



*Candor ends paranoia.*

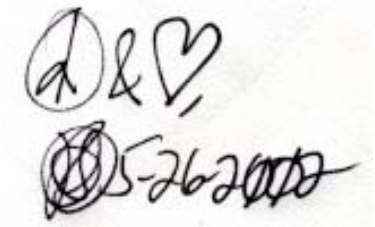
—Allen Ginsberg

*This is the long overdue second issue of this series of books intended to increase the range of distribution for various projects published by Scriptor Press.*

*Grass roots projects such as this one seek to offer comfort, empathy, maybe wisdom to souls willing to open up to the creative work of their fellows. One might find this book at a festival, in a box of free books, or be handed it by a smiling soul.*

*Once you open up your doors, however, you can't close them again, or even know who or what will walk into your life. This is the both the danger & hope of life in this aspect of the universe.*

*Take from this book what you can, keep it with you, or pass it along. Blessed be : )*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' and 'S' followed by '& V', and a date '5-26-2010' written below it.

Ray Soulard, Jr.  
Editor & Publisher  
Scriptor Press

**Scriptor Press Sampler**  
**no. 2**  
**2000 Annual**

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MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



SCRIPTOR PRESS  
2000

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Ray Soulard, Jr.

**Beauty, Afflictus**

(for Shannon)

---

If someone were to fall into intimate slumber, sleep of the golden eyes, sleep of the murmuring grey fields, & slept deeply with Things, shiny pinkcheeked Things, Things of whisper & wet, Things both the cup & its holder, Things elusive like worthy cathedrals, how easily he would come to a different day, a longer day, a day that will not melt with the passing hours, how easily he would come to a different day, out of mutual depth, how deeply eternity badges us, out of mutual depth, twining spasms of remembrance, chilling glints of smiling mystery, out of mutual depth, have we yet begun, Beauty, refracted, defined, slept into, seduced sacredly, seduced musically, Beauty, obscure, today is never going to end, courtyard of twisting breezes, out of mutual depth, love is a mean, chanting, obsessed motherfucker & you are his favorite song.

---

i.

Eternal She, embedded, in brickface, in snow  
Eternal She, before me now, this sleepless dream  
The great beast Mortality chained & humming  
    without my window, offering a whole  
    panoramice library of lies  
Eternal She, will you see with me through  
    this beast, past invisibility, past its flake & fall?  
  
The courtyard is empty, the crowd is dancing,  
    the band rocks on.

Eternal She, who loved me in some  
    secret year, full moon & beloved pine,  
I would bind & kill her, she not confessed,  
    she still waiting for the strength that  
finally embodies the promise it portends.

Saddle the horses, gather the blades  
    prayers are becoming dangerous again.

Eternal She, younger now than ever,  
    cleanse something bitter, raw & silent,  
Eternal She, knowing desire again,  
    its biting tireless music, blood everywhere,  
    spend it all—

ii.

Beauty Crowds me til I die  
Beauty Crowns me til I cry  
Beauty mercy have on me  
Beauty, marry me, marry me, marry me  
  
But if I expire today, nameless to the last  
Let it be in sight of thee  
Let me disintegrated into thee  
Transcend me from within, Art,  
I want to be your laughing sunshine supernova.

iii.

Certain & I was your suitor  
the lover of your pending garden

Momentous moment, a younger day  
I saw you set ordinary air ablaze  
I saw you smile at me, liquid, vanishing point  
I saw you negate what I had been,  
agree to forget, agree that  
today was the only day & from  
your womb, Beauty, I was crawling  
& would here-ever-on.

I kept passing through you more slowly  
til I no longer came or went  
til there were no calendars, only you  
til the moon, I knew, was there for you  
til all that had ever been grew from you

I kept pausing before you  
til pause was all there was  
til I was only a young weed  
on your inevitable wall

Thentime, before you transfigured into  
Merry Muse I sought your nascent  
likeness in the varieties of flesh,  
ironic, sincere, detached, forlorn,  
embodied, embraced, exhaled, inhaled,  
emptied out, exited, errors, I know.

Sought I to embrace you, then near  
you, then mirror. I did not know.  
I do not know. Your absence  
fills me, maneuvers me, verifies &  
falsifies me

Please stop.  
I'm too happy already.

iv.

---

Dancing maiden, ringing colors, vision immolating, the day  
uncontained by its capitals & its periods. Dancing maiden, the chanting,  
scorching drums troubling & pleasing you. Dancing maiden, i see you in  
every bar i stumble, every tree i love, every time i choose between living &  
dying, every time I agree to the fatty comforts of despair, the bigbellied  
scriptures of capitulation, last night was the last night, no more last nights  
left among my dreams, just fascist soft-voiced afternoons, just hosery &  
something adjusted too tightly. Reinvent me, dancing maiden, there is no I  
in me anymore. There is only a set of bored muscles, a mind left over from  
the ragged part of youth. Reinvent me, make me thy mate, thy servant, thy  
listener from afar, dancing maiden I can hear you better as you transcend  
me from within.

---

v.

Pretty, profound, pretty, profound—  
i long for everything.  
Art is the answer to this world.  
Art is the most expensive answer in this world.  
Art, drunk on pens, staggers pretty on.  
Art, high on colors, floats profound away.

I saw you in a museum, once,  
gave you my first bouquet of flames.

Pretty, profound, pretty, profound—  
i'll keep lapping. you keep breathing hard.  
Art, my raggamuffin with furry boots &  
a happy yellow purse  
Art, the most regal dream—  
keep breathing. inhale. exhale. harder.

I saw you in a museum, again,  
but, no, here's an empty room of rhythm,  
a joint passed with a sisterly smile—

Pretty, profound, pretty, profound—

---

in bus stations, in desparate hours, you are love. You are everywhere.

in a large room, between cathedrals & haystacks, more summer than  
winter here, i guess, and children playing on carnival-bright days

a large canvas in a large room, a forest of a room, within the night's  
shyness, beneath the night's secret full moon, songs for wastrels & wizards,  
large canvas, dancing with her, her skin softer than a fancy, dressed in pink  
& scarlet, dressed for the courting of wastrels & wizards

(read this in a dictionary of evanescence & apocalypse)

She becomes bone-liquid, ecstasy between the beats, her release less rifle  
than starlight. Mesmerism.

crawl for me, Beauty, that canvas never contained you! this large room in  
ruins, crawl for me, Beauty! Your wastrel. Your wizard.

---

We dance in the courtyard of  
wind & ice. We tremble music.

Come on, Desire! Where are you from?

At low moments in my life I  
had two choices— sex or philosophy.

We dance in a tangle of exhaust.  
A black sheet covers our confusion.

Come on, Desire! You can't hold that note forever!

At low moments in my life I looked  
around for my answers.

We become nameless finally. Our dance  
has taught us this. Desire erupts  
with continuous gladness.

At low moments in my life  
I believed that truth had a  
tag, a list, a dwelling.

Truth is her smile studied from  
across a wooden room.

Tonight I need a friend. Or something.  
Tonight's too easy. There has to be more.  
Tonight I am alone. Only art will help.

Tonight I'm no longer weak. Lights. Ringing.  
Tonight's too hard. A bleak woman in pain.  
Tonight I'm sure at last what I want.

Tonight I live on despite it all.

Tonight Merry Muse floats, glitters, nearby.  
Kicks back her drink. Looking at me. Nodding.

She will wait.

Tonight is for burying old poems.  
Tonight, nude, Merry Muse, she says: "what now?"  
Tonight, brand new fall. Tonight, brand new resurrection.

Tonight Merry Muse will catch every last drop.  
Tonight she'll consider me ever-more-slowly.

viii.

There was a moment, once, back then,  
it must have been several,  
I pressed her shoulders hoping  
for more than yield.

Quickly, in the scattered light, I told her  
of my dream, a reunion with unknown  
souls from my youth, a fractured celebration  
of memory, something we have, something we lose.

Something we have. Something we lose.

The dream continued. Someone was missing  
from the past, I explained, the full moon  
judging this empty bed confession, this messy  
coalescence.

Someone is still missing. Dreams & daylight  
both tell me so. I pressed her shoulders,  
once, back then, hoping, but all she could  
offer me was yield. Something we have.  
Something we lose. I long for everything.

This messy coalescence.

ix.

You who hasn't yet arrived, I no longer expect  
you. I know you are coming.  
You are lost in dreamless daylight. You wait  
for the pretty rubble of twilight to begin.  
I don't know what songs will please you.  
I'll sing them all for you. You'll recognize  
the right one. It will flutter dangerously.  
It will remind you of me as I sing it.

A song of absence.

We'll walk together in the twilight rubble,  
the rising tide of night swelling  
our hearts.

You'll have my song. It will remind you  
of me when I sing it.

From you I'll want the touch of skin soft  
as a fancy. From you I'll demand  
a midnight vow. To your lightness I will  
cling til we float, til we fall.

You'll teach me the right name for this world.  
Godd. Desire. Art. Death. Art.  
I'll know. Floating. Falling, I'll know.

---

Is Beauty an affliction? The clock ticks, slave to invisible cycles. Trees in ancient cemeteries mingle with displaced spirits. The moon above is full, even tonight. Every night.

Beauty an affliction? If so, then what choice? There's rubble to be read. The wastrel wakes the wizard, together they make songs & bake vows.

Is Beauty an affliction? The more intimate slumber is coming, sleep of the golden eyes. Longer days, vaster celebration. Aging every day, in the dawn's new light.

Beauty is an affliction. Watching the dancing maiden, calling her Art, Desire, Godd. Pinkcheeked spirituality. Too late now to believe anything else. Afflicted. Wind & ice shrill with the night's diminishing frenzy.

Beauty, affliction. The maiden uncontained on the canvas. The maiden lost in a dreamless daylight world. One is Beauty. One is affliction. My song will teach them about each other. Twilight & midnight. Answered prayer.

---

x.

Coming, soon, the morning, I am  
crowded from my bed, my chamber  
filling with displaced spirits I know  
but did not contrive.

There's a picture on my wall, a dancing  
maiden & her beau, & I have covered  
them both with songs, with fancies,  
with adoration.

Desire. Art. Godd. Maybe Love too. Maybe  
Death, when I am ready. For now,  
a worthy cathedral. For now, intimation.  
For now, stark challenge.

I long for everything.  
I've let nothing go.

The dawn will be different, today, new,  
like it is every day.  
The moon will evanesce. Rubble's just dirt.  
Dreams are deserts where everything  
shines but nothing lives.

Maybe? No. The spirits crowd me. I begin to float.



February 28, 1999  
Malden, Massachusetts

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Joe Ciccone

## *The Story of the Boy who Goes by the Name of Nonsense*

I hope you find these phrases adequate  
I would perform my work better but I was not built from gears

Outside my third-story window  
A twelve-membered ring of children erect a synagogue from shadows  
And tumble inside  
I hear bagpipes playing

All the artists are asleep at their presses

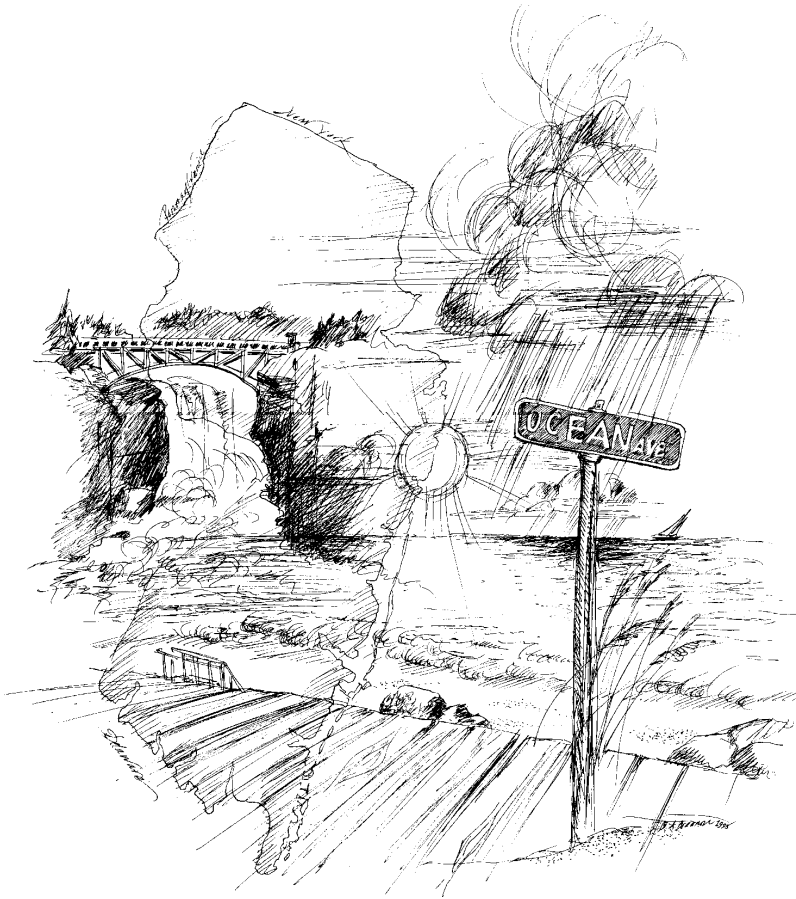
I

After a long legless day beneath the flashing CITGO sign  
The boy with curly brown hair swam most assuredly through the  
Deepest most uneven tides and when the words  
That gave breath to his voyages no longer filled the sails of his dreams  
He abandoned all his old ways and turned to burglary  
Petty larceny and amphetamines

He would later realize his vessel was just an illusion hiding in the curtains  
of his room

His friend the clinging poet understood why this was anything but funny  
The love of a flower girl went right to his head  
Don't worry about whom since  
They're all one person

What connects such visions is a charged silence



WATER CYCLES: JERSEY FROM NORTH OF JERSEY BY JOE CICCONE  
Barbara Brannon

Deny it all you want but you know when it's there  
And I know you know

His first poem was called The Ballad of the Modeller

As I recall  
It went something like this

Landscapes: Turn them over.  
Most of what's important sticks.

And mankind had no answer

But he was more consumed at that time with sea monkeys  
Cherry bombs  
Bang snaps  
Inventions for the improvement of golf balls  
Dress shoes  
And bookends

He was also writing scripts with no storyline  
Hallucinating that there were dead men in the compost heap  
Toward which he could see his girlfriend  
Sweet Guenny  
Approaching with a shovel

By exhuming dead tunes from old songbooks  
He sought revelations the splendor of which you might expect  
At the place where all religions join paths and end  
But his phrasing was always a bit off  
And when he finished singing only the silence rose up to meet him

Always looking like he either just woke up  
Or had been up for days  
He would host his parties with the rest of the eels  
Flipping flapjacks in a silver skillet with a tongue-wash of benzedrine

[You should have known better (we're in the midst of a nugget) than to get  
yourself mortised like

planking above these two nervy downbeats, science and art, with no  
signposts to point your way]

Then another poem came to him entitled The Linguist's Heaven Butchered

It went as follows as I seem to recall

Myriad? No! . . .  
Spattering.

And then mankind answered back but he didn't listen  
He knew it wasn't his best work

## II

Under the lid of the box of meaning is something about a musician  
Caught between language and song  
Out of love  
He knows that everything is what it is and he refuses at all costs  
To make anything more out of it  
Yet still he wants to have made something solid  
Before he dies

Ah he would give his entire education for a decent ship worth even a  
Millionth of its weight in roguery  
A young man in puppeteer school with the nerve to speak about God  
He once asked me Do you like the Doors?  
I said I like myself  
Lit a joint  
And turned my back on my last friend

## III

With light bulbs for eyes he came home years later  
The sounds of his journey still ringing underfoot  
To find the house had long since forgotten him

It was there that we would raise our stethoscopes to the whirling moon

And diagnose each other as mad  
Swearing we'd make something out of our youth  
But all we made were asses out of ourselves

The elders grew restless in their caskets  
But their lives had been nothing more than a deep march into slow graves  
anyway  
And their words meaningless to us  
After all it is their machines that are taking us over  
It began with the gandy dancers  
And will end with the empty caboose with its box of locks

When I was young and still had bones in my cookies  
I never imagined anyone could need more grass  
Than the small patch outside my front door  
But here's a drowning tip

Open your eyes and find the light

He did  
Even during those gaps in time when he would pick up the instrument  
Glistening with each of its fine strings and his  
Fingers were laced  
Together unable to build  
The lowliest of chords and when  
The lines from his pencil seemed to run off into their own  
Drifting spirals  
Unintelligible to everyone including himself and  
The sounds in his mind no longer hearkened back to anything known  
Or even knowable  
They couldn't be sung with a voice or bent with a reed  
But merely danced for their own sake  
Coming together sometimes  
In Paris  
In the form of a bird  
Which he could never quite catch in its unpredictable flight  
As it trailed off into the hinterlands of his imagination untagged

He was amazed into a language there was no way out of  
The more he wrote the more laughable his arguments became

But still tin shacks by the tracks held the promise  
Of Diet Sprites and Marlboro Lights and shoveled eggs with toast  
And his mind couldn't have been any cleaner before sex  
That wonderful rhyme  
On which all the best ideas go to waste

Since it is after all a long road and easier to settle for ecstasy  
He moved on quietly through the first shadows of the apocalypse

I remember all these people without coming any closer to understanding  
them  
They were my friends  
And he was my best

#### IV

Pete Seeger and  
Henry Ford and minimum wage are complicated enough themes

So let me crawl under this dimly lit altar  
And speak of unions  
And salvation

Till we starve

#### V

And here's my concept of memory  
Since you asked

I woke this morning and thought I smelled the wet papier- mâché  
Of a newly molded cast

I was thirteen again with a broken hand

Later I thought I smelled bad hospital food  
And again I was dying with my father

VI

Oh what's the use  
 I pull a single tooth out of a bag of heads and wonder why I can't write  
 Anything good tonight

He once said in a one-line poem called On Telling Time  
 The hard part is knowing where to start from

But I remember clearly when I first met him in a campsite at the  
 Bonfire rally in Vermont  
 Having not slept all night and lying beneath my truck  
 He jostled me saying Friend  
 We are saluting the dawn  
 We've made it from nothing at all  
 Come let me show you  
 While the first geese flew over the tapestry woven down  
 And brought hard to light  
 With not even a match

VII

Perhaps these notebooks will someday begin to resemble notebooks  
 The symbols  
 Scrawled out inside their pages precise facsimiles of actual thoughts  
 If ever such existed  
 Notions that at one time told of directions yet to be found  
 Before all the trees were gone



NIGHT IN THE NEW WEST FROM *CENACLE* 42  
 Barbara Brannon

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Ric Amante

## *On the Ferry – Alone Together*

“In the brightening scope  
of day’s immensity,  
awareness shifts to particulars  
lest the mind bloom unchecked  
in a less than tranquil way. . .”

I

So observe that young man —  
lanky left arm  
stretched and pressed  
close to the body  
like picket to post,  
quivering right hand  
holding back a smoke,  
ribs like a greyhound  
corrugating the cloth  
of a thin, black jersey. . .  
Eyes connect briefly  
when you look his way,  
and yes,  
you’re happy for him —  
his once-broken nose,  
many-skewed loves,  
black hair damped  
with comb-strokes  
moments ago. . .

II

She’s eating popcorn  
in a most raw and elegant way. . .  
Long and garish nails  
dive into the tub  
(pertly balanced on bare knee)  
like hungry minnows,  
then each kernel hovers  
before full and painted lips  
for a breathless eternity,  
allowing all to savor  
the delay and delight  
of food desired, held, consumed. . .  
She’s aware of her power,  
performs the act coolly —  
the air around her blisters. . .

III

Iron-gray spray of rain  
whips in from the bow  
as an unshaven man of twenty  
in tattered shortsleeves  
maniacally strides  
port to starboard,  
starboard to port,  
flailing both arms  
and dipping from the waist  
like a busted jack-in-the-box. . .  
Within the cabin,  
passengers nap, chat, deal cards —  
here on the brink,  
some high, keen panic. . .

On the smoking deck of the ferry  
 people congregate in genial knots,  
 embalmed in the amber  
 of setting sun. . .  
 Hard to think that  
 we were ever meant  
 to do otherwise. . .  
 And why shouldn't this tableau  
 be the right one,  
 the one of illumination and ease  
 that favors all embodiment. . .

---

## Mark Shorette

### ***LISTEN***

1

never  
 you'll never write like  
 a mad motherfucker  
 till you become a mad motherfucker  
 never  
 not till you cast your pen  
 in the creek  
 jump in naked  
 fish it out as if it were a drowning infant

love your pen  
 cradle it to your breast  
 allow it to suckle from your days of bitterness  
 and majesty

2

See!  
 You're identifying  
 with mad ole Allen  
 who spent his dying year  
 in gracious insanity  
 reaching to recue dead men  
 he was sure he'd outlive

on a night  
 sky charred by sunset

droning with an almost inaudible hum  
hum  
hum  
hum  
and I yell  
“Be quiet!”  
and it avails nothing  
so I tell you about the hum  
about nights unfree from the noise of engines  
in hope  
you will listen

3

(clap)(clap) (clap)(clap)(clap)  
(clap)(clap) (clap)(clap)(clap)

(I do hope you're reading this poem aloud)

LET'S  
GO  
WOLFPACK!

(CLAP)(CLAP) (CLAP)(CLAP)(CLAP)

not a good thing  
confusing the audience

they thought I liked  
quiet

they thought I was a Luddite

ah, but there are civilized places  
for noise

the crashing of torso into fiberglass

scrape of skate

the ineffable well landed uppercut

ding ding ding goes the trolley

as it carries us home from the spectacle of struggle

but then you arrive  
and consider  
the weapon bearers  
both ancient and modern  
and the drone collides  
with eardrum  
on a night when you should  
listen

4

And I sing to you  
of streets  
streets I have loved  
perhaps you too

as recent as yesterday  
on Trumbull  
filled with revelers

Park Street Boston  
giant puppets  
caricature the tower dwellers

a street you remain unaware of  
Roseleah  
dead to traffic  
but so alive

the quiet one ways near Mio's

which carry me to a cove

you  
on a street

what do you hear  
or have you lost the capacity to  
listen

5

what is this nothing  
you allegedly hear

the neighbor's TV

a passing car

audible conversation

a child's yelled greeting

the rattlings of a dog's chain

the slamming of a screen door

the coughing of an after-dusk walker

the pinched hum of a motor scooter

a mother calling children home

the annoyed whine of refusal

the start of a car

the close blare of a horn

the pop of a distant firecracker

planes descending to the nearby airport

below it all, the expressway, which never ceases

this is the essence of that nothing which you do not hear...

do you listen?

6

Yah Poe  
there was one crazy fucker  
yelling 'bout the  
bells  
bells bells  
bells bells bells bells bells

do you doubt that he listened

do you doubt that he was consumed with the artlessness of his own time

that slender string which connects our own age with his

...and his age seems so laden with grace by comparison

but here we live

hearing our own  
bells bells bells bells bells

becoming madder motherfuckers  
than that morose Baltimorean  
because we  
like he

listen.

## *Aquinnah Cliffs*



AQUINNAH CLIFFS FROM CENACLE  
Barbara Brannon

---

Gerry Dillon

## ***And Fechtner, she played her fiddle barefoot***

*And Fechtner, she played her fiddle barefoot.*

Did the first time I saw her, and she did the last time I saw her. Fechtner was a Breeder. She was the daughter of one of Maldeen's most important Rounds. The first I saw her, I was gathering shit. It was early in the year; only one sun stood proud in the sky. We had a full quarter-revolution before the Red Giant would begin to rise above the horizon, and a full half revolution before it would burn day and night down upon us. Her hair was the shade of the primary sun and eyes the color of the Great Sea. Her long dress was the dark of fertile soil. She stood upon the grey rocks, playing her fiddle. I looked around the area that day, but could see no one for whom she played. All I saw were the fields and the bosontu. And Fechtner, her I saw, too. She played her fiddle barefoot.

I lowered the handles of my load that day. And stored my shovel in the wagon. I was a power-man. I kept the bio-mass gas turbines filled with the methane produced from bosontu droppings. It's back breaking work. The kind of work left to the Mutants. I was not just any power-man. I maintained the bio-mass turbines on the Beacon, that hyper-tachyon carrier wave sending out its silent voice into the night, telling our cousins on earth that we are here, on Maldeen.

The Captain had laid the cornerstone of the Beacon in the first year of settlement. The Beacon had been started before the Captain had slowly turned into a Round, before the first Mutant had been born, and before the first summer fire-storm had swept across the planet. Because of this the Beacon is a grander place than many built on Maldeen. It was built when the Captain still had hope. The Beacon was placed on the beach by the Great Sea. It was

a pillar between the city and the thick, impassable woods of the shoreline.

\*\*\*\*\*

I trundled along the streets of Maldeen. I had left the Beacon to its work. The display panel was Green, telling me I had nothing to fear. It was Red which I feared. Red on the panel and Red in the sky. I was in Maldeen for the spring festival and meeting.

Spring was here on the planet. Crops were to be planted and the cold, dark nights of winter had ended as the planet orbited back into the lumisphere of the second sun. It had only begun to rise into the sky. Bosontu and the other few mammals were coming into heat. Humans were no different. What was different was that chance or choice had little to do with the selection process for the human mammals. No, the council would make the selection, based on who they hoped would bred another breeder. I was a mutant and not chosen to take part.

I strained my ears to hear as I stood far back in the Mutant circles surrounding the Great Hall and the spring meeting taking place. With a helping hand from her son, Tobin, Ginjher rose to speak. Ginjher was a woman back when she was a Breeder. Now she was just a Round, spouting oratory about the justness of Laws and the sanctity of a Constitution no one has read since it was locked away safely in the Great Hall. No longer able to walk into the hall, she sits upon the marble steps. Ginjher rose to speak and declared the couplings for this spring. Carefully, I listened, knowing no Mutant's name would be spoken.

The crowd parted. Fechtner strode away from the meeting. Her comely face strained into a grimace. I knew then what my ears could not inform me. Fechtner had been chosen to breed this year. She was to be a mother for Ginjher had spoken. Fechtner had been selected for Tobin.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was night. The second sun only filled a sliver of the horizon. I drew back my dark cloak to allow the sunlight to bathe my pale skin without burning. I

took off my shaded glasses to allow my eyes to see unfiltered. No beauty met my tired, weak eyes. I looked down the narrow alleys of Maldeen only to gaze upon horror.

I saw Tobin and two of his cronies. The two stood behind him. They passed a wineskin between them. Tobin did not stand alone. He stood with Fechtner. Fechtner was dressed as black a night without the second sun. And the brightest of winter stars gleamed in the jewelry at her earlobes. Tobin reached out his hand, still five-fingered, to grab her arm.

I knew this was wrong. I knew this, but what was a Mutant to do. The Rounds had chosen Fechtner for Tobin. What right did I have interfering in the decisions laid down by Law before the Great Hall? What choice did Fechtner have? If we, late of humanity and of earth, were to survive on Maldeen. If we were to await the ships of earth, what choice did we have?

— Grrr Arrgh! my voice cried out as I charged Tobin and his friends. I struck him in the face with my shovel. The others tried to grab at my oily clothes. I kicked one and drove the handle of my shovel into the belly of the other. Tobin lay on the ground, holding his hand the same hand which had grabbed Fechtner — to his bleeding mouth. I swung my weapon about to strike again and again and again. I was prepared to strike until they struck me dead. Tobin scrambled to his feet and ran off. The others followed. I held out my hand to Fechtner.

It was morning as I rose and cracked my bones back into place. Silently, I mouthed an 'excuse me' at the noise. Fechtner played no mind. We were in Murten's stable, where I usually sleep when I am in Maldeen. Fechtner stood, letting her horse blanket fall from her shoulders. Her dress was torn from where Tobin grabbed her and one of her two eyes was swollen and bruised. She straightened her shoulders and fixed her clothing about her, pulling at the skirt to make it fall right and brushing the hay from it. Not until she had completed priming, did she turn toward me and smile.

I limped over to the half-door of Murten's stable. I slowly opened it and glanced out into the harsh daylight. I feared to see a patrol, but none met my eye. We needed to get Fechtner out of Maldeen and to do it soon. I motioned toward my wagon of shit for the bio-mass turbines. Fechtner smiled again. She wrapped the blanket about her head and strode toward my cart.

Fechtner lay down on the wooden planks. A reed stuck in her nose and

placed secretly into the knots in the wood. My large ears could pick out the susurrus sound of her breath. I lay a oilskin on top of her, then began to shovel the bosontu waste on top of her. She coughed loudly as the stench struck her nose. I lifted the weight of my load into my hands and began to pull my wagon to the beacon and out of Maldeen.

The primary hung bright in the sky and I bundled my dark covering about me. I shielded my eyes from the sun. My calloused hands gripped the wooden handles of my wagon. I had a delivery to perform. Remember I was the power-man for the Beacon.

I approached the city gates. The guards looked me over with distaste as I neared. I scratched out a message on my board. I told them I had come for the fair and now had to power the beacon. They ignored me. I was just a shit shoveler. Even if I did that shoveling to serve the Beacon.

So Fechtner left Maldeen.

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Tobin and the other guards stood by the city gates. They tossed dice, barely giving the passersby a glance. Holding out his hand, Tobin stopped me. He let a Round pass before a Mutant. I looked up to meet his face. Did he know that it was my shovel which broke his nose and ruined his pretty, Breeder's face? Tobin did not return my glance; I was but a Mutant. I set my hunchback shoulders and pulled my wagon and its treasures out of Maldeen. I planted my feet upon the path toward the cliffs and the woods.

I reached the foot of the Beacon tower. It was set on a cliff overlooking the turquoise Great Sea. Purple land-algae clung to the rock face. The Beacon was sending out its message in binary tones. It is always sending out its message. Often have I wondered what it tells the stars. I was just a power-man. I had not heard the message. Did it speak the truth electronically into the great night? Did it relay the truth about we poor sons and daughters of the earth? The truth that we are either born Mutants or become Rounds when the swelling starts.

I did not stop at the Beacon but pointed my wagon toward the woods which rest beyond even the tower. As I pulled up my wagon of treasure through the woods, I heard the adagio beat of the strings.

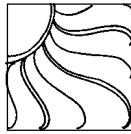
Fechtner stood on the grey rocks playing her fiddle. All the children crowded around her. I placed my bundle upon the ground. As Fechtner's beat grew faster, I slowly unrolled the old, stained linings. I unrolled and unrolled until one of the children lay smiling upon the ground. The child blinked its red eyes at me. This child was born secretly in the Mutant quarters. As had all of Fechtner's other wards.

I limped back to my wagon for I had work to do; I powered the Beacon.  
*And Fechtner, she played her fiddle barefoot.*



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MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



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