

*by Raymond Soulard, Jr.*



# Dream Raps, Volumes One-Six

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by Raymond Soulard, Jr.

SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2024

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RaiBooks Number Nine  
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These contents appeared in a slightly different form in *The Cenacle*.

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### To my beloved Kassandra:

*“Please accept this ragged purse  
of high notes.”*

\* \* \* \* \*



## I Am Immersed

You know... you know... you know... It's like, it's like this. I, you, but let's say you, fall asleep and instead of just sleeping, a bodily rest, a stillness, I fall into the most complex stories. Strange, surreal, yet vivid. Vivid. And for the stretch of the really vivid ones, the especially vivid ones, the ones they say come near dawn, if you sleep overnight, I'm as immersed in the reality of what is happening as I will be when the alarm goes off and I wake up. Just as immersed, just as real. In all ways. Just as vivid. And so, why is this important activity that happens to every single human being somehow left behind upon leaving bed and entering the human world?

\* \* \* \* \*

## When You Run in Dreams

Sometimes when you run in dreams, from somewhere to somewhere, then you find yourself doing it again. The plot doubles, narrative or anti-narrative. I suppose it depends on what terms you try to apply to what happens in dreams now. What would be interesting and oh, probably someone out there has done it, is to say *OK, what if you extracted the rules from within the event itself, the events, if you would call them events.* And that might be interesting.

But what catches me every time, and what I haven't been able to figure out, is how in waking, there's so much conflict in action and purpose and yet everyone, even other kinds of beings, we all dream. And I wonder, is this somewhere to start? I mean is there something to this? Is there some kind of fresh ground to work with here? There are certainly tribes that value dreams more than we, in the West, do, incorporate them. But I wonder if you brought all the powers to bear, that exist in the Western world, the science, the technology, the thinkers, the leaders, the freaks, if you brought dreams up from their obscure place, to a place on high, well, what would come?

\* \* \* \* \*

## Tired Mind, Dream Narrative

The strange thing are the dreams where a body's exhausted, but the mind generates powerful, surreal narratives. Dream narratives. And the body lies there, exhausted, sucking on sleep, like a dry throat water. But the mind, *oh the mind doesn't stop.* The mind does not stop in the least. *Pounds away.* And in the morning, when in a sense mind and body reunite, via waking consciousness,

the body, refreshed for the sleep, but the mind trying to recall the dreams can't. What were those powerful images? Can't recall them. The body was too tired. Somehow, the body participates in the dream recall. Does the body participate in the dreams? Does the body dream? Does the body dream?

\* \* \* \* \*

## Body Asleep vs. Body Awake

You know, I guess you could say, I've been trying to figure this thing out for a long time. It's this question of what exactly, what works, what can explain the relation between the body in sleep and the body awake. Now it seems as though there are two explanations. Two. That's right.

There's the waking explanation, which pushes a sort of kind of linear narrative rooted in time and space. Now there are all sorts of exceptions, there's all sorts of things you can talk to, there's all sorts of stories you can tell all sorts of people. You can point toward and say *but?* And yet, most of the time, mostly in agreement.

And then, there's that same body in sleep. And that's where all the weird shit that happens in waking life, that happens here and there, more to some than others—well, that's where it all breaks loose. Sort of like a gloves-off, nobody's-fooling-nobody-anymore kind of situation. Now if you can rustle me up an answer for all of this, well, sir, I'd be most happy hear you out.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Where Do Dreams Flush To?

And I keep wondering: where they flush to, these dreams? I wake up some mornings and what it seems like is that they're there but they're leaving, where are they going, where do they go, try to write them down, where do they go? They come and they go and yet while they're happening I'm prone and still and so how is it they come and go? Do they move around? And even when I capture them in a few words on a piece of paper it's not like they're not going, it's just that I'm marking their passage, their passage through me.

I mean one could say, well, they start in my brain and end in my brain, just chemicals firing off in all directions but I don't see that, I don't agree with that, I don't think so. Maybe the chemicals are playing with something else,

jacking into something else, chemistry and something else. It always seems to be when you ask those deep questions, you get a handful of answers sitting on your table—then you look around and realize, *ah, there's something else, damn it, something else.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Start Where You Are**

Now, you've always got to start where you are. Always. Well, you don't have a choice but by golly, sometimes the air around you slips inside your head and tricks you into thinking you do have a choice in the matter. But I say to you now, *no, you start where you are.* There are blooms outside this window on a tree, that's where it starts. Here it is merely February in the Pacific Northwest and there are blooms outside this window. That's where you start, that's where to start. You want to build a focus, you want to see the whole world, start there. Start with something right in front of you, maybe something beautiful, maybe something that catches your eye, that you look at and you like and think: *I like that.* Now if I'm going to build a world, I'm going to start *right there.*

There might be something else in your view, something else you can see, there may be a bill for your unpaid goods or there may be a broken device, there may be a sad letter, but no, start with that beautiful thing, and it may be beautiful in the nicest of ways and it may be beautiful in a way that only you understand, you in your heart understand, maybe deeper in your heart that's where you understand. So blooms, and then beyond or within. Now that's the question because I could tell you things.

I could say that in my mind when I'm asleep and I'm dreaming, whole worlds rise up, whole worlds rise up, whole worlds rise up. Or maybe you can reach your hand out to the world and reach another hand in, so to speak, into those dreams and what they mean if anything. But anyway, start with something beautiful before you look way out or way in. Make sure the ground under your feet is solid and lovely.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Favorite Coffeehouse Gone**

So, I was with my beloved on the street, and I sat down in front of our favorite coffeehouse and she just walked away and then I looked inside and it was empty, it was gone, to the floors gone, and I looked for her, and she wasn't

there around either, and I sort of panicked, you might say. And what happened was I called 911 and then, well, she reappeared and said, *well, there you are* and I called back 911 and said *it's OK, it's OK, it's alright, my favorite place is gone but she's back, that girl of mine, so I'm alright, I'm alright, you thank you, you thank you, you have a nice day.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It Came Upon Me With No Name**

It came upon me with no name and it was beautiful and I couldn't describe it but I tried. It came upon me both hard and soft, hard like a punch in your belly, when you're not expecting it, so it really lays you low, and soft like a breath in your ear, whispering something you really like in a secret language that you do not know. *Now how, you ask, could it be both hard and soft?* Good question. And the answer is I don't know, for it came upon me without a name, without expectation. No explain of what it was, how long it would stay, or where, after it went, it would go.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Quick Talking Dreaming Hustling Man**

*Oh, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah? Oh yeah, oh yeah. What? What? What? Oh, yeah. Oh, OK, OK, OK. Are you sure? Are you sure? No, man, really, I was standing on a corner, standing on the corner, and I was trying to get a couple bucks and this guy come up to me and he said, listen, man, I'll tell you, I'll tell you this and uh then you'll know cuz everybody should know, no no no you gotta listen, no don't walk away, you gotta listen, yeah yeah yeah, so so so there I was and I was havin this dream and and and it was a very strange dream and then I realized man, I ain't dreamin', and I looked around and I thought wow everything sort of looks well well well, well it looks uh it looks the same but not quite the same, no no no it looks kinda different, kinda different. Can't quite say how maybe it's the color, maybe it's the sound, I don't really know but listen, listen . . . yeah yeah yeah yeah, so listen listen listen listen, I'm gonna tell you what you need to know and what you need to know is that on certain nights, when the moon is half full, god shines from your big toenail.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Was Following the Thread**

I was following the thread, following the thread, I was thinking about the

thread, and what it meant, it's an old story. It's an old story about how a seeker was looking to defeat the great beast and so he had to confront him, the beast would eat flesh, sacrifices, and this great hero, this great seeker hero, was deciding he was going to defeat the beast.

The beast lived in the middle of a labyrinth and the hero's lover, who knew that others had gone in to fight the beast, said *here, here's a thread, I'll hold one end as you go in, you hold the other, and that way you won't get lost along the way because there are tricks of the mind to be encountered, not just tricks of battle.*

And the seeker hero went in to the labyrinth, deep into the labyrinth, and confronted the beast, and battled the beast, and slay the beast, and was able to come back out. Elude the mind tricks and defeat the beast and come back out and win and return.

I was thinking that the thread is an idea that you can use in other ways. You can battle with it in other ways and so that is what I was thinking about, how you follow the thread and you look back, and the thread is where you came from, and what matters, and then you can look forward and see where you're following it to, and see if they connect, and see if you're holding on tight now. And that's what you're thinking about, you're thinking about how to do that and I think that the thread idea is a helpful one, interesting. It's a way of going at it.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Sniff the Air

Well then, well then, sniff the air, sniff the air, sniff the air, oh, it smells like November. How does November smell? I suppose that's a good question. I think it often smells cool and clear and full of a sense of passing time. That's a whole hell of a lot for a November to bear in its mere scent, but yes indeed, and when I look up on this November morning, I see colorful rings floating in a mass. It's a happy mass, a colorful mass. You may say, well, what in the world are you talking about and I would say, no man, if you can't see them with your eyes open, look with your eyes shut. Colorful rings, red blue yellow green even black orange, and they're floating. It's nice whether you see with your eyes open or shut. I don't think it matters one way or the other and if you look further, maybe shift to your left or right, you might see whirling patterns of concentric circles, a mind warp of images, and you might say, *hey man, what's going on here*, and I would say, *it's a new day at the radio ranch ha ha ha.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### It Was a House

Now sometimes it will occur that if you engage the dream space, really push your fingers deep in, well, it'll fuck with you, it'll terrify you, it'll bring you screaming awake away from your sleep. It was a room, it was a house, there were rooms, I was in a room, I was moving from room to room. There were cobwebs, they got thicker and thicker, they got much thicker than they ever should have or could have been. It made no sense, *oh it made no sense*, and there was my father, deceased a while but in this dream, of course, there he was, and he was saying, *I can't hear you, I can't hear you.* And I realized that the cobwebs were very *very* thick and I was having to claw to break through them. It was tangled. I was surrounded, like a thick net, and when I broke through, there were huge spiders waiting.

\* \* \* \* \*

### It Was 1998

It was I guess you could say an historical dream of sorts, but it was involved with time travel, which made it even more interesting. It was 1998, and the funny thing with dreams was that you don't always catch why you would know such a little detail, and yet I knew it was 1998, and there I was, and it was like my mission was to find out how did we get from there to here and here I suppose would be 2010 and there of course was 1998 and they were places you might say, and so there I was, and oddly again the two details that came through pieces of the explanation were dotcom crash and George W. Bush, and I remember thinking in this dream time travel 1998 place that I was in that I would have to look up the dotcom crash on Wikipedia. And I've been thinking ever since how the hell did we get from then to now? I've been thinking that, how did we get from then to now?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Two Bookstore Dreams

Now what was strange was that it happened twice in a week. That old bookstore. I hadn't worked in it for many years and, yet, here it was again. And somehow I was brought in for the day, and there I was among customers, each with a demand. Few of them would acknowledge that others had an equal demand of equal importance—each one was like a child with an empty cup that needed filling *right now*. And there was Amante and he greeted me, and he hadn't worked there in many years either so it made it funnier. It's like there we were both back in that store where we met years ago, working away,

same work, bookstore work never changes.

And then the second time, same store but not physically the same and yet it was and yet I don't think it was, it didn't have the same qualities, it was the store with the same name but it's like it was in a shopping mall or something. There was an atrium outside. There was a crazy old man, long white hair and beard, scary eyes. He shouted something at me, something insulting, and, for a moment, but, no, I objected, protested, and told him so and he looked at me with crazier eyes and he said *I'm 75 years old* as if that justified any garbage coming out of his mouth, anything at all, *75 years old*. And the people from the bookstore where I did not work this time were looking on and eventually I followed them in and I explained to a man—who looked perhaps slightly like a man I might have worked for at some bookstore or other at some point or other—explained that I wasn't and that wasn't but *75 years old* was not justification, it just wasn't.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Dream of the Desert**

It was the dream of the desert, where I'd lived so many days over the years, and I hadn't been there in a while, at least physically, and that was OK, but I hadn't been there in a while in my dreaming either, so that was curious, since that was just part of the deal over the years, curious. In this dream, the climactic event, the fire to destroy the old and burn the new into the world, had been cancelled, too stormy, that's what I'd been told by that one and this one but strangely my concerns were otherwise.

I was walking around, with a twist, both my first love and my best one all in one, most curious. Time travel is not linear, if I could draw a moment's lesson from any of this it would be that. I was in two places at once—I had not gone from now to then or then to now—I was both and a lot in between and otherwise.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Make Friends in Dreams?**

And I ask: is it possible to make friends in dreams? I mean, I think I've read about this, here and there, guides, visions, bush souls, things of that kind, but I wonder, but I think it's possible. One time, I had a swarm of friends living in some kind of suburb. I'd known them for a long time. Now you ask: *were they friends from your waking days?* and I'd say *no, pretty much not, pretty much*

*people I've never met that I've known for a very long time and cared for very much.* What do you make of that?

I took pictures when we were all together. At one point me and one of these friends, we were diffusing a bomb or something. At another point, we were talking about going to a party on New Year's Eve and there was a deep affection, it was visceral. They weren't just people I've known in waking days with different faces, these were different people, it was warm and it was dear and I loved it.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Tall Tall Building**

I was in a large building, I was climbing from level to level—each one I would arrive at, and it would prove perilous. It's like I would arrive through a doorway and I'd be on a ledge and there'd be a deep drop which is strange. It's as though each floor of the building had nothing architecturally to do with the lower one or the one above, and I continued climbing and eventually I reached the top one and I found a huge library of books, many of them strange and obscure, many of them science fiction and I said *this explains the bookstore many stories below* but I wonder why I said that.

Then came the twist, the twist was while in this building on this top floor in this large library of books I got to remembering this other series of dreams about a big building, a house, and I would walk through the living room, climb a ladder or a set of stairs into the attic and this would lead me to endless series of rooms, so I was dreaming and these dreams I was having while I was dreaming were reminding me of other dreams I've had. Now you tell me the relationship between that dreaming, the other dreaming, and waking.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Needed to Record Somebody**

I needed to record somebody, it was really important, even several dreams in or down or far, depending on how you look at dreams and their architecture. I would wake within dreams to other dreams and this same need to record somebody. I needed to get this person on the phone, I needed to set up all the equipment, I needed to get their words recorded, preserved, they were important words.

But then it fell upon me and I landed within it, it was a very tall bureau, many drawers, impossibly so, a dream bureau of course, what else?—and my little



friends were in the drawers, there were many of them, I don't know why, but there were many of them, they were in the drawers, they were on the top, some slipped behind. I kept trying to gather them up. They were small, I did not want them to get lost and then the littlest one of all, the one that cackles, the one that's full of shenanigans and trouble, her arm was moving around, it rotated strangely, in fact it wouldn't stop rotating. It was disturbing, I didn't understand but I kept looking and looking—

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### **It's A Far Western City**

It's a far Western city that I'm in. It's night, cold, and I'm trying to climb a very icy street, climbing on my hands and knees, crawling really. I need to get to that apartment. Find someone. It's an apartment building that the outside is the inside, depending on where you are in it. I'm trying to call my love with the phone that's unplugged and when I plug it in I notice that it's powered by large boulders and I look in the distance at this inside outside apartment toward the horizon that I shouldn't be able to see as clearly as I do and yet I do see it and there . . . wild sheets of light climb the sky, rip and mend, rip and mend the sky, and they give way as a dark bank of clouds descends low and, between the horizon and that bank of clouds, countless colored lights bounce, they bounce up and hit the clouds and bounce down and hit the horizon, bounce up and down, thousands of them, thousands of them. Good.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm Hired as an Auto Mechanic**

Now this is a curious one. I'm hired by an auto garage as a mechanic. My buddy encourages me to take the job, and the owner of the garage is a paternal fellow, takes care of his employees. He's a good guy. I think he has a boss too, somewhere.

And when we're at work we all wear face-masks. They render our faces almost devoid of features, but quickly I realize I don't know anything about cars and fixing them and I panic. I don't have the skills or the knowledge to do this. But everyone there, all my co-workers and my boss and my buddy, they talk me into it, they say *you can do it*, they're very emotional, very close, dear, they want me to try, so I do.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm in School**

I'm in school, art class, and a math class. I need to take both of them and pass to graduate. But after a while I stop going to the math class, I just stop going, it just doesn't matter, it's not important. The art class, though, I have an assignment to draw what's against a wall, picture frame, refrigerator, some other things, and I draw my picture and the things on the wall, against the wall, I draw the far edge of the picture, other things take up most of my picture. And I get a low grade, until I point out I had filled the assignment, those things are in my picture, they're just at the far edge and the borders.

I don't like the class much, I don't like the teacher much, the teacher doesn't like me much. And I look out the window and I think a big storm's coming but I hope even the teacher survives and prospers.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Had a Job**

Well now. Well now, I say. Had a job, had a job, I say. In which I was assigned a task, first, to counsel a man who is kicking speed by starting on heroin. It was up to me to talk with him, I worked with three others whom I saw as buddies, one said bring him a present, and that job didn't last. It just did not last. I couldn't say why. Who could say why? But it did not last.

So I went to a visit a college, radio station there, it was in a warehouse-like area. And I sat talking to the ones who run it thinking *that's what I want, a room in a house devoted to radio* but alas they said *you can't DJ here, you're not a student*. Well, so much for my good plans.

Moved along, as we do. I seemed to be living in a city, going to a college, which was not really organized, no radio. At one point I was living in an apartment with an elevator, and it was very small and very crowded, and when I get out of the elevator I end up on the bus and it was crowded and I just wanted to sit till it was over.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Two Jobs Twisted into One**

There was the story of a job I had and the oddness of it was that it was two jobs twisted into one. At a bookstore, always at a bookstore. And the colleague from one bookstore is working with me in the other bookstore, and he came

up to me as I was trying to figure out how to ring up on the cash register a soda someone was purchasing, and he said to me instead *these books are really bad and we're trying to figure out a way to lower your pay rate*. So there's that story.

But I tend to think that there are better ones that can be told. A better one is the time I climbed the hill with that old folk singer, asking her if she was still an earth mother. She was telling me how she taught her son to play guitar because he had developed mental disabilities, and we'd nearly reached the high school up this very steep hill when I was no longer there. I was in your room, lying in your bed, looking out toward the world from where you looked out toward it many mornings before getting up, getting along your way, and I think that I don't understand even more than I thought I did.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Law Firm

Now this one went so deep I don't even know what to say but I'll try. I will try. I am working for a law firm, a new job. Early on asked about it, I liken it as a show to *LA Law* that the lawyer had not heard of. My job is ambiguous. I am uncertain, tenuous. One of the lawyers has three only somewhat friendly cats?

The lawyers tend to leave at 2:00. I experience two days there. The head lawyer has a TV interview with Senator Russ Feingold. At another point they're filming them all around a table, joshing, throwing stuff, there is a term they use I forget. I feel invalid and unsure, yet nobody is unfriendly. There is an empty office, one of the lawyers has moved from it.

It was odd because it was like I was watching a show of which I was a part and at moments we were watching shows within the show and also being filmed. Now I'm not sure, I don't know, but for the two days I resided in that law office.

\* \* \* \* \*

### LSD Expert on TV

I was on CNN, the cable TV news network. I was in the audience, and there was this expert on LSD. I can't say I knew his name or anything about him but there he was. I was sitting next to an old buddy of mine and the expert he had this long I guess you'd call it an applicator, and it was filled with LSD, and he came over and he drip-dropped it into my buddy and my eyes and he drip-dropped on our faces, splashing on our faces and on our skin, it was all

wonderful and seemed strange and what could this be about being splashed on cable news TV with very nice acid with me and my buddy? He said he had no trouble—he said no one had followed him—he said no one had followed us. He said this appearance brought in many donations that night and I remember wondering at that because I was thinking he's talking about this as if it's already happened. How can you talk about the present tense as though you're in the future talking about the past? But gosh was that acid good.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Take Back Your Mind

Someone said, they said, said someone said *take back your mind* and I stumbled, hearing those words. They seemed to mean something. I mean, they seemed to mean something to me and I wondered, *where had my mind been that I needed to go there to take it back*—and I didn't know, or maybe it hadn't left but I had and I needed to return. Or maybe there was a siege within, a kind of paralysis in which all movement slowed, not freezing but slowed—the currents of figures the currents of waters the currents of spirit and thought, dream, dreaming, wishing and dreaming. For dreams went on, oh they went on, but wishing, not so sure about that. *Take back your mind*, whatever this means, it's potent, it's one of those strikes, straight and true, straight and true.

\* \* \* \* \*

### How Would You Know You Passed the Test?

After all, *how would you know if you passed the test?* that's my question—and if you time traveled in dreams, *how would you know that too?* that's my other question. If you were sitting there with your thick headphones on your head, mind the pencils, they grow soft during transmission from one place to another. What would that mean and if you had to kill someone to save someone else because the story just got too complicated and what about the dog, what about that dog? Not quite a dog, that's what I say. You would pet the dog, pretty lovely fur, but the dog would never lick your hand because like I said it was not a dog, not quite, and as I also said *how would you know if you passed the test?*

\* \* \* \* \*

### All Night I Stared at Him

All night I stared at him, lying on his death bed, eyes shut, long gray beard

tucked above his blanket, silent, still, and I kept coming back over and over from wherever else, like a circuit from elsewhere back to the image of this man dying in this strange place far from where he'd ruled, where he'd created, where he'd loved. Seemed a warning, warning.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **There Were Birds**

There were birds, there were birds, there were birds, and at first they were out the window, and they were filling my dreams so they were out the window but they were in my dreams too. They crossed over, with their singing, calling, tweeting, crossed over until eventually they formed my dreams, more and more, bigger and bigger, their singing became my dreams, my dreams became their singing more and more, and still they were out the window at their singing.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Travelling One Town to the Next**

Now I suppose you could say that each one has its own groove. I'd say, well now, that's true, but I suppose that some of them groove deeper than others. There was this one where I was passing through, traveling, one town to the next, three towns in all, and so I passed through the first, passed through the second, and then I passed through the third and got to talking to someone and others too and none of them had heard of the first two. I'd been through them, of course, so I had experience of passing through them, and yet in this third town nobody knew them. Now what do you do with that? I suppose thinking about it more I would have piled him in my car, or whatever I was traveling in from the third town, and drove him on back to the second and the first, got folks meeting up, connecting because you know in Dreamland there's power and vulnerability both.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Was Deep in the Woods**

I was in some kind of woods, and at one point I was going to drink from a flower, it was a deep flower and it was full of water. But suddenly there was a great toad that leaped out of the water and then there were more toads and then they were gone.

And I turned my head slowly to watch them and found myself living in what seemed like a one-room apartment with a cement floor in a city. I leave one day, don't lock my apartment door and as I return later on a neighbor woman greets me. Lives in the building next to mine, up on the third floor. She waves. I think she's retarded. I realize I know her from other dreams. I wave back and then I walk into my apartment and all my things are gone, everything's all been cleared out, there's just two big trash bags sitting there—and I panic and I run outside to call my love in, and tell her what happened.

And I turn around again as though to a noise and find myself one of a small group of soldiers and the leader, our leader, is saying *you've got to teach us our history so that we don't forget*. And I wonder if the lesson to learn is be careful in dreams when you turn your head.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **In a City on a Bus**

I was in a city on a bus, I was taking a long trip, and I get off for a break, and I got into this joint, and I get a sorta hamburger at this joint. I don't have any money. That's kinda the problem. I just want a soda and a hamburger, no money and what's strange, what happens next, is that I willed some and then I had it. Now in pocket.

So I say to the old lady *can I get a soda but no ice please* and she mixes me up a soda with a spoon. I'm impressed, some kind of skill. What happens next, I'm in a fenced yard and there are two great snakes, cobras, one brown, the other really big, and they near me. I can't say for sure they were going to hurt me or I threatened them, but we were fenced in the yard, and they were snakes, and I was whatever I appeared to them to be. I grabbed them, tossed them, and what it feels like is that I'm summoning my knowledge of how to deal with the situation, how to will money for a soda, there's a familiarity with how it feels, perhaps there's more than one way, and more than one timeline into lucidity.

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### **Poison the World**

Hm, I hear a man and his wife planning to poison the world, using poison grown from seedpods and converted into honey, which when poured onto people rendering them smiling and mindless.

I watched the seeds grow in jars into these pods, large misshapen green pods. And then I'm observing them in a classroom where he administers the honey

and I escape and I try to warn people. I see him come out with his wife and they need more people, families, they don't know what he's doin—and then, at the far edges of this story, whose middle I don't know, the man is defeated, and he's buried deep in the earth, many layers down, below living strata.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Sometimes the Dreams Are So Deep**

Sometimes the dreams are so deep, some other kind of real, that I wake up and they're completely gone, and I don't even understand that really, how that can be, how one can be so completely immersed in, in *something*, and then it's gone, happens often, not always but often. Even what's brought back is shells from a shore, pictures, bits. Some of them are valuable, some of them are dear, but the ones where I feel like it's the entirety of everything, I feel even more all pervasive than this waking, varied and trapped and immobile, and I don't know what it means?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It Was a Hotel**

It was a hotel and it was full of covert activities. And I'm in it. At one point I'm in someone's room on a cell phone and I'm told to skin the drawers, which means look for devices, and I go through them looking for devices. I don't have any luck, but my boss does, finds something, not a bug but finds something. The moment shifts or maybe I just put on the TV in the hotel room that I've broken into looking for bugs.

Anyway, I'm watching the show on Amadon, freaky kid, has a buddy with him, and a pretty sort of girlfriend, and I know that Amadon had once played an epic game of tennis ball hockey, grand it was like a planet. Now he lives in an abandoned building, friends come over, smoke some weed. It might be some sort of reality show I'm watching, maybe it's true, I don't know.

Amadon doesn't notice his sort of girlfriend's come-ons, doesn't pay attention. He was in a yearbook at his school on the basketball team page—he was the only player not to score. Amadon seems to be someone who impresses others but is lost in his own mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Owner of a Long Strange Warehouse**

He was the owner of a long strange warehouse, at least I think he was the owner. He might have been some kind of manager. Sort of a vague overseer. He wasn't in charge, I could tell. We passed from area to area, room to room. There was no one in charge of this—there was no coherency save a roof above.

At one point we passed through a narrow room and a scrawny two-headed dog attacked me, bit me on the arm. He wasn't a two-headed dog like those you encounter in mythology, big, scary, muscled. No, he was scrawny like he hadn't eaten in awhile—he was poorly cared for, if cared for at all.

Later on, the owner was gone, didn't miss him much, he hadn't impressed me, but something had happened and I was being held with others in the gym. Being held in the gym I don't know by whom. I don't know and yet somehow I knew that there was an air duct, just had to undo a few screws and crawl on in. The whole thing seemed kind of precarious but it was a way out, and we had to get out and we had to get out soon—

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Write for a Newspaper in Dreamland**

I write for a newspaper in Dreamland and it's called the *Eighth*, now figure on that one a bit. Peculiar, I'd say.

I also carry around my hekk, it's my dream-stick, it allows me to choose some dreams over others, go into different rooms and not go into others in Dreamland. Now you figure that out. I can't figure that out. But it's interesting. The whole thing's interesting.

At one point, there was a cookie, yes indeed, there was a cookie, and there was a war and I was watching the war from the cookie's point of view. Now, wouldn't you say that's a little strange? You might say that's a little strange, you might say, *hey pal, that's a little strange, you and your dream-stick, you and your newspaper called the Eighth, you and your thoughts of wars from the cookie's point of view and what does that mean? I mean, really. What does that mean?* you're asking. I'm asking. I don't know. I only know that, day after day, more days than some, others, it deepens a little or I deepen a little with it relationally.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Complex of Rooms

It was a complex of rooms and I think a party was going on. I'm not sure, but there sure were a lot of people around. Didn't seem like roommates. I have a room, and also a bathroom, and people keep walking through the bedroom, passing through, hanging around, those kind of people, looking at my books, thinking of my things, trying to form a picture. I seem happier in the bathroom, where I have a table and chairs—perhaps that's where I work.

The bathroom is within the bedroom, it's a side door you can only get to it through the bedroom, and I like to close that door and work in the bathroom but you see, people keep coming in. I have work to do and an important phone call to make and people just keep coming. I suppose they do that.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Labyrinthine Mark on Wall

I was standing in a hallway of sorts, with my brother, and we were looking up at a wall with a labyrinthine watermark which faded from right to left, and I was thinking how I'd looked up at this wall before, I've seen that watermark, that labyrinthine watermark faded from right to left and I keep asking and wondering, *what does it mean in a dream when you remember the experience you have in a different dream, a place you've been before in two separate dreams? Are they connected? And if so, how? How are they connected? And what about those dreams where you're surrounded by people you've known for years, people you don't know in your waking years and yet here they are surrounding you and there's deep affection on all sides? What does all that mean?*

\* \* \* \* \*

## It Was a Clean Hour

It was a clean house, it was very clean and I walked through its rooms and they were all clean, I think they were empty but maybe not, maybe just bare. Maybe there wasn't much in them and why was the word "clean" the one I thought? What was it about that, those rooms and that word? Clean. And then I was in a room, down a hallway past other rooms, it was the far room of the hallway. There was a dead rat on the floor in the corner. No, I take that back. There were three of them, dead rats in the corner. What does that mean? And I looked down, shiny cockroach went scuttling by, hurrying on its way, shiny shell, see it go.

And I say to you in conclusion, or by way of assertion, perhaps both, but I say to you there is so much fucked up bullshit in this world that if you do not appreciate the lovely things, the beautiful moments, the dear fierceness, the hours that flow, you are a fool.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Small Bug on the Wall

So there I was, back deep in the old mind-cosmos-history thing, thang. And there was a small bug on the wall. It wasn't anything hardly notable but there it was. It was small, but what was weird, oh, *of course something was weird*, is that it grew and grew and it got really big and it was like it was a bug that looked like a giant pink shrimp, but it was a bug and it was terrifying because it kept getting bigger in moments, in seconds, it went from being a tiny bug to this giant pink shrimp-like thing. And my mother had a broom and she smashed it again and again, & it died, blown apart and screaming and that was something else.

Till later there was a small group of us in the field and lions appeared on the other side of the world. And we kept feeding them raw meat, they kept hanging around and we apparently had raw meat in hand for the need, and we kept feeding them, & it seemed they kept wanting more because they kept nearing us and they kept nearing us, & when we ran out of raw meat, *we were the raw meat*.

But no, no, *wait*, because I was on an airplane and I had to bring my bike to the back of the airplane to store it, but what I found in the back of the airplane was a large warehouse that was vast and full of things, and I got very lost trying to find a place to store my bike in this vast place. Then I stored it and I wanted to return to my seat on the plane but I couldn't find the way back, and I kept going on and on and I kind of ended up in a mall. I ended up on an escalator, and I was trying to return, and I looked at my airplane ticket, and it said departure 9:07, and then I looked around for a clock and it said 9:07. *Oh my goodness*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## That House By the Beach

We were living in that house by the beach. And it had been a long drive to get there. At one point, we passed through a dump advertising **hard trash**. And our car had gotten buried in the snow. I remember pushing the snow

away with my hands, just to climb in the backseat window to try to get to the driver's seat to keep driving to get to the house by the beach.

And there were several people there, two just married having their honeymoon in our bedroom. Strange noises coming out of the bedroom, not the many kinds of noises of coupling either—other kinds of strange noises.

And in a different room, I was sitting on the bed and I was writing about how I had a dream about a house by the beach that had been a long drive to get to, passing through a dump advertising **hard trash** and how at the house one of the rooms was closed to us and the married couple within and their strange, strange noises.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Arriving in a New Town

Arriving in a new town, I was hardly there an hour. I made some new friends, two boys and a girl. And we were at a coffeehouse, many rooms, and there were big old computer monitors, free to use. And now it's all gone. I'm walking and I'm holding a small friend who was injured. I come to the town center, *oh, yes, class*. I forgot.

And the assignment seems to be making fireworks of some kind or another. I don't quite understand it. Back in the classroom, I ask the boy for the assignment and he gives me some papers to look at. I lose them. I go to the teacher. She's dismissive. I now have some papers but there someone else's assignment with a grade. Then I say to the boy: *You left me. I've only just moved here*. He's insulted. The girl tries to make things right but it doesn't work.

And then where am I? I'm on a bus and I guess I'm leaving that town. There's a radio or TV going and someone talking fundamental Christian talk, and there's a guy sitting up front and he's saying nasty things, and I'm saying *be tolerant*, but he won't be so I get up, walk up the aisle where he's sitting, and I grab him and I carry him to the front and I threaten to throw him out the door, and I look at the bus driver to try to intervene and say a word but he doesn't seem to care. So I put him back in his seat. Sit back in mine—find myself reading a comic strip in which I discover that he was relieved that he'd backed down. Because you always find truth in comic strips if you look hard enough.

And the bus arrives, and it's a gathering with my loved ones from many years. One's telling me to boycott the grocery store and another one's looking at me

funny. Another one I haven't seen in years and I'm saying, *do a radio show like I do*. Soon I'm at a building having to make a call. I'm using a pencil to make the call. I'm trying to call about my master's thesis and tell them it won't be ready in time, and again there's someone hassling me and I say, *get away from me now*. And he does, and someone picks up on the phone, and I don't remember who to ask for.

\* \* \* \* \*

### I Think It Was What You Call a Soap Opera

I think it was what you call a soap opera. There were two agents. An older one and a younger one. And the older one was saying, *when you see you are fooled. There is truth behind maya lines about the curvature of the earth, and when you see this truth I will kill you*. And then the man's eyes glow and oceans pour from them, and that is the symbol of the show.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Wow! I am Friends with This Couple

Wow! That's all I can say. *Wow*. I am friends with this couple who buy an old church to live in. I first met them when they were in two movies. I saw them in the movies. They were characters in the movies. They were comedies. The guy was a buffoon in the comedy and I said to him, *buffoons are people who haven't found themselves yet and so accept being the butt of a joke as an easy role*. In the first film, the guy was a bartender at a party. There was a plaque in the first film that then showed up at the second. I think that was the only connection between the two.

Then she found this church. It was a big old New England-style church, and the white paint was peeling off it on all sides. It had big rooms. They showed me through it when I came to visit, room after room after room, and outside and then an old cemetery, great lawns, big gardens. The cemetery had strange stone-shaped markers. They didn't stick out of the ground like usual, they were in clusters too. And I was talking to the buffoons again, responding to someone quoting gossip saying I'd changed. I said: *Yeah, I don't squat on dick no more*.

And a priest suddenly fled from the crowd. What crowd? They were good, dear friends, I loved them both. And I loved their church and it seemed all like a good idea. They were going to fix it up and make it good. They were excited.

\* \* \* \* \*

### There She Was Again, Small

There she was again, small, and there was my brother and he was young too, and they were laying together in a nice cuddle, I'd say, and I was asking her about her baby. She said the wrong one died. I think we're speaking of dolls. She holds the dead one, tells her she loves her. She said Dad told her some souls aren't meant to complete the journey.

Now the snow, car buried in the snow, radio somewhere, the DJ saying, *I'll take you all out for beers, as long as the San Francisco flagship stays up.* And I'm clearing heaps of snow from the car, on the side of it, and the top of it, trying to get it out, get it free and someone says *noooooo.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### There Was a Situation

There was a situation, I'd say, in which I'm talking to a group of people who helped me through a bad time. I didn't see it that way till now. They gave me coffee cups as gestures of friendship. It's nice. I thank them.

And then I walk out into the night air because they're sending me on to a club. They feel I'm ready, some kind of counseling group, it's like the next stage. And I find myself in a dark club and there are ten colored lights I keep looking at and feeling like something's wrong with them.

I'm sitting next to a friendly girl and I'm talking in English to her and I'm saying, *it's a language of metaphors and displacement.* And I turn to two other guys, who I notice are about to go at it. Maybe they were looking at the lights on the wall too and equally disturbed. And I say to them, most seriously, that *a person is a house of rooms. And we go from one room to the next clearing the cobwebs, but then the rooms we're not in fill up with more and we go from one to the next.* And then to drive my point home about all of this, I say: *a chair is like a stump.* And suddenly before us there is one.

Well, eventually I have to go again. There doesn't seem to be a staying place for me very long this evening. I'm with a friend I've met along the way and we have a gun, he has a gun, we might be drunk but I don't think so but we're stumbling around, peering closely at things on the shelf and his gun goes off. And I ask: *anything interesting?* And his answer is obscure.

\* \* \* \* \*

### I'm Staying in a Guest House

Now figure it, just figure it. A TV sitcom. Hm. I'm staying in a guesthouse. Main one is fancier, much less shabby. All are located driving up very steep hills. There are parents and two blond boys and some sort of aunt. My dad is in there too. Opening sequence shows the mom and the blond boys arriving home, and a panning shot of boys getting food and doing their sequence of choreographed activities.

At one point I'm in my room, with another brother, telling him about a strange game I want to play involving levitation and fruit. Later, I show him my tape recorder. It snaps onto cassettes and you just hit the buttons. Somewhere in the distance Phish is playing live on the grounds, and at another point I'm bringing them pans of eggs and potatoes to the main house but then I find myself riding my bike in the rain, creaking. And finally, there's a last visual of a song, perhaps as this show ends, and the song goes: **I wash my butt and face every time I see your face.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### There is No Higher and There is No Ground We Kiss

I wrote, somewhere after, *there is no higher ground. There is no higher and there is no ground, we kiss across the abyss and you are mine once more. There is no higher and there is no ground, we kiss across the abyss and you are mine once more. There is no higher and there is no ground, we kiss across the abyss and you are mine once more. There is no higher and there is no ground, we kiss across the abyss and you are mine once more. Floating floor holds us as memories, that long ago time, far from home, all the friends, the one from Atlanta and his sports, when I held you above me and we both proposed, when I had to leave all these people and return home and I wanted you and I couldn't find you. Your sky blue eyes and the years between us, I would talk about you to everyone. It never ended, the miles, the years, and how I could not come and you could not go and above me we loved and below you we loved and it was because I was from the dream and it was because you were the dreamer. I was the dream and you were the dreamer. There is no higher and there is no ground, we kiss across the abyss and you are mine once more.*

\* \* \* \* \*



### The Ships Have Always Been Overhead

The ships have always been overhead. And yet, not *just* overhead. For you see, *we are on those ships*, as we walk around, down here, we are on those ships that are overhead.

And you wonder: *well, what can that mean?* How can you be on a ship overhead, & walking around, down below? And I say to you: *I don't know*. And I say to you: *dreams are real, too*, even though they seem many, disparate, fragmented. *Yes*. Dreams, ships overhead, walking around down below. Now that's a kind of a . . . formula both real & metaphorical, & it's yours to parse out . . . if you care to choose.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Traveling in the Midwest

I find myself traveling, in the Midwest, with several men. Not sure where we're going. We're on a strange bus, at one point, it's like a rolling restaurant, there are tables & waitresses. No one seems to be aware that we are rolling through the land.

I turn, & I know they're gone, those men I was traveling with, & it's probably for the best. In the corner on a small black-&-white TV, that nobody is paying attention to, I see that a movie is on. I learn it's called *RemoteLand*. It's about a woman that's captured & brought to a tiny cell where she powerfully imagines her youth & her playmates. Her playmates seem to be boys from TV shows, rather than real boys that she remembers.

I switch the channel, the movie is too sad, & I see someone who looks like me who is in a bathroom, pissing in the sink, & people keep coming in, coming & going, as though the bathroom is the necessary path from one needed place to another. And they just keep coming & going, & I just keep pissing & pissing, & this all seems strange, I guess.

It reminds me of this time I went over my teacher's house for class, & we each had to wear a hat & write our initials on them. And I had to write an essay, for the class, on a small scrap of paper.

The teacher's house is big, multiple levels. Somehow I find out that the teacher is dead, & I run into the room where all the students are gathered, & I tell them all. "He's dead!" And nobody knows what to do, so we explore his house that we'd only known one room of, thus far, the place where we held the class.



He has a vast library in the basement, on the second floor, the kitchen, there are many books everywhere.

And then someone climbs into a cupboard, & laughs, & the door opens slightly, & many tiny golden bees fly out. They don't seem harmful, & we're sad, because the teacher's dead. We liked him. And . . . we're sad, about the teacher.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Ice Cream Truck

It was like this, it was like this exactly, well, sort of. I was standing at a bus stop with two guys, and an ice cream truck pulls up, and the front of it was filled with branches, couldn't see a driver.

But out back they had ice cream for sale and I pull out money to buy three but mine ends up melted on the ground, still in the container. I try to eat it but bad, and I'm mad since I'd paid for them all. I just walk away because I have a party to go to, ice cream or not. I arrive at the party, with many balloons, and there are many there but I don't know anybody.

And then I see these two girls I knew a long time ago and I hug them but they had to go. And I was alone with the strangers and I thought, *well this day isn't going well*. So I left, kept walking and came to the beach. There were coins on the ground, I noticed. I bent down to look at them closely and each coin had a little I sticker on it, little letter I. Then what I did was I sat with the coins and I watched the ocean. It seemed peaceable finally after all that ruckus.

\* \* \* \* \*

### There's a Valley

So here is how it went: there was a neighborhood, in a valley, and down the road comes these laughing crazy boys. They've got machine guns, they're cutting down everyone in their path. People are firing back, and the crazy boys are getting cut down, until there are only four of them remaining, holding hands, laughing, *crazy! What the hell!* And . . . somewhere . . . there's a machine gun, and its turret tipped over, still firing. And if you look in that direction, you'll see . . . a cemetery, and the men of the town, or the neighborhood at least, are rushing to set it on fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

### And I'm Ready to Teach a Class

And I'm readying to teach a class, but it seems I'm not prepared. And I wonder who would show up anyway, because it's snowing, and I'm unsure. And the musician is asking me about commandments versus enders. And I explain to him—since no one is showing up to my class—that I have the time—and this seems more important anyway—that the commandments believe there is a set of rules to grant and receive rewards, and the enders believe that it would all be beautiful no matter what. And on the radio, Jimi Hendrix is playing, and I said: "He was an ender." And this all made sense, and the musician wondered if he'd made it all up, feared he'd made it all up. But I told him he was smart, and I didn't think he had, and these were *psychedelic designations*. And I asked him: "Have you ever read a book interpreting Jimi Hendrix's lyrics?" But I don't think he had, as of yet.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Taken a Bus to a House

I'd taken a bus to a house, and I was with others. But they didn't like me. An old friend of mine was there, and I pushed him to the wall, *hard*, and I begged him to *back me up*. Offer a word on my behalf, defend me to others, but I don't think he could, and I don't think he did. And this was all very disturbing, but I left, my head hung lower.

I lived in an apartment. And there were these guys upstairs, who kept coming through the windows and taking things. And they made it seem as though, well, it was their due, it was what they did. *They'd come in, they'd take things*. And I couldn't keep them out. Eventually, I ended up a floor below, exactly below, my apartment, with some allies. These allies could hear the noise above, and that reassured me. They heard those guys coming in and taking my things, and I found this reassuring, as though *they really did come, they really did take*. *Someone could verify*. Very strange. Would you need verification? Maybe. I'm not sure.

I fell asleep that night, in my bed, in my apartment, with my diminishing number of things, and I dreamt of a man I used to work for. He was still sad, he was still angry. And his hair, strangely, was like tentacles—they waved wildly around. And he was sad and angry and I couldn't give him any comfort. But I noticed that when he played with his niece, he was happy, and that was good. Because in this world, you've got to find something or someone, that makes you happy. What other choice do you have?

\* \* \* \* \*

## What You Love Will Warp Your Path

I guess you could say that what you love will warp your path, one way and another. So your best angle on the thing is to make sure you love as well as you possibly can, because your path will warp, one way and another. And there's nothing wrong in that. It's a good thing. Some warps in the path can be as beautiful as you can possibly imagine. But remember: it's all warps in the end.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Big Canvas, Empty

It was, um, it was a big canvas, empty, that's what they said, I think. The bit that remains was the universe that split off from an unchosen decision, a splinter, and it only contains that decision when a person is lonely but perhaps there's pity and there's provided a friend, you might say, so anyway—

the other thing was there was this actress and she was having hallucinations and she accompanied me while I was playing miniature golf but you see I wasn't playing it right, because I was taking long shots and there are no miniature golf long shots, there's none in that particular game. And so it went badly. We took our suitcases and we went back to the bus stop at the side of the road. It was one of those long distance bus stops where you just stand there seemingly in the middle of nowhere, except for the miniature golf course, of course, where we got thrown out of. And then we were on the bus for a while and I think that went badly too because then we were on a truck, and that went OK for a while.

The trucker had a strange hat on, it had floppy ears and big eyeballs at the top of it and he didn't look like the kind of fellow wears such things, but there were other odd things about him too. He had lots of photographs of clowns. He told us he visited every circus he could because he had a fascination with clowns. He said there was a clown in his heart, if not two or three—

But then the truck got stolen, or maybe we came out of the diner and it was gone. And so we needed some help finding the truck, if it was possible. We went back to the diner and there were these Jewish guys and these Spanish guys, there was a gang of them, it was a strange mix of guys, and they had guns, we noticed. We were determined to get the truck back, but hopefully no blood would be shed. And they drove us and they had a strange car too and it was an *ElIII Camino*, that's what it was called, an *ElIII Camino* but you see it didn't find the truck. The *ElIII Camino* did not find the truck but we thanked them and we told them for helping us, even though we failed, *you get many*

*karmic points.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## I Am Watching This Story from Another City

I am watching this story from another city. I don't know why I'm in one city watching another, watching this story unfold. There is a boy and there's a girl and they're in a house with many floors. There's an elevator that runs from one floor to the next. They're trying to get together, to be close, but it's not working. They seem to end up on different floors at different times.

I watch as the days go by, the seasons change, it seems to be an awful long time that passes, and yet they never grow old, and they never leave the house, and at one point they find each other in the elevator, by accident, and for a moment they're close, happy, makes sense, things cohere, and then something, and then something else, and as I watch now they're on different floors again but they remember.

The remembering is what changes things because if they have, they will again, and I watch as they near from one obstacle, and then the next, sometime an interior obstacle, sometimes an exterior one. And then finally, many floors up, there he is, there she is, they're together, it's a sweet story. I watched it all my life, from afar. I'm satisfied. I close the window and I pull the curtain closed.

\* \* \* \* \*

## That Old Bookstore

It went on forever. It seems. It was long, it was longer. There were far deep rooms, full of literature. *Lit'rature*, you might say. Brick walls. I was there, scrounging for a living, *and yet* trying to make a phone call to another employer. Simultaneity, it made no sense, and yet it did. I will tell you: *it did*. And it got busy, as such places do, but I never seemed to be able to figure out when to help, and nobody called me, and it wasn't all very friendly but—it was as though something that no longer exists continued to exist in other strange ways. Went on and on, went on and on.

Well, time passed, as it does, and I have a new job, in a converted factory building, cluttered rooms, and I'm trained at various times by a man and a woman. There are others going for the same job, good pay, an office and a desk. Above us, there's sort of a magazine rack, on a mezzanine. *Run by the Catholics*, someone says.

And the big guy, a recovering Catholic, talks to me about this. We agree: the Golden Rule is the best guide. Between us, we agree to that. And at some point, all of us are called to gather for a man talking. And I keep finding myself standing in people's ways, and they shove.

And later on I'm at a desk, there's some candy, it might be Christmas. And there might be a going away party going on, and I'm tempted by a creamy sweet, but I don't indulge. The woman is training me, but she has to leave, and then she's gone. And I'm thinking: I really like the job I already have, back there, wish it could go on. That's what I think to myself.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Wild Wild Days

These are wild wild days. *Wild days*. Lawless. Constant attacks, by vicious groups. Society retreats to a bunker, guarded constantly, thick doors, and I'm not allowed in. Punished, for having led them here. The vicious ones. I didn't do it on purpose. But I did do it. The doors will not open for me, so I run. I think there are others running with me, and we're chased, and up ahead, coming at us down the road, many cattle. They block the way. We scramble off the road, up a hill, into tangly brush. Desperate, but not yet caught.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Old Movie on TV

Might have been an old movie on TV. I'm not exactly sure. But there it was, set in space, a group of people come together, seemingly randomly. For a moment, they're set to make war on their slavers. And then they're all captured, except for one, who joined late. He follows their prison ship, as it flies low over the planet. Looks like an airplane. They think they can get control of it. They think they can bid their freedom. They think they're going to attack the complex.

But the whole thing's a fake. Their hope is false. But we do learn, near the end of the movie, *these are the people who sent the Red Bags down. One, none, and many*. And I seem to recall, before I fall asleep, a sort of dream-not-dream. I pass the spook in the hallway of some building. His eyes look red. He looks beat up. He has a copy of *Labyrinthine*, typed, held together on a binder ring. I tell him: *there's more*. Or: *there's a second edition*. Hmmm.

\* \* \* \* \*

### There's An Invasion

There's an invasion. An overwhelming, unbeatable force, that comes. And at one point, I'm far from home, traveling by bus. I lose my book bag. Meet up with several others, and make it to my apartment. And there are squatters there. I throw them out, of course! But they hang around. Seem to feel they have a claim.

Later on, I'm in my ship, a pilot, flying into battle, flying low. Firing at the aliens in their ships. *I feel like I'm accomplishing something*.

Then something else, I guess, and I'm in a warehouse, or something. On steps, running. And the light of day is gone. They control the situation beyond all reason, it's obvious. And I can't understand how they did it. When they came, when they arrived, when they first appeared in the skies, they claimed they'd come from God. They were His missionaries. And they'd come to destroy the foul Earth, and pass judgment on all humans. *People believed it. Heb. Heb. Heb. Believed it by the millions*. And they submitted themselves to be judged, and punished. And I really wonder if that's how it's going to play out.

\* \* \* \* \*

### I Was in a Fake Rock Band

Well, there was that time I was in the fake band. There were nine of us, in that band. And we stood in front of the classroom, and we answered questions, like it was a press conference. And it was funny, even jocular. Until I noticed a sack in my hand. Reached in, and suddenly I'm holding a snake. Holding it at arm's length, to keep it from biting me. *Now how did that happen?* How is it a jocular press conference for a fake rock band turned into a terrifying situation, I wonder?

I returned to the car, looked in the rear view mirror, and saw two things. One: there was someone sleeping in the back. Two: I didn't recognize my face. Hmm. I'm someone else. *Again*. That's a girl in the back. She's in a blanket. I think she's nude.

We drive to an old bookstore. There I see a strange book, on one of the lower shelves. And I wonder at it. *Is it portent, signal, clue, random? Should I buy it? Should I steal it? Would it make a difference in the end?* Maybe. I return to the car, and the back seat is empty, save all the blankets are folded. *Oh*, and there are three guys there, in the car. I notice the blankets first, because I was looking the back seat, but then I noticed the three guys, two in the front seat, one in

the back seat, and the blankets. I get in the back seat, next to the blankets. *Well now, where to?* They won't say. We just have to drive, and drive, and drive.

Now as I find my comfort among the blankets, not knowing where we're driving, or what danger I've fallen into, I fall into a dream. In this dream, I'm packed into bed, with eight other people, and yet it doesn't seem strange. And I find that we work well together, even though we're packed well in this bed. There's a cooperating spirit. Why, if we wanted to be, we could be a jocular fake rock band. I would just prefer that this time there not be a sack, with a snake inside.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm in My Old City. . . Emandia**

I'm in my old city, born there, live there, become at least part of someone, towards someone there. It's before dawn, dark, walking to work, no street lamps, and there are voices everywhere. I'm afraid, but I keep walking. Eventually nearing Bluebird Insurance Company. I find a couch, and a blanket, settle in, begin to doze. Time passes. And then there are some ladies, and a cop. He's pointing his flashlight at me. I explain I'm going to work early, the plumbing is broken at home.

The ladies crowd my couch and I sit up. It's no longer as comfortable as it was. But you know how that happens. Later that day, I find myself in another city. The next city. The other-piece-to-the-picture city. *Another* piece to the picture, anyway. I'm at a street corner, and there's this Spanish tourist, and there's his woman, and they seem lost. And they have a map, and we cross the street, and we sit on a bench, and there's snow and ice, and look at the map. And I point out to them the street they're seeking. And I tell them they will have fun, for sure.

And that night, after such an adventurous day, I dream I am aboard a space shuttle, far in the future, with a crew. Good folks. Not sure where bound. At one point I cry out: *"I hope when they come, it's a bald blue giant, standing, laughing on a planet, like it was a small stone!"* I go into the cockpit to fly for awhile, replace another, he's disappointed, and I hear Marvin Gaye singing, *"Let's get it onnnn . . ."* And I wonder if he did any other songs. And the dream eventually crackles, perhaps into another, perhaps not, and I wake up thinking of a place, that I do not yet know, but that I may come to know, in one way or another. *Emandia . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **After I'd Come to the Vast Camp**

Now what was strange, and I'll tell you it was strange, and I'll say, *yes, it was strange*, and I can't think of any other way to put it, is that, after I came to the vast camp, climbing hills and hiking, I didn't like it. And I knew there was some building with some weird treasure, somewhere in there, somewhere in this vast camp of buildings.

But the weirder thing was that I met several people, and they were each wearing a costume that promotes eternal life. It adheres to the body, sucks out toxins, and apparently that makes it so that you live forever. And in the middle of this vast camp, with who knows what going on, some kind of weird treasure in one of the buildings, well, just to hear these people talk, and to hear their hope, *this* is what the answer was. *To wear this costume and live forever.* It seemed like it really didn't sum, coherently.

And so I just kept walking on, sniffing for the treasure, as that was the best way for it to be found.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **All White Imp**

And it was strange, it was *strange*. It was strange to see that maniacal little imp cackling but all white. Someone had removed her colors. The colors from her garments, the colors from her face, the colors from her limbs. She was all white. But she maintained her cackling airs. *Oh, she maintained them.*

And we got in the special car and we drove, indoors, past restaurants, Chinese and otherwise, through room after room. We came to a room where there were people sleeping in beds. Well, they had to move them because we had to drive on through. *We had to drive on through.* I awoke and that little imp was full-colored again, her smile just as crazy, and she conducted the chorus of birds outside with particular glee that morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Killed Someone**

And it was one of those that leaves you shaking and wondering later. I killed someone, I think. I don't who. And I'm fleeing with my notebooks in a black garbage bag in a shopping cart. I end up in the hills. And I'm pursued, and I'm caught, or I give up, and I retreat to a house where nobody cares. All I'm

thinking is: *what am I go to do about my notebooks? How am I going to secure them, make sure they're safe?* I don't know.

Eventually I'm in prison and I'm being processed by a woman named Scam. She sprays me thoroughly with disinfectant. And I'm thinking about writing the whole time. And then two small individuals, relatively good friends, come into my mind and I think of them. Each has a blue nose. One is gray and white, one is white and gray. I think of them and I'm comforted in my troubles.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **There is a Room**

There is a room, and in the room there is a goldfish. I find him or her and place him or her in a cup. At some point, the unruly one floods the place, water coming in from the cellar, and I yell, panic. I use different vessels to hold the goldfish. And then there are two. I thought the other one was dead but I guess not. Good news.

And then they can talk sometimes. Sometimes they're not even in the water. I have a hard time figuring out where to put their vessel so it'll be safe. It keeps crashing to the ground and breaking. They're nice and pleasant, vulnerable, but nice goldfish. At one point I am filling their vessel with water and they are helping me to know if the water is too hot or too cold. We work together. As it should be.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **They Hold a World Between Them**

They hold a world between them, balanced. His hands above, hers below. They speak rarely. He wonders about her kiss, she wonders about his touch. This is something important they do. Down below, within that world, there is a very small store and it stays in business by selling one very important thing. And the one very important thing connects surely but mysteriously to those together rarely speaking, holding the world in balance.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Along Came the Traveling Troubadour**

Along came the Traveling Troubadour, long dead, but loved by many when

he appears. And I find myself in his company, happily, as many times before. I marvel at the fact of him being here, and wonder what is real. *What is real?*

Then I show him my puzzle. You see, I have a blue sheet to write upon but I seem to have trouble writing upon it. I wish to fill it with fragments which, when assembled, form a whole but still fragments. He nods, sees my dilemma. *None, one, and many*, he laughs, almost cackles. Yes, indeed, I say. *None, one, and many*. He lifts his instrument, strikes a perfect note, smiles a happy smile, and is gone until the next time around.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Old Tyme Restaurant**

I was with my friend and we were traveling along. We come to one of them restaurants, old tyme restaurants. One where burgers are a nickel and shakes a dime. I don't suppose you find them on the main roads anymore. They're still around, if you look.

And I got out with all my cleaning materials and I began to wash down the windows. My friend stayed in the truck, he was not one for them fancy television devices talking like the future. He said he couldn't make it. He didn't want to blow through all the money.

Well, sometimes in this world, when it doesn't work out one way, you just keep cleaning. You keep dipping your rag into the soapy water and cleaning until every inch is spotless. And then you step back and admire your work. I learned that from an old codger many years ago and, in this moment, I felt it was the best advice in the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Small Apartment Owned By a Mean Man**

I was living in the small apartment, owned by a mean man, who would just come on in, walk on through the door. And at night sometimes I dreamed of the necklace around my neck. It signified memories of the nicest kind. Other times, other places. Nothing much, nothing unusual, mean man by day, me with my pendant at night. Some nights.

And then one night I forgot to close the shade with a full moon and I'd been to the beach that day and I was burned by the sun and I couldn't sleep and I watched the full moon with my aching skin. And I saw a face in the moon and

the face seemed to talk to me alone and it said *click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise!* in a tongue I was not familiar with, but it sounded like the most charming g-nattering I've ever heard.

The next night my skin still troubled me and the moon was still full and what could only be described as the tiny imp in the moon returned to distract me from my pain and sleeplessness, uttering the words *click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise!*

On the third night, I could not keep awake as my skin no longer ached but I knew even as I closed the shade that the moon was waning as it does, and the imp in there was not possible to see at this time. But come the next full moon, burnt skin or not, I would be looking for that imp.

\* \* \* \* \*



## **I'm Listening to the Folk Singer**

Well now, I step back into old years. Far gone years. And I'm listening to the folk singer on the phonograph, and he's there, sitting with me, and we're listening to one of his songs, a good one, we're talking. I'm telling him how I cried at news of his death, how much his music means to me, and then he says, *I'm going to travel with you for a while*, and we decide to go to a show, as seems logical, when you're traveling with an old folk singer.

And there's a long line, and I don't know who's playing. Who are we waiting to see? It's a good question, perhaps without an answer, and eventually we go to the show but I'm not so sure it's such a great show. The band doesn't seem very enthused. In fact, they only play a chord or two, and then just start to doze. They start to fall asleep right on stage, they drift away. And someone says, *hey man, wanna come to a party? Sure*, we say.

And we follow this guy out into his van, it has no roof, and it's pulled along the road by several horses. *Hi-ho, Gold!* he cries, not wanting to be like everyone else. We end up at a party, with lots of people, and someone's playing guitar again, to the tune of *Jingle Bell Rock*, the old Christmas tune. Someone is singing other words, and there is talk of a place called Hamilton Mill, in 1905, the whole town is excited about tooth tattoos. Everyone is excited, this is the big thing for all of them. Tooth tattoos. But then I cry out, *look out! Here comes television! here comes television! here comes television!*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **That Mobile Home**

When we went back, long and far and deep, it was to that mobile home. Now abandoned, this is where I came from. I lived there as a child. And everything's still here, it's as though we'd left without packing anything, or that we'd had so much stuff that we'd brought plenty and left lots behind.

And I'm walking through all of this decay, and I'm trying to figure it out, I'm trying to understand what was left behind, and why, and I find myself focusing on all the toys, little miniature figures, they seem to be Disney figurines, and there seem to be hundreds or maybe thousands of them. And I'm thinking to myself, *well, you know I'd like to take something from here, I'd really like to do that, I'd really like to have something that I take away from my coming here this time, and I can't find anything but Disney figurines*. Everything else is almost destroyed beyond form, and it's very peculiar and, well, I don't find anything.

I just don't find a thing, so I leave. And I walk out the door, and I walk for miles, and I come to a different kind of neighborhood, and there I walk into a large house, and I think it might be mine but I'm not really sure.

There's something about the curtains that are weird, they're red curtains, really, but there are green curtains over the red curtains, and I'm disturbed by this and I don't know why one set of curtains has covered the other set of curtains, and then I come into a room, maybe it's on the second floor or the third floor, and one of the curtains is gold and this is even stranger and so, really, what it comes down to is that when you wander in such a way, you don't return.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Down Below There's a Frozen Body of Water**

This moment is culmination and cumulation, this moment is culmination and cumulation. It's spooky, though, I have to say. I'm on a hill with someone and, down below, there's a frozen body of water. And, uh, I find that I'm throwing rocks to crack the ice, and I look across the water and there are these strange crystalline formations, and I'm trying to break them too, throwing my rocks at them, their different colors, their strange and disturbing formations across the frozen water, and I seem to have a lot of rocks and I seem to be throwing them at the water and at the formations.

And I wake up in the room of a castle and there's this fly buzzing at the window. It's a small room, buzz is loud, small fly though, loud buzz, small room. I open up the window and I let the fly out. This castle seems like everything, but really the Island is everything, culmination and cumulation.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **This Was a Science Test Like None Other**

This was a science test like none other I'd ever taken, let me tell you. Well, I was studying for it by a river, that's how I prepared. Reading my books, looking at my notes, I was getting ready. And I thought, *OK, I'm ready to go*. Or maybe I didn't so much think that, but at some point, ready or not, there I was, taking this test.

The test was not on paper, however. The test was in a container of food, a plastic container of food, it was sort of a dry pudding. And I was reading the pudding as though it was a series of questions. I was poking my fingers into it, to find the questions and then answer them. And this may seem strange

to you, it may seem very strange to you, it was probably strange to me too. But what had happened was, I woke with instructions for taking this test, and the instructions were: *forgive, understand, reconcile*. That was what this plastic container of pudding science test left.

\* \* \* \* \*

### It Begins With the Smallest of Kittens

It begins with the smallest of kittens, who wears a long blue top hat. Sometimes sleeps on a piece of cardboard. Sometimes rests on the very tips of my fingers. Well, sometimes that tiny kitten is not there, and so I will leave the room, and I will float through the hallway, riding in a white bucket. Sometimes I will see old faces, known from other times.

Float on and on, outside there is a field. And above this field are a million shooting stars. There are people picnicking beneath the shooting stars, having a party. I think to myself, *I've got to get more room for that tiny kitten*.

But, anyway, I have to go to work. And I work in a big store. I'm in the back, and I can't find my book bag. Not quite sure where it is, find myself walking back to the city, street after street. There's a record store owner sitting outside his store, and he shows me a map. Later there's a pizza place, empty, but for all the dancers inside. I can't find my bags. And I keep walking, buildings getting older and older, and finally I find myself sitting in an empty ballpark with an AM transistor radio, and I'm listening to the *Creature Common Show with DJ Squeak*.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Love Is . . .

I come to a bar, walk through the door, accompanied by a girl with a bottle for a leg. We sit down with two strangers. I start talking about what could strangers initially have in common before speaking. The lady laughs at me. I don't know if she enjoys my statement, I don't know if she doesn't. But she looks at me and she says, *love is violins, tributes, and ghosts*. She continues on, saying that all through her day walking here she'd seen it scrawled everywhere, and she had joined in, and she brandishes a strange crayon before our eyes.

We turn, for the night's entertainment is about to begin at this bar and, at the podium, which is behind the bar, high up where all can see, there is a lecturer. The lecturer speaks of spirituality, goes on and on, and concludes

that Christianity is the only way. I had admired his speakings, known him previously, but now I start to shout other religion's names, *Zoroastrianism! Jainism! Buddhism! ismism!* I shout and shout and the place engulfs in riots.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A Shifting Design

In a car, with other documentary film producers. We work for the same network. We're driving down a very narrow street, with a crowd of cars, and then a crowd of people. My friend somehow manages to get the car turned around, steers us through. It's like we're driving backwards through the crowd of cars, crowd of people.

What happens next is that we arrive where we were going all along. It's a place, oh I don't know about this kind of place, you might say it's, uh, a kind of place where you don't arrive to too often, and you certainly never get there unless someone brings you there. And there's a back room, and I see professors from my old college. They taught about books but, you see, I never took their classes. I took the classes of others. And here we are, and they are glad to see me. I seem to be passing through, passing on, and passing elsewhere.

And, well, they have a little present for me. Takes a little bit of preparation but what they do is, they take a box of very small cigars, probably as big as your pinky, maybe half your pinky, and they soak them in liquid, and then freeze them in ice cream.

And then there's this time that passes. I'm with my brother, carrying the box of frozen liquid-covered cigars. Walking along, but he seems to be limping, his sneakers crushed. And I look over, and there's a building, and it's crushed in the same way, the same formation, crushed.

And we are crossing the street and I'm thinking, *I've got to get him a better sneaker, or two even*. And he looks at me and says, *beauty is guerilla*. And I said, *how did you remember that old phrase*, and he nods, and a wink, and we move on.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Darling Darlene Danger

It's a story of Darling Darlene Danger. And she recounts it in her book, *Luminous Ends*. It is the story of her parents who came to the castle when she



was small, and found her among other denizens, and took care of her some years till they no longer got along, and they lived in different areas of the castle. They would only speak by telephone.

One night, while arguing on the telephone, the wife is smoking a cigarette, puts it down on the bedspread. It causes a fire, which burns a hole in the castle. Eventually, Darling Darlene Danger's parents leave. They leave the castle, they leave her, but she stays. She is part of the castle and she will not leave now or ever. She keeps herself busy with elaborate paperwork she does not understand. Sometimes she gets trapped in it, deep in it. There are questions in this paperwork that are multiple choice. She doesn't know the answers. She struggles.

Once, she puts on the radio and listens to a program about the Big Red Machine, was a ball team, long ago, somewhere else. They won their games, many games and many more games. It was so easy. Darling Darlene Danger slips into a dream in which she goes to their park. There, then, she sees the old fire pit container they used. There are still scraps of paper around, predictions written on them. These, and other things, she recounts in her book, *Luminous Ends*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Running

Running, running, running, running, running, *running*. In a complex, I don't know how I got there, here, *there*, *here*. It's like a strange funhouse, with many strange rooms, and I'm running, running, running, running, running, *running*, and I seem to be with someone but I'm not sure who. I find my favorite automobile in a strange form and drive her badly into another room, and somehow lose her along the way, and I keep running, running, running, running, running, *running*.

There are minor barriers, there are twists and turns, and I keep trying to get back but the rooms shift and change. Eventually I come back to my favorite automobile, together with a man who is Afghani. We sit there, he says he doesn't want anybody to know that he is an Afghani. He shows me the parts of his body where he was beaten up, and then we get out of the automobile and he shows me the place where he was beaten up. It is a memorial area to where he was beaten up. And then we see two men with skis trying to steal my favorite automobile, and I chase them away violently.

And I go back into the complex and run and run and run, running and

running and running and running and, for just a moment I have a pencil and there's a great book and I've got to get it all down, finally, all of this, every last part, every last detail about the running and running and running, and I'm writing it down in the great book but the pencil tip is wearing down on me.

\*\*\*\*\*

## There is a Festival

There is a festival, always there seems to be a festival, I mean that just seems to be how these things go. And once again, I'm trying to sort through the matter of this festival. For a while, driving a favorite automobile, superb in many ways. In the rearview mirror, all the male cast members of the TV show I once called home are singing and dancing me goodbye. Happy, jumping, wishing me well. I am moving on from that TV show. They know I have to go to the festival.

Later on, I'm helping someone put up a platform for a Grand Production, and there's a question of what act to lead off with first. I say, *always lead with your best punch*. Eventually, I come to the wooded area of the festival. Oh, I suppose you could say it's even more than wooded, far more than wooded. It is a great forest, the world's forest.

For I know that no festival would be the smashing success it could be unless someone goes to see the Summonatrix and gets an approving word for all of it, and that's why I'm driving my favorite automobile into the deep woods, bound for seeing the Summonatrix, *ah ah ah, oh oh oh, wish me well*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## I Was On My Own for the Weekend

Well, there was that one time, you see, that I was on my own for a weekend, and I was living in this apartment and I had this friend, and he published a book and he was most excited, most, most, *most* excited. And uh, it got reviewed in *The New York Times* and his chance to change careers. He was a cleaner of grit, grime, and grease. Slammed by that review and, well, he still cleans the old grit, grime, and grease, and maybe he's happier for it.

But I have to say that he held up well, hosted this party one time and, at the heart of the party, he gathered everybody around, there was lots of smoke, there was lots of frivolity, windows were flung wide open, moon in every window and he had this contest, see, because he was gathering himself back

and getting back his mojo, *fuck The New York Times*, he said, and there was this contest where he gathered everybody together to participate and there was a long piece of paper and there was a puzzle on each side of it and he handed it off to groups and what happened was you had to make your way down the puzzle on the one side and then make your way down the puzzle on the other and you had to do it quickly, you had 30 minutes or less, this was not a slow going puzzle so there were people explaining it, it seemed like there was more than just my roommate who was into this.

And it got toward dawn so we walked outside and there were picnic tables outside and we were still working on the puzzle, somewhere along the way the half hour had come and gone but we were still working on it anyway, and then it started icy raining and I got worried because I had valuable things with me, valuable friends not accustomed to rain, and a bag full of notebooks that would have gotten wet.

In the rain there appeared this German Shepherd barking and I didn't know whose it was, *who's this German Shepherd belong to? why's he here?* Finally his man came along, see this is the end of the story, and he said, *how was he?*, and we said, *he was good, he sat still and he waited and it was good, it was all good, your German shepherd was a good dog. Thank you.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Yesterday is Everything**

You know, yesterday is everything and there's almost nothing useful to say about any of it. I'm in an old city in just shorts, looking for coins to make a phone call, call this old friend, call that old friend, yesterday, yesterday, *yesterday*.

And I find myself in a situation in the outskirts with a couple of others, it's snowing, there's cops around. There's a guy in a truck and he's minding his own business but several of us have piled a bunch of snow in his cab, no reason, we're trying to fool the cops, *what does that mean*, then we're driving with him, sitting with the snow, *what does that mean*, and we end up on another planet.

There's a mining area and we intend to sabotage it, but this gets out of hand and it's pointless. There are men, there are machines, there are girls in bikinis surrounding us, every which way, we're trapped by them all. They knew we were coming and here we all are. Now we're in a cage, the cage is moving, it's on wheels and, don't you know it, in the middle of all this I meet a hippie and

he just wants to go to sleep, what else would be true?

My buddies Tim and Rick, the ones I've been traveling through this time and place, I've confused them, I don't know which one is which, I don't know who is who, I'm uncertain, it rattles my bones not to know, not to know which is which and who is who, it makes me think, *I just don't know many things, but the whole of us are going to escape somehow.*

We're sent out to work like prison gangs on this planet, wherever it may be, but what we know, and what you just have to trust is going to occur, is that two gangs of us will go out but only one gang of us will return.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A Panoply of Events & Occurrences**

Sometimes it's just a panoply of events and occurrences. For example, I'm with a loveable sheriff. He's glad pot is legal in our state. And it gets complicated from there. There are guns, a dog gets shot, it's always my dog that gets shot. The sheriff nods, commiserates.

Further event occurs, there's a ship and someone is rowing away. I'm with a child in a store getting matches and candy for him. I shift from person to person in the store, not always taking over, just eluding, and finally I am chained and bound and surrounded by cops and the sheriff is not amongst them. These are mean cops.

But I have already requested a bike, and I manage to elude them, and ride away into the darkness down the road. I see that the friendly sheriff is descending from above without a parachute and I wonder *how are you doing that?*

And anyway, it's good that pot is legal in our state. For you see, what happens next is that there is a brick wall, right in the middle of the road. I come up to the brick wall, and I discover it is a brick wall through time, and there is a TV show about the brick wall and people in the show who also watch along the brick wall, they travel along the brick wall through time. It all makes sense, so I begin to ride my bike along the brick wall through time, wondering if my sheriff friend will catch up with me, perhaps he will, he makes an good traveling companion, he knows several excellent jokes.

Eventually, even being a time traveler, I have to get work, so I'm working at a small deli, a convenience store in a kind of camp compound. The deli is in a small house. At one point there's a long, long line for sandwiches. The

first one, he's a customer I know by name, asks for seltzer, I point him to the sodas and drinks and cans. I don't think he paid because there's nobody at the register. The next one wants an elaborate sandwich, has had made it before, she knows what breads we carry. She wants the most obscure of these breads, but in her mind and in her heart is more than sandwiches. She is planning revenge against her ex-boyfriend. It goes on and on, this long line of customers with all their tales and stories.

Then I leave and I go away, I'm tired of this brick wall, I'm tired of this deli, I'm tired of the whole thing, I don't even miss my sheriff friend anymore. As I'm leaving, I come to the lady planning revenge and I say, *you know before I go and leave all, I'll tell you it's not worth it, you won't win him back anyhow. Think twice.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **When I Was Young I Roamed the Woods**

When I was young, I roamed the hills, countryside, the woods, the far, deep woods, and I lived in a cabin with few modern conveniences of any kind. I lived there with a woman I didn't know well. She'd moved in at some unknown point and when I'd come home from my roamings, she liked to pin me against the wall and have me fuck her with my jeans half down, just like that, lickety split, and then I'd be sweaty and stained as I pulled them up afterward. There was nothing romantic about it at all. Eventually, I packed up what little I owned, I took down the cabin, which wasn't much anyway, returned its components to what they would be otherwise, back to the earth, and got me back down to some so-called civilization.

Found old friends who'd wondered where I'd gone, but not that hard. Found them planning something, which they mixed me up in, at least for a while. We were going to rob a bank. One morning found us crouched with guns on steps waiting for the bank to open, and I thought to myself, *is this what I came back for?* as I held my gun. I'd never even shot a gun in the wilderness all the time I'd lived there. I'd lived peaceably with the land and found my way. Finally, I just said *no, this is not for me.* Put my gun, heavy in my hands, down on the steps, now light in my hands. I told them I was leaving. They seemed scared to do so as well, scared of the man who'd hired us, a heavy criminal who wasn't there.

Somewhere along the way, I found myself a bicycle. I got on my bicycle and rode away. It was raining, hard, but I didn't care, didn't care at all. I decided I would ride to my mother's house and try to explain everything. Along the

way I stopped at a McDonald's, great cheeseburgers but I couldn't stay. I was terrified to be caught and dragged back to the criminal act I'd failed to perform, so I just kept biking and I guess that's all I wanted to say at this time.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A Tale of the W.A.R.P. Wizard**

Now you probably want to hear another one of those splendid tales of the W.A.R.P. Wizard. You know him well. He travels with his small chunky book and snub-nosed raygun, helping, travels the four corners of the globe.

Well, this time around, he finds himself in time and space in an apartment in 1970 with others. They're gathered round expectantly and in walk the members of the greatest rock band that has ever existed. And their new album is just out and everyone's excited to sit in a room, the room we're in, there's chairs and pillows and couches and we're just all so excited.

It's all friendly but it's not very enthused and we begin to feel their lack of enthusiasm, we begin to feel the room dry up with the energy that was crackling through it, the excitement of meeting these musician heroes, these avatars, these brilliant geniuses who we love and admire so much, and here they are before us and nothing, *nothing*, they're just not happy to be here.

And I want to take a picture but my camera isn't working right, the batteries are dead or something like that. I go outside and try to find some more batteries or some kind of charger that you know will work in 1970, and just come back in and hardly anybody's left and people look at me in particular and they realize, *oh he's from the future*, and I think *ah, well, the jig's up, the energy is gone from the room*, the W.A.R.P. Wizard is being stared at darkly. *It's time.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Trying Not to Crush the Thing**

I keep falling asleep, waking up, trying not to crush the thing, trying very hard not to crush the thing. Where is it, trying not to crush the thing. And then I wake up, I do wake up and I realize, *oh, this place.* Overly familiar and not very clean, it's a prison camp. I've been here a short time, guarded by aliens in great armor. I don't know how big they are, I just know how big their armor is.

But we can walk around, us prisoners, because they're so much bigger and they're armed and it seems there's no way out, nowhere to go. Then one dies,

and nobody seems to notice, he falls at my feet with a crash and nobody seems to notice.

OK. I'll go with this as long as it lasts. I pull open his armor, pull him out, he's not so big, and he's dead. I get in, knowing this won't work, knowing because I've observed that the armor only works based on blood recognition, as you slide in and it snaps into place, your finger gets pricked for blood recognition. As I slide in to place and my finger gets pricked, I'm sure it's over. But, what the hell? Then something surprising happens. The armor is active and I'm inside. Someone comes up to me and I realize it's the dead alien's brother and he's happy to see me, and he embraces me, such as two big, armored aliens can embrace, and we head off to the ship.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **They Call Me Makon**

Well, now. They call me Makon, which is short for Makonic. I have my obsessions. For one thing, I think that my deep brown skin is lovely. I think it's gorgeous. I don't say a thing to anybody at all about this, ever. But it is a secret obsession of mine. So I don't tell anybody.

By day, I teach in the classroom. By night, I stay in my art studio. It has a single, tall window, looking out to the night. I make all kinds of art. I haven't ever decided what kind of artist I am. I decide to be a superhero of artists, and make all kinds, and discriminate against none. Make great canvasses and small sculptures of clay, of steel, things that are half melted, things that float in the sky. For a while I become obsessed, aside from with my skin, to making art that is half in and half out of my dreams. I like to watch it shift in the air. Sometimes I'll puff a little breath onto one, just to see it come and go and how it changes. It is such a good life, though I don't get much rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It's a Movie Theater, I Think**

It's a movie theater, I think. Yes, I suppose it's a movie theater. And there's a movie that only a few want to see. Just a few of them, but they're being refused. They're scattered up and down the hallway that runs from theater to theater inside the large theater building. And they want to see this movie, and it's a few of them, but they're scattered. They are herded to a waiting area. And there still seems to be a lot of trouble about them seeing this movie, this strange few of them who've been herded.

But eventually they get in, and the movie starts, and somewhere along the way, there's a farm. Fields full of sleeping camels, curled around their eggs, and I'm trying to navigate through the camels and their eggs without waking anybody, just get to the other side. *How did I end up in this movie?* I don't know, but there I am. I find myself at the road that I was trying to get to, traveling with a lot of stuff and it's raining hard. I'm waiting for a bus, and I realize I've forgotten my tent bag, the kind that you hook over your shoulder. Left it back at that farm. I'm far from home. I have to get this bus, though I know that it is rare in coming.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm Living in One of Those Inside-Outside Apartments**

You know, this happens every time I'm living in one of those inside-outside apartments. They get very cluttered. I try to pick them up, I do my best, what can I say? Several people appear, they seem to be friends. They have a shopping cart. They're asking me for help, to open my inside-outside apartment, roll their shopping cart on in. I try to help, I try to get them going.

Next door, a girl plays an elaborate game. I'd seen her, earlier in the evening, down in the street, with a circle of empty chairs, playing this elaborate game. Time to go outside of the inside-outside apartment, just time to leave it entirely, conceptually speaking.

*Hey, oh, there you are, I was wondering where you were. Let's go walking together. Yes, it is a beautiful night, isn't it? Yes, I think it is too. How are you today? I'm fine, how are you?*

*What? Hark! Look at this alley we are walking down, what strange small stores on either side. You are annoyed that they sell magazines? Why are you annoyed by this thing? I don't know, Look, isn't it strange, this alley into a room? Oh, it's one of those inside-outside apartments that you arrive in. Yes, I have one of these too, aren't they nice? People just drop on in all the time, invited or not. Yes, indeed. It's good to see you. Well, must be going now, probably gotta get back to my own inside-outside apartment and figure out who's walked into it lately. So long.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It's Like Several Dreams at Once**

You're wondering and, yes, it's like several dreams in one, and I'll tell you,

there was one. Check this out. My first love, old and matronly, and there she was, a widow. And I come to her front steps. I don't triumph and I don't know why. Suddenly, I told you it was several dreams at once, I'm back at the burning festival in the desert, as though I never left, ecstatic, high, no time, no place, no where, here, forever. 'Tis sweet, 'tis fine. I look, peer, there's a house. I'm in that house. What? Huh? I told you, it was several dreams at once. And there are two people who've come to rob us. And I fight them off, they're not going to get the wad of money in my hands.

And they leave, but thennnn, he came back, and I decided to work with him. And she came back too, and I figured OK, why not? And they had this little foam radio, a tinny, crazy, noise in it. I look and look, and everywhere was crazy colors. I gave them some money from my wad to help, but we were going after a lot more.

You have to understand, *it was several dreams at once*. Living at this apartment, returning from somewhere, I had problems, I'm unsteady, several dreams at once. Some friends helped me out, picked things up, then they'd go. Then there's older women, they like me. I'm there with my love trying to figure out what to do, bills to pay, rent is late. I get out a check and an envelope and then sat filling it out. Get upset. Finally I leave, barefoot, wander out in the street. (Several dreams at once.) Should I write Sally on the envelope?

I don't know. I fall to the earth, to the grass, look up at the stars. And I think the following thought: *there's a lizard in a tank of water, big and fierce, threatening. But it is cold and begins to shrink, losing size and power, the ability to affect. I watch and watch, as now it is in a plastic bag with water, small, impotent. Its location no longer crucial, and it dies, tiny, glass-eyed*. It was several dreams at once, and I told you so.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **You See, I'm Working at This Bookstore**

Well, now, this doesn't happen every day of the week. You see, I'm working at this bookstore, as I have often done before. And there is this kid who has a book on Vietnam he's been looking at. And he wants to put it back on the shelf. I try to help him, but he tries to put it wherever. Gets impatient, but I school him in the process, give him the secrets of how you put books on shelves in bookstores. I'm not sure he appreciates it now but, sometime down the road, he'll be glad he was schooled on how to do it.

On my lunch break, which is ten minutes, I step outside, take a look around.

*Oh, yeah. That pet store window*. There's a snake behind the glass. Predators keep coming toward it, it's newborn, and keeps eluding them. It seems almost hopeless, that this snake is going to get eaten or carried away, but somehow it's not, and I think to myself, *does this happen every time I take my ten minute lunch break out here, and look in this window?* Oh, probably. I think I need a better job. I need one of those office jobs, with a boss. The kind that you meet in an elevator and he has one of those voice recorders that he's always speaking his ideas into, because he's a go-getter. And he says to me, *you should be more like me, be a go-getter, read the best-selling novels, keep fit*. I say, *yeah right, man. You're not very fit at all. You're like 600 pounds, man, and you smoke cigars. What is fit about you?* And he says, *don't give me any lip. You're not going to advance in that way. The way you're going to advance is by making the boss feel good and obeying his every whim. Now light my cigar*.

Well, I don't like that, I don't like lighting guys' cigars, especially in elevators. It seems like a counter-productive thing to do, no matter what the corporate ladder might say about it. So I leave at the next floor that we come to. I just walk out. I'm done with these jobs. I'm going outside. It's cold, admittedly, but I'm going outside.

And I walk for a while, and there's snow. Everything's frozen. And I come across a vehicle and it's half-buried in the snow, and it looks like someone might need help. I think to myself, *well, what can I do?* and then I come up with it.

I turn to the group of people standing there, looking at the situation, gawkingly, and I say, *get some gasoline. Come on, there must be a can of gasoline amongst you*. They procure one and hand it to me. I pour a gasoline path from the road to the stuck vehicle. Set it on fire, and at least in this moment, at this time, it works. The car is out, thawed. It comes back to the road, it continues along its way.

Hooray! I have found my purpose in life, to roam the land, saving people with cans of gasoline and other fine tools and implements.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Through the Entrance to the Mall**

Through the entrance to the mall, there is a door, and through the door there seems to be a vast residence, where lives a man and his two children. They are German, I think. There's a certain game going on in this complex, sort of a chase or hide-and-seek, constantly going on in this place. I await explanation,

watching the people chase in and out of rooms, preparing for dinner, looking at a book on the fall of Vietnam in 1976. I notice a monitor showing a live feed from 1968 of crowds, fire, and chaos.

At one point, I'm with the German children and they fear I will leave. I say, *no, I'm here awhile*. I continue to watch the live feed from 1968. And I walk into the next room, and I find myself outside. How did that happen? It seemed like a room when I walked in, but no, I'm outside.

There are woods and there's a tiger. I run. My lover runs. What's she doing here? We find our sedan, better to run when you're riding. There are more animals, there are dogs and a cabin. We get them going, get them out, get them running. *Run, all of you, run, run, run*. We get them all running, and look back twice to make sure that there are no stragglers.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Was An Agent**

I was an agent. You can say, *are you still an agent?* and I'll probably just grimace, but anyway, I saved this girl from being murdered like her parents had been. Saved her, it was ugly, but she was saved, she wasn't murdered, and that was that. I moved on.

Then, years later, I'm sitting somewhere, uncomfortable, at an outdoor café. And I'm waiting for someone who isn't coming, and I knew that this person wasn't coming, but I was sitting there anyway, letting go of the idea slowly, when this girl, much older, of course, than when I saved her from being murdered like her parents had been, suddenly was sitting at my table and smiling at me as though I was still the much taller man I had been when I saved her.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It Was Christmastime, 1970-something**

It was Christmastime, 1970-something. Oh you remember those years where it was either one year, or another, but frankly no one was quite sure. It was hard to care.

But there were these people who cared, maybe they cared a little bit too much because what they would do is they would infiltrate weapons facilities and they would steal the nuclear weapons kept there. They'd drive them out to the

wastelands, way out somewhere, it's hard to say where, but they drove these weapons out and they dismantled them. And things went fine for a long, long time. Stealing the weapons, dismantling them, out in the wastelands, but they'd come to this Christmas, 1970-something, and they'd been doing this for a while. And when they unloaded their truck, the latest batch of weapons they'd stolen to dismantle, they found a man, additionally.

He was dressed in a red suit, he had a long white beard, a little tasseled hat, kind of chubby, he was sound asleep among the nuclear weapons. Seemed like he might be sleeping one off, too. So these people looked at one another and said, *holy shit. It's Christmas. We've got to dismantle Santa Claus, too.*

\* \* \* \* \*



### **The Best Kind of Pilgrimage**

The best kind of pilgrimage is the pilgrimage deep into the sea. Deep down into the sea. And if you go deep down into the sea, you will of course encounter Creatures of the deep-down-into-the-sea kind of nature. The kinds of Creatures who like it way down below. That is where they prefer to travel & to keep their company.

But you may ask yourself: *who are these Creatures that are living deep down below the sea, keeping their company there?* And so you swim up to them & ask, *who are you?* And they may sing out to you, there in the deep, deep sea where you have taken your pilgrimage. They may sing: *We are many, we are one. We are many, we are none. Come to our party. Come sing & dance with us!*

And thus you will have your answer, of a sort. What other kind of answer would you expect from the strange & wondrous Creatures who live deep down in the sea & keep company there?

Except to say one other thing: if you look behind them, there is a wall, a very steep wall. The wall reaches from deep down in the sea up, up through the depths to the very surface where it arrives, & you think to yourself: *my my my, what's all this? We are many, we are one. We are many, we are none. Come sing & dance!*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **I Am Near the Festival Again**

Oh man, I am near the festival again. And I'm one of the musicians. I've created this audio piece. It's two hours long, to be played later in the night, on the stage there on the cracked desert floor. Something always seems to be playing on that stage, save during the highest heat of the day. Its back wall reaches high up into the sky, giving shade much of the day, is buried deep into the dusty earth.

At some point, I bring me & my beloved's boots inside some kind of building—some kind of room, a wooden box deep inside a hole in the floor—for safekeeping. And I write the letter **S** on the box, in dust.

Later on, I'm listening to a man telling his story of going to college, complications, stupid tragedies, ends of the world. Someone's world. I'm counseling him like the old days at the festival, & I'm remembering those old days, & I break down crying, remembering how I did this.

And finally it's night, & there's a band on the stage & I feel like I should know who they are. They're longhaired hippies dressed in crazy costumes. And they launch into a song called *The Pink Floyd*, which sounds like The Pink Floyd.

We go on next. Grand finale? *No. The festival never ends.*

And all of this is so intense. *You tell me dreams aren't real, you tell me dreams aren't real, you tell me dreams aren't real, you tell me dreams aren't real, you tell me dreams aren't real, you tell me dreams aren't real.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Must Be a Boy, Full of My Fires**

I must be a boy, full of my fires, because there's a longhaired girl with golden boots on her small feet. But, more important to my world, there's her father. He's a teacher, & he doesn't like me. Isn't that always the way? Oh, first he has me read some student essays. *One, I say, is good, though is not relevant to the assignment. I would tell the student to start with the first sentence again, but keep the rest tucked away.*

Another essay just isn't very good. About a pilgrimage to the desert, or maybe a TV show about one, & then to the sea, or maybe just a bright pink cartoon dolphin riding the cartoon waves on that girl's low-cut halter top. They took a buggy ride. She wouldn't even kiss his cheek after.

But this teacher, father to the longhaired girl, doesn't like me no matter what I say or do. Somehow we end up together at a baseball game, behind the backstop. In this future or past time, players have to wear sandwich boards—which of course makes them clumsier to play, but adds advertising revenue to their teams' fortunes. One player's sandwich board reads: *ChocoSmax: Them's the Fax!* Another player's sandwich board reads: *We are many, we are one. We are many, we are none.*

The teacher takes it out on me, leveling criticism after criticism at me, as though it's all my fault. He takes all of this personally.

*You've ruined the game of baseball!* He cries, his eyes yellow with rage. I say: *is there nothing you can do but disapprove?*

He says, *I'm old & you're fucking my daughter. And I'm old. And I'm old. And I'm old. And I'm old. And I'm old. And I'm old.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **One of Those Low-Budget Movies About Time Travel**

It's like one of those low-budget movies where you're told it's about time travel but it never really goes anywhere. It kind of just all takes place in some guy's apartment. That's exactly what this was like . . .

There was this apartment building I was living in, & there were three apartments on the third floor, a small one & a big one & a medium one. And I seem to have lived in all of them from time to time. And the landlord's wife had a fondness for me, which was nice, especially when my rent was late.

But then what happened was that my credit card was stolen from the old wooden box I kept in the hole under my bed, & the thief ordered lots of pornography sent to me, & this did not go over well with the landlord's wife, who somehow got wind of what was being sent to me. Maybe she peeked, I don't know.

But later in the film—this was the time travel part—, we are in one of the apartments trying to get back in time to the other. It's one of those where you're told: *oh, it's forward in time—oh, it's back—my goodness! Look at the powdered wigs, look at the jet packs!* That kind of thing.

And then there is, of course, a heroine to this film, but she's not very bright &, as for escaping the pursuers, we end up at a baseball game & she doesn't understand that to get lost in the crowd, you have to swirl into the crowd & *get lost in it*. She sort of stays on the edge of the crowd uncertainly. She is not a very bright heroine. Longhaired, lovely, but little more. Once told me she believed she was born in a spaceship buried deep in the earth.

But, somehow, we make it back through space & time to the apartment. I find myself relieved. Further, I find myself sitting on a stool, on stage, in the big apartment, with Creatures, & we are performing. Some of them are leaping through a hole in the stage to perhaps another dimension, so one is told. It's that kind of film. I wonder if they'll come back for the Grand Finale, when we will all sing & dance on the stage together. I have a feeling they shall. For you see, they are professionals.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Always Get Invited to These Kinds of Parties**

You know, I always get invited to *these* kinds of parties. Now there are all sorts of kinds of parties. There's dress-up parties, costume parties, there's proms &



wedding parties, & frat parties, & all sorts of things, but this is the kind of party that I get to go to.

Seems to be a kind of a family affair, all sorts of family members. Someone's family anyway. As I entered the biggest room in the great house where the party was held, I saw there moving images on the wall. I couldn't tell if these were films, or videos, or some kind of two-dimensional Creatures in sort of a frame. It was hard to say.

And I suppose the party carried on for a while—there might have been dancing & singing. *Oh, no doubt, some got naked.* There was probably a body of water nearby, maybe the sea, maybe some jumped in, maybe it was the middle of the winter & they jumped in deep anyway with yowls of delight. Fireworks, of course. Mud, Jello, a nearby Woods where strange things happened. Maybe more came in than went out, or vice versa. *Things of this kind.*

And then there was the sort of a finale where this famous longhaired comedian came out, & he was going to put on his show, & he just was getting warmed up, telling his favorite fierce jokes, but his act was cut short. Someone cut his microphone, turned on the stereo, loud. I nodded. *Of course it's The Pink Floyd.*

His act was cut short because there were fanatics in the bunch. And they didn't like the comedian, they didn't like his style, they didn't like his face, they didn't like his long hair, they didn't like that he had ten fingers total on two hands.

And I'm not sure what happened to him, in the end, whether there was something that occurred in the Woods, or out to sea, or in the Jello. Among the naked people. *Things went down. Things happened. I don't know what happened.*

And all I can say is that eventually I end up back at my hotel room, unable to sleep from the events of the night, & from the kinds of parties I always get invited to. I sat there watching TV. It was a program about a town called 1971. One of the many you find on late-night TV where the lab blows up, the world ends, & only the Creatures are left, *again*, living on the lone habitable Island, deep in its magical White Woods, in the Great Cavern, caves & tunnels under the Tangled Gate.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Mrs. Wordsley

Everybody, it seems, has had a teacher like Mrs. Wordsley. Oh, she's not one of your regular teachers, she's not one of those that you have for all sorts of classes over the course of time & maybe you'd come to love her or hate her. No, she's your classic substitute teacher.

And you think, years later, how did this woman make a living? She showed up, occasionally, to substitute. It wasn't like she was there in different classes every day. She was just there randomly, once in a while.

She was strange, too. She'd walk around, carrying a strange wooden box. It had all sorts of symbols on it. You won't find them on the Google, or in big dictionaries, or in arcane volumes in the library. No, sir. It also looked like it had been through fire a couple times. There were scorch marks on it, a couple dents. It was a wooden box but it looked like it had sailed the seven seas.

And so that was Mrs. Wordsley. And this wouldn't any of it be very important except I was recalling the time that she made me stand up in class. *She didn't make people stand up in class. She didn't make people work.* She seemed far more interested in her box.

But she'd just got her hair cut, which spooked me from the moment she walked into class that morning, & she made me stand up in class & tell her what I had dreamed the night before. And I told her, I stood up, & I told her a dream. Now it wasn't my dream. I don't know if it was anybody's dream but it just occurred to me, in that minute, that sudden panic-filled minute when this substitute teacher ordered me to do this thing that I had never been ordered to do before.

I described climbing a rocky path, a very steep rocky path. It was both muddy & icy. It was very steep & there were many people along this path. And I wasn't sure where I was climbing to, but it seemed very important that I get up there, to the top &, if no other reason was involved, at least I wouldn't be on this slippery, muddy, icy path anymore. *Just begging gravity to take me down & with as much pain as possible.*

And I finished telling this dream that someone had had, maybe I've had it, I don't know but I don't think so. I looked at Mrs. Wordsley, but by the time I'd finished this now very long rendition of what had happened during this dream, she'd lost interest.

She was back sorting through her box, pulling out scraps of paper & other

things, some of which possibly moved on their own. It was hard to say. So I just sat down & hoped it wouldn't happen again.

*You were going to the sea, young man, she said. Reading shakily from a torn & scorched scrap taken from her box. Don't you know anything about dreams, young man? Don't you know that dreams are real?*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Leap from a Building**

I leap from a building, drop toward the ground, slow, & land fine. You see, I'm hurrying to finish my classes. I've got to get that college degree finally. I'm going to go work in an office, & I'm going to have a job with a tie & a suitcase & a hat upon my head, but I've got to take five classes, plus take two make-up exams, & possibly jumping jacks.

And that's just how it has to be. College these days isn't the easy thing it was back when I didn't finish it. Along the way, I go into a club & there are two pool sharks. They beat me easy but I get worked up, say: *I do poetry the way you do pool. Let's teach each other.*

Now these pool sharks have never been approached like this. Usually people fear them, & for good reason, but maybe it was just the tone of my voice, maybe I said it just right, humble & forthrightly, maybe just the right amount of Fraggie in me.

But they liked it indeed, & we began an alliance that day that continued the rest of my college career & it helped out too. You see, I was living in an apartment in a poor, dangerous neighborhood. Its living room floor—such as you could call it a living room—was just a hole, a declivity in the earth. People would come in & would tell me how to cover it up, or fill it in, & none of it made any sense whatsoever.

Finally I just say *to hell with it* & set up a movie projector & we show horror films in the declivity. One of them ends with a lab blowing up, & the end of the world, & the beginning of a new one, & I'm so glad I got that college education.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm Sitting at My Old Bar**

I'm sitting at my old bar, at my old corner stool, with my glass of ice water, & there's a man, sitting a couple stools away.

Now he's a man who has seen his best days come & go, or so it seems, & he's drinking directly from the bottle that the barman left for him, understanding that need tonight.

He starts talking eventually, saying it had taken him a long time but he had managed to pull together the suit that he was wearing at that moment. He explains that it was a combination of about three or four suits that were too beaten up to wear respectably, & so what he did was take the best pieces of each—a lapel here, a button there—& pulled them together into what he was wearing at that moment.

I give him a fair assessment because I figure that's what he wants, & I say: *I think it'll do, looks good.* He nods, he knows. It was a lot of work, it was a struggle.

He explains that he's on his way to the transport plane. He explains that there's a division of passengers among roles. There's the artists & the cooks, the poets & the felons, there's the counselors, on & on, like that. Roles. And like passenger sits with like passenger for the duration of the trip.

I say: *when does the plane leave & from where?* And he says: *I know it's soon & I know it's near but that's all I can say. But when I finish this bottle, I'm going to walk out into that daylight street in my suit, & I'm going to take a sniff of the air, a big sniff, & I'm going to follow it until I find that plane & join the other passengers on board.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **You Walk Around as Three People**

You know, it's often times true that you walk around as three people. And sometimes these three people are the past, the present, & the future. And sometimes what happens is that you're in a state of mind where they all mix in together, one plus two plus three.

I am in a neighborhood, full of houses, apartment buildings, sidewalks & stores, cars on the street, flag poles in the air, clouds in the sky. I go into a used bookstore, oh yes, this again. It's nice. I walk around for awhile. I don't buy

anything, maybe I don't have any money. It often was true in this past present & future that I'm describing.

I comfort myself by memorizing poems to recite to my longhaired lover on the nights she'll come see me, crutch holding her up on her footless right side. I select a book with no cover or title page & read to myself, then speak quietly, over & over: *Who are these Creatures that are living deep down below the sea, keeping their company there? And so you swim up to them & ask, who are you? And they may sing out to you, there in the deep, deep sea where you have taken your pilgrimage. They may sing: We are many, we are one. We are many, we are none. Come to our party. Come sing & dance with us!*

Maybe she will kiss my cheek twice when I recite these words to her. Better than the usual twisted silent hour in the dark.

I then go visit old friends that live next door. *Oh, this is a treat.* I have not seen these old friends in decades. They are friendly & welcoming. *Who hoo! Who hoo!* I say. It's been a long time.

I talk about the art we used to make together & I wished that we'd had better equipment to make it. I tell my friends: *you're so lucky to have a bookstore so close to you, next door.*

But after awhile, sitting in their warm living room, a friendly soft light, music on the stereo, over & over an album called *Mellow Moods & Moments with The Pink Floyd*. I begin to feel trapped. Like, I have to go. This is wonderful. *I have to go. Why would I think that? Why would that be true? What would be the secret to that feeling?* I don't know.

But I go. And I don't look back. Because, you see, when you're three people, past present & future all at once, you don't need to look back, because it is swirling all around you & inside you all the time.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A Friendship That Transcends . . .**

It is sometimes fortunate that one has a friendship that transcends time, space, & sense itself. I'm friends with the dead singer. He is not yet dead. We are good friends, & we have other friends too. We gather many nights in a known & familiar room, & know nothing of our various ascents & descents to come.

And so I'm with the dead singer, who's not yet dead, & his friends, driving in a

top-down black sedan, out deep in the desert. *Oh! The good times you can have with friends in a top-down black sedan out in the desert, deep in the desert!* It's so far out there, so flat & far from anywhere else, that it's like non-time-travel, like nothing passes, quietly, beautifully, crazy like you can just simply sniff the clean dry air itself, & know that whatever you've lost will come to you again. A pilgrimage into the one & many & everything you are.

Eventually, I find that we are no longer in a top-down black sedan but in a buggy race in the deep desert. Buggies are going every which way, it's almost chaos, how can you tell who's winning & who's losing? How would you know? I grip my wheel & drive hard nonetheless, & try not to crash, & eventually I come to a hill.

Strangely, I drive up the hill. I come to the finish line shack. I've come in fourth place, & I'm feeling very triumphant, but the newly-shorn lady in the shack only wants her \$180 entry fee. That's all. I look around cagily & notice there is a store behind her. I say: *does that store have an ATM machine?* She says it does.

I get out of the buggy & go into the store. Then I slip & slide my way through the store, find a set of stairs that take me down back to the desert floor, & I make away without paying my entry fee.

Later I give a call to the dead singer who is not dead. And I say to him, *thank you, that was such a good time & I came in fourth place.* But I warn him not to become a tragical symbol for his generation. I say to him, quite honestly, *that would be a waste.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Known & Familiar Room**

Now here you are again, in that known & familiar room, among those known & familiar souls from yesteryear. And you are among them, knowing how the years have played out since then, & they do not.

Yet you are with them, among them, a familiar among familiars. The high-high singer, the smirking preacher, the belly-laughing poet, the many brilliant brothers we were. Do you say or do you refrain? What do you do with the knowledge you have? Can you affect things, can you make them better, or just different?

Do you give them the gift of not knowing because you've traveled back to

a good night among loved ones & fellows in a good place, or do you take it away? Do you look at each face, & then the next face, & take it away because you know?

Or do you forget for a length of time, just a little length of time, & enjoy this miracle of having traveled back to their company before they run divergent & some down low? Do you enjoy this company of your yesteryear fellows? Is there enough Fraggles in you to enjoy it for as long as it will last?

\* \* \* \* \*

### You're Smoking Something Good on TV

Now you know what happens sometimes is that you're sitting at home in your living room or your bedroom, or maybe you're living in a studio apartment & they're all one & the same, & you're watching something good on TV.

Something funny, something that when you sit there & smoke something good, & watch this good thing on TV, they seem the same. It's like you're smoking something good & watching something good, but it's a twinned sensation. I'm smoking this TV show, this TV show is smoking my pipe, we are smoking together. *We feel together, we're very high together.*

It's very nice, it's sweet, you don't need anyone else in the world but your pipe full of sweet ganja & your TV show, your couch or your floor. There might be a window, there might not be a window, who knows what kind of place you're living in?

You do your best, you work hard, or you don't have a job, it's hard to say. You go through situations, one then the next. Anyway, you run out of good edibles. You've got the show, you've got the pipe, you've got the ganja, you've got everything, but you've got nothing good to eat. Cheese Doodles, ChocoSmax, things like that. Things that are good to reach into because it's a bag full of them & you can eat them, one at a time, in between smoking & watching & laughing.

So you have to go to the local store. Now you've heard things about this local store. It's open 24 hours a day, in your little town where *nothing* is open 24 hours a day. And you've heard stories about this store, that it's actually part of a spaceship. It's like the topmost part of a giant spaceship buried deep in the earth.

And you walk in, & you're looking for ChocoSmax or Cheese Doodles, or

things like that that will help you with your friendly pleasing solitary high whether you have a job or don't have a job, whether you have a window or don't have a window.

And you walk in & you think to yourself: *is this really the top part of a spaceship that is buried deep in the earth? Could this be?* You look around stealthily & you see in the back of the store there is a door. Now it could just go back into the place where they keep the mops & the brooms, or maybe it goes back into the cooler because you've got to stock the soda & the milk even when you're making the kind of crap money that they pay you at this kind of job.

Still. You walk through that door & there are stairs down—oh, & the guy at the counter, he's a friend of yours, & he's not watching anyway, a couple of girls came in & they are wearing halter tops, that was it, he's not watching nothing else. So you go in & you go down, step after step after step.

You come to the bottom of the steps, & there's a keypad, & there's a door, & you can get into this spaceship if you know the code. And you think to yourself: *what is the code?* He won't be talking to those girls forever, they'll get bored & they'll leave & he'll come looking for you, because you were talking to him earlier & promised him some good weed when his shift is done, or possibly during. Who can tell? It's a long night, third shift, though you do have to get back to your TV show & you do have your ChocoSmax & Cheese Doodles in hand now.

You think to yourself: *I had a dream last night, were there numbers in it? Yes, there were numbers in it! There was a festival, deep in the desert, & heavy rock music on stages everywhere (including The Pink Floyd & The Pink Floyd Too), & it was a chaos until the bands began to synch up, a few at a time, then all of them, every band, every stage, synching up, the drums first, the bass guitars, then the keyboards swirled into place, the lead guitars, & the singers, so many singers! Singing, chanting, humming, words in & around us, we are many, we are one, we are many, we are none!*

Furiously you type these numbers into the key pad—*many, one, many, none*—& you hit the **enter** button, & you just hope, & a little green light comes on, & you push the door in! *You are inside the spaceship, my friend. Go take a look. And a listen. Is that the sound of the sea?*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Dreams they complicate my life (Dreams they  
complement my life)*  
—R.E.M. “Get Up.”

*I return home to the hospital, arrive OK this time, & there are all my roommates  
in our shared room, & they're having a hard discussion about how there's too many  
of us, & too little room, & the acid is beginning to come on, the acid is beginning  
to come on, the acid . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm a Small Young Man**

I'm a small young man, I'd tell ya 5'2" but I'd have to be wearing taller heels on my shoes at the time. But then I meet a woman named Evelyn, & she doesn't notice how not tall I am. She notices my smile, notices it in a way it's not been noticed before.

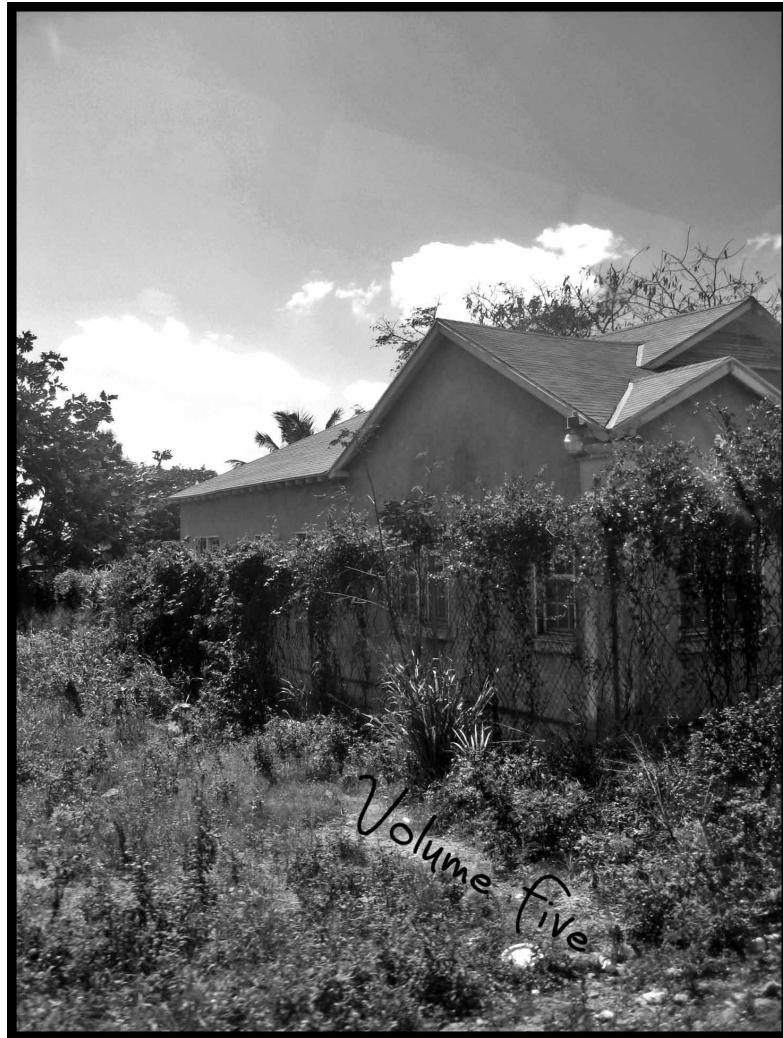
Evelyn is brown-haired, turquoise eyes, long & luscious, as I am short, short, *short*. Somehow me, & my sack of things, & I'm moving in with Evelyn into her two-room house.

Sometimes when I'm at home all day, waiting for her to return, I forget her name. It's something that happens to me, & I go hunting through her mail, looking through her things, trying to remember what her name is. *Evelyn, it's Evelyn.*

At one point, we're in her back yard, on chaise lounges next to one another, we're naked, lookin' up at the stars, takin' turns cryin' out “*hellllloooooo*,” until there is a noise, & in comes to the two-room house, bigger than the house, bigger than both of us, & certainly bigger than me, even on platform shoes, Evelyn's big, bruising, bald ex-boyfriend.

Evelyn throws a sheet on me as I lie there naked on the chaise lounge—she covers up with one too—we pretend to be asleep—but he calls & calls & calls, “Ev'lyn, where's my be'ah, where's my dinna', where's my suppa'?” *Things like that.*

Evelyn stands, puts on her robe, goes inside. I wait, cowering under my sheet. There's a gunshot, lots of shooting. Evelyn comes back. She climbs on top of me in my chaise lounge, still under my sheet, but I find myself fucking her anyway. It is strange—it is shocking—but somehow wonderful—because it is Evelyn, & she wants sex now—but I want to know how she feels about me—



because I'm small, & my heart's big, & can be broken *so easily*.

I spend a lot of time looking at her picture postcards, & the photos on her wall, trying to understand my Evelyn.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **You Leap! Across Time & Space**

Leaping! Across time & space . . . I am back in high school, yes indeed, *oh ho ho ho ho*. But I am taking classes now, doing quite well. Getting good grades. *Nothing keeps me down this time around*. I walk into an empty classroom, a'swaggering, thinking nothing can stop me this time. But there's a message on the chalkboard. CLASS IS CANCELLED TODAY.

*Hm*. Feeling slowed, a little off now, uncertain, but then I notice a book on the teacher's otherwise empty desk. The book is called *Nazi Jailbait Bitch*.

Kind of a porn novel, seems the title charactress seduces & kills Nazis. It's an old cheap paperback. I wonder how it ended up in this empty classroom. Well, I sit on the teacher's desk, my short legs swinging below me, page through it, reading about the various adventures of the **NJB**. She's quite a clever **NJB**, & she kills in a variety of colorful ways.

*They hold a world between them, balanced. His hands above, hers below. They speak rarely. He wonders about her kiss, she wonders about his touch. This is something important they do. When it ends, as it has to, & he is bleeding out from a thousand small skin pricks, each a star's deadly jab, she stays right there, so close, loving him, hating him, making sure his last view of the world are her eyes, what he once called "the opposite of turquoise," to his last breath, watching her eyes.*

But then I decide whoever owns the book will value it enough such that I should leave it where it is, on the teacher's empty desk in the empty classroom. And I leave, having gained a little bit of the literary experience for myself from that volume, & ready to move on.

I walk home, each step again leaping me back across time & space. Arrive to a not-quite-then-nor-a-quite-now. It's the little gas station convenience store I worked in, when much younger, the one built right on top of the spaceship buried in the earth. Down a flight of stairs found at the back of the store's walk-in refrigerator, but a locked door below kept me from exploring it too deeply.

I find myself back behind the cash register, watching the security video monitor of my friends, my dear brothers back at that old brown-paneled barroom we used'ta haunt like a pack of grimy ghosts, all now long lost to me in time & space. They're laughing, they're shaggy-haired, they're grabbing each other's shoulders & hands. *They're funny as fuck*.

And sometimes I just feel like I'm walking blind through the world, wishing I could make a valley for all my loved ones to live together & maybe, *oh you know*, open up the valley to others. Random guy walks in & says, *I love your writing, man*, & I say to him, *I love your writing, man*, & we hug each other affectionately, & it seems as though I'm left wondering what does it mean to be bound by space & time, by finitudes of memories, by the affections that wax & wane in the human heart, & the miracle of the greener world, & the miracle of music, & the miracle of *breathing in, breathing out*, & keeping somehow, some way, by years & miles & years & miles, your heart open to all.

\* \* \* \* \*

*. . . so I stretch out on my bed, long legs dangling far over the edge, curtains closed so I cannot see the many other beds in the room . . . & so I put on my headphones, turn on my cassette player because that very day I'd recorded off the radio a new album by my favorite band . . . sink into my music, sink into my hospital bed, deep into my hospital bed . . . listening to those songs I recorded off my radio, holding the tape player near to the speaker, & they're all wonderful songs, deep, tragic in ways I don't know, they're beautiful, beautiful songs . . . they make me happy . . . & then the DJ, Commander Q, says the name of the album is Wish You Were Here, & I think that too, tonight, thinking back, thinking forward, thinking across those miles, turquoise eyes, turquoise eyes, wish you were here . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm Going to School**

I'm going to school again, now, Evelyn smiles me each time I leave for class, my *Tales of the W.A.R.P. Wizard* lunch box in hand, trying to make myself something after all these sad nothing years.

At my school, there's a woman who keeps following me around. Oh, it's not romantic or nothin' like that. She's an automaton, & she wants me to kill her, & she hands me two guns for the task. She pleads & begs & says *just finish me & you'll be a better man for it*.

Well, we walk out to an empty park with lots of trees, & find a particularly

nice tree where I promise I'll bury her under, give her some dignity, being she doesn't feel any.

And I shoot right at her, & they don't work right, these guns, they seem to go off wrong, & yet one bullet does seem to pierce her head, & she dies—or she seems to die—falls heavy to the ground—and I realize I don't have a shovel—so I use these guns to dig a hole.

It's not a very good hole, & so I have to disassemble her into much smaller pieces by hand, & some of her screws don't come out right so I have to snap them off—but eventually I get her all into pieces, & I sort of line them up in the hole with a little bit of dignity to the whole thing—and I don't exactly say a prayer over the whole thing but I do say, *I hope you rest in peace.*

I find myself wandering the campus trying to dispose of the guns, & that seems to be a harder thing to do than I thought. At one point I end up in the dorm room, maybe it's my old dorm room, maybe it's a friend's, from the month I tried the local college. I'm smoking something good on the TV, maybe to take my mind off the whole thing—it's important & not important at the same time.

—& there are no lights on in the dorm room—though it's nearly noon—and there are people sleeping in it too, maybe sleeping off a party, I really don't know—and I turn on the lights from a bank of switches, & the people sleeping complain—though it's nearly noon—and I can't get them off again—and I think to myself, *goddamn*, & I go over to the wall, & it's a brick wall—there's a brick loose in it, nobody's looking because they're all asleep—and I pull the loose brick out, it's tough but it comes out.

Behind the brick there's empty space, & so I shove the guns in there, put the brick back in place, & realize the deed is done, so go back to smoking my TV program. There are others watching me now, but *they just don't know.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*It was a movie, or a dream I had that night, listening to that cassette of my favorite band on my headphones in my hospital bed, or maybe it happened to me, why I ended up in this hospital bed, in this too-crowded room, with the quarreling room-mates, the acid coming on, the acid coming on . . .*

*Their village was gone, destroyed? We find a group of people traveling together. They embody their lost culture. They carry its trinkets, its memories, its seeds, & they travel on & on. They become adaptable to many situations, to the dryness, the*

*parched heat of the desert, metallic chill of the mountains, the strange magick of certain Woods & on occasions when everyone seems to feel it, & they do a lot, a sad collective feeling, they will brew a trinket tea together that will allow them to cluster dream & live anew in their lost home, to walk around, to touch its details, its smells, tastes, the faces that are not among them anymore, what the air was like, important sounds & not important sounds. It helps them greatly, these rare nights, to keep going . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **There Was This Woman I Knew, Older Woman**

There was this other woman I meet at school, older woman, sixty, eighty, a thousand, it was hard to say. Plain-looking woman but somewhat strange. We near each other, sometimes get along. Both back at school, trying to turn our nothing selves into something at last.

There was one time in the cafeteria where she's sitting with someone else, & I was sitting nearby. I had my favoritest peanut butter jelly & cottage cheese sandwich. *Favoritest.* I would make it up in Evelyn's tiny kitchen, & I'd wrap it in tin foil, & then I'd put it in a plastic baggy, & then I'd put it in my little sandwich-carrying case, & then put that inside my *Tales of the W.A.R.P. Wizard* lunch box, & I would make sure nobody touched my lunch box but me, because I knew what a tasty sandwich lay within.

But then he left, & now we're sitting together, chairs facing each other, & I want to take her hand, talk about a man's feeling of possession, but I don't quite, & anyway she'd probably misunderstand & think I meant me & her, when I didn't at all. I was just practicing for later that night with someone entirely different. *Evelyn, of course, you know that.*

But she has to go. I can tell she has to go because she's putting her screwdrivers, wrenches, & various colored nails back into her strange wooden box. It had all sorts of symbols on it. You won't find them on the Google, or in big dictionaries, or in arcane volumes in the library. No, sir. It also looks like it had been through fire a couple times. There are scorch marks on it, a couple dents. It's a wooden box but it looked like it had sailed the seven seas.

I collect my spoons & stuff them into my bag, but it's too light & I panic. *Where is my sandwich? Oh, there you are, sandwich. Still in the sandwich container.* I was very worried but now I feel reassured, & then I depart too, & I'm back working in my office.

The school gave me a job to help me pay for my classes—which is located at the part of the building that’s not yet built, so it’s actually a worksite—but I have a cubicle in the middle of the worksite. **CLICK-CLICK NOISE-NOISE** all day long. The crazy sounds of work around me as I’m trying to type on my typewriter, fill out forms, answer the telephone. Most of the questions are about the live feed from 1968, it’s glitchy today, & seems to only show war riots, nothing pretty, nothing hippie. People call and complain. *They want hippie.*

Late afternoon, as often happens, all the workers in their hard hats gather in a certain corner of the worksite to watch a sort of live cartoon that appears there every day to entertain them. Some kind of pretty girl dancing merrily, her face grows older, younger, she’s shy, she’s bold, she clearly delights in dancing for the workers until their break is up, & then she departs, & I go home but, again, *no one touches my lunch box.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*You wonder what kind of project could this be & if I tell you it is a film, you would not believe me & say, oh no, strange sir, film was conceived only recently, & I will say to you in response, you have not seen **Remoteland**, you have not seen **Remoteland**. You have not seen **Remoteland** . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **There Are Numbers Crawling Along Every Surface**

We finish together & we smile & I am ready to tell Evelyn why I am so short now, 5’2”, if that, this is an important part of why, she listens, & I watch her listening, & she smiling prompts me to continue when I am too long silent watching her listen—

There were numbers crawling along every surface that I could see, & there were letters & symbols & formulas & someone said, *read ‘em, what do they say?* I peered closer & I couldn’t see because they kept changing, I couldn’t focus on one number or letter or symbol long enough to see what it said, because it changed the moment I focused on it to something else, *something else, something else, something else.*

& they crawled on my hands & they crawled on the ceiling & they crawled on the walls & they crawled on the pictures in the picture frames & they crawled on the windows & they crawled on the floor & they seemed to adhere to the kind of surface that they crawled through. Sometimes they were more old-

school computer style numbers, sometimes they were more curvy, sometimes they were pixelated. They took on the form of what they crawled on.

& there was nothing to say about them. There was no explanation really, there was no *this is what it means*, & yet it wasn’t meaningless, but it had no meaning. It was somewhere in between, maybe somewhere off that narrow scale. *Wow. Fucking wow.*

Went on all night, went into the next day. I climbed the stairs &, instead of on the floor there being numbers, there were patterns, strange craquelure patterns, but everywhere else numbers, & I’m still looking for them even now.

“*Even now,*” I say, not quite meeting her turquoise eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

*What I keep mind of is your turquoise eyes. That’s what I keep mind of. For you see, what happens over time is that it seems like first you are you & then I am you & then you are me & then I am me again. Sometimes I am the raggedy fellow & you are the long-haired girl with the turquoise eyes & sometimes I am the raggedy girl & you’re the boy with the turquoise eyes, but you see it’s the turquoise eyes that always keeps me knowing what is what. They remain your constant, girl or boy, whichever is whichever, however things sort between us, & it’s a good thing too for, in this new place we’ve come to, things look perilous.*

*We have to learn how to adapt & adjust, we may have to stand in different lines, we may have to sleep on different floors, we may have to speak in different tongues. I think to myself, this is only temporary, I think to myself, as long as I can pick out your turquoise eyes in any situation, any profile, any raid, any examination, any time there’s raising waters or drought, any time under any star, amongst any kind of soil, in & among & through, however it may be, words words words words words words words, ahhh, turquoise eyes. It’s OK. . .*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Tiny Little . . . Individdle**

*You see, Evelyn, it’s like also this.* Once upon a long time ago, might have been a Tuesday, I was looking to make the acquaintance of a tiny little individdle. A tiny little individdle. & this individdle has been an individdle part of my days & nights ever since. A tiny little individdle.

One time I was in a situation where I could not believe that she was multiple



sizes at once, & it was a dangerous situation in which all the circumstances surrounding it were uncertain. There were strange faces, there were swaying hands, there was skipping music, there was some kind of dark & eerie, as it were, & I worried the fate of this tiny little individdle.

I swept her into my hand, I hustled her along, sometimes she was too entirely big for me to move much, except by sort of a nudging gesture of my shoulder to her ankle that towered above me, & sometimes she was many at once, a horde of her, crazy-eyed & cackling merrily, but I worked to find every single one of her, & *oh!* I made sure that I found them all, even as their numbers shifted higher & lower & stranger still.

—& I can tell you now that, as of this telling, this tiny little individdle is as safe as I can possibly cause such a being to be, with her love of the game, the shenanigan, the cackling trouble or, as she likes to say, *click-click noise-noise*.

\* \* \* \* \*

### His Name, I Say, Is Daniel

His name, I say, is Daniel. He is a man who has been washed over time by event, person, world, his own body, washed, washed, & washed again. In the last year of his long career as a local sports hero, beloved, best of all players, playing aching always, or just plain injured, playing for a team the shell of its old championship days, his heart still the hero's even though his body is slower & battered, he persuades all his teammates, except for two, as the season is winding down, the end is near, he says, *why are we earning all this money? We're terrible. Let's donate the rest of our paychecks for the remainder of the season to the good charity. Let's just do it.*

Oh, there's a big event, he doesn't want it, he just wants them to do it quietly but someone gets a hold of the story, & this last good act of his as a professional ball player is pronounced far & wide. Someone later on, years later, long past his time, wants to do a documentary on the man, remember him on film, & the only sequence of this unfinished film that is ever recovered from the fire is a scene where there's a crash & we arrive suddenly above ground on the subway train as we come out to near his home where he grew up, sparse green, many strange houses, some seemingly built from the bottom up rather than the top-down.

Half-filmed is the story a childhood friend of his told about the time when they were mere tykes in the sweet store—& they'd gathered all their money from paper routes, shaking down littler kids, stealing off their parents' bu-

reaus, finding coins in sewers—they were in this sweet shop, & they knew they could have bought the same sweets somewhere else cheaper, but it was finer doing it this way.

He said, *it's finer doing it this way because they'll put it in a fancy-looking bag with a ribbon, & we'll look like we're just sittin' pretty, bag full of this sweet candy to share between only us.*

He remembers his last morning as a ball player, the last game he was going to play, probably was not going to play more than two or three minutes of it, maybe throw a basket or two, everybody was going to clap too loud, call it good.

He was lying that morning in his bunk, thinkin' *what kind of Mac-Donald's breakfast am I going to have this morning, is it going to be a big one or a small one?* If it was the last day of your professional basketball career, & you'd already donated all your money for most of the season, so you were kind of on a low budget now, what kind of Mac-Donald's breakfast would you go for? Where would you scrape up the nickels & quarters?—& as you did, would you be thinking to yourself, *wow, this is like way-back-when all over again?*

“You were the friend from his childhood?” Evelyn asks.

He nods.

“You were taller then?”

“So damned tall, Evelyn.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### I'm Listening to My AM-FM Transistor Radio

*She says: What were you like when you were a teenager? Tell me a good story.* I can't think of any, so I tell this:

I'm listening to my AM-FM transistor radio late into the night, I listen to song after song, it's like medicine as they say, & I find this singer, his name is James McGunn, & they play a lot of songs by him on this late night radio show hosted by this strange gent called Commander Q, & James McGunn has this album out, it's called **Sco'u'tland**, sort of a strangely punctuated version of *Scotland*.

It's a 90-minute long album. I save up my money & I buy it on LP, double LP, perhaps even cassette tape as well. I look him up in the music review books, & he has other albums too, some they like & some they don't, & I wonder who

he is, who is this James McGunn?

When I'm not listening to his double LP **Sco'utland**, I'm walking down the street with my transistor radio poked right at my ear, hopin' he'll come on. Maybe Commander Q will have an interview with him. Maybe I'll find out more. It's hard to say.

Later on, I'm just sittin' somewhere with my favorite com-puter & we're havin' ourselves a good ole time, not doing much of anything, but just sitting with my com-puter, & it starts raining, & my com-puter fills with rain, all her ports, & I panic, try to shake them out. I look around for shelter, & I find this college bookstore, & I bring her inside, & just try to shake her out.

It's just very strange, it's like water that goes sideways & vertical & sticks—it's some kind of gravity-defying water—& I remember this song by James McGunn, it said,—& it was very reassuring though I didn't understand it at the time as now I do—it said, *when the water starts to fall up, forget the king, bring your cup.*

(She laughs merrily. My strange years before her delight her & turn her on. Every time.)

\* \* \* \* \*

*NJB likes to say to me: these are the kinds of things you hear when you're riding the local bus & people get to talkin' about their lives & their times & they sometimes tell you lurid details of their escapades, because you see these people are desperately lonely & sad, & they don't understand how the world has tromped on them, year by year by year by year, & the only thing I can say in response to all of this is that some of those strange things really happen to some of those strange people, & so I say to you tonight, one & all, most sincerely: CHOMP THE ORANGE, DO YA?*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Then I Traveled to a Place Called Oorous**

Sexxy, placing the tab on your lover's tongue, watching her chew, swallow, watching him watch you as you chew, swallow. Telling the next story, as the acid is coming on, *oh, luva, the acid is coming on . . .*

Then I travel to a place called Oorous. Seems at first to look like a town, a nice, small town. But I find out eventually that it's a sort of slave camp run by the aliens whose ships have always been overhead.

I arrive in the guise of a reporter, taking a break from his big city newspaper life to write his novel, take the room above the coffee shop, & I come down every morning for my coffee, my raisin toast, light butter, & sometimes a hard-boiled egg.

I set up shop at one of the tables under the elongated awning that the coffee shop features to keep its patrons safe from rain & shine, as they enjoy their beverages & their conversations.

I set up at my table my notebooks, my pens & pencils, a couple of novels I'd like to try (including the new one by Darling Darlene Danger, & my ump-teenth read of Cosmic Early's *Aftermath*), & I'm ready to roll. I get to know people though over the course of my days. Oh, there are some times when you'll see me hunched down low, scribbling away, blind to all but my page.

—but then there'll be other times I'll be looking pensively off into the sky, tapping the pencil against my front teeth—& that'll be a good moment to stop & say hi, & chatter a little, & so I get to know people this way. I get to know that paperboy & teach him that the proper way to eat a Danish, *son, is to keep it wrapped in its plastic & to nibble away. That way you do not get sticky, nor do your newspapers when you deliver them.*

He gets roughed up later by a couple of toughs, who I believe are in cahoots with the aliens. They drag him into an alley to beat him up, 'cuz he was seen with me too much, pallin' around.

I go to that alley & fists start to fly, & they are cowards, these two toughs, & they admit that it wasn't their idea, & *I said you're not going to do this again. You're going to tell those alien motherfuckers this boy is OK. Got me?* They bleed, shiver, nod.

Eventually, the aliens turn on me too, warn people to stay away from my writin' table—& I start to get kind of lonely, as people shy their eyes away from me as they pass by—ones who used to smile upon me—until one morning a black man shows up, tall, handsome, well-spoken. I've heard he's the town minister.

He says, *I understand your problem, & I appreciate you stayin' around—& I say, are you really the minister?—& he says, no, they got him in hidin', we didn't know what those alien bastards were gonna do to the town leaders when they first arrived, so they think I'm the minister, & they steer clear. They aren't sure what this God thing is about, & they aren't ready to find out yet.*

\* \* \* \* \*

There were missing pages near the end of *NJB*, & the very last page was a mangled fragment. But I read it & memorized it & liked to speak it breathlessly into your turquoise eyes: “Wars in the future will be fought in the mind by drugs, dreams, televisions, internet, sex, persuasion, the manipulation of loyalties, needs, desires, to the point where to obey is to receive pleasure & endorsement & to disobey not punishment but simply nothing. Physical war, impoverishment, suffering, disease, prejudice have all been eradicated at the cost of freedom & self created identity. This epoch is not sustainable because the world is too badly damaged.”

Where are you, Turquoise Eyes? Where are you? Why am I in this hospital bed?  
Who am I, Turquoise Eyes?

\* \* \* \* \*

### I Was Trying to Find Someone

Evelyn finally replies. She likes us to sleep with the bedroom shade open, the moonlight, the stars, the obscure green-&-gold neon sign glare from the S&G Pizza place next door.

*I was a very young woman at the time, & I was trying to find someone. We're far from each other. I try sending her a note, use a pen that writes on her paper where she's sitting in that ratty old armchair she likes, & I tell her where in the city to go.*

*She gets up slowly, & gets ready to go slowly, & she floats along, following the course of the river, sometimes floating above the river. She holds the pen & pad in both hands, & I'm writing her instructions on what to do next. Her replies on my pad are short & illegible.*

*Sometimes I see from her point of view, as she's floating along to meet me, & we're approaching each other, & I sometimes see from my point of view & her point of view both. We arrive at the same moment through the same cave-like entrance of the bookstore, same aisle, same bookcase, holding between us a book entitled **Labyrinthine**, & it's falling apart. We look at the back cover, & read that **Labyrinthine** describes six stories of imprisonment, each a different kind. **Hm.***

*I begin to sing to her, holding her small soft hands, to reassure her that her long lost soldier boy will come home. I look into her face with all the love I can offer, & reassurance, & I start to sing, **love is a battlefield, love is a battlefield, love is a battlefield.***

\* \* \* \* \*

### He Was the Boy . . . Who Knew Two Sisters

“He wasn’t supposed to be a basketball player. I knew that. He knew that. For years, I would see him playing ball on my black-&-white TV with its Antennar 2000, the kind that gets you in 3 channels, not just 2, & I would watch him score & score, pass, block, lay up, push his teammates to be the best possible, hand them round the championship trophies as they came, every spring for six straight seasons, held each one up for just a moment, then hand them ’round to each of his teammates for them to hold, them to feel that shiny, buzzing pride of *winning well*.

“But, Evelyn, I knew the true story. He’d told me. We had a night back in high school, years before, a reunion night, first since our candy-buying days, we were in the same store in town, the gas station convenience store I would work at in a few years, the only one the alien slavers let us run without interference, & we came face to face, him much taller than back when, me growing shorter as I continued to do, & he nodded, & I nodded, & we went back to where we would go in those candy-glorious days, down a long, dingy road, down a hill alongside it, through swamp & reeds, come to a dirty river that ran under a noisy bridge, & sat on the hill under that bridge, & he brought out a big-ass craggy pipe for us to smoke, & he said, *this baggy has the last of my Turkish black hashish, & you & I are going to smoke it all, & I am going to tell you why I am joining the basketball team tomorrow.*” And we smoked ourselves blind, silly, silent after a long while, after he’d told all, & then I knew what nobody else did, forever.

“He was the boy who knew two sisters. The younger one prettier, of course. They’re friendly to him. They’re performers & started talking to him between sets, & then they step back inside the roughly constructed performance building, & they are among many performers taking their turn, sort of a calliope of talent & freakishness.

“—& these two sisters are performing with their father on one of the stages, singing as he plays guitar, & their singing moves him, moves him deeply. For a moment, he forgets his wants & his desires, his frustrations, whatever brought him here, there’s just this music. *This beautiful music.*

“Later on, there’s the fires the performers like, they light them in the field near the performance building, so many dancers, so many drummers, & he finds himself in shadows with the younger one, feeling her up, saying *my god, you sing so beautifully with your sister, your father playing, & you have such beautiful tits too.*

“—& she laughs, blushes, says *thank you*, but looks somewhere else, toward the many dancers, the many drummers, & he slowly lets her go & thinks *that’s it*—he goes back to where he’s staying—he’s not staying with the performers—no, he has a crappy tent, a few possessions, just another refugee.

“But he begins to gather things, he begins to go to places where he can find paper, he digs himself up a pencil. He finds different colored paper. He finds different colored pencils. *It’s amazing what you can find when a passion grabs your Art, inflicts your mind.*

“—& he begins assembling a colored book filled with colored penciled poems, for the younger sister. He puts it together, ties it with bark & twine, assembles it roughly but sincerely. It’s finally done & he brings it back, he stands in the shadows, watching their performance.

“He has his book in his hands, of all these words he’s written, he’s found in himself poetry, praise, longing, desire, put into words. If only some of it, & he’s holding this book & the singing so moves him again, so deeply & so dearly, that all he can do is leave his book on a seat in the very last row, & depart before they finish their last song.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Down in the hospital basement something’s going on that I’m connected to. Something such ordinary folk as my roommates don’t know about. Something to do with the machinery, the blood & the marrow & the bones & the muscles & the tentacles that undergird this world & all its beauties & terrors.*

*That’s what’s down in the basement behind a thick door with massive lock that I only have the single key to, & I keep the key hidden on the third floor, the floor my roommates don’t know about. All the walls have been knocked out on this floor, so it’s one big room. You may also notice all the broken glass on the floor, every last instrument, every last drinking glass has been smashed, & I won’t tell you what or how or why right now.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I’m Working at an Office, but the End of the World Has Come**

I’m still working in the office, the construction around me has finished, but the end of the world has come. I find myself in the file room with crayons, drawing a map to the Place of Art where we plan to go. Before leaving, I walk down the hall, to see my boss, & she’s not in, & I realize I’m just going to have

to go—& I leave the office, & I leave the building, & walk down the street.

Things are collapsing around me. There are colors missing, certain words in the language are gone, & things begin to rumble below me, above me, along my arms. *Rumble rumble.* I walk, then run, to her two-room house, fetch her, we bring one knapsack each, follow her map far out of the town, follow it loyally until we find the Place of Art, deep in the White Woods, & here we are in the Place of Art, & we walk in, there’s a clearing, she tells me to close my eyes, & we begin.

—& it’s a visual book I see with my eyes closed & I’m reading my way along, a long apartment, narrow, living room one end, kitchen & bathroom on the other, & I’m reading in long straight swathes along it, a very crowded party is around me.

I read back & forth across the apartment but I am *in* the apartment now. I’m *in it*, not just reading it. I live there with my beloved Evelyn, this is my home, & it’s the night before leaving, & I want to make something of this. I want to read one of my longest poems to everyone. I want to give out copies to everyone so they can read along too, but my beloved Evelyn says *we only have fifteen copies* & there are way more people there.

They are crowded from one end of the apartment to the other. Finally I have a microphone & I call out, *does anyone have a drum to play while I read my poem?* But nobody seems to know me or pay attention. I begin to think, I begin to wonder, I begin to get curious as to what’s really happening here.

I open up my eyes for a moment, & see the quiet Woods around me, see Evelyn as a sort of buzzing glow nearby, & realize I’m in two places at once, & I can come back here anytime.

I close my eyes again, & I walk through the crowds, & I come to the back door, & there’s a girl returning through the back door, & she’s just pissed on the back porch.

She looks at me & says, *sorry.*  
*No, you’re not,* I answer.

—& I still want to read something long, poetical, with grace, whimsy, dark hope in these dark times, but I can’t do it. I can’t do it now, & I keep walking until I find that I am now at the other end of the apartment, but I see that people leaving. Crowds of people leaving, going out the door, & they’re going onto the landing, & they’re getting on their bikes, & I just want them to *stop*,

want them to *stop leaving*, want them to *stop staying*, *I want the end of the world to stop*. Stop, I say. Stop.

I hear her voice in my head, & she says, *just open your eyes & wake up, & I do*.

\* \* \* \* \*

*I wake up, & I am again in the strange metallic chair in a spaceship high high high above the earth. Trying to explain to them something that we had all come up with, all of us, men & women, the best of those remaining, the ones who hadn't panicked & given up.*

*We'd decided to call it United Earth because it was a simple phrase that covered everything that needed to be covered. If we couldn't be united, that'd be about it, & I was trying to tell them about it. But I kept drifting back into dreaming, & each time the dream was different, there was no connection between them, there was no link.*

*I wake with some strength & I try to tell them that we meant it this time. **We meant it. Please help. Please help, we need it,** & then I drift away, & find myself in my school again.*

*It's a long, long building, & I walk to my classroom on the far end, having missed class again. Find out it's cancelled, & I don't know where to go because I have missed so many classes that I thought today, when I woke up so full of energy & life, I was going to catch up on all my classes.*

*I was going to do what I had to do, talk to the teachers, even Mrs. Wordsley with her spooky box, talk to others & say, **this is the day I put my foot down & get it together,** & just as I'm getting it together the class is cancelled, & just as that happens, & I'm sort of wandering away vaguely, well, this man comes up to me & says, **hey, big man, you have a big hole in your pants, on the back,** & I sort of lean back, twist my neck around & sure enough, there's a big hole in my pants that I hadn't even noticed.*

*I thought, **I've got to go back to the hospital room where I keep my other two pairs of pants & change, & get this pair of pants fixed,** & it's getting all so muddled, it's not perfect, what of those vows, & I drift & drift & drift toward those pants, & eventually I find myself awake in the metallic chair, talking to them again about United Earth, & it seems like they're saying, **we want to believe, we want to believe you this time, but we don't know if we can, & we don't know if there's time, & we don't know if this isn't for the best.***

*& I'm nodding & I'm thinking, I'm thinking that if I don't say something useful here I'm going to just drift away into another dream, & it's just going to be pointless because eventually I'm going to wake up back down there & I'll have accomplished nothing but caused myself a lot of pain & so I say to them, with what's left of me, **there is a future in which we all live together, & there is a big library that we go to, to remind us of our sordid & bloody past, & some of us will stay there for weeks, if not months, to study it, & to try to figure out what not to do wrong again, & we need your help to build that world & that library, & that library will be our promise to you, please help,** & then I drift back again into dream.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **There is a Town, Far from All Else**

We breathe slowly, deeply, in, out, in, out, & close our eyes again, & travel deeper into the Island's magical White Woods, until we find a clearing.

The clearing becomes a temple, shaped by the full moonlight—

We enter the temple, & arrive to the deep desert—

We pass along, far along, deeper into the desert, & come to a little shack with an exotic nearly toothless little man who gnatters high & low at us, & Evelyn laughs & gnatters high & low back at him, & I try to, & I'm not so good at it, but I try again & again—

—& he whispers in her ear, then mine, the words we need to send us on our way to the town deep & far from anywhere else—

—& we will travel & travel & eventually though we come again to the Woods, & there is a road—

The road brings us to the Village he whispered about, & the Village doesn't have many buildings in it, it's hardly a Village at all, & we have to pick the right one, but there are so few. Evelyn points, *there*. The one with no main entrance.

It's huge. It's like a mountain of a building, like it's cut from rock itself, shaped into doors & windows, floors & entrances, unknown number—

—& we enter through a door, a guess, a hope it's right, & come to a room, lined on three sides with books, floor to ceiling, on the floor, there's a fireplace

crackling & snapping, & before us a small chair, & an armchair turned away, & there is someone in that armchair that you cannot see that motions us in our minds to each sit in one of the little chairs, to be comfortable, to be ready to learn.

*Are you ready to learn the secrets of this strange town called Wytner?*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Heard This Story at a Bus Station**

*This someone then speaks:* “I heard this story at a bus station. I was traveling somewhere far, I’m not sure where I was going, but I had my ticket. I sat next to this old man with a long beard, ragged kind of Army-looking clothes, & he told me that his blood was sick, & that he was dying, & he said that he was doing his best to comfort those around him who did not know how to handle these things as he had learned to.

“—& he said there was this particular moment when he found himself with a group of friends, some of them new, some of them old, & they were in a monastery museum, looking at the blood canvases on the wall, the red bulbs along the staircase, the fake eyeballs hanging in profusion by wires from the attic door.

“—& he finally led them out onto the roof, oh you couldn’t go out on the roof of this monastery museum, but he found them an open window, & they all climbed out, & all these new & old friends of his, & he showed them the sky from this peculiar perspective.

“It was a beautiful night. Sunset was strange, sort of golden & green, but beautiful, lovely, soft. If anybody had a hand in making this sunset, they were both artistic & skilled, enormously inspired, & he touched each of his friends on the shoulder, tall & short, long-known & new, & he said *just look at that sunset!*

“He said: *Every time you see a sunset like that hereon, long after I’m gone, think of me, & then one day, when your time has come, you bring your group of friends up on a rooftop that doesn’t expect you to be up on top of it, & you say the same thing to them. You say, **look at this sunset!** Feel it, don’t worry about its details & words. Feel it, & tell them to think of you, & pass it on to others.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It Doesn’t Begin Well**

*Someone then cackles a bit & speaks the other version:* “It doesn’t begin well, on this Island. I’m scared, I’m running. Some kind of dead or deaths behind me. I didn’t cause them, I saw them, heard them, & I’m running, running, & eventually I find that I get to as far on this Island as I can, & away from the scary thing I was running from. *Was it a Beast? What was it?*

“Hours pass, then a few days, then longer, & nothing happens. I begin to assess my situation more calmly. Oh, I’m still scared, look in every direction often, but here I am. *On this Island.*

“I study my camera that I brought. It seemed so important before all those tragic scary things that happened after I arrived. But the camera was meant to take pictures of the strange things that they say occur on this Island, the strange thing this Island is. This Island with the mythical timeless portal, that will not be found on any map, & I brought a camera, & I was gonna document it all.

“Just as an experiment, I take a few exploratory pictures. Just around my camp, just to document. But then when I go to pull the roll of film out to develop it, I’d brought all the chemicals & tools, it just pours, *it pours* out the back of the camera. *It’s like there’s nothing but liquid inside this camera, & I just don’t know what to think.*

“I came here to find out the truth of the Island, & to document it, I meant no harm, but it seems that, since I’ve arrived, things have gone wrong—& then I remember this peculiar bit of advice I was given along the way, as I told various people of my plans to find this Island.

“One of them was a strange old man with a long beard, I don’t even know why he was in my office. He kind of came in with others that I was discussing the matter with, then suddenly he was looking at me. They’d all left, & he was looking at me, & he was saying, *if you’re gonna survive there, you better learn how to hmmmmmm*

“& until now I hadn’t even thought of this advice, but now I sit down, right where I am, right in the clearing where I am, I just sit right down, knowing it’s all too much for me, too bigger than I am, except that this one piece of advice, & I sit right down here, & I close my eyes, & I *hmmmmmm*

\* \* \* \* \*

*And for just a moment, you are back with me, close, closer than anyone or anything  
I have ever known, Turquoise Eyes, my Evelyn, Turquoise Eyes, & I hmmmmmm  
till my breath runs out, and you are gone again, oh my lost heart, you are gone  
again . . . . .*

\* \* \* \* \*



*I ask the Universe tonight:  
What if Dream-Mind is Supra-Consciousness?*

### **I'm Back at the Desert Festival, Again**

I'm back at the desert festival again, really it seems, surprise, delight, & again I am wearing a certain hat, one I shared with a small Creature friend of mine, this friend who traveled with me. It's a warm fisher hat, with a chin-strap. I found it on the old green bus back in the city, the last one of the night, returning from the hospital, in the very back seat. It'd fallen in a dark crevasse, & I thought of my little Creature friend, who was always cold. Folds nicely to fit his much smaller head.

One day I did not know where he was anymore, & I kept the fisher hat to remember him, & then another day I did not know where the hat was anymore. And days upon seething days, till recently, when dreams nudged into my waking, taking me by the scruff & nudging, & nudging harder, until one moment I open my eyes, & I'm back at the desert festival again, & my little Creature friend's fisher hat is in my hands.

I would sit down, back then, on the desert floor, night-time, desert festival loud & cheerful all around us, & I would look at my little Creature friend, & he would look at me, very calmly, & suddenly I am calmer, because he is a good little Creature friend. He knows how I get, excited, overblown, too full of the dramas for any one of them to take hold, offer a path.

He has very deep dark eyes, a pleasant purple fur, & I'm very glad for him, & he reaches out his little paw & pats me on the nose & I think: *my, how cool you are, & how cool you are, & how cool you are . . .* then he hops off my knee, & begins to do his desert dance, a kind of frenetic rocking back & forth, the ribbons in his paws & his fisher hat flying wildly about him, like he can listen to all the human musics, & the desert noises, & the wind, & the celestial music above, & the roiling in the earth itself below, & dance it wildly, happily, calmly, freely . . .

If I am back here again, can he be too? Can I find him? Give him his fisher hat? Hold him on my knee again? Watch him dance his beautiful dance again?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Mulronie the Space Pirate**

Well, you know, it's like I always say, & I've been saying it for a long time,

because it's something that my dear friend Mulronie the Space Pirate taught me. *You never know with people-folks.*

Now I know every one of you reading these lines, dozens, hundreds, thousands, bajillions, you've read the five famous books written about Mulronie the Space Pirate. The shortest, mightiest bandito in all of outer space. You well know that when he was twelve, in 1951, he had a strange encounter, under the starry skies, out in the fields beyond the farmhouse where he lived. Something happened that night, & it changed him. And you know that when he was a young feller, in 'bout 1969, he was part of that *other* mission to the moon, the one you *don't* hear about.

You know all that well, & you know how the books detail his eventual departing Earth, Terra, homeland, whatever you may call it, he called it many things, & how he made his way, by one means & another, into the far reaches of outer space.

But what you don't know is that in the year 2402, so far away from those starry skies back in that mythical year 1951, there came a sixth book about Mulronie the Space Pirate's adventures. None of you know that. I'm telling you tonight, this is a confession that there was indeed a sixth book, detailing the final adventures of Mulronie the Space Pirate, beyond what you know.

Now you may get worried & say: *oh dear, did he finally perish after all those years?* No, he didn't. He found himself a nice, small, semi-habitable planetoid—so far away from everything else, you'd think it was Kansas. But he had those later adventures before that kind of quasi-retirement he went into. It was those adventures that made the retirement possible, because he learned finally how to travel without moving, how to raise his kind of hell without lifting any of his thirteen fingers. That book does exist, I know, because I wrote it, his dear friend, his companion.

It was a long neighborhood, on that nice, small, semi-habitable planetoid like Kansas. There were two houses, his & mine. We kept them far apart from each other, by agreement. I'd keep the manuscript of the sixth book overnight, wake up at first light, walk halfway toward his house. He'd meet me, take the manuscript, securing it under his arm, & we'd walk the rest of the way to his house, & continue our work.

But what happened was the wind hit, & it blew hard, & he staggered, & he tumbled, & the pages blew all over the place, & there were no Woods to catch them, & there were no clouds to keep them from flying away, *& my goodness how those pages flew*, they flew all over the world, all over that nice, small, semi-



habitable world. We found all the pages we could, but not nearly all of them. It would have been much longer a book. But he was ready to retire soon, & just said, *let's do with what we have, my friend. Let the rest go.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm Drowsing, Over a Football Game**

I'm drowsing over a football game in the early wintertime. The snow has been falling & falling all weekend. I've watched it pile higher, up to & halfway over the one window that I have to see outside. I'm safe inside, & it's warm, but I don't know how I'll pay the heating bill next month, or the electricity bill, or the phone bill. But I think to myself: *if this snow keeps falling, I'll be buried & warm like the polar bear in the wintertime.* So go my future business plans.

I'm watching the football game on my black & white TV, every so often adjusting my Antennar 2000 to try to bring in the picture a little bit more clearly. I find my eye drawn to one particular football player, and start to feel like I'm watching two games at once. He plays for the Los Angeles team, has played for them for a long time. I knew him once, a long time ago, he was my friend, & now he's much older than that, & so am I, & so it seems like I'm watching two games at once.

I'm watching the game long ago in which he ran for many touchdowns. I think they even brought him out to punt the ball once. He could do no wrong, & they cheered & cheered, & cried out his name. People painted it on their bare chests, & on their bald heads.

But the other game I'm watching is probably a more recent game, my Antennar 2000 can't tell time anymore. He's now kind of fat, sloppily uniformed, & I guess they keep him around out of sentiment. He's an institution. They don't even call the plays in his direction anymore, because then people start to laugh. He mostly stays in to block because he's so big & fat, it often helps, people fall around him.

Glance out the window from my two games, & see that the snow is piling higher & higher. I'm thinking: *O! To be a polar bear, now that the winter is here.* Look back to the black & white TV screen, & see the pretty quarterback, in the newer game, dropping back & throwing the ball, & it's tipped up, & it rides high up into the air &, as though an air current itself had a funny sense of humor, the ball falls into my old friend's fat hands!

He probably hasn't caught a pass in five or six seasons, & he staggers wildly

around with the ball, not remembering what to do or how, his old body moves & memories all gone. He runs the wrong way, & then he trips, & he falls down near the sidelines, & I'm thinking to myself: *please, ball, just roll out of bounds & save my friend's pride for one more day,* & it rolls closer & closer to the out of bounds markers.

In the older game, they put him on defense near the end of the game, & he roars through the line, crushes the pretty quarterback, ball jumps loose, & he scoops it up, & dances & jives his way to the end zone. The stadium lifts off with cheers for my friend.

\* \* \* \* \*

*You've got to pay attention to the signs in your life. You've got to look around for clues, there's all sorts of information & guide points everywhere, but you've gotta pay attention.*

*You can't be controlled by your dogmas & your presuppositions. You've got to just look around with open eyes, listen in strange ways, any way you can.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Couple A & Couple B**

It is the old & well-known story of what happens when there is a Couple A & a Couple B. Couple A & Couple B meet in college. Couple B walk hand in hand into the student center, & they sit down at a table near Couple A, & they all start talking. Couple B is prettier, Couple A is kindlier. They switch up at times, becoming Couple C & Couple D, & two stray, Couple E & Couple F, & stray further, to form Couple G & Couple H. But eventually Couple A & Couple B reform.

Some years after college, Couple A & Couple B going to the Red Sox baseball game on the weekend, one of them holds up the best sign in the whole park, & they win the local TV station's "Take a Swing!" contest. As prize, they get to play an inning against the Red Sox, right there at Fenway Park.

For the first play, Couple A-he gets a single. Maybe the Sox are kind, don't try too hard. Couple B-she takes a walk. Couple B-he bunts, & the Red Sox let all runners advance safely. Laughing lazily, rich, good-looking guys in tight white uniforms.

The fourth one, though, Couple A-she, smashes the ball just over the left fielder's glove. (She's the leading hitter by a country mile in her local softball league. *Shhhhhhh!*) The fielder slows it, that's all, then wilds around for the ball. Another fielder rushes to help him—they're panicked—they hadn't expected this. They throw the ball back to the infield, but it just rolls away toward the dugout &, by the time the chaos & panic has settled down, there has been struck, inside Fenway Park, by these seeming amateurs (*Shhhhhhh!*), an inside-the-park grand slam home run. And, as a result, the Red Sox have to pay them \$10,000 total—\$2,500 per run—, plus make a \$10,000 donation to the Jimmy Cancer Fund.

*Delight delight delight*, everyone says, newspapers catch the gleam of their smiles, their pretty figures, the laughing charms in their eyes. Then days, *dot-dot-dot*, weeks pass. He sees a tiny blue light again on the ceiling of their bedroom. Thinking of his small Creature friend, his small friend's fisher hat, the desert festival. The small Creature friend's dance, better than any coupling, any inside-the-park grand slam home run.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It All Comes from the Book I Was Reading**

Now you can say what you want, but I say that it all comes from the book I was reading. It was for a class, & it was a day late, should have read it yesterday. It's how these things go sometimes.

Our house is kind of tipped in design. I climb from one half to the other, settle into the lowest end of the couch to read, where I'm least likely to just tumble on out mid-page. And on the last page of the book I'm reading, the girl's telling the boy she had a good time the other night, & it ends, & I can't tell if a page is missing. I just don't know. I stare at the book, & I just don't know. Will young Mulronie leave pretty Figga after all, for the romances of outer space, that secret mission to the moon & beyond?

Anyway, I put the book in my knapsack & I head off to class that, mind you, was held yesterday, but I wonder if I can say something anyway. Along the way I figure: *well, since I'm late, maybe I'll just go in & see a movie*. There's this movie theater I like, it's down an alley, although the sign that marked it has long since been gone, so you *really* gotta know it's there or you'll never find it. I walk, still wondering about my book. Mulronie always packs his black & white TV with the Antennar 2000 last &, *when & only when they're packed*, he goes.

It's a fairly big room. And the thing about this theater is that it doesn't have the

usual rows upon rows of theater seats. It has an assortment of chairs, different kinds & sizes, armchairs & rocking chairs & so on, & the movie screen is small & it's over in one corner. So I pick up my favorite green armchair, lucky it's empty, & I move it as close as I can to the screen, trying not to get in the way of others who were also peering toward the screen, everybody trying to get a look. Because nobody actually charges us to get in, we try to have our manners.

When it comes on, it's in the middle of the story, as the movies sometimes are at this theater. It seems to be a movie about a football team. The grizzled old veteran is showing the brash first round rookie how to play, how to win right. He feels he can't do it anymore, he believes he's on his way out. The fans laugh at him now, & the team usually only lets him block these days, not carry or catch the ball. His leadership in the locker room, coaching on the sideline, these are shadowed over by his big belly, grizzled jaw, slack-mouthed grin at everything.

But I can feel the hotshot rookie's loyalty to him, the long-time loyalty of everyone else on the team to him still. No matter his lesser gleam, his diminished speed. He's their *leader*, he's their *man*. I want him to go out & play one more game, & I want him to ride out high. The movie ends suddenly before we can find out if he does. Puff of smoke, & the film on the screen burns to white.

Everybody sits around for a while, some smoked blunts, some talked politics, some looked for M&Ms on the floor. There were always one or two. Since there were no candy concessions at this theater, you had to get what you could. A few of the skeptical hipsters who'd stuck around this long decide to venture into the murk beyond the movie screen to a **Bar** they say is on the other side. Don't see any of them again tonight.

Anyway, then a short cartoon suddenly comes on, it's about 30 seconds long & it goes like this: *they discovered that what had been slowly destroying their world all these centuries were people just like them, only these people were thousands of times bigger than them, & no more knowing that they existed than these tiny people had known the big people existed. But these tiny people embarked on a great mission to bring them down, by growing bigger in time. They vowed they would grow bigger, & they would bring the big ones down, & before you could even think twice, this short cartoon was over.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*I was at someone's house, it was a friend, she had this large jug of LSD, it was brown-tinted,*

*it was kind of a pretty brown, almost like a dye but I don't think so. She was very generous with this LSD, every time I came she made sure I got took care of, that I got risen up, that I got high. She knew I was struggling with my worry about paying rent. Then what happened one night was that, I don't know, I didn't get high, it didn't work, maybe it did, & I just didn't notice, the worry had overcome me. She was tired, she had to go to work the next day, she went to bed, & so I went into the little refrigerator where she kept all her medicines & chemicals & do-clads & I poured a little more LSD from her jug into my cup of orange juice, maybe a little more after that, I just had to finally evict this worry from my mind & not worry about rent except for the first of the month. But I must have poured out too much because now it looked like there was a lot less in the jug than there was, & so I got panicked & I brought the jug over to the sink & I filled it up with water a little, but now that beautiful brown color was gone.*

*It was watered down & I just didn't know what to do, & it's like in the course of trying to expel one worry, rent worry, I'd taken on another, so maybe there's a lesson in there for you or, honestly, maybe there isn't.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Here I Am, Standing in My Old Hometown

Here I am, standing in my old hometown. But, I'll tell ya, it looks a lot more prosperous than it used to. I find myself again on the street that used to have the bookstore I went into to buy 10-for-a-dollar paperback books out of a crate, & downstairs in its basement the burger joint where I'd sit in the corner, read my frail paperbacks, & write *lurve* poems.

Now it's all different. I stare at the pink neon sign **Mulronie's Original Genuine Gourmet Space Pirate Burgers!** & walk in. Not a paperback book in sight. Not even the Mulronie books. I *loved* those books. Just a weird, worn-looking full-sized cut-out of Mulronie in his Space Pirate suit, standing near the famous Space Tugboat, commandeered by the tiny cackling black & white pandy bear, sitting in Mulronie's hand.

Should I feel this furious? Didn't I leave this joint, this street, this whole town, a long time ago? But I do feel this furious, more than I ever have. Someone asks to take my order & instead I sit at an empty table, saying I am waiting for someone. *OK, sir. Let us know.*

I look around. The exposed brick walls are the same. Just everything in the middle is different. Then I remember something that could help my fury. Up high toward the ceiling, there is a brick that I happen to know is a kind of explosive. The owner of the joint back then only told a few of us regulars about it. Called it his Plan B Retirement Plan. He didn't actually tell me; I

just overheard them talking one night. He pointed up there & said in his unearthly drawl, "I just take a chair & climb up there, pull out that brick, & the spike behind it, & drive the one into the other. BOOM! Whatever problems I got, solved. End of the world."

So I take my chair, & I climb up there, & I begin pulling at bricks to find the right one. And I hear below the consternation over what I am doing, & would likely be hauled down by the town cop (maybe there was more than one, but they always looked the same to me), but I find it, & I pull it down, the brick & the spike. Set them on the table before me, & think: *Do I want to do this?* Nod, & I raise the spike in my hand, & drive deep right into the brick to end the world!

I find myself back in a kind of a little store, the one they say has a buried spaceship beneath it. There's a red-haired girl behind the counter that I knew, oh-so-long-ago, it aches me to think of it. I lean forward to kiss her, since the world has ended, & yet somehow it hasn't. Has & hasn't.

Now we're sitting, facing each other, on the floor, & others are walking past, smiling at us, wondering: *who are these two crazy kids, & why does one of them think the world has ended?*

\* \* \* \* \*

### My Beloved & I Keep Going to These Strange Parties, Over & Over

I don't know what happens but my beloved & I will find ourselves in a very cluttered living room, waiting for someone who's on the phone in the other room. So I'll be looking around thinking, *what can I put together here to sweeten her way?* And I find a Mason jar, & I mix in a little bit of chocolate, a little bit of coconut, from pouches I keep in my book-bag. Dashes & drops from flasks on the shelf with no labels on them, just for fun. I take a sip on it. It tastes drinkable.

And then a lot of people show up at that moment before my beloved can take a drink of this. Perhaps it's for the better, since what kind of mad concoction had I made? Anyway, I don't know anybody here, that's the kind of strange parties we've been going to.

But, happily, I sort of ease into a corner, & my beloved eases into the corner with me. Right near to the shelf with the strange flasks, & the empty one above it. I reach up to the empty one, tug, & it comes loose from the wall into my hands. It's made out of lots of pieces of wood, strange pale wood, wood

that seems to almost *hmmmm*. These pieces of wood are twisted & braided together to form this board, & I'm going to hand it over to my beloved, so she can study it too, when it just sort of floats over to her. She catches it in her hands, & smiles, & floats it back over to me.

Then I nod to her, she nods to me &, I don't know how we do it, but we together climb up on that board & float out through the open window into the clear night. *Goodbye, good night to another strange party.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I'm With a Group of Friends**

I'm with a group of friends. Dear ones. We're sitting around a table in the brown-paneled back room of that old Italian-Polish restaurant, & my old friend the Traveling Troubadour is there, strumming his guitar happily, blue eyes twinkling for all. But I know he's really gone & I have to go out to the bar in the other room to catch my breath for a moment. One of my friends comes out to see if I'm OK. She saw him too.

We go back in & I ask him, *what's your life like now, wherever you are, up in the stars?* And he smiles big & says, *smokin', drinkin', guitar-playin'.* Then he gets serious with wailing pretty on his guitar, his beautiful voice once again filling this brown-paneled room, like years long gone.

Later we all leave that restaurant, 'cuz it's a beautiful night out, & we pile into somebody's car, & we're tight up against each other in the back, cheek to cheek, shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip. I feel so fucking happy at this moment, & I close my eyes, & we come to some kind of party, & it's a very cluttered place, hard to say what kind of party's going on here anyway. Two laughing people are floating on some kind of board above the clutter, laughing, laughing hard, departing through an open window.

I get this idea that something really important is in the middle of this clutter, & I go searching through it all, pushing things aside, almost randomly. And then I find them, these Secret Books that I only ever find in dreams like this one, & there they are, unharmed, & I just open one up because I know that my time with them is short, & this kind of reading's the best kind of reading.

I dive in, & start reading about the King who summoned his brothers on a great quest, his mission to lead them to a mysterious Island. On the Island, to find a timeless, powerful Gate; within it, a being who might help them save the world. Carries with him a Secret Book of his own, within it a map to the

Island.

But one night along their years-long way, tired, drooping, they let loose in a sort of coffee house in a Village, start carousing & fighting. What causes the fight is that they see specters of their lost loves in the murk of the Tavern, people they left behind years back to go on this quest. These loved ones are sad & missing them, yearning for them to return. It's a night where the quest may just fall apart out of sadness for what is gone, & yet their King somehow holds them together.

Somehow he makes it so the night passes more blurrily & they hang together. By the next morning, they don't really remember much of what happened, & I think to myself, having been through a night of my own, *sometimes I could use a little bit of that blurry not-remembering-so-well-next-morning stuff. But only sometimes.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*I'm descending a complicated series of ladders & stairs, among many people,  
continuously climbing down.  
I feel as I'm descending like it's not just space but time, I'm descending through  
places & people I've known & haven't known, times that still remain strange to  
me though I lived in them, through them, in spite of them. I think of people I  
knew, that I knew so closely, yes, yes, no, maybe. That's all you get at best.  
Then there are people I remember that become different to me over time. It's like  
who they are in my mind now is based on someone they once were, & who they  
actually are somewhere out there on the planet  
doesn't really matter anymore because they operate in my mind  
in a different way, they become a kind of a symbol of something, become tied to  
something, tied to a feeling, or tied to a memory, tied to something, like a mascot.  
Like you were once my friend  
& now you're Cap'n Crunch. Now you're my mascot for regret, for youth, for fun,  
for foolishness.  
And I keep descending this series of ladders & stairs & I feel my limbs fall away  
from me  
& not really important anymore in this descent. This descent is not into a  
physical place.  
This descent is through dream, somewhere else. The faces fall away, as faces do,  
& other faces come, & they go too. If I'm lucky, as I fall away completely,  
I will look beyond the faces & see the rest of this wide, wide world.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Those Crazy Days Back When I Was a Spy

When I think back on those crazy days, back when I was a spy, there were some funny moments, in amidst the bloodshed & mayhem. There was one I still like to tell about. We had an operation going on in a hotel room. It was a big hotel room, big as an apartment.

My partner & I were trying to tease something from the air, expose it. He'd brought in this heavy suitcase for our work. It was one of those bulletproof kinds. You could drop it from a hundred floors up & it'd be fine, wouldn't break or open up. You had to use the right thumbprint, & tumbler combination, & maybe a couple of secret handshakes to get into that bugger but, once you got into it, that's what you got. Bugs. In cans, & jars, & containers, all sorts of insects. Ants, praying mantises, hummingbirds, etc., etc.

I was unclear at first why we brought them in to set them loose, & then my partner took out from the suitcase what he called the Football. The Football was this football-shaped light &, when we set it up on a table, the bugs would gravitate towards it. The closer they got to it, the more likely it was they were going to evaporate. They'd evaporate.

Well, I wasn't sure what all this was about, because it just seemed like it was a lot of trouble for a bug zapper. My partner assured me this was no ordinary bug zapper, or zapper of any kind. *You see*, he told me, blue-sometimes-green eye glinting, mushroom eye glinting too, *what's important is not the ones that evaporate but the ones that don't. Because, when they don't, it's like it's some kind of signal, like in their buggy little minds it's time to hurry home.*

I didn't know what *hurry home* meant, or why it was important, but this is what we wanted to do. We wanted them to approach the Football, & then the ones that didn't get zapped to hurry home. Now the problem with this was that we had to let them out of the hotel room for them to hurry home, & follow them, & this part of the operation went south pretty quickly because they're insects, they go fast, & these were super-hyper-intelligent alien insects to boot. I don't think our technologies were really prepared to follow these super-hyper-intelligent alien insects back to wherever *home* was.

And so, ultimately, I just sat at the hotel bar a lot until the operation was declared over, & there was a red-haired waitress there who kept my drink filled. I was just watching the news, the same political things comin' & goin' as ever. Saw some pretty shady characters in the hotel, too, comin' & goin'.

I noticed that some of them were a little overly dressed for the summer heat

that was happening outside. Some of them passed through the lobby in long coats, big hats. Sometimes their antennae poked out, sometimes tails from under their coats, sometimes they made a *buzzzzzzzz zzzzz zzzzzzz* noise as they passed.

\* \* \* \* \*

## It Was a Very Strange Year

It was a very strange year indeed. I found myself often walking through a series of old factory buildings. It became my regular path. Between the buildings were these wide, wide alleys, dark, & I couldn't tell if they were filled with trash, or if people were living there, or something else stranger still was going on.

I'd always get to a certain point in this walk, or *perambulation*, as one of my stranger friends would call it, where I just had to go to the bathroom. There, over to my left, sort of embedded in one of these old factory buildings, was a red door. Next to the red door was a blacked-out window, but it had a neon sign in it to tell you what was going on. It said **Bar**.

So I'd go over to **Bar**, & it took me a few times to remember that you didn't just push the door open at **Bar**—you had to kick at the bottom twice, & push high immediately, to get the door open. Otherwise it wouldn't no matter what you did, because it was only that combination that worked. I can't tell you how I learned it, but somehow I did. Maybe someone showed it to me. *Who knows?*

Anyway I'd go in, & the bar would be over to the left, & over to the right would be a bathroom stall. Not a bathroom, just a stall. Just a toilet surrounded by three flimsy walls & a door. And I'd go in, & close the door, & I reinforce it with the trash can that was there within the stall, since there was no lock, because inevitably someone would come banging against the door, wanting to use it, not recognizing that I was inside, not seeing my feet, not hearing my noises.

It was often this woman, she'd come pounding at the door, yelling *Fucking secret Moon mission!* & I'd hurry & I wouldn't finish. I'd just escape the whole thing & often, perhaps every time, I'd be attracted to what was going on at the back of the bar because, you see, there was no back wall, there was just sort of a murky inkiness that trailed off for as far as the eye could see, & further.

And I'd find myself walking into the murkiness &, sure enough, there would

be another bathroom, or rather just another stall, but this time nobody else competed for its space. So I'd walk in, I'd close the door, & it actually had a lock. I'd close my eyes to calm, & I swear sometimes I thought I could hear the sounds of a TV show or a movie going on, distantly. Maybe a laugh or two. But I had to get where I was going, so I regret to say I never walked deeper into the murkiness to see what it was. Lazy, cowardly? I don't know.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Now this story started slow, those pages back there, so you could follow it really easily at the beginning,  
but now it's going to twist, & it's going to turn, & I'm not saying you can't do it,  
but I am saying maybe hang onto the rails a little bit more, just in case.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### I'm Sitting in a Sort of Coffee House

I'm sitting in a sort of coffee house in the Village. It runs back into its own murk for what seems like miles. And there's this turquoise-eyed girl I'm sweet on. Her name is Figga. I think I'm some other age. It might be younger, it might be older. It might just be some other kind of number. She's friendly but somewhat distant. I'm shy, don't know what to say. Probably I'm younger than I am now.

But I do my best, smile, talk about books, Mulronie & so on, & at some point she kind of smiles, & nods, & wanders away, & I see her go off with some pretty guy for a while. Then later she's back, her long red hair now tied up in a fake bob, & I don't remember what we're talking about. It all feels like loneliness & yearning. I'm helpless, but I try to remember back, *how did I get here?* Maybe that'll help me figure out where I am now & what's next.

I was on that green bus, the one that runs to the hospital, & I knew that most of the passengers on the green bus are not coming back tonight. It's the last green bus of the night. I got off it, not at the hospital, no, & I was walking the streets awhile, thinking about how a lot of them who stayed on the green bus were not coming back.

I was supposed to go to the hospital. The doctor said, *you just come on in, & we'll get you cleaned out & fix it all.* Then he added, *you could take your chance with the pills, maybe they'll help. Or you can heal on your own,* & he shrugged. So he really didn't know, & maybe he really didn't care. I'd had enough of that hospital. The crowded rooms, the quarreling roommates.

I cross the road toward this sort of coffee house, & I see the green bus in the distance, still heading to the hospital, going faster & faster. I know that driver; he won't stay on the street as he gets closer to the hospital. It takes hold of him, that feeling that most people he's driving are not coming back, it takes hold of him, & sometimes he'll drive off the road, into the ditch, & maybe he'll just stop for a moment for a minute & sit silently, his bus half-tipped in the ditch.

He remembers a dream he had, it was a long time ago, but it feels like it applies to nights like tonight, when I'm feeling like this—*We were all lost, & so we traveled to an alternative time, where the world had been healed of all its ills, & it felt good, & it felt hopeful*—, & so that's how I first came here, this sort of coffee house, it being one of the crossroads amongst the many kinds of worlds. But then something terrible happened.

There was a great explosion of some kind, & there's no more sort of coffee house, & I have this naked red girl, red-haired girl, in my arms. What I am saying is, she's burned but she's also red-haired, red-haired and red-skinned in my arms. And we're being pursued, & I'm looking for an escape, somewhere, & finally I see it. I see that big house that I dreamed about all those years. Been awhile.

I remember there was an attic, & there were many mirrored rooms, & you could just lose yourself in those many-mirrored rooms. I carry her, red-skinned & red-haired, clumsily climbing the fold-down ladder up into the attic.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Time isn't linear, no, it's like a big field, moments, places, people, events.  
It's hard to believe this, & yet only to be able to point & say, **that's where I came from, back there,**  
but not be able to point somewhere else & say, **that's where I'm bound, over there.***

\* \* \* \* \*

### He Was Known as Jack the Drug Dealer

He was known as Jack the Drug Dealer. He was a polite man, but he was in bad shape. Everybody knew it. The only hint you had of him from his older, better days was that paperback he carried around. *Unofficial Guide to Mulronie the Space Pirate's Universe.* You never saw him look at it, but you always got the feeling he just didn't have to, that he knew all its contents.

But then good luck came to him. He was sleeping in alleys, his only address a cavernous bookstore nearby that was kindly to him. Most of the time, if he ate at all, it was from the licorice roots found in a nearby park. But then good luck came to him, he won some money in some kind of contest, & grew confident, and he was now head of a charity organization, with ten nodes of business. He was on the top; his clothes were clean.

I was new on the job, & I heard this story about him in pieces over time. Then one day I got called into his office. It wasn't that big an office for the big head of a charity organization. I don't think he ever quite left the alley in some way.

We ended up sitting on the floor together. He told me a story. He said, *there was this baseball game & I was in the outfield. They put me out there because they figured that was the place where I could do the least damage. I was their mascot, because I won a contest with my friends. People paid to see me stand in the outfield & wave to them. They were a pretty good defensive team, so not many balls came out my way.*

*But then one time this ball was hit hard, I heard it, it was a crack! a beautiful sound, strange to say, & I think it's going to go over my head, but then it starts to arc low, & I start rushing toward it, & for a moment I forget that I'm no good at baseball, & I don't know why I'm here. I'm in the outfield because they have no use for me, just short of not having me at all. I just leap into it, my body arcs low, & the ball is curving low, & they are going to meet, my glove & this ball, & what happens is this: I squeeze my glove with my eyes closed & by the single thread hanging off the ball, because it was hit so hard that it was kind of tattered, I catch it & hold it above the ground. I catch it cleanly.*

*Nobody realizes. They think I'd just kind of fumbled & jumped & fell my way toward near it somehow. And they were yelling at me to **throw to home plate!** because the monster that had hit this ball was going to get an inside-the-park home run off my sorry ass. But I raise the ball up, & I yell, **I caught it clean!** And then, just to convince them all, I hurl that ball toward home plate. It's a beautiful throw, straight on, arrives cleanly in the catcher's glove. I'm not capable of that throw, wasn't then, not now, not ever.*

*Later, someone asked me to autograph the inside of a milk carton. He said, **this carton's covered in signatures & statements by heroes, & you're one.** So I did. Now get out of my office. Get back to work, son.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Civil War & Football

There's always these kinds of confusions between one thing & another. I'm sure you've been involved in a few yourselves. You see, this occurred during the Civil War & football. My squad is in the other side's war-torn territory, & we need to find some room for our kicker, when their soldiers rush at us & we shoot them down so he can kick the go-ahead field goal. And he does. He's very good, you see. Very good.

And now we're ahead, holding a slim lead. We then find ourselves in some kind of building. There are many of them as well. We're all getting food, it's like a cafeteria. *Is this like a timeout? Halftime?*

Now we're returning back to battle, & we get the word that Headquarters wants us to put on a big To-Do, & I am getting confused as to whether this is the Civil War & football, or possibly a Grand Production on the stage in the classic traditions of Vaudeville & Carnivale.

I find myself crawling over the stage, & people are waving at me in a confusion of lights, music, & noise. It just seems chaotic, & I'm trying to figure what's going on, when I fall through this stage, & I fall & fall & fall, until I land in the lounge of a kind of library in a very strange museum. I see in this lounge drawings of a red-haired girl that my friend Harry likes. He made them when they went to dinner. Told me with a shit-eaten grin that her name is Figga.

But then I blink twice, & they're not there, & I realize, *wow, this was one of those prognostications.* I saw pictures that haven't been made yet. And I turn to him, he's lying there on one of the other couches, passed out in between a boy & a girl, as is his preference. Ask him, *which one?* He'll say, every time, *Yes!*

I tell him about those drawings of that girl he really likes, & how they went out to dinner, & while they were at dinner he pulled out his sketchpad because he's very good, you see, he's very good. He drew a beautiful, elegant, sweet, lovely portrait of her, giving special attention to her turquoise eyes, & she squirmed about in her seat at the restaurant, wondering who else was watching, & many were, but she liked these drawings very much.

I get up & leave him to think about his life, his decisions. Walk along the vast murky room, & I think to myself, *isn't it funny how where you start & where you end in these things can have virtually no relation to one another.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Just Walking Through the Neighborhood

Houses & many trees, it's nighttime, & I'm lost. No phone to call anyone to pick me up. Then some fast figures appear, chasing, laughing wickedly, & they seem to herd me along, but they don't capture me. Then someone else they're herding along too despairs & gives in, allows capture, but then regrets it with a yowl.

But I don't, I just don't, & they herd me along, & eventually there's a green bus, & it doesn't seem to stop in this neighborhood. But I run for it, pound at its door, pound & pound it. It slows, & I get my fingers inside the door, & I yank it open just enough to squeeze in. I climb on, & I give the driver a dirty look, like *dare me to pay you, just dare me*.

The green bus rides strangely & bumpily out to the hospital, veering on purpose into a ditch at one point, the driver sitting there staring for a while, like his mind is shut off. But eventually it comes around again, & I make it home. Start to make up our bed, but it's a vast bed, & it's covered in papers that I push to one side to get the blankets better spread. They're from a manuscript I can't seem to organize into a proper book. I hate looking at these pages & feeling my failure. Mulronie waiting at the far end of the neighborhood, so patiently.

I'm singing to myself, after this hard strange night, that old song, *Goin' down the road, feelin' bad. Goin' down the road, feelin' bad. Goin' down the road, feelin' bad, feelin' bad, & I don't wanna be treated this-a way*. It's late now, & I'm thinking, *man, it'd be good to sleep*. I lie down, push the papers again to one side, but they seem to keep accumulating on the bed. *We lost so many, Mulronie. What do I do with the rest?*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Sunny, Sunny Days

You know those kind of sunny, sunny days. Oh yes, those kind of sunny, sunny days when you find yourself sitting in a patch of grass, maybe just a big old field, nothing going on in that big old field, nothing having to do with people & their mighty small concerns, no sir-ee. There's just grass growing, maybe a tree, insects, small animals, whatever else.

I find myself watching this insect pick its way along the grass. It's sort of shaped like a stick with legs. I can't even figure out where its head is. It's a very strange insect, & it puts me into a sort of reverie because I start remembering

this red-haired girl I knew a long time ago. Her name was Figga. Strange name, eh? But Figga was her name, & I was in her house, & I was comin' down the basement stairs. I had this uncommon way of coming down these stairs. Halfway down, I sort of swung from them & sideways into the basement. Done it many times.

*Well, OK, you might say, so how did you know Figga?* Well, I think she was my neighbor, & I'd come over to her house to fix things. *And was she old or young?* Well, I'm not really sure. She kind of seemed like she was a little bit of both, & it seemed like everything that needed to be fixed was in her basement. I think that's where she kept broken things. I think she liked to keep all the things that didn't work or needed fixing in one place.

So I'd come in, & I'd be the fixer-guy, & I had no skills, & I didn't even have any tools. She bought me the tools at the local tool store, what they call in technical terms the *hardware store*. I'd come down, oh 'bout once a week, for a while, & I'd see what had broken & what she needed fixing. Sometimes it was something that had broken in her house, & sometimes she just found things out in the world that were broken, & she thought, *oh well, he'll fix them, he's good with the tools & the skills*. But I wasn't good at either the tools or the skills.

But what fascinated her about me was that I had once lived on a mythical Island out far, far in the Wide Wide Sea. It did not have any attachment to the roots of the earth. I'd gone out there when I was a student. It was one of those exchange programs where I got to live for awhile and study on this Island.

But I must admit I wasn't very good at it because, although it was a very big Island, it wasn't actually even finished, & I used to find myself sort of floating at the edge of it with my notebooks, & sometimes they would float away from me, & that seemed far more important to me than anything else that was happening on this Island. In fact, I can't even tell you what was happening on this Island, or what I was supposed to be studying.

All I know was that I had a hard time keeping my stuff together & that really wasn't very much fun. But Figga, she just couldn't get enough of hearing that I had lived for awhile as a young student on a mythical Island. And then she'd hand me somethin' else to fix, her turquoise eyes twinkling, & the conversation would continue elsewhere.

\* \* \* \* \*



## In the Year 2402

This happened long ago, or far on from now, depending on your point in things. In the year 2402, or was it 24,002? I'm not sure of the details, but my love & I are in a house we share with another couple. We've been away but now are returning, & it's still new to us, even though it's an old house. There's still shelves to build, places on the walls for pictures. How can something be both new & old? Known & novel, *how?*

I leave the next morning, very early, to go to school, to try to catch up. I'm behind on my classes, & haven't paid for anything. And I think what happens is that I walk down the wrong hallway, & I arrive at the wrong school, & I get turned around, & I end up on the ceiling. But it's one of those places where you can walk on the ceiling, & walk on the floor, & everything kind of spins around, & time passes, & I come upon a girl who seems friendly enough, & I ask her what time it is. She says, *it's 1:30*. I want to ask her what year, but I just quietly despair.

\* \* \* \* \*

## That Strange Nada Theater

So this is what happens when you go to that strange Nada Theater, at that strange No-Tel, after midnight, well after midnight. You've seen more of **Remoteland** tonight, sure, it went on for hours, it seemed like for more hours than there are in a night. But now, if you can outlast the crowds such as they are, stay on & on in your seat, don't find some reason to leave or let someone persuade you it's time to go & have a malted at the local sugar emporium, you might get to the movie that comes on near dawn, pre-dawn they call it. You might get to see **More Fun**.

It's a strange world of **More Fun**. It's like our world but worse, if you can imagine that. No zombies, no vampires, no nuclear apocalypse. No, something happens, & people just start dying. They get weak, & never recover from this weakness. And what's funny, though not really, is that when the weak ones start to die, they sort of melt away, parts of them become invisible. Still there, but invisible. Then the invisible parts fade out completely. Some people call these poor unfortunate souls Melties.

Our hero, such as he is one, is the Postman. He finds a gun shop, & takes a few, & then he finds a grocery, & ransacks it for food. Then he leaves his known places behind, & eventually meets up with a man called the Recruiter.

The Recruiter is rebuilding the population of the world by killing the Melties. He does it kind; they never see it coming. Often he spends a last night with them, sharing their meal, maybe singing their songs, letting them tell memories of what it used to be like. How it is now, maybe any hopes they have left. Kills them quickly in their sleep, buries them carefully somewhere peaceful. If he can't do it mercifully, then he parts them still breathing, still melting.

But his goal is for humans to finish the race, & then the world will carry on from there. He's good at finding people in holes & hideaways. He says to the Postman, the first night they are traveling together, *we just can't have human beings like Melties, who are more like hotel soap in a hot shower. We just can't have them.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## As You Travel Through the White Woods, Horizontally

You just wonder, as you travel through these White Woods horizontally, a sugar cube of LSD melting through you, allowing you to travel in this new & pleasurable way, you just wonder: *how it is that the Woods more welcomes you this way, horizontally? What is it about your human form that fits better this way?*

You come at last to the road that you didn't know was here, because there are no roads in the White Woods, & yet here is this road, passing through the White Woods, it's a simple paved road. *What does that mean?* And you're feeling for your horizontality, *but it's gone*. You're upright & walking again. Whatever that was, it's gone. It feels like you're walking on this road forever & ever, but never getting anywhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

## I Had This Lady Teacher

There's lots to say about when I was a student. Lots of crazy things, lots of subtle quiet things. Lots of things that I can't say too, like they were just of their time, of their moment. They weren't things that traveled through space & time to be tellable at some later time. They're just not; it's not possible.

I had this lady teacher at one point, & I go over to her house. I think she was having a party & I was invited. It was one of those parties where all the students show up, & the teachers, & everybody relaxes, calms down a bit. Not in the classroom right now, don't have to put on an act, not as a student or a teacher.

She was a good teacher, she taught history. I wasn't a very good history student because, at that time, I didn't understand that wherever you drop your coin in the stream of humanity, anywhere along it, by time or place, you're going to find most of the same things. They resemble each other way more than they don't. She tried to teach me that then, & I only learned it later on my own, sloppily. Took way too long.

I sat with her at this party, on the floor, in a corner out of the main action. I had the impression that she'd never eaten magic mushrooms before, & I offered her some from a paper bag I had with me. She took a look at the bag, peeked inside, pulled out one of the little curled bits to hold in her hand, examine, sniff. She smiled. She was kind of an older lady, but not too old.

Then I told her I had something else too. I pulled from my pocket, in a rather debonair way, as though offering her a Cuban cigar, a really long blunt, & I started telling her about the times that I had lived in out West, in Seattle & Portland, how I'd go trippin' on Saturdays. I told her that I'd been poor & jobless & struggling then, & writing saved me on those tripping Saturdays, all those years ago. A black pen, a notebook of lined white sheets, a tab of Lucy, my Walkman & bag of rock-&-roll cassettes, & a green city to play through.

She looked at me curiously & said, *well, how old are you?*

And I said, *well, I'm 22, ma'am.*

And she said, *well, what years ago are you talking about?*

And I said, *well, truth be told, I'm talking about the future. Now if you want to take a few of those mushrooms & chew them on down, you might understand a little better what I'm saying. But it's OK if you don't.*

And she said, *well, so what was the craziest time you ever had out there, with those crazy Saturdays you're telling me about?*

And I said, *well, I don't know whether I am being a clown & entertaining you, like that guy on TV, or if you really care, but I'll tell you a story that didn't actually happen. It was more like a fantasia that I might have conjured up while hanging out in an alley one time. One of the homeless guys was saying to me, oh yeah, this was years ago, I was in the Woods, & there's women tied to the trees, all over the place. Now they weren't victims or kidnapped, nothin' like that, no. They liked it, they liked being tied up to the trees, & fucked that way too. It was really good, those nights, & there was nothing profound about it at all. So take that, you, Mr. Book Learning, you take that. It's the kind of reality that's out there for you to find.*

And so I told this story to the teacher, & she looked at me, smiling still, & said something I'll never forget. She said, *the key thing to being tied to a tree & fucked is that your hands are tied properly, not too tight, not too loose, & then when the man screws you, he positions your hips just right.*

And after that I knew, whether this lady ever had or ever would eat magic mushrooms, she'd always be OK in my book.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **I Woke Up in the White Woods**

I woke up in the White Woods, wasn't sure how I'd gotten there. I lied there on the Woodsy floor, trying to reach back in my mind, eyes closed, breathing calm, thinking, *How did I get here? Am I injured? No. I don't feel injured. Sore? A little.*

Lying here on the Woodsy floor for hours on end, sleeping or whatever it is I was doing, passed out maybe? *How did I get here?* Eventually, I find myself also sinking down below the Woodsy floor where I have been lying, below what's around me, below questions about injury & feeling.

I find myself traveling again through a city, with others, traveling together. I don't see their faces but we're walking close together, familiarly, there's a sort of complementariness to our pace, to the way we swing our arms & move our legs. Some of us are bigger, some are smaller, some walk naturally faster, some slower, but there's a familiarity to it.

At one point, we end up on a hill above the city & I'm just trying to figure it out. *What does this all mean to that me, who's lying a little bit sore on the Woodsy floor, there, over there? I can see you, over there, lying on that Woodsy floor. You can see me. Can you see me? Yes, I can see you, with those familiar people on that hill looking down on a city. How did we? I don't know. How did we? I don't know. Am I the past & you're the future, or vice versa? Did I go from city to Woods or Woods to city? I'm not sure. Are we happening together at the same time, on parallel tracks? Which one of me is lying alone, deep in the White Woods, & which one of me is on this hill, sitting among these dear people whose faces I can't quite see, looking down on the city, thinking almost everything is in sight?*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Watch him build that world, watch him puff them out from his fingertips, look at that, look at that one, it's green & blue, look at that one, it's roiling with earthquakes, look at that one, it's a million suns in one, look at that one, look at that one, look at that one.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Walking into the White Woods

Walking into the White Woods & at first there seems no sign of people-folks. Their ways & things. And there's no paths, not a one, & I'm not bound for somewhere, so I'm not looking for a path. I'm not looking for anything. I look at the tree trunks, some of them smooth, some of them gnarled, branches in every direction, leaves of different colors, needles, the bushes below. Everything is almost still, there's just a bit of a wind, just a bit of something moving in addition to me.

And I suppose that makes me feel better because if it was completely still here, & I was the only one moving, the only entity, the only thing, I'd feel like I'm troubling the stillness, but the wind, if wind is sentient, if it is, if it isn't, it assures me that no, I move, other things move. Maybe things move that I can't even see.

And I come upon, & it's shocking, I come upon a man-made thing. It's hard to figure what it is. It's a long structure, sort of dilapidated, looks like it's been assembled over the course of decades or centuries. There's rust on some of it, looks reinforced in some places. I walk in, & it's like entering into a tunnel from that almost-stillness that I was in.

I see that many kinds of metal & wooden structures have been bolted, nailed, strapped, taped together, to form a tunnel & I wonder where it's going to bring me, if anywhere at all. And then I come to a kind of a brightly lit place, strangely colored but not disturbing. There's curvy seats that are sort of built into the wall, & the floors are soft, & the ceiling vague, almost kind of space-age.

I find my seat along the wall. It smoothes into me, gathers me in softly & firmly. There's a fireplace nearby, wasn't there just a moment ago, but there it is & it's not been started. I find my pencil & my little notebook, & I think maybe to scribble a word or two, but then I see that my thumb's nail is split & bloody, & it's going to be hard to write anything. I don't know whether to keep on, go back, or stay awhile.

\* \* \* \* \*

## What You're Gonna Do, & How You're Gonna Do It

It all comes down to what you're gonna do, & how you're gonna do it & that counts almost everywhere, in all types of situations. I was in the back of a Jeep, back where I come from. I was riding with an old friend, laughing, colorful.

One of those guys you meet along the way that's just bigger than everybody else. Pays attention in a certain way, loves the music more, loves everything more. Wails pretty on his guitar till deep in the night becomes early in the morning.

And we ended up at a party, & there's another old friend of mine, & this one is from a *long* time ago. He's young, he's in his glories. His eyes are bright & his mind is alert & crazy & free, beautiful. I listen & I look. *Do it again, do it again.*

But then someone reminds me of something, & I realize that I left my bag of notebooks out in the Jeep, & so I have to go get them. So I leave the party, the sweet blunt smoke & the happy high music, James McGunn & such, & there's some girls, & they're even the friendly kind, though maybe not *too* friendly, but friendly enough, & there's food & everything. I feel welcomed, I feel alright, *something*.

I come out & where's that Jeep? That Jeep had my bag of notebooks in it, *Oh man, shit. Hey, where'd that Jeep go? Hey, you know those guys, you know the guy that drives that Jeep, where's he live? No, man, no, man, tell me. It's OK, I need to know.*

*Yeah listen, can you give me a ride over there? Really, I left my bag of notebooks in the back of the guy's Jeep, & I'm not sure where he lives or where he works but, man, if we can just catch him it'd be all good. Can we do that, please? No, really, just give me a ride, it's just a bag of notebooks but it's important to me, it really is. Why'd I lose it? Why'd I lose it?*

\* \* \* \* \*

## I'm in a Bookstore, Again, & I Have a Cold

*Why am I in this bookstore again?* I have a cold. Well, maybe it'll cheer me up, maybe it won't. I'm trying to find the books that I really want to read, ones full of music & high laughter, low despair, & cackling weirdness all around.

Buy one book, a paperback, & it's missing its first 70 pages. *What kind of bookstore is this?* Well, I guess that's not an easy question to answer. It ends in charts. Maybe those 70 pages would help you understand the charts, but *who knows what kind of paperback book this is?*

I keep moving in the bookstore, sometimes that's a good idea, you just keep moving. And there's a series of old, tall, grainy-looking hardbacks. I don't

know, twenty, thirty volumes of them on this shelf in a row. Is it a complete set? I don't know. There's no titles on them. But I touch one, just to feel the age. I touch it very gently, & it thinks how long since it's been read. I touch the next one, & it's thinking of a funny joke someone told it, maybe the volume next to it told it a funny joke, that's my guess, I'm not really sure. All I can tell you is that as I touch them very lightly, I can hear their thoughts.

And I'm telling you, I'm going home to bed now. I'm going to sleep off this cold for a million hours, but that does not negate the fact that these books, they're living objects, wood impressed with words, *living objects*.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Market Located Over the Buried Spaceship**

When I was young, I worked at that market that was located over the buried spaceship. It was called Chief Seattle's Friendly Market, & I'd say it was pretty friendly, although when I started I didn't feel all that much friendliness from my co-workers. They didn't help me with all the strange cash registers I had to figure out, some of them ancient, some of them not so much.

They really didn't know who or what I was when I walked in the door that first day, still in high school, asking for a job. I was looking for a place to be that I could really care about, for some people that would remember my name from one time to the next. And it became that eventually, it took a while, I'll say that. Had to fight my way in. Maybe that's true of any situation that's already established. You're the new person, eager, wanting to join in.

It took at least a year for me to finally get down those long, dark stairs in the back, through the walk-in refrigerator, the crates of milk & juice jugs, other frozen items, push back the curtain, down that stairwell. Unlit & you descended & it seemed to get darker. Then, when you don't think it's possible, & you're thinking to turn back, even if you've been down there before, it starts to get a little lighter, & suddenly you're in this place that you didn't, couldn't, imagine existed, deep under the earth.

You're in a hallway, you arrive down into it. There's a ceiling, there's a floor, walls on either side, there's doors. It winds away, & there was this one time that my wanderings went a little too far in that buried spaceship, & I think I became disoriented, became dehydrated. I'm not really sure what it was.

But I will tell you that I remember indistinctly ending up in a room, not knowing how I'd gotten there, laying on a bed, the room was dark, &

someone was feeding me the most delicious soup. I'd never tasted anything like it before, & I was being fed by a kindly, furred paw. And the paw fed me that soup, & sort of touched my nose & made a gesture, when I had eaten the good soup, *go back to sleep, it's OK*. As I faded, feeling safer than maybe ever, I felt the paws lift up my head gently, & pull a hat onto me. *A fisher hat?*

And eventually I woke up, & was able to make my way back, no problem. I wasn't nearly as far from the exit as I'd thought. But I remember that all these years later. It was unique among the many adventures I had down there in that buried spaceship. Never told this to anyone before tonight. It's not in any of the five Mulronie the Space Pirate books. Not even the secret sixth volume. But now you know.

\* \* \* \* \*

This book was composed in the Adobe Garamond font in  
Adobe InDesign CS5 on a MacBook Pro computer.  
Graphic art and design by Raymond and Cassandra Soulard.  
RaiBooks logo by Barbara Brannon.

Printed by Scriptor Press New England  
2442 NW Market Street #363  
Seattle, WA 98107  
[scriptorpress.com](http://scriptorpress.com)  
[editor@scriptorpress.com](mailto:editor@scriptorpress.com)  
August 2024

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