

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume III, Issue IX

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Never Write Poetry With A Hangover
by
Christian Ward

I fed last night's verse
packs of cigarettes
and half opened cans
of Guinness

brown rimmed craters
started to appear like
cracks in the pages,
but I was too sober to notice;

I still had the taste
of the half eaten
verse in my mouth,
which was slowly
falling out, leaving
holes in the carpet.

A postcard of better times
still hangs in the back
of my mind.

I haven't destroyed that yet.

Two Poems
by
Eddie Kilowatt

going under the knife

"Oh man, you it's so comfortable,
you gotta try it."

his fiancée chimed in

"Oh I love it,
women just love it.
It makes them feel
like it's something you do for them
and nobody else."

I was having a hard time believing this.
it just seemed like so much crap to me.

"Right! he said,
You can't be lookin' like you're
all stuck in the 70's or something.
You gotta take care of that shit!"

A few days later
while about to take a shower
I looked in the mirror and

- What the hell,

maybe he's got a point.

I gathered all the materials,
laid them out
orderly and sterile,
anticipating
the precision necessary.

I spent a long time in there.

each swipe:
carefully choreographed.
beads of sweat fell from my brow
I was a sculptor,
an artist of the highest calibre
I had a grace and concentration
familiar only to Russian chess players and
circus acrobats.

and when it was all done
I stood looking, not quite sure what to think.
it looked like one of those sphynx cats,
the hairless ones,
all pink and harmless looking.

Two days later I called him
to tell him that he was wrong.
all. wrong.,
and spent the rest of July
peeling my balls off the inside of my leg.

I would imagine

on the sidewalk, today
there was this
black and yellow
two sided
sandwich board sign
saying

DANGER
FALLING
ICE

I would imagine the goal of that
is for you to look up
and see the ice falling on you
so it would land in your eye
instead of your hair

Three Poems
by
Li Min Hua

Welfare Diet

The rich taste good with pepper and salt.
Don't waste thyme, rosemary, or sage;
cayenne's enough. It's not their fault
they're bland or fat. It's the age.

Stay their hearts with Louis Vuitton
strips; baste them with buttered blood.
Roast and serve. Soften in brine
their necks, then boil. Next flood

with garlic these briskets. Press
cloves with salvaged dentures.
Kabob their balls with mushrooms.
Eschew more exotic adventures.

The rich taste good with pepper and salt.
Don't waste thyme, rosemary, or sage;
cayenne's enough. It's not their fault
they're bland or fat. It's the age.

Front Man

Plaaaaaaaaas
tic
cups,
sturdy reeeeeeeeeeeed
plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups.

Get your sturdy red plaaaaaaaaas
tic cup
riiiiiiiight
here,
owwnly wuuuuun
fiiiiiiifty.

Plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups,
step right up
and get yooooore
sturdy red plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups,
with a diiiiiime

thrown iiiiin
for good meaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaas
ure.

Plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups!

Biiiiiiiig wuns,
reeeeeeglar wuns,
smaaaaaaall wuns,
get yooooore
sturdy red plaaaaaaaaas
tic cup
right here,
owwnly wuuuuun
fiiiiiiifty.

Dooooooooon't
be cauwwwght
withouwwwwwt
wuuuuun.

Raaaaaaaaaaaat
tle it,
raaaaaaaaaaat
tle it,
let them
heeeeeeeear
soooooomewuuuuun
eiiiiiiise
has giiiiiiiven.
Shaaaaaaaaaaaaake
that dime,
shaaaaaaaaaaaaake
that dime,
when you siiiiiiiiit
in the coooooooooold.
Plaaaaaaaaas
tic
cups.
Sturdy
reeeeeeeeeeed
plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups.
Get yooooore
sturdy red
plaaaaaaaaas
tic cup
riiiiiiiight
here,
owwnly wuuuuun
fiiiiiiifty.

Wiiiiinter
is
coooooooooooming.
Dooooon't
be
cauuuuuuuuuuuuuught
without ooooooooooone.
Maaaaaaake it
reeeeeeeeeeed.
Maaaaaaake it
reeeeeeeeeeed,
soooooow that theeeeeeeeeey
will seeeeeeeeeeee
it.

Plaaaaaaaaas
tic
cups.
Stuuuuuuurdy
reeeeeeeeeeed
plaaaaaaaaas
tic cups.
get yooooore
sturdy red
plaaaaaaaaas
tic cup
riiiiiiiight
here,
only wuuuuuun
fifty.

Available

Worn-out manger, speckled slightly with sheep
dip, stuck with bits of straw and prickly
angel hair. Smells a tad like joss sticks.
Unsuitable for fashionable creche.
Authentic.
Contact Joseph, 1-800- 243-2836. Telex:
EFRATA. Email: Carpenter@INN.il. MasterCharge,
American Express, and Visa not accepted.

After my ship sank
by
Sam Stein

After my ship sank,
I came to a conclusion:
Desert islands suck

One Small Step
by
Andrew Hellard

July 20, 1969 (19:10 UTC)

Official Apollo 11 Radio Transcript

Classified: Top Secret

ALDRIN: Houston?

MISSION CONTROL: What is it now, Buzz?

ALDRIN: I think we have a problem.

MISSION CONTROL: We've been over this. You can't sing the MIT fight song while Neil puts up the flag. The Harvard boys in DC would have a fit. Besides, it's obscene.

ALDRIN: It's only a little obscene.

MISSION CONTROL: Not going to happen.

ALDRIN: Have it your way. But that's not the problem.

MISSION CONTROL: What's going on?

ALDRIN: Well, here's the thing. Neil says he's not going to leave the lander.

MISSION CONTROL: What?

ALDRIN: He says that if he sets foot outside the lander, the Martians are going to eat his soul.

MISSION CONTROL: What?

ALDRIN: Neil got into the reserve canisters and he's been huffing pure oxygen for the last six hours.

MISSION CONTROL: I can't believe this. We told you guys that you have to watch Neil every second. Did you at least keep him away from the Tang?

ALDRIN: I'm afraid not. Hey, it's not like we don't have other stuff going on right now. Besides, Collins was supposed to be keeping an eye on him.

MISSION CONTROL: You can point fingers after the mission is over. Look, I don't care how you do it, but as soon as you touch down, Neil has to go out and get that flag in the ground.

ALDRIN: I don't understand why Neil has to be on flag detail. It's not all that difficult. I

could go out, run the flag up, say something inspirational over the radio, and crawl back inside. Five minutes, in and out.

MISSION CONTROL: It has to be Neil. Nixon likes Neil. I don't know why. No one knows why. The President was very specific.

ALDRIN: He just wants to make sure he wins Ohio in the next election.

MISSION CONTROL: What was that?

ALDRIN: Nothing. Oh, for crying out loud...

MISSION CONTROL: Is everything ok there?

ALDRIN: Now Neil's locked himself in one of the storage cubbies. He won't come out. He says the Martians are watching.

MISSION CONTROL: You've got to be kidding me. Have you tried talking to him?

ALDRIN: Yes. Every time I get near him, he starts raving about how much he hates logarithms.

MISSION CONTROL: Ok, try this. Tell him that the Martians can't get him, because you're not going to Mars.

ALDRIN: That might actually work. I'll give it a shot.

ALDRIN: He says that the Martians have a time-share vacation house on the Moon. He says everyone knows that.

MISSION CONTROL: I told them that we didn't need pilots, that chimpanzees would make great astronauts, but no, they had to have prima donna flyboys.

ALDRIN: What was that?

MISSION CONTROL: Nothing.

ALDRIN: What do you want me to do here? We're going to touch down in less than ten minutes.

MISSION CONTROL: Maybe we could get a priest on the line to tell him that his soul's going to be ok.

ALDRIN: I think he's Presbyterian.

MISSION CONTROL: That's going to be a problem. I don't think there are any Presbyterians in Texas.

ALDRIN: Probably not in Houston, at least. How about this? I'll go out there and you can just tell everyone that I'm Neil.

MISSION CONTROL: That's no good. As soon as you plant the flag, we're supposed to patch

you through to the White House.

ALDRIN: I've got to talk to that weasel Nixon?

MISSION CONTROL: No, Neil has to talk to that weasel Nixon. And trust me, you don't want to know what will happen if the President gets on the horn and finds that his favorite astronaut is hiding in a storage bin and screaming about Martians.

ALDRIN: I don't think that would be good for any of our careers.

MISSION CONTROL: He'd probably tell us to just leave you out there.

ALDRIN: You could do that?

MISSION CONTROL: Yeah. We've been controlling the lander this entire time. That joystick in the cockpit isn't actually attached to anything.

ALDRIN: This just keeps getting better and better. I should have stayed at MIT.

MISSION CONTROL: Give me a second to check with the guys here. We should be able to come up with something. We are rocket scientists, after all.

ALDRIN: I was happy there. I could have had tenure. And a little Cape Cod in Cambridge. Painted yellow.

MISSION CONTROL: Ok, here's what you're going to do. Tell Neil that the Martians have Genghis.

ALDRIN: Who's Genghis?

MISSION CONTROL: Neil's Pomeranian.

ALDRIN: Neil has a Pomeranian named Genghis?

MISSION CONTROL: Look, just tell him that the Martians are going to vaporize the dog if Neil doesn't go out there and plant that flag.

ALDRIN: Ok.

ALDRIN: He's going to do it.

MISSION CONTROL: Great.

ALDRIN: Not quite. Neil said that he's going to put the flag up, but he'll be damned if lets those Martians enjoy their victory.

MISSION CONTROL: What?

ALDRIN: He said he's going to tell the world what he thinks of those little green freaks.

MISSION CONTROL: This isn't going to end well.

ALDRIN: Probably not.

MISSION CONTROL: Tell him the Martians said that if he mentions aliens, the dog gets it.

ALDRIN: Ok, but I'm not responsible for anything that happens if you send him out there without a script. You remember that incident in Akron.

MISSION CONTROL: I can't do everything here. Just make something up. I don't care if you have to crib a line from "The Road Less Traveled."

ALDRIN: This is not what I signed up for.

MISSION CONTROL: Quit whining and get Neil into his spacesuit. And whatever you come up with for him to say had better be good. The world is going to hear this.

End of Transcript

Indian Massacre by **D.E. Fredd**

Lester Connors explained to the Maine state troopers that the raid happened just after dawn. The arrow markings and other telltale signs pointed to the Algonquin nation, probably the Iroquois tribe although here in Kittery the usually peaceful Abenakis tribe couldn't be ruled out totally. He and Margaret were early risers, even on Saturday. She had set the new Gevalia coffee maker brewing. They received it free for joining a coffee club by dialing an 800 number. She was sitting down to her own hot breakfast. It was beyond her to prepare anything decent for him. He was in his pajamas in the living room, the TV tuned to ESPN as the Red Sox were on the west coast that week. He wanted to know the score because he dozed off just after eleven, although against Seattle it was usually bad news.

He hadn't heard much; they were a stealthy lot. One of the few perks he'd allowed himself when he retired from Bainville Wood Products was a set of Bose earphones. It bypassed the hundred watt, surround sound system he had installed, but it sometimes kept the peace with Margaret when she wanted to knit or read in the same room with him. Since his bursitis and sciatic hip began to bark at him at all hours, the thermo massage recliner in front of the TV was where he spent most of his time. In her view it was a hideous color and took up half the room, but he was glad he'd stuck to his guns and bought it anyway. And thank God he had gotten interested in sports when he was younger. There was always something to follow. He had DirecTV with all the sports' packages. Margaret hit the roof when the monthly bill came, but he never asked her how much she spent on that junk from the Christmas Tree Shop or over at those rip-off outlet malls on Route 1. And he wasn't nearly as addicted to sports as she ranted and raved to the kids. In fact, if anyone was addicted, it was her when it came to those stupid shopping channels. She even had the audacity to poke fun at the History Channel he liked as well as those stations, AMC and TCM which screened the old time movies. He did knuckle under to her rule of no TV during meals even though he was certain she deliberately picked crucial moments of games to announce dinner.

It sounded like several thunks as if someone was banging a palm on a hollow crate many times in quick succession. He took his earphones off and listened more intently but heard nothing. He called out. She never answered to anything but Margaret. He repeated her name. Silence. He struggled up from his chair and hobbled out to the kitchen. She was spread out by the sink, feet splayed towards the dishwasher. They had evidently surprised her from behind. As he went to check on her, that's when the flaming arrow struck. Right through the screen it swooshed and hit just above the decorative shelf, the impact shattering her Hummels and porcelain cat figurines collection. It's like they were aiming for it, hating them almost as much as he did. Yet, as shocked as he was, he couldn't just stand there. By instinct, it seemed, he grabbed the burning arrow with his bare hands. No time to consider personal safety. He doused it in the sink nearly blinded by the wet smoke. Then he dialed 911.

"I figured you boys knew how to handle these situations," he told Officer Kyle Moody whose

grandfather belonged to the same Legion post as he did.

Lester Connors had never shown prejudice towards any Indian tribe. He even felt Chief Wahoo, the Cleveland Indian logo, was a bit over the top with respect to political correctness, unlike the Atlanta Braves mascot. Margaret had dragged him to the Foxwoods casino on a few occasions; the last being two months ago with the senior citizens group. He didn't gamble and it was a smoke-filled waste of time in his book, but she'd won eighty dollars at the slots so they may have had their tribal dander up on that account. Except he wasn't so sure these were from any Connecticut tribe. Just something about their war paint and the array of feathers they'd decorated themselves with.

"Was it possible they weren't Indians at all, but doped up teenagers dressed like them?"

"I suppose anything's possible in this day and age, Mr. Connors."

The coroner on scene figured a heavy, blunt instrument had been what killed her. Death was instantaneous. There had been a crude attempt to crop off her hair, but the culprit was interrupted. A tomahawk was found in the back yard just off the deck near the property line with the Hughes'. Lester led the police to where the soil had been disturbed.

"This is where I saw them run to. They must have tied their ponies here while they had their fun. They rode bareback, and I caught sight of the tail end of them headed towards Torrence Ave. Maybe they took the rotary and Route 16 after that. I didn't do much but scream at them. Afraid I used some impolite language which I should go next door and apologize for."

The crime scene boys dusted for prints. Mr. Connors went over his story again. The body was removed. The house and grounds were searched. Evidence was bagged. Phones calls were made to Western New York State to his son and daughter. Lester said he'd like to have at least one of them drive back to Maine to help with arrangements. He could handle the rest of the day and the night himself so no need to speed and risk a ticket.

By eleven the next morning the house was somewhat back to normal. Mrs. Billings came over with a macaroni and lima bean casserole and set to work on the kitchen floor. By two they got everything spic and span and Edith said she'd call later to see how he was holding up. After he saw her out, he slumped back into his Strato-lounger, hit the massage button and began to channel surf the Saturday afternoon college football games.

He spent an enjoyable three hours although the spicy lunch gave him cause to take some antacid tablets around four. In the early evening NASCAR racing came on from Daytona, and he rooted for the J. C. Penny car until he kissed the wall in turn four a bit too hard and was done for the day. There was some thought of a snack, but he was just too comfortable where he was. By eight it was time for his favorite sport, baseball, and he reflected that late September was a great month for sports, like several planets being in conjunction with one another, providing such a wide variety of athletic activities.

He must have dozed off because, when he came to, it was tied in the bottom of the seventh. The Phils had evidently come back from their 5 to 0, early inning deficit to the Reds. He was ready to answer a call of nature when he heard an unusual sound. It sounded like a hoot owl only its notes were lower and more evenly spaced. His flesh froze as he detected the smell of bear grease. In the reflection of the 42 inch HDTV screen, he spotted a form crouching behind him. It must have come from upstairs, an obvious stranger to the house as the second from the bottom step groaned loudly. Outside he heard a horse clear its nostrils.

He looked around for something to defend himself with. His genuine replica Louisville Slugger signed by Manny Ramirez was in the cellar for safe-keeping. There were several TV remotes within reaching distance. In a last ditch effort, he grabbed one and hit the volume control bringing the Philadelphia announcers to overbearing life as the veneer scale hit fifty. The act had momentary success as there was some hesitation on his assailant's part. The knife which was meant for his throat came in too high and slashed across the bridge of the nose. Lester screamed, but the sound was absorbed by the home crowd's reaction to a four hundred foot blast to straight-a-way center. The next slash was truer and the arteries on both side of the neck were opened. Other dark and dusky figures then slunk into room, opened windows and doused the furniture with coal oil. A bone handled blade cut a deep circle around the top of Lester's scalp and, in a single, deft movement, a shock of white hair was peeled from back to front leaving the victim looking like a bloodied, bald-pated monk.

Then they were gone in different directions, the last one dragging a tree branch across the bare patches in the back yard to obliterate any tracks they may have made. When all was quiet, an arrow arced through the sky, glided through the open window and thudded into the sofa. It sputtered against the protective plastic cover for a moment then caught the scent of the coal oil and exploded into a full fledged conflagration. It was the beginning.

AABEHLPT: (A List)
by
Frank Burton

A:

It always begins with A. The first, greatest and most powerful of all letters. It is the first letter of the word "alphabet" as well as the first letter of my pseudonym, Adam.

My friend Annie has advised me on a number of occasions that I ought to compile a list of things that I alphabetise on a day-to-day basis. For some reason, she seems to think that if I put it all down on paper, it will make me realise how "ridiculous" my perfectly sensible organisational processes are.

Still, I am not doing this for her benefit. I am doing this simply because I like to alphabetise. To be frank, I am ashamed I never thought of it myself.

B:

Books.

Of course, plenty of people alphabetise their books. However, my collection is extra special, as not only are the volumes on my shelf arranged in an alphabetised order, they are also alphabetised in content. I have an aversion to books that are not structured A-Z, which unfortunately means that I am unable to read anything other than reference books. My collection begins with the A-Z and finishes with Who's Who. Don't get me wrong, I'd be happy to read a novel one day if authors of fiction began organising themselves efficiently.

C:

CD Collection.

I believe this is also common. Annie herself admits to having an alphabetised CD collection, although when I visited her flat to inspect it, I found it to be nothing of the sort.

"This is not an alphabetised CD collection," I told her.

"Why not?" she said.

"Well, for one thing, you've only alphabetised by artist and not by album title. Look at this Beatles section. You've put Abbey Road way ahead of all these other ones."

"They're placed in the order in which they were recorded," she said. "Is that a problem?"

"Well, it's your system, I suppose," I said.

"I'd be interested to know, actually, whereabouts under your system you would place The White Album."

"Well, that's easy, because it's not actually called The White Album, it's eponymous. I would place it under B for 'Beatles.'"

"So, you wouldn't put it under T for "The Beatles"?"

"No, the listing would appear, 'Beatles, The.' But you can make your own rules regarding 'the' and 'a' and suchlike. That's the beauty of it."

I am not sure she understood the beauty of it.

D:

Dinner.

I eat my food in alphabetical order. If I am having soup as a starter, that usually has to be eaten after the main course, unless the main course is something slightly higher up the chain like spaghetti. By the same rules, if I am having cake for desert, quite often I have to eat desert first. There are also occasions when I have to eat desert halfway through a meal. If I have a glass of wine with the meal, that usually has to wait until last. It is for this reason that I never participate in toasting at weddings, unless it is after food.

E:

Everything.

This isn't strictly true, although I wish it were. I only include this as an entry here, as Annie accuses me of doing so all the time: "Adam, you alphabetise everything!"

Maybe one day, with enough hard work and effort.

F:

Food.

(See Dinner.) The food in my cupboard is alphabetised according to type rather than brand name. For example, in my condiments section, Branston Pickle is placed after Heinz Ketchup, because if I happen to buy another brand of pickle one day, this too will be placed under P for Pickle. Once I have unpacked my shopping and alphabetised it, I then proceed to place the carrier bags in my alphabetised carrier bag drawer. Here, in contrast to the food cupboards, I have decided to sort according to the name of the store where I purchased the bags—Asda, B&Q, Costcutter and so on. I have found this is the only way to avoid any confusion.

G:

Grapes.

(See Food.) This is only a minor category, as there are only ever four kinds of grape in my kitchen—green seeded, green seedless, red seeded, red seedless. It is a rare occasion that all four are present at any one time, although it is worth noting that even if there is only one type of grape in my kitchen, it does not mean that the grapes are not alphabetised. It simply means that the list is very short.

H:

History.

A number of the historical encyclopædias in my collection have timelines at the beginning. I have reordered these, and produced what I call "Time Zigzags" on my computer, detailing each event in its proper order. I have printed them out and pasted them over top of the

original timelines.

Time Zigzags are much more in keeping with my own personal view of history. On a conventional timeline, The English Civil War appears after The Renaissance. This, to me, is clearly wrong. What does it matter what year a particular event took place? It is in the past; finished. This does not mean we shouldn't alphabetise them for posterity, of course.

There are some historical events that appear at roughly the same position on both a timeline and a Time Zigzag—the World Wars, for example—but this is pure coincidence.

Time Zigzags are probably my second favourite alphabetising scheme. As far as I know, no one else has ever had such a notion, and frankly, I cannot see why not. It only occurred to me after completing them that their crisscrossed lines appear to resemble the display on a heart monitor—a sure sign that I have my “finger on the pulse”.

I:

Instructions.

Not being the most technically minded person, I often have to consult the instructions for my computer. These are filed neatly into the C section of my collected instructions. Now, some might ask, if I use these instructions on a regular basis, why don't I keep them out on the desk next to my computer? Indeed, Annie posed this very question recently.

“Well, for one thing,” I said, “I might lose them. That isn't the only reason, but it's a fundamental truth that things left lying around will go astray, unless they are kept in some kind of order.”

“Hence the alphabetising,” she said.

“And what is that supposed to mean?” I said.

“I think you alphabetise things in order to stop yourself from losing anything.”

“As I say, that is one factor....”

“I don't mean to get too deep here,” she said, “but could it be something to do with losing your parents when you were young?”

“Don't be stupid,” I said. “To 'lose' someone is just a figure of speech that people use when they don't want to use words like 'death'. My parents died. I didn't lose them.”

“I know, I know,” she said, “but maybe you still feel guilty about it.”

“I didn't kill them,” I said.

“No, no, I'm not saying you did. What I'm saying is...”

“What you're saying is, you think I'm obsessed. Perhaps I am, but isn't everybody obsessed with something? You seem to be obsessed with me and my obsessions.”

“Somebody's got to be.”

I am not entirely sure what she meant.

J:
Jumpers.

These are filed according to the predominant colour. Jumpers with patterns on them that do not have one predominant colour are filed under M for "Mixed." Jumpers in the Mixed section are then filed according to the two most prominent colours. For example, "Blue, Black" comes before "Blue, Grey."

K:
Keyboard.

I have reordered the keys on my keyboard to replace the nonsensical QWERTYUIOP, etc. with the far more pleasing and user-friendly ABCDEFGHIJ. To be frank, I do not know what the manufacturers were thinking. I have also tried my best to alphabetise the punctuation marks, although the technician who reordered my keyboard for me said he could do nothing about the fact that colon and semi-colon are included on the same key. This made me very angry. It's a jump of sixteen whole letters! I later reassured myself that a semi-colon could realistically be filed under C, as after all, it is a type of colon. I'm still not very happy about this, but I try not to think about it too much.

L:
Laundry.

Don't even get me started on laundry. For an insight into a typical laundry day, see notes under Jumpers. The same general rules apply to each article of clothing, but of course they need to be filed by type first. Laundry days are by far the longest of my week, and can at times be a genuine test of faith in the whole system.

I don't want to talk about laundry.

M:
Money.

I have created a series of small pockets in my wallet for small change to be sorted, according to its alphabetical rather than numerical value: Fifty Pence, Five Pence, One Pence, One Pound, Ten Pence, Twenty Pence, Ten Pence, Two Pence, Two Pounds. In a conventional alphabetised list, these coins would be ordered according to the value of the number. However, I have always been opposed to this tradition of placing numbers before letters in an alphabetised list, somehow suggesting that numerical figures are more worthy of our attention.

That said, I do acknowledge that mine is a controversial view, and certainly do not begrudge any individual who decides to order their coins numerically. It is, after all, probably a little easier that way.

N:
Neapolitan Ice Cream.

I prefer to eat Neapolitan ice cream in alphabetical order, chocolate first, then strawberry, followed by vanilla. This is a very difficult task, and requires me to separate each flavour

into a separate bowl, disposing of any parts in which two flavours have mingled together. Often, by the time this task is completed, the ice cream has already melted. I have recently stopped purchasing Neapolitan ice cream, as I have come to the conclusion that it is a lot simpler to purchase individual flavours separately. Technically, therefore, Neapolitan ice cream should not be part of this list, but I have included it here, as I could not think of anything else that I alphabetise that starts with the letter N. Apologies.

O:

The same, I regret to say, applies to the letter O.

P:

People.

I managed to upset Annie recently. We were having a particularly intimate conversation, in which she revealed some quite surprising facts about her childhood. We were sitting together on her bed, holding hands as we often would when having a heart to heart.

She hugged me, and thanked me for being there.

"I'm so glad you thought of calling me today, Adam," she said.

"I'm glad too," I said.

"You know you're my best friend, don't you?" she said. "I know I've only known you for a couple of years, Adam, but I think you're the best friend I've ever had. I really mean that."

"You're my best friend too," I said, and I also meant exactly what I said.

"What made you think of me today?" she said.

"I just wanted to talk to someone," I said. "Whenever I do, I always call you."

"My God, that is so sweet," she said. "God, Adam, I think I'm going to cry. We just have this great connection, don't we? And it's not like a sexual thing, or anything, it's like something more important than that."

"I agree," I said. "But really, you shouldn't think of it as 'sweet'."

"Why not?" she said.

"Well, you know how I like to alphabetise things?"

"Yes?"

"Your number is the first number in my phone, and it's also the first number in my address book. It's because your name begins with the letter A."

There was a long silence.

"It's your turn to speak," I said. "I said something, and then stopped talking, so that means that it's your go. You'd be rude not to."

"Rude?" she said. "Rude? Get out. Get out, now. I don't want to speak to you. Right now, I don't think I ever want to speak to you again."

Obediently, I left the room, and went to the hallway to put my shoes on.

Annie came after me.

"So that's really it?" she said. "That's the only reason we're such good friends? That's the only reason you called me today? Because my name appears first in your phone?"

"Yes," I said. "But for once, this isn't me and my so-called 'obsession.' Mobile phones automatically alphabetise names. Address books start with the letter A. It isn't me, it's society."

"Sort yourself out," she said. "Think about what it is that you're saying. I want you to go away now, and don't come back until you've realised that people are more important than letters."

I have seen her since that conversation. But the fact of the matter is, I'm not sure that people are more important than letters. It's such an unfair comparison. When a person dies, it is sad, but society continues happily without them, almost as though they were never there in the first place. Conversely, if we lost one of the letters in the alphabet, everything would grind to a halt.

Q:

Quick, Brown Fox Jumps Over A Lazy Dog, The.

I would just like to take this opportunity to say that I hate this sentence. Is it supposed to be clever, or something?

R:

Rubbish.

I have several bins, for both recyclable and non-recyclable waste. This has proven to be a major problem, as there are many different items that need to be disposed of on a day-to-day basis, and it is simply not practical to have a separate bin for each of them. At one point, I had thirty-seven swing-top bins, many of which spent most of their time empty, as they were reserved for items that I do not normally use. I have recently revised this system in the interests of floor space. Whereas before, I had a bin reserved specifically for banana skins, I now have a bin for all leftover fruit and veg. I used to have separate bins for newspapers, magazines and envelopes, but now I simply have a bin for wastepaper.

I would like to state categorically that I not in any way regard this revision as a defeat. Alphabetising is about being practical, and if something is not practical, it needs to be adjusted in order to make it so.

S:

Stamps.

If, indeed, Annie is right, and I "have a problem," perhaps this springs from the fact that my father was an obsessive stamp collector. I inherited his extensive stamp collection, and have since alphabetised it (a task that took several weeks), before locking it away, not

intending to expand the collection any further.

I am interested in my father, but I am not interested in stamps, alphabetised or otherwise.

T:
The.

As I have already suggested, under my system, anything beginning with the word "The" should not be filed under the letter T, but under the first letter of the word following the word "The".

After my mother's death, I inherited her record collection, and discovered that she was a particular fan of a band called "The The." I find the name very funny, although I have not yet found the time to listen to any of their music. I am sure they are very amusing.

U:
Underwear.

(See Jumpers for general clothing guidelines.)

V:
Vests.

(See above.)

W:
Words.

Well, this is the big one, folks. My most radical idea to date, which has thus far attracted no adherents whatsoever. This does not necessarily mean that the idea is not a wonderful one. Alphabetising words effectively brings about a brand new language, based closely on English, but resembling something else entirely. For example, a simple sentence such as "The cat sat on the mat," under my new system reads, "Eht act ast no eht amt."

Admittedly, it is a difficult language to learn, not to mention pronounce, and requires a lot of dedication. At present, I am spending around four to five hours every day perfecting the art of what I like to call, "Aabehlpt Aekps," or "Alphabet Speak," to give it its standard English name. I am now reaching a point that may almost be defined as fluent.

It's just a shame that I'm the only person who can actually speak the language.

X:
Xylophone.

I bought one especially for the purposes of compiling this list. Of course, the beauty of my xylophone is that its notes are already alphabetised without me having to lift a finger. Well, I suppose they would have been, had there only been one scale of notes instead of three. The notes on my xylophone now run: A, A, A, B, B, B, and so on. It is still possible to play a coherent tune—it is simply a matter of observing the order in which the notes have been placed.

Y:

Yoghurt.

There is a particular type of yoghurt that I sometimes buy that has fruit in one section, and yoghurt in another. I am guessing that the manufacturers intended for people to mix the two together, but I find it a lot more pleasing to eat the fruit first. It doesn't matter what the fruit is, it will never beat the yoghurt in the race to finish last. Not unless there is a fruit out there that begins with the letter Z. I'm not sure that such a fruit currently exists.

Z:

Zoo Animals.

In a bid to make amends with Annie, I agreed to meet up with her at a neutral location, i.e. at neither of our homes. I suggested going for a coffee, but Annie insisted on a day out at the zoo. It is not a place that I would ordinarily visit, but considering the circumstances I chose not to refuse.

"So," she said as I arrived, "how are you?"

It had been several weeks since our little misunderstanding, and although we'd spoken several times on the phone, actually meeting her in person brought about a certain amount of tension, marked by the absence of any physical contact.

"Fine," I said.

"Look," she said, "thanks for coming. You know, for making the effort."

"I'm not sure that you'll like what I'm about to say next," I said, "but if it's OK with you, I'd like to wear a blindfold."

"Won't you miss all the animals?"

"You misunderstand. What I'd like to do is wear the blindfold in between the different sections in order to view the animals in alphabetical order. I've obtained a copy of the site map, and traced an appropriate route. So, if it's OK for you to guide me..."

She shrugged. "Whatever."

Being unable to see was not a comfortable experience, but if I was going to do this, I was determined to do it properly. I realised as we walked arm in arm that there was really only one person in the world that I could trust to accompany me in this manner. I felt safe with Annie, in the same way that I feel safe when I'm alone.

She raised her fingers to my face and removed the blindfold.

I opened my eyes.

She was smiling.

I returned the gesture, and looked beyond her over the nearby fence.

"What's that?" I said.

"It's a yak," she replied, rather proudly.

"I don't understand."

"Well, it was going to be a zebra, but they don't have any zebras."

"You did this deliberately?"

"Yes," she said. Her hand was on my back, stroking. "You see, here we are, two friends at the zoo, looking at a yak. And where's the harm in that? You're still alive."

"I didn't think I was going to die," I said. "I just prefer it..."

"You can't always get what you want though, Adam. Sometimes you have to accommodate for things that are beyond your control. Most of the time, in fact. It's what people do."

"It's not what I do."

"It should be," she said. "We all need to lose control every once in a while. You need freedom, Adam—you need to start breaking some of these self-imposed rules and start living."

"I'm already alive, thanks."

"Look," she said, pointing to the yak.

I didn't look.

"It's an animal," she said. "A for Animal. The next one will also be an animal. If you can't bring yourself to break the rules, can't you change them at least?"

"Because they're all different animals, you stupid bitch."

The hand disappeared.

"I'm sorry, I can't do this anymore."

I couldn't watch her walking away.

A part of me was glad she was gone. After all, those needless questions were running along behind her.

With hindsight, I'd like to think that part of me was right. However sincere her intentions, she remained wrong.

Better off without the aggravation.

Plenty more where she came from, anyway.

There's always Belinda.

A Letter From Your Best Former Lover
by
Mark Spencer

Dear Woman,

In a day or two I will have to go into hibernation. Sprawled on the floor of a cave, I will drink a case of Bud. The dark months to come will be full of feverish visions of you.

Last night, I was outside your Taco Tasty, watching, my view of you obscured only by the poster of the fat \$1.99 beef burrito. The chill autumn breeze teased my fur, nipped at my toes, as I crouched in the shadows of the overflowing dumpster. A tear drop froze half way down my cheek.

You took orders, played the cash register with your scarlet-nailed finger tips, made change—all with that wonderful, full-lipped smile of yours, your sexy overbite offered for the pleasure of strangers. You leaned toward the microphone, caressed it, brought your lips close, and your tongue tapped your teeth as you spoke: "Two tacos, two tostados."

The last time you and I were together you denied me your overbite. You denied me your eyes. You focused on my furry feet, stared at them as though you had never noticed before that they were size twenty-eight, the corners of your mouth stubbornly turned down.

I was still there last night when you shoved through the glass door at closing time. I was only feet away. I could have pounced on you, ravished you, but you sighed, and I hesitated. Were you tired?

Or free from the distractions of Taco Tasty, were you suddenly assailed by thoughts of your apartment dark and silent, all signs of me gone except maybe for a hair ball or two hidden in the crevices of the sofa cushions?

Your name tag caught the moonlight and glimmered like a jewel, as you made your way across the asphalt, the air pungent with motor oil, exhaust, Taco Tasty—and your perfume and your sweat.

Remember how I bragged on that first date set up by the good humans at LoveConnection.com that my sense of smell was better than that of any creature on earth? I was trying to impress you. Do you recall, my love, how I mutilated the restaurant's silverware in my clumsy, nervous paws? But you didn't seem put off. Or by my line as I walked you to the door of your apartment: "If I told you you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?"

Crossing the parking lot, you seemed to sense my presence. You looked toward the dumpster, and I smelled your fear, and my heart fluttered ambivalently. Your slim legs and hips and arms pumped hard toward your pick-up. I thought of your hairless white body, your taut muscles, the way everything is close to your tissue skin, the veins blue in your hands, the tendons in your delicate neck, your elegant ribs, your provocatively protruding hip bones.

What happened to us, Woman?

I know I can be a bad boy, but wasn't it the bad boy in me you loved?

Loved? Is the tense correct?

Tell me this, darling. Illuminate me. How can I go from being the smartest, the sweetest, the most romantic, the largest—the only one you've "ever truly loved" (note that I'm quoting here) to being someone (or is it something?) you can "never see . . . again"?

You argued that it was you, not I--your problem, not mine--that I did nothing, that you merely need your space, that you need to prove to yourself that you don't need a man or a Big Foot in your life. But I'm not buying it.

Was it the tiny mites that live deep in my fur, which I sometimes pluck from my nesty underarms and slowly crush between my teeth, savoring the chickeny flavor?

Was it my promiscuous past, all those nubile hikers in the forests, often thrill-seeking co-eds, some times thrill-shunning hitherto devoted and saintly wives overwhelmed by my ability to elicit their subdued passions, make warm and flowing their juices that had grown viscid by chilly routine and icy husbandly hands? Honey, I can't help it that I'm a stud.

Did I wear you out, baby?

Or was it the incident with your sister that time she showed up at your apartment-complex pool in that French-cut bikini?

Was that it? The sister incident? Honey, I am only a Big Foot.

You complained once that I ignored you when I read. Was that it? My affection for Flaubert, Kafka, Camus, Faulkner, Twain, Salinger, Shakespeare? Was it that I disagreed with you about *The Old Man and the Sea*? Maybe I cannot be objective about Mr. Hemingway. In 1936, in Montana, he did, after all, try to shoot my grandfather. A madman with a gun, a drunk with a pencil, a scribbler. Babes, how could you let literature tear us apart?

Was it my jealousy? What I did to Pretty Boy, that former recipient of your sugar, plier of your high-school flesh? He should have known better than to show up at your class reunion—I even wore a tie for you and let you trim my face and did not flinch when you told old classmates that I was a corporate attorney or that my Jaguar was in the shop or that my father had been ruler of a small Asian principality. Pretty Boy should not have hugged you. He definitely should not have kissed you, even on the cheek. He deserved to be bitten. And it's not like I have rabies.

You won't respond to this letter, I know.

I suppose that the last glimpse I may ever have of you was watching you hurrying to your elderly, primer-gray Dodge pick-up with its list to the driver's side and its illegally tinted windshield, at the top of which in red block letters is the word

"BITCHIN."

You hurried as though terrified. The driver's door creaked, banged shut; the lock snapped down, and the engine fired. You were hidden inside, the cab of that truck as dark as the

chambers of your heart.

You turned the truck toward my dumpster, and the engine roared, and your transmission clunked and whined into second, then third, like you were a bat on the freeway out of Hell.

I wanted to step into your path, leap upon your hood, beg you to come with me to the great redwood forests where we could unleash our passions hour upon hour, live on nuts, berries, and abandoned tourists' picnics, free from your interfering friends with their malevolent admonishments about mixed relationships, your controlling mother (who really did make a pass at me in the kitchen on July 4th), your nosey neighbors (who assumed I was a member of Hell's Angels), that unreasonable apartment manager (who had the gall to send you a letter saying NO PETS ALLOWED! I should have bitten him, too!), and let's not forget that slut of a sister of yours.

Paradise—my turf for a change. Just the two of us, baby.

But, no, you made your choice. If I had jumped in your path, I have no doubt you would have simply mowed me down as though you were a drunk redneck and I a mangy dog on a dark country road.

Don't worry, Woman, my love. I will vacate your life with dignity. If we ever meet on a hiker's trail, do not worry. I will simply tip my hat and continue on my way. And I know you will refuse to flash me your overbite.

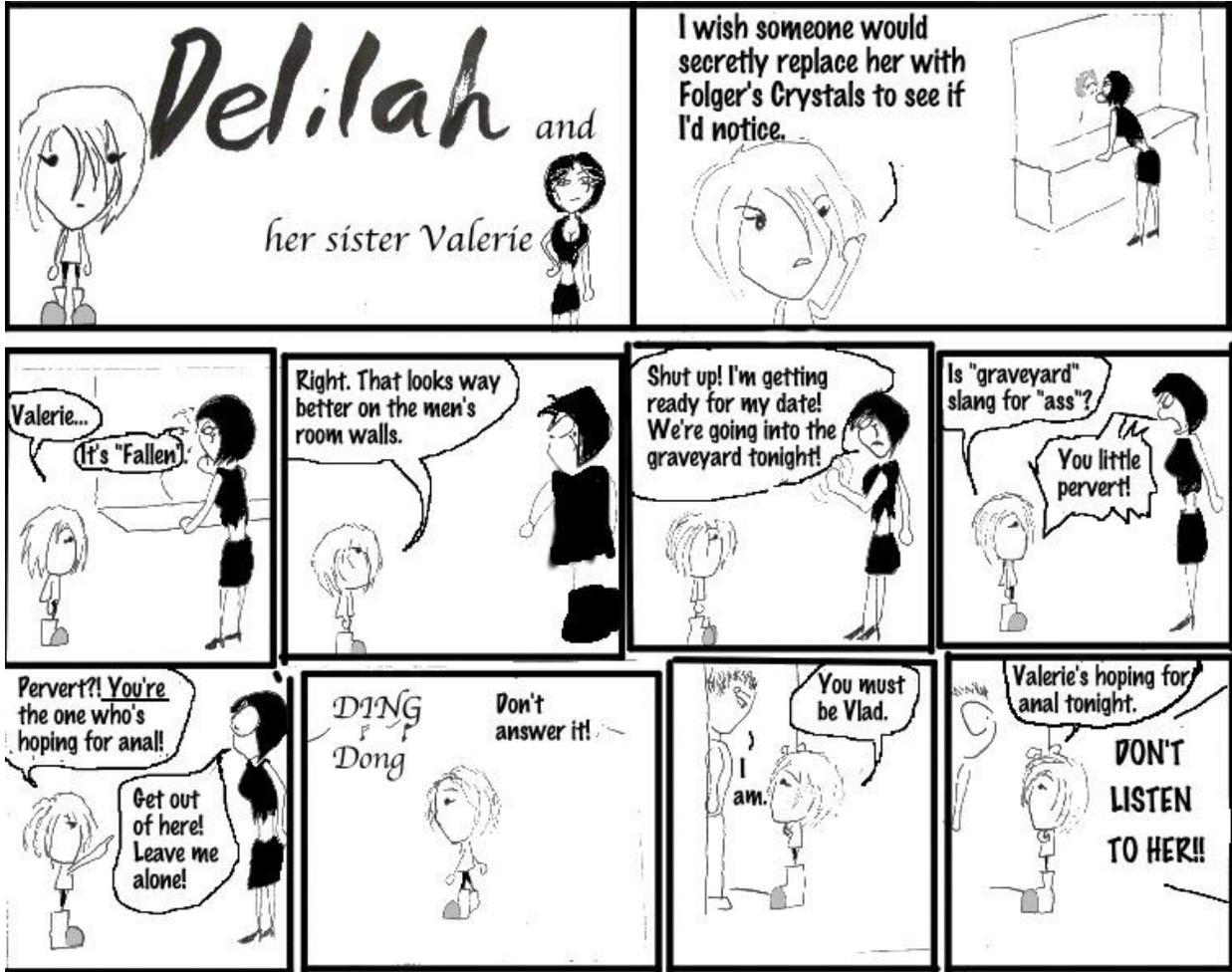
Perhaps the word on your windshield has too many letters.

My fingers stiffen in the cold as I write this note. A case of Bud awaits. And hibernation. And nightmares of you. Of you.

I must remind myself that in the spring a new life will begin. I will need no internet dating services. That was a lark. I am through with your human technology, so overrated, so unimportant.

But I will think of you, if only fleetingly—surely fleetingly—whenever I summon the passions of the hundreds of grateful women hikers my future holds. Their shrill cries of pleasure will remind me—fleetingly, fleetingly, fleetingly—of yours.

Delilah and her sister Valerie
by
Benjamin Rae



A La Recherche Du Temps Depardieu
by
Ricky Garni

A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS DEPARDIEU



'I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO PROVE' SAID FAMED FRENCH ACTOR GERARD DEPARDIEU AFTER ANNOUNCING HIS RETIREMENT FROM FILM TODAY: OCTOBER 30, 2005.



SPEAKING OF FILM, OCTOBER 30TH IS ALSO AN INTERESTING DAY BECAUSE TODAY THE MOST POPULAR MOVIE IN THE THEATRE IS SAW II.



NOT ORLANDO DE BERGERAC, STARRING FAMED FRENCH ACTOR, GERARD DEPARDIEU.



NOR GREEN CARD, ALSO STARRING THE FAMED FRENCH ACTOR, GERARD DEPARDIEU. THIS ONE IS VERY POIGNANT, IT HAS SILENCE AND SADNESS AND ALL OF THAT IN IT. PLUS GERARD DEPARDIEU.



NOT THAT POIGNANT WAS UNUSUAL IN THOSE DAYS, NOT AS LONG AS YOU HAD GERARD DEPARDIEU NEAR BY. I MEAN, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RETURN OF MARTIN GIBBERIE? POIGNANT!



BUT WHAT IS GERARD DEPARDIEU HIMSELF IF NOT POIGNANT?

BLUESH? GALCUB? SLOPPY? SHY? GARROLOUS? SOFT SPOKEN? GENTLE? MAINLY? REALLY SLOPPY? POORLY DRESSED? ROMANTIC? CLOTHES TOO SMALL IN GENERAL? ROMANTIC? LOST? HERDLE? ALL THESE THINGS AND MORE ARE DEPARDIEU. THESE ARE THOSE THINGS THAT MAKE THE MAN, AND MORE.

LET'S GO OUT FOR A DRINK! HE SAYS. SOMEONE HAS JUST STABBED DEPARDIEU HIM IN THE STOMACH WITH A KNIFE. T HERE IS MUCH TO THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF DEPARDIEU. L'EST TRES COMPLEXE.



-AND PROLIC, YOU COULD GO OUT TO SEE MARTIN GIBBERIE AND JEAN DE FLORETTE AND GREEN CARD AND ORLANDO DE BERGERAC AND THE LAST METRO AND GUESS HOW MANY MOVIES YOU COULD STILL SEE STARRING GERARD DEPARDIEU? SHE WAT. 65. I FORGOT THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR. I NEVER LIED THAT ONE TOO MUCH.



Intermission



I WAS SHOWN MY FIRST DEPARDIEU IN HIGH SCHOOL. I WAS LONELY AND A LONG WAY FROM HOME. SUDDENLY I FOUND MYSELF LIVING IN THE COLD, DARK NORTH, FILLED WITH DEEP RICH WINTERS. I SAW DRUGS, POWERFUL BLACK HAIRED WOMEN SPORTING BLACK LEATHER JACKET'S, AND SMALL BLACK MOTORCYCLES ZOOMING BY ON THE ICY STREETS!-AND AT NIGHT.

Vaginas Are Everywhere!
by
Tom Becker and Paul Cibis



The shudder of a leaf. A sunset deepens red—redder. Water gushes forth from the spring. Welcome to vagina country. A world inhabited by Paul Cibis and Tom Becker: photographic visionaries whose work continues to stimulate, excite, and arouse the artworld. Their latest creation—"Vaginas Are Everywhere!"— is a coffee table book consisting of two photographs of things that look like vaginas.

Contributor Biographies

Christian Ward says: "An escaped lab rat. See that thing humping your leg? That's me."

Eddie Kilowatt's first collection of poetry, *Manifest Density*, was released in spring 2006 by Full Contact Publishing. This summer he is using a digital voice recorder to speak his next book while riding a motorcycle around the U.S. He currently lives and works in Milwaukee, WI as a quality control expert for Miller Brewing Company.

Li Min Hua is the author of over 1,700 poems and essays. He is an emeritus professor at Rutgers University.

Sam Stein, the author, is a thirteen-year-old who currently lives in a giant golden fortress floating somewhere above Michigan. It is called "The Megapode". He spends his days writing poems. <http://lavos12.deviantart.com> and enjoys extorting the governments of the world from somewhere high above Michigan.

Andrew Hellard is a freelance writer currently living and working in a tastefully remodeled Civil Defense bunker under the featureless wasteland of Central Ohio. He will not emerge until he finishes his magnum opus, the 27-part epic poem, "Things That Make Me Angry". As he is currently in the middle of Canto II (working title "You, Yes I'm Talking About You"), he plans on not seeing the sun again until shortly before the next scheduled apocalypse.

D.E. Fredd has been published in many journals and reviews. A novel will debut in December 2006.

Frank Burton is a genius who lives somewhere in a place that he calls home. We like him a lot because he called us "great and powerful" and we're egotistical bastards.

Mark Spencer says: "I have long lived in seclusion with my friends J.D. Salinger, Elvis Presley, and Big Foot. I prefer to allow people to think I'm dead because first editions of my books (LOVE AND RERUNS IN ADAMS COUNTY, Random House; THE WEARY MOTEL, Backwaters Press; and WEDLOCK, Watermark Press) are worth more that way."

International superspy **Benjamin Rae** would prefer it very much if you didn't know he was and international superspy. Our bad.

Visit **Ricky Garni** at this place: www.crispyworld.blogspot.com. We double dog dare you.

Tom Becker's cousin liked the first three bios he wrote, but then he felt they got kind of needy. So Tom went with this one.

After seeing them brutally murdered before his eyes, **Paul Cibis** swore an oath on his parents' grave to find things that look like vaginas, but were not, and photograph them.