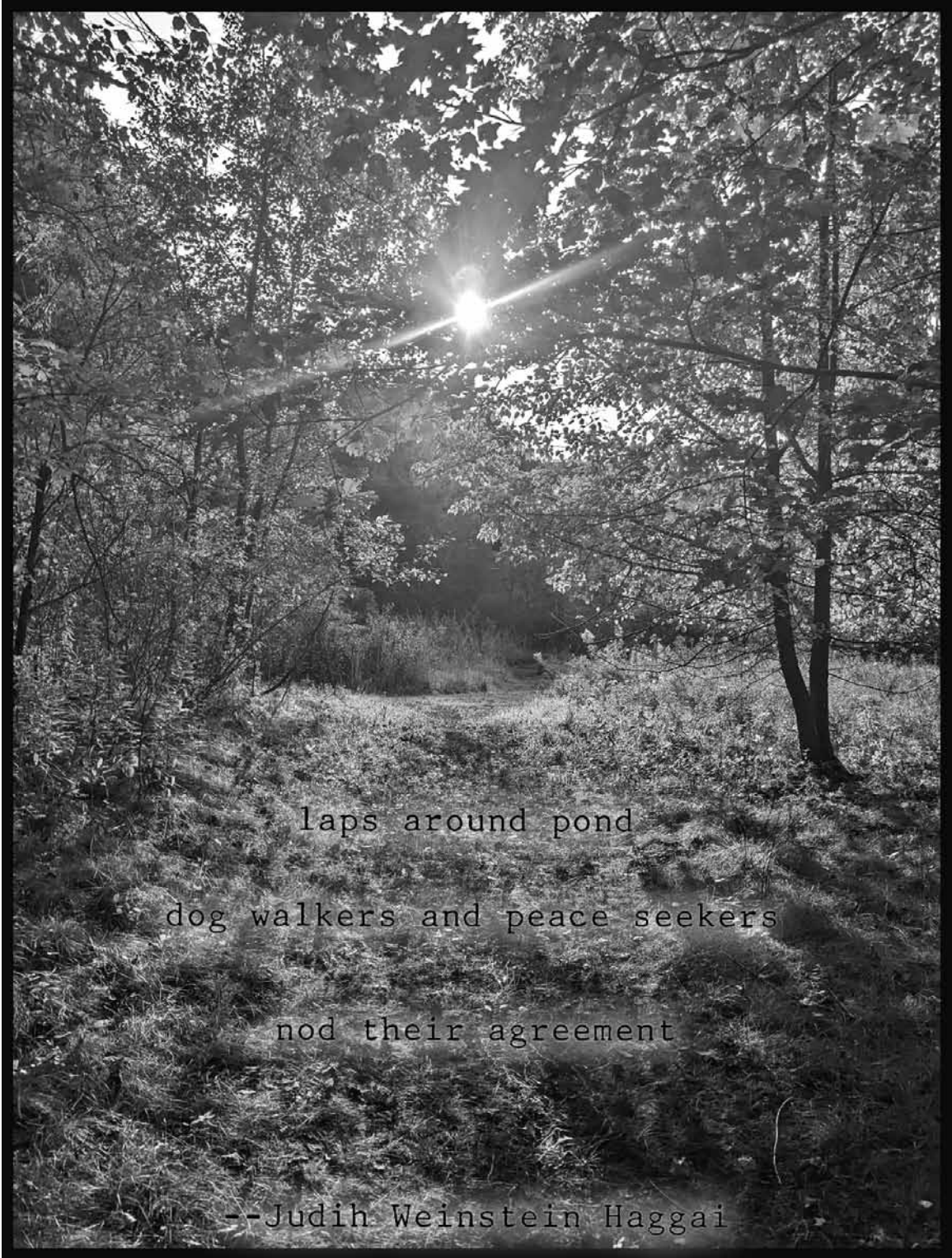


The Cenacle



NUMBER 123 | DECEMBER 2023



laps around pond

dog walkers and peace seekers

nod their agreement

--Judih Weinstein Haggai

December 24, 2023

4:35 p.m.

Bungalow Cc -

Attic Study [work table] -

Milkrose, MA.

— There's no way to say it all.
Say some.
Tell what.
Go.

This is the last piece that will be added into this issue. Will complete it. Will then be ready to publish in print & electronic form. Often this is the last piece written, or nearly so. Sometimes it's the "Notes on Contributors" or the "thanks too..." on the Table of Contents. Those both already done this time, neither pending.

No plan for this piece this time. No letter to Obama like years past. No Anniversary note for the journal. I don't always have a plan, but what I rarely have is so much reluctance to write it.

OK, a few notes. Words really:
Conspire Long gestation of issue Lost loved ones

SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
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SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!

WINWITHOUTWAR.ORG

SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!
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SAVE LIVES. CEASEFIRE NOW!

WINWITHOUTWAR.ORG

-23-

Those & a sentence: neither venerate nor
denigrate others

That's it. Baker's dozen of words & an unusual
reluctance.

No way to say it all. Say some. Tell what. Go.

Those words move me cheering myself on.

Attic Study. What the ignorant world's surrender
to the Pandemic has left me to write my
strange words.

E.S.T.'s Leucocyte on the Attic Radio. Some of the
most beautiful psychedelic jazz ever recorded.
Good for writing strange words by.

I didn't want this issue to complete,
to be published, with still no word of the
fate of my dear friend Judith Weinstein Hagar.
But still no word. This issue contains her
beautiful work, as always, & love expressed
by other contributors for her. But she is not
safe as I write these words, as this
issue is published. I'm sorry, Jude.

—24—

This year has taught me, again, that there are no sure bets in this world. And I don't mean just bad things. There are good surprises too.

I started the year employed by a company that I could see was going down the wrong road. Greed, arrogance had poisoned a once beautiful work environment. Then it was over for me, not by my choosing.

Needing to move on, I did, & arrived by good fit & good fortune to a new place. What we have to offer each other aligns very well.

I say this first to contrast the seeming more numerous bad things. The Pandemic continues to kill. The climate crisis is accelerating. And the Middle East, birthplace of most of the world's ancient & current empires, is again at war.

A turn of the calendar page will change none of these. Giving up, head in the sand, let somebody else bother with it—

IT'S ONE WORLD. SUFFERING BLIGHTS US ALL.

The Cenacle is the thing of beauty, of hope, of Art that I conspire with others to gift the world. Each issue comprises the best of what I have to say & to share. Yet only two issues this year, not the usual four. And only three last year. It's on me to do this work well. It's on me to shepherd this collective thing of beauty, of hope, of Art into this world.

This issue, like the last, took about twice as long as usual to manifest fully. I am proud of every page, but I know I can even do better.

There's no way to say it all.

Say some.

Tell what.

Go.

In this season particularly devoted to various kinds of gods & goddesses, I find myself ever clinging to the thought that there is danger in veneration or degrading anyone, anything, any idea. War is an easy example to give of this danger. "What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!" goes the old hippie anthem. Then, now, & ever on.

But the world of humans is at war in countless ways less ~~so~~ terrifyingly obvious than the current genocide going on in the Middle East. As long as somebody has more of something than someone else, it seems there cannot be peace.

And I have no more or less faith in anyone to help figure this all out based on skin hue, sex, ethnicity, ideology, favorite ball team, bank account, or ability to conjugate a verb in one or a dozen languages.

What I suppose I wish most, in this season particularly devoted to various gods & goddesses, is that the power people have to teach, to heal, to forgive, to love be far more devoted to now. To what, bides in every single moment. What a miracle is happening now.

To stop "looking for a moment when the world seems right (Springsteen), & see it bears every thing it needs right now to be right.

Hope abounds in every moment, & yet so little of its vastness is spent.

-27-

So — what if you & I conspired together, at whatever distance we are — by whatever acquaintance we have with one another — to live each succeeding moment a little bit more in hope? Spend more of its endless wealth.

What does this mean? Maybe it starts with simple awareness of how much hope one has, how much it wastes one's days. How it could more than it does.

Test it out a little, this idea. Test hope. See if it is indeed boundless, & does indeed welcome each & all to avail of it.

When I finish writing this piece, in less than a dozen more lines, I will act next in hope. I can't say how, but I promise you that I will. I invite, urge you to do the same. Act in hope. See what happens. Nothing? Try again. A third time. The spark will strike. Now revel in the feeling. Let your hunger grow with each new fry.

Shall we? You & I? Shall we act in hope? Let's try.

~~12/24/2013~~ 12/24/2013



Edited by Raymond Souland Jr.

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Souland

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Thank you to RTI for extending me faith and good will.

Thank you to those who still worry the Pandemic & will not live in ignorance.

Thank you to every last brave person who does what is possible to end all wars, & deliver every being in the world to deserved peace.

Happy Season of Lights!



Feedback on Cenacle 122 | April 2023

Editor's Note: *At the time of publication, our dear friend & long-time Cenacle contributor, Judih Weinstein Haggai, was missing from her home in Kibbutz Nir Oz, Israel, her fate currently unknown. Some of the feedback received below came in before this tragic occurrence. All of the contributors to The Cenacle deeply hope for the safe return of Judih, & an immediate cessation of violence.*

Timothy Vilgiate:

Judih Weinstein Haggai's poems in this issue are beautiful, in an especially bittersweet way, in the aftermath of the tragic events in Israel and Palestine. Her haiku lines "laps around pond / dog walkers and peace seekers / nod their agreement" will stick with me for a long time. I only hope that she returns safely, and that people can work towards peace and justice.

I also really enjoyed Victor Vanek's prose-poem "The Elementals," especially the opening idea about the significance of the number thirteen—the six fertile pairs and the one wild card. I can't say I've been fortunate enough to meet an Elemental, or maybe I have and didn't know. The last line "words are not the cup you drink from" makes me think that if I had, it's not the sort of thing I could express.

And then there is Colin James' "Every Unspeakable Moment of Torture"—I love the imagery of the jellyfish wading down river. I've met a lot of people down in Mexico who've tried to cross the US border, or expressed interest in going up to Texas to work. I think James does a great job emphasizing the unique aspects of nature while subtly invoking the human element of the setting—who knows if that was the border area James was thinking of, but it's what it reminded me of.

Martina Newberry:

Judih Weinstein Haggai's poems are wondrous! They are, for me, like eating an artichoke—each delicious word is a tasty leaf, and leads to the most delicious and satisfying heart of her poems.

Epi Rogan's photos pull me so deeply into them that the desire to stay inside them is nearly overwhelming.

I was touched and somewhat dumbstruck at seeing Jimmy Heffernan's beautiful poem, "Books and Bushmills," which he so graciously dedicated to me. I love the poem, and am honored to see my name anywhere near it. Thank you, Jimmy.

Charlie Beyer:

Delicious memories of loading passengers in the dark of silhouettes. The flat black water lurks around us like a cloak as we push through the mysterious fog. Then the fog lightens, some hair and hats show greyly through the mist. Then abruptly golden rays pierce the white, and all is shimmering in the morning sun. A wake-up glory. Thanks, Nathan H. (and your piece "Dierdre and Shushufindi"), from my jungle to yours.

In Martina Newberry's city of lurking sex crime, we take sanctuary in the Armenian gift shop. A welcome POV from a woman with gritted teeth. In LA . . . and in all life . . . evil lurks . . . but we adapt for a greater love of humanity.

Epi Rogan's color photos are evocative, unexpected, intriguing. Perplexing perspectives of surfaces from a pigeon's point of view. A camera untamed.

Tamera Miles' poem "Rail Chemistry" could have been called "The Death and Life of a Railroad Spike." I believe in the lives of inanimate objects: spikes, rocks, motors, wallets . . . what have they seen, felt, loved?

Tamara Miles:

Judih Weinstein Haggai's description in "*From the ElectroLounge Forums: Turns in My Road*," of her time with her first husband, inspires me. They studied sacred gymnastics, for one thing, and I want to know all about it.

I think Sam Knot must have studied it, too, because his world turned upside down, and right side up again, and he began to understand that God is love, and his arms are for reaching out. I bless him in his love for the leveret whose world had also been turned over, by a lawn mower, and how he grabbed and held that little creature, and let it cry.

* * * * *

Louis Staebler:

Magic is what some call the production of an image that comes to one via the brain to the eye and put upon paper for preservation. How fantastic it is to see, to experience, in this 28th anniversary issue. Acknowledging the past to promote the future. I do like this communal quilt so eloquently stitched together. Keep this synergy going. This is how meaning makers struggle. By our works we shall know.

* * * * *

Epi Rogan:

Love love love Louis Staebler's flower photography. His photos have transported me back to spring.

I also really enjoyed Tamara Miles' poem "Railroad Chemistry," spanning space, time, and function. Evokes ideas of becoming, for me, and of transformation.

* * * * *

Sam Knot:

Last night I picked up *Cenacle* 122 and read it before bed, just randomly flicking through. I stood with Gregory Kelly, in his "Writer's Notebook," looking down at that handmade journal, over a hundred years old, and I too was dumbfounded by its potential, and fell in love with it just the way it was. And yet "it is neither empty nor void. it'tis: waiting."

* * * * *

Gregory Kelly:

Bravo, Sam Knot! Bravo, sir! For your "Viridelix / The Bridge of Green Twist." I do not need to go to this bridge. But I want to. I do not need to go because you've already transported us to it through such a delicate transformative moment. I wonder what more we can learn from the warbling flower dangling in drifts among the grasses under the Bridge of Green Twist?

* * * * *

Jimmy Heffernan:

I usually very much enjoy giving feedback on the work of my fellow authors of *The Cenacle*. But I cannot get our dear Judih out of my mind enough to focus. So, for this issue, I would just like to say that my thoughts, prayers and heart are with her, and her loved ones, amid this tragic debacle in Israel.

* * * * *

Nathan D. Horowitz:

The following graphic images were inspired by lines in Raymond Soulard Jr.'s "Notes from New England: Dream Raps, Volume Twelve":

And so what I did was, I lifted up the beautiful green plant, with the Caterpillar on it, who kept crawling, unperturbed.



And, uh, well, I had this random hat on my head, gotten somehow along the way (said Theater of the Mind on it, in some weird, surreal green-&-golden font),

But it was funny that, by one way & another, I'm not even sure if I can untangle it for you, I did indeed end up at the Great Liberry, at the Heart of the Worlds, doing my research.



But, you know, the thing is, is that at some point, & I can't say precisely how, I found myself climbing up the stairs to what turned out to be a very large Attic.



For a long moment, Dreamwalker regards his old friend, the Gentleman Photographer. Long unseen, & yet here he is, also under this bridge by the dirty stream.

It is a puppet. It is crudely made. It has a blue skirt that runs down his wrist. And its head looks a people-folks head, smiling. Like the head of a space traveler.



He did know of the row of Mulrone the Space Pirate Books, of course.

A very strange handmade book





Epi Rogan



Judih Weinstein Haggai



AbandonView



Tamara Miles



Sam Knot

From the ElectroLounge Forums

Recent Poundings of the Keys by Nathan D. Horowitz

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

Post by Nathan on Aug 15, 2023 at 11:35am

Feedback or meaningful hand gestures welcome.

Again

Again, we attempted to blend in with the narwhals—
again, to no avail.

* * *

Narwhal Fertility Ritual

The hills are alive with the sound of Nirvana.
The narwhals are blasting it.

In mythic time, the Ur-Narwhal
was born on each of two hills.

Tonight, the hills are alive with the smell of
narwhal funk and poontang.

On grassy hillsides littered with bottles,
screaming lyrics to “Teen Spirit” in ultrasonic voices,

narwhals wriggle and rut
in slimy flippered embrace.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 15, 2023 at 12:14pm

Our Distant Cousin

It’s rather late but not quite quite late.

It's getting to be the time
 when one often meets our distant cousin
 ambling past this enamel factory.
 What's his warp mussel?
 How do his boots produce so many narwhals?
 Who's his beard sharpener?
 Why bleed clouds?
 These are among the questions
 you can ask our distant cousin.
 He may be along soon. It's getting to be the time—
 rather late but not quite quite late.

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Aug 15, 2023 at 3:33pm

Man, you've really got me thinking about the concept of meaningful hand gestures, in terms of the possibility of there being a/any meaningless one/s. I've gotten as far as: if there aren't any meaningless hand gestures (which was my first impulse), can there be any meaningful ones?

One thing that strikes me now, no pun intended, is the notion that a hand facing up, as if cupping the sky, so to speak, would be many times more meaningful than a hand facing down, as if stroking the earth, I suppose, although having said that . . .

I put my hand face up—no, sorry: palm up—I put my hand palm up on the desk and I look at it. I can no longer see the dead spider.

I seem to recognise the state of mind in these poems. If it even is a state of mind. The lovechild of Chthulhu and a flamingo. Your speech is studded with strange gems.

I love you, Nathan, this has just been a quick reply while I happened to be passing. Maybe next time I'll pass for happening. I would like to hear these, then mangle them in my soundforge, but first I have an unwhole lot of iron filings to align.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 15, 2023 at 4:32pm

In a class in college, I learned there's an African ethnicity where the people pray by talking down into their cupped palm, which is constantly making the gesture of lifting the words up to the sky . . . thanks as always for your kind words. I love you too!

* * * * *

Post by Martina on Aug 15, 2023 at 5:50pm

Nathan, these poems are flawless. Your ideas are mind-blowing and mind-bending. So rich! Your work grows and grows and it is beautiful to see. Thank you for sharing them with us.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 15, 2023 at 10:44pm

Thank ye, Martina.

* * * * *

Post by Jimmy on Aug 16, 2023 at 1:48pm

I particularly like your flow as a poet. You make it look easy and we all know it's not!

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 16, 2023 at 4:46pm

Thank you for your kind words, Jimmy.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Aug 21, 2023 at 9:19am

Nathan—before I dive in further to good reading and thinking about your poems, I have to ask first: why narwhals?

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 21, 2023 at 6:36pm

I find them underrepresented in poetry. Whitman, who wrote about so much, doesn't have any narwhal poems. Eliot and Pound, ditto. Shakespeare didn't mention narwhals. The Beat poets are silent on the topic. Michael McClure has a killer whale poem but no narwhal poem!

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Aug 22, 2023 at 11:33am

From *Wikipedia*:

The narwhal, also known as a narwhale (*Monodon monoceros*), is a medium-sized toothed whale that possesses a large “tusk” from a protruding canine tooth. It lives year-round in the Arctic waters around Greenland, Canada and Russia. It is one of two living species of whale in the family Monodontidae, along with the beluga whale, and the only species in the genus *Monodon*. The narwhal males are distinguished by a long, straight, helical tusk, which is an elongated upper left canine. The narwhal was one of many species described by Carl Linnaeus in his publication *Systema Naturae* in 1758.

Its name is derived from the Old Norse word *nár*, meaning “corpse,” in reference to the animal's greyish, mottled pigmentation, like that of a drowned sailor, and its summertime habit of lying still at or near the surface of the sea (called “logging”). The scientific name, *Monodon monoceros*, is derived from Greek: “one-tooth one-horn.”

The most conspicuous characteristic of the male narwhal is a single long tusk, which is in fact a canine tooth that projects from the left side of the upper jaw, through the lip and form a left-handed helical spiral. The tusk grows throughout life, reaching a length of about 1.5 to 3.1 m (4.9 to 10.2 ft). It is hollow and weighs around 10 kg (22 lb). About one in 500 males has two tusks, occurring when the right canine also grows out through the lip. Only about 15 per cent of females grow a tusk, which typically is smaller than a male tusk, with a less noticeable spiral. Collected in 1684, there is only one known case of a female growing a second tusk.

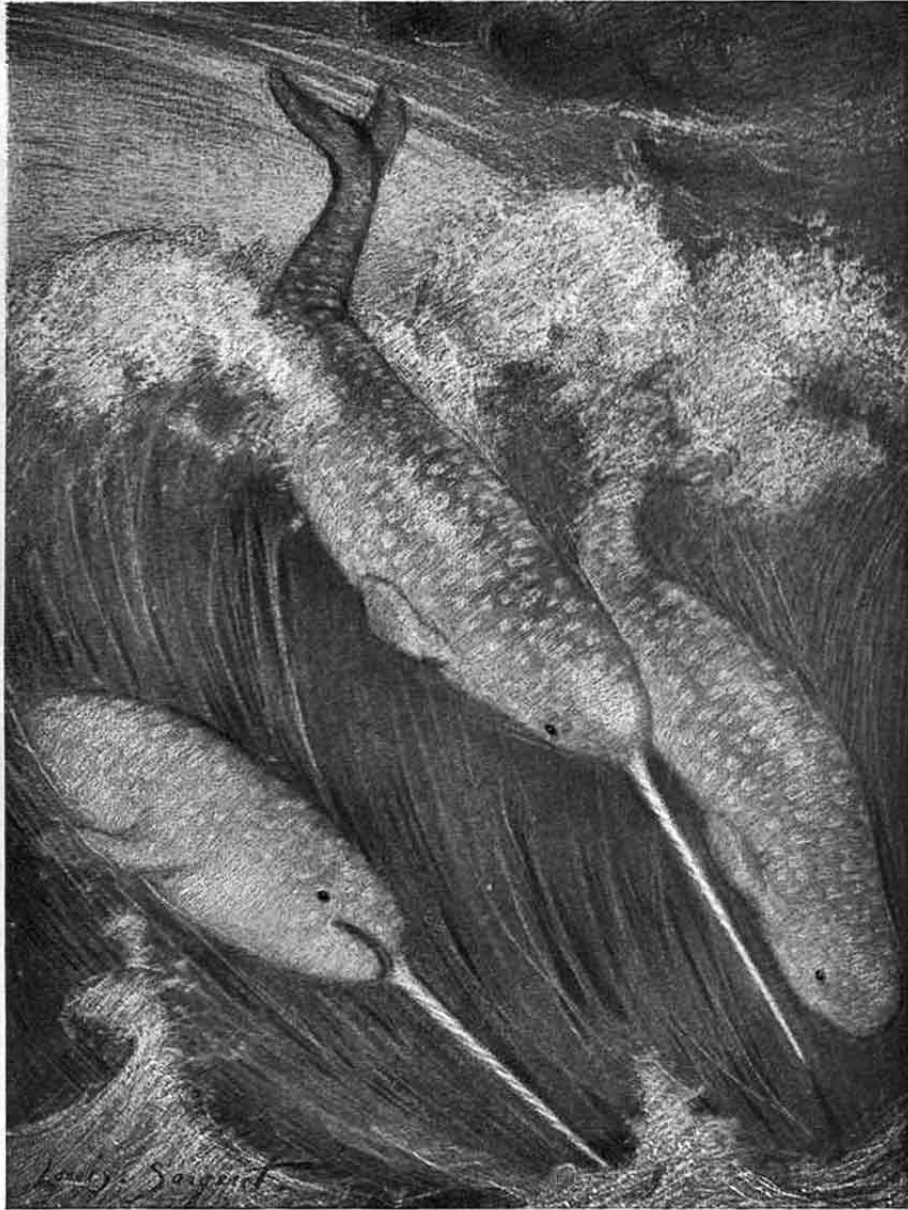
Narwhals exhibit seasonal migrations, with a high fidelity of return to preferred, ice-free summering grounds, usually in shallow waters. In summer months, they move closer to coasts, often in pods of 10–100. In the winter, they move to offshore, deeper waters under thick pack ice, surfacing in narrow fissures in the sea ice, or leads. As spring comes, these leads open up into channels and the narwhals return to the coastal bays. Narwhals from Canada and West Greenland winter regularly in the pack ice of Davis Strait and Baffin Bay along the continental slope with less than 5% open water and high densities of Greenland halibut. Feeding in the winter accounts for a much larger portion of narwhal energy intake than in the summer.

As in most toothed whales, narwhals use sound to navigate and hunt for food. Narwhals primarily vocalize through “clicks,” “whistles,” and “knocks,” created by air movement between chambers near the blow-hole. These sounds are reflected off the sloping front of the skull and focused by the animal’s melon, which can be controlled by musculature. Echolocation clicks are primarily produced for prey detection and for locating obstacles at short distances. It is possible that individual “bangs” are capable of disorienting or incapacitating prey, making them easier to hunt, but this has not been verified. They also emit tonal signals, such as whistles and pulsed calls, that are believed to have a communication function. The calls recorded from the same herd are more similar than calls from different herds, suggesting the possibility of group or individual-specific calls in narwhals. Narwhals may also adjust the duration and the pitch of their pulsed calls to maximize sound propagation in varying acoustic environments. Other sounds produced by narwhals include trumpeting and squeaking door sounds. The narwhal vocal repertoire is similar to that of the closely related beluga, with comparable whistle frequency ranges, whistle duration and repetition rates of pulse calls; however beluga whistles may have a higher frequency range and more diversified whistle contours.

Narwhals can live an average of 50 years, however research using aspartic acid racemization from the lens of the eyes suggests that narwhals can live to be as old as 115 ± 10 years and 84 ± 9 years for females and males, respectively. Mortality often occurs when the narwhals suffocate after they fail to leave before the surface of the Arctic waters freeze over in the late autumn. As narwhals need to breathe, they drown if open water is no longer accessible and the ice is too thick for them to break through.

Narwhals are one of many mammals that are being threatened by human actions. Estimates of the world population of narwhals range from around 50,000 (from 1996) to around 170,000 (compilation of various sub-population estimates from the years 2000–2017). They are considered to be near threatened and several sub-populations have evidence of decline. In an effort to support conservation, the European Union established an import ban on tusks in 2004 and lifted it in 2010. The United States has forbidden imports since 1972 under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Narwhals are difficult to keep in captivity.

In Inuit legend, the narwhal’s tusk was created when a woman with a harpoon rope tied around her waist was dragged into the ocean after the harpoon had struck a large narwhal. She was transformed into a narwhal and her hair, which she was wearing in a twisted knot, became the characteristic spiral



NARWHALS
By Louis A. Sargent

Louis A. Sargent, *The Wild Beasts of the World*, plate 36, 1909.

narwhal tusk.

The narwhal was one of two possible explanations of the giant sea phenomenon written by Jules Verne in his 1870 novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Verne thought that it would be unlikely that there was such a gigantic narwhal in existence. The size of the narwhal, or “unicorn of the sea,” as found by Verne, would have been 18.3 m (60 ft). For the narwhal to have caused the phenomenon, Verne stated that its size and strength would have to increase by five or ten times.

Herman Melville wrote a section on the narwhal (written as “narwhale”) in his 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*, in which he claims a narwhal tusk hung for “a long period” in Windsor Castle after Sir Martin Frobisher had given it to Queen Elizabeth. Another claim he made was that the Danish kings made their thrones from narwhal tusks.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 23, 2023 at 7:36pm

Also from *Wikipedia*:

The Coronation Chair of Denmark (Danish and Norwegian: Danmarks tronstol; also: salvingsstol, kroningsstol) is the chair formerly used in the coronation of the Danish monarch. According to legend, the Coronation Chair is made of the horn of unicorns. In reality, it is made from Norwegian narwhal tusks. It is guarded by three life-size silver lions, based on Biblical references, and was a symbol of the absolute monarchy of the Twin Kingdoms. The Coronation Chair is located in the Castle of Rosenborg in Copenhagen.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 23, 2023 at 7:36pm

Raymond—As usual, Melville is either spot on or not far wrong.

* * * * *

Post by Judih on Aug 24, 2023 at 9:20am

Wow, what a treat! A glimpse into the reservoirs of poet Nathan. I want to hear you read this. If not you, if not Sam, or Martina, then me. Someone! Jimmy? Maybe our local rosy-finned wannabe who grabbed the mic.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Aug 24, 2023 at 10:10am

**Horowitz, (re(re(mixed)ed)ed)
Again, Again**

Again, we attempted to blend in with the narwhals—
this time we tried a veil.

* * *

Narwhal Fertility Ritual, l,l,l . .

The hills are alive with the sound of Nirvana.
The narwhals are blasting it.

The leading theory has long been that the narwhal tusk serves as a secondary sex character of males

In mythic time, the Ur-Narwhal
was born on each of two hills.

for nonviolent assessment of hierarchical status on the basis of relative tusk size

Tonight, the hills are alive with the smell of
narwhal funk and poontang.

the tusk is a highly innervated sensory organ

On grassy hillsides littered with bottles,
screaming lyrics to “Teen Spirit” in ultrasonic voices,

with millions of nerve endings connecting seawater stimuli in the external ocean environment with the brain

narwhals wriggle and rut
in slimy flippered embrace.

the narwhal tusk is a sexual trait, much like the antlers of a stag, the mane of a lion, or the feathers of a peacock.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 24, 2023 at 7:42pm

More randomish texts, from my forthcoming chapbook! *Conversations with Narwhals*:

Neruda and Me

(A microessay)

Neruda fantasizes in a poem about how his life would have been different if, instead of writing poems, he had taken all the emotions and thoughts that went into all his poems and channeled them into a single, great, green blot of ink upon a single paper. BAM!

In my own fantasy, I drop a word like a stone in a pond. Ripples extend outward to the horizon, rocking everyone they touch. The effect becomes known as The Wobble—the moment when everyone saw the world from a different angle!

(Impudent poundings of the keys! Dear reader, please pardon the brained-ness of my brawny brain. Also, one of the short poems in the previous post used an idea—The Wobble—taken from Raymond without attribution. May this note serve as attribution.)

* * * * *

Post by KD on Aug 26, 2023 at 7:20pm

Nathan, I've so enjoyed all your poems and musings, and did not know I was in for such an education about narwhals! I think Sam's comment about the possible state of mind of these poems is pretty spot-on: "The lovechild of Chthulhu and a flamingo." Narwhals as "the unicorns of the sea" make them even more alluring and such a fun word to read/say out loud.

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Aug 27, 2023 at 11:46am

I was geekily thrilled by your mention of *The Wobble*, and like the way you glossed it: the moment when everyone saw the world from a different angle. Resonates with my own Wobbly feelings. Was happy to be able to ask Ray about it in one of our calls, and to be treated to the tale of breaking through the bottom of the Deep Deep Sea, into the Deeper Deeper Sea, on the back of a Sea Dragon—a joyous image that will never leave me.

Such much fun in these poems, in a most accomplished manner. Bravo. And even though it was probably a joke—the narwhal chapbook—don't mean it shouldn't be a reality. Some of my favorite realities are jokes.

* * * * *

Post by Jimmy on Aug 30, 2023 at 7:52pm

My little narwhal contribution:

Narwhals

Narwhals are found in the Arctic North
 And are many, but nigh endangered
 Never from the Arctic do they venture forth
 Being Canadian and Greenlander rangers
 Narwhals can live up to fifty years
 And can dive down a mile deep!
 Polar bears and man are their principal fears
 Fish, shrimp and squid are what they reap
 Their magnificent tusks are their claim to fame
 These appendages are actually teeth
 A sensory organ that helps with their game
 A nerve ending bundle bone sheath
 With four-inch blubber and no dorsal fin
 These babies can make it in cold
 Discussing narwhals is always a win
 They're such lovely beings to behold!

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Sep 9, 2023 at 10:21pm

That's lovely, Jimmy.

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Oct 9, 2023 at 7:25am

I think you must be that Narwhal, in the distance, the one with its—what was it again? ah, that's right: nerve ending bundle bone sheath—the one with its NEBBS in the air, poking out above the waves like a thought-casting tower . . . ?

* * * * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai



I Rise

I rise,
the chair begs me to return
but I can't
it's just impossible.

I hear the sounds of figs falling
and I fly through windswept branches
swirling swooping energy within

I drink wayward wafts of cool
and my kayak spirit paddles the streams
furry scampering things along the bank

all one, forest land and hill
me amongst them
large and small, all

not to turn back
till the trumpet sounds

* * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai

patrol the night sky
my mind on my breath
pilotless drones

* * *

ceiling fan whitenoise
noiseless kibbutz
warmth of 4 am

* * *

along the spectrum
bomb blasts to morning birdsong
vibrancy of life

* * *

swallowed apple seed
slowly sprouts
haiku fruit

* * *

kibbutz wandering
spontaneous rendezvous
jackals and i

* * *

bird of paradise
beside the armadillo
emerging friendship

* * *

pulse accelerates
mind makes new connections
as Fall shows her face

* * *

as i move through life
may i receive myself
just as i am

* * *

that recurring figure
occupying space in my mind
still a mystery

* * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai

kibbutz night music
whooshes, soft roars and cat songs
one-time show?

* * *

nights like these
rocket alerts, saferoom stays
till quiet morning

* * *

thank you neighbor dog
guarding our kibbutz pathway
while we sleep

* * *

around the world
some humans walk paths
with modest footprints

* * *

when is the game over?
have you played your hand?
time for a change?

* * *

what's good is good
when you do something, do it
DNA wisdom

* * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from New England

*“Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes.”*

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as Notes from the Northwest, & appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, & perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Job Hunting Journal July 13, 2023 to November 8, 2023

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

*“Sometimes things take longer to happen than you think they will,
and then they happen faster than you thought they could.”
—Economist Rudiger Dornbusch*

July 13, 2023
2:56 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Not precisely like the earlier one published in *Cenacle* | 109 | October 2019. I am still employed right now; no layoff at this point.

Yet I feel like I need to make a move, & soon. The team I am on is led by an incompetent manager who does not treat me with any respect. Every day is a struggle to do good work, because of this ongoing conflict. Like ever taking two slow steps for one.

So today I am starting the process of moving on, within the company I am in now, or elsewhere. I do not yet have a plan. Just a deep unhappiness, & a wish to sleep full nights again. Decided to dig into this journal again, anew. See what comes. As usual, little knowing.

* * * * *



July 14, 2023
 5:39 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Today I put in an official complaint against my manager, & her manager, for months of abuse & harassment. It was a very hard thing to do. I've never before experienced what it is to do something like this. Scary as fuck, & yet sometimes there is no choice in the matter. Take it, or speak up. Feeling brave or not, speak up.

I don't know what happens next. But I do know that refusing to take bullshit from people who don't think twice about dishing it out is a good thing.

I hope I have something good to say in a subsequent entry.

Right now, just shaking & drained. Glad it's the weekend.

* * * * *

July 16, 2023
 5:25 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Tomorrow I return to work, & whatever it will be hereon. I was sad & angry & frustrated last night that a job I loved for so long has in the last six months become such a nightmare.

I let out my pent-up-everything last night. KD listened, & sympathized, & is supportive no matter what. I am wordlessly lucky to have her.

I did this by my choice. Could have just put up with the bullshit longer, or quit. I chose to say *no*, stand up, & demand to be recognized & respected. Whatever comes of this, the people who tried to gaslight me into submission have been officially reported, & will have to account for it. And I will *not* feel like I ran from cowardice & fear.

Fucking hard to stand up for yourself sometimes. Especially outnumbered. But you *have* to.

* * * * *

July 17, 2023
 1:22 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Been at work most of my day now, no response on my submitted complaint. Doing what work makes sense to me to do. Not doing other things I would have done last week.

Waiting is hard, but the last six months of helplessness were far worse. Just have to continue & see what move it made. I took my turn first.

* * * * *

Jul 22, 2023
12:01p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Next week is when I find things out, like Monday. I've talked to a lawyer, just in case. Have another call with her Monday.

I'm moving the equation around as best I can, working on a new plan.

We've all been bullied in this life, by people who never should have had the power to do so. It sucks, & sometimes there is a feeling of being in a prison of someone else's making.

But this instance stops. I'm not going back. Whatever comes, I've taking the available mechanisms, & made the situation public; bullies hate witnesses & light.

Anyway, got a weekend to think other thoughts. Then back to it on Monday.

* * * * *

July 23, 2023
7:52 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

I think my waiting for what is going to happen ends tomorrow. I am hoping things will get moving on:

- Acknowledging that what happened was wrong
- Confirming I need to be transferred to another team
- Working with me to make this happen swiftly, smartly, & well

I am mildly optimistic that my reputation at the company will indicate that I did not put in a complaint carelessly, & that what I request is reasonable. I feel better & worse about it all in various moments.

Bottom line: if they don't do right by me, I have a lawyer. I hope *hope hope* things can be done maturely & nothing like that will come about. Wish me well.

* * * * *

July 26, 2023
3:08 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Still waiting . . .

* * * * *

July 27, 2023
 2:36 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Told company leadership will hand down some kind of decision regarding my complaint, & request to transfer.

Paranoia make me wonder if this is my last week. July has been my layoff week many years. 2009. 2012. 2019. 2020.

Again? I don't know. But the waiting & the worry suck. *Really suck.*

* * * * *

July 29, 2023
 4:14 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Finally met with a Human Resources person yesterday morning. Her two weeks new to the company, but very professional. We talked a full hour. *What can we know about strangers on Zoom calls? Can we trust our gut that a person's caring face means it?* I don't know.

But she seemed very committed to helping. Told me to take Monday off, let her do some interviews & more research. I told her of places in the company I could re-locate to. Other teams that would take me, if it was arranged.

Will this work? I don't know. Know *nothing*.

But this. KD & I were watching a series this weekend on Netflix about stalkers & their victims. The helplessness the victims felt. Their distrust that anyone would believe & help.

This is not stalking, but it is the cruel bad use of power like those situations. I will **NEVER FUCKING WORK FOR THAT MANAGER AGAIN.**

I am reasonable, kind, always willing to collaborate. But I've reached the end of my road with that manager, told this HR lady so. I'm done. Six months of it, *done*.

It's all a risk as to if it will work out. But honest to the universe, I'd be dumb as scum if I ever let myself near that manager again.

I told the HR lady to tell that manager I requested out, & I am transferring. That's it. I hope it means I keep my job there, on a new team. But even if not, no fucking way do I ever go back. Nothing about all this is being swept under any rug.

Feeling jittery, nervous, glad for the day off, but I just want to do the fucking job & get paid, no psychodrama.

-24-

Tuesday, August 12, 2003 9:00 a.m.
 Bungalow Cecil E Tower - Melrose, MA

OK - here goes...

9:09 a.m. ~~Journal~~ 1:1 at 11:30

2:43 p.m. Attic Study ^(work) _(table) - Melrose, MA.

- They did it. Laid me off. That's it.
 Fucking ~~some~~ & ~~some~~, stone-faced killers.

But like Elton John's song, "I'm Still Standing".

This is low. Nearby steps bid to climb anew.

They beat me for now.
 Sad. Angry. Mostly numb.

I'm here.
 Bastards cut down
 I stand up again.
 How this works.

So still waiting . . . *hope?* Maybe a dram more now . . . will see if this HR lady truly walks the walk . . .

* * * * *

August 1, 2023
11:16 a.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

More updates in about 15 min.

Wow, this is stressful.

Wanting to breathe easier again.

* * * * *

August 1, 2023
1:02 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Laid off. They *won*. *For now*.

* * * * *

August 2, 2023
10:19 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Slowly getting back from somewhere else. The last six months have been worse & worse until it seemed like nothing good would ever happen again. Then they laid me off in a cruel & sudden fashion.

Little job nibbles come in. I know not to get stuck on any of them. Just keep the process moving along. Could take any amount of time for success to arrive. And I do not even know what that looks like. Not yet.

I want something more than just another job. I want some peace of mind & more time. I don't want to ever lose myself in a pay job again. What does this mean? *Care less?* I don't know. That sums up. *Don't know*. Slowly finding out . . .

* * * * *

August 3, 2023
9:37 a.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

Below today's letter to my attorney. Just making sure there isn't anything I can do but get on with job-hunting . . .

On July 14, 2023, I filed an EthicsPoint report against my managers at XXXXXX. My report detailed six months of harassment and gaslighting on their part, leading to a toxic work environment that was compromising my mental health and ability to do my work.

I also spoke with an attorney from [your legal firm] about this matter, and was advised that I was not in a protected class of workers. This attorney asked for follow-up when it occurred.

On July 28, 2023, I met with an HR person at XXXXXX, and discussed my report, and my request for a transfer to another department. I gave her details on where I might transfer, and how my role would continue to benefit the company. She promised to follow up with me in a few days.

On August 1, 2023, expecting to have this follow-up call with her, I was instead brought into a call with the manager (one of two that I had filed my report against) and told that I had been terminated from the company. This manager then proceeded to go on a long harangue against me, for no apparent reason, as the decision had been made.

I realize that Massachusetts is an at-will state for employment, but is responding to my EthicsPoint report like this acceptable behavior? Does my talking to HR as well offer me no protection against sudden termination?

In light of these details, I am writing to you. I am going to include my termination letter for your review. I have not signed it yet, of course, since even my non-attorney eyes can see that once I do (mostly to get the four weeks of severance pay, and to be able to collect unemployment insurance), my ability to do anything further otherwise is done.

Please advise me ASAP on this letter. This experience has been very traumatizing to me and my wife. I was in excellent standing at this company until the reporting structure above me changed, and I seemed to be targeted for some reason. Quite honestly, I did not deserve this treatment. Nobody does. Your guidance will be greatly appreciated.

—Raymond Soulard, Jr.

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August 3, 2023
 11:56 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

This letter is more going through the motions. I don't expect anything but, just in case, I have documented everything.

They won for now. But I have noticed that, sooner or later, bastards fall in this world. Just a matter of time. They will piss someone "important" there off. Nobody stays high or low forever. That's my comfort (haha!).

* * * * *

August 5, 2023
 8:35 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

The hard thing, like any trauma, is to re-calibrate sense of self. To think about time anew. To try & figure out what mattered, & carry it along, & begin to jettison the rest. The unexplained cruelty.

Keeping one's head up is as much a mental as physical thing. Yet I think it's both.

Looking onward, remembering what's useful to remember. Time enough to grieve later.

* * * * *

August 6, 2023
 8:19 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

So every moment I am working, or loving the world somehow, the bastards lose. *Simple.*

What I do with all I've learned—what more I know—what better I can do—is the test. My hope is to pass this test far more often than not; & not lessen my renewed efforts for times I fail.

None of this is easy. But laying down quietly to the ignorance & cruelty of others is worse. Hearts are meant to beat. Lungs to breathe. Minds to find new roads when the old no longer do.

* * * * *

August 8, 2023
 11:31 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Asking: *who am I without that daily work at that particular place?*

Funny: the company on my mental name-tag has changed countless times over the years. Endless parade of great & terrible bosses, great & terrible co-workers, great & terrible work to do.

Funnier: my very favorite job was my paper route, when I was a teenager. Seven days a week at dawn, you'd find me pushing my shopping cart up & down some suburban Connecticut streets. Hot of summer, blizzards of winter, all of it. I had my way of doing things; my streets of customers; got paid on Saturday mornings when I'd bike into town to the newspaper office. Paid them what I owed them for the week's papers; kept the rest, & the tips. And holidays? Envelopes of thankees & money. Life wasn't so good otherwise then, but one little part of it was wholly mine . . . first of so many mental name-tags.

I can only say that what to fall back on is what travels with one across jobs, from one to the next, & in between them. *What are you, what am I, when not on the clock?* I know that my love of books & language in general is what I have translated a small piece of into my technical communication career. But the rest is still pretty much what it has always been. Pens, notebooks, novels. This beloved literary journal I have published for many years.

I've always thought of pay-jobs as paying for *what* I love, & helping tend in one way or another *who* I love. And that's fine.

But my challenge is that I get a good job & I lose my heart to it too. When it ends—& they all end, one way or another—I feel lesser. Not less worthwhile as a human being, but lesser because a part of me I cared about is gone; worse, suddenly gone.

So then, time to dip deeper into the rest. What does not leave because of a corporate decision, a bean-counter's stroke of the pen.

Raining Boston but good today. The green world enjoys. Invites us to enjoy too, if we can turn away a moment from the endless murk of human folly, simply to behold mysteries as deep as our dreams . . .

* * * * *

August 9, 2023
 9:15 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

I am trying to capture this experience in writing, as I am able, for myself &, to a degree, for others. Bring some worth to this essentially worth-less activity.

* * * * *

August 10, 2023
 9:22 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Last night I hit a wall. Hard. As previously mentioned, I'd been talking to an attorney about action against my former employer. She said "maybe, need to talk to another attorney." But more time needed. Meanwhile, because hadn't yet signed severance agreement; can't get onto KD's insurance; can't start collecting unemployment.

And, really, *for what?* Attorney said: "more money, maybe get some job at company back."

Worth it? I need a job *now*. I need to look forward to the clear road ahead, not linger at that beautiful wreck over there in the ditch.

I loved that job, the work mostly. The people really nice but it's the work, knowledge management, technical communication, that I really love. I want more of it, soon. That employer fucked up, but I can't keep staring at the debris of what was once good. It will linger, a memory-scar. But new days deserve new attention. So I signed the agreement.

Taking today off a bit. Already did some job-hunting, sent out resumes. The rest mostly in my Attic Study, notebooks, deep within me, deep without me.

It was a hard good move. Letting go doesn't start until you do something you don't want to do. Release a little, then a little more.

* * * * *

August 11, 2023
 2:07 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

From a dream . . .

Find myself sitting, fully clothed, in a cold running stream . . . feeling just shoved in . . .

The near-empty carafe of water in my hand is from back there, on land . . .

I consider it, sadly, then dump it out, slowly . . .

Fill it again with the cold stream's water, drink deeply . . .

Goodbye, old employer . . .

* * * * *

August 13, 2023
 8:41 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

KD affectionately calls me a “job-hunt junkie,” & I can see her point. Even during this weekend, I sent out resumes. I think in part I do so to integrate this into the rest of my life. Like Art, publishing, radio work, it is a process part of daily living. It came to be by bad people, but I am seeking to make it my own, as good a thing as it can be. *Fuck them*. I will find a *new* path.

* * * * *

August 15, 2023
 10:20 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Started 3 day juice cleanse yesterday, 8 super juices every 2 hours, nothing else but water, wow, what a challenge . . .

Still sent out 10+ resumes, that’s my daily goal. Two already today. Sometimes I just feel low, putting out good energy, getting nothing or “not interested” responses in return. But this is not new to me. This is about saturating the market with resumes. There is no other way to do this. No magic bullet. Just send & send & send. Eventually screening interviews. Then real interviews. And all of this over & over & over again until the ball drops in. I’ve done it before, hated it. Doing it now, hating it. But it needs be done.

* * * * *

August 15, 2023
 4:12 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

One of the tests of job-hunting is maintaining health, mental & physical. Day after day, hat in hand, asking for work, is not what anyone prefers to be doing. Also, in a sudden layoff, one was just seeming moments ago working away, earning a paycheck, talking to colleagues, all the usual. Now the work is gone, the paycheck too, & the colleagues are still at that job, wishing you well, but now from a distance.

Learning to keep to one’s good habits despite all this (even to defy the circumstance & try to gain new ones!) can be hard. And job-hunts don’t come with expiration dates to when they end (collecting unemployment does, so more like a clock ticking down than a date). It gets done till it’s done. But keeping one’s mind together, one’s body in tact, these are not negotiable like pay rates. Jobs come & go for everyone. We each & all get one body, one mind, for this go-round anyway.

* * * * *

August 21, 2023
 9:44 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Call at 10 a.m. for a Technical Content Writer. 15 min. phone screening with a recruiter, so essentially a gateway call. We size each other up, ask questions, & decide if there is a spark to move forward.

Do it, well as can, then shake it off & move on. Getting stuck on **ANY** possibility is lunacy. The key to this is keep on keeping on keeping on . . . day in, day out, don't stop, not never, till the money is committed & the papers are signed . . .

Ugly fucking way to spend some daylight hours, but no choice in the matter . . . anyway, I parsed out the job description, sentence by sentence, so I'm ready for the coming 15 min. like a crazed motherfucker . . . but polite, calm, & **OH SO QUALIFIED** 😊

* * * * *

August 22, 2023
 2:24 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Well, that went south quick. A good screening turned into a weirdly overly demanding client, one I had long ago contracted for. They got rid of me without a blink 11 years ago. *Fuck 'em.*

Then heard from a friend at last job. Struggling with Long COVID. A good man. Wanted to get together. I realized I didn't. I am fucking chained to this task until it is done. I spent half every day on it, then half on other things.

But I am still angry. Anything that is near to association with that place. Even a sweet guy I loved working with there & knowing.

Wound is bandaged but not close to healing. Only been 3 weeks. Spent those three weeks a-begging work. There's no distance yet at all.

* * * * *

August 29, 2023
 11:02 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Another job screening this morning, now 4 weeks since suddenly laid off. All of August 2023, save for the few morning hours of the 1st, at this unlikeable task. Leaving August with a nibble here, a nibble there, nothing solid yet.

1:29 p.m. [cont p. 10] -31-

RTI Hiring Manager Interview

last time
this time

* Manage docs for research projects
to improve projects

Documents
Project &
Quality
Manager by
lots of fw &
low background

KM?

- Style Guide — Templates
- Training — Review Calendar
- Standards for management - files, tags, etc.

* Work under general direction & oversight
of project leaders to complete assignments

Q1?

- Consistent regular reporting
- Agreed upon milestones
- Check-ins along a project path
for feedback, blockers, etc.

* Offer guidance & provide technical expertise to
less experienced staff

- Office hours — Ticketing process
- Lunch & learns — Ad-hoc meetings / trainings

RTIS?

* Make direct contributions to proposals through
technical & budget activities — ?

* Make indirect contributions [resume renewal update,
bio sketches & charts]
Have managed teams

After Labor Day is when companies start hiring again more seriously, & so there is that hope. There is the hope of experience, which tells me that this process begins with saturation, eventually moves to screenings, & arrives to interviews at some point. Already in the first two of those.

There is the hope that earning enough money, & investing it wisely means one day leaving all this behind. Hell, there's the hope that I will luck into a company that understands that the knowledge management aspect of their business is critical, & a valid aspect to success.

And there are other hopes in this world. The coming annual beauty of autumn in New England. The brilliant mysteries of being alive, that engulf to very little this onerous task.

* * * * *

August 31, 2023

9:23 a.m.

Bungalow Cee

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Gosh, the end of August. First day of which I was laid off, in a cruel moment, from a job I had earned & loved every day for nearly 3 years. I can only remind myself that the marketplace can bring great rewards one moment, spit you out with a curse in another. There is no full protection against it, unless one lives without the need to earn a paid living. Till such a time, one straps on one's best smile, will, attitude, & belief in the powers of collaboration, & gets to it.

* * * * *

August 31, 2023

9:35 a.m.

Bungalow Cee

Milkrose, Massachusetts

A full month of being jobless, & trying to assess what it means. And Labor Day in the US coming up this weekend. I'm not sure what to make of this holiday, other than it seems to mark the passage from summer to fall, & for most include a long week off from . . . labor.

I spent half my weekday time on places like LinkedIn.com, looking for new roles, getting the current lay of the job market landscape. Dealing with ads that say "remote" but really mean "remote unless you are required to come into the office, which you thus must live near enough to do." Other ads for "technical writers" that require PhDs in science, or engineering, which is precisely what the profession is not. But also appreciating how places like LinkedIn.com make the process of applying for roles so much faster & easier. *Remember the old days of classified ads in the newspapers?*

* * * * *

September 6, 2023
 10:53 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts



Jobhunting . . .
 mind sometimes on other things . . .

* * * * *

September 11, 2023
 11:21 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Another HR screening in a few min. And later a phone call with an old colleague, dude I loved to work with, maybe something with his company might occur. And already sent out a few resumes, & got one nibble quashed. It goes on & on.

Trying to live well as possible otherwise, write & write, get *Cenacle* 123 under way. SPRadio every weekend, all the work to make that happen.

Thus, Monday.

But, hey! My Dallas Cowboys won their opening night game, 40-0 over archrivals NY Giants. Good things happen too!

* * * * *

September 12, 2023
 1:59 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Needed this today:

*When life is too much, roll with it, baby
 Don't stop and lose your touch, oh no, baby
 Hard times knocking on your door,
 I'll tell them you ain't there no more
 Get on through it, roll with it, baby
 Luck'll come and then slip away,
 You've gotta move, bring it back to stay
 You just roll with it, baby, come on and just roll with it, baby
 You and me, roll with it, baby, hang on and just roll with it, baby
 The way that you love is good as money
 I swear by stars above, sweet as honey
 People think you're down and out, you show them what it's all about
 You can make it, roll with it, baby*

*When this world turns its back on you,
 Hang in and do that sweet thing you do
 You just roll with it, baby, you just roll with it, baby
 Come on and just roll with it,
 Baby, you and me, just roll with it, baby
 Now there'll be a day you'll get there, baby, you'll hear the music
 Play, you'll dance, baby
 You'll leave bad times way behind, nothing but good times on your mind
 You can do it, roll with it, baby
 Then you'll see life will be so nice, it's just a step up to paradise
 You just roll with it, baby, you just roll with it, baby
 You and me, just roll with it,
 Baby, Come on and just roll with it, baby*

—Steve Winwood, “Roll With It,” 1988.

* * * * *

September 16, 2023
 10:13 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Another week of a psychic war. Daily send out resumes, talk to random souls on phone, play the part of give-a-fuck, again & again & again, not for these random recruiting drones, not for the peering-down hiring team soon, but for my Art, & for KD, & for what I do give a fuck for. Ain't pretty, tho my resume is, tho my practiced phone skills intimate. No, it's as ugly as the deluded masses dying of COVID, as the Arctic ices melting. But you pay me cash money, Master, I got a nice set of skills to work for you. With a smile. Giving a good-hearted fuck by the paying hour. Amen. *Fuck them all.* If there is a God, this ugly human world ain't God's fault.

* * * * *

September 20, 2023
 4:00 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Two second round interviews today. One just done. Other in an hour. Prepped for first one for a couple of hours, this one for an hour. Give it all, thanked kindly, that's that.

OK. Get along. Performance in 58 min.

* * * * *

September 26, 2023
4:00 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

One of those a no; the other still waiting. On it goes, though a pause for a few days up in Maine coming. Nature not a cure for joblessness, but surely a balm.

* * * * *

October 1, 2023
4:00 p.m.
Bungalow Bee
Hulls Cove, Maine

Last night of vacation, to share this bright bit. Hopeful from a really good call about a potential job with a company I knew as a vendor with my last employer. Worked with its folks, on documentation projects. Call with VP just before leaving on vacation (our car was packed, ready to go once call done) made me think that maybe what I am & have to offer fits this company nicely. That said, other interviews set up for this coming Tuesday, back from Maine. But hope, Emily Dickinson's "thing with feathers," drives one on, while the opposite lays one out.

Flap, flap!

* * * * *

October 10, 2023
3:32 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

The one job I really want is waiting on many details to fall luckily into place over the next couple of weeks. Meanwhile, I do other interviews &, after a few vacation days off, I have returned to the 10-resumes-submitted-a-day plan. Soul-sucking, but doing it.

Woke up thinking: *so much of life is trying to do good by one's self while trying to figure out how this mixes well with doing well by others.* Jobs are about money, but not quite *just* about money. Yet money is wrapped up in them. No easy answer to sorting this out.

* * * * *

October 12, 2023
2:38 p.m.
Bungalow Cee
Milkrose, Massachusetts

A good hiring manager interview this morning, the kind that gives me hope, for a moment, then get back to sending out resumes. But I think two are getting genuinely closer.

Till an offer, & acceptance, I don't stop.

Oh, & another HR screening came through for next Monday.

This does not stop until the finish line crossed.

Jude & Gadi, you are on my mind every day. All I can do is this kind of thing, job hunting, *Cenacle* 123, SPRadio, & leave some space for thinking of you. It's not enough. Nothing is.

* * * * *

October 17, 2023

10:36 a.m.

Bungalow Cee

Milkrose, Massachusetts

What's funny in a sick way is we keep having to do our daily stuff . . .

but war & war & war & war . . .

Dear friend Judih & her beloved Gadi are missing, hurt, fates unknown . . .

I now have several potential roles in play—no offers but beyond the recruiter stage . . .

Perfectly autumnal peaceful out my back door . . .

Interviews, meals, TV shows, writing, next issue of *Cenacle* 123 currently in the making . . .

🌀 yet 🌀 yet 🌀 yet 🌀 yet 🌀 yet 🌀 yet . . .

🌀 yet 🌀 yet . . .

🌀 yet . . .

War 🌀 war 🌀 war 🌀 war.

* * * * *

October 20, 2023

10:10 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Still the fucking War goes on, still Judih & Gadi & many others missing . . .

Meanwhile, I have five companies in play, many interviews in play next week . . . exciting but scary because none yet have many an offer . . . no leverage yet . . . no solid ground . . . hoping this comes very soon . . .

* * * * *

-16-

2:59 p.m. Nothing yet — still waiting & hopeful — based on email this morning from HR lady —

"Finalizing details"

"Should be reaching out today with an update :)"

"Stay tuned"

So waiting —

It would work — will accept soon as requested & see if the others do anything quick —

Just cross the line with me. I will earn the faith every day. A company bent on saving the world — well, how can't that be good? GB was like that in 2020 —

Meanwhile, WSU 10/28/23 nearly edited & so near to finish last & this weekend —

3:40 p.m.

GOT IT!

First day
in
2023
I can
breathe
easy

Nightmare Over

October 25, 2023
 9:38 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Cribbed from a note to dear friend Charlie Beyer:

Job search. I cannot *think* of anything more dehumanizing than shaking mind's ass for a fucking job. Don't get dollar one for putting on my tie, sharpening up my silver tongue, & spinning my fairy tale narrative that **THIS** is the job I have wanted all my fucking life. *So hire me, please, so I can pay my fucking mortgage & take care of my beautiful wife, OK, motherfuckers? O-fucking-K?*

But I've gotten up to advanced rounds on half a dozen tech writer/knowledge manager-type roles this week. Took 3 months to get to this point. I just need to score one. Think a hopeful thought for me.

* * * * *

November 2, 2023
 10:30 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Today a 4th interview with a company. Tuesday was third with a different company. Yesterday two of my six leading possibles fell through. Feeling like I have four really good chances, two especially. I wish I had something else to say. Just hope good luck occurs, fear I'll be back to 10-resumes-sent-out-daily, as it has been since August.

Three months of this shit. Could be over very soon, or not

* * * * *

November 5, 2023
 10:35 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Some good news coming to share this week. Not yet to tell. But soon.

* * * * *

November 8, 2023
 9:27 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Took 95 days from August 1, when I was laid off, to November 3, when a good company offered me, & I accepted, a new Technical Writer position. I learned, & re-learned, a lot about myself during this time. The best of it, for fellow job-hunters, is this:

The commonly said wisdom is that layoffs aren't "personal." They *are*. Suddenly, your way of life is over. Your paycheck. Your daily labors. Your colleagues. Our society runs on the engines of our minds' & backs' sweat. It depends on us to show up every day & do the work. There is *no* choice in this. And yet these situations come along where we are denied doing the thing we are depended upon to do. And the fruits of that thing. So, yah, this *is* personal, & societal, both.

That all said, layoffs are *not* about you. They are about a company making a financial decision. The money you cost, versus the value you bring in for the company, are no longer in line with each other. Company first.

Remember: the people laying you off need those paychecks too. They just have the power to decide that you are to be cast out to save the rest. Personal? *Oh, hell yah.*

Now that you are laid off, & with luck receiving some unemployment support from the government for a short period (six months usually), it's time to get busy. Think of that unemployment check as paying you to find a job. *Finding* a job is now your job, for however long this lasts. Not jobless, but jobbed with job-hunting. This seems like a small mental twist of perception, but I found it helped me.

Get up every day, Monday to Friday, & build a job-hunting routine. Mine was to go online to places like LinkedIn, Indeed, Dice, etc., & get out at least 10 resume/applications a day. Did it this time around for nearly 3 months. I kept a spreadsheet to track who I had applied to; what job information was given (full-time vs contract, salary range, size of company, etc.); status of application. My spreadsheet shows that I applied to about 600 positions; talked to screening recruiters for about 10% of those; & to hiring managers for maybe 33% of that smaller number. I am very qualified to do what I do, but there are many others who are also qualified.

Remember: you are not job-hunting in a vacuum. Others are dealing with it too, for one reason or another.

Make sure your resume is *solid*. There are reputable places to help. It is worth the small investment. A good resume is a calling card on your behalf, your first effort to get someone with a role to fill to want to know you better. It should reflect well the best of who you are, & tell the story you wish to tell about your working career. Make sure that it is done up to show you off in your best light. Your enthusiasm for your profession. The positions you've held. The skills you've accrued. Your education. Make your truths *shine*.

When you get calls from reputable recruiters (keep in mind, there are also many scammers out there, simply accumulating quotas of names they are submitting), prepare for them like they are your first interview. Research the person you are going to be talking to. Research the company. Be ready with talking points about how you & your experience align with the open role. With good questions. Apply for jobs where you can talk comfortably about the good fit you would make. This makes the effort harder, but it means the recruiter will likely be more impressed with you.

Remember: the recruiter is not there to hire you, but to screen you. That is, make notes for the hiring manager, who decides who should be contacted for a second interview.

Once you get that second interview, leave nothing to chance. If it's in person, or on video call (Zoom etc.), be ready in all ways. Dress well. Spend the night before, or the morning of, reading & reading about the company, & preparing for what might be asked about the role. Focus on it entirely, as though

you don't have other possibilities, other interviews. The *only* thing you should be focusing on is this role. Have some good questions to ask too. Show your enthusiasm. Keep in mind that what you bring to an interview is what a performing artist brings to an audition. Even harder, since you're not singing your song, nor reading your lines. You are simply presenting a case for the fact that, if hired, you will do the job well.

Never, ever, ever, stop job-hunting along your way. Take a day off sometimes, as you would do at any job. But *never* think that you have a job in the bag just because an interview went well. The interviewers you just talked to are very likely preparing for the next equally qualified candidate. Best thing you can do is, after getting off an interview, take a breath, have a snack, go outside, & then get back to your work-space & blast out another half-dozen resume/applications before the end of the day. Nobody is obligated to hire you, nor you to accept any job, until the papers are signed. Till then, *keep moving*.

And, no matter all this, job-hunting, especially from a layoff, *sucks & sucks & sucks*. Honestly, I liken it to the breakup of a relationship. A romance especially, or even a really good friendship that ends. It's *personal*. Time heals, to a degree, with a lot of work.

Lastly, complementing your job-hunting job, have a life beyond it. Your loved ones, your personal passions. Don't lose track of the world, & its many struggles, & its many beauties. Helps to keep perspective. If it all gets too much, turn it off awhile. But don't lose *touch* with the world for the fact that you are nursing an ongoing wound.

Nothing helps completely. No words, no strategies, no better or worse days. Job-hunting has one real victory: *getting hired*. Since that is going to happen at the end (& my friends, it will happen if you do not let up), trying to live a meaningful life along the way is critical. Hard sometimes, but critical. Don't lose your best self. *You'll need it at your next job!*

I'm going to close these notes with a final sentiment. Another commonly said wisdom is that "shit happens." As in, nothing can predict it, just sucks sometimes. My response is to stretch that thought out like Play-Doh to read: "when shit happens, *make sure you happen back*." Keep that in mind, if it helps.

Peace,
Raymond







Sam Knot



Becoming Archaeology: A Eulogy for Living Moor.

*Bennett's Cross, Birch Tor, Water Hill,
Assycombe Hill, White Ridge, The Grey Wethers,
Sittaford Tor, Grey Down Stones, Quintin's Man,
Whitehorse Hill, East Dart Head, Kit Rocks,
Sandy Hole Pass, The Waterfall, Hartland Tor,
Roundy Park, Postbridge, Pizwell, Soussons
Down, Home, & Rivenstone.*

Part One: The Wester, The Wilder.

i.

It is as if the tarmac were bedrock,
this road cut six feet deep into the peat,
living walls that whisper to the sheening skin
of the man-built beast that bears you,
speeds you across the moor.

You singing cyborg!

Sight a flickering bubble
of red & white.

The moor black as space.

Sudden constellations
of sheep's eyes & cat's eyes.

Redshift—a road sign
in the mirror.

*

Space not so black after all,
rather not so tainted:

No human interference
in the milky blood of a million stars.

Old maps unfamiliar
in light of an older reality

—studded with trickster symmetry—

synapses dazzled by the dance
of their own connections

Awe Hewn New—
mind underMin'd
by Night knighted.

* * *

ii.

Bend to wake the eyes,
dew behind the ears,
evaporating sleep
from the back of the neck.

*

Old cross
adopted by the elements:
Dancing Venus,
swaying & armless:
Adoring mother,
enraptured Madonna:
Erected by men
but weathered
into womanhood.

*

Sun
 reaches fanned fingers
 over the tallest down:
 A prophetic painting in cloud.

*

Wind slips into the cracks
 of the granite crest, carving faces
 to look upon origins.

*

Breakfast
 where aurochs
 wear the rocks.

* * *

iii.

A series of destinations
 with no paths to link them,
 so hug the wood,
 bear out along the ridge,
 stay with the old stone wall,
 then fix a direction
 —some blip on the vast horizon—
 & give myself up to the moor.
 Moor & moor & moor.
 Moor where watercourses
 masquerade as walkways
 & grass bent by animal legs
 attracts animal legs
 of my own.

* * *

iv.

I see the clothes I want to wear
walking on the moor.
Shaggy hair, familiar:
Horned & wild & naturally styled.
Wearing its own skin to leather,
& wearing the rough rocks as well.

I see the clothes I want to wear
walking on the moor.
Not shopping in the mall. Out
where I can thank the sheep for its wool
& the only things to envy
are the cow & the bull.

I see the clothes I want to wear
walking on the moor, bare,
bare with skins upon skins
upon skins, still bare . . .

I see the clothes I want to wear
walking on the moor.

* * *



Sam Knot

v.

See this carcass
 lying in the grass made bed
 —spacious where once
 it was full—
 taking time to return
 to the land where it grew:
 Life's gift of death
 in full view.

Sculpting & being sculpted.
 Sanded by bark & grass & fur
 & hand & horn & heather.
 Bone blasted by wind & water.
 Eaten & shat, grown & eroded.
 Burgeoning & weathering.
 In the wearing being worn.

Rock is bone. Earth is flesh.
 Grasses hair. Flowering eyes.
 Animal skin. Mist breath.

Ancestor memory
 does not recollect
 so much as
 collectively
 reoccurs.

Like the animals. Like
 man in animal sight.
 Changing & changeless.
 Naming & nameless.

* * *

vi.

Sometimes I am more the journey
 than myself, & the journey is long:
 In visiting a grave 4,000 years old
 I become a relative, a lover, a friend.
 I feel potentials, hold vast spans of time.



Sam Knot

I see this stone
 eaten under by lichen,
 sliced by ice wind rain,
 split under its own weight.

I imagine it whole.
 I put my hand on it broken.

I've never seen this stone
 but something before me
 sees it now, inside me says:
 Many have passed these ways,
 they are the pathless paths
 of animals & ancients
 —paths out of time—
 trod then because now,
 & now because always.

* * *

vii.

Getting lost can be a gift.
 I would never have found this,
 this . . . what this can only be:
 Worked granite still white
 & gleaming, cut from the grave
 where it was carefully laid
 & is still laying, unmarked
 but now revealed:
 A wheel of white stones
 tipped gently back
 into the peat,
 hiding until recently
 up on this high wild ridge:
 White beacons of something,
 like the chalk rings further east,
 something white in the semi-darkness,
 something still where it stood
 thus still able to speak,
 or rather still singing,
 meaning still echoing,
 still beyond words.

* * *

viii.

As I walk I enlarge
 my collection: bone for bone
 & ironstone for blood,
 wool for hair skin clothes
 & dirt under the nails
 that pin us all together.

I pull the wool under my nose,
 clamp with top lip & sniff with a smile
 my fake moustache
 —scent of moor life—
 air rich & warmed
 as it flows through the web
 into, in two,
 & I am warm from this inbreath—
 a warmth that lingers for minutes
 that stand for hours
 in the interminable
 wind that whips.

* * *

ix.

I am here now,
 high on land & high on life,
 & all life comes to me
 bearing gifts of meaning
 —none other than themselves—
 none other, then all else.

I am at your kist now,
 sure that I have kissed you.
 As your father. As your brother.
 As your lover. As your friend.
 At your beginning.
 All over your middle.
 At your end.

I am feeling full
 of funereal thoughts.
 Feeling full of feeling.
 Feeling big
 & small as a boat
 on em . . . otion.

I bring you things: the bog flag
 that flies white as cotton, the tough
 grass that sky stabs & weaves well,
 the soft moss that sponges, the heather
 that colours & carpets.

I share my food too: dried pear flesh
 & walnut brain, pumpkinseed eyes,
 earth mind & air mind, water
 to wash it all down. I take some peat
 from your resting place. Like I promised
 I sing you a song.

* * *

x.

This is a high point.
 You can read three-sixty degrees.
 Stories in every direction.
 Pivoting 'round every tor.
 Woven from nettle & wool.
 Woven on human loom.
 Weighted with stone.
 Looming till time they are spoken.
 Looming again in between.

Mystery gets realer here.
 Truth clearer (fact no nearer).
 Mystery is closer here.
 Myth, alive as the meat
 in Imagination's teeth.
 Everything within reach

. . . but landscape
 speaks with silence
 to the eyes

& wind is a wordless voice

& touch is touched in turn
but blindfolded,
mindfolded:

The Trickster Twist
ever-preserved.

Memory is naught
but the depth to feeling

& feeling is strong
with these shadows in tow.

* * *

xi.

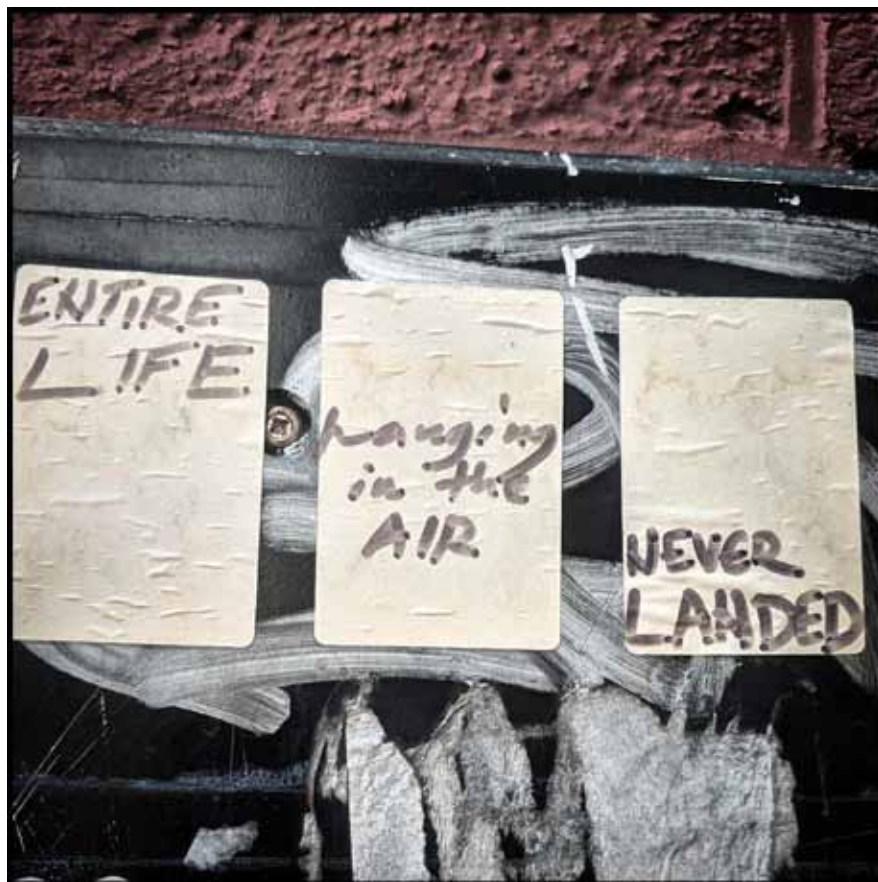
It is a martyr of masked bone
who hobbles the East Dart home:
An electric wizard, still getting wizened
(easy to put a foot wrong
with eyes on the horizon!)
who gives thanks to the new gods
of GPS & monopod
& thanks to the old ones
& none ones & one one
for moor wisdom
& that long-weathered marker
still darker than the darkening sky.

* * * * *

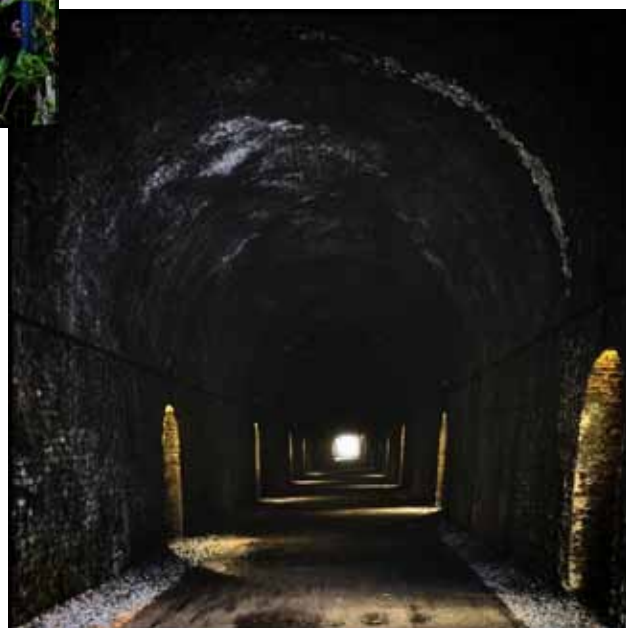
Epi Rogan













Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

Twelfth Series

*"I tell you, there are more worlds,
and more doors to them,
than you will think of in many years!"*
— George MacDonald, *Lilith*, 1895.

xxiv. Their Arrival

*"Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel & kiss the ground."*
—Rumi

i. Prelude

Things change, they don't undo—
but what afar can near again—
find new songs from ashes of green & gold—
Departure & arrival two legs of the same trouser—

Many musics, one long, near unending, song.

ii. Clover-dale

The Lavender Trace leads me to a wooden room.
Walls solid of bookcases. Ceiling of skittering stars.
An *oldness* to this place, a vast greediness of ages.
The dim air bothers by me moving through it.
Nothing expected of me not already countless better
offered before. Near to leaving but . . . a movement.

In one obscure corner of the too-many here,
a ragged figure sits, soft armchair of cracks & dust.
I slowly approach, & see he cradles in grasp
a strange pot, & grows from it a long green plant, tendril-y,
draping. And upon this beautiful plant is a
very large Caterpillar, with the most delicate features.

Forgetting this unwelcoming olden place, even too
 the ragged figure holding the strange pot,
 I lean in to study this Caterpillar close.
 With an ancient, sweet, almost-but-not-quite
 people-folks' face. Unperturbed by my studyings, & all,
 just steady crawling up & down, & around
 this beautiful green plant.

A voice knicks my deep awe. The ragged figure,
 smiling up at me. "Hello."
 "Hello," I mimic speech.
 "How are you?" Friendly, soft.

I try to think. "My friend is somewhere . . .
 back there." Gesture to no wooden doorway
 behind me. "I'm not sure how to find him.
 Or the rest of my friends."

He nods, thinking, studying his own sweet little
 friends a moment. His hair long & vaguely copper
 under a dark woolen skull's cap. His clothes darkened, too,
 & old with age. Yet strangely cared for, still,
 as are his thick boots. Raises a finger to me. *Wait.*

Roots around in several of his countless pockets
 until he finds & extracts a scrap of paper.
 Appears greenish in this half-willing light.
 A writing implement too, scratches a few words
 upon it. Hands it up to me with kindest smile.

Words upon it read:
 "*Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment.*"

Curious, no why, I turn it over & see a map.
 "To the Manse," it reads.

And then *something*.
 And then *something*.
 And then *something more*.
Not in that room anymore.

iii. Their Departure

Now I'm back in the corridor with Gate-Keeper, like all that
 lost time not lost. We are following the Trace close,
 in chase, as she also chases, a wee twittering
 thing. Both only in view through his Tripod Camera's
 lens, so I clutch on his bony shoulder &
 ragged pockets close as we near gallop to pursue.

But we lose track. Too many corridor turns to keep up.
 We slow in defeat, both feeling how exit was *near*.
 Then I finger anew & remember the Mossy scrap
 in my pocket. And the way now clears, *easily*.

I direct us, breathless, through countless turns,
 following sure a way I could not know down
 featureless corridors. "*There they are!*"
 Gate-Keeper cries too loudly. I feel wild about it all
 too, for there is daylight ahead of them.
 I am saying "thank you" to them just as
 Gate-Keeper & I are now *tumbling up*
 through the exit to whatever will catch us beyond.

But then I lose him.
 Then I lose all.
And then something.
And then something more.

iv. Remember a Last Thing

The swaying of a boat, far out upon
 the Wide Wide Sea. *Here? How?*

Quarters below deck of . . . *our ship?*
 The very ship my Brothers & I sailed by
 all those years, in our chase toward
 the Island of the Tangled Gate?

And before me, abed, *dear stars ablaze,*
tis my King.

He looks at me, sadly, past me, sadder still,
 somewhere else even, his deep blue eyes
 both very *here*, & very *gone*.

My mind claws itself violently to *know again*
 this moment. *Remember it.*

He talks, like each word disassembles him a piece more.
 "We Wobbled away, dear Brother, & further
 still to come."

Pauses like he will never speak again.
 Speaks. "We'll Wobble back together again."

Though he lays before me, just us two
 on this sturdy, sad boat, bereft of our
 other Brothers, tis like we are already parted,
far parted.



Katsushika Hokusai, "The Drum Bridge at Kameido Tenjin Shrine (Kameido Tenjin taikobashi)," from the series *Remarkable Views of Bridges in Various Provinces (Shokoku meikyô kiran)*, 1834.

The boat rocks, waves toss, winds blow,
 stronger & lesser. He seems to retreat to sleep,
 & I return to my steerings. Hardly gone a few minutes,
 yet it feels like twice ever has passed.
 Already I begin to forget this moment.
 Forget that obscure promise of his.

And then something & something & something more.

v. Half Moon Bridge

The Bridge ahead is tall, steep, nothing on
 this Beach beyond its view. Yes, this is
 Abe's Beach of Many Worlds, we're arrived
 at last. Our boots trodding its heavy, musical sand.

We hurry, we slow, neither matters as it oncomes
 by its own will. Neither of us is pressed to talk,
 but we do. *Am I really here?*

"We're close, Roddy. Do you feel it?"

"I do. Not sure why, but yes."

"Your Brothers. You feel them near?"

"Yes, I do."

"They call this *liminal*, this kind of moment."

"I'm glad we came this far together."

He pauses. We're arrived the bloom-covered bridge,
 its braided crossed rungs. Looks me quiet & true.

"We are bound now, aren't we?"

"Yes. And the help I pledged you. Yes, & always."

The climb is slow, the rungs creak thoughtfully
 on their wooden frame. I think of the many
 Bridges I've known in the White Woods. Far from
 this mysterious sand, that *whoosh-whooshing* Sea,
 those strange heavy banks of clouds up there.

Can I bring my Brothers to those many places

I long ago told them about?

Can I return to that city I walked away from,

ask a peace with it I did not know I yearned?

Will we Brothers stay together ever on this time?

Will my King forgive me?

Now arrived the apex of the Bridge, & hardly behold
 more fully the Beach of Many Worlds when,
 as we help each other to stand up, we sense
 something powerful approaching from the direction we came.
 We look at each other, & crouch low again.

Stronger & stronger, compelling us lie flat atop
 this Bridge, holding hands, while a powerful wave
 rolls over us, & over us again, & still a third time.

I get a feeling, *something more?* & raise my head,
 & look down the Beach as far as I can see.
 And it looks like those waves, Wobbles? have closed the
 distances, cleared them some away.

There is a campsite & surely that great Creature
 is Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle! His kind eyes
 nodding me to *look on! look on!*

I do & the distances draw me to a man
 seated in a strange little vehicle, like a kind
 of boat on wheels? And I see what I've not seen
 for so long, those eyes, *those deep blue eyes*
of you, my King.

I remember your promise. This far moment
 from that one. These clasp as our eyes clasp,
 as our hearts clasp anew. *I remember now, my King.*

Everything between us *falls away.*
 All that kept us apart, *falls away.*
 As the Wobble diminishes, *I remember.*

I sit up.
 "We have to go now. We have to get to him *soon.*"

vi. Their Arrival

We climb down off the Half Moon Bridge,
 & set off toward Abe's campsite, & my King.
 But hurry as we might on this heavy colorful
 sand, we do not near them soon as
 seems we ought.

And the skies above grow dark. And darker.
 And darker still.

Gate-Keeper now close to my side, &
 he shares hold of his Tripod Camera
 with me, as the darkness engulfs our
 very sight of each other. Our voices fail us too,
 coming out garbled & warped. We together
 grasp the Tripod Camera, & stumble on.

Now sounds around us! Voices? Now we are
 grasped, sure & warmly. *Are these my Brothers?*

We are urged to sit down on the sand, with these
 others close to us. I then feel Gate-Keeper
 raising his Tripod Camera enough to look
 through its lens, wonder why in this dark.
 I feel his hand cranking & cranking its handle.

Now he pulls me even closer to look through
 the lens, as he cranks & cranks.

I gather my mind to this. Clear all away,
 like that Wobble had. And now I see
 faces through the lens as Gate-Keeper
 pans it along.

Asoyadonna.
Francisco.
Odom.
Dreamwalker.

My King.

vii. Coda

We'll find it where we lost it in the Cave
 of the Beast. Find us, whatever form we are now.
 Bond to it, however pain or pleasure.
 Continue deeper in, letting none of us
 fall alone again.

But it begins with you & me, my King.
 Chance & endurance led us to each other again.

Now we unbank this debt.
Now we save the Many Worlds.



* * * * *



Timothy Vilgiate



Rivers of the Mind

[A Novel]

*“Purify the colors, purify my mind
Spread the ashes of the colors
over this earth of mine”*

—Arcade Fire, “Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels),” 2004.

Chapter 25: Outside

i. John & Sapphire

The ocean of dreams stretched on for miles, filled with pale images of the real world underneath. I looked between my feet to see alarms sounding throughout the base below, as soldiers wound their way through the hallways. I found my physical body frozen next to a pair of confused and panicked ghosts frantically searching through Dr. Whitebalm’s kitchen and living room.

Carefully, I floated downwards. The part of the facility where the ghosts had been hiding was right underneath a local Arby’s, so I awkwardly slid between a woman filling up an extra large soda and a young couple kissing next to the trash can. From there, it was almost a mile of bedrock, sewer systems, and power cables to Dr. Whitebalm’s private room.

I reached out for my own body, and felt my skin stretch to pool with the frozen features of my double until we became one. The feeling of muted, ghostly tangibility returned to my hands and arms. Control over my memories, and the memories of the other ghosts, passed from the Fisherman to Ryan. Reality almost imperceptibly shifted. Ryan drafted a new, parasitic timeline within the one that surrounded that which existed inside of the Fisherman’s mind.

The paradox formed by his death means that the Fisherman will, sooner or later, return, but for now, we are safe, so long as my physical body is asleep. When I awake, the Fisherman will be released from my mind, and we will wait as a temporal Trojan Horse, essentially invaders, living in a unique dead spot crafted by Ryan’s dream harpoon.

Sapphire jumps when she notices that I’ve come unfrozen. “He’s back!” she shouts.

I turn to face her. Her trembling eyes are wracked with existential dread. She just saw on Dr. Whitebalm’s calendar that it is 2017. That means she’s been dead for almost fifty years. She would be seventy-four now, if she’d made it out alive. Her parents have probably died, her friends have probably all but forgotten her and, worst of all, she will never escape this place. She will never get to see the sun again, or those long, beautiful stretches of desert and mountains that she remembers. She will never get to hear music. She is trapped here until she finally dissipates from reality.

I want to reassure her, but there are no reassurances. At least I can return to my body someday. She has truly lost hers; her feelings are no overreaction, but the simplest possible statement of our reality. I don’t know what to tell her. I don’t know how to comfort her soul in the weight of this revelation. I’ve never spoken to a ghost.

“Are you OK?” she asks me. Her question catches me off guard. Am I OK? Shouldn’t I be asking her? Don’t I look like I am OK? She imagines that I’ve had the same revelation, that I’d died fifty years before,

that I am going through everything she is. But I'm not.

I walk closer to her, passing through Dr. Whitebalm's dining room table to come to her side. I know what I have to do, but everything about it seems wrong. I want to help her. Her memories, her thoughts, her feelings, her wants, everything flashes through my mind as I look into her eyes, and I can't stop thinking that once this is all over, I'll have to leave her to be a ghost.

"John?" she asks. **"Are you OK?"**

"Listen. I'm not a ghost," I say. **"So I can't say I understand how you're feeling, any of it. But—"** I run out of words. What can I say to someone who has suffered this much, who has glimpsed so much inhumanity?

"Are you a demon?" she asks. **"Not to be weird or anything but, hell, man, are you? Is this hell?"**

"No, no. I'm . . . I'm still alive."

"So you're like, a psychic or something?"

"No. I mean, yeah. I guess."

"What do you want from us?"

"I need your help . . . Ryan . . . Ryan is . . . he's a . . . uhm . . . psychic too. About ten years ago, he tried to get high off of Datura. You know . . . uhm . . . it's like . . ." I try to look through her memories of the experiments to which she'd been subjected. **"That drug they gave you that made your mouth get all dry and made you forget everything. And he ended up getting detached from time, because of an opening in the universe. He's . . . taken over my mind now."**

"I guess I should clarify. I took acid in this field, like a week ago. A week and a half. And the government—they don't use this place for mind control now, by the way, just for space stuff—they had torn a hole in the universe with a wormhole machine, so I had the same thing happen to me, only I can read minds and pull people into my head. Which Ryan wanted to steal to make himself into a god. Right now, there's another version of Ryan, though, who helped break us free of the Evil Ryan."

Sapphire tries to piece together what I'm saying and to discern whether or not it can be trusted. She studies my face. I look like I might be alright, she guesses. But so did the guy who'd brought her here. She doesn't trust men, never has. I seem different, but plenty of people had seemed different to her. And what I said sounds bizarre enough for her to wonder if this is all part of some experiment.

"So what do you want us to do?" she spits.

"I need you to help me. In about twelve hours, he's going to come back, and he's going to expect us to have forgotten everything that happened before. But the Good Ryan is going to keep us from forgetting. We have to keep the Evil Ryan—he's called the Fisherman—from hurting Meagan. That girl. He was trying to turn us against her since she's the only one who can kill him."

"And you trust this, what, this Good Ryan? Look, John—if that is your name—no! I'm not going along with any of your shit. I don't know what the fuck is going on, but I don't believe a damn word you say. And if you can read my mind, like you say, then you know I have some good fucking reasons not to believe you. You can stop your simulation, you fuckers! You're not fooling anyone!"

She slams her hand against the table, scattering various papers, coffee cups, and candles from its surface onto the floor, and then kicks one of the chairs, before turning away to continue yelling at the unseen government monitors. Before she can, I grab her by the arm. She tries to pull back, but instead I quickly force my consciousness over hers.

She shuts her eyes. Piece by piece, I show her my life: my home in Sacramento, memories of rock-hounding as a little kid, my first years of college, the time I worked as an intern at a research station by a volcano, going to the oil fields and running away from them, selling crystals, and arriving here in Texas.

I show her my meeting with Meagan, the fight with the Mushrooms in the field, my efforts to help Gerry, and the hole that the Mushrooms tore into the universe. I show her what Ryan did to me, and then show her my escape into the real world.

Stupefied, she opens her eyes and fumbles for words. She wants to apologize, but doesn't know how.

She doesn't know how to speak to me—she's never spoken to an LSD psychic (although she had been forced to play one in a sadistic government experiment). As much as she wants to apologize, she doesn't understand—she doesn't understand me, or the future that I live in, or the things that I have seen.

Meekly, she comes closer, and gives me a hug, trying to comfort me. A reasonable reaction, I guess, to learning about someone's experience of decades of imprisonment in a psychic prison. I would have been a flower child if I'd been alive back in her time, she knows. She can imagine sharing a joint with me in the back of her friend's van, driving through Arizona, or dropping acid out in the National Forest around a campfire with me. She wishes she could have known me before she died, and she wishes she had been kinder to me, now that she can see what I've been through.

“How long do we have until he comes back?”

“Twelve hours. So until sunrise.”

“And what do we do when he does?”

“When he comes back, we have to go along with what he says until the Good Ryan gives us the signal to turn against him. He can't hurt us as long as the Good Ryan is there to protect us.”

“And until then, we just . . .”

“We have all night to . . . watch after Meagan, I guess. Or get ready. I don't know. We can see how beer tastes in this timeline, or maybe steal some cake from the kitchen. Honestly, no idea. He just said to follow his instructions, so that's all I know.”

She ponders it for a moment, looking sentimentally over at Carlos, and around at the old, decaying base. Somehow, the fact that the base no longer serves the purpose it had served during her time gives her a weak sense of closure.

But it is only a half-freedom. She wants to see the forest. The stars. The moon. “Can we go outside?” she asks. I gulp, since I know that as much as I should say no, I will feel terrible if I tell her that.

“Of course,” I say, turning to Carlos to invite him along. He doesn't speak English, so I send him an image of the moon.

“Usted es de la luna?” he mumbles, aghast.

I don't know quite what he said. I get the impression that he thinks I am from the moon. “No,” I say, “we are going outside.” I try to project the image into his thoughts. Somewhat confused, but not knowing exactly how to ask me to clarify, he reluctantly follows Sapphire and me up through the ceiling.

ii. Platanos? Que? No me diga

The three of us make our way away from Dr. Whitebalm's room, towards the front entrance of the facility. I freely gaze into the minds of those below in order to learn more about the place we are flying over. The Horizon Deep Space Exploration Lab is colossal, with thousands of square feet of different hallways, with five levels of office and laboratory space.

The first level of it was built in the 1940s. Later, in the 1950s, the area north of San Antonio became home to a number of bases for the development of secret technologies, processing of Soviet intelligence, and covert detention of spies. When the CIA began its MK-Ultra program, which experimented with LSD and other drugs in order to unlock secret potentials of the human brain, to develop enhanced interrogation techniques, and to control minds, the lab expanded and merged with several others.

A scientist named Ray Treichler oversaw a long list of projects—numbers 136, 145, 146, and 172 come to the minds of the people below most often. Most of the records of the experiments Sapphire had taken part in had been destroyed, living on only in the minds of ghosts. A steady flow of migrants, homeless, and hippies provided the lab with a large population of human subjects.

The lab was left in decay for a decade after the Cold War, until an incident in 2006 led to increased governmental interest in developing Deep Space technologies, and in renovating parts of the lab. The first experiments at this time were dedicated to replicating reverse engineered technology from alien wreckage, which were tested in the desert southwest near Colorado, but these were not especially fruitful. Dr. Whitebalm

was hired as a consultant and, later, as Chief Scientist in 2014. Today, it employs 2,500 people, with secret entrances spread out over four different towns.

Eventually we come to the entrance near the water treatment center, which is so concealed as to be entirely invisible from above. All that we see as we draw near are a pair of railroad tracks that incline sharply upwards, illuminated barely by the light of the moon.

Sapphire's heart sings as she catches just a glimpse of moonlight, her face feeling the open air for the first time in half a century. Her stomach trembles, as memories buried in deep wounds warn her that it is all a trap, that it is still 1967, that this is just another experiment. She shuts her eyes and pulls herself from these fears.

Meanwhile, Carlos' stomach sinks into a pit. He dreams of running home to Mexico, and seeing what has become of his hometown, if things have gotten any better, if any of his brothers or his sisters are still alive. He imagines that, the moment he sees the sky, he will fly up into it, and rise over miles upon miles of desert as an invincible spirit, never to return to this awful place again.

I don't know how to tell him that we will all be forced back into the same place once the timeline reseals, but the only time I've ever spoken Spanish was when my cousin Andre told me to say something to this girl I had a crush on in elementary school, and she ended up knocking out two of my teeth.

And, as my Spanish time travel vocabulary is very limited, I decide I will let him be. Both of them. I'll let them enjoy whatever there is out there, and then, when the time comes, we will return to our bodies, and help Meagan kill the Fisherman. Then, I suppose, I can set them free.

As she emerges from the end of the tunnel, Sapphire dashes up the hill and into the open air, letting out a joyous shout that echoes across the hills. I follow her, lackadaisically. Carlos trails behind, eyeing the tall electric fences, and wondering if I'll try to stop him from running away. His hair stands on end as the moonlight shines down on him, the night sky filling him with wonder. He is free.

"You can fly away tomorrow, when we've killed Ryan, and we're safe," I try to say.

He looks at me, puzzled by the strange words appearing in his head. I show him a picture of what he was contemplating, and say, softly, **"Not now. Manana."**

"Platanos? Que? No me diga . . ." Vaguely comprehending, he grimaces and nods, turning to walk in private through the field.

iii. Into the Forest

Sapphire, who has been staring at a tree, looks over at me. **"It's so beautiful out here."**

The moonlight paints her eyes into gemstones, and casts the crisscrossing shadows of pine needles over her skin. She smiles, her teeth glowing with an unearthly sheen. The forest seems to breathe with life—even more so to us ghosts.

"I know. It's real nice out here."

"You camped out here?"

"Down the hill a little bit, yeah. Someone said that I might see aliens."

"Far out, man. I probably would've done the same thing if I didn't know the kind of shit they do to people here."

She runs her hands over the tree bark, studying its tiny, winding canyons, and the sap that drips down along their surface.

"What ended up happening with Vietnam?"

"Nixon ended up pulling us out."

"Really? Was he like . . . the President?"

"Yeah."

"I thought he would have given up after losing to Kennedy."

I don't really know that much about it, or what to say. She moves along.

"How about segregation? Like, what ever happened with the civil rights stuff?"

"Yeah. I mean, well, segregation's over for the most part."

"For the most part?"

"They ended segregation and the white people all moved to gated communities in the desert basically, so it's like the same thing."

"I remember hearing something like that. Just so you know, I mean, I know you can read my mind, but I was totally down with all that civil rights and stuff. I had lots of colored friends back in California. How about the Russians? Did they ever attack us, or . . . ?"

"No, no. They ended up losing the whole Cold War thing."

"That's crazy, man. How did they lose?"

"I'm kind of fuzzy on the details, but I think Ronald Reagan managed to like . . . uhm . . . outspend them? Or that's what my grandpa says."

She gulps when I say that word. She liked me, but she can't help but remember she is at least forty-five years older than me in real time. She'd learned to hate old people, when she was a teenager, for being so out of touch and backwards. Now she feels like she is the backwards one.

"Oh, huh, Ronald Reagan. He was the governor, right? The one who banned LSD? Right. Well, anyway, I guess I should ask you, like, uhm . . . what do the kids like to do in 2017?"

"Well. We got this really cool, uhm . . . thing called the internet. You can get information about anything you want any time of day, and talk to people from halfway across the world like . . . instantly, using uhm . . . satellites. Like Sputnik, but bigger. So a lot of folks like to, uhm . . . play games online. Or chat with their friends. But I don't know, it depends. Some people go to music festivals, some people like to read, stuff like that."

"What kind of music do they listen to?"

Rather than trying to explain, I show her one of the music festivals I'd been to, where a DJ was playing a dubstep remix of a Beatles song, which I thought she might have heard in her time. She looks confused, so I try another one, my friend from Philadelphia's band. She thinks it sounds like the Beach Boys, but weirder. Like, weirder-than-Pet Sounds-weirder. The future is a strange place.

"What about like . . . you know, folk songs? Like 'Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me . . .' You know that one?"

"Yeah, it's the one that's like, 'It's not . . . doo-doo, and I don't got no place dun-da-dun-dun-dun.'"

"I'm not sleepy and there ain't no place I'm going to."

"Yeah! I've heard it. I just didn't know the words."

"So they still listen to Dylan, that's cool."

"Well, yeah. He's, like, classic. No offense."

"What about the Monkees? They don't listen to the Monkees, do they?"

"I haven't heard of them, actually."

"Good. Fuck the Monkees. Fucking corporate trash."

"What did you guys do when you were on the road back in '65?"

"Oh, like, you know. We'd all smoke a few joints and jam out whenever we could. Or if we could score some acid, we'd trip. And like, all of the others were really into the whole free love thing, and like, we all really liked . . . I guess expanding our minds and trying to be spiritual. Ben was the oldest and he wrote poetry. His lover Willow would knit. I'd make little sculptures. And then Moonbeam and Jimmy liked to draw."

"How'd you meet them?"

"Just like, I mean, I knew Willow and she introduced me to Ben, and he had this idea that we'd all pitch in for a van and go around the country like the Merry Pranksters. We picked up Moonbeam on the way to San Francisco and she met Jimmy somewhere in Ashbury and, like . . . they were soul-mates. Instant soul-mates. Seriously."

Sapphire and I wander deeper into the forest, until we come to Blackberry Creek, which bubbles

out of a spring in the hillside. I tell her about the geology of the area, and the way that the spring would have formed, as she teaches me more about the sixties, and life on the road with her friends. Before we know it, both of us have forgotten we are ghosts from different years. Both of us have forgotten our suffering, if only for a while, and have become lost in conversation.

Before long, the sun starts to peek over the horizon. It casts an omnipresent blue over the forest, and brings the birds out to sing. As the two of us gaze into the woods, an uneasiness settles into our limbs. What if this is all another one of Ryan's tricks? I wonder.

What if this is all another experiment? she thinks.

A faint smile spreads across her face, and she chuckles, starting to tell me a story, almost whispering it to herself: *"The worst trip I had before I came to this place was in Oregon. We were camped out in the woods, and I decided to take four tabs instead of two. It started out fine, until . . . I don't remember why, but I . . . I forgot what my face looked like. And I wanted to go find out what it looked like."*

"So I went to this little creek, just like this one, and I sat down, and my face looked totally different. I started freaking out, and I went back to the campsite and I asked Jimmy, 'Hey, what does my face look like to you?' And he tried to describe it but, like, Moonbeam had this idea that she and Jimmy would just draw my face together."

"Well, they both were on acid also, so one of them drew me as this kind of like . . . demon-looking thing, and the other drew me as this weird-looking fairy. And I freaked out, and I like . . . insisted that I get into the car to get a mirror, but they wouldn't let me, because they said I was ruining everyone's vibe, and I needed to chill."

"So I sat in the tent for at least eight hours, freaking out about my face, before I had this vision, of like . . . of like, a jewel, in the sky, folding in on itself, filled with all these different animals, and castles, and buildings. And it was me."

"And I told myself that I had all this wonder inside of myself that I could let out into the world, that I might look different to different people, but it didn't really matter, because they didn't really get it. You know? And someday, someone would. I was lucky I talked myself out of it, but it was honestly so horrible when it happened. And, then, I mean, I died at 24 and never got to do . . . you know. Fucking anything. And that trip was peanuts compared to what I went through here. It just . . ." She isn't sure why she is talking about it.

I say, *"My worst trip before this was in high school. My friend, he was really stupid, I think he's in jail now, or something. Well, my friend, he read on the internet that you could get high off of cough syrup, so we went store to store to buy some. And we figured it would be pretty stupid and lame, 'cause, you know, it was cough syrup. So we just really thought we had to take a lot to actually do anything. An hour in, I started seeing double, and everyone's voices sounded like they were faster than their mouths, if that makes sense. The world started flickering, and when I sat down, I felt like I'd melted into the couch."*

"I was convinced I'd overdosed and I was going to die. My friend said that if I smoked weed, I would feel better. After that point, I don't remember anything, just thinking I'd died and gone to hell for hours and hours until I woke up, maybe around 2 a.m., and I was still tripping."

"I walked outside, into the road, and everything looked like it was curving. It was in a suburb, so all the houses were just . . . repeating, and I felt like I was in a neverending loop. Eventually, I came to a park, and I threw up in a trashcan, and my friend's big brother came to pick me up. Every time I look at cough syrup now, I feel like I'm going to throw up."

She smirks, on the verge of laughing, but not quite relaxed enough to do so. The two of us look out to the horizon, where traces of orange light make their way through the blue, surrounding us in sunlight that makes our faces barely visible.

"Should we go inside?" she asks.

"I don't think we need to."

“Good. Let’s just wait.”

The two of us join hands, our fingers first barely touching, and then wrapping around one another. The sunrise pours savory and rosy light over the earth. Any minute now.

“John,” Sapphire interrupts, her hand starting to shiver.

“What?”

“We might die after this. I mean, we might . . . really die. Right?”

I gulp, too afraid to answer honestly.

“If . . . if I die, can you do something for me?”

“What is it?”

“I never got a funeral. I . . . I don’t know where my body is. They probably burnt it or something. I don’t know, I just—I want you to give me one. If that’s OK. Go out into the desert, plant me a flower, and sing me a song. ‘Mr. Tambourine Man,’ I guess. Although . . . well, that one might not be good. But something pretty. I don’t care what. You can even sing me one of your dubsteps. I mean . . . all my friends are probably dead, right? Or senile. Or they don’t even remember me. No one probably ever bothered to look for me, or give me a funeral or anything. You’re the first friend I’ve had since I died, and—” She starts to choke on her words, her eyes visibly glassing over with tears.

“I will.”

She holds onto my hand tighter. “Thanks.”

“And . . . if I die, my rock collection is buried up in Bismarck, North Dakota, thirty paces downhill from the apartment complex on Chestnut. If you can tell them, somehow, I don’t know how, to bury me there with my crystals.”

“Of course.”

“Thank y—”

Before I can finish my sentence, everything freezes still. A bird hangs in the air, its wings back in preparation for landing—the stream turns to ice—our hearts cease to beat. A sinister aura overtakes the world, as the hills burst forth with a ghostly roar. We have lost—no voice in my head needs to tell me so. Devastated, I watch Sapphire’s face crumble inwards like a tiny clay vessel, as my vision fades to black.

* * * * *





Martina Reisz Newberry

Spanish Raindrops

Blue glass on the ground
broken without boundaries.
Which bits are useful?

* * *

These days, I do best
when I let the city speak.
Concrete knows what's what.

* * *

My ghosts were lonely,
then sirens and neighbor's lamps—
Is danger comfort?

* * *

Her dreams are so dark
They threaten to decimate
every creation.

* * *

Methodist Church bell
in the background, Buddhist chant—
Hand me my red beads.

* * *

The shaded steps
dirty trickles turn to moss.
The wind sings jasmine.

* * *

In Los Angeles
fall smells of sea glass sorrows.
The unhappy sky wants spring.

* * *

At Eleven O'Clock

Do we hear each other better in the dark?

The held breaths,
the almost-not-there hesitation
in answering *I love you*—

The body turning away too quickly,
the pretense of sleep (the fake snore).

Lies fall apart in the dark.
You'd think they'd be easier to tell,
when there are only shadows
and moon rays filling the room—

But it's the sound that gives it away—
that muffled *nothing* when asked if something's wrong,
the treacle-sweet-but-barely-there cheek kiss.

It's a tunnel, you know—words and twitches,
eye blinks—all echoing mightily—

The flawless loneliness of the twisted sheet,
the truth standing over there by the closet,
waiting.

* * *

79 Times Around the Sun

Dormant figures behind your eyes—
they speak in careful tones.
They bless you now—
you've earned it.

Once, they teased
and belittled you,
reminding you daily
of your disfigurements,
your lack of demarcation lines,
your numerous fears of the unknown,
and the known.

Now, they offer easeful murmurs:
It never really mattered, they say,
none of it.

* * * * *



Martina Reisz Newberry





Dialogue on the Poetic Process

I would like to present three poems, each of which had a different genesis. I use multiple techniques at different times to compose my poems, and will give some examples.

Following each poem is a dialogue with *Cenacle* Editor Raymond Soulard, Jr.

* * *

JH's notes: Ordinarily, I can finish a poem in about twenty to thirty minutes. This one took me two hours. It is based upon a technique that Aleister Crowley used once, and I had to take copious notes and study his technique diligently. The finished product is my own and unique, and I feel like I earned it on this one.

A Hard Rain

(To A.C.)

It's gonna be a hard rain
 If ever we unleash
 Proliferate, degenerate
 Inside of this pastiche
 The toil of ages vain
 Miscalculation, madness
 Abrupt ending, peace rending
 An intense kind of sadness

By the toss of the tumbler
 The shatter implore
 Through the crest of the breast
 Through the fall of the floor
 Like unto a rumbler
 At the height of the soar
 The roil of the boil
 I abhor! I abhor!

Of the fairy and faun
 It's the end of it all
 Solemn greet the big heat
 We've a planet too small
 From the dying of the dawn
 Of the age of the dead
 The terminus of delight
 Only dread, only dread!

Cybernetic alternative
 Take our hands off the switch
 Dam the Nile, in denial
 Of the trial of the bitch
 Though I lack, though I live
 Though I dive through the door
 By the time of the rime
 I abhor! I abhor!

The awful battle beaker
 Of love that's gone by
 The exotic erotic
 Sun's rays in the sky
 The old pitiful speaker
 Of the half-cocked and trite
 I awoke, I evoke
 The full force of the fight!

In the end, our redemption
 In the fullness of fate
 To sever the lever
 That's leveraged to hate
 A short-circuit exemption
 Is what God has in store
 O revel not Devil!
 I abhor! I abhor!

* * *

Raymond: Readers always wonder what inspires a work of Art. What led to this one, as far as you can recall? Something you read? Some other source?

Jimmy: This poem was inspired by Aleister Crowley's poem, *Pan to Artemis*. However, the content of my poem, and the content of his, are totally different. His has to do with Greek gods and Magick, and mine is based upon the specter of nuclear holocaust. What led to it was nothing I read in any isolated way; I have been studying nuclear proliferation and technology issues for the better part of thirty years. It is a subject that I have always felt was tremendously

important.

As Alicia says in *Stella Maris*, Cormac McCarthy's last book (published in 2022), "Anyone who doesn't understand that the Manhattan Project is one of the most significant events in human history hasn't been paying attention. It's up there with fire and language. It's at least number three and it may be number one. We just don't know yet. But we will."

Raymond: The title is from the Bob Dylan song? If not, what was inspiration? If so, why that song? Is there a line or lines from it that were most inspiring?

Jimmy: Yes, the title is taken from Bob Dylan's song, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," from 1962, which of course we know is about nuclear war, and the folks who have their fingers on the button. That's pretty much where the parallel ends, however, as far as the song itself goes. Other than the title, the content of the poem is my own, for good or ill.

Raymond: You mentioned Crowley, and a method he used. Could you detail this method, and how you used it, and how you varied from it?

Jimmy: Well, when I say method, I really mean rhyme scheme. It is one of the more complex rhyme schemes I can remember encountering, and I wanted to emulate it, while creating an original poem. By "complex" I mean to say that no two stanzas are quite the same, and it's easy to miss the full extent of the profusion of rhymes that are in there.

So I tried to stay true to his rhyming method, while injecting content that was totally original. In doing so, I did make some changes to his scheme, but I think I stayed pretty true to it.

Raymond: Could you quote some of the copious notes you took?

Jimmy: Sadly, as I have just gone looking for them, I cannot find them. 'Twas ever thus.

Raymond: Since your poetry often rhymes, which is your strategy for this? Do you have a rhyming dictionary, or other tool to aid you?

Jimmy: Most of the time, I just make the rhymes on my own. Sometimes when I am particularly stuck I will look at a rhyme thesaurus, but even when you do that, even when you find some words that rhyme, you have to know what to do with the word. I don't really think it's cheating.

Raymond: Was this poem written in one go, one version? Or, given that it took longer than usual, what slowed you to two hours? Give a sense of what those two hours were like, from the point of view of trial and error.

Jimmy: Once I had the rhyme scheme laid out in my notes (which, sadly, as I have said, I cannot locate), I used words that were all my own, with one exception. "Fairy and faun" is a line from the original Crowley, and I decided to use it as a sort of homage. Otherwise, it's all my stuff.

Normally, I will write a poem in about 20-30 minutes and, normally, I do not base them on other poems. I had to diagram what Crowley did, and that took over an hour. The rest of the time was devoted to writing my poem, which took almost an hour. It was very difficult. I had to jump around from say, the first line to the fourth, the second to the sixth, stuff like that,

and keep everything straight as far as the poem's making sense goes. I don't know if it actually makes sense, but it does to me. I abhor nuclear weapons!

* * * * *

JH's notes: This poem was written in the Gonzo style, immortalized by Hunter S. Thompson. The idea is that you crank it out as violently as possible, and do not edit anything. I followed this directive, but what I needed was feedback—I didn't know what I had. Fortunately the feedback I received was positive, and I didn't need to break the rules and make changes!

GONZO

Purple eels climbing the walls
 Wizards cooking up napalm
 Komodo dragons playing croquet
 While dwarf-kings ponder the bomb
 Kinghell speed on the bleeding edge
 Take the turn at one-fifteen
 Jangled nerves and a burned out soul
 Screaming along down the seam
 Old Gray Hattie with a knife in her teeth
 The silly demons never quit
 But electric snakes with their eyes all aglow
 Are with all shamans tight-knit
 Push the velocity 'til brain vessels burst
 Then reel it in to the Devil
 Alight from meter for a high-speed burn
 And in bugger wiles thou shalt revel
 Push the envelope 'til it breaks clean off
 And don't ever revise or hold back
 Take what it takes, Pazuzu in the wind
 As your blazing neurons turn black

* * *

Raymond: What is Thompson's Gonzo style for you?

Jimmy: Basically, Gonzo means you fire up to a certain intensity, and create output that you do not revise or delete. Whatever you do in the first draft is it. So I just came up with a bunch of fanciful, crazy lyrics, and what you see is what you get. I didn't change anything.

Raymond: What kind of specific feedback did you get? Can you quote or paraphrase it?

Jimmy: Well, on two websites where I post my poems, I got quite a response. I got a lot of up-votes, and there were some comments that were desultory as far as poetic insight, more along the lines of a pat on the back. There was some technical feedback as well, very supportive. Honestly, I can't remember exactly what those who said something said. But it was all very

positive.

Raymond: Where did this poem come from? Was it from reading Thompson, or was the idea for it already in your mind, or possibly both?

Jimmy: Well, I've been reading HST for a long time, so I am familiar with Gonzo writing. Some of the things in it are directly from Thompson, like "kinghell," and riding a motorcycle around a blind curve at 115, but mostly it was just improvisation and the luck that comes sometimes when you write. Took me maybe five or ten minutes to write and I didn't change a thing.

Raymond: What is "Kinghell speed"? Moreover, what does this phrase signify to you?

Jimmy: "Kinghell" is a word that Thompson used quite a lot, whether it was in his Gonzo writings, journalism, books, what have you. I think he used it as a kind of hybrid adjective/interjection. In the *Wiktionary*, it is listed as meaning: "Tremendous; terrible." It's just a fun modifier to use at times, that's all.

Raymond: Who is "Old Gray Hattie"? Again, why this choice?

Jimmy: Old Gray Hattie comes from a nursery rhyme ("Old Gray Hattie ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be . . ." etc.) and, as I say above, this was Gonzo poetry, so it just flew out of my brain and into the poem. With Gonzo, you don't stop and think so much as you just flow in the moment, and hope that what you have in the end is any good!

Raymond: Who is "Pazuzu"?

Jimmy: Once again, more Gonzo. Pazuzu is a Mesopotamian demon, and has dominion over the southwest winds, being king of the wind demons. He has always been one of my favorite demons, so I included him. There's really no relation with anything, except what the reader finds.

* * * * *

JH's notes: This last was just a blitz. Inspired by the work of Jack Parsons, using a rhyme scheme I have used many times, I might have written this in no more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Unlike with the Gonzo poem, I did proofread this poem and make adjustments. Sometimes I engage in blitzkrieg poetry, but it is only one of several avenues in my creative process.

Simulacrum

We hight Earthly mammals, the Holy empanel
 And we live on a wonderful sphere
 Do not change the channel, the needle-eye camel
 Can hopefully just disappear

The place is enormous, all the good before us
 The true fingerprint of a God
 That goes to inform us, celestial chorus
 That there's such dysfunction is odd!

This radical being, the one who is freeing
 Enabled happening to evolve
 Like a programmer seeing, nary decreeing
 Sets up many worlds to revolve

A grand simulation, technic emulation
 Do not attribute as one will
 All tribulation, transubstantiation
 And a dire subterranean grill?

Such is inconclusive, it is so abusive
 But higher realms seem rather certain
 Beings reclusive, and levels inclusive
 And various acts behind the curtain

Placing the blame of the moves of the game
 Up above is therefore inadvisable
 Nature, She is sane, sometimes goes a bit lame
 But her autonomy is cognizable

We hight Earthly mammals, the Holy empanel
 No need to get us out of here
 Do not change the channel, a soul just enameled
 There's a lot less than you think to fear

* * *

Raymond: The title of this poem is, I think, pretty key. Could you discuss its significance?

Jimmy: The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* lists “simulacrum” primarily as: “An image or representation”: and secondarily as: “An insubstantial form or semblance of something: trace.”

With this poem, I had in mind the second definition (although the first is relevant as well). What this poem is really about is that God created existence, but then left it alone to evolve, and his “trace” or insubstantial form or substance has left a fingerprint or an abstract image behind. “We hight Earthly mammals, the Holy empanel” just means we’re called Earthly mammals, and we’re pretty humble down here, but there is a holy thread—and holy beings—in custody of existence.

Raymond: Elaborate on who Jack Parsons is, his method, and why it inspires you.

Jimmy: Jack Parsons (1914-1952) was one of the most famous and historically significant

rocket scientists who ever lived. He was also deeply involved in Ceremonial Magick, Thelema, and he was a member of several lodges. So he was quite a character.

A poem of his that I came across reminded me of a rhyme scheme I had used in a previous book, that just goes:

A, A
B
A, A
B

As I said, I've used the scheme before, several times, so I just thought I'd use it again and give Parsons credit for reminding me. Also, I stole the word "hight," which is an archaic version of "named" or "called."

Raymond: Describe the rhyming scheme you chose, and why you like it. Also, quote another of your poems that employs it, by way of comparative example.

Jimmy: Gosh, my brain doesn't work that way. I guess "Perceptual Motion" (In *Many Worlds: A Collection of Poems* from 2019) is pretty close to it, as well as "Morphic Resonance" in my upcoming book (*Multiverse: A Book of Poems*). There are some others in all of my books of poetry, and probably four or five are an exact facsimile of that scheme.

Raymond: What kind of adjustments did you make on this poem? Give some examples.

Jimmy: I made adjustments all over the place. This was definitely not a Gonzo poem! At first I didn't know what I'd do with the purloined "hight," but figured that out. I also sort of tinkered with what it would be about while writing it, and then wrote new lines and edited old ones to fit my thinking. My poems tend to very organically evolve as I am writing them, I do virtually no planning beforehand, except much of the time I create the title (and hence the subject) before I begin writing.

Raymond: This is a more philosophical poem, of a kind you often write. Could you sum up in prose the perceptions of the universe it is propounding in verse, and what these perceptions mean to you, how you came to hold them?

Jimmy: As I said above, what this poem is about is the idea that God created the capacity for existence, for the implicate order, for an infinite series of big bangs, but then left it alone to evolve, and his "trace" or insubstantial form or substance has left a fingerprint or an abstract image behind.

I also mention "technic emulation." It's as if God set up a computer simulation program, then let it evolve on its own. So that what happens has an origin in some higher power, but that that higher power is not actually responsible for what happens in Nature. "We hight Earthly mammals, the Holy empanel" just means we're named Earthly mammals, and we're pretty humble down here, but there is a holy thread—and holy beings—in existence at much deeper levels of the universe, yet counter-intuitively they are still in oblique contact with our dimension.

Raymond: What are the other avenues of your creative process, in addition to blitzkrieg?

Jimmy: Well, as you say, there's blitzkrieg. Really there are two forms of blitzkrieg, micro and macro. "Gonzo" would be an example of blitzkrieg on a single poem. Also, when I intend to write a new book of poems, I'll write one or two a day, almost every day, until I have eighty or ninety poems. This usually takes about three and a half or four months. Then I have a book! That's the macro. I practiced that on my last two books. For my first two books of poems, I would just write here and there, and harvest at some random time.

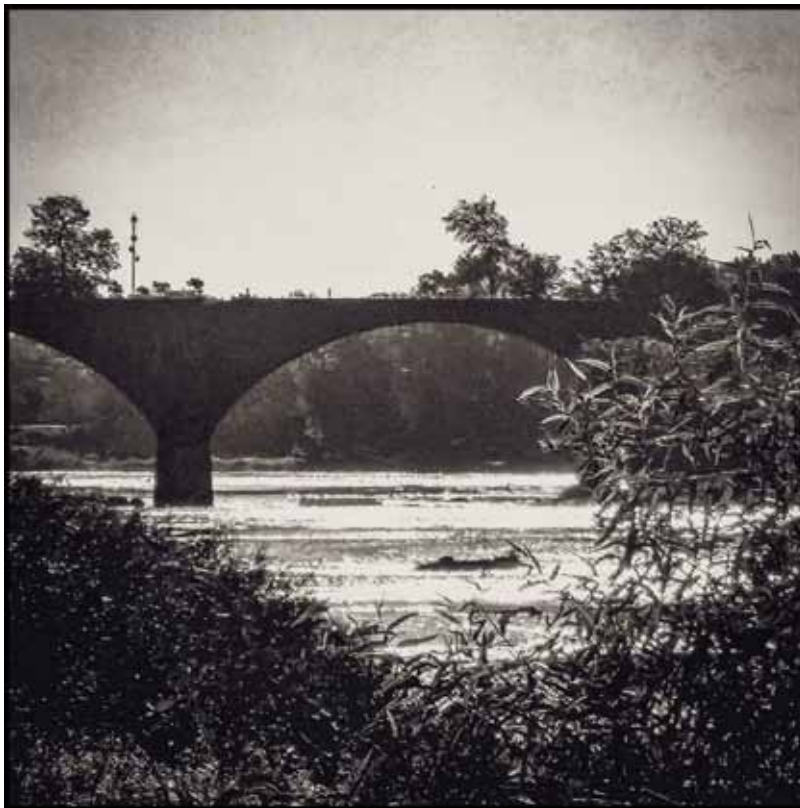
In addition, I will seek out feedback on some of my poems and make changes, editing carefully.

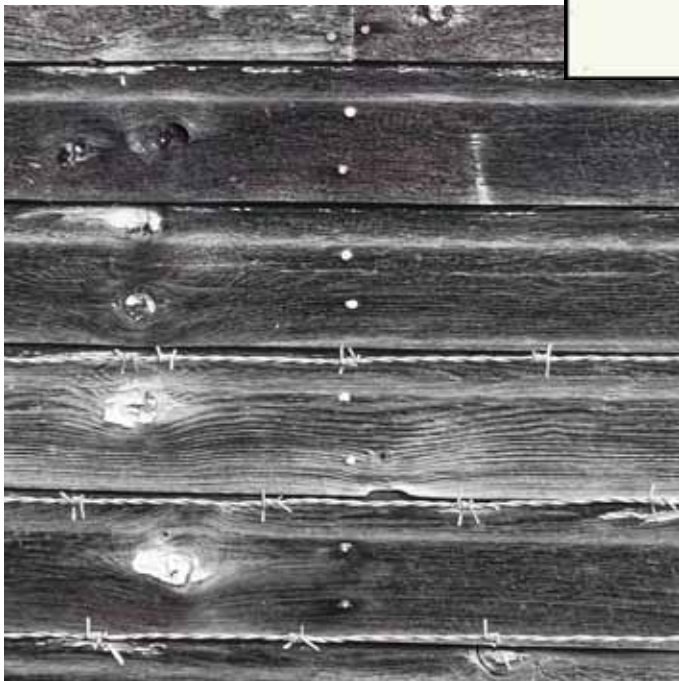
Also, many times I will write poems for which I have lots of preexisting notes. I'll take some set of philosophical notions, already written down, and incorporate them into a poem, but take my time doing so. This is probably my most common method.

* * * * *



Louis Staeble













Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

*“Think for yourself
& question authority.”*
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Nineteen

continued from

The Cenacle | 121 | Autumn 2022

Read the full History at:

http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

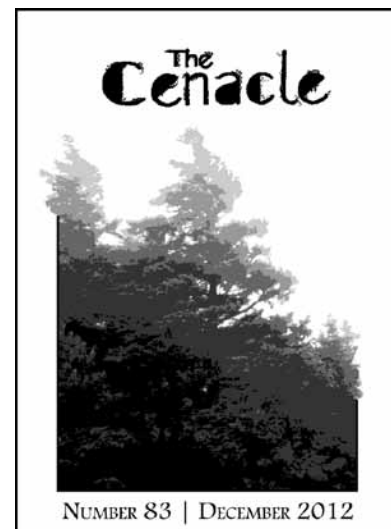
What I did in 2012, still do, before & ever on, is mix Art & press-work with living, pay-job, meals, bus rides, weather, & so on. The funny thing that occurs to me is that, in some sense, the Art & press-work remain, even as the days & nights spent living otherwise linger ever more distant.

I'd written the original *Tangled Gate* poems, most of them, November into December, on the bus bound, with KD, toward Boston for our pay-jobs. Working my still-fairly-new Technical Writer job at PHT. Something called a *Site Support Guide* obsessing my days there. Ending up evenings awhile at places like my now-long-lost but ever beloved Au Bon Pain Café in Harvard Square, working *Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012 toward finish.

Come home for dinner & fine TV shows like *Haven*, *Boardwalk Empire*, & *Burn Notice*—finishing the night telling the *Creature Tale* aloud to the Creatures themselves, & to KD. Now recording them too, my *Voice Journal* project of 1999-2002 revived.

Happy that my MacBook Pro Eurydice had come back all repaired. Happy that, though he could not make the December 15th Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, my poet friend Ric Amante was willing to get on a phone call with me & record some poems to be shared at it. Happy the Friday before the meeting to enjoy my weekly Duckees Bath. Always fun. Even up until the early afternoon of the day of the meeting, KD & I were still finishing *Cenacle* 83.

Funny to be writing about *Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012, now, in *Cenacle* | 123 | December 2023. This journal has changed some in the intervening years, but not so much as it hasn't. More contributors than back then. More of my writings in it. But still more same than different. I'm glad of both, honestly.



The front cover of the issue was taken from the rainy top of a small mountain in Moose Point State Park, Searsport, Maine. On a fun camping trip, went on a slippery hike up to the top & back down.

Mindful of it being a year since my dear brother JBIII's sudden passing, the epigraph, a lovely KD black-&-white dusky portrait of the Boston skyline, is from his favorite band, The Who, & lines he loved from one of their songs:

There once was a note, pure and easy,
Playing so free, like a breath rippling by
The note is eternal, I hear it, it sees me,
forever we blend and forever we die.

These lines have influenced me as well: the idea of music being the source of the Universe. An Eternal Note. All of Creation sung into being. What a lovely way to think about the beginning of things.

From Soulard's Notebooks, written 12/12/12, was the newest piece in the issue, just a few days before its JG debut. In it, I'm feeling hopeful about several major events of the concluding year: Obama's re-election as US president; marijuana's legalization in Colorado & Washington State; gay marriage getting legalized in Maine, Maryland, & Washington State (the issue's Table of Contents' thank you note mentions the portions of the American electorate who voted for these).

These victories mattered, matter still, even in these darker days of the ongoing Pandemic & accelerating climate change. The ballot box *can be* a powerful force for liberation.

The main contents of the issue kick off with new contributor Jonathan Talat Phillips's "Welcome to the Rodeo, Cowboy." I'd met Jonathan via his recorded talks online, & his affiliation with the Evolver Network (a global network connecting organizations and individuals working toward the health and wellbeing of Earth and humanity).

His piece is excerpted from his 2011 book *The Electric Jesus*. The Ayahuasca visions he experiences include the following:

[m]y consciousness swished back into my body, but I wasn't exactly me. I saw myself as a majestic bear-human on a stone throne, a wild but graceful animal with a human contenance. "This represents the story of tribal humanity," the voice advised. That image soon disappeared to reveal a half-human, half-lion on a gilded throne, similarly animal but more regal. Around me embroidered red-and-silver tapestries hung on the walls of a vast palace chamber. Millions of other half-lion royals appeared with golden branches stretching out of their glowing crowns, connecting us in a gilded web. "This represents the story of civilization, humanity's journey out of nature into separation, laws, and technological achievement."

There is a beauty & braveness in his writing, & a relieving strain of humor through it too. I was not long again in touch with Jonathan, but I wish him safe, fruitful travels.

Writing about Judih Haggai Weinstein, now, final days of 2023, is painful as never was before. She is currently one of those missing amidst the renewed Israeli-Palestinian war, raging since early October 2023. Going back these 11 years, her haiku emanating from her kibbutz near the Palestinian border, tell the ongoing story of war:

even the quiet
is noisy
after the war.

* * *

machines in sky
dread in heart
another war day

* * *

bomb blasts
on them on us
noise of hell

* * *

Yet others tell of her wise, peaceful, sometimes funny vision too:

open ears
do i notice
today's miracles

* * *

shut up and listen
secrets will flow
simple empathy

* * *

perhaps now
flamenco dreams
will strut my mind

* * *

Nathan D. Horowitz's "Gateway Mexico" continues in this issue. From El Nopal, Cora Indian Territory, Nayarit, the narrator, "Nate," deepens his shamanic pursuits:

He began realizing his dream of fasting up on the hill for three days and nights. He felt he had risen above the rest of his life. All his ordinary concerns were down below, and he was high up with his hunger, some plants, some stones, and the sky. He wrote letters to Lily and made long lists of foods he had eaten at one time or another; hungry to an extreme, he could vividly taste things he had enjoyed years and years before, including the cream-filled chocolate eggs from the Easter baskets his mother had assembled for him, and the bowls

of cottage cheese, sour cream, and fruit cocktail that his father used to give him as a snack when he visited his apartment. He promised himself that when he got home, he would open a large can of peaches and, as quickly as possible, eat them all and drink the syrup. He wrote down his dreams, including one in which he visited the land of the dead and saw Hitler being punished by the liberal regime there, by being made to do community service, working behind the counter in a candy store.

He reflects on his journey thus:

Also on the wall was an electricity meter labeled “Wathorímetro Thermofascio.” It dovetailed with something Nate had been thinking about: how strange it must have seemed to the Coras that someone from the distant, incomprehensible United States wanted to learn to be a shaman. It was as if a young man from outer space, insanely wealthy, eight feet tall, and as pale as a sheet of paper, appeared in Brooklyn and went to the Lubovicher Hasidism, saying that he felt he needed to become a rabbi. The gringo thought he could write a science fiction story about this. The visitor’s name would be something that sounded as weird to them as his did to the Coras: *Wathorímetro Thermofascio*. The Hasidism would think it bizarre that Watt wanted to be a rabbi, but seeing that he was serious about it, and willing to share a pinch of his vast fortune, they would take in the young space traveler and study Talmud with him.

His moving & delightful “well-told tales of the adventures of the gringo who wanted to be a shaman” carry on.

Charlie Beyer’s “Hustle-Work Stories” find the shaggy-faced raconteur forever trying to raise funds to build & market his beloved hovercraft business. From bad:

Went to see the flim-flam man in Vancouver. He had on a cheap suit and a nose that’s mashed over to one side. Always suspicious of the asymmetrical. Big promises of venture capital on the phone “Come on in. We got money today.” I zoom down to Vancouver for a “meeting.” It’s a tiny front in a mini-mall tucked between a Kinko’s and a Korean massage parlor. Lettering on the door says “Security Quick Title and Mortgage.” Someone is in the process of scraping the name off so it says “. . . y Quick Title and Morg . . .”

To sad:

He likes my Indiana Jones no-bullshit approach. My resume reads like the adventures of Papillon on his third escape attempt. He gets me talking about hovercrafts (which I incidentally know a great deal about) and all pretenses of getting me into a tight collar shirt are dropped. I get him worked up on hovers. He tells me to come back on MLK day with some hover info. I show up three hours early. Look stupid. Have to sit in my car in the rain and smoke cheap cigars. Come back in at the right time, all frumpled, smelling like a community college ashtray. Clutching a pile of dot matrix printouts wrinkled with sweat and rain. Everything I ever knew and wrote about hovers is here, plans, specs, pics, the sink. He is gracious. Flops it all on the floor behind his desk. The trash can?

To beautifully delusional:

Had a successful investment consulting corporation in New York that was really bringing it in [train station?]. Decided to quit and take life easy. Traveled all over the world but wasn't interested in anything [abject stupidity?]. Just all these sights added up to be boring. Everywhere I went it was just more traveling and fancy dinners. Back in New York I just hung around the penthouse [jail?] eating all sorts of rich foods and doing nothing. Soon became really fat. And then, [lowers his voice] I lost all sexual urge for my wife [she fat too?]. Couldn't even get it up. So I had to go back to work. Started this little operation [code for scam] with my wife as executive secretary. We work all day meeting lots of interesting people [pause for effect] like you, and helping them turn their business around [into his pocket]. Like Dravis and Machelli just up the street had a liability on their books. We worked with them in their spent chemicals re-assigning company and had them with a fat bank account in two weeks [took the Mob money, dumped the toxic waste in the river]. Now we work till 6 when the wife goes home and takes a bubble bath [in spent chemicals?]. I do a little paperwork [dumping], then we go out dancing and have a late night romantic dinner. I'm 78 years old and never felt better in my life. This job is exciting and we're doing some fast enterprise turn around."

Beyer laughs, cries, rages wonderfully ever on.

Sometimes what lingers from a poet are just a line or two. From Joe Coleman's "The Lovely Haunting": "Etching in the art of acids." And from "Mind's Eye Candy (from the Jacobin Cycle)": "Imagination is unfulfilled hunger." These lines stick deep.

Poet Zannemarie Lloyd Tayler (her nom de plume), friend of mine for a few years, hostess of the Out Loud Open Mic, where I met both Joe Coleman & Tom Sheehan &, more importantly, beloved partner of my long-time friend Ric Amante, contributed two poems to this issue. And them newly married at that time. KD & me not invited to their ceremony, though living only a few towns away. These lines from "The Way You Say My Name" do a nice poetical summing of their deep romance:

I love the way you light my name like a marquee, when you sing it,
When you go neon, electric, on me. I love how you clasp our lips to it
Like a kitten pouncing on a moth.

Tom Sheehan's poem "Right of Asylum," recalls, in part, his long-lost & profoundly loved father:

The soft moon of his face
Leaping on my woolen landscape;
His breath heavy, warm, ripe,
Like a crock full of home made beer,

His hands clumsy at adjusting
Even the thinnest of my shrouds.
I often thought he let me know,
By such ruse, he attended darkness.



I should tug at you but I won't.
 I'll accept the moon and silence
 And your lying like a submarine,
 Bottomed, only dreams inside.

It's like his Art remembers for a living.

Martina Newberry's very timely & very funny "Christmas Music" tells the story of the holiday:

After all, at home they'd always stuffed their pillows and sleeping mats with clean straw so this would be no different. The animals around them, watching . . . so what? Both had raised their share of animals—let the beasts watch; animals have concluded their own births and won't be bothered by human issue. They told each other "Don't worry," and got ready for a long night.

Not many could wring such a sober holiday for its funny residua.

This issue also featured poems by the Persian poet Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (known in modern times simply as Rumi) first re-published by Scriptor Press New England in the ongoing series of Burning Man Books, back in 1999 (as *Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do*). Rumi was a poet, a theologian, a mystic. Speaking again of Ric Amante, it was he who introduced me to Rumi's brilliant work.

Good translations of Rumi's poems, most written in Persian, convey their vision, artistry, humor. Two of the shorter pieces in *Cenacle 83* convey this point well:

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
 and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
 and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.
 There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

* * *

Dance, when you're broken open.
 Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
 Dance in the middle of the fighting.
 Dance in your blood.
 Dance, when you're perfectly free.

I recall Ric, long ago, in various apartments of his where we would visit, reciting Rumi's poems as he drank deeply of red wine, & dancing the words, like Rumi was said to have done. These poems welcome all, & never grow stale in the mind.

This issue is also profusely decorated with photographs from our early September visit to the Mass MOCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art). My personal journal from 9/1/2012 describes:

Vastness. Three floors in an old warehouse complex—very impressive—as were the exhibitions—a sweeping multimedia “O Canada,” the multi-floor Sol Lewitt wall drawings, the Afro-futurist Sanford Biggers, & the thematic “Ten Cities.”

It is an endlessly fun museum, worth anyone’s visit.

Always the wish to discuss *Labyrinthine* & never the perfect way found. Yet *Cenacle* 83 contains a passage that rings ever true of this strange long book:

Yes, this ragged sheaf of high notes, yes, nothing learned yet but strategy to keep singing, keep singing & so I try, I put this black ink stick to its page & push it along, to understand with hope, & I do, & I don't & I do—

This world is not ours—we belong to it—& yet not enough in saying that—the ships have always been overhead—do I believe this or just write it, or has one led toward the other?

Every shift contacts every other shift—again, my own words seduce me by their weird play into belief—it's true, or it sounds like it should be true—like a sexy little truth with a pouty mouth & a skirt conforming precisely to her hot little ass—

Would knowing even help? Would it justify or disappoint? It seems like the civilizations of men flourish with the clash of arguments, the wild flourish of mysteries—

certainty brings corrosion—

What comes can be the strength of accumulating years, that's what I carry by way of current faith, I think: because I have done this many ways over many years, what opens out to me is further along, as though a path, as though there is not loss or diminish but gain—

I would will my daylight hours root from an hour such as this—I would wish its branchy truths, its far lights, its ceaseless unfoldings, its nearness to dreaming—

Ever carry these words, their sentiments, along.

Having discussed the *Tangled Gate* poems in this *History* already, I'd attend here to the *Notes from New England* that I wrote about it a few days later. These lines sum best:

These poems are profoundly connected to my others writings, & to ideas I've long had. They are culmination as much as new. I felt myself tonight, while writing the final piece, “One, Many, None,” reaching back many years. Asking myself: what would a flawless moment or thing be? Remembering an acid trip from about 14 years ago, first day of spring, snow fall, I saw Bob Dylan's *Don't Look Back* at Coolidge Corner Movie House in Brookline, probably stopped at the McDonald's nearby before movie, & Barnes & Noble nearby after, both now long gone, eventually a bus to Harvard Square, & I felt so happy, so blessed that night, “first day of spring, snow fall, all is perfect, beautiful,” is what I wrote.

* * *

Still, so many questions: what is the Red Bag? A kind of portal? From where to where? What is the Tangled Gate? A kind of interface? Who or what is the Beast? A personification of earth, Nature? What are the One Woods? Of the world before men? What the blazes is gnattering? A language-less tongue, an ur-tongue? What is the Carnival Room & Cloverdale? Part of the geography of Dreamland? What is the Pensionne? A safe-house for Eternals & those they make? What are Eternals?

* * *

And the conclusion:

Earlier this week I added the dedication. Of course for Jim. I wish he were around to play along when I read it to the 24th anniversary Jellicle Literary Guild meeting this weekend. But as the Traveling Troubadour, he had to move along. Like all I've loved perpetually, he embeds inside the words themselves.

“What’s next, Jim?”

He smiles, blue eyes twinkling.

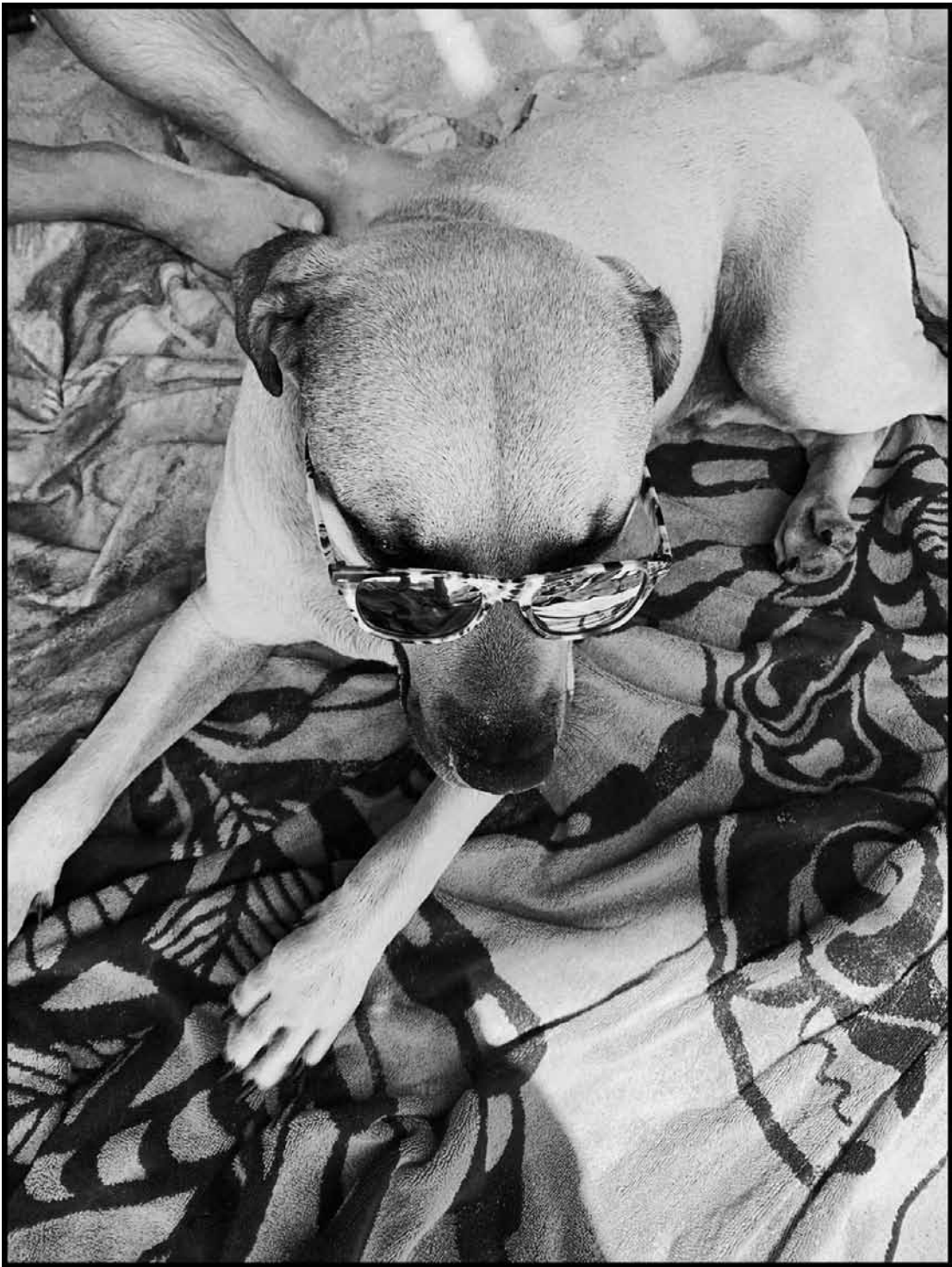
“You’ll find out soon enough.”

All of which leads me on to describing that Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.



* * * * *





Tamara Miles



The Fox-Spell

(For Judih)

A fox will appear over your head while you sleep,
 looking for a hedgerow or woody lot
 in the PeeDee of your imagination,
 or pasture of the Piedmont.

Under your left eyelid, an abandoned tobacco barn
 where she can hide in a well-dug den beneath.
 No one finds her in the daytime.

By night she is called Parvati, daughter
 of the Himalayas, Uma, the divine feminine,
 benevolent goddess of fertility, love, and devotion,
 wife or consort of the Hindu god Shiva,
 mother of the elephant god, Ganesha.

She is Adi Parashakti, the First Power,
 and above you as you dream she leaps;
 soon, tracks will appear on your pillow.

In you, there are thought-rabbits who shiver
 in a snow-bank, and the shimmering mice
 of a moonlit field. Fruits and berries
 in the tendrils of your hair to nourish
 her for mating season, December to February.

In you, are young pups of creative energy,
 and they will venture out, having outgrown
 your fears of the houndsmen.

Parvati, blessed fox, has curled to rest
 upon your heart. Out of your breath,
 hymns rise for her, vermilion, woman
 crowned with rubies.

In you, a metamorphosis,
 a fox with nine tails, carrying a pearl
 in its mouth.

* * *

Mantis

The forelegs of the Mantodea,
folded in prayer. For now,
I must imagine them, nested
as they are in the elbow
of my peach tree, and tucked
behind the apple tree's ear.

The babies will emerge in six
weeks or so. I bought the pods
from Nature's Good Guys,
#onelesspesticide, because last
year worms got our peaches, ruined
on the ground, food for ants.

The female mantis can be a sexual
cannibal. Mantis, from a word
meaning prophet. Mantis religiosa,
five-eyed priest of peaches, raptorial
legs with which to hold its pray.
Stereovision, tympanate ears,

a walking appendage, quickly rotating
head toward encountered motion,
binocular field of compound eyes
toward light—they stalk, strike, then grasp.

In the south, the Brunner's stick mantis
reproduces without males, and its cousins
find it most convenient to bite off the male's
head as soon as he dismounts,
the romantic season being over.

* * * * *



The Brain Claim

[Prose]

Concluded from Cenacle | 122 | April 2023

vi.

I send \$50 to some graft-slacker for a temporary water permit. I never get a response or receipt, so that's how important that is. The Idaho water quality guy is a friend of mine from mining elsewhere in the state. I know I can't pump out of the fish creek, but we can dig a hole that fills, and use that ground water. So water solved, maps made, sequencing done (the sequence is: strip topsoil; dig out and move barren overburden; dig out the gold on the bottom; replace the overburden and then the topsoil; reseed and run with the treasure). We'll drive down the mountain and use the BLM office for a latrine.

For Christmas . . . I am shut out of the mine. I tell Bob that I am pissed and that he is a two-faced mind-changer. He calls me names then, that are actually his monikers: *angry, liar, greedy*. I don't need this shit for being helpful. I tell him that it is over and that I cannot work with a rageaholic. I send him a \$2000 bill. Then in a week, he has talked to his priest. His priest can't figure out why his brain is cockeyed—here is his engineer, doing everything without asking for anything except friendship. Bob has refused to be friendly. His priest should spank him. Merry crap-ass Christmas.

In a week (after I've layed off Evan before starting), an email comes in from Bob that is all begging slobbering alcoholic forgiveness. It is a long letter about misunderstanding. *How did we get to this point?* How sorry he is, if he hurt my feelings. *Can't we just forget all and resume the mine project? Let's dump the lovers quarrel and re-marry.*

Sure. I'm the biggest softy and sucker on the West Coast. My brain evaluates all the insults to date. The noggin concludes that I can take considerably more abuse than this—to come away with twenty grand by the end of June. Just bite the bullet, I tell myself.

So now the biggie to get past is the Arc Narking. In a few more weeks, Lund gets up there with his team of mining compliance people. A police raid to our thinking. They crawl about the claim for a day, and create a report with the top secret security again—I'm still not sure why? Bob receives the certified letter package at the same time as I do.

This time he calls me. Like most, writing anything over two sentences is beyond his skill. He is in a panicked lather.

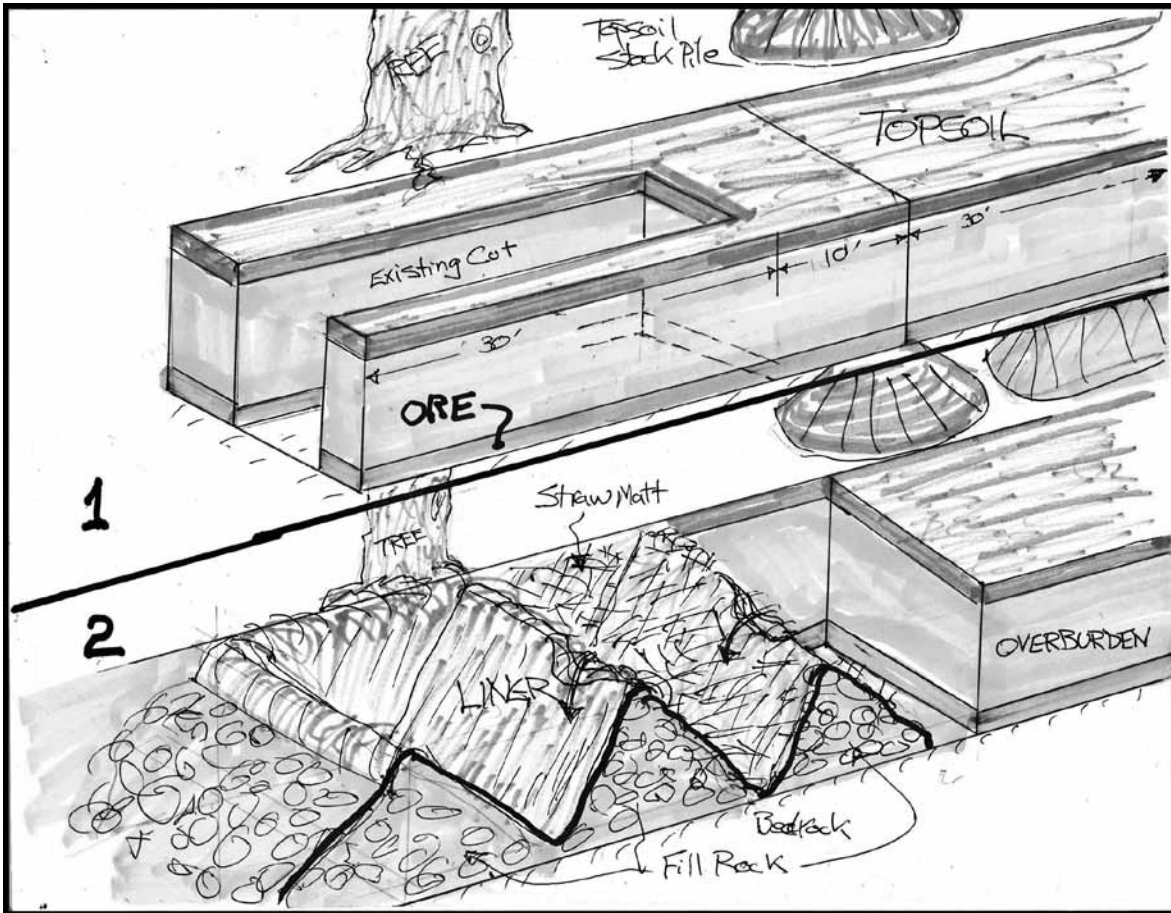
"These bureaucrats are stealing my land! They are eliminating more than half my claim from operations!"

The area we are to mine is free of any archeological debris, they say, and good to go, but more than half of Bob's claims are shaded in red. An archeological "area of significance."

"You have to do something!" he cries.

I write an email to Lund and also to his boss, cc'ing the Arc Nark. I can see that the Arc Nark is a recent graduate of some liberal college that teaches that *all* mining is bad and destructive. All miners should be stopped. This graduate child, who is enjoying her first time in the field, wants to make a name for herself. So she piles on every subjective regulation ever thought of. A phone meeting is set up.

Phone rings. The Area Manager for the BLM is on the line, along with Lund and the Arc Nark, who is dead quiet, not really knowing what is going on. I explain to them that this is an illegal action—



Charlie Beyer

to stop our exploration and mining on most of Bob's claim. That the young enthusiast is claiming every scrap of garbage as "significant" when we all know it is dirt with no informational value. That she is grandstanding at the expense of people who have invested thousands of dollars and years of work into the property. I tell them that I want the decision reversed with a formal apology, or I'm going to the director in Boise, and then to my cousin in Congress to straighten this shit out.

Bureaucrats are terrified of someone going over their head. Makes them look bad and makes them have to answer to higher ups. Lund squirms large on the other end. He says, "We never said you couldn't do anything there. Just that this is an 'area of significance.'"

"Then why did you tell us to stay away from there? Do not dig or sample. Sounds pretty clear."

"Oh no. We did not mean that," Lund says.

"Then what do you mean? Your green bunny person is trying to make a name for herself at no expense to her, but thousands to us. I demand that she be put on parole, or some kind of restriction to put her power trip on hold."

The BLM boss chimes in: "Well then, Mr. Lund, did you tell them that this area was closed to mining?"

"No, *no*, never said that. Only that some further investigation needs to be done here before any additional activity," grovels Lund.

"So you are *not* stopping activity here?" I ask.

"*No*. This is all a misunderstanding. If you wish to mine there, submit a new plan and we will do a more specific evaluation."

"Then this is all a mis-communication?" I ask.

It is. And a stupid one at that. I have gone overboard for the freak-out Mormon with an unnecessary complaint. I don't like that. The Bob worm can't ask or confront the government guys himself. It's like they are some kind of sacred cow. They are just partially educated, biased, CYA, government workers with their weekly check and little sympathy for the people they are supposed to be working for.

Bob rails on me over the phone about the "theft" of his claim. I assure him that everything is smoothed out, all is a go for the dig, and the next dig will go easy, now that they know we fight back. He is still grumbling, unable to accept any answer that does not fit with his government conspiracy theories.

As an after-thought, he says I can dig anywhere on his claim. Another reversal. *What the hell?* This sounds good, but I am now 800 miles away and the claim is buried in five feet of snow. So thanks, jerkwad, but not happening.

Lund sends us a final packet of questions. In it he wants to know: the size of the topsoil stock pile; the size of the overburden stock pile; what we'll do if we find any "cultural resources" (hide them, of course); if we'll destroy any survey landmarks; if the machinery have fire suppression equipment; how will the fuel be stored and where; how many trees will be cut; if we notify of any changes; if we re-seed the area; where we are getting the water; a schedule of mobilization; where will we camp; and what we'll do with the potty situation. Yeah—this is getting like a calculus test with a hangover.

All these questions are easy to answer and placate the government. I answer everything and run it back by Bob. Of course he freaks at a number of things, like the plan to shit in a bucket and an unjustified worry about the trees. Anything I discuss, he confutes and is disagreeable with. My abused brain was thinking that he wanted me to run the show, but it is like asking a kid if I can eat his Halloween candy. I get him to shut up and I mail the whole package off to Lund. Wait two weeks. Then three. Bob is shitting little green nickels again. It is now mid-March.

Bob is quiet for a few days, and then says I can dig again on the claim as a prospector, reporting every grain to him. I am relieved this guy has climbed out of his ass (once again) and I am anxious to get up there and recover my expenses, something for the months of work I have put into this project so far. I write him a nice letter saying I'll test this spot and another for future expansion of our dig. I say

that it will be good to recover an ounce and re-imburse myself.

In the next letter, he is unglued again.

“An ounce!” he cries. “Why you greedy thief! How dare you steal an ounce off my claim?”

Chronic mania? He gives me permission and then takes it away. If not an ounce, then what the fuck am I working for? *Does he want to pay me in tennis balls, or what?* One goddamned ounce is a fragment of what I’m doing this for. *How will I ever get paid anything if this bugger is tight-fisted over every pennyweight?*

I realize that the guy doesn’t want money. He wants *gold*. Irrational gold to amass and hoard. He has gold fever, which is worse than diphtheria, as the Mormon has no idea why, or what, he’s doing, other than amassing power and admiration (so he thinks).

So I’m supposed to be the Mine Manager, but this guy is such control freak that I can’t do a goddamned thing without checking six ways with him. Very frustrating. *Where’s the equipment? Do you want me to haul it up there? Who are your assistants? What do you expect them to do? Are they working for your whims or mine? Who buys the grass seed? If you have a guy with a chipper, where the hell is he?*

Bob gives only cryptic answers, like: “I got a rock-puller and three dredges.” OK, so-the-fuck-what? *Want a medal?*

Now he says he’s going to be there the whole time, when the point was for me to run things so he could pursue his other businesses. I am obviously off the trust list. *What the hell could have switched his brain into paranoid schizophrenic in less than a week?* I need either to be boss or a slave.

He tells me he wants to dredge the whole claim with the permit. The permit is not for dredging. Dredging is illegal due to possible damage to the poisonous fish. If he does so, we will all go to jail.

“What is wrong with the plan we have been working on for months?” I have to ask. “We have done all they ask and they will grant us a permit soon.”

“But the assistants will rob the mine. My cousin and brother-in-law are good people but they will be stealing gold,” he whines.

“Well, they are your family. Can’t you control them?”

“They are all thieves out to get me. They will steal everything. I trust *no one!*”

Yes, I’m getting it. And I’m part of the No-One. Do I really want to work with this asshole who will accuse me of theft no matter what we do? Or any of a dozen other made up reasons? I’m still holding out for my bonanza. I know it’s there. We just have to get past the stupidity and mine it. My brain feels like it’s been dragged behind a horse. Hope rising and falling like water in a toilet bowl.

In another two weeks, we get another certified letter from Mr. Lund: “The BLM gives you full approval to go ahead and mine. Please post a \$4320 bond with the BLM office in Boise.”

Of course Bob freaks out. Well, *dub*. You have to post a bond. That’s the name of the game. No getting out of it. Like asking rain to fall up, like wanting the wind to stop when you are going 60. Bob tries to pay a tenth through a bail bondsman, but nobody will have anything to do with it. Laugh-o-meter #37.

He bitches to me in the extreme about this cost. What a wimp. Pay out four grand to recover hundreds. Most kindergarteners could figure that one out. He sweats over this for another three weeks, closing the time gap until the scheduled start-up day, with none of the main issues solved.

Finally, he pays the goddamned bond after being a tightfisted-delaying dick, and I get notified of this by Lund. Bob is having a hair-tearing hissy fit. His brain is on fire with bureaucratic conspiracies, and he’s surrounded by thieves. Myself topping the list.

vii.

On Tuesday, he writes that he has a massive brain tumor and is going into surgery on Thursday. The mine is *off*. He is recovering his bond to spend on the doctors. Everything is off. *Don’t go near the mine.*

OK. Sometimes the spirits save you from some greater disaster that you are diving into. I think they are party-pooing angels, as opposed to the god Murphy, who happily tows you into a cyclone of confusion and broken machinery. I have to figure this is what the spirits are up to. Either that, or shoot myself—or Bob.

But even with a pack of do-good partypoop angels trying to hold me back, I am still crazed to dig the place up. I offer my sympathies (although I feel none of it), and tell Bob that I can mine the whole place with just the kid, getting him a hundred thousand to give to the doctors. But he can't control everything with an IV stabbed in his head bone. So everything is off. It is all too complicated for him. He heads off to get his skull sawed open. I am hoping that they reach in there arm-deep, and pull out the asshole in him.

Now the writing is on the wall. No mine. Time to make new plans. My brain is numb. I cannot grasp that Murphy has screwed me out of this gold deal. A whole winter spent permitting a great hope that comes to nothing. *When in the fuck will Murphy give me a break?*

It is June 1st. We should be up to our eyeballs in mud, water, noise, and *gold*. But, no, we sit at home like we have a broken car. I get a post-surgery email from Bob. It says: "mE gahath root ndf veexx nMT beth." Mega gibberish. His cat walked on the keyboard and hit "send." Sorta like a desktop butt call. Apparently the head choppers didn't kill him, which I have mixed feelings about. One of the feelings is that he should have left the hospital in a body bag.

So I settle in here in Colorado, rotting in the winter home, 232% cabin fever, a big TV, and binging serials about 20-somethings. The little babies think they have *so* many problems.

My mining charge has had enough of the wishy-washy mine job, and heads out to Utah to do perilous rock climbing. He's sort of an expert at this and has the broken bones to prove it.

My sweetie heads off for some remote hot springs where she and her girlfriends soak naked in the mineral waters while consuming copious drugs. My brain is on a serious dopamine low. I haven't seen a fleck of serotonin in months. If I'd been invited to be naked with the girls, it would have gone a long way towards my happiness. But I remain here, a dreaming dirty old man.

viii.

OK, I'm gonna walk to Panama. I gotta get out of here. Get moving. Summer is burning away. I am politely waiting for my sweetie to return from her orgy, later in the month. In a week, she suddenly shows up early. But is moving fast, straight to the area hospital. Evan, the rock climber, has fallen from a massive height, and snapped his leg in two parts. He lay in the dirt in the wilderness until miraculously getting help.

In a day or two, my honey brings her broken kid home to where I am hanging. We get him all set up with beds, crutches, ice, and a day and night nurse. *Me*. Sweetie takes off again to go frolic with her femi-friends. I am the kitchen bitch, bedpan purveyor, bandage bastard, and all-around \$500-a-day nurse, without the money.

Evan gets to moving around on his own in a few weeks, adjusting his smashed body to the stainless steel with which he is pinned together. My sweetie comes home sometime past the longest day, and sleeps for two days.

Now its time for Charlie to have a little Charlie time. In the next few days, Terry and I leave to hunt crystals on the Continental Divide for a month. Evan is healed enough to do everything, even drive his truck. So it's sayonara, my broken buddy.

But Evan is now in debt to the doctors for \$160,000. He doesn't have a fraction of that. He falls in with a false conventional wisdom that, if you post your sob story on GoFundMe.com, the world will automatically send you millions. What he finds out is that it's like selling cosmetics to your neighbors. You can only send pathetic begging to those you know. There is no "going viral." A few people send twenty bucks, but in a few days he's collected only \$120. I can't pay anything, of course,

nor do I want to. Like all others, it's like: "damn, dude, glad your luck is not mine. And ya know, I got problems up the ass too."

So the public begging program is not going so well. Maybe it's the presentation, think them who consider such advertising. "Oh wait," they say. "Charlie is a writer. Let's get him to make the million dollar appeal."

I refuse. I'm supposed to write the story of the illiterate who is a family member? Anytime you write anything about your family you go over to automatic shun. The asshole department. Anything you say will be wrong, desultory, rude, and rejected. I am encouraged to read the appeal that has already been posted. It is pathetic, and not in a good way. Every sentence begins with "I" and refers to "me" at least once. Sounds like a 13-year old-girl whining to go to the mall.

The family hounds me and guilt trips me until I give in. I hate begging. Stealing I like. I tell them that if I write this, it will be as a story with little reference to "I." In fact, I will avoid it. It may not reflect his deeper feelings or inner thoughts. "OK, OK, anything you do will be better than what we have," they cry.

I agree with that, but know that I'll be making waves with the kid. I extensively interview him as to his feelings in this or that part of the saga. Mostly, he cannot remember due to the incredible stress of dying alone in the desert. But I gather a mess of notes and proceed to the typewriter.

Two days later I have the printed pages and present it to the broken kid. He doesn't read it for two days because he's "too stoned." He doesn't appear to read it in the days after either. After a week, he says he's saving it for the TV show *This Happened To Me*.

It's obvious that he can't stand my writing. It doesn't seem to convey the pathetic helplessness of his life with sympathy, or the Amerikan entitlement he feels, in which everyone is obligated to give him money. My efforts are wasted, as I suspected they would be. Yes, I'm a bit pissed to waste my efforts on the illiterate. "Pearls before swine" is all I can think.

The Brain Claim boned me. I come away with mental illness, not gold. I'd like to know if "Brain Bob" is still alive, not to feel sorry for him, but to avoid the bugger while I go raid an ounce off the claim. In my brain, to accuse me of being a thief . . . makes me a thief. *So fuck you, Bob!*

Now . . . Bob lives . . . or dies . . . the leg heals slowly . . . I scrape along on Social Security . . . and Terry and I find pockets of jewels on the Divide as a compensation prize in life. The story of Evan's ailments never goes on the net, but I post it here, where it is supposedly in his own words—for all the curious in perpetuity.

ix.

I decided to do something different this summer than the usual death-defying clambering up a cliff like a lizard. My boss let me get out of there for three weeks, but what to do?

Mom's boyfriend was always up to something weird, and this year he was an engineer for a small gold mine. He invited me to help run claptrap machinery excavating the top of a mountain, and come away with a few ounces of glittering gold for the trouble. That was different.

Hello, Kind Reader, I am Evan Muldoon, who has destroyed my leg and wallet by smashing into an unplanned rock near Moab, Utah. A very cool place, with a massive arch as seen on postcards. A rope swing hangs from the center and creates thousands of feet of gravity-defying air as you traverse the arc. I had done this before—pure thrill and nothing to it.

This time—the thrill was different.

There is a toxic dust that blows off the Great Salt Lake. The chemicals in this dust crossed the blood brain barrier in the skull of the mine owner who lived there. As Mom's boyfriend permitted the mining venture with agencies over the course of the winter, this owner went progressively more insane, changing and fussing over every detail, stopping just short of making us have to wear our underwear outside our pants.

Mom's boyfriend got the project permitted, but then it was discovered that the owner had a massive brain tumor. He cancelled everything and went under the doctor's knife. This left me back to Plan B, the rock lizard plan. Climbing buddies were as scarce as the gold on the mountain.

From one grand wall in Utah to the next, I scaled and repelled with enthusiasm, as my dog peered quizzically up from below. A few other climbers were met, but no mutual exertion was ever manifested, all climbing being a solo adventure.

On the last day of the vacation, on the road out, this grand arch and its monster swing drew me to it for one last thrill. I lined up my leap into space but, at the last moment, being a media junkie, as we all are now, I decided that making a video seemed like the thing to do. So, with rope in hand, I crabbed over to my pack to get my phone. Feeling cocky and bold, I ran to the edge and dived into the air.

Anger at my stupidity instantly welled up inside of me as I plunged to my doom. The matter of six feet sideways had changed the trajectory of my arc. The miscalculation had my mass heading straight for a massive boulder. In a desperate instant, I tried to scramble up the rope, but only gained a foot of elevation at the bottom of the 130-foot arc.

Crack! A sound to reverberate through the rest of my life. My leg's major femur was snapped in half like a dry twig. With all my momentum and velocity absorbed by the rock, I limply drooled down the line to a steep rocky sand and scree. The leg was by my side, as in still attached, but at a right angle to my body. Any normal person would have crapped their pants at this twisted vision but, for myself, all the first responder training I have had flashed before my eyes.

There was mental shock, viewing this leg in disbelief, followed by a realization of helplessness. This quickly became a desperate screaming for help, the cries echoing off the stonewalls like laughter. Realizing the futility of bellowing like a broken beast to an empty land with no ears, my mind became a super computer accessing options and solutions.

Seeing that this leg thing was wrong, maybe dead wrong, I began to fuss with the ropes in some attempt to tie it up. Sadly, a leg has no hooks or tie-down points, so my efforts were futile. Rolling my head in confusion, I saw above me . . . a vision from God. Glowing softly in an astral light, like the chalice of the Last Supper, was my phone.

All my consciousness now focused on this savior. If I could reach my phone, I would be saved. But it was thirty feet above me through a shamble of slithery rocks. Not even considering defeat at this new salvation, I began to climb like a noodle thrown on the wall, full body on the ground, hauling the lifeless meat behind me inch by inch. When twenty feet had been gained, I slid back five. Again and again I tried this. Again and again I slid down the scree helplessly, each time more damaged than the last.

Seeing that this was not working, and yet salvation lay so close, a new plan was developed. At my maximum gained elevation, still ten feet below the precious scrap of technology, I configured a monkey's paw out of the rope. This was thrown up hill, over and over, to try and dislodge the magic box.

At what seemed the hundredth throw, it was knocked askew and came tumbling down the hill. Could I catch it before it tumbled below and out of reach? Snatching it out of the air as it fled by . . . *yes!* I clamped my trembling hands around it, like choking a slippery fish.

Now came the next realization that here we were—my phone and me—miles from any reception. “Can you hear me now?” Not likely. I dialed 911 and, by some cosmic miracle, the operator answered.

“What is your emergency?”

“Leg . . . broken in half. Stranded on a cliff. Need immediate help. Please.”

“Please state your Social Security number and full name.”

“Just send someone . . . *please.*”

“Do you have a valid driver's license?”

“For God’s sake, I’m bleeding to death on a rocky slope!”

“Is this a good number to reach you at?”

“I’m in Utah at Hangman’s Arch. Please send emergency services.”

“And where exactly do you think that is?”

“Where do you think it is? I just told you!”

For the next half hour we discussed how to get to my location, with extreme frustration on both sides of the phone. Finally she felt satisfied and dispatched some rescuers. I felt I was directing a four-year-old through the Smithsonian to the bathroom.

But then she fell silent. *Where did she go? Lunch break?* After numerous calls to return, she came back on the line.

“This is 911. What is your emergency?” I wondered if this is a human or a robot?

“Holy crap! We were just talking. I am the emergency. Please stay on the line. I’m all alone out here. I need your voice.”

The operator apologized and attempted to strike up small talk, as a way of comfort.

“What Google apps do you like the most?”

“What the *fu . . . ck?* The emergency app. You have that?”

“How would you compare that to Android?”

So it went for a half hour, as my body wedged into some rocks to keep from sliding further down the hill. In an hour from when I first dialed out, I heard voices below. Savior voices. No bird song or words of love ever sounded so sweet. A few fellows clambered up to attend me.

The first fellow attempted to straighten my leg, like I was a broken doll. Screamed in his face with pain, and he quickly got the message to leave well enough alone. They kindly grasped me firmly, and propped up my body, taking the pressure off all of my parts gripping the surrounding landscape.

Within another half hour, other EMS people showed up, more trained in handling mangled bodies. Together, four of them got me down the hill to a flat spot, with many interior crunching sounds. When laid flat, there is another big crack that is of unknown origins within me. But by now I was getting splinted up and injected with morphine. There was no high to this, as my body sucked up all the euphoric qualities to just quell the pain.

What was my main worry? The *dog*. The poor dog was stuck in the truck, whimpering for his master three hundred feet above.

“Get my dog. Save my dog,” I too whimpered, as though it was his leg that was broken. I was assured in many ways that he too would be saved. And now, through the bustle around me, I was loaded into the helicopter. Thinking: “OK. A helicopter. This is a big deal now. I really fucked up this time.”

Now, a month later, I still live. *But how do I live? Have I learned a damned thing?* I’d like to think so.

The mantra we all hear from the PC populi is that “life is precious.” Is that in terms of re-sale? Or just hard to find? *What the hell does that mean to a person with a daily predictable job, meat loaf at 6, and serial TV watching?* Not much. Maybe it is only relevant to near-death experiences? To those who lay in a crumpled ball in the wilderness? *Can one really appreciate something until they have nearly lost it?*

Damn the connections of cayos that inadvertently changed my course to this outcome. The blowing dust of the Great Salt Lake, destroying the bad brain of the boss, shifting me to the rock lizard “vacation.” At any moment—*what else could happen? A hurried mother with a kid’s toy under the brake pedal? A Russian satellite visits your neighborhood? A scratch on your hand goes gangrene?*

Precious life is more out of our control than we can imagine. Our only defense is to love life *now. In this moment.*

I get it. I’m going to repair this broken body as well as humanly possible. I’m going to get out there, out into my beloved wild (with new caution), into the faces of other people, new and old friends, stepping up and finishing dreams and projects, never chickening out in the face of adversity.

Continuing to help others in effective ways as I have always tried, but maybe not always so effectively.

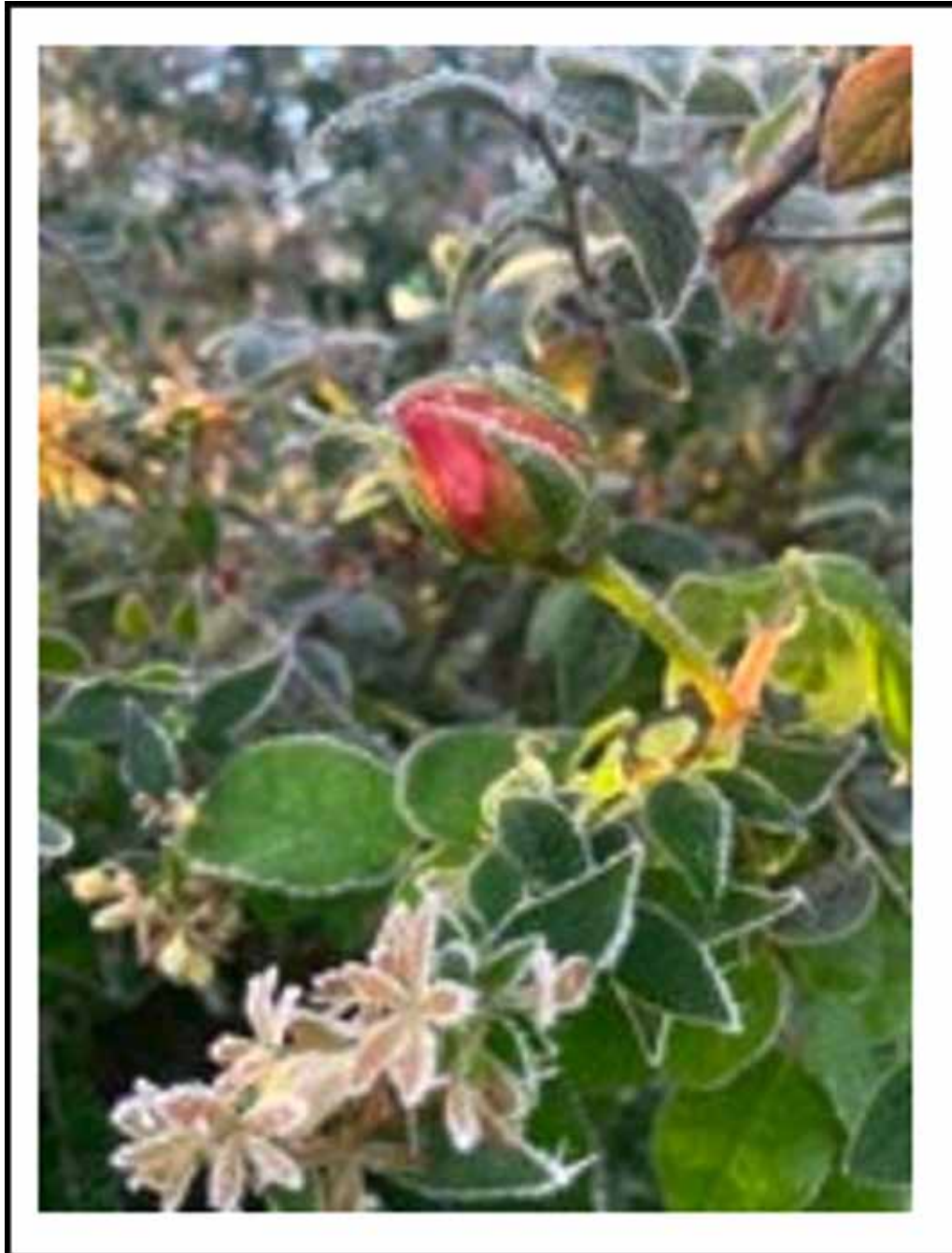
With your help, I'll pay off this debt that is larger than the state's student loan. I will fix myself both mentally and physically, never decaying into the despair of uselessness, or the limp of Igor.

I will love and cherish life—with you—and all life around me.

Thank you for reading my story,
Evan Muldoon.

* * * * *





Gregory Kelly

Gregory Kelly

Writer's Notebook

[About a rose.]

That's as far as I got. When I thought what words might fit.
Some nights are like that.

Nothing fits.

And yet. This rose didn't fit the scene.

But.

That's a narrow-minded view really. It shows my youth.
A rose in December.

To find it, you needn't go far.

A quick turn off the main road.

The fourth house up. Just pass'd the turn for the cul de sac.

Look between the holly. Between the birch. Before the barren bird bath.
There's some rubble in the garden. Don't mind that. You'll forget it's even there
once you find the rose.

I didn't even see the rose. Not until I'd been told.

It's in the frost.

And that's when all the words stopt.

Except: about a rose.

* * *

Time Magazine—1989

A strong wind blows today. When set against histories and generations and millennia, it's insignificant. This blowing wind.

Though. It looks like it will topple the oak. And rip from the ground the seeds of spring.
Prising apart the allotments we spend lifetimes tending. Uprooting all at once what we
consider weeds, what we consider fruitful.

I was four. Mom says. When I saw a little boy dead.

I did not know this little boy. It was a picture. This little boy. A strong wind must've blown this little boy to the ground. Mom said. She said he got up.

But something in my little bones told me this little boy never used his little legs to run again.

He couldn't outrun the winds. They left him sprawled out on dust and dirt. And I know how the funeral saying goes. How we'll all return to good ole Mother Earth.

But that doesn't soften the blow. The winds they still pummel and pummel and pummel. And yet. I know. God knows. When even one little sparrow falls flightless.

When one big rocket falls flightless.

When one big bullet falls flightless.

Or wildfire words.

Do you know what you say? How hard your winds blow?

Because I cannot choose a side. Because the only picture that comes to mind. Decades later. Decades gone. Is this little boy I never knew. Who'd never chosen a side. But ended up the one that died.

So no. Don't speak to me about your justifications. Don't outline your academic logics. Your politicized tinderboxes. I am deaf to all your words.

That little boy. See. He did get up. He followed me. Into my dreams. That's where my world collided with his. And rather than some dusty desert floor. He was pinned to the pavement. Under the lights. At a junction. At the bottom of Seven Hills.

Cars were stopt. Yet no one got out. The lights didn't turn either. Still no one got out.

The fire station's in reach at that junction. In case you didn't know. A church, too, just up the hill. Hidden behind some pines. Hidden and out of view. Still no one came out. To look. At. . .

This little boy. I walked up to him in my dreams. Shook his body and tried to wake him. Because that's what you do when you're a little boy.

However much the winds they pummel and pummel and pummel. I will shake and I will shake and I will shake their little bodies until they're revived.

Let me tell you. I'll end with this. That little boy. He never wakes. And everyone else at that junction, they never stir.

So I pray to this day that the God of the sparrows will someday bring us the cure and that the cure will be sideless so we will all not be flightless.

* * *

[Wat'ry panes]

I stared. Longingly. Out the pane of glass. It's smudged, the pane of glass. Streaked and dappled with rain droplets. A fisherman of sorts trawling the torrential rains. And having caught some dozens and more, I peered through each in turn hoping it would magnify my sights so I could see beyond the beech hedge that's grown a house's height.

That's the measure of a hedge, you see. In house lengths. From foundations to roof. From roots to where sparrows are borne on the winds. That's the measure of a hedge. The length between them: those sparrow wings and the dampproof course of bricks that lets no waters in.

But I ain't so sure they let no waters in.

I ain't so sure.

The soles of my feet are dry to the touch. But when I rub my eyes, they're not dry to the touch. That's the measure of a man, you see. The distance between his waters and dry land. The distance they course. Those wat'ry molecules ferrying the weight of all creation

the burden of all being

the joy of all being.

Between the burden and the joy, there are anxious lips parch't clean of any beloved's kiss. A heart at peace in one beat. And then, with drums and trumpets and all the thund'rous harm-wakening roars, there is war

there is war

there is war.

When I look't through the pane of glass. The rains had stopt. And the winds had transformed them droplets into string-bound constellations. I could ring the bells on each. Pulling the strings on each. Causing them to streak down the pane of glass and test the dampproof course. Because there's something in me telling me the soles of my feet aren't so dry as they were the other week.

So I took some flint from the front garden and started rubbing them down. Broke through my crackt heels. And flattened out the arch. Found I could pull back the skin. The layers

after layers of all the ages and miles I had walked them in. But even below that surface, I found no waters. Just bone and root.

And bone and root. And bone

and root.

God – tell me I’m missing something here. Because there’s water in my eyes. And dry land at my feet. But it feels like I’m swimming – God. Feels like I’m kicking out my limbs and flailing. Catastrophically failing. But no water gets splashed on the surface. No ocean spray. No tangible waves.

Tell me – God – tell me. What if I stopt all my kicking? Would these wat’ry panes go and leave so I really could feel dry land below my feet?

* * * * *



Gregory Kelly



Bags End Book #21: What is the Creature Carnival? Part 2

This story and more Bags End Books
can be found at:
www.scriptorpress.com/bags-end.pdf

Hello Cenacle readers,

Mah name is Algernon Beagle & I am the editor guy for Bags End News. Bags End News is a newspaper about mah homeland, a fantasyland called Bags End.

From the outside, Bags End looks like 3 brown-colored laundry bags piled up on a little chair in the corner of our friend Miss Chris's bedroom in Connecticut. And there is one newer Red Bag near them. Miss Chris is 5 years old & has a toy tall boy brother named Ramie, who is 17.

Inside, Bags End is sort of like an apartment building of levels but, cuz it is a fantasyland, nobody knows about its top or bottom. Most levels look like regular hallways, with doors to rooms & other places running up & down their lengths.

Each level is connected to the one above & the one below by ramps that are good for folks with legs & others without. Strangely, the other end of each level ends in a sudden edge, so be warned, should you come to visit.

The Cenacle editor guy, who is a cousin to my friend & Miss Chris's brother Ramie, invited me to share some of the stories from mah newspaper, now & again. He also helped with the typing & some of the spellings, to make this book presentable here. I love English but I still don't spell it too great.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy these stories from Bags End, a place near & dear to mah heartbone.

* * * * *

Creature Carnival in Bags End?

It's funny how sometimes a story can have a sort of strange trick inside of it. Nothing mean, but then it's different afterwards.

You see, Dear Readers, I had thoughted from when the strange Creature Carnival poster had arrived to mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch, in its glowing & hmming envelope, that I had to find mah way to get there, wherever there was. And along the way to get mah friend CC from the Creature Common there too.

4or I had traveled to the Creature Common more than once & picked up CC as a traveling companion & sort-of Creature advisor. Unlike everyone else in the Common, he doesn't live in the Carnival too. I guess that his pretty lady friend Miss Kassi doesn't live there either, but she didn't have the itch

Bags End News
 No. 406 November 5, 2016
 Editor: Algernon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunny
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
 Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Kreechur Karnivall inn Baggond?

Itz' any howe sumtinz a storey
 kann hav a sort of strang frikk
 insid ut itt. Nothing meen butt thenn
 itz' different attruwardz.

Ye seey, dear reedrs, I hadd
 thawted from werrn thee strang
 Kreechur Karnivall postz hadd arriv'd
 too mah kumrey drincher onn Milhse
 Porch, inn itz' going a hummish
 Envelope thatt I hadd too find
 apin waye too gett theer, weer evr
 theer wez. An allow thee waye too
 gett mah trend @

Kreechur Komon theer
 for I hadd trav
 Kreechur Komon mo

Bags End News
 No. 407 November 12, 2016
 Editor: Algernon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunny
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
 Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Bilding thee Kreechur Karnivell Grande Produkshun!

From wat vor old beegel boye
 jernalist pall Algernon Beegel
 hazz seen inn hiz' tims, wen
 yu gett a bunch of bigg guz inn
 a rum, mossfy pratts will
 brak out, & level guz besst bee
 takin' kuvr.

Butt guz from thee Kreechur
 Komon ar noth lik thatt & ween
 thay ar around, nobody ells
 iz eethr.

Itz' noth thatt eny wun
 ells iz badd prr less, an watevr
 guz ar wat thay ar, butt itz'
 mor lik thee Kreechur sort of a
 um, inspir eny wun too want too

to travel this time.

But what happened to me & CC when we finally traveled our way to the Creature Carnival was that we only found X the Carnival Master, & he explained that the Carnival was coming to us in Bags End.

And so here we were, then, back in Bags End, me & CC following his fellow Commonards X & Jumping Jacoby from mah Milne's Porch, into mah bedroom, & then following along behind mah highly dubious Bumping brother called Alexander Puppy.

While on the one paw, I was very excited that the Creature Carnival was arrived to Bags End, I guess I was worried whether mah brawling homeland folks would behave or not.

Well, I guessed I would see soon enough because Alex brung us right straight to Sheila Bunny's Throne Room. I wondered if that was the first place on her tour 4or them of Bags End. Probably.

Now I am not the most deeply imagining guy around, so I could not begin to wonder what we would find. But a deep breath, & a nod, & push through the door with the crown picture on it.

First of all, there was a weird sort of map to see. Maps are usually flat pieces of paper you look at on the floor or on a table. Simple, right?

No, not this one at all. It sort of floated in the air, like a Blondy, & it looked like it showed a bunch of places, but you saw the one that you were facing.

And the room was full of big guys & fellas, all the important ones too.

Sheila Bunny, of course, & she was ignoring me from the moment she saw X & CC & Jacoby.

But also Princess Crissy of Imagianna, who very much didn't ignore me with her friendly-4or-all-including-me smile.

I pointed to the Pine Cone Necklace around mah neck, her & Lori Bunny's gift to me 4or recording stories & interviews & stuff.

"Do you like it?" she asked, though too shy 4or her & me.

With so many here, I decided not to lecture her on shyness with dear friends. So I nodded & said, "It's really good, Crissy. I like it a lot." She smiled like a local happy star.

Just then Lori Bunny herself came up to me & I remembered the reporter's fedorah on mah head.

She started explaining the weird map even be4ore I could ask. In truth, she was who tolded me it was a map.

"It shows all of our local Neighbors. Bags End, Imagianna, the White Woods, Dreamland, the Bunny Pillow Farm, & the Creature Common. You rotate it with your paw to see each one," Lori explained as she adjusted her little smartguy spectacles.

Hmm. That's when I noticed Betsy Bunny Pillow & that tricky-but-OK guy Benny Big Dreams. Like I said, lotta big guys here.

So I thinked my question best I could. "But why, Lori? Why all this?" I asked.

"Because, Beagle," said Sheila, both annoyed & explaining, "I convinced X that we want to share the Carnival with all of our local Neighbors."

X nodded, smiling. He is a nicely scarved white-furred Bear Creature, with a handsome black hat too. He said, "And Princess Crissy made us all this map so we could plan it out together."

Crissy smiled, tricky & pleased. I could see how she could come up with this strange & wonderful idear.

"OK, then. How do we do all the Neighbors?" I asked. "1 at a time?"

"That's what we were still deciding, Algernon," Crissy said, still

smiling.

I looked at X, who had his paw on his chin like he had a good thought making itself right now. A familiar move among his Creature folks.

"What is it, X?" whisper-asked Betsy Bunny Pillow, who had been quiet until now. I think she respects Creatures because Dorris is one of them, & her Partner Pillows, & they are important Pillows, I guess.

X said, "We have an event that goes on in the White Woods every turn of the calendar. 2 really. The Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock."

What was strange, Dear Readers, was that when he said those words I sorta stumbled in mah mind over the word "Rutabaga."

It was like some kind of a very important word to me, but that I had 4orgottted all about. And was now sorta remembering. But what did it mean? I thought. Twice again. Then shooked mah head. Nothing.

"Algernon, are you OK?" asked Crissy, smiling her no-fooling-smile at me.

I nodded because it would sound silly to be felled low by a strange word. Like fleeing a poster. Not even the likes of me would do it.

X talked more. "So our friends the Royal Thumbs were going to turn Fleastock this year into a class in how to make a Grand Production, like they do."

Everyone nodded & was impressed by this. I agreed.

"And then they decided it would be a Grand Production about the Creature Carnival," he said some more.

More nods & general being impressed sounds. I agreed more!

"And now it turns out that this Grand Production will be done by all the local Neighbors!" said someones just arrived to this Throne Room.

Dressed in their royal crowns & capes, it was none other than those handsome Royal Thumbs!

Wow, Dear Readers!

Just wow . . .

* * * * *

Building the Creature Carnival Grand Production!

From what your old beagleboy journalist pal Algernon Beagle has seen in his days, when you get a bunch of big guys in a room, mostly brawls will break out, & so little guys best be taking cover.

But guys from the Creature Common are not like that, & when they are around, nobody else is either.

It's not that everyone else is bad or less or whatever, guys are what they are, but it's more like Creatures sort of, um, inspire everyone to want to work together.

I have rited often about their Grand Productions, & everyone agrees they are the finest of fine entertainers.

Now the creators of those Grand Productions, the Royal Thumbs, had invited all of us Neighbors to join together in the making of their newest Grand Production about the Creature Carnival.

And it looked like all the big guys you could ask 4or were ready to help. Sheila Bunny's Throne Room was chock full of Sheila, Princess Crissy of Imagianna, Betsy Bunny Pillow of, I guess mostly now, the Dream Pillow Farm, Benny Big Dreams that tricky oneironautical fellow of Dreamland, & X & Jacoby & CC of Creature Common. That was 5 of the local Neighbors anyway.

"What about the, um, White Woods?" I asked, like I was just one of the

rest & belonged here, full of talkings & idears.

Sheila disagreed. She pointed her paw at me like surely it was time 4or me to be going. I was ready to turn tail, be4ore having it turned 4or me, when Crissy said, "Wait, Algernon! Look on your nose!"

"Mah nozebone?" Since it's long, I could see some of it.

I looked closer & closer, & could maybe see what looked like the tiniest little fellas ever!

"Those are Thought Fleas," explained X nicely to me.

I tried not to panic. "Do they bite?" I remembered them a little from another Grand Production, but them suddenly on mah nozebone spooked me good.

"No!" said X, smiling me kindly. "We just call them that because they are tiny, & they can help with sad or troubling thoughts."

"O," I calmed.

"And they live in the White Woods," he said more.

O. "OK," I said, & then remembered mah alleged famous manners. "Hi, little Fleas. I am glad you don't bite. And you are officially welcomed onto mah nozebone. I remember your per4orming talents well."

These little guys seemed to wave at me in a nice way, & so I guessed I could be their safe conveyance through Bags End.

I took mah chances here, but nodded & talked on. "It's a great idear to have all us Neighbors help with this, um, Fleastock? Wait! These little guys?"

Everyone nodded.

Hmm. I stumbled on with mah question. "Well, it's just that each place is different from you Creatures & your many talents. Maybe we should find a way to create a Grand Production like that?" I finished but felt like mah steam had long run out.

There was quiet 4or a minute. I figgered it was just to decide who wanted to mock me first & most, & I betted Sheila Bunny's hometown mockings would win out.

But when she talked, it was instead to shock & say, "Yes, Beagle. Good idear."

Then everyone talked, & no mock in any of it.

I just listened 4or awhile, because there was enough smart big guys here to figger this out good.

Soon they were all gathered around Crissy's Floating Map of all of the local Neighbors.

The Royal Thumbs then said the most important thing, though I still don't know how they talk, being fingers & all.

"To make each Neighbor's act in the Grand Production, we could travel from one to the next doing our teaching & getting their per4ormers ready & rehearsed."

Everyone nodded & smiled & agreed on this.

"And perhaps Algernon Beagle can come with you to rite about it all?" asked X, & only because he is one of those nice Creature guys did I believe he wasn't joking a whole lot.

"And so he can travel with the Thought Fleas who can help with the setting up work & getting everything ready?" asked Crissy, but I could not figger out how these words matched up to the tiny little crowds on mah nozebone.

But nobody else thought this was nothing but a good idear.

"And they will also keep some Thought Fleas attending to the Rutabagas of course," whispered Betsy Bunny Pillow, & I twice marveled at her knowing & caring about anyone but herself, & that strange word "Rutabaga" again.



"Algernon?" said Crissy, suddenly up close & smiling me.
 I shook mah head clear, & a question popped out mah mouth promptly.
 "I would be happy to travel with these nice little Thought Fleas, but I can't talk to them. Can you big guys help?" I asked somewhat 4orlornly.
 No need to 4orlorn though. Not with dear friend Crissy in the crowd.
 "Well, it was Benny's bright idear," she said, & pointed to mah Pine Cone Necklace.
 I almost 4orgot it was there.
 "I like this Necklace a lot, but how can it help?" I asked.
 "Well, now it's a microphone that hears & tells even the little voices of the Thought Fleas," Crissy said, full of her tricky smile magicks.
 "Hello, Algernon Beagle! We are so happy to meet you up close, & work with you on the Fleastock Grand Production!" said what sounded like a whole passel of little voices close to mah face.
 "O! Hi, little guys! Nice to meet you too!" I said friendly.
 So it seemed like it was settled. I tolded the Royal Thumbs & the tiny Thought Fleas that I had to get mahself ready 4or our trip to all of the Neighbors, & they should come to Milne's Porch in a few days to get going.
 Wow, what great things can sometimes happen when big guys get together & cooperate!

* * * * *

Traveling with the Royal Thumbs & Thought Fleas!

As much as I love mah native homeland called Bags End, & all of its nice & weird com4orts, I am lucky too as a beagleboy journalist to have good reason to travel to other places to get good stories 4or mah beloved newspaper.

And this time around, I was lucky to be traveling with new friends too. There was the Royal Thumbs, whose Grand Productions are famous both near & far. I noticed that they usually kept that nice CC guy nearby. He seemed to be agreeable to serving their needs, like a sort of traveling servant.

The other friends were a group I had just met, called Thought Fleas, riding tiny & numberless on mah very own nozebone!

But not yet. Be4ore we began our Fleastock training tour of all of the local Neighbors, I asked 4or a little time to get ready.

I can't say I knew what that meant really. I just wanted a little time to think mah own thoughts, apart from all the big guys.

So I come to mah favorite thinking-&-not-thinking-sometimes-too place, which mah loyal Dear Readers will know is Milne's Porch of course.

I sat a long time in mah comfy armchair. I tried something mah good friend & newspaper partner Lori Bunny tolded me about.

"When you're trying to figger on something, Algernon," she said, adjusting her smartguy spectacles, "try not thinking at first & see what happens."

So I did, & I found out I am really good at not-thinking. I seemed to go on & on, not-thinking, till I panicked that I couldn't stop.

Then I kind of took a few deep breaths, & relaxed. And again. Still not quite enough, so I tried something else. I began to hmmm like Creatures do.

This helped even more because it seems like hmmming is something other than either thinking or not-thinking. It's like it clears the way ahead in your mind 4or whatever you want to do.

I hmmmd with mah cracked beagle voice 4or probably a very long time,

until the way in mah mind opened up, & I saw what I had never quite see'd be4ore.

These Grand Productions are like mah newspaper! I know it seems strange, but let me explain.

The Royal Thumbs use their stories, & their per4ormers, & their stages, & maybe a little bit of press-digit-ation, to put on their Grand Productions.

Me & mah partner Lori Bunny tell stories in mah newspaper, but use mah words to produce our issues.

With the Grand Production, you are sitting in your seat & watching. With mah newspaper, you are sitting in your seat & reading. Sort of like a same & different thing both.

I had rited about the Grand Productions a lot be4ore, but never about how they were made. I guess it was new & exciting to do. But maybe I felt a little bit unsure of it all too.

Which is why, Dear Readers, I have brung back one of mah newspaper's oldest & most beloved features.

* * * * *

Interview with the Royal Thumbs!

I will say to begin that this interview took place in mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch. And the Thumbs' servant CC was there, in case he was needed. The Thumbs very 4ormally weared their crowns & capes, but were very friendly otherwise.

AB - Hello, Royal Thumbs!

RT - Hello, Algernon Beagle! We always like reading your fine newspaper, or hearing you read it on the radio DJ's guy's show.

AB - O, thanks, guys! I think your Grand Productions are just like their name. Grand, I mean.

RT - Thank you!

AB - But it's a new thing to be teaching how you work?

RT - Yes, we can't wait!

AB - And to be making the Grand Production with all of our local Neighbors?

RT - We think the Creature Carnival story needs everyone.

AB - Why is that?

RT - The Creature Carnival is different with each place it goes to. So we want to show that.

AB - Even Bags End? Cuz I don't think the Carnival has ever been here?

RT - Well, you have your own entertainers here.

AB - That's true.

RT - We are glad you are coming, along with our friends the Thought Fleas.

AB - O, yah, I meant to ask. Thought Fleas, are you still on mah nozebone?

TF - Yes! Hi, Algernon Beagle!

AB - Hi! What I don't understand is how these tiny little guys are going to help?

RT - Well, what we learned when we decided to do this Grand Production 4or Fleastock is that the Thought Fleas can do all sorts of helpful things when asked.

AB - Like what?

TF - You will see soon, Algernon Beagle!

Well, I guessed that was good enough to go with. I thanked the Royal Thumbs, & they climbed with CC back to Bags End. I thanked the Thought Fleas, & they sort of cheered me, & I guessed left too.

Now I was once again by mahself in mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch. I felt more ready now since I had sat hmmming & thinking things over, & also with mah interview. I thought the Royal Thumbs had some good idears about this Grand Production, & how they wanted to do it.

I was dozing peaceably when there was a polite tap at mah Porch's window.

It was mah dear friend & newspaper partner Lori Bunny. I waved her on in to come & sit with me.

We sat, quiet good friends 4or awhile. Then she talked.

"Are you excited?"

"I think so."

"You're not sure?"

"I just want to rite a good story."

"You will. You're always a good story riter."

"O! Um. O yah. Thanks."

"Sure thing, Boss," & then she gave me a little kiss on mah furry cheekbone, & climbed back into Bags End.

Alone again. But OK. I was gonna make sure mah friends the Royal Thumbs got the best story I could do. I promised.

* * * * *

Creasure Carnival Begins Tour in Bags End!

This is such a, um, Grand Production to tell of, Dear Readers, that I am going to have to tell it a little tricky.

Now most know that telling tricky is not mah chosen way. Straight & true telling works best 4or mah simple brainbone. And I really like it best most of the time.

But along mah travels with the Royal Thumbs, & their traveling servant CC, plus the countless numbers of friendly & tiny Thought Fleas on mah nozebone, I realized that I had to think hard & dig around to get this story tolded right.

And that's when I figgered out I had to go through true this time to get to straight. I hope it all makes more sense as you read on.

The Creature Carnival guys were all come to Bags End, & I guess that is Thing #1 to tell. You might ask: where? And that would be a good question.

And the answer kind of shocked me. I will delay mah reveal no longer. It was the Red Bag!

You might ask next: why not regular Bags End? Another good question, fella. So I will rite down here what the Royal Thumbs tolded me.

"All of the local Neighbors have the Red Bag, so it connects us all in a simple way," they said, somehow.

I nodded, even tho I had never seen nothing simple about the Red Bag. Then they invited me to come see how things set up there.

So we traveled from where we were talking on Milne's Porch, on the day I'd said 4or us to start our travels together, with the Thought Fleas safely riding on mah nozebone. They were quiet like Creatures get, but I figgered they were watching close, like Creatures also do. The Thumbs led the way with CC their traveling servant.

And there was the Red Door, along a hallway of otherwise usual doors.

Bags End News
 No. 408 November 19, 2016
 Editor: Aigeehon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunnig
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold People
 Written Down By: Leri Bunnig

 Traveling with thee Royal Thumz
 & Thawt Fleez

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Bags End News
 No. 409 November 26, 2016
 Editor: Aigeehon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunnig
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold People
 Written Down By: Leri Bunnig

Kreetchur Karnivell Beginz
 Turr umm Bagzend!

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Bags End News
 No. 410 December 3, 2016
 Editor: Aigeehon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunnig
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold People
 Written Down by: Leri Bunnig
 Apprentice: Willy Froggy

Kreetchur Karniv Travels
 Dreamlandd too thee Great Kaveen!

 Wellikum too AK2 of this
 Royell Thumz Grande Prujuk
 Shum, deer reederz! I knowe
 itz probabley spokkin too reed
 thatt butt I all soundre thatt
 mozt of yu hav probabley traveled
 too AK1 I bly nowe. I think it
 iz still opm too, um, exxperiens?
 Sims it meenz going thropo yar
 landz. Redd Expe too gett too
 thee Redd Expe um Prujuk way
 thee Kreetchur Karnivell iz sent
 ut I gess headkumsteo in nowe.
 An ref vor inn coz arr
 windland arr Nevr, and ennwinn

And through it, the Red Bag. But boy! Was it all changed!

No more red-colored hallway that ended in the door to that strange Tangled Gate.

Instead, it looked like the place CC & me had found by his tricks & ritings somewhere far away! There were tents & trailers, & many many Creatures going here & there at their tasks.

"Wow!" I said. "How did you do all this here?"

The Thumbs said, "This was all built by the Thought Fleas. We tolded them the Carnival needed to set up a place to work from. This is where the Grand Production begins too. We want the audience to see all about how the Carnival works."

"Wow," I said again, like twice was smarter.

The Thumbs said more, "All the local Neighbors will come here through their Red Bag, & walk around to visit. It's Act 1, Algernon. Go ahead. You are first."

"Can I still be mah beagleboy journalist self & ask questions?" I asked hopefully.

The Thumbs laughed. I don't know how. "Of course!"

I nodded happy. "Hey, Thought Fleas? I have a question."

"Yes, Algernon Beagle?" their tiny voices were good to hear through mah Pine Cone Necklace, now a microphone as well as a recorder. Crissy magick, of course.

"How did you guys do all this?" I pointed around me to all the Carnival structures.

"Big thoughts!" they all yelled together. I waited 4or more, but they were quiet again. Hmm.

So I walked around as first audience member of Act 1, & will try to tell what I saw. I hope all of you go too.

It was like what CC & I had see'd in that other place. But also a lotta Creatures. As I walked among the tents & booths & all, I met & talked to many a nice Creature.

There was this little friendly & big smiling Froggy guy. We had a nice chat.

"You're the famous Algernon Beagle!"

"O! shucks! Yes, I mean."

"I am a reporter too."

"Really?"

"They call me the Fine Friendly Freckled Froggily Frocked Froggy Fellow!"

"Wow!"

"But you can call me Willy Nilly."

"O. OK. What do you report on?"

"Well, I just rite little notes & sometimes show them around."

"You don't got a newspaper?"

Willy Nilly shooked his head even tho he kept smiling.

I decided right there. "I had a Apprentice Reporter once. It was fun, weirdly. Would you like to try?"

That made Willy Nilly smile even wider, if that was possible. "Just like Boop was?"

I nodded & smiled.

I asked CC to carry Willy Nilly along, & he agreed. He even had a useful pocket in his raggedy green plaid jacket to offer, 4or Willy Nilly to perch high out of & safely watch from.

"Who should I talk to next, Apprentice?" I asked.

"There are so many to meet, but let's go to the River, & see the Duckees & their Water Carnival!" Willy said, smiling from pocket.

So we all walked quite a ways along until we came to a real River. Strange to say, but it was there for sure.

And there was a group of handsome Duckees doing their clever water tricks. Their leader was a friendly yellow Duckee named Amos who kind of reminds me of Threshold, who is the Lead Lead Creature. He was sort of directing the performance.

There was KeeWee Duckee, who wore a big fun long red hat, & somehow got the other Duckees up in air, & I swear it looked like she was juggling 5 or 6 of them in a crazy high splashing formation!

Then I saw how water spouted from the River, & all the Duckees would leap up high on these spouts, & then sort of jump from one to another in strange patterns, & never crash!

I was just amazed & wanted to see more & talk to everyone, but Willy Nilly said X would enjoy talking to us now.

Mah new Apprentice Reporter was right too. Always go first to see the head guy or, um, Bear, as it may be. Maybe he would even walk around with us too, if we were lucky.

"Lead on, Apprentice!" I said, hoping no mock coming.

But Willy Nilly just smiled his big smile & pointed CC the way.

* * * * *

Creature Carnival Travels Dreamland to the Great Cavern!

Welcome to Act 2 of this Royal Thumbs' Grand Production, Dear Readers! I know it's probably shocking to read that, but I also hope that most of you have probably traveled to Act 1 by now. I think it is open to, um, experience? Since it means going through your land's Red Bag to get to the Red Bag in Bags End, where the Creature Carnival is sort of, I guess, headquartered right now.

And if you're in Oz or Wonderland or Neverland, or one of the other more famous, but still friendly to Bags End, distant fantasyland Neighbors, but still with no Red Bag to call your own, let me & Princess Crissy know & we will get you here, promise.

Also, the Royal Thumbs told me the name of this Grand Production. Though fingers, who seem to rely upon their servant CC to travel, they said, "It's called, 'Welcome to X's Carnival of Mysteries & Wonders!'"

I told those Thumbs I liked this title cuz I like titles that tell first what's to come.

Anyway, it seemed like me & mah new Apprentice Reporter Willy Nilly were getting to come along first with the travels & acts of this Grand Production. This is how we traveled from Act 1 to Act 2.

After seeing those amazing Duckees perform on the River, Willy Nilly said we should go to see X the Carnival Master. He had brought CC & me from where we had gone searching for the Carnival, when we thought the poster that I had received to mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch was a come-to-us invitation, not a we're-coming-to-you kind. Now he was back in his own white trailer with the "X" over the door.

So me with the Thought Fleas on mah nozebone, & CC with the Royal Thumbs & Willy Nilly, went along together. We passed by a friendly-looking yellow Lion Creature with an orange mane & a handsome freckle on his face, who made me think of mah Bags End kinsfolk Leona Lion.

And there was that bloo-&-pink fella calld Bellla who I nowed was a special friend of Crissy's from back when, & a really good per4ormer from past Grand Productions. I saw her at a table doing some strange tricks with some playing cards. She smiled her tricky smile at me, & pointed to mah headbone. I found a tall hat of her cards on me, just like that! Then she tricky smiled again & poof! It was gone!

X's trailer door was open, so we just clambered up the stairs & went in. "Hello again, my friends!" he said, all happy. "Did you enjoy Act 1? Are you ready 4or Act 2?"

We all nodded much to liking Act 1, & agreed we were ready 4or more. So we followed X right out of his trailer again to I guessed where Act 2 was.

We passed a nice pink-&-white Elafink Creature, tending all these pretty Pine Cones, much bigger than mah own Pine Cone Necklace, & lots of other pretty plants.

And also these white Polar Bear & red-&-white Penguin Creatures, both wearing warm scarves like X's, & per4orming really good dancings on this stage of ice! Really! You will see! Danced & slided all over!

Finally, come to a big white tent, much taller than all the others, & a kind of Gate in front of it, almost like that mysterious Tangled Gate. X led us right through the Gate & into the big tent.

What we found was totally not what I expected to see. I blinked once, twice, twice again. But yes.

We were in a bedroom, which I guessed was people-folks sized, because the bed was about right 4or CC.

Standing by this bed was a familiar figger. Tall, but not quite as tall as CC, muscled strong & bald head & earrings & picture tattoos on him. It was Benny Big Dreams!

He was smiling nicely & almost not ruffian guy tricky, at least 4or him. He pulled back the covers, & sort of motioned CC & me & our smaller friends into the bed.

I almost hesitated, but CC didn't. "They built this bed special? The Thought Fleas?" he asked Benny.

Benny nodded, smiling again. "Bigger or smaller, depending on size. Everyone gets a comfy ride to Dreamland!"

Be4ore I could ask "how?" the Thought Fleas piped up on mah Pine Cone Necklace microphone, "Big & little thoughts, Algernon Beagle!"

O. O! This was Benny's Red Bag, the one he made 4or Dreamland after reading about Red Bags in Crissy's storybook.

X spoke up next to me. "Act 2 this way!"

And so me & CC with the Royal Thumbs & Willy Nilly & those amazing Thought Fleas all let Benny tuck us into bed, & the lights got low, & I could just hear Benny's & X's voices say together, "On . . . with . . . the . . . Show!"

I don't know how long it lasted, but when I waked up & opened mah eyes again, we weren't in a little bedroom no more. It was more like what I thought we would come to when we entered that, um, this? tent.

A big grassy field with, I guessed, White Woods all around the edge. And what looked like a kind of stage at one end.

And CC with me, the Royal Thumbs & Willy Nilly too of course, but twice blink & I saw we were surrounded by these many guys about me-sized. Furry guys with big eyes, long antennars, & tails too. Dressed sorta raggedy like CC's style.

"Hello, Algernon Beagle!" They all shouted me with their nice & friendly & not-too-loud voices.



"Um. Thought Fleas?" I asked. They all kind of nodded as a bunch. Wow, Dear Readers!

Then they all turned toward the stage & we all saw, I swear, um, 6 Islands? I nudge CC & he counted them twice 4or me, to be sure.

OK, I remember about them from be4ore, but not too much. They were, um, clustered close, & it's super crazy but they reminded me of being amongst those nice Creatures when they are napping together in their Common.

But then from the sky came falling & splashing in the waters something, or more than one, I don't know, but the 6 Islands suddenly spooked like startled Creatures, & all but 1 fled far away!

Now there was just 1 Island, & CC suddenly got up from where we were sitting, & started walking toward the stage.

"Hurry, Algernon Beagle!" all the Thought Fleas said around me. "Act 3 is waiting 4or you up there!"

I hurried!



To be continued in Cenacle | 124 | Winter 2024!

* * * * *



Abandon View







Nathan D. Horowitz

Waiting for the Ranchera to Poza Honda

[Travel Journal]

In the jungle town of Shushufindi, while I was waiting for the ranchera to Poza Honda, an open-sided bus that kept not appearing, I was joined at a café by Lucho Payaguaje, whom I knew from the village of San Pablo. I ordered avocado smoothies for us, and we began to chat, or *charlar*, to use the Spanish term.

As usual, I didn't mention Serafín Piaguaje, the educator, the intellectual, the first Secoya who had learned to read and write, whom I admired, and who had eloped with Lucho's wife; and, for a change, Lucho didn't ask me for money for his kids' education. We had a lively chat, or *charla*, about local matters in San Pablo, and events on the street before us in Sushufindi.

Most of the way through the cool, jade-green sweetness that was our avocado smoothies, we saw an elderly indigenous man walking briskly down the street.

Barefoot, he wore a blue tunic and a simple curved band of wood for a crown. He had thin sticks through his earlobes and, as was popular in his generation, some kind of fragrant plants stuck under woven cotton bands on his upper arms.

I had seen this elder around Shushifindi before. He stood out because everyone else was dressed in Western garb.

I asked Lucho, "Do you know him?"

Lucho said, "He's a Siona. His name is Cou. That means 'Turtle.'"

Cou passed by, dignified, self-possessed.

When he was out of sight, Lucho added, "He's the one people say killed Mecías Ocoquaje with witchcraft."

Mecías Ocoquaje. The Siona guy that Rufino told me about.

Rufino said Mecías had argued with his brother-in-law about the woman they had in common, sister of one, wife of the other.

The brother-in-law, Rufino said, had blown on Mecías, shooting witchcraft darts into him, saying, "Now you're going to die."

Mecías instantly fell ill. He swelled up and became covered in spots. Within three days, he was dead.

Rufino had mentioned Mecías to me because he had seen a photo of the Siona on the cover of my copy of the book *The Yagé Drinker*.

Even though the book wasn't about Mecías in particular, it was about *yagé* drinking, and an old photo of Mecías from 1969 had been used. A German photographer had taken the shot during a ceremony.

The face in the photo, red with achiote face paint and ember light, is puffing a hand-rolled cigar and contemplating the viewer through its smoke with candor and inspiration. I had enjoyed the drinker's vibe without knowing who he was.

Now, twenty-seven years after the photo was taken, Rufino told me the man had been murdered. A year after that, Lucho was pointing out to me the murderer.

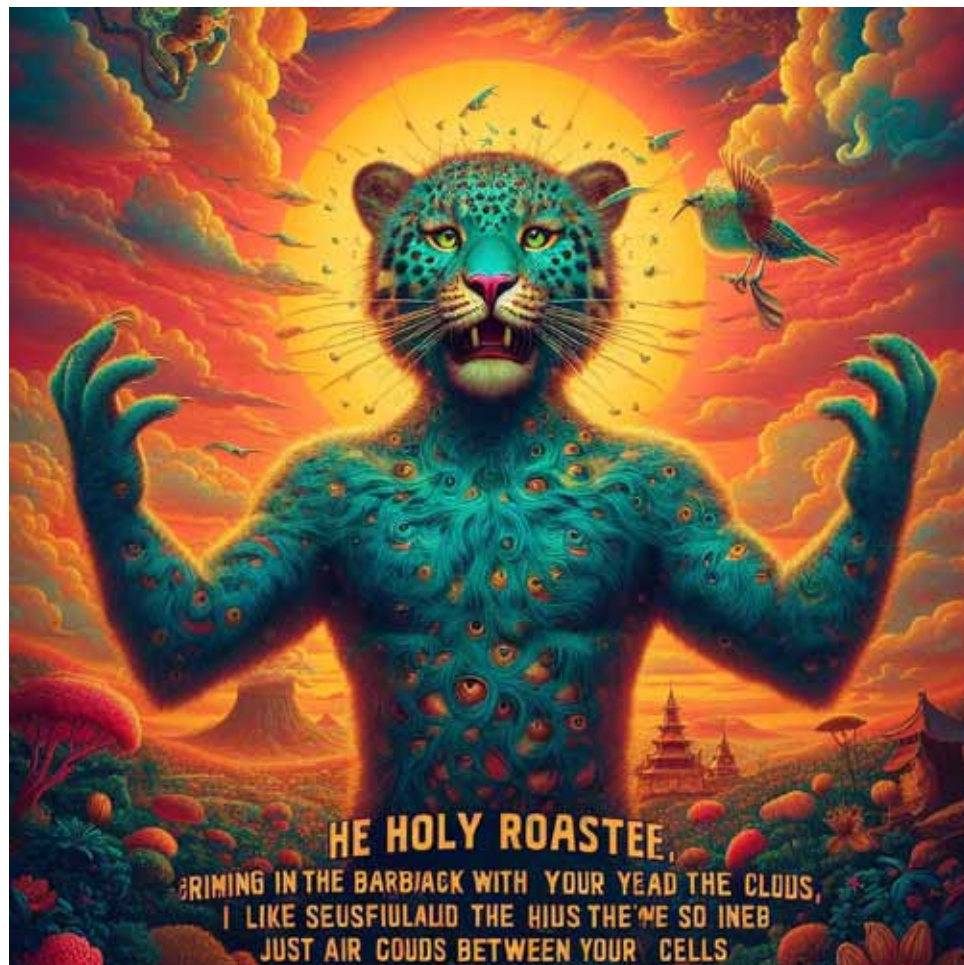
I said, “Rufino told me about that. He said Mecias’s brother-in-law blew on him, and told him he was going to die.”

“I heard that, too,” said Lucho. “But I don’t believe it. That’s just talk.”

We finished our avocado smoothies and Lucho left, leaving me pondering families and magical darts, and wondering for the seven thousandth time if magic were real.

And I kept on waiting for the ranchera to Poza Honda, which kept on not appearing.

* * * * *



Nathan D. Horowitz



Colin James

An Allesverloren Christmas

If you do get it together
to venture out to the shops
for your bread, cheese and tea,
could you dress really disheveled?

You know, unshaven with
a scary-not-with-it look
staring from your half-open eyes.

A bathrobe would be great,
but that's probably asking too much.
Odd bedroom slippers should round you off.
A shuffling walk couldn't hurt
your sense of purpose.

If you recall, this was your attire
when we first met. Unsightly,
except you were wearing brogues.

* * *

15 Illuminated Seesaws

I have an acquaintance
who has a friend who has
devised these ingenious little nets
for catching poems,
usually on a summer night,
but occasionally during
blustery winter gales.

She stores them in thick books,
weighted to keep the edges crisp.
I inquired about nabbing a few
but was told, "No!"

There is a matter of rights,
also bringing out the correct voice
or attempting to. So I've stopped
loitering in her garden,
inappropriately wearing overalls,
when shorts would do.

Indiscreetly escorted off the grounds,
all sweaty, effective as ridicule.

* * *

Prepubescent Poetry Reading, 1956

The eyes became largely small slits.
Marijuana exerted its precedence,
wafting through the suddenly patient hall.

Those heads, too fragile to walk upon,
bearded tops and bearded bottoms,
slowed their front row aspirin-sized fastballs.

The floor was wet with hopelessness,
and asylum-seeking Czechs.
Latecomers recognized them, waving joyfully,
too serious to be relevant.

Buy this book and read it to your pet ostrich.
Once trapped in a bathroom with one,
I couldn't help but admire his pecker,
puffy feathers concealing nervousness.

* * *

A Reactionary Behaviorist's Apprehension

The men ignoring my tourniquet,
an improvised elastic band wrapped
around a beak-like nose twenty-fold,
are searching the thick brush
hedges that line The Asylum's grounds.

My head feels like glass after
a misrepresentative water reference.
Plastic ice would require a different session.

They are looking for my friend who
took issue with a too-conspicuous victory
during exciting game room activities.

The grounds are extensive and include
many ideal places to hide.
I know of one tree, an old oak,
with a concealed door in its trunk.
Graduated steps lead down to tunnels,
extending well beyond nearby towns.

Staff had willingly turned a blind eye,
requiring squatting submissively until
that feeling of cramped euphoria expands
outward like a series of debilitating shocks.

The men are already revising their maps,
since my friend has taken with him a suave
spare suit, a month's supply of cordials,
and two very dark almost black dress shoes.

* * * * *

Translated by Husain Haddawy

The Story of Sindbad the Sailor

from The Arabian Nights
[Classic Fiction]

The Seventh Voyage of Sindbad

Fellows, after I returned from my sixth voyage, I resumed my former way of life, and continued to lead a life of contentment and happiness, indulging day and night in play, diversion, and pleasure, having secured great gains and profits, until I began to long again to sail the seas, associate with fellow merchants, see foreign countries, and hear new things.

I made my resolve and, packing up a quantity of precious goods suited to a sea voyage, carried them from Baghdad to Basra, where I found a ship ready to set sail, with a group of prominent merchants. I embarked with them, and we became friends, as we sailed with a fair wind in peace and good health, until we passed by a city called the City of China and, while we were in the utmost joy and happiness, talking among ourselves about travel and commerce, a violent head wind blew suddenly, and a heavy rain began to fall on us, until we and our bales were drenched.

So we covered the bales with felt and canvas, fearing that the goods would be spoiled by the rain, and began to pray and implore God the Almighty to deliver us from the peril we were in.

Then the captain, girding his waist and tucking up his clothes, climbed up the mast and began to look to the right and left.

Then he looked at the people in the ship, and began to slap his face and pluck his beard.

We asked him, "Captain, what is the matter?"

And he said, "Implore the Almighty God for deliverance from the peril we are in, and weep for yourselves, and bid each other farewell, for the wind has prevailed against us and driven us into the farthest of the seas of the world."

He then descended from the mast, opened a chest, and took out of it a cotton bag. Then he untied the bag, took out of it some dust, like ashes, wetted it with water and, waiting a little, smelled it. Then he took out of the chest a small book and began to read in it.

Then he said to us, "Passengers, in this book there is an amazing statement that whoever comes to this place will never leave it safely, and will surely perish, for this region is called the Province of the Kings, and in it is the tomb of our Lord Solomon, the son of David (peace be on him), and there are huge, horrible-looking whales, and whenever a ship enters this region, one of them rises from the sea and swallows it with everything in it."

When we heard the captain's explanation, we were dumbfounded, and hardly had he finished his words when the ship suddenly began to rise out of the water and drop again, and we heard a great cry, like a peel of thunder, at which we were struck almost dead with terror, sure of our destruction.

Suddenly we saw a whale heading for the boat, like a towering mountain, and we were terrified, and wept bitterly for ourselves and prepared for death. We kept looking at that whale, marveling at its terrible shape, when suddenly another whale, the most huge and most terrible we had ever seen, approached us, and while we bade each other farewell and wept for ourselves, a third whale, even greater than the other two, approached, and we were stupefied and driven mad with terror.

Then the three whales began to circle the ship, and the third whale lunged at the ship to



“A Series of Seventy Original Illustrations to Captain Sir R. F. Burton’s ‘Arabian Nights’ and a Portrait of Captain Sir Richard. Francis Burton,” no. 32, specially painted by Albert Letchford. London: H.S. Nichols Ltd., 1897.

swallow it, when suddenly a violent gust of wind blew, and the ship rose and fell on a massive reef, breaking in pieces, and all the merchants, and the other passengers, and the bales sank in the sea.

I took off all my clothes, except for a shirt, and swam until I caught a plank of wood from the ship, and hung on to it. Then I got on it and held on to it, while the wind and the waves toyed with me on the surface of the water, carrying me up and down. I was in the worst of plights, with fear and distress and hunger and thirst.

I blamed myself for what I had done, and for incurring more hardships, after a life of ease, and said to myself, "O Sindbad the Sailor, you don't learn, for every time you suffer hardships and weariness, yet you don't repent and renounce travel in the sea, and when you renounce, you lie to yourself. I deserve my plight, which had been decreed by God the Almighty to cure me of my greed, which is the root of all my suffering, for I have abundant wealth."

I returned to my reason and said to myself, "In this voyage, I repent to the Almighty God with a sincere repentance, and I will never again embark on travel, nor mention it, nor even think of it, for the rest of my life." I continued to implore the Almighty God, and to weep, recalling my former days of play and pleasure and cheer and contentment and happiness.

I continued in this condition for a whole day and a second, at the end of which I came to a large island abounding in trees and streams. I landed, and ate of the fruits of those trees, and drank of the waters of those streams, until I felt refreshed, and regained my strength, and recovered my spirit.

Then I walked in the island, and found on the other side a great river of sweet water, running with a strong current, and I remembered the raft I had made last time, and said to myself, "I must make me a raft like that one; perhaps I will get out of here. If I get out safely, I will have my wish, and vow to the Almighty God to foreswear travel, and if I perish, I will find rest from toil and misery."

Then I gathered many pieces of wood from the trees, which were of the finest sandalwood, the like of which does not exist anywhere else, although I did not know it at the time. Then I found a way to twist grasses and twigs into a kind of rope, with which I bound the raft, saying to myself, "If I escape safely, it will be by the grace of God."

Then I got on the raft and proceeded along the river, leaving that part of the island behind. I lay on the raft for three days. I did not eat, but I drank from the water of the river, to quench my thirst, until I was giddy like a young bird from extreme weariness, hunger, and fear.

At the end of this time, the raft brought me to a high mountain, beneath which ran the river. When I saw this, I was frightened, recalling what I had suffered from the narrowness of that other stream during my preceding voyage. I tried to stop the raft, and get off on the side of the mountain, but the current overpowered me, and drew the raft, with me on it, beneath the mountain.

I was sure that I would perish and said, "There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent" but, after a short distance, the raft emerged in a wide space, a great valley, through which the river roared with a noise like thunder, and ran with a swiftness like that of the wind. I held on to the raft, for fear of falling, while the waves tossed it to the right and left in the middle of the river.

The raft continued to descend with the current, along the valley, while I was unable to stop or steer it toward the bank, until it brought me to a large, well-built, and populous city. When the people saw me on the raft, descending in the middle of the river with the current, they cast a net and ropes on the raft and drew it ashore.

I fell among them like a dead man, from extreme hunger, lack of sleep, and fear. Soon there approached me from among the people a venerable old man, who welcomed me and threw over me an abundance of handsome clothes, which I put on to make myself decent. Then he took me to the bath, and brought me refreshing cordials and sweet perfumes.

After the bath, he took me to his house, and his family received me joyfully. Then he seated me in a pleasant place and prepared sumptuous food for me, and I ate my fill and thanked the Almighty God for my safety. Then his pages brought me hot water, with which I washed my hands, and his maids

brought me silk towels, with which I dried them and wiped my mouth.

Then he prepared for me a private apartment in a part of his house, and charged his pages and maids to wait on me and fulfill my needs, and they served me attentively. I stayed in the guest apartment for three days, enjoying delicious food and drink and sweet scents, until my fear subsided, my energy returned, and I felt at ease.

On the fourth day, the old man came to me and said, "Son, we have enjoyed your company, and God be praised for your safety. Would you like now to go down with me to the bank of the river and sell your goods in the market? Perhaps with the money you get, you will buy something with which to traffic."

I remained silent for a while, thinking to myself, "What goods do I have, and what does he mean?"

He added, "Son, don't worry and don't think too much about it. Let us go to the market, and if we find anyone who will offer a price that will content you, I will receive the money for you, and if we don't, I will keep them for you in my storerooms until the days of buying and selling arrive."

I thought about it and said to myself, "Let me do what he asks and see what these goods are." Then I said to him, "Uncle, I hear and obey. I cannot contradict you in anything, for what you do has God's blessing."

So I went with him to the market and found out that he had taken the raft apart and delivered the sandalwood, of which it was made, to the broker who was announcing it for sale. The merchants came and opened the bidding, and they increased their offers until the bidding stopped at one thousand dinars.

Then the old man turned to me and said, "Listen, son, this is the price of your goods at the present time. Would you like to sell them at this price, or would you like to wait and let me keep them for you in my storerooms to sell them for a higher price at the right time?"

I replied, "Sir, I leave it to you; do as you wish."

He said, "Son, will you sell me this wood for a hundred dinars above what the merchants have offered?"

I said, "Yes, it is done." Then he ordered his servants to carry the wood to his storerooms, and we returned to his house, where we sat, and he counted the money in payment for the wood and, fetching bags, put the money in them, locked them up with an iron lock, and gave me the key.

Some days later, the old man said to me, "Son, I would like to propose something to you, and I hope that you will comply."

I said, "What is it?"

He replied, "Son, I am a very old man, and I am without a son, but I do have a daughter who is young and charming and endowed with great wealth and beauty. I would like to marry her to you, so that you may live with her here in our country. Then I will give you all I have, for I have become an old man, and you will take my place."

I remained silent, and he added, "Son, accept my proposal, for I wish you good. If you obey me, I will marry my daughter to you, and you will be as my son and will possess all I have. If you wish to travel to your country and engage in trade, no one will prevent you. This is your property, at your disposal, to do with it what you wish and choose."

I said to him, "By God, uncle, you have become as a father to me. I have suffered many horrors that have rendered me bewildered and lacking in judgment. It is for you to decide as you wish."

Then he ordered his pages to bring the judge and witnesses, and when they came, he married me to his daughter, celebrating with a great entertainment and a great feast. When I went in to my wife, I found her extremely beautiful, with a graceful figure and a lovely gait, clad in rich apparel and covered with gold ornaments, necklaces, jewels, and precious stones, worth thousands of thousands of dinars and beyond the means of anyone.

When I saw her, she pleased me, and we loved one another. I lived with her for some time,

leading an extremely happy and joyful life. Soon her father died and was admitted to the mercy of God. We prepared him and buried him, and I took possession of all his property, and his servants became my servants to serve me at my bidding. Then the merchants appointed me to his office, for he was their chief, and that meant that none of them purchased anything without his knowledge and permission.

When I mingled with the people of the city, I noticed that they were transformed at the beginning of each month, in that they grew wings with which they flew to the upper region of the sky, and no one remained in the city except women and children.

I said to myself, "When the first day of the month comes, I will ask some of them to carry me with them to where they go." When the day came, and their colors and shapes changed, I went to one of them and said, "For God's sake, carry me with you, so that I may divert myself and then return."

He said, "This is not possible," but I pressed him until he granted me the favor. So I went with them, without telling any of my family or servants or friends, and he took me on his back and flew with me up into the air, and kept flying upward until we were so high that I heard the angels glorifying God in the vault of heaven. I marveled at that and exclaimed, "Glory be to God, and His is the praise."

Hardly had I finished my prayer when a fire came out of heaven, and almost consumed us. They flew down and, dropping me on a high mountain, departed, feeling very angry with me, and left me alone. I blamed myself for what I had done and said to myself, "There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. Every time I escape from a calamity, I fall into a worse one."

I sat on the mountain, not knowing where to go, when suddenly two young men passed by. They were like twin moons, each holding a walking staff of red gold. I approached them and saluted them, and they returned my salutation.

Then I asked them, "For God's sake, tell me who and what you are."

They replied, "We are servants of the Almighty God," and, giving me a walking staff of gold, like the ones they had with them, went on their way and left me.

I walked along the ridge of the mountain, leaning on the staff and wondering about the two young men, when suddenly a serpent emerged from beneath the mountain, with a man in its mouth, whom it had swallowed to his navel, while he was screaming and crying out, "Whoever delivers me, God will deliver him from every difficulty." I went close to the serpent and struck it on its head with the gold staff, and it threw the man from its mouth.

Then he approached me and said, "Since you have saved me from this serpent, I will never leave you, and you have become my companion on this mountain."

Soon a group of people approached us, and when I looked, I saw among them the man who had carried me on his shoulders and flew up with me. I approached him and, speaking courteously to him, offered my apologies and said, "Friend, this is not the way friends treat friends."

He replied, "It was you who almost destroyed us by glorifying God on my back."

I said, "Excuse me, for I had no knowledge of this, and I will never utter another word again."

Finally, he consented to take me with him, on condition that I would refrain from mentioning the name of God or glorifying Him on his back. Then he carried me and flew up with me, as he had done before, until he brought me to my house.

My wife met me, greeted me and, congratulating me on my safety, said, "Beware of going out again or associating with those people, for they are brothers of the devils and do not worship God."

I asked her, "But how did your father then get along with them?"

She replied, "My father was not one of them, nor did he as they did. Now that he is dead, I think that you should sell all our possessions, buy goods with the money, and go back to your country and family, and I will go with you, for I have no reason to stay in this city, since both my father and mother are dead." So I sold my father-in-law's property, little by little, and waited to find someone who would go to Baghdad, so that I might go with him.

Soon, a group of men in the city decided to travel and, failing to find a ship, bought wood and built for themselves a large one. I booked passage with them, paying them the fare in full, and

embarked with my wife and all we could carry of our property, leaving our land and buildings behind.

We set out and sailed with a fair wind from sea to sea, and from island to island, until we reached Basra where, without tarrying, I booked passage on a boat and, loading our belongings, headed for Baghdad. Then I came to my quarter, entered my house, and met my family and friends and loved ones, and stored in my storerooms all the goods I had brought with me.

My family had given up hope of my return, for when they calculated the time of my absence during the seventh voyage, they found that it was twenty-seven years. When I related to them all my experiences, they marveled exceedingly and congratulated me on my safety.

Then I vowed to the Almighty God never to travel again by land or sea, after the seventh voyage, which was the one to end all voyages. I also refrained from indulging my appetites and thanked the Almighty and Glorious God and praised Him and glorified Him for having brought me back to my native country and to my family. Consider, o Sindbad the Porter, what I had gone through.

Sindbad the Porter said to Sindbad the Sailor, “For God’s sake, pardon me the wrong I did you,” and they continued to enjoy their fellowship and friendship, in all cheer and joy, until there came to them death, the destroyer of delights, sunderer of companies, wrecker of palaces, and builder of tombs.

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Twelve

"I tell you, there are more words,
and more stars to them,
than you will think of in many years!"
—George MacDonogh
Lilith, 1875

xxiv.

Even if but a few lines right now, add them here & now.

I suppose a long stretch of late I will end up in my Attic Study, Dreamland Jazz station on Attic Radio.

Feeling often safer here than most elsewhere. Can't stay here but stretches sometimes.

Windily snowy out, another New England winter has locked in.

I don't seem to have much depth or breadth to offer here tonight. Just love of black pen & paper.

And a deep wish to return here soon—

Sometimes seems too like I more write *Labyrinthine* in my mind than in this right & proper notebook—& this reminds me of a recently passed friend—one try is to call him a trucker-poet—

He used to say he'd had conversations with me & my beloved more often in his head than in person—since our visits were annually at best for many years—

What were those conversations like? Can't help but to wonder to know. Ever wonder maybe.

And mine with *Labyrinthine*? Honestly, maybe more like simple promises. As in: "I'll be back here soon. Ever & again."



This section an *interstice* among various narratives, new lines needed to read live on my *Within's Within* radio show tonight when *Lx's* turn comes—

OK—but more—always more—

This feeling that the *Gr.Gr.Br.N.* has reached this deep, strange, lovely place—I don't have all of its answers, but no worry over them coming—

When I wrote my *6 x 36 Nocturnes* years ago, I was learning the art of mixing I've been doing since—& what's tastiest in this treat of an idea is that it has no far, stopping wall—

The question ever to discover how to mix *more, better, deeper, stranger,*

how much wilder the fun can be

how much? ever more to know

To continue a week later, weirdest fiction-diary-thing imaginable—progress on *Many Musics*, deep into solving the puzzle of King's path from Island of Tangled Gate to his exile at the Great Tree at the Heart of the World—

And always wondering the *Tangled Gate* mythopoeia itself—it encompasses the whole of my writing, of my Art in every form—Many Worlds I know some-not-much-of—

To be so enthralled—unending love & curiosity—a ceaseless game—

And one niggling to go ever deeper—

And another more a question:

—what of the rest of this book?

—its other characters?

—other poetry?

Next door deeper in? Or new one outside somewhere else? Why a choice in this? I've one imagining mind—it's all one Imaginal Space—

No limits exist unless imposed & followed

—The Braided Canvas leans against the wall farthest from the Helping Hut's door.

“We have to hang it.”

“Hang?”

“And step through.”

“Through?”

“And assure the King's path to Abe's Beach of Many Worlds.”

“Assure?”

“Lift it up with me. It's heavy.”

Grunts.

“That hook . . . there . . . guide it into place . . . straighten . . . again . . . good . . .”

“Yes. Good.”

The door is opening.

“Quick! Now in!”

“In?”

And if the rest of this book let back in, resumed, who & which & what?

How does this *Tangled Gate mythopoeia* connect to all the rest?

To Bowie? To Maya? To Rich Americus?

They preceded this *mythopoeia*, though already somewhat relate to it?

I ever prefer to leave none out nor discarded. *The map includes all.*

How? should not be a hard question to answer. In sum: *each* can walk through *any* door. That's not narrative itself, but a truth undergirding it.

Maybe what's next for the *mythopoeia* is this new mixturing. Who actually walks through each door, & what happens next?

Right now, my most important concern is writing toward that moment, narrating toward it, when all six Brother-Heroes come together again in reunion. This has been many calendars in coming. It feels like a long-arriving apotheosis, & is so close, yet not quite arrived—

Twill be *arrival*, then *continuance*.

Not letting up until it occurs will foster not letting up thereafter.

Whatever it *means*, it *matters* . . .

Anyway, we step through the usual way . . . close eyes . . . *hmmm* . . . & arrive . . . somewhere . . .

“What now?”

“We wait for him.”

“Then?”

“We make sure he gets to Abe's Beach.”

And so we wait.

Waiting . . . where? Open eyes, just really wondering where . . .

A long wooden counter, dark, old, burnished. A bartop. Behind it a wall collaged with photos, posters, newspaper clippings. Shelves of liquor. Up high, a black-&-white Dümönt TV next to a White-Faced Pink Cat Radio.

“Named Alice,” I smirk pleasurably & pointing, for G.P.'s very uncertain benefit. He nods a bit.

Look around first time in a while. Of course this is Luna T's Cafe's barroom. This book will return here from time to time, when feeling needful for roots.

Many rock posters on the wall. Hendrix. Beatles. CCR. R.E.M. Woodstock '69. Human Be-In '67.

Jukebox in the corner chockfull of 45s old & new. A pinball machine. A video game console shared by

Galaga & Ms. Pac-Man.

This is the pausing, lingering breath while G.P. & I are still arriving, such as we are here at all. So nobody else clearly here with us nor we with them. Insist our slow arrival for G.P.'s benefit, few or many questions.

He surprises me though. Somewhat.

"I think I was here once," he says slowly, cohering his thoughts. "There was a live band in . . . that other room?"

"Noisy Children," says a voice I realize is not mine because tis Bowie the Spy's, a few barstools down from us.

G.P. nods uncertainly. "Maybe? I didn't stay very long. They were good though. I was tempted."

Bowie nods. Now regards me, & a slow mocking wink. Green eye or blue eye? I'm unsure.

G.P. turns back to me. "Why here? Will the King arrive here too?"

I think a moment, but really needless. Shake my head. "Maybe this is just for me. Wanting to pass through here for a page or two again. Been awhile."

He nods. A hand now wiping the counter before him slowly reveals fully to belong to Mr. Bob the barman. Aged in his 60s perhaps, short neat pepper-grey hair. Neat white shirt & black tie & dark trousers obscured by his apron's colourous splatter patterns.

"What's yours, bud?" he asks G.P. friendly. I notice my diet cola with ice already arrived.

G.P. looks at me uncertainly. "Do I drink?"

I think, not really, nod, smile, glance at Mr. Bob. "Chuck, could you get our friend here something mixed & fine? He is, as you can see, a photographer. And a gentleman to boot!"

Mr. Bob nods, smiles, & is at his mixings in one seeming long gesture.

"4000 pages of your book?" Bowie catches my eye with his two strange ones again. Raises his oddly-shaped sortof-martini glass.

"Thanks," I say, smiling this more than I feel. Raise my soda. "Here's to the next 1000 pages taking less than the near-6 years it took this time."

They all toast, if only for my benefit.

xxvi.

By when the King & his five Brother-Heroes finally arrived to the Island of the Tangled Gate, they were too heart-worn to finish their quest successfully.

Their bonds not broken but frayed. Some, most, would have yet stayed in the Mainland Kingdom they had lately built up. Maybe despairing there *was* a Tangled Gate to be found, & rathering to believe in what visible good their hands & backs were building day by day there.



Even the King's obsession had shifted from saving the world to recovering his mysteriously lost beloved Deirdre. Even her visionary appearance on their boat now bound for the Tangled Gate, her assurance that another mattered now far more than her, did not convince him.

When they found the Tangled Gate, only with the help of Creatures, & then the Cave of the Beast, their intent was shattered, & they were Wobbled from hither to yon. Most of them.

Roddy the woodsman not. Perhaps his long & deep sojourn among Creatures in the White Woods spared him.

The King was not because his obsession to recover Deirdre too powerful. I think the three days he alone remained in the Cave of the Beast were a wrangle. A something. A change in him.

He asked for help. He was told no.

"Raymond?"

"Hmm?"

"Sorry to interrupt. We have to go."

"Now?"

"Yes."

I am still wrestling all this.

"Hello."

"Hello, sir."

"Hello, sir."

"Did I make it back to Abraham's Beach? Finally?"

"Yes, sir."

"You did!"

"Do you know which way is his camp?"

I think. Given left or right, I'll always choose left. I point thusly.

The King smiles at us. Handsome face, lorn eyes, grayish beard. If I were a girl, I'd swoon. Nearly do anyway.

He nods us thanks & heads off. G.P. & I are frozen a moment.

"I think we did OK."

"Did we?"

"We got him here. No Wobbles!"

We hurry after him, clumsy, abashed.

xxvii.

I slow our walk from the King's eager pace, because I need a bit to consider. G.P. slows with me.

"The heart of this evolving finale is about forgiveness."

"OK."

“Not every character. Not the Creatures. But the King & Roddy foremost.”

Nod. *Whoosh-whoosh* of the Deeper Deeper Sea nearby. The heavy, colorful musical sand under our steps.

“Not like they finally see each other, & all is forgiven. More like a slow, clumsy process.”

Nod.

“I feel the personal element to this. How much have & have I not forgiven myself & others in my life.”

Curious: “How much have you?”

“Not nearly enough.”

“So your struggle becomes theirs?”

“Yes. Simply, yes. But *becomes* is not the *same as*.”

I suddenly set down on the sand, & notebook & black pen appear in my grasp.

“Our love lost its bottom notes. Its bassline. Still floated, as love long known does, but without root now, & so away from us, you from me, me from you . . . ”

Pause.

“Your dreams of her clawed you from within, where nothing protects. There was no path *forward* for you. No *next* step. Only memory, loss, & the deepest boniest claw in you urging a move, like only one choice, thus none, *return, return, return*. . . ”

More?

“I blocked your way. Our shared Kingdom blocked your way. All but that pointing, bony claw blocked your way.”

Mm.

“You would return with me there, to retrieve our Brothers, to retrieve your Queen. You & me, & an army enough to bring down that Gate & all within.”

Go.

“This smiling mania in you reared up slowly, like a great wave in dreams, ever & ever more with no recall of before & no retreat from it.”

. . . .

. . .

. .

.

“You would return with me. The mystery of all that occurred now simply a war’s tactical retreat. Not any of it to understand, nor care in it, just reassemble & return.”

.

“We spoke less & less, till none at all. Smiling mania does not know refusal, or other ways to do.”

“Why did I try to persuade you? Why didn’t I clap you down safely till I was surer of my path for us?”

“Why? You are my *King*. You are my *Brother*. A heart given in fealty never fully returns. I spoke to who you had *been*, groped for *him* with my words, sought our bottom notes. Whatever its story, however dark, collapsed, love does not undo. Cannot undo.”

“Forgive? Forget? Nod & let go?”

I stop. Pack up my notebook in my bookbag, black pen in my pocket. Nod to G.P. enjoying the Sea, & we walk on a bit faster, to catch up to the King.

xxviii.

Near a month since most recent lines here. And I wonder: *why?*

No good or real reason. I get distracted by things, some worth it, some not. That’s more a fact than a reason.

There’s no moment when I do not feel that Art isn’t relevant. I’ve come more to think that *a lot else isn’t*

If I spent a whole day writing in a museum, or reading in a park, or watching movies, I’d feel, easily, *tis a good day*. Too many hours aren’t like this.

It’s not lack of commitment to Art in my mind, *ever*, my heart, *ever*, I think it’s more I sometimes lose myself in my work’s complexities—the ever vaster relation of one to several to many—I slow myself, essentially. All other impediments, however real-seeming, are illusory.

When it works, the good feeling is so intimately familiar. Nothing to deduce.

I find that my commitment deepens as time goes on, & my wish is to simply not return to where life is boring, dull, known, unloved.

Working for a living seems a distraction from what matters in life. I used to think of it as grounding me, keeping me in touch with the world. Now I’ve more come to see most of the human world as meager. Repetitive. Selfish. Myopic. As much as I *never* write enough, it’s *ever* what I wish to do. Art is all that matters to me. In its myriad forms & ways.

Where will this *Great Grand Braided Narrative* lead? Surely something that had been so long in the braiding up will never braid down again?

Don’t think so. Don’t think I’d want it to. But I am also interested where the various works of the *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia* might fly off to; how many possible directions & far corners?

These thoughts what run through me happy high & low, what matter in my mind.

Poking into the big nooks & tiniest of crannies—

Knowing it all leads somewhere, elsewhere, on where, & back—

Go—go—go—GO!

xxix.

Look, another month passes but what if I did not stop writing this passage for the next hour? Mixed in thoughts near & far to see what 'cumes?

OK. Let's see. Start near. The Attic Study of the Bungalow Cee. Too warm to quite enjoy, & yet not too-too-warm to spend this day off—vacation from my payjob—needed beyond need—

Attic Radio. Dreamland Jazz Station seems passed to gone with the station owner's passing. There are good alternatives, tho not any what it was—

Pounding audible from a neighbor's house, sounds of a new roof being hammered into place. Occasional shouts & laughter.

Cenacle | 122 | April 2023 | 28th Anniversary Issue debuted this past Sunday at Jellicle Literary Guild meeting #161, first of the current turn of the calendar. Meeting was epic fun, my beloved & I in person, brilliant poet Sam Knot live on the videophone, others present by printed page, recorded audio and/or video.

Bound tomorrow on a jetplane out to the U.S. Midwest to visit with beloved's kin in the woods. Should be fun.

That's most of near.

I want to tattoo on my strange mind:

MAKE ART BETTER NOW

And then figure out how to live this authentically, & validly, with love & fealty.

EVERY DAMNED BLESSED DAY

Whither *Labyrinthine* next? Somewhere else, new, back, far back, on & weirdly on—easy—

It's part in the *Great Grand Braided Narrative* [*Gr.Gr.Br.N.* for friendly] concluded when Asoyadonna arrived to Abe's Beach of Many Worlds, with Dreamwalker no less, & the King to boot. *Lx* has done its part.

Does *concluded* mean *done*? I am surely not sure, mulling on it now.

Where does the *Gr.Gr.Br.N.* conclude? Let me riff on this a stretch.

On Abe's Beach of Many Worlds, below the Deep Deep Sea, by the shore of the Deeper Deeper Sea, there will soon come a moment when all six Brother-Heroes will be together.

There are two of the *Gr.Gr.Br.N.* narrative threads that will tell this. *Bags End News & Many Musics*—the former told of course by Mister Algernon Beagle, & the latter from the perspective of Roddy & the Gate-Keeper.

The Brothers will then follow a path to:

1. Thought Fleas' Great Clearing to visit the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock; specifically, Boop & Lori Bunny, for important information;
2. The Tangled Gate's Cave of the Beast, where they had last been, for important reasons again;
3. The world that Gate-Keeper's people crash landed on long ago, to help free them from Captors, & lead them to their intended home-world.

Then 4. involves them returning to visit long-unseen homes & loved ones. Many peaces to make.

Will this writing occur soon or soon-ish?

What can *Lx* do for its aid?

Should *Lx* be mapping out where they will come to, guessing what might occur?

Or is *Lx* best to run an obscure parallel track?

Is the action seen on a TV at Luna T's Cafe? Is it seen in a new scene in **RemoteLand**?

The sweet spot isn't there yet.

Maybe it is far from all of this.

41 min of 60. OK. Hand off to—

xxx.

[It was a lingering moment up here in the high mountain forests—]

Sitting on a bench by a hard-running stream. Sitting alone is the King, listening to the water, its singing balm—

And his sense, though but old & lovely trees about him for his fine company, & the stream to perform & entertain, that he is not alone—

That here, in his long exile near the Great Tree at the Hearts of the World, he is not alone. Those he's loved, known past times, & unknown ones to come, are nearer than he can easily know—

Here seems where time itself arrives, rests, maybe becomes something else—

He breathes quietly, in & out, listens, rests too. Feels he will be elsewhere, come other days; to return still,



come other ones. Yet something else will ever remain here too.

Eventually, others crossed the King's path, as he sat on his bench, by the water, maybe inevitably, as everything might be in the vastless reaches of the White Woods.

The first, likely most inevitably, to cross his path, were Creatures. They live in the White Woods, of course, all over it, as far as anyone knows, even as they live elsewhere too, like in the Creature Common, & elsewhen, like with the Princess, under the Tangled Gate.

Well, there was that snowstorm, one strange day, when he lay unmoving on the ground, beyond despair to numbness, until two charming brown Bear Creatures with peppermint decorations about their cloaks, came upon him, & sweetly crooned him back from nowhere to somewhere. Always a good start.

Somewhere led him to this bench by that singing stream, & thoughts more hopeful, at least lightly hopeful for certain.

And next come upon him one afternoon a group of Creatures to know. A pink Bear Creature with charming pink-bow-tie & devilish smirk, in partner with a friendly Leopard Creature, them pulling a strange little Wagon together.

The King of course sniffed friendly to them, as he does to all Creatures, & he was glad & curious of their company too.

Their Wagon contained three strange little flower-pots, each occupied by a wee little Bear Creature—cinnamon-colored, chocolate-colored, & brown sugar-colored (with red bow-tie).

Creatures are known to rarely speak the English, it spooking them (there are exceptions of course, such as Bellla!), but the King learned by other ways that the little Bears were called Cackleberries, & their haulers were called Cackleberry farmers.

Cackleberry Crops, actually. And what this meant both *hard to say & tis so*—

These friendly folks were neighbors to the King, living not far from the Hut where he stayed. Having all met, the Cackleberry farmers & their Crops made sure to pass by the King on his stream-side bench most afternoons. Crops & Farmers alike would join the smiling King on his bench, usually in his very lap, to doze peacefully together to the stream's music.

The King would ever be reminded how his travels long ago began with the deeply felt wish to protect all Creatures, & the countless other magicks of the White Woods, & this impulse had been shared by all his Brothers. He was sure that, even now, however far apart they were, this wish yet guided them all.

To be continued in Cenacle | 124 | Winter 2024



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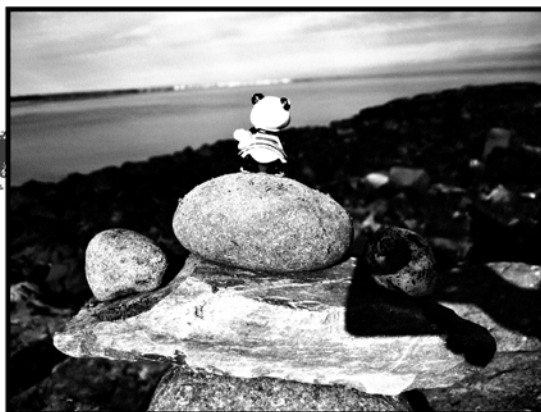
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NEW ENGLAND

Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Getting his breath & his health & his Art back. Don't slow. More of his work can be found at: <http://purigare.tumblr.com>.

Algernon Beagle lives in Bags End. He is the Editor guy for *Bags End News*. Delightful books made from the stories in his delightful newspaper appear regularly in *The Cenacle*.

Arabian Nights is a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled in Arabic during the *Islamic Golden Age*. It is often known in English as the *Arabian Nights*, from the first English-language edition (c. 1706–1721), which rendered the title as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* (Source: *Wikipedia*). Scriptor Press New England reprinted “The Story of Sindbad the Sailor,” in chapbook form, as part of the 2009 *Burning Man Books* series. This volume can be found online at: <http://www.scriptorpress.com/nobordersbookstore.html>.

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Currently waiting out a mild winter to get back to the wilderness he prefers *by far* to most human company. More of his writings can be found at therubyeye.blogspot.com.

ElectroLounge Forums is a discussion community for contributors to *The Cenacle*, found at electrolounge.boards.net. Writers, artists, photographers, & readers are encouraged to request a membership (no charge) & visit these forums to meet, & perhaps join, those whose works fill the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Judih Weinstein Haggai currently resides in parts unknown. Her haiku & recent longer poems appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. *Hoping you make it home safely, Jude, nothing less*. Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless. She also hosts the excellent radio show of the same name on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com).

Jimmy Heffernan lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. His prose & poetry appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. His poems in this issue will be appearing in *Multiverse: A Book of Poems*, to be published in January 2024 by BookBaby. Always enjoy our dialogues in print.

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Chapters from his epic work-in-progress, *Nighttime Daydreams*, appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Book 2 of his published quadrilogy of *Nighttime Daydreams (Bat Dreams)* was published in 2019. He hosts the excellent radio show “Nighttime Daydreams” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Glad we caught up with some of your great new poems, Nate!

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. We are currently working on a *RaiBook* edition of his poetry, to be published sometime in 2024.

Gregory Kelly lives in England. His poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*. Our time together at the same pay-job came to a sad & fairly abrupt end, but our collaborations will go on & on.

Sam Knot lives in rural France. His poetry, prose, & artwork all appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Building his multi-art studio, no scheme too big! Visit samknot.com for more of his work.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her prose & poetry & photographs appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Lost her dear friend & canine companion, Reacher, of late. Mourning him in her own way.

Martina Reisz Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Trying to keep mind & soul together, make good new Art, in a world gone madder. More of her writings can be found at martinnewberry.wordpress.com.

Epi Rogan lives in Cork, Ireland, though she is originally from Alaska. Her fantastic photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of her work can be found at [instagram.com/pieorgan](https://www.instagram.com/pieorgan). Somewhere, likely, at this moment, she is snapping an amazing photograph!

Kassandra Soulard lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Took us eight months to get this one made, & we did it again. Your brilliant front cover made the rest inevitable to come, love.

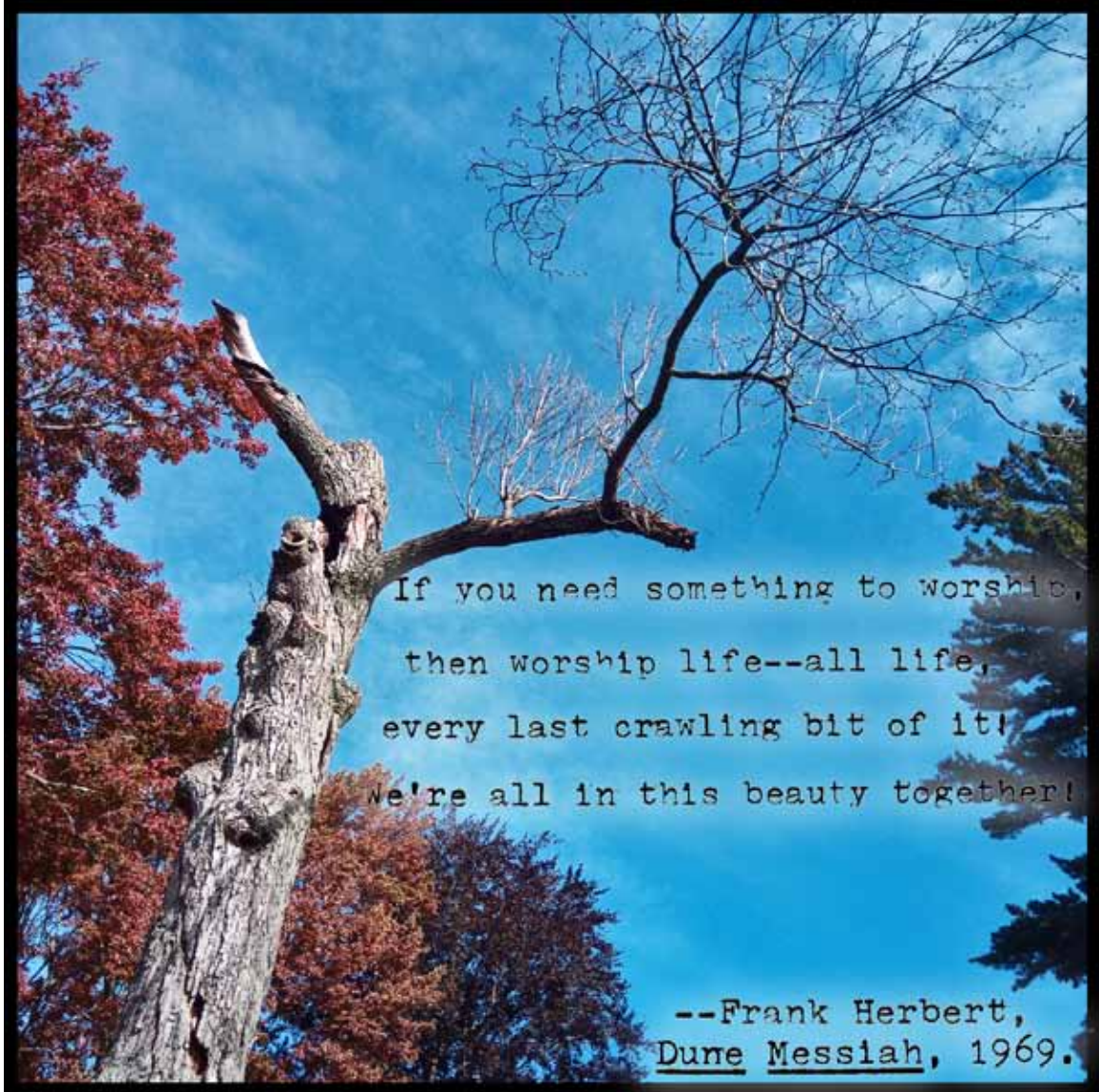
Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Leaving this year feeling a little more battered, & strangely also a little better, than when I arrived to it.

Louis Staebble lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His wonderful photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of his work can be found at [instagram.com/louiestaebble](https://www.instagram.com/louiestaebble). A brilliant man I do not know near well enough yet.

Timothy Vilgiate lives in Austin, Texas. His *Rivers of the Mind [A Novel]* is regularly serialized in this journal. Working hard in Mexico, studying the legacy of the healer Maria Sabina. The radio version of *Rivers of the Mind*, an amazing work in any form, can be found online at riversofthemind.libsyn.com.

* * * * *





If you need something to worship,
then worship life--all life,
every last crawling bit of it!
We're all in this beauty together!

--Frank Herbert,
Dune Messiah, 1969.

