

◇ Defenestration ◇

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Two Poems
by
C. Allen Rearick

Chemical Imbalance

Sitting at work reading
and drinking my
morning java
it was brought
to my attention
that the contents
of a cup of coffee
contain 1000 chemicals

of these
only 26 have been tested
and half of them caused
cancer in lab rats

I sat my book down
discretely leered into
my cup of chemicals
took a short sip
let out the proverbial

“ahhhh”

and thought

“thank god
I’m not a lab

rat.

Stand Or Fall

My girlfriend told me
she was gonna hop
in the shower

I retorted
my classic line

“you should stand
it’s a lot safer”

she just sat there
flashed a sarcastic glare

and rolled her eyes

it made me think
maybe the line has lost its humor
hell maybe it never had any
to begin with

even so

if she does it again
I'm gonna bust into
the bathroom
push her down

and say

"see

I told you

so."

What Gave it Away
by
Christopher Hivner

Special delivery
for the Prince of Darkness
on his birthday.
A dozen roses, Oprah's book club selection,
and a kitten with a big, red bow.
Another gag gift
from the boys in the office.

Three Poems
by
Julian Bernick

Let's Make a Deal

You can shave my head if I can shave yours.

The Man-Thing (a tribute to Marvel Comics of the 70s)

For Richard Rory, back, and full of gin,
In Florida, in Citrusville, to be
Exact, there is but one gone-lonely friend
Who trudges in a viscous reverie.
For Richard Rory-- finally-- sold out!
The eternal loser! Hard (still) to believe--
But fucking true. He's rich, without a doubt;
Across this strung-out nation slackers grieve
For Rory, storied, gloried prototype
A weasel-weakling-jackal-hippy putz
Who cringed beneath a blurb of torrid hype
Whatever knows fear burns at the Man-Thing's touch!
The Man-Thing: stretch of swamp some eight feet tall.
THE MOST THROBORRIFIC CESS-BEAST OF THEM ALL!

Howard The Duck

(For Gerber & Colan)

Lost in a world he claimed not to have made,
he chomped his cheap cigar and quacked his ire
at everything he saw. But now, retired,
he shrugs his downy shoulders: "Anger fades."
What rough, billed beast, bedecked in Bozo clothes
waddled toward Cleveland to be bored?
O huffy Howard, I, for one, adored
you. Stupid land! What shining shame! What woe
to the ones that squarely squandered him.
A talking duck? But this was '76
and anything was possible for us.
Since Watergate, the half-glimpsed, half-hid fin
of fishy statesmen sank (as in Loch Ness)
A fowl looked good next to foulness such as this.

Three Poems
by
Maurice Oliver

Perfect, And Absolutely Useless

We ring likes the bells in a Hemingway novel.

Then later, we play a game blindfolded with a world map. Her finger toys with Greece or turns into a dozen different stories about monasteries. She says she wants to be invisible so she can watch everybody else live their lives. I say I want to spike the ice tea with cyanide or tickle her ear. Bright green is the astroturf. Stifling heat is the greenhouse. "Can a prize be greater than the achievement", she ask, as her drink forms a ring around its coaster. A paw of steel. A shoebox of dodo feathers. My finger settles on Zanzibar or we try imagining a picnic on a grassy knoll in the shadow of an ancient ruin. We want to go there but I forgot my raincoat. "Yeah, and I wonder if anyone could be quirky enough to refresh me like a soft drink full of bubbles", I reply, convinced this is what they call thinking out aloud. The brown haze of dusk. The urge to pull almost any trigger. And it could go on like this or become a rented tuxedo, or all of New York in a glass frame. Either way, we'll still have our false passports, Eskimos will "think snow" and that handwriting expert won't have a clue when it comes to reading a doctor's prescription.

To Finally Get Princied

Crows decide by majority vote to move to the city.

Warm weather blushing its way through the south. Footsteps that disturb northern snow. A conspiracy theorist. A plausible cliffhanger. The hands a doorman uses. No kids. No druggies. No such thing as a free lunch. Or sitting ducks. The goose that laid the golden egg. Bodies that sway to the music. Linoleum floors. Ten examples of how to feel wickedly sinful in Cleveland. Anyone wanna to watch? Waterfalls that like to chuckle. In a foreign country driving a jeep. Then the phone rings but it's only a heavy breather...

a series of dramatic monologues at dawn...
a desire to experience anything promising pleasure.

His 30-inch TV screen wanting to be victimized.
Her statue of Eros wearing rosary beads.

Before we start she says, "I guess I'm not into STD's
personally but I'll try anything once".

The ad reads "must be flexible & or the artsy type".

A sexy Superwoman custom in colossal cleavage.

O yeah, and Mediterranean good looks are a plus.

"April In Rococo"

Shh. This is the part where the joy-juice of a grape
hugs a hairy nun
before reaching for the natural curtain of Wisteria.
Town's people are forced to renounce every imaginary
friend. The diamond dealer wakes up as a glass eye
or his twenty-three year old frat-boy son
gets high on cough medicine & then dances naked
at a party. Russell's room paces back & forth.
Debra is a spinal tap getting sleepy or sometimes
maybe can't taste a single drop
of vermouth in the gin or I suppose Vermont
could be surprising
affordable. Either way,
everyone becomes an elementary school teacher
& fears death by water. The film's canister that was
on the jukebox a minute ago
is now summer at the drive-ins where night is just a
good time trying on cardboard boxes
full of somebody else's sun glasses.

Dear Movie Hut Employee #62
by
C.L. Bledsoe

Dear Movie Hut Employee #62,

I have written to you before about your personal hygiene, and I am very pleased that it has improved. Your dandruff is hardly noticeable, and the smell is much more bearable. So good work on that, Robert. What I am writing to you about today is your customer service. The manner in which you treat customers has been brought to my attention recently. I have noticed your manner myself. On Tuesday, the 27, when I was in the store, I observed the way you followed customers around, berating them in a shrill and obnoxious manner, talking nonstop about things they weren't interested in, like Star Trek and comic books. I noticed that many of the customers avoided you. And when one of them pretended interest, you became almost frighteningly enthusiastic. You chased several customers around the store as they tried to get away from you, but you followed them until they grabbed some terrible movie they would never have rented otherwise and brought it up to the counter so they could leave.

But their trials are not over, there. I have received the most complaints about your behavior behind the register. Apparently, when a customer tries to pay for his or her rentals, you quiz them, yelling out: "Pop Quiz!" in a very jolting manner. Then you proceed to ask various trivia concerning the movie they just selected. One customer reported that you wouldn't allow him to have his movie or change until he'd answered you. And when he couldn't answer the question, you said, "Oh, see, if you knew the answer to that I'd know you are a real fan of the "Smokey and the Bandit," series." And, having humiliated him, you then allowed him to leave.

I have had many complaints from customers and coworkers about your behavior, Robert. Customers have gone so far as to tell me that they will avoid returning movies when they see that you are working, so that they end up having to pay late fees. Well I say bravo, Robert! Since you've been employed with us, the catalogue rentals have increased by 80%! Late fees have increased by 67%! During our gift card special you sold double the amount of cards of any other employee. Customers are still complaining to me about how you followed them into the parking lot ranting about some episode of "Sabrina the Teenage Witch," you saw, until they were afraid not to buy a gift card.

Good work! Your methods might rub some people the wrong way, but I say stick to your guns, as long as you get results. I tell you, Robert, and this is completely off the record, you understand, but if you keep this up, we might just promote you to Senior Customer Service Representative.

Keep up the good work,

John Spurling, District Manager

We are the robots
by
David Gaffney

She was the third girlfriend to ditch me this year. 'We went to this club,' I told Gary, 'and at the end of the night she'd completely changed. She was distant, hostile.'

He looked at me over the rim of his spectacles 'Did you dance?'

'Well,' I poked at a beer mat. 'At one point I did throw a few shapes.'

He tilted his head towards me. 'Did you do the robotics?'

'Definitely not.'

'What was the music?'

'Eighties retro'

Gary removed his spectacles and rubbed his eyes. 'How many times have we been through this – you hear the music, you do the robotics.' He picked up his coat. 'No woman will stand for it.'

Later I was on the floor. A moog bass line squelched, a metallic snare ripped the air, I was part of a machine, a valve in the heart of a bleeping gnashing metal beast.

Crime Report
by
Jon Alan Carroll

At the Dharma Hotel on Seventh Avenue, two men forced their way into the room of Michael Anderson and demanded money. The men, described as scruffy white males in their late twenties, were both armed with handguns.

After the two men entered his room, Anderson warned the robbers of the spiritual dangers inherent in an empty, narcissistic lifestyle. The two suspects quickly grasped the wisdom of this and backed out of the room.

The suspects were last seen swearing to dedicate their lives to the pursuit of Truth. They remained at large at press time.

From the Pages of the *Bethlehem Gazette*
by
Michael Hulme

Dear J,

Let's just get this straight, shall we? You've been out there, sanding and planning and lathing and working your gnarled and achy hands until the calluses are falling off, and while you've been trying to make a living for the two of you, she's been doing a little work of her own, hey. Ever wonder where those new clothes came from, J? But no - wait for it - now she's telling you there's some mistake. Sure, she was visited in a dream by some kind of winged creature. Well, J, believe that if you like, believe that's the reason her belly's now as round as an egg, that's the reason no matter how hard you try, you can't get so much as a sniff of some of that good old-fashioned loving. Or you could get wise and ditch the cheating skank. Leave her to the Romans, J, and get on with your life. Find a nice market girl or one of those war widows, and settle down with someone you can trust not to fool around on you and leave you bringing up another man's child. In the meantime, stone her. Trust me on this; I'm never wrong.

Dear J Jr.,

I get a lot of letters like this from young men your age, and let me first say that I understand your frustration. it is difficult when one feels so limited with their place in life, though I think that your paragraph about the world being such a "small, heartless place filled with cruelty and evil deeds" tends towards the kind of melodrama one is best to avoid as it can lead people to do silly things. I'll put this down to your age and raging hormones for now. You say you feel that nobody, including your parents, understands you, and dear, I do sympathize. I understand you do not wish to follow your father's life as a carpenter; do though try to honour him, as it cannot have been easy for him to address the difficult issue of parenthood with you. Yes, I feel traveling around for a while would indeed be just the tonic for your spirits - I am not familiar with "the word" you intend to spread, but if you feel it will help you find the inner peace you seek, I say - go for it! (I myself spent a number of weeks around the shores of Galilee, and while I found the place rather tiresome on the whole, there were one or two restaurants which do excellent fresh lobster at very reasonable cost. Give my regards to Mario.)

In answer to your second point - touching or picking at spots should not be encouraged as they will spread to other parts of your body. That you claim to be clearing up the spots of your friends simply by touching them strikes me as rather unlikely.

Dear Concerned of Galilee,

Listen, I'll put this to you without any spin and you see how it sounds. Your son's off with a group of older men, all following this guy they say can perform amazing acts, and when he comes home, which is seldom, he talks about peace and love, and chastises you for staring at your neighbour's swine? Does that sound kind of creepy to you? Damn right, I'd be worried! Seriously, now - to throw your questions back at you - have you ever see anyone walk across water? Out of research, and a willingness to believe you, I tried it just now

before sitting down to write this; I had to get Ezekiel from across the square to come and haul me out. And as for the water/wine - well, who doesn't wish they could do that? Come on, Concerned of Galilee, just think about it. Your boy's been duped! Tricked! Played for a patsy! What they're doing to him as part of their "beliefs," I shudder to think. As for what you can do - how about getting your old man to get a band of vigilantes together and head off into the hills to forcibly retrieve your own flesh and blood? Far be it from me to incite violence, but often the thud of clubs on skulls is the only language this type of twisted fanatic understands.

Dear J,

I was sorry to hear that your friend is going through such a difficult time right now, and I'm sure he appreciates your support through these dark days. It is difficult to choose between such a substantial amount of money on the one hand, and a friend on the other. But, as you say, your friend had fallen out with this friend, and so the assertion he feels he has "sold him down the river" is probably a little harsh. After all, if there was no friendship left to lose, what harm could it really have done? We can all think of friends we don't really like - perhaps they're more popular than us, or have some quality we envy - and often, the best way to deal with this situation is to remove yourself from that social circle. It sounds like your friend has succeeded admirably at this. So, rather than blame himself, I would suggest your friend takes his silver pieces and uses them to start a new life, perhaps opening a hotel or a small farm. He has enough money to support himself in whatever enterprise he wishes to take on. I hope very much your friend learn to forgive himself in order to fully enjoy the fruits of his labours.

Dear P,

I was going to suggest you contact your friend and tell him that you are sorry, but reading between the lines of your letter (I take it the "far better place" you say he's gone to isn't that charming resort on the Red Sea), I suspect any apology you make will fall on deaf ears. On this occasion, as I'm fond of saying, forgiveness must come from within. Although you behaved badly towards your friend at a time when he could have done with your support, it's not such a big deal when you think about it. On my way to a dinner party just last week, I saw the lady who used to clean my house. She's fallen on rather hard times since her son was trampled by donkeys, and now she wears a lot of black and sits in doorways with her palms outstretched. Now, I would have stopped to offer her some money, or a few words of consolation, but it just wasn't the time. Understand I wasn't concerned about being seen talking to an old yellow beggar woman by my peers, oh no. I was simply late for dinner, and the next time I walk that way, I'll have a few kind words for her. The bottom line, P, is this: if you don't like yourself, nobody else will. Accept you made a mistake, promise yourself you won't do it again, and smile into tomorrow.

Dear M,

No, I don't think that is possible. It sounds to me like a combination of grave robbery and pure denial. I suggest you try to accept your friend is no more, and deal with your grief accordingly. Have you thought about writing a tribute to him, perhaps? I did this when my husband died, and it proved wonderfully therapeutic. Why not arrange a gathering of your friends where you can tell stories about his life and write them all down for posterity so you

can remember his life. This will give you the closure you need, and empower you to move on. There's no point dwelling on it. Trust me. I'm never wrong.

What's In a Name?

by
Nathan Graziano

Note from Defenestration: This story is related to Nathan's previous piece, "Pete And My Peter," which can be read here: <http://www.defenestrationmag.net/prose/ngraziano.htm>

I am Ham.

Actually, my full name is Hamlet. My father—who never picked up a book, much less Shakespeare, in his life—was sold on the name after he heard it used in dirty joke. He's loud and stubborn, and my poor mother, who is one of the most passive women alive, conceded her choice of Mark—after the Apostle—and went ahead with naming me Hamlet. The cards were stacked against me from the start.

Growing up in South Boston with a name like Hamlet was an open invitation for anyone in the schoolyard to kick the shit out of me. It wasn't until the third grade when my parents moved to a new town in Western Massachusetts that I wised up and started introducing myself as Ham. Small consolation.

But the name was short-lived. When I got to junior high, I had an incident in gym class that renamed me, yet again. I was crossing the monkey rings with my arms extended and torso exposed when I inadvertently popped a boner. I have no idea what triggered it. Puberty, I guess. I even remember what I was wearing: a pair of navy blue sweatpants and a black Def Leppard Pyromania T-shirt. A group of girls sitting in a circle on the floor mats were the first to notice. They started screaming, laughing and pointing at me and my sad chubby. I glanced down, and the rest was history. In a graduating class had 150 kids, maybe, a handful of them knew my real name. The rest referred to me by my nickname—the one that stuck with me after what was notoriously referred to as "The Monkey Ring Rod."

They called me Woodrow.

Although I'm not a bad-looking adult, I was a downright gawky teenager; thinner than a bicycle spoke with scattered patches of thick, purulent acne on my forehead and chin with had a shaggy brown mullet to boot. Between my awkwardness and the nickname, I would've gone my entire high school career without losing my virginity if it weren't for Carla Kay.

Carla Kay. What a wonderfully alliterative name for a girl who was, hands down, one of the easiest lays in Southern New England. Her father had run off with a history teacher at our high school her freshman year—a guy named Joe Carbone—and Carla subsequently went off the deep end. She started stripping at parties and allowing the guys to line up to take turns at her. That's how I lost my virginity senior year; I was the seventh guy in line. Luckily for her, I was quick and came in under a minute. I remember her lying on the bed and smoking a cigarette as I dressed. "You're a real stud, Woodrow. You'll make some girl real happy someday," she said.

After I slept with Carla, I fell completely and obsessively in love with her and tried to woo her with verse. I wrote pages and pages of terrible rhymed poetry and slipped them on

loose leaf anonymously into her locker. In spite of the fact that she had a face like a trout, I'd go on and on about her lips being like candy apples, her nose being the soft silhouette of a mountain on a clear day, and her ears being two daffodils sprouting up from the verdant grass that was her hair. It was painfully bad, but ate up the time when I wasn't masturbating thinking about her

One day, she came up to me in the hallway and called me out. "Woodrow, are you writing those poems for me?"

I choked, blushed and vehemently denied it.

"It's too bad," she said. "They're pretty good."

I never came clean with Carla Kay about the poems, nor did I sleep with her again. Instead I started focusing my attention on college. I'd seen movies, heard stories of lascivious coeds and pillow fights. College was supposed to be an all-out orgy.

That summer I took Acutane to clear up my skin and started working out, putting on a little bulk. I was prepared to kill Woodrow and reinvent Ham.

And Ham, I am.

Shit Lit Crit
by
Vanessa Gebbie

They are sitting on a bench at the station, Earnest and Ruth.

Before we go on, stations are a point of departure, yes? Or a point on a journey. Earnest and Ruth are not modern names, ah! They are perhaps mid way through life? This is a point on their journey? An important point, for it to be starting a story. Hold your breath, reader.

Oh, nearly forgot. They are together. It is Earnest AND Ruth. There will be some relationship between these two people.

They are SITTING. This is meaningful, of course, they do not stand, they sit. They are maybe old? Relaxed? Or maybe their knees hurt? That's important, and should not be discounted.

A bench... not a seat. Benches have no back. You cannot fully relax on a bench. Ah... There is no relaxing into each other, this couple, no leaning back, forgetting. Or maybe the author intends us to think they are magistrates? Let's file that one away for future reference, in case the story takes off, goes too fast and gets fined for speeding...

THE station. Symbolic that the station has no name, then? Ah. It is a generic station. I knew it had meaning. It is a generic station, a stopping, or starting or intermediate point on life's journey, surely.

Their names. Ah. The author has chosen earnest for the man. Earnest. What trails our minds wander down with 'Earnest'... is he a deeply serious man? Is he perhaps related to Hemmingway? Is he good in bed?

Hang on, where did that come from?

Answer, look, the last four letters spell 'nest'. Nest is synonymous with 'bed', therefore the author was thinking of sex, and it is communicating itself subliminally to the reader via 'Earnest'. He is serious, about bed. But has a bad knee, hence the sitting.

But... What of the 'Ear' of Earnest? Ah... ears of corn, maybe? He is a country man? Or maybe is deaf? Only one ear is mentioned in Earnest. So... the character is good in bed, and is deaf in one ear, and suffers from bad knees. Such communication!

Wait. 'The Importance of Being Earnest...' another layer for the astute reader. Not only is he good, serious about bed, he is also deaf in one ear, has a bad knee AND is an important man, perhaps? Wait... what about 'Being'? is he just acting, then? Is this man, Earnest, sitting here on a bench at this station, not really who he seems to be? Does yet another path open itself? He is pretending, acting out a role, he is... An actor!!!

To recap. Earnest is... half deaf, serious about bed, OK at sex, and is an important actor, with a bad knee.

Wow!

What about Ruth? Ah. Biblical allusion, she is religious? A nun? Does she act (ha! Told you) out this fantasy for Earnest in bed? The meaning of Ruth is 'pity'. Do we feel pity for this Ruth? Or does she pity us having to read this story which starts with her and Earnest on a bench at a station? Should we pity her being with Earnest? Should we pity her Earnestly? Is she sitting on his deaf side, perhaps?

Yes! He's not listening to her, because he can't, not with that ear. Poor, poor Ruth. And stations are such noisy places too.

Ruth, the gleaner. The picker up of dropped ears (more ears... ah, such cleverness, the weaving is amazing) of corn. (Ah. Earnest was perhaps a man from the country, was he not... yes! The author is using symbolism to underline the countryness of both people, here, on this bench, at this station.)

Ruth and Earnest, up from the country, she on his deaf side, but... she chose to sit this side, did she not? Her natural place, where she talks and he doesn't hear her.

AH!!! This is a story about non-communication. I can tell. Back to the opening sentence then.

They are sitting on a bench at the station, Earnest and Ruth. Earnest is eating a ham sandwich.

Oh God. Ruth MUST be Jewish....or not hungry, or he's only bought one, or...the possibilities are legion.....

Feel free to extrapolate at will, so long as you do it in private.

Contributor Biographies

C. Allen Rearick is a lazy migrant farmer from Peru with 3 ingrown toenails and a raccoon's leg for an arm. He strains raindrops threw a purifier to garner wisdom and inspiration for his poems. Visit his website or else he will cast a spell on you with the heave of his chicken bones. www.geocities.com/c_allenrearick/index.html

Christopher Hivner says, "Born in a fish hatchery in 1937 to a small-mouth bass with bionic fins, I grew up writing haiku on the scales of carp. I like to make candles out of bacon grease, selling them to children for their lunch money and have never met an Eskimo named Larry. Of course, I have never been published in a finer publication than whatever the name of this one is."

Julian Bernick is an aging, misunderstood MONSTER OF ROCK! gnashing his teeth against the slings and arrows of an indifferent cosmos. He graduated from That Workshop Place (TM). He has also published online at Diceybrown.com, 42opus.com and Whimperbang.com. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two cats, stopping to smell the flowers often and patiently awaiting the end of the world. His favorite food is pizza.

Maurice Oliver spent almost a decade working as a freelance photographer in Europe. Then, in 1995, he made a lifelong dream reality by traveling around the world for eight months, recording his experiences in a journal instead of pictures. And so began his desire to be a poet. His poetry has appeared in *The Potomac Journal*, *Circle Magazine*, *Bullfight Review*, *Tryst3 Journal*, *The MAG*, *Eye-Shot*, *The Surface*, *Wicked Alice*, *WordRiot*, *Taj Mahal Review* (India), *Stride Magazine* (UK), *Retort Magazine* (Australia), & online at subtletea.com, undergroundvoices.com, friggmagazine.com, tmpoetry.com, zafusy.com, girlswithinsurance.com, & interpoetry.com (UK). He lives in Portland, Oregon where he is a tutor.

C.L. Bledsoe doesn't like the way you're eying his turkey sausage and if you don't cut it out, he'll have to get nasty. Real nasty. Like Roadhouse nasty. He is an editor for *Ghoti Magazine* www.ghotimag.com. He also wishes someone would publish his freaking book already. And pay him. Cheeseburgers are good too. With curly fries. What was I talking about?

David Gaffney wrote this on the back of his hand right after slapping some dude. With the back of his hand.

Jon Alan Carroll is a San Francisco writer and editor. To date, his work has been rejected by over 50 publications, including *Harper's*, *Atlantic*, and *The Bingo News*. His first collection, *Poems of Anguish and Pain*, is not currently on any bestseller list, primarily because it remains unpublished. He describes his personal philosophy as one of "fierce apathy."

Michael Hulme was the world's first solid gold baby.

Nathan Graziano was shocked when he found out President Bush wasn't going to nominate him for Supreme Court Justice. Although he's never been a judge, he once won a raffle at a fraternity party and got to take a stripper's G-string off with his teeth. It's been a steady ride downhill from there. He lives in Manchester, New Hampshire and has published

a few books along the way. More information on those can be found at www.nathangraziano.com.

Vanessa Gebbie wrote the following limerick upon her acceptance into *Defenestration*:

It's nice to be back in "Defen"
And to write with a humorous pen,
Your taste is astounding,
Amazing, unbounding...
Your cheque's in the post, once again.