

# ◇ Defenestration ◇

## Volume I, Issue IX

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**Toilet Stall Poetry**  
by  
**Allen Coyle**

Have you used a public restroom  
Have you been seated inside a stall  
And have you noticed the words of wisdom  
That are scrawled across the wall

Curses and verses and wisecracks  
Hints and tips not taught in school  
Insightful quotes by scholars  
Sketches of women in the nude

If you must answer the call of nature  
There's no better way to spend your time  
Than to perch yourself upon a toilet  
And to read these clever lines

As you're taking care of business  
You admire this masterpiece  
And wonder how many have added to it  
As they sat here on this seat

All of the many virtuosos  
Who contributed to this monument  
Are the ones responsible for its beauty  
And for all the graffiti written on it

You think about your unheard voice  
Just before you flush  
And how those who have nothing to say  
Are the ones who say too much

But in the restroom things are different  
Where a wise man can say his piece  
In only one or two prophetic verses  
Advice that's always free

So you clutch your trusty pen  
And find an empty space  
To write what's on your mind  
In your very own sacred place

And so with one conclusive scribble  
You admire what you've composed  
It fits in so nicely with this mural  
Made up of drawings, poems, and prose

You flush with satisfaction

You've become a bathroom poet  
You've had the ability to create beauty  
And yet you didn't even know it

And so every poem and quote  
And even the sketches that are obscene  
Will remain as art for many centuries  
Or until the janitor wipes them clean

Two Poems  
by  
Andrew T Duncan

**A Haiku**

I love dinosaurs  
T Rex kicks your face, no sweat  
Then he glows bright orange

**Jung at Heart**

In my dream it rains  
But the rain is knives and guns  
We have great parties

**Ode to an Academic**  
**by**  
**David Choate**

Todd does not believe in God-  
At least he says he doesn't-  
Or Virtue, Truth or Cleansing Blood-  
Nor anything unpleasant.

But if clerks believed in Nothing,  
We'd have a hi ho, hearty time  
And not worry we'd done something  
Outside the Post-Mod party line.

But Dr. Todd does worry--  
He worries half to death,  
That he's bothered some bug's glory  
Or a microbe by his breath.

Or perhaps a bird by coughing,  
Or a mouse the cat has caught,  
Or a snake who's in mid-sloughing,  
Or a young mind by a thought.

If clerks thought life was random,  
We'd slaughter baby seals  
And splice their tripe in tandem  
To spice our midday meals.

The very last breeding pair

Of each life form on this earth--  
We would hunt down in sea and air  
To make death as dumb as birth.

If clerks believed in Nothing,  
We'd eat rare meats like manna,  
But Todd condemns such grubbing--  
Lest it's some native's grandma.

-- Or perhaps some pagan's grandma.  
Todd does so admire the pagan--  
At least before the Lion of Judah,  
Coughed up some Galilean.

If clerks like me were pagan,  
We'd send our comrades forth  
To drag behind their pre-owned cars  
The owners in the north.

But Todd's so odd a pagan  
Since he carries 'round a cross.  
He tries hard to heed a dragon:  
The Provost, his witch-boss

If clerks were given tenure,  
We'd get ourselves some drums  
And beat them with wild pleasure  
--And our bosses and their chums.

But Dr. Todd has tenure;  
And yet we detect no drum.  
In fact when he's with Bursar  
He takes a harp to strum.

If clerks had no scruples,  
We'd seek out tarts in curls  
Like your swine rooting truffles  
We'd root out dancing girls.

If we were really pagan,  
We'd carry on with bar flies.  
We'd soak them with a flagon  
While pelting them with mud pies.

But Todd maintains romance is rape  
And then falls strangely mute.  
(The wife has lost her teeth and shape  
And run to fat to boot.)

Dr. Todd believes in Nothing-  
At least in nothing much-  
But he may as well take the veil  
And be whipped in church by monks.

**The Pooter**  
**by**  
**R. Roberts-Mesta**

"Beans beans the magical fruit. The more you eat..."

They scream and shout it at him, the others. Taunting, recess after recess.

They are cruel. They don't understand.

Pinto, garbanzo, navy, great northern. His mother lovingly obliges. Each day, a new mouth-watering recipe.

He farts as the bell rings.

"Children! Line up!" he shouts.



**I'm No Anna Nicole**  
by  
**Charlotte Jones**

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. By instinct my first two fingers on my right hand flew to my throat to check my pulse and make sure I was still alive. My poor departed husband hadn't been dead long enough for the body to get cold, (from the flames, I mean,) and that slimebag of a lawyer reads the words, "And to my lovely wife, I leave all my money in a TRUST from which she will receive \$20,000 a month at the discretion of the trustees until her death. My two daughters, Gertrude and Gretchen will serve as trustees, and upon my wife's death, will inherit outright the balance of the trust."

I just couldn't listen to the rest, especially after I heard the figure of \$20,000 a month and that my two evil step-daughters would be watching my every move. I mean, what about inflation? What about needing a bigger house? What about the annual Christmas catalog from Neiman's?

I had to yank my eyes away from that sagging piece of skin still quivering beneath the lawyer's chin to look at my two step-daughters. I could see by the smirk they gave each other that they already were planning my quick and untimely demise so they could get on with the business of spending their inheritance.

If only I had persuaded Donald to move to a community property state before he died! Too bad those tiresome doctors wouldn't let me take him out of the hospital. That would have made my life so much easier, because then I would have had half the \$800 million all to myself. The very thought of those girls -- girls HA, they're older than me -- deciding how much I can spend just makes me want to throw up. And I would, too, except I've got a luncheon at the Jr. League right after this meeting and I don't want to splatter my new raw silk suit.

When I questioned the terms of the will, you'd have thought I was some kind of selfish pit viper from the response. It was "My daddy made his fortune long before you came along, honey." And "Maybe daddy didn't love you as much as you think he did, darlin', heh, heh, heh." And "Afterall, you're an EX-Playboy Bunny. Maybe you should be happy with what you get." It was really enough to chap my ass and if I weren't such a lady, (and if I hadn't just had a manicure,) there would have been a cat fight right then and there. You should know that I married their daddy in spite of knowing those two little black-hearted fiends would become part of my family. I made his final year happy, too.

Well, I was smart enough to know that fighting them legally wasn't the answer. The trick was to get rid of them before they could get rid of me. Then I could be trustee of my own trust and the problem would be solved.

Well, I won't bore you with the details but coincidentally, over the next six months, my lovely step-daughters were involved in some terrible accidents that led to their untimely deaths. Gertrude was driving her little 1945 Jaguar SS-100 roadster, you know, the convertible with the wire rims? Somehow her lovely Hermes scarf got caught in the spokes and strangled her. It was a shame, because I had it specially made for her, extra long, too. It was totally unsalvageable.

And Gretchen. Well, she choked to death on a raw oyster at a private reception for the chairman of De Beers. She was chatting him up when he casually mentioned that her diamond necklace was actually cubic zirconia and that's what did it. Fortunately, no one in that crowd knew the Heimlich maneuver, preferring to leave that sort of thing to the help.

Of course, given the circumstances of the estate, I was questioned in depth, but in the end, they couldn't prove I had anything to do with it and no charges were filed.

I will say, I was most pleased with the services provided by Accidents-R-Us. I found them on the Internet. Thank God I'd soon have my hands on that trust because they cost me a small fortune!

Six months later, so nobody would think I was anxious or anything, I made an appointment with the lawyer to settle once and for all that I would now be trustee of my own trust.

After I made my case, he just smiled at me over the top of his cheap reading glasses. His elbows rested on the mahogany desk. He lightly tapped his fingers together and shook his head side to side. It was really a rather condescending look, which, with his bad hairpiece and all, makes you wonder how some people can think they are so important.

He said, "Oh, no, no dear. The terms of the will stated that if anything suspicious surrounded the deaths of your late husband's daughters, or even if they predecease you, that your monthly stipend was to be suspended and the principle of the trust was to go directly to his brother. I'm so sorry, but I guess you didn't hear that part. I AM sorry."

You know, desperation will make one stoop to doing some low things. I thought about killing that lawyer right then and there. And, if he were still alive, I WOULD have killed my husband. But instead, I just put on my hat and walked out that door. How my darling husband, whom I adored, could have left me destitute, I will never understand.

Of what I did next, I am truly ashamed. It is the lowest, most vile act I have ever committed. My mother brought me up better than this. But I was at rock bottom, so what else could I do?

I placed another personal ad:

SYWWFPB (single, young, wealthy (so I lied a little, everyone does) widow, former *Playboy* Bunny) seeks SGBBWCKMMIA (single glamorous billionaire businessman who can keep me (in the) manner I'm accustomed) for romantic entanglement. Enjoys dining at Tavern on the Green, yachting in the Mediterranean and shopping at Tiffany's. Prefers gentlemen with no children.

## **The Swashbuckler—Finding and Keeping Him. A Ladies' Guide** by **Dave Whippman**

Finding your swashbuckler is no problem - he'll find you, though first you might have to experience the discomfort of being captured by pirates, outlaws, or enemy soldiers. This man is great at rescue, and his timing is perfect. At the very moment when your strength gives out, and you can no longer fight off the advances of the repulsive villain, our hero will crash through the window on a rope/leap from his horse/clamber into the speedboat. In fact, a cynic might wonder if he's let you struggle for a while so as to build the drama. After all, he could probably have warned you about the pirate ship while you were back in port, and saved everyone the trouble, but it just wouldn't be the same.

Alternately, he might be the pirate, outlaw, etc. and you're the outraged, respectable woman who falls into his dastardly clutches. In that case, what can you expect? Well, a lot depends on the setting, but one thing's for certain: if you're big on political correctness, you're in for a bad time. This fellow never heard of Germaine Greer, and he thinks Spare Rib is a barbecue. Protesting about his attitudes will achieve nothing except a smack on your backside (well, try to see it from his point of view, it makes a change from slapping his own thigh) and what's even more annoying is that his men will laugh heartily (in fact they do everything heartily).

Speaking of his men, you'd better resign yourself that for some time to come, they're his priority. Our swashbuckler is 100% heterosexual, but male bonding is essential in his line of work. In fact, some of them may protest that a woman is bad luck on a warship, cavalry patrol, or whatever, and demand that he get rid of you. Don't worry - he won't, though at this early stage there'll be some hard-headed reason for keeping you. ("She's a sullen wench to be sure, lads, and I've a mind to feed her to the sharks like you say, but her father the Count of Torremelinos will pay a fortune in doubloons to see her scowling face again.") Given time, you'll actually get to like his cronies, though on the face of it they're an unappealing lot: all of them ugly and bristle-jawed (the male bonding bit doesn't go as far as sharing his razor; he's always immaculately clean shaven except for the optional dashing moustache), most of them considerably older than you-know-who (not that he's insecure, he just doesn't need that kind of competition.) In fact, they're important for the development of the romance, because when the oldest and ugliest of them is mortally wounded, and you see tears in the hero's eyes as he cradles the old fellow's head in his lap and listens to his dying words ("I... I never thought a Spaniard could aim that good, Cap'n") you realize for the first time that there's a sensitive heart within that bluff exterior.

At first you're shocked. Until now, you thought your captor was nothing more than a violent, chauvinist, hard-drinking oaf. But there's more to him than that. After all, he's a swashbuckler, not a premier league footballer. Soon after that, you admit to yourself that it's him you really want; your previous life as a respectable housewife or staid governess is no longer for you, and you couldn't face going back to your dull husband or wealthy father or stuffy old guardian.

But how to win him? Well, there are a number of options. One line of attack is via the aforesaid sensitivity: you can offer him a pair of listening ears and a soft shoulder. ("My men would laugh at me if they knew how I cried when my pet goldfish passed away, yet you seem to understand, countess."). A variation of this approach is to cry on his shoulder:

"It's strange. My husband, the foremost chartered accountant in England, wooed me with flowers and chocolates, while you carried me off on your shoulder as though I were simply another item of booty from that ship, yet I've never talked to him, as I have to you, about my years at the orphanage."

A totally different method is to prove you're as good as him at his own game. You don't have to be the simpering heroine who covers her eyes while the fighting goes on: you can get in there and mix it, thereby earning his respect. ("By thunder, girl, you wield a cutlass as if Blackbeard himself taught you!") But this requires a balancing act between action and femininity - your swashbuckler will be turned off by the butch type. After the battle's over, and the decks have been sluiced clean of blood, you should think about turning all feminine: shedding a few strategic tears and bemoaning the poor fallen lads whom you came to know and love (not in the same way as you love him, of course: he's the jealous type).

And keeping him? Well, first, are you sure you want to? After all, in the long term, a fellow who spends his time in buccaneering or horse chases isn't a good bet as a husband and father. In fact a kind of catch 22 operates here; if he gives up his rip-roaring ways and holds down a steady job, you might as well have stayed with your original boring old hubby. In any case, however good his intentions, a change of career won't be easy. ("Interesting CV you've got here, Mr. Daring. Sergeant in the Foreign Legion, US Cavalry Lieutenant, frontier marshal, South Seas pearl diver. I don't suppose somewhere along the way you took the part 2 Institute of Financial Management exam? Ah, I thought perhaps not. In that case, I'm afraid we at Acme Investment Corp. don't really have a niche for you.").

On balance, this may be a case for loving and leaving. The sad truth is that the swashbuckler doesn't age well - witness later photos of Errol Flynn, Anthony Steel, etc. In this respect, he's at a disadvantage compared to other romantic archetypes - the Professor, for instance, who can always invent an elixir of youth; or the Boy Next Door, who ages invisibly because he's been dressing and acting like a 70 year old from the age of 5.

Better let your swashbuckler ride alone into the sunset, and keep your incorruptible memories of a brief, glorious romance. Still, you never know: maybe you'll meet again one day, when your Saga cruise ship is boarded by a crew of ageing villains, and your heart leaps as you look at the one who's got a rapier in one hand and a zimmer frame in the other.

**Found at the Dump**  
by  
**David Holub**

I awoke at 4:45 a.m. to the blaring sounds of a trombone and clarinet trading fours midway through "When the Saints Go Marching In." Fully awake but with my eyes still closed, I was eagerly awaiting the trumpet/banjo showdown. Then I realized the music was coming from my smoke alarm, which I had rigged to play Dixie instead of the annoying high-pitched scream.

Arising from my bed and still in a pre-dawn daze, I hurried into the kitchen expecting flames or at least sparks but discovered nothing but darkness. Detecting the faint scent of smoke, I flipped on the light only to find the air clear. With my nose still searching, I traced the smell to one of the cabinets, which contained an overturned jar of liquid smoke. Apparently the odor had fully duped the overanxious smoke alarm. As the sun would soon peak over the horizon, I knew I wouldn't be able to return to my pre-Dixie slumber. Instead of tossing, turning, and fretting of caramel and public transportation, I chose to rise for the day.

With four hours to burn before I began my route and a hankering for some solace, I headed down to the place I knew I would find it: The dump.

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Despite the consistent drone of bulldozers, the squawking of thousands of seagulls and being surrounded by filth and a thick stench, the dump was a great place for relaxation, meditation, reflection and a general cleansing of the spirit.

The dump was a place I could get away from pesky mailmen, honking horns, stray dogs and those annoying beeping crosswalks for the blind. There I liked solving math problems or working on my Pig Latin thesaurus or reading the print on the trash surrounding my car.

My favorite was finding discarded items that had ludicrous lawsuit-induced warnings printed on them. Hall of fame acquisitions were the Kleenex box that said, "Do not flush down toilet" or the instant mashed potato box warning, "Do not sniff potato flakes."

But reading trash, the thesaurus and the tranquility were merely rationalizations to get me to the dump. I enjoyed those activities but when I was honest with myself, I knew what really brought me to the dump so often.

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Four years and seven weeks ago, I returned to my apartment after an afternoon of intimidating people with my trombone at the park. After dismounting from my bike, I set my trombone down and fished in my left sock for my keys.

My thought process was jolted when a man wearing a pair of undies, a cape and boots descended from the top of the building on a crudely hung zip line. I don't know if he was attempting to elude someone or if he was just a giant jackass, but he didn't exactly land smooth. Rather, he lost his balance and slammed into one of the mopeds innocently parked

on the street. I immediately ran to him to check his health. Caught in the commotion, I forgot about the trombone that I had thoughtlessly set on the ground minutes earlier.

After men claiming to be paramedics arrived, the whereabouts of my trombone hit me over the dome like a well-planted cheap shot. I craned my head to see if the brass instrument was still there. It wasn't. I ran to the spot where I had laid it and turned in circles, scanning the area. Nothing.

Hearing the sound of a bulky engine, I twisted to see a garbage truck driving away in the distance, likely heading to the dump. It was then that I realized I was standing not five feet from an empty dumpster. With my trombone gone, I wasn't only left without an instrument; I was left without a way to express myself, to communicate with others. My theories on mammals, education reform and molecular science were presented in their purest, most concise forms through my trombone. Gone were my street performances of trombone comedy, my famed trombone debates and highly-publicized trombone protests, where me and my trombone successfully lobbied the end of inflated transportation budgets and several open public record violations.

I was left without a voice.

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As I perused the dump grounds surrounding my car, my attention was taken by two scavengers arguing loudly in what I recognized as broken Portuguese. As I watched them fight over a weathered stick pony, I noticed a garbage truck in the distance dumping trash. As I continued to look on I let out a horrific shriek, seeing what appeared to be a human body fall from the back of the truck.

Unsure whether my shriek had been heard I rushed to my car and laid on the horn. Immediately after pressing the horn I was reminded that I had replaced the wimpy, factory-installed "beep beep" with a horn that played a selection from Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. I had wanted something to use in tense traffic situations that conveyed true anger and vivacity. I got that with Bartok. The horn immediately got the attention of the truck driver but he must have been Hungarian because instead of alarm, he seemed to appreciate the music of what I presumed to be his homeland.

Abandoning the horn, I sprinted to the truck and began inspecting the area for the body I'd seen fall. I trusted that my eyes had not lied. The driver quickly ejected from the truck's cab and began toward me, barking in a strange Eastern European tongue. The scavengers gravitated toward us, one walking briskly and the other dogging behind, riding a stick pony. As embarrassing and humiliated as the scavenger looked on the stick pony, I wasn't sure if he'd won or lost the argument.

Soon I had the trash man shouting and pointing in all directions and the two scavengers aggressively requesting information in Portuguese. I regurgitated the only Portuguese I knew, which consisted mainly of croquet terms. They both looked at me blankly as I shouted the Portuguese words for "wicket," "pegger," "treble," and "rover."

When the situation had calmed, I made my way down a steep incline to where the trash had dumped. My orbs of sight gently scanned the area and centered on two legs jutting from the heap. But the legs were not that of a human or even that of a once-living creature. Rather,

they were the color of brass, molded in what appeared to be hard plastic or rubber. I stepped forward and grabbed the two ankles, reviving a chorus of coarse babble from the Hungarian and the scavengers. Nonetheless, I continued to yank, pulling from the pile a fully dressed mannequin. I looked him in the eye and appreciated his nondescript facial features.

When the trio saw the revealed dummy, the multilingual raucous fell silent. They stared at the plastic man then back at me, then at the plastic man, then at me. In a deep murmur, the Hungarian mumbled something in Hungarian. As I stared back at them, the mannequin caught my attention. Rather, its clothes. He and I were dressed exactly the same. I quickly tried to calculate the odds of this happening but stopped when I second-guessed my estimation of the city's mannequin population.

Regardless of how the mannequin got there and whatever the circumstances for his wardrobe, I was not going to let him stay in the pile of trash. The difficulty would be to evade the Hungarian and the scavengers, who might claim first rights. But their actions left me dumbstruck. Instead of opposition, I was oddly met with honor and praise. For some reason – foreign customs I'm sure – the three greeted me with adoration and gratitude. The scavengers grinned while making quick bowing motions like thankful Japanese. The Hungarian ran to the cab of his truck and returned with an ice-cold beer and a high-end street map. In his native tongue he insisted I take the items then dropped to the ground and hugged my lower left leg.

I suddenly felt like an international superstar with a pack of adoring fans. As odd as the situation was, I took a moment to bask in the attention, then patted them all on the shoulder, thanking them in what I figured was an internationally-accepted form of gratitude. I carried the mannequin with both arms back to the car where I set him in the front passenger seat and fastened the seatbelt.

As I mentally began clearing a space for the mannequin in the kitchen, I turned around and waived to the Hungarian and the scavengers. They looked in my eyes and knew what I'd found at the dump.

**A Selection From *Tyranny Whenever***  
**by**  
**Kane X. Faucher**

It took some length of time to get to the nearest town big enough to have a car rental agency. My convertible had been given a temporary patch job which would get it as far as the next small town before Lexington before all matter of combustible evil sprang up and threatened to cause the whole rigging to seize and blow up in a leaping inferno. The vehicle was now limited in its options and couldn't go over 55 without belching thick, black smoke—much like a Republican. I couldn't show up to the rental agency in this beast without making it impossible for me to rent a car and be trusted. So I parked three blocks over and hid it in an alley for the wolves to find.

I walked in the agency and one of those annoying little bells just over the door jingled to announce my arrival. All small town stores had this feature...I believe there's something inherently Pavlovian about consumerism in these parts. A friendly faced yak of a man, early forties with that failed look of one who would never get above assistant manager while his younger colleagues sped to the top, gave a customary nervous hello. People like that, absolute losers and meek rodent wimps, always made me uncomfortable. They were always afraid of bending company rules, seeing as this job was the last barrier between them and certain self-despondent doom. They were easily spooked by brash talking out-of-towners in a kind of mixture of fear and star-crossed admiration. Meanwhile, they deprecated themselves to humiliating levels to their younger, meaner bosses. I knew this type well, and so I had to fast talk my way out as quickly as possible, confuse the frightened animal into giving me what I wanted. The trick here was to be impatient; the meek bastards who desperately want to please everyone cannot handle it. Though, at the same time, I didn't want to make this poor schlep pick between me and his boss, for he still has that slight survivalist glimmer of intelligence that knows who signs the checks. Rather, I had to put on the airs of the carefree, fast talking city guy, just out enjoying the country life on an idle weekend. He would want my respect, of course, and if any hitches occurred that would cause my delay, this would earn my impatience and displeasure. His accumulated knowledge of city folk told him that these people preferred a quick and seamless transaction, were easily annoyed, and just didn't have the time to haggle over unimportant details like "where are you going? How long do you need the vehicle for? When will you bring it back? Would you like to sign this accountability for damages form?" and so on. Needling little questions like that irritate city folk who just want to get the affair over with as quickly as possible and get on the road. Those questions are fine in dealing with the townies, but city folk are too important to care about earning the trust of inconsequential people when it should be universally understood that we are well beyond trust. That would be the card I played.

"So, what car would you like to rent today, sir?"

"I like the powder blue convertible in the lot."

He made a worried inward sucking sound between his teeth and I could tell that he was trying to formulate some polite excuse to deny me access to that particular, most expensive car.

"Well, the thing is, sir, that this particular car is a new addition to our family, and I don't



think my boss wants me renting it out to anyone outside of town just as yet. Could I persuade you to rent another car? We have a beautiful and luxurious beige Sedan that is roomy and good on gas." A clever lateral move, hiding behind the boss to pass the blame ball up the chain, and go for the safety pitch.

"What?" I suddenly said in controlled outrage. "Are you telling me that I don't know how to take care of a good car?"

"Oh, no, no, no, sir, it's just that the Sedan—"

"Fuck the Sedan! I want that powder blue convertible!"

"I know, but it's just that my boss is not ready to rent it out to people he doesn't know."

"What kind of lame excuse for a business is this? Back in Chicago, I don't have to know squat about the guy who's renting me a car! What kind of nazi suspicion racket are you running here? I don't have time for this bullshit! I'll call my lawyer if I have to! This is favouritism and discrimination!"

"I-I-I know, sir, um, but the thing is, my boss is very—"

"Ill? Depraved? A goddamn fascist cunt? What, do you think I'm a criminal? You think I'm some sort of goddamn, low-down criminal, don't you? What, you think I'm going to go to some county fair and abandon your precious convertible to be picked apart and destroyed by a raving mob of lunatics? Is this a business or a bloody three ring circus? Am I not good enough for that car, is that what you're telling me? Because if that's the case, let me tell you something—"

"Oh, no, not at all, sir! You seem pretty decent to me, and I know people well. I got a sixth sense about people," he said with a nervous quiver in his voice, yet I still hadn't won him over and clinched the deal just as yet.

"But it's your goddamn nazi boss, huh? Fine, I want to see your boss right now! Get him over here! I want to give him a big piece of my mind of what I think of him and his shady operation! Imagine! Him trying to five and dime me like this! In the city, he'd be run out of business so fast that the thought of renting cars would give him a seizure! Get him here, now!"

That clinched it. The last thing Johnny Do-Good wanted was to demonstrate to his boss, master of his financial fate, that he couldn't handle this on his own.

"Well, let's wait a minute here... I think I recall my boss telling me that I could rent that convertible out, but I need your strictest word of honour that you can have it back sometime, say, by tomorrow night? Would that be okay?" It was okay for weasely fiction.

"Sure. Now this is more reasonable. I'll get it back to you by tomorrow afternoon, even, without a scratch and a tank full of gas."

"Excellent, sir." Relief was restored, but doubts remained. "But you do promise to be super careful with the car, won't you? I mean, it's my head if anything goes wrong—not that anything wrong would happen under your care, I'm sure, but you know, I just want to make absolutely certain and sure," he said, a nervous laugh to cut the edge of his serious

doomspeak.

"Yeah, yeah, I'll treat her like a newborn baby. Let's just sign the papers and get this over with, already. I'm starving."

"There's a nice diner just on the corner and—"

"That's swell, buddy, but no. I want to get some real food in me, someplace where the smell of cow won't upset my digestion."

"Oh, of course." He started to read off the mandatory set of questions, checking off boxes and all that. "I have to ask some questions. It will only take five minutes of your time... Just a formality, really. Will you be smoking in the vehicle?"

"No."

"Will you at any point during the tenancy of this vehicle be drinking any alcoholic beverages?"

"No."

"Will there be anyone else operating this vehicle other than you while the vehicle is in your care?"

"No."

"Are you on any form of medication that alone or in conjunction with any other medication would in any way impede your abilities to operate this vehicle?"

"No."

"To the best of your knowledge, will you be leaving the state of Kentucky with this vehicle?"

"No."

"Have you been charged for any automobile-related crime to which you have not received an official pardon?"

"No."

"Are you currently paid up to date with your automobile insurance policy or other affiliated insurance plan?"

"Yes."

"Will you be involving this vehicle in any illegal acts considered as such by federal or state law?"

"No."

"Is there any reason that you can ascertain, not addressed by these questions, that would in any way make you an unsuitable lessee of this vehicle?"

"No."

"Okay, great!" he said, this formal questioning session not enough to fully allay his fears. But he had come this far, and he couldn't turn back now. "I'll just get you to sign here...and here...and, oh, yes right where I put the 'x' over here...and if you could write down your valid government issue driver's license right in that box. Okay! While you look over our agreement and the insurance deductible, I'll go and bring the car round!"

"Great."

The ordeal was at an end for me, but it was just beginning for the rental agent. Perhaps years from that nervous next night while he chewed his fingers to the bone, just waiting, looking up the highway every ten seconds at every set of lights hoping it would be that brash young man behind the wheel of a completely unscathed powder blue convertible, I would wonder whatever happened to him...what he was forced to tell his impatient and short-tempered boss. I would wonder whether he would curse the day I walked in, and me, and perhaps himself for being so naïve and trusting. Would he hate all city folk and carry this hate like an enormous chip on his shoulder? Or would he, for the rest of his natural life, continue looking up that road for any sign of that fatal mistake, that powder blue convertible humming along and mocking his last shred of human dignity? But it is my hope that he looks back on this moment in a different light, with a new dawning perspective... That I had been crucial in a magnificent change within him, that my act of blatant theft which cost him his job was the same moment when he suddenly grew a spine and began to walk strongly in this world, not fearing anyone. Not the city folk and their fast talking, not his young and successful bosses, nor even his own shivering smallness. It can only be hoped that he has found his power center, and driving back home within himself is the powder blue convertible he let get away. Perhaps then he will know what is truly at stake, that the world is more than just petty bosses, city hustlers, and powder blue convertibles.

**Zen Cola**  
**by**  
**Rob Rosen**

She came to my office much the same way as all my patients do: referred by her usual dentist who didn't have the time to deal with such an extreme case. But there was something different about her. Something not quite right. And it hit me as soon as she stepped into the examining room.

She wasn't nervous.

Far from it, actually. She was, surprisingly, humming. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that it was to the song, "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing"; made famous more than thirty years ago by the Hillside Singers; and made famous, yet again, around the same time by Coca-Cola. I knew, almost immediately, what I'd find when she opened her mouth. I'd seen it time and time again. Only this was more severe than anything I'd encountered before.

I asked her to have a seat. Introduced myself, "Dr. John Dennis, but my patients call me John."

"Nice to meet you, John. My names Jenny."

We shook hands. I looked into her gloriously yellow smile, as she got comfortable in the chair.

"So what brings you in today, Jenny?" I asked, already fairly certain of her answer.

"A penchant for Coke, or so I've been told."

Bingo.

"And just how many do you drink a day?"

"Oh, don't rightly know. Six or seven, I suppose."

"Sounds like an addiction." I prepared to look into her mouth, though I knew what I'd find. She'd be lucky to have any enamel left at all.

"Coca-Cola is the shortest distance between thirst and refreshment," she informed.

I stared into her eyes and only nodded, unsure of just how to respond. For a nut case, she practically radiated self-assurance. Buzzed with it, actually. But maybe that was the caffeine. It's hard to say for sure.

"Well, it's eating away at your teeth. Why not try something else for a change. Maybe a juice the next time you're thirsty."

The smile left her face.

"Not drink Coke? The friendliest drink on earth? The drink of quality? The pause that refreshes?"

"There are other, well, less caustic drinks out there, you know."

"Other than Coke? No way, Doc. It's ice-cold sunshine. It's around the corner from everywhere. Coca-Cola revives and sustains." The smile reappeared. Her mantras clearly had a relaxing effect.

"It's the real thing, huh?" I played along.

"Coke adds life."

"But it subtracts from teeth. I'm surprised you have any left in your mouth. Not to mention what it's doing to the lining of your stomach."

"Have a Coke and a smile," she said, and flashed me hers. Actually, even though it was as yellow as, well, a Mountain Dew, it was a glorious smile to behold. I'd seen that look on Buddhist monks before, but never on any of my patients. Perhaps she'd found a new religion in her addiction. Perhaps the slogans she was spouting had actually brought her joy. Truthfully, I'd never seen anyone so happy before.

"But aren't you in pain?" I inquired.

"Sometimes, I suppose. But sacrifices have to be made. Life is good, Doc. Enjoy! Catch the wave!"

Her insanely upbeat personality was infectious. Maybe she was on to something. Besides, I could replace her teeth. Could I replace her bliss?

I tried one last time. "So, I can't persuade you? It's Coke or nothing?"

"Coke is it. Always, Coca-Cola. Can't beat the real thing."

And I couldn't beat the feeling that she had a point. I gave up and went to work on her mouth. She hummed the entire time, oblivious to my often jarring work. I was right, of course. Her teeth were barely hanging in there. Even with regular brushing and flossing, it was a lost cause. The acidity of her life-sustaining fluid was eating away at her. And still she smiled and hummed. Tapping her foot to the beat of her song.

It was mesmerizing. And, after a while, I too found myself singing the song and tapping my feet.

*"I'd like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love. Grow apple trees and honeybees, and snow white turtledoves. I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony, I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company"*

"Ipsa weel fing," she sang along with me. A look of pure bliss spread across her radiant face, as I finished up in her mouth.

Several visits later, I finished what I'd set out to do. Once again, Jenny had opal-white teeth, which, I was fairly certain, she'd fast stain and ruin all over again. Still, I wasn't all that upset. I actually looked forward to our next encounter.

Truth be told, I too would now like to buy the world a Coke. It's good for business and, apparently, the inner harmony of the soul.

**Revisiting Luther**  
by  
**Vanessa Gebbie**

For nine weeks and two days, Leticia Hooper started each morning upside-down, talking to her first husband through the bars of his cage. Wearing a very elderly and baggy black leotard, she would unhook the cage from its stand and place it on the rug, and then she would do a headstand against the wall of her bed-sit over the Tatler Tearooms.

"Luther," she would say between clenched teeth, "This is not getting any easier."

And it wasn't. At sixty, the sinews protested a bit, but so what?

Luther would rattle his beak against the bars, or sometimes, if he was in a particularly good mood put his head on one side and reach over to ting his bell. Parrot or no parrot, suffusing the head with blood for ten minutes every morning was very good for the brain. There may have been some changes to her routine now that Luther was here, but yoga was not negotiable.

He had come to stay under completely false pretences. Never again would she give in to a plea from another librarian to look after a parrot for three months. If she'd known then what she knew now...

As soon as she saw him, (he was called Bill then) she knew there was something funny. Not that she was all that well acquainted with parrots, but it was something in his look that reminded her of the first Luther. Bulging eyes and swiveling head, probably. No, the revelation such as it was had come later that same day. It was when she'd been undressing for bed. As soon as she peeled off her pants the parrot set up a frantic whistle and fixed its beady eyes on her pubic hair. Not a wolf whistle, more of the noise a train makes when it rushes into a tunnel at speed.

It was discomforting, being fancied by a parrot. Sitting in bed with her book that first evening, trying hard to concentrate on "Sons and Lovers" for the third time, Leticia had watched him bobbing furiously on his perch, and climbing the bars with his knobby feet. Are parrots sexual beings viz a viz humans? Sex with Luther the Man hadn't been inspiring; D.H. Lawrence would have been most alarmed. Following the same train of thought, "Leticia and the Parrot" did not have the same ring as "Leda and the Swan". Do parrots have penises? Leticia got out of bed and went to have a look. She bent down in her wincyette nightie behind Luther, so that her face was at the level of the parrot's rear end, but she couldn't see anything. Then she inspected his lower front. There were too many feathers. The parrot turned round on his perch and bent to look her in the eye. Leticia blushed. From then on she dressed and undressed in the bathroom.

"I don't think you're Bill," Leticia had put her face up close to the bars and eyeballed the parrot, who gazed back at her, unmoved. "I think you're Luther Carstairs come back to haunt me." The parrot had put its head on one side, and lifted a large seed to its mouth with a claw. No direct answers. So evasive. Just like Luther the Man. It rolled its eye, and moved the black pebble that was its tongue slowly round the seed, then cracked it, letting the husk fall to the bottom of its cage. It lent forward and looked at the mess it was making. Housework. He was telling her to clear up after him. No question about it. So the

parrot became Luther.

Ursula-Who-Does-The-Breakfasts had come up with her tray the next morning, "Morning Mrs Hooper. Tea and toast. Oh goodness. What's that?"

"I think he'd better have a kipper," said Leticia in a strangled voice from a few inches above the rug. Luther the Man had had kippers every day for six years. That would nail it.

After yoga every morning, Leticia would sit reading the paper over her breakfast. This was normally, pre-Luther the Parrot, a quiet time, time to stretch her long legs out from the little settee, and lean back with a cup of tea, while scanning the daily disasters. (Why on earth couldn't the papers print good news for a change. You can't even go on holiday these days without wondering if you'll be blown to smithereens on the way. And forget about relaxing in your own home. The contents of the average food cupboard have been discovered to be a veritable health hazard. Don't think you can escape damnation with going organic either. Last night's organic broccoli had included a large well fed caterpillar that had plopped, cooked and rigid, onto her plate.)

Now, breakfast with Luther was interesting. Parrots have a habit of eating kippers very messily indeed. Leticia had to give up the middle sheets of her newspaper to protect the rug from flying fish. But he was loving it. Leticia had to be careful though. The kippers had a loosening effect on Luther. He had taken to lifting his tail and shooting a stream of excreta out at whatever happened to be behind him. The first time this happened he hit the decanter, totally deliberately, of course. Luther the Man had been teetotal since he went Baha'i the year before they split up, and Luther the Parrot seemed equally starchy about alcohol. When Leticia poured herself a small schooner of medium sherry after walking up the hill from the library on the Monday evening, Luther went berserk. Even if parrots can't do mock faints and fall backwards deliberately off their perches, Luther came pretty close. He dropped to the ground, and dragged himself round the floor of his cage limping, watching Leticia over his shoulder.

It is all very well having your first husband back with you, thirty years later, even if he is wearing feathers. It is worrying. There was nowhere to put him where he was not overlooking the bed, other than the bathroom, and going to the loo would have been impossible with Luther watching. So Leticia left him where the librarian had put him, in the corner of her bed sit, by the window.

The other permanent guests of the Tatler Tea rooms were accommodating as far as Luther went. Leticia played it correctly, right from the start, and asked them all in to meet him. Of course, she did not divulge to little Colonel Etherington that this was her husband, but she might as well have done.

"Good God. What a sight. Euthanasia." was all the Colonel said. On reflection, Leticia agreed. And the Misses Cartwright. Luther could screech as much as he liked. They were so deaf that he didn't bother them on that score, but he did disgrace himself by spitting sunflower seeds into their tea when Leticia seated them too close to his cage.

Mrs. Carmichael, the owner of The Tatler, was ambivalent.

"So long as the customers aren't disturbed," was all she said.

The weeks went by, and Leticia received two postcards from the other librarian, on



sabbatical in Florence. What freedom. What stimulation... unlike Leticia's own recent experience. Luther the Man had become impossible to live with all those years ago, and Luther the Parrot was following suit. Their relationship was becoming dangerously similar in many respects to what it had been when he was a man. After taking off his covers, she gave him his kippers, and the room smelt of them all day. He said very little during breakfast, but then neither did she. She ate her toast, and Luther rasped occasionally and flicked fish about onto the newspaper. She cleared up after him. When she was dressed, he said very little. Often he didn't even bother to look at her, but preened himself. Leticia went to work in the library, and when she got home, he didn't so much as ask how her day had gone. If she was late giving him his supper he would sulk and turn his back on her. If her hand reached out for the decanter he squawked like a banshee. It took a while before Leticia realized what the large brown blanket the other librarian had brought was for. And until she did, Luther the Parrot whistled at her all night bobbing furiously, giving her very little pleasure indeed. Exactly like Luther the Man.

Parrots must know when they are disliked. One day, arriving back from the library, Leticia found three rather nice feathers on the rug. Not little accidental feathers, large ones. Over the course of a few days, a small bare patch appeared on Luther's chest, and more feathers appeared on the rug. That was all she needed. A parrot with psychological problems. The patch grew as their relationship declined.

The countdown to eventual freedom having begun with only three weeks left to Luther's repatriation, Leticia was devastated to receive a phone call from the other librarian, begging for another month's board and lodging for his pet. Luther screeched throughout the call, making it impossible to hear properly.

"So you'll be back when?" said Leticia over the din.

The other librarian said something about him sounding as happy as a pig in something or other.

"Yes, but the noise, the intrusion, seriously, when will you be back.....?" but he had rung off, and was no doubt off to enjoy a glass of something cool, light and bubbly. Leticia turned to Luther. She would put the blanket over his cage early tonight, and finish her book in peace. She was reading a very good book this time, short stories by Graham Greene. Much more satisfying, short stories, when you have a parrot. Less chance to lose the plot. And anyway, they were like an excellent glass of sherry if drunk at the right time. Left you with a bit of a glow. Luther the Man had been trying to be a writer. Waste of time, really. You were surrounded by books all day at the library, with boxes of the things arriving every Monday. Did the world really need Luther's? Had he made it after the divorce? She'd never seen anything by Luther Carstairs, but then he might have used a nom de plume.

Seven more weeks. Noise, mess, and the constant reminder of a failed sex life, while she had been young enough and energetic enough to be really good at it, given half a chance. Plus the added cost of all those kippers.

Then Luther made a mistake, a very silly mistake. He turned his back on Leticia, and raised his rump, and before she could do anything about it, he'd defecated all over Graham Greene.

A parrot's neck is much thinner than it looks, though all those feathers. It took Leticia precisely half a minute to wring it. Bloody bird. Ten a penny in the pet shop. There seemed

to be feathers all over the room, and Mrs. Carmichael wanted to know why she needed to borrow the Hoover at seven on a Thursday evening, but Leticia said she'd spilt some parrot feed. Graham Greene was quite unreadable.

The brown blanket stayed over the cage the next morning. Ursula-Who-Does-The-Breakfasts didn't notice a thing, as Leticia welcomed her, upside down as usual, and said: "Just leave his kipper on the floor. He's still asleep."

The day before the other librarian returned, Leticia rang the fifteenth pet shop in Yellow Pages, and discovered that to her delight and relief, they did indeed have a parrot that closely resembled Luther. What she had not bargained for was the cost.

Walking back up the hill from the bus station to the Tatler, the new parrot got heavier and heavier. Her bank account had gone in the opposite direction, and was much, much lighter. Several thousand pounds lighter. But the new parrot looked exactly like Luther, and so chances were that the other librarian would never notice the difference.

The new parrot was in its new cage. Leticia settled down on the settee with a new book, Best American Short Stories, and a cup of tea. No, damn the tea, a drink was called for. She put down the open book, got up and went over to the decanter.

And the new parrot began to screech, and screech, and screech.....

**W And His Trusty Steed**  
by  
Chris Katkol



We at *Defenestration* would never, under any circumstances, print material that would call the presidency of the United States into question. Except this. And the painting we published last month. Okay, so we *would* print material that makes fun of the President. But it's just too tempting not too!

**Legless Horse**  
by  
**Matt Fletcher (Photograph)**  
and  
**Top *Defenestration* Scientists (Text)**



Amateur nature photographer Matt Fletcher recently sent us this rare image of *Equus immobilis*, or, as it is known in more vulgar terms, the “legless” or “weird as hell” horse. Known for its cigar-shaped body and tendency to float mysteriously in place while it grazes on tufts of grass, the legless horse has been sighted sporadically across the continental United States, as well as Great Britain and the Iberian and Arabian peninsulas.

“The horse wasn’t born without legs and the amazing ability to hover,” says Mr. Fletcher, who is clearly lying in order to protect the amazing creature from poachers. “I edited it in PhotoShop.” Always one to stay true to his lies, Mr. Fletcher added, “It was originally a stock photo from deviantART. I’m pretty happy with the results.”

We, the highly educated scientists on the *Defenestration* staff, have been hard at work trying to locate Mr. Fletcher’s discovery. The potential to learn more about this animal, such as how it hovers, its excretory habits, and how in God’s name it mates, was too good an opportunity to pass up.

Finding the horse was problematic. Finding Matt Fletcher wasn't. After hours of brutal interrogation, Mr. Fletcher told us, choking back tears, "His name's Henry, and he likes hugs." We'll give you more information as we discover it. Stay tuned to *Defenestration*.

## Contributor Biographies

At an early age, **Allen Coyle** realized that he had absolutely no talent for writing, but decided to pursue it anyway. His hobbies include drinking beer and mooning the alien vessels that hover over his house at night. He also loves to listen to Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon and read The Wizard of Oz, though he still doesn't see why people say they sync. He is currently in the market for a life.

Andy D (born **Andrew T. Duncan**), is the illegitimate child of Lee Van Cleef and Punky Brewster. After birth, his mother and father retired to a peaceful suburban manse in Indiana. There he developed a martial art form dedicated to dropkicking all jerks and fools. Now Andy D rocks New York City vomiting forth gold in the ancient Japanese art form called "Haiku," which means "Wind sweeps over the mountain to the place where dinosaurs and unicorns dance forever!" He is also working on his rap career. If you like his poems let him know: [Whiteumbrella@lagomorpho.com](mailto:Whiteumbrella@lagomorpho.com). To hear music: <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~atd210/rockslow.mp3>

After exhausting every other possibility, **David Choate** now teaches mathematics in a liberal arts college in Kentucky. So far as he can determine, he is the only teacher in history never to have received a teaching award. However, in his youth he did distinguish himself as a representative of the chronically unemployed.

**R. Roberts-Mesta** is a mommiiiiiee, a minister (but not the kind you think she is), a Reiki practitioner, a photographer, a wife, and a writer. She lives in a castle on the east coast with her family. They are all proud to be prolific poeters.

**Charlotte Jones** decided to write her biography in the form of a haiku:  
Charlotte Jones appears  
for the fourth time in this mag.  
What *are* they thinking?

**Dave Whippman** says: "I'm in my fifties, originally a West Countryman, at present living in Lancashire. I've spent most of my working life as a psychiatric nurse, writing as a hobby, mainly for the small press. Away from the keyboard, I like to play chess and practice harmonica (not simultaneously)."

**David Holub** is made of plastic and is fascinated by false teeth, fool's gold and shoe horns. If there is anything you were wondering about him, the answer is 'yes.' His writing has appeared at *Cafe Irreal*, *The Dream People*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Locust Magazine* and *Juked*.

**Kane X. Faucher** was last seen rowing a canoe into the sea, vowing to return only when he found a cure for grammar fatigue, and mastered the art of training twelve ton octopi to dance by remote mind control. His webpage: <http://www.geocities.com/codex1977>  
Rob Rosen lives, loves, and works in San Francisco. Rob would like to remind everyone to brush and floss after every meal and to visit your dentist at least twice a year. Gargling is optional. Feel free to visit him at his website [www.therobrosen.com](http://www.therobrosen.com) or email him at [robrosen@therobrosen.com](mailto:robrosen@therobrosen.com).

**Vanessa Gebbie** does not only write about parrots. She is a journalist and has to be serious sometimes. Other people have had the good taste to like her stuff... among them,

*Aesthetica, Cadenza, Buzzwords, Smokelong Quarterly, Flashme.* The proper author Alex Keegan is lucky enough to be her tutor.

**Chris Katko** gave us the following information: "Born and raised in the suburban Bermuda Triangle known to many as southern California. Worked for the now defunct California News Agency, then escaped on a cargo ship to New Zealand, and continued west, north, west, north and west again. Lived and worked in Europe for years. Currently based in the failed social experiment called Syracuse, New York, drinking lots of Hungarian wine, making perogis, drawing nasty pictures, and saving up to move."

**Matt Fletcher** says: "'Lo, my name's Matt Fletcher and I'm 15 (nearly 16) and from England. My pastimes involve sipping tea, watching cricket, and saying "Tally Ho!" When I'm not doing that, I enjoy messing about with PotatoChop- cutting up pictures of animals, sticking them to other animals, removing things, adding things, messing about with things; you get the picture. I also like to do web design, my site being <http://www.naiveamoeba.co.uk> , and my webcomic being <http://a.1asphost.com/pixelpuss/> . But of course, I also like other things, like my guitar, TV, curry, and whipping fat children with sticks."