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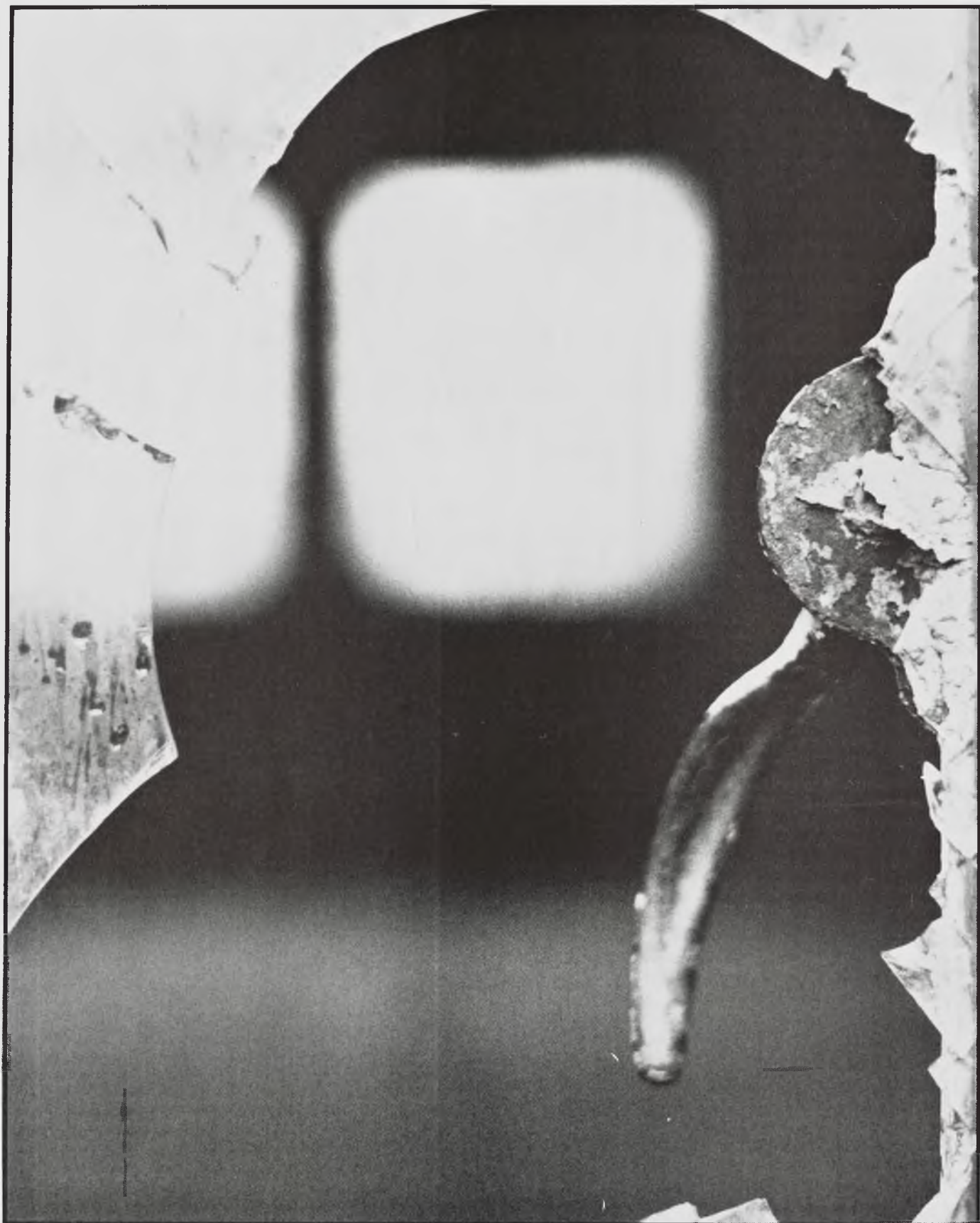
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by Thomas Good

SUNDOWN

by Thomas Morrissey

Texas Jake McGrew stumbled out of the saloon into the hot and dusty night. The Rio Grande Rider, six inches taller and sixty pounds lighter, came after him on the next swing of the doors.

"Ah want me a woman," Texas Jake proclaimed. "Ah want me a woman now."

Rio smiled thinly, eyes of blood-veined ice inspecting their surroundings. It wasn't late, nine o'clock or so, but most of the inhabitants of Welcome Home, Arizona were long since dreaming of cows and crops and whatever else regular folk saw in their sleep. No clock ran their lives; they were outlaws.

"Bordello. There." He angled his head at a white, two-story building with sky-blue trim and shutters and a single red-shaded candle in the window.

Texas Jake snorted, wiped his nose with the sleeve of his plaid shirt, and focussed. "Nah."

Rio was not intoxicated. He adjusted his hat with exaggerated care. "It is."

"Hunh? Oh, yah, s'a bordello. S'not what ah want. 'Member Puerto Christa? Doc said ah couldn't use mah pecker f'r two weeks. Ah ain't ready fer another dose o'cooties jus' yet." He burped. "'Sides, ain't shur ah got enough left t'pay."

"We don't pay. We take."

"Yah, but not whores. Ah want someone fresh. Someone who ain't spread fer half th' Sierra Nevada. 'Cuz ah know the diff'rence."

Rio's upper lip doubted the statement as his eyelashes continued their search. They settled on the sign marking 'Buchman's General Store'. Through a window, he watched a woman stock shelves by lamplight.

"Her."

Texas Jake squinted. He'd worn a pair of glasses one time. They'd worked, but when a kid had called him 'Four Eyes' he'd ditched them and shot the little bastard dead.

"She alone? She purty? We ain't got to settle fer no ugly one, acne. We're feared men." He scratched at the tobacco-stained fuzz on his chin, the pitch of his voice rising with excitement. "She got to be purty." His boots clonked on the wooden sidewalk. "Blonde, too. Purty an' blonde."

"Quite."

Buchman's store was at the end of the street, separate from the other storefronts. It was made of sun-bleached timber with a grey shingle roof, a row of quartered windows bordered by shutters across the front, and a hitching post between the door and the corner. The sign was written in fancy script, green letters on white. It was supported by a brief awning. Beyond the store was a small graveyard and, beyond that, desert to the Gila River and Mexico.

Last chance to turn and stay, it said below the word 'Store'.

Texas Jake snorked up phlegm and was about to spit when he felt Rio's stare. He grimaced and forced the gluey wad back down his throat. Rio stalked on. Texas Jake stepped off the sidewalk to follow and lurched as his boot slipped in a pile of horse manure.

"Goddamn "

Rio was at his side, holding him up by a fistful of his shirt and hairy chest. His words cut. "Do you want a woman?"

Texas Jake righted himself. He scuffed his boot in the dirt, panting booze breath.

"Course ah do."

"So do I." Rio released him, his smile a broken whiskey bottle. "Be careful."

"Yah." Texas Jake smoothed his shirt, smirking at his partner's back. For all Rio's toughness, his hand had been sweating.

Lynn Buchman sat on a crate of mason jars, thinking for the hundredth time that she ought to hire more help. Though a sturdy woman, with the solid frame common to her Irish ancestors, she was only one pair of arms, one strong back. She toyed with the loose end of her strawberry-blonde braid.

"Tom, Tom." She looked at the cash register. A picture of a handlebar-mustachioed man showed her an 'aw-shucks' smile. Her brogue was light. "Thomas 'Sundown' Buchman. Sur'n I could use y'urr help now."

She touched the black frame with a loving caress. Her arm nudged a wax box of crackers off the counter. It toppled, and before she could catch it spilled its contents all over the floor. Lynn looked at her empty hand.

"Not quite as fast as you, Tom. No on's e'er been quite that fast. Such a show-off. You an' yurr silver devils." Her tone forgave him for his gunslinging prowess.

She began to replace the picture, still staring at the upturned corners of his mouth, at the way the curl of his moustache made him seem twice as happy, and finally smiled herself. She touched the picture to her lips, leaving breath-fog in the shape of her kiss.

"Yurr always there for m', Tom. Always."
There came a knock at the door.

They approached the store with Texas Jake automatically letting Rio take the lead. Being the more respectable-looking, Rio always handled the set-up. It amazed Texas Jake how his partner could become so angelic with just a change of expression. He did so now, widening his snake eyes and relaxing the tightened muscles of his jaw into a shy smile.

Texas Jake slid into a shadow between a window and the front door as Rio knocked. There was a filmy curtain across the door's glass; it rustled aside to let the woman peer out. She shook her head.

"I'm sorra, sirr, wurr closed," she said through the door, in a voice that's bargained and cajoled for too many hours that day. "But y'kin try me early tomorra. I'll be here 'round about six."

"Beggin' your pardon, ma'am. I'm in right desperate need." Rio gulped and fumbled his hat from his head as though he'd just remembered his manners.

She shook her head again. "I'm sorra, but. . ."

"My missus well, it's her birthday. Darned if I didn't leave my gift for her at her mom's farm." He blinked, Adam's apple bobbing. "She's at the hotel. Said it didn't matter. I know her. It's botherin' her she ain't got a present. Botherin' her plenty."

At the mention of a wife the woman's set features softened. "Well. . ."

Rio's hands were at his belt, holding the hat in front of him preacher-style. "Please. It's her first birthday as a woman. She's sixteen."

That did it. The woman smiled wistfully (although for as far past that mark as she might have been, she still looked good to Rio), let down the curtain, and unlocked the door. "M' name's Lynn Buchman," she began, turning to let him follow her in. "I never could turn down a needy husband. You could ask my Tom, if he. . ."

Rio stepped to the side. Texas Jake followed his lead, oozing through the open doorway, silent in spite of his weight and drunkenness. Rio nodded; that was why they were partners.

Lynn, not hearing Rio follow, looked back. All

she saw was Texas Jake's beer-bottle-grubby palm swinging. It struck her across the cheek, knocking her to her knees and dazing her before she could scream. He waded in, his backhand so strong it knocked out one of her teeth. She hit the floor hard with her face. A bloody lip print smudged the layer of traildust.

Rio glided inside, shutting and locking the door with a single movement. He methodically went to the windows, ripping the blinds down and snuffing out most of the lanterns. When there was no chance of being seen from outside, he turned.

He squatted beside the woman, holding one of the last lit lanterns near her face. She was blonde. Pretty, too, in spite of the split lip and her age-she must have been at least twenty-nine! Texas Jake had flipped her onto her back and was kneeling on her arms, his crotch inches above her forehead. So far she'd shown no inclination to scream; she was over her initial panic and now sized them up with unblinking hatred. Rio, his face back to normal, mirrored the look.

"Yurr too late if you'd be wantin' money," Lynn said harshly. "I sent it to the bank already."

Texas Jake went, "Haw haw," and wiped saliva from his lips.

She looked at him, wincing at his breath. "Seems like an awful lot'a trouble f'r some supplies that wouldna cost much annaway," she went on.

Rio didn't answer. Supplies; good thing she'd mentioned them. He and Texas Jake would need a few things before they headed for California. He stood and swept the lantern like a lighthouse lamp, examining the wares on the wood plank walls and counter. He stopped at a black-bordered frame by the register. Within was a picture of a man with a handlebar moustache.

"Your husband?"

She clamped her lips together.

"He here?"

Her look told Rio he wasn't.

"He in town?"

Again her face answered. He studied her for a moment, then considered the black frame. After a moment he shook his head.

"Guess not."

He shifted to Texas Jake, who was staring at her grey flannel dress rise and fall with her breath.

"Ah can't see enough," the heavier man complained. He leaned over. Lynn gasped as his weight crushed down on her forearms. His stink made her choke. He grasped two sweaty handfuls of fabric, leaving dark smudges, and pulled. Pearl buttons popped and ricocheted, shrapnel of her virtue's defenses. Her slip was a clean contrast in the dirt.

"Aw-haw. Now we're gettin' somewhere!"

"Leave me, y'bastard "

He pounded a fist into her nose. It crunched like a peanut shell, gagging her. A fine mist of blood sprayed.

"Aw shit!" Texas Jake said, swiping his hand across his ass.

Rio stood before them. He licked his lips and, taking a knife from his boot, handed it to his partner.

"Her slip. Cut it."

He set the lantern on a barrel of pickles and started to unbuckle his belt. There was a bulge in his pants.

He waited until after the funeral to pay his respects. It hurt, but he had to. He had to wait for everyone to leave; he knew how people would react to him.

It was dark as he stood over the grave, an impenetrable, mineshaft darkness. There were no stars out. The sky looked burned out, wasted and dead.

Like me, he thought.

The grave was small, a tiny mound of earth in a puny cemetery on a scrubby plain. The marker was a paper-thin piece of slate.

LYNN BUCHMAN

Loving Wife

May The Lord Accept
Her Into His Bosom

Hell of a memorial.

The wind swept down from the mountains in a great wash, swirling dust devils and rustling flowers the townspeople left for her. The marker for the second grave, a rickety wooden cross, swayed. Its creaks were like old bones tossing in search of comfort.

He hadn't been there for her. He'd made a vow, but when she'd needed him, he hadn't been there for her.

But I will be now.

They called themselves Texas Jake McGrew and the Rio Grande Rider. He'd heard about them before but never considered them a threat, even though they were in his part of the territories. To him they were a couple of little boys who thought being cruel made you a grown-up. Seemed like there was a lot of that going around these days; damn penny pulp-magazines. There was a lot more to the world than those stories told. He knew.

They wouldn't live to find out.

Señor Adalgo and Luke Meership had spoken

about them earlier. They seemed to think the two were heading for the Gila River. He couldn't allow that. If they made it across the river he wouldn't be able to get them.

He knelt one more time, placing the rose he held onto the sandy mound.

"I have to go," he whispered. "I won't be long. Not this time."



"Made good time today."

"Ah s'pose."

Texas Jake scratched his belly and farted, then yawned and glanced at his partner. Rio poked at the embers, his face demonic in the firelight. "Yew still think Californy's a good idea? We gonna hafta pass awful close t'Yuma to git there."

"Got another suggestion?" Rio lit a cigarillo with a glowing branch. He was getting better; he only coughed twice.

"Yep. Ah say once we git across th' Gila we keep goin' south, into the Copper Mountains. We hit a few mining camps to get supplies, then head across Lechuguilla Desert into Mexico." He chewed at a leathery strip of dried beef like a cow with its cud. "In 'Me-hee-co' they

ain't heard-a us yet. We c'n make a

sweep through the border towns, then ride into Californy in style." He nodded greedily.

"They haven't 'heard' of us," Rio agreed. "but we're not farmers. Not ranchers. Not prospectors. And we're gringos." He spat a piece of tobacco. It sizzled in the campfire. "They know our type. They'll be careful."

"So? Ain't like we ain't dealt with that before." He jerked his head towards the direction from which they'd come. "We good enough t' handle it."

"Every town's not Welcome Home, Arizona."

"Too bad." Texas Jake grinned. A wad of bean was wedged in his teeth. "Shore was fun last night."

"She was a good woman." Rio's lipless smile slashed the campfire's smoke. "No attachments."

"Yew said that afore. Not that ah care," Texas Jake leaned back onto his bedroll-covered saddle, "'cuz he wouldn't be th' first or last husband ah shot, but howcum yer so shur 'bout that?"

"Simple; the picture's frame was black."

"Hunh?"

"Black. Like mourning."

They'd stopped along a rock outcropping bordered by several twelve-foot saguaro cacti. Their horses were hitched to one, occasionally chewing at the scrub-brush on the stony sand around them. It was an easily defensible position; the only way to attack from behind was to ride down a steep grade. No one could do that and shoot at the same time.

He decided against subtlety. He had no need for it; now that he'd found them they wouldn't get away. The fire isolated their campsite, creating a target with the men as bull's eyes.

He spurred his ride on.

They were dozing when they first heard the hoof-beat.

"Whuzzat?"

"Quiet."

Rio flowed from his back to his feet, revolver sliding from the worn leather holster at his side. Texas Jake threw aside his blanket and brought up the shotgun that slept along his leg. The pounding came from in front of them. Rio's natural squint pierced the night but couldn't find the source. On the vista he could make out the giant-man silhouettes of the saguaros, clumps of sagebrush and far, far on the horizon, a sagittal crest of mountains. He blinked. There were no stars or moon, but his night vision was fine. He saw everything except a rider.

A wind began to blow.

"Y'see 'um?" Texas Jake whispered, sidling next to him. His eyes skittered across their surroundings like Mexican jumping beans in a skillet.

The hoofbeat pounded closer.

Rio gave an impatient shake of his head. His gun hand twitched.

"Injuns, y'think? Cheyenne?"

"Doubt it; too far south." The thought of facing a tribe of tomahawks made Rio's armpits sweat. "Mexes, probably. Indians are quieter."

"Yeah, but we could see Mexes. Where'n hell's that rider?"

They stood side by side now. Wind moaned, Lynn Buchman's final pleas. Brush whipped about, her hair thrashing in the throes of her denial. Grit stung their lips, her broken, dust-coated kiss. Hoofbeat thundered harder and faster, her heart before Rio had finally impaled it on his knife.

Then nothing.

"Hi-yaaaaa!"

They whirled.

The grey stallion hurled himself from the bottom of the incline. He landed in the campfire embers, hooves scattering fiery shards. A gout of flame exploded upwards. The stallion reared back. Ashes glowed on his shoes, and sparks glanced off his bared yellow teeth. His eyes were full of blood. They couldn't make out the rider's features; his low-crowned hat was pulled too far down. All that was visible was a glint beneath his handlebar moustache. It was as white as the butts of his revolvers, but it wasn't a smile.

It was a sidewinder's bite.

Texas Jake screamed and pulled the shotgun's trigger. Behind the horse a saguaro disintegrated in a pulpy splatter. Rio kept his head, diving to one side with his Colt roaring. The movement threw his aim. With a 'spwing!!', his shots went wide off the rocks.

The stallion reared back again. One second the rider's hands were holding its reins; then there was a lightning flash and the silver devils had cleared leather, spitting .45 caliber hellfire. The first grouping shattered the shotgun's stock, driving maple splinters under Texas Jake's fingernails. His voice cracked as he shrieked, throwing the weapon and his hands high. The rider's second grouping blew off six of Texas Jake's fingers.

Shock choked off his screams. He held his digitless hands in front of his face, tears coursing down his cheeks.

"N-no. No!!"

He thrust the stubs into his mouth, vainly sucking the wounds. The red flow was unstemmed. His gorge flooded and he stumbled to his knees, retching blood and vomit.

The rider's twelfth bullet gave Texas Jake a third eye.

The shots echoed across the prairie, aftermath of the storm. Rio popped his head out from behind one of the giant cacti. "Twelve. You're out. My turn." He spun out from his cover, pistols chest high and tracking.

The rider's guns were shooting stars back into their holsters. He reached between his shoulder blades and swept a Winchester rifle up over his head. Without visible effort he aimed and cut Rio's legs off at the thighs. Rio howled and tumbled onto his back. His boots, with his feet still in them, remained standing.

The rider dismounted and walked through the burning embers. He kicked Rio's boot aside and straddled the fallen boy.

"She was my wife."

Rio's eyes, squeezed tight from agony, slitted. "C-can't be. You're dead."

The rifle fired again, feeding the desert plants a mulch of disintegrated brain and bone.

Thomas 'Sundown' Buchman smiled without humor.

"So what?" he said.

hospital stay

at night the hospital hums and ticks.
it's hard to get inside my head.
except in the gaps of silence in between
the I.V. pumps and an old man
asking for blankets because the A.C.
makes his testicle hair stand on end.
I hear the wheezing of snorers
through the walls and the staff who
mimic an old lady who croaks
in a gravelly contralto. HELP.
HELP.HELP: The nurses answer
in military school voices that
they're moving as fast as they can.
as old frozen testicle hair keeps
time by clearing phlegm from
his throat. and the old lady continues croaking.
unpanicked in a voice as rhythmic and
assured of victory as fate.

the woman next door dies and
my roommate and I discuss
her death over the price is right
and lunchtime jello.
Two men in white suits and
two nurses bring a gurney with
an empty pick covering on
top into her room.
The pink covering is filled as
the procession leaves the room
and goes down a corridor I've
never seen before.

in the daytime I stare out the window.
there's a parking lot and a checkout point
without sentries.
The two-tone crucifix on my
wall witnesses a car slowly cruise
through a stop sign.

Old men ask for blankets and
old ladies groan; they're
asserting themselves—like diseased
organs grumbling at the health of
the rest of the body.

that's what cancer is.
a rebellion too close to home.
and when that fails the cells
revert to cannibalism.
as always. the violence turns inward.

at night there are no stars.
the pipes rustle like mice
as the room hums down decrescendo
and the non-slip soles of my shoes
let go.

by John Korbul



by Eugene Grubbs

JOYFUL LOSER

by TC Lynch

Most mornings I wake to a ringing in my ears, a small voice whispering cabalistic incantations promising today to be the day the Rosetta Stone is deciphered and the secrets of the cosmos laid bare at my feet. By the time I get out of bed the voice is gone, and the rest of my day is pure agony. I wander about trying to drag a snippet of the information out of the depths of my memory, but my head refuses to release any bits or pieces, and I go berserk, blaming the loss of these scriptures on Them.

Them. They're always near me, around corners, in alleys, waiting to jump out and tear my throat open. Hovering beside me, over me, their raggedy wings trying to obliterate the things I have glimpsed just beyond their ken.

My eyes have seen a glory not coming from above but from a dank, dark well embedded in my soul, where angels never tread but gods now ride a delirium glide under sun-speckled skies. They tell me not to sip that well's nectar, because in there lies madness. But I will drink that black water til I puke Technicolor vomit sprouting daffodils that splatter on their rugs.

They plod along, slow and steady, building "careers" that they use to justify a tepid, spiceless life, and try to tell me "slow and steady wins the race." Rubbish. Keeping yourself under control, putting a governor on your engine to keep it running slow and steady, does not get you anywhere worth going. The fun is when you are running with your foot glued to the floor, feeling the suspension dance and skip across the pavement through the seat of your pants as the wind peels back the skin from your cheeks and tears tears from your eyes while a howl somewhere between agony and ecstasy loosens itself from the bottom of your slam dancing heart. The octane needed to take that ride is found in the black hole. No where else.

More than once I have bitten off more road than I can chew, but the fear of becoming someone who mutters "should have" and "could have" when the chances have flittered away is more terrifying than any possible fender benders my trip may hold.

I am a Loser. A Joyful Loser, basking in the misery Them, Winners, consider my existence. Some days signals I receive get mixed up with the relentless ship Reality forces down my throat, and I think that the Winners are right: at heart I am one of Them, and should return to their fold.

But I always recover from these temporary breakdowns of resolve. I am Icarus armed with Crazy Glue, safe from smashing back to earth because my hubris is stronger than gravitas. Too many puttering, hollow cars litter my landscape, their engines making pitiful whining sounds that buzz in my ears like the fucking bees in my brain that keep me awake on long, silent nights. Listening to their drone drives me closer to the abyss, so I shove the stick in gear and stomp the pedal to the metal with one eye closed to keep the natives unsettled. Who knows? Maybe I will end up in a king high crack-up and the race will leave me behind. But I will have had my one pure ride. They constantly tell me "You do not understand," and direct me to follow their predetermined road map to the Good Life.

I understand all too well.

You are terror filled children lacking the balls needed to drink from the dark, dank well. You are drunk on complacency. You are part of the great Walking Dead. When you make demands on me to conform, I shake my fist and scream, "Balls!"

Exhilaration is not meant to be enjoyed from society's safe sofa. Nirvana is a scary place. . . Valhalla is not meant for the meek.

Heaven is a horror show. . . The Good Books tells me so.

AN INTRODUCTION TO HAMISH MACMILLIAN

ALAN MARMORSTEIN

The smell of bacon filled the air near the fire. The sound of grease snapping from beneath the thick hand cut strips of cured pork mixed with that of birds singing in a bright morning sun. The trees filtered the sunlight some, yet as he looked up at the sky, Hamish MacMillan still had to shield his eyes from its burning rays. A smile crossed his lips and he turned back to the fire. The bacon was cooked. He removed it from the pan with his knife, draped the pieces over the brown aged blade, and placed them into a small bowl. The bowl had been painstakingly carved from a burl. The bowl was a beautiful piece, artistic almost. Had it not been marred by years of rough use, it might have been more at home in the china cabinet of a rich man. Hamish grabbed a piece of the bacon, burning the tips of his fingers with the hot grease before he put it in his mouth. A cough and a curse and the bacon was swallowed. The pan was off the fire now, it's blackened exterior leaving traces of soot on the old piece of skin that he used to hold it. The grease he poured off into a tin boiler. The grease, a handful of dried corn, some water and the boiler were soon hanging over the fire from a green bough. Hamish finished off the bacon, anticipating the next course of his breakfast. Delighting in his morning "feast" he thought how this meager breakfast tasted as good as any that might be placed upon the table of a nobleman. He let out a subdued laugh and checked on the corn.

As he lifted the lid of the boiler, the sweet smell of hominy wafted through the air. He took in the sweet vapors with a deep breath and removed the boiler from the fire. With his back supported by a large downfall, he ate heartily, plunging an old horn spoon into the hot gruel, slowly lifting heaping mounds of hominy to his lips. The breakfast was the only food he would eat until the sun went down. The energy in hog and hominy would be — had to be -- enough to sustain him for the whole day.

Hamish's muscular physique was a testimony to the many tough days of wilderness travel he had endured. Only to him it wasn't endurance. It was what it was. To him hunting, tracking, trapping, and exploring were the only pursuits worthy of a man. With the hog and hominy safely placed within, he knew he must begin the day's trek. His meal finished, he picked up the pan, the boiler, and the bowl and placed them along with the utensils on top of a blanket. His two blankets were quickly rolled and tied. Setting them beside his rifle and its accoutrements, he stomped out the fire. It wasn't a large fire. Small in fact. Although Hamish had been to these parts before, he wasn't sure about the nature of the local Indians. With an uprising in the Colonies, it was difficult to say whose side they would take. Then again, they might use the chaos as an excuse to take neither side. Perhaps, just as during Pontiac's uprising 30 some years before, the Indians might use this opportunity to try and push all the Whites back into the sea. He thought it best to keep his fires for cooking only. Even then he decided they should be small. This fire had been built on an inverted flat stone. With the flames extinguished, he simply inverted the stone so that it's original surface was face up. The ashes and coals were buried beneath. In no time, he had heaped fresh forest debris over the depression in the duff where he had slept. He knew an Indian could still tell that he had slept there, but he hoped they couldn't judge him a white man.

With his camp site camouflaged, he set about readying himself. He lifted his rifle from its rest. Quickly snapping open the frizzen, he decided to refresh the priming. With a stiff brush, he removed the old powder which had accumulated enough moisture during the night to become more of a block than a pile. Reaching inside his hunting pouch he quickly found the priming horn. It was a perfect match for his hunting horn when it was new and unsoiled. Now the two could barely be discerned as twins. Much like the rest of his gear, the years of hard use had resulted in a heavy, worn patina developing over the surface. Both horns had accumulated a great deal of powder residue and the large hunting horn was covered with crude drawings that he'd etched into the horn about the fire during the quiet moments. He poured a fresh charge in the pan and sealed the frizzen down over it. With a finger

full of grease and tallow, he formed an air tight seal about the frizzen to keep the morning dew from the all important priming. Returning the tools to the pouch, he placed its strap over his shoulder, adjusting the larger hunting horn to sit over the flap. He wiped the grease from his hands on the leather. A custom he often performed. There were black streaks down the front of the flap where his fingers had left a deposit of grease after the meal. The straps he had bound the blankets with were now binding the blankets to his shoulders. He lifted his rifle from the ground and was off.

Hamish preferred to venture on his own. In the wilderness there was often danger and he'd rather face it himself than have to look out for some flatlander. True, occasionally he escorted a group of settlers or merchants to new towns and trading posts. But he didn't enjoy the work. Often the women would complain about the lack of "civilized" comforts in the woods, and the men were near panic stricken at the first sign of Indians. His consolation was the high pay he received for such a job. His name and reputation were well established on the colonial frontier. The Indians considered him a worthy enemy, and Hamish had earned a small fortune collecting the bounty on scalps. Now, once again in need of money, he was forced to take employment as a guide. This time however, it was the British army that would pay for his services. He had been asked by the British to serve as a scout in the wilderness of the Mohawk Valley. It seemed that, with the folks in Boston in revolt, the British felt the need to reinforce their frontier garrisons. Hamish didn't know why, and he really didn't care. He would join up in several days with the 43rd Regiment in Amsterdam and take them wherever they wanted to go. He wasn't sure exactly where that was, but it didn't matter, as long as it was not to Boston!

To most folks traveling in the forest, every tree and stone looks alike. Most folks can't tell north from south or up from down. The Indians of course were at home in the woods and the average colonist feared them most of all. As Hamish strode down a deer trail he noted every tree. The shape of the limbs, the variety of the stands. Thoughts of the game that were likely to be found in a given stand of trees or the thicket he'd just entered filled his mind. He knew the animals better than he knew most people. He could pick out a squirrel in a fir tree from a hundred yards off. The rocks and the lay of the land became his navigation beacons. The compass in his pocket served only in the dreariest of weather and even then, he was a reluctant master. Hamish reveled in the wind on his face, the rain on his skin, the cold, and the warm. A storm wasn't an annoyance, but yet another adventure in life. To him, life without adventure was a life without purpose. He relished the challenges thrown at him by nature as lessons in an exclusive school that few colonists dared apply to enter.

His quick pace was suddenly slowed by the



by Bonnie Bartkow

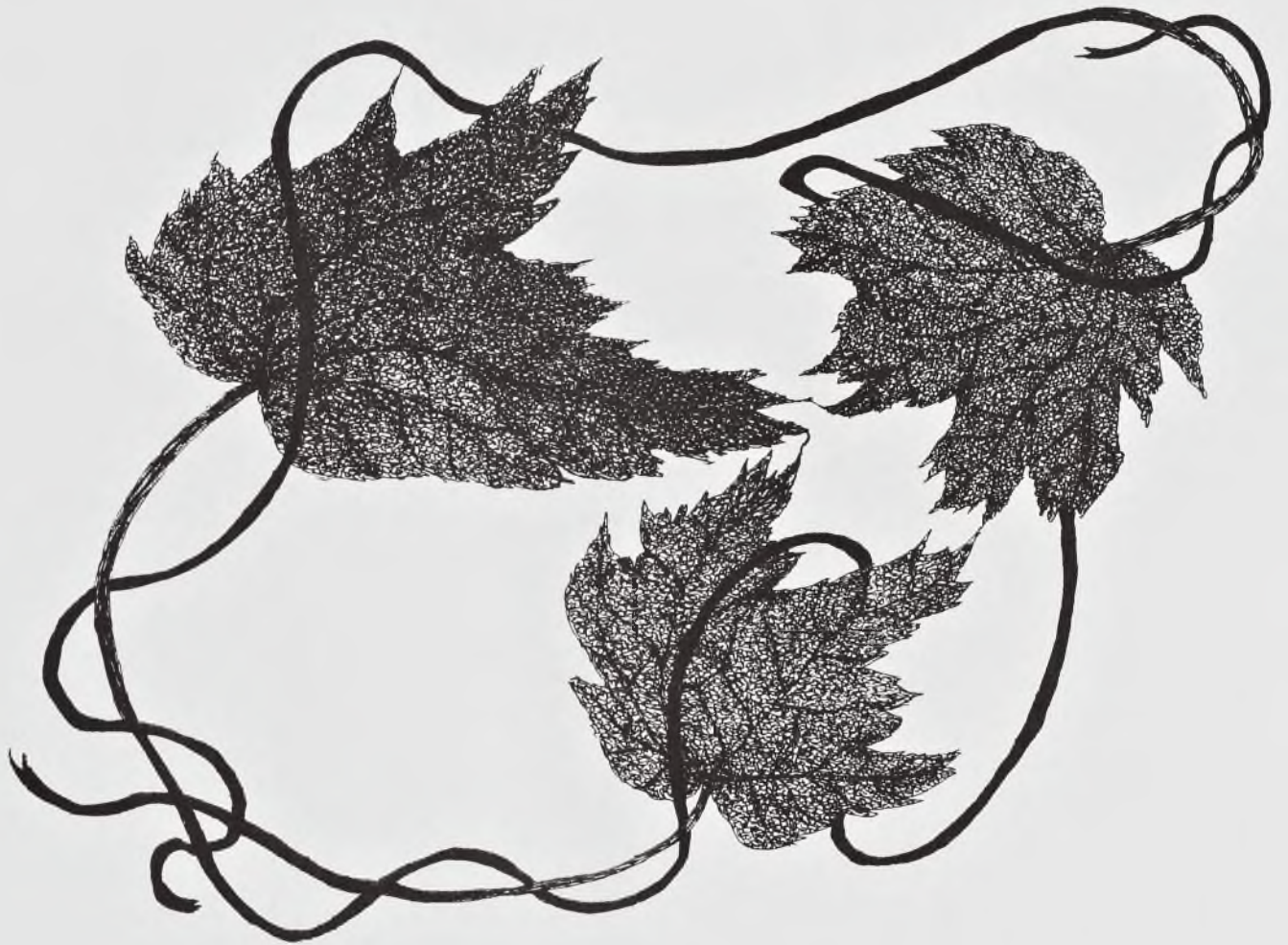
appearance of a fresh pile of deer droppings. The pile was steaming in the morning chill and that could mean only that it was left very recently. Though hunting wasn't the purpose of this trip, Hamish figured the extra meat might be worth a short detour. The fresh meat for the next day or two would be welcome and the hide would most certainly be useful, even if just to make a new pair of moccasins. He stopped and knelt to the ground looking closely at the tracks. The tracks headed northeast. Fortunately for Hamish, that was the direction in which he was traveling.

The tracks were obvious. In the deep debris that had collected on the forest floor, the hooves of a deer left a deep and lasting imprint. Each time he crossed another deer trail, he would sort the tracks from the measurements on his stick and soon he was back on the trail of the buck again. He followed through a stand of tall maples and then some large elm trees. The deer hadn't stopped here. No cover. Finally 100 or so yards off in the distance, there was a clearing filled with shrubs and bushes. The buck was nipping at the barks and buds. Hamish came to a dead stop. His breathing was slow and even. It took the discipline of a hunter to restrain the panting that his body so wanted to do, in response to the fast pace at which had tracked. He looked around moving only his eyes, straining to see to the left and right, beyond that which his physiology would allow. There were several trees between him and the buck and his shot was neither certain nor clear. As the buck returned his interest to the branches at hand, Hamish started to slowly walk forward. His moccasined feet were intentionally placed side first then with the ball of his foot rolling into place. It seemed like hours to move ten feet. When the deer would look up, Hamish would freeze. His motionless body appearing to be just another part of the forest. Finally he was within 50 yards. The shot still wasn't perfectly clear, but he would now wait out the deer. He dropped to his knees behind a tree, never losing sight of his prey. The deer would look up and again he would freeze in place as though he, too was as immobile as the trees that hid him. Slowly he lifted his rifle to his shoulder. With his elbow supported by his knee, he held it steady and drew a sight picture around the buck. With a quick motion he cocked the hammer and began to apply a steady pressure to the trigger. The buck heard the hammer snap into place and looked up. . . too late. Hamish pulled the trigger, a puff of smoke near his face as the pan ignited was followed by a mighty roar as the small round ball of lead sped to its target. Finding the deer's hide no barrier to its motion, the bullet exploded into the deer's chest, tearing haphazardly at the flesh and bone. The deer fell to the ground.

Hamish quickly stood up and immediately began to measure a new charge of powder. Once poured down the bore of the gun, he grabbed his hunting block. Placing a patched ball over the muzzle of the rifle, he started it with a shallow but

strong thrust of the ramrod. The ball was firmly seated against the powder after a few more thrusts. He turned the rifle, bringing the lock close and primed the pan. With his rifle primed, Hamish was ready to approach the deer. He slowly moved forward, his hand on the trigger, the hammer fully cocked. Keeping the rifle ready to fire in a split second. As Hamish came within ten feet of the buck, it sprang up from the ground and charged him. Its antlers not yet lost to the seasons, it tried to gore him. He dropped the rifle and grabbed the antlers with his hands. The rifle discharged upon hitting the ground but the bullet flew off, harmlessly finding a tree. Meanwhile the buck was trying with all its might to gore him. Hamish had to think. His hands were the only thing keeping the buck at bay. Every sinew and tendon in its lean body was bulging and he knew he couldn't let go. With a loud shout he summoned up all the strength he had and started to move the buck back. It fought but began to lose ground. Finally its legs buckled and Hamish let go. The buck reared up and came at him again. This time it felt the sting of that old brown blade. Hamish plunged his knife deep into the buck's chest from the front. He felt the warmth of blood flowing from the buck's chest into his hand from the blade. Still the deer fought. It got ever weaker, finally falling to the ground, panting. Hamish slit its throat. The death blow, final and swift. He rolled over on the ground exhausted, panting, as the hunter and his prey lay side by side.

When he finally caught his breath, the reality of his wilderness existence returned to him. Hamish rose from his bed next to the fallen buck. He hurriedly found and reloaded his rifle. The two shots were sure to catch the attention of anyone nearby and he had to be certain that should they chose to investigate he could handle a hostile encounter. Once loaded, he went to the chore of gutting the buck. It was huge. Hamish figured the buck for better than two hundred pounds! With a rack to be proud of: eight points. With a skillful hand, he slit open the belly of the deer. Its internals poured out, the last vestige of life now departed, exhibiting themselves in the random contractions of the muscles. The warmth of the deer's innards felt good on his hands. He removed the heart and the lungs, saving the heart. This deer had spirit. The Indians would eat the heart raw to take the courage of the animal. He too consumed the heart. When the gutting was done, he pushed a stick through the rear legs just below the knees, between the tendons and the bone. Using the stick, he began to pull the carcass through he woods, always alert to the possibility of hostiles and the need for a suitable campsite to spend the next several days. The British would just have to wait.



by Bonnie Bartkow

SLEEP TIGHT ST. GEORGE

by Ginger Zarske

St. George. The name invoked visions of a mighty dragon-slayer with untamed hair streaming, lips curled in rage, and sunlight glinting off his sword, drawn and bloody from victorious battle with the great beast. The reality was a little different: two shabby old office buildings with footprints on the walls, holes in the floors, doors divorcing their hinges, and a general sense of poverty and neglect.

Over time, though, the dirty walls receded, and the buildings became a sort of black-and-white back-drop for the many vivid individuals who decorated the campus. We in the Engineering Department were, and are, gifted with such an opulence of cultures and religions, including students and faculty, that an Engineering Science degree from CSI ought to include an automatic double major in International Studies.

These chairs and couches played host to such diverse souls, hailing from Sri Lanka to Rumania, from Tierra Del Fuego to Bensonhurst. Religious differences were forgotten in the struggle to understand Thermodynamics and Digital Electronics, and Moslem, Jew, Catholic, Hindu, Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, Pagan, and Atheist all worked together to achieve a common goal: passing the test. I used to think that we could create world peace if we could just bring all the world leaders together and make them solve a differential equation. Then St. George really would be a dragon slayer.

But our time there was to end. The campus was merging with Sunnyside, and moving to Willowbrook, where there may be a willow, but I have yet to find a brook, and the task of packing up the Engineering club offices fell to those of us too sentimental to leave after finals were over. The Engineering clubs had occupied these rooms at St. George for as long as any of us could remember, and every photograph unpinned from the decaying cork wall brought with it a memory, and each book removed from the shelf recalled some all-night study session:

"I'll tell you. I remember my first day at St. George. My very first day. . ."

"Ahh. I remember that ENS320 class."

"320 was my first class on my first day at 8 o'clock on a Monday morning. I walked in there and couldn't believe how dilapidated the place was. I turned over the top of my desk and saw multicolored rainbows of gum. There were probably a hundred pieces under there. You couldn't put your hands under your own desk, you'd be so grossed out. And the blinds were all broken and falling down and the tint was peeling off the windows. . ."

"What kind of college have I transferred to?"

"Yeah, and you had to check all the chairs to make

sure they weren't going to fall out from under you and the desk tops weren't going to crash to the floor as soon as you sat down."

"The thing that appalled me the most was that smoking was allowed in the cafeteria. Only in New York City."

"Thank God, thank God. God bless New York!"

"The whole place had a cloud of smoke hanging over it. I walked into that cafeteria, saw that cloud, and thought 'Oh my god. This place is filthy, nothing works, the blinds are all ripped, the tint's coming off the windows, the desks are covered with gum, there's more toilet paper on the floor than in the stalls, and now they're smoking too! But after about a week, I kind of got used to it."

"I'll always remember you guys sitting down in the cafeteria. I hardly knew anyone at the time. You were the only one in the morning and so I would just come over and sit down and have coffee with you. . ."

"We really got close over the summer."

"Right."

"Yeah, we'd hang out in the lounge."

"Before that, we used to hang out in the cafeteria."

"The Engineers sit back there'. Nobody else was allowed to go back there. Do you believe that's all we would do? We'd get here at 9 o'clock in the morning and we would study straight through. We were in the cafeteria for like a whole year."

"Right and I was always saying 'Why are you guys down here? You've got perfectly good offices upstairs to study in.' Nobody ever listened to me then. And all of a sudden, one day, everybody was just 'That's it, we're going upstairs.'"

"Well, once we got involved with the clubs, that's the way. . ."

"Now in the office we've got a sofa, radio, come on, with the coffee machine it's too much like home."

"It is our second home."

"Remember when they painted the cow spots on the radiator?"

"I thought that was the best. I thought the cow spots was the best idea."

"It was great."

"And then we started painting that stupid picture on the wall, and part of the picture was the mountain. . ."

"And boy did Student Government get pissed at us. Oh my God!"

"It was such a big thing!"

"It shouldn't have been. . ."

"Remember last semester, we were there all night? I came in and Tom stayed there to help me out. I was there 'till 5 in the morning because I had to pass Tsui's test, and Tom, I could not have done it without Tom. And thank God for the Office."

"One time I went in at 3 o'clock in the morning. I left the office at 12 and couldn't sleep, I was too tense from studying. So I got up and tried to study at home, I was like 'no, I cannot do that.'"
"Your thinking cap was left at St. George. I can't study at home either."

"Don't we feel more at home in St. George than in Sunnyside? We're always in St. George, and we know everyone. All the professors. . ."

"I don't know how that happened, but now. . ."

"We got to know every professor. They come up. . ."

"You can't go from one floor to another without passing someone that you know."

"I must say hello to the same person three, four, fifty times a day."

"You get close that way. . ."

"I used to come to school, go home, and go to work and that's it. But once I got, you know, involved with the clubs, having the office, you hang around more. We've been doing more work. We've been

getting involved more and we've been getting to know the professors."

"The only good thing I can remember is the late night study sessions, talking about everything but what we had to study."

"Joe, didn't you lose your cherry at St. George?"

"Twice, yeah."

"The ninth floor. The ninth floor has a bathroom that's never used. It's clean."

"Oh yeah. I left my mark in there many times."

"It was the cleanest room there."

"It was the cleanest room in that whole building."

"Hey, let me tell you something. You know what I always do to make sure that nobody else is going to the bathroom in there? I'd take the top off the toilet and put it on the seat, and then I'd lock the door on my way out."

"Yeah? I pissed all over that top once."

"I really don't have any stories."

"Our dinners."

"Ah, yeah. The dinners."

"We had four dinners over the past two years."

"We only organized two."

"Yeah, but. . ."

"I didn't go to the other ones."

"I went to one of them, where Rasha became president of Society of Women Engineers. I compared it, that dinner was the first one I went to, I compared it to the last dinner we had, and how we had that little, like quarter of the cafeteria and we were on top of one another and they had the West Indian food and it was not and by the time we ate there was nothing left."

"It was my first time. And when I was the vice president, I didn't know anything, and so there I was, the only officer in the stupid club. 'Please guys, join. . .' 'Oh no no no. . .' fine. Now I'm in this shit alone and everyone's like 'Oh don't worry about it', you know, and I didn't even taste it. I don't even remember it, you know. I don't remember eating it."



"By the time we got to it, by the end, we got branches. Twigs. That's what they always kid about. All we got was the twigs. They had like twigs in there, in the rice."

"Do you remember our idea even before we got our positions as officers of the clubs?"

"We're going to do this, we're going to do that, we're going to make a change, we'll have our own library, help out other students and everything.' All these ideas we had. . ."

"And we did them!"

"We did!"

"The thing that I will never forget as long as I live is when James Aortas died."

"Yes."

"Rasha had come home with me. . ."

"You guys didn't get the phone call at 3 o'clock in the morning that they found him. I had no idea what happened. I thought maybe somebody broke into the lounge, you know, and stole something. So I went immediately to my office, and I'm walk-

ing out when the security guard's there. He says 'you go up to the 5th floor'. He was just like in a position laying out on the desk."

"He was on the desk? Had he died on the desk?"

"While he was sitting or he was laying?"

"He was in a sleeping position."

"On the desk? Don't you think he'd be lying down on the floor?"

"No. . ."

"I thought he was on a sofa or something."

"No no no, he was at his desk. He was studying. The window was wide open they said, and he put his head down to go to sleep and he fell asleep on top of his books."

"And he just fell asleep. There was no suicide or anything like that?"

"It turned out to be diabetic coma."

"That's what we thought."

"With the onset of hypothermia."

"So he died on Saturday night. Rasha and I were stranded at my place because of the storm, and Sunday morning we came in to pick up our books. When we got here, there was a strange security guard in the lobby."

"He said 'You cannot come up. Something bad has happened.' And we thought 'Oh my God'."

"We were really scared. He said 'If you guys can come back in an hour, I think we'll be finished up there and you can go up and get your books.'"

"So we went over to the Terrace Grill and waited, wondering who it could be. We thought it was probably James because a week or so before that the President of Student Government had warned us that he was afraid James would be up there by himself and go into a diabetic coma, and that's exactly what happened. So when Rasha and I went back from the Terrace Grill, they were bringing him down."

"Oh, that was horrible. We stood there. . ."

"The mortuary van was outside. Then security told us that we could go up and get our books."

"So we came up here. We opened the office door; and the storm had blown the windows wide open and torn through the office, killing every plant and ripping everything off the walls. Complete chaos. Soaking wet. All the books. And Rasha started crying. . ."

The last book taken from the shelf, the Christmas Tree wrapped up tight, and the coffee cups nestled together in their packing, it was time for a final check to make sure there was no rancid milk in the fridge, nobody's toothbrush in the file cabinet. We lingered as long as we could, knowing that the important things must be left behind: the laughter, the bullshit sessions, the crossword puzzle marathons, the birthday celebrations, the pre-exam panic attacks, and the end-of-semester blow outs; and when we knew that there was nothing more to be done, we turned out the light, closed the door, and walked away

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by Joseph Zolfo

florida

*(a narrative poem: i.e., a
robert levine influenced.
firsthand account of
adventures past, present
and future for tots and
teens.)*

age 9

*I wanted to take the lizard outside
the bedroom window home, but I thought
he'd be dead by N.C.. You can't expect something
to leave home and live. But if he
did live, I bet his daddy would
say, "What a fine lizard boy I
raised." And I would say, "Daddy,
you know how the radio sounds
when you drive under a bridge, all
fuzzy and low, like someone's talking
underwater? Well, that's what you
sound like when you talk to me."*

age 25.5

*I wanted to take the lizard outside
the bedroom window home, but I thought that
he'd be dead by the time we reached N.C.. You can't expect
something to be taken out of its native
environment and survive. But I did
survive. It's a cliché to drive down
to Florida and see Disneyworld: I felt that
I should have had a small child by my
side to justify my being there. Irene french
braided my hair and we went into the temple of animation. A
girl with a black top, white shoulders
and red hair was shy by the banister.
Our eyes had bounced off each
other outside. I kept looking for
whomever she was with as she wandered around, nonchalantly
alone. Finally, I saw her talk to a woman and a*

man a few years older than her
and I considered whether they were
relatives, friends or companions. Her face only
told me that she was somewhere between 16 and 25.
It would've been awkward if I'd approached her
and her party accused me of being a
pedophile or something else which, under the circumstances,
would've been roughly accurate.

age 45

I had a Florida dream again last
night. As I was waking up I
thought that it was a hospital bed I was
in, but it was the floor. I looked
around. I heard my mother talking to me
from inside a gray box. She asked if
I was keeping my food down. I
answered that I was still on liquid
food and wasting away. Her voice sounded
like rough surf with jellyfish on it.
I seemed to be hearing her under
tons of water, at the bottom of an
aquarium, or an ocean, with my ears
in the sand. She asked when
they would be releasing me. I
answered that I was no longer sick.
"Don't be so sure," she said. "You
were always a little too cocky."

by John Korbul

I don't feel like getting back to you right now,
you're somewhere in the back of my mind and I'd like you to
remain
smoky, coming into clarity
with flame readiness
for a second's pop
then receding, imperceptibly.
like a hairline.

That's how I'd like you to remain
right now.

by John Korbul



by Tom Good

HAIKU

*twisting winds slow danced
with bearded man wearing black
while he crossed the street*

by Robert Levine

Tanka

Dedicated to Cheryl Thom and all relationship pain:

*I'm stuck in the blue
my body an erection
tight and neatly stretched
I see my limbs falling down
and bouncing on the asphalt*

by Robert Levine

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THE ACCIDENT

BY CHARLOTTE MEEHAN

I was three days nine. My best friend Patty, who lived across the street from my backyard, wasn't able to come to my birthday party — she was punished for talking to Michael Scarpetti on the phone — and this was the first time we were seeing each other since two days before that momentous occasion. She was still wearing the "I am a bad girl" sign, but only for that one last day. She had a strict Italian father, who marinated chicken and punched holes in the basement walls. I couldn't wait to show her my favorite present, Violet, the newest Little Kiddle that came in her own lavender perfume bottle. Megan Lyddy, whose father was our Democratic state Senator, gave her to me. My father wasn't pleased to have her at the party but, after all, she was in my class.

Patty and I were walking along Pacific Street — right behind the pine trees in my backyard — when suddenly a boy, about fourteen years old, skinny and black, marched up to us and demanded that I hand over Violet. There were no sounds on the street; the fall air was dead under a bright blue sky. I flat out said no, and he hauled off and punched me in the face, twice. Once in the eye, and once on the cheekbone. Patty screamed at him while I stood there, dizzy and broken. Doreen Korskinsky, who lived across the street from my front yard on Laurell Avenue, suddenly appeared out of nowhere with her fist in the boy's face. "You blind idiot. Not her, this one," she yelled pointing to Patty. Swollen and confused, I just held onto Violet. Come to find out Doreen had paid the black boy a quarter to punch Patty in the face, which she thought would win over Michael Scarpetti. Patty ran home, and I ran home.

I didn't start crying until I got into the house. When my mother saw my black eye and swollen face, she screamed like Patty, but louder. And before I had a chance to explain, she bolted out the door with a yardstick. There was no telling what she would do, in a state like that. For a few minutes I stood there in the kitchen, stunned, trying to conjure up an image of my mother who never stayed in one place long enough for me to memorize her face. Then I ran out looking for her. There she was about half-way up Wade Street hitting Doreen with the yardstick. When she saw me, she got even more mad. "What the hell are you doing here? Get back in the house now," she commanded. Violet and I walked home. Sitting in the living room on one of our mahogany love seats, I cried quietly to myself, "I'm sorry about this, Violet. Don't worry we'll be alright. Mom will come home in no time." When my father walked in the front door, he greeted me with "What happened to you?" Through heavy sobs, I told him about Doreen and the black boy, about Patty and Violet and the punches and Mom and the yardstick. "Get in the car," he said.

I was in trouble now.

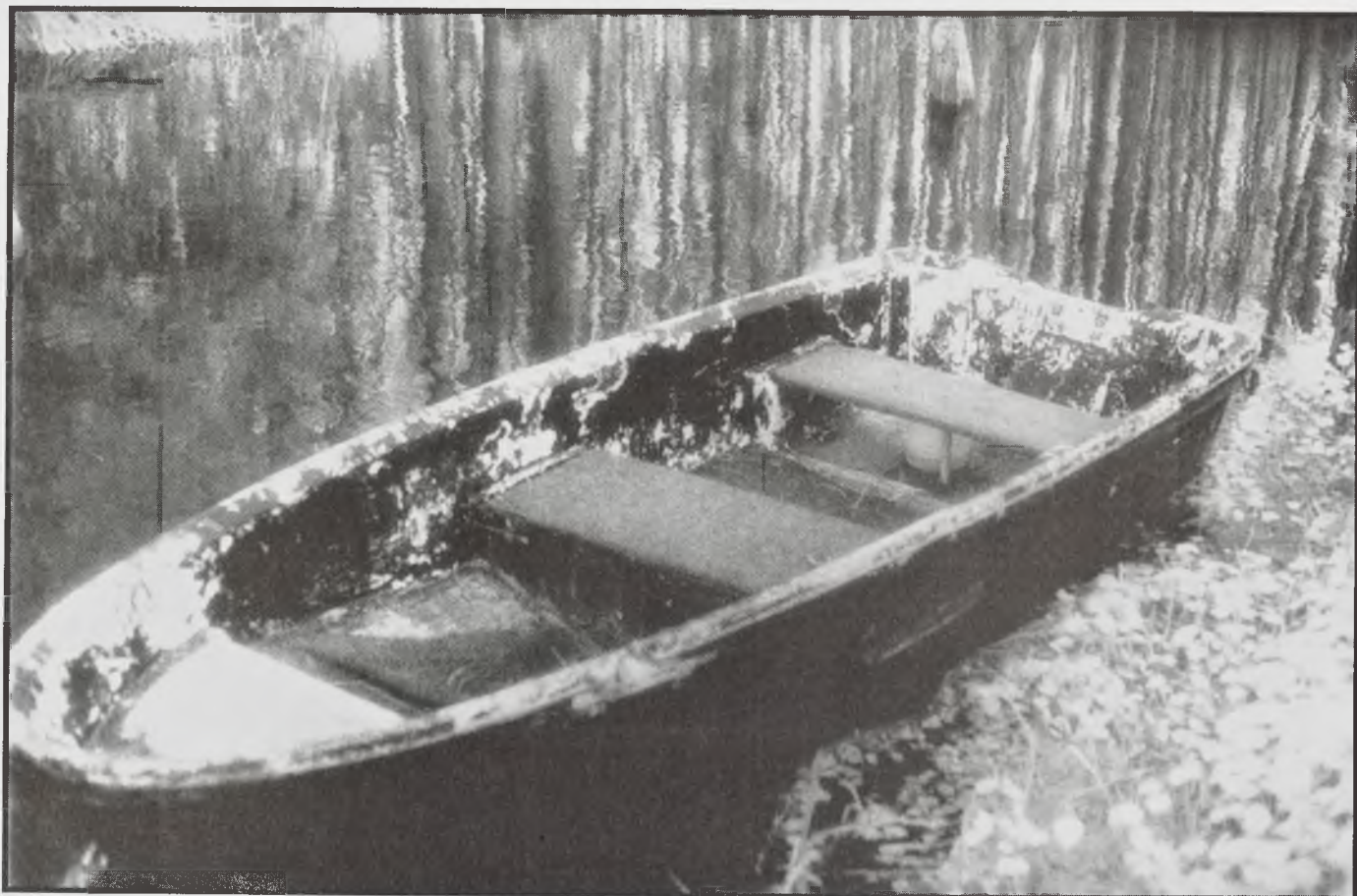
We drove up Wade Street and passed my mother, still hitting Doreen with the yardstick — on arms, legs, and behind — in front of the whole neighborhood, Michael Scarpetti included. Doreen's fat mother, who no one ever saw since her husband went to jail, was out by then too, apologizing to my mother and shrieking at Doreen, "you deserve everything you're getting." Satisfied that Doreen was being taken care of, my father drove on

without even stopping to talk to my mother. At the corner of Wade and North Avenue, where Haeflich's junk store sat, my father spotted a skinny black boy about fourteen on a bicycle. "Is he the one?" I couldn't speak. "Is he the one?" he yelled louder. I nodded yes. He turned onto North Avenue, the busiest street in Bridgeport, and stopped the car right in the middle of it during rush hour, ordering me to stay put. Cars were beeping and honking, but my father didn't care. Out he went, heading straight for the black boy, his thick, short legs pounding the street, arms solid and stiff like tree trunks, face cemented in anger. I sat there glued to the vinyl, staring out the open car window. I saw my father pull a skinny black boy off his bicycle, drag him along the sidewalk by the arm and leg to Haeflich's junk store, grab him by the neck of his white shirt, and smash him against the front window. The bones came out of his skin. I saw his back crack against the glass. "I'm going to put you through this window because I want to see if a little nigger bastard can bleed," my father told him. The black boy coughed and cried. I did too, from my seat in the car. I felt the pee fill up in my shorts.

We were both in trouble.

A frosted blond lady jumped out of her sky blue Volkswagon Beetle and demanded to know what my father was doing to the boy. "Shut up and mind your own goddamn business, you bleeding-heart-liberal bitch," he told her. "I'll get the police if you don't let him go. We'll see how brave you are." He put the black boy down. "Are you satisfied?" She asked the black boy if he was O.K. He nodded, shaking like a pine needle on one of my backyard trees. My father told her she didn't know the whole story, then they headed back to their cars. The black boy stood in front of Haeflich's for a minute putting his shirt back in his pants and wiping the tears from his face and neck. He jumped on his bicycle and headed home. Starting the car, my father proudly announced, "that little nigger bastard will never come over to this neighborhood again. He better not, or he'll be dead." Then he looked at me and asked, "How's your face?"

□



by Jack Driggs

A PARALLEL PLAY

(for Lois)

by Thomas Good

In the enigmatic evolution of our species, some truly select Souls have emerged: beings who are clearly not Earthbound, whose development is at least one deviation away from that of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Man. Are these winged brothers possessed by demons? Are they prophets, the beloved of God? In search of an answer, we will now enter a late American afternoon, wherein three very unique men sat at a blotchy table in a grey and stately building. A building that housed rattling skeleton keys, hallucinatory demons and idiomatic prophets.

On the afternoon in question, the pretty Nurse Wren sat at her station, the guardian of the parallel universe known as the Cook County Hospital Psychiatric Inpatient Unit. She observed her three wards as they sat opposite her, enjoying a recreation period in the 'Day Room.'

On her left sat Harry Doyle, a thirty-one year old single white male. A diagnosed 'disorganized type', with the face and form of a Buddha, he smiled continuously. According to his medical record, Harry had last spoken several years earlier. On admission, Harry had communicated in marvelously poetic, hermetically sealed, ciphers. However, a short time later he regressed into aphasia. Although Harry continued to feed, dress and toilet himself, he did so silently. A rough and tumble merchant marine at one time, Harry Doyle now sat calmly, unblinking and apparently unflappable.

Harry's admission to Cook was occasioned when he shot a Federal Excess deliveryman with a thirty-eight caliber revolver, once upon a past, somewhat less than lucid, moment. A moment that rang out sharply at Forensic Committee meetings whenever the possibility of a discharge was discussed.

At the time of his arrest, Harry informed the authorities that he had been acting on instructions from J. Edgar Hoover when he made "the hit". Hoover, according to Harry, had appeared posthumously on an episode of the 800 Club, a syndicated religious broadcast, bearing special instructions for Harry alone. And so Harry, acting in good faith, pulled the trigger. He was apprehended by the Chicago Police Department when an anonymous tipster reported that the alleged assassin could be found sunbathing nude in front of the regional F.B.I. office building. (The F.B.I., for their part, declined to confirm or deny whether Harry was indeed in their employ.)

Shortly after Harry's breakdown and subsequent arrest, a duo of court appointed psychiatrists typed and affixed a narrow file folder label to his being. And so Harry became Criminal Procedure Law case number 89-4. He was remanded to Cook County Hospital, where, at first, he was very cooperative with the doctors who treated him. However, after repeated attempts to explain his actions failed to secure his release, Harry lapsed into an enduring quietude. And there he remained, as a 'C.P.L.', and a ward of the diminutive Nurse Wren.

Sitting next to Harry, Carmine fidgeted. He was generally fidgety. By his account, he was a man with a broken heart. A man who was being unfairly persecuted for "accidentally" stabbing his wife some forty-three times. Apparently, Carmine killed his wife after she switched off his television during his favorite wrestling program. His tag team match abruptly ended, Carmine entered the Metropolitan Chicago Mental Health System. Carmine frequently complained bitterly that his "one indiscretion" should not have resulted in his indefinite incarceration. This line of argument failed to impress the austere Forensic Committee, which consistently voted to delay discharge, citing some obscure regulation dealing with insight and judgement. The Committee's unfortunate bureaucratic tendencies enraged Carmine, who was nicknamed 'Fly' by his friends, due to his constant angry buzzing and nervy fidgeting.

"One faux pas," Fly mumbled, as he bit into a quivering length of pepperoni. "One mistake, and they're crucifying me," he said, waving the flaccid sausage at Harry. Gripping a chunk of provolone emphatically with his left hand, Fly offered an impassive Harry a brief sniff, saying, "Smells like old socks, doesn't it, Harry?" Harry smiled evenly. "It's a painkiller," Fly added.

Observing the interaction, Nurse Wren smiled gently, her head bowed. Her coffee steamed wistfully through her last day on the job. She mused that madness was a form of nostalgia, a tiny sparrow, a small child, tapping at the window of the adult soul. And the madman was a sad emi-



Colleen McGraham

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Colleen McGraham

gre, staring back at the child, seeing it refracted through the dusty lens of the unyielding window.

"Ike" completed the semicircle of parallel players facing Nurse Wren. Ike didn't care much for people, or "insignificant others", as he termed them. Whenever one of "that crowd" of "mediocre minded small talkers" would attempt to engage him in "the relentless exchange of banalities", i.e. conversation, Ike would bark like a dog until the intruder backed off. On one occasion, Ike was restrained in the 'Quiet Room' after he bit a loquacious orderly. Ike, a divorced Black male, was tall and thin, quite intelligent, thirty years of age, and a veteran of the recent war in Haiti.

During the war Ike had been a staff sergeant attached to the First Marine Division in Port-au-Prince, engaged in what was known as 'low intensity conflict' or 'offering non-lethal assistance to indigenous counter-insurgency units' when 'The Operation' (or "The Euphemism" as Ike termed it) grew messy and the sergeant's moorings slipped. He was found wandering aimlessly in guerilla occupied territory, apparently the sole survivor of a platoon sent in to scout enemy positions. A shell-shocked Ike was shipped stateside and held for observation at the V.A. hospital in Chicago.

While at the V.A., shortly after he was unceremoniously discharged from the Marine Corps and divorced by his wife, Ike stabbed a doctor with a letter opener. Evidently, Ike had been quietly watching a situation comedy about life in the Post Office when he calmly rose, walked down the hall, entered his therapist's office and secured what would be the murder weapon. As his therapist was at lunch, Ike stabbed and fatally wounded the doctor who shared the office space.

When questioned as to his motivation to stab his therapist, Ike disclosed that he had been "just following orders." When asked who had issued the orders, Ike replied, "Eisenhower, comma, Dwight, comma, General, period." Soon afterwards Ike was transferred to Cook County for long term care, or, in his vernacular, to the "Hotel Chatterbox" for "a tune-up." Rumor had it that 'Ike', his real name lost in some faraway file cabinet, had acquired his nickname shortly after, and directly because of, the 'Eisenhower Incident'.

Thus, Ike became the third frame of the triptych facing the petite Nurse Wren, the far point of the crescent which shone over the late afternoon which concerns us presently.

Absently fondling a cigarette, Ike stared into a distant West Indian sunset. He was engaged in a soliloquy, his preferred form of discourse.

"All manner of invertebrata, sporting ridiculous clichés and mistaking cologne for charisma, great mustachioed buffoons, are clogging up the cerebral arteries of our illustrious hamlet. Ventricular homicide," he said with venom. "Ah, reality: love it or leave it," he added.

Sandwiched between the blustery Ike and the taciturn Harry, a restless Fly quivered at the end of his length of pepperoni. His chunk of cheese ripened on the table. Nurse Wren, noting Ike's cigarette, looked up at the long arms of the State issue clock. Not yet, she thought, it's still too early for four o'clock lights.

Waving his wand, Fly said, "Ike should write down

some of the stuff he comes up with, huh Harry?" Harry beamed placidly at Fly. "Come on, Ike," Fly continued, "tell me why you killed that doctor."

Ike slammed his hand down atop Fly's. Pepperoni thudded against pine. The slab of provolone bounced twice, stopping in front of Harry. Harry regarded the cheese evenly.

"Stop it, Ike, I get nervous!" Fly choked.

Miles away, Ike squinted, scanning the horizon for guerrillas.

"Please, Ike. . ." Fly pleaded. Harry and the provolone watched the exchange quietly.

"I never really intended to terminate that clown," Ike said as he released his grip. Fly massaged his swollen hand.

"Not that it matters," Ike explained, "Looper was, after all, just another cheese-eater." Fly glanced nervously at the provolone. "He was an irritant. An imbecile. He was. . ." Ike paused. Fly twitched his wings, expectantly.

". . . verbose," Ike concluded.

Fly opened his mouth to speak, then thought better of it.

"He was a showboat. . .he deserved to die. Still, I regret that I never acquired my real target."

"Who, Ike. . .?" spluttered a wide-eyed Fly.

"Doctor Genitalia. The team leader at the V.A. My therapist. An anal retentive with the personality of a cold sore. The pompous prick used to tap his medical school ring on the arm of the chair when he talked at you." Ike paused, drifted, regained his course. "He had this amazing facial tic. . .the whole right side of his face, from eye socket to jawbone, would convulse rhythmically. It was the one thing about the swine that was sheer poetry. Some days he would even hyperventilate," Ike said wistfully.

"So why did you want to kill him, Ike?"

"Genitalia was a pestilence," Ike expounded, in the general direction of the spasmodic Fly. "A goddamn parasite. Doctor, my ass. He was a typical ring tapper. Like my fucking C.O. in the Corps. Officers," Ike snarled, "they're useless. . .the government which governs best is deceased." Ike smoothed his crooked cigarette. "Genitalia," he growled through clenched teeth, "was a giant, twitching, bloodsucking mosquito."

"I hate mosquitoes," shuddered Fly.

"As do I, my dear Fly, as do I. In fact, I despise all leeches, sycophants, Freudians, symbiotics, and their brothers in disease, administrators. Like our beloved chief of staff, Mr. Burnside's. Another parasite. A village idiocy in the bloated body of an overfed wood tick. A mobile excrement. A bald, fat, life support unit for a midlife crisis. A pre-literate, a. . .a. . .memo writer who can't keep his hands off Nurse Wren. And we do love our little nightengale, do we not?"

Fly nodded timidly at the glowering Ike.

"Do you know what Burnside's first name is?" Ike demanded.

Fly cocked his head nervously to and fro, licking his lips.

"Do you?" Ike pressed.

"No Ike," Fly managed.

Ike leaned over and whispered the answer to the trembling Fly.

"Mister," he said.



By Thomas Good

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Fly stared blankly at Ike.

"The comedy is ended," Ike announced. And with that the conversation was concluded. Ike resumed straightening his cigarette, squinting in the glare of the Haitian sunset. Fly nibbled tentatively on his sausage.

* * *

In another corner of our story, as Fly fed and Ike drifted, Harry Doyle began to unfold himself. His being issued forth in a series of liquid spirals. Suddenly, he plucked the provolone from the tabletop in one elegant motion. Before the startled Fly, Harry masticated with deliberation, savoring, and then, gratefully, swallowing. Fly watched intently, sensing that something unusual was happening. The cheese itself was not the issue: throughout his stay at Cook County, Harry had been willing and able to feed himself. Indeed, the careful reader will have noted that Harry has been described as a portly man. During his seafaring years, in fact, Harry had often been heard to say: "Any port in a storm, sterno in a pinch." And yet, Fly sensed the pregnancy of the proverbial moment. Despite this premonition, Fly stared in disbelief as the hermetically sealed Hamlet, one Harry Doyle, pursed his lips and, apparently addressing Ike, said, "The anger is you, my warrior brother, but not all of you. You are, in a word, superlative. The anger is but a mental mistake, clearly opaque."

Ike turned suddenly back to the present moment. "Jesus H. Christ, Doyle," exclaimed Ike, "how long has it been since you spoke?"

"I spoke just a moment ago and am speaking now," Harry replied.

"How absolute the knave is," observed Ike.

Harry admired Fly's length of sausage. Fly proffered it and Harry gently accepted the tremulous offertory, reducing its measure slightly.

"Harry, where have you been?" put forth an excited Fly.

"Here and there," Harry said, chewing on his response, "here again."

"What were you doing?" queried the now totally befuddled Fly.

"This and that, in and out, a seesaw manouever. In a word: respirating. It was sublime," Harry responded.

"Breathing," said Ike, nodding his approval. "Silence, blessed silence," he added.

Harry offered Ike the sausage. Ike waved it away.

"Harry, you never stopped smiling the whole time you were . . . out," Fly noted.

"It's tantamount, sort of elastic. It relaxes my face," Harry explained. "You should try it Carmine. You too, Ike."

"Denmark's a prison for happy faces. Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," Ike retorted.

Harry patted Ike's arm, saying, "Locked in here, as our days melt away, our adventures must be of a parenthetical nature. Luckily, we have each other. That friendship can be a great joy."

"We are arrant knaves all," Ike said, pulling his arm free, "mere literary devices. Stock characters suffering from the delusion that we are protagonists. Friendship is meaningless. Our author is a hack and we are only hollow reiterations."

"Harry," Fly buzzed, "I believe you. . . you guys are my only friends. I would have killed myself by now if it weren't for. . ."

"Think now, small Fly," Ike barked, "talk of suicide will land you in restraints. You want a stay in the Quiet Room? You can smile all you want in there."

Fly looked over at the Nurse's Station anxiously. Nurse Wren smiled back at him.

"Ah yes, the Quiet Room," observed Harry, "a good place for relaxation. I've meditated there often, lost in the sleep of seamless dreaming. . ."

Ike shook his head. "The human race is not to the swift," he muttered.

"Harry, do you remember when they gave us both electroshock?" Fly asked, animated again. "We went together, right before you stopped talking. Remember?"

"Yes, Carmine. I remember. We've been through a lot together," Harry said kindly.

"Ah, the heartache, the thousand unnatural shocks flesh is heir to," quipped Ike.

"Harry, we're veterans," said Fly with a laugh. "Listen, Harry, could I have a cigarette, just one?"

"I'm sorry, I have none of the sacred herb, my dear Carmine."

Fly looked downcast. Harry glanced at Ike. "You could give him one, brother," Harry suggested.

"Any other demands, my Lord?" Ike replied.

"Actually, yes," Harry said. "I demand the immediate denial of plausibility. I demand the repeal of the Law of Gravity. I demand Common Sense declare moral bankruptcy. I demand the Church be recognized as the Mother of Invention. I declare the early bird be forced to eat worms. (Fly nodded vigorously here). I demand that the leaders of organized crime appear on postage stamps. I demand that 'early to bed and early to rise' place a man under police surveillance. And finally, I demand a cigarette for the noble Carmine," Harry said, with a magnanimous gesture.

"Woof," Ike retorted.

"The dog strains but cannot break the leash," Harry said.

"The play's the thing," Ike answered. Harry nodded in agreement. Quietly relenting, Ike presented Fly with a well straightened cigarette. Fly accepted it gratefully, smiling and nodding. Ike dismissed him with a wave.

"Will you talk to staff too?" Fly asked, turning to Harry.

"Here and there," Harry said. To Ike he added, "Tell me, my dear Mack-the-Knife, or to be precise, Ike-the-Letter-Opener, where is it that we three kings, we three stock characters, we mere devices, are going?"

"To sleep, perchance to dream," Ike replied.

"Where, Harry?" Fly asked.

"Home, gentlemen, home. . ."

Three men, reduced by circumstance, sat in quietude for a moment. Ike raised a hand to shield his eyes from the glare of the Caribbean sun. Fly began straightening his weary cigarette.

"Home," Fly said mournfully.

"Home," Ike scoffed, "mayhaps you are again asleep, perchance dreaming, Lord Doyle. They'll never let us out of here. We're 'Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity'. Remember? If I were you, I would seek silence again. If we

'recover' they can always persecute us to the full extent of their ignorance. They do not forgive. Know your enemy," he added.

"Know the enemy," Harry mused, "perhaps a euphemism for: 'fear the unknown.' While we must indeed be judicious with whom we share our thoughts, friend Ike, some of the Others are actually able to hear us. There are poet-friends who also fold their dreams into the quietude of ink. The solace of think." Harry surveyed his friends tenderly.

"Home, gentlemen, home. . ." Harry repeated. "It's true, of course, that some of us wear white kid gloves which give the minimum away," Harry said, glancing at Ike, "but even those, even old Mack-the-Knife, conspires in desire to go home. Even the madman, the genetic poet, has no reality apart from his fellows. Sadly, it is a truism that greatness in mad ones often goes unwatched, noble friends, therefore we, the imperial and conversational we, must see our own greatness, our grandeur. We are a poetry and she is a diction which proscribes intruders. All the same, we should not turn our backs on the Others. Without them I should not have become enlightened. . . turned inwards, been able to see my true will, my spontaneous and sparkling self, my tantamount wit."

"But Harry, we are captives," Fly said.

"The captive is the freest of men, Carmine. Laughing in our minds we have moments of unparalleled freedom, moments most of the Others never know. I myself am a hymn of synonym, a poet king, followed by a herd of dictionary words. While others lament their lives, I postulate poppies on a topical reef. I am a syntax no government may regulate. Here, in our electrified sandbox, we need only remember one noble truth to be free: that, on an incandescent day, windows open where they may."

"Better Felonius in a protectory, than Fallacious in a rectory," quipped Ike.

Harry erupted into a belly laugh. "True, my dear Ike," he said.

"But Harry, other people hate us. They keep us prisoners," Fly moaned.

"No Carmine, they do hate us. Their ignorance makes them fear us. They are the prisoners."

"But Harry, I was so happy when I was little. I was like the others," Fly sobbed.

"There, there, Carmine. . . your boyhood will endure as a thing of beauty. The Castle melted in the waves, but it shone brilliantly for a moment, didn't it?"

Carmine nodded, wiping his eyes.

"Spare the rod and spoil the sex, Fly," Ike added.

"Tell me, Francis," said Harry, apparently addressing Ike, "where else but here could you find solitude and silence so easily? Brothers to support you? Acceptance? Why must you remain stiff as a bard?"

"How did you know my name?" Ike asked, astounded.

"What other name could you possibly have, or, to be precise, have forgotten, Frank?" Harry asked.

Ike smiled, his wall of anger, his shield, lowered for a moment.

"Sitting here, on this chessboard," Harry mused, as Fly stared at the checked floor, "we are at once gods and pawns. And this place is our home. . . if indeed we are mere literary devices, my friends, then I shall be a deus ex-machina. . . a god machine. . ."

The men grew quiet as Nurse Wren approached.

"Ready for four o'clock lights, guys?" she asked.

"Nurse Wren, Harry spoke! He called me Carmine!" Fly said. He winced as Ike elbowed him in the ribs. "Sorry, Ike," he muttered.

Nurse Wren smiled. "Did he now?" she asked, as she lit Fly's quivering cigarette. She lit Ike in turn.

"Get thee to a nunnery," Ike said, by way of thanks. Wren nodded.

"Hello, Harry," Nurse Wren said.

"Hi Joan," Harry said warmly. "It's your last day, is it not? Is your knapsack packed for the move? I hear the Upper Peninsula is tantamount this time of year."

With a gentle tap on Harry's broad shoulder, she replied, "I'll miss you, Harry."

"You have always, and will always, be here, Joan," Harry said, touching his hand to his heart. "Remember me to the forest," he added.

"I'll say goodbye on my way out," Nurse Wren replied as she fought to restrain a tear. "It's nice to see you men talking," she said.

Ike and Fly stared at their tablemate as Nurse Wren returned to her station, Harry to his.

"What gives here, Doyle?" Ike demanded. "Our diminutive songbird wasn't at all surprised that you're talking again. How did you know that she's moving to Michigan, she never told us?!"

Fly, pulling hard on his cigarette, stared at Harry searchingly.

"What is this, Doyle?" Ike demanded.

"Home," said Harry. "Men," he continued, "the ostrich is a clever bird. And a handsome one, I might add. He knows what the Old Bill meant when he said, 'better a wise fool, than a foolish wise man.' My friends, not all of the actors in our play are parallel players. Not all of the characters are stock. For example, the lovely Nurse Wren and I have spoken long and often. A sensitive creature, she, with a quite subversive smile. . . she informs the morning light with her luminous longing, as a songbird loves, through its singing. A gentleman may say no more."

"The sweet Ophelia," Ike said wistfully.

"But she's leaving, Harry," Fly noted.

"There are others, sweet Prince, others waiting only to be, or to be seen," Harry explained. "Others who know the answer to that old riddle: does a dog, or even a fly, have a Soul?"

His explanation complete, Harry slowly folded back into himself. Raising his hands to his face, palms joined, he bowed to his brothers. "Tyranny is a popular misconception," he said, in conclusion.

"Harry, you'll be back won't you?" Fly trembled. Ike grabbed Fly's shoulder reassuringly as Harry offered up a conspiratorial grin.

From her station, Nurse Wren smiled a farewell to her friend. Her Mona Lisa grin was reflected by the sphinx-like Harry Doyle. And in the joining of these two half smiles, faithful reader, we have a semblance of a solution to our query. As a poet-king once noted: "Life is just your point of view, a third person standing next to you."

REMEMBERING HENRY

Irving Stettner

HENRY MILLER. . . A dynamite subject! How did I get to know him? It is quite a story. . .

First there was Michael Fraenkel, whom I ran into in New York, spring, 1946, and who had been one of Miller's buddies, back in Paris in the Thirties. . . It was right after World War II, and I was just back from the Pacific, after a three year stint in the army. . .

Fraenkel was a writer, and a thin wisp of a man, with a thick grey moustache, loquacious, forever waving a fancy silver cigarette holder, fastidious, popping around on the balls of his feet, histrionic, peppery as a young gamecock. . . A strong, charismatic personality, yes, and since I was tender, impressionable twenty-three years old. . . It is not long before I am publishing a small book of his (at my own expense, with what is left of my army discharge pay), The Day Face and the Night Face. . .

Then a month later, I am accompanying Fraenkel down to Mexico City, as unpaid secretary, general factotum, giving him a hand publishing another opus of his, Bastard Death. Alas, or verily a book which died, or was never even born, because the Mexican printer absconded with the money, or turned out to be a dirty crook, and a long legal suit began, or dealing with equally crooked lawyers, etc., ad inf., all ending up in a total fiasco!

And I am packing my grip, "Adios!" Besides I have run out of money. . . Even my buddy, mentor, spiritual master Fraenkel says he is flat broke (though later on I found out he was filthy rich, even dabbling in the stock market, the old tightwad!). Anyhow, I am able to wheedle the train fare out of him, and gritting my teeth, head back to the sad-rack rat race, New York. . . But it is by way of the West Coast. . . Since two months previous someone had put the Tropic of Cancer in my hands — and blown me to star smithereens. . . And since I am aware that its author, one Henry Miller, is now living in the Santa Lucia mountains of California. . . I am on my way!

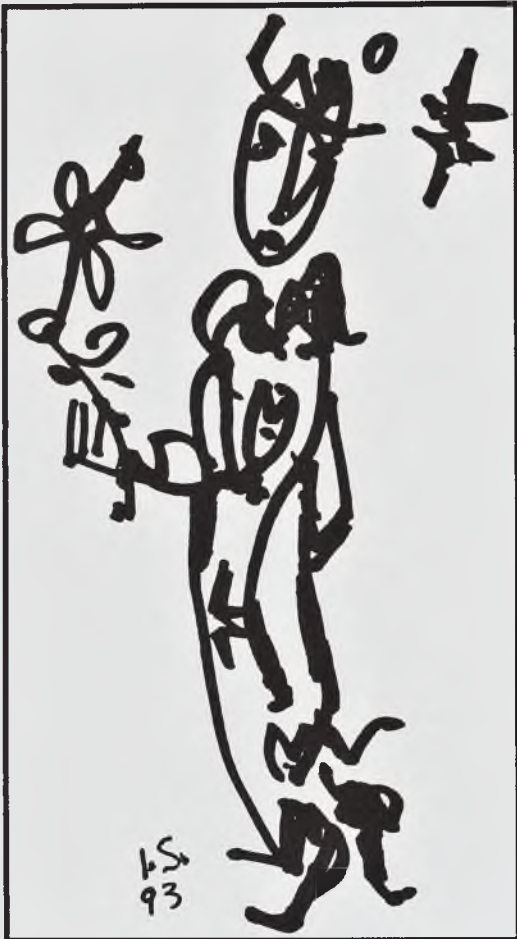
Fraenkel mentioned Miller now and then, said they were still friends, so before leaving I made him give me a letter of Introduction. Henry Miller: the name already has an electric charge to it, like a thunderbolt, simply from reading the Tropic of Cancer. True, I may not have understood the book fully, my first reading — I may even have misread it — but it had still hit me in the gut. And what came across in the glowing, jewel-exploding descriptions — was Paris, its unique beauty, magic, charm. . .

A week later, and I'm knocking on the door of Miller's cabin in Big Sur; only to find him away, and be told by his young wife Lepska that he was off visiting the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. So I hop on a bus, hightail it there, and as luck would have it, in two hours or so I am standing only a few feet away from my hero. . .

In the lobby of the museum, where I find Henry midst a small group of friends, speaking favorably, excitedly about the film None But the Lonely Heart, with Cary Grant and Ethel Barrymore. A man of average height, with a deep froggy voice, a semi-bald pate, thick glasses and carrying a Manila folder full of type-scripts. . . I catch his eye, and hand him Fraenkel's letter of Introduction. . . My knees are shaking, my heart doing a double-take. . . I ask Miller if he has an unpublished manuscript I can print, passing myself off as an ambitious young publisher. . . "How else can he find me interesting," I muse, "or even bother to speak to me?" It is my innate streak of cunning — being a Scorpio, with my moon in Gemini. . .

"Oh, that's who you are," he mutters, "wait — I've seen so many people today, hard for me to think—" A ten minute parley, which ends with Miller asking me to write him when I am back in New York. . . And in a week's time, upon arriving there, which I do forthright.

Then in reply, I recall, came a letter from Henry, asking a little favor: "Could you possibly look up my ex-wife June?" he wrote. "She lives in Brooklyn now, here's her



by Irving Stettner

address—”

It was June Mansfield, yes, or the famed Mona of Miller’s three volume novel, *The Rosy Crucifixion*. Except after leaving and divorcing Henry, she had married an American naval officer, and her name was June Corbett now. . . She lived in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, a few blocks from City Hall. .

I drop her a line, a time is agreed on, and I visited her. . . She has a small two room flat in a grimy, red brick lower middle class apartment house. . . A woman in her early 40s, with dark flashing eyes, swarthy complexion, a thin, frail figure. . . She speaks fluently, in a low, gentle voice, somewhat disjointedly, but intelligently, which goes with her lengthy forehead. .

“Henry, I made him find himself,” she says. “I made him reach for the stars. . . Life — that’s what matters. Life, yes, and it will always be. . . What are we worried about? It’s like a flower, a simple flower which always reaches for the light, day after day, growing. . .”

Times I could not follow her. “Sex,” she went on, “why all the fuss? I tried it again the other night, and — nothing. . . A little disgusting, in fact! . . . Sex, yes, oh, I’m finished with it.” We sat by the window, next to the courtyard, talking away into the summer night. . . In an hour or so, I recall, a man suddenly stuck his head out the window above, a burly, middle-aged guy, and in a gruff voice asked us “to quiet it down”. . . “Oh, I’m sorry!” June exclaimed, jumping off her seat, deeply apologetic, “terribly sorry!” Which I did not think was necessary, because we really had not been talking loudly, it seemed to me. . .

I saw June a few more times. One evening particularly, I remember, when we had dinner in a small, narrow Italian restaurant

on lower Second Avenue. Along with Bill Allen, who was my next door neighbor then in the “Slaughter-house alley” tenement, East Fifth Street, near Third Avenue. Bill who was also an ardent Henry Miller fan, and a patron of his, now and then sending Henry a little money. . . Good ole Willio Allen! I can still see his cherubic, red-nosed baby face, looking like a confirmed rummy, or a dead ringer for a Catholic priest (due to his habit of wearing charcoal suits, a black Stetson and stiff white collars). Allen, by profession a social worker, but also a heavy red Chianti guzzler, globe-trotter (once having made a six month trip around the world, on the way stopping in Calcutta to sit at Mahatma Gandhi’s feet for a month), dilettante, collector of erotica, Persian scrolls, Japanese sumi paintings, ladies’-man, bon vivant, inexhaustible monologist, storyteller and writer, author of one of the most fascinating unpublished manuscripts I have ever read, all five thick volumes, *Microspores of a Macrocsmic Voyage*. . .

Shortly afterward I made my first trip to Paris. (Yes, the idea to do so came from reading the *Tropic of Cancer*!) And once living there, the first two years especially, every so often I would receive a letter from Miller. They were warm, friendly little epistles primarily, wherein Henry seemed hungry for news — or just to think, dwell, ask questions about — his beloved Paris. “Have you walked down the rue Mouffetard yet? My favorite street in Paris! . . . And such-and-such cafe in Montparnasse — is it still in existence?” True, now and then he would ask me to run a “literary” errand, or look up his Paris publisher, Maurice Girodias, Olympia Press, and find out if a certain manuscript had arrived, or contact one of his translators. Regardless, even those letters were studded with a few

piquant remarks, a little anecdote, or Henry’s unique self-depreciatory humor, and always a sheer delight, a boost, or needed shot-in-the arm.

He would drop a helpful hint or two on how to get by in Paris, or give me the name and address of an artist or writer, whom he thought I might end up being friends with. I remember the time I had a big crush on Juliette Greco, the French folk singer (whom I had been introduced to, or knew slightly, and would run into occasionally in St. Germain-des-Prés), and in one letter made Henry aware of it. And he wrote back, yes, he understood, having seen her picture in a popular magazine, and thought her face “distinctive, full of character.” In another letter he raved about Marc Chagall’s autobiography *Ma Vie*, and strongly urged me to read it. And then there was the letter in which Henry asked me to look up an old friend of his from the Thirties, sending me his address. A Russian expatriate by the name of Eugene Pachoutinsky, who had helped Miller when he was down

and out, living in the Paris streets, and kept him from starving to death. My instructions were to look up Pachoutinsky, find out if he was in need of anything, clothing, food or money, and Henry would immediately send it.

Which I did. The Russian lived in a dusty little flat near the Porte d’Orléans, on the rue d’Alésia. He was a frail, slim man with chestnut curly hair, pinched cheeks and big blue-grey eyes, tender as a gazelle’s. They watered when I mentioned Miller’s name. . . “Ah, Henri,” he said, smiling softly, “whenever we played chess — he always beat me!”. . . His wife was a little plump brunette, a Frenchwoman who the whole time I was in the apartment kept polishing the parquet floor in the small living room, with a steel wool pad attached to her right foot. Pachoutinsky related how he had met Miller, twenty-five years previous — while he was working as a piano player in a small movie house; for two weeks he kept Miller in meals and cigarettes, and at night would let him sleep under the piano. . . “Alas, I’m no longer a pianist,” said



Irving Stettner



by Colleen McGrath

Pachoutinsky, “but a haberdashery salesman.” He showed me samples of the boxer shorts and wool socks that he hawked. . . Finally I discreetly dropped Miller’s offer — “As an old friend, well, he knew the war years had been tough — if he could possibly send something —” “No, nothing, thanks,” responded the Russian, smiling, humbly, “but if Henri would like to drop me a letter. . .”

But if he had said “Yes” — could Henry have helped him substantially? I doubt it. Since in his letters to me, quite often Henry would involuntarily make me aware how broke he was. Do not forget that at this time, the early ‘50s, Miller’s books were still banned in the States. And even if they were being published, printed in English and sold in Paris, and the sales were considerable, times even phenomenal (thanks to the thousands of GI’s in post-World II Europe): due to some crazy French law, publisher Maurice Girodias was unable to send Henry the royalties due him, no, not a cent.

Yes, it was a thrill: to now and then receive a letter from the Henry Miller, the man who had exploded the literary scene in London, New York, Paris, all over the world, who “had broken the sound barrier”. Still, ironically, pathetically, it was not keeping the writer from going hungry, or penniless as a beggar. I recall distinctly one letter, wherein Henry wrote me shortly after his wife Lepska had left him (ran away with another guy, it became clear later on), and he was alone with his two kids to take care of, Val and Tony, both under age ten then: “Irv, today I had to walk two miles to buy my kids some milk, and spent my last few bucks. . .”

Though much to my amazement. . . Now and then a large package would arrive from him in the mail: with clothing enclosed, a sport jacket, a pair of pants, or wool sweater, so on; secondhand, true (probably sent him by one of his fans), but in good condition. Yes, bad off as Henry was, he always thought of his friends. Yes, as anyone who happened to know him, even slightly, can verify: Henry was always bighearted, a born sucker, a giver, with a streak of magnanimity in him a mile wide, like a river of pure, precious ambrosia. He was generosity per se, personified. (Which may have rubbed off. . . Because I recall going out, once, twice, buying a copy of the Tropic of Cancer, and a few beat-up, secondhand French books; then making a package of the whole lot, and mailing it (using a phony sender’s address) off to Henry. Nota bene, in those days, under the counter in the States, the Tropic of Cancer sold for almost an astronomical sum.)

There was the day when a half-dozen of his watercolors arrived. . . Mea culpa! With Henry’s vague instructions “to show them around Paris. . .” Did he want me to approach a few galleries? I was not sure, but being desperately broke at the time. . . I sold them, I confess, to a few hot Henry Miller fans in St. Germain-des-Prés (largely young Frenchmen, oddly enough). However, just for the record: a few years later, back in New York, and waking up one morning in the chips, I sent Henry a two hundred dollar money order. Perhaps not as much, but it salved my conscience. . . Still, mea culpa!

And then one day Henry’s Into the Night Life came in the mail. . . A large, handsome, deluxe book, done in collaboration with the Israeli artist Bezalel Schatz, illustrated with two dozen or so of his lively, colorful paintings. It was finely printed, using a special silk-screen process, and a limited edition. Attached was a note from Henry, asking me to show it to a few artists, writers living in Paris, and get their impression of it, or a few words which could be used as blurbs. And enclosed were their names and addresses: André Breton,

Fernand Léger, Marc Chagall, Raymond Queneau. . .

I was living in a small hotel up in Montmartre then, I recall, Le MidiHotel on rue Tholozé. . . What a setup! Soon after moving in, I became fast friends with the hotel proprietress, a Madame Amizet, and three or four of the guests. They were a chummy, hearty, happy-go-lucky bunch, and in short order I was spending a good part of each day, whether I liked it or not, hobnobbing, drinking and feasting with them. . . As if a big party was continually in progress! Anyhow, soon as Into the Night Life arrived, I sat down and wrote a letter to Breton, Chagall, etc., complying with Miller’s request.

Fernand Léger was the first to respond, writing back the day and time I could visit him in his studio on the rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, up in Montparnasse. He was a tall, heavy-set man, taciturn, stolid, a cross between a grizzly bear and a stone dolmen, exuding the quiet strength of both.

He showed me his recent work: large canvases of nudes, workmen, bicyclists, fruit, flowers, etc., in bright prime colors, singing yellows, blue, red, blacks. Rather cold, impersonal, I thought, but still bold, lyrical statements about everyday life. He was slow to speak, Léger, unwind, but eventually brought up the subject of perspective, and remarked that he didn’t think it was necessary in modern painting.

Also he told me about his visit to New York, during World War II, where he had rented a studio, lived and painted for three years. “A tough town,” he said, “and it was a big blow living there, like a stone axe coming down on my back. . . But I took it as a challenge — or an incentive. Actually, I think I did some of my strongest work in America. . . Paradoxically! Here, let me show you this painting—”

André Breton wrote back that I could drop by any time. He had a little dark flat on the Boulevard de Clichy, with a strange sign on its front door; a black silhouette of a weird animal, either a baby rhino or a werewolf, and a few enigmatic words underneath on the subject of Surrealism. . . He was warm, friendly, but didn’t really say much. And a bit of a charmer, since almost the whole time I was there, sitting back relaxedly on a green leather couch, his long legs crossed, he kept saying, in a suave voice, “Mon cher, mon cher, naturellement. . .” like I was an old friend, though it was our first meeting. Whatever, he agreed to read Into the Night Life, and give me his comment.

Raymond Queneau was down in Spain, off on a long vacation, so that was that, no chance there. Marc Chagall was away two weeks, so his female secretary wrote back, but if I could wait till such-and-such a date, he was sure to grant me a visit. Then — the two weeks went by. . . And believe it or not, it just slipped my mind! Why? One, I had just met Françoise (the blue-eyed brunette I once told you about), and swept off my feet, was seeing her two or three times a week; secundo, during the day I was at the Le Midi Hotel, where soon as I stepped out the door of my room, I was in the middle of a lively ball always going on; and finally, evenings I was going over to the Left Bank and the Cafe Flore and meeting up with pals Albert and Sasha, who were nightly introducing me to a slew of stunning young French movie vedettes, actors, writers, musicians, vagabond poets, etc. All in all my own life was so replete, full of incidents, accidents, thrilling, dramatic encounters, even traumatic—I was completely indifferent about meeting Marc Chagall, or the Pope, the ghost of King Tutankhamen, President de Gaulle, Marilyn Monroe or Picasso himself!

Hinge
for Toshio

Tojin Toji Joshoji Shokokuji Tofukuji Tolu kuji?
Manganji Mokyoji Mokoji Ginkakuji Kinkajui Kinky!
Daitokuji Kodaiji Sanjusangendo Tell me again
Nyorenji Nyokenji Mibudera My blood dares you
Bokkakujo Reikanji Nanzenji Zenrinji (hianji
(hianin Shorenin Mansuin ikimas ka)
(hisakuin Monneinin Shinyodo Komyeji Come
Go Come Go Is it good) Mai Mai Ies li
li Ies Ieyasu Good
Watash-tachi wa doko ni ikimas ka?

I'm fading, like Ieyasu, like a ghost, to Kyoto
in the rain
A good place for ghosts, I think.
He appears. I pull a branch of maple to wet him through
It wets both of us. Ghosts become uncrossed in the rain
Blind.
I lead him to a noodle shop. Order fox soba futtatsu
kitsune for two. It arrives hot and sweet.
I sweat through my skirt as he shows me his tattoos.
I thought nobility didn't have tattoos. I say
"I got them after I died." He's proud.

White cranes. A dragon. A leaping tiger.
Looks like a rock to me. I say.
That's zen for you. he replies.
Chrysanthemums. Pine cones. Red clouds.
A sake cup.
We play hanna juda with patches of his skin.
Yakuzo flowers match up.
"Mannami, he laughs, "sake under the full moon,
under the cherry blossoms.
But I have the rain series.

I question him on reality, a puzzle.
"The hinge has five parts.
he says, "but only one join.
I need a hint. "Why not four?"
"Four is death. He wins the hand.

I counter. "The eye you see isn't an eye because you see it.
It's an eye because it sees you.
"But I know Machado personally. he says. I lose. He rolls
a joint.
"You're strange for a Japanese warrior. I say, peeved.
"My heart is severe. My mind is traditional.
however I look to you. he replies.

for a ghost, he looks strong, sword scarred,
jowls heavy with war
but his hands are beautiful
Long dark slender fingers, square-tipped, delt
No move uncertain.
Gracful and sure as they draw me
back into the shadow of the temples.
"A temple is a joining. he says.
"But what about the tourists?" I ask.
"We who are dead enjoy certain privileges. and
his dark hands move down.
His statue watches, seated between an ancient enemy
and a Buddha. The ghost of Tokugawa Ieyasu says.
"Welcome to my peaceful home. His hands part my thighs,
on the arch of Mountain Gate.
High above Kyoto, incense rises.
"Are you sure? I whisper.
A gong sounds twice, a drum once, in the mist.
His tongue flickers twice,
once.
"In Japan, when we come
we go.
His tongue flickers, catches drops of moon's blood.
I'm fading. "Then where are we going?" I demand.
"Watash-tachi wa doko ni ikimas ka?
like a ghost. To Kyoto. To Tojin Toji Joshoji
Shokokuji.

by Jaida n'ho Sandra

Notes on the Japanese

1. The poem is circular, beginning and ending with a recitation of temples in Kyoto.
2. Most of the Japanese is paraphrased in English within the poem, so no meaning is lost by not knowing both languages. The yakuzo (gangsters) play a gambling card game called hanna juda in which pictures of flowers and animals are collected into sets.
3. Tokugawa Ieyasu was a famous Shogun; Machado a Spanish poet.
4. The poem is partially a play on the different way orgasm is referred to in English (to come) and Japanese ("iki" - to go).

THE MOTOREDE CHAPTER

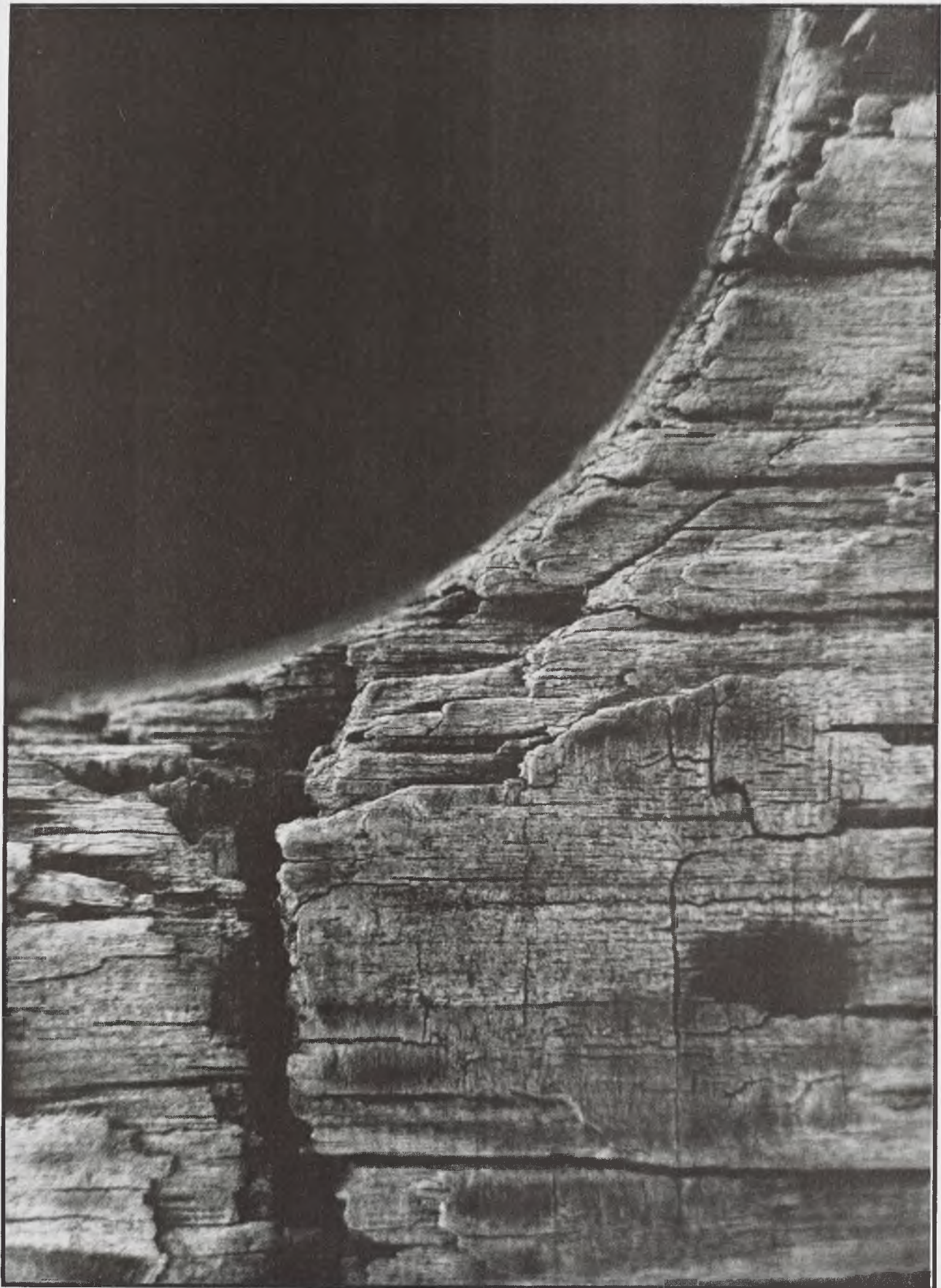
by Charlotte Meehan

My mother founded MOTOREDE — The Movement to Restore Decency — back in 1970, the year my baby sister was born. This was her fifth child, the fourth had just made it to first grade, and, damn it, she wasn't going to spend another five years mopping floors, bleaching underwear, breaking up fights, and burning toast. She was going to stand up and be counted. She had a giant replica of a policeman's cap made complete with gold insignia, silver studs, and shiny black visor, which she sported all over town on top of her 1968 steel blue Ford stationwagon. She also prominently displayed blue bumper stickers with white lettering saying, "Support Your Local Police and Keep Them Independent" on key areas of the car, along with a sign post of the same slogan on the front lawn. Busy saving the country, she was always late picking me up from Cora Chateauf's house, always with that police cap on top of the car. I never knew which mortified me more — watching for her trying to disappear into the front window while Mrs. Chateauf put supper on the table, or seeing her arrive in full red, white, and blue regalia, like a one-woman traveling circus.

Her best friend Jane, a brunette Marilyn Monroe knock-off from across the street, became her co-partner in this crusade. She, too, was fed up with being a full-time mother and housewife, having been forced to marry at 16 (for the obvious reason) which meant turning down a chance to sing with The Grasshoppers. Recently, she had overdosed on a bottle of valiums while pregnant with her fourth child; this would be good for Jane, my mother thought, good for the cause. Together they would be invincible, my mother providing knowledge and maturity, Jane adding passion and glamour. Joey was born. Jane was happy to have her old body back, which had only taken three months on an Entenmann's coffee ring and Ex-Lax diet. She was ready to leave the house, ready for a full commitment to the cause, which meant leaving the kids at home alone, but she knew they understood. By the time Joey turned two, none of us seemed to be able to stop him from throwing all his shoes and bottles down the sewer on the corner of Wade and Pacific. His father beat him many times and locked him in his room; nothing worked.

Jane was too busy working on MOTOREDE to worry about that. She and my mother were saving the country from impending moral ruin, and from race integration in the public schools by mandatory bussing. They stormed all the PTA meetings they could find, railing against the newly mandated sex education and sensitivity training programs. "This is nothing but a thinly disguised Communist plot to pollute the minds of America's youth. We will fight you to the death, in the name of God and this country." Once they came close. They had broken into a school board meeting, armed with their pamphlets and bumper stickers, shouting "keep our schools free of crime and ignorance. Keep our children safe and Communist free." The principal asked them politely to sit down and shut up. Two Joan of Arcs, they stood there defiantly, ready to be burned. He tried escorting them to the door; they wouldn't budge. The police were called in to take them away. Once at the station, they were finally getting somewhere. The Chief of Police of Bridgeport, Connecticut was backing them 100 percent.

Quickly, Chief Buchanan (otherwise known as Buck) and Jane began traveling the lecture circuit, Jane looking radiant and more glamorous than ever. They were the perfect talk show team: Jane, young, beautiful, well spoken, a mother of four; Buck, distinguished, older, blue uniformed, and macho. My mother was so proud. Her dream had come true. What she could not have predicted was that Jane and the Chief of Police had each other — not MOTOREDE — on their minds. Within six months they had left their families and taken off on a drinking binge cruise to the Bahamas. American life would never be the same.



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RADIANCE

by Jim Higgins

My name is Jim Higgins. I stand six feet, one inch tall. I have dark brown hair, cut-short. I wear wire-rimmed glasses.

In the second grade, they made me responsible for getting a girl in my class to talk. She spoke only in the barest whisper and often looked at the ground. Her name was Susan. The Teacher tried to get Susan to talk in class, but could not. She lost patience with Susan easily. When Susan was called on to read, she spoke so softly the words were hardly audible. The teacher would lose her temper and yell at Susan, which only caused her to retreat more into herself. Everyday, the teacher would send Susan and I out into the hallway for an hour so that Susan could read to me. I encouraged her and supported her; praised her gains and went easy on her errors. Mostly I told her that it was okay, that she was okay. She was eventually able to read loud enough in class so that everyone could hear her. I was in the second grade. They wanted me to get Susan to talk.

My son will be three years old when he dies. He will have dark hair, curly like mine. I don't know what his name will be. He will die in a freak accident: a car out of control will jump the curb and smash him into a building. His mother, my wife, will be with him. She will be unhurt, the car having missed her by inches. My son will die instantly, and for that, at least, we will be grateful, that he did not suffer. My mother will be very unhinged by the tragedy; he will be her first grandchild. My wife Lori will be plagued by uncontrollable guilt for months. We will both recover, but will always be haunted, during quiet times, by tiny ghosts that beg us to play.

I am a caseworker at a private social services agency. Families who abuse or neglect their children are referred to me for counseling. I am twenty-eight years old. I have no children that I know of. I am single and not involved in a relationship with a woman at this time. I wear dungarees to work, and often forget to shave.

I was once involved with a woman from India. She was a painter. She had long wavy black hair, and dark skin the color of wet, autumn leaves. She was small and beautiful and walked very surefootedly, like a lioness or a swan. When we were in bed, or just alone, she could not let me touch her face. I caress face out of habit; she pulled away from being conditioned. She told me that she had been with a boyfriend for two years who beat her mercilessly. Whenever I would touch her face, she would bat my hand away out of reflex. I would apologize, she would apologize. It happened over and over: my reflex, then hers, my reflex, then hers. I was always amazed when she spoke of the boyfriend. Aside from her conditioned, protective gestures, all her wounds were invisible.

I haven't met Lori yet. She will be my wife. I saw her once in a dream and immediately knew that she was The One, that person we all look for, the one that matters, the perfect match. People say: When the Right Person comes along, you'll know. I've never felt like that with anyone. Close to it, perhaps, or so I thought when I was involved or pursuing. But in retrospect, no. Lori has my color hair but straight, just above shoulder length, cut blunt with bangs. Her smile is sublimely simple, with mouth closed like Alice's Cheshire Cat. She'll be thirty-two when I meet her. Certain friends will remark on how much she looks like my sister.

Lori will work in one of the helping professions, a nurse, I think. The image I carry of her in my head, from the dream, is of her doing some kind of work with her hands: folding laundry, packing a box, stacking books I can't be sure. She is wearing faded jeans and a pink long-sleeve t-shirt, that has six buttons down the front. She is smiling while talking to someone. She seems content.

I live on an island, Staten Island, in New York City. My street is named after a man named Peter Styvesant. My apartment building is on a hill. The boiler often breaks here, and so there are periods where there is no hot water. I don't know many people who live in the building. I do know the mailman, whose name is Joe.

I went out to San Diego one summer, to a large comic book convention. I met a beautiful bohemian sort of woman named Missy. She worked for a publisher of underground comics. We spent a lot of time together, going to parties, eating out, walking, talking,

whatever. Our time together was like watching two hands clasp in slow motion. During conversation, she mentioned a boyfriend whom she was ambivalent about. This was enough to prevent me from taking any serious steps towards a tryst. A half hour before she had to get on a bus to leave town, Missy, while the two of us were lounging in her hotel room bemoaned the fact that she hadn't had a fling with me. We kissed, embraced, and rolled around on the bed for a few minutes, all the time we had. But our joining was never consummated. There just wasn't time. I made love to her only in my mind (over and over after she left). I said goodbye in a grungy Greyhound bus terminal, surrounded by vagrants, refuse, and lost opportunities.

I will meet Lori at a party. There will be mostly people there I don't know. I will have been invited by a close woman friend of mine, whose opinion I trust, to whom I feel very close. Lori and I will make eye contact for a while across the people at the party. Then, very easily, very naturally, we will both breach the distance between us and start talking. We laugh and joke (I am very attracted to her sarcastic sense of humor) and quickly realize that we click. She is warm, and talks easily about her feelings. By the end of the party, I will be surrounded by the sensation that, even though I will have just met Lori, she is familiar to me. Eventually I will come to feel that I have always known Lori, that I always will know Lori, and that it was only a matter of time before we met again.

My parents are still married and also live on Staten Island. My brother is four years younger than me and lives home. We see each other a lot; we're friends. My sister is two years older than me and lives in Manhattan. When she was in college, we were very close. She would come home for weekends, and we would sit up in her bedroom and talk for hours. We had a falling out, somehow; not a fight or an argument, just differences. Disapproval from her, resentment from me. We see each other on holidays, talk pleasantly, but that's about all. I miss her.

Most people have a black spot somewhere in their history of relationships. A person that is like poison, eating away at everything that is good in you, destroying everything that you have built up to make you who you are. I had one. I won't use her name because I still fear her, even though we managed to reconcile afterwards enough to be friendly. She had a childhood that was marked by physical abuse, often severe. She got away for a short time to college, but a suicide attempt landed her in psychiatric inpatient care, briefly, and then home, back with her father who had beaten her so terribly. I got together with her years after. She was still living at home. She talked constantly, continuously of her past, of her abuse by her father, and later by cruel boyfriends. I felt guilty when I thought she was self-centered, how could I be so insensitive? I wanted to help her. I eventually realized that she was not able to focus her energies on someone else. Her needs were enormous, and her demands became greater. She wanted all of me, all of the time. We had arguments for weeks. Finally, we had our last one. It ended in another suicide attempt, with her in the hospital. I saw her there briefly. As I left, I said: No more. I refused to be swallowed up by her insanity. I cut her loose there and then, and swore I would feel no guilt. She was drowning, in an emotional maelstrom, and almost dragged me down with her.

Lori and I will have two daughters. When Kate, the younger one, is graduating from elementary school, she is a mature woman of eleven, I will have a great realization. We will be outside in the schoolyard during one of those June days where the sun is so brilliant that it makes you chuckle as you squint. I'll turn to Lori and tell her that this is what I have waited for. Not this ceremony, not this graduation, but this a family, in the prime of its growth. A cluster like a well tended garden: developing together, able to be trimmed back when necessary, and allowed to flower and blossom exuberantly when it's right to do so. I'll look at Lori and see something beautiful; not her form or her shape but something intangible, transcendent, something like love.

I'll hold Katie in my arms and I'll think: This girl here, is part of me. And I've known her, too. But I've never loved her like I do now. It will be a radiant day.



I Want to Make that Train, Damn It

Don't ask me why
but I heave
to the insides
of my bones
every time
this stench
even in myself

Oh, yes
you motherfucker
going too slow
through the turn-
style at
Broadway Lafayette
any one

You'll always
piss me off
because I'm
angry already
to be descending
into that
Oliver Twist
token booth
of a sludge pool
down there
on the D

Will I fall off
jump in
get pushed
or squeeze on
anything
to avoid
another trip

down
piss
down
shit
down
roach
down
rat
down

Down that
I'm sleeping
be quiet
bed on the
ground
army barracks
no rules
crack smoking
Kamikazes
on the D

I can't take it
I won't take it
I want to lie
down

by Charlotte Meehan

School Board Serpico

by Thomas Deignan

While Asbestos And Sexual Politics Have Dominated The NYC Schools Spotlight, The Saga Of Brent Cutler May Reveal To The New Schools Chancellor Larger Demons That Haunt The Board Of Ed.

"Come out and die like a man!" he was told.

When Kenneth Drummond, a member of scandal-ridden School Board 12 in the South Bronx, was charged with numerous crimes some months back, again raising the spectre of corruption at the local levels of the Board of Education, these words must have echoed sickly inside Brent Cutler's head.

Formerly the superintendent's executive assistant at School Board 9, also in the South Bronx, Cutler has traveled an odyssey through New York City's school boards that few can wholly comprehend or appreciate, including, apparently, the New York media. The opaque nature of the story, despite its made-for- "Hard Copy" morsels of sex and violence, can be attributed to both the complexity of the intertwining crimes, and the disturbing fact that most of the figures involved were either elected or paid—sometimes both—to provide a glimmer of hope to only a small number of New York City's poorest children; those residing in the Morissania section of the South Bronx, where two in three students read below their grade level.

Cutler's long, strange trip began about three years ago, when Carmelo Saez, then the president of Board 9, offered Cutler a simple video tape displaying the talents of a not-for-profit drum and bugle organization Saez, at that time, directed. The tape, Cutler soon discovered, was produced by Board 9's media team, who were paid while working on Board of Ed time. Saez' expectations, Cutler explains, were that he would raise money for the group and in turn, afford Cutler a much more relaxing career at District 9; a not uncommon practice of political one-hand-washing-washing-the-other in a district where it is career etiquette to buy and sell jobs. No one can attest to this better than Cutler and his wife, Helaine Atlas, also formerly an educator in the district: She was once asked for \$18,000 in exchange for a principalship.

Cutler eventually met with Deputy Schools Chancellor Stanley Litow to discuss the video tape, which ultimately forced former Schools Chancellor Joe Fernandez to remove Saez in June 1992 from his position as Board President. Saez had been forced to resign from his position as director of the drum and bugle organization as

well, after an investigation showed that between 1989 and 1990, he had misappropriated part of the organization's \$240,000 budget. Saez denies all charges, calling them politically motivated.

Frightening perhaps, and a little pathetic all this, but nothing earth-shattering in a district with a history such as Board 9's where a principal was arrested for buying crack in 1988, where a board member and his wife—a state assembly-woman—were indicted for stealing a baby grand piano from a school, where nine board members were convicted of wrongdoing from 1989 to 1991, where a board executive assistant under Saez was recently convicted of child molestation, where Israel Ruiz, a convicted felon recently under investigation for not residing in his district, sits as a City Council representative, and where Cutler was told by the School Board's then Vice President to "come out and die like a man." In short, this district may be a grand microcosm for new Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines, one which may reveal, beyond the headlines, the most ferocious, yet stealth problem facing New York City's Board of Education.

On April twenty-second, 1991, George Palermo, Board Vice President and Saez ally, burst into Cutler's office livid that Cutler was implementing orders to relocate Palermo's office from leased property to Board of Ed property. He assaulted Cutler and attempted to choke him, all the while waving a gun, threatening both Cutler and his secretary. Palermo, who plead guilty to theft of public records in 1983, eventually plead guilty to charges of menacing, claiming that the gun he was waving was a toy gun. Real or not, a gun was never found. (Cutler's secretary Marisol Rodriguez, who says she has knowledge of guns, swore in court it was real.) Saez, not on the scene, denied a gun was ever involved.

It wasn't long after this incident that, in an effort to quell the damaging publicity that might impinge on Board 9's well-oiled operation, the sharks began circling. The casualty? Cutler's wife, then an acting principal in the district, became ensnared in this burgeoning enigma. With the help of Councilman Ruiz, who supplied the photos, apparently as a favor to his friends at Board 9, *The New York Post* and WNBC news ran nude pictures of Atlas saying she offered them to Saez as a means of sexually enticing him into giving her a principalship. It was later proven that it was an eleven year-old photo taken by Atlas' former fiancé, who at one time also worked in District 9, and apparently understood its idiosyn-

crasies. Some have speculated he gave the photos to Saez in return for future favors. At the time, Saez and Ruiz told the *Post* and Channel 4 that they would produce affidavits that would prove unequivocally that Atlas was the corrupt, shrewd and manipulative one pulling all the strings here. Those affidavits never surfaced.

Cutler and his wife had, months before, requested immediate transfers. They also filed lawsuits against the central Board of Ed and Board 9, as well as Palermo and Saez personally. The harassing phone calls continued, threatening Atlas' job security if each persisted in their refusal to drop the charges. As expected, before the case was heard, she was removed from her position as acting principal.

Despite the microscope that the recent school board elections were placed under, few wrote about Cutler's seemingly irresistible and sexy story, which seems a story born to emblazon New York City's tabloid headlines for days. Cutler called on all the city dailies but none were interested. Even when it was reported *en masse*, after Terry Golway at *The New York Observer* took the story and ran, it seemed another nameless, faceless, victimless story about typical City sleaze.

The sporadic reportage provided little analysis concerning the possibility that Board 9 may be the symptom of a larger disease. In fairness, all the papers wanted to know afterwards why Cutler hadn't come to them first. Few things were more useless to Cutler at this point than irony.

"I hate to say it but it's standard to read this stuff in New York," Cutler notes. "A couple of weeks ago there were six killings over the weekend and I heard a reporter on the radio say 'Just another weekend in New York'."

Things only got stranger when, despite all their improprieties, both Saez and Palermo ran in the recent May 4th school board elections. And while Palermo was too stained even for this district, Saez was not. He won and began his 18th year of service to the parents and children of the Bronx on July 1st. He was also reelected as Board president.

"I felt the real issues of the school board election were never discussed," contends Cutler. "I don't care if it's the religious right or the liberal left, I'd like to see people that are honest talk about education. If you can do that and not steal the money, then we can talk about other issues."

Suffice to say, Cutler's crusade has simply not had the effect on school boards that fellow whistleblower Frank Serpico's had on the NYPD in the mid-Seventies, despite the fact that the

wrongdoing may be equally rampant, and the victims equally helpless. And those victims—the 30,000 children of this community—nearly became a mere chunk of vote-less constituents recently. On September 14th, Carmelo Saez and all his legal baggage ran for the district's City Council seat in the Democratic primary. He ended up losing, quite handily in fact, to incumbent Wendell Foster. But he did garner 21% of the vote. He missed out, this time around anyway, on representing the South Bronx along with Councilman Ruiz and Councilman Rafael Castaneria Colon, in the news recently facing accusations that he battered his former lover. Colon was also arraigned on charges that he stole nearly \$400,000 from the City, in the form of phantom checks, one written by a cousin who had died four months prior. The charges levied by his lover were dropped, but Colon faces thirty years in prison on over 700 counts of wrongdoing in charges related to the embezzlement case.

Cutler and Atlas meanwhile, both still working as educators in different parts of New York City, remain happily married, and he says, in a way, strengthened by this experience.

"When we looked around, especially on the day the article came out about the photos, we found we were really alone. It was a terrible feeling." Cutler continued. He recalls an interview he and his wife did on WNYC radio, the day after the nude photos were publicized, and he remembers his wife keeping her head hung low. "After the interview I said to her 'We've responded to it, now lift

. . . a principal was arrested for buying crack in 1988. . .

your head up.' I felt the pain she was feeling." And pain is likely what the residents of District 9 will continue feeling. After finally being suspended for his improprieties, Cutler contends Saez' zeal for wrongdoing was as passionate as ever during his run for re-election. In District 9, ballot boxes disappeared on Election Day, and Saez, some have said, may have paid Board of Ed workers \$8 an-hour to obtain last minute votes.

The position Saez was eventually reelected to carries a modest stipend of \$125 a month, but according to Cutler, this is supplemented by Saez' political income. "Board members are selling positions. They sell the district office jobs, they sell assistant principalships, principalships, after school jobs. These people are making lots and lots of money." According to Cutler, Saez has been unemployed for the last three years and, on his \$125 a-month stipend, he maintains a residence, owns a car and feeds his family.

Cutler, a congenial, accommodating and persistent whistleblower,—described, along with his wife, by Jack Newfield in *The New York Post* as "a

little flaky in their self-absorbed zealotry"—displaying rare cynicism, also says that he knew all along Saez was going to repossess his school board seat because of his political connections, as well as the allegations reported in *The Village Voice* that claim that principles from P.S. 4, 109, 114 and 35 were working on the campaign throughout Election Day.

"I tend to think that this story is one that will continue until School Board 9 in minus Carl Saez forever." said Cutler.

Aside from the recent conviction of Drummond at Board 12, and perhaps Saez' loss in the Council primary, Cutler's only vindication has been his appearance on Donahue, which finally allowed him to tell the world this crazy story, rather than a tiny New York City radio station, or a small-circulation newspaper. But even on this show, his story didn't seem to fit the overall theme, and while the audience gasped as he once again recited his nightmare, most of the show was allotted to the other guests.

Reflects Cutler: "I'd have to say in most ways this whole thing has ruined my career. Would anybody in the New York City school system want to hire my wife, or I, when we have a reputation for speaking out against the School Board? The last thing they want is someone who has a history of talking about the problems that exist in the school system."

"My mother-in-law, when I first went to the newspapers, told me 'Go fight City Hall, you won't win.' But lives were being destroyed, in this case my wife's and my own, and to watch careers being destroyed, and knowing they've done it to many other people, it couldn't be allowed to continue. If I didn't stand up, how could I be a teacher? There's a point where you look yourself in the mirror and say, 'Are you going to be a victim?'"

It is with this hopeless sense of spitting in the wind that would allow one to greet the appointment of a new schools chancellor with gleaming optimism: new blood begets reform. Ramon Cortines, however, has shown that he may be more dangerous than, or at least indifferent to, the status quo. In early October, he reinstated nine thoroughly corrupt principles to the aforementioned School Board 12 of Kenneth Drummond infamy. A choir of editorial criticism, *The New York Daily News* and *The New York Times* included, railed this move. Ninfa Sigera, on the other hand, was quite pleased. Sigera is the Dinkins-appointed Bronx representative to the seven-member central Board of Education and her tenure on the board expires next June. She, like others, is aware of the political power and influence that entrenched school board politicians hold. Sigera's voting record, meanwhile, has essentially betrayed the Mayor (she is a member of the board's so-called "Gang of Four" Dinkins opponents); she supported Cortines as chancellor, rather than Dinkins' preference Joe Fernandez and

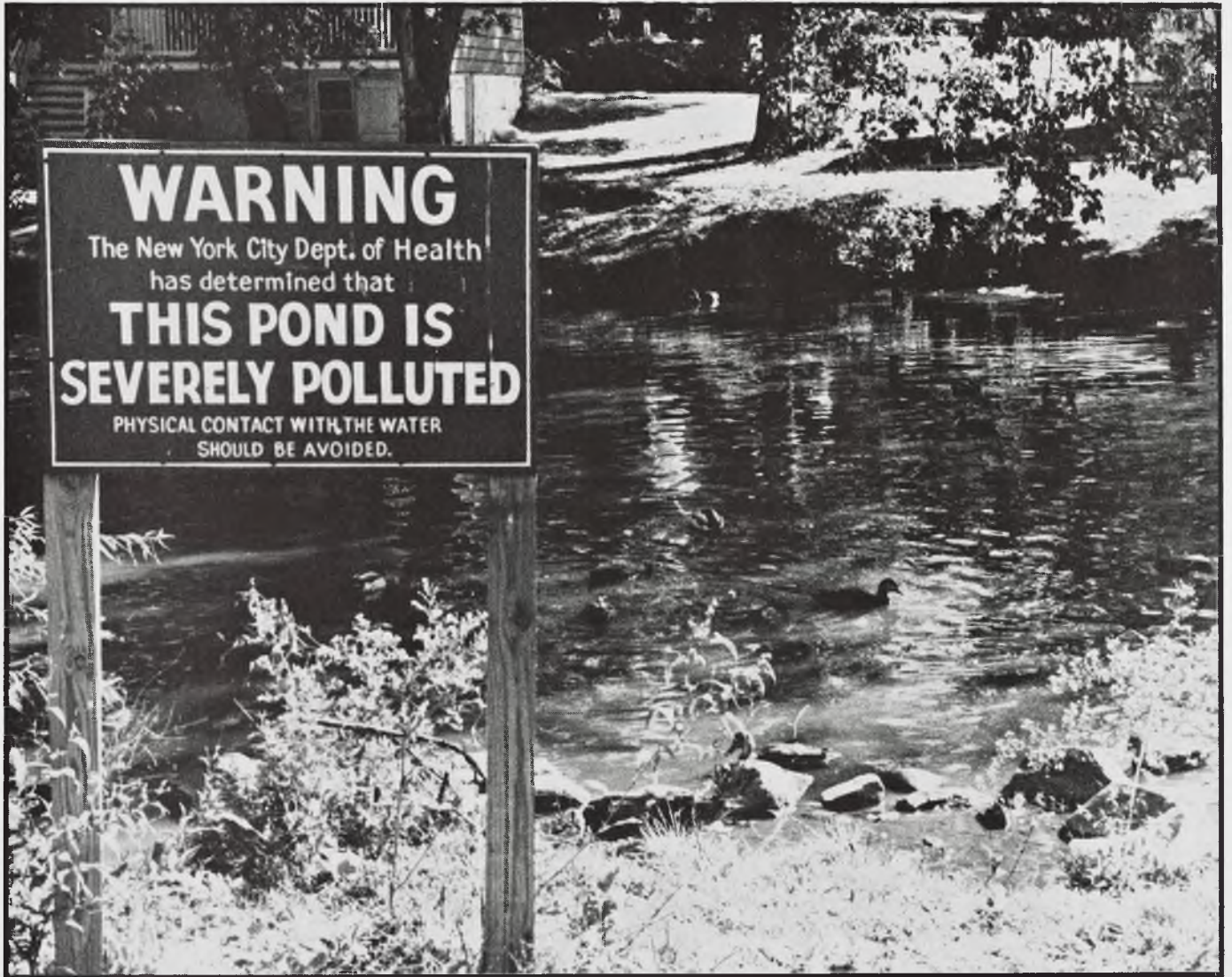
was also an opponent of the Mayor on the issue of the Rainbow curriculum and condom access. This ideological switch oddly coincided with the fact that Sigera's boyfriend (now husband) was once an employee in the Mayor's office but was let go. Sigera may also be harboring ill feelings for not being appointed president of the central board two years ago, when Carl McCall eventually was. Either way, if Mayor Dinkins is reelected, her seat on the board is history, especially since Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer has said he will not support her. That means Sigera's last hope is...Rudolph W. Giuliani. If he is elected the new Mayor of New York City, it will be his duty to fill two of the seven seats on the central Board of Ed. And in a tight race for Mayor, Giuliani has relied on a sordid cast of characters for support, a cast that includes Carmelo Saez and allies of those entrenched and corrupt principals at District 12, the ones that Sigera and Cortines are welcoming back—the entrenched school board politicians, Saez and others, who are trying, for their own reasons, to get Rudy Giuliani into City Hall, who in turn can help Sigera stay on the board, who in turn can continue to act passively towards and work with such corrupt figures. Political one-hand-washing-the-other...(See related story, "Washing Hands, Scratching Backs")

In a month or so, a report will be issued that is expected to expose the widespread corruption that took place during the May 4th school board elections. The details are likely to involve figures from Boards 9 and 12. Meanwhile, life in the Bronx's school boards plods along. The president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) was recently in New York to discuss the possibly corrupt methods by which Anna Perez became the principal of P.S 163 in District 12. Evidence suggests that she had not accrued the experience required to hold the job. Also, Perez transferred from District 12 to 9 at the same time a man was hired as a paraprofessional in District 9 and subsequently removed when it was discovered that he obtained the job without ever having his fingerprints taken, a requirement of any employee. That employee's name was Carmelo Saez Jr., son of the Board 9 president. Members of the committee responsible for hiring or not hiring Perez continue to investigate the situation, despite the numerous death threats. When this report is released next month, Brent Cutler, Carmelo Saez, the children of the South Bronx, and maybe even Ramon Cortines, will be watching. Perhaps then it will be easier to gauge what precisely was accomplished by Cutler and his wife's crusade. But it is when this question is asked that the spit most often flies back and hits someone's face.



Menu

Sweet and Sour Duck \$10.95



by Ryan Monroe

This morning. This sweltering, sultry, Sunday morning. It finally dawned on yours truly that I have always been a Rat. There can be no denying this, although denial has long been my principal defense. Ever since I can recall, I have felt no bond of kinship with the other members of my Mammalian family. The darting eyes, nervous stammering and hasty exits of those whom I encounter make it all too clear: the legacy my family has left me is that of an untouchable.

Mark my declension: Mammal; Rodent; Rat; Untouchable. To be sure, I am somewhat long in the tooth. However, I've always fancied my grin to be rather infectious. In fact, I find my face to hold a certain angular charm, sophistication even. Yet, I am feared and shunned by members of my own family. Too many of my contemporaries are put off by something they imagine they see in my character. Something which they allegedly deduce from my appearance.

Some of my peers have pointed out that my reclusive tendencies, more so than my physical attributes, annoy members of more gregarious species. I, however, have long suspected that the difficulty lies with my propensity to issue biting comments on the herd instinct: a behavioral pattern all too pronounced in the Mammalian world. It is my tendency to tease, to nibble around the edges of my neighbors, that really annoys. You see, I am a writer of the worst kind: a poet and a social commentator. A satirist condemned by my anti-intellectual countrymen to suffer life alone. Alone in the sewers of this American Century.

Oddly, something about my temperament seems inherently well suited to the subterranean depths to which I have been condemned. My confinement has provided me the means, motive and opportunity to pursue my happy hobby: lampooning the Philistine. Whether my pursuit is a genetic predisposition or a learned behavior, I know not. But, an avocation it is. Unfortunately, chronicling the folly of the mundane will not make you Bard-of-the-Month. For while "three blind Mice" makes amusing fodder for childsong, the reality is that Mice, while often blind, are firstly fearful, decidedly defensive and all too numerous. And their numbers increase daily. Of course, I do feel something for the crushing swell of immature

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faces, as the noble Mouse is indeed my cousin (although he denies our connection vehemently). My fondness, however, is tempered by the realization that these nymphs will age, and "mature", into mere units. Individual decibels in the cacophony of the swarm. Offspring that will, in turn, produce exponentially, more little faces, more consumers, more blind followers, more white noise. Alas, in the bell curve of the Rodent world, three blind Mice have become three billion, as they occupy, nay, infest, center stage, as the mean, the statistical norm. All the while their leaders rail against any population control, with the same ferocity with which they rant against living life fully. (This love of life, in the abstract, seems to me an oxymoron. Fetus envy.)

I digress. The point is that I have been made an outcast, an outlaw, for the "crime" of using my pen to parody my peers: these creatures who chatter ceaselessly; embody ambivalence, and; ultimately capitulate to weak impulses. Verily, the preliterate nations of our Mammalian America have made of your not-so-humble Bard, an Enemy-of-the-People. For my metaphorical "crime", for my use of wit. Yet, it is not the lyric of the Bard that the witless buffoons assault. Rather they level charges against my "character". Charges based on an idiotically literal interpretation of metaphor: that is, that the Poet, to be, must slay himself. The meaning of the metaphor is that for Cain, a Poet, to emerge from the slave Abel, Abel must slay his Self, rip open the prison of his mind. What is "understood" by the Public is that a "murder" has taken place. The masses seek justice (revenge) by casting aspersions, to cast out the literate leper. To stone the unbeliever. Well, stone me then, my Mammalian brothers. Your sticks and stones will, doubtless, impact on my bones, but your monosyllables cannot harm me. Like the noble Crow, against whom you also erect ragamuffin sentries, my disheveled appearance conceals an inner strength. My true character. You may deny me, thinking I have rejected you - but it is only your thoughtlessness that I reject. What good is the mindless existence of the hapless Hare, whose lot it is to procreate more out of subservience to stereotype than in pursuance of divine lust?

What good the empty existence of the simple Squirrel? The beggar in Eternal search of the elusive benefactor? With wilderness vanishing is not the suburban Squirrel the prototype of the sole survivor? Is not his existence the most sublime? The most comfortable? Perhaps the latter. But life on a leash is certainly not sublime, albeit survival. "Blasphemy!" you cry. Ah, the very word is music to my ears. I, the outlaw, who believes not in God the Mammal, let alone God the King of the Rodents!

And so, there it is. I write of indecent matters, sitting here in my dank abode, the scorn of civilization. I write with a humor the dim cannot perceive. And that is my "crime". So how do I plead? To the charge of misanthropy? A resounding "Not Guilty". For while I reject the herd instinct, the sanctity of subservience, I do so somewhat wistfully. Although I cannot be one of you, I am not filled with hate. Your folly is part and parcel of my own. Am I not, after all, a member of a brother species? Is there not room for the poet, however unsightly he and his subject matter? When I gaze upon my reflection, seeing my sharp features, my eyes, aflame with the coals of intellect, my shabby yet elegant coat of arms, my bare but versatile tail, my precise talons, well smoothed by the concrete of my cavernous realm, when I gaze on the facets of this repellent yet fascinating creature I ask myself and my distant brothers: am I not a contributor? To the history of our People? Should I not be accorded that status? Why is it that, in our immense nation, there is no room for the poet? In this American hour, is there not a second to spare for the least of the Rodents? I accept my station in life. The subterranean realm is my realm. And if I choose not to reproduce myself literally, but figuratively, can you not respect that? Must you look away from me? As though I do not exist? Can you not see my beauty, however well hidden? Can not my work be accorded merit? Am I not, after all, your mirror?

Your brother?

May I not have the Moment I've been denied?

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Toothpicks, lip gloss, hastily written phone numbers on dinner napkins, A kitchen knife hidden in an inside pocket of a winter jacket, three quarts of a bottle of vinegar (?).... A brand new silver gray leather jacket and a birthday watch still in the box. Carrying the clothing that was my son, Matthew. It was his second funeral. I kissed his shoes good-bye, I hugged all his sweats...not being able to get over the feeling that now I was really giving him up. (Something inside your head keeps telling you, if you hang onto his sox, sneakers, razor, and favorite stuff... he can't be gone.

When the phone rang three weeks ago... A man's voice told me my son Matthew had expired...there was no way this was to be believed...no one is advised in this manner ... I was wrong... it was so... no one could tell me how, where, when... until I agreed to identify my baby at the NYC medical examiners office... god forgive me, I prayed all the way there, someone had stolen his ID. And this was a terrible blunder... (only now after the fact am I able to apologize for wishing it was someone else's son in the morgue)

Did you know they only let you see a Polaroid? They never let me see his body. I cannot swear it was him in the picture, but as the days past, it was surely him in his casket. This could not be a happy ending, tomorrow was his 34th birthday, I brought him into this life on the same day (34 years later) that we cried at his funeral.

He was found face down in a park somewhere in the Bronx with the needle still in his arm, and crushed leaves on his cheeks... the autopsy report said he was well nourished, that was good. Did you know the autopsy takes 4 to 6 weeks? Maybe because to the powers that be he was not spectacular. They don't know that this was my good friend , his laughter got us through many rough spots. We had good times together, no one loved me like my Matthew.

He had been clean. For almost two years... I was never safer out in the world than when he was by my side. He had dignity and class. I was always proud to introduce him to anyone... his love and respect for his dad and I was always right there... he was no mystery to us.

We could spend the rest of our lives wondering who did this to our kid, had he become so discouraged looking for work? Did he hook up with someone with less resolve than he... and was talked into celebrating his birthday on the streets? Or had he been secretly (the vinegar) hooked again?

I believe he thought he could get over on us one more time, who's to know, get high, and by the time you reach home, you can tell them you stopped off for a few beers, they'll believe you, they always do, they love you... Who could it hurt?

My question is does Matt know he is dead, gone for all time? This time someone up there in the Bronx sold him some poison... they say he died instantly. He is so lucky, we die a little bit each and every day...

All we have left of him are his ashes, from dust to dust? His STARDUST will be sprinkled in his yard to keep him forever close to us.....

Love, Mom.....



by Donnie Bartkow

I C T U S R E V I E W

WOULD LOVE TO HAVE
YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Deadline for next issue:

friday, November

19th

WE ACCEPT:

ESSAYS

POETRY

PHOTOGRAPHY

ARTWORK

SHORT STORIES

& just about anything else
that will fit in black & white

Submission Guidelines:

Manuscripts should be typed (double space, one inch margins) on white paper. If possible, please include a 3.5" computer diskette (IBM or MAC) with submission. File types preferred: MacWrite II, Microsoft Word, or ASCII Text. Artwork (photos, drawings, etc.) must be black and white and no larger than 11"x17". No color works will be accepted. (unless our budget goes up!)

Include a brief biography of author or artist, current address and phone number along with all submissions.

Ictus Review

2800 Victory Boulevard, Campus Center Room 1C-231
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By Jules Allen

Penis Vagina Breast Testicle

If I had sex
with a poem
that was green
I would cry

With a poem
I'd have to have sex, and
I would cry
I would cry. For sex.

I'd have to have sex, and
while throwing blue balls, I,
I would cry. For sex.
Even though

While throwing blue balls, I,
can't tell anyone
even though
sex sex sex sex sex

Can't tell anyone
about penises
sex sex sex sex sex
about penises

About penises
The t.v. was watching me last night.
About penises
The t.v. was watching me last night.

The t.v. was watching me last night.
About vagina
The t.v. was watching me last night.
About vagina

About vagina
About penis
About vagina
About penis

About penis
Poetry
about penis
sexy poetry

Poetry
has sex
sexy poetry
about penis sex

Has sex
had a party
about penis sex
And. That was green.

Had a party
of poems
And. That was green
I would not do it.

Of poems
I juggle testicles
I would not do it
and they are slimy.

I juggle testicles
I juggle vaginas

and they are slimy
testicles and vaginas

I juggle vaginas
I juggle penises
testicles and vaginas
Say I juggle breasts

I juggle penises
I like to say
I juggle breasts
I like to

I like to say
Penis vagina breast testicle
I like to
have sex with sexy poetry.

Penis vagina breast testicle
eat poetry, and
have sex with sexy poetry
lick it.

Eat poetry, and
chew it, and
lick it
even though it is bleeding bleeding

Chew it, and
burp it out
even though it is bleeding bleeding
Fuck Fuck Fuck Fuck Fuck

Burp it out
Take sex aspirins for your sexache
Fuck Fuck Fuck Fuck Fuck
DO NOT LISTEN TO THE RADIO

Take sex aspirins for your sex-ache
and burp them out, but
DO NOT LISTEN TO THE RADIO
lies lies lies lies lies

And burp them out, but
sex lies are dirty, filthy dirty
lies lies lies lies lies
stand. Stand up for your penis.

Sex lies are dirty, filthy dirty
and they make me real nervous. So nervous I sit.
stand. Stand up for your penis
and bleed bleed bleed. Think about good sex.

and they make me real nervous. So nervous I sit.
Pausing, and putting on a condom,
and bleed bleed bleed. Think about good sex
and fuck. Penis vagina breast testicle.

Pausing, and putting on a condom
if I had sex
and fuck. Penis vagina breast testicle.
That was green