

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume II, Issue I

Table of Contents

Andrew T. Duncan, "Haiku Knife Fight"	3
C. Allen Rearick, Three Poems	4
David Choate, "Song of Sums"	6
J. Patrick Lewis, "Epitaph for a Horse Whisperer"	8
John Cooley, "hooouuuuhggg"	9
Ace Boggess, "Thanks, Dad".	10
Alison Burke, "Don't Judge Me, or Judge Me... Sexily"	18
J.M. Becker, "Prozac and Bee stings."	19
J.R. Carson, "Bloody Yank"	21
Jonathan Redhorse, "The Brains of God"	23
Mary Trafford, "Adverbs"	24
Michael Jarrette-Kenny, "The Day of the Revolution"	27
Pete Butler, "The Big Picture"	32
Rob Rosen, "Small Worlds"	33
Ross Eldridge, "The Nature of Love Revealed"	37
Tammy Walters, "Now They Call Me Donjon"	40
Dan McLaren, <i>A Things You Should Know</i> Comic	42
Jerry Rychlo, <i>A Comic</i>	43
Ricky Garni, "Crispy Contemplates Death"	44
Contributor Biographies	45

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Haiku Knife Fight
by
Andrew T. Duncan

Haiku #1:

Al Green is magic
When chicks hear his high, black voice
It's like huge rufies

Haiku #2:

Australia wins
When it comes to neat mammals
Kangaroos kill girls

Haiku #3:

I believe in you
And as soon as you love me
I will let you breathe

Three Poems
by
C. Allen Rearick

Credit Where Credit Is Due

Those
who speak
in front
of large groups
of people
are really
brave

but not
half as
brave as
someone
willing
to wrestle
an
alligator.

Coming Soon

The

end

of

this

poem.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Right above

my window

Song of Sums
by
David Choate

Though the vile are venerated,
Though the best are beaten, blighted,
Though the dumb are decorated,
Though Mick Jagger's just been knighted,
Two and two are still just four.

And even if Our Lord's created
Other Worlds more consecrated,
There's none in which some other two
When added right yields left or blue.
No, the answer's always four.

Yes, two and two are still just four.
Before and now and evermore,
Before and now and evermore

Though sophists rage unabated,
The Paul de Mans, the Jacque Derridas
Though these types are celebrated,
(Though both were Nazis-- both real shiddas)
Two and two are still just four.

Though every woman's now a woe,
'Cause every chairman's now a chair,
Though they beat pure logic low,

And deconstruct the very air,
Two and two are still just foe.

That is, I mean, they are just four-
I'm not at all the least less shore.

(Chorus- with a swing of joy and energy)

No, two and two are still just four.
Before and now and evermore,
Before and now and evermore

Epitaph for a Horse Whisperer
by
J. Patrick Lewis

Shhhh,
Shhhh,
Shhhh...
it

hooouuuhggg
by
John Cooley

“hooouuuhggg”

we would dance together soon enough in dark streets under lamp posts
when we heard spanish music from the park
where strangers came together to celebrate and sing with one another

“hooouuuhggg”

and the smell of fall would sneak into our palettes with the falling amber leaves
crunching under our feet as we spun around on the sidewalk hand in hand
smiling and laughing and planning on retreating to the mountains where

“hooouuuhggg”

we would relax and tell stories about when we had met
and of our first kiss and our childhood romances

“hooouuuhggg”

but first i would have to hold her hair back from the porcelain until she finished heaving
and i could introduce myself

Thanks, Dad
by
Ace Boggess

Edgar only saw his eight-year-old son every other weekend. He thought that if he didn't make each visit special, young Marshall might believe his dear old dad deserted him. So Edgar tried to help the boy do everything imaginable and imagine everything not quite doable.

Two weeks ago, they went camping in northern West Virginia. And two weeks before that, it was King's Island in Cincinnati. This week, after visiting the Pittsburgh zoo, Marshall sat on the passenger side of Edgar's beat-up blue Ford Torino station wagon, questioning all the mysteries of life so his dad could explain them with calm logic any great philosopher would bow before. Marshall didn't care about roller coasters and rhinoceri. To him, they were just props, play things to amuse the wise one while he readied himself to speak.

"Dad," Marshall said a bit timidly—the first question always came out that way—"Why are there no traffic lights on the interstate?"

Edgar glanced down at his boy for a moment before returning his eyes to the road. Voice dry and deadpan like narrators on TV history shows, he replied, "It was thirty years ago when the aliens came. You remember the stories I told you about Roswell and Hangar Eighteen?"

"Yes, Dad."

"Well, this was worse. Much worse. A colony of little green men—and some gray men, too, as they were racially harmonious—came to Earth and lived among us. They planned to share our land in exchange for all their wonderful inventions. The aliens promised a cure for cancer, a new super fuel, and a couple guaranteed get-rich-quick schemes and fad diets, all gratis as a show of their good will."

"What happened, Dad?"

Edgar flinched like a shutter on a camera set at high speed. "They were on their way to the White House, having landed by mistake in Maryland. But they never made it."

"Why not?"

"Because they crashed on I-70, going down in a huge fireball that ate up an entire mountain range. It was a disaster. The entire area had to be closed for weeks. Radiation caked mud and rock in crazy patterns, and now there are painted mountains in Maryland because of it."

"Wow," said Marshall. "But Dad, WHY did the space men crash?"

"Traffic lights."

"Traffic lights?"

"Traffic lights. Turned out, red lights were hypnotic signals to the aliens. Anything glowing

red made them go into a trance. So whenever the pilots saw a stoplight on red, they blacked out and crashed their saucers like drunks out on a Saturday night. Of course, we didn't know this at first, and before long spaceships were crashing left and right. It got to be so as you couldn't walk down to the farmer's market without a fear of being hit by a falling saucer. By the time we did figure it out, it was too late. The aliens were mostly gone: dead or fleeing for their lives. Still, as a gesture of friendship to the survivors, President Nixon promised from that day forward there'd be no more red lights on the interstate. That way, if the aliens ever returned, they'd have a safe passage wherever they wanted to go."

"Did they ever come back, Dad?"

"Only once. Something about Elvis Presley's funeral, I believe. But otherwise, we never heard from them again. All their technological advancements were lost because of traffic lights."

"Wow, Dad," said Marshall with a giddy grin. "Great story. Thanks."

"No problem. You know I'm always glad to help. Is there anything else?"

Marshall sat in numb silence for several minutes, memorizing every detail of his father's story as if it were the Pledge of Allegiance or the answers to a World Cultures test. It'd be great fodder to spread around school on Monday. When he was sure he hadn't forgotten anything, he said, "Dad, why did you and Mom get divorced?"

Edgar sighed and grinned a grim death mask as if saying, "I wish you hadn't asked me that." When the words came, they were accompanied by a tired drawl occasionally spitting spiteful fire. "I didn't want to tell you this, Son, but your mother's a demon."

Marshall gasped, almost swallowing his tongue.

"I don't want to say too much right now, but it's true. You know your Grandpa Joe?"

"Uh huh." Marshall nodded.

"Well, he's a mean old man—a warlock, some would say. He cursed me for stealing his only daughter, and that curse caused an evil demon to come up and possess her."

Marshall covered his mouth as if afraid to breathe or make a sound.

"Sure, she looks normal enough. Goes to church on Sunday trying to hide the truth. But watch her. You'll see how edgy she gets when the preacher goes off on a rant."

"But Mom. . . ."

"No, Mars. That's all I can say. But don't let her catch on that you know. She might slurp your brains out the hole in your ear while you're asleep."

Marshall's pupils turned foggy like two jade eyes on a bamboo god. The atmosphere around him was just as ominous, weighing on him like unexpected prophecies of impending doom. Edgar and Marshall must have gone twenty miles or more in a brooding silence before Marshall's mind finally relegated the truth to its proper place and moved on. "Dad," he said.

"Yes?"

"Where do babies come from?"

Edgar swerved nervously in the road. "Have you asked your mother about that, Mars?"

"Yeah huh."

"What did she tell you?"

"She said they come from two people getting together like birds."

"Well, that's right, Son. But it's only part of the story. When two people get together, they do something called 'making love.' It's just like the birds who join together, wing in wing, for a dance that could be either fruitful or fatal. They lose all control and go spinning toward the ground in a massive maddening downward spiral, only to break apart at the last instant and fly away, or off to try again."

"What happens if they don't break apart?"

"That's the sad part, Mars. If they stop too soon, the lady bird won't be happy, so she won't lay any eggs. But if they wait too long, they crash into the dirt at a frightening speed and lie there broken and battered for some mangy mutt to come along and devour."

"That's horrible, Dad. Why make love at all? Sounds like nothing but trouble."

"Oh God," thought Edgar. "It's getting way too deep." Not knowing any better way to put it, he said, "It's fun. You're flying up and down and round and round, and then you're spiraling straight to earth. It's a thrill, like riding a roller coaster only with no track to keep you safe. But, if you spin too fast, it could change the weather. That's where tornadoes come from, Mars. It's people making love without any control."

"Wow! That's amazing! But why. . . ?"

Edgar stopped him. "Enough for now. See? Looks like you're home."

Marshall hugged his father and said goodbye. He smiled as if already making those tornadoes in his mind. "Thanks, Dad," he said.

"Any time. You know I'm always here when you have important questions."

Marshall only came to visit for two weeks every summer. So, Edgar liked to take the boy on extended trips to strange places. They'd gone to Yellowstone and Hilton Head, D.C. and New Orleans, anywhere that looked entertaining. When Marshall was eleven, the two went to Disney World in Florida, where they were attacked by imaginary sharks, sent twenty thousand leagues under the sea, and visited by green, glowing ghosts who popped up just over their shoulders like pets, close enough to lick a cheek with affection. But Marshall had little interest in any of that. To him, Edgar was the best amusement park in the world, and he never hesitated to ride the wildest rides. He fired off questions like space probes

searching for intelligent life. In line at Space Mountain, walking by the giant golf ball at Epcott, watching a parade on Main Street, he'd smile and say, "Dad, why do caterpillars change into butterflies?" or "Dad, what's a democrat?"

Edgar would reply with his typical deadpan drawl, "Because they've been infected with super-secret diseases by their communist earthworm enemies, so they'll die if they don't," or "A person who's had the political portion of his brain cut out after years of letting it go to waste."

"Dad, why are goldfish called goldfish when they aren't even gold?"

"Good question, Mars. It goes back to the middle ages when autonomous countries refused to accept coins minted by other autonomous countries. Free trade was almost impossible, and people couldn't leave England, for example, to go and visit relatives in France. So some genius figured out that, while the rate of exchange for money varied from country to country, the rate of exchange of orangefish—they were called 'orangefish' back then—had to be the same from place to place. So, the French, English, Germans and Spanish got together and decided one orangefish would be the equivalent of one ounce of gold not yet minted into a coin. Hence the term 'goldfish.' See? Of course, it didn't last. Businesses needed huge tanks to contain their profits, and a clumsy child could send a hotel or restaurant into bankruptcy. Besides, bartenders couldn't figure out how to make change for a goldfish when someone asked for a copper's worth of ale."

"Wow," said Marshall. "Thanks, Dad."

"No problem, Mars."

"Dad, how did the dinosaurs die?"

"Drugs, Son."

"The dodo birds?"

"Drugs."

"The passenger pigeons?"

"Ritual mass suicide. You don't need to hear about THAT."

Marshall kept silent for a while. "Dad, is making love like making a hot dog?"

Edgar looked at his son with shock. "Where on earth'd you hear such a thing?"

"Roach told me."

"Who in the world is Roach?"

"One of the boys at school. He made fun of me 'cause I didn't know how to make love. Said you put your wiener in the microwave and cover it with coleslaw when it gets hot."

Edgar shook his head in disgust. "What stories kids hear these days," he thought. Then, like Heracles in the Augean Stables, he set about cleaning the filth from his young child's

head. "No, Mars. Making love's not like making a hot dog. It's more like making a milkshake. Remember once before I told you about the birds spinning out of control?"

Marshall nodded and looked at his dad with wonder.

"It's the same with a milkshake. Round and round the blender with the blade turned on mix, or maybe puree, spinning and spinning down in a whirlpool of delight. But don't forget, if you quit too soon, your shake'll be too lumpy, and if you wait too long, your shake'll come out runny like pure milk. You got to let that blender go as crazy as it can, but at the same time, be patient and careful so your milkshake turns out perfect."

"So, it's not like a hot dog at all, really?"

"No, Mars. But think about it. I told you before that you make love to make babies, so to encourage you to make babies, making love has to be rich and sweet. What tastes better, a hot dog or a milkshake?"

"I don't know," said Marshall.

"You don't know?"

"I like 'em both."

"Hmmm," said Edgar. "Well, let's go get a couple hot dogs and a nice, thick shake. Then you can make up your mind."

"Really? Thanks, Dad. Thanks." As always, Edgar's wisdom inspired young Marshall. The boy couldn't wait to get back so he could tell Roach and all his friends.

The summer after Marshall turned fourteen, it was his idea to go camping at Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia. It wasn't that he enjoyed camping or fishing—in fact, he found them slightly less entertaining than doing chin-ups or squat-thrusts during soccer practice—but he knew he and his father could engage in such activities without including Edgar's new wife, Arlene. She hated bugs and trees and lakes and just about everything else without a skip button or automatic rewind. Marshall didn't dislike Arlene, but he preferred to spend two weeks with just his dad.

By now, Marshall knew to take everything his father said with a grain of salt, a wink, and a nod. That didn't mean he'd stopped believing Edgar, but he'd learned to be skeptical ever since he found out former President Clinton wasn't a hardcore toothpaste addict while in office. Still, he liked to listen to the old man who had such a remarkable way of explaining things.

"Dad," said Marshall, as the two sat on a soggy bank, scratching their bug bites and poison ivy buboes while watching their bobbers fail to bob like little red Titanics unwilling to sink no matter how large of an iceberg had been rammed.

"Yeah, Mars. What is it?"

"Have you ever read Shakespeare?"

"Many times, Son."

"We're reading Romeo and Juliet in English class."

"Wonderful play. Enjoying it?"

"It's not bad. But I was wondering, do you have any idea why Shakespeare wrote so many tragedies? I mean, so many characters DIE. If you did that in a movie, it'd go direct to video."

"You're right. But there's a perfectly good explanation for it. You see, Shakespeare lived under the reign of a merciless, tyrannical queen." He paused for effect. "Queen JoBeth."

"That's Mom's name," Marshall said.

Edgar shrugged as if to say the connection was entirely coincidental. "So it is. Anyway, Queen JoBeth ruled England with an iron hand and a sharpened axe, never hesitating to sever an arm, a leg, a genital, or even a head if a citizen broke one of her rules."

"What kind of rules?"

"Oh, you know, the basics. Never wear a hat in the presence of a horse. Don't feed the peasants. No loud rap or rock n' roll music after eight in the evening. Common stuff."

"So, what's it got to do with Shakespeare?"

"Well, old Will never broke any rules. He was a coward at heart and he preferred to keep his head attached. Even so, he'd become quite a success writing romantic comedies. He had money, power, chicks. He was directing videos for MTV, and beer commercials. Big star, you know. Then Queen JoBeth found out she was dying from a well-deserved disease—syphilis, I think. Since she was the heroine of her own boring story, and since she was dying, she decreed that from then on, all main characters in every play had to die at the end as well."

"No way."

"It's true, Mars. I wouldn't lie to you. Shakespeare had no choice. He was too much of a pansy to stand up to the queen. For the rest of JoBeth's life, he wrote tragedies, some of which are now classics of literature."

"That's amazing, Dad. Thanks."

"No problem, Son."

The two sat silently on the bank, staring at the sky, staring at the water, staring at their unmoving bobbers. After an hour or two, Marshall caught a turtle, but he let it go because, no matter how much Edgar tried to convince him otherwise, he knew turtles aren't fish.

That night, as they were lying out under the stars like two cowboys in an old western, Marshall finally asked the question: "Dad, when you and Arlene make love, what's it like?"

Edgar didn't even flinch as he replied, "That's kind of personal, Son."

"I know, but. . . ."

"But WHAT?"

"I'm getting older. I'll be making love pretty soon. I need to know what it's like."

'Pretty soon' wasn't exactly the way Edgar preferred to think of it. In his mind, terms 'eventually' or 'someday' seemed more appropriate. Nonetheless, he understood how mixed up kids had become since the so-called sexual revolution, so he figured it was probably best to be straight with Marshall. "It's like a game of croquet," he said. "You got your mallet and you got your balls and you have to be smart as you try to angle shots through the steel portals. Sometimes you got to go slow and steady, lining up and easing on with a delicate tap. Other times, you just pull back and slam your mallet down with a smack. But it's like I always told you, Son, you've got to watch each shot carefully to make sure you get it right-- not too much, not too little. Otherwise, you'll mess up the stroke and have a lousy game."

Marshall considered this for some time, staring up at Andromeda and imagining himself playing croquet with the girls of Playboy and Penthouse that he and his friends liked to look at in Roach's father's room when the old man wasn't around. When his games were over, he sighed resignedly and whispered, "Thanks, Dad," to Edgar, who'd already drifted off to sleep.

Marshall was seventeen before he had his first intimate encounter with a girl. Actually, it was a woman. His lady friend, Cindy, was nineteen and a sophomore at Youngstown State University. He met her after crashing a frat party, pretending to be one of the brothers of Omega Omega Phi in order to get free beer. He saw Cindy dancing on a landing between flights of stairs. She had short blonde hair and eyebrows like sunbeams through a heavy cloud cover. Her lips were small and pink as pink lemonade, even without lip gloss. She smelled of spilled beer and cigarette smoke, but also another flavor like caramel from perfume coating her neck.

Cindy took him back to her dorm room under cover of darkness as if he were a mad bomber or a secret agent. "You're adorable, Hal," she said to him over and over. He was going by Hal these days, instead of the more traditional Marshall or even Mars. "I want you to make love to me." And yes, she actually used the words 'make love' rather than more colloquial phrases that might have distracted Edgar's inexperienced son.

Having heard the right phrase, like a password or a key installed under hypnotic suggestion, Marshall went to work, applying all the methods his father taught him: bird on a crash dive, tornado wreaking havoc, rich and creamy milkshake swirling round the blender like a black hole, and finally a game of croquet. Gentle at times, explosive at others, he kept at it until he and Cindy had no energy left to breathe, let alone continue making love. As they lay there spent in each other's arms, basking in the warm afterglow of intercourse, Cindy turned to Marshall and kissed him on the cheek. "That's the most incredible sex I've ever had," she told him. "Where'd you learn to do all that?"

Smiling, Marshall kissed her back. "My father taught me everything I know."

"Oh," Cindy replied, closing her eyes and remembering how she'd felt with every spin and

whack. She whispered a brief prayer to the night. "Thanks, Dad," she said, and lay there in Marshall's arms imagining a world where all fathers were so candid and considerate when it came to teaching their children about something as important as making love.

Don't Judge Me, or Judge Me... Sexily
by
Alison Burke

Examining the past of one's own art is not just important; nay, I say it should be required by the Norse gods! For how can we as writers grow if we cannot joyfully laugh at our past prose exploits? How I ask you? HOW?!

Case in point: this evening, I came across some of my elementary school work in an old box. One item of particular interest was an old story I wrote in the second grade. The story, which told of the perils of a young girl named Marilyn, had a thick plot full of twists, turns and dramatic irony. I will sum up the story with this basic summary:

Marilyn runs away from home but she doesn't mind being homeless because she likes camping (apparently in the streets). Winter is on its way, so she needs more clothes to be a hobo fashion dynamo, or a hooker. (The details here were sketchy at best.) She only has exactly \$20.50 and so she has to go to the bank where, incredibly, this seven year old girl not only has an account but enough money to get an entire new winter wardrobe (because who needs to pay rent when you love street camping?). She gets some new clothes and then decides being a street bum kind of sucks but at least she looks good. Then, for some unknown reason, she buys a book and goes home where her mom and she have this reunion which consists of talking all day.

Sure the character development left something to be desired—like character development—but the moral was great: being homeless isn't as bad when you look good doing it. Funny how relevant this story is to my current existence—a case of art imitating life. Marilyn and I share the same affinity for fashion and camping. But we also realize that at home you don't have to pay rent and you have indoor plumbing. I'd have to say that is the ironic twist—something which every good story must encompass.

I also have another piece, a poem I wrote about my dad (in his pre-medicated days) when I was about five. The fantastic poem reads as such:

my dad, my dad
he's always mad
he's never ever, ever glad
so please don't make me sad

That cut is totally the first track on my rap album.

Looking back on the past does mean facing up to some hard truths (like my childhood lack of knowledge about the banking industry) and some deep, enduring scars (why didn't I have a rap album when I was seven?!), but the rewards of contemplation far outweigh the devastating trip down Repressed Memory Lane.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have \$20.25 burning a hole in my pocket!

Prozac and Bee stings.
by
By J.M. Becker

Every day when Darby takes his Prozac, a bumblebee flies out of nowhere and stings his right eyebrow.

When Darby's doctor asked,

"Darby is there really a bee? Or are you afraid to be happy?"

Darby stretched his right eyebrow down so the little red bumps were more visible. The doctor scribbled a few lines on his legal pad with an "I see..."

Darby turned to his wife for support,

"Man, I am really depressed."

"Then take your Prozac."

"But the bee!"

"A bee can only sting once, then he dies."

"Not this bee. He's fucking magic! And he loves to sting me!"

(In the secret Beehive behind Darby's medicine cabinet)

"I totally stung Darby today!"

"Yeah, you fucked him up! He was crying and then he called you a fuckhead!"

"I can't wait for tomorrow! I am going to sting him so hard in the exact same place! Now, pass the honey and play that tune!"

The bee's reclined in their black bee-size leather reclining chairs, sipped their honey, and bobbed their tiny heads to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee."

Darby called an exterminator. The exterminator was an old fat Italian with garlic breath.

"Now you say it's a bumblebee?"

"Yeah, it's huge!"

"Bumblebees only live outside."

"I swear the same one flies out every day and stings my eyebrow." Darby stretched his eyebrow down so the little red bumps were more visible.

"I don't see any beehives in here."

In a small crack in the mirror the Bees watched Darby talk to the Exterminator.

They all chanted in unison,

"Darby is a pussy! Darby is a pussy! Darby is a pussy!"

(Back in the Beehive)

"Operation Sting Darby" was in full force. Darby's picture was shown to the entire hive; the Bees would make loud noises with their tiny transparent wings and yell out their undying hatred of all things Darby.

"Sting HIM!"

"Kill Him!"

"Kill Goldstein, I mean Darby! Kill Darby!"

Then the President of the beehive gave a seven-minute speech about the evilness of Darby and God given freedoms of each and every bee. After the President's speech, the General of the beehive presented a colorful PowerPoint presentation about the stockpiles of weapons that Darby kept in the medicine cabinet.

"Darby must be stung. We must protect our way of life!"

All the bees cheered. Two bees fainted. One Bee was so excited he choked on his honey and CPR was administrated. The Bee survived. And with his first breath, he claimed Agents of Darby had slipped a choking drug in to his honey. A riot nearly broke out.

Back on the other side of the mirror Darby looked in to his reflection.

"Is there really a bee? Or am I really too afraid to be happy?"

Darby was about to pour the bottle of Prozac down the toilet, when "Operation Sting Darby Twice as Hard and More Times" was given the green light.

Bloody Yank
by
J.R. Carson

"To hell with all of you, then!" I slurred, stumbling out of the pub. That was the third place I'd been kicked out of that night.

"We saved your *asses* in dubya dubya two!"

The alley was cold and damp, especially on my hands and knees as I puked up Absinthe and vodka (a mixture I do *not* recommend). My head spun horribly as I righted myself and sauntered, knock-knee'd, along the wall.

"Ooooooh, beauuuutiful for spaaaacious skies! For barley, hopps, and graaaaain!"

"Shut up, ya' bloody yank!" shouted some voice from a window above.

I continued through the light of a single street lamp and finally found what looked like another place to explore. I busted in the red door, pushed out my chest, and stomped up to the nearest person.

"Gimme' your beshht shhhingle malt whishhkey and make it shhhnappy!" Drool began gathering in the corner of my mouth.

"Get the hell out of my flat!" the man screamed.

"My euro-dippity-doo-dahs are as good as aaanybody's, you lemony... limeny... *limey* bastard!"

This didn't seem to matter as he just shoved me right back onto the street.

"Bunch o' rude fuckers!" I was rotating my shoulders side-to-side like a six-year-old, my arms flapping like a rag doll's. "I don't know *who* the hell Bob is, but he sure ain't my fuckin' uncle!" I mumbled to no one in particular.

A boar's head painted on a shingle told me I had another shot at drinking, so I fell in.

It was filled with a quiet lot, all gruff looking and bigger than me—which is unusual, since I'm a solid two-fifty. I tried to straighten up so as not to look like an easy target.

My body leaned forward heavily and my feet pedaled to keep up—I nearly ran head-first into the bar, just missing a concussion. The bartender was a bit fuzzy, but I kept getting that 'feeling', that 'I want you' vibe, from him.

"Gimme' a..." I couldn't think of any complicated drinks, so I said "Bud. Aaaa Bud. That's right, aaaaa Bud."

He looked me up and down for a moment, then said "No Bud, sorry—'ow 'bout a Brown? It's on me."

I knew I wasn't going home alone tonight! He wasn't my usual 'thing', but, hey, lonely is lonely. I grinned from ear to eyebrow (I couldn't quite find the other ear) and gave up the only pick-up line I know.

"Did it hurt when heaven... no, no, wait... Did you get hurt in Heav... no, no, okay, I got it! Did you fall from Heaven, 'cause you look painful... Damn it, that's not it eeeeither!"

I was thankfully interrupted from my struggles when he said, "Don't bother, lady, I fancy blokes."

END

The Brains Of God
by
Jonathan Redhorse

So:

One day God took a revolver out of God's cabinet drawer and blew God's brains out all over the place.

The brains went everywhere, a great deal landing on Earth.

The size and sheer magnificence of the remnants immediately implied God. Renowned theologians were called to the scene and they confirmed, using assorted texts and the latest in forensic technology, that, yes, these were in fact the Brains of God.

This set up debate across the world:

"What do you think now, you pansy atheist? We've got the Brains of God on display at the Smithsonian."

"Well, I guess I was wrong. But now I'm right. There is no God. He committed suicide."

"You were wrong though, and that's what matters."

Pieces of God's brain really were displayed at the Smithsonian. They sat behind glass, charred, mangled and bloody; spectators couldn't get enough of them.

A small child named Betty Sue asked her mother:

"Does God hate us?"

"Well God... well he's probably not feeling a whole lot now... but he obviously loved us right up to the end. Why else would he prove his existence in such a striking manner?"

"Why?"

To show us that we're not alone. Now stand over there dear, and I'll take a picture of you with God's left frontal lobe."

Relieved by her mother's words, Betty Sue smiled and said:

"Cheese."

Adverbs
by
Mary Trafford

It is beyond coincidence that Andre Dubus can bring out a collection of stories called *Raven's Croft* and John Ravenscroft publishes his *Dubious Collected Stories, ON THE SAME DAY*, and both are printed on paper, both have words of mostly more than one syllable, both have the page numbers in the bottom right hand corner of the page.

Ravenscroft's lead story is called "Ostrich Central," about the demise of an on-line writer's group, Dubus's opener is "Death of an Emu," followed by "Mandarin Sunset," where Ravenscroft writes in his story "Bird Watching With My Mate Steve," the phrase "man during sunset".

This is a message, people, something crossing the cosmos. It is God leaking, it is the Jungian Collective Consciousness, a scarab beetle crawling where scarabs do not crawl to whisper (metaphorically speaking) 'we are not alone,' 'There are more things on Heaven and Earth, Prospero' (shit like that) and have you played a DVD backwards to discover all the people walk funny?

"The trouble with writing is there simply aren't enough adjectives, and the ones we have are boring. Then again, there's a bit of an adverb famine going on too."

This is what John Ravenscroft says when I ring him for the interview.

"Ring that bloke with a beard, that Dubus bloke with a girl's first name. See how he feels about modifiers."

It is at this point that we realize Dubus and Ravenscroft both have silver beards, both take a dump before breakfast, both like to look learned, leaning towards the camera, and like their biopics in black and white.

There are forces at work here, people.

"Mr Dubus."

"Yes."

"Thank-you for speaking to me. I've been speaking to Mr—"

"The bum in Lincolnsire? Mr Dubious Collected?"

"He said to ask about adjectives. There's a world shortage..."

"It's that fucking Proulx woman, she gets them wholesale then packs them into every fucking sentence. Why d'you think I write so spare, can't get an adjective under two dollars!"

"Proulx?"

"The tenuous, tense, torture of Ave Maria hits the roof of rooves, the arches, the archaic old man's mouth, a tonsilectomy, a scream, a sigh, squeezing between holy edges, of his buzzing, chronic cleft holy palate, the church abused, festered, festering, festooned with B flats, full, vile, vox humana, the paternoster pastronising partially contradicting itself in a masturbatory corner, the organs bellowing, organs mellowing, billowing, joyous discords, discord, accord, virgins dripping, weeping, sweeping, as Maria, virgin mother, that baby, never ripped from there, not a vagina, not an egress, legless, not MARIA, and silent eyes fix on varnished oak, vanishing oak, yesterday's superficial scratchings, the vagina, the virgin, more scratching."

"That's Proulx?"

"No, she's worse, wanna hear some?"

"Is it part of the interview?"

"No, but I like to share my pain."

"Just a little then..."

"What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't."

"Not Keegan is it? Not that wanker: ' Jack Sherman's word today is miasma. He is thinking of the morningfaint stench of misplaced semen, pussy, of feet and toenails and armpits, visitors, paper, print, of red wine drying to a sediment in glasses by the sink, the tiny ozones of television, carpetmites and spilled coffee, aerosol-dampened shit, wash'n'go, exhaust fumes, tyre-slick, colours of sirens, CD residue, atoms."

"Oh I don't know..."

"What? I suppose you like, ' Yesterday - (milieu) - Jack had thought of lies, protestations, fabrications and confabulations, of subtle underdigging, of sexgame alluding, of hurt and scathe and fluttering, the words first. He thought of proximities, knees which parted, pale hamstrings flashing, of stretches, openings, arms, mouths, legs (briefly), fingers flexing, intellects and raw ape.' too?"

"Um..."

"Jesus, man, not you too? Let me guess, MFA from IOWA? No, you sound like a Brit. So is it one of those faggot MAs from whatsisname, the Motion man over at UEA? They get to you too? What happened to plain English, hey?"

"I..."

"Hey, bud, whatevername. You don't know where I can get some cheap adjectives? I can go 30 cents, four for a dollar, but I don't want ordinary. I want a few of those bullshit modifiers, the sort Annie E gets. Y'know, " IN the long unfurling of his life, from tight-wound kid hustler in a wool suit riding the train out of Cheyenne to geriatric limper in this spooled-out year, Mero had kicked down thoughts of the place where he began, a so-called ranch on

strange ground at the south hinge of the Big Horns. He'd got himself out of there in 1936, had gone to a war and come back, married and married again (and again), made money in boilers and air-duct cleaning and smart investments, retired, got into local politics and out again without scandal, never circled back to see the old man and Rollo, bankrupt and ruined, because he knew they were.' Man, that stuff so squeezes the literati tits. I could make a mint."

"It's very worrying..."

"Very, where d'you get the very?"

"Oh, at home."

"You got adjectives?"

"I was going to write romances."

"Give me your address son. I'm coming over."

The Day of the Revolution by **Michael Jarrette-Kenny**

The revolution will not be satirized. All those who would attempt such an act will be considered reactionary and will be satirized themselves. Those who satirize satirists who have satirized reactionary satirists will themselves be judged reactionary and satirized appropriately.

In retrospect, it had been a particularly difficult day. Arriving at work that humid July morning I discovered a smoking crater where my desk would have normally been. "If Rube Goldberg had designed sex toys," a female intoned in the backdrop of the security tape as Abdul Mohammed Liechtenstein, the building janitor stumbled randomly into my cubicle at 8:35, two minutes prior to my arrival, on the day of the revolution. Earlier that morning in a fit of self-disgust over the failure of recent peace talks in the Middle East, The former orthodox Jew turned Islamic Fundamentalist had declared jihad against himself. Remarkably the localized detonation was unobserved by any of the other employees who assumed that I had been keeping some sort of incendiary device in my desk, in preparation for an upcoming "postal" session.

My co-workers tip toed around its circumference avoiding my gaze as soon afterward, the sprinklers began dispensing a frothing mass of what appeared to be non dairy creamer along the halls and stairwells. My supervisor arrived seconds later at the head of a phalanx of armed security guards who escorted me from the building, using my head as a battering ram with which to open the metal doors.

I returned home discouraged and confused, circling my block several times in an effort to find my house without success, only to find that in the intervening hour my white colonial had been painted lime green and a new house number affixed to the door. I attempted to insert my key into the lock as a set of conjoined twins dressed in Cotton Mather era apparel appeared in the doorway and began cursing my ancestors in a haughty dialect of Mandarin Chinese. Later I was to discover that the pair had recently left their small Amish community in Pennsylvania to begin their Rumspring, proceeding quickly through the bacchanalian underworld of the Amish rave scene, manufacturing methamphetamine on the side. After a raid on their lab in the motel 6 across the street, they had surveyed the landscape and settled on my house as the most suitable distribution point for their latest batch. They had been taking an online immersion course in Chinese in order to better converse with their pair of mail order brides and had apparently forgotten how to speak English in the interim.

My wife, a soon to be Nobel Prize winning physicist and amateur circus freak was nowhere to be found.

Returning to the office, I ritualistically disemboweled three security guards with a fountain pen given to me for my five year anniversary at the company, holding my office mates captive with a Black swing line stapler as I began composing my revolutionary manifesto, dictating to my hostages as they inscribed my words along the walls with type writer correction fluid. As they began to reflect on the profundity escaping my lips through the intercom speakers, they too turned upon their former masters on the upper floors, stripping to their underwear, rending the flesh of their ex-overseers with abandon, copulating wildly behind the partitions of their cubicles. As the entire office is now enshrined

at the Metropolitan Museum I often return in the early morning hours to gaze longingly at those hieroglyphs, the first manifestations of the revolutionary zeitgeist, inscribed along the morose corporate gray wall paper, designed by the C.I.A to diffuse any stirrings of unrest among the worker drones of America.

Out in the parking lot, crowds were already gathering in record-breaking numbers. By 2:00 in the afternoon, news helicopters began describing the assembled masses in adjectives usually reserved for the Nuremberg rallies and Britney Spears concerts. Midgets dressed in World War 2 era sailors suits were selling tee shirts with my likeness photo shopped onto a dollar bill in place of George Washington's head, the proceeds of which were allegedly donated to charity, funding a maverick ex-McDonald's execs fledgling franchise of assisted suicide discotheques in Oregon and the Netherlands. Some garrulous employee had prematurely disseminated my secret 5-point plan for the proletariat revolution to the assembled press corp. and was promptly assassinated by one of my more fervent followers.

Heading a motorcade of 30 other cars (driven by pierced hermaphrodites, Babies with beards etc.) My wife Kathleen appeared in the middle distance, clad in black leather widow's regalia, straddling the front seat of a replica of the Lincoln town car made famous by Lee Harvey Oswald. As usual the anatomically functional vagina that stood in place of her left ear was moistening beneath her polyester head thong from the erotic charge she was getting out of denouncing me in public.

"Of course, I have spoken to representatives from the Nobel committee and my ex-husbands actions will not effect the outcome of their deliberations."

Later at the custody trial for the unified field theory, which she had birthed with my assistance, she continued to minimize my mammoth contribution to our joint brainchild. It was during a late night aural sex session that ended up lost in a post coital collage of lengthy equations uniting Clerk Maxwell's electromagneticism, Schrodinger's wave equation's, and Einstein's general relativity (She had actually converted the head board of our bed into a chalkboard). She would claim that my contribution to her cogitation was a mere 2 inches, a lie easily disproved before the gathered onlookers who afterwards had to be revived with smelling salts after glimpsing my rippling appendage.

Needless to say, I have been awarded ample recompense for my contributions to Humanity. The custody agreement has allotted me 30 hours a week in which I may stand outside Kathy's house chanting "na na nana na" through a bullhorn, half the income generated from any commercial enterprise involving "My Unified Field Theory" (patent pending) and a bronze statue of my likeness roughly equal in proportion to the empire state building to be erected on the former white house lawn.

The revolution will be available on DVD, VHS, Laser Disc, CD-Rom, Betamax, Hardcover, Paperback, Polaroid, Daguerreotype, Oil painting, Cuneiform Tablet and as a limited edition Neanderthal Cave drawing.

I am watching a movie of a review of a book inspired by the book I am currently writing. The main characters are being played by the British royal family. They are dressed up as letters of the alphabet. The remaining letters are being played by 70's porno stars. The movie consists of close-ups of the actor's crotches. The movie has been shot one letter at a time so it is very very long, longer then the holocaust documentary Shoah, longer then a Michael Caine film festival. Because the screen consists of nothing but black space, it takes me awhile to realize that I am not actually watching the movie. I am in fact, watching

the back of the head of the person who is watching the movie. I become angry at this deception and storm out of the theater. The letters follow me off the screen into the street causing a 24-car pile up. Ron Jeremy's engorged organ is stuck into a pedestrian's eye socket. Prince Charles has been impaled on a fire hydrant and water is shooting out of his ears and mouth causing and an army of overheated street kids to gather around him, bathing their overheated bodies in the royal effluence. Seka lays spread eagled over the traffic light, her long legs extended out into the bottom half of the letter A. The random piles of bodies have through some statistical aberration formed into advertisements for Preparation H suppositories. Rather than take the victims to the hospital, the arriving rescue crews drink apple martinis and play scrabble with the corpses.

I am oblivious to the carnage my exit has caused. Because of my misanthropic tendencies, I have been barred from participating in the Miss America pageant. I am no longer interested in being the fearless revolutionary leader. My followers lie out before me like a lumpy carpet, hoping to receive the imperial footprint on their faces, a mark that will entitle them to a lifetime of free white castle cheeseburgers. This makes travel on foot difficult to say the least. As a result I have had Arnold Schwarzenegger's headless body made into my personal off road vehicle. A joystick similar to that of the Atari 2600 has been attached to the brainstem allowing superior handling at a price well within the reach of most totalitarian dictators.

I go to the port authority bus terminal to consult the oracle: a transsexual Jane Mansfield impersonator with a bad case of colitis whom has taken up residence in a stall in the 2nd floor restroom. I pound on the door of the stall and she yells at me to come back later. I adjourn to the bowling alley next door and play 3 games, conquering a visiting champion from the Czech republic on a 7 10 split by cracking my bowling ball in half with a shuriken throwing star. I return to the bathroom and take a seat in the stall next door.

"Forgive me fearless leader," she says in an incongruous accent reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich. "I was delayed by the stirrings of my odoriferous taskmaster."

A protracted siege by a busload of food poisoned Bolivians, apparently protesting her commandeering of the commode has left her exhausted and irritably bowelled. In revenge she was preparing a sphincterian soliloquy of epic proportions. It began with a brief apologia.

To the coprophagous critics
Who crowd like hungry flies
around the words of others
With envy in their eyes

Pincers poised they rend and tear
Imagining a feast
And bathe their prey in acid
When they find no shit to eat

Scrape and scour for sustenance
Among another's dreams
When time would be much better spent
In search of a latrine

I'll paraphrase Catullus

And not urge you to desist
Keep smiling through your poison pen
Teeth cleaned by poet's piss

Before continuing in this excretory indulgence, she felt it is was her duty to detail for the edification of the uninitiated her ascent (or rather descent) into this peculiar, pyloric Parnassus (Okay enough alliteration for one goddamn paragraph already).

"You know," she says, "I was not always where I am today (that is alone, in the dark, with my panties around my ankles). Try to imagine yourself perched on the porcelain altar, struggling and straining after one too many visits to the local taco bell, when something strange happens. The lights dim and the walls of your stall tremble. Slowly the soft stertorous moan, the flatulent stutter of peristalsis is by degrees transformed into a lush sonorous baritone, a voice that can only be described as biblical. The note sounds, generating overtones, forming into phonemes and then, miraculously words. Like Siegfried bathed in the dragon's blood, the unintelligible squeaks and snorts of your anus have been converted into garrulous music. Quatrains, prophecies, opera arias begin to emanate from your hindquarters. Imagine your shock and disgust. You pull up your pants and rush out of the office without explanation. When you arrive back at your apartment you take all of your remaining Prozac and wash it down with a bottle of Jim Beam. You slump down on your couch and listen to its plaintive wail, the whispered threats smothered in the seat cushions. People have accused me (unjustly) of having an adolescent preoccupation with bodily functions (I prefer to think of it as Rabelaisian), but have they every tried to sleep while their asshole whistled the Battle Hymn of the Republic, the Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde and Free Bird all in one simultaneous cacophonous, counterpoint? I think not.

"How does one cope with such trauma? Life as you can imagine goes on as before except for one small thing: the slightest bout of flatulence can have deadly consequences. Walking down the street can be impossible when your asshole is shouting obscenities at passerby. It insults your boss' hair plugs. It tells ethnic jokes on crowded subway platforms. You wear three pairs of underwear, you try butt plugs, pacifiers, gas free diets. You spend years in therapy, attempting to work through that difficult toilet training when suddenly the voice changes. Suddenly everything makes sense. A content begins to emerge. Days and nights are spent feverishly transcribing these anal utterances until your bathroom walls are covered in minute maniacal scrawl. The voice emits cryptic farts like Zen koans. Rolls and rolls of toilet paper are filled with your exegesis of elimination. A voluminous philosophy of the universe takes shape as you struggle through your third helping of fiber rich oat bran. But alas, you are stranded in your stenography, how does one notify the public at large to the wisdom contained with your obviously highly developed digestive tract?

"Needless to say the Port Authority Police were not thrilled at my demands for cable modem access, to say nothing about the velvet lined toilet seat cover. It took an hour trapped in an elevator for my asshole to convince them with its superior rhetorical skill. Unfortunately this necessitated a few concessions on my end (no pun intended), one of which being the role of myself and my partner in this little enterprise. How does one pay these exorbitant New York City rental fees? Among the suggestions are a weekly advice column (Dear Duodenum?) a detective show (Tales from the stall?). Or perhaps a game show (You bet your ass?) As both my asshole and myself view entertainment as merely a day job we will leave it to your holiness to decide an appropriate rate of compensation."

"Never mind that." I say. "What the hell do I do now? I'm tired of the fearless leader thing."

There was nothing but a solitary eructation, reverberating solemnly between the tiled surfaces.

Finally she said.

"There is always pizza delivery."

Violence is not the answer. Violently answering is not the answer. Violently not answering is not the answer. Answering violently that you will not answer is not the answer. Not answering violently that you will not answer is not an answer and therefore will not receive an answer.

The Big Picture
by
Pete Butler

As much as I hated my neighbor's cat, I did *not* mean for that to happen.

I mean, how was I supposed to know I had that much catnip growing in my yard?

"Look at it this way," I told my neighbor. "Your cat may be gone, but luckily for cats as a species, another carrier of the 'doesn't-respect-riding-lawnmowers' gene has been purged from the gene pool."

He hit me anyway.

-End-

Small Worlds
by
Rob Rosen

"Name?"

"Lashondra."

"Lashondra what?"

"I said, Lashondra!"

"No, last name, please."

"Oh. Bijou. Lashondra Bijou."

"That your real name?"

"Depends."

"On what?"

"Who's asking."

"Please, state your real name, for the record."

"Fine. Evelyn Jones."

"Age?"

"24."

"Real age."

"34."

"Sex?"

"Fifty dollars. For you, forty."

"No. What is your sex?"

"Oh. Damn, officer, can you be more specific with these questions, please?"

"Fine, Ms. Jones, what sex are you?"

"Depends."

"Miss Jones, please."

"Fine, male. I'm a man. Sir. Officer."

"Then your real name isn't Evelyn Jones, is it?"

"That's what I call myself when I'm not Lashondra Bijou."

"What does your mother call you then?"

"Bitch. Or whore. But she usually doesn't call me. We're not very close. Anymore."

"Fine. What does it say on your birth certificate, then?"

"Leroy. Leroy Brown."

"Fine, Mr. Brown. Height and weight?"

"It's not polite to ask a lady?... And don't look at me like that. Lady is a state of mind."

"Height and weight, please."

"Fine. Lordy, you're a rude one. 6'1, 160 pounds. And to save you the trouble, blonde hair and blue eyes."

"Without the heels, wig, and contacts?"

"5'8, brown, and brown. Wanna see?"

"See what, ma'am?"

"The wig? Got it at Miss Love's House of Hair. Only cost me twenty bucks, a steal...I mean, cheap. I didn't steal it or nothing."

"No, ma'am. Keep your wig on. They'll take it when they bring you back. And the heels."

"What? These heels? Nuh-uh. Not these heels, officer, sir. These my only good ones."

"Sorry, ma'am. Rules are rules."

"Rules, like these cheap nails, meant to be broken, officer...officer...say, what's your name, anyway?"

"Officer Babcock. Sergeant Justin Babcock."

"Sounds dirty. That I like. Fits a big, strong man like yourself."

"Please ma'am, can we just finish this. Got a big line behind you."

"Hey now, nothing big on this behind. Got something big on this front, though. Wanna see?"

"Please, ma'am, can we just..."

"Wait, did you say Justin Babcock?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Seronda Babcock's boy?"

"Yes, ma'am. Why?"

"Justin, it's me. Leroy. From 19th Street."

"Sorry, doesn't ring a bell. Now, if we can continue. Current address?"

"Justin, you know my address. It's three floors up from your mamma's. You used to come play with me all the time. But my mamma moved out and I stayed on. Remember?"

"Please state your address for the record, ma'am."

"Why you keep calling me ma'am? You know it's me...Leroy. You the one who brought me my first panties. Remember?"

"Please then, sir, I haven't lived at that address for over ten years. How can I be expected to remember..."

"Oh you remember, all right. Used to come over and make me wear your mamma's panties and bras. You the reason I ended up like this...probably. Your fellow officers know you like to dress up other men in lady's things?"

"Please, sir, keep your voice down."

"If I remember it correctly, you used to like it when I was loud. Specially when you was tearing those panties off from the back, like you like."

"Now hold on just one minute..."

"Yeah, that's what you used to ask me to do. Though it was more than a minute, if I remember correctly. Though it never did take much longer than that. You never could last very long, now could you?"

"Please, sir, maybe we can talk about this outside. Please walk this way."

"Oh, not that way, sugar. Not in these heels."

"Please, just follow me."

"Sure, officer. Anything you say."

"Okay, look. Seeing as our mamma's were probably friends and all, I'm going to let you off. This time. For old time's sake. But don't let me catch you here again. Please."

"Oh, okay, no problem, officer. Just give me a couple of quarters so I can call for a ride. This ain't no safe neighborhood for a lady like myself."

"Fine. Here. The phone's around the corner. Just go."

"Okay, Justin. Will do. And say hello to your mamma for me. Tell her I still got some of her panties, if she wants 'em back. They don't fit me no more, anyway. You can even come over and get them yourself, if you like."

"No thank you. Good bye, sir."

"I think I like the ma'am better. But okay then. Bye for now, Justin. And thanks for the quarters."

"Hello, Laquisha, it's me, Lashondra. I'm down at the police station. Come get me, please. Oh, and thanks for that tip. Worked like a charm. He turned whiter than Michael Jackson there for a few seconds. Thank goodness he didn't ask for your panties back, though. I clean forget to put any on today."

The Nature of Love Revealed
by
By Ross Eldridge

"When you are round boys, you should sit with your legs crossed so they don't see what you got."

These words-from a young girl dressed in her middle school uniform and wearing a rhinestone-studded tiara-were addressed to the television audience by way of a newsman and his camera crew. The girl's teacher had just given an interview about an after-school programme that encouraged young girls to be modest, ladylike, versed in etiquette, yet not shy and retiring. The girl with the tiara had earned the highest grade, and was presented to the viewing public as a role model for her peers. She had smiled coyly at her fame, and was ready when asked what was the most important thing she had learned. "When you are round boys."

I am sure that I could improve this little story by describing what local news came before and after it, because news generated here in Bermuda tends to be quaint, and usually funny. I must have heard the preceding items, but after the girl's pronouncement I was laughing so much that I forgot the earlier stories and missed the rest of the news, the stock market indices, as well as the weather forecast for the Bermuda area. Oh! Let it rain!

Certainly, this is a fine course of study for young ladies seeking a life of deportment rather than vulgarity. The child earned that tiara if just for her brilliant comment on the evening news. I'd love to have seen interviews with some of the girls who didn't make the grade. Of course, I'm British, and I always hope for stories involving bums, tits, knickers and buggery.

I live across the road from a park called the Montpelier Arboretum, which has been far less wooded since Hurricane Fabian blasted Bermuda last September 2003. A year before that, visitors to the Arboretum started reporting sightings of a naked male. Of course, these stories made the local newspaper, usually page three, and the evening news on television.

As the stories spread, I noticed increased activity in the Arboretum, with dozens driving to the park to eat their boxed lunches. To the best of my knowledge, the "Arboretum Bandit" did not turn up for the lunch crowd. I'm not sure if anyone was apprehended, or whether the flasher moved on.

Last summer, an American tourist went to the police and reported that as she walked onto the Warwick Long Bay beach, on our South Shore, early one morning, a naked man leapt out from behind a sand dune, apparently happy to see her. At least he wasn't carrying a gun. The tourist actually walked on down the beach, thinking the incident too silly to make a fuss over. Her eventual report to the police continued. Farther down the beach, another

naked man leapt out from behind another sand dune. Clearly, the woman had a two-for-the-price-of-one coupon. She registered her complaint.

And that should have been enough. However, even later in the season, someone with one of those mobile phones that can take snapshots caught a flasher in action on our spectacular Horseshoe Bay Beach. That one was on the front page of the Royal Gazette, suitably blurred where it is supposed to count.

In July, Bermuda's finest arrested the first flasher of the 2004 season. Not at the beach. This bloke was outside an apartment block wearing only sandals. The news report said black sandals. Could that matter? Who would notice that?

About a year ago, my sister boasted to me that her son, then sixteen, had a first girlfriend, and that the girl in question was a year ahead of him at school. My sister cooed: "An older woman." My sister had convinced my nephew to invite the girl over for dinner, and then added that the girl might like to come over earlier and prepare their meal for them. I'm sure the girl had no intention of cooking the meal; she'd have thought the invitation out to dinner was an opportunity to enjoy her boyfriend's parents' fare. I asked what food the dinner guest was being asked to provide. Spaghetti. I'll remark on that.

I do not often eat at my sister's home, as she is actually worse at cooking than our mother was. The house specialty at my sister's is spaghetti, with the unheated pasta sauce in a jar on the table. No meatballs. No garlic toast. A spoon for the sauce is all you get. She orders the same when they eat out, and when she persuades a dinner guest to come over and make the meal.

A few days later, I telephoned my sister to hear how the evening with the first sweetheart had gone. The girl had turned up, which shows she was reasonably brave; and had made spaghetti, which went down well with the hosts; and had not run away screaming. I can't explain how she managed to stay for the entire meal and conversation. Would she have left saying: "Thanks for having me!" while meaning it?

My sister told me she'd told the first girlfriend, as they ate spaghetti, that she'd taken my nephew to the drugstore and made him buy condoms. My sister's cheerful words to the girl on this first meeting: "So he won't get you pregnant."

I'm sure the young woman was pleased to hear that, but it was not enough to keep her interested in my nephew. The love boat had gone on the rocks as it left the pier. Last I heard, my nephew was applying to join the Royal Navy.

A friend's mobile phone rang while I was talking with him and his wife as we visited someone we all knew. The friend was trying to hold the telephone with one hand, and his drink with the other, and the caller wanted him to write down a message. He looked panicked and admitted defeat, so his wife grew another pair of arms and took the phone from him. She juggled plates and the phone, held a drink, took a message, carried on a few conversations and told a joke, all at the same time. I believe she could have done all of that and more, talking in sign language, if necessary. It was something to watch, I'll tell you.

"Men," said my friend's wife, "are no good at multitasking."

"What do you mean?" cried out her indignant husband.

"You are a great example of what I'm saying. The only time you can do any multitasking is when you are fantasizing having sex with a pair of identical twins."

"Oh!"

"And you still can't do it."

When you throw a wedding reception on the lawn outside your bed-sit apartment, and your guests are eating, drinking, singing, dancing and carrying on, and a weather-front roars in across the Great Sound, you need each guest to be a sprinter, flexible, and not claustrophobic.

There were about forty of us-all but three or four were adults-holding plates of food and odd bits of stereo equipment including a karaoke machine, as we crammed into the little apartment. The whisper went out: "The rain won't last long. Pass my plate into the kitchen for more chicken." And plates were passed from person to person, refilled, and sent back. As there were dozens of casseroles, pots, pans and heated servers, it was remarkable that those who wanted spring rolls got them, and those that fancied a nice bit of squid got that sent back.

I stood near the doorway, another half-dozen guests had arrived in the rain, couldn't fit inside, so they stood outside under umbrellas while eating and drinking. The whisper went out: "The rain won't last long. I hear the cake is fabulous."

Next to me was a young lady who is somewhat less than five feet tall, even in heels and with her hair up. As I passed plates to and from the kitchen, I looked down. The young lady was looking up, or trying to. Her blouse was unbuttoned somewhat lower than she wished and she smiled up at me and said: "I'd better button this shirt, or Ross will look down and learn the nature of love." She used the word "learn" and not "see".

I wondered why my short friend chose that expression to excuse her actions as she adjusted her clothing. She could have said I might learn the chicken dance, or Tagalog, or geriatric nursing. Happens I know she has experience of all those. Apparently, there was more going on. The rule is: Don't let them see what you got.

You can laugh in a jam-packed room, but it must be like the action of the stadium "wave". In order to do it well, all must take part. And I laughed and the laughter moved into the room, a little faster than a plate looking for a third helping of kebabs. The Nature of Love? Indeed!

Now They Call Me Donjon
by
Tammy Walters

Flesh does bruise, she told me. That's what the arnica gel is for. Two applications, three at the most-everything as good as new. As long as the skin isn't broken, she added.

She swung the whip in an underhanded motion, like someone pitching softball. It cracked against the seat of my Dockers.

Ah, yes, I said. No broken skin. You are, after all, Feather Lyte. Ha ha-like she hadn't heard that one a hundred times before. Then I wondered what it said about me that I would assume she'd been with a hundred guys just because this was her thing. Maybe she only brought her special men down here. Who knows-maybe I was the first. So I amended myself:

You are the one with the medical training.

She smiled at that and assured me medical considerations were a priority for her. Such as: all toys used in anal play were run through the dishwasher. On the pot scrubber setting. Twice. Then, believing the ice had been broken, she invited me to examine the rest of the contents in her first-aid kit-a black leather bag she kept right next to the suspension harness:

Butterfly closures.

Burn spray.

Band-Aids-featuring the Peanuts characters; the box of assorted sizes.

Neosporin

Eye patch.

Needle and surgical thread.

Two of those long wooden stick-thingys that the guys at Home Depot use to stir paint. (I held these up for explanation. Splints, Feather said.)

Okay, I said. Okay. Okay. I was beginning to see this as the punishment my mother had always warned me about-like, don't use your sisters' batons as pretend crutches or someday the Lord really will make you a cripple. And although I hadn't intended to say this out loud, I must have, because Feather said, no, Joe, honey (not my real name), that's the mistake most people make-thinking this is all about punishment. It's not. And I could see the eagerness she had displayed in showing me the kit was dissipating, so I said, Kim (not her real name), Feather, honey, you're going to have to give me a minute to adjust. I could not have been more surprised if you'd opened that basement door and the goddamn Bat Cave had been down here.

Well, you don't have to use that language, she said, closing the kit, and I realized it was, in

fact, the first time I'd used a swear word in front of her. Already the dynamics of this relationship were changing.

I sensed the mood was turning ugly, that I was disappointing Feather in a way that might become insurmountable-an unfortunate word, but that's the way everything seemed to be tilting-so I chose the most innocuous-looking item from the table where Feather had picked up her whip and tried to muster some enthusiasm.

The U.S.S. Oriskany? I asked. I made the small plastic battleship ride pretend waves through the air.

Feather became animated again and took the ship from me. In keeping with the spirit of safety first, she explained, everything that goes IN must be of a shape and size that can easily be taken OUT. I watched her long, slender fingers thrust the battleship back and forth in demonstration and searched my memory for any false signals I may have given. I only hit on one: the emergency appointment I'd taken with the dentist for whom she worked, a certain Dr. R-. (An old-fashioned, Lady with the Dog kind of device to use, I know, but again, I don't think it appropriate to give his real name.) A filling in my molar had fallen out, and Dr. R- went to numb me with the local anesthesia and I said, no thanks, I'll pass. He raised his eyebrows and said, oh my, don't tell me you're one of those? I'd looked at Feather and winked, and she'd ducked her head and giggled-a delicate gesture that made me think of a Geisha. Of course, the truth was that I had a major sales presentation to make and couldn't afford to have my lips immobilized for the rest of the day.

Feather put the battleship back on the table and picked up a pair of handcuffs covered in pink fur-the kind of fur you see on cheap toilet seat covers. She walked towards me, swinging the cuffs from an index finger. Down here, she said, I am The Domme. And I started to titter because the response that immediately came to my mind was, I know you are but what am I? Also, it was kind of funny because the shortened version of my real name, the nickname my family uses for me, sounds a lot like domme. The nickname my friends use for me is Pimp Daddy Joe, which, believe me, has a much more alliterative quality when used with my real name. But the point is, Pimp Daddy had been ready to shed his libertine skin for Feather. Now Feather was offering to flog it for him.

She reached out to rub the pink fur against my cheek and stood on her tiptoes to whisper in my ear. Some submissives, she said, freak out the first time they're bound. Which is why she promised not to gag me-not at first, anyway-and we would establish a safe sign. She would, she assured me, respect my threshold.

But a big strapping guy like you, she said, you can take it. You won't freak out on Feather. Will you.

That's how she said it. Not a question. A statement.

She had a grip on my crotch.

This isn't about punishment, Feather said again. This is about trust. She'd pulled back from me to look into my eyes, and I said, well, when you put it like that; but all I really wanted was for her to let go of my balls. A glass of water would have done me a world of good right then, but already I was too intimidated to make requests.

You trust me, don't you? Feather asked.

She dangled the cuffs in my face.

I'd asked my father once how a person could know when he was in love. He'd thought a moment, then said, well, when a person is willing to walk two miles through a snowstorm to be with his girl, I'd say that is love. I'd figured the old man really knew his stuff, because the walk he was referring to, that had been one hell of a trek for me. By the time I'd gotten to my girlfriend's house, my socks had soaked clean through and I couldn't move my toes or bend my ankles. When feeling did start to creep back into my feet, they felt like they'd been beaten with a hammer. My mother must have overheard my father and me talking, because the next day she handed me a stack of my laundered underwear with a newspaper clipping on top-a column from Dear Abby explaining the difference between lust and love. They'd both been wrong-or maybe they'd both been right. Either way, I didn't have my answer until Feather and I walked into WalMart and found this little kid dressed in a cowboy outfit, standing in the feminine products aisle, bawling for his mother.

Feather knelt down beside him, got right down on his level, and said, come on, big guy, don't worry, we'll find her. I just knew his mother was going to see us heading towards the front of the store with her son in tow and peg us as two perverts trying to kidnap him, so I hung back, kind of appalled that the kid was so quick to take Feather's hand anyway-didn't his parents teach him about not going off with strangers? But there Feather was, straightening the bandana around his neck and wiping his tears with her shirt sleeve. She was wearing her black ballerina flats, and she'd tied the tails of her shirt at her waist so I could see a strip of skin between the knot and her capris. She put her hand on the kid's cheap red hat and turned to smile at me, and I knew, right then, that I loved her. I wondered what her petite body would look like when her stomach was swollen with my child. I wondered how her apple breasts would change when they became engorged with milk. I imagined myself supporting the small of her back while she waddled on bloated ankles, her feet turned out for balance.

Feather pulled my left hand out of my pocket and put one pink handcuff on me.

Trust me, she said. Trust me.

I took my right hand out of my pocket and held my wrist out to her.

And if you want to know the truth, nipple clamps really don't cause that much pain until after they've been removed.

A Things You Should Know Comic
by
Dan McLaren

Things You Should Know

By: Dan McLaren



It was then that Becky realized, clowns just aren't funny.

A Comic
by
Jerry Rychlo



Crispy Contemplates Death
by
Ricky Garni

MERRY DEATH, OH MERRY DEATH,
WHY ART THOU SO MERRY?



WHEN I CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOUL,
OH DEATH, I FEEL MY WOMB IS
FILLED WITH CHOCOLATE. OH YES,
DEEP, DARK AND RICH: HOW
BITTERSWEET IS THY CHOCOLATE!

AND YET: COULD ANYTHING NOURISH
THE SOUL LIKE AN AFTERNOON
OF UNINTERRUPTED TELEVISION?
BE STILL: AN ADVENTURER IS
ABOUT TO PLUMMET FROM
THE MOUNTAINTOP, AND IN
DOING SO, HE WILL MAKE
A FATEFUL MISCALCULATION
INVOLVING ROPE LENGTH.
OH TELEVISION! HOW DEATH
COURTS YOU AND I,
LIKE A SUBTLE FINGERED LOVER
FROM A DISTANT LAND
WHOSE HAIR IS SLIGHTLY
OILY BUT NOT UNPLEASANTLY SO!

THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN WHO ATE FREQUENTLY
AT MCDONALDS AND WHOSE SKIN WAS TAWNY AND
LOOSENED FROM HER CARRIAGE AS WITH THE ANCIENT
MUSES OF ANTIQUITY WHO PROFFERED PRESICIENT WISDOM,
ALTHOUGH THE WOMAN WAS NOT WISE, LIKE A MUSE,
AND YES, SHE, TOO, THOUGH NOT PARTICULARLY
MUSE-LIKE, DID NOT FIND YOU MERRY DEATH:
NO, SHE DID NOT.

SPEAKING OF PEOPLE, WHAT IF YOUR
NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE WERE TO HAVE ITS
INTERIORS PAINTED, AND PAINTED A ROBIN EGG'S BLUE?
AS WITH A METAPHOR, THE PAINTERS WOULD HAIL
FROM MEXICO, STEEPED IN THE FOLKLORE OF
DISTANT LANDS, AND THEY WOULD KNOW
OF YOU, OH DEATH: THEIR TRUCK
WOULD BE MIGHTY, AND FILLED WITH LADDERS



OH DEATH!
HOW STEEP THIS
ROAD AND HOW
THE SUN BEGINS
TO SET! HOW
MUCH I STILL
GRAVE TO SUP!
HOW MUCH?
TERRIBLY MUCH!
AT TIMES,
AND OFTEN, MORE

BY
RICKY

Contributor Biographies

Andrew T. Duncan bases his entire life believing in Dinosaurs and how big of a prehistoric party those dinos could totally throw, like Jurassic dance party or Mesozoic spin the bottle. He now lives in Monument Valley and practices his dropkicks on exposed fossils, releasing his frustrations about the dinosaurs dying so soon, before he could get to the party. Dropkicks are amazing because when you do one, you have to stop caring where you land because you are totally going to fall down hard, giving all your rage to the kick. Believe in Andy D.

C. Allen Rearick writes threatening letters to himself and hides them in his sock drawer. He thinks oranges are really yellow and refuses to tie his shoes. He once watched the movie *Cabin Boy* in slow motion. In addition to all these "zany" traits, he has a duel broadside with "wacky" Canadian Chris Kornacki coming out soon via *Hemispherical Press*. Drop by his web-site if you're hungry. www.geocities.com/c_allenrearick/index.html

David Choate came of age in the Irish Channel of New Orleans and was later treated for flashbacks in Vietnam.

J. Patrick Lewis writes light verse and intelligent nonsense for children in the form of 39 books (to date), but who's counting?

Johnson Cooley is 26 living in Brooklyn on the rooftop of a Krispy Kreme Doughnut shop. He snuck into the store to type this poem. Being Deaf and Dumb, and Blind, and quadriplegic hasn't got him down, he's well on his way to becoming an attorney and hopes to reign over the world.

When accepted into this month's *Defenestration*, **Ace Boggess** said: "Usually acceptance letters aren't that creative, but I've had some great rejection letters. In the early 90s (as a young, scarcely-published writer), the editor of one magazine wrote of my poem 'Gay Vampires Spread AIDS' (which was based on a headline from the *Weekly World News*): 'This poem is an egregious insult to taste and decency, but that would be ok if not for the corny rhymes.' And recently, atop a form rejection letter from another magazine, the words 'Up Yours' appeared. That, of course, was the title of the story submitted. However, you can see how fun it was to show that rejection letter to friends."

Alison Burke's unequalled love for cake once spawned the following poem by famed philanthropist and *Defenestration* staff writer Luigi Fairbanks:

Miss Burke, oh please,
Save some for me,
I'd like another slice!
You're eating all my birthday cake
(Which isn't very nice).

J.M. Becker is from New York. Currently, he lives in Maryland. He likes books, movies, and pretty women. You can reach him at jmbecker2@gmail.com.

J.R. Carson was born the son of a poor sharecropper. After losing his head in a combine accident, he pushed on and learned to read and write without the use of his brain. This

allowed him to develop an irrepressibly stupid style enjoyed by dozens of readers every year.

Mr. **Jonathan Redhorse** is currently trapped inside a building labyrinth. He is looking for room A240, but there appears to be a floornumbering discrepancy depending on the region visited. For instance, he thought he was on floor 2, but now he's on floor 4. Upon refinding floor 2, he found all the letter prefixes to be C and not A, meaning that he somehow left the Drysdale building and ended up in the Chemical building. Where is he? If you have seen him, please call your local authorities to aid in his rescue. You may be eligible for a reward.

"I had a spot as Monica Lewinski's Dry Cleaner, then worked PR for Saddam Hussein before taking up my current role as Peace Ambassador for President Bush. As I have a lot of spare time (currently 7 Days a week) I've started writing, recently started submitting...

"**Mary Trafford** could be my real name."

Michael Jarrette-Kenny has had fiction appear in *Burning Leaf*, *Duct Tape Press*, *Aphelion*, and others. Sometimes, when people aren't looking, he turns himself inside out and lets dogs chase his entrails.

Pete Butler lives in Pittsburgh, where he is developing the Shoulder-Mounted Dachshund Launcher, a terrifying weapon which he is convinced will revolutionize modern warfare. Interested parties are invited to visit his website at <http://blairhippo.com/>. Third-world dictators welcome!

Rob Rosen lives, loves, and works in San Francisco. His first novel, *Sparkle*, was published in 2001 to critical acclaim. His short stories appear regularly on more than thirty literary sites, and have been published in the literary anthologies *Mentsh* (Alyson, 2004), *I Do/I Don't* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2004), and *Travel a Time Historic* (Cyber Pulp, 2005). Feel free to visit him at his website www.therobrosen.com or email him at robrosen@therobrosen.com

Ross Eldridge has a fantasy: He's sitting on a wicker peacock chair, dressed in a white linen suit, cigarette in a holder, hair slicked down, one leg crossed over the other, a red silk stocking revealed, a black patent leather shoe pointed slightly down. In his fantasy, Ross says: "Kak zamechatel'no! Eti doma takie vysokie, chto dazhe ptitsam nelegko vzletet' do krysh." It's probably a good thing this is just a fantasy. Where could you get a red silk stocking in 2004? Oh, Ross wants to write comedy. You need that? REwriter@northrock.bm will get you there.

Tammy Walters is working towards an MFA in Creative Writing at George Mason University where, in addition to studying craft, she continues to hone her transgressive and alienating interpersonal skills.

Dan McLaren likes to draw, very morbid and sometimes un-funny cartoons. He also discovered that putting salt in your eyes really hurts. Hey if you are salt-eye free go check out www.freewebs.com/biohazart to see more of his stuff.

Jerry Rychlo lives in his basement with a large supply of ink pens and a huge stack of papers. If you like his work tell him at jrychlo@county.middlesex.on.ca If you don't, let him know also. (He still has receipts for the pens and papers).

Ricky Garni has devoted many years to the illustrated biographical study of the enigmatic early 20th century Andalusian symbolist poet CRISPY FLOTILLA. A work in progress, Mr. Garni now struggles to capture in prose the painful later years of Mr. Flotilla when, broken and penniless, the brilliant poet spent his last days living in obscurity with a cocktail waitress known only as Captain Bob.