



Candor ends paranoia.

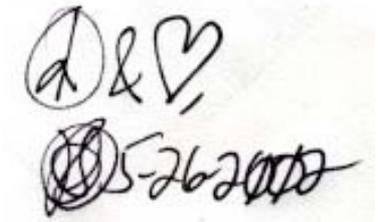
—Allen Ginsberg

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 'Soulard, Jr.' and a date '5-26-2010' written in a cursive script.

Ray Soulard, Jr.
Editor & Publisher
Scriptor Press

Scriptor Press Sampler
no. 2
2000 Annual

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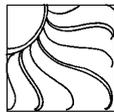
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Scriptor Press Sampler is published frequently by
Scriptor Press, 32 Newman Rd., #2, Malden, MA 02148
cenacle@mindspring.com
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Edited by Ray Soulard, Jr.
Cover art by Barbara Brannon

MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



SCRIPTOR PRESS
2000

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 musem, 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

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

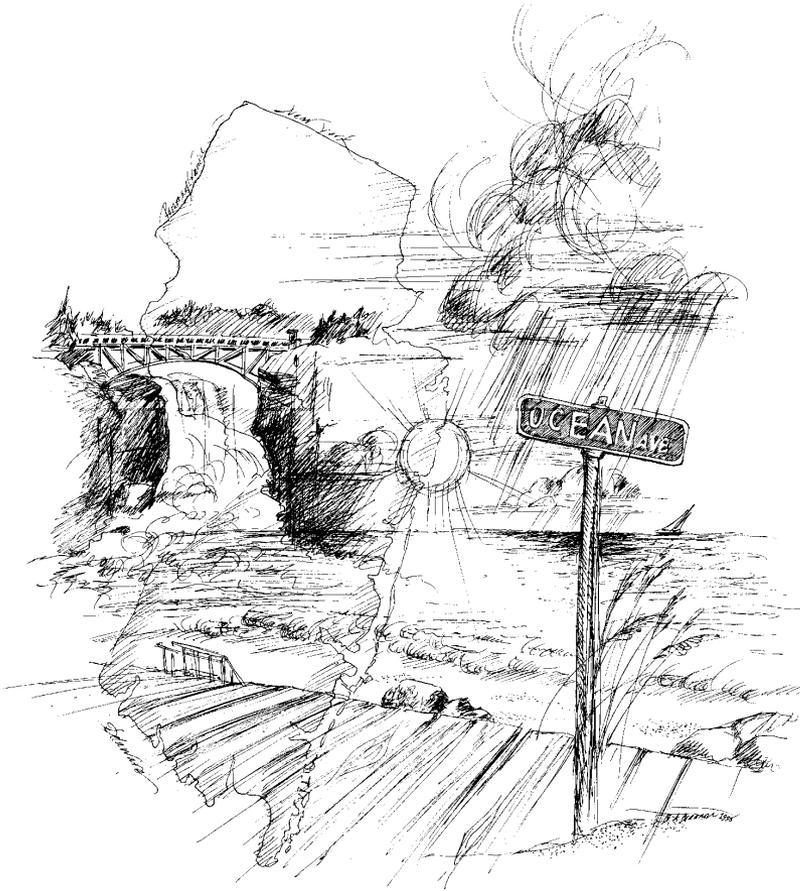
I

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

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. . .

IV

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.

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.

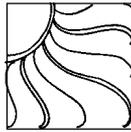
Fechtner stood on the grey rocks playing her fiddle. All the children crowded around her. I placed my bundle upon the ground. As Fechtner's beat grew faster, I slowly unrolled the old, stained linings. I unrolled and unrolled until one of the children lay smiling upon the ground. The child blinked its 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.



This book is set in the Sabon Roman and Textile fonts
in PageMaker 6.5 on the Macintosh G4 computer.

MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



SCRIPTOR PRESS
2000

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