OF DEAD ANIMALS** by *William Hart*
- 25: **WELDER'S APPRENTICE** by *William Hart*
- 26: **RIDING THE RAILS** by *Don A. Hoyt*
- 27: **richard diebenkorn: man and window, 1958** by *Gerald Locklin*
- 28: **edgar dégas: cotton merchants of new orleans, 1873** by *Gerald Locklin*
- 29: **BLOOD, HE SAID** by *Adrian Manning*
- 30: **PSYCHO LINE (A PSYCHODRAMA)** by *B.Z. Niditch*
- 37: **TAKING NOTES** by *Ned Pendergast*
- 38: **MEAN LITTLE KID** by *Dennis Upper*
- 39: **WAKING IN HOTELS** by *Greg Watson*
- 40: **GENUINE, AUTHENTIC, INDIAN-MADE** by *Laurie Ann Whitt*
- 41: **FARM BOY** by *Ben Wilensky*

IMAGES

 **COVER DESIGN** by *Christopher M.*

 **ILLUSTRATIONS, PAGES 13,28,37** by *Stepan Chapman*

 **ILLUSTRATION, PAGE 17** by *Albert Huffstickler*

 **ILLUSTRATION, PAGE 39** by *Peter Magliocco*

Drunk Man's Ballad

SUSANNE R. BOWERS

I've never known love,
except in a bottle,
kind of like time in
a bottle, but it's
brown and snaky,
not misty like time,
and you have to drink it
down, snake and all,
that's when you get to
the love part...it
just fills you up,
you see it everywhere,
overflowing... little
girls with the beginnings
of tits, ladies spinning
their asses at you on
the street, sometimes
cozying up to you in
the bar, hanging their
perfumed faces on your
sleeve, and it walks
right on through the
night with you, that
love, you look in the
mirror and you're a
handsome fellow, so you
take it to bed with
you, hold it tight,
right there on your
pillow, that love, that
snake love, snake ass,
beginnings of tits
love, perfumed hair
love, that I'm a hero
feeling, smiling,
sinking into the brown
snake oblivion, never
afraid or alone again,
love.

Head

D. CASTLEMAN

It has been suggested that an accountant is only a historian of recent moneys, and wears only the same mind a historian wears, arranging variously misleading needle-points of data so they may be handled more comfortably. An acquaintance, a friendly acquaintance perhaps but not quite a friend, who was captain of a cargo ship told me he wanted a purser, an accountant, for a voyage from London across the Atlantic and through the Amazon.

Having no knowledge of shipping and yet feeling adequate to accountancy, I agreed to accompany him.

In earlier conversations when he had mentioned his numerous adventures in shipping I had suspected him of behaving conscientiously with an accurate responsibility, and of possessing a core of intelligent kindness, so mostly I was unworried of long days looming under his command, of long weeks and of long months bobbing like Huck Finn's fishingcork.

London is England's principal itch, like a suppurating pimple continuously exacerbated by bacteria from everywhere. So when he said London I understood he meant London money, and that the ship would sail from Swansea.

I meandered from San Francisco to London, and to the docks in Swansea, and was unimpressed when I saw his massive steamer, WHITE WHALE. Captain Sanctuary was no Ahab, as well as I could tell, and the lord knows I was never intended to be an Ishmail. He did not brood and gnaw his fingers, and I was naturally too cautious often to walk into traps.

I arrived at the bloated great boat in the evening before the morning of our sailing, noting that all of my prospective mates who had already arrived had been partaking of the frivolities of the local parlors. The reek and bluster of cheap booze was everywhere, as well as the drifting haze of tobacco. Amiable feminine shrieks were loud, subduably loud, loud enough to be called upon to hush.

I found my berth, my cabin, earlyish, which was tiny as a prison cell and yet bigger than a hatbox. It had a dim bulb, and in a cupboard a lamp which threw greasy shadows upon the edges of a greasy yellow light.

I tried to read, and was unable, so I lay on my bunk, or cot, and chased and gathered my lines into a circle, and I smalled the circle until it was a point, and I slept.

Sounds of the morning gathered about, and I could smell the dawn, just passed, and the sizzling breakfast. Once more I was an early arrival to the scene, and I introduced myself to the great jolly cook, Pluck, and to the engineer, Sandy.

Both men were born to smile.

"Filthy goddamned brig," Sandy greeted me jovially. "What in all the lengths of hell was them bastards doing while I was toying the ladies ashore? She was stowed amiss. You can feel it in her bones. It is bloody ill," he smiled. He growled, and he grunted, and he flushed the clogging in his nostrils violently into his cupped fingers, and he wiped the goo across his shirt.

We shook hands.

Pluck, our Santa Claus of a cook, jolly as could be, was chugging around like a great choo-choo train. His chins bounced in a red and friendly manner, and the flabby lobes of his ears flapped happily. Sweat bounced from his pores and swung from his earlobes like pendulums, and let go.

I was to be ducked whole in the micro politics of the ship, and I looked forward to the earnest frivolity. I had been there before, and was unscarred, mostly.

Our breakfast was wealthy with hot salty fats, blessedly somewhat relieved by Pluck's own freshly baked bread which was rich with germ and bran. Coffee ran...

Pluck had been with Captain Sanctuary for ages and ages, and theirs was a love embellished by a wonted reciprocity. It was joy to behold it. Pluck slept in a cabin off the galley and its outlengths, which were farm, or garden.

His galley was fully furnished with everything a cook might request, almost, with pots and pans, cauldrons aplenty, knives and fridges and freezers. The knives he kept keen as Excalibur, and the fridges and freezers at an assortment of temperatures. He had cans and tubs and crates.

Hanging from the ceiling were bales and boxes in nets and in bags, swinging in swirling whorls, labeled and not, hanging at two levels touching, with their ropes gathered in bunches and strung like the strings of balloons to hooks driven in the walls. An army might have hidden up there.

Pluck's able, fidgety helper, was a little fellow called Knockers, for reasons I choose not to ponder. He was a miniature personality and an exceedingly serious individual indeed. Once he informed me that he had changed his name when it had occurred to him that his parents had been presumptuous when they had christened him, cruelly presumptuous because they could not have known what his personality would be. "By naming me in their ignorance they attempted to define the limits of my soul," he said.

And so when he was able he had changed his name.

Many times I have found that my interests were best served by withdrawing into an appearance of misunderstanding what is laid before me, and so I did now. I responded with my commonest noncommittal retort, and I said, "Good."

Knockers was employed, much to the gratification of everybody concerned, in the farm which lined the outlengths of the galley. Pluck, who was a wise man in our human ways, told him his job. Wondrous healthy crops were produced, a rarity in any situation and aboard a ship a secular miracle.

They grew broccoli, and we dined upon sprouts and leaves and flowers. They grew soy, and we ate sprouts and soup hot and cold, and the beans everyway. They grew cabbage and we ate unsalted salads of cabbage. They grew onions, and we ate leaves and bulbs. They grew dandelions, and we ate roots, leaves, and flowers, in our unsalted salads. They grew potatoes, o blessed potatoes.

But our meat was always canned, salty, fat.

Somewhere among these considerations the ship shoved off and the sea rolled under us like the years of lives, running. Days occurred, each but a little different from another, much as people are each but a little different from another and each has its little day.

Days occurred, and nights occurred. The weather was good and the weather was bad and the weather was in the welter between, in a chaos of calm and wild.

Soon I and my fellows became familiar and friendly and we settled into the common fall of things. Although I was effectually a nonentity I dined with Captain Sanctuary and the Chief Engineer, Sandy, and with the doctor, Dr Equanimous. Also the Chief Mate was there, and Pluck rolled about us like an attendant wheel. Knockers fidgeted in the background, darted to our foreground, and sped away, sometimes just listening although nothing magnificent was ever spoken.

We ate in the saloon, which resembled a livingroom and a diningroom. Heavily stuffed chairs inwardly surrounded the walls, and those chairs had been wrapped thoroughly in a coarse plastic which drained the moisture both inside and out. I remembered, every time I sat in one, how it

always felt when I stuck my hand and my arm in a cold sandy hole searching for clams on the beach.

And yet they were a bulwark to be grateful for, like wombs, unaware of their inhabitants and of the comforting effect produced in their inhabitants by the immersion in estrogen. We complained of them constantly, and yet as if we were hippopotami in a wateringhole we wallowed in them amiably.

During meals we sat around a table in sturdy unupholstered chairs which had been bolted deliberately. Captain Sanctuary's chair possessed the only cushion, and was unbolted.

Such was an inviolable principle. Only the Captain might swing about like a cannon to address whom he chose.

Captain Sanctuary's eyebrows were imperious in themselves, and leaped forth from his forehead like the sails of the grand old sailing ships, like the wings of eagles. From their perch below, his eyes could bore in upon the recipient of their gaze until one's mind hung in smoking tatters, or felt clutched and skewered. His only knowledge was an information concerning affairs pragmatism, as he called it, taking a sly dig at those who fancied useless esoterica. He was a sly old sea dog.

My guess is that he was hightailing it from something in petticoats and a nursery, or from his lack thereof. Dr. Equanimous sat at the table also, and obviously he was the icon of sophistication, clever as the devil. Often I wondered why he had been cast among us, and suspected he had misbehaved, having been tuned a few lines too finely by the Creator. Perhaps he had never been given a fit example to live down to.

Sometimes as we chatted, the Doctor would raise his hand before his mouth and smile. Sometimes he would accompany us in our sallies of vain inanities, our silly and important gossipings.

If he smiled behind his hand, we knew that soon he would beg politely to be excused and then he would stroll away onto the deck or to his cabin, or to his surgery. If this happened, the Captain would bend to me and say, "I do not understand that man. His aplomb confuses me, and angers me." Clearly, the Captain was intrigued by the Doctor, but the Doctor would intrigue with nobody.

Sometimes after our dinners closed, at his explicit invitation, which was often couched as an entreaty, I thought, I would pad across to the Doctor's cabin, which was a better cabin than mine. He dearly loved his nightly tittle, and he had provided himself ably with gin. He had been in many of our world's theaters, and he had more tales than had Boccaccio, and he delighted in an audience of one.

My cabin was a tiny thing, though much bigger than an eyelid. In my innocence I had brought too many books and had scrupulously arranged them on the shelf provided, according to the birthyears of the words. But soon I learned that the sea did not care about my scruples, and now they were neatly piled in a bag I hung from a nail.

Shakespeare was there, and Boswell's LIFE, and Blake and Shelley: two men of the earth, one of the fire, and one of air. Our fellow of the water had not yet appeared to us, and any of the ether would be inscrutable.

Each copy was something like a not overly complete oxford, with a print exceedingly clear, a clearness of line which became an invisible clarity once entered. And I had similarly big volumes of Charles Fort, who always had the effect of arranging my mind into an ease, and of Edgar Poe, who made me smile.

I felt I was well-mounted against the proud meaningless forces of chaos. I understood that some of these friends would be unable to speak with me during some of the times to come, and I felt prepared. I was not wholly an inexperienced fellow and I believed I did understand how people behave when we are stuck together for lengthy spaces, and being a bit of a seditious inciter I brought with me several cheap paperbacks which I intended to lose tactically among my fellows

once the time had drawn through sufficiently.

Always I have experienced an identifiable pleasure in placing mindbombs clandestinely, and these books I selected consisted of works by my fellow inciters, by such as Charles Williams and by Theodore Sturgeon, by Edward Lucas White. I sought explosions to jar one's perceptions of psychological orderliness.

It has been mentioned that it is commonplace for us to place deliberately specific books, on our coffee-tables and in our bathrooms so that they might be seen by our neighbors, our visitors and friends, and what I proposed to do was a simple corollary to this illuminating procedure.

Mostly in those evenings when I was alone I did just what you do in those evening when you are alone. Sometimes I browsed a volume lazily and ruminantly, and sometimes I was able to read a book vigorously, entering far.

Sometimes I could not get beyond the face of the page, and I would stop the effort and I would only doodle on a page, scribbling what was sometimes poetry, and commonly scribbling what would later prove the usefulness of nonsense.

It is no easy thing to go outside of the self but it is also no easy thing to stay inside of it. One evening I dictated some pieces I called imperfect equations, pieces, I alleged.

Perhaps my favorites of these imperfect equations were, "Wisdom is selflessness accepting its ego," and, "Preconception is death." Such things are only paper poetry, I suppose.

On those evenings when my mind ran black I would force myself to sleep. In earlier years when that would happen I would pour my tippie down my throat until I disappeared. Wisdom is a bitter virtue, but it is wiser simply to force oneself to sleep than it is to disappear altogether. Weariness has taught me that pretty notion, and I am grateful for that weariness.

Frequently as I entered my cabin I smiled bleakly at the black stampede as the cockroaches flashed from my sight. Our ship had cockroaches as plentifully as any political convention has boastings of a virtual morality, and always I found it impressive. I could never determine whether they fled from me or from the burst of light

Some of those roaches were as big as both of my thumbs, and it seemed wasteful the gods had not devised some cuddly fluffy roach-gobbler who loved to purr while its tummy was being tickled, and who always smelled as if it had just been shampooed.

The doors to our cabins had locks, of course, but they all responded to the same key. Sometimes I fancied it was just as well, since I had left my clutch of Fabergé eggs at home in my estates in the Cotswolds, ha ha.

Sometimes if I left articles on my cot they would disappear, but I did not much miss them. It was on my cot I left some of those subversive paperbacks, and invariably they scooted off to do their work on some hapless thief. Grief is meaningless to the immortals, I surmised, but vengeance is good hard fun. Many a cabin has been used as a trap, I guessed.

These rolling days were shreds of wonder, hallucinogenic. Sometimes it dawned on me that I participated in something quite special, inspired perhaps. In the distance on the cloud-capped ocean I could almost catch sight of flaming dragons which fled as I brought my focus upon them.

I was not unhappy.

Much time I spent in my office, counting among the numbers in the ship's books. It was easy to sneak my better books in, and my time was so easy I spent many long days just reading what I chose.

When together with the other men we chatted amiably about trifles, much as you do, and we gossiped hugely concerning the way of the ship, concerning each other's idiosyncrasies. I could

never trust anybody who did not enjoy gossip.

And sometimes I would go visit the Skipper, Captain Sanctuary, in his comfy cabin, which was clearly the best cabin on board. His books, I noticed, were mostly professional manuals, and travel books by T.E. Lawrence, H.M. Tomlinson, Wilfred Thesiger. Curiously, he had none of the books of those old sea voyages: if it is not contemporary it does not exist, I supposed.

Because he was the Master, the Skipper, the Captain, his books obeyed his will and did not fall from the shelves during turbulence, and so they were placed neatly in no particular order I could discern. I did notice that most of the blue ones were together.

Pluck, our Cook, obeyed and babied the Skipper, I noticed, and sometimes brought him, uncalled, a choice bottle, or a choice snack. But then Pluck was the soul of sweetness and generosity to everybody. When he was a child, I thought, somebody must have been kind to him.

Sometimes when I chatted in the Skipper's cabin, Pluck would bring us merely the simplest wedges of cabbage, and we would thank him as garrulously as a landsman might thank a man who yanks his daughter from the path of a train. This demonstrativeness pleased everybody and was not just air.

Pluck's assistant, Knockers, kept the Skipper's cabin, as he called it, "the spotlessest cabin on the ship." Knockers had the knack of being invisible, and he was never there when I was chatting with the Skipper.

This cabin was a livingroom, had nice chairs, his own little stove, an aquarium that appeared to have nothing in it except for water and a few rocks. From a stout brass hook hung a fishingnet within which were glass fishingweights, I supposed, until I got closer and saw they were half a dozen or so shrunken human heads such as an equatorial cannibal tribe might bestow upon an exceedingly well-armed and assertive visitor.

They were small enough for cats to chew on.

Days rolled under us like stars.

Every seaman aboard appeared a superstitious fellow, as is customary where people move among a vastness. Every seaman watched the birds as if personally directed portents, sibylline commentary. Commonly a man would lean against the railing above the waves and would speak to his wife, and speak to his beloved dead, a mother maybe, or a lover he has never known. Always this is a communication with his god, spanning the essential silence, a testament in aloneness. I do this, and so do you.

Tales would be told with unsaid endings, tales whose beginnings and endings might be merely incidental. Glances would be used to bring forth the bad birth, and a message would be passed like a baton.

The winds rolled over us and all around us, mixing the air and the water. The winds were a grim avalanche, and every dawning brought us warmer as we came closer to the green belly of the world. Our few chickens were long plucked, and our freezers were running out of meat: mostly now we ate a flesh hot, salty, and fat. I thanked heaven for Pluck's fresh veggies, his godsend.

My duties continued scantily.

The winds rolled over us like time pressing.

Some days I watched the sea.

The sea was comprised of individual tendrils flowing in cataclysmic symbiosis toward a distance and from a distance, immeasurably. The tendrils wreaked and wove in violent tapestry around and through their neighbors and themselves, beginning and ending someplace none can say. Every movement is a wrapping, and the symbiosis strangles every participant.

Trees in every forest, and people on every space, and the grasses of the flat plains, are equally wrapping, weaving, ripping, strangling. The hidden limbs of the earth, those multitudinous veinings that insinuate through every cubic inch, are equally wrapping, strangling, pushing, forging forth.

It is too awesome a spectacle for folks to appreciate, to understand, and to have inklings of, and so we believe ourselves discrete. It is a single phenomenon. Days followed days, as I watched this astrology of the earth which was too profoundly vital and too immense to comprehend. And yet I was permitted to be a witness.

And the days followed the days.

Doctor Equanimous and Captain Sanctuary, and I, many mornings would visit the forecastle. Carefully the Doctor's fingers would prowl through his clothing for little beasties, and always he would find some.

Captain Sanctuary and I were free men, relatively speaking, and seldom felt the need. Bugs and insects had no use for us, and left us alone, blessedly. Possibly we smelled bad, and what is a scent but the promise of a taste?

Sometimes the Doctor would then suggest a variation in our diet, and I suspect he enjoyed our tinned flesh as little as I did. Curiously enough, the ship had no fishingpoles, so we improvised satisfactorily, and always I prayed for tuna.

As you have observed, prayers are seldom answered in a voice capable of being heard by humans, and commonly before too much time had elapsed we had on board one of Neptune's great thumping steeds, and it would be wrestled and hammered and spiked and gutted, and would get et.

Frequently this debacle occurred, and every time it did occur each of us acted like it was a new idea freshly dropped upon us through the winds. We played many innocent painless games to beguile the tedium.

It is no wondrous thing that most sailors choose not to fish, for on a long tedious journey it is kindest to oneself if any unnecessary anticipations are avoided, and so sailors commonly prefer to eat the same foods every day.

Endlessly the sailors watched the sea, and to common unimaginative fellows it appears identical and meaningless day after day, because it is a reflection of the mind. Eccentrically these men might see the promise of visions and visitations, but they would see the promise only, and never see the visions and the visitations.

The sea was only the sea, and it followed itself as it had preceded itself, endlessly...

Days followed the days, endlessly.

Some mornings I woke to doleful yelpings, and I knew the Skipper was thrashing his dog, Cerberus, and I knew he held in his hands a sturdy belt and he held it by its buckle, probably, and his mighty arms were swinging like the arms of a windmill, and blood was not flowing, probably.

I do not believe the dog ever understood the excuses adopted by Captain Sanctuary, nor could the dog have understood the function of these beatings. Our Captain required such an outburst of pent frustrations, as every beater does, and the dog's misbehavior was used to furnish this outburst its door.

Finally the exercise would be done, and the dog would slink away to lick his wounds and his balls, awash in self-pity and self-loathing, and the master also.

What I intend when I mention the tendrulous configuration of our individual humanities, and of every corollary existence, is that we as the members of a species are extensions of our genetic lineage or strandings which travel extensively throughout all planetary lives. We are individual starpoints on these gyrating tendrils that reach and grope through the millennia and the species of

our cosmic awakenings. We are spots on our genetic wanderings as the galaxies are compromised beyond the reach of innocence.

This was true of the dog, and of the man also.

Our passing had become quite warm, almost sultry, and in the evenings that great beating heart of the sun more coolly desisted its hammerings. In these evenings, being rampant with leisure, we would carry lamps and we would stroll the decks gathering flying fish for our breakfast. Always we would gather, and the amiable Pluck would later cook, enough fish for anybody who might want one.

Some of the men did like fish, and some of the men wished merely to ingest that nutritionally marvelous flesh, especially after the nippings of the night before.

Men who sleep alone, and men who pretend to sleep alone, do tend sometimes to indulge at the glass, and since, in this monstrous hulk of a ship, individual berths had been provided for every body who might want one, such habits were allowed to occur.

Women and men are head and hat, and civilization without women was sufficiently difficult to achieve without burdening the men with the humiliation of being observed continuously. Thus, the remarkable civility happening on the ship had been a choice deliberately made by its masters. Everybody appreciated it, every day.

It was hot as we approached the tropics, and it was hard to get clean. Commonly I would wake at 6, to the sounds made by the men washing the deck, using their massive hoses. This was my signal to come clean. Wrapped in a towel big as a bedspread I'd leave my cabin and pad to the engines where a barrel had been filled with scald from the boiler. A faucet had been rigged with a screen and I would stand as the wash doused me. It was no easy thing not to shriek but I was resolute in my civility.

Next, I would pad, or scamper, upon the deck and the hands would blast me with those massive hoses as I rotated. Always this would be to an accompaniment of jocular remarks by the hands, and commonly these remarks were very indelicately jocular.

I remember once when Pluck, our Cook, our enormously great-bellied Cook, was performing this roundward ritual to a universal glee, and his great belly was bouncing alarmingly, and the men joked that he was pregnant with a baby elephant and that if one looked very very closely one could see its trunk hanging out. I suspected that Pluck had heard this joke before, once or twice, and yet he understood his shipmates had no malice and he laughed heartily along with his torturers.

"But can you see its ears?" one of them asked laughingly.

Played once, twice, or thrice, it was a good joke, and yet I suspected it had been performed so frequently that its value as entertainment had petered out somewhat.

One day the Doctor and I were arguing amiably about some stupefyingly meaningless trifle, such as how much the earth would weigh if it were stacked upon itself, an identical object, and Captain Sanctuary approached us and asked for our considered opinions concerning when we might reasonably expect to see the coast.

Of course he was sharpening us, since he knew that answer far better than either of us did, but we played along. What it came down to, of course, was that he bet each of us a pound of tobacco. I had no more use for tobacco than has a mouse for a toupee, but soon I had to buy a block of it from myself, the Purser. Our Captain was a gambler.

As we entered the river estuary it was a new experience for me, and that day it was as if I were experiencing two whole dawnings. First, the sun rolled out from under us and the day began with an appearance of lightfall, and then the liquid emerald of jungle rolled its wild splendors to my view.

At first I had the attitude of the immortals who only watch our finite goings on, without deigning as participants, but with the passing of novelty I understood I was a participant. I was no longer a tacit chorus.

I was grateful for this vision though I could not keep it, and soon we anchored.

Soon, in tropical time, a launch bobbed alongside our ship, and our political formalities began. The customs officer was a strutting swaggering fellow, pretty and perfumed, confident as Valentino.

The Doctor and I proposed going ashore, and he hid his treasures carefully, and he locked his door. I chid him for such an inhospitable incivility and in my self-consciously superior civility quite ostentatiously I placed my favorite huntingknife on my blankets and my door ajar.

The Doctor patted my cheeks and said he loved babies. I was monumentally unruffled and dignified, and I told him he was a sour old fool. We hopped aboard the launch and rode the mile of soft water. Still feeling definably superior, I thought I handled myself excellently like an old sea dog. I felt exquisitely graceful, from ship, to boat, to dock.

White buildings were the town, with red roofs, and broad-leaved trees dropping with fruit. People were dark, and poached by rains and sun. Noise was loud, the sound of rivers and of equatorial emotions.

A yankee hustler, scalawag or carpetbagger, invited us for quinine splashed on gin, on his veranda. Some men live among their individual days, and some among their decades, and some among the millennia or so, and this man appeared to slide rootlessly among them all.

He told us a story.

He told us to notice the jungle was watching us and closing in on us. It hedges everything, he said, and it closes everything, and it knows.

He said that sometime back an assertive little man came to the town through the jungle, claiming he had found a cache left by the conquistadors, of emeralds set in patterns of gold. This assertive little man wanted a mule-train to haul out his find. He was as unpleasant as he could be, and sorry to behold.

A man with a small man's complex is only slightly less unpleasant than is a woman with a small man's complex, he said, and this man had the additional misfortune of wearing a strawberry birthmark across both eyes, resembling a dancer's domino, a coon's spectacles, or Zorro's mask. And his skin was as yellow as an old manuscript, with blackish splotches like burned holes. His attitude was the white man's burden.

This man bought his mule-train and he struck back into the jungle, hoping to swipe the treasure from under the noses of a cannibal tribe he said it belonged to. He was not heard from, though a couple of years passed, or a few.

Much later a prospector came through the town, and he sat swilling my gin just where you fellows are sitting, our tale-bearer told us, and he drew a bundle from his bag, undid its covering of leaves and showed me a shrunken human head he said he bought for a song upriver. "He told me it must be a thousand years old, and I saw that it had a curious discoloration about the eyes, like a coon's eyeglasses, and I said I doubted if it was that many days."

We sat there. The doctor and the hustler and I, and we swilled a drop of gin, each thinking or just feeling or, more likely, a little bit of neither and both. I was in no land of soft green meadows.

In reciprocity, the Doctor began a tale. He said that many long years earlier he had been attached to a party of explorers, mercenaries really, and they were sent for money through the bush. They had been told of a pigmy tribe, and a certain entrepreneur wanted samples.

These little dolls had the best eyesight in the world, and the healthiest, most robust tissues

throughout, and a scientist in America believed he had a solution for harvesting these rewarding parts. Enough money was available to provide litigation and legislation to make this business feasible.

An adult male would attain 2 feet in height, so they should be easy to capture and to transport. Where our maps led was in the distant bush, and no natives could be found. It was as if a network of telepathy controlled the land.

One day a white man stumbled into our camp and he was hot with fever. He told us he and his party had been on the same adventure we were on, and had found what we sought. In his bag was a bundling of shrunken, or miniature, human heads, and they smelled like mushrooms, faintly.

The leader of their expedition had run afoul of the pigmy priestess, he said, and lay dying in camp. "How is he dying?" we asked, and were told he was in a tent alone. Voices were heard from the tent, voices shrieking, arguing, and the singing of weird songs in many voices raised sometimes athwart each other simultaneously.

And the voices would interrupt each other, speaking at different speeds. None were permitted to enter the tent, and the dying man brandished his rifle toward any who attempted to cross the door. And yet he begged for, and received, water and food in great quantities, as if he were feeding an army.

Someone had slit an aperture in the tent and had watched as their leader hacked at his body with a huntingknife, something like great carbuncles was growing there, and blood ran, and his body was covered with fist-sized bumps, and wounds.

Our man died, and we proceeded toward his camp.

Only one white man remained, and the bearers had gone. We heard that cross-running chorus of screams and pleadings issuing from the tent, and we entered the tent. The man was in, and he appeared delirious. He was lying on his cot.

In one hand he held a bloody knife, and the floor was a welter of little heads, and blood. I thought I could hear echoes of an agony. His eyes tracked us as we moved, the Doctor said.

Everywhere he had been heavily muscled were cicatrices, wounds or scars, nearly round and the size of a fist "I felt," the Doctor said, "as if I were witnessing a thinning of the tapestry we call the world of matter, and as if something was attempting to force a passage through from the far side."

Fresh bulges were developing around his belly, and as we watched two of them opened and small heads burst forth, about the size of a man's fist. Their eyes were open, and the man on the cot was watching them now, and they were watching him.

He screamed and with his dripping knife chopped and sawed at their bases, their necks which were sliding forth from his body's openings. The heads lopped, and rolled.

He lay back, and shuddered as the third head broke through. Their eyes were fixed upon each other's eyes, and had no room for us. He seemed exhausted wholly.

Slowly the intruder slipped forth, past his neck and his shoulders and farther. His eyes now swept the room, understanding everything, and when my eyes met his I knew he remembered how my mother had cooed to me when I was at her breast, and he remembered, if that is the word, everything I had ever experienced.

Now his body was revealed to his thighs. It was anatomically correct in every particular, and it was an adult uncircumcised male perfectly. An umbilical cord ran through the genital pelt down his left leg and disappeared into his host's body. I thought of centaurs.

"What is a man but the shadow of his chains?" the homunculus said to his host, who was lying in apparent resignation, waiting. "You have betrayed a formidable obligation, and this results. Let

us return together,” and both men collapsed.

The Doctor ceased his narrative, and again I thought that truly this was no land of soft green meadows, gamboling fawns, and sweet music. Mozart was never here, observing Vivaldi past his steepled fingers. This was Wagner country, harsh, unempathic, brutally innocent.

Once more we were in silence. Each of us pulled at his gin. I did not know what to say, and somehow I felt embarrassed at receiving such a tale. The Doctor saw that our new acquaintance and I shared a difficulty, and he said, “Please forgive the indecency of my manners. I appear to have the habit of indiscretion.”

And we returned to our ship. Of course my hunting knife was gone, though the door was still ajar. The Doctor’s door was still locked.

With us, two Brazilian pilots climbed aboard, to guide us through those dangerous waters to come. These men were not stoics, but behaved as if life were an uninterrupted joy. They loved being hotblooded animals where the sun was hot.

Going the river they chattered like Bedouins, remarking on each tiniest spectacle, on this shadow and on that shadow, on this floating twig and on that floating twig, on this bubble and on that bubble, endlessly. This resembled an infantile chattering, to my cold northern ears, and kept the thoughts at bay.

Every hovel we passed, every rubberfarm, had its own satellite dish open to the messages of consumerism. These ears reminded me of a gypsy’s crystal ball, or Sauron’s palantir, and they brought into each acquisitive personality the insatiable carnival of moguls, popes, and presidents.

The mosquitoes were as commonplace as was the human riffraff we saw everywhere along the shores. We saw people in the last throes of despondency, twisting into cruel caricatures of their natural selves.

Our prime yankee woman-damned man-damned goddamned mogul, salesman of presidents and popes, Daniel Ludwig, proprietor of the Empire State’s Building once brooding rapaciously in his eyrie in its high eye-sockets, bribed and captured and butchered a Brazilian land as big as Connecticut, razoring it until the bloody guts washed down the Amazon into the sea.

Now along the riverbanks we witnessed the vestiges of his error as it slunk toward the primeval ooze of its reentry. Creatures of every tribe, race and species, slunk in consciously uncomprehending agony from the eviscerated jungle homelands toward the uncaring sea.

I was reminded of an innocent sailor boy who once stood incomprehensible in bravery for his hanging. As an organism he died as the hemp closed about his neck, and as he was raised, (for in a sea-hanging one does not drop) he was watched by his mates not to squirm.

He did not squirm, of course, because this living organism was not hanged: it was a dead man who was hanged, and he cheated the hangman, and he cheated the hangman’s masters most bitterly. He did not win.

Weather was variable as we rolled up the sinking Amazon against the tide of myriad floating islands of verdure, and alligators, and half-submerged trees floating to the sea. Alternately we were poached and we were floated out to dry, and bugs and insects kept us company.

Mosquitoes were rampant.

As we moved the jungle receded like an ancient scroll fitly rolling out its tale. We watched the rolling of its patterns, observing the colors of its weave.

The Doctor sat placidly in the deck shadows, searching an immense tome about tropical diseases. I felt like a bait the jungle decided to swallow.

Sometimes a canoe pulled alongside, and we would spin off toward the land on a mission of

discovery. We were shown a local Stonehenge, and local immense sculpted heads, totem poles, burrowed rings.

Once in an explorer's journal I had read of an anaconda 60 feet long. The explorer's commentators did not dispute the figure, because of the explorer's reputation. Commonly in the papers I had read of a village being terrorized by a 40 foot specimen which, once captured and killed, was resolved into a 20 foot corpse. The locals called this beast sucuruja.

From such canoes we purchased many fresh foods, including a welcome variety of fruits, and many freshly killed birds.

Our cook, Pluck, bought a baby ocelot which immediately ran up into that forest of bales and bundles to play with the rats. Everybody knows that cats are bad luck on ships, and yet he bought it anyway, and it was the cutest kitten I ever saw. I did not think it was time to tell him that venerable joke, that one way to titillate an ocelot was to oscillate its tit a lot, but I figured I'd get around to it.

I am a patient fellow.

Soon the kitten had the run of the ship and we became close pals. One day I found a freshly killed rat on my pillow, but I just tossed it overboard and turned the pillow over. I figured the flies would find that blood pretty soon, so I washed the pillow and the pillowcase the following morning.

One day we hauled aboard a businessman's herd of cattle, long-horned beasts with thick necks. A crane was elbowed over the water and a noose was dropped around the cattle's necks, one at a time, and they were swung aboard. I'd guess there were maybe 80 of them.

Every day on the river as I glanced along the riverbanks I saw the villagers' livestock, and in the individual hovels along the banks. Often pigs and chickens lived under the stilted dwellings, and goats and llama moved in the open spaces.

Frequently the owners cracked the forward ankles as a means of hobbling the beasts inexpensively, and I could see the beasts stumping about on their two, and two half, legs.

I was rattled by the sight but the jungle did move in the clearings every night, and the river was a jungle in itself. The sucuruja was not a phantom from exaggerated myths, and piranhas and gators poked about, and there were cats to marvel at.

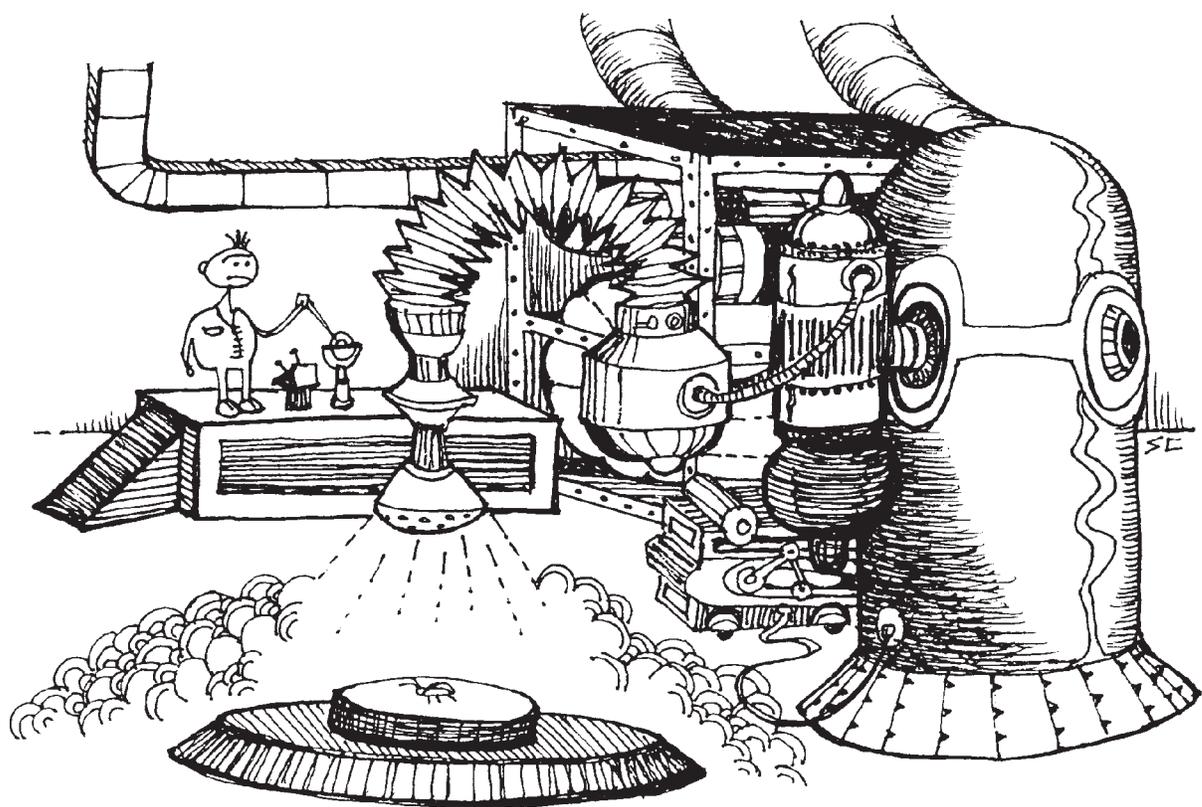
Soon, so to speak, we were where the Amazon meets the Madeira, and that is a broad expanse. The sun was reflected as widely as it had been reflected when we were on the sea, and as sharply. And yet by the sight of the jungle we knew this was a river and was not the sea, as we rolled upward toward the Andes.

I fancied the jungle resembled a god who had appeared in our dreams and had strengthened his communication until the dream dissipated and the god remained.

Floating islands and half-submerged trees continued to pass us in their escape to the sea. Wildlife rode on these moving lands.

Mosquitoes were prevalent. The Doctor said, "Here are mosquitoes big enough to carry a man off," and he was not wholly kidding. Every day every man took his quinine, in gin or not. Some men neglected to tuck themselves securely in their cots, leaving a gap in the netting, and they paid dearly.

The Doctor now fancied himself an entomologist, and asked me to help. "Some bugs bite and some bugs do not bite," I told him, "and I prefer those bugs who do not bite."



POISON BY STEPAN CHAPMAN

All the Battlefields of the Mind

ALAN CATLIN

They know everything.

It's inscribed on the back of their Golden American Express card at birth and transferred to the back of their gold wrist jewelry and neckwear for easy access and referencing.

In all their years on this earth.

On Their planet that they are reluctantly sharing with the rest of us mere mortals, peons of the flesh, necessary only because someone not Them has to do the dirty work.

They will dispense their infinite wisdom for you whether you want it or not as if whatever they have time to accomplish in a few short years weaned from the trust fund and the wide spread cloak of overweening parental guidance, which isn't nearly enough to justify their 'done it all, seen it all, got the t-shirt' attitude.

Life was all one big party for them but it's all in the way you see things.

Party Time

Life was just
one long party
to Air Head-
going to, coming
from or planning
the next get down
in the rain, un-
dressed and ready
for action, personal
weapon on automatic
fire, damn the slant
eyes full speed
ahead, let's just
shake, rattle
and roll like

the mean mojo man
says, like a human
skeleton hanging
from a tree,
picked clean by
carrion birds-
"Don't fire until
you see the blood
on their beaks"
AH said but most
nights in the field
come party time
he couldn't wait.

Some people's playground is another person's battlefield.

A War Zone littered with every kind of imagined human litter.

The seen and the unseen. The known and the unknowable.

The Ghost Road

In Nam
half in jest-
we called every
road, every path,
every where
we went
highways to hell
and
they were
once you saw

where we went
when we walked
there ending up
like human
litter not fit
for body bags,
ghost patrols
for the dis-
embodied,
lost spirits
one and all

It doesn't matter where you are, once the war starts it carries on within and without you.

The wasteland is a place you learn to live with and no matter what happens there is no escaping it.

You try not to let it show, to let it carry over into the things you think and do everyday out in the world but it doesn't matter.

"I beat the bottle but
I can't beat the war" - *after an acrylic on canvas by Ron Mann*

30 years after
the fact a lawnmower
two yards over
backfires and just
like that I'm back
in-country sucking
in lawn chemicals
instead of air,
all that fertilizer
for a mind on a
perpetual edge
recalling an agent
oranged dawn that
colors all the jungle
a dark unnatural

light like the hand
of death pressing down
the sharp, bladed
grass next to a
recently roto-tilled
garden plot, that
graveyard for lost
crops, plowed under
plants, dead soldiers
composted a dark, rich
loam thick with earth
worms fattened on
the rotting skins
of the dead

The dead.

You see them everywhere staring over the bar with that half-assed, spent three quarters of my life under an artificial tanning hut light contracting melanomas so that I can come here and pretend I'm perpetually working out in the sun and they've got something good for you, a little joke on themselves they'll never get as they try to impress you with knowledge of beers and wine they not only have never had before but can't pronounce.

Like a Guinness Light.

Strange Meeting

Just as the assault
team convoy begins
the descent cresting
the treeline, eye
sighting the LZ,
the FNG says
something so foolish
stupid I want to
back hand him
across the face,
"You know," he said,
"I never thought it
would be this hot here.
I thought back home
in Lou-zee-anna it was

as hot as it could get."
as if this was some
kind of war movie
back lot screen testing
for the real thing
instead of a tropical
fucking rain forest
crawling with Victor
Charles, so I said,
"Kid, you don't know
what hot is." A remark
that implied, that he
was sure as hell going
to find out.

Guinness Light.

Not in this lifetime, son.

So you suggest something different, something really unusual.

The Black Hole

*Stolie Orange flavored by a drop of
Black Haus, shaken served up
with a wedge of licorice garnish*

He looked as if
his brain had
been sand blasted
clean of all
thoughts, memories
& ideas, all
the blood drained
from his body
& replaced by
a liquid that
smelled vaguely
of formaldehyde,
claimed to be
a true denizen
of the night
in need of

the elixir of
life, sat smoothing
out an incredibly
wrinkled Gold
Certificate twenty
dollar bill
on the scarred
surface of the bar
with an inane
grin on his face
that seemed to
suggest he expected
service sometime
in the not too
distant future

He decides that's not for him.

He wasn't really thirsty after all.

Maybe it was something I said.

You can never be certain of anything except the existence of the undeniable

The Avenging Angel

*1 part Black Sambuca, Irish Creme,
Vanilla Stolie, topped with Coca Cola*

What she perceives
as a low, sexy voice
slightly hyped by
high test speed is
a sound as if
from beyond
the grave, a banshee
wail, savage keening
from the darkest
point inside
the occluded soul,
something from inside
the rock of her heart,
withdrawn from
circulation & pressed,
That's my life.

in vinyl, re-
mastered as long
playing DC selections,
two cuts for a
buck, her remaining
life force a garish
object among neon
embers, spiraling,
variegated among
lost schematic patterns
of virtual light.

The Wasteland

it all depends upon how you see things

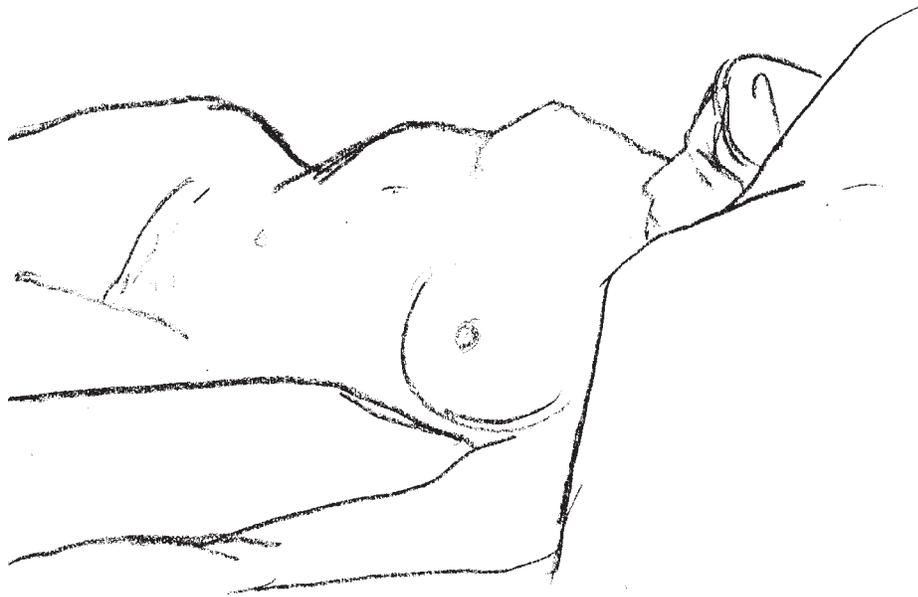
what happens inside and without you

what happens everyday

The Wasteland

“In Dis I sang to them, they will remember me.”
-Louise Cluck, *Orfeo*

Would have looked
like the banks of
the Mekong after
a B-52 bombing run
if Eliot had been
a foot soldier
instead of some candy-
assed REMF—that’s
Rear Echelon Mother
Fucker to you—or
a spontaneous DMZ
after a napalm bath
and wash that cured
what ailed you,
that made even
the biggest, dumbest
beasts of burden into
dried relic pieces
like some prehistoric
scuttling crab units
and we were the new men,
no longer hollow ones,
who got to watch
the show, so full of
what happened after,
not even our shit
would smell the same.



UNTITLED BY ALBERT HUFFSTICKLER

the miswired mind

JAMIE CAVANAGH

snow clings to corner shadows,
bitter in resentment.
corruption thrives.
redemption hesitates.
sun on its knees
peeks through curtains
of clouded confusion.
repetitive crimes 51 times,
cops in the service of crooks.

Africa starves.
(searching for the remote,
we vow to cut back
on those damnable intermeal snacks)
gloria in excelsis deo
beg vainly beg vainly beg vainly

circus maximus
outdraws the Mass.
TV evangelists prove
the rich and religion:
each in the other's employ.
the teachings of Christ
rejected.
the Bill of Rights
rejected.
any uneasy conception
rejected.
the stars ashamed wink out.
moon embarrassed too.
the sun considers a move
to a better brighter neighborhood.

in overfurnished coffeeshops
even dykes gossip, grow old,
sit in judgement:
Xerxes, Herod, Augustus.
mechanical chattering teeth
set before a robot heart
sing in a humorless wind.
I love the mind miswired.
as we flip the channels,
turn the page
unread in worried waiting rooms:
waiting for some doctoring,
some magical rewiring,
I love the mind miswired.

decapitated fried and laid there while the feast begins to happen

TERRY EVERTON

maria had
invited me over
for dinner

and i was
sitting there
on her couch
sucking at a
beercan

as her voice
came out
of the kitchen
at me

"I SURE HOPE
YOU LIKE YERS
FRIED DARLIN'
'CAUSE THAT'S HOW
I'M COOKIN' 'EM!"

she emerged
a few minutes later
carrying a couple of
paper plates

which she sat
in front of me
on the coffee table
while saying
"i'm outta
forks honey
but you ain't
gonna need one
anyways."

she shuffled
back off
toward the kitchen

as her cat
jumped up
onto my lap
and began
shedding.

maria returned
sat a bowl of
partially

mashed potatoes
in front of me

and asked me
if i wanted
another beer

"definitely"
i replied.

she brought
the beer to me

and as the cat
sharpened its claws
on the couch

maria
did a little dance
in the middle
of her floor
while singing
"HERE COMES
TH' MAIN COURSE
YA LUCKY DEVIL!"

a beerswallow was
making its way
down my throat

when she came
walking back out
carrying
what appeared to be
two large fried rats
by their tails.

she sat
one of them
on a paper plate
in front of me
and took
two steps back
as her eyes widened
in anticipation.

jesus...
this looks like
a fuckin' rat"
I said.

maria's mouth
dropped a bit

and she muttered
"omigod...
yer absolutely
right!"

she walked over
to the closet

pulled out a
large hatchet

walked up to
my rat

and lopped
its head off.

the head landed
by my foot

and as the cat
was carrying it off
maria sighed
with satisfaction
and said
"there! that's all
better now!"

she sat down
next to me
and plopped a
large spoonful of
partially
mashed potatoes
next to the
decapitated fried rat

as
a chewing noise
came from
the cat
behind the couch.

My Summers as a Human Mule

GARY EVERY

“Where are we headed,” I ask, interrupting my toils as part of a claimstaking and surveying crew, bent over from my bundle of sticks like a medieval peasant retrieving firewood.

“Over there, towards Black Butte,” Brian answers.

The air around the volcanic mesa shimmers with reflected heat, looking as if the temperature rose any more it would return to molten lava. It is the southernmost peak of the Vulture Mountain chain. Vultures are the only birds ingenious enough to figure out how to stay perched atop the hot black crags. They piss on their feet.

It’s hot. Too hot if you’re rented out as a human mule. I am always thirsty, not just from a parched throat but as if the heat deprives. My shadow is etched concisely, burnt onto the sand like the chalk outlines police draw around fatalities. My responsibilities as a good employee mean trudging across the desert floor laden with poles, shovels, axes, saws, hammers, maps, waters, and little pill boxes filled with documents which claimstake the land we walk across in the name of whatever geological entity we are hired hands for; similar to Spanish conquistadors planting flags and crosses in these same southwestern deserts many centuries ago. In the middle of the Mohave, Chihuahua, Sonoran, and Nevada deserts, in corners so distant that even the wind gets lost; we triangulate and calculate. It is my personal epiphany of existential futility, using a geometric language whose abstract icons of angles and distances have little to do with the terrain and the precisely measuring out a series of rectangles. It is the kind of existence which makes a man contemplate buzzard urine.

This is not the hottest place I have ever worked, even if the black igneous rocks turn the mountains into giant solar panels. It is hotter than Nevada and that was pretty bad. Still, as deserts go I have seen bleaker and drier. Hell, Wickenburg, the closest town has a tradition of being an oasis resort. The arroyo in the center of town is flowing with water, the banks are lined with grasses, flowers, reeds, and other signs of year round water.

This waterway once carried tourists escaping Phoenix in the summer, riding steam powered paddle boats. To survive rocky stretches of river during the dry season the paddlewheel was retracted, wheels would drop from the underside and the boat would roll downstream. There was once a government sponsored exploration of the Missouri River by paddlewheeler with a huge Viking-style dragon carved on the front, nostrils connected to the steam engine vents to impress the Native Americans. It was not the paddle boat but the steam powered locomotive which colonized the West, winding serpentine across the continent; smokestacks puffing.

The hottest place I ever worked was near the Eagle Tail Mountains. The U.S.G.S. quadrangle maps identified the particular parcel we were graphing as 4th of July Peak, an inconsequential heap of volcanic black slag, too puny to even cast a cool shadow of sanctuary. It was beside 4th of July Wash, named so because of the Mormons who celebrated the patriotic holiday there with picnics and fireworks. The temperature there hits the high hundred and teens, occasionally breaking past one hundred and twenty degrees. We traveled in perfect rectangles across the strange multi-colored soils, measuring our progress with laser beams and minors as we strolled, noticing that the texture of the grains changed along with colors into yellows, tans, browns, clays, and sandstones. The landscape was covered with gnarled ironwood trees, badger holes, spiky Thorn of Christ cactus, and the only sign of human habitation was the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant on the far horizon. Blinking, my eyes stinging from the salt of my own sweat I could almost see Palo Verde exploding catastrophically, suddenly venting giant plumes of radioactive steam capable of melting entire mountains, and as the billows clear there stands the ghost of apocalyptic steamboat dragon; nostrils flaring.

Some of the two dimensional Euclidean shapes we are surveying make no sense at all for the terrain. One of our points is about 30 feet up a cliff and needs a tagged post hammered into it. We flip a coin and Lady Luck chooses me to scale the cliff. By the time I return Brian has discovered an eagle eye. An eagle eye is our name for any small cave in a cliff where one can attain an outstanding view. We put down our bundle of posts and take an exploration break only to discover that it is not a cave at all but a freestanding slab that has been wind carved from the sandstone cliff into a facade fronting a ledge barely wide enough to turn around on with an eagle eye carved into the center. As soon as we scramble up and fill the aperture two hawks screech, circling above and challenging.

The most magical thing I ever saw while working as a human mule involved horses, a small herd of mustangs in northern Nevada. Tiny, hippy ponies whose tails and manes hung to the ground, stirring in the breeze like fluttering flamenco guitar strings. This herd held three mares, a single foal, and a black stallion with white socks and a white stripe along his nose, symmetrical until it zagged towards an ear. As I climbed over the ridge, my scent was carried by the same breezes which the vultures were sailing; riding thermal updraft. The stallion responded to me as a rival. He reared, throwing up clouds of dust in an equine tantrum. I used my shovel to throw up clouds of my own into the air and he whinnied, racing between me and his mares; back and forth, back and forth. Suddenly, they vanished across the landscape, their shadows sailing along the prairie grass like kites.

Kneeling in the eagle eye reminds me of the precipice prose of John Muir and Yosemite Falls or the Nathaniel Hawthorne tale of climbing atop a church steeple and admiring the landscape while the local villagers scream about blasphemy. At Deazadash Lake in the Yukon I read from On Walden Pond while staring at the turquoise reflections on the glacial water's surface against a bleak landscape where the scattered pines grew twisted in the direction of the Arctic chill.

Sometimes the literature is not only about the earth but also a part of it; carved into the rocks themselves. While working in the Yellow Medicine Hills we used to stop and look at the petroglyphs by Gillespie Dam. Petroglyphs, Native American picture carvings on rock, were based on principle similar to Native American Sign Language, many of whose symbols were understood all across the North American continent. Petroglyphs recorded tales, myths, histories, and personal insights; some of which have been long forgotten except for the places where they have been etched onto the earth.

My favorite petroglyphs are the giant Nazca lines of Peru. The huge stick drawings are decipherable only from the air and some anthropologist believe that the Inca had reed basket balloons to look down upon them. I saw the earth from a great height once and it was certainly a religious experience. I went skydiving, soaring above my native Sonoran Desert and after the chute opened I could feel myself traveling along the wind. It was as if I could fly, sailing across the valley, beyond all the mountains that I could see. Floating beneath the open canopy was exactly what I had imagined flying to be like but I wonder if birds ever imagine that they are us, willingly trading flight, coveting our opposable thumbs and all their accompanying technology.

The American West has been measured to death by everybody from Lewis and Clark to John Wesley Powell; digging up gardens, ruins, graves, bones, fossils, and rocks. The 1890 census declared the American frontier closed to the small independent farmer (and Jeffersonian democracy) but in 1868, at Antelope Pass, Nebraska, an anthropologist stopped to examine rumored fossils of primitive man. Those fossils turned out to be prehistoric horses, tiny pygmy ponies who had long been extinct. This discovery led a scientific wave on investigation whose immigrants were logists; anthro, hydro, bio, and geo. Once, I dug out trilobite fossils from stratified shale near Kadiz; 550 million years old and among the most ancient fingerprints on the planet. Now they sit in my waterless fossil fish tank; the brightly colored gravel bottom littered with geodes, crystals, and unpolished gemstones whose sparkling contrasts greatly with the shales and browns the fossils are imprinted in. The lives of these trilobites and fish have been etched into these fossil patterns, surviving millions of years only to become curiosities in my fossil fish tank.

While I gaze out from my eagle eye across the landscape I wonder what minerals my employers are prospecting for: gold? silver? uranium? The sandy colored soil makes me think otherwise, perhaps some clay which can be transformed into an industrial lubricant; keeping machines humming and running smoothly. I have been to plenty of mining boom towns turned into ghost towns. The Southwest is littered with dried up ghost towns, while the metropolises grow larger and larger sending pipelines and canals spreading across the drainages and basin ways like thirsting tentacles.

The ground beneath us in the eagle eye crunches and crackles beneath our feet as we shift around. The ledge is directly beneath the mated hawk pair, who litter the eagle eye dinner discards. Sun bleached bones cover the earth with a thin layer of squirrel skeletons and fragile rabbit skulls. The hawks screech again.

From the eagle eye we can see where the canyon boxes up, dead ending where cliff and chasm butt up against each other, revealing a large cavern. As we approach the entrance to the cave Brian stops, bends over, and shouts, "Feathers!", holding three brightly colored plumes aloft.

Those feathers glisten like jeweled keys. Brian's exclamation frightens three vultures from the cave. They swoop from the mouth, spiraling quickly above the angry hawks. We enter the cave, blasted by the damp cool wave of humidity that lingers there. The cave is cool, moisture clinging to the walls and before our eyes can adjust to the shadow there is a burst of white light, brighter than any lantern.

Caves come in two colors; shadow and total darkness. The farthest underground I have ever gone was on an environmental geology class field trip where we spent a day exploring the wastelands of Yucca Flats before riding mine cars down into the chill beating heart of the underground nuclear explosion test shaft. The most comforting cavern I ever sought shelter in had to be the Desert Rose Bar along the abandoned highway that provides the easiest access to the Yellow Medicine Hills. The beer was cheap, jukebox didn't work, and the pool tables were in tournament condition and for a quarter we made the colored balls bounce around like atoms chain reacting throughout the universe. Somewhere smack dab in the middle between the cool calculating horror of the nuclear tests shafts and the oasis refuge sanctuary of the Desert Rose Bar, was Gabbs, Nevada.

Gabbs consisted of only three buildings; their signs proclaiming GAS, STORE, and HOTEL. STORE doubles as the post office and HOTEL contains a house of ill repute, (Gabbs' largest industry). GAS sells only automotive needs but STORE had a flyer taped to it offering cash for captured lizards and so I discovered that Gabbs second leading industry, the reptilian slave trade, was also of questionable moral ethics.

I was in Gila Bend, eating dinner in the Space Age Lodge and Restaurant. The decor was garish 60's optimism with brightly colored plastic and glass baubles built into the walls and the lawn held scattered replicas of NASA paraphernalia. The food was bland and the coffee cold. A farmer and lawyer sat at the table behind me and discussed the farmer's bankruptcy proceedings, the rising cost of irrigation driving him out of the agribusiness. You could tell by his weathered hands that he had worked this land for a long time. I wondered if he had grown up on the farm that he was signing away.

The next job that summer offered quite a contrast to Gila Bend and the beauty of the Yellow Medicine Hills. Our crew changed from the flat lands where we could trace out our surveying rectangles rather quickly, covering vast amounts of territory in a single day to the stubborn Mule Mountains, whose steep terrain made progress arduous and whose deep gullies frequently eroded line of sight. Instead of Gila Bend and the Space Age Lodge with its Kennedy-era optimism it was now Douglas and the Red Barn Saloon. On a Tuesday afternoon the clientele had comprised of three unemployed men in their fifties, each wearing flannel shirts and crew cuts. Two of them had been career miners until the Lavender Pit was shut down but the years of exposure to heavy machinery had left them hard of hearing and they sat there swilling beer and watching programs like "The People's Court" or "Court TV" and felt free to comment on the judicial proceedings,

needing to shout over each others deafness.

“Give her hell judge,” one of the gentleman might declare, pausing to sip his fermented beverage while his compatriot furthered the consensus, “Anyone can see she is a lying little tart.” At the end of every program and during most of the commercial breaks they would pause to offer a toast in celebration of the machinations of justice.

Originally when the Constitution was drawn up it was envisioned that the House of Representatives would be made up of farmers, butchers, tailors, merchants, teachers, engineers,... The idea was that the House of Representatives would be comprised of private citizens taking a few years away from their careers to serve their country. Instead, we have career politicians dressed in suits and ties, ponderously pontificating, sending their words echoing off the domed ceiling. Sometimes in a cave when you startle flocks of sleeping bats it makes them squeak all at once, cacophony echoing everywhere as they flutter and stumble, attempting to steer by panicked sonar. Then after the bats leave and the echoes have died down you realize you are crawling through great big piles of bat shit.

In the box canyon in the Vulture Mountains, that blast of white hurls itself at us as we cross the line from sunlight into the shadow of the cave. Barely in time, I duck, the wings and shoulders of whatever the white thing is almost touching me. Turning around I see a snowy white barn owl fling itself away from the mouth of the dark cavern directly into the face of the summer desert sun. It wobbles for just one instant, as if it can't see; blinded by a sun this nocturnal creature never deals with, and one of the screaming hawks drops from above.

Snaps the owl's neck in half.

Brian and I turn, not certain if we want to continue in our explorations. Then we see the other owl. Same size as the first, same snowy white feathers with brown speckles, and as it glares at us from the edge of the nest; three frightened chicks squeak beneath it. We have accidentally killed a parent, a mate. I wonder if the chicks will survive or if the terrain is too bleak to allow one parent to succeed at the difficult task of raising the young alone. Perhaps we have killed the chicks too, only more slowly.

The curiosity that led me to take an exploration break instead of a lunch on a hot, hard, work day is one of my favorite parts of myself. It is an attitude which I consciously cultivate. This day my curiosity is shockingly quenched in that instant when the hawk destroys the owl, reminding me of the cost of my own continuing existence: welcome to the food chain.

We leave the cave before we frighten the other owl so bad that she abandons her nest and children. The next ridge over Brian and I discover a beehive, built right into the mountain itself honey oozing out from the rock. Neither one of us are willing to risk the wrath of swarming bees for the golden treasure. Instead we have work to do, continuing our claimstaking employment of sketching out rectangles across the land.

Mansion of Dead Animals

WILLIAM HART

I never liked it much
when we got sent up north
to the Wichita packing houses.
True, we escaped the blast
of Kansas summer
but no breezes blew in those
half-lit dripping places
with the AC frozen at 45 degrees
and a football field of hanging meat
clogging one's perspective.
There is a particular smell
to a herd of deceased cattle
shorn of heads, skin, innards
down to the blue-white flesh.
It is a half-sweet, semi-heavy
pervasive odor, soaking
deep into the clothes and hair
of all who labor daily
in the abattoir.

Each slaughterhouse
contains a room for curing hams
which possess a finer bouquet
of salt and hickory smoke
tinged with a hint of sugar.
A smell so good, I'd
sometimes feel hungry.
However, it was the pigs
who cast a grotesque sadness
over the entire enterprise.

Their problem was

they were bright enough to fathom
the secret beyond the black
dangling rubber strips
through which pig generations
brimming with the prime of life
had marched before them.
They did not foresee precisely
the shining steel rod
fired deep into the brain
then retracted up its barrel
for the next in line
or the dancing hoses
washing down the blood
but could in a general way
sense what was happening.
Some reluctant ones would stiffen legs
and squeal like freight trains
till the chute workers
zapped them with cattle prods
forcing them to prance across
the threshold of being.

I've had to ask myself
why hogs should be more lucid
than the victims of Auschwitz
who by report
examined dry shower heads
and wooden blocks of soap
in consternation
before the penny dropped.
It's not intelligence, of course.
It's that behind the beady eyes of pigs
lie no illusions like
"soul", "sympathy", "moral precept".
This allows the porcine kind
to penetrate the mystery
of the human heart
whose main compulsion
and imperative is not
the golden rule
but to follow orders.

Welder's Apprentice

WILLIAM HART

The arc of fusion
is bright enough to blind
and the novice welder
inept with his hood
will scorch his bare eyes
many times before he
cops the knack.

These quiescent burns
unfelt by day
turn to sand in the wretched night
sand that won't wash away
grained in the eyeball
like some dust of insomnia
tossed by an evil sandman.

A slice of raw potato
placed on the closed eyelid
like a mortician's coin
won't cure welding burns
but can numb agony
as potato juice
cool and soothing
seeps to the blitzed
cornea.

The only cure
is proficiency
got by practice.
In time, with a nod,
the hood falls into place
like an eyelid
as the arc of fusion
leaps to life
throwing shadows
on every wall.
The welder sees
through glass darkly
a small demon bead
of raw energy
turning steel to tears
and laying scars
that hold the guts
inside a building.

Riding the Rails

DON A. HOYT

Let's fling that old garment of repentance. Baby!
-Paul Blackburn

Wondering where the rail's end is
(even though I've been there),
I ride the rails of Canal street,
their clickity-clack ringing in my ears,
the rain spray stinging cold as prejudice
through the open window,
watching the sexy teenager,
black as an atheist's afterlife,
in her tight pants swish and sway down
the isle followed by her two strong brothers,
then gazing idly, the car moving smoothly,
at the porch sitters along the avenue
with their feet drawn up under them
on their top steps as if to avoid the wet
ground, as if to curl up like the knobs
on their ornate balustrades—
the fat lady counting her kids over and over
with a mathematician's skill
as they wear out what little plant life
remains between the porch and the banquette.
The dapper lover, slick as the inside
of a crank case, starting out from his
garage apartment on a night's new
crusade, brimming with verve and sperm,
the workman coming home, his fists in his
pockets as if holding on tight to the life
he would give up in a New York second for
a piece of American sweet apple pie,
his plump wife watching nervously
from the porch swing down the block
as his eyes undress the mousy woman
in the corner house he struts past—
I ride to the end of the line
where the whitewashed city stands,
its silent citizens apathetic as Hell.
Their one concern being
to not float about on the alluvial plane
and get all mixed up where their descendants
couldn't find them on Sunday afternoon
when they come with plastic flowers,
its gate guarded by the huge horseman
frozen in that moment of passing
us all by, indifferent to my weary boredom
across the outbound lanes of Canal Street,
squatting and waiting for another street car
to ride me back into my busy life.

richard diebenkorn: man and window, 1958

GERALD LOCKLIN

the importance of a window
is that you can sit in a chair
facing away from it.

you need never look out a window.
maybe it's dusk out there.
maybe it's not.
who cares?
nothing is out there.
nothing of importance is happening.
pick up a book.
stare at a wall.
smoke a cigarette.
smoke many cigarettes.
do push-ups.
have a drink.
have another.

meditate on the plays
of harold pinter.
don't watch television
unless, which is unlikely,
some channel is premiering
a new play by harold pinter.
no, you're better off just
tossing the t.v. out the window.
that is another reason why
a window's of such great importance.
a television may seem like a window,
but it is not at all like one.
a television is much more like
a microwave oven in an apartment
without a refrigerator.

don't even toy with the idea
of purchasing a computer.
that would be subjecting oneself to
the ultimate epistemological fraud.

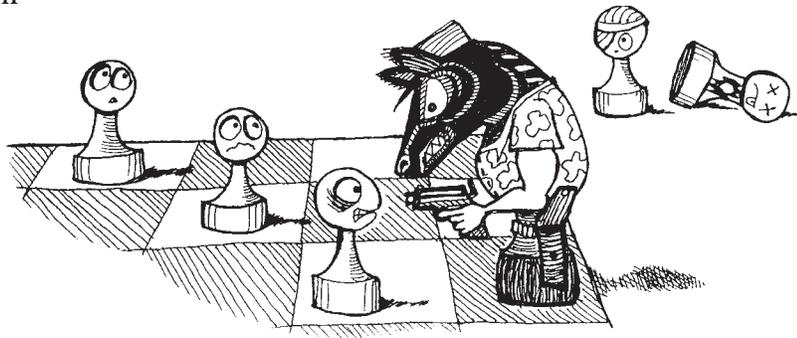
be sure to subscribe to
a daily newspaper, though.
subscribe to all of them,
from every city,
in every language.

have the delivery boys
toss them in the window.

edgar dégas: cotton merchants of new orleans,

GERALD LOCKLIN

sink your hands into
the clouds of cotton.
paint your walls a white
that is only slightly creamier than
the white of cotton.
import africa for its
color-coded contrasts.
even the creoles, of course,
are less white than
the white of cotton.
eschew purity for revelry:
the white of cotton is purity enough.
set sail on the billowy seas
of cotton, not the soiled green of
the ocean framed upon the wall.
wear white shirts.
wear straw hats and top hats.
don't try to paint in the sunlight
which could blind a european.
or a brother's wife,
the model estelle.
consider the cotton candy.
dive into it like scrooge mc duck.
melville knew that madness
was the color of absence.
poe knew that madness was
the glare of the north pole.
now dégas, who would return from
a year among family, amidst a culture
of gumbo, jambalaya, spice, humidity,
and the erasure, in the sun, of
boundaries, to an art as exclusionary
as the colorlessness that denies itself:
always the observer – of the dance,
the horses, the operatic ascension –
never the participant.



CHess BY STEPAN CHAPMAN

Blood, He Said

ADRIAN MANNING

You know the artists are poor,
starving and suffering.
Well he starved and suffered
in a room overlooking the
slaughterhouse,
stuck for paints,
staring at a blank canvas,
gazing through the window
watching animals arrive,
carcasses leave
and men in blood stained
white smocks taking
cigarette breaks,
leaning along the wall
like victims of a firing squad.

“Blood,” he said,
“that is the answer.
Where does the blood go?
They wash it away,
they don’t need it,
I can use it,
what a medium.”

She gave up chasing roaches
with a hammer,
turned to him and said,

“I can get it for you.
The guard, the old guy,
his wife died,
he must be desperate for a piece.
I could ‘look after him’ for
a barrel or two to get you started.”
“You’re a whore,” he said,
“but it could work.”

Later that night, he watched her
enter the gate, but she wasn’t
careful enough.
He could see her going to work
on one of the young men
working the night shift.
She finished,
composed herself,
and left.

She came back but
there was no barrel of blood.
She would tell him she needed
to go back the next night,
to work on the old man some more.
He wouldn’t give her the chance.
He picked up the hammer and waited
in the darkness behind the door
for her return.

“There will be blood,” he said,
standing perfectly still,
only his terrible, black heart
moving inside him.

Psycho Line (A Psychodrama)

B.Z. NIDITCH

PLACE: Nirvana, New Haven, a mansion in Connecticut

TIME: The present

CHARACTERS: Mr. Knot, 40s, a psychology expert

Miss Scud, 20s, his secretary

Mrs. Richardson, a reporter from The Post

And the callers: Daphne, Marlene, Dotty, Sally Travers, Danny, Mary and Tanya

SETTING: There is a slogan on the wall, "Time is invaluable." When the phone rings, a light flashes on the phone, and we see the callers from the other half of the stage.

DAHPNE: Is this Dr. Knot?

SCUD: Mr. Knot is not in right now. This is Miss Scud, legal secretary.

DAHPNE: I'm Daphne.

SCUD: Wait a moment. Did we get your check for fifty dollars on the first?

DAHPNE: I'm one of Dr. Knot's new time religion prayer partners and Amazon warriors.

SCUD: Mr. Knot appreciates your new religious devotion as well as your checks, and Daphne, we haven't heard from you on the first.

DAHPNE: I know I missed Summer Solstice, but I need to talk.

SCUD: I know. But every minute of Mr. Knot's time is invaluable.

DAHPNE: I've been to so many priests, ministers, men of the cloth, but no one can help me like Dr. Knot.

SCUD: Mr. Knot knows how to help and where to tap in the resources for better mental health. You know principle one.

DAHPNE: I've memorized it.

SCUD: What is it, Daphne?

DAHPNE: Our own light is our source.

SCUD: Two, Daphne?

DAHPNE: Seed faith and it will sprout.

SCUD: Haven't you been negligent on principle two?

DAHPNE: I sent in my seed faith money, but all you sent me back was a snapdragon plant, and it died!

SCUD: With your attitude, you'll have to go right into three, since you didn't water your seed with faith.

DAHPNE: Principle three: Attitude is gratitude. Please, I must talk with Dr. Knot!

SCUD: What can I do? Mr. Knot's line is tied up right now.

DAHPNE: Okay. I'll send you in the summer solstice check right now. I'll see what I have and give it to you.

SCUD: I'm sure Mr. Knot will appreciate your offering. Bye, Daphne.

(Miss Scud hangs up the phone. The phone rings again.)

SCUD: Mr. Knot's office. Yes?

MARLENE: I'm Marlene. I feel suicidal. I have to talk to Dr. Knot.

SCUD: Yes, Marlene. Wait a moment. It's Marlene, Mr. Knot.

(Dr. Knot enters. He is wearing red boxer shorts and no top. He has on red glitter sneakers.)

MARLENE: I have to talk to Dr. Knot.

SCUD: Yes, Marlene. Wait a minute. It's Marlene, Mr. Knot.

KNOT: Ah, Marlene.

MARLENE: I said my principles today.

KNOT: Good, Marlene. You are a worthy person.

MARLENE: Oh, thank you for saying it.

KNOT: Your self is the most important thing about you, and there'll never be another Marlene, honey, in all the world like you.

MARLENE: Oh, Dr. Knot, I felt suicidal, but just hearing your voice over the phone, it does make a difference. How are you always so cheery?

KNOT: It takes practice.

MARLENE: I know you must get other serious calls.

KNOT: If we all have faith in our psycho-ministry, we'll all be fine.

MARLENE: What shall I do today?

KNOT: Do your principles. Say them out loud. Memorize them. Then go into meditation about me.

MARLENE: Oh, I fantasized about you all day. You must be so gorgeous. I couldn't sleep last night, thinking about you.

KNOT: I'm honored.

MARLENE: I thought of you in the most weird positions and then, voila, I fell asleep in the morning at 5:00 AM.

KNOT: It always works.

MARLENE: And I had so much insomnia before I joined the line.

KNOT: Principle number four: Fantasize, then memorize. Let's hear number five.

MARLENE: Memorize, then exercise. I have your exercise book near me now. I began in the fetal position.

KNOT: Excellent way to begin the day.
(Miss Scud is stroking Mr. Knot and giving him a backrub.)

MARLENE: Then I went into the yellow shower, and I imagined how you look. I stayed in the shower for over 55 minutes. It seems when I think of you I can't leave the shower. Then I came out and drew a picture of what I thought you look like.

SCUD: I'm trying to do my best.

KNOT: I know you are. Then rub-a-dub.

MARLENE: Your picture looked like a saint in those mass cards Grandma sent me on my saint's day.

KNOT: Never be without me. I'll always be there with you, Darlene.

MARLENE: Marlene.

KNOT: Marlene.

MARLENE: Oh, Mr. Knot. I'm getting turned on just hearing your voice.

KNOT: Well, Marlene, your time is up.

MARLENE: How are the cats I sent in for winter solstice, Salt and Pepper?

KNOT: They're out the door.

MARLENE: Oh, I'm so pleased. I'm planning to send you seven thousand dollars so the cats will be taken care of.

KNOT: Thank you, Darlene, for your support.
(He hangs up.)

KNOT: She's sending us a love offering of \$7,000 for her cat fund. Oh, Miss Scud, you make me feel so good. What would I do without you?

SCUD: I don't know. Oh, the phone line.
(She answers the phone.)

SCUD: Mr. Knot's Human Ministry to Those Who Need a Touch.

DOTTY: It's Dotty.

SCUD: Oh, how are you, Dotty? Wait up a moment. *(to Knot)* Dotty.

KNOT: Dotty who? Check the computer.
(There's a big computer on Miss Scud's desk. She presses some keys, and Dotty's name appears with dollar signs next to it.)

SCUD: I think she's paid up.

KNOT: *(taking phone)* Oh, Dotty, I've just been thinking of you.

DOTTY: Oh, how kind of you, Mr. Knot. I need you to help plan my day.

KNOT: You do? Did you say your principles?

DOTTY: Yes, faithfully.

KNOT: And did you memorize and exercise?

DOTTY: Well, that's just it. I keep forgetting things.

KNOT: That's okay. You don't need a doctor.

DOTTY: As long as I have you, Mr. Knot. You told me you had a picture of my body in your mind, and that I was in perfect health, so I didn't take a mammogram. Am I still healthy?

KNOT: You're in perfect condition.

DOTTY: But can't you help me with my diet? I'm up to 250 pounds.

KNOT: Perfectly fine. Two hundred and eighty pounds is you. That's your self. Why be different?

DOTTY: Oh, Mr. Knot. I'm so glad I got you this morning. But can you help me with my diet?

KNOT: With Dr. Knot, no one need diet or die. Dotty, make a list of what you want for brekkie, lunchie, or dinnie meals.

DOTTY: I've done that already. For brekkie I had your granola jam on zwieback.

KNOT: How do you like our granola jam?

DOTTY: Well, it's different. To be honest, it makes me delirious.

KNOT: I hope you use our love bread.

DOTTY: Yes. And then I take a bit off, when I watch you on T.V. for daily community. But I don't know what to use for wine, so I drink milk.

KNOT: We all hate milk. If you want to be part of our ministry, you must hate milk. I was given a revelation at my mother's breast how destructive milk is, and now I realize that breast-feeding must stop.

DOTTY: Now I hate milk. I'm telling everybody.

KNOT: It's part of dead religion.

DOTTY: I now know the truth. Milk is horrible. I'm going to empty all of it out in the sink, right now.

KNOT: What did you plan for lunchie?

DOTTY: For lunchie I'm having a seaweed sandwich. I'm reading from your cookbook.

KNOT: Excellent. Why don't you give out some for winter solstice? I'll give you a break if you order them now.

DOTTY: You told me to give up my friends until my inheritance runs out, and then I'll need them.

KNOT: Dotty, your astrology chart came in. You're not to leave your house for eight months. All of your food needs will be met by me, and you can open up your windows if you need any fresh air.

DOTTY: Oh, thank you, Mr. Knot. I hoped you'd have a word of divine knowledge for me today. I've been reading your book, "Divine Wisdom as Taught by the Master."

KNOT: I have to go, Dotty. Your time is up. Keep looking within.

DOTTY: Oh, I will, Mr. Knot. Since my husband Drake died in Vietnam, I had no one until I met you. You're like him in a way. So strong, so comforting, and so wise.

KNOT: I'll be whatever you want me to be.

DOTTY: Oh, Mr. Knot, I'm so grateful.

KNOT: Gratitude is an attitude.

DOTTY: Oh, yes. I'll meditate on this pearl of yours today.

KNOT: Bye-bye, Dotty.
(Mr. Knot hangs up the phone. The phone rings again.)

SCUD: It's Sally Travers.

SALLY: I need some of your pearls today. They just melt in my mouth. I really need your advice. I listened to you when you told me to fire my lawyer, and I didn't know what to do with my insurance policies and my will. Would you handle it for me?

KNOT: Absolutely.

SALLY: Oh, Mr. Knot. I know your wisdom is greater than mine. I respect your mind, too. It's always ahead of mine. It must come from a higher power.

KNOT: Your wish is my demand.

SALLY: You're so rich in everything. Thank you for your legal expertise.

KNOT: I try to have a legal tender mind.

SALLY: You do. It's extraordinary. I'll send out my insurance policy and will to you.

KNOT: Don't forget the Social Security. We have to help the orphans and the unfortunate. You have to have a social conscience. Our movement is dead works unless we do good works – principle number six.

SCUD: There's someone on line eight, but there's a buzzing sound. It's Mary.

KNOT: Bye, Mrs. Travers.

SALLY: Sally.

KNOT: Sally. *(Hangs up.)* Mary, what's this buzzing sound?

MARY: I'm doing my birds and bees. You knew how much I wanted a baby. And I'm convinced this will work. But it's difficult. I brought in so many birds and bees. I want to have a baby and I'm doing what you recommend. But I have such welts, and my hubby doesn't appreciate the bird doo.

KNOT: Get rid of your hubby. You don't need him around for the birds and bees.

MARY: I don't? But how will I have my baby?

KNOT: Trust me.

MARY: Did a little birdie tell you?

KNOT: Just get back to those birds and bees, and let me know how your pregnancy goes.

MARY: I'd like to name my baby after you, but I never knew your first name.

KNOT: I'm not at liberty to disclose it. I wish you the best. Bye, Mary.
(Mr. Knot hangs up.)

SCUD: What is your first name?

KNOT: I despise it. Mama was vacationing in Puerto Rico, and the bellboy at the hotel on the day of my birth recommended she call me Jesus. I hate that name!

SCUD: I'm sorry I asked.

KNOT: I don't want any part of the old religion, Miss Scud. So you're not to speak of our secret.

SCUD: Why are you so formal with me? I've been with you for over a month.

KNOT: I believe in professional etiquette.

SCUD: Listen, I was in the oldest profession when you met me.

KNOT: Oh, Miss Magdalena Scud!

SCUD: Oh, Mr. Knot, you rescued me, and brought me here to Nirvana Haven. It's so pleasant in this mansion.

KNOT: My father wanted his mansion in the sky, but I wouldn't wait.

SCUD: How did you act as a little boy?

KNOT: Why is it whores are the most sentimental people? They even cry at dog pounds. Now get the phone.

SCUD: Hello? It's Danny.

KNOT: Oh, that Danny boy, the one who wants to be a girl.

DANNY: It's Danielle.

KNOT: Oh, naughty Danielle, how goes it in the transvestite world?

DANNY: Pretty good, until this morning. I've taken those hormones you recommended. But my breasts are sagging.

KNOT: At your age?

DANNY: I'm trying to firm them up.

KNOT: Be firm. Always be firm.

DANNY: I need your help to plan my dinnie. I'm inviting my boss over, Mr. Arthur, and he needs to see me in the best manner.

KNOT: I recommend a snake sandwich. It always works on bosses. Add a little of Knot's Steak Sauce. You can get it at one of your natural food centers. Where are you calling from?

DANNY: Driftwood, Kansas.

KNOT: Well, get to Kansas City, and tell them Mr. Knot sent you.

DANNY: Oh, thanks so much. (*Hangs up.*)

SCUD: It's line nine, Mrs. Richardson.

KNOT: Oh, her? She always wants to interview me. Miss Scud, would you go down to the basement, and get the records for a bio for Miss Richardson of The Post? Here are my keys.

SCUD: It may take me a while finding it.

KNOT: Ah, Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. R.: We'd still like to interview you about your empire.

KNOT: Oh, what a flattering thing to say to little old me.

MRS. R.: From what I hear, you're neither little nor old.

KNOT: Mrs. Richardson, you've enlightened your readers about many well-known personalities.

MRS. R.: I try my best. Mr. Knot, you call yourself a metaphysical physician.

KNOT: Yes.

MRS. R.: Have you any degrees that qualify you for this position?

KNOT: Life. The college where I applied gave that criterion for acceptance in its program.

MRS.R.: What college did you attend?

KNOT: Various ones, by mail. My wisdom is given by revelation.

MRS. R.: By what?

KNOT: Revelation understanding. I help people – that's my role in society.

MRS. R.: Well, can you help me?

KNOT: Now you're talking, Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. R.: My husband is a boor. I need a man.

KNOT: Well, perhaps I'm that man. I feel it in my vibes.

MRS. R.: Somehow I do, too.

KNOT: You see what Psycho Line can do. Even a woman with your public recognition feels the right vibes on this line.

MRS. R.: When I speak to you, the interview doesn't seem as important as just hearing your voice.

KNOT: It's love, that four-letter word, which we will do anything for.

MRS. R.: May I come over for a visit?

KNOT: It's irregular, but seeing how the vibes are between us, be here at 4:00 P.M.

MRS. R.: Exactly where is Nirvana, New Haven?

KNOT: I will whisper it to you. It's an isolated secret.

MRS. R.: I realize that. I'll be there at 4:00. Bye, now.
(Miss Scud comes back from downstairs.)

KNOT: Oh, Miss Scud, you startled me.

SCUD: I went downstairs to get the file out, and I turned a corner towards Love's Acre, and I found several dead bodies. I'm shocked!

KNOT: Don't be shocked.

MRS. R.: Who were they?

KNOT: Don't speak of the past. We belong to the present. Every day is a new day. *(He sings a song.)*
"Every day is a new day, it's just about greater. Every hour is a new hour, if we are tapped into nirvana's power."

SCUD: But those bodies!

KNOT: Miss Scud, they are deceased. Never talk about the dead; that's old religion.

SCUD: But the smell!

KNOT: Perhaps you think you smelled a rat? You wouldn't want to go down there yourself again?

SCUD: No, Mr. Knot. We have a lasting relationship, and I won't tell your secret.

KNOT: No, it's too much to take a risk.
(Mr. Knot puts his foot down, and a trap door opens, and Miss Scud falls in. He looks at the clock, and it says 2:00. The doorbell rings.)

KNOT: Come in, Mrs. Richardson. You're two hours early. This is a day for surprises. I wasn't prepared for your visit. Did you have trouble locating us?

MRS. R.: No, but the dogs outside were ferocious. Mr. Knot, can't I call you something else? You do have a first name.

KNOT: I think first names or saints' names are a bit parochial, so I chose the name Wolfe, W-O-L-F-E.

MRS. H.: That's delightful, Wolfe. But it sounds more like a last name. I suppose the last will be first.

KNOT: Don't quote the old religion. We're new age here. Would you like to visit our hypnotic center, our psychic center, our astrology planetarium? I go there to meditate, and read charts. Perhaps you'd like yours to be done.

MRS. R.: Frankly, I've come for romance. I like to date celebrities. Rock stars. I even dated one of those T.V. evangelists. Frankly, when I called you, I was going to launch a series of articles in The Post against you.

KNOT: Why? What harm have I ever done anybody, who didn't want what happened to them? Everyone who came here, even those who I gave special treatment to by allowing them to visit Nirvana, even if they wanted suicide, somehow they got what they wanted.

MRS. R.: You're always so thoughtful. I want to know the real you, Wolfe.

KNOT: What you see is at your disposal.

MRS. R.: I've let my staff know how to get here for pictures, and I've telephoned the local police also.

KNOT: I see, Mrs. Richardson. *(Mr. Knot takes out a syringe.)* You'd better call them off, or I'll sic the dogs on them.

MRS. R.: I can't do that. Sorry.

KNOT: And I thought, Mrs. Richardson, you were going to be special to me.

MRS. R.: I thought all of your friends were special.

KNOT: I can't tolerate my enemies.

MRS. R.: You can't have any. Not you.

(Mr. Knot presses his foot down, and Mrs. Richardson falls into the pit. The phone rings, and Mr. Knot answers it.)

TANYA: It's Tanya. I'm going through a crisis. I need you.

KNOT: Just go and meditate.

TANYA: But my husband abused me.

KNOT: Just think of me and it will be all right.

TANYA: Do you think so?

KNOT: I know so.

TANYA: You have such a way. All my troubles melt away.

KNOT: I'm the most happy fella.

TANYA: You must have had so many girlfriends.

KNOT: Now, you know our rule on the line. We don't talk of such things publicly.

TANYA: Do you remember the time I used to hear a voice called "It?" It used to tell me who would live and who would die. Remember one day when I saw that baby, and when I looked at the baby, I knew it would be dead? I think I caused it by thinking of it, and the same with the political assassinations; I think I thought of it so it happened. But then I called you, and you made it all go away.

KNOT: What can I do for you?

TANYA: I need a job.

KNOT: We have an excellent position here for a secretary.

TANYA: You do? I can type.

KNOT: I like your type. I like your vibes.

TANYA: Where can I reach you?

KNOT: I will whisper it.

TANYA: But what can I do with my hubby? He's violent.

KNOT: Why don't you give him those pellets I sent you?

TANYA: And what do I do after I give him the suicide nugget?

KNOT: Give the rest of the pellets to the horses.

TANYA: I'll be over, Mr. Knot. And thank you. You're so wonderful.

KNOT: I try my best.

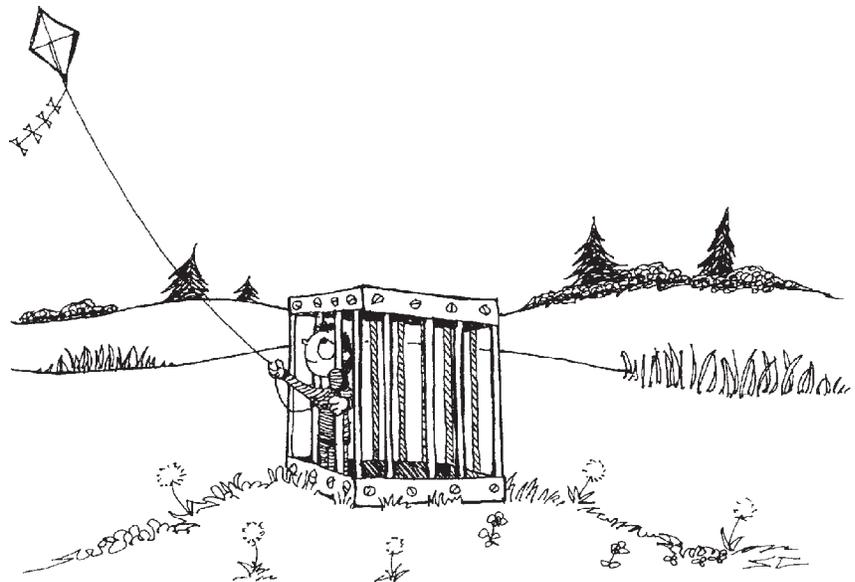
Taking Notes

NED PENDERGAST

The plastic cover on the couch is hot and sticky. She says I can talk about anything and scribbles on a notepad when I say something important. Her fat legs are crossed, they look like a loaf of braided italian bread. As she writes, her eyes peek over the top of her pink glasses. I tell her I'm going to jump out the window. She looks at me funny, interesting, pushes the glasses back on her nose and stops writing.

She waddles to the window, opens it, tells me I can jump when I'm ready, writing as she talks. I unstick from the plastic, walk to the window and look down. People are fleas from up here. I lie about a traffic mess below. She comes over for a look see and leans out. I push mushy fat and watch as she takes a brody, head first to kiss the cement and fleas below. No noise when she splats. I return to the couch feeling much better but it doesn't last.

In a little while the office door opens. She's back. Her flat face looks like a cheap pizza. Black skirt and blouse are twisted, soiled and in shreds but the pink half-glasses are like new. Twisted sausages hold a new notebook and pen. I wave from the couch and start talking. She flops into the seat crosses her bloody legs and takes notes. One shoe off, one shoe on. She looks at her notes and tells me I lied about the traffic mess. Relentless.



KITE BY STEPAN CHAPMAN

Mean Little Kid

DENNIS UPPER

Douglas was the first kid
ever expelled from pre-school
for splitting open a little girl's scalp
with a sandbox shovel.

At age 7, he stole a BB-gun
to shoot everything in sight:
windows, pets, streetlights, birds,
his brother's left eye.

Teenaged, with a badass record—
petty theft, assault, truancy, dealing—
Dougie got a hard choice:
join up or face jail.

AWOL twice, held back once,
inches from a bad-conduct discharge,
he finally graduated from boot camp
directly to Vietnam.

As the chopper swooped into LZ X-ray,
on the banks of the Ia Drang River,
Doug was locked and loaded,
ready to rumble.

He jumped down into the waving grass,
and a steel-jacketed AK-47 round
hit him square in the forehead,
stamping his ticket forever.

In the shadows at the jungle's fringe,
twelve-year-old sniper Nguyen Loi,
proud owner of a new Chinese assault rifle,
grinned a black-toothed grin.

Nguyen Loi, who grew up early
on the back streets of Saigon,
eating from garbage cans and rolling GIs,
was a really mean little kid.

Waking in Hotels

GREG WATSON

It's strange, waking in a foreign hotel
in a foreign city distant even to itself,
forgetting for a moment where you are
or even your name, a lonesome cricket
stranded in the air duct and a wine stain
from the night before spread out
like a circle of blood on crisp white sheets.
The rooms are invariably and deceptively clean,
the bath tubs too small, the ceilings too low,
so that even your dreams remain grounded.
It's strange in New Orleans, where
the ginger-skinned cleaning women smell of
Lemon Pledge and reefer and brass bands march
with the saints from dark until dark.
It's strange in San Francisco, the fog-bound
sunlight stumbling through Chinatown
like a drunken angel, the skinny smoking men
hammering out fish like broken shoes
and everything in miniature and everything
glazed in a bright red facade.

It's strange in your hometown when there's
nowhere else to go, celebrating something
you no longer recall, looking out across
the smoking pillars of factories and homes,
down upon the same dirty streets
you've walked since you were able
and still not quite being used to them.
It's strange and it's sad and it's glorious,
how memory begins only after we're gone
and when I can no longer see your face
in my hand is when I need you the most,
and there's nothing left to do but write it
down, sleep, and pray for another city.



WO IST BATMAN?
BY PETER MAGLIOCCO

Genuine, Authentic, Indian-Made

LAURIE ANN WHITT

“It seems to me I have as much right
to develop the belief systems of
Native Americans as they do.”

-famous American poet

The settlers
of the New Age

like those of
the New World

imagine a savage romance
with a romantic savage
they imagine.

They smudge themselves
with sweetgrass, &
beat drums.

The spirits they
say belong
to all of us,

as the land &
resources did
before them.

Some claim it is
their moral duty

an obligation to self
& planet.

For others
it is simple
entitlement.

The spoils of squatting
on sacred ground.

A manifest destiny
of the spirit:

the right to take
the gods they want.

Farm Boy

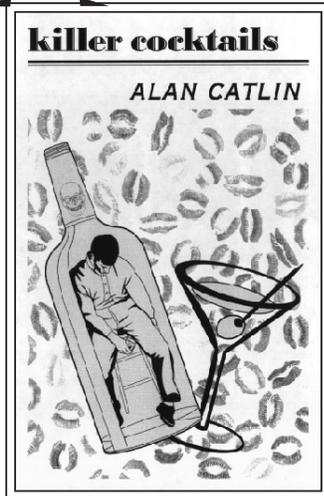
BEN WILENSKY

Farm boy,
ten thousand miles away,
running through the cornfields,
rutting in the hay,
remembering the thumping strokes
of his first lay,
the joyful noise, rebel yell,
golden girl on hands and knees
and out of breath,
heaving in and heaving out with pleasure, pain,
the little death. Old Sow
was witness to this act, but she passed away
on that very spot, back of the barn,
the piglets dead, the corpse bone white,
slicked by the maggots, licked by the flies,
gleaming in the frozen light.
Marjorie, killed in a crash,
crushed by a tree, that stunned expression
on her face, the absurdity.
I was primed for violence, farm boy said.
No one prepped me for the slaughter of Vietnam.
Oh daddy, it's hard to speak.
I sorted arms and legs and private parts
from week to week, going on a second year
in a tour of hell.
I placed them into cardboard boxes.
On Saturday, before I could pray,
I shoveled brains into a deep latrine,
and flushed them away
My teenage warriors, the grunts, how fearfully made,
were shrieking for their mothers all night long.
They didn't know where the bombs were coming from,
or how to take a piss, or what was taken
in a sacrifice. And neither did I.
Bodies were flying through the air
like chickens without a head,
and blood was shooting in the sky,
painting the sky red.
This went on for years and years
until I broke.
Oh daddy, the farm boy said,
writing in a trembling hand,
there was shit in my coffee, snakes in the crapper,
worms in my open wounds,
and when I stuck my fingers
deep into the marrow of my brains to shut it down,
to shut down pain,
all I could smell was that rotting pig
in the back of the barn
and I knew I was going to die.
You said stop. Do not run away.
You said turn and heal thyself.
Farm boy made it home to praise the day,
And tremble in the cornfields.

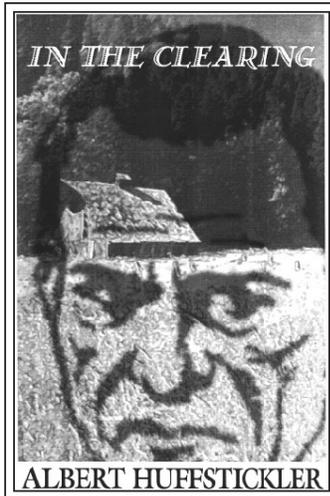


ALSO AVAILABLE FROM

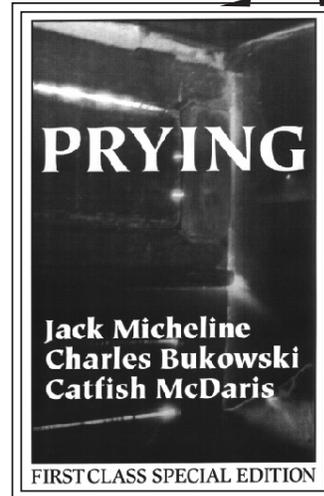
FOUR-SEP PUBLICATIONS



KILLER COCKTAILS is the latest collection of poetics by the well-known Alan Catlin. Each piece in this collection of thirty is a portrayal of a character or event inspired by a particular cocktail. Persona and event become imbibables.....Fully worth the \$5ppd./offset slick cover/bamboo-laid paper/32pp/FS#104



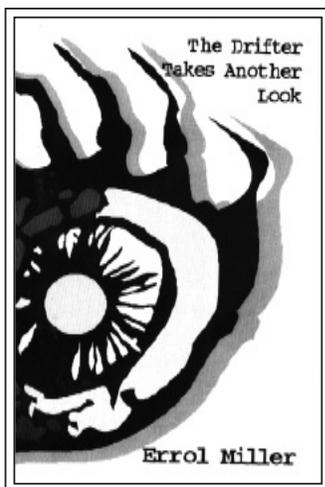
IN THE CLEARING is a wandering collection which merges into a fragmented cohesion. Disturbing and fearsome, yet the most brutal aspect of this journal of poetics is the impact of frank self-examination. Albert Huffstickler is one of the best, period....\$5ppd./offset slick cover/bamboo-laid paper/32pp/FS#105



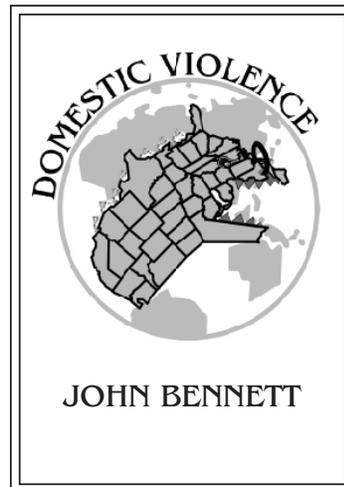
PRYING is a special edition of First Class featuring the words of Jack Micheline, Charles Bukowski (unpubbed), and Catfish McDaris as well as images by Sinisa Dugonic(Belgrade), Jouni Vaara- kangas(Finland), Carlos Serpas (Mexico), and Mike Tolento (USA)....\$5ppd./glossy cover/bamboo paper/28pp/FS#103.



PEOPLE, YOU THINK YOU KNOW? is short fiction and poetics from one of the long-standing greats in the small press, A.D. Winans. This is Winans at his best with short fiction and gritty poetics. Get into Winans' head! Also features fotos of San Fran folks, through the eyes of A.D. / \$5ppd/offset slick cover/bamboo-laid paper/28pp/FS#107



THE DRIFTER TAKES ANOTHER LOOK... These are pieces from the late 80s, Miller's mind ripe, the pen in his hand, once again, after an 8-year dormancy. This is the sweetest, most well preserved fruit plucked from the sealed cellar of the mind of Errol Miller, one of the more prolific writers on the scene today/\$6ppd/offset slick cover/bamboo-laid paper/50pp/FS#108



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE is a new collection of John Bennett's finely honed style of 'shard writing': stripped away convention beating like a pulpy red heart. This is the very sharpest cutting edge of his talent, and is a most eloquent assault on post-modern sensibilities ...\$9ppd./perfect bound/finest quality offset multi-color cover/72pp/FS#106

TERMS: I PREFER CASH, BUT CHECKS TO CHRISTOPHER M. ARE OK.

cattle call

First Class is very open to submissions. Especially sought after are pieces of short fiction, but poetics are, of course, accepted as well. I am now also very interested in illustrations and *some* stark photography for both cover art and internal pages. I seek the very best words and images you have available for me to read. I don't pay myself, so I certainly won't pay you, but you will receive at least one copy, maybe more.

There are a few important things to make sure that you do when you submit your work. Please, please, make every attempt to print/type your copy as dark as possible. Also, for the computer users, please do not justify or force-justify your text. Left-justification is preferred by my scanner and deleting all those extra spaces created by justified text sucks. Name and address on the first page of each piece only. Send along a SASE when appropriate. Lastly.....drop me a letter with your submission, it sure beats the hell out of a chunk of submission text and a SASE dropping out on the table without at least a brief greeting.

I make it a point to take advantage of the technology I have available to keep track of everything that comes in and leaves First Class. You can expect timely responses and notifications. I know from experience that it is disturbing not to know the status of your words.

Speaking of technology » » » stay up to date at : www.execpc.com/~chriflor (don't forget the tilde)

Christopher M.

see below [NOW IN EFFECT] see below

Sickened by the rape of your wallet at the copyshop? Feeling locked out of the publishing loop?

Tired of the unending hassles encountered while attempting to present your words with the utmost of aesthetic appeal?

The editor of the esteemed lit-mag known as "First Class" is overjoyed to announce that Four-Sep Publications will now be able to produce chaps-for-hire under the new imprint "Lockout Press".

There are several options available as to paperstocks and quantities, but all include full layout and design with the option for partial distribution through Four-Sep/First Class. The foremost concern in this venture is to communicate your work with the layout and design matching the scale of your message. Professional layout software along with crisp laser output will be combined with experience, skill and text-crafting ability. After dropping too many paychecks at the copyshop, I want to share the ability I now have to reduce the costs associated with this wondrous obsession, and increase the quality of the finished product. Plus, I'll be able to read more of all of your fine words. Nothing is impossible to work out, and I assure you that you will reel in amazement. Drop a line to the address below, and I will work up a quote based on the info you give me. Sample rates:



Quantity	Pages	Paper	Price	Each
50	32	Ivory Linen	\$122.77	\$2.46
50	36	24# White	112.10	2.24
75	24	Ivory Linen	128.93	1.72
100	32	24# White	142.12	1.42
100	36	Ivory Linen	184.36	1.84

The Ivory Linen refers to a paper that has a nice rugged texture, a dull yellow/ivory tone, and minimal show-through. 24# is firmer and more opaque, than standard 20# paper. All chaps include an offset printed cover on gloss stock. These are samples and subject to change. Some special projects may entail a greater commitment from both parties.

CONTRIBUTORS

SUSANNE BOWERS – Lives in Houston, Texas, and was a finalist for the Academy Arts Press 1997 National Short Fiction Competition. Many publishing credits, with her collection “The Space We Leave Between” published by Touchstone Press.

D. CASTLEMAN – Resides in Mill Valley, California.

ALAN CATLIN – Barmaster in Schenectady, NY. An oft-published and award-winning poet with several excellent chaps. Published in “Press” and many others. Check out “Killer Cocktails” available from Four-Sep, a chosen Quarter Book by)ism(.

JAMIE CAVANAGH – Resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

STEPAN CHAPMAN – Lives in Cottonwood, Arizona and his illustrations have appeared all over the place in the small press. He also writes short fiction, appearing in “The Baffler”, “Analog Science Fiction”, and “The Comics Journal”.

TERRY EVERTON – Resides in Everton, Colorado.

GARY EVERY – Several appearances in First Class, and elsewhere to his credit, based in Oracle, Arizona. Spends his working hours with the ultra-rich, and his better time dropping words on paper.

WILLIAM HART – Numerous job titles to his credit, and an even higher count of publishing credits. Also scripts film documentaries, winning a Silver Apple Award from the Nat’l Educational Media Association. Resides in Montrose, California.

DON A. HOYT – Downsville, Louisiana is home to this wandering mind.

ALBERT HUFFSTICKLER – Widely published phenom in the small press. His words have often appeared on these pages, this time we have a bit of art. Lives, breaths, and eats in Austin, Texas. Be sure to check out ‘In the Clearing’ from Four-Sep.

GERALD LOCKLIN – Long time, far-reaching presence, with an abundance of publishing credits. Teaches at CSU-Long Beach and has lectured on Hemingway in the land of cigars: Cuba. His books are even available on popular bookstore websites.

PETER MAGLIOCCO – Live from the sweaty streets of Las Vegas, this time we have the Mag-Man’s ink drawings in the First Class lounge.

ADRIAN MANNING – His words traveled the Atlantic, from Leicester, England, to grace these pages.

B.Z. NIDITCH – The artistic director of “The Original Theatre”, with both national and international publishing credits. Several of his plays and prose pieces have appeared in First Class.

NED PENDERGAST – Resides in San Francisco, California.

DENNIS UPPER – Widely published clinical psychologist from Winchester, Massachusetts, with a distinct edge in getting inside a character’s head.

GREG WATSON – Decidedly non-academic, penning away in St. Paul, Minnesota.

LAURIE ANN WHITT - Has various works published in various places, posted to the world from the Keweenaw Peninsula in Upper Michigan.

BEN WILENSKY – Resides in the fine town of Rockaway, New York.

A booming thanks goes to all who have and continue to submit words on paper to First Class. I read every scrap that pries it’s way into my pobox, and enjoy and appreciate the efforts of those who have the balls to submit their words to other’s scrutiny. Please continue to pleasure me with your submissions.

— *Christopher M.*

try these



- ANGELFLESH:** Jim Buchanan, pobox 141123, Grand Rapids, MI 49514. Please send anything—poetry, artwork, fiction, sex toys, whatever. \$4/single issue, \$10/year(3 issues plus extras).
- NERVE COWBOY:** pobox 4973, Austin, TX 78765. Send poems, short stories(up to 5pp), and b&w art w/SASE. Bias toward accessible work that depicts the absurd nature of human experience. \$4/sample.
- HEELTAP:** Richard D.Houff, 2054 Montreal Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116. Mostly poetry, excellent production. Send \$4ppd for a sample.
- AMERICA by A.D. Winans:** Quite excellent piece of poetics, dedicated to the working men and women of America, which means all of us. Black Bear Pub., 1916 Lincoln Street, Croydon, PA 19021.
- LOVE IS A BROKEN DOWN TRUCK by Joshua Bodwell and Laura Savard:** Hand-made and -bound short piece, with a three-color silk-screened cover. A work of art. Send them \$5 and pray there are any left. Excellent production. Bodwell, pobox 4381, Portland, ME 04101.
- DREAMS AND GARBAGE AND THE ABYSS by Mark Senkus:** \$2 to 200 W. Portage #3, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783.
- PURPLE:** pobox 341, Park Hills, MO 63601. This is Daniel Crocker's excellent collection of essays, reviews, and criticism featuring an always awesome variety of writers. Send a few \$\$\$ for one today.
- TWO NOVELLAS, THE FIRST TIME HE SAW PARIS by Gerald Locklin/WAITING FOR MY BABY by Donna Hilbert:** 336pp/\$29.95 + \$3 s/h to: Event Horizon Press, pobox 867, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240.
- THE TROIKA by Stepan Chapman:** 250pp/\$15 ppd. to: Ministry of Whimsy, pobox 4248, Tallahassee, FL 32315.
-)]ISM(an organization dedicated to contemporary writers and the independent presses that publish them:** The second issue was a great improvement. Basically a showcase for people like you and me. *Be sure to check out their web site: www.poetryism.com.* Info and correspondence: 1514 16th Avenue #2, Seattle, WA 98122-4196. Submissions: 8772 State Route 80, Fabius, NY 13063.
- PEOPLE EVERYDAY AND OTHER POEMS by Daniel Crocker:** I have yet to read this collection, but if you are familiar with Crocker's work, you know it will be good. There are 92 pages in this one, with a forward by Gerald Locklin. \$12 + \$1 postage to: Green Bean Press, pobox 237, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013.
- DOWNWARD GLIDE by Errol Miller:** This is poetics. No foolishness, pretension or classless meanderings. Miller is a poet with a talent for putting heavy weight into each word. As Vincent Bator writes of this collection: "A native son of the South, Miller mines the region's indelible history, a milieu of culture, myth and hopeless failings woven into a solid body of poetic epics." Indeed. Ninety pages, professionally presented with full color cover available for \$12 ppd. from: BGB Press, 158 King Street, Northampton, MA 01060.
- THE MOTH EATERS by John Bennett:** A collection of John Bennett's longer pieces. A brooding and exciting zone where characters develop and the full tale is told, though always with a bit of mysterious oddity teasing your brain for a time after ingesting. If you have read one of his famous "shards", imagine that as a speedy jolting assault, while in these stories, Bennett has the opportunity to tie you to a chair and spread his tales all over your face. Gorgeous words. Great production. Angelflesh Press, pobox 141123, Grand Rapids, MI 49514.
- ATOM MIND:** If you are into the 'beat'/booze/sex poetics, perpetrated to the finest degree, and have yet to check out this excellent perfect-bound magazine, send Mother Road (see above) \$6 as soon as possible. You will be treated to over 100 pages of killer writing and gobs of Wayne Hogan images.
- DRIVERS SIDE AIRBAG:** It is nearly impossible to be disappointed in this digest-sized quarterly. It is packed with post-mod pieces of interest to those who appreciate a challenge from the writer, a challenge to think a bit. Thoroughly entertaining and engrossing, with illustrations and comics spicing it up. \$4/issue or \$13/year from: Undulating Bedsheets Productions, pobox 25760, Los Angeles, CA 90025.
- RATTLE:** The nice thing about this professionally produced journal is that it looks like a stuffy, crap-hound academia-burdened "review" or "collection" on the outside, yet when I cracked the cover and began to digest the poetic offerings within the pages, I was given a taste of sweet honey from the hive. As bad as this sounds: It is an excellent bundle of words to have in the shitter with you. Clean production and stand-out selections make this one more than worth it: 13440 Ventura Blvd. #200, Sherman Oaks, California 91423.
- TAKING THE FIFTH by Albert Huffstickler:** This is a cool collection, a good read, bits and pieces and fragments of Huffstickler's thoughts and poetic meandering, intermingled with illustrations. Short and sweet, though it took me a good half hour to read and absorb. Available from: Press of Circumstance, 312 E. 43rd Street #103, Austin, Texas 78751.
- THE JACK KEROUAC UPPER PENINSULA DIARY by T. Kilgore Splake:** A fantastic work that is so much more than a stylistic exercise. Splake "discovers" a lost segment of the life and writings of Kerouac in a backroom bookstore

'TRY THESE' HAS BECOME MY FORUM FOR PROMOTION OF THE WORKS OF WRITERS AND PUBLISHERS WHOM I, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, HAPPEN TO APPRECIATE OR ADMIRE. I CANNOT PROMISE THAT EVERY CHAP OR BOOK OR MAGAZINE SENT MY WAY WILL BE MENTIONED HERE, BUT YOU CAN BE DAMN SURE THAT THOSE THAT ARE HAVE PLEASURED MY EYES AND BRAIN. TAKE A SHOT AND SEND YOUR BEST CREATIONS MY WAY. THEY ARE IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER.

'TRY THESE' CONTINUES ON PAGE 46

in Michigan's upper peninsula while poking around on a road trip. Extraordinarily well done. Angst Productions, pobox 508, Calumet, MI 49913.

LITURGICS FOR THE HORDES AND SCADS AND MYRIADS by Alan Cohol: Two of the many themes Cohol writes about: writing and love/emotion, are themes that I usually find tedious. However, this book is a pure pleasure to rake the eyeballs over. His poetics smooth into the brain like creamy icing, and his insights and sentiments "we'll blind them all with beauty" make you wish he was your friend and neighbor. His words are calmly raw, their insidious creeping prongs buried in bliss. The design is exquisite, allowing images to mingle passionately with the text. Temporary Vandalism, pobox 6184, Orange, CA 92863-6184.

FEBRUARY IS THE CROOKEDEST MONTH by Mark Weber: Buy this chap! If not for the wonderful words of Weber, then for the phenomenal production by Clamp Down Press. Joshua Bodwell, the editor, culled these poetic gems from a vast supply, creating, as he states a "Weber reader". An awesome exploration of his common themes (booze, jazz, gardening, Janet) with beautiful hand-crafted and bound pages to ride on. An outstanding six-color screen printed cover starts it all out. \$8ppd to Clamp Down Press, pobox 7270, Cape Porpoise, ME 04014-7270.

THE DARKNESS STARTS UP WHERE YOU STAND by Arthur Winfield Knight: Addiction swirling through post-industrial working class America. Small town desperation and escapist, desperate behavior, illustrated in such a way that the characters are more than stereotypes and talk-show mimes. An excellent go-round of an oft-penned topic, written as if known fully and understood utterly. \$10ppd to pobox 2580, Petaluma, CA 94953.

CARDBOARD PASTRIES by Richard Houff: Houff evokes a sense of the Blues in his poetics, perhaps a lyrical answer to his musical endeavors. This work is a great way to spend half an hour, contemplating the cynical and satirical and damn serious methodology in Houff's approach and jazz-punky stance on life. Send \$6 to Scrooge's Ledger Press, pobox 1621, Pueblo, CO 81002.

GRAPPLING by Susanne R. Bowers: The poetics in this collection are strong reflections on the turgid underbelly of faulty family life and screamie memories. Happily spiteful, yet fair, Bowers pecks out the best words from her thoughts and experiences and soothes the needles down your throat with impeccably succinct expressions. This collection took third place in the 1998 Nerve Cowboy chap contest. Send \$4 to Liquid Paper Press, pobox 4973, Austin, TX 78765.

NEVER-ENDING CIGARETTES by Scott C. Holstad: A cool, enjoyable, 10-ton light, flighty, dead-serious, humorous, sad collection of coffee-shop pennings and curt observations of humans dancing in their events, the raw, tired, hunkered-down spectacles of their existences – or is it a singular, shared endurance test the human race faces as a unified bundle of suction-cupped tentacles? Whores seen from a distance with a microscope, and wrestling with the bent-on-chaos landscapes of USA, Holstad's language portrays the otherwise mundane with fresh and engaging word-plotting. Send \$5 to Ye Olde Font Shoppe, pobox 8328, New Haven, CT 06530.

DIRTY WALLS AND IVORY ENDINGS by Mark Senkus: Senkus' third collection of poetics from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a peek at the everyday events in his life, the event and tidbit orbiting his existence. Senkus not only wonders about the inequalities and shaft-ridden rules that dominate our culture, but illustrates them so you see things his way. In "Spooked" he saves a doomed to be pellet-shot squirrel's life because "I knew what it was like/to be unwanted and rejected for/nothing other than the sin of existing". Available from Chiron Review Press, 702 N. Prairie, St. John, KS 67576 (www.geocities.com/SoHo/Nook/1748/)

BRENDA'S BIRTHDAY by Jack Saunders: This is Saunders' 154th book. Saunders serializes segments of his life, his actions, his interactions, while injecting and infusing his paragraphs with thought-deep, sensible, outlandish opinions and assessments, relating all things to larger events and ideas. Wide-ranging thorough world-knowledge pumps through the heart of his works and the result is an eloquently chaotic macro-micro of the whole she-bang. A generous, sharing, prolific writer, contact him at: Garage Band Books, Box 1392, Tucker, GA 30085.

LOOSE FRONT END by Mark Weber and Scott Virtue: Pleasurable pieces and powerful moods from Weber, punctuated by inked accompaniment from Virtue. These two work well together, and it is your brain's privilege if you place this fine, fine chap before your eyeholes. Zerx Press, 725 Van Buren Pl., Albuquerque, NM 87108.

LONG LIVE THE 2 OF SPADES by Daniel Crocker: The final of three 2 of Spades books, in which Crocker, admittedly, chronicles growing up and his youth. Youthful perception, founding creativity, the quest to develop the soul and ideals, flirting with disaster, heaven, woman, and the booze. This collection completes the metamorph. Crocker could be you, or me, or anyone, yet he comes off as decidedly unique in a cluttered world. Try this perfectbound piece out for \$7 from: Green Bean Press, pobox 237, New York, NY 10013.

ART:MAG #22: Peter Magliocco puts together 76 pages of goodness with a free-buffet table sized helping of some of the best in the small press. This is the 15th Anniversary Issue!!! Besides the excellent poetics, there are several stand-out ink drawings by Lilia Levin. Send \$5 to Limited Editions Press, pobox 70896, Las Vegas, NV 89170.

QUICKIES: Spunk magazine: pobox 55336, Hayward, CA 94545; **Salt Pork and Sunsets** by T. Anders Carson: \$5 Black Bile Press, 25 Avalon Place, Hamilton, Ontario L8M1G9; **The Writer's Ancestral Sense of Place** by Errol Miller: \$4 French Bread Publications, pobox 23868, San Jose, CA 95153; **Star City Concerto** by Errol Miller: \$5 to Encircle Publications, pobox 219, Sagamore Beach, MA 02562; **From the Engine Room** by Errol Miller: \$6 to Broken Boulder Press, 1207 W. 19th Street, Lawrence, KS 66046; **Looking for an Answer** by A.D. Winans: \$4 French Bread Publications, pobox 23868, San Jose, CA 95153; **Taking the Bull by the Horns** by Glen Chesnut: \$3 3300 Press, 3300 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94110; **Insanity-An Anthology** by Michael Buchenroth: \$20 Buchenroth Publishing Company, pobox 13771, Columbus, OH 43213-0771; **Burroughs at Santo Domingo** by John Macker: Long Road/La Cantera Press, pobox 1825, Las Vegas, NM 87701; **Miscibles** by Mary Gribble: 1657 Los Robles, San Marino, CA 91108-1622; **Armageddon's Garden**: Jerry Gordon/**Between Genesis and 666**: Robert Roden: \$4 Aphasia Press, pobox 1626, Orange, CA 92856; **Names for the Self** by Edward Locke: \$7 Harlequinade Press, 12 Flagstaff Hill Terrace, Canton, MA 02021.