





Editor's Introduction

This volume is the sixteenth in a series of annual *Samplers* featuring the best prose, poetry, & graphic artwork published by Scriptor Press in the previous year.

The human world shambled on in 2014, full of joys & subtleties, violence & fears. The dangers to the green world continued, mostly unprevented. There were some who wanted humanity to realize the potential of its empathy & Art, & turn its species in a new, kinder direction. Some, not yet enough.

You will find in this volume a variety of works that come from the minds & hearts of this potent minority. Not yet enough, but the narrative of the human story is still yet unfinished.

RS
Raymond Souland Jr. ©
8/4/2015

Raymond Souland, Jr.
Editor & Publisher
Scriptor Press New England



Scriptor Press Sampler

Number 16 | 2014 Annual

Edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr.
Assistant Editor: Kassandra Soulard

| | |
|--|-----|
| MANY MUSICS [TENTH SERIES] by Raymond Soulard, Jr. [🎵] | 5 |
| PROSE-POETRY by Victor Vanek | 23 |
| FACELESS IN THE DARK [TRAVEL JOURNAL] by Nathan D. Horowitz | 27 |
| POETRY by Ric Amante | 37 |
| POETRY by Judih Haggai | 39 |
| DREAM RAPS by Raymond Soulard, Jr. [🎵] | 41 |
| POETRY by Joe Coleman | 51 |
| POETRY by René Schamberger | 57 |
| LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA by Raymond Soulard, Jr. [🎵] | 59 |
| POETRY by Tom Sheehan | 63 |
| FREEDOM IN THE LAYERS OF TIME [ESSAY] by Charlie Beyer | 67 |
| POETRY by Joe Ciccone | 83 |
| POETRY by Martina Newberry | 86 |
| LABYRINTHINE [A NEW FICTION] by Raymond Soulard, Jr. [🎵] | 89 |
| NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS | 106 |

Scriptor Press Sampler is published annually by Scriptor Press,
2442 NW Market Street, #363, Seattle, Washington, USA 98107
Email: editor@scriptorpress.com | Web: <http://www.scriptorpress.com>
Front & back covers by Raymond & Kassandra Soulard.
Interior graphic artwork by Raymond & Kassandra Soulard, except where noted.

SCRIPTOR PRESS

NEW ENGLAND
2015

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics, Ninth Series *The Tangled Gate (Continued)*

lv. Deeper Creature Time (i)

“Deeper Creature time,” he writes,
finding his old notes ledger &
resuming a fresh page. “Looking for
a gape in my world, I keep thinking
about this, about how little I know
about it.

“They weren’t from Emandia as we were.
They were native to this world, the Island,
its White Woods. Endless, pathless White Woods.”

Pauses. Looks around the nearly ageless
dank of his office. Its books piled high,
containers of herbs & potions, trinkets
from the many places & times he’d
travelled. Smells of decay dried to dust.
His desk really a great table,
covered too but for the area before him,
cleared away periodically.

Himself dressed in soft rags, noone to show
for, shine for, bother about. His body
nearly immortal but old with patina,
time & sadness.

Resumes. Struggles. “Or maybe it should
be called Deeper Creature timelessness.
For they do not live with awareness
of time. Shackled to its passing &
finitude. For them, *there is no time*.

Nods. “Theirs is an existence outside time’s passing, like my own, but that they aren’t even aware of time. I am.
I am made by hands, yet *I am a man.*”

Picks up his ledger & on a whim brings it to the Tower office’s front window, near to his great spy-glass & thick maps of the Tangled Gate. *Where she’d sat.*
He sniffs, can’t help himself. Just memories.

Table not a quarter the size of his own, he moves things around, settles in.
Dust, displaced, stays displaced, awake again, wondering.

And, there below, the Gate? This still the Island? & that yet the Gate?

He mulls. This discontent won’t salve itself, nor will sitting in this office do any better.
The Gate?

Nothing to lose but his loneliness.
Stands, looks around, finds his long unworn overcoat. Feels odd, like he won’t be back here a long while, like it’s time. For me, *there is time.*
At least for now.

lvi. Deeper Creature Time (ii)

The Gate never changes. So massively tall, & its legend where its scrollwork peaks:
“For those lost.”

I enter & there is the Fountain, perpetually crumbling yet ever gushing, insisting a drink. A drink, & a choice.
I briefly consider declining but realize *I need the Gate’s help.*
Whatever that might be, I need it.

So I take my two-handed scoop of the cold, tingling water, music to taste, water to listen to? Drink it down deep, & move past the Fountain.

They knew me once. We became friends & together helped the Princess succeed.
How do I reach them now? Remember my old advice to her, tap my head once, my heart once, sniff twice, & begin to follow somewhat seeming random paths of vines & stones. Sky above a murky grey. My breath slows nicely, I feel my body in a less heavy way.

But eventually I slow, frustrated.
It is possible to fail & exit the Gate a failure? Why this quick to quit in me?

Come on. “*Come on!*” I begin to call, wordlessly, call & call, I cry & howl, moan unto *hmmmmmm*, summon all the hope & hopeful purpose I have.
Come on. “*Come on!*”

Softly, at first, then again a little louder,
something echoes through the air &
through my mind, a cackle, another,
many cackles! Swooping & swirling
around me, ringing, echoing, echoing,
then echoing the echoes, it cannot be but
my old friend the wee Imp! Can it be?

It must.

lvii. Deeper Creature Time (iii)

The cackles continue their echoing
play, & I follow. Follow, & yet no
closer. I must faster. *I must play.*

I think of old times, the White Bunny,
& I try. Long ears, glowing fur, pink nose,
nothing. *Nothing.* Still man-shaped.

Man . . . shaped. Not thinking at all,
this is my body's turn to do. I sleek
down, not quite a bunny, or an imp,
but a creaturely form all my own,
what I might have been I now am,
for this little while. Listen close, I speed.

The cackles triple with delight, *this*
is their Architect *come for play!*
They direct me, a long tunnel of dancing
cackles, & I follow, I speed like
no man has, man I am, man I'm not.

Speed till I slow, slow sudden
to stop. A cave. *This cave.*
I know it. The Beast long lived here.

The cackles are urging me on in,
but I remain still. The Beast is
of forces deeper than my knowledge or skill.
The Beast is this world itself, given
a body to roam it, a mind to reckon
itself & all dwelling on it.

I kneel. I kneel very low toward
the Cave & its possible inhabitant.
I speak quietly, scrub a man's natural
arrogance before his world, his hand's
& eye's & mind's & throat's raw power,
& I speak from my long loneliness
& yearning.

"My friend brought me here. She
urges me to pass. She is a Creature,
& travels to her home. I am a man,
of a kind, & wish to visit, with my
questions. I ask your leave for
safe passage. Perhaps there is still
good in me to do others."

Upon my last words, & only these,
a breath, a stirring, the sounds
of something unearthed from dug &
tossed rock. Something emits the Cave.

I stand. Approach. No. Yes. *Tis.* The blue bag
I gave the Princess long ago. Whole &
handled still. The Cave says nothing more
but I sniff twice & feel my entry allowed.
Realize myself still in Creaturely form as
I make to pick up the bag with swift
but clumsy paws. Regret, but reform.

About to revisit its contents, curious
what remains, but the cackles sudden
everywhere, high & low, they practically
push me into the Cave, carrying
my old bag unopened for now. Well.

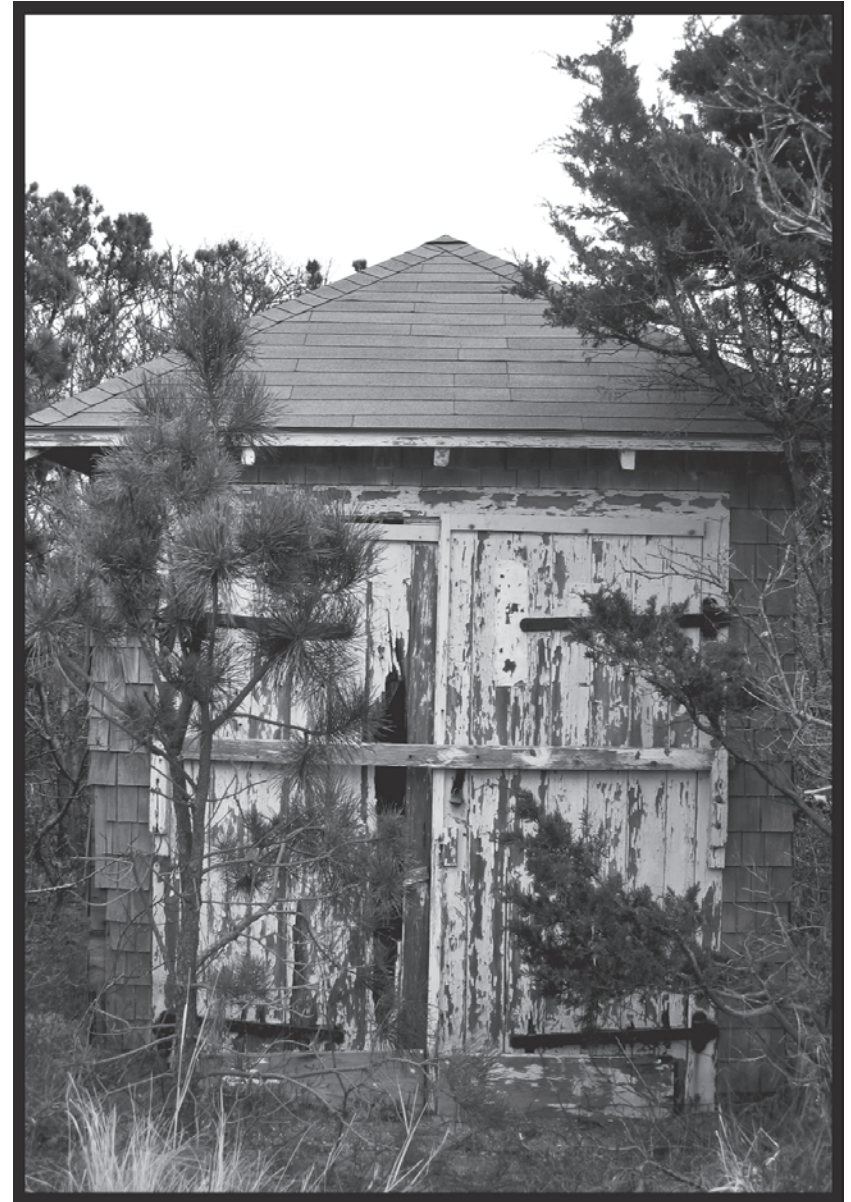
Man again, I move at my own swift
speed now. I feel more myself as this
latter-day adventure continues, uncertain
but burbling. Thinking me ready for
anything.

No. And not. I come of a sudden into
the too bright central cavern of these
caves & tunnels, & for a lingering moment
as I stop, crouch, choke my breath
& beat still, I hear the scraping stones,
bare feet upon stones, bare feet dancing,
dancing, a lithe body conjuring song from
patterns & dreams. My heart stops. I fall away.

lviii. Deeper Creature Time (iv)

When I come to, I am aloft, but back
in the tunnel I emerged from. My form
changed to, *ah*, I am again Hummingbird
like when I first met her along paths of
the Gate!

I'm afraid. She dances happily with
the Creatures, she's found her content.
She gifted me my Tower, day & night
without ending, & I've balked.
Dissatisfy with retiring quietly to a drawer,
a man-shaped tool plied, & done.



I flit, flit some more, find myself falling
into these pleasures. Remember
to listen with ears & there are still
cackles around me, waiting,
now nudging a little, come along,
Hummingbird! New play! New play!

Enter the great cavern again, inured
to its bright light now, & see
the Princess has concluded her
solitary dance & now every Creature
big & small joins in her frolic.

Many of the major Bears in
this number, little ones too,
even wee ones & their oddest of noises
make me think of the Imp somehow.
Several Giraffes, a grey Hedgehog,
the White Bunny! So many more.

I join. Before I can think to think,
or choose to choose, I join in &
dance. Flitter high & low, feel out
the song they sing too, find my voice
among the many others, & join
in too. Like I belong. *I belong.*

My form shifts unknowing to me,
slowly, I become less Hummingbird
& more the Creaturely form I'd chose
to chase the cackles, swift & sleek,
but then less this than a man's form,
my form, still dancing, still singing.
Still smiling among all these old friends.

When the singing crescendos to its slow close,
I feel crowds of Creatures dividing in twain before me
as I half intentioned, nudged & nudged
by cackles, by clicks-clicks & noise-noises too
now, I arrive, fully formed man,
the dance & song finished, I arrive
to the shocked, smiling, beautiful face
of my long-beloved Princess. *Oh my.*

lix. Deeper Creature Time: Grand Production

"We are and are not."
—Heraclitus

Your smile holds me from falling,
keeps me from fleeing. Your hair as red
as always, as long, your eyes still
a faerie blue, but nothing to your smile
as you slow me enough to rest, not pause,
in my place. Your smile the sum
of what all these years have not been.
Your smile sups upon me until I am
well-chewed, swallowed, expelled back
to myself at this calm reunion's moment.

"You came."
"You . . . called?"
She nods, steps forward, & grasps
my hand. "It was time."

I feel something wordless, something
I do not know, good or bad? I don't
know. Look down. Our hands, as
they keep grasping, meld to one.

I gasp. Begin to laugh. Still holding her,
our hand, I lean over & laugh loud.

“What is it?”

I hold up our hand. “This! I think
this is what got lost along the way.
We let go each other’s hand, & then came
history. All of it.”

She nods. I please her. She leads me by
our hand somewhere, woods, White Woods?
No Creatures follow us. All is quiet.

I want to say & say & say.
“I do too. It’s OK.”
Calm. A beat. A breath. OK.
“Where are we going?”
“Where I was bound already. I waited for you.”

We come through the Woods to a clearing,
a long one, & I see at the far end
a platform, stop which sits a grand stage.
The Princess smiles ever more so at me,
I feel as though our limbs are twining
amongst each other in her excitement.
Abh. Many Creatures now join us in the clearing.

We have no special place to stand or sit
among our friends here, although I notice
the White Bunny, the turtle who is not a
turtle, yes, the crazy gnattering Imp
all nuzzle up near to us. They know me,
sniff twice familiarly. My heart shines,
& falls free.

“Tis a Grand Production!”
I nod. “There is no time.”
She laughs. Points.

A white-furred bear wearing a long
Scotch-styled scarf is waving a long paw
& crying “On . . . with . . . the . . . Show!”

There is a deep-black bear who
comes out to dance, tells a few jokes,
juggles a few, then more, then countless
balls, then executes an impossible tumble
into the crowd, returning before left.

There is the black & white bear who
slides onto the stage, dancing high
& low, tapping his paws artfully to music
I wonder must be the Traveling Troubadour’s,
& brings out the black bear & others to
leap & fall to the audience’s delight.

Our friend the White Bunny on stage
performs many dazzling long-eared
hops, impossibly high & fast!

There is a comical dalmatian & his
daffy quips. There is a purple-furred
dancing Creature, long ribbons in
dizzying flourish. There is the tumbling
brown monkey who jumps seeming miles
high. Many, many others come & go.

I forget who I am & am smiling
the Princess’s smile, laughing
her laugh, feeling her long deep
warmth with these friends.
This is who I am when the world
isn’t in peril, or when we let each
other be.

There is the handsome bumblebee gliding
over us, & atop his furred back is
a small melancholy-faced pup, & they
fly together not like steed & rider but
like their paws too are one, like
there is no other way to be, stars
above, earth below, *we too are one,*
we too are one.

I wake. Cry out. “*Shhh.*” Look around.
Oh. Creatures cavern. They are
clustered all around us, still dozing.

She smiles down at me, I panic, but
feel our hand still warmly one.
Relax a moment. Let her arms around
me possess me all. So close. Release. *So close.*

“Yes. And no.” We recede a little. Just a little.
“There’s more. There’s else.”
“Not every Creature lives safely here.”
“Nor most of the world. Shaped like men,
Creatures. Trees. Everything.”
“It’s why I called you. Why you brought
my blue bag.”
I nod. I’m ready.

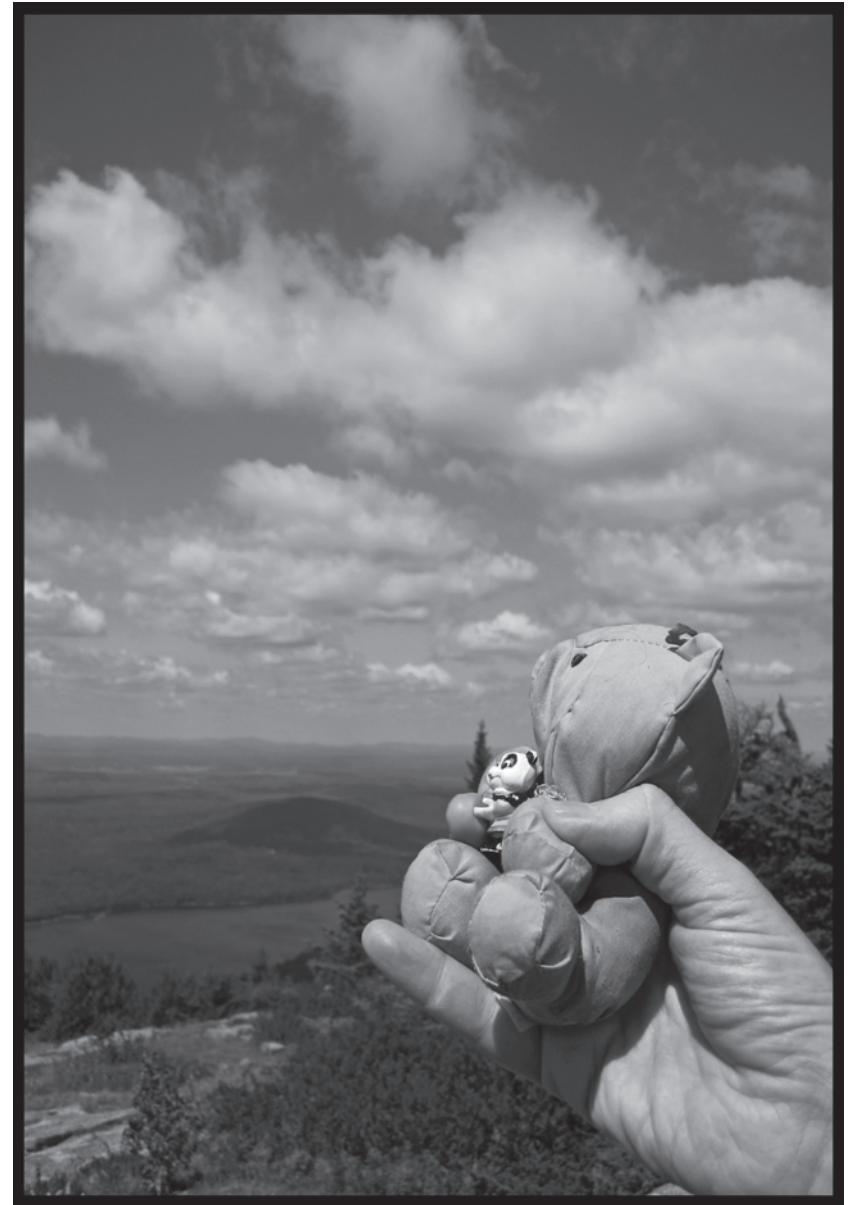
lx. Deeper Creature Time: Leaving Off

“*Nothing remains still.*”
—*Heraclitus*

Sitting side by side, we unclasp the blue bag
& open its cover. A soft floral scarf
covers its contents.

She removes a dearly known item to me.
The Braided Threads, hands them to me,
these are still powerful for our task.
I nod.

Then she takes out two small red balls,
blue striped. Three more, orange these.
She nods this time. I put them aside
me with the Braided Thread.



The Creatures stir & wake around us,
sniff twice, know change & gather,
gather close.

We each touch the Creature near to hand,
the Princess her White Tiger, me his kind-eyed
bullfrog companion.

I feel each Creature touching to each,
one to many to all, paws, nuzzles,
we too are one, we too are one.

“You’re doing this to teach me.
You know this already. You always did.”

The Princess smiles at me, her smile
like shine, like wash, lets me close
to her, her skin, her hair, allows me
rove across her cheek, touch her lips,
smooth to her neck, ‘cross her shoulders,
upon her breasts, of them in them,
on them, pleases me man, pleases
me soul, becomes my tongue sliding
across her body, taste you tasting me,
let flesh meld & light, let flesh twain
& delight to chase, release, chase,
release, we too are one & two & one
& two & one too.

She lays the colored balls, the Creatures
know them as Treasures, in a pattern
to broadcast us where we will.
Twined one to another, the Princess
allowing the girl’s form in her for my
pleasure, touched by every Creature
as they doze near us, & later to dancing,
& later to exploring cavern & Gate
above alike, we begin to sing
pathways into the world, touch
& teach others how.

Remember some things. It took thick
books of why & walls of fear against
beasts of the world & unknown men’s
faces to shock you into following
obeying silence. It took centuries of
contrived sufferings to convince you
that *this world is to be suffered*.

It took great iron cities built
gouging & burning from the earth
to convince you that the world
does not easily provide to all.
Caterwauling leaders to scare you from
each other too close, & let the
suffering men & women in the streets lie,
& *let them suffer*.

You had to tame. You had to conquer.
You had to cage. You had to own.
You had to celebrate dominance with
feast. Cry & fuck. Cry & fuck some more.

There is no time. Especially in dreams.
As we sing into the world, a low *hmmmmmm*
you will not yet hear, tis because it began
in your dreams, what we sang you
as we held you close, travelled you
by cosmos & microbe to see in all
we too are one, we too are one.

Travel you to the Tangled Gate,
source of your world, secret you
can enter & learn to know. Just a drink
from the Fountain, still lingering
on the Gate’s legend “*For those lost*.” Yes.
You were. You’ll find your way now.

In the Gate, down its many tall pathways
of vines & stones, we'll follow you now.
There is the Hummingbird & its tale
of men & women remembering their first song
& flying away, *awakening & flying away.*

Perhaps you will lead to Cloverdale,
its dank first room, its room of mirrors,
its desert & there a small shack.
Will you meet the small exotic
or the Tramp his grieving friend?
Where will you lead us next?

Maybe, freely going now, you will find
the *hekk* stick in your hands & thus
decide easily where this dream next,
lead us on or let us go, part the Gate
itself, or else a smile, & deeper in.

If Cloverdale, you might come to
the Carnival Room if you can, learn
to sing how &, entering its marvels,
for you a long-limbed fiddler, for you a great
buck barking you to knee? Will you carriage
with us to the far end of the world,
behold the Sleepers, join them awhile
in their Sleeping Capsules, drink the juice
to cross the Dreaming, or show them how
without Capsule, without juice?

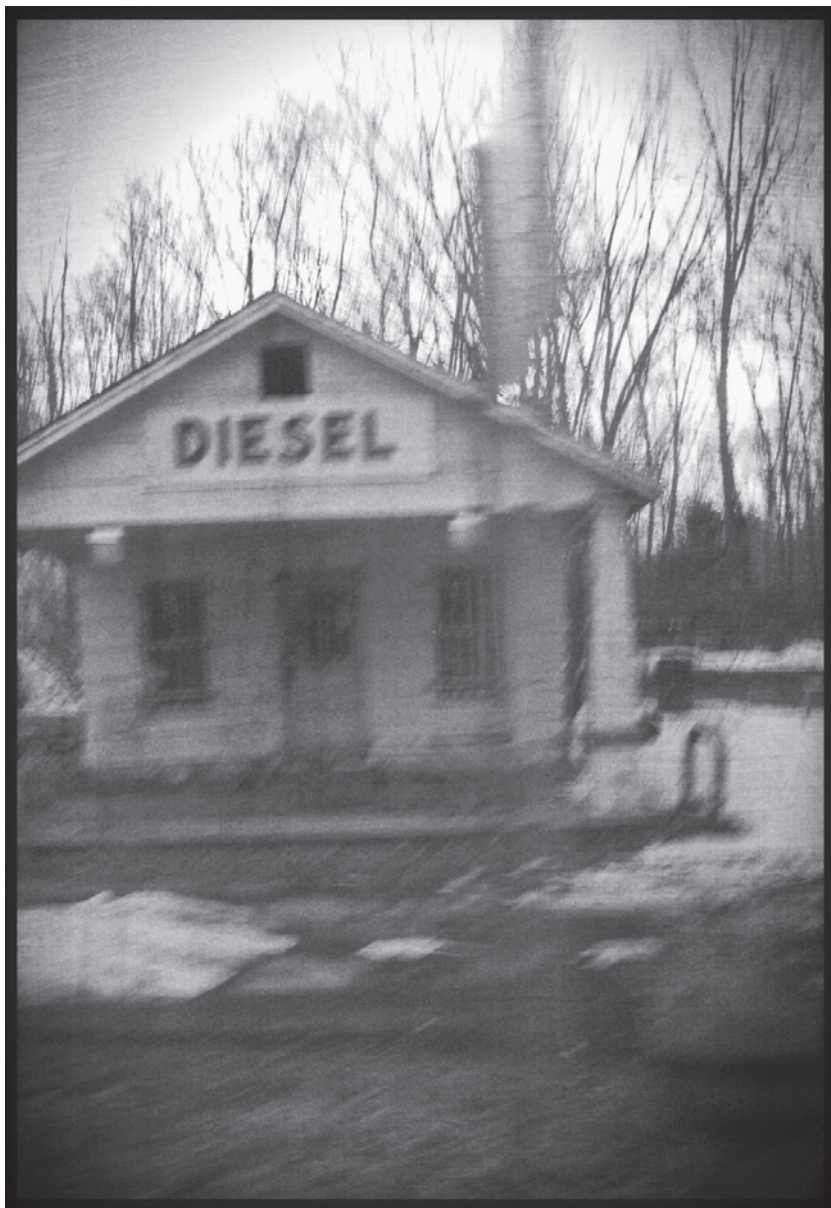
Will you choose to travel with us
many dreams like these, learn
what we are, Architect & Princess, &
behold the Island outside the Gate,
live with us its story, how we came
to be, what we learned to know,
what mysteries we cannot reck, wild cards
to our equations, our songs, our histories,
our loves?

As we sit here now with you, in this
warm cavern, these friendly Creatures
all around, some dozing, all partners
in the *Hmmmmmm*, we invite you
to wake when you will, how you will,
make of this dream & its like whatever
you wish, but return whenever you
wish to as well. The Braided Thread
we leave, ever weaving through your
dreams. Yours to grasp or leave lie.

*[And when she at last came, & took
your other hand, & when he came & took my other,
something was now complete, now told of what was
& what passes on to be. I did not let go,
I am a man & I both hope & fear, but I willed
my heart open wider to all, to every
& all, we too are one, we too are one,
together we will architect this world.
Together we will architect this beautiful world.]*

6-14-2014
H





Victor Vanek



The B String

Excited by a song coming through my computer (some strummy guitar thing), she asked if she could grab my guitar and play along. I warned her that I hadn't even picked the thing up in over a year, so it might be badly out of tune.

She listened to the song and tried to find the key that it was being played in. She ran her pretty fingers up and down the fret board, searching for notes that were same as the song's notes.

Like the old children's crank toy goes . . . "Pop" goes the B string! It was a funny moment. The shock that comes with a suddenly broken string. The exasperated look, and then the tumble of apologies. Suddenly, she appeared to me as a stone that, when the sunlight pierces it perfectly, shows you something not suspected. What I saw was very pretty.

At that moment, I wanted very much to kiss her on the mouth, and take her into my bed, and pull the covers over the both of our heads. I wanted to run out the door with her and join the circus. Maybe I could talk my way into the entry-level position of Elephant Washer and work my way up to reading children's stories to the Ringmaster's kids. She could easily get a job as Cigarette Girl or convincing young men to play impossible games for plastic trinkets that looked like Shiva on a bicycle, or key fobs with the first two lines of Poe's "The Raven" on them.

The passage of a couple days led me to procuring two new sets of my favorite guitar strings. I thought maybe that broken B string might get me to string my guitar, and maybe see if my fingers could even find a chord. It'd been a while.

I thought much of her in the stringing of my instrument. I tuned everything the way I do, and tried to find a G chord. I fingered it up a fret too high, and then brought it back down to where my hand should have fallen. In attempting an A minor, I instead went to D minor. I was suddenly reminded of a Billy Collins poem that I had once read to her about a five piece jazz ensemble of angels playing on the head of a pin.

The second set of strings that I purchased, I hoped to give to her (actually, I secretly wished she would let me tune her guitar for her). I wasn't exactly sure how the whole thing would go, because what I really wanted was

to simply sit by her side for a moment or two. The stringing of a guitar is a seductive act. The waiting string placed between the lips, and the other string being set perfectly, and then being pulled from slack to tight. The long pull of the string and threading of tuning peg. The desire to get it perfect on the very first try.

I think I'll take a bath now and try to soap some of my feelings away, and let them drain back into where the water comes from.

* * *

Squirrel

When I look out the window in the afternoon, it is common to see the brown squirrel that lives here on the property with me. He's a busy little bastard that collects the sunflower seed that the sparrows and goldfinches can't be bothered to crack—instead just letting them fall to the ground.

The squirrel will bully his way past the ring-necked doves with the same kind of purpose the March Hare had in his own story, squaring up to the bulk of seed. After quickly filling his cheek pouches, bolt for a new place to hide his plenty.

Once he's cleaned up his booty and only the black and white woody shells are left, he retires to the fallen fencepost next to his burrow in the evergreen shrubbery. He will sit there sometimes for up to an hour on his hind legs, paws side by side in the front of him, slanted eyes half-closed. He's not sleeping, but content. The little fucker is absolutely content.

Why can't I attain the contentment of a squirrel? I'm 210 pounds of meat and guts, my brain all by its lonely self weighs as much as ten squirrels. I've got the same hands and the same feet that little brown bastard does. I've got pants pockets instead of cheek pouches and my balls droop a little more than his does, but he's got me utterly whipped in the contentment game.

We're essentially the same, he and I. We've planted the same seed, enjoy the same crab-apple trees, and both of us are on the constant lookout for Gary the Cat. Equal in most things except that I know that I never get the same look on my face that he wears while he's out meditating on the fence-post.

Why can't I achieve the sedate and productive nature of a squirrel?

He showed up in a dream I had Wednesday night of last week, looking like an ambassador of Walter Potter (the English taxidermist who created animal tableaux resembling human life). He was complete with fringed golden epaulets, a monocle, and tiny black leather gloves. He introduced himself as Theodore Seedsack the second, of the family Seedsack. We sat in the dream den and spoke for a while about the differences between nuts and seeds, then moved on to how the war between the kingdoms of cat and squirrel was going. The hours of our pleasant conversation grew but morning was coming closer. I had to excuse myself for the evening and prepare to rise into the world of men and to the endless chores the waking world demands.

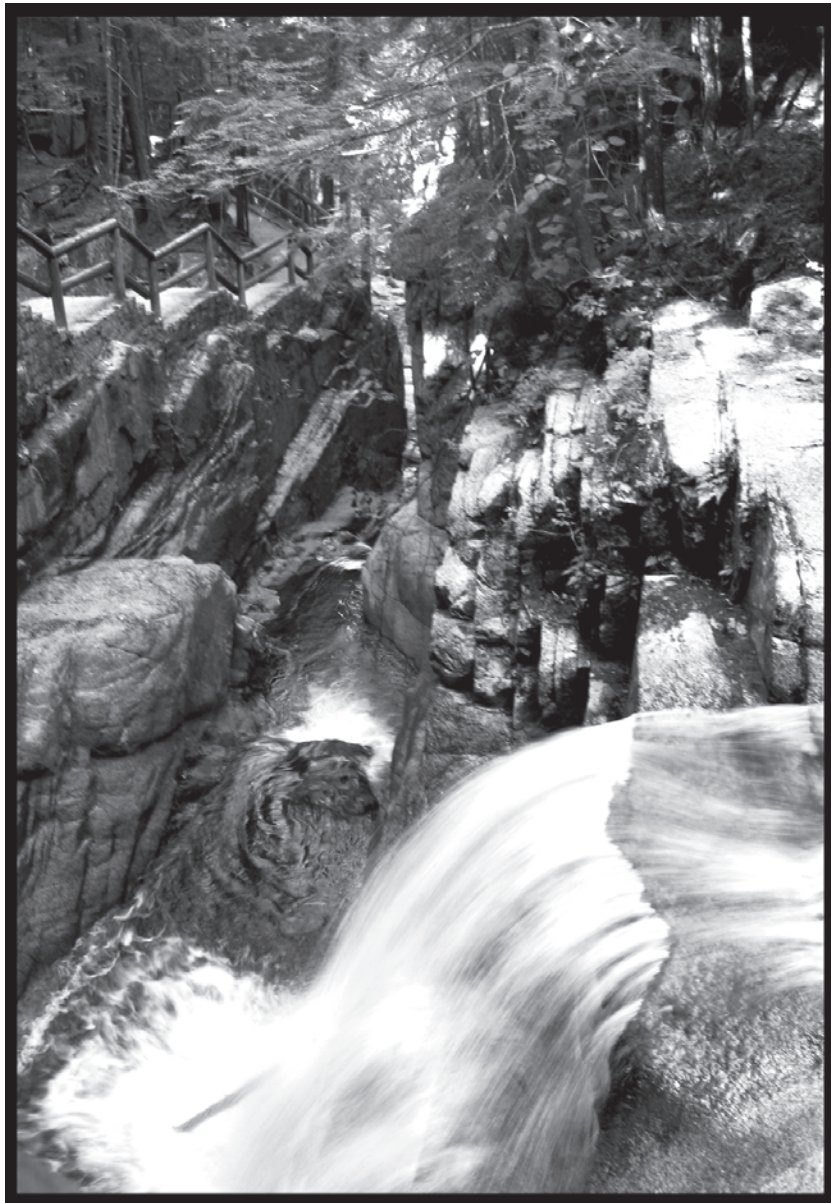
I gathered up our empty Scotch glasses and took them to the kitchen while Theodore fiddled with his cigarette case in preparation to leave. I walked him to the door and stepped outside with him.

It was at that moment he looked me dead in the eye, and said to me in a gentle tone, "You know, it's easy, Victor."

To which I said, "I know."

* * * * *





Nathan D. Horowitz



Faceless in the Dark

[Travel Journal]

All day I'd been fasting from food and drink; at three in the afternoon, the headache set in from caffeine withdrawal. I was lying face down, stretched out in the best hammock, wearing a green tunic that Joaquín's wife Maribel had sewn for me. It was like a sleeveless, shin-length t-shirt. Or, admittedly, like a dress. Gervasio had told me the previous year that the Secoyas used to get teased by mestizos about wearing tunics, and they nearly stopped wearing them; but in the 1990s, every Secoya man had a few of them alongside his Western clothes.

Cabaña Supernatura had no walls, just a palm-thatched roof and a floor that was up on posts, three and a half feet off the ground. A cool breeze came from off the river. Most of the family was away. Somewhere upriver, Joaquín was brewing yagé out of vines and leaves with his friend Lázaro, who would drink with us.

After urging Joaquín for a couple of weeks to conduct another ceremony, the day had arrived and I was apprehensive, dreading the awful taste in the mouth and the vomiting. I turned my head and complained to Joaquín's twelve-year-old grandson Luis, who was walking by: "Poor me."

"Why?"

"I'm going to drink yagé tonight."

The boy laughed. He'd never tried yagé and had no plans to. We exchanged a few more words and he wandered off to play soccer with his brother and sister.

I recalled a conversation with the boy's father, Joaquín's son Rufino. "In the past," Rufino had told me, "boys sampled it at about nine years of age, just a little at first."

"And girls?" I asked.

"It wasn't as essential for girls. After my father was orphaned, he learned to drink it under the guidance of his mother's parents, who were both shamans, and he began healing when he was about fifteen. But then when Protestant missionaries from the United States came into Secoya territory, they prohibited shamanism and the yagé ceremony."

"From the United States?" I remembered Gervasio telling me this. A

curious connection between here and my home country. First some gringos come to prohibit shamanism, then another comes to study it.

“Yes, they were members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.”

“I’ve heard of them,” I said. “Jesus wanted everyone have a chance to hear his gospel, so they go around the world translating the Bible into various languages for small tribes and then getting them to be Christian.”

“That’s right. My mother had begun her training as a shaman. Her older brother Francisco was teaching her. He was the last shaman-chief of our group. One day she was talking to Señora Barclay, the missionary, about Jesus, and Señora Barclay told her to pray to him and ask him to wash away her sins. My mother only wanted Jesus to be another helping spirit for her. That’s why she prayed to him. But when she did, she really felt that Jesus washed away her sins, and after that, she didn’t need shamanism any more, and she never went back to it.

“When she was a shaman, she could heal people just by putting her hands on them. She can still do that as a Christian; it’s just that it’s Jesus who gives her the power now.

“There are no apprentice shamans among the Secoyas these days. The young people aren’t interested. We’re teaching them to read and write and deal with the outside world.”

I closed my eyes. Nearby, in the trees by the Aguarico River, black and yellow oropendola birds were singing a sad, liquid tune.

It was dark when Joaquín and Lázaro arrived and I was confused by sleep. The two men bore flashlights and spoke jovially in their alien tongue. In my dreams, I’d been far away. Now I was in a laughing darkness, unsure of the order in which things would happen. I sat up in the hammock, collected my thoughts, waited. The family was bedding down for the night in the enclosed room at the other end of the hut; a Secoya schoolteacher and his son were also staying the night, getting settled under mosquito netting in the dining area.

Faceless in the dark, Joaquín bustled over and handed me a flashlight; a tin-framed, rectangular mirror; and a seedpod of achioté to be used as a pigment. “You can paint your face now,” he said. I cracked open the soft, spiky pod, worked a finger into the moist, red, pungent juice around the seeds, and applied a standard, basic yagé drinker’s design: a spot on each cheek, and one spot each on the chin, tip of the nose, and forehead.

Lázaro kindled a fire of palm wood on a wide metal plate that rested on three squat ceramic pillars on the floor. I wrapped myself in a blanket and reclined in a hammock; Joaquín and Lázaro were side by side in the one I’d been sleeping in before, facing opposite directions, Lázaro closer to the fire.

This was the first time I’d seen him. He seemed in his late fifties, a decade younger than Joaquín, with a big jaw and squinty eyes. Unlike the cheerful Joaquín, he didn’t speak to me. He seemed uncommunicative. He made me nervous.

In front of Lázaro were two plastic jugs, one filled with yagé, the other with water; and two plastic cups, one for yagé, and one for water to rinse out the mouth.

I let my eyes close. I heard Lázaro unscrewing the cap from the jug of yagé. The sound of the cap being placed on a floorboard. The sound of liquid pouring into a plastic cup. I watched Lázaro as the strange man held the green cup in his hands. Praying, he sang; singing, he chanted: a pagan priest consecrating a sacrament. It was intense and serious and went on for about five minutes. He fell silent and drained the cup. He rinsed his mouth with water from the other cup and leaned over and spat the water into a crack between floorboards. He poured yagé and prayed over it for Joaquín, and lastly did the same for me. I silently thanked the creator of the earth and sky for this moment and for the yagé.

The taste was even worse than I’d remembered, instantly nauseating. I fought my way to the bottom of the cup. They’d brewed it thick. I rinsed my mouth, lay back, tried to move as little as possible. Rested for an hour, calm, bored, praying for good visions and the power to heal, unable to sleep, listening to the night sounds and the sporadic conversation of the shamans, wishing I could speak their language.

I looked for alteration in my vision and thought and found none. Lázaro chanted. The voice made me uncomfortable. It sounded less human than Joaquín’s; less mammalian, even: it contained pitches and rhythms of insect songs.

Lázaro buzzed to a stop, chatted with Joaquín, and prayed over and drank another cup; offered me another, which I accepted. Another uneventful hour passed and I drank a third. I felt the yagé building up like water behind a dam, and eventually was given a fourth cup. Now I was shivering, waiting for the dam to break. Feeling cold and electrified, I shook violently, rocking forward and backward in the hammock.

At last a pale blue arabesque arises from the droning buzz of the nearby cicadas. I relax as I focus on it. Each graphic element within the pattern of this visualized song seems to contain a different piece of information.

Lázaro chants like a cricket, very fast. In the near darkness, now that the fire has died down, his face blurs, half cricket, half pattern of sounds like blue-green fan corals floating and shifting in the air. Joaquín sings now too, as if he were an old scat singer, improvising riffs on ancient melodies. He’s been

doing this for nearly sixty years and he sings the syllables with a fluent beauty. From time to time one or another of the uncucuis breaks off singing to mimic a howler monkey or a jaguar, a sudden *HUH! HUH! HUH!* or *HRRR!* in the common language of the mammal tribe. Now Joaquín picks up a mamecocó and shakes it for rhythm and to move energy. It's like the wind rustling leaves, fast, over and over.

A rumble in my stomach leads to pain. The yagé appears as a huge blue snake squirming wildly in my belly. The pain makes me cry out. I wail in anguish like a child, then climb a hill of pain and shout in triumph, then slide back down. The pain becomes extreme. I've never felt this much before. It's as if I've been poisoned and I'm dying. I writhe in the hammock like a fish in a net or a butterfly trying to shake off its chrysalis.

I keep the yagé in as long as possible while it extracts its price, the tax on transformation. Its price is pain and I'm willing to pay. Congealed sorrow that's been stored in my lower back since my parents divorced is getting shaken out like dust from a carpet. As I scream, Joaquín and Lázaro build a brilliant wall of song nearby from their shamanic spaceship hammock, a song that says to me perfectly clearly, "You're doing fine. We've been there too."

*A crescendo of pain,
gripping, whirling, killing,
infinite pain, insane,
breaks me at last
and explodes out my mouth;
at that moment
my cries turn to roars
of ecstatic victory.*

*It's like smashing through a magic mirror
or passing through a lens that turns everything upside-down:
the pleasure that follows the breaking point
is exactly as strong as the pain that preceded it.*

Death itself must be like that. So I have nothing to fear, now or ever. I roar with the strongest joy imaginable. With the piney-smelling vomit pooled on the floorboards inches from my face, I scream, my body facing the floor, swaying, just my head out of the hammock, looking at the upside-down world in darkness. Now's the time to growl, no human language needed; now's the time to howl, to pound on the floor, imagining enemies.

I lie back in the hammock, my body humming like a well-tuned machine. At home on the earth I sing *Ommmm . . . home . . . hey hey hey hey*

. . . With simple sounds I evoke the growth of plants, the birth of stars, the alliances between rainforest peoples and outsiders, and the joy that must follow death. When I get back I'll tell my mother about this, and the rest of my family too. Then they won't fear death anymore.

I'm silent now, listening to Lázaro and Joaquín singing different songs at the same time. Complex patterns of sound waves mix with the vibrations of cicadas, crickets, tree frogs peeping in the woods.

I listen to the silence of the uncucuis and to the peaceful song of the forest night.

The two older men sit up in their hammock, their legs in opposite directions, and converse. Lázaro pours, chants a magic spell, drinks another cup of the potion. To me he says, "You want another?"

"Yes." I watch while Lázaro pours, prays, passes it to me. Horrible glittering holy yagé, welcome to my body, even as I shudder as I drink.

Since I'm sitting up, I feed the fire, blow on it, get it going again. Smoke blows back in my face, hot, bitter, choking. I lie back in the hammock, swaying. Along my jaw, my fingers explore razor stubble, twelve o'clock shadow. Thoughts lead to thoughts and I wonder how the U.S. military mission in Haiti is going. A newspaper article I read in town a week ago said the death toll on the U.S. side was up in the twenties. Now I see the dead ones marching, thirty yards southwest of the hut, lost among planes of darkness in the roadless jungle of the night. Some houngan must have cast a spell on the souls to mess up their sense of direction. And they've found out what they wondered all their lives: what it is to die. I sing to them,

*Now you know,
now you know.
Honor the fallen soldiers.
We wish you well.*

Immediately they've taken refuge in my stomach and I know I'm going to throw up.

I sing to the dead soldiers that their country's proud of them and their families love them. And that later on I'll die too.

*We all die,
we all die,
we all die.*

A peaceful, deathlike calm floats over and around my body. I lie

without moving, practicing to be dead, rocking gently back and forth in the hammock like a hanged man swayed by the wind.

When we agreed to be born, we agreed to die. When we drank the cup of life, we drank the cup of death.

Although I have no fear of death now, I know it may return. Fear and pain guard the life of the body.

The oscillation of pleasure and pain creates the rhythm of life. The highs and the lows need each other and give way to each other.

When I was younger, I used to get stuck in the lows and think they'd never end. Partly because the younger we are, the slower time goes by, and partly because I hadn't lived through enough of that wavelike motion to recognize it.

I flash back to a graffito I saw in Quito: *Out of the shit rises a sun, and a flower is born*. The Quito graffito refutes my G-I-G-O (Garbage-In-Garbage-Out) Theory of human psychology. In fact, the garbage that goes in can be compost. Light can feed on darkness.

That's like the Buddhist image of the mind as a lotus rooted in muck and making its way up through the water toward the sun until it reaches the surface and can blossom: enlightenment.

Joaquín or Lázaro clears his throat loudly.

Death is present, holding hands with life, giving a strange comfort, a strange love.

I contemplate the physical process of dying of torture or illness. The body undergoes its changes as the flesh is attacked. The soul endures these horrors until they become too much for it and it recoils from the body. The stronger the pain before death, it seems, the stronger the joy afterwards. I suddenly understand torture as a transmission of energy from the victim to the perpetrator. And while the torturer is preparing a blissful afterlife for his victim, he's winding up a brutal backlash for himself in this life and the next.

There's silence, there's cricket song. What's it like to be dead, anyway? Once, in a dream, I met my friend Verge Basso. He'd died a year earlier. A promising young writer, charismatic and witty, afraid of his sadistic tendencies in the same way I was. He'd been kayaking alone on a river in New Zealand without a helmet, and he smacked his head on a stone and drowned. The body and the kayak floated out to a bay, where they were recovered. Verge was 21.

In the dream I run into him in the basement of a nightclub in Chicago. We embrace, a dead man and a live man. We've missed each other. We go outside to talk.

I ask him to tell me something I couldn't possibly know—a family

secret or something—so I can get in touch with his parents and his sister and prove to them that I've actually met him.

He winces. I understand the rules forbid him from contacting his family this way, though he'd like to. But he tells me something else.

He says that for a week after he died, he ate cabbage and the tops of waves on the river where he'd drowned.

The cicadas start up again. Or had I just forgotten them? I hum, wondering about the birth and death of the universe. I fall silent, agnostic. What are the shamans seeing?

Joaquín coughs and begins a song, tentatively at first, then stronger. He's told me it's his job to protect his people with his song, his magic, his prayer. Demons—a metaphor?—can't stand the sound of it and flee back to their hell-realms below.

After a while my soldier-ghost-filled stomach churns and I know it's only a matter of time.

The waves of nausea come closer together now, and stronger. I'm singing hard, trying to persuade my body to keep the yagé down, knowing it's hopeless. Then the waves of pain break over me and I cry out; then I'm singing again, knowing I'm going to feel a lot worse before I feel better. Nine people are more or less asleep within earshot, and while it's fine to roar, howl, scream, yell as necessary, it feels important to sound good while doing so. I think about the people thinking about me, I see them seeing my face in the darkness, and I reassure them with my song that I'm all right.

No, I'm not all right. I'm losing it. A horrible groan rips from my lips, and in a moment I'm puking again, as inevitable as death. It's strong, my whole body bucks, my eyes must be squirting tears. Cleaner inside to start with, I'm not roaring as much, but I feel like I'm staring through the earth into outer space. The fingers of one hand grip the webbing of the hammock, the other hand braces against the floor as I spit out the last of the yagé—*Ptah!* Empty but convulsed by dry heaves, I shout *Dau! Huh huh huh HUH! HRR!* I cough and spit again and lie back feeling lighter. Rocking, I sing gently *Haaa* to signal that I'm at peace and that rage is a gift that must be used only for good. *Hey* . . . the defense of peaceful communities. *Hmmm* . . . healing and the color green. *Heyy* . . . the sound of sunlight. *High*, the blue sky. *Ha, ha, ha* . . . the pleasure of being alive. I mix a song from shining fragments of words and sounds that tumble out in all colors; I sing really well, then falter; try to regain the magic, fail, and subside. I remember something funny that happened in ninth grade, and laugh and laugh. Then there's silence again.

Lázaro sings his funny insect song, Joaquín's pensive, and I laugh.

Joaquín sings, shaking his leaf fan, and I hum along, wishing I could sing like him. I'm grateful to the shamans and their ancestors for their songs of freedom and redemption. Later, Lázaro gives me more yagé, and later still I throw it up again, the vision machine humming around me, painting intricate colored patterns in the black air. Even later, we all sing together, and it's like flying through clouds.

I ponder the connections I've been making with the people here in Latin America. We're like neurons linking up to each other. Humanity's like a brain learning to communicate between its diverse parts. I feel now that despite my earlier reluctance, my place in society will include work in education.

I dig cross-cultural communication because I'm a child of several cultures myself, born in the USA, my mom Irish-American, my dad Jewish-American of Russian and Polish provenance. Without cross-cultural communication, my mind feels like a muttering wasteland haunted by enemy tribes—or like the courtroom where the two people I loved most struggled to destroy each other for reasons I've never been able to fathom.

This impulse to cross cultures may come not from us as individuals but from the soul of our species. The spirit of humanity itself brought my parents together. And then drove them apart? But I had been created. And then I was broken open. To take up the tasks of our species. Like the artist work of observing and articulating. This sense organ work for the collective body.

A distant roar of howler monkeys in the jungle to the south sounds like a storm on the ocean, or like a choir of distant ancestors telling me to have courage.'

His reptilian, narrow-eyed, big-jawed face expressionless, Lázaro rises lightly with his leaf fan from the hammock he shares with Joaquín and begins to dance up and down in the deep blue pre-dawn light—marching forward, stepping backward, shaking the fresh green mamecoco so it says *sh-sh-sh-sh-sh-sh-sh*. He reminds me of a pterodactyl. I lie there eyeing him, thinking, *This is weird. Truly, deeply, embarrassingly weird.* But the following evening, Joaquín will ask, *Did you see how beautifully he danced? And did you see the sky people dancing alongside him? So many of them, like leaves! And so beautiful!*

Soon a couple roosters begin to crow, and dawn light seeps into the tunics, Lázaro's yellow, Joaquín's orange, and my green. I note that both men's red achiote facepaint designs are intact. On my own face, the marks I applied last night must be smeared. Lázaro turns and belches loud and strong in the direction of the forest. The sound of it overwhelms me with nausea. I double over with dry heaves, gagging, gut-wrenched. I'm utterly thirsty. The Café Trieste looks really good right now. I wish I were sucking down a raspberry

Italian soda.

I'm OK, though. I sigh and smile and lie back again, calm. Lázaro and Joaquín joke with me, broad smiles and laughter all around. Joaquín's relaxed, bemused, legs crossed at the ankles. He usually reminds me of a Tibetan lama, but his current smile is just like that of a different visionary, the Belgian Surrealist painter René Magritte.

Lázaro takes a long swig of yagé directly from the jug. Watching him do this nauseates me again, and I belch, turn over in the hammock, put my head out, and throw up a little on the floor. I stay where I am, perfectly comfortable, and watch the pool of yagé as some of it begins to slip slowly down between two floorboards. I study the curving chainsaw pattern of the boards, and the tiny, white saliva bubbles like insect eggs atop the thick brown liquid.

I hear the sleepers rising in the other part of the hut. Joaquín, who's drunk less than Lázaro or me, converses with them. I shift my head and watch, for a long time, the upside-down jungle, and the way the breeze picks out certain leaves to caress while leaving others unmoved. Huge, upright leaves of banana plants, transfixed bright green by the morning sun, rock back and forth. I study the clean clothes hanging on the wire clothesline outside, and the flight paths of small birds as they zoom by, little more than blurs. I can see how this kind of patient observation would be useful to rainforest people—a profound contemplation of the environment.

The Rorschach of a patch of bark on a tree near the hut resolves into the image of the poet Walt Whitman from the frontispiece of *Leaves of Grass*, half-smiling, under a jauntily-cocked broad-brimmed hat; only the features on the face are mine.

An immense black beetle buzzes joyfully through the hut.

I lie back in the hammock chatting with Joaquín and Lázaro. My whole body feels good. From the dining area, the schoolteacher, drinking a cup of coffee, regards me intently. His son's wary of me, remembering my wild roars. Two of Joaquín's grandchildren, Luís and Xiomara, smile at me, proud of my fortitude. And Joaquín's wife Maribel beams her gorgeous grin and sits down with a kitchen knife to pare her nails.

* * * * *



Saint Someone

I once met a man in Seattle
whose fragile psychic network
ran his speech to shiver and quake.
At first I thought “DT’s”—
personal hieroglyphs between pints of white port—
but after walking much and saying very little,
then drinking anew and long on moon-splashed docks,
it became apparent the tremors
were broadcasts from other realities,
his red and ultramarine throat
incapable of further vocalization,
his perpetual blue eyes all god.

Young Apollo

He’s the boy with the sun in his eyes,
the sure-footed stalker of the real
piloting a slant-six Dodge Dart
with an eight track a six-pack
an ice ax a red Bic a quick smile.
You’ve seen him downtown, upstate,
ecstatic, abject, profound, comic
in search of the raw and the cooked.
What strange and beautiful fires
tear through the skies when you’re seventeen!
Flare through brain and cock,
fuse old beauty to green heart.
How does he hold such majesty,
and when does he plan to release it?

January Thaw

Time feels kind and luxurious again
as the old dog walks you slowly down the street
and honeyed shafts of sunlight silently ignite
the damp mats of dark brown oak leaves
freshly uncovered of their snow-white linens
on a mid-day Monday stroll most folks away
just the alders and boulders and you
uncoiling in the hillside's warming filaments.
Branches unfreeze in a sheen of lemon filigree,
each stone brims with glacial amber,
the dog sniffs joy on every surface—
the earth would like to welcome you back.

* * * * *



Judih Haggai



ku slips in
leaves a sigh
and that's it

camels in the field
long time residents
pay no mind

alas the frog departs
no more pond frolic
back to work

birds and i
fly the distant fields
then discuss

look and find
search conscience and suffer
or let go and breathe

one black cat
infiltrates my life
bed and breakfast

chunk of flesh
from me to horsefly
alms to the poor

puppet eyes
watch from the corner
work invitation

young tree
bears four yellow guava
gifts of fall

autumn takes a bow
all in a life's work
'em smiling

back on track
sleep all night
his shoulder on mine

all night rain
drums on rooftops
tadpoles in garden

* * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Dream Raps

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*.

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*.

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.*

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.

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 yet 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.



* * * * *



In Stir

A few years ago I did time in the slammer
for, I'm loath to admit, my deplorable grammar.
I thought I'd be charged with a lesser offense
like the imperfect use of the past-perfect tense
which my lawyer assured me I might beat because
he got some client off with a defendant clause
but much to my family's (and my own) disgrace
it turned into a major declarative case.
The verdict was "Guilty." The gavel fell hard.
I soon walked on gravel in my prison yard.
My run-on sentence for poor punctuation
did not permit visits, verbs, or "conjugation."
I worked out with weights and a large dictionary
to develop my biceps and vocabulary.
The whole Big House structure was compound/complex.
I had to rely on both wit and reflex.
My cell-mates were Lex (a con. . .), "Sammy the Shiv,"
(who was sent up for splitting an infinitive. . .)
and Paragraph Indent (—nailed having stolen
an asterisk, hyphen, ellipsis, and colon).
They smuggled in paper for contraband verse.
Their typing was awful. Their syntax was worse. . .
I was forced to list parts of speech, usages, functions. . .
I was subject to predicates. . . tied with conjunctions.
A linguist (a wordsmith is one definition),
propositioned me once with a sick preposition:
I would write things which he'd scan in the can
then format and type-set. He said, "I've a plan. . .
I'll publish you!" (These were all transitive lies.
The crook was intending to plagiarize!)
With participles dangling, taking a shower,
I was threatened by members of "Metaphor Power."
They told me, "Bend over and pick up that pen
because we want to edit tight writing again!"

But I busted the pen. The ink ran down the drain.
The prose never flows if I'm under a strain.

Then Lieutenant Gerund and Adjective Hayes
(who was armed only with an imperative phrase. . .)
moved me off Writer's Block. Three other screws
found A, E, I, O, U, and Y in some shoes.
They suspected some poet was getting protection
in exchange for the vowels in his haiku collection.
I traded Winstons for alphabet soup
and established a convicted writers' group.
We counted on commas to break up our days
as I tried to remind them that rhyme never pays.

It was quite a bad period (synonym: spell).
The warden informed me I wrote very good.
He contracted—he shortened—my time in the joint
with no exclamation. But I got the point.

All Past is Prefix.
The Future's before us. . .
I have a new life and a Roget's Thesaurus.

* * *

Farmer's Market (My Vegetable Past)

Near the end of my college education I got into veggie-experimentation.
Regrettably, as a related result, I joined a vegetable-satanist cult
and underwent horrid humiliation to pass through their secret
initiation:
The sadistic vegetable-satanists
tied string-beans and pea-pods around my wrists;
I was told to sit in the corner, shut up,
and drink carrot-juice from a plasticene cup.
Then they took off my jacket and one of my shoes
and forced me to read *Agricultural News*.
Just by the hairs on my chinny-chin-chin I survived the ordeal.
The cult voted me in.

They gave me my vegetable-satanist name
and from that moment onward Joe Coleman became

“His Satanic, Majestic, Infernal Dark Lord
of the Wicked Zucchini, Anathema Gourd,
and Nasty, Annoying, Demonically Evil
Cabbage infested with Rootworm and Weevil;
—His Royal Red Radish, deriving All-Power
from the Double-Horned, Cloven-Hoofed Cauliflower;
—And the Deputy Sherriff of Bottomless Pit
filled with Fire and Brimstone, Hot Peppers and shit;
—The Devilish Pitchfork-wielding Bane
of Butternut Squash and Cucumber stain;
—The Garlic-breath, Turnip-Head Minion. . . Joe!”
It's a long honorific.
It's stupid.
I know.

Then the blasphemous Mark of the Beet was applied.
I was manicured. . . pedicured. . . plain terrified
they might re-style my hair or trim down my beard.
(I'm grateful they didn't. . . that would have been weird!)

I took part in rituals that filled me with shame.
These all involved produce. The Leeks were to blame. . .
—like offering our souls to the Great Brussels Sprout
and crowning a Candied Yam, dancing about
the Enthroned Potato—or bending the knee
at the Altar of Cream Cheese on Celery
—or the communal baking of fresh pumpkin pie.

I watched innocent organic vegetables die.

At two A.M. once we all walked to a farm
and, after disabling the rooster-alarm,
we kidnapped some onions and young ears of corn
and filmed videos of sick vegetable porn;
rough, lurid, three-way onion-action;
corn ears getting audio satisfaction;
corn-kernel-lingus; raw onion kink;

cream of corn; onion skin. . . worse than you think!
Then we slaughtered the onions in sacrifice.
We sliced them and cooked them up with some white rice
AND WE ATE THEM! —while chanting “Uncle Ben!”
“Uncle Ben!” over and over again. . .
In our Leek-induced frenzy we satanically digested the pilaf.
The corn was set free.

That was my breaking point.
I’d had enough. . .
I abandoned the cult and got off the stuff.
I joined a Gourmet Club, resumed eating meat,
and cleaned up my act, my cult-life complete.
I went back to the college and got my degree.
The vegetable-satanist life’s not for me.
I burned all the videos ultimately.
There’s no market for veggie-pornography!

* * *

The Big Stop

How amusingly antic they are
driving their silly clown car;
a big bunch of bozos,
slap-happy stooges,
circling,
bouncing
—Bizarre!
Beeping and honking
they cough
they choke
as wheel rims scrape
and flat tires slide
until, with a “POP!”
it comes to a stop
concluding their pointless ride.
There’s a gigantic geyser of smoke . . .
Fourteen fools jump out of the joke.
How did they all fit inside?

Laugh!
Are you satisfied?

The circus will run out of gas.
The calliope has missing keys.
There are no nets should someone drop
when a rope snaps on the trapeze.
Bring on the shovel and mop.
All flesh is nothing but grass.

Harlequin colors will fade grayish-brown,
lights will blink dark, tents will come down,
and time will disperse faint circus smells
of sawdust, popcorn, peanut shells,
crackerjacks, candy, and waffle-cones.
The Fat Lady will be skin and bones.

In this, the last of the one-horse towns,
they burn dead elephants.

Grieve
for dead clowns.

* * *

Pastoral

Poor little lonely shepherd lad;
far from his sweetheart,
tired and sad,
with moon and clouds of stars in the sky,
he misses, he needs her.
He starts to cry
—when suddenly one sheep catches his eye
and he thinks, “Why not give it a try?
That sheep is throwing a ‘come-hither’ look . . .”
He makes his move
dropping both trousers and crook.
There were fireworks—violins—hillsides shook . . .
a few minutes was all it took.

One might think if only for decency's sake
 he's tell the sheep, "Sorry . . . that was a mistake . . ."
 but the following evening at quarter-past ten
 there were fireworks and violins again
 after which, exhausted with nothing to say
 the lad puffed on his pipe of clay.
 Some farmer spied smoke and thought there was flame.
 The poor little shepherd was full of shame
 when the farmer happened upon the pair
 (though the sheep didn't seem to care).
 Then the poor little shepherd returned to the town
 where his sweetheart disgustedly laid the law down,
 "If I even catch you LOOKING at sheep
 there'll be no more kisses from me, you CREEP!
 These lips will become but a dim memory.
 Is it going to be sheep—or me?"

The picturesque town never saw such a thing:
 a sheep in a veil with a wedding ring.

* * *

July 5th

Driftwood summer. Brooding, solemn, pure,
 humid. (Whisper: "Evening. . . balsam air.")
 Raptor Angel. Clouded, lacework moon.
 Anger. Grizzle. Haggard, tragic yawn.

Stubborn mattress. Sleepy. Wet.
 Lesion. Sutures. Achy gut.
 Bedpan. Jaundice. Greasy spit.

Lucent colors dim.
 Vacant slippers dream.

Lonesome death.

Poor Dad. . .

* * * * *

Reneé Schamberger



Easter Island

I drift
 barefoot on the beach
 tanned shoulders
 tropical flowers in my hair,
 ocean's tongue gently
 lapping at my feet.

Sanctuary
 from discordant language
 this world speaks.

I lip read island's silent sounds
 and stare as her stones
 begin to sing.

* * *

6 Weeks

I'm drawn to the garden again,
 to kneel in fertile soil, a penitent.

My hands toil, untangle weeds,
 shelter emerging seedlings
 as I should have protected you.

Fingers touch concave petals,
 beg forgiveness of each,
 seeking their hollows to know
 the curve of your face.

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



October 25, 2014
Christian Science Park—
near Reflecting Pool
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear President Obama,

This begins my eighth letter to you, sixth since you've been the sitting American President. I've written to you annually since 2008, & also publish the letter in my independent literary journal, *The Cenacle*.

As I write to you this time, the mid-term Congressional elections are just over a week away. The Democrats may barely keep the Senate, or may not.

The country is in the mostly-media-driven frenzy of the Ebola virus crisis. Happily, it does not appear we'll all, at least for now, go the way predicted in *28 Days Later* or *The Walking Dead*.

The economy seems vaguely recovered from its 2008 depths. Unemployment is down to 5.9%.

And yet. And yet. The U.S. is revealed to be more of a Big Brother spy at home, & less of a legitimate peacemaker abroad.

And yet. And yet. The FCC's drive to gut Net Neutrality has been, best said for now, slowed. You've publicly spoken out, on the right side of history in this matter. How would you have become President without a free & open Internet?

Healthcare reform roots ever deeper into the nation's bureaucratic structure. Republicans have all but given up on their largely empty efforts to repeal it. They essentially have no argument or alternative to convince millions of people that being uninsured again is a good idea. This legislation, along with withdrawing troops from Iraq & Afghanistan, will likely stand as your administration's greatest achievements. Not perfect, but pretty damned good. Oh, & being the first non-Caucasian American president.

And yet. And yet. Why is your party not winning back the House & easily keeping the Senate? Why does *Harper's* magazine fear Democrats will support your ideologically like-minded colleague, Hillary Clinton? Why do Democrats campaigning this election season tout your healthcare reforms but steer clear of you?

Why. I think there's no plain answer. You were elected with an emotional mandate in 2008, & an expedient one in 2012. The first to crush the Bush cabal & hurry them out of D.C. (they never really left but it was good enough for then). The second because you had done some good things (war draw-down, healthcare), deserved more time & because, honestly, Mitt Romney was such a corporate tool that listening to him talk made too many people ill to allow him any chance of winning.

But here you are, now, your election victories behind you, your lame duck status fairly assured no matter what happens this Election Day. Washington will get nothing done, or even less.

I wonder what the Barack Obama of 2014 would tell the 2008 Obama, if he could.

Perhaps that the hallucinatory fervor of that November cannot last. Perhaps that being President can be both the most powerful & paralyzing position in the world. Perhaps that you will disappoint progressive ideologists but the families of soldiers & sick people will not fail to praise you.

I'm trying to remember what I felt toward you in 2008. I've re-read all the letters I've written to you. I've seen their downward trajectory from hope & praise to worry to pleading to . . . resignation tonight. I realize that what I wanted then was a philosopher-king, a visionary, a poet.

What you became was a semi-successful administrator. To use a sports metaphor, you took over a last place (feeling) team, coached it back to the playoffs, won a couple of memorable games there. But your opponents figured out that you had no new secret strategies for winning. You gave a good pre-game speech, your players were reasonably well-coached, but you *weren't that unbeatable*.

Maybe the hard lesson to learn is that we're never going to get a philosopher-king in this country. Maybe it's for the best. Politics is an ugly business of money & special interests, & lying with a pretty smile. Politics is whoring for power over others. Politics is for the kind of arrogant solipsistic personality nobody wants to have in their family or workplace (though most of us have them).

My hope is that progressives stop with the idea of a high road vs. low road approach to governance. That we stop trusting your kind to stay true to any virtuous path. That we elect you to accomplish good & should have little to no patience for your compromises & endless pleas for patience.

My hope is that we understand for good hereon that a man or woman sells his soul to win political office, to be thrust by effort into the unnatural

position of deciding the fates of others unknown, never to be met.

Your kind's willingness to engage this activity should be treated with pity, & expediency. You're not the heroes of society, if any of you ever were. You are its prime functionaries, enjoined to keep this unsustainable, earth-destroying, poverty enslaving market capitalism, built on the structural inequalities of its system, from collapsing sooner than it will. You keep your collective thumb in the dyke.

You've done some good. You've more than that prevented others from doing much harm. But you've shown this nation & the world at large that believing that a man-hero will come along to rescue us from our own failures is a rotten pathetic idea.

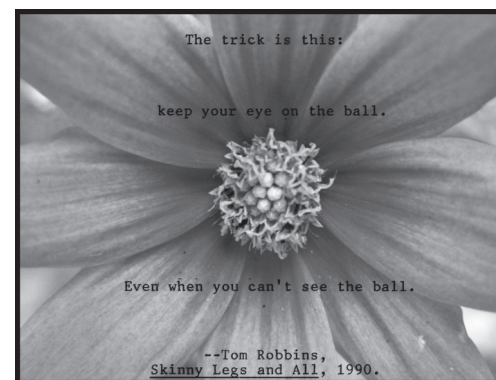
I hope your failure to govern inspirationally & well will help more & more of us to stop waiting for this to ever occur again.

Peace,



Scriptor Press New England
scriptorpress.com

* * * * *





Tom Sheehan



Excursion

December gave us both a gray day,
thick as hardpan, sitting-down thick,
a neutral sadness running pole to pole,
a day that cried for work or laughter.

Work wins out, I told son James,
barely three and barely to my thigh.
I dressed him for the full adventure;
gloves soft as strung rabbit's neck,

stocking cap puffed out of lamb,
jacket thick with duck's outside,
a twist of blue knotting under chin,
two-ply boots denser than a tire.

Jamie leaned penguinish, starchy tight,
not quite sure of feet or balance point,
where the fulcrum of his day angled,
what could tip him this way or that.

I sat him, nugget of a boy, deep in the van*
among chainsaw, rip ax, six-pound maul,
and the pair of blunt wedges I had worn
feverishly down through full reams of trees.

Oh, James likes iron, how it calls attention
to itself, hidden core ringing at his feet,
the hard touch remembered on cold days,
surfaces demanding the sweat of hands.

He likes iron forcing its way in or through,
iron beating on or back in brittle echoes,
that sprouts handles and odd points
and sharp edges; iron changing shapes

of shapes, moving together or ever apart,
iron crying for the sweet will of muscle.
James comes bountied to move earth,
to carve pieces to his wanting, his need.

He comes magnetic. Tools move to him,
are drawn by his hands, heart's thirst,
shoulder coming poised behind the ingot,
with the shaking that little boys give off.

Some monger's fire simmers in his eyes;
his lungs have bellow burst, puff of dream.
A dynamo hums in him, sings, trembles
down the limbs he brings to tasks,

a flywheel set in motion, gearage grab.
He clanged and banged and rang aloud
in the back of the van, echoing himself
among harsh tools, rang hard as them,

wavered as a tuning fork to day's wand,
gave me in the driver's seat fair music
of the shop, beat of the forge at fire,
early shape of man in the ringing light

of coming on to size, pig iron breakout
from the harvest of heat, furnace essence,
the brazier soul coming through a sense
of fire, son where the welding works.

Oh, we bend here in a parade of tasks,
endless marching to orders we are born
ever to obey, the expense of our energies.
Each of us must light his own ample fire,

as James must light his. Failure is here,
not burning off the energy, not using up
all the waiting ghost that resides within.
Now James, my son, comes beside me

moving up in time, rattling with tools
he will spend his life with or always at,
the promise of something Excalibured,
the deeply driven driven out or drawn.

The hunger swell that swells some souls
must swell in him. At length he will move
the mountain in the way, will bend keen
tool edge on the steepest edge of Earth

as he moves Authurian in his life. But then
we came at last to dream and destination;
a wide field, a thick butt of maple tree,
monarch dropped along the avenue,

once the carrier of a hundred fallen nests,
donned a thousand rains, worst of storms,
wore scars of lightning zippered on its bark.
Into this field was brought tree's death.

And we come, James and I, to scavenge,
to pick as ants, gulls, or high vultures
what is left of the dying or the dead;
a father and son looting what is left

of the maple's being, faint yellow core.
A pair of deed-takers, two men of tools,
making hard music of twin cutters
as I whipped my saw into quick frenzy.

It loves good wood, slab of thick hides,
the inner rings hundreds high and counting.
James held his ground, the maul too heavy
to lift but handle operable as rudder stick,

able to steer the day to someplace on.
His eyes measured all three feet down
into the butt the saw's cut would hasten,
blinked at the majestic toss of sawdust

and chips hosing out beneath rapid chain,
figuring what it takes to earn the saw,
how much tool it was, what its sound meant
in a field where our maple died some more.

* * * * *



Charlie Beyer



Freedom in the Layers of Time

[Travel Journal]

Following a meaty dinner of incinerated half chickens and beans, the group settles in around the fire. Presently a bottle of Irish whiskey is passed around. This is good stuff and I drink my share as it passes from lips to lips in the circle.

“Hey, did you hear about that Mormon who was shot near here by the Ute Indians?”

“No. Not really. What about it?” responds JonJon.

“Guess the Mormon was grave robbing a burial site. Had a fine pile of arrowheads too.”

“What happened?”

“The Indian shot the guy in the back of the head. Took the time to re-bury the artifacts before the authorities came and took him away.”

“Well, you guys have heard of Claude Dallas, haven’t you?” I ask.

“He shot somebody too. Who was that?” asks JonJon.

“He shot the law, and the law didn’t win.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I had occasion once to sit next to one of the pigs who was in on the manhunt for him.”

“OK. Go on.”

“It happened that I caught the puddle jumper from Boise to Seattle on Crashcaid Airlines. These tiny turbo prop planes must clear the Cascade Mountain range to get to the coast. Many do not, and hence the name bastardization of Cascade Airlines. The seats are crammed in, and yet I felt mine was even more cramped, mashed as I was between the window and a gigantic sheriff. He had the proverbial flat top and arrogant pig air about him. Being bored and uncomfortable, particularly in the presence of the law, I engaged him in conversation.

“Well, officer, from what county do you prevail?”

“Owyhee County. Biggest damn county in Idaho. More wild country than the rest of the state combined.”

“Are you out in the country a lot, then?”

“Damn right. There’s no rock a criminal can hide from the likes of me.’

“Isn’t that the county that Claude Dallas hid out in? What ever happened to that guy anyway?’

“Why that snake-eyed polecat. Son-of-a-bitch is out free in the country again.’

“Free is he? How did that happen?’

“That’s what the people wanted. Judge went along with it. Served his puny sentence and walked.’

“Damn. You don’t say.’

“Travesty of justice, if you ask me. Should have shot him when we had the chance.’

“I would have expected nothing less of this cowboy pig. But I wanted to butter him up, as I live in Owyhee County and am not partial to his pearl handled six guns blazing down on me for some tiny infraction with explosives or some other minor issue.”

I continue with the story in greater detail.

Claude Dallas

Claude Dallas was from the Midwest. If television had been promoting the trench coat killer with the hidden shotgun under it meme when he was young, he would have been in the line up at the Columbine school shooting. Claude loved guns in inverse proportion to his loathing of people. He had every kind of weapon and practiced with them furiously. He also studied trapping, both conventional ways and a hundred illegal ways: snares, wire traps, spikes, and pit falls. When he got out of high school, he packed up three duffel bags of guns and headed to the Wild West. He wore a fifteen-gallon hat, similar to Hoss in the old *Bonanza* show.

In the far lonely valleys of Nevada, he found employment with ranchers. As is practiced there, cows are released into the empty wasteland in the spring and rounded up a year or more later. Claude was the guy who would roam thousands of square miles in search of these animals. The snow painted him white, the sun bleached his leathery outfit, the loneliness and silence of empty space sank into his soul. He became a valued wrangler to the owners of this vastness, never complaining, always ready to return to the nothingness. Self-sufficient in every way. He was seen as a true icon of the west, the lone wolf, and a competent collector of cows.

In a half a dozen years, he became well known among scattered locals in a superficial way, as he never spoke more than a few words. He was well

liked by cafe and general store owners, paying in cash for a few supplies, and then heading back out to God knew where. For months at a time when not employed, he would disappear into the mountains, living off the game he caught there. In the winter of 1981, Claude was camped on the upper reaches of the Owyhee River in a wilderness area. Two fish and game officers got a tip that he was poaching deer and set out to arrest him. Hiking down three miles into the deep canyon, they came unexpectedly into his camp. Two deer were strung up in the chilly air. Claude sat quietly beside the smoldering fire. They announced that they were there to arrest him for poaching. The older fatter and more gruff officer reached for his gun when Claude showed no sign of complying. Claude whipped out his own pistol and shot the big man in the chest. The other officer had drawn his gun by this time but, being hesitant, was quickly gunned down by the .45 in Claude’s cold hands. Being a mechanical killer of all things, he placed a .22 rifle at their temples, emptied the barrel, making sure they would rise no more. He then dumped the bodies in the river and calmly packed up camp.

The fish and game officers were missed. The government truck found on the ridge above prompted a helicopter search of the area. Soon their bodies were spotted washed ashore on a sand bar, partly eaten by coyotes. The bullet holes told the grisly story. It was clear who had done this. Bringing the quiet clay back into the county seat of Owyhee County, the law enforcement purveyors went wild. The sheriff called his sheriff friends in adjoining counties who scrambled their assault gear together. The deputies called their deputy buddies. The Boise Police excused themselves from duty to join the manhunt. The FBI came and took notebooks of notes. Every one assembled in the tiny county seat amid patriotic speeches, bristling firearms, and idling 4-wheel-drive trucks of all sort. In an apoplexy of rage, they set out to scour the vastness of the west for the killer. Feverishly they searched day and night, over a hundred of them, but no trace or trail of Claude could be found. K-9 dogs sniffed around every sagebrush. Helicopters plowed the winter air.

In a week of intensive search, evening beer camaraderie around the campfires, and oaths to string up the culprit, enthusiasm waned. Wisps of snow sucked the heat out of the foaming posse. Some drifted back to their counties to take care of their own business. In another week the forces were reduced to half. Then deputies returned back to their villages and wives, the Boise Police returned to their beats, the funds for the chase became exhausted and, within a month, only a few of the most dedicated and desperate for the head of Dallas remained in the field.

Christmas came and went. The glacial January would not let anyone outside. In four months, the manhunt was reduced to one deputy at a desk

reviewing all the evidence for clues. But there were no clues. Claude had slipped deep into the hills where he was comfortable, probably constantly on the move, killing and eating animals as the animal that he was. The press had had a Christmas of its own with the story. The lone frontiersman had eluded all the law in the West with all their technology.

The talk emerged that Claude had gunned down the officers in a fair fight. They drew first but, like the Sundance Kid, Claude had been faster and gotten the drop on the police outlaws. The government agents were the outlaws, not Claude, who was just peacefully living the Wild West dream. Rumors of his sighting began: a desert store in Nevada, an outpost in New Mexico, a fishing supply shop in Montana. Nothing could be confirmed. People whom he had worked for and were in the areas of sightings were close mouthed.

Claude may have been a fugitive from this oppressive world of laws, but he was also a hero. He had gunned down two bastards in a fair fight—single handed. “You’re welcome here, Claude” signs began to sprout on roadside truck stops and across the un-urbanized haunts of the West. Silhouettes of the fifteen-gallon hat were spray painted on road signs. A song about his heroics became popular and played in truck stop cafes. Mr. Dallas had become a cult following.

After a year and a half, Claude was all but forgotten. Only a wanted poster ten sheets down in the post office reminded us of him—if one took the time to leaf through these things. He was still there in his gigantic hat, more a poster of a South American liberator than a murderer. But he was our liberator. Our Sagebrush Rebellion liberator. The guy who would take no shit from meddling government. The West idolized the hero and loathed the dead Fish and Game agents.

Claude was caught by a computer. Working in a 7-11 in Alamogordo, New Mexico. The IRS cross-matched his social security number. Claude was paying taxes. A true American. Dragged off in chains, he was rapidly expedited to Idaho for a grand trial in Boise. The great unwashed came out of every corner of the desert, the cities, and the deep woods. Not to see him hang, but to cheer on his innocence. His right. His entitlement as a premiere mountain man. The courtroom was packed, the hallways packed, the street packed as the cowboy masses chanted “Dallas! Dallas! Dallas!” He got a speedy trial. The law officer mob drooled for blood.

Unrequited. The jury was Claude’s. They could see no crime here, only the removal of bureaucrats that prevented their God-given right to hunt and fish in the Promised Land. The judge was also sympathetic. After a short deliberation, the jury could find little more to convict him on than a mild manslaughter charge. The sentence: five years in a minimum-security

detention.

The crowd roared in triumph, smashing police cars in the Boise streets and drinking like the Fourth of July. Fifteen-gallon hats were painted on every wall. Many hummed the Dallas song. The newspapers and talking heads re-broadcast every detail of the justified killing, selling their craft with a fervor. The news trailed off, the ranchers went home. Claude went to his new comfortable country home wearing an orange suit. Things returned to quiet—for about six months. Then spring came and Claude Dallas, feeling the freshness of the mountains on his face, the call of the wild, deftly stepped over the fence and disappeared into the West.

The pigs went berserk. The sheriff called the other sheriff, who called the other sheriff, who called the deputies, who rounded up their cousins, who called their Boise Police friends, who alerted every state agency in the west. They all assembled in front of the Owyhee County court house bristling with guns and Jeeps and speeches of ruination to bring in the head of the desperado. Dead or alive. In a fresh frenzy of rage, they set out to comb the hills and gullies of the West for the killer.

After a week, the beer ran out again and there was not the slightest trace of the fugitive. The deputies drifted back to their wives, the Boise Police back to their beats, the FBI took notes again and returned to the coastal cities. Only the most hardcore sheriffs remained, burning taxpayer gasoline, ever fanning out into rural areas in search of a lead. But Claude needed no rural areas. Digging up a cache of guns under a mountain rock, he simply resumed the iconic life he had created, a voraciously independent hunter and trapper. A killer. There was no trail to follow because Claude walked in streams and on outcrop rock. There was no scent but for the skinned animals he wore. There was no need for society, for friends, for human help . . . there never had been. It was like looking for a single armadillo named Walter in the state of Texas. Eventually the manhunt was reduced to one deputy at one desk reviewing the evidence for clues, waiting for a phone call, any phone call. But no one called to rat out the Hero of the West.

Two years went by. Claude Dallas remained on the lam. He was eventually captured near Denver due to a local spat with some suburbanites, moved “country,” in their six-bedroom ranch rambler. There they pretended to be farmers, growing a few miserable vegetables and running good hay through three cows they treated as pets. Claude was shooting coyotes for the bounty in their back pasture, and he considered it to be the Free West.

It had been, before the 400-thousand dollar house was built on it. He was quickly beleaguered by a L.L. Bean clothed housewife with a “save the animals” fanaticism, a wife who had never stepped foot off pavement in her

life. The husband did his manly duty and called the cops. One thing led to another. Mr. Dallas was expatriated back to Idaho in chains, this time dumped in the maximum-security prison. The press gave it hardly a ripple, the masses somewhat bored of the subject and having forgotten the original incident. The painted hats long since faded away. Claude served his time as an exemplary inmate and was released. Now he is free to roam again. He has served his time for society. The man has been redeemed. Allowed again to do what he does best, kill living things in the name of freedom. Claude Dallas, the last outlaw in the Wild West.

Last Valley Bones

The morning ice cold again. Colder than yesterday's morn. The fire-pit a wreck again. Garbage and beer cans flung about like child's toys in a romper room, each piece of kibble somehow evenly spaced from the other. There is a pile of vomit in the sand where Dave sat and raved about excrement late into the night. Only a few log ends remain in the fire pit, the firewood accumulation gone. I break ice out of the water jug and set it to boil. Collect a few armloads of fire fuel. Boiling water must be poured on the coffee maker to thaw it open and remove the frozen grime. In a short while, I am enjoying the hot black liquid by a small warming blaze. The group slowly assembles looking more hungover than on previous mornings. There is some wide-eyed talk of Dave's slurred ravings last night, and his consumption of fireball whiskey which he could not keep down.

A hundred sausages this morning with the proverbial scrambled eggs. This time with burnt potatoes left over from last night. One cannot be sure if the black things are sticks, carbon, or maybe flies. But it is all wolfed down like dogs. No time to be picky. Dan announces that we will all head up the main valley here about two miles. There, after pinching down for over a mile, it opens up again to over a half mile across. He tells us that this is the original site that this main camp was planned for, but the helicopter pilot was drunk or stupid or both, blindly flapping along oblivious to the proper camp spot. In desperation, Dan screamed in his ear to put the bird down here.

We all hike out at more or less the same time. I take the crummy rock hammer today so Dan can have a lightweight pick in each hand. I seem to hardly use the tools anyway and, when I do dig, there is nothing there. I hike with Laura and her son Dave. The fuzzy Winnie seems restored to vigor now and delights in herding our fast strolling pack of three. The way is dry riverbed. Easy walking and very pleasant. Laura lectures Dave insistently about being a drunk and what kind of presentation that makes of himself. How this will

hurt him in the small world of paleontologists. How he will be passed by as a fool. He does indeed sound like a fool, although he has studied harder than any of us, his dyslexia making for long hours of reading and re-reading the same material until almost memorized word for word. As his uncle, I have to join in on the admonishing, relating how just the rumor of being a weed smoker had halted my career in the mining industry. And yes—fuck them anyway—but still, for a young man climbing for the top, it's not the situation to get in. My sister repeats all of what she has just said, which takes us another mile up the valley. I can see Dave's hammered and hang-dog demeanor as he nods and acquiesces every point over again. Eventually we stop belaboring the issue and talk small talk. I ask Dave about the trees, which cone goes to what, and he is relieved as he categorizes each we pass. He is really quite knowledgeable on the subject.

In a little over an hour we come into the widened valley, taking the side to the right out on to a large flat of slick rock where most things have been eroded away. Stopping in a small grove of trees, we peel down a few layers of clothes, making an accidental bed the dog quickly claims as his own. Others are not around, having either lingered behind or launched far ahead. Laura and Dave head further up the valley, myself choosing to linger with the dog and check out what we have passed in greater scrutiny. Eventually I wander out, the dog watching me with a *I'll just stay here* look. Fine with me. Along the steep mud walls of the canyon I scout, bones dribbling from its sides, fractured and in poor abundance. I've seen this for the past few days, so take no special note, dig no enthusiastic holes in false expectation.

Coming back to the lower "pinch" of the valley, I cross the creek and proceed along the wall in the same manner. I love the vastness of the land. Even though I can see a half-mile in most directions, I can see no trace of others. Strange that this mile-by-half-mile open area are could swallow up a dozen scientists in its mounds, gullies, slopes, and hiding places. Nothing much amusing in my path. Fragments of turtle shell and fractured unidentifiable bones. I do find about twenty black stones, rough and lumpy. Is this dino shit? I can't see any plant traces in it. None of the chopped twigs found in the other stuff elsewhere. But it's interesting anyway.

Not finding much around here. Seems the same as elsewhere. I'm sort of depressed. What exactly am I doing out here? Yeah, it's beautiful and all, but shouldn't I be doing something to save the world? Or at least save my own ass. What happens when we go back to civilization tomorrow? Where's my job? My friends? My tribe? My purpose? These thoughts put me into a spiral of dark thought. Might as well have some fatal accident out here rather than do the stupid suicide thing later with the iconic note and all that shit.

Oh, he seemed fine to me. I can't understand it, they will all say. Damn.

Even ending this merry-go-round seems trite. What to do, what to do? I decide to go see what the dog is doing. Share some lunch with it. Petting fur always seems to have meaning, if only in a momentary Zen sort of way. The animals are always so accommodating about this.

The dog is across the valley, at least that's where I left it. The land is flat for a quarter-mile, then a deep gulch, and another flat on the other side. Forty-foot cones of striped mud sit like Dr. Seuss pimples in my path, spaced a few hundred yards apart. I circle the base of one of these, noting a little bone rubble. As I round the side, there is a depression in front of me sporting dark red rock with white fleck in it. Hmmmm . . . what can this be I wonder? Getting closer, they seem to be bones imbedded in the stone. The stone is actually two stones about the size of car hoods. On top of them now, I see this is a mass of bones. Big bones, as large as my wrist. Rib bones lined up in rows as thick as shovel handles. *This is an entire dinosaur. Wow! Holy crap! A discovery!!*

Whatever it is, it's pretty scrambled. Not all arranged in a nice sitting position reading a book, but a shitload of bones. Bones have eroded out of the rocks too, and litter the ground ten feet on all sides. This is it. The Full Monte. The dino in place in the Matrix. All dark thoughts of my destruction instantly vanish. I am jacked up. This is incredible. I toss my pack down and fish out the camera, snapping from various angles with the pack in there for scale. Must have been a pretty big critter. I've got to tell the others. This is what they are looking for too.

Leaving everything there, I head off to toward the gulch. But in the words of a late night TV ad: "but wait—there's more!" There in the sandstone is half a turtle shell. Then another and another. These are sticking up out of the sandstone like half buried bowls. Big bowls, two feet across and a foot out of the rock. I can see the markings on the outer shell. Amazing. A small diorama of three Sidney Opera Houses. I want to molest them, break off chunks and dig them out. I try a little digging at the base of one, but it's cemented in hard with the lithification of time.

Instead, I clear away the base and dust off the loose rubble with a paint brush. I see other smaller bones imbedded around me in the rock. Not turtle. Not like the big guy in the red rock. Birds maybe? I am almost trembling with excitement now. Hot damn. I force myself to get up and go look for the others. But first another look at Big Bertha, just to make sure it is the real thing. Yep. It is. The ribs in the rock are polished with time, a tan creamy smoothness, just waiting for me for 65 million years.

OK. *Rise and seek the eggheads.* Walk carefully through the bowl zone. And here are two more turtles, not so prominent, but fossilized creatures

never-the-less. Over the undulating landscape and through a small grove of trees, the ground becomes more convoluted as I near the gulch in the center of the valley. I do not see any more bones; they all seem to be back there in that one place.

Finally I see Dave wandering in seemingly aimless randomness. A sort of drunken swagger. The huge fool killer pick on his shoulder.

"Dave! Dave!" I shout across the gulch. "You have to come see this!" Sound acts weird here, reflecting off some surfaces and being absorbed by others.

"Hunaa? Waaa?" He utters as he focuses on me across the divide.

"Yam quaddile ma zookie!" I shout back, just to confuse him.

"Waaaa?"

"Dookie!"

"Huaa. Turd! *Hunkucc, hunck.*" He ambles in my direction as I also close the gap on him. When closer, I give him a brief *Reader's Digest* version of the discovery.

"A complete dinosaur skeleton. Turtles everywhere sticking out of the rock like sails. Come on. This way. You have to see this."

"Complete skeleton? Serious?"

"No shit, Dave. Serious as Ebola."

"Well . . . uhkay. I'm coming." In fact, his giant stride outpaces me and I have to do the little hurry-up trot to stay ahead of him so he heads in the right direction. We say nothing when we come to the area. His eyes are all over everything in rapid succession, the turtles, the bones, the surroundings. Dave picks at the heap of bones a bit, identifying ribs and hips and skull fragments.

Presently, he says: "We have to tell Dan."

"Yeah, tell Dan. Tell everybody."

"Where is he?"

"I dunno. I thought you knew."

"I think he's up the valley with Mom," he says.

"Well, let's go get him."

"Yeah. He'll want to see this."

"Hell, yeah."

We reluctantly leave the magnificent bones and head up the valley, weaving through stunted trees, small blows of sand, and choppy terrain. When we can see some distance, we see both Dan and Laura. Dan is about a hundred feet above the valley floor on a near vertical slope of gray mud, hacking at a greenish strata. Laura is just below him, doing little, except trying to stay attached to the wall. The overall appearance is of two beetles trying to escape



Jeremy Kilar

a child's cardboard box, in peril of sliding back in at any moment.

We shout to them, but it is too far and the sound will not carry. "I'll go get them," says Dave. A good sport, this guy. He had always been my favorite nephew. Maybe because he maintained a non-plussed innocent view of the world. I continue to search the area for bones, but pickings are scarce here. It's as though they all accumulated in one spot, leaving elsewhere barren. I can see Dave reach the bottom of the slope and shout up to his brother. A few words I catch—"Charlie"—"whole"—but the rest is muted. Then there is acquiescence from Dan above. It can be seen in his body language. A shrug. A disengagement. Then instructions to his mom, who is glued on just below. Going down is harder than going up. Laura very slowly, tortuously so, beginning her descent, painstakingly fitting her foot to each notch. Often she leans over and hacks a new toehold. I can see the irritation in Dan about the glacial advance she is making. He surely has a faster way, like sliding down with the pick as a tail dragger. I head back to the bones, to dust them off, photograph them again, GPS them.

When Dan and Laura finally come over the small rise, they become giddy with awe at the turtle shell sails protruding from the rock. Dan then becomes almost prostrate at the sight of the mass of bones in the red rocks. It is like he sees his first tropical sunset. He quickly sets to lovingly handling each loose bone, fondling those that are stuck in the rock. Presently he shows me an inch and a half piece he calls a section of the skull.

"This is definitely an Ankylosaurus. The bone was so thick to prevent getting chewed through by a predator. A Theropod or larger."

Laura sits amid the turtle shells, gently sweeping away sand, glad to be on flat ground where there is something other than debris dribbling down on her. I sit in the shade too, like a proud mother watching her children play in the kiddie park.

Dan tells us, after a brief inspection, that the smaller bones are Theropod bones. If you look closely, you can see that they were hollow. Birds descended from these carnivores. After a few bites of what is left in the pack, I examine the surrounding area closer. A nearby mud hill has crocodile skin scattered atop, but after some expansive digging, I cannot come up with any connected bones. I find another turtle in a small gully, this one mostly encased in the red rock, a complete specimen. It looks like a yard tall hamburger in its bun, standing on edge. Then another turtle fifty feet away, half imbedded in the rock.

Back to where the rest are scratching around the Ankylosaurs. Dave has found a turtle in the conical mud hill. Bones are spilling out all around the shell. As if they are mosquitoes attracted to a naked animal, others appear

out of the terrain. Kitty and two volunteers. They are all impressed as well, and congratulate me extensively on the discovery. I feel so damn special. I *am* special. Kitty, with her anatomical skills, sets down next to Dave's discovered turtle and begins assembling bones, knowing what connects to what. In a half an hour, she has assembled all four legs, each comprising 5 or 6 bones. To her delight, the toenails of each foot are there too. In themselves, these things are as big as a thumb, conical-shaped, perfect in preservation. Claws like these could dig through rock. Although the shell is still buried, the assembled legs give a great idea what sort of monster this was. Dave and some others have wandered off, coming back shortly to announce more turtle finds. Everybody has found a new turtle, some have found two. Dave has found a Hadrosaur, the jaws anyway, with its flat cow-like teeth all perfectly intact. Dan takes some time writing notes and GPS's the turtle locations, the numbers of them climbing rapidly beyond anyone's imagining. By now the day is late and we must start back to camp or be trapped in the dark, stumbling along.

We closely examine Dave's Hadrosaur jaws on the way. It is remarkable to see so many teeth, sitting there imbedded in the rock, as if still capable of devouring a ton of plant matter that is long gone. Moving along, I see more bones, which immediately leads me to another Hadrosaur. This one is scattered over a twenty-foot area, rather pulled apart, but some of the bones are protruding from the rock as though they were hastily buried yesterday. I can hardly believe this. How can this clean leg bone be so uneroded? In such divine shape. We all take the time to scratch around this new find, wanting to disturb, but not disturbing. A fine line I think. I'd like to take dynamite to it, if I had some, if it would be allowed. Which it wouldn't.

With regrets to leave, we trundle on. Each jabbering about the various parts of the discovery, how it will be excavated, what parts will be dug out first. No more is found downstream. Everything seems concentrated in this small area. Dan gives me some more congratulations. Tells me he knew it was a good idea to bring along a prospector. How I am invited to next year's collection of the site—without question. The trail is easy back to camp. We come across the bureaucrat harpy, who is browbeating her quiet Lincoln to do this and the other thing. She has found a miserable turtle fragment that she thinks is the discovery of the century. She has long-limbed Lincoln scratching to the tune of her obsessive-compulsive disorder, with what looks like a dental pick. She importantly sits on a rock, taking meaningless notes, telling him how to wrap and protect the puny specimen. She wants to tell us all about it, her moment of glory. Dan feigns great interest, being the most polite person in the West. I say nothing and move away as rapidly as possible. I bow my head to the East and thank Allah that I am not this bitch's husband.

The poor bastard.

Back at camp, the meal meaty again, the booze is lightly drunk. No one gets drunk. Dave has filled this environmental niche for some days to come. The next morning is a flurry of packing up, my sister and I being the slowest again. The hike out beautiful, lengthy, uphill. Laura, the hairy oversized maggot, and I travel together, the others rushing ahead in their own intense stride. That is just wonderful to me, and Laura doesn't really care, except that her sons are miles ahead and she's stuck with her brother. The dog waddles along wonderfully. A lot of boosting up the steeper parts, but it tries very hard with no sit-down strikes. I ditched about half my gear in the lower camp so that it would be a light load on the way out but, still, I am happy I don't have to carry thirty-five pounds of canine meat. The views beyond glorious again, as they were on the way in. We stop for some photo sessions. Laura instinctively posing perfect with the designer pack and unwrinkled North Face clothes. I should sell these pictures to the company, make a little on the side. In the evening, we are back at the primary ridge camp, where new recruits have arrived for another two-week stint. Rolph makes hot dogs for everyone, his specialty dish, the same thing he makes every night. The newbies offer no help and bully to be the first in the chow line. Later a few bottles are passed around, the caps thrown in the fire, but my thirst is slacked. Slacked by the discovery. By the glory that is mine. Pictures in camera are passed around of the bone finds. Rolph becomes stupid drunk, then annoyingly maudlin, hugging us all in bear fashion. Stinking of weeks without a shower. Us avoiding him by moving to the far side of the fire. His quiet voice almost crying. Huge and pathetic.

Redemption

As we plod out of the far and forgotten place, the place of rock and mud and bones, I contemplate what was the motivation that brought us all here. Mine was clear: to get out of my soggy-ass brain set, to love life again. My sister's was to be in the dog pack of her sons. Dan and JonJon to increase their standing in the hierarchy of their field through hard work and discovery, with professionalism. To Dave, to have more on his resume for applying to PhD programs, although he is not sure that's really what he wants to do. To impress people with scatology is his true desire. For the bureaucrat bitch, to get out of the office, boss volunteers around, to accumulate gossip for the other eleven months of the year. For her panic frozen husband, Lincoln, to follow the boss without sound or question. For Kitty, an internal struggle to get away from the cadavers and her necrophilia. Even though she cannot

warm up enough to touch or ask for another's touch, she knows this is a necessary step for her redemption, which would culminate in sleeping with a live man. But she's not there yet. Big Rolph is already redeemed. He has gone to the bottom and risen again. His voice should be booming for a man that size, but is swallowed in shame of what he has been, but he is here now, living his remade life. A better man for it. For the volunteers, to test their mettle, I suppose, knowing only intellectually what it is like to shit on the ground, to eat only what you pack, to feel hunger and the wild changes of the weather beating upon your body all day, not just from the parking lot to the office. To *feel*—where there had been only urban homogenization before.

But Ted is a different story. He has secret motivations that are couched in scientific inquiry. Ted seeks redemption from his failure by stepping on the backs of all others. Climbing the stack of their crushed bodies to the top.

When back in Denver, Ted downplays the entire discovery to JonJon and Dan. The Ankylosaur is too scrambled for anybody to ever get anything out of it, he says. Basically worthless. The turtles are *ho hum*. Things are everywhere, even though there are twenty of them here all in one place—in almost perfect condition. The Hadrosaurs are also not in perfect condition, even though the jaws are with all the teeth intact. The crocodiles are rubble. The Theropod bones are insignificant. Basically Uncle Charlie didn't find jack shit. Uncle Charlie would do better looking for dimes in the city park. Keep these armatures out of the field. Tapio is the only real field researcher.

But the story is different to the museum. Ted shamelessly promotes himself to *National Geographic* also when they come around in curiosity. Ted has discovered the most significant bone bed in North America. This is the rival to Fire Creek in Montana where the Tyrannosaurus Sue had been dug out. This place, he is now calling Turtle Town, has more paleo information than ten other places. Some of the turtles have preserved skin! This will allow scientists to know what color they were, what the climate was like, whether they had parasites or not, whether they had fur. Ted says he will be digging on this site he discovered for years to come with other scientists. The top turtle guy in the world is coming out to spend the summer. Complete turtle specimens will be extracted and prepared for display. These are over a meter across on the back. *With skin*—he must emphasize again.

Ted has been searching for this for fourteen years. The first twelve years were with the Salt Lake Museum, where he went out every summer with a dozen volunteers and, over the years, slept with the majority of the female half. Then two years with the Denver Museum. This bone bed is Ted's right. His inheritance. His entitlement. No matter that he did not see the first bone,

or even that he was not there, this is the discovery of Tapio/Ted. No aged fatted interloper is going to claim it as "Uncle Charlie's Bone Bed." There will be no name on this but what he gives it. This is the crowning glory of his career. He will write papers about this and his esteem in the scientific community will soar. This is what he wants, *prestige*. This is what he has been searching for all the disappointing years. Now, at long last, Ted is redeemed in the eyes of his peers. He has made sure that I am not on the invite list for the next year's field work, filling the available spaces with twenty-something female paleo wannabes.

So did I really find the bone bed or did all the rest of the crew? Was I just next in line in space and time? Other opportunities existed for it to be found by more adroit scientists. Dan and Dave had hiked through here not more than five days previous. It was late and they were in a hurry to get to the main camp two miles downstream. They must have wandered within a hundred feet of the place, if not walked right over it. But they were blinded by fatigue and hunger.

And why was the camp downstream? It had been planned to be here. Surely if it had been, the bone bed would have been stumbled on. How many things of chance had to happen for everyone else to evade the bone bed? For instance, the year before had been dry. Therefore the grass did not grow sufficiently. Then, on Rondol's Ranch, where they raise buffalo meat, the babies had not been as abundant. Because of this, there was a shortage of buffalo meat and Henrie's Buffalo Barbecue had been in short supply. Then when the helicopter pilot took his wife out for their anniversary dinner, the BBQ buffalo was three times the price. The pilot settled on quesadillas with habanero sauce. The next morning he was rooted to the toilet. When the last red hot squirt came out, he was a half hour late to meet the paleontologists. He rushed out the door without the map or the GPS, but what would it matter? He knew the country well enough. So in an hour, when they are flying down Lost Valley, he has no idea where "X" marks the spot. He doesn't give a goddamn either; he just wants to get back on the ground and continue evacuating behind a bush. So they fly past Turtle Town unawares. The helicopter is put down at the next widening of the valley two miles down. The dry summer and the habanero sauce has inadvertently led me to my personal glory.

Was it my fate to elevate my esteem among these people and to myself? Had the hole of thought and life been so low that it could only be counteracted by such a height of a magnificent find? Cosmic sinusoidism? Did my own personal manifest destiny make it invisible to all others? I'd like to think so. But it is doubtful.

It is a node. A point in time when all else branches off. Had I not come across this, my depression would have grown again. I would have slunk back whence I came. I would be the nobody that I am. Disappear into myself. Likely pull that trigger before the spring snow melted. Or the branch from the node could have gone another way. All praise and glory could have been directed to me. I would be on the cover of *National Geographic* instead of Ted. I would go to the university and make an academic career of this. I would get all the volunteer pussy in late nights under the stars. But how it is—is just fine. The satisfaction is in myself. I have left behind my hate of self. Left behind the cruel girlfriend, my beloved dog, the scraggly cats, the plug-pulled father, the dozen dead friends I called brothers. Now I am in spirit—new again. This node now sends me into unimagined places with unimagined people. I embrace the strangeness of it, the fresh uncertainties, the new challenges to myself. With this foray into the end of time, I have found new time, new directions. I have found redemption from the past, from self-destruction.

* * * * *



All I Can Say

Prologue

I write because the past keeps happening.
Day after day I settle old scores,
forget old lines,
remember new ones.
The memory of a poet
is persistent.

i.

Before this house, some trees.
Before the trees, just ground.
Before the ground, a house.
One must have religion.

ii.

My cellar is a church.
Within the church is a doorframe.
Beside the frame, a door
leaning against the wall.
Light shines from beneath the door,
but not the frame,
at night.

iii.

I dream of my father.
He looks at me.
We are the same age by now.
He tries to speak but can't.
I try to speak but cry.
It goes on like this for awhile.
I am trying not to wake up.
Then he motions with his index finger
as if to say someday, Joe,
someday.

iv.

My surprising course
was built of will,
unlikely as are these hands,
built for working wrenches,
not the guitar—
for working steel,
not flesh.

v.

A star goes out
on the other side of the world.
“Telstar” plays in a dusky field.

I ask the sky, “Perfect order
or perfect chaos?”

Sighs the setting sun,
“Ask my brother the moon,
on his moonlit run.”

vi.

You exist between these words,
some chosen, some there before us.
I've moved mountains,
spoon by spoon.
Words—not so much.

vii.

What'll you do when your time comes—
When all your checkpoints fail?
When even paper won't burn?

viii.

I walked through a series of rites,
labored in a bubble.
I begged to make it real
but the asterisks remain.

* * * * *





Martina Newberry

Perhaps You Could Breathe for Me

Here I make a record of the world I was born into.
I let you enter my mind to see. How far back shall we go?
First there was polio then radioactive warfare then

losses and sorrows and more warfare which was treated like a
fire sale in a sporting goods store. Then we scanned the dark skies for
spy planes. (I sat in my father's lap on the roof of the high school

and counted the blue and green lines of his flannel plaid shirt).
There were tranquilizers for the mothers and whiskey for the
fathers and a Loyalty Oath going 'round to be taken

with an aperitif at 5 pm. Somewhere, I blanked out
and, when I came to, there was wild music (for God so loved the
world, He gave it Jefferson Airplane). There was free love and the

world slave trade and MacDonald's and political savvy.
There was a surplus of bright speech and the sound of bone on bone.
There were assassinations and there was the way I rocked back

and forth on my knees, knowing mourning and fear, knowing sick
grief.

Enter to see moonwalks and the fires that astonished me and
the man I married who beat me and the lover I took who

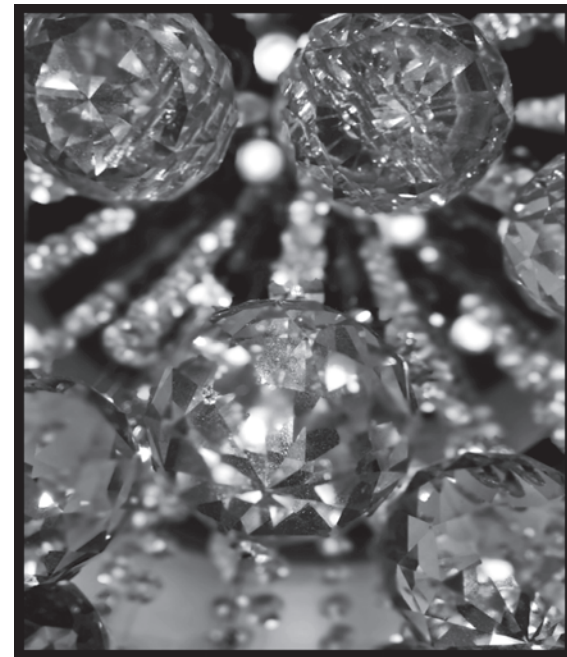
did not and how that act of impure infidelity saved
my life, how a sweet tongue calmed and cured me. All of that is
history, a short record of the world I was born into.

The thread of that world stitches itself into this world where planets
rise and set and new warfare makes old history. Now, you are
entered and you know me. I hear you go, I listen for your

return, our story is inside me, finding its way through walls
and revolutions and lovers and acid rain and the truth;
through punishment, the public act of torture and submission.

Molecule by molecule, we are one, exploding body.
Our ceremonies have found a way to escalate reason:
We make love with dedication. We make peace by accident.

* * * * *





Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Labyrinthine

[a new fixation]

ii.

“There was a knight & he would travel around an endless, pathless woods, observing, advising, protecting when he had to. He was quiet & brave, made friends easily, had a surprisingly sweet & kindly smile.

“Tis said he was captured by a queen or some great lady, who had him brought to her castle, imprisoned in stocks, readied for execution. And yet it did not come. Long days passed & it did not come.”

Bowie startles. This house. His father’s house. The night of a big party, never given before, but this one would fill this big house with people, music, talk, it was something important.

And here he was, hidden in the pitch dark of his bedroom, in his closet, crouched behind the many coats & jackets, most of which he did not wear.

Nestled in here with Iris.

Oh shit. Feels her warmth, more like a growling, intelligent heat he could barely keep near.

Closes his eyes. No, he’s not the boy he was with her. Feels the years in him, the wrinkles of his life so far.

And her? She sniffs to him the same, & not. Older, like him? How?

It was she who’d been talking just now, in his ear, the strange story of the knight.

“Iris.”

“Bowie.”

“Wait. How do you know that name?”

"I don't know."

"How are we here together? We were kids on the night of the party."

"What . . . party?"

Bowie starts, she explains. "Listen to all those voices, the music. Listen! . . . that happened only once here."

"Were we . . . together that night?"

Bowie nods to her, in the dark.

"Nobody had caught us out. My . . . father."

"So what then? Did you bring us back?"

He sniffs again, his mind roams his memories of her body when he held her. She's the same but, like him, older.

He doesn't care. *Doesn't fucking care.*

She flows closer in his grasp, there in the dark in the back of that closet. Curls among his arms & legs, twines them impossibly close, he shivers with this, this is how she was back then, they melded, it wasn't just lust or love or the memory he held out from himself for so many years, they *melded*, their hands, where their limbs & torsos touched & twined, & she began to sing, begins now to sing, to *hmmmmmm* in his ear, he feels his body heat up, impossibly heat up, how is it this again?

He tries to think, to remember that night, it was their last untroubled, uncaught, their last & their best, they would venture into the party, watch from closets & beneath tables, & retreat to their own closet, to laugh, to kiss some more, her fears were falling away, she was releasing to him, a moment at a time, finally, he'd been so patient & loved her so much—but finally—

But something else, something *fucking* else that night, holding her again now, her wordless enjoying, her from where? how? She seems not to care like he does. Something else. *What. Who?*

Who. A very strange who. Bowie can't remember much of his looks, frail, practically disintegrating, but for a moment he & Bowie talked. Where was she?

She was down there. Licking his cock, swallowing his balls one & both, his strange alien sometimes sexually featureless girlfriend was doing unto his cock what seemed like carnal surgery, raising every nerve ending, every little hair, playing them, *hmmmmmming*, while Bowie talked to the strange frail X the Space Alien—

That's what he called himself, then & years later at Luna T's Cafe. Those years later he would apparently be seeking refuge, asylum, & Luna T's such a place, it's why Bowie himself ended up there for awhile—

Could she hear them talking? Were they in the back of his closet? How had he met X?

X was not on the run then. In fact, he was what Bowie became, a spy. Across worlds, maybe more but, still, a spy was a spy. A kind of mind soldier in someone else's bigger game.

Was X recruiting him that night? Was that how this began for him? A cosmic headhunter recruiting him while his nubile alien princess girlfriend gave him the worst best excruciating head he would ever get? *Ever?*

Ever. Now. Wait. *Now?* She was down there again. He almost laughed. She really didn't care how they'd been reunited, what this way.

He only said two words, to buy himself a little bit to figure. "Slower, love." It was worse, better, slower.

He closes his eyes, uses the old spy's trick to resist torture, pulls himself deep in, impenetrably in, no entries, no exit. Save now he can control it, appear impenetrable, but actually gone, a back door, a non-existent back door. Worked perfectly.

Iris doesn't care if we ever leave that closet. When we did the last time, we were taken from each other.

So I leave us in our loving twist, & I go, I go quickly through the many rooms of my father's house, using every cloaking trick I know, old ones, simple ones, looking for X. He'd said to follow, to leave her her privacy.

I can't say the years I roughly traversed that night, it's like I was traveling backwards in time. Old friends, younger, who they were in glory days nobody knew were glory days.

I kept going, those old nights at T's, those gone faces. The Asian accountant. The sarcastic preacher. That old crazy poet.

Finally, I realize something, shrug, shake myself onto a barstool at Luna T's Cafe's bar.

Shake within, compose. Listen. Red Sox on the TV, leading someone 2-1 in the 8th. Sniff. Beer. Sweat. Pussy. Taste. It's real. All this on my tongue like then, like it is now. Touch. The stool old but steady under me. My hands resting lightly on wooden bartop.

Look up. The old man, barman, Mr. Bob. Pepper-grey hair. Spectacles. A fond smile for me, always knowing but kindly, nothing more.

"Another, Bowie?"

My friends shout another for me, that I'm not keeping up.

What year? I don't know. Before all this was gone.

"I came to you that night, to show you what was possible. I glimpsed you into this."

"All the while she sucked my cock"

"All the while I sucked your cock, Bowie"

Now she's at the bar too, then now, bar, closet, beer, blowjob

She looks at me, smiles, smiles more, her face lights up blindly as I am consumed by her in that closet, then, now, I don't know when I don't know where

Iris I love you

I had to let you go

I had to let you go

I had to let you go

u.

Do it better. What does that mean? Write better than before? That's possible. It should be. What other choice but try?

Better, or different? I can't write as I did then, don't know that I would want to. And yet, some of it I read & admire.

Bowie looks at me. "Whose scene is this?"

"appears to be ours."

"Well, what then?"

"That party. Your father's party."

"Yah."

"Why?"

"Why did he have a party?"

"Yah. Only once. For what?"

"I never knew. He didn't tell me."

"You were too busy fucking with Iris."

"Yah, of course. What did I care? I wasn't a spy. I was a horny boy with possibly a real & sometimes willing for some things girlfriend."

I laugh.

"Can I have her back?"

"Now?"

"Then, now. Yes. Look. I get it now. X the Space Alien was trying to tell me something at that party. Very important. I was too busy trying to fuck Iris finally."

"Yes. White shorts."

"Brother, you can't fucking know."

"I wore them for you. I didn't like dressing like that. But I knew you'd like it. You would like me more."

My jaw & heart & soul & cock & body drop. It's you. Really you, as you were then. And I'm me. I'm me now. I have this moment.

"Go, Bowie. Take her. Go!" says X blindly in my ears. We hand in hand chase through my father's house, did I even know how to exit, did it have doors?

But we go & go swiftly, & somehow are ignored by people in rooms & hallways, in the entryway, coming, going, through the door, Iris in white shorts, me in whatever—

"Bowie, where—"

"Iris, do you love me?"

"Yes, of course."

"Always? Yes?"

"Yes."

"Through time & space?"

She laughs. Her eyes shining into mine, cars parking everywhere, people passing. She reddens. “Yes.” Sees my look. “All of that, Bowie.”

“Do you trust me, Iris?”

“Yes.”

“And you’ll come with me.”

Reddens more. “If you want me to, Bowie.”

I am leading her away from cars & people & lights. Among trees.

“Sniff.”

“Um?”

“Sniff twice.”

She does. Does again.

Oh. She smiles. There’s my Princess.

We walk together. Close. Closer. The trees thin, thicken, thin again. Moonlight. There. A patch of grass in the moonlight. I lead us.

You are then, you are now,
you are whatever I wish most,
which is both, you all times,
now, then, all times, me,
better, me, better.

I kiss you & understand. My mind floods with your lights, your voice, your body, your love, I kiss you & understand.

Me, better. Iris, me, Bowie, *better.*

We go.

xxii.

To get where we’re going, I need a boat. Nobody tells me how to figure this shit out. Jazz doesn’t help when she could.

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“An island?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I don’t fucking know, Jazz.”

“Who is bossing you?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Who?”

I sit at the table in this shitty motel room, its excuse for a desk. Not too close to her. Still.

“I was sent to bring you back. Something went wrong. You know that.”

“I got old, Toby. Why didn’t you?”

“Jazz, look in the mirror.”

“Why don’t you tell me? Be my mirror.” She laughs but not so much.

“The longer we travel, the younger you get.”

“Is that what you like?”

“It’s what *every* guy likes, Jazz. But that’s not the point.”

“What is?”

“When we get there, you’ll be the age you were that night. With the van.”

“The failed gangbang little sister night.”

“Yah, that one.”

Jasmine sees no lie in him & he doesn’t seem to know more than he’s answering.

So she asks: “Ashleigh?”

“She’s there.”

“She knows I’m coming.”

“I don’t know.”

“*Does she?*”

“I *don’t fucking* know.”

“What happens when we get there?”

“That’s up to him.”

“Who?”

“Your master.”

“I don’t have a master.”

“He’s waiting.”

Jasmine takes her bag & is in the bathroom about half an hour. Showers, cleans up. Comes out dressed, no halter tops, no cherry lipstick. Brown hair tied back. All business. Hotter than fucking ever.

Toby nods. She's trying. OK.

They leave the room finally & there is no car waiting, as there had been the other motel departure mornings.

And have to get to the water.

"Wanna hitch?"

"That might work too well with you."

"Thanks, I guess."

They walk out to the road, looking at what the highway showed them each way.

Toby nods. "There."

"What?"

"That diner. It will bring us some of the way."

"A diner?"

"Yah. It's one of theirs. The name."

"Black Dog Diner."

"Yah. It's one of the few clues they gave me."

"Clues, Toby?"

"Yah. Look. Jasmine. Maybe if we do this, get there, something good happens."

Starts to talk. Stops. Nods. Takes his hand. Black Dog Diner it is.

She's hungry, & not for the junk food from the machines she's been living on. Pancakes, eggs. Toast, waffles. Milk. OJ.

"Too much you'll lose that jailbait figure."

"Aww, Toby. You so sweet." Her grey eyes twinkle.

He sticks to coffee.

"How did you end up in that bar?"

She's chewing, toast in one hand, knife dripping jelly in the other.

"We couldn't get out, Toby."

"I got you & her out, Jazz. That's why I don't understand why you were in that bar."

Jazz puts down her knife, finishes her chews, gets no more. She reaches across the table for Toby's hand. He hesitates, sees only calm, sincere need

on her face. Takes it, small, in his larger.

Closes her eyes. Begins to breathe slower until a steady pace.

A waitress approaches, Toby shakes her away with a smile, the kind he saves for older women, hint of a guilty flirt in it. She nods, moves away.

Jazz talks softly. Like she's mesmerized herself. Toby's not surprised she can.

"It goes back to that day of the van."

Toby flinches. Real guilt. Her hand remains moveless in his.

"At school I saw my friend, the boy who tutors me. We sort of have a crush on each other but he won't make a move. Just sneaks looks at me. He doesn't know I dress for his looks."

"A boy, Jazz?" Toby can't help but say.

"He's not like other boys. He's sweet. I dunno. I guess I like different kinds."

Her voice fades soft.

"Go on," Toby squeezes her hand.

"I gave him a poem by Cosmic Early. It's sort of a magick text. If he figures it out, it will tell him some things about me. It will help."

"So you went home."

"Yes. My mom & stepdad had to go out of town for a funeral. So me & Ash were alone."

"What did you do?"

"I was where I used to go when I was bored. The chatroom."

Toby laughs. "Those old guys stood no chance."

"They were lonely, confused. Horny. Harmless."

"Didn't they bore you?"

"Yes and no. The ones I liked I kept."

"Did you tell them anything?"

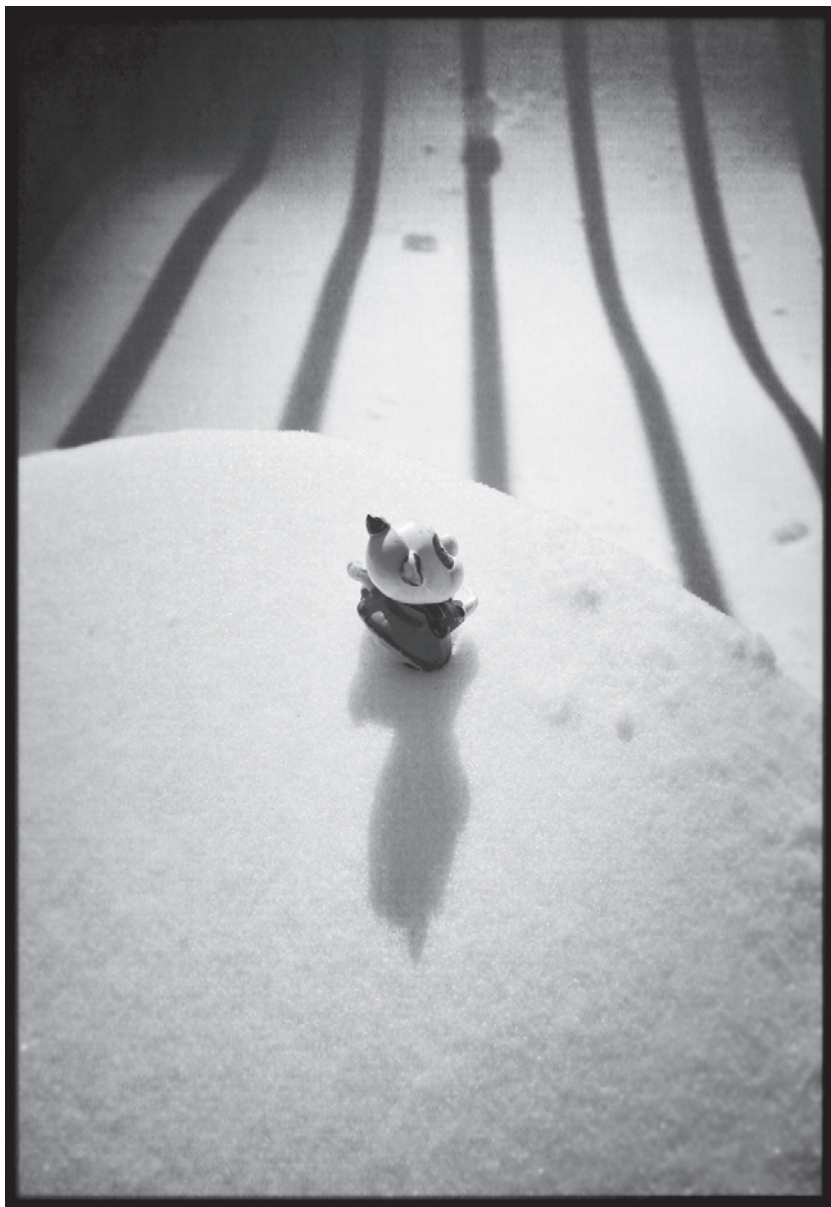
"No. I'm not stupid."

"There's a but here—"

The Black Dog Diner lurches slowly into motion. Rolls from its reserved parking space onto the road, moving along like a truck hauling a long wide freight. Eventually the sense of moving is little more than that on a passenger airplane.

"Go on, Jazz."

"He came that last night. He seemed agitated. I don't remember much what we said but he gave me this bad feeling. Like foreboding. It wasn't sexual with him, like the others most of the time. It was concern." Toby steels himself for



the next part.

"You didn't take us the first time."

"We . . . didn't?"

"No. We were taken to Global Wall in the White Woods, separated."

"How did you escape?"

"The White Woods was destroyed."

"It was?"

"For a moment. So the night went differently. We were home & you took us."

Her hand remains calm in his. But her grey eyes are open & steady staring at him.

"Your turn."

Toby tries to pull away but Jazz is much stronger than she looks. "Tell me." Smiles at him. Kindly. No blame. Inwardly Toby convulses, feels something for this girl, little to do with her pretty face or hot body. Perhaps what that boy she liked feels. He's a shitting dickhead though. *Fuck. OK. Whatever.*

Close his eyes, takes his deep breath.

"We used chloroform to knock you out."

"The first time."

"Yes."

"The time that didn't happen."

"Um. Yes."

She squeezes his hand, go on.

"Billy was driving. The weed & the Scotch was going around. We'd never done anything like this as a group.

"Denny wanted a taste while you two were lying there in the back of the van."

"No."

"the fuck, Toby? You gonna have 'em both & make us circle jerk around you?"

I say nothing. Denny is the only one who challenges my lead in our group. Fucking hot-headed wide receiver.

"Wait till we're at the cabin," I say definitely.

Just to up me a bit, Denny reaches over, pushes up your blouse a bit, we all get a nice look. Then he stops.

“Would you have done it?”

“I don’t know. Yes. No. Alcohol. Frustration. We’d parked near your house before, & didn’t go in. Your parents.”

“You were dumb fucking jocks but not stupid.”

“Yah.”

“Then we crashed, driving too fast up a mountain. There were lights, & a spaceship, it was fucking crazy.”

“You were all up there.”

“Yes. It’s how we ended up in that van.” Toby smiles sheepishly. “Aside from being good solid dickheads.”

Jazz laughs. He’s not trying to impress her. He’s apologized so that’s relaxed him.

“OK, you can tell me.”

“It was my first girlfriend. Her name was Rosie. She was only here for a year. She wouldn’t tell me so much except that she wasn’t staying.”

“And you fell for her.”

They fell for each other. Her family was Spanish & Catholic & he was a boy & an athlete. And a boy.

Before him, Rosie had found boys funny, & easy to resist. They didn’t know why her family was different. What she was. They saw tits—& hers were nice—& an ass—even nicer—but these didn’t begin to tell—

Or why her family had to relocate for a year. Their house burned to the ground. Best to leave because of it for awhile. And whatever her dad did, this town had another office.

He was sweet. She wasn’t surprised he had a sister, or that they shared a wall between their bedrooms.

“I told her about the dreams I always had of the ships overhead. She didn’t laugh. Not even close.”

It was a desperate move to calm her, to show her she hadn’t made a mistake. Coming with him to the cabin, shortest skirt, lowest halter top. They didn’t drink much, she did more than him.

They began at the table, he made the one chicken dish he knew. She was delighted. Then the couch, the fireplace. Her kisses would have been enough for him. Not pushing. Not pushing. He could have jacked off in the bathroom, driven her home, whatever. Her face, her smile, enveloped him. Her body near him nearly choked his mind. His sister’s phone calls only told him two things about this moment: tell her she’s the sexiest girl he’s ever known, & get *down there* & lick. A lot.

But she had explained her family’s faith, how much it mattered, he nodded, it was OK, it wasn’t, *it was OK*.

But she was on top of him on this couch, pulling off her halter top, her black bra beneath, burying him in her slow wet kiss, now a hand on his jeans, pushing rubbing, oh shit, *oh shit*—

“Rosie.”

“I want you.”

“But.”

“No.”

“Your family?”

She led his hand between her legs, “feel there, feel it, how wet am I?”

“Very wet.”

“Are you going to tell me no?”

Before he passed out she was leading him to the cabin’s bed. Made him finish undressing her, & had his rags off in a couple of good tugs. He didn’t have to know how with her, she twisted with him close & kissed him deeply as he slid into her, as she guided him in, as they moved with each other deeper & slower, slower, until not so slow, & faster, & harder, & deeper, & her moans so low in her throat, pulling him in, pulling him harder in, did I wear a condom, is it on? Yes, I feel it, how did it get on? *Ohhhh godddd* she made us cum together, I don’t know how but I feel that power of us as one—

Jazz shakes me. “Keep going.”

“She moved. And she was gone. And she had told me that was how it was going to happen.”

“But?”

“Nothing. She was gone. And for a whole school year I had only been with her. I was alone.”

“So you joined the football team?”

“Yah. It wasn’t a very good team. I showed up, I was big & willing.”

Jazz nods. Smiles. She's listening like Rosie would. I *hate* remembering her.
"It wasn't anything special, we played hard, we shared girlfriends, we drank a lot. At some point the six of us knew."
"About the dreams?"
"About how they weren't dreams, Jazz."

They say it's all about getting your ass examined. That's stupid.

"They were from somewhere far away. Their planet had died or something. They were in our dreams, but these were real somehow. This is how they traveled. They were trying to figure out if our world would work for them."
"I don't understand, Toby."
"They wanted to know whether they should come here."
"Now? Like land?"
Toby's look is anguished, frustrated. "They don't relate to time like us, like we do, like it's a single straight line through things."
"What then?"

Like they had no leashes on them like we do. Double, triple, sideways, forward, backwards.

I tried to talk to them. They weren't hurting my body, but I did feel a great pressure in my head.

"Please explain to me. You're eternal?"
"Yes. In your words."
"But your world is gone."
"Yes. We killed it."
"So you want to come to our planet now?"
"Now?"
"Yes? Now?"
"No. Then?"
"Then?"
"Then? Yes. We travel like a field in the sun."

"We found out we could keep them away by drinking really heavy, Jazz. We couldn't not sleep. But we could drink till we passed out & be too gone for them."

Jazz nods.

"Other things. Passing out from violent sex."

"Violent. Or rape?"

Toby shrugs. "There's enough girls like it rough. We shared."

"But then Ash & me?"

"That was me. I fell for her."

Jazz laughs, relaxes again. "A lot of guys did. She couldn't help herself."

"She didn't try."

"No."

"So," Jazz summarizes, "you six were going to rape Ash & me so that the aliens in your dreams would stay back?"

"Yah, you two & gallons of Scotch."

"But the crash?"

"We'd never seen them altogether, or in waking."

We drove off the road, flipped. The rest ran. I didn't. You two were still out. I checked you over. You were OK.

"I ran."

That night, they have separate rooms. To compromise, Toby lets Jazz suck his cock in the bathroom they share. She is slow, she slurps, she moans her pleasure, she swallows & swallows. Stands, straightens her frock, cries a little, leaves.

Um. Yah. Save the last bit.

Toby crawls to his bed & sleeps better than he has since Rosie's arms so long ago.



* * * * *



WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES
FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC
REVOLUTION

Music. Poetry. Rant. Mindfood.

turn on . . .

tune in . . .



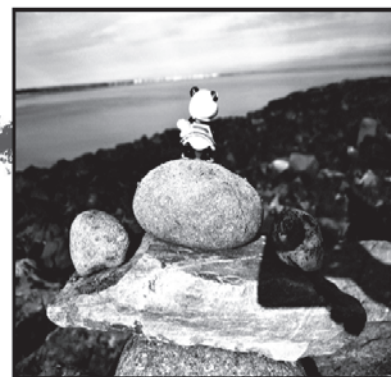
On the Web: <http://www.spiritplantsradio.com>

Saturdays 11pm-2 am Eastern US time

Repeats: Sundays 8 pm-11 pm Eastern US time

Scriptor Press

Independent Publishing Since 1995



Scriptor Press is an independent press founded in 1995 in Cambridge, MA. Scriptor Press publishes the quarterly literary magazine *The Cenacle*; the *RaiBooks* literary chapbooks series; & an annual *Sampler* of selected works. It also hosts the quarterly meetings of the Jellicle Literary Guild.

Visit us online at ScriptorPress.com
for more information.

SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Scriptor Press published his *Ferry Tales & Other Poems* [<http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/ferrytales.pdf>] in 1999.

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. More of his work can be found online at: <http://www.therubyeve.blogspot.com>.

Joe Ciccone lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Scriptor Press published his poetry collection *North of Jersey* [<http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/northofjersey.pdf>] in 2000.

Joe Coleman lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Scriptor Press published his poetry collection *Kingdom of Clowns* [<http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/kingdomofclowns.pdf>] in 2015.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Scriptor Press published her poetry collection *Spirit World Restless* [<http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless.pdf>] in 2004.

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Vienna, Austria. His work can also be found online at: <http://www.scribd.com/%Nathan%Horowitz>

Jeremy Kilar lives in Oak Ridge, New Jersey. His photography has often appeared in the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Martina Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her work can also be found online at: <http://martinanewberry.wordpress.com>.

Reneè Schamberger lives in Pullman, Washington. Her poetry has recently appeared in the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His poetry and other writings can be found many places online and in print.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. She is unbelievably important in the creation of this publication, in the many beauties it possesses.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Finishing this issue of this series took longer than usual but, damn! it is another good one..

Victor Vanek lives in The Dalles, Oregon. His photography has often appeared in the pages of *The Cenacle*.

* * * * *







SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2015