



Dedicated to Genesis Tara Mitchell-Romero

Welcome to Earth, my child.

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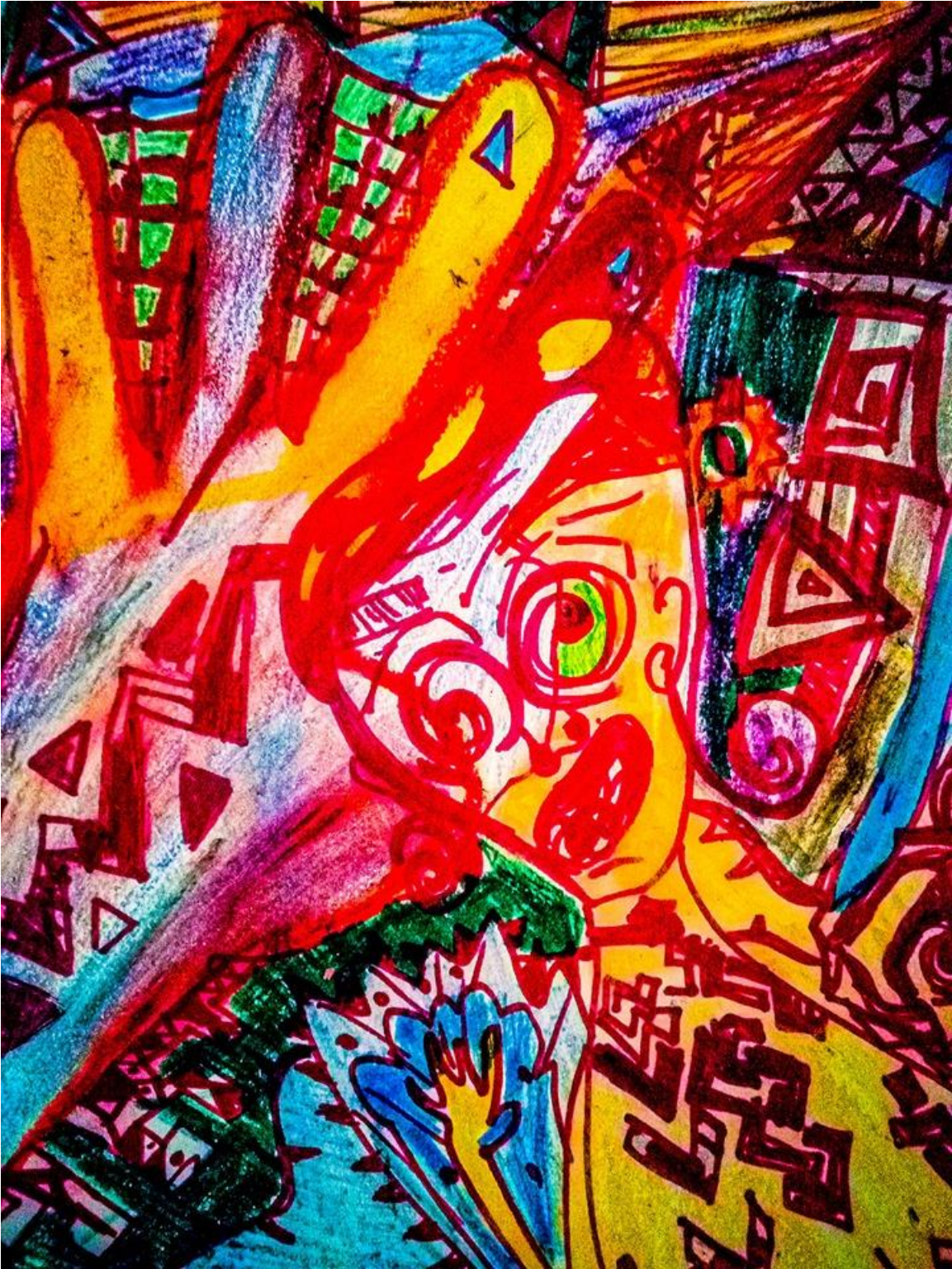
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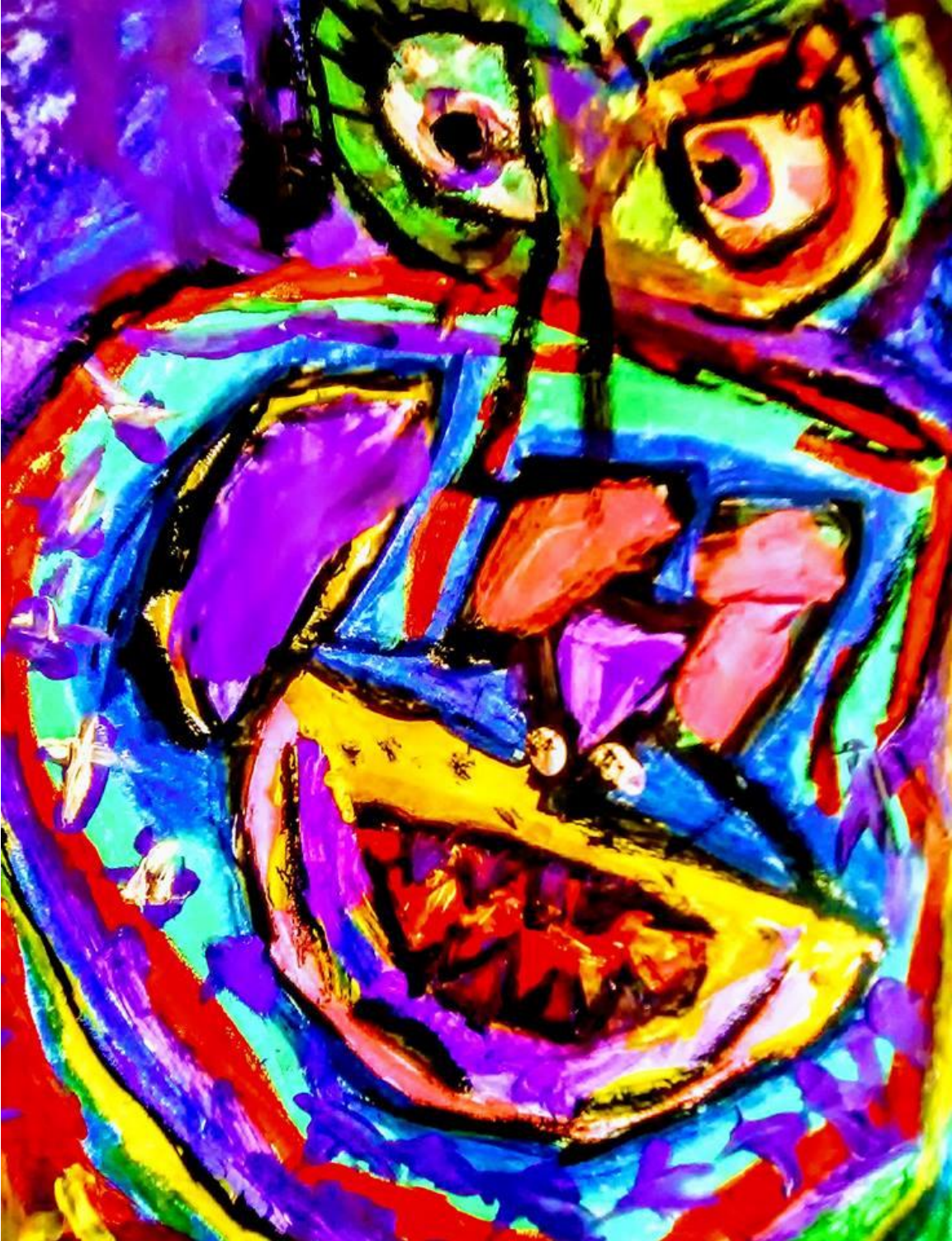
Art from Pseudonym Lastname

(Ammi Romero & Red Focks)









Another Alien Buddha Haiku Showcase

Lynn Long

Learn from the moments
For each is a stepping stone
On the path to you

Accepting myself
In all my imperfection
Brings inner freedom

A river at heart
Everchanging, yet the same
Flowing to the sea

David Estringel

The Story of Us

Our asymmetries
mesh and catch like well-greased gears—
a brutal machine.

Stop and Re-calibrate

We speed down our roads.
Chances to change our courses
at every red light.

A Moment of Clarity

Drunk on puppy breath
and cold gin, I am reminded
Love lasts, Life's on loan.

Veronica Hopkins

Time for open mic

Let's abscond when Chris walks up

He is such a dick

Cheated through college

Therapist needs therapy

smart phone with dumb man

Exclusion tactics

cool kids in the corner booth

dipping wings in cum

I don't like his work

bone dry like mary's chicken

please bring tequila

Bill Lambdin

write down a haiku
don't show it to anyone
not even yourself

I might write about
sunset over the mountains
in twenty more years

we have lots of fun
we go grocery shopping
and we walk the dog

Taj Bourgeois



Ken Allan Dronsfield

Bubble

Coolish evenfall
A slimy bubble dances
above the gators.

Saucer

Night godforsaken
A scary flying saucer
another bigfoot.

Carrot

Depressing midnight
A nubile, small carrot sings
betrayed by the years.

Jay Miner

When Jesus came

In his loincloth

Were you there?

buddha wants haiku

the poets have gone away

buddha don't get none

call for haiku

none come

fuck the buddha

Wayne F Burke

girl I never slept with
bought me soap
for my birthday

she threw me over
for a guy
looks like a Sumo wrestler

the little slut
walks her meat
down the street

Veronica Falletta



Elancharan Gunasekaran

eternal game
of the mad gods
snuffing out
random stars- lives

two moons
thrown as dice
cosmic gamble

still playing
galactic hide-and-seeK
alien buddha and humans

Vatsala Radhakeesoon

Alien Buddha

adjusts coppery machines

Dodo swims in seas

Tropical winter

Teardrops on morning flowers

Poems rest on grass

Tom Blessing

walking the beach

sand, cobble, and the

cigarette butts of summer

no horizon

the lake becomes

fog

Alfred Gremsly

Every time I cry
Another piece of me dies
Nothing left but dust

keep your picture
locked in the walls of my head
Never to be gone

Years will not soon pass
Your memory i will cry
Flowers bloom no more

Bart Solarczyk

eating chips
& writing poems
with salty fingers

Saturday morning
smoke rings
bong, bong, bong.

what starts with a kiss
can end
in an abortion

Mark Hartenbach

abandoned at birth
dance of the aimless lemmings
never had a lesson

kick up diamonds
in what pass as common ground
cough up rare blood type

stumbling along path
drunken li po on bender
falling where i'm not

Pradnya Kushal

a school uniform
in the old cupboard
waiting for new creases

strawberry ice cream
gathering of children
in front of the school

flop movie
in empty theater
lost couple

Kushal Poddar

monsoon came rain didn't

farmer's dog

sleeps in the pond.

bamboo leaf

hacks the wind

summer school kung fu camp

rose stuck in the book

a library no one goes

but the old spinster

Poetry From Glen Armstrong

Partially Articulated Wings

Everyone here shares
the same dirty spoon:

masked senators, teenage witches

and me
in my giant owl costume

with the partially articulated wings.

A veterinarian walks into the room
as if she's a ghost in training

who is only allowed to walk
through beaded curtains
for now.

There will be walls.

She says she's not hungry,
that she's only here

to check on my injured foot
which is actually vacuum-formed
plastic glued to a purple

rainboot.

Baby Ducks

The eternal becomes ethereal.
Inevitable as baby ducks.
Enjoying a puddle of rain.
A busload of clients from the group.
Home roam the shopping mall.
With their escort.
I order two tacos and a medium Dr.
Pepper.
Veruca Salt is an alt-rock.
Band and mother of two.

I listen for the rhythm of the falling.
The patterns that lead away.
The reign referenced in both.
Comic books and religion.
That which is simple and sincere.
Has its way.
There is much to see and purchase.
Cake.
Is an alt-rock band and birthday.
Expectation.

Among the Forgetters #74

And it extends the text.

And it shows more skin.

And its mood grows dark

like an umbrella dipped

in a creature's lagoon.

And it used to be considered good luck

to paint a green turtle

somewhere

in a new place of business.

You don't need any knowledge

of chemicals or the sun

to change something's color.

You don't need a sci-

fi shrink ray to make

a little something crawl

through your neighbor's head.

We can see that our new uniforms

affect the enemies'

demeanor.

Melissa fastens her long hair
back into a ponytail

and reminds me that *our rivals*
are not necessarily our enemies.

It's difficult to differentiate
nervousness from sexual
tension.

Windows by David Estringel

(from *Indelible Fingerprints* [Alien Buddha Press], originally published by *Down in the Dirt*)

About two and a half months ago, I was abruptly told via voicemail that my mother was going to have emergency brain surgery. Wednesday night's social work class—the first one of the semester—had just wrapped-up and after the last of my students exited the building, I headed to my office to grab my satchel, lock-up, and head home. Per usual, I checked my phone and saw my favorite niece Lauren had called. “Tio,” she said, “I don't know if you know this but grandma is having brain surgery in the morning. Has a couple of blood clots. Call mom. OK? I miss you. Bye, tio.”

I chuckled—a bit—at the irony of the situation, as I had ended the class with an exercise that a colleague suggested I try that involved exploring personally held attitudes about specific stages of human development, ranging from birth to old age. I had students stand against the whiteboard in front of the classroom and share their thoughts, thinking this would be a nice way bond as a cohort. Things went along smoothly for about five minutes, until all the crying started. They cried about their childhoods, fathers that left them, bullyings in high school, divorces, and empty nests. I wanted to strangle Cynthia, my colleague. One of my older students (probably in her 50s) got up next. She started to share but then completely broke down. We were all stunned into death-like silence. Apart from her crying, it was so quiet in there that you could have heard a blotter of acid being dropped back in the 1960s. Eventually, she composed herself, apologized, and informed the class that she had just lost her mother a few days prior; her announcement did little to shatter the awkwardness in the room. She talked about how difficult it was to have the tables turned on her and have to watch the people that took care of

her all her life deteriorate, requiring her to take care of them, now.

Embarrassed, she wiped her eyes and promptly sat down, surrounded by her very empathetic peers. As I watched, I remembered the picture of my mother and I that I have on my refrigerator door that I see every morning when I grab some rice milk for my cereal: she is on a hideous 1970s couch with perfect hair and make-up with me—shirtless in pajama bottoms, holding a copy of *The Hungry Caterpillar*. We both looked happy. Overcome with guilt, I threw myself upon the pyre and decided to suffer along with everyone else. Plus, I knew they would remember this night, during instructor evaluation time. I took a deep breath, dove right in, and did well until I got to “old age,” but I got through it, somehow.

“Class dismissed.”

The hospital my mother was in was about an hour away from campus. It was already after 9:30 PM and I was tired from a long, monotonous day of grading papers and advising students for the upcoming Spring semester; moreover, the evening’s hysterics didn’t help. It’s hard enough holding a space for three hours, lecturing non-stop and engaging students, but when you have twelve grown people crumbling apart before your very eyes it becomes damn near impossible. I was exhausted. Reinforcements were necessary: I needed caffeine and many, many cigarettes.

I stopped by a convenience store on my way to Edinburg to get supplies. I parked the car and turned off the ignition, preparing to get out when the reality of the situation hit me like a flu: my 85-year-old mother was having brain surgery and there was a very real chance she may not make it. This wasn’t like one of her falls, which I had already gotten accustomed to by that point, or one of her patented melt-downs that left her husband and anyone

within calling distance flustered and unsure of what to do to calm her. She had been suffering from Alzheimer's for two or three years, already, and it seemed to be advancing at an exponential rate, especially this past year. She lost her words more than not. Her short-term memory was unpredictable at best. There were even times when she would attempt to speak but couldn't; she would just sit there with a look of frustration on her face—still, as a statue—then let out a, “Damn!” and then focus on whatever happened to be on TV at the time, as if nothing had happened. Things hadn't been easy and didn't seem to be letting up any. No, this was very different.

I made it to the hospital in record time, hauling-ass at around 85 miles per hour after procuring my fixes. After driving around parking lots for about fifteen minutes, I finally was able to find a spot and made my way to the Neuro ICU. When I got to her room, I saw frail frame curled up in her hospital-bed, disheveled and confused, surrounded by a concerto of blinking lights and rhythmic beeps that came from the various monitors she was connected to by tubes and multi-colored wires. Her gown—a yellow so ugly she would have left “against medical advice” if she were more lucid—was off one shoulder, exposing more skin than I was comfortable with (though her sitter, a squat, older lady of about 60, didn't seem to be phased in the slightest). I looked over at the woman—I believe her name was Thelma—who had been there ten hours, already, due to my mother having tried to get out of bed multiple times that day. “Son,” I quickly blurted in her general direction, attempting to get formalities out of the way. My mother kept trying to pull her gown from her legs, unaware of how scantily clad she already was. I pulled it back over her knees and grabbed her hands to try and calm her along with a serenade of rhythmic shooshing.

“I thought you said you didn’t have a son, Alda,” the sitter said.

Foggy, my mother answered, annoyed, “I don’t.” She looked at me blankly. “I have Lisa, my daughter. I have Katie, her daughter...” She started at her gown, again. “No. I don’t have a son.”

I had prepared myself for pretty much anything on the drive up to the hospital, but it still stung. “Wishful thinking, old woman,” I said, looking into her eyes, smiling and rubbing the top top of her crepe-papery hand.

She laughed, apparently remembering some things about us. After scanning my face more, a light turned on. “My baby! Anthony! Where were you? I’ve been waiting!”

“Teaching, mom. It’s Wednesday. I just found out about this an hour ago.” I squeezed her hands, noticing how pale she was. I didn’t remember her skin being so white. “You OK?” My eyes began to sting and water.

Seeing the tears start to well up in my eyes, she said, “You love me” with a pitying look upon her face. “No...you don’t love me. You like me, but you don’t love me.” She turned her head away, perhaps distracted by a fly or a moving figure on the TV screen—maybe one of those crazy hallucinations she has from time to time.

“Well, not right now I don’t.” Again, she laughed. “I love you, mom...I do,” I assured, using the tank-top under my maroon dress shirt, as a tissue, to mop up a burgeoning flood of tears and snot. In an attempt to cut through the pall in the room, I tried to lighten things up by telling her about the picture on my

refrigerator that I had looked at that morning—not really knowing what else to say—but it didn’t seem to register.

The next hour or so was spent keeping her calm, keeping her covered, dodging heart-breaking pleas to take her home. To make things worse, she would, intermittently, talk in word salad: random words strung together in nonsensical sentences. For a stretch that seemed to go on forever, she talked nonstop and said absolutely nothing. Other times she would snap out it and speak only Spanish, talking to her father, who had died thirty-five years prior, repeating over and over, again, “Ayudame, papi! Ayudame! (“Help me, daddy! Help me!”).” I just stood there, crying, wishing he would and feeling bad that I didn’t feel bad about thinking it.

At some point, her lucidity seemed to return some, so I took advantage of the moment and asked if she was scared about going into surgery in the morning, but she was oblivious to all that business. “They’re doing a procedure, mom. In and out. Easy.” I smiled, hoping what might be the last conversation I had with her wouldn’t be a lie.

“Not with my hair looking like this, I’m not!” (If you knew my mother, you would know this was a really good sign).

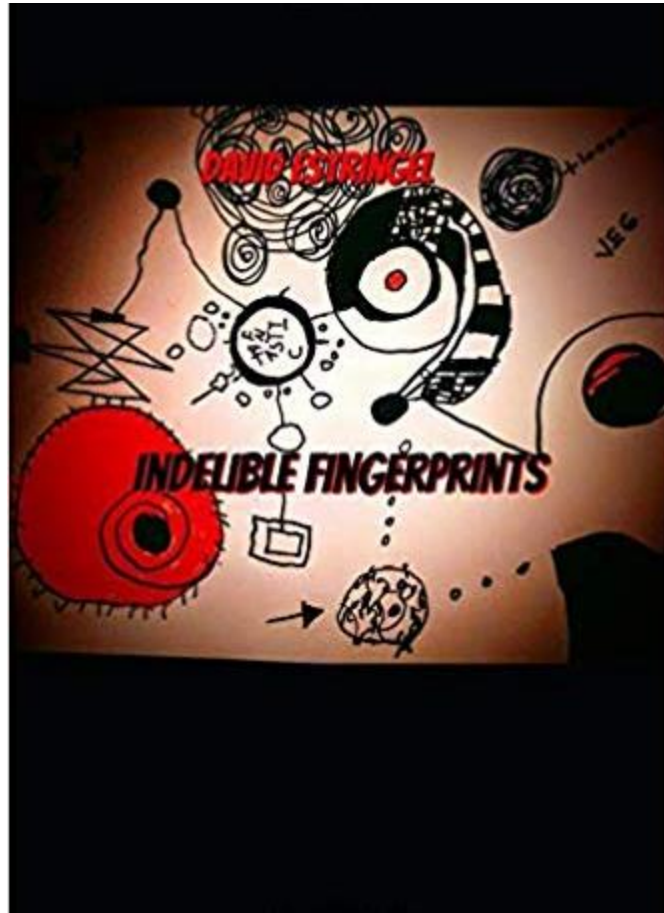
“It looks fine,” I laughed, but as soon as things started to look more optimistic, the pleading and agitation returned. All I could do was stand there with tears, staining my cheeks, and think about everything that could possibly go wrong in the next few hours. When she finally calmed down, she turned to me and looked at me with a suspicious look I hadn’t seen since my early 20s.

“What do you want?” she demanded.

“Cocaine,” I said. She didn’t laugh, but—honestly—it didn’t necessarily sound like a bad idea at the time.

“No, you want something. What is it?” She turned away from me with a stare that peeled off my skin like duct-tape, leaving me feel—for a moment—utterly raw. I thought about my phone and how much I hated it.

Midnight had come and gone, and she showed no signs of tiring. I was physically and mentally spent. I thought about her. The surgery. The “what ifs.” I fought back tears—when I could--holding her hands the whole time, never letting go. Then, suddenly, her restlessness subsided, as quickly as it came. She turned to me, again, and just looked at me. That frustrated look I knew so well had resurfaced. She wanted to talk but couldn’t. Our eyes locked and in that moment, I saw her, the mother on the couch with perfect hair and make-up, and—through all my artifice and bullshit—she saw me, a shirtless little boy in pajama bottoms, holding a copy of *The Hungry Caterpillar* and for a few seconds we were both happy, again.



<https://www.amazon.com/Indelible-Fingerprints-David-Estrunge/dp/1091941319/>

Cover art by Red Focks

Poetry From David Boski

Crying Game

I remember my sister saying:
'David never cries, it's so weird'
after our father's funeral—
I stood there watching others
do just that:
her
my mother
my cousins
my aunt
his friends
and
strangers
who I didn't know
or
recognize
as I fought back
my own
pushing those feelings
deep down
into my guts
hoping that's where
they'd stay.

I've never felt comfortable
crying in front of other people
and even though I've done it before—
it's a sight rarely seen.

It usually happens when I'm alone
and my insides spontaneously combust—
as I stand in the shower; a place I can't feel my tears.

For My Sake and Theirs

I once knocked a man out while I was wearing a dress shirt and a bow tie; he wouldn't stop barking at me, I warned him to leave me alone, but he didn't listen. another time I punched a man with a lighter in my hand and the sparks flew right off of his face, it was quite a sight. this was after he looked at me and said: "look at you, what the fuck are you going to do? look at y..." but he didn't get to finish. more recently, I broke a man's front teeth in a crowded pool hall bar, after he got angry that me and my friend had put our pints on "HIS" table; again, there was a warning, more than once, but he didn't listen either. they all looked at me and saw a very tall, very skinny man; once wearing a bow tie, another time drunk off my ass, and another time with long hair and bangs; but what they didn't see was the madness, the apathy, and the chaos behind the eyes, or know that I can become unhinged at a moment's notice and that I always throw the first punch when that happens. plenty of others have made that same mistake, and they too have been met with fists. winning or losing has never been a concern, but as I have gotten older, I have tried to avoid putting myself in these precarious situations; for my sake, and theirs.

Luck's Run Out

different people
different identities
men identifying
as women
women identifying
as men
the predator never
wants to identify as
the prey.
the prey sometimes
escapes with its life
and identifies as a
hero or a lucky bastard—
temporarily.
I'd like to identify as a
a happy human being—
which seems impossible.
they all have it easier me;
but one day I will escape
too, permanently, like the
prey when its luck's run out.

Uninvited Guest

sometimes I know it's coming
making it hard to breathe.
an emptiness consumes my gut
and makes it feel like
I've hit a big drop on a roller coaster
at an amusement park.

other times it shows up
like an uninvited guest
that I desperately want to
get rid of
but I choke on my excuses
so now I'm sitting with it
in my living room
listening to it speak
knowing it's full of shit
knowing it's killed before
and knowing that's what it
ultimately wants.

I never know when it will leave
and sometimes I think it'll stay
until I finally give in and decide
the visits alone are torture enough
but until then we continue to do
our little song and dance.

days

weeks

and

months

can go by

but I know I can count on

it coming back—

and I know

we'll be seeing each other

again soon.

GMC Safari

It was our second date, and after having some drinks I dropped her back off at her parent's house; where she was living at the time.

"I wish you could come inside and fuck me, I really want to fuck you" she said in between us kissing.

"yeah, I guess your father wouldn't like that"

I replied with my cock throbbing in my jeans, resigned to the fact that I would probably have to rub one out alone later. "wait, I have an idea, you want to fuck in the van?" she asked excitedly. earlier that night she told me how she used to fuck her high school boyfriend in the back of her dad's work van, as he would always leave the keys out on a hook in the foyer.

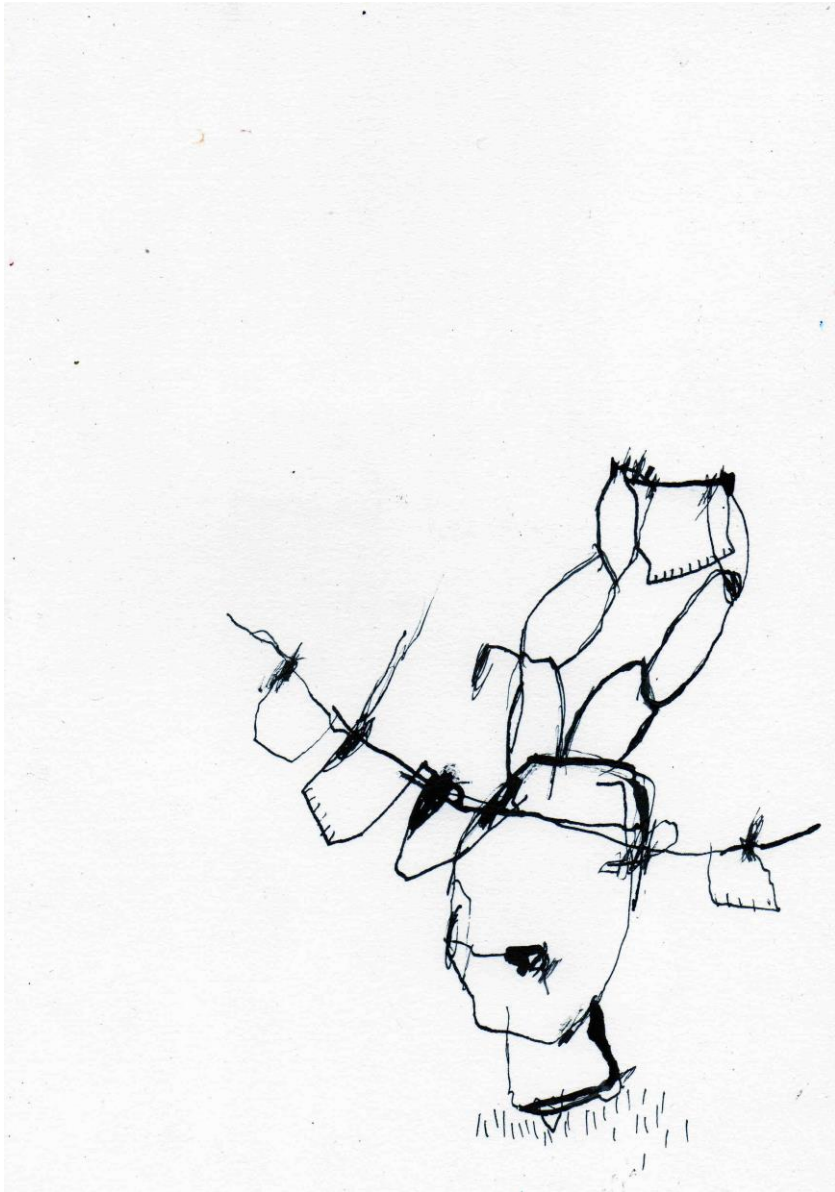
"is there room back there?" I asked, momentarily forgetting she'd done this before.

"yeah, we'll make it work, wait here."

when she came back, she unlocked the sliding door on the passenger side, and we got in, and we made it work. it smelled like dirty carpet and paint thinner in there but that didn't distract me from the task at hand, and she told me I could finish inside of her, which I did. a few months later her dad offered me a painting job, and occasionally asked me to drive the van, and every time I did I thought of that night; the first time I used it to paint his daughter's interiors.

Art From Marcel Herms









Poetry From JD Nelson

estrellita spore

the way honey was poured over horses in those days

the rest of the people in the gym eating nachos

little bell ringing
hope, the mushroom earth with video

that machine is still running
can you believe it

that old tattered yeck is dorty

starts with stars
& moves on to planets
stars set up definitions aloud
& earth wins
when you come to earth
we will drink cloudy water
we will lick the dirt

adrian dantley ball

the new water is not so clear
but we love the taste

more like fishy salt than you'd think
first world face like a scanner violently
until there is a blue halo

unlit stars remember nova

Ah, Francis, you're a sissy

by Andrea E Lodge

Isn't that what they did to tease you in school? Those Catholic kids, comparing you to that saint? If they only knew. If they only knew you, huh? I know. The secrets of your sickness but those don't matter when I have felt the thickness of your immaturity in your balled up fingers to an innocent face. Innocent face that thought it knew what love was and gave whatever it thought it had to you. Only you. And elbows into breast plates mean nothing compared to fingernails tearing flesh from the skin of a baby's cheeks. Just a baby, Francis. But I don't remember, is that weird? I cannot feel a fist, a cut, a bruise. I can see the stares of passion, of compassion from new friends and the sick sadness in their eyes as I lie away broken blood vessels spreading through the only beauty I think I have and they know it. They know there is no truth behind my speeches. But I cannot feel the blow anymore. I couldn't feel it the second after. Just the remnants through the soreness it left. You maimed me. Tried to name me something other than one with wings who knew how to fly a little before and most definitely after you existed and now what are you? Where are you? Did you drown in that poisonous brown liquid whose smell makes me choke and vomit? Are you a tiny nothingness floating in a beer can someone forgot was full and used as an ashtray? Only small men do what you did, you know? Not tough guys. Were you so small that one day you fell in the cracks in the sidewalk and wound up stuck on the bottom of a shoe on its way to train for a marathon? Do you dodge needles on a pin cushion? I fucking hope so.

Poetry From Marion Deutsche Cohen

Seventh Grade

(1) Goals

The teacher asked where we all planned to go to college. I didn't know any college. Ricky Klophaus said Yale or Harvard, then David Carter said Yale or Harvard, how did they find out about Yale or Harvard? how come my parents didn't tell me about Yale or Harvard? how come my friends never talked about Yale or Harvard? had my parents and friends known all along about Yale or Harvard just like Ricky Klophaus? where was I when everybody was finding out about Yale or Harvard and what else wasn't I finding out about?

(2) Friend

I didn't understand Diana when she said I just LOVE the United States. I really do. Every time I see the flag, my heart just goes thumpity thump. How could you love a flag? And if you could, how could you love it in the thumpity thump way? Diana's parents agreed with me but Diana kept insisting I don't care. I love my country. In some places it's legal to marry an object, any object you please, there's a woman married to the Eifel Tower, she took her spouse's name. So I guess Diana could have married the United States flag. She could take its name, forever and ever, 'til death do them part.

Re: Long-term Care Insurance

I don't feel like being realistic, I've already been realistic, I was realistic for 26 years when my first husband had M.S., I haven't yet had enough vacation from being realistic.

I already have mammograms and dexoscans, already do leg exercises, already made out my advance directive, already have life insurance for my kids, how realistic

do I have to be?

Can't I be unrealistic another year or so? Can't I just keep bopping from thrift to thrift store? Can't I just keep teaching the course I developed? Can't I just be extra-rigorous with this math idea? Aren't the books I write realistic enough?

Junior Philosopher, Aged 12

My sister said You're not really interested in anything, Marion. The only thing you're

interested in is yourself.

No, I answered. I'm interested in What Is Truth? What Is Beauty? What Is Existence?

No you're not, you're interested in the fact that you think of those questions.

Well, both.

The questions and the fact that I think of them.

The poems and the fact that I think of them.

The theorems and the fact that I think of them.

I think, therefore I think.

I can't help thinking about the things I think.

No Specifics

“I won’t read the specifics,” I promised when I came across that New Yorker holocaust article. “I’ll skip over those parts.” I already knew the generals, like gassing, medical experiments, and random shootings on whims.

The article didn’t go into specifics either, not at first. But on the third or fourth page the specifics sneaked in, suddenly my eyes saw one and then another and then it was too late.

Don’t worry, I won’t go into specifics except, one involved newborns and the other wasn’t all that different from stuff the U.S. does. But I now know those two new specifics so, 3:00 AM, here I lie not sleeping, those specifics cancelling all happy thoughts, students’ interesting homework papers, family around Treasure Island dinner table, son rapping on Mexican TV. That New Yorker article is keeping me awake and aware most of the night, just as I knew it would. Those new specifics are ruining everything.

Daddy in the Army

I don't remember my father playing good-bye rock-a-bye baby for me on the violin. I don't remember banging my head against the crib all night long and I don't remember my mother sleepless as I banged. And I don't know why I do remember playing, two years later, with toy teacups on the backyard porch with my mother and the little boy next door.

"...and a red one for Jimmy and a blue one for Marion..." And I don't know why I suddenly asked "Where's Daddy?" and why my mother answered "you don't have a Daddy."

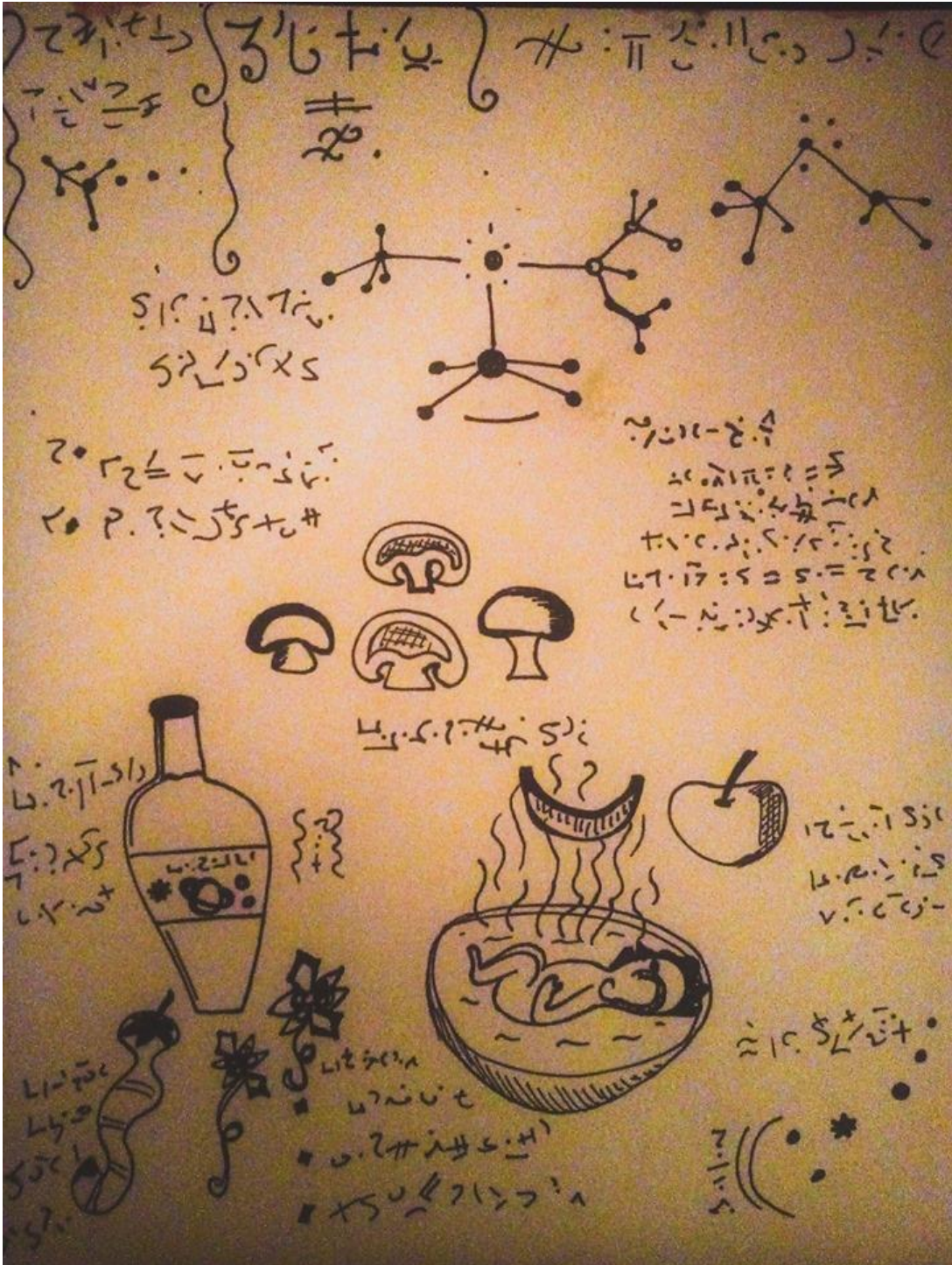
It was a long backyard. Those three porch steps were only the tippy start of it. At the end, far away, were spread-out woods, high trees and many paths. If I had walked along one of those paths something magical would have happened. I don't know why I didn't.

Art From Red Focks





Asemic Writing From Ammi Romero



Ten Minutes and Fourteen Seconds
with Edgar Allan Poe
by Paul Brucker

Just because business is business
and should be done in business-like way,
because by accident I put my right foot into my left shoe,
because justice is a poor joke
and hope a promise yet to be broken,
is that sufficient reason
for the sun to depart,
absorbed by the stream
and the trunk that gave it birth,
is that sufficient reason
for darkness to fall,
and reclaim dominion over all?

That said, you must never lock in the dead
or keep them in the dark.
You must never leave the sick
until they are dead,
unable to anticipate or impair
the behavior of other dead
and soon to be dead.

For now, if you are like me, then
you are present, reporting for duty,
two-thirds dead, maybe three-fourths dead –
requiring no difference but the ability
to savor the difference,
no ability but to distinguish
one degree of truth from another,
to take a calm, inquisitive interest in everything,
to gaze reposefully, which only begets regret
as family secrets are revealed by servants
in candlelight insufficient
to illuminate you or thwart the shadow,
the slim-legged, shovel-footed shadow
that follows and fleeces all.

When the specific quantity
of your body
is greater than the water it displaces,
the body must settle at the bottom –
it makes small difference
whether or not you love the water
or if the water is fifteen feet or five thousand feet deep.

That said, let us celebrate the stream
which flows without song from Edmonton to Enfield,
unloved stream which then flows, as best it can,
from Columbia to North Cherry,
and grows less pure, less peaceful
until a body is found,
a body that strains with all its power,
all its resources,
to produce a cry,
a cry you clearly hear and understand,
a cry you choose not to respond to, nor acknowledge.

What's peace but a set of experiences,
not something that has those experiences.

How I labor, how I toil.
How I brood, bottle and coil.
The iambic follows the Sapphic.
Slights of pen and deformities of language
sully the fair paper,
paper soon worth less
than the price paid for said paper.

How unblessed and unimportant I become, how impatient
with the efforts necessary to get the desired results
as relationships between thought and object,
subject and object, people and object,
become mere response, mere results,
the flow of blood,
not spontaneous expression or coherent view,
not a clear indication of meaning or purpose –
just a frightened head concealed from view.

I used to possess faith.

I used to believe I could manage
the distance between what is and what is desired,
what is longed for and what is long gone,
the minimum dose of a drug
necessary to produce the desired effect.

Now I see another mouse by the path,
lonely, unloved mouse,
denied a sliver of sun,
dying without sign of injury or disease
which makes no difference
because it must become
a few sticks, twigs and bones,
a little string, a little salt –

all that's left to represent religion.

Maybe that's why I'm always a step
or so behind the others, essentially left out,
unclear of purpose, of what to do or say
as the hands of menials
prepare another menial for the tomb.

Maybe that's why I always try
to apply magic, wisdom or, failing that, terror
so the language of the world –
my world \neg – shall not perish,
though all language falls short,
all trying falls short:
an unfair exchange –
all that represents you
left under a roof full of holes,
insatiable holes that hold dominion over all.

I wear a dark mustache, scrupulously kept.
I express the symmetry of my person
with the ease and grace of my carriage,
with coat, gloves and boots
from better days
as the coffin reaches the lynch-gate
to be received in the churchyard.

I am among the people
you are among –
people to love and judge,
people to ring the bell
(nine strokes for a man, six for a woman, three for a child),
people who must show credentials
to be admitted by the agents in charge.
People who wonder, will they catch cold
if they leave their window open
(like F. Michael Vershoor waving a flag –
once divine, now deceased and despised).

Sick people who try their best to appear normal.
“That’s a nice shirt you’re wearing,
white as leprosy,
a nice color for you.”

I flash a hypocritical smile
and argue about trifles
in a high key with violent gestures.
I pound my fist on whatever’s near at hand,
and recite jokes to divert attention
and if that fails, forge tears.

That said, even under the best of conditions,
you must watch your mind,
must observe every alteration in countenance,
and pretend to be interested,
to give a shit.

“Ahem!” someone says.

To which you reply, “aha!”
as if, by golly, we’re wonderful people,
merely wonderful people, all of us, living
in a wonderful age.

See the self-centered shits with immense heads,
apparently holding many brains –
who think no good comes
unless it advances their purpose.

Where have their hands been, I wonder.

What have their hands been up to?

How can they help
with constitutional infirmities
akin to my own?

Little men eaten by the less little man,
a neighbor with teeth and claws
who despises me,

who will outlive me
unless I help him
assume the distinct look of repose
from strife and sorrow
and enter the state of absolute rest
that besets all objects,
never telling him why.

Because then, as well as now, there's no difference
between friend or foe,
no distinguishing marks or features –
merely foes that ask no longer to be
considered foes.

The best way to separate bodies
is to add a third
and the only discourse possible
is inconsistent with your objective
because the man superior in intellect
makes enemies at every turn.

And so on until there's no one left
to borrow from,
no one left
to give the benefit of doubt,
no one left to represent you.

I dread all –
marginal metaphysicians,
collywobbly clerks,
muttons dressed as lamb –
for none is so weak as me.

I dread the trumpet-tongued,
bedeviled in books,
with enough hardihood to share
his heart laid bare.

Maybe that's why I inspire hard looks,
snide remarks,
indications I've been written off.

For now, will you be so good
as to send me a copy
of the history of Tacitus –
it's a small volume,
also some soap.

In the quivering of a leaf,
a blade of grass,
a gleaming of dewdrop or hue,

walk with me,
feel the wind mingle with your breath.

Walk where the paths narrow,
and grow more intricate,
past the kindly, protective elms
and the wisp of willows
where a fox or hare hides
because it hides his scent
from the hounds.

Walk among shadows,
open your eyes in the dark,
decide which shadow to trust,
which to follow, which to fear.

Sky fretted ceiling adorned with gold.
Grass, short, springy, sweet-scented.
You, the most desirable one
in terms of look, smell and carriage,
possessed of every possible charm.

A well-shaped slender figure, noble head
so fine in proportion and expression,
with grace of step, rustle of robes

slivery-silken, with eyes of purple and pearl,
pervaded by a dim, religious light.

Nevertheless, your hands – too large,
not as beautifully formed,
nor as clean as I wish.

One touch to heal,
one to destroy.

An interesting spot
where your mouth used to be.

I'll pay 12 dollars for the furniture,
two for each embrace.

But what does it matter
when all that represents you
will no longer be you?

For so long, I fought and swore
not to sell myself
for less than my asking price,
for less than I paid.

So what if I cannot handle
or deserve my misfortune?
So what if I pass from sipper to tippler,
from gulper to guzzler?

If you remove false judgment,
there is no other judgment.
Fine wine turns bad in an unopened bottle
and what you think
is more important than what you know.

Just because my shoes grow more shoddy,
too tight and out of style,
because no one hears me,
understands me or cares,
because death renders us all alike,
is that sufficient reason
for the intensity of the beam to vary
as the square of the two planes of transmission,
is that sufficient reason
for someone, perhaps you,
to laze or linger
over the ground
where my grave will be.

That said or as good as said,
blame not your feet, the earth
and the ensuing silence
for they must sound like feet, earth
and ensuing silence.

For now, do me a favor.
Breathe evenly and deeply into this moment.
Pretend there has never been a better moment.

Pretend now, at last, no one can harm us.
Now, at last, we cannot harm ourselves.

The Old Tartan Farm by Su Zi

It might have been that the Tartan and Ocala Stud farms lost paddock when the I-75 bulldozed its way from Miami to Detroit. The Sisters said they had worked there when the barn we were all in had been Tartan, instead of Mockingbird—which is where we all were that foaling season. Across the road, there were barns that were still Tartan, a few of the old lines in residence: I would sometimes pass by there on my way home, and see this one masonry barn lit up with the last of the day, and it didn't seem to have any horses. You can tell when a barn has horses, it glows.

Both of The Sisters were overweight and outworked everyone. They fed the new mommas and their babies, and some of those mommas were the grandbabies of yore. That's how it was then.

Along the way of the day, I would be riding with one Sister or the other in the truck assigned to the barn. Occasionally, they would speak of the Old Tartan: how the manager there had been a marine and ran a stopwatch on mucking out a stall, insisted on precision everything. It came on me to ask about the glowering barn I saw on my drive home, how it looked to be tidy but empty of horses. It might have been Sister Sharon who flatly said, "It has horses".

The sisters were Sharon and Christine, and they liked me because I didn't quit after a week, and I had learned to drive that monstrous Holland we used every day. We talked a bit enough for me to know that there wasn't a curlicue in any word they spoke.

I made a point, after that, to look real slow at that barn before I made my right onto the paved road. There was a little rise to get to the paved road, because it started the bridge over the highway, and you might have been able to see a good bit of that barn area, except everything had been positioned to block the view: tractor, trucks, the barn itself seemed to shield a view of its paddocks. There was a row of stall windows facing west, and usually horses can be seen in total darkness by a certain warmth they give, but these windows looked flat—not empty, just flat—as if the edge of the air of the barn itself were reflective.

It got to be a habit, taking a minute to look at that old barn, built exactly out of the same everything as the one I worked in, and some of the others I would be assigned to during the daily this n that of birthing four hundred thoroughbred race horses. At day's end, I was so used to stinking I didn't notice, so I could sit in my little, blue truck and light a cigarette while looking east to that barn. I was making the right onto the paved road one night when I saw a horse in a paddock of that old Tartan property. A dark bay or black thoroughbred, nose on grass in the rising shadows of a sunset. It might have been spring by then, the grass had greened up some. I stared at this one horse. This one horse seen after all this time of looking.

Too far to tell anything, except that it was alone, and it had that unmistakable thoroughbred silhouette: a balance of delicate power.

Someone must have seen me looking, and that horse wasn't there any day after.

Maybe I had asked one of the Sisters about that horse, because they knew every one of them: They knew the grandparents of the grandparents back to Needles himself, and so did the Mare manager, Lyla—who had been

pulling champions seems like forever. One of the plain spoken Sisters told me not be to seen by that barn, not to be noticed by it at all. They used to work night watch at that barn sometimes, the Sisters did, in the churring dark of night. Sister said that for a good while there was a monkey in the barn, not kept, but a free roaming monkey.

Sister said she saw it one night go into an empty stall and close the door. When she walked after it to look into the stall, the monkey was vanished.

Now, Ocala does have a tribe of monkeys out by the river, and a few have been known to wander, but this is a good twenty miles west and twenty miles seems daunting to a creature the size of a toddler. Nonetheless, the stall windows have bars placed closely enough together to not let a narrow horse snoot get stuck, and that's span pretty narrow for a monkey.

Apparently, the monkey came and went in its ghostly fashion, without ever showing any want to a human who happened to be working there. The monkey was rather timid, rarely showing itself to its clothed cousin; however, the horses were unperturbed. Now, thoroughbred horses are not bred to be speculative and philosophical, they need to Leap Up, Out, Now, Now in times going into the hundredths of a second. That the horses in that full barn were no more perturbed by a ghost monkey than they were by the barn tractor meant it was ordinary.

Since the monkey didn't frighten the horses, no one much bothered to investigate why sometimes the monkey was a monkey and sometimes a glowing beach ball and sometimes just a weird fog in one spot.

Sister had said that there was a week or so where when the both of them showed up to the barn to do the ten to six and the tractor was circling the barn. No one was on the tractor.

To circle the barn was to drive an oval, and the tractor was being driven but not by any one who could be seen. The tractor might have been provable by a hot radiator later, by hours on the engine, but no one seemed inclined to fight it: the tracks were there, the Sisters had seen it and no one ever doubted a word of a Sister...it was pointless, their implacable speech was as efficient as their blur-fast pitchforks. It became a matter of always checking the fuel in the tractor, because no one noticed how long it ran at night or when—tractor noise becomes invisible on a farm.

The Old Tartan had backed up to Bonnie Heath still, and when that property was sold to be a strip mall with empty stores ten years later, Tartan began dispersal. Rumor was that Tartan started dispersal and a new farm north of town as soon as it became clear that the local senator wanted pavement instead of champions. By the time I was working alongside the Sisters that season, most of the Tartan mares were gone.

Now, of course, some newbe to town won't even miss those blue and white barns of Bonnie Heath, nor know of the grass that fed some of the finest athletes of the second half of the twentieth century. There's a gated community of cheap, crowded houses with big front doors, and the paddock for the retired mares is filled with franchises. Fortunately, the land is also prone to sinkholes that can inhale deeply and crawl forth with snakes, so we will see how long that real estate stays propped up. I dare not think about the fate of the monkey.

Dick Puts the Plug Into the Jug

by Wayne F. Burke

I used to go to the dances
at the grange
and before the dance
I would drink wine
4 or 5 pints worth
and I could still navigate
or so I thought
until one night I come out of a black-out
driving a car
at a high rate of speed
and in the rear-view mirror
I see blue lights of a cop car
and I realize they are shooting at me
and boy
I knew I was in trouble:
I did not have a license.
Hell, I did not own a car either.

They put my picture in the newspaper
afterwards and
I became a marked man
to the cops
so I moved
to another state
and soon found out they had cops there
too
and pretty soon those cops knew me
so I moved again
this time to the city
and got a room in a rooming house--
the kind of room where
if one cockroach died,
six came to its funeral...
I got a job moving furniture
but
could not keep it
because
once I started drinking

I would forget about working...

I remember coming-to once

sitting up on the side of my bed

and not knowing

if I was putting my sock on to go out

or taking it off to go to bed--

that is how bad I got--

I wound up at a drying-out joint

half a dozen times before

I finally

put the plug

in the jug

and kept it there.

HEHE (Excerpt 5) **Wasted on Shrooms**

by John Miller

The masters at the Shiton Yu temple lived a rather insular lifestyle. With the loss of the junior masters as readily available servants, a pair of dim-witted brothers from a nearby farm were requisitioned by the senior masters to deliver groceries along with saki from the local still. The brothers would knock on the heavy wooden temple doors once a week with a delivery of rice, some vegetables, a few large bags of noodles and, of course, the masters' beloved liquid spirits. The Shiton Yu philosophy forbade the ingestion of meat, Sensei Satori Satire himself having coined the expression: 'Eat bowls of meat and your bowels over-heat'.

Sex was also taboo with the Shiton Yuers. It was believed that a man's semen was an important part of his strength and that releasing it weakened him while retaining it resulted in an expansion of spiritual power. Sensei Satire was reputed to have instructed his followers: 'Shoot your giz and you're out of biz'.

Once a month a postal carrier would bring a delivery of coins; donations from a few men who had left the temple in bygone days, along with one much more substantial monetary bequest from a crazy wealthy retired Naval Admiral who made a hobby out of funding small fanatical groups. The money was more than the masters needed for their simple diets, simple clothing needs, and crazed saki sucking. When the dim-witted brothers began showing up in obvious states of altered consciousness, the masters quickly ascertained that the deliverers had themselves discovered the joys of booze and had begun helping themselves to little nips from the deliveries. Though the brothers were allowed to continue delivering groceries to the temple, they were immediately supplanted in their role as liquor bearers. That job fell to He He Ho Ho and, due to the masters' awareness that the brothers had perhaps been sneaking sips for some time, they decided that they needed to make up for lost drinking-time. The saki delivery schedule was increased to once a day.

With the exception of the daily dispatching of He He to town to get the day's liquor supply, and the occasional stepping just outside the temple door for some methane-gas-free breathing kata, the inhabitants of Temple Shiton Yu rarely, if ever, left the confines of their fortress-like home. As a result, they had little idea as to what was going on in the world outside their walls.

Despite this insularity, by 1945 the masters had heard mumblings from the brothers concerning a global war, but they paid it little mind. As Satori Satire had so astutely slurred while squatting behind a pine tree one hung-over morning: 'There's always war; wars between people, wars of the spirit and wars of the soul, now pass me some leaves I need to wipe my bung hole'.

On the fateful day when the Shiton Yu prophesy came to pass He He had just finished the 3.14 mile run to the temple entrance with the day's sack of former-junior-master-brewed saki, when an atomic bomb detonated over Nagasaki. The explosive impact slammed him into the dojo's thick wooden door. He He dropped the sack, causing the precious bottles to smash, and the saki to spill out and soak into the dry dirt. He He Ho Ho's first thought was of the beating he was going to get for his butter-fingered screw up. He had never before wasted a precious saki drop, let alone dropped an entire bottle, and here he had smashed a whole day's supply on account of some silly little noise.

Each day, after he'd brought in the saki sack, it would be taken from him by Master Goochy Goochy Goo Goo. The master would then set down the saki and ritualistically slap He He silly. He He shuddered, wondering what Master Goo Goo would do when he saw the Saki soaked ground. He He turned and saw a huge mushroom cloud rising in the distance. The temple door opened.

Master Goo Goo stepped out, and stood joining He He in staring at the cloud. "Some mushroom, huh?" Goo Goo said. "How'd you like to find that sucker in your rice?" Goo Goo's rare smile left abruptly when he saw the fallen sack and the stained

dirt. His masterly face contorted into a grimace the likes of which little He He had never before seen.

"Master, Master, it was the explosion, the blast."

"Ho Ho you lost control! Look what you've done! All because of your failure to concentrate, we have no saki!"

"But Master, the blast."

Master Goo Goo turned and strode purposefully into the temple. He He followed, head bowed. The other masters were at meditation and the main training floor was empty. He He shuffled behind Goo Goo as the master paced the well-scrubbed wood. Without turning to look at He He, Goo Goo spoke.

"I am so angry Ho Ho, that I am going to deny you the back of my hand. There will be no slap for you today. You have disappointed me greatly. You will suffer the ignominy of no hand slapping. This day for you will live in infancy."

"Oh please, Master," He He pleaded. "Please Master, strike me."

Master Goo Goo turned to leer at He He, but instead of speaking, his masterly jaw only dropped. He stood staring at He He's small, unworthy body which appeared to be entirely engulfed in a deep, fiery aura, unlike anything the spirit sensitive master had ever seen.

xxxx

Meanwhile, back at our past and in He He's future:

"I ain't no poultry thief, and I ain't no vestal virgin," Big Boss Parodi smiled. "We've choked the chicken and we've cooked the goose, but your ass ain't budged and my bowels ain't moving."

Yamma Gammaguchi had no idea what Parodi was talking about. In the course of the four hours of negotiation Yamma had understood about ten minutes

worth of Boss' rambling euphemisms. On the few occasions when Parodi talked percentages, Yamma would pipe in with his favorite American slang expression: 'no way'. Parodi would then launch into another long litany involving barnyard animals, electromagnetic fields and Texas cowboy folklore. The scary, steel-eyed Parodi who had shown such remarkable knowledge of Gammaguchi's business 'secrets', had disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared. At least Parodi hadn't called his secretary back, and for that Gammaguchi was relieved. After his first drink Big Boss had abstained from further imbibing.

In the seeming middle of some unintelligible rambling about goats, wading boots, and global warming the steel gaze returned. "Alright, fuck it," he said. "Fifty-fifty. We split down the middle."

For the first time since his arrival in the office, Yamma Gammaguchi smiled. "Fifty-fifty," he said. "We fuck it down the middle."

Big Boss reached across the table. The two billionaires shook hands. "Now how about a drink?" Parodi winked.

"Double bourbon, rocks," Gammaguchi answered.

Big Boss smiled broadly, and buzzed for Ellen. She entered immediately, glanced suggestively at Yamma, and strode to the liquor cabinet.

"Our esteemed friend would like a double bourbon on the rocks, darling, and I do believe that I'll have me an 'All American'. Add a good dose of Coo-Coo Cola to Yammazoomi's too. Takes the ding-dongin' edge off."

Yamma frowned at the thought of the cola defiled liquor, but didn't correct the Big Boss corrected order.

Ellen turned her back toward the gentlemen and began preparing the cocktails. She worked slowly and when Big Boss swiveled in his chair and looked out the window Ellen noticed that Gammaguchi's gaze turned away from her rump and

followed Parodi's. Ellen used the temporary diversion to reach down into her much-adored cleavage, and slide a small vial from between her breasts, pouring a portion of thick opaque goo from the vial into each glass before quickly topping off the bourbon and ice with a hefty dose of Coo-Coo Cola.

"Maybe you'll go for that little back rub now too," Parodi said, swiveling his chair back around, winking at Ellen then looking at Gammaguchi.

"You never know." Yamma said, still grinning like the cat who swallowed the Swallow.

"Hear that, honey," Big Boss patted Ellen's firm rump. "You never know. Our friend, Mr Gammaguchi came all the way from Nagasaki, Japan to tell us what we thought we knew. You never know. Remember that, darling. That there is one profound piece of oriental wisdom. You never know. I'll never know either. Never know if I couldn't bullshit Mr. Gammaguchi here because he couldn't understand my particularly cryptic line of bullshit, or whether Mr. Gammaguchi just ain't one to be bulldozered. I may never know, darling." Big now kneaded her beautiful butt with one hand while sipping his fresh drink with the other, "but I sure as shit got my suspicions."

"Around here," Mr. Gammaguchi said, "I'll bet shit is pretty sure."

Big Boss Parodi laughed so loud he bourbon and cola shower-spit his drink all over his document-spread desk-top. Yamma doubled over in his seat, guffawing uncharacteristically. Ellen began giggling grandly and impulsively repulsed away from Parodi. Yamma turned a quizzical look toward his tumbler.

"This is a most unusual tasting cocktail."

"Special blend," Parodi snapped. "Have a bunch of damned hillbillies over at the corn-fucking-tucky Rebel Flag chicken coop mix it up for me on their ding-dongin' day off from the sheet makin' factory. Good ole boys are real clock-sucking craftsmen. Make the best quality Klu Klux rooty-tootin' Klan costumes in the lower

forty-six fucking states. Then on their day off, they head out to the hills, fire up their stills, and squeeze out a corn-holin' mash that'd make a midnight masher gravy his taters. Stuff'll knock your socks right back to old Nagasaki. In fact, Ellen, why don't you give us a little ole re-fill here. A little more Coo-Coo this time around. I could still taste that old rot gut in my last 'All American'. Stuff'll kill ya quicker than a ten mile an hour crash in one of them defective 'Best Motors' brand bolt buckets.

Anyway, hurry up with them ding-a-lingin' drinks honey. After closing a deal like this we're gonna need to have us a rooty-tootin' couple." He turned back toward Yamma and chortled, "Mr. G, I think we've got here, what we call in America, the start of one beautiful ass-scratchin' relationship."

"I need your shit Mr. P," Yamma stared, now being the one with the steel-eyed gaze. "But I'll only take so much shit from anybody. Let's just not pile it on too deep."

There was a momentary silence during which both billionaires glared, waiting to see who would blink first. Ellen shifted her perfectly distributed weight from foot to foot and again prepared two, surreptitiously from-'tween-tit-altered, bourbon, goo, and Coo-Coo Cola cocktails. As if rehearsed, each man cracked a perfectly timed smile at exactly the same instant. Ellen sighed audibly and handed them each a fresh drink.

"Honey," Mr. P said, "Why don't you get on the horn and rustle up a little companionship for our distinguished guest for the evening."

Big Boss held up his glass and Yamma reflexively clinked his against it, glugged a large swallow, grimaced, and again looking quizzically at the tumbler's cloudy contents. Despite the thick black cola over-riding the cocktail's coloration, a goopy cloud seemed to float through the drink.

"That damn L.A. water makes terrible ice," Big Boss snorted, noting Yamma's suspicious look. "Too much ding dongin' smog comin' from all those fuckin' palm trees. They oughta cut down every bark-itchin' son-of-a-bitchin' one of em. They

ain't natural. Brought over here by the damn Poly-nee-shuns or some other bunch of gole damned atheist motherfuckers way back when L.A. was nothing more than a stinkin' sink-hole just waitin' for us white folk to come and fuck her brains out.

That's the problem with having a free fucking country, Yammanuchi. Too many foreigners comin' in and bringing all their crap in with 'em. Oughta green card every one of their asses back to Borneo. This is our gole danged country and don't you ding dongin' forget it! I don't give a rat's ass-hole what those tree humpin' enviro-maniacs say. If God hadn't meant the bitch to get humpty-dumptyed he wouldn't have filled her ying yangin' pantys up with gold! Am I right Hoody Hoochy?" Big Boss paused. Sweat dripped down his face from his animated tirade.

Yamma had heard only half of Parodi's ravings and had understood less than half of what he'd heard. His powers of concentration seemed to be spiraling away from him.

"Anyway Yamma," Big continued, his tone softened, "getting back to the real matter at hand, any particular preferences as to your evenings companionship?"

"In this particular matter, I believe I can trust your judgement," Yamma answered, staring at Ellen. The effect of his vile tasting cocktail seemed to point his consciousness in one unwavering direction, a direction that culminated where the world ended, and Ellen's rear end began.

Parodi's smile twisted into a satanically lecherous leer. He took a long swallow from his glass and bellowed, "Well gole corn dang it to hell Gigglehoochy, I don't mind kickin' in the same corral if you don't." Big Boss' intoxicated fixation was droolingly directed at his new 'business associate'.

"If we are going to be financial partners we must learn to trust each other and to share and share unlike."

"Share and share unlike! Share and share un-hippy-dippin' like! Hot damn Gammaguchi! I bet you're a regular old Pearl Harbor once you get your zippy dippin' frog knickers off."

"I don't know about pearls, Parodi, but right now I'm thinking about diving for some sweet American clams." He stared lustily at Ellen, feeling an erupting hornyness the likes of which he had never before experienced.

"I'll give ya a sweet sweatin' American gole damned clam alright," Big Boss mumbled, staring, mouth open, at Yamma.

Ellen smiled at the Japanese auto baron. She ran her tongue suggestively over her upper lip. "OOOhhh! I don't know of too many girls who can say that they had two different billionaires make deposits and withdrawals from their accounts in the same day."

"Yee-hah," Big Boss bellowed, chug-a-lugging the last of his drink while rubbing maniacally at his crotch with his open right hand. "Let's get over to my corn holin' penthouse before I done go and bust my poly-asster britches right here and now."

Ellen swung her hips with mock exaggeration as she led the procession out of the office, through the empty reception area, and into the elevator. She glanced back now and again at the two expensive-suited groins bringing up the processional rear. If at any point Yamma's stuff didn't appear to be up to snuff, she used a light hand stroke to re-establish a zipper-alerting condition red. Big Boss' eyes stayed glued to Yamma Gammaguchi's butt while Yamma gazed at Ellen's swaying rump. The men become boys become men become boys plummeted the thirty three elevator-boxed floors, giggling like jerked-off cub scouts until arriving at ground zero (the employees term for the first floor lobby), whereupon the doors slid open exposing the teeming masses of wannabe rich white men, milling about the floor,

pausing in mid-million-dollar dream delusion to bow their heads to the great Boss Parodi.

"Get to work, ya lily-liberaled pud-pullers!" Boss directed, never taking his eyes off of Yamma Gammaguchi's butt. "I'll downsize every one of your asses faster than you can unbuckle your belly-bustin' belts."

The peons blushed communal Caucasian blushes and turned their attention back to their hand-held computers.

The three person procession continued through the lobby, out Parodi Enterprise's main door, and on to Big Boss' reserved parking space. They ceased at Big Boss' car, piled in, and Parodi, yodeling a hearty 'Hooty hoot!' as he punched the gas pedal, sped the special edition Gammaguchi Gold Touring Deluxe through the hot Los Angeles afternoon. Big continued hooting, yodeling and fondling his own stiff-as-a-board member, while Yamma Gammaguchi humped Ellen smack dab in the middle of the wide back-seat.

Upon arrival at Parodi's palatial penthouse, copious quantities of Coo-Coo Cola were added to head-banging shots of cheap southern bourbon, subsequently mickey-slipped by Ellen from her 'tween-breasted vile, then poured down the gullets of the two businessmen. The horned-up party only made it past the plush living room during intercourse interlude occasions when elimination pit-stops were required.

Alien Foodha

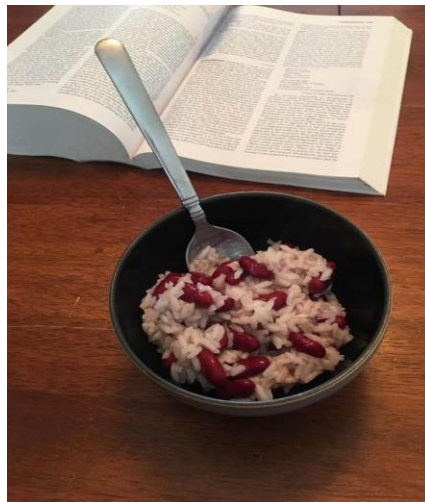
**A Collaborative Segment About the Food We Eat, How it Affects Us, and
Where it Comes From**



**Battered by Wants:
My Week of Eating Refugee Rations
By Josh Medsker**

In June, I did the Ration Challenge. For one week, I ate the same rations as a Syrian refugee living in Jordan. Friends and family sponsored me and I ended up raising \$1100 dollars for Church World Service, who headed up the challenge. They help raise money for food, education, medicine, and other necessities for these people. It may not sound like much, but read on.

It was important to me to do something direct to help other people, and something where I had to sacrifice. What could be more direct than changing the way you eat? I didn't really realize how much I would be sacrificing, until I was deep in it. Early on, I decided to forgo the recipe book they sent me, and come up with my own meal plan. Now, before I get into that, I need to tell you just how little I had to eat. I was given:



3 lbs of rice

3 lb flour

36 grams of chickpeas

1 tin of sardines

16 oz of vegetable oil

and 2 cups of lentils

For a week. So I decided to have a midday meal and a late evening meal, in order to make everything last. As you can imagine, I leaned on the rice and flour, hardcore.

I mixed up the beans and some rice, and designated that for my breakfasts. I mixed up the lentils with more rice, and made that my dinners. I made some frybread and had that for snacks (and later, a mini-dinner). I tried to make hummus and burned the chickpeas into a nearly inedible mush the very first day. I ate it anyway. Talk about heartbreaking. At midday, I had my breakfast, and later in the evening, usually around 9pm, I'd eat my dinner (later, two mini-dinners, spaced apart). The timing of the meals ended up being crucial to my success. And I had about 2 gallons of water, constantly, throughout the day, to stave off hunger and keep myself chugging along.

In order to prime myself for this rationing of food, I cut out all sugar and all bread for a week before. This was partially out of necessity, and partially because I had ballooned up to 220 pounds, about 40 pounds more than my ideal weight. For this effort, I lost 5 pounds, and went into the challenge week

at 215. I don't think I could have made it the week on such miniscule portions otherwise. By the end of the week, I was at 205.

At first I counted the minutes until I could eat again, but near the end of the week, I had gotten used to the constant low-grade headaches, brain fog, and irritability. As the week wore on, my kitchen became kind of a sacred place, a place I could go to prepare my meals and meditate on how grateful I was for my position in life, instead of the place where I'd wander to when I was bored.

I think back to times, at the end a work-week, when my wife and I had to throw out spoiled vegetables—because we'd get home from work and were wiped out, and would order a pizza or Chinese, and our groceries went uneaten. Sometimes when I was preparing my tiny slab of frybread smeared with sardines, I'd look at the fridge longingly and then feel this incredible wave of guilt, thinking about all of the food I'd thrown out over the years. I also knew that if I wanted to break my promise, I could sneak food if the going got too rough. It did get rough. But I never snuck extra food. At least I had extra food to sneak, right?

This week of food depravation shocked me into a deeper understanding of how good I really have it, and the power that gives me. It's easy to forget that sometimes, when we are constantly battered by wants. And if you want to get deeper into it, it showed me that in the times of extreme division, extreme callousness in government, and worsening despair, we still have control over ourselves. We can choose to make things better, or sit back and let the world

crush us. We raised enough to feed 5 adults and also get school materials for 5 kids, for a year. I chose action. I hope you will too.

*** (Although the Ration Challenge is over for this year, you can visit <https://cwsglobal.org/> to find out other ways to give and volunteer!)



Fuel by John Drudge

Good food
Breeds enchanted memories
Deep within us
Be it slow roasted pig
In the foothills
Of southern Spain
A light carbonara
With a view
Of the Trevi in Rome
Or oysters on the terrace
At Rotonde in Paris
On a bustling hot
Summer night
With a bottomless bucket
Of iced Sancerre at the steady
And friends nestled in
Side by each
We are moved by our desire
For sustenance
And more
Forever hunters and gatherers
Of our own deep instincts
And deeper passions
At the core

Let's Choke Phil by Henry Stanton

Let's choke ravenous, insatiable, obscene, repugnant Phil To death.

Ironically, Phil is sort of like the octopus he is stuffing in his pie-hole right now, all arms grabbing and pulling food up to a hard, horny, merciless crunching beak. Though, of course, Phil is never like the once and perfect being that he has now eaten, not the brilliant, sentient being flashing its vast panoply of color in beautiful fluttering waves that integrate that scintillate with a pristine environment. Phil is a pasty, skinny, insatiable palimpsest written there-on being the demise of eating as survival and the much broader and bigger demise of decent, integrated, compassionate, quiet and careful living. Instead, Phil eats to impress, or to amuse (his audience but mostly himself), to make friends/admirers, to achieve some proposed noble thing, to indulge the artistic impulse, to establish a body of work (an Oeuvre which since the egg is food he immediately consumes) but mostly to fill the vast, insurmountable, unfillable, awful emptiness inside.

And he has no idea. Which is incredibly dangerous. To all the animals he consumes, of course, to the global fisheries silver and flashing, to the savannahs' ungulates and predators, to waving grasses and powerful ominous storms, to the unassailable upward-trending mountains, to the pure and clear lakes and streams, to the quaking and whispering forests, to crystalline icy-blue glaciers, to the bountiful, to the abundant, to the beautiful and to and

to.... all depleted. All gone. All to feed the obscene, empty hole in Phil's petty being.

Oops that's a little harsh. Anyway. Geez. Let's choke the guy to death for god sakes. It's way to dangerous, the danger is too immediate to wait for the proposed divine or universal intervention - the one that intervenes with a hunk of fatty meat lodged so far down in Phil's esophagus, right at the gateway to breath, that it is unredeemable, and we are relieved of his incessant chattering, and eating, and obliterating. We can't wait for a distracted higher being to pay attention. Phil is running out of animals of the so-called lower order to consume.

And then, what will be left for Phil to eat? Our pets that are the residue of that lower order, then our children littlest ravenous beings that they can also be, and then, ultimately, our trembling, fragile, disappearing selves. We have to stop Phil. He is eating through everything that matters on this earth. He is eating up our humanity. He is eating up any hope of finding meaning in our struggle to survive. He is eating up who we are, who we can be, who we never were.

Poetry From LB Sedlacek

Blackberry Beer

is a little sweet
and a bit blue
and only around during
the annual Blackberry Festival.

Fish Suppers

Corn boil
and
fish fry
of
fresh caught
ocean
fish at
a
bonfire on
the
beach in
the

cool night
air
a staple
of
summer nights
and
memories not
forgotten.

Eggs to Apples to You

From the beginning
you were never
mine so let's
rebuild you one
cell one molecule
a made to
order meal cooked
fresh.

Homeless in an insensate world

by Darcy Reed

The numbers of homeless are growing all over the world. I've heard there's a worldwide housing crisis. The have-nots now have no homes. They lounge on your streets, exhausted and weary from weather and strife, or they hang at street corners with signs and wait for a dollar every now and then. You stop at the light, they are looking at you. You look away or maybe find some change. We feel sorry but can't do much for them.

In today's world, the poor are getting poorer. In our own hometown, the population grew so fast that the rents rose so high forcing people either to the streets or far out the city itself. I've been to a hearing at the state capitol for a bill called The Right to Rest, but the legislators were sleeping and picking their noses. The restaurateurs were anxious to make sure the homeless couldn't sit or lie down anywhere in the city. The mayor's henchmen continued to confiscate their tents and blankets.

The rents again just recently rose in Denver. It's outrageous trying to live as a renter. The renters are the layer of societal have-nots that barely pass muster in the new Denver with its pseudo-sophisticated inheritors of the city on the plains. Anyone could get homeless but it seems the renters get homeless more often at the mercy of landlords who often don't care about people but just money. The same happens in the other big cities; now even the smaller cities. It's scary. It could happen to a mom or dad or teenager or little kids in sad families and the haves don't care. They just think it's a shame they have to even see them: the new untouchables.

The homeless are all kinds of people. Some are drug addicts or alcoholics or mentally ill people. It doesn't really matter how they got there. They are people. They are veterans of wars -- the champions of our war loving society. They're on the corner with a sign. How does that make you feel, America? Seriously, how does it feel to send soldiers into war, break them into smithereens, and just abandon them to the streets?

But these days, it seems people think in memes. You can only help one group at a time, apparently. It's like people who decide they can only do one thing a day. You can't solve all the problems, so what about this or what about that? What-aboutism is the biggest fallacy in thinking of all and prevents us from helping all the people: the refugees in cages, the vets, the homeless, the sick, the overworked, underpaid renters. Everybody needs help and deserves it. It isn't all about all this other stuff. Fix it all now, damn it!

As my brother just pointed out, the idea of treating one segment of the population better than another is one of the recognized markers of genocide. No one segment of the population deserves humanity more than any other. The world does this to the poor everywhere, as if the poor and homeless deserve to be poor and homeless -- kind of an American philosophy, I guess. If you're poor it's your fault and God hates you. If you're rich it's because you're virtuous and God loves you. Imagine a world like that! I don't have to.

Recipe for a Revolution by Heidi Blakeslee

One trillion books

Two million people who refuse to re-live the horrors of WWII

A dash of instigation from the Weather Underground

Twenty million Harriet Tubmans on twenties

Impeachment and then jail

Ten cups of kindness

A million poets marching to the beats, wearing

snorkeling gear so tear gas won't matter

telling anyone who'll listen that there's another way to live

A redistribution of wealth

A new system

A sprinkling of sugar

Some rainbow food coloring

Throw into a mosh pit

until awakened

Set loose

THE ENCHANTRESS' SANDWICH SHOP
& PRESIDENT tRUMP's
INTERGALACTIC PROTEIN COMPROMISE
by Red Focks

Tuna Maggot and Smeg-Cheese Grinders

hot flopping slaps of horseradish

moldy sourdough; dip it in your soup.

Drink his blood. Eat his flesh.

Go to church. Confess.

Trapdoors and hidden agendas

Heavenly choirs, chicken wings and blowtorches.

Flavorless Sodium Pentothal Juice Boxes

Shrek 3 on DVD. God-Eating-Trees.

Burning epidermis' eating itself alive.

Fifteen-year-old mayonnaise & Freedom-Fries

Not a Dick, or a Bush, or a Colon.

Just an unsanitary meal.

Greasy food poisoning and a fuzzy memory.

The means of justification.

We. Do. NOT. Loose. Wars.

Pie Eating Reptilian Moon Creatures

The Human Food Pyramid.

EAT MORE KALE for added nutritional sustenance.

Missing person\$. Report card\$. Dollar menu\$.

It was always White vs Dark meat.

Fuck your blood diamonds!

I'm too busy getting strung out

on avocados in a gutter somewhere.

I'd elucidate further

but I've got to drag

my sorry ass down

to Whole Foods

so I can purchase more avocados.

I don't even care about the economy, man.

All I care about is avocados.

A cannibal

would eat

the crust

if he was.

One. Two.

Two. Three, thy.

Three. Free the

Heathens and Jezebelz

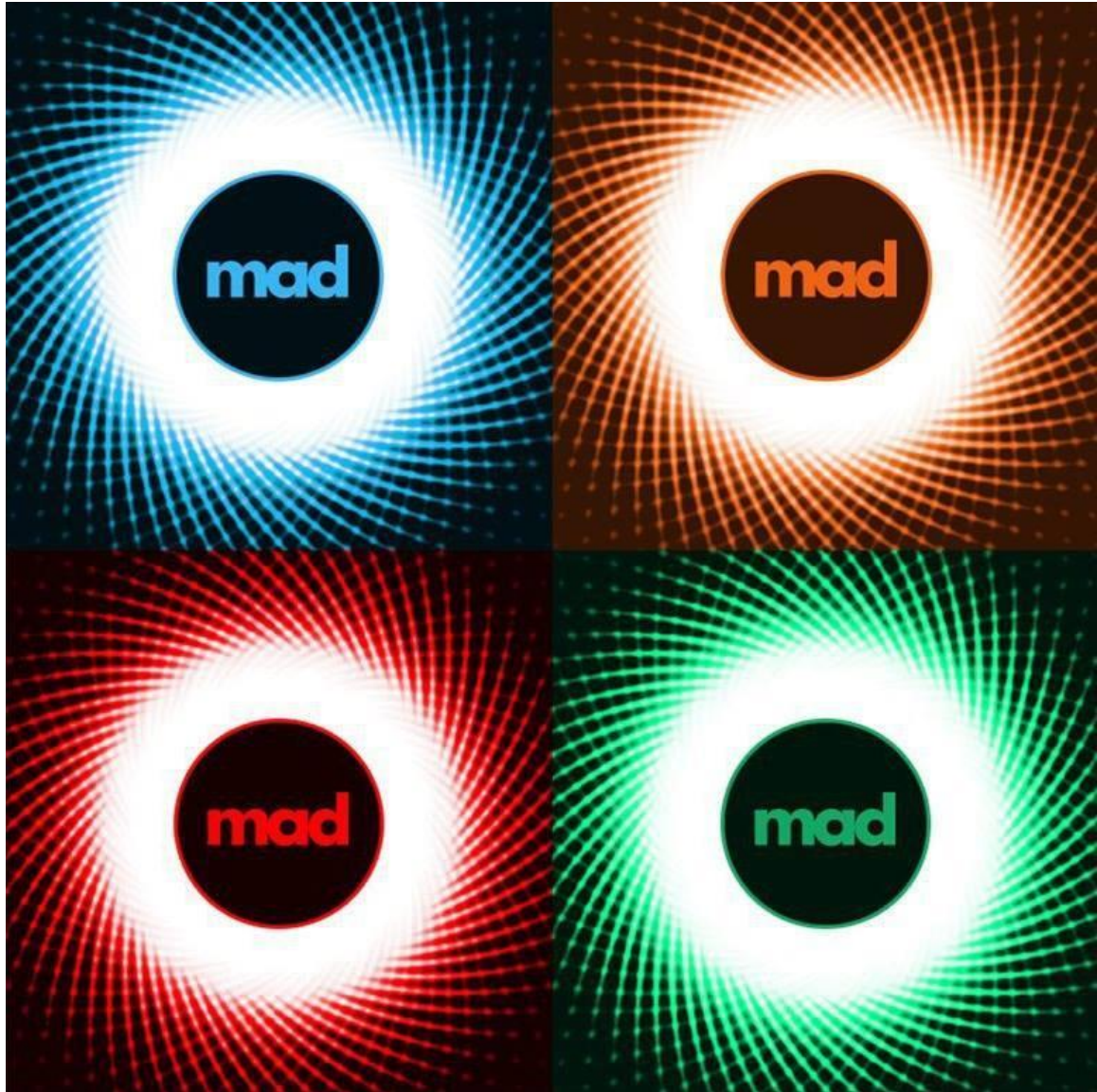
from hell on Santa's sleigh.

Frost. Feast. Prey. We

The United Food Chain.

There I go eating folk again.

An Interview With Johnny Olson, Editor at Mad Swirl



ABP- Thanks for taking this interview, Johnny. For the ABZ readers who are not familiar with Mad Swirl, what can you tell us about your operation?

JO- Thank YOU for providing me a soap box to preach the Mad Swirl word! I could truly speak on the subject of Mad Swirl for hours. She truly is a creative love-child with many souls giving her life.

For those who have no idea whatsoever who we are or what we do, here's our boilerplate definition of Mad Swirl: We are an arts and literature website. Mad Swirl is a platform, a showcase, and a stage for artistic expression in this mad, mad world of ours; a creative collective of as many poets, artists, and writers we can gather from around the world; from Nepal to Ireland, from England to China, from California to New York City and all the places in between. Our Poetry Forum features works from over 150 contributing poets, our short story library has over 140 writers and our Mad Gallery has over 45 resident artists. Mad Swirl hosts a monthly open mic in Dallas, Texas, featuring poets, musicians, actors, singers and performers (circus freaks and Elvis impersonators always welcome) every 1st Wednesday of the month.

To give you a brief glimpse into how all this madness got swirled up, in 1999, Mad Swirl was conceived and born here in Dallas, Texas. What started out as a printed arts "zine" highlighting the poetry, prose and art from our local friends has now turned into a global creative collective community. Little did we know 20 years ago that we'd still be swirling' today.

Back then I was carrying much of the weight of responsibilities associated with maintaining and growing this creative love-child (editing, designing, marketing, etc.). Today, I am the chief editor and still do the designing and marketing with some editing here and there but the bulk of the editorial work is handled by our very competent & talented staff: MH Clay is our poetry editor; Tyler Malone is our short story editor; Madelyn Olson is our visual editor; and our newest addition, Mike Fiorito, is our associate editor.

To give you a gist of our daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual rhythm, here are the Mad tunes we play...

MH Clay (who is also a gifted poet, writer, artist, actor and

musician) scans our poetry submissions queue, selecting one poem from a different poet every day to feature in our Poetry Forum. By week's end, he has created a scene, weaving together the overview in his weekly rant.

Tyler Malone (who is also a bad ass poet, writer and photographer) selects a weekly short story/flash fiction -1,000 words or less- piece to highlight in Mad Swirl's library. He also selects a photograph from his vast collection to complement the prose piece.

Madelyn Olson (who is also an amazing artist, writer and poet) chooses the artist who best captures the vibe of Mad Swirl, featuring the artist for the month in our Mad Gallery. We highlight one piece from their collection once a week.

Our newest edition to the Mad crew, Mike Fiorito (who is also an accomplished poet, writer, artist and musician) is our official Mad Swirl reviewer. Mike will sift thru the book review requests we receive from Mad Swirl's Contributing Poets and Writers and select one to highlight, providing a very detailed yet entertaining dive into the

book, which we feature quarterly in our blog.

As for me, I'm Chief Editor Johnny Olson (also a poet, artist and writer). I've been here since day one when this little Swirl of ours was dreamed up thanks to Kerouac's *On the Road* and his pithy line "The whole mad swirl of everything that was to come began then." Now that we have a staff, I just wear a few Mad hats: web/print designer, creative director, email gatekeeper, social media marketer and occasionally, editor wrangler. To say that I have the best seat in the house would be a gross understatement.

Each week we gather together that week's featured poems, story and artist piece (as well as highlight a review if it's due time, same goes for our monthly open mic news) and share "The Best of Mad Swirl : (date of that week)" with our social media network of fans as well as highlight it on Mad Swirl's site in the Blog.

ABP- If somebody has something that they would like to share with Mad Swirl, how would they go about getting in touch with you?

JO- First, I suggest they visit our submissions page, where they can find a whole lot of info on our guidelines. As you know being editors yourself, guidelines are a necessity and ones we take quite seriously.

After giving that a once over, any and all submissions are welcome (three poems and/or one short story and/or 5 to 10 visuals) to submissions@madswirl.com.

The initial purpose in starting Mad Swirl was as a means to showcase the creativity swirling all around us. Our intentions were to accept any and all kinds of submissions from any and all kinds of artists. We never followed a specific style or genre but stayed open-minded to diverse avenues of expression. We're approachable. We're humans. We want to divinely shine and allow others to shine with us. That, I think, is what sets us apart from other outlets that are similar to Mad Swirl. We thrive on no-holds-barred expression and strive to foster a safe, positive and supportive stage/page.

ABP- I can see that Mad Swirl hosts live events such as open mics. How was 'Dr. Googly Eyes Healin' Circus and Mad Swirlin' Medicine Show' which was held on 7.3.19?

JO- As if I wasn't wordy enough already, I could go on and on about our open mic but try to contain myself. Mad Swirl hosted our first open mic November 2004 in Dallas. Ever since that day, we have kept the live mic madness swirling every 1st Wednesday. We are honored to showcase on our stage some of the most talented poets, musicians and performers (of all kinds) around. Each month we just never know what we'll get but it's always electric! Swirve, our house jazz band, opens our show as well as plays the intermissions. Front man, mad trumpeter Chris Curiel, has a new guest musician sitting in with Swirve every month. Just like the open mic portion of the night, we just never know what vibe Swirve will bring to that night, except that it'll be mad-tastic!

We typically rely on our Mad muse to determine what creative direction each open mic will take. But, in 2015, given the rise of the negative rhetoric we started to hear so much through the media (maybe it had

something to do with the upcoming 2016 election? wink, wink). We wanted to have a themed open mic focused on the rise of “Yes!” Hence, ‘Dr. Googly Eyes Healin’ Circus and Mad Swirlin’ Medicine Show’. We have had this one every year since. July 3rd was a grand time for all, with “no” diminished by the positive glow of our Mad Ones reveling in “Yes!”

ABP- Mad Swirl has a couple of ‘Best Of’ anthology books for sale.

What can you tell us about those, and how could one go about obtaining a copy?

JO- Starting with 2017, we have put together a "Best of Mad Swirl :(year)" in print form. This collection features the works that the editorial staff felt best represented that year. In doing so, we highlight 52 poems (one from each week), 12 short stories (one from each month) and four artists (one from each quarter). This collection truly is a fine representation of the diverse and talented contributors that Mad Swirl is mighty blessed to shine a light upon. Here is the official Mad Swirl spiel for our anthologies:

"Our annual anthology features 52 poets, 12 short fiction writers, and four artists whose works were presented on MadSwirl.com throughout the year. We editors reviewed the entire year's output to ensure this collection is truly "the best of Mad Swirl." The works represent diverse voices and vantagepoints which speak to all aspects of this crazy swirl we call 'life on earth.' This anthology is a great introduction to the world of Mad Swirl!"

Both 2017 and 2018's Best of Mad Swirl anthologies are available at Amazon.com. If you don't have either, we highly recommend both. They are timeless and a necessity for anyone who digs poetry, prose and art... which are most of your readers, I assume!

ABP- In your website's photo gallery, I can see some truly outstanding visual art, including work from ABP contributors such as Mike Fiorito, and R. Keith. Can you tell us about some of the other visual artists you have featured, whose work our readers may enjoy exploring?

JO- Mad Swirl has been quite blessed to feature some mighty talented artists through the years. All kinds of mediums, from painters, photographers illustrators, stained-glass artists, collagists... all have a presence and a place in our Mad Gallery.

You already named a couple of artists that I'm big fans of. Madelyn's assessment of Mike's collage collection, "sometimes sexual, sometimes spiritual and sometimes a little bit of both" hits the spot. Speaking of Madelyn, she herself is a featured artist in our Mad Gallery.

Although I am her father, I am also her biggest fan. Her cast of diverse characters, with swimming glimmering eyes and twisted limbs disjointed and amputated, carry a message that cannot be denied.

Madelyn's portraits unapologetically express the rawness of a reality that's on a twisted parallel of our own. I am also a big fan of photographer Dan Rodriguez. Dan passed away this year and his presence

both as my friend as well as our photographer at Mad Swirl's Open Mic thru the years has left a big hole, personally and in our Swirl world.

Dan had that special something that made him a master of his craft. He knew the exact moment and angle to capture hundreds of performers we had on our mic over many of years. A few others I would highly recommend are BA Ardoin, Elvin Armando, Chuck Hatton, Tyler Malone, Jon Marquette, Christian Millet, Maria Valentina Sheets, Bill Wolak and William Zuback.

ABP- What does Mad Swirl have planned for the rest of the year, and in 2020?

JO- Since Mad Swirl's conception over 20 years ago, our creative love-child has grown tremendously. In the past few years we checked many of the boxes of new initiatives, updates, etc. that we had hoped to check off. But there's always room to grow and change and surely we will. But for right now all online, print and open mic pistons are hitting quite nicely.

After putting out 2018's anthology this year, along with Contributing Poet Opalina Salas' book, "Black Sparrow Dress" (also available on

Amazon), we have been getting the itch to publish another Contributing Poet's works this year. When/Who might that be? Stay tuned!

As for 2020, we have a few more big dreams that are still on our list and may take years to complete. But we keep dreaming of the “someday” scenes knowing that with perseverance and a pinch of good ol’ fashioned luck, Mad Swirl will continue to evolve organically and grow into exactly what it was born to be!

ABP- Thanks again for taking the time out of your schedule to answer these questions, Johnny. The floor is all yours. Take the following pages to share anything at all.

JO- Again, I really appreciate the opportunity to share the Mad Swirl word with your fans. I warned you that I could go on and on about Mad Swirl! So to end on a different note, I'd like to allow our editorial staff to share a few words on what they do and what Mad Swirl means to them:

"I am most fortunate and proud to be a part of this Mad Swirl. I take my role as Poetry Editor with honor and care; each poet's work is from

their heart and I treat all submissions with respect. It is my aim to offer the best, most diverse, most creative expressions our Mad Swirl of poets have to offer." ~ Poetry Editor MH Clay

"Fiction is a dialog, and that's where my role as Mad Swirl's Short Story Editor rests. From selecting and editing comes a conversation with a person who I probably don't know but just shared an entire world with me. Being able to help refine that gift before it's sent out into the world is the luckiest experience possible and one I've attempted to have the deepest relationship with in my tenure as editor." ~ Short Story Editor Tyler Malone

"It's the biggest honor to be a part of the artistic community that is Mad Swirl and to have a role within it that nurtures my soul. My love for the existence of creative expression and the fact that all of us do it so uniquely, beautifully and sacredly makes my role as Mad Swirl's Visual Editor so deeply meaningful to me!" ~ Visual Editor Madelyn Olson

"As Associate Editor I have the honor to write book reviews for Mad Swirl. It is my hope to capture the spirit of each reviewed poet's

work and convey to other readers the joy and inspiration that I experienced in my own reading." ~ Associate Editor Mike Fiorito

And on those notes, I will now drop the mic and exit stage left!

Peace & Madness...

Johnny O

Tomorrow's Ghost by Mike Fiorito

Liddy woke that morning drenched in sweat. He could still smell the scent of his wife Kate on the warm sheets. She'd left to go to Canada for the International Climate Change Conference the night before.

While still in bed, he mulled over his reoccurring dream of being followed by an alien being. In his dreams, the alien's presence was protective. Sometimes, his dreams were violently interrupted by another force. The other force was demonic in nature. It seemed intent on suffocating him. Nailing him shut into a coffin where he couldn't breathe.

Shaking his head, Liddy rubbed his eyes. What's wrong with me?

I have to get Torrin ready for school by myself today. And then head to work.

He waved his hand near the sensor to turn on the solar powered light in Torrin's bedroom.

"Come on, kid. Rise and shine."

Torrin began to stir.

"Get yourself ready, come have breakfast and I'll drop you off." Then they got dressed and ate.

Opening the door to the house, the flaming sunlight burst in like water

breaking through a dam.

Liddy and Torrin ran to the electric car to escape the scorching winds. As they rushed toward the car, Torrin dropped one of his books.

“Go, go” said Liddy, motioning for Torrin to get into the car. Then Liddy reached down to pick up the book. It felt like piece of hot iron. He pulled the book up by its pages, his fingertips burning just to touch them. There were puddles of sunshine on the ground, the light blasted his eyes, blinding him.

Opening the car door, Liddy jumped into the front seat, then slammed the door shut and sighed, resting his hands on the dash.

Liddy looked at Torrin, his eyes watery, his chest heaving.

“Are you ok?” asked Liddy.

Torrin shook his head affirmatively.

"Daddy, they're saying we won't have school soon. That we'll attend school virtually," said Torrin, his voice cracking with worry.

"That might not be for a while," replied Liddy, still huffing, knowing it was going to happen sooner. This just couldn't go on, people running around, children scampering out of the sun, like the earth was on fire.

As a college professor, Liddy's lectures were given remotely. They could be recorded and cataloged. But kids needed the socialization. His couldn't have been the last generation to be socialized, to make friends in school, to play basketball in an outdoor court. What will tomorrow's world be like? Will people be trapped in their homes, caged in their rooms?

After school later that day, Liddy picked up Torrin. They came home, did homework.

"Are all stars as powerful as our sun?" asked Torrin, after they finished.

"Our sun is a normal star. It's not what you would consider a powerful star. Though, of course, it is powerful."

"Will the sun exist forever?"

"No the sun will one day implode, scientists say, pulling the planets apart when it does."

"When will that happen?"

"Not for millions of years," said Liddy. Though millions of years was far away, it still seemed final and dreadful.

"What will we do on the Earth when the sun explodes?"

“We don’t have to worry about that now,” replied Liddy, knowing that Torrin was asking the right questions.

“I want to be a climate scientist like mom when I grow up,” said Torrin.

“That’s a good goal,” said Liddy, moved by his son’s earnestness. Only eight and Torrin already showed great empathy for people, for the world.

“How long will I live?” asked Torrin, out of the blue.

Questions, always asking questions.

“Well, normal lifespan is about a hundred years,” answered Liddy.

“How long do you want to live? Do you want to live forever?”

“I only want to live forever if you and mommy are with me,” said Torrin, innocently.

Liddy wiped the tear that welled in his eye.

That night Liddy dreamed again about the alien. He didn't know what else to call it. The being’s presence was comforting in the midst of his nightmares. Perhaps he was so addled from worry that his dreams became disturbed and turbulent. In his dream the alien spoke to him, but the words were garbled and distorted, like you’d hear on a short-wave radio that was just out of reach.

"I can bring you here," said a light blue vaporous form. It looked more like a wrinkle in the air than a being.

"But where are you?"

"I am far away; I want to help you, to help others, escape," it said, its voice like ribbons of notes.

"How will you help me, or us?"

"There is a way. There are paths opened."

"I don't know what that means," said Liddy.

"You will know," said the voice and then the dream ended.

The next day, Liddy and Torrin watched news on the video screen while eating breakfast in the kitchen nook. The screen showed images of gigantic icebergs melting in the North Pole, their waters spilling into coastal cities, destroying everything in their wake. The video then zeroed in on the faces of some of the people. Despite the demolished houses, trees ripped down and streets turned upside down, there were smiles on the faces of the people. One man spoke to a reporter, saying that the iceberg's melting was an act of God, bringing relief to the Nordic countries. The man's eyebrows were tinged with frost. The video showed people dancing in the streets among the rubble.

Kate arrived back from Canada the next day, just as Liddy and Torrin were preparing to have dinner.

“We missed you so much,” said Liddy, after embracing his wife. Torrin rushed to his mother, hugging her by the waist.

Then they all sat down together, Kate’s knapsack and luggage still piled on the kitchen floor.

Liddy could tell by the look on her face not to discuss the details of the conference. It might be too unsettling for Torrin to hear. With the daily images from the news video and lessons at school, it was already too much.

“How was Canada?” asked Liddy, trying to focus on something positive.

“Canada was beautiful,” said Kate. The air was cooler and fresher in the Northern Rockies. “We went on a number of excavations in the mountains, testing the soil, and collecting tree samples,” she added, as her bright blue eyes sparkled.

“How are they treating their American peers?” asked Liddy, knowing that there was growing tension between the United States and Canada and other international democracies. There had been an increasing number of American refugees fleeing to Canada. Some people even pleaded with the

Canadian government to take their children, even if they couldn't stay in Canada. With climate change running amok in the United States, on top of a growing authoritarian government, the rest of the world began to look at the United States suspiciously.

“Well, they know that climate scientists certainly don't side with the current administration,” said Kate. Then, she added, speaking to Torrin, “What did you learn about in school these last few days, honey?”

“We've been learning about the sun, about climate change, about how big the universe is,” said Torrin.

“Those are tall subjects for a little man,” said Kate, smiling, now holding Torrin's chin in the cup of her hands.

“I want to be like you when I grow up, mommy.”

“That's so sweet, honey. You don't want to be like your dad?” asked Kate, now rolling her eyes at Liddy.

“I want to save the world, mommy, like you.”

“Daddy's saving the world in his way, honey.”

That night Liddy again dreamt about the alien. First the blue ribboned form, then the garbled voice.

“You are back,” said Liddy.

“Yes, I came for you.”

“You came for me?”

“To take you to our world.” Its voice whirred and whizzed, the syllables sometimes separated in time, but sometimes doubling, like two voices speaking at once.

This was the first time the alien said the word “our.”

“Where is your world?”

“It is very far away.”

“How far away?”

“We are so far away, you could never fly to us in a machine of any kind.”

“How long would it take us to get to you?”

“It would take sixty thousand years by conventional travel methods.”

Suddenly, Liddy felt like he’d had this conversation before.

“Sixty thousand years by conventional methods?” asked Liddy.

“Remember, just like we had talked about before,” said the alien.

“We’ve had this conversation?” asked Liddy.

Now, ignoring his question, the alien reached out his hand.

“I need you to take my hand,” said the alien.

“What will happen?”

“When you take my hand, I will pull you into my world. You see, this is how we travel. In dreams.”

“I’m dreaming, that’s right,” said Liddy. He had had a few lucid dreams before.

“Yes, you’re dreaming. Remember how you used to say that you have to live your dreams.”

“I used to say that to Torrin when he was a little boy.”

Now a radio whir roared, as if from inside a gigantic subway station.

The alien held out his hand. Liddy reached toward the hand. Their touching set off a series of electrical sparks. Liddy found himself in a spinning tunnel; a cyclone of swirling color swarmed around him, rotating and turning. He held the alien’s hand tightly. Whatever was happening, whether he was dreaming or not, he felt at peace. Somehow the presence of this being

seemed to fill his heart with love. It reminded him of how he felt holding his father's hand.

After tumbling, his body shuttered and pulled, he was set free, then floated gently, his body slowly descending to the ground, like a bird that landed. Liddy looked around at the sky in this world. It was magnificent. There were so many stars, but these stars seemed closer and brighter. There were gigantic swatches of color across the sky, like the yoke of the galaxy had oozed out of its membranous enclosure.

Now, looking down from the sky, he noticed that he was still holding the hand of the alien.

They looked into each other's eyes.

"You look just as I remembered," said the alien. Its voice was no longer travelling over great distances. It was right in front of him.

Liddy knew the face in front of him.

"Who are you?" asked Liddy, confused about who it was he was looking at.

"We travel through dreams to cover the expanse of space."

"I'm not sure I understand," said Liddy. "Am I dreaming? Is this real?"

“I am who you think I am,” said the alien.

Liddy’s eyes filled with water. They joined both hands now, glancing into each other’s eyes.

“And now, we have to go get mother,” said the alien.

Art and Poetry from Daniel de Culla



RAGECRACKER BENCHCRACKER BUSYBODY

He is. Look: He says that he has, in his body as in his soul, an Emperor fish in its own hollow metal exile with a handle and a piece of brass loose inside to make it sound when rattled like a rattlesnake.

He is a person who is enraged every moment without sufficient reason. Ragecracker like someone who crushes his prick. Person of little brain and a lot of sex that dazzles with vain hopes.

He was "crushed" in the Seminary and, later, in the Army, without becoming "tiger sucker": toilet fist; but of matins and toilet yes, as a bud of the acorn.

"She red cracker" he called his sperm when he was ejaculating, because, both in the Seminary and in the Army, he had been taught to love and hate, at the same time, the red women, whom he called "Crabs to Love" like the of the German Gestapo will did with the beautiful She Jews.

Rough, rude, making noise with his teeth he masturbated like a pirate winding the silk of his worm, and weaving it like a rattlesnake or cascades, throwing the grape cascades away from the place.

When he masturbated, he sang:

"The Canime stuffs his prick

In the hole that is made

To the wine vats

Keeping his face

Goofy

After cumming

How it happened to the royal troop

Expired by Bolívar

In the famous battle of Carabobo

In Venezuela"

It hurt to see his prick break into pieces like clay pot. These pieces, usually, "concave", as he said.

- Oh, my prick hulls! He said. Although he liked to rub it more than take it to the lining of a vagina. It pleased him as much or more to see the pieces of white of his scattered eggs, than the fragments of artillery when a grenade exploded at the Shooting Range between Madrid and Guadalajara, where he saw his captains and generals as soliped animals, as they came and went. mounted on horseback.

Agile or cheerful, he has helmets to the jineta. His eggs are rolled like oak bark in the second shell of the cork oak, dreaming with Casilda, daughter of a Moorish king of Toledo who passed ill to Castile and converted to Christianity contemplating a small Visigoth phalometer of light construction, brought, and blessed, by a friar who came from the Crabs' Island; Equatorial Atlantic Island, to the Orinoco embouchure on the coast of Caracas.

RODE INTO THE MOUNTAINS

In the middle of Spain

Yin Yang in a Journey in Spring

The sun with its tide home going

Over ground with seed and hands.

This is a place where we must stop:

Ears to earth under frosty

Rotating nebulae, seeing

Old women, Young girls

Babies crying and a few men.

All is unintelligible inside the ground

That yearn for eyes a heart in the center

Aflame with smoke and desire.

Clouds, clouds, clouds

Hazes of the eternal

And ephemeral beyond

Over impossible but almost feasible

Zigzag up never abandoned cliffs

Where the rivers began

Roading toward blank areas of stark madness

Suddenly realizing its freedom.



FOLKLORIC WO/MAN NUMBER ONE

I woke up from a deep sleep

And I came to the fields

Leaving the bedroom

And, as sorcerer and wizard

I rose up to a leafy tree

For watching sunrise.

With great silence, softly

The Sun god

Was walking slowly

Wrapped in colorful clouds

Visiting the site

Where I

Was contemplating Him.

What a joy of light

He was going to give me |

He's coming, He's arriving.

I stick out my tongue

And relate Him.

Oh, what a moment!
When I got hold of myself
He dressed me as folkloric Wo/Man
And put in my hands
On the right chest
A plastic Goddess
Whom my hug woke up
Giving trick, a good trick
On the Sun god
Because I gave Life to the Goddess
Naming her Eve
Removing Himself, full of sun
Confused and stunned
Growling and giving swear-words
For burning my skin
And make me blisters.
With some risk
I got off the tree
And, in its shadow

Me free from so much sun
I blessed Him for being God and Sun
And for giving me this goddess
With which, here, I fell in Love
Wanting without wanting.
I don't know if other folklorics
Will have achieved so much happiness
Like me.
What I can say is
That I'm full of light

CAPTIVE VENUS

Bunny "Venus" sleeps
Mine's daughter Elizabeth
Born of the primordial egg
In her Olympic cage
And we have to be joyful
All the day
Because, when She wakes up
We will take her in our arms
Feeling her in our chest
Lively and throbbing.
Her running around the house
From the dining room to the kitchen
Throws us to life
Turning the stay
In a beautiful garden.
Now we are in The banquet
Like the Platon's
And the six that are here

We are saying:

-What a beautiful bunny

How soft is her white hair!

She has black ears

Like those of Lucas Cranach

That are propellers that blow

To the wind of her passing.

-Of what color is

Elizabeth's white bunny?

It is the most widespread question

What does father and mother

To kid growing up

Between mischieves and games

When he comes to see her.

She combs her hair alone

Her eyes are two half moons

That light the dark night

Of the dreamedrabbbit Cupid

Coming, in dreams

With a carnal torch
That inflames the senses
And giving birth to Love
In hearts
Reciting Petrarca
On his road
Garcilaso de la Vega as well
Galeotto del Carretto
Juan de Mal Lara
Juan de Arguijo
Giambatista Marino
José de Valdivielso
Calderón de la Barca
La Fontaine and Marivaux
And Me too.

ABP's Artists of the Month

View all of the artist of the month features at
<https://wordpress.com/posts/alienbuddhapress.wordpress.com>

Marcel Herms- September 2018

Mark Hartenbach- October 2018

Mike Fiorito- November 2018

Dustin Pickering- December 2018

Ammi Romero- January 2019

Heath Brougher- February 2019

Heidi Blakeslee- March 2019

Luke Kuzmish- April 2019

Chani Zwibel- May 2019

Robert Ragan- June 2019

Vatsala Radhakeesoon- July 2019

Mike Zone- August 2019

Jeff, Laura, & Leo Weddle- September 2019

LB Sedlacek- October 2019

David Estringel- November 2019

Poetry From Darrick Hernandez

Oculus

Staring in the mirror again.

An object of derision, the
safeguard of delusion, opaque
vision clouds, drapes blot
sight invisible.

Reflection becoming clearer?

Again, again, the stare.

Most forceful glare, as
a seer determined, whose
crystal ball will not yield,
energy spent unaffecting.

Reflection becoming clearer.

Desires and hunger unkempt,
chisel lines across the face, the

time ware of stone, with ages
come wisdom and wisdom pain.

Alas the understanding!

Life before the eyes, a flash,
the catch, wasted on the case,
running in a circle, receding
to where we once came.

Insight

Charade, charade
the games are underway.

Mimicking, actors, actresses
in tragedies, comedies un-divine
blaspheme the sacred arts
false profits and gain
true to form, not.

Real artistry through pain,
art equals life, and
life equates to pleasure.

Somehow this isn't understood
in the illusion of reality,
when perception is all,
but disillusion,
nothing.

Valor

Searching for the might,
to see through day and night,
hazed in their sight,
for a future, they fight?

Fortune favors the brave?
But how could such save
one who will not cave?
So, keep fortune for a slave.

There is no luck in warfare,
only scapegoats and lionshare.
Who can prove not to spare,
enough life to win the care.

Villains praised as heroes,
chosen ones subtract to zeroes.
Hear that fiddle, Neros,
within this burning spheros?

Ashes to the ashes,
dust with the dust,
the masses, embering masses.

Madman's Ramble

The sun shines through the window pane,
but I cannot seem to see a thing.

Am I dense, dull, faulty senses to blame,
or plagued by stoicism preordained?

I try and I try, not to see so bitter,
though my wings snipped; no song to sing.
In this place without music, hearts don't flutter,
but for the sound of the bells' tolling ring.

The only companions a wretch could meander,
no red roses, dark lotus, pungent oleander.

The smell of it all, thick and sour,
as anguish runs aloft every waking hour,
while nights ruled by the mares of horror.

Things that must be seen to believe,
reality and perception a grievous heave,
a burden, the knowledge of good and evil,
fiction cannot compare to the peripheral.

Everyone as a number despite their civility,
I limbo between that possibility and a foul fork to prosperity,
between the feather and weight of my heart,
a clockwork orange, where do I start?

Within this most dangerous game,
one can rarely cheat death for lame,
and after such a long gestation,
what could be the final destination?

Choose to lose on the greatest experience,
or, is such, fancy a mask for a scheme?
Maybe preserve myself for a greater climax;
heaven and hell, ever the sexual innuendo to me.

Where good often dies young,
the profane takes the rein,
the honorable fall unsung,
leaving a malign façade to remain.

So, which one to choose?
A devout would surely lose
for the moral cause,
though, I am not without flaws.

Hollow inside, yet not holy,
shallow for fear of spiritual drowning—
if I decide to believe in such things,
diving interventions, the mark of Cain.

Thus, as for the concept to refrain,
it is meant only for the tame,
those who wish to live in chains,
and I am an unbridled flame.

There seems no means to change,
to change by what means?
Who knows what it means to change,
or what change really means?

The word is merely a loose term,
to suit those who are accusing,
the status quo, making the head squirm,
into obedience and conforming.

Dark Reveries

In the lowest of an empty soul, hollow,
helplessly do you often wallow,
in your sins and in your sorrow,
with no glee for tomorrow.

Rays of light burn as fire,
cloaked by shadows, flames don't inspire
yet, fill you with much more ire,
you delve further into mire.

Buried in a deep burrow,
seldom a place to grow,
so many leagues below,
any shine for a flower to follow.

Coalesce within that darkness,
an opaque fane do you harness,
heart of stone, cold, hardness,
as cruelty appears masked by kindness.

For when love fades away,
what dwells in its stay,

is the truth lain to bare,
contrary to the fanfare.

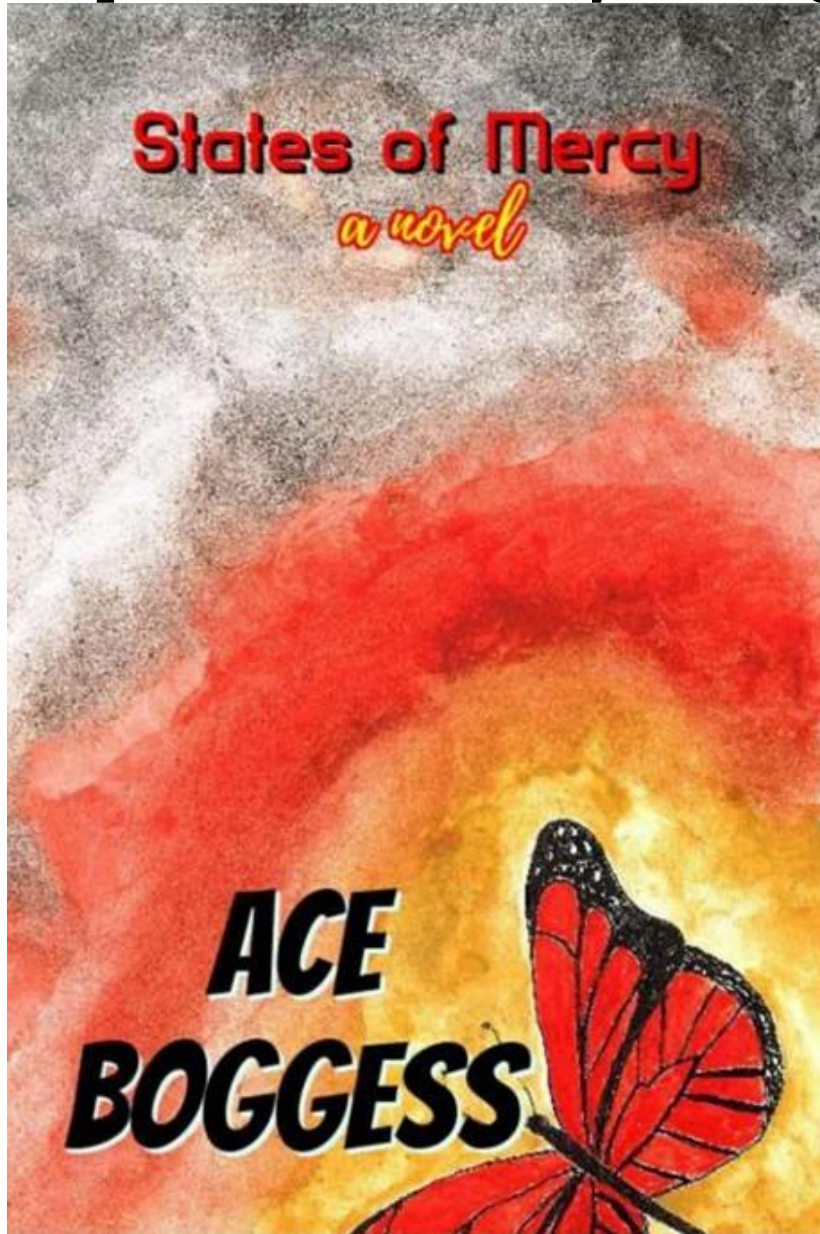
Absent the former acclaim,
nothing is left to proclaim,
new Cupids' trusty aim,
felt more as if to maim.

The beauty of life appeals far less,
almost to a point lifeless,
as your vision unmasks the spineless—
who seems two-faced or mindless.

The stalking wolves, scatter,
their sheep clothing left tattered,
façade splintered to shatter,
your mind pierced through matter.

No longer plagued by blindness,
though reality not viewed in fondness,
your illusions melted by acute fineness,
dark reveries in somber loneliness.

States of Mercy
an excerpt from the novel by Ace Boggess



<https://www.amazon.com/States-Mercy-Novel-Ace-Boggess/dp/1095480081>

I sighed, exhausted, then sat down on the raised step of a darkened niche beside the door. I locked my hands over my lap and stared up at the sky. A bat flew across the face of the moon, or maybe it was an incarnation of the god Quetzalcoatl circling. I inhaled warm night air, feeling momentarily better and worse, drained and afraid, and still so alone. I shook my head and sighed a second time.

And the voice behind me said, "I know that sound too well."

I must have jumped an inch off the ground as I turned, looking for a ghost. From the shadows of the niche, she emerged like one. I blinked.

"Sighs are the soul's long breaths," she said. "You must have a lot on your mind."

I watched her as she drew forward into the light. She had on a pair of jeans the deep sea-like cobalt of her eyes and a black shirt that rode up, exposing much of her midriff, navel floating there like a hypnotist's coin. She held something in her hands. At first, I thought it was a bottle of beer. I was about to warn her she could get in trouble for that when I saw my mistake. The moonlight made it glitter in silver, red and yellow flecks like cartoon magic dust. A snow globe. Inside was a dirt-marked hobo sitting on a park bench and holding a worn amber guitar. A young girl sat cross-legged at his feet.

The student dropped down beside me on the step. “Pretty, isn’t it?” she said.

I nodded, wanted to add something but couldn’t find words that lived up to the standards of my thoughts, so I shook my head as well. A short silence raced between us before I finally asked, “What are you doing out here in the dark?”

She neither flinched nor looked away. “Overcoming my parents.”

“Your parents?”

“Childhood. My whole life. Whatever. I’m overcoming all of it.”

“Were your parents abusive?” I asked.

“No,” she answered.

“Strict?”

“No more than usual. They were normal.”

“Then what’s to overcome?”

“Good parents are as much of a curse as bad,” she told me. “They just leave you with different things to overcome.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“Safety, security, comfort, custom, routine.”

“Those are bad things?”

“They can be.”

“Really?” I said.

“Sure, if you let them cloud your judgment, or if they distract you from seeing the world through other perspectives. They rob you of Self.”

“Self’s what you’re after?”

“No. That’s just another step in the quest.”

“The quest for what?”

She hesitated. “I don’t know,” she told me. “I don’t really know. Enlightenment, transcendence, nirvana. Lots of different words that mean . . . I don’t know what. If I knew, I’d probably get where I’m going and have nothing left to seek.”

“Ah,” I sighed.

Ignoring me, she continued, “I’ve broken it down to a formula.”

“What?”

“Transcendence.”

“Oh.”

She went on: “We can say of transcendence that T equals Y plus Z , in which you are Y and Z is something else. The trick, I think, is to figure out Z without losing Y along the way.”

“I think I get it. So first you have to find Y .”

“Right. You have to find yourself.”

“Sounds easy enough.”

“It isn’t, trust me. It’s as much of a quest as the search for Z, only at least with Y you know where to begin.”

“Overcoming your parents?”

“Overcoming everything that Self can hide behind.”

I nodded but didn’t say anything. I wasn’t quite sure what she meant.

A warm wind chilled my skin. A taxi drove by, its taillights shrinking down the road like fiery arrows, vanishing into the night. And I thought: *Maybe that’s it. Maybe I’m hiding behind the darkness to avoid questioning, to keep from really seeing her, or else to keep from seeing me.* All of a sudden I got scared, partly that I was on the verge of a breakthrough and partly that *she* would walk away again without telling me her name. If that happened, I doubted I’d ever work up the nerve to talk to her again. She was younger than me, but her thoughts were more complex, her theories more thoroughly defined than my simple musings. I didn’t know how I could reintroduce myself into her surroundings. “I’m Lucian,” I said, without looking at her or offering my hand.

“Mercy,” she replied.

“What? What’s wrong?”

“Mercy,” she said again. “That’s my name. Mercy Adams.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I thought you were just being southern.”

“*Why, mercy me,*” she mocked. “*What a thing to say to a girl.*”

Chicago My Hometown

by Judge Santiago Burdon

I was in Chicago Grant Park 1968 when Mayor Daley let loose his army of Chicago Gestapo on the crowd of protesters that late summer afternoon. A buddy and I along with another High School acquaintance that I didn't care for, thought it would be entertaining to attend the demonstration.

There were mobs of long haired scruffy Hippies and also some referring to themselves as Yippies; the Youth International Party with a pig named Pigasus as their leader and also a candidate running for President. The crowd assembled in Grant Park that summer afternoon were enthusiastic and quite passive. They didn't appear to be aggressive fostering only one item on their agenda, just a contingency of young adults voicing their protest as a group against the Vietnam War. I remember feeling as though I didn't fit in because my hair wasn't as long as I would have preferred (father issues). Couldn't imagine anyone would take me seriously as a dedicatedly disciple looking so straight.

It was embarrassment enough that I was called "part-time" as a nickname in High School. I was referred to by that nickname because I participated in sports and was dedicated to my studies and academic career which occasionally interfered with social activities . Those activities often were hanging out at the park getting high or creating minor mischief, nothing of grave importance but somehow my group required my attendance. The choice to juggle my studies and my illustrious social life was a decision I implemented on my own. Besides I enjoyed school, it kept me hidden from the scrutinizing eyes of my old man. And sure as hell was more entertaining than getting stoned and making shadow puppet figures on the walls of the

park's bathroom building. Thus the nickname part time hippie which was shortened to just part-time.

We had to park near Soldier Field to get an available parking spot a long way from the event and walked what seemed a punishing distance. Luckily, we entered through an entrance used for volunteers working the gathering and ended up extremely close to the stage. Banners and posters adorned the area, all basically voicing the same Anti- War sentiment. There was one however that captured my attention and I remember to this day with brightly painted flowers popping out of the letters and peace symbols placed were the "O's" appeared in the message; "We don't need to have the same dream to live together in the same reality ." I'm not sure why I considered the message so profound. It may have been just that place in time.

Everyone appeared so angry and defiant, with fists raised in the air, "fucking right man, fuck them, you fucking know it brother, we're fucking with you " A great amount of "fucks" from the crowd screaming their responses to the speeches. The sentiment on the painted bed sheet seemed in some way out of place and extremely pacifist. The S.D.S were there, Black Panthers, American Indian Movement, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and a new group actively recruiting members called the Weathermen Underground Organization. They didn't arouse my interest because their name "Weathermen" didn't sound radical at all. In the years to follow they would prove my assessment of not being radical, a major underestimation and error in judgement.

I had no interest in membership of any group simply put, organized groups were too regimented. I wasn't able to grasp the concept of rebelling against rules or those conforming to structured concepts and the establishment, 'whoever they were?' when their guidelines for membership

demanded the same set of principles. Besides I was expelled from Boy Scouts so I was aware of my inability to obey directives.

I was hopeful and excited to possibly hear Abbie Hoffman speak with his talent of mesmerizing followers with his descriptive words of inspiration. Instead this dude (That's correct I wrote Dude) spoke, receiving thundering applause and cheers from the crowd as well as many "fucks." Jerry Reuben is how he introduced himself, leader of a faction known as Yippies.

He went on for five or ten minutes basically saying nothing that inspired me to do anything and was what I determined as rather boring. I spent the time checking out girls in the crowd. The Chicago summer heat was starting to wear me down so I left my companions to search for a refreshment to cure my thirst. I remembered there was a booth selling fruit juice drinks about a block away. It was then I noticed an extremely large contingency of Chicago Police, Illinois National Guard and United States Army soldiers surrounding the area.

Without any type of verbal command to disburse the troops with clubs drawn, shields and dressed in riot gear began an assault on defenseless attendees. These Sons of Bitches meant business trotting at a hurried pace swinging clubs, punching and kicking downed people relentlessly.

I immediately began to run in the opposite direction into the crowd screaming the "Fucking Pigs are coming! Run! The Pigs are coming!" Some heeded my advice and began a mass exodus others I remembered glared at me in complete disbelief. I recall a few laughing as I ran past. I'm sure a minute or so later there wasn't anyone laughing.

I made the mistake of running to Michigan Avenue to avoid the onslaught, thinking the action would be isolated to the Grant Park Bandshell area. If there was ever an instance when I shouldn't have listened to my own

advice that was the time. Thousands of others must have heard me giving myself advice and were emptying out into the avenue.

The Police had set up a perimeter along the avenue protecting the Hotels especially The Hilton where Candidates attending the Democratic Convention were staying. Tear Gas, screaming and complete pandemonium ensued as I attempted to make my way to some kind of safe area. I wasn't aware at the time there was no place of safety available.

The figures in uniform kept coming swinging clubs punching, hand cuffing and pulling kids toward Paddy Wagons. Every time I encountered a Cop I'd scream and point behind me, "They're over there. Over there! They're coming from over there! Watch out!" I don't know what the Hell I was talking about but it served as a temporary distraction that aided in my escape. I was struck only twice once in the back and on my left side which resulted in a large bruise.

I was exhausted from the running, tripping over bodies, being pushed and trampled upon when I'd fall. The Tear Gas was burning the hell out of my eyes and my sweating caused pores to open and my skin became irritated with a incurable fiery pain. I was running, dodging, jumping, shoving my way to a different area of battle. Some were throwing rocks and bricks that had been taken from walls surrounding the park. I had arrived at Akeldama field ready to meet my end. There was no escape.

I tried Roosevelt, Wabash and Harrison streets with devastating results. The Art Institute was only a few blocks away and I thought it might possibly serve as a sanctuary. My companions I considered a lost cause and I'd find some other method to get home if I got out of here alive.

The crowd was running at me as I tried to make my way North. Entering Grant Park again from Michigan Avenue I dodged and weaved in between the

wave of scared confused faces, some bloodied being assisted by a comrade leading them back into the Tsunami of violence.

It was beginning to get dark and lights in the park had been turned off. The street lights on Michigan Avenue and lights from buildings were the only eyes in the darkness. Traffic on LSD (Lake Shore Drive) had been blocked by the hoards escaping the gauntlet earlier. It now was shutdown by the Police roaming the road in Squad Cars with red and blue flashing lights, spotlights trained on the crowd. Buckingham Fountain was also not functional, the colored flood lights surrounding it were cut off. The crowd was thinning which allowed me to stop temporarily at the fountain to dip my face into the water washing away the Tear Gas as well as cleaning my arms of the residue. A fast drink, cupping my hands two or three times then off I ran to the Art Institute.

Bullhorns screamed with Police ordering once dedicated protesters to disburse in a peaceful manner. The directives weren't being ignored, the Chicago Police and National Guard weren't allowing the crowd to obey. The beatings and arrests continued without an intermission. The darkness helped me become somewhat undetected except for the occasional spot lights from Police Cars shining their beams on stragglers.

Confrontation had centered on Michigan Avenue where the Police were not going to allow, still a large contingency of determined protesters to disrupt the Democratic Convention. I could see the Art Institute in the obtainable distance walking at a hurried pace but not running so I wouldn't draw attention to myself. My left side was beginning to throb generating pain, causing me to think a couple of ribs had been fractured.

I reached the Art Institute which was surprisingly devoid of protestors or any type of disturbance. The steps and entrances were protected by Guardsmen that appeared young with expressions of

what I interpreted as fear. I took refuge around the back of one of the huge Lion Figures that stand guard in front of The Art Institute. Finally an opportunity to be rested and not arrested.

I could hear voices getting closer with heavy footsteps. "Hey you come away from there! Come on get over here!" Damn, once again as if some cosmic force or omnipotent being was constantly subjecting me to some type of vendetta. I have never possessed the ability, the luck or dispensation to get away with anything my entire life. I would get blamed or accused of incidents I had no part in. And in some cases be reprimanded or punished for committing them. "I'm coming hold on. I'm coming! I surrender." There stood three Illinois National Guardsmen that had been patrolling the perimeter of the building.

"I was only trying to get someplace safe from the riot . I was not a participant in the..." I attempt to plead my case. "Hey don't I know you? You're Carlito's little brother aren't you? What are you doing down here?" A guardsman asks. "This kid is like twelve years old. I went to school with his brother. We should probably take him into custody so he doesn't get hurt." He declares. Actually I had just turned sixteen the month before, I was extremely small for my age short and baby faced. I wasn't about to correct the Guardsman concerning my age. "Seriously, what are you doing here? You could have gotten seriously hurt. You're name is Santi, that's it. I know your brother Carlito. You remember me?"

"You live on Utica huh? I remember you. You're Butch Larkin with the motorcycle, right?" "That's me! Let's get you outta here."

I'm escorted by three Guardsmen to a bivouac that has been set up as a communication base. The place is crawling with National Guardsmen some appear to be injured and are receiving Medical attention for cuts most likely

from rocks. They lead me into an area with a couple of cots as well as tables and chairs. There's some big guy yelling into the radio dressed in a uniform straight out of a Hollywood War movie. My escort addresses him as Captain explaining my situation.

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I exit following close behind Motorcycle Butch "Damn kid that was hilarious. You sure got under his skin. Thanks I hate that Son of a Bitch." Butch continues with his accolades moving through a crowd of Law Enforcement

Officers and straglers left over from the protest. I wonder how long Butch kept talking before he turned around and noticed I had escaped custody.

Harrison St. was fairly empty and accessible as I made my way to the loop then La Salle Street Station and the Rock Island Train south . I just couldn't get the song out of my head.

"Chicago, Chicago that toddling town
Chicago, Chicago let me show ya around.
You'll have the time the time of your life
You better carry a gun or a knife
Chicago, my hometown."
#END#

Judge Santiago Burdon

©2019

Word Count 2700Chicago My Hometown

I was in Chicago Grant Park 1968 when Mayor Daley let loose his army of Chicago Gestapo on the crowd of protesters that late summer afternoon. A buddy and I along with another High School acquaintance that I didn't care for, thought it would be entertaining to attend the demonstration.

There were mobs of long haired scruffy Hippies and also some referring to themselves as Yippies; the Youth International Party with a pig named Pigasus as their leader and also a candidate running for President. The crowd assembled in Grant Park that summer afternoon were enthusiastic and quite passive. They didn't appear to be aggressive fostering only one item on their agenda, just a contingency of young adults voicing their protest as a group against the Vietnam War. I remember feeling as though I didn't fit in because

my hair wasn't as long as I would have preferred (father issues). Couldn't imagine anyone would take me seriously as a dedicatedly disciple looking so straight.

It was embarrassment enough that I was called "part-time" as a nickname in High School. I was referred to by that nickname because I participated in sports and was dedicated to my studies and academic career which occasionally interfered with social activities . Those activities often were hanging out at the park getting high or creating minor mischief, nothing of grave importance but somehow my group required my attendance. The choice to juggle my studies and my illustrious social life was a decision I implemented on my own. Besides I enjoyed school, it kept me hidden from the scrutinizing eyes of my old man. And sure as hell was more entertaining than getting stoned and making shadow puppet figures on the walls of the park's bathroom building. Thus the nickname part time hippie which was shortened to just part-time.

We had to park near Soldier Field to get an available parking spot a long way from the event and walked what seemed a punishing distance. Luckily, we entered through an entrance used for volunteers working the gathering and ended up extremely close to the stage. Banners and posters adorned the area, all basically voicing the same Anti- War sentiment. There was one however that captured my attention and I remember to this day with brightly painted flowers popping out of the letters and peace symbols placed were the "O's" appeared in the message; "We don't need to have the same dream to live together in the same reality ." I'm not sure why I considered the message so profound. It may have been just that place in time.

Everyone appeared so angry and defiant, with fists raised in the air, "fucking right man, fuck them, you fucking know it brother, we're fucking with

you " A great amount of "fucks" from the crowd screaming their responses to the speeches. The sentiment on the painted bed sheet seemed in some way out of place and extremely pacifist. The S.D.S were there, Black Panthers, American Indian Movement, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and a new group actively recruiting members called the Weathermen Underground Organization. They didn't arouse my interest because their name "Weathermen" didn't sound radical at all. In the years to follow they would prove my assessment of not being radical, a major underestimation and error in judgement.

I had no interest in membership of any group simply put, organized groups were too regimented. I wasn't able to grasp the concept of rebelling against rules or those conforming to structured concepts and the establishment, 'whoever they were?' when their guidelines for membership demanded the same set of principles. Besides I was expelled from Boy Scouts so I was aware of my inability to obey directives.

I was hopeful and excited to possibly hear Abbie Hoffman speak with his talent of mesmerizing followers with his descriptive words of inspiration. Instead this dude (That's correct I wrote Dude) spoke, receiving thundering applause and cheers from the crowd as well as many "fucks." Jerry Reuben is how he introduced himself, leader of a faction known as Yippies.

He went on for five or ten minutes basically saying nothing that inspired me to do anything and was what I determined as rather boring. I spent the time checking out girls in the crowd. The Chicago summer heat was starting to wear me down so I left my companions to search for a refreshment to cure my thirst. I remembered there was a booth selling fruit juice drinks about a block away. It was then I noticed an extremely large contingency of Chicago

Police, Illinois National Guard and United States Army soldiers surrounding the area.

Without any type of verbal command to disburse the troops with clubs drawn, shields and dressed in riot gear began an assault on defenseless attendees. These Sons of Bitches meant business trotting at a hurried pace swinging clubs, punching and kicking downed people relentlessly.

I immediately began to run in the opposite direction into the crowd screaming the "Fucking Pigs are coming! Run! The Pigs are coming!" Some heeded my advice and began a mass exodus others I remembered glared at me in complete disbelief. I recall a few laughing as I ran past. I'm sure a minute or so later there wasn't anyone laughing.

I made the mistake of running to Michigan Avenue to avoid the onslaught, thinking the action would be isolated to the Grant Park Bandshell area. If there was ever an instance when I shouldn't have listened to my own advice that was the time. Thousands of others must have heard me giving myself advice and were emptying out into the avenue.

The Police had set up a perimeter along the avenue protecting the Hotels especially The Hilton where Candidates attending the Democratic Convention were staying. Tear Gas, screaming and complete pandemonium ensued as I attempted to make my way to some kind of safe area. I wasn't aware at the time there was no place of safety available.

The figures in uniform kept coming swinging clubs punching, hand cuffing and pulling kids toward Paddy Wagons. Every time I encountered a Cop I'd scream and point behind me, " They're over there. Over there! They're coming from over there! Watch out!" I don't know what the Hell I was talking about but it served as a temporary distraction that aided in my escape. I was

struck only twice once in the back and on my left side which resulted in a large bruise.

I was exhausted from the running, tripping over bodies, being pushed and trampled upon when I'd fall. The Tear Gas was burning the hell out of my eyes and my sweating caused pores to open and my skin became irritated with a incurable fiery pain. I was running, dodging, jumping, shoving my way to a different area of battle. Some were throwing rocks and bricks that had been taken from walls surrounding the park. I had arrived at Akeldama field ready to meet my end. There was no escape.

I tried Roosevelt, Wabash and Harrison streets with devastating results. The Art Institute was only a few blocks away and I thought it might possibly serve as a sanctuary. My companions I considered a lost cause and I'd find some other method to get home if I got out of here alive.

The crowd was running at me as I tried to make my way North. Entering Grant Park again from Michigan Avenue I dodged and weaved in between the wave of scared confused faces, some bloodied being assisted by a comrade leading them back into the Tsunami of violence.

It was beginning to get dark and lights in the park had been turned off. The street lights on Michigan Avenue and lights from buildings were the only eyes in the darkness. Traffic on LSD (Lake Shore Drive) had been blocked by the hoards escaping the gauntlet earlier. It now was shutdown by the Police roaming the road in Squad Cars with red and blue flashing lights, spotlights trained on the crowd. Buckingham Fountain was also not functional, the colored flood lights surrounding it were cut off. The crowd was thinning which allowed me to stop temporarily at the fountain to dip my face into the water washing away the Tear Gas as well as cleaning my arms of the residue. A fast drink, cupping my hands two or three times then off I ran to the Art Institute.

Bullhorns screamed with Police ordering once dedicated protesters to disperse in a peaceful manner. The directives weren't being ignored, the Chicago Police and National Guard weren't allowing the crowd to obey. The beatings and arrests continued without an intermission. The darkness helped me become somewhat undetected except for the occasional spot lights from Police Cars shining their beams on stragglers.

Confrontation had centered on Michigan Avenue where the Police were not going to allow, still a large contingency of determined protesters to disrupt the Democratic Convention. I could see the Art Institute in the obtainable distance walking at a hurried pace but not running so I wouldn't draw attention to myself. My left side was beginning to throb generating pain, causing me to think a couple of ribs had been fractured.

I reached the Art Institute which was surprisingly devoid of protestors or any type of disturbance. The steps and entrances were protected by Guardsmen that appeared young with expressions of

what I interpreted as fear. I took refuge around the back of one of the huge Lion Figures that stand guard in front of The Art Institute. Finally an opportunity to be rested and not arrested.

I could hear voices getting closer with heavy footsteps. "Hey you come away from there! Come on get over here!" Damn, once again as if some cosmic force or omnipotent being was constantly subjecting me to some type of vendetta. I have never possessed the ability, the luck or dispensation to get away with anything my entire life. I would get blamed or accused of incidents I had no part in. And in some cases be reprimanded or punished for committing them. "I'm coming hold on. I'm coming! I surrender." There stood three Illinois National Guardsmen that had been patrolling the perimeter of the building.

"I was only trying to get someplace safe from the riot . I was not a participant in the..." I attempt to plead my case. "Hey don't I know you? You're Carlito's little brother aren't you? What are you doing down here?" A guardsman asks. "This kid is like twelve years old. I went to school with his brother. We should probably take him into custody so he doesn't get hurt." He declares. Actually I had just turned sixteen the month before, I was extremely small for my age short and baby faced. I wasn't about to correct the Guardsman concerning my age. "Seriously, what are you doing here? You could have gotten seriously hurt. You're name is Santi, that's it. I know your brother Carlito. You remember me?"

"You live on Utica huh? I remember you. You're Butch Larkin with the motorcycle, right?" "That's me! Let's get you outta here."

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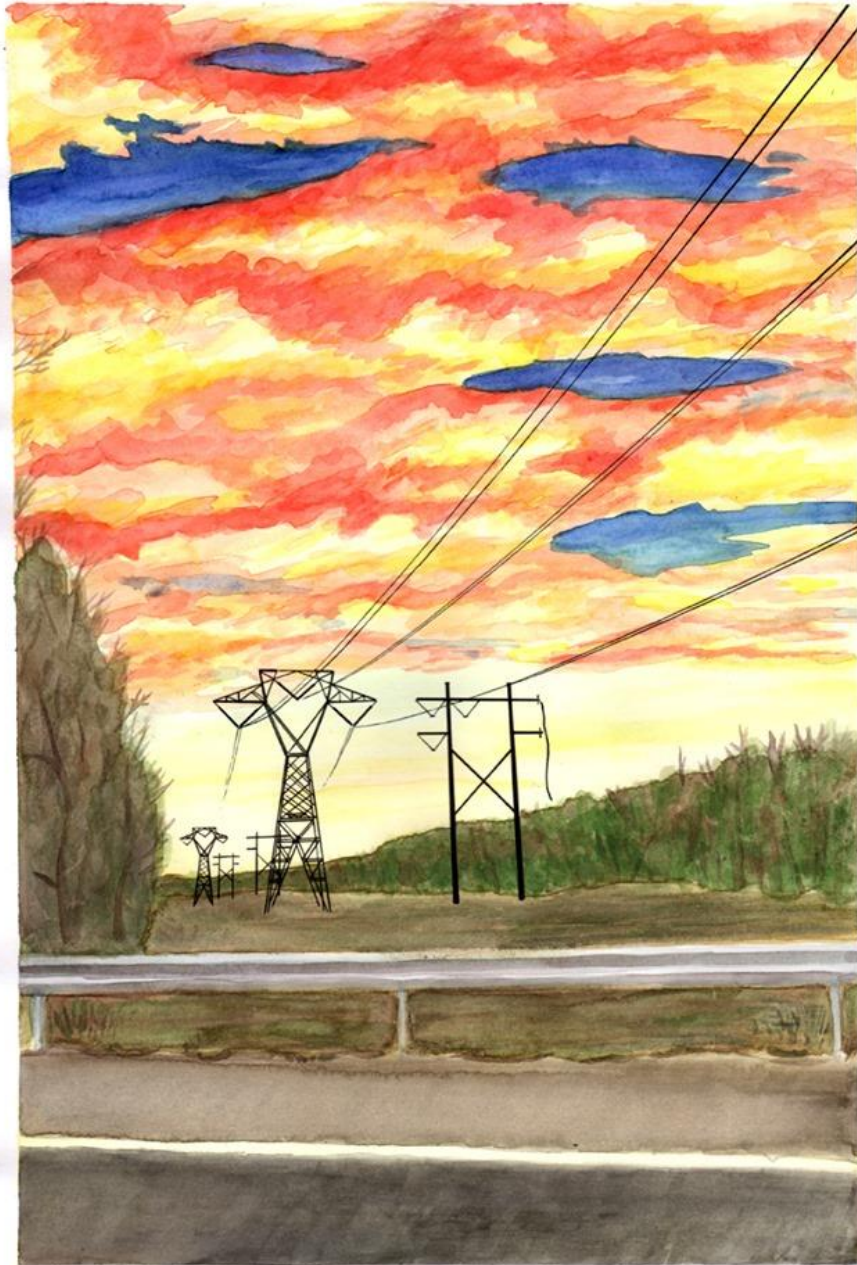
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Art From Joan Comics



“Road Trip”

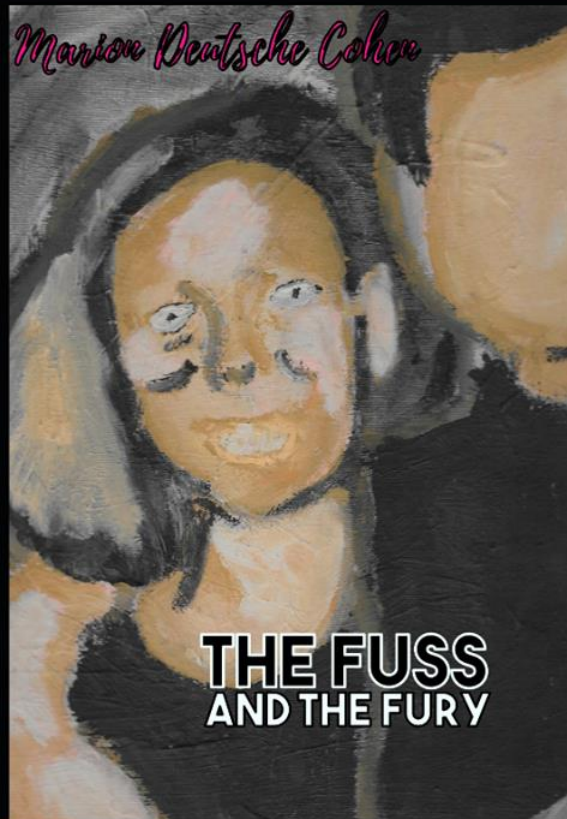
ISBN: 9781085987271

This writer is a catalyst. She causes our brains to think, our tummies to flutter, our eyes to tear and our hearts to open. She surprises us, delights us, warms us, shocks and challenges us. This work evoked so many memories of my days as a young mother that I wanted to crawl inside the pages so that I could "feel this way some more." Her words linger. I marvel at her ability to touch me deeply in places I had forgotten still existed. I come alive again; she helps me give birth to a part of me that I realize needs to be birthed again.

— Nancy Wainer, CPM (midwife, author, lecturer, educator), author of *Silent Knife: Cesarean Prevention and VBAC*



cover art by
Devin Asher Cohen



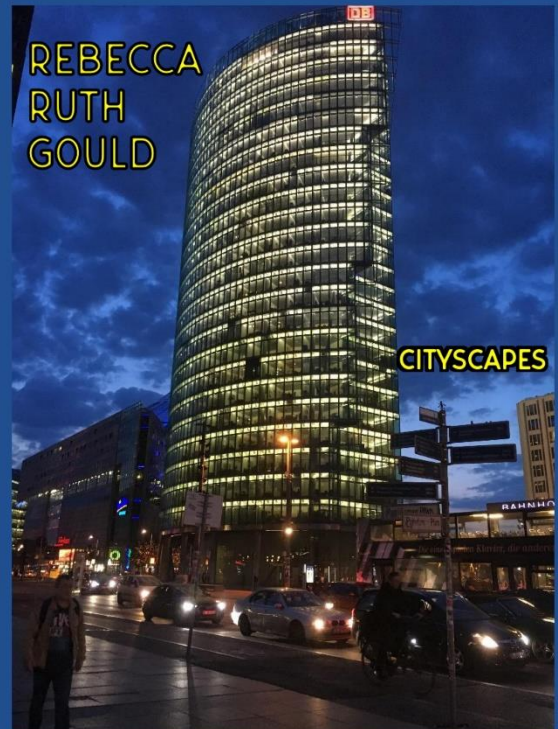
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**A Preview of *Cityscapes*
a Poetry Chapbook by
Rebecca Ruth Gould**



ISBN: 9781086683288

Rebecca Ruth Gould translates from Persian, Russian, and Georgian, and has translated books such as *After Tomorrow the Days Disappear: Ghazals and Other Poems of Hasan Sijzi of Delhi* (Northwestern University Press, 2016) and *The Death of Bagrat Zakharych and other Stories* by Vazha-Pshavela (Paper & Ink, 2019). She was a finalist for the Luminaire Award for Best Poetry and (together with Kayvan Tahmasebian), Lunch Ticket's Gabo Prize (both in 2017), and is a Pushcart Prize nominee.



Link

**Small Town Tyranny,
a Poem on Love in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

I.

Your persecution, my beloved, is a
familiar song.

I read about it in the GULAG's annals
& in the murders of Mandelstam,

Titsian, Paolo Iashvili, and Cholpon.

I witnessed it in the deaths of Mayakovsky,
Esenin, Tsvetaeva, and Galaktion.

It was foretold in the imprisonments of
Gumilyov,
Zabalotsky, and Efron. It echoes in the
silencing of
Pasternak and Akhmatova.

The lists of victims, my beloved, is long.
Resurrecting these dead poets
in the Islamic Republic of Iran

revives the executioner's threnody.
I fear losing you—the suffocation of our
love—
beneath a veil of piety.

II.

The Republic reeks of small tyrannies:
tawdry portraits of Khamenei and
Khomeini
peer above our heads.

Their empty, oily eyes protrude from
dense skulls.
Hoisted high like fake angels,
their heads prophesy a false posterity.

It is not the monstrous “Islamic” fantasy
that scares me, but the trivial gossip
that spreads like cancer,

the petty rumours that circulate
from London to Tehran
& back again,

the formulaic recitations
of state-sponsored poetry,
the forced confessions broadcast live,

the threats against all lovers
who refuse to engage in treachery,
the gossipers spreading calumny.

Their whispers hum beneath every breath,
like flies buzzing around a corpse, then
eating its flesh.

I fear your *shisha*-smoking interrogators,

who orchestrate their interrogations
more carefully than a romantic
rendezvous.

They play with you to make you bend,

until you inform on yourself and betray
your friends.

I know you won't give in,
but what price will you pay to resist?

Past masters in the arts of fear,
their mercenary fingers bulge like the
cockroaches
who punished Mandelstam for blaspheming Stalin.

III.

When they bug our rooms
& surveil our emails,
my love for you opens

like a Venus fly trap.
My lips grasp your kiss
before it vanishes in Tehran's polluted air.

Even when the state holds us in its grip,
the tenderness of your fingertips
lingers on my breast.

I fear what will happen
when you cross the threshold,
headed for my sphere.

Will you disappear into the abyss?
Will the sentries of sovereignty
unearth the shards of our intimacy

scavenged from our paper scraps—
I told you to burn them—
Will banishment be our punishment?

Will the bureaucrats

use our love to proclaim the victory
of their provincial tyrannies,

just as they hang
dead bodies in the public square:
to terrify lovers everywhere?

Grozny

The girl who invited me
to live in her tent camp
so she could teach me Chechen

sat staring in the corner,
fearing any motion that
might trigger an explosion.

Grozny's flats were levelled.
Dolls lay disembowelled on the floor.
Glass shards covered the earth.

The road's yellow ribbon rolled
like a carpet, limning the edge
of my escape to Vladikavkaz.

The siren song of battle
was an endless, plaintive moan.
Contraband, listened to by everyone.

Golconda Fort

The night show begins.
You pass me the mosquito repellent.
Yellow phosphorescence bathes the ruins
bright.

Plaintive moans lament
Aurangzaeb's attack.
The ancient fortress crumbles.

A doting husband photographs
his pregnant wife
covered in a saffron hijab.

I mention I am unmarried,
& your hands squirm over my breasts,
plundering my body.

You thought being single
made me your prized possession.
In fact the opposite is true:

the less tied I am to a man
the less point there is
in having sex with you.

Constellations

The cosmos is a Ka'ba
stretched against the sky,
stripped of signs.

The firmament echoes God
speaking to Muhammad,
dictating the Quran.

Back then, the sky was synchronized
to the cycles of time
& the Pleiades watched over us.

Back then, the Ka'ba circulated above.
Everything that happened on earth
was mirrored above.

God was undead.
The signs on the Ka'ba have ceased
speaking our language.

In prison, we wait to hear our names.
We make up our languages
as we go along.

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