

Table of Contents

Read First	2
Daniel Gallik	4
Dirk van Nouhuys	6
James Steeber	13
Joshua Martin	18
Kit Knight	32
Maura Gage Cavell	35
Mykola Dementiuk	41
Nathan Anderson	173
Randy Russell	181
Ric Carfagna	191
Richard Freeman	201
Richard Kostelanetz	270
Tom Ball	286
Vernon Frazer	460

Welcome to issue #100 of PBW.

We come out twice a year, June-July and December-January, except during Plague Years, and all rights revert back to our generous (albeit unpaid and, by now, quite tired of waiting) authors. How we ever made it to issue 100 with me still being alive, I'll never know.

Our next issue will appear, magically, on your computer, in June-July as who wants to stand in line at the post office when anyone around you could be spreading the bird flu or listening to hip-hop - it was so much easier back when it was only the syph that did in a generation of French poets and novelists.

Poets are permitted to send their work on paper, but my patented two-fingered typing will no longer permit me to attempt anything much longer than a few short poems or three.

All writing and art work can be sent to us via e-mail, at BNI@AOL.COM - traditionalists can still reach us at:

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Feel free to make copies of PBW for family and friends, or even put it out on the net, though that might incur the wrath of the cancelling class.

Anyway, see you again in July.

One Time I Saw Ohio's State Fair For A Day

by Daniel Gallik

Ten miles ago I asked this girl
At the concession stand if she
Knew any good looking ladies.
She scoffed, "I don't know you
Or wish to. In fact, I'll call a cop
To see if he can put you in jail."
That told me she wanted a date.
Girls don't want you unless ya
Wanna kid or two. This lady's
Name was Figoora. She told

Me she's Yiddish and part Riga-
Maro. She laughed at me then.
She said she liked babies that
Stayed like babies. I told her
I wanted to marry a lady who

Never aged. She said her last
Five husbands all died of leg
Problems. I told her that was
The reason I got my legs cut
Off back when I drove a limo.

The Empty Square

by Dirk van Nouhuys

A skinny man, skinny like a twisted tree, approached along the dusty side walk. The Pencil Man saw first his worn tennis shoes on the concrete, raised his eyes to worn blue jeans and a camouflage shirt and then a narrow purposeful face with a large, sharp nose.

The skinny man knelt down to the Pencil Man and said, “Are you Brendon Whiteweed?”

The Pencil Man glanced into the mirror. He always pretended he wasn't a quick read.

“Sometimes.”

“Mike Pepper said I should talk to you.”

“Buying or selling?”

“I'm not buying.”

“Who did you say?”

“Mike Pepper,” he enunciated.

“Are you from the Lost Coast.”

“Sometimes.”

“Are you carrying?”

“That wouldn’t be very smart.”

The Pencil Man nodded as if the question of smart vs. dumb were too dumb to consider.

“No, I just want to know how the land lies.”

The Pencil Man shrugged and named two prices. The skinny man assumed one for kilos of leaf and the other for buds.

“That’s bricks.” The the Pencil Man added.

As he was speaking, a tall plumpish, smiling college girl dressed in a white cashmere sweater, and a knee-length pleated black skirt came up. The Pencil Man raised a finger. The new comer reached down and gently slapped it aside.

“Take it easy,” the Pencil Man said to her and she stepped back waiting patiently but not deferentially.

“Can I count on that?” the skinny man continued.

“It’s different different days,” the Pencil Man said.

“What if I came somewhere Tuesday of next week. Not here.”

We could make a deal for an address then, after I check it with Mike. Check back here.”

“No problem.”

The skinny man stood, turned, and smiled at the tall girl.

She smiled back briefly, bent, and spoke a few quiet words with the Pencil Man.

When she stood, the skinny man asked her: “Would you like a cup of coffee?”

“A cup of coffee?”

“That’s all I have to offer.”

“Sure,” she said, “A cup of coffee.”

“Is there somewhere around here?”

“I know a place; it’s a couple of blocks.”

The college girl looked down at the Pencil Man as if he had spoken to her. He hadn’t, but he eyed the mirror severely.

“Back in an hour,” the college girl said.

The Pencil Man nodded, not understandingly.

After a few steps the skinny man said, “Hi, my name is Albilio Castro” and held out his hand. She shook his hand and said Celia Andersen. They walked together to the edge of the campus and turned left to a cafe that had a wooden figure of a Spartan outside the door. Inside it was a creamy, slightly dingy space with eight tables and a counter behind which a black woman not in a waitress uniform but in blue jeans and a checkered shirt was reading a book. The bell rang when they entered and she raised her eyes and gestured for them to take any table. A big glass box on the counter displayed an array of doughnuts. The tables had

Formica tops and each had salt, pepper, and sugar containers and a pump napkin holder. The skinny man took a seat facing the door. The waitress came to them and they ordered coffee and doughnuts.

The skinny man said to Celia, "You're quick."

"That's secrete, when did you notice?"

"The way you talked to the Pencil Man."

Celia scanned Albilio. She did not so much look him over as take him in. He was skinny, alert, and often shifted his eyes, first to her, then to the interior of the cafe, then to the street outside and the green grass and brick buildings of the campus beyond. She felt his eyes always return to her.

"Do you come here often?"

"No, I just walk by it."

"Are you really a student?"

It seemed to her a gentle question.

"Yes."

"Full time?"

"Yes." She took off her glasses and put them on the table.

"Where are you from?"

"I grew up here?"

"What are your parents like?"

“I don’t know.” Celia explained briefly her enigmatic origin. “So I don’t know what they do.” After Tenor told her about her parents, in Junior highschool, she had sometimes thought about where they had lived, and by extension what they did, as a child considers occupations, soldier, sailor, Indian chief. Yes, because of the unknown circumstances, she considered Indian chief. But ‘growing up’ she’d stopped thinking about that until now. Now, they must be old and doing something Where? what?’

“Are you mad at them?”

She smiled at Albilio as if trying to make up for dissing him. She had an impulse to reach for her glasses but pursed her lips instead.

“Do you like your parents?” She asked.

“I hate them,” he said, “but that’s not what I want to talk about.”

‘How can he just say that?’ she thought but said. “But you know them.”

“And they know me. But what about the people who raised you?”

Celia shrugged. “They aren’t like me. You know those beetles that have evolved to look just like ants and slip into anthills where the ants feed them?”

“Who have you loved.”

“Really loved?”

Albilio nodded, keeping eye contact.

“Like, like, I don’t know.”

“Is that because no one has loved you?”

“Like, they, my, what should I call them, adoptive parents, they loved me in their way, like a dark cave.”

Albilio mused. “Is there anything in that cave?”

“A hot stone.”

They fell silent stirring their coffee cups, in his case empty. Celia noticed his spoon turning in the empty air and that she had said to him, ‘a hot stone’ and he had not seemed confused. It made her feel comfortable.

“I want to apologize to you.”

“What for?” asked Celia surprised.

“Have you met Sophia’s — Veronique’s mom’s — friend, they guy in the worn brown suit with the soft fedora?”

Celia wrinkled her brow

“His name is Mac O’Neil.”

“Like, yes, I think so, but I don’t remember very well.”

“He has a system, a path for seducing women.”

“Oh yeah?” the idea of system roused her interest.

“It involves asking certain questions, about feelings and memories, and avoiding others.”

“How do you know that?”

“He explained it to me. Man to man. But he would explain it to you if you asked him. He’s proud of it. I want to apologize. I’ve been practicing on you. You deserve better.”

“Thank you,” she said.

He stopped stirring the air, laid his spoon next to the cup, and his hand beside it.

“*You* deserve much better.” He stressed ‘you’ as if there were a world of other women who deserved nothing.

“How do you know that?”

“Listen to yourself,” he said.

A Meeting Of Minds

The Joys of an Art Museum

by Jams Steeber

Occasionally, I visit the Museum of Modern Art, thanks to one of my employers offering free admission there. It's quite a bargain, in that the usual cost is about \$30. I don't do it enough, as the walk is a little tiring for a work schedule, but days where I can just make it to West 53rd Street are usually rewarded with one renewable surprise. That surprise? Art enlivens the mind.

It's not just the experience of leaping over crowds waiting in long lines. It's much more of what happens once inside the familiar trappings of the museum, past the Bell-47 helicopter suspended from the ceiling and the gigantic two-story installations of contemporary creators, plus the video screens comprising entire walls, attempting to shock and challenge.

I walk or ride up to the fifth floor, as I did on my last visit, and eventually see some of the most celebrated sculptural and

painterly art ever produced in the known world. At times, on some visits, I spend more time watching the watchers – seeing where they stop, seeing what they capture with a device and move on, sometimes noting where they put down and rest in front of a work. Finally, my own dialogue emerges where I realize I’m standing before an actual Picasso or Brancusi, de Chirico, or Van Gogh. On this last visit I stared at the swirls of paint in *Starry Night*, during a momentary lull where otherwise deep crowds might intercede. There it was in all its still-new brightness, colors as fresh as on the day they were applied. The protective non-reflective glass was doing its best to vanish completely, helping the illusion that one could reach forward and feel the texture of the paint.

I said to myself, “I’m looking right at a Van Gogh painting”, remarking at the stunning availability of this and other works, if I would only walk over to see them.

Back at work, I generally would not have the opportunity to look right at a Van Gogh painting. That painting, brighter than any possible reproduction, took me back to a state of order in its stillness containing its vibrant kinetic will. This is why they all had flown in from around the world and why they were so keen to capture it in some way – to take the magic back home with them. I could walk the magic back to work ten blocks away.

When I did get back to my job, I could feel the transformation of possibility. I had seen particular works arranged in a room as not before – famous artists influenced in a certain era by the others, only later to break free in direction, never to return to that point of singularity. It was frozen communication but contemporary in feeling, so well-preserved, as in the moment I stepped into the room. “All of this – available to me?” I thought. It was like arriving in the great city anew. As a musician in dance education, that day I was aware that inspiration was a little easier to find and trust, thanks to the combing and liberating quality of great art.

This makes, as I often ruminate, a case for the inner life – the imagination. The galleries in a great museum, per one of the hackneyed terms of the day, are “curated”. They are carefully prepared. One may notice that framed works on walls are placed evenly throughout the room. In some rooms, as in the case of the longest waterlily rendering of Claude Monet (41 feet) a single work may be the only thing on the wall. That allowance of space is precious in a city that doesn’t allow much space or even the ability to stand and watch.

In preparing to write this article, I looked through my image library and found a photograph I had taken in 2012 at MoMA. It was of a “Self Portrait” by Charles Sheeler, painted in 1923. Sheeler liked industrial themes as with his “Stacks in Celebration”

from 1954, which I had enjoyed at the Dayton Art Institute when I lived in that city. Here was something intimate coming from an artist I liked.



My 2012 photograph of Charles Sheeler's 1923 "Self Portrait". I only recently realized I was in the picture, along with the artist.

Going back to the photograph, I was surprised to realize that I had inadvertently superimposed myself into the work. What I initially thought was the subject of the self-portrait was in fact me, holding up a small camera. The artist, I noticed only a moment later, was standing to my right, even overlapping me. The non-reflective glass had deftly inserted me into the picture. Because of the dark and light hues, I only appeared in the window pane, just

like Sheeler in his smock, suit, and tie. I couldn't have been happier to be seen in his work, if only for a visit.

In summary, a good museum (even a great one) like the Museum of Modern Art can provide a sense of calm, order, and control, even through displays of chaos and disharmony. The galleries are places of safety where thought and imagination are the principal commodities. Your inner thoughts meet the arts' inner thoughts. And nobody tells you to move along. What could be better?

Manufactured Retina Task

by Joshua Martin

EXTRA!

TEXTURE! => =>

relentlessly opaque bunions

in surprised models [duck

, cover

, overwhelming

risk scrolling

extended

VARIATIONS] =>

\ And been willing To Optimize Crowded Dangling /

: token

& content

& "Who wants to rearticulate cement?" : => :

originally published

as N=U=M=B // // // //

fixity

blushing
intruding
attested
built-in
insides // // // //

, spatter correlations

fishing IN=SO=FAR-AS

waving radiant

hauntings mourn

publicity postulations

relative to heliotropes

(passing thematics)

(factories embalmed)

^ ##### ^ =>

MoVe

&

LiT

&

DrUggInG SYNTAX =>

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swiftly discreet, in=alert, solicited,

central to anarchic hedging copiesl,

, , , , , , , , , %age? SwEEpInG

dRuG SToRe

PolluTiON, , , , , , , , ,

sTiCkY / a lozenge FoR dreaming / / / /

hostage

component embedded in

NuDiTy

] :::

elementary training wheels

legally bequeathed, valiantly arid,

peR aN

adjective TiLTed

, far OFF,

STAND=OFF / / / / /

((((^

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^))))):

‘Too Much Mechanical Machination’

∴,

∴, / => dilatory

passage

breeding

exhibitions

like coins

In The

TaNk of deluded

schemes =>

] >>>>> \ un=open=ed veracity / <<<<< [,

quarreling zombies

flinching beneath perceptive

subscriptions

, (let

'em

WEEP), =>, =>, =>,

residual tickling

LUMPS

: stunted

: ovER GROWN :

Starved To The Point

of curving fractures

Nodding Nylon Suspenders Grieving

stomach overlapping

rented carpets sleeping through emphatic & isolating

gears of stunted rendezvous gadgets : contracted

gazes, halitosis,

verging, clockwork

attractions / (radial

chasms pleading ignorance) // plotting

vertical charms, braced against thermal vitamins

: ABOVE

/ in a prism, avoided,

local shards of glancing

MAXIMUMS \ => => ,

sipped & trained & tumbled & drooped :

debilitating laughter like acidic braincells swelling

beneath tub => injunctions! => RaBiD Soll ! =>

spectacular clues

scarred sui generis

placards : sprained

IN

CONTAGION

operatives :

draining spinal inertia apparatus hatred channeling

residential ennui, musty pelvic smears, elliptical

matters never justifying supple verves fraught,

sour, wanton polemic tides // // // // =>

debris,
pasted, geometric fixtures
wearing tacit frugality, (un=
correct=ed sTOOpinG stasis) = / = / = / exceeding
severed heads, NaTiVe
ToNaL
DoCtRInE = (!) = (flexed?) =
I try an oven, invent a masterclass
devoid of shivering matchstick cornea I ,,,, , trained
inside out : wishful skilled pouncing muscles
make the eyes scrounge for negated avenues : 'What
resembles lust anyway?????' : scanned sewage
must have offered mysterious weeping toupees,
manic televised salt mines
invoking gestured caulk =>
[how, then, a symptomatic
gnome covered in arm
hair] => crowned a
landscape of misted penmanship caves :
chanson /
relic /
frothy diameter plugged with
solidifying egg routines , mastered toenail

dribbling hangnail glasses , ‘What hangs beneath
the rotating turmoil of a lazy grasshopper spleen?????’

bottled bookcase

shivering gawking

chimney gossip

columns : thoughtless,

basement targets living in patches of silly goalposts

pronouncing unpleasantries, graphically allegorical,

maple rectangular puppets : : : :

grapple, dubbed,

civilization of

SUBTITLES, , , , ,

charted birdseed lipsticks / (potato

arguments thinking of mushrooms),:

regardless of a baked

sense of rustic gravitational

ice cream fenceposts.

Distinct Colloquial Goosebumps

tEEmlng rAw obituaries equally

inventing DREAM = SCAPES, [as the

ream of
erasures
begin
programming
multi-dimensional
PIPE=LINE=S],

to rest in the ToNaLiTy, instead

(resampled reading largess) => via

freely associative

collapsing,,,,,

after impulse /

after dumping explosions resist wordy selections

/ => => (prefaced, as in seconds,

scorching outlooks

unless a common

preoccupation drinking

cyanide causality) <= <= / ;;;;;;;;

an accumulation of LiMbS

talking in whispered ToNeS,

scratched MooNs of grammatical framing devices

, malfunctioning crisis,,

lowly narration,,,

kinetic palms blocking forcefields

and rhythmic visualizations . . . in rigid

colors <<< ,

objective destructive impulses

(a living change machine) // (walking upright

/// =>

hence, an attraction,

by FoRcE :: adlibbed confrontations

::: , aching staring magazine emptiness, :::

PolnTiNg

AT

A

VACUUM,

INTENSE

sTaRrInG

P

I

L

L

A : > sauce

R : facsimile

S : dryer < , , , ,

cyclonic shame

, quizzical balancing AcT,

into an envelope,

crystals feeding themselves

sausage fragments,

) / = facial blossoms begin

To Dance Fandangos = / (:

even

eating

streaked

oranges >>>> a mop

imposed

upon facets <<<<<

failure

is the prevalent,,,,,

tactful soothsayers beholden

to scratched livers (spoons

subsumed

by NOTIONS)

=> escape is a hemisphere

and fiasco takes the pressure

to articulate an inscribed

semblance of disintegration

quavering sinkhole oracle

teething hungered proofs
near sampled freeways of
whiplash frenzies until
glossy stars appear twisted
in charted and thunderous
applause. that which has
been wafted. nightly debris
desiring lashing tongue baths
in an unheard-of swamp.
exploding pictorial wallpaper.

enigmatic building pressurized
brainstem recording pulses
placed in pale registration blast
both unfulfilling and pounding
without support. a sentence of
unstructured greatness collapsing
escapade. starlets and diversions
and the so-called perched verge
spinning watery shoving masses.

[right= hug
ly] huge
>un=suspect alive

(ed)(ing) carrier

DiStAnT limbs

speak

without penetrating

graveyard mollusks / = \ question

marks

BeNd

grOO

vIn

g

tOOth

dEcAy symbolic

muster => => =>

Whose

/ assailing doors

discarded happily,

compostable fading

LuCkY STArS

(faraway behind a jaunty

dim=witted

chain link)

Or =

UN=BRIDL=ED

hello, how'd it

EnD Up ThiS

WaY ?

? ? ? ?

you

ng por

tion

of a StOOl => =>

indifference boxing gloves clutch
almond proclivities. likewise
posted at a noon showerhead
snarling a dossier. pancake or
a hand grenade permit. Spore
and forensics and tiered at a
starving pericope. repercussion.

Recent. By widening gaps.

By [airshaft] [carrying

what

through=out

what?],

destiny wisteria

boasted passions

::

:: serenading apologies

, abilities

, an archipelago happenstance

SP

RI

NG => => ^^^^

(, [colorful YeasT MiRRoR] of

the sad remnants

of a posterboard

highly cultured

and sorrowfully

aesthetic) => =>

ONE

HAND STARTS BY

DANGLING, another

squatting

package

behaving As If Already

DESTROYED.

Last Words by Kit Knight

Upon viewing his adult nephew's body in the cheap coffin, the elderly man took off his hat & wrapped his arm around his sobbing sister softly saying, "He'd had enough." Joe had been an honor student & a star in two high school sports but had come home from Iraq a drug addict. He immediately married & went thru rehab, went back to some desert, returning to a busted marriage & more drugs. He broke multiple bones in a drunken motorcycle accident spending months in hospitals before coming home in a wheelchair. Joe's weary sister stood next to her weeping mother as her uncle spoke & altho Donna had to strain to hear his words, it was the best and kindest summary of a suicide she'd ever heard.

Thinning Hair

For over two years I've been
a resident of an assisted living
facility & have multiple problems
but missing hair isn't
one of them. Half of the old women here
have thinning to really noticeable
bald spots. Jen's inch wide nude streak
runs from her forehead to the center of
the back of her skull. Shocking
in her Raggedy Ann thatch. Several
wear knitted caps & I've never
seen any of those ladies minus
a hat. Some mornings, Pam rushes
for the dining hall & her cap
goes missing so calmly dines
w/a rust colored towel
draping her head, reddish edges
almost skimming
her eggs. Sometimes
—silent company—
Dee Dee brings a doll
to meals & if her hair isn't

pulled back in a bouncy
ponytail, Dee pins a floppy
red paper rose next to
her bald spot. Can't imagine why
she wants to draw attention
to it & I'm certainly not
going to ask. Maybe she thinks
it does the opposite & maybe
she's right.

She Loves Weddings

by Maura Gage Cavell

She says she loves weddings as
her father offers her career
advice. Sun streams in a blinding
way. She says she will consider
all he's said. She's leaving to meet
up with a friend, the city scape
silhouetted against a blue sky.
Her friend was not alone when she
met her at the restaurant, no,
and she did not care for the set-
up situation, so she walked
out into the night air, neon
city lights shining on her hair
as she caught a taxi back home.

As Winter Melts Away

As winter melts away and she reassesses herself, her goals, her hopes, her former dreams, she thinks of him and now feels ready, but she's hurt him, and she does not know where to look, nor what to say if she did find him, so she sits on a half iced over park bench, and watches water as it courses along, partly icy, partly flowing. Suddenly, a man who was on a run through the park, sees her and stops to talk. She cannot fathom he's real and there with her.

She Grew Afraid

When winter came along with its own dark song, she grew fearful of something so right. She pulled away, went somewhere inside the shell of doubt and rocked shut. He called and he knocked, but she was like a bolted door—locked, and he never had a key, apparently. He texted, sent cards, and gifts, talked to her friends, pleaded with her mother, prayed to the stars and the heavens. asked his pastor for advice, his friends what to do, but still there was no reply. Defeated, he tried to forget.

A Kind One Came Along

There was something soft in his voice when he first came up to her as she stood in a circle of friends at a theater in a nearby city where he lived. He was suddenly there in her world, fitting in, making her laugh, never pressuring her. He was the kind who brought flowers, pulled out a chair, opened doors, made sure to offer her his jacket, put his arm out to wrap around her chair back just to offer her security, his presence, his warmth—right so far.

She Dated the Wrong One

He was everything that made
her cringe, every muscle tight
against the embarrassment she
felt—and at her friend’s party, too.
Under the streamers of silver
and red, her blushing cheeks could not
hide her misery—crimson blooms
as he became rowdy and drunk.
She didn’t know where to turn nor
how to escape this scene as toasts
were made and champagne showered all.
She kept looking for an exit,
hoped for a curtain call, but no
one swooped her away to safety.

Winter Wonder

She realizes she can see at
night when there’s snow on the ground. She
realizes this is a sign as
the crunching beneath her boots keeps

her company and she finds she's
at his door. As he opens it
and she steps inside, they stand by
his glowing fireplace and hold
each other and kiss. The tension
from before has slipped away; she
feels secure as they talk as they
really listen and understand each
other. They're both ready now,
Winter wonders sprinkling magic.

Bookstore Clerk

by Mykola Dementiuk

To Amos Lassen, a great scribe and my friend.

Author's Note

Once upon a time, bookstores were everywhere. They were very numerous in New York City, some neighborhoods even boasting ten or twenty. In Greenwich Village, the East Village, the Upper West Side, and in between, they sometimes stood side by side, and people flocked in to read and buy books. Books were a way of life to many of us, but that's all gone now. Some claim they're "reading" when they read Kindle's or Nook's. But is electronic reading the same as reading a real book,

holding it, turning its pages, caressing the story word by word, really getting into the grit of the writer's work? I think not; we've lost some of the wonder that comes from a story on a printed page, giving it up to electronics, the wave of the future, the wave of the NOW! Sadly, I am a Kindle reader, as well.

This is a story of a bookstore clerk in the late 1960's, a lover of books; nothing profound or romantic about it, just one guy getting by as best he could. You could say...

Chapter 1

It was the late 1960's, and I was working at Doubleday Book Store as a stock boy on 5th Avenue and 53rd Street, traveling each day on the F train, which I caught a few blocks

away from my rooming house on 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. I'd catch the train on Houston Street, taking it up to 53rd Street, and Doubleday's was right there, just one subway stop, really, and what could be better?

The bookstore clerks would greet me, smiling and nodding, though others aloofly stared past me. Many of the female clerks would offer me a "Good morning, sweetie," to which I'd mumble "Morning," blushing and red-faced, and hurry down to the basement which was my work area: delivery, packing, stockroom.

Which really wasn't that bad. I had worked at other bookstores over time, Brentano's, Scribner's on 5th Avenue. But I'd been at Doubleday for over a year, and I could wear what I wanted, jeans and a T-shirt, unlike the upstairs staff who were required to dress in jackets and neckties while the female staff had to wear sedate and presentable skirts or dresses. After all, this was a bookstore, and a librarian's attire was preferred. Yet

sometimes a female clerk with an early date would dare to wear a low-cut or very tight blouse, which kept a few customers wideeyed and browsing longer than they might have. Mr. Jennings, the supervisor, would frown and have a word with the woman, but he never sent anyone home to change. And they always dressed modestly again the next day, which seemed to please Mr. Jennings. You could always tell when he was upset, because he narrowed his eyes.

I'd walk down to the stockroom; there were six or seven packing clerks in the basement, all of them packing books, filing books on shelves or shipping them out to bibliophiles all over the country. When a delivery truck from a publisher dropped off a truckload of bestsellers, the stockroom boys would be busy for a few hours helping unload them to inventory or carrying them to the stacking area; tiring work but very gratifying, at least for me. At lunchtime some would scurry to delis for sandwiches or trek on up to Central Park and toke on joints before heading back to

Doubleday. I went with them a few times and took a few hits of someone's joint, but I always erupted in a fit of coughing and gagging; the marijuana cigarettes just didn't agree with me.

"You're a fag pussy," sneered Danny, another stockroom guy sucking the joint and holding it in.

I shrugged but went to the park less and less with them, just watching as they returned all befuddled and giggling, very stoned.

My weeks went by, but on Friday mornings the expectation of what I'd be doing there that night only increased as soon as the subway drew near the 42nd Street stop, dropping off its passengers. I knew I'd be back on 42nd Street that evening and hated how slowly the hours passed, tick tock, tick tock, tick tock... On and on, I'd be staring at the clock up on the wall, glaring at any clerk who had something to say, intruding on my expectant, horny thoughts of Times Square, of what I'd be doing there that night or who I'd be doing it with. I normally didn't care about the other clerks, Danny being an obnoxious pest, laughing

and sneering at everyone. I'd just let it go, let them sneer and laugh however they wanted, but on Fridays I would be sexually hard up; what else was there in life? Looking at their stupid expressions made me very tense; a few times I almost blew up at how they acted around me. But I didn't, thankfully. I just gritted my teeth and kept on working, packing up book after book. Pretty soon I knew I'd be where I wanted to be, in Times Square, just looking for a hand or mouth ready to take me in.

Ever since I discovered the ready sexuality of Times Square, I'd been drawn to the movie theaters, the sexual lust, the heady satisfaction—and the quick flight afterwards. That's why I was drawn to those sleazy movie houses. Nothing was permanent. A few strokes, a quick insertion in a mouth, a fluttered sucking and swallowing, followed by a hurried spitting out and gagging. Usually I'd be gone by then; no way did I want to listen to someone gagging, especially when it was my scum that was being spat out. Ugh! I'd quickly scurry away as he

gagged his guts out in the flickering darkness as still another masturbating stranger hovered in the nearby darkness.

One day, just after I'd bought my movie ticket and was making my way to the lobby and to the concession stand so I could get an orange drink or cola with some candy, in the mirror behind the brightly-lit soda machines I saw, much to my surprise, Mr. Jennings, my Doubleday bookstore supervisor, entering the Pix movie house. I turned so he wouldn't see my face. The Pix was once an elegant theater, with wide balconies and lush décor, but now it was slowly fading away, with peeling paint and scum-smearred bathrooms. I grinned to myself; seeing Mr. Jennings certainly was a surprise. He was always stern at work and I never thought he'd be at a Times Square porno house, but that's exactly where he was, horny old Mr. Jennings. I grinned and watched him walk quickly to a stairway and disappear up into the balcony. I waited a few moments, eating some of my candy, but then I went up to the upper level. I knew that I

wouldn't see him in the darkness, but I also knew that he would recognize me if he was looking my way. I headed toward an available seat, making a scene when I spilled some soda.

“Oh, shoot,” I said loudly, and some candy fell out of the box. If he hasn't seen me by now, I thought, maybe he doesn't want to recognize me. I shrugged and ate the candy, watching the dumb sex movie, same as was playing a week ago, with nylon-clad women who always brought in an audience—more or less the same audience every time.

It didn't take long, a tit going into a mouth, a hand on an ass, when I heard someone entering my row of seats. I looked up; it was Mr. Jennings with a bemused, surprised smile on his lips. In the quivering darkness he fell into a seat beside me and whispered, “What are you doing here?” as he batted his eyelashes at me.

I shrugged and quietly answered. “I don't know; eating candy and watching the film, I suppose. What are you doing

here?”

Again he lecherously winked at me, gripping my knee.

“Same as you, honey. Film any good?” he asked. “Or is it just filthy naughtiness?”

Surprisingly, with his arm on my kneecap I felt myself getting even harder than I was before, my penis throbbing at his touch. I moved to relieve my cock, protruding in my pants.

“You want some?” I asked, holding up the candy box. He looked at me.

“Yes, I would,” he answered, pretending to reach for the candy, then reaching for my erection. I melted as I felt him struggling with the zipper. I quickly set the candy box down and easily pulled my zipper open. He instantly reached in and gripped my stiff erection, holding it out and pulling the skin up and down. I didn’t know how incredibly horny I was but in just a few strokes I erupted, doubling over, my semen shooting out onto his wrist and hand, still gripping my stiff, dribbling penis. I

didn't think that it could be happening this way; barely fifteen minutes ago I'd ejaculated onto another man about to suck me off, yet here I was spilling myself once again on another, Mr. Jennings. It proved that I must be sexually sick or I must really like him. I turned very red; good thing it was dark or Mr. Jennings would have seen how ashamed I was.

"So sorry," I muttered, putting myself back into my pants.

He brought out some tissues from his jacket pocket and gave me one, wiping his fingers on another. I was about to toss the scummy tissue to the floor when he took it from me, wiped his lips on it, then flicked it aside.

"Ooh, that's gross," I muttered, squirming from him.

"Oh, bosh," he said. "What's so gross about it? I'd lick and suck you any time, kiddo."

I looked at him, narrowing my eyes.

"You would? But you're always so cold at work, so unfriendly, you know?"

“Hmm. You mean, stiff?”

I smirked.

“Bet you’re stiff right now, are you?”

He cleared his throat and look around, gripping my knee once again.

“Let’s get out of here, let’s get something to eat and drink, all right?”

“But you just came in.”

He shrugged.

“Saw the film yesterday, and the day before. Gets boring after a while.”

I was surprised.

“You were here? I was here last week,” I laughed. “Same film was playing then, too.”

“It’s a good place to meet young men, old men,” he shrugged and winked. “Isn’t that why you’re here, to meet someone?”

Once more I reddened but nodded. He squeezed my knee

and we both got up, leaving the Pix.

Chapter 2

On busy, people-filled 42nd Street I immediately saw that he was dressed differently than he'd ever been at work—he'd obviously been home to change. Gone was the business suit. He was wearing a light tan summer jacket with bright orange pants and white loafers, a loose light greenish shirt billowing under the jacket. He looked right for happy Miami Beach, not the angry, explosive streets of New York City.

“Mr. Jennings, you've changed,” I said, smiling and looking him up and down.

“What, this?” he shrugged, glancing down at his clothes. “Can't expect me to be in business attire day and night, would you? Where's the fun in that?” And he winked at me.

Under his gaze I felt serene. I sighed as our shoulders touched occasionally, as we made our way down busy people and traffic-filled Broadway.

“Oh, let’s go there,” he gestured with his chin, while holding me by the elbow. “I just love the new Nathan’s that opened up, don’t you?”

Nathan’s Coney Island eatery had a new fast food restaurant on 43rd Street and Broadway that served frankfurters, French fries, corn on the cob, clams and other ocean-side delicacies popular at Coney Island. My mouth watered as we went through the doors of brightly-lit restaurant.

“Have you ever been here?” he asked, standing near the clam bar. “You can get anything you like,” and again he winked at me. “My treat.”

“Oh, Mr. Jennings, that’s very nice of you.” I felt warm and easy with him; if the restaurant wasn’t so filled with people I felt sure he would’ve kissed me.

“Call me Timmy,” he said. “We’re not at work any more, so there’s no need for formal names, is there?”

I smiled. “Yes, Timmy. I’m Billy.”

“Yes, I know, Billy the Filly,” he smirked at me.

I narrowed my eyes. “Why do you call me that?”

This time he turned red and lowered his voice.

“The way you walk, your ass held up high; you look like a horse in heat. The female clerks all call you Billy the Filly, a young buck in heat. That’s how I think of you, too. A nice name, ‘Billy the Filly,’ don’t you think?”

I hadn’t liked hearing the name at first, but after Mr. Jennings told me what he meant, I started to like it.

“So you have special names for us, do you?” I chuckled.

“We have some for you, too.” I blushed and turned away.

He looked at me.

“I would love to hear what you call me. Something naughty, I hope?”

I laughed, shaking my head.

“Never mind, you wouldn’t want to hear what they say.”

“Oh, really? But what do you call me?”

I lowered my voice.

“It’s them, not me. They call you names.” I was very red and lowered my voice, shrugging. “Fag, sissy, queer, cocksucker, you know. Asshole words that they don’t even know what they’re saying.”

He looked at me and sighed, shrugging.

“But you know what those words are, don’t you, like fag or cocksucker?”

I turned red.

“Mr. Jennings, I mean, Timmy, don’t say that, those are crude words.”

He proudly looked at me.

“I’m glad you’re not like them, Billy.” He grinned warmly and whispered. “After what we just did in the movie house, I’m

glad to know you're special." He beamed at me, "You're my special buck. Ride 'em, cowboy!"

We laughed as we stood in line for hot dogs and French fries, simple but hardy, plus two plastic glasses of Budweiser beer.

Most of the tables were loaded with customers, but we did find some vacant ones near the back by the pizza ovens, and we sat. The first sip of beer was surprisingly refreshing. I quickly grew to like it, the taste bitter but refreshing as we ate our franks and fries.

We talked about work, the benefits and negatives of being employed by Doubleday's.

"But I'm always in the back in the basement," I said, "I really don't get to see what goes on upstairs."

He looked at me, chewing.

"How long have you been there? A year, I take it?"

"A little over; a year and two months," I answered, biting

into my hot dog.

He looked at me.

“Ever think you might be ready for a change?”

I studied him; the beer was making me mellow. I stretched a leg, accidentally—or not so accidentally—touching his under the table. I pulled back, sitting up, but with the same leg he gently touched and rocked against mine; I tapped my leg against his.

“A change in doing what?” I asked, our two legs rubbing.

“Well, after a year in the stockroom it’s time to move up to the selling floor, don’t you agree?” He swallowed his beer and set the empty glass down. I did the same. “Would you like another glass of beer?” he asked. “Or we can go to my place. I have beer. We can relax and chat.” He winked and tapped my leg again, still holding his leg against mine. “How about it, you curious about what you might learn?”

I blushed but nodded and said, “Uh huh, curious. Very much so, Timmy.”

“That’s my boy, Billy,”

We got up and went outside, where we caught a cab and rode up to his apartment on 85th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

Chapter 3

Timmy had a fairly big apartment off Amsterdam Avenue but, in the evenings, he said, you had to be careful being out. “Muggers everywhere, which is why I always take cabs at night.”

I shrugged. It was dangerous in my Lower East Side neighborhood as well, but actually you could get mugged anywhere in New York City, up- or downtown; made no difference, really.

But I immediately loved his apartment. The table lamps and knick-knacks added a warm, welcoming feel to the rooms. I

instantly felt comfortably at home with him. I had never been in anybody's house before, getting my sexual gratification in movie theaters and restrooms. But being in his home was a big step forward, and with Timmy I felt relaxed, at peace with myself, and especially with him.

“Take your shoes off, kiddo,” he said, kicking his loafers off. “You want a beer or a glass of wine? I have hearty Burgundy.”

I hesitated, then decided. “Burgundy; sounds mellow enough.”

“Burgundy it is,” he said, and winked at me. I winked back. I took my shoes off and lazed on the couch, looking about the living room. The couch faced two windows above the street and at times you could hear cars passing by. Timmy returned, holding two glasses; he handed one to me. I took a sip, the wine biting at the back of my throat. But a tenderness came over me. Timmy sat on the couch and took a sip of wine. I took another sip. “So how about it, you ready to try it?” We had been

discussing his proposal in the cab, of my leaving the stockroom and taking my place on the selling floor. “Where you deserve to be,” he added, taking a deeper swallow of his wine, and winking at me as if he meant something completely different. I looked at him, taking in the wine; I was feeling giddy, what with the beer I’d had earlier.

“I don’t know; I really don’t have clothes for the position, just jeans and shirts, nothing formal like I would need, suits and ties, you know.”

“Oh, bosh,” he answered dismissively. “What size are you? You’re small, but with some tailoring my old suits will be a perfect fit for you.” He stood up and held out his hand. “Let’s go to my bedroom. You can try them on.” I shrugged, downed the little remaining burgundy and tried to stand, but I tottered backwards. “Oops,” he giggled, holding onto my hand, “Someone’s had too much to drink.”

“I know,” I said, feeling very dizzy. “And now he thinks

he's going to try on a suit and tie," I shook my head but successfully stood up and wobbled after him.

"What you need," he said, holding my shoulder, "is to get into bed and rest a while," and he leered at me, "with someone cuddling right beside you." I felt his lips close to me. But then I collapsed onto the bed, immediately passing out and sleeping. Even a little alcohol will do that when you're not used to it. I awoke in the night—I don't know how long I'd been out—my clothes had been removed and tossed on the floor helter-skelter.

Timmy was at my crotch, sucking my limp dick while jerking off his own. Like me, he was without any clothes but the hardness of his penis stirred me awake. I sighed loudly and he looked up at me; my cock quickly hardened. I saw his eyes brighten when he recognized that I was awake and growing harder. I wiggled my fingers and he instantly gripped my hand and squeezed. The warm feeling of his hand atop mine only

added to the incredible sexiness I was feeling; I would do anything for him, even wear a suit and tie if he wanted.

Without releasing my penis from his mouth I felt his torso shifting about, his legs moving closer to my face. Oh, no, I realized, he thinks I want to suck him, too! I turned my head slightly away from his penis which now throbbed close to my mouth. Sixty-nine was what he intended to do, but I had never sucked a man before and was very scared to do so now. Just then his penis spat out its scum, lashing my forehead and the sides of my face. It was cool and refreshing, and I suddenly felt I wanted it, too. I opened my mouth, sucking it in. His penis stayed in my mouth, throbbing and jerking as it relaxed. After a few moments it shrank down and I let it fall from my mouth.

Surprisingly, I had not been repelled by sucking his penis; amazing how simple it really was, as if I was made for just that!

He sat up and looked at me.

“You have dollops of cum on your face,” he gestured with

his fingers.

I shrugged.

“I don’t care, let it stay.”

He smiled and looked at me.

“It’s better if you rub it in, that way it will penetrate deep inside you.”

I shut my eyes.

“Oh, yes, please, rub it on me, all over my face.” And I felt his gentle fingers rubbing his scum deep on me. I had quickly become one with him, erasing my being in his existence. The feeling was heavenly!

“Stay with me tonight,” he whispered, “please. Don’t go anywhere.” He bit his lips and looked at me.

I instantly nodded.

“I have nowhere to go; I feel as if I’m at home with you, where I belong.”

He hugged me. “You’re home, baby, where we missed

you so very much.” He sadly shook his head. “I have no one else. You’re the only one in my life.”

His sweet kisses were a balm to my soul. Never before had I felt such love fill me as he again shifted to my crotch and presented his hard penis to me. I greedily opened my mouth, sucking it in and he did the same. The wonder wasn’t what I was doing to him, sucking his cock, but in what he was doing to me, sucking mine. Sixty-nine was glorious!

Through that evening and night I told Timmy of my past, how my father left and my mom wasn’t much into care-giving. How I had to grow up quickly on the tough Lower East Side streets, getting my education by a swift kick in the ribs or a punch in the mouth; by the time my high-school education should have been underway I had pretty much had stopped going to school. It was easy for the truant officers to lock me in a reformatory for chronic absentee kids: nothing but a worthless truant. Stayed there, more or less, until I was sixteen, seventeen,

almost two years, but by then I had learned how to really read and write, and had begun to learn how to behave myself, not letting myself be influenced by the street kids trying to drag me into prison or even worse. My life on the street had taught me one thing: that it's no life at all. Little by little I was accepted back into society, had a place to stay, a rooming house, and a job which kept me out of trouble, except for visiting the movie houses of Times Square, where I recognized Mr. Jennings, Timmy, my supervisor, who was to become my utter dreamboat. Timmy held my shoulder, patting me every now and then, as I related my sad story.

“I don't want to go back there; reform school for kids is very much like prison is for adults.”

He looked at me.

“Why? Did someone say something about your going to reform school?”

I shook my head.

“No, but the fear is always with me. I’m always afraid something could go wrong and there I’d be, back in the reformatory.”

He sternly answered.

“Not while I’m around. If anyone threatens you, they’ll have to deal with me, and I’m a formidable force.”

We looked at each other. Yes, I thought, this was what I needed, someone to protect me. That’s what I had been craving and seeking my entire life, a protector. And I thought I had finally found him.

Our lips met and I melted into him.

Chapter 4

When I awoke, it was about ten a.m. It being a Saturday, I

was off from the bookstore, though Mr. Jennings was on duty. He'd woken up before 8 a.m. while I'd stayed in bed. Saturday was a busy day for book sales. We'd discussed it last evening.

“Just relax,” he had said, “it’s your day off, why do anything? I’ll be back after five.”

I stretched, enjoying the lovely pink and lavender sheets—feminine, I thought, or at least definitely queer. I frowned. That was dumb; can bed sheets be indicative of one’s sexuality? So I was queer, I knew that, but the crew in the bookshop stockroom didn’t; well, they’d find out soon enough. Downstairs the stockroom boys knew everything about the upstairs crew, who was straight, who was queer and who was certainly a sick pervert—mostly someone that they didn’t like. It was the usual workers’ gossip. Mr. Jennings was definitely a queer, besides the other fags employed there. I reddened, shaking my head. Just a queer, I thought, that’s what I was, a queer.

I snorted, throwing the covers off and shuffling to the

bathroom. The day was very dark, with rain falling against the windows. Good that I had it off; I had no real rain gear, not even a flimsy raincoat or umbrella. I always made do with my jeans and denim jacket; but I'd get a winter coat from somewhere.

I peed, looked at a photo of Mr. Jennings with a man beside him, both of them smiling. Similar photos were scattered about the rest of the house, in the bedroom, the living room, the kitchen, even in the bathroom. Must be a very close friend, I thought, but knowing about Timmy's sexual tastes I could just imagine how close they were.

I frowned; where would that leave me? If he had a boyfriend or girlfriend, or whatever they called each other, how would I fit in?

I grunted, "Shit!" Angrily didn't flush the toilet and left the bathroom.

Outside thunder sounded through the streets. I looked out of the third-story window, a tree-lined street on the upper West

Side, the rain probably keeping people indoors. I scratched my balls and fell onto the living-room couch. There was a television set in the corner, and chairs and other cabinets around the room. And there were pictures of Timmy and the man on the coffee table and hanging on one wall. I was sure there must be other photos around the apartment. I looked closer at the one on the side table. Oh, yeah, he had mentioned that he was gone. There were even two dates, “1935–1967.” I felt bad. Whoever he may have been, he now had passed away. I felt stupid for thinking bad thoughts about him. I immediately got up and returned to the bathroom, flushed the toilet. I shook my head. When will I ever learn that life is life, there’s nothing you can do about it.

I went back to the bedroom and fell into bed again. It sure felt nice being naked in his apartment. I at first felt hesitant about walking about the rooms bare, but he was doing it too, with no sense of shame, as if it was the natural thing to do. Well, it was, wasn’t it? I grinned, shrugged and did the same. I lay awhile,

playing with myself. But no, I shook my head, I wasn't going to do that.

I got up and put on my clothes, thinking I should get moving. I was still unsure if I should accept Timmy's offer of moving in with him or keep my room in that dive rooming house I lived in. Hell, it was twenty-eight bucks in rent and I had one more day.

I opened the closet; suit after suit hung there, all waiting to be worn. He had offered me three suits. He'd said the jackets had to be taken in and the pants shortened, but I felt very uncertain about wearing them. I wasn't a suit person, never had had one in my entire life, and now he was offering to dress me up in them. I wondered about that: do men actually pick clothes for their partners and dress them up as if they were women? Would I be playing the part of the female in this relationship? Oh, hell, I just didn't know.

I looked out the window. A few people walked along the street; a man with a closed umbrella passed by, so it had stopped raining, at least for now. I took the light-colored tan

jacket Mr. Jennings had said I could wear and put it on. It was slightly too big but it would do in case it started raining again. I set the spring deadbolt on his door—he had given me a key so I could get back in—and went down the stairs.

Chapter 5

Walking on the wet sidewalk was nice in Timmy's jacket; a few times drizzle passed overhead but nothing really unbearable. On 57th Street, I thought of going east and passing by 53rd Street, where Doubleday's bookstore was, but instead I continued walking down Broadway and making my way to the movie-theater-filled streets around 42nd Street. Girlie magazines and photos in stores winked at me as I passed by, each one so

enticing and alluring that I quickly felt my erection pulsing and throbbing very stiffly in my pants. I know the sexiness of the various models wasn't to my tastes, but the audacious way they posed quickly had me aroused. That's why I had gone to the Pix theater last night; it was just a girlie movie that was playing, but the girlie film brought Timmy into my life.

On Broadway and 7th Avenue, the Crossroads of the World Restaurant had stood for decades. But now it was a video porno store, giving peeks and thrills for twenty-five cents. It was around noontime and men entered the store and hovered near the booths, stealthily looking around and slipping into a booth, yet constantly glancing at other men who were doing the same. I'd quickly found out on my excursions to 42nd Street that a woman's body on the screen or in the peep-show booths meant little to the men skulking close by; they were just waiting for another man who would come them into a booth with them. I noticed three men leering and trying to draw me into one.

Strange, horny, homo men staring at movies of naked or halfdressed women. My erection was hard and very eager for a touch, but I blinked my eyes and walked through the sexy magazine section, past the rows of booths, and found myself exiting the shop onto Broadway again. The sun was peeking out among the clouds and I continued walking down Broadway. I like to walk the city streets. Walking's my favorite means of transportation when I don't have to go to work, otherwise I'd be lazing along wherever my walking might take me. And pretty soon I came to Madison Square Park on 23rd and 26th Streets, where 5th Avenue opens up, showing an expanse of green surrounded by tall buildings of every kind, straight modern ones reaching up to the sky or older ones not so very eager to reach up there. I liked this part of town. Maybe because the park gives a sense of peace in a busy part of town, very much like Bryant Park up around 42nd Street, nice little restful spots in the big, noisy city.

I sauntered over toward the wide row of park seats that ringed the entire small park—there were a few old-timers sitting and looking around. But I always feel strange in parks teeming with people, as if everyone is looking my way and focusing on me, prey to be attacked and maybe easily devoured. I collapsed onto a seat, adjusting my stiff, eager penis, and saw a man approaching, holding an unlit cigarette. He was hard also; I could see his stiff penis as it pushed against his pants, standing out like a beacon in his tan slacks. I blushed and turned away. Did I look so obviously so homo? Guess I did. But no, I can't do that, I thought, not when I had gotten so close to Timmy the night before, it would be like I was taking advantage of him, cheating on him. I shook my head and turned away.

I heard footsteps. I turned back; the tan-slacked man was only a few feet away, his hardness evident before him.

“Do you have a light by any chance?” and he gestured with a cigarette before his open mouth, drawing it in and out of

his open lips; the gesture was unmistakable. I had responded to just those movements in parks, or movie theaters, or libraries to men who either wanted to give a blowjob or get one in return. I shook my head.

“Nope, sorry, don’t smoke.”

He sadly looked at me.

“A pity, you look like a young man who did.”

I shrugged. He tapped the unlit cigarette against his lips and teeth and sat down on the same bench. I was uncomfortable.

“Lovely day today, wouldn’t you say?”

I nodded.

“Sure is, after last night’s heavy rain.”

“Oh, really, we didn’t get much at all. Must be from out of town, are you? That explains it; New York is very big, too big, if you ask me.” He stared at me and again tapped his cigarette on his lips; the erection in his pants was definitely protruding. “By the

way, I'm Timmy," and he held out his hand. "What's your name, sweetie?"

A spasm of uneasiness tore through me His name was Timmy? Nervousness and discomfort and all kinds of bad feelings shot through me. Timmy? I shook my head and bolted up and hurried down the path. Timmy, just like my Timmy—

"What the fuck?" I heard behind me as I ran out of the park onto 23rd Street.

Chapter 6

I ran past the 23rd Street Metropolitan Life clock tower, past book shops and clothing stores on the other side of the street, nearing Park Avenue South when I turned around, but no one was coming after me. Timmy, come on, why did he have to

be named “Timmy?” Could have been Joe or Sam, maybe even a Moishe or Abdullah, but no, Timmy. I shook my head and continued walking till I got to 2nd Avenue, periodically turning to look behind me. A joke is what it was.

The sun was out and near 17th Street I saw trees on both sides of the avenue, the 2nd Avenue Park. It’s a small park with hospitals on one side, churches and a temple on the other. Another peaceful spot in a very busy city, just like all the parks. But Saturday was peaceful. I shrugged and walked into the park on 17th Street.

Almost immediately I saw men sitting on park benches, some reading books or magazines, others talking, still others just staring. How did my eyes alter so suddenly? I knew what they were waiting for, what they looking at. Once, they were just plain old men causally relaxing, but now they’d suddenly become rabid sexual predators. How did I see this now, when I’d been so blind before? Didn’t I know what was really going on?

I shivered but walked on past the park, coming nearer to my rooming home on 3rd Street. It was just a small tenement off 2nd Avenue. I entered below street level, two steps down under the front steps, going to my room near the back. I sighed at the shutting door, always my way of relieving the frustrations of the day. But now I was smiling and humming a tune, "Be my, be my baby; Oh, oh, oh," I couldn't remember the rest of the words, but just kept repeating them over and over, "Be my, be my baby." Already the song was an oldie and I'd heard it on a pizza-shop radio I'd passed on the street; it stayed in my head: "Be my, be my baby."

I opened my closet. The only other things in my room were the bed, a chair, a small table, and a lamp. A year in this room with these furnishings and nothing more, what a joke. I took two shirts, a pair of jeans and underwear, and put them in a paper bag. Then I moved the single bed to the side so I could

see the edge of the linoleum against the wall. I bent down and lifted the corner, where I'd stashed my bank book under the linoleum. Months ago I had carried it everywhere I went: the bookstore, the grocery store, everywhere. Until Ramos, a Spanish stockroom boy at work, mentioned that's where he always put his, and that gave me the idea of doing the same. So for almost six months that's where it lay until I pulled it out to make my sometime deposits. I took the bankbook, just 84 dollars I had saved up, and shoved the bed back into place. Good old Ramos, who always winked at me as if he meant something else, which I'm sure he did. I sighed, looked around the room, and went to see the landlord.

Mr. Ihor, a Slavic gruff of a man, was at his desk, looking me over with one eye while the other was shut. I don't know what causes that, but he certainly needed glasses.

"You come to pay rent?" he eagerly leered at me, in his Russian-Slavic accent.

“Nope,” I shook my head, “Have to check out.”

He frowned, shaking his head.

“For what, you think I rich man?”

“No, I just have to check out, that’s all. Have to move.”

He looked bitterly at me, rose up from his desk and to his full size. I don’t think I’d ever seen him stand up from his desk. Now he looked large and intimidating. He looked at a notebook on his desk.

“Twenty eight dollars is rent, you pay now?” And he rubbed his hands together as if bringing a close to the conversation.

Again I shook my head and turned, saying, “No I have to leave, goodbye!” What would be the point of arguing with him?

“Svoluch! (Scumbag!) You can no do this!” I heard behind me, as the front door shut behind me.

Chapter 7

Outside it was almost three o'clock. Svoluch was a typical Russian word I often heard in the rooming house; I turned and walked away. The avenues and streets were crowded as I made my way to the subway, changing at 42nd Street to a train going up to the upper West Side. Had enough walking for a day, that's for sure. I had no difficulty getting back to Timmy's third-floor apartment but as I was about to close the door I heard, "Timmy, got a minute?"

A man was coming up the stairs but, seeing me, he stopped, "Oh, I thought you were Timmy, my apologies."

"No, Timmy's at work," I smiled, turning red. "I'm his...roommate." I blushed. Should I have said that or not? His eyes squinted as he looked at me, standing up above.

“Oh, I see. I didn’t know Timmy had a roommate.” He shrugged. “Well, tell him Henry was here. I’m his neighbor from the floor below.”

“I’m Billy, will do, Henry.”

Henry again studied me, then turned and went back downstairs. I shut the door behind me.

Timmy’s apartment was comfortable, a hell of a lot better than the room I’d just vacated. He had trinkets and knickknacks around, besides the photographs, making the place appear warm and homey, shutting the world out. It was a home. I’d never had one, but it felt very warm and comfortable.

I took off Timmy’s jacket and kicked the shoes off, picking up a magazine on the coffee table. A movie magazine, mostly about the new Barbra Streisand film, *Funny Girl*, which was very popular that year. I sniggered; this wasn’t the kind of film that had brought us together. I put the magazine back down and went to the bedroom.

There was a robe on a chair near the bed, on top of a shirt with pants. I picked up the pants and fingered the crotch— obviously he had forgotten them—then I blushed and set them down. I went to the closet and stared at the row of suits, some dark, some light, some the kind he had worn last night, as if for a merry, playful dress-up, which I'm sure he had worn many a time. I looked at the three suits he said were going to be mine once I started my position as bookstore clerk and ran my fingers over each one. A tingle went through me as if they were probing me, instead. I smiled. I had a comfortable feeling that I was being welcomed, and that they were just right for me. I couldn't wait for them to be altered so they could be on me.

I heard the sound of a key in the door. I came out of the bedroom and there was Timmy, holding a paper bag of groceries. He smiled and winked at me, shutting the door behind him as I came up to him.

“Miss me?” he said, setting the bag down and putting his

arms around me. We kissed; something I rarely did with another man, but his kiss was so warm and friendly that it was the natural thing to do. I kissed him back and melted.

He loosened his tie, then kissed me again. Still kissing me, he steered me to the sofa and we collapsed atop it. I always wanted this, to take the woman's part, as the man held me and kissed me, though it rarely happened. The feeling was heavenly—then there was a loud rapping at the front door.

“Timmy, can I see you? It's important.” a voice called. We broke in frustration from each other.

“That's Henry, he lives downstairs,” he said, wiping his mouth and pushing himself up.

“Oh, yeah, he was just here looking for you.”

Timmy looked at me.

“Wonder what he wants,” he said, adjusting his clothes and opening the front door.

Henry looked through the door at me, still on the couch,

then reddened and turned to Timmy.

“Mom passed away last night; I’m flying to Chicago for the funeral.”

“Oh, my,” said Timmy. “My condolences. I’m so very sorry.” And he put his arm around Henry and said, “Anything you want or need, don’t hesitate to call. You know I’m always here.” He turned to look at me. “Or Billy, he’ll more or less be here, too.”

I stood up from the sofa and went to the doorway.

“Sorry to hear about your mom,” I mumbled.

Henry shrugged.

“The cancer did mom in, but she’d been suffering for the past two years. It’s better that she’s gone; she can rest now.” He nodded his head, turned, and walked down the stairs.

“Anything you want,” Timmy called, “we’re always here.” I heard Henry mutter something but Timmy just nodded and locked the door. Timmy looked at me and I shrugged.

“Never really knew my own mom,” I said, “I was just a kid

when she put me up for adoption.”

I lowered my head; Timmy put an arm about me. He cleared his throat and changed the subject.

“How about spaghetti tonight, kiddo?” he said, unpacking the grocery bag. “And with very nice olive oil.” He looked at a slim bottle he had also retrieved from the bag.

“What, no sauce?”

He looked sternly at me.

“You never had it with olive oil? That’s the sauce, and it’s heavenly!” He put his thumb and first two fingers together and smacked them in a kiss. “Absolutely divine. Just wait till you try it.” My mouth watered. I smiled.

“Can’t wait.”

We ate our meal, spaghetti with delicious olive oil and garlic—I didn't think I'd ever eaten such a scrumptious meal and asked for seconds. Timmy quickly ladled it out for me. And the glass of excellent white wine was putting me in a good mood.

“Do anything special today while you were out?”

I shook my head.

“Just walked downtown to my place and had words with the landlord.”

He looked at me.

“Oh, really? Anything bad?”

“He didn't like that I was leaving.”

“Oh, bosh. So what?”

“He just wanted another twenty-eight dollars. He even stood up and tried to scare me.”

Timmy shook his head.

“Just forget it, that meager amount isn't worth getting riled

over. I know honest money is important, but sometimes it might be best to forget it and go on with your life. How much do you make in the basement?”

“A dollar twenty-five an hour.”

“That’s all? You can make almost double that amount on the selling floor.” He nodded his head. “Just you wait until Monday. I’ll have a word with the upstairs office, you can be sure of that.”

“Wow, they’ve been ripping me off!”

“How much were you supposed to get?”

“That price. I had asked for it and they said yes, so we left it at that, one twenty-five an hour.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll talk to them.”

We’d put the dishes in the sink. Timmy decided to leave them for tomorrow.

“Can’t stand washing dishes after I just ate, can you?”

“I know what you mean, but I never had to do my own dishes. Got my food in cheap restaurants and they washed the

dishes for me.” I smirked and shrugged.

He slowly shook his head and put his arm around my shoulder; I snuggled into him.

“You have so much to learn, I can see that.”

I looked up at him.

“You’re the supervisor, but you’re going to be my teacher, too?”

He nodded.

“Certainly, I’ll teach you.”

We kissed.

Chapter 9

Making love was beautiful that night; I had never felt the kind of peace and serenity that I was experiencing in those moments with him. My past life had disappeared and was replaced by my belonging to him. I wasn’t a small part of him; I

was a complete whole. I melded into his being completely, utterly. I was reborn to a sexual newness that I'd never experienced, a union of myself and another, and while we sucked each other off I felt the two of us commingling in a new life form, two human beings now utterly one.

We slept and, each time we stirred in the night, him holding me, me holding him, we smiled to ourselves, turned over and drifted to sleep again. I never wanted to lose him. But dawn crept in and I cursed it.

"Billy," he called, shaking me by the leg, "It's morning. You know what they say about the morning."

I yawned and looked at him.

"Yeah, the early bird catches the worm," and I reached over and tried grabbed his penis. He turned.

"No, don't," he pushed my hand away, "you know I'll fall apart."

I yawned again.

“I love when that happens,” I said, stretching in bed.

“Come on, lazy bones,” he said, standing up from the bed.

“You take a shower and I’ll get you some breakfast.”

I scratched my balls, watching him get up and leave the room. It was Sunday, but it was my turn to show up for stockroom duties, getting books for customers or packing them up and preparing them for shipping. There’d be two of us in the basement; we arrived later in the morning, at 11 a.m., on Sunday. I liked it, no supervisor was around on those days and there was little to do, just sitting around answering calls from the selling floor. In a way, Sundays were very productive—that is, for stockroom boys: our very lazy, do-nothing days.

Again I yawned, scratching my crotch, and staggered to the bathroom. The hot shower awoke me, jolting my eyes wide open. I lathered and washed myself and felt reborn and clean. Ah, it felt lovely!

I stepped out of the bathroom with a towel around my

waist. Two plates were on the table and Timmy was filling them. The scent was heavenly, scrambled eggs and home fries, toast and coffee. I dove right in. Timmy smiled and sat down. Delicious way to start the day, I thought. I always had a stale donut or whatever I could get my hands on for breakfast. Mornings weren't something to look forward to; you just had to get through them.

“Can't wait till I become a real bookstore clerk and not just a stock boy,” I took a bite of the toast and drank some coffee.

Timmy looked at me.

“Keep it under your hat until I discuss it with the upstairs office. No need for anybody else to know.”

I nodded.

“I know, I'll keep quiet, but I'm still very excited about it. Imagine me in a suit and tie, helping customers, whew!”

Timmy grinned.

“I can imagine you walking the aisles without any clothes, your balls swaying.” He blinked as if coming to and got up from

the table. “No, I can’t think those thoughts.” He picked up the plates and went into the kitchen. “Time for you to get dressed, anyway.”

I also grinned, rubbed my hardening crotch, and stood up from the table.

“Let’s go out tonight,” said Timmy, entering the living room. “We’ll celebrate. Anywhere you want to go.”

I shrugged. “Times Square?”

He frowned, coming to me and putting his arms at my waist. “I’ll think of a better place. We don’t need Times Square anymore.” We kissed, and I instantly hardened, as I’m sure he did, too. We broke from each other, wiping our lips and mouths. “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do,” he winked, rubbing his stiff crotch.

I winked back.

“Yeah, right.”

We both smiled and I went to get dressed.

Chapter 10

At Doubleday's I was the first stock boy in that morning; salesgirl Connie let me in, frowning at me as I passed through the revolving doors.

"Good morning," I said to her.

She sneered at me.

We looked at each other but I didn't say anything and went to the basement stockroom/loading area. The hell with Connie, I thought, she's a frustrated slut, anyway. I shrugged and got her out of my thoughts.

Danny was in right after me, but he kept yawning and could hardly keep his eyes open. I knew that he'd sleep off his

hangover as he'd done many times before. He collapsed into a chair and let his head drop forward.

A few times me or Danny, who finally got out of his chair, answered calls for some book that someone wanted and we sent it up on the dumbwaiter. At other times a clerk would come downstairs and get herself a book; it was an easy way to take a break from the selling floor while sneaking in a cigarette.

"You know, I'm going to be a bookstore clerk one day," I blurted out to Danny when we were alone.

He sneered and made a face.

"What the hell for?" he said, shaking his head. "You ain't going to get me up there. Nosirree. Anyway, what makes you think they'll let you up there? You're a stock boy, accept it."

I shook my head.

"Mr. Jennings said he was going to help me," I said, nodding my head, but I knew I had already said too much.

"Mr. Jennings? That faggot, he wants only one thing, your

dick. What have you got to do with him?” He grinned lecherously.

“Or have you two already done it, you pussy?”

The phone rang and I reddened, grabbing it. One of the clerks spouted off a title and I went to get it, Danny smiling wickedly after me and shaking his head. When I sent the book upstairs, Danny still was grinning and shaking his head.

“I always knew that you were one of them, a pussy faggot.”

“Fuck you!” I spat out. But then I said, “So what if I am? I don’t want to stay in this grubby old stockroom. You want to call me a faggot for that? Good, that’s what I am, but you’ll be in this stockroom for the rest of your life. Me? I’m going where I belong, up on top.” I folded my arms and stood looking at him.

“Faggot,” he simply repeated, leering at me. “Cocksucking faggot.”

We heard heels on the steps; we both looked, it was Connie.

“Hey Connie, what you think about the new bookstore clerk? He said he’s going to work with you, you ready for another

sissy up there?”

Connie scowled, staring at me.

“Stop calling people names. You’ve been warned about that.” She turned to me. “Anyway, all the positions are taken. We don’t need anyone else.”

Danny smirked.

“He said Mr. Jennings will help him. I wonder what he’s doing for Mr. Jennings,” and he winked at Connie.

I was very red-faced, as Connie shook her head.

“I only said that one day I might. What’s the point of working here in the basement if you can’t move up?”

Danny sneered.

“That’s right, get yourself an older sugar daddy like Mr. Jennings and bend over. He’ll have you in a nice position, if you know what I mean.”

“Fuck you, you idiot!” I spat.

“Faggot!” Danny responded, sneering at me.

Connie shook her head again and went back upstairs.

“Fuck you, you motherfucker!” I spat at him.

It was 5:30 in the afternoon, near closing time anyway.

anyway.

Chapter 11

It was after 6 p.m. as I let myself in the apartment.

“Hi sweetie,” Timmy called from the other room. “Be right out.”

I heard what sounded like a closet being shut and went to the couch, removing my shoes and collapsing onto it. Timmy entered the room.

“What’s wrong?” he immediately asked.

“Nothing,” I muttered. “Had some words with Danny, you know, that stock boy in the basement.”

“Over what?”

“About being a bookshop clerk and working upstairs with

the other clerks.”

“But I told you not to mention it,” he said, rubbing his head.

“I didn’t mean like right now, but maybe one day in the future. That’s a good way to get out of the basement, that’s all.”

“And what did Danny say to that?”

I frowned. “I mentioned your name and he called me a faggot,” I said, looking up at him. “I really hate him, he’s an asshole.”

Timmy sat down beside me and put his arm around my shoulders.

“That’s when Connie came down and said they didn’t need any clerks. ‘Not now,’ I said, ‘but in the future.’” I looked at him. “It kind of broke down after that. They’re both jerks, I don’t know how you tolerate Connie or Danny.”

“I have nothing to do with Danny, he has his own supervisor; and Connie, she’s a very good clerk. I’ll talk to her tomorrow.” He tapped and rubbed my shoulder. “Are you

hungry? I was thinking about Luigi's on Broadway. They make exquisite lasagna, good enough to die for."

"I guess," I shrugged. I still was upset. "Connie said a stock boy would become a clerk over her dead body, not when she was at Doubleday's."

"Oh, she did? We'll see about that." He again tried to change the subject, "Now, how about Luigi's?"

"Sure," I shrugged. "I'd love some Italian food." But I was still a little upset and angry.

Chapter 12

I decided against lasagna and had Fettucini Alfredo—I liked that name, not that I knew what it meant, but Timmy's explanation got me more interested in pasta. And it was delicious! As I'm sure his lasagna was, too. We settled back, our stomachs

bulging, and talked about things that we still had to face.

“Being a bookstore clerk would be perfect for you. In a year or so I’m going to retire and it would be ideal to pay you a visit every now and then.”

“Retire, how come? You’re not so old.”

He laughed.

“Older than you think. I’ll be sixty-five next year and it’s about time I gave it up. I would love to just relax and sit in Central Park, watching life go by, and read more often than I do now.”

“Wow, sixty-five. I didn’t know you were that old.” I reddened. “I mean...”

“I know what you mean, sweetie. Old is old,” he shrugged.

I lowered my voice.

“But you still can get it up. If you can do that you’re not old, you’re as good as any teenager trying to get laid.”

He took me by the hand.

“Well, I doubt that, but you’re kind and sweet,” he looked

at me, his watery eyes blinking as he wiped a corner of an eye. “You know I love you,” he whispered. “We have just been really close, what was it, a day ago? But you mean the world to me now. Promise you’ll always stay.” He held my hand and squeezed tightly.

“I promise,” I said. “I’ll never leave.”

He grinned warmly as we left the restaurant. Out on the street we stopped at a newsstand to pick up a copy of The New York Times Sunday paper, though it was almost the end of the day.

“I’m addicted to Sunday papers, even though I never read the daily ones. I get all my news on Sunday nights.” He saw me looking at the magazines. “You want something to read, too?”

I turned red, shaking my head and put back the fashion magazine I was glancing at. “Come on, take one, can’t be much, at least it’s under a dollar.”

I retrieved the men’s magazine and showed it to Timmy,

who shrugged. “You don’t need it; I’ll show you what to wear and how to dress.”

I put the magazine back in the rack, watched him pay for the Sunday paper and we walked away from the newsstand.

“You know I never wore a suit and tie. It’s kind of scary.”

“Oh, bosh,” he shook his head. “Once the tailor gets through with you you’ll look elegant, the way you’re supposed to look. Mark my words.”

In a moment we were back home and climbing the stairs.

Chapter 13

“I wonder how Henry made out?” he said as we passed his second-floor door and continued up.

“I’m sure he made it to...to...where was he going?”

“Chicago. He’s from Chicago, was going home for his

mother's funeral."

I nodded. "That's right, Chicago," I shook my head. "I've never been there."

"Me neither. New York is my home.

I smiled. "Mine, too. I don't want to be anywhere else."

He opened the door and let us in. Instantly, he grabbed my ass. I giggled.

"Just like the ladies who come in the store," he said, pawing me, "some in dresses, some in pants," my arms were around him. "But I don't like it when they do that," he shook his head, "like they're silly teenagers."

"Doing what?"

He reddened, and shook his head.

"Grabbing each other. We had a customer just a few days ago who was letting her boyfriend, or whoever he was, feel her up, as if it the most natural thing in the world, and in front of other customers, too; simply outrageous."

“They must have been in love,” I laughed, “very horny love, too.”

“Connie and the other clerks saw it, too, but they didn’t say anything, they just blushed.”

He’d pushed me into the bedroom and removed my shirt, unzipping my pants.

“Did you?”

He turned red.

“I was so embarrassed. It’s like they were characters in a dirty Times Square movie that we all were looking at.” He sadly shook his head. “Would’ve won an Oscar for their roles, I’m sure of that.”

Again I giggled.

“Starring roles, eh?” I smirked. “Did it get out of hand, besides his hands on her?”

“Gratefully, no, they finally went down 5th Avenue, the young man pawing her, and she was acting as if they weren’t

doing anything out of hand.”

I was undressed, lying naked on the bed, watching him undress.

“Hey, man, it’s the sixties,” I winked, “free love everywhere you turn, you know what they say: Turn on, tune out, drop dead, or something like that. Those are the new rules, man, you know.” I smirked at him.

I looked at him as he undressed. I realized his age as he came over to join me on the bed. His skin was sagging. It was like ten or twenty years had been added to him. He fell on the bed, exhausted. I didn’t say anything, just letting myself swoon in his tender hold. Old age—oh, what a horror!

Chapter 14

The next day we rode the subway together, him reading

Herzog by Saul Bellow, me holding the pole and looking around. I found it hard to read modern novels; I never really understood what was going on. I'd tried to read Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* but really couldn't get into it. The characters' actions always had me confused; were they making love or just pretending, coming or going? I'd read that the characters were as unsure of themselves as I was, but they certainly didn't sound like me, seems they were too well-off or perhaps things were just different in those times, the twenties. I shook my head and smiled at Timmy as he went on reading his book for just a few stops. We got off on 7th Avenue and 50th Street and walked to Doubleday's on 5th Avenue and 53rd Street. I liked the way he held the book, under his arm and up at his chest; he looked very much like an educated book person, which I'm sure he was.

The streets were busy with people rushing on their way to work or speeding into or out of coffee shops, carrying bags of coffee with their buttered rolls or Danishes. Timmy stopped at

one place on 6th Avenue and ordered his usual cup of tea, no sugar, and I had a regular cup of coffee with extra sugar. He frowned at my order but didn't say anything. I guess extra sugar wasn't to his liking. We walked to Doubleday's.

In the doorway, Danny was smoking and staring at people. I instantly hesitated and looked down; I knew we'd need to pass him. Mr. Jennings turned to look at me, then turned in Danny's direction. Danny smirked but didn't say anything as we went past him. As the door shut behind us I heard him quietly mutter "faggots." I shook my head and went downstairs. A few moments later Danny came downstairs, too.

"Hey, boys," he said gleefully, putting his arm around me.

"We got us a flaming faggot, ain't that right?"

"Fuck you!" I said, brushing his arm off.

Mr. David, our supervisor, stepped out of his office.

"Danny," he said sternly, "you've been warned about calling people names. Do you want to go up to the head office

and explain what you just said? Because that's where you're headed and they'll get rid of you in a moment, take my word on that!"

A silence fell on the room as each of us turned and went to his work area, me at packing packages and Danny at the filled loading dock. Morning passed with some of the crew standing around Danny, gossiping and smirking. I ignored them.

"Never mind the assholes," said Ramos, the Spanish stock boy. He didn't hang out with the other stock boys, kept to himself. "The assholes are just jealous."

I eyed him.

"Of what?"

He shrugged.

"Of you, you have the courage that they don't have. You know what you are and what you want, and they can't stand that."

He winked, smiled, and went back to his work area. I was

amazed. In the year I'd been at Doubleday's there'd never been more than just a word between us. "Hey," I'd say, "Hey," he'd say. Now we'd had a real discussion. I felt good and warm, continuing to pack up book after book after book.

At about 11:30 I spotted Mr. Jennings coming into the basement. I felt awkward thinking about him as "Timmy." That was his name, of course, but in the bookstore he was still "Mr. Jennings." I blushed as he came to my work area.

"They want to see you upstairs," he said. I couldn't make anything out from his face, positive or negative.

He turned and went into Mr. David's office. Without smiling, in case someone saw, I turned and got into the elevator which would take me to the corporate offices. I let myself beam broadly as the elevator door shut.

Chapter 15

Miss Terri, a short-haired, neck-tied woman in a masculine suit, stood next to the secretary's desk in the outer office, reading some papers. She glanced at me as I stepped out of the elevator. In her manly clothes and appearance, she made it evident that she was a bitter, unfriendly lesbian. I always dreaded running into her. She was known facetiously and quietly as "Mrs. Doubleday," though no one dared say it aloud. She looked at me, shaking her head and sneering.

"Good," she said to the secretary. "Just get rid of those commas." The secretary made a disappointed face as Miss Terri turned to me and said, "Come this way." I followed her into an office overlooking 5th Avenue.

"You wear T-shirts to work," she said sternly, "with dungarees?"

I winced.

"For downstairs I do, they all wear them. I hardly ever come upstairs unless I have to take something up."

“What makes you think you’ll fit in? Do you have dress clothes, like a suit and tie, so you can look presentable?”

“Yes ma’am, they’ll be ready when I need them. I can be ready in a few days, just give the word,” and I smiled at her.

Her face remained immobile, looking at the papers on her desk.

“You worked for short times at Scribner’s and Brentano’s, is that right?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Stop with the ma’ams!” she flared, “Just say ‘yes’ or ‘no!’”

I nodded, very uneasy.

“Yes, but I’ve been here a year and a few months. I can do a very good job, I know I can. I just need a break.”

She glanced again at the paper.

“We don’t have anything right now. The economy is sluggish. But when it picks up we’ll call you. Oh, how much do you make, \$1.25 an hour?” she looked at her paper. “You’re

overdue for a raise, \$1.30 an hour.” She wrote something down.

“Thank you for stopping by. Good day.”

I was stunned. Mr. Jennings’s confidence that I could do well meant nothing to her. I looked at her, stood up and staggered from her office. I saw Connie talking with the secretary. She looked at me, smirked, and went into Miss Terri’s office.

“Stinkin’ bitch!” I muttered as I waited for the elevator doors to shut; the secretary looked up at me.

Chapter 16

As I got out of the elevator, I saw that Mr. Jennings was waiting for me in the basement. He saw my downcast appearance. I heard Danny laughing across the room.

“Come with me,” said Timmy. He led me out of

Doubleday's and across the street to the outer waterfall lobby of 666 5th Avenue. It had the exclusive restaurant Top of the Sixes, with its panoramic views of New York. I stood downcast at the waterfall.

"I didn't get it," I sulked, shrugging like it didn't mean anything, "The bookseller's job, I mean."

But Timmy shook his head, as if he knew differently.

"For now you didn't get it, but this afternoon I have a meeting with Mr. Simmons, one of Doubleday's top people. We'll be discussing just that, the operation and staffing of the bookstore. Don't be upset, a good word from him will put it motion. Things are spinning right now, as we speak."

"But Miss Terri won't let it happen. I just saw Connie going in her office. She'll also tell her she's against it."

"Oh, bosh, of course they're against it. Those two lesbian creeps are always against what a man comes up with."

I looked at him.

“Connie’s a lesbian? I didn’t know.”

“Uh huh, and she’s Terri’s lover. They live together. Down in Greenwich Village.”

“Wow, so why are they against us?” I lowered my voice, looking around at people walking by the waterfall. “Queers who like each other, just like they do?”

He sighed and rubbed his face.

“If I knew that, the world would be a better place, wouldn’t it? But that’s the way things stand between us; nothing’s any different than it ever was. You just have to stand up and fight, not let them get away with even the slightest bit, because they’ll only take and take until there’s nothing left.” He sighed again. “Let’s go back. Face the monsters, because we’re better than them.” He put his arm around my shoulder. “We’ll know for certain by this afternoon.”

I looked up at him. God, I wished we weren’t with so many people on crowded 5th Avenue. I would have kissed him. I

nodded and we started across the busy, traffic-filled avenue.

Chapter 17

The store was busy with a noontime crowd, people wandering the aisles, some carrying books that they had chosen to buy, others just lazily looking and biding their time. Mr. Jennings nodded at me and went to help a customer as I headed for the basement. I was nervous and tense but I steeled myself, ready to face anything that came up, just as Timmy had suggested.

Most of the crew had left for lunch but I saw Ramos sitting in a corner, and eating a sandwich while reading a small paperback. I immediately recognized it as a Spanish comic book, one of those pocket booklets found in Spanish neighborhoods, the barrios, around New York City.

“Hey,” I said, taking a chair beside him.

“Hey,” he nodded at me, holding his comic book. “It’s lunch time, you already had?”

I shrugged. “Not hungry. What you reading?”

“What, this?” he turned the book to its cover, showing a drawing of a large-breasted woman running from a man. He smiled. “De amar a un hombre. To Love a Man, it means, just silly romantic nonsense, doesn’t mean anything.” He looked at me, still holding the comic. “You ever love anyone like that, so much that you run away from them, like a man?” I instantly blushed and sighed. What did he know or suspect? “Things happen, you know?” he winked.

I looked at him.

“Yes, things happen. I never thought I could love like that, but there it is. Love as I never knew it. And that’s the funny part. When you’re in love with someone, the world suddenly closes in, like it wants to break you apart for your happiness.”

He agreed.

“You can’t let that happen,” he said, shaking his head.

“Man or woman, straight or queer, love is love. As bad as it may seem now, love will triumph in the end. Just remember that, love always wins.”

He took me by the hand and gave it a squeeze. I looked at him and melted. I wanted to kiss him in gratitude. For so long we had worked together, just nodding and tolerating our coworkers and now, suddenly, we were close. He beamed at me as I returned the warm feeling I had for him.

“Thanks,” I nodded, “that means a lot to me. I can’t run away from it, it’s my life we’re talking about, and there’s nothing more important than that.”

I also squeezed his hand and heard someone descending the stairs. We quickly let our hands go and looked at the crew returning from lunch. Danny just sneered at me but didn’t say a word. We went back to work, but with the lovely but quiet Ramos

nearby I felt much warmer than I had ever felt with someone before. My small world had gotten much larger and more certain.

Chapter 18

At around 4:30 there was a sudden silence in the back of the stockroom, where I was packing up boxes for mailing. The radio, constantly playing oldies but goodies, “Be my, be my baby...” had been switched off. I looked up and saw Mr. Jennings standing with Mr. Simmons, a Doubleday executive, and they were about to enter Mr. David’s office. There were the usual greetings between them and the crew, then the door closed. Mr. David rarely closed his door.

I nervously continued working when Danny turned the radio back up, staring at me. I narrowed my eyes. What does the radio have to do with anything? I thought, packing up another

book for shipping. Mr. David's door opened. Timmy and Mr. Simmons came out, walking in my direction. I bit my bottom lip, looking down, and just continued with my work.

"Billy," I heard Timmy say, "this is Mr. Simmons. He has something to say to you." he nodded his head.

Mr. Simmons cleared his throat. He was probably the same age as Timmy but very formally dressed in a tuxedo and shined shoes. I'd heard him joke with Mr. David about going to a fundraiser that evening, just before they'd closed the office door.

"Billy, you've been chosen as the new bookstore clerk, starting tomorrow," he shook my hand and turned to Timmy.

"With Fall approaching, it will be our busiest season. We have to prepare ahead of time before Christmas is upon us, our busiest time of year." He again rapidly shook my hand. "Welcome aboard, Billy," and he winked at me and turned to Timmy. The two were beaming at me. I heard footsteps; Connie and Miss Terri had come down to the stockroom, with Miss Terri around,

Connie looked incredibly sheepish, trailing after her but looking like she expected nothing.

“Sidney,” said a stern-voiced Miss Terri, “can I have a word with you about this situation?”

Mr. Simmons’s face showed nothing.

“There is no ‘situation.’ Billy will be our new bookstore clerk.” He was looking right at Miss Terri. “Starting tomorrow. It’s a corporate decision. Is that clear?”

I saw Miss Terri’s face tighten, but she turned and headed back up the stairs, with Connie still trailing after her.

“Well, good, she’s gone,” said Mr. Simmons, shaking his head and turning to Timmy. “The bookstore clerk’s position is your responsibility and, by the look of him, there won’t be any problem,” and he winked at me again.

“Yes, sir, no problem at all. Can’t wait to get started tomorrow,” I said, as they left the basement. I shook a few hands around me but I quickly noticed that Danny and a few others had

already vanished; it was after five o'clock, anyway.

I waited for Timmy outside. The evening crew had just heard the good news and were smiling at me, though a few of them just shrugged and went on with their duties.

Timmy came out, happily smiling.

“I told you that you had nothing to worry about. You just have to know the right person, that’s the only way you can get ahead in life,” he said as we descended to the subway.

Chapter 19

“It was a very emotional day,” Timmy said when the subway let us off on 86th Street. “I’m spent, as you must be, too.”

“You’re right. I feel drained and exhausted, too.”

But he led me into a men’s store. I needed a new suit for tomorrow.

“But I thought you were going to give me yours,” I protested, “and that we were going to take them in?”

“Can’t,” he shook his head. “This is a rush, and Philip is our man,” he continued as we reached the store. “He makes all my suits. It does take a while to have a suit made, but Philip always comes through with just what you need, like suits when you’re in a hurry and can’t wait.”

We went into the large corner store— “Philip’s” read the sign in the front— and Philip instantly recognized Timmy and rushed over to him.

“Mr. Jennings, what a pleasure! You were here just last week, is anything wrong with your purchase?”

“Not at all, Philip, the sweater and neckties were ideal, but I have a special request for you.” He explained what he needed, a suit for me and in a hurry, too, because I had to wear it tomorrow morning.

“But Mr. Jennings,” said Philip, looking at me, “you know that’s no problem.” By then he had removed the measuring tape from around his neck and was taking all kind of measurements.

He immediately found a suit just for me! I was stunned; I didn't expect such speedy service. A navy-colored John F. Kennedy imitation suit and, even though I'm short, it was an ideal fit. I even felt presidential in it.

"Perfect!" said Philip. "Never before has there been a customer just made for this suit. This suit is you, that's for sure," he said, and he nodded repeatedly.

With two white shirts and a couple of light blue ones (Timmy had ties I could use), we happily left the store.

"Come back quickly," said a merry Philip. "We'll have a new order in about a week's time." We waved goodbye through the window and we walked home to 85th Street.

"I thought I'd be wearing one of yours," I said as we went in the building and climbed the stairs.

"Today's rush put a damper on that. But it's a new job, demands a new suit," he smiled and opened the apartment door. In an instant, with the door shutting behind us, we both were on

each other. He was pushing me toward the bedroom as we struggled out of our clothes and pressed our nakedness into each other. I lay back onto the bed and he jumped on next to me, on his hands and knees, licking my cock and fondling my balls. I shot my jism first, thick heady scum shooting onto his forehead and eyelids, and dripping past his nose. I didn't hesitate. I kissed him, smearing my face in my own scum. I wasn't repelled but licked it up readily. In about two, three minutes he shot off but it was weak and tired, as if there was no appetite remaining. He shivered once or twice then collapsed on the bed. He was spent.

“I'm sorry,” he finally said, looking away. I sat up. “Sorry about what?” “That I take so long to ejaculate.” “Oh, don't be silly. ‘Oh, bosh,’ as you always say. I enjoyed sucking you that much longer and savoring every moment while I was doing it. Your cock is just ideal for that,” I winked and again kissed him. When we finally broke, I got out of bed and hung the suit up.

“You got Miss Terri very mad this afternoon,” I said.

“Wonder what she’ll do?”

“Oh, bosh on them both, her and that slut Connie. She doesn’t know how to dress properly. Always wearing such out-of-style clothes. It reminds me of what women wore in World War II. Simply ridiculous. Terri sets her up to look like that, like an old crone so that she won’t look more attractive than Terri. Holds her under lock and key, that’s what lesbians do.”

“But queers don’t?”

“Of course not, we’re more liberal in our manly view, while women are just plain women. They’re old fashioned, not worth a dime, if you ask me.”

I didn’t care for his judgmental, outdated view; I tried changing the subject.

“So, you think nothing’s going to happen tomorrow?”

Timmy studied me. “If anything does, they’ll both be booted out of Doubleday’s. You can be sure Mr. Simmons had a stern talk with Terri. She’ll be quiet after today’s debacle.”

I marveled. So, Mr. Simmons was one of us, too, a queer. Small world, indeed. I beamed at Timmy.

He lay on the bed, nodding his head, and I kept getting harder looking at his half-stiff penis. I couldn’t help it, I went down on him, sucking his dick as if I had all the time in the world, drenching him in my saliva, savoring and salivating. He exploded; I moved off and got a beautiful but weak dollop right in my face. It was exquisitely divine! I loved his cum on me, rubbing it on my face and brow, smoothing it on my skin until it had vanished in my pores. Oh, God, what a beautiful man he was, and I loved him very deeply. We fell asleep holding each other.

Chapter 20

When I woke next morning, I felt edgy and tense. My nerves were shot. Nothing was going right. The new suit, which had seemed perfect the day before, now took on a shabby, drab looking appearance: in the suit I looked like a joke, a fake. Not a businessman but a fraud. Not a bookstore clerk but a stupid schoolkid entering kindergarten. Ready to be shamed and insulted at any moment.

“This is stupid,” I flared. “I don’t want to go.” I collapsed in a chair, rubbing my head and face.

“Oh, bosh, stop that. You have to go. This is what you’ve been dreaming of, being a bookstore clerk. Well, young man, that day is here! Hold your head high. Get up out of that chair. Don’t let your dreams fade like this. Be a man!”

I put my hands down, looking at him.

“But I still feel ridiculous.”

“Of course you do, you’re wearing new clothes and taking on a new role in your life. You’re not sure of yourself, but after you assist two or three customers it will all fall into place. Think of it, getting a book by Hemingway or Faulkner, Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy, or any other author. That’s what the customer is looking for, and you will be there to help them find it. It’s a marvelous feeling and, when you do that, you’ll know what you were meant to be in life, a bookstore clerk.”

He was right; that had been my dream ever since I’d started working in bookstores, and now it was going to come true. I was going to be just what I had always wanted to be, a bookstore clerk. I stood up.

“I’m ready. Let’s go.”

His eyes watered and he kissed me. I melted for a moment but gripped myself, and we happily went to the subway.

“Who is this bosh you always mention, some kind of God?” I asked.

He laughed.

“Just an expression. I don’t know when it came into use, the 1800s I suppose. It really means nonsense, or fiddlesticks, or it’s ridiculous. ‘Oh, bosh’ is a way of saying ‘get a hold of yourself’, you, see?”

I reddened but whispered, “Or I’ll get a hold of you, instead,” I grinned. “‘Oh, bosh.’ I like that.”

He smiled but also reddened and cleared his throat; we got off the subway and walked to Doubleday’s. I felt proud but nervous, too.

In front of the store, I saw Danny smoking a cigarette and watching the people hurrying past. He stood there like always, which I’m sure meant he was feeling superior to everyone who walked by. I lowered my head but instantly Danny recognized me.

“Oh, Jesus, what a jerk, you look ridiculous!” He exploded in loud laughter and catcalls. “A real asshole is what you are. Who’s going to believe you’re a bookstore clerk, more like a

bookstore jerk is what you are.”

Mr. Jennings was right in front of him.

“What do you mean by insulting our new bookstore clerk?”

he flared back. “And out here in the open, too. This is certainly grounds for dismissal. You’ll find out in a few minutes what the management intends to do about this.”

He turned, pushing me toward the revolving door and following me. I looked back at Danny. He was biting his lower lip and watching us. What an asshole he could be, I thought and entered the revolving door.

Elderly Mrs. Petersen, another bookstore clerk, was right in front of us. She’d also had been associated with many 5th Avenue bookstores over the years, Brentano’s, Scribner’s, Marlboro’s, etc. Now she was in charge of the children’s section of Doubleday’s.

“My, my, don’t we look elegant,” she said, looking me up

and down and squeezing my hand. “Knock ’em dead, fella,” and she winked at me.

I turned red.

“I will, Mrs. Petersen, I certainly will.”

We went up the front stairway to the paperback section on the second floor. From there I saw Danny come in and make his way back to the basement stairs. Timmy didn’t say anything, but I knew he would soon be going upstairs to discuss Danny’s intransigence. It was about time someone did something about him.

Connie was on the second floor, arranging a few books.

She turned away as we approached. We came up to her.

“Billy will be starting this morning,” Timmy said. “Show him the ropes.” He looked at me and Connie, then turned and walked away. Connie made a face, sighed, and set her armful of books on a bookshelf.

“You’ll be in charge of fiction paperbacks,” she cleared her

throat. "That's toward the rear; non-fiction is kept at the front of the store, facing the avenue."

We walked through the aisles, and I saw a few clerks eyeing me curiously. Todd, a clerk who was a few years older than me, gripped my hand and said, "Welcome aboard, kiddo," and he winked. "Just ignore the ones with bad mouths, they all have something negative to say. Do your job and to hell with the rest." But while he was talking to me, he was sneering directly at Connie, who had her head down. I grinned and nodded at Todd. "Thanks, it's good to be here."

"Glad you got out of the basement," he said and went back to getting his shelves in order.

Connie escorted me to the fiction paperback section.

"You'll be working here. It will get busy by the late morning, but you can never tell. You have lunch at 12:30, half an hour, then at 3:00, another half an hour. Is that clear?"

I nodded and saw Miss Terri coming up the aisle. Connie

turned from her and started to straighten some shelves.

“Your probation starts this morning,” a stern Miss Terri spoke. “You have four weeks to prove your worth and every little mistake will be noted down. Connie will keep her eyes on you, is that understood?”

I nodded. “Yes, ma’am,” I said, before I remembered that she bitterly disliked the term. A stern look swept over her face but she didn’t say anything. She turned and walked away.

I looked at Connie. For the few moments that Miss Terri had been there, Connie had seemed frightened and unsure of herself, but once she’d gone, Connie’d breathed out, sort of a relief that nothing bad had happened. Connie was actually afraid of her, I realized. What kind of relationship were they in, anyway? I blinked at her.

“Walk through the aisles,” said Connie. “Familiarize yourself with where everything is. I’ll be close by.” And she walked back to the paperback non-fiction section. That bitch

Miss Terri keeps the reins tight over her, I thought; I was certain of that. The store opened for the day.

Chapter 21

I heard the first customers come in and, in a few moments, some were climbing the stairs to the second floor. My instructions were not to hinder them, but just to be available should the need arise. I wore a name tag on my lapel which said “Doubleday’s,” with my name typed underneath. I steeled myself as the first customer hurried down the aisle. He said something to Connie, who pointed him in my direction.

“Where’s that book about airports by Joe Haley?”

“You mean Airport by Arthur Hailey?” I asked. “Right there beside you.”

Row upon row of the best sellers were right beside him.

“Oh, yeah, here it is,” picking up the book, flipping a few

pages. “Hey, thanks,” he said. “Pay here or downstairs?”

“Right this way, sir,” said Connie, appearing out of nowhere. “The cash register is right here,” and she led him to a register in the middle of the second floor.

I breathed out. Wow, my first customer! That was easy enough and seemed to go very well. I smiled. I saw Connie, who seemed to be smiling to herself. I looked away and turned to a man roaming the aisles.

“Do you have the book Cocksure?” he blushed. “Can’t seem to find it...”

It rang a bell.

“That’s by the author, what was his name?” I said, trying to remember.

“Mordecai Richler.”

“That’s right, Mordecai Richler, should be right here.” We went to the R shelves to see if the book was there or out of stock.

“Let me call the stockroom, they might have a copy.”

Interesting title, I was thinking, when Ramos picked up the phone downstairs.

“Stock,” he said.

“I need Cocksure by Mordecai Richler.” And I spelled the last name. “Do we have it?”

I could just imagine Ramos leering into the phone as I blushed and looked at the customer.

“Interesting title, don’t you think?” he said.

“Yeah, please just check the stock,” I talked to the phone. “Writers will come up with anything,” I shrugged, waiting for Ramos to return, “just as long as they can sell their books.”

“Oh, are you a writer, too? I can imagine the charming stories you must write. Are they hard, you know, to write, those things?” and he blinked at me.

And just the way he spoke, putting an emphasis on the word hard, with his eyes fluttering, made me realize how easy and nice it was to be with people, especially queer people like

him. I blinked my eyes and Ramos answered.

“Yes, baby, we have some cock for you, Cocksure coming up.” I could just imagine Ramos smiling, rubbing himself and thinking of me. I put the phone down and nodded at the customer.

“Should be right up,” I winked at him, and he winked back at me.

“Lovely,” he said, we both were blushing. He lowered his voice,

“I like a little cock for breakfast, don’t you agree?” and he winked again.

“Breakfast, supper, and dinner, makes my mouth water.” I was feeling myself growing hard; I bit my lip.

The dumbwaiter came up and I cleared my throat and retrieved the copy. It had an orange cover with a drawing of a rooster. I gave to him.

“Here you are, sir, Cocksure.”

He grabbed the book, holding it and caressing it, smiling

at me all the time.

“Oh, I will be, you can be sure of that,” he said as he went to the cash register, still fluttering his eyelashes at me. Connie smirked but didn’t say anything; she was red with embarrassment. I smiled to myself.

But every hour or so Timmy would come up for a moment to see how I was doing. I told him about the Cocksure customer.

“Yes, I know, he often comes here for a purchase, was downstairs loudly showing a copy off, simply repeating the title every chance he got.” He smiled and looked at me. “But you’re okay?” I nodded and went to assist another customer. He went back downstairs.

Near noontime Miss Terri stormed out of the elevator. She saw Connie chatting and smiling with another female customer. Their eyes met and in an instant her merriness changed into despair. Even the customer noticed the abrupt change and walked away, looking confused. Connie lowered her head and

started aligning the shelved books. Miss Terri came up to her with her arms akimbo. I was too far to hear her, but Connie looked my way and said something to her. Miss Terri answered loudly.

“Oh, really? We’ll see about that.” She turned and stalked toward me. There was silence on the second floor. “Who gave you the right to sell that book?” she hissed. “It was being held for a special customer.” She stalked to the elevator and rang for it.

I cringed. What in the hell was she talking about, what book?

Timmy came rushing up the stairs; Connie was running up behind him. I was stunned. Had she gone to get him? I saw Miss Terri’s lips purse; she also saw exactly what had occurred.

Damn, Connie was going to get it, that’s for sure.

The elevator opened and Miss Terri stormed in, fuming and gesturing at Connie to follow her. Connie turned her head away and stood, looking at Timmy. The elevator closed its doors.

We all heard, “Bitch!” through the shut doors.

Two other female clerks left their posts and came to us.

“Oh, Connie, are you all right?” asked one. She had her arm around Connie and was patting her shoulder. “I never could see what you saw in her,” said the other.

“She’s evil,” another nodded.

Timmy and I drifted back to the fiction aisles.

“What book was she talking about,” I asked. “I sold ten or fifteen titles, and everyone seemed pleased.”

Timmy shrugged.

“Probably that Cocksure book, but who knows? I’m sure we’ll be hearing about that this afternoon.” He looked at his watch. “Take lunch now,” he nodded. “I’ll be on the floor.” It was almost 12:30. He pulled me to an empty aisle and held my hand. “You did marvelously. I’m proud of you.” And his mouth slightly opened to meet my lips but then he shook his head, whispering, “Later,” and went back downstairs. I saw Connie and the two

bookstore clerks return to their positions. I went up to Connie, who looked very frightened.

“I’ll go and have lunch now, if that’s okay with you.”

As if coming to, Connie looked at me.

“Yes, go to lunch, half an hour, you have another break at three.”

I nodded and went to the back stairs, heading down to the basement.

Chapter 22

I thought I’d catch Ramos—I knew he took lunch around that time. But I heard loud voices from below. It was Miss Terri screaming.

“You had no right; there was a Hold sticker on it. You’re responsible.”

“Bullshit!” Ramos answered. “A Hold sticker holds the book for one week. The sticker was dated two weeks ago so I took it off and sent it up. It’s not my fault your customer came a week late.”

So, they were talking about Cocksure, I grinned. He was right, absolutely goddamned right! One week for a Hold sticker, then the book went up for sale again. I could feel Miss Terri’s frustration but there was nothing she could do about it. I went down to the basement. Miss Terri looked like she wanted to spit on me but pounded back up the stairs.

Ramos saw me and did a double take. “Eh, muchacho, just look at you.” He made me turn around and show the suit off to the other smiling stockroom boys. “Elegante,” he muttered in Spanish. “Very nice suit.” A few of the work crew looked, shrugged and went back to their jobs. I quickly noticed Danny was not around.

“You have lunch?” I asked Ramos.

He studied my face.

“You want to eat with me?”

“Why not, we can talk, you know?”

“Very nice,” he said as we headed up the stairs.

We both agreed to have something at Dark Mocha, around the block. Not exactly a lunch place, but it had different coffees and pastries. I got a regular house coffee and a donut while Ramos wanted a dark Spanish coffee and a rich Napoleon pastry. It was nice to sit here in the afternoon with a nice man.

“How you like what they did with Danny,” he said, sipping his bitter Spanish coffee and diving into the Napoleon. “They booted him out. Good riddance, I say.”

“They what?” I said, nearly dropping my donut. “You’re kidding!”

He shook his head and slowly sipped his coffee.

“He was fired for ‘too much cursing,’ but everybody knows he calls everyone a faggot, even the bosses. Bet you that’s the last, we’ll see of him.”

“Wow,” I said, shaking my head. “That’s good. I disliked

that guy a hell of a lot.”

“Me too; everybody did.”

“You weren’t the only one.” I looked at wall clock hanging in the restaurant. “Still have ten minutes left,” I said, finishing my coffee and donut.

He studied me, lowering his voice.

“You like Jennings,” he said, then stared at me as I blushed. “He’s a pretty good man, isn’t he?”

I nodded.

“Good in bed?” he whispered, downing the last of the Napoleon and finishing his coffee.

Again, I blushed but nodded again.

“Better than any I ever had before.”

He smiled and patted my hand.

“I’m happy for you, in more ways than just one. It’s great to see your life changing. Anything could happen; you just have to be there.” He winked and we both got up to leave. I hurried

back but he still had a half hour to kill. He went for the basement door so he could read his Spanish comic book. I smiled and went through the revolving doors into Doubleday's.

Chapter 23

Coming up to the second floor, I instantly saw Miss Terri stepping into the elevator. I put my name tag back on my lapel and started shelving books, keeping my eyes on Connie.

Something was up, I was sure of it.

Connie was assisting her customers but was keeping her eyes on me.

I neared the shelves containing the X, Y, Z authors, not many, and looked at the nearby non-fiction paperbacks that Connie was in charge of. As soon as she saw me, her face filled with hatred and spite. She slammed a book down, two customers glancing at her, and went to the other side of her non-fiction section. I got out

of there and hurried to the center of the fiction section. I hoped it would work out as long as we stayed apart.

About an hour later, Timmy peered in to have a look.

“Everything okay?” he asked, winking at me.

“As good as it can be,” I answered, winking back at him.

He nodded and went back downstairs. Connie glared viciously at me again. I shrugged and went on with my work, refilling the shelves with some best sellers, *The Armies of the Night* by Norman Mailer and *Myra Breckenridge* by Gore Vidal.

I always blushed when someone bought the Vidal book, and someone seemed to be buying a copy every hour. I told myself that I would read it. The notion of cross-dressing intrigued me, enough so that every time I saw someone looking at the book, I felt my penis happily rising in a salute. Mailer’s *Armies* I stayed away from; military or angry demonstrations had nothing to do with me, and that’s for sure.

I had my other break at three, and Maryann, another nonfiction

clerk, also had her break then; we walked out together.

She was my age, in her 20s, but the way she kept her hand up to her face clearly showed off her wedding ring.

“Nice ring,” I said, looking at it.

“Oh, this?” she blushed. “It’s my wedding ring.”

“Yeah, I thought so,” I said, smiling at her.

“You married?” she asked and blushed, as if she knew the answer; I also blushed.

“Nope, got better things to do.”

We were walking around the block and were on Madison Avenue.

“Like what? Don’t you want a family?”

“Sure, I do, but there’s more to life than just a family.”

Maryann snorted.

“Yeah, like what?”

“Like loving the person you’re with, that’s a family, there’s nothing greater than that.” We looked at each other. “Been

married for long?”

“Four months tomorrow,” she said.

“Wow, nice,” I grinned at her.

She looked at me.

“What’s so nice about it?”

“I don’t know, that you’re married, I guess?”

She snorted.

“A lot of good that does,” Maryann said sadly, shaking her head. “Guys have it so much easier, you know?”

“We do? How do you see that?”

“Guys can pick and chose who they want, we have to wait until a guy likes us but that doesn’t mean he won’t be cheating on us, because he will.” She nodded her head as if telling me a secret truth.

“Oh, that’s crazy. Absurd, really. If you don’t like a guy, tell

him ‘Goodbye, Jack, hit the road, buddy.’ And before you know it he will, anyway. What’s he going to do about it? Absolutely nothing!”

We were back on 5th Avenue. She frowned and shook her head.

“You think it’s that easy?” Maryann sighed as we passed through the revolving door, I passed after her. “Just wait till you’re married, then you’ll see.”

We walked up the stairs.

“How do you know I’m not living with someone? We can do without the legal crap. Life can be beautiful.” I winked at her and went back to my station.

Chapter 24

There weren’t that many full-time bookstore clerks. The majority were part-timers who were actors, dancers, or stand-up

comedians trying to get a big break in the show-business world of Broadway. A few of the girl clerks asked me if I was an entertainer. I shook my head, “Nope,” and watched them walk away, annoyed by my response. I shrugged. I was in a better place, having Timmy. But Maryann was a puzzle to me, trying to appear happily married when she wasn’t, but still holding on to her dream. I suppose there were millions like her in New York City, struggling through their days and still spending their nights dreaming, but arguing bitterly with their spouse. I sighed. What could I do about it? Again, absolutely nothing! They were married and I wasn’t, at least not like them.

As the afternoon drew near its close, the evening clerks appeared on the floor. A few, I noticed, were like Timmy and me, obviously homosexual men, actors and dreamers. I instantly felt close to them, but Timmy later told me, “You have to be careful. Just because they’re like us doesn’t mean they can be close to us. Man, they’ll eat you up and spit you out as easily as anybody

else can. You have to watch it with foolish queers just as you have to watch it with bitter lesbians.” He shook his head. “But we have us,” he winked. “That’s more than enough.”

Near 4:30 I saw Miss Terri on the floor, heading directly over to Connie, who was near the stairway, chatting with an evening clerk. Almost instantly you could feel the tension. The evening clerk instantly disappeared as Miss Terri said something to Connie, who lowered her head but said nothing. Miss Terri gripped her arm and forced to look up; she saw me looking at them. I turned away. Connie said something to Miss Terri, who listened. Then she came in my direction.

“I’m very disappointed in you,” Miss Terri said. “The customer was here this afternoon for his book, and we didn’t have it because you purposely sold it off. You made us look ridiculous. Do you take pleasure in doing that?” I looked at her. “Answer me!”

“It’s not my fault he didn’t come sooner. Our policy is to

hold the book for seven days, then it goes on the shelves again.”

“It was not on the shelves because it was being held in the basement. It should have remained there until he picked it up!”

I shook my head and shrugged.

“A customer asked for the book. I called the stockroom and was told we have it. It came up and I sold it. Just doing my job.” I hesitated, then added, “Ma’am,” and I turned away and went back to my rows of books.

Chapter 25

My workday was over; I’d done pretty well, I thought. I removed my name tag, smiled at the remaining evening clerks and headed down the stairs, where I met Timmy about to come upstairs. We smiled at each other, and he put his arm around my shoulder.

“You did well, sport,” he winked at me. “I’m very proud.”

I grinned back at him, wishing we could do more than just having his arm around me. Kissing would be nice, I thought, blushing. He removed his arm from my shoulder, and we crossed busy 5th Avenue, making our way to Broadway and the subway.

“Bet you’re tired,” he said on the subway. At that time of day it was packed.

“Nope, I feel very much alive. The work didn’t take anything from me. I feel wonderful!”

He laughed.

“First-day excitement, that’s all it is. Wait a few days, then you’ll see. It’ll become a boring, tiresome affair,” he nodded.

I grinned.

“Sure, hope not.”

I glanced around the subway car. The majority of people were reading newspapers or paperback books; a few even held up hardcovers. I looked at Timmy reading, and I was happy. But where did this notion of his being my helper come from, because

that's what he certainly was—coming upon me in Times Square and taking me into his home. I wonder if people meet that way and somehow know that this person is someone they've just been dying to meet, just as that person was doing the same, dying to meet them as well. Do they feel it in the slowness of the subway train as it crawls uptown? Do they feel just how near their destiny is? Or do they just arrive at their stop, take their things and just get up and leave?

I shook my head. We had come to the 86th Street stop.

“Pardon me.” Timmy was beside me, pushing his way through the crowd. “Pardon.” I was right after him.

When we got to the platform, Timmy was sweaty and wiping his brow. “It seems to be worsening, each day the crowd getting bigger and bigger. More people are moving uptown. It wasn't like this just a few years ago.”

We went up the subway stairs and were on Broadway.

“No difference up here,” he continued, “but at least you

can breathe up here.”

I nodded. “Yeah, I don’t think the guy next to me had any deodorant on, the smell was pretty powerful.”

“Hmm, I smelled that, thought it was you.”

I laughed. “You like that smell?”

“Only if it comes from you,” he winked and opened the front door.

“I think it’s gross,” I squirmed and shook my head.

“I agree; a little deodorant always helps.”

We reached the second floor and saw Henry’s door was ajar.

“Hmm, he must be back.” Timmy knocked on the half open door. “Henry, you in here?”

We heard someone walking through the apartment; it was Henry, looking a little worn.

“You’re back quickly.”

Henry shrugged.

“Jewish funerals: They’re done pretty fast.”

Timmy cleared his throat.

“This is Billy, I believe you’ve met?”

We shook hands as Henry readjusted the skullcap he was wearing.

“Yes, yes, we met. Didn’t know you’d ever have a roommate again.”

Timmy smiled. “You mean, at my age?”

Henry vehemently shook his head. “Don’t be ridiculous. You’re still a very young man.” He winked at me. “Anyway, we’re almost the same age.”

“Not as young as Billy is, eh?” He put his arm around my shoulder, winking at me, too. I blushed and looked down. “Again, our condolences.” Henry nodded and we went upstairs.

“Seems like a nice man,” I said on the stairs.

Timmy put his finger on his lips.

“He can’t seem to get a roommate,” he whispered. “Every month he has someone else there,” he opened the door, “and

they always argue and bicker.” He shrugged. “Nothing I can do about that, is there?” He shut door. “As long as I have you, that’s all I need.”

We were in each other’s arms. It was like we’d been waiting just for this moment. We fell on the bed, hugging and feeling each other up as we threw our clothes on the floor. I tried going down on him but he held me off.

“Do it this way,” he said, turning me around and bending me forward, with him clutching my waist. I didn’t understand at first but felt his penis probe my asshole.

“No, I can’t,” I said, quickly turning around. “I never did it like that, you know, getting it up the ass.”

He fell on the bed. “Of course, I understand, just thought you did. There are many other things we can do to make us both happy.” I cuddled beside him, his arm around me, my head resting on his chest.

“I want to learn,” I said, looking up at him. “I had never

sucked anyone before you, but now I like it very much. Same with taking it from behind, you'll have to teach me. Please teach me," I said, staring at him. "I want so much to learn." I lowered my eyes, gently rubbing the nipple at his chest.

We kissed.

"I think its best we bathe and get warmed up. That will loosen us up, getting rid of the cares and woes, don't you agree?"

I nodded.

"Yes. Yes, I do," I said, rubbing my hungry ass cheeks.

Chapter 26

The hot tub was ready, and I stepped in, easing down in the very warm water, its soothing comfort feeling lavish. Earlier, as we'd walked across the room, he had lovingly squeezed and tweaked my buttocks, even probing with a finger. He'd gotten a

small jar of Vaseline from the medicine cabinet.

“I haven’t used it since Danny was alive,” he said sadly.

“Never thought I’d be using it again. It makes for a good insertion,” he said, and winked.

But I was no longer afraid; this was a man whom I loved and who loved me in return.

“A pity I can’t step in with you,” he said, shaking his head.

“The tub’s too small for that. But you wash up and get relaxed in the hot water, it will open you up and I’ll get in after you’re done, okay, sweetie?”

I nodded, watching him leave. I took a small bar of soap and lathered myself, spending a little extra time on my backside, shoving the soap in and out and doing it over again. I don’t know if the soap fucked me or not—it entered slightly, but did it go deep enough? Still, I felt refreshed, clean and eager for anything, no matter how deep it went in, but I sure was ready.

I walked into the bedroom, wiping my hair and feeling

myself getting erect. Timmy set down the book he was reading, got up from the bed and came over to me. Again, he tweaked my ass, rubbing my buttocks and momentarily trying to insert his finger. I didn't care what he was doing, even bending me over for better insertion.

“Let me get in the tub,” he said, still rubbing my ass. “We'll both feel renewed and refreshed.” He winked and went to the bathroom.

“Hurry up,” I called after him. “I can't wait.” Quietly I added, “Ass fucking, that's what I'm going to get.”

I shrugged, giggling, and finished wiping myself. I stood before the long mirror in front of his closet, tweaking and squeezing my buttocks. I turned around, holding them up high, and getting a better view of my asshole. Oh, God, right in my ass, what a lovely feeling that would be!

I went to the bed and lay on it, looked at what he was reading. The Confessions of Nat Turner by William Styron. I

didn't open it. Too deep for me, that's for sure. Thought about Connie and Miss Terri. What were they doing now? Arguing bitterly or tenderly caressing each other? I couldn't imagine Miss Terri being tender. I shivered and shook my head. I doubted if Connie would be able to argue back. She'd probably stand there with her head lowered as Miss Terri spat venom at her.

I turned over and lay on my chest, holding my ass up in the air, positioning it in various ways and craning my head to see what the best angle would be. Timmy came out, his eyes wide and staring at my round, eager buttocks.

"Hmm, very lovely, I must say." He licked his lips and got on the bed, lowering himself over me. He cooed in my ear about how lovely I was, all the while rubbing my asshole with Vaseline, trying to push himself in. Suddenly I panicked. I squirmed under him and twisted around to face him, falling onto my back.

"I'm scared, very scared," I mumbled. "And ashamed, too—"

"Oh, bosh, don't be. Just a natural reaction and fear of

something new. I was the same many years ago, when it was my first time.”

“You were?”

“Uh huh,” he nodded. “And the big boy was very rough and crude in his drunkenness.” I saw he had gotten sad as he lay atop me.

“Please tell me,” I whispered. “I want to know what it was like for you.”

He looked at me.

“Yes, I’ll tell you. We were just kids,” he said, slowly shaking his head. “It was in the 1940s and I so much wanted to be an adult. I used to hang out with the older boys. We lived outside of Pittsburgh, and most boys were in the Army. The boys I hung out with always had good times, but didn’t do anything rough. I think I was their mascot for a time, and I felt good, good and proud that I was accepted by them.”

He still lay atop me but his hands were at my head, his

fingers stroking my hair. I was beneath him, with my legs open as I felt his stiff penis pressed against mine.

“I liked this one boy, Sidney, and I was sure he liked me, too. But one day he showed up drunk and wanted us all to go into the woods. The other boys refused, told him to go home and sleep it off, but Sidney said, “fuck off,” and started staggering into the woods. I watched him disappear, nervously jumped up and ran after him. I caught up to him and he put his arm around me, shoulder to shoulder, and we staggered on.”

My legs had gone around his thighs and my heels tapped gently against his buttocks. He looked at me.

“You like that,” he asked. “Rubbing against my backside?”

I nodded. “Same as you do, tweaking my ass,” I shrugged. “But tell me what happened in the woods.”

“As we walked, he started talking about his old girlfriend, the one who just had gotten married to someone else. ‘I used to fuck her like a pig,’ he’d say ‘because she was one, who took it

in the ass because she wanted to stay a virgin for husband that she'd meet one day.' What a bunch of malarkey girls spread in those days." He shook his head, "as I'm sure they're still doing."

I had moved my legs, lifting them to his waist, and he readily put his arms under them, holding my legs braced behind my knees. I think the realization of what we had maneuvered ourselves into suddenly hit us that we were ripe for a fucking, an ass-fucking, just as a man did with a woman, or a man did with man, and I was playing the part of the woman.

"And," I asked, "what happened then?"

I felt his penis prodding against my asshole; a look of wonder showed in his eyes.

"Amazing, I have never done it this way before, it's simply amazing."

I felt his penis struggling and pushing in against my tight, resistant asshole. I knew I had to be in a relaxed mood or it would never break through the stubborn, resistant sphincter, no

matter how much Vaseline he'd used. But his penis probed and slowly pushed in.

“In an instant he had my pants off, twisted me around and he entered me from the rear.” He stopped, as if marveling at what we were doing. “Amazing, simply amazing, that it could be like this, face to face.”

He probed in a little more, man to man, ass to dick, deeper and deeper, playing the mating game! He was in me! “There was a little blood, but he fucked me and staggered off into the woods. You could say I was growing up.”

“Oh, yes,” I cried brokenly. “Oh, God, Jesus, yes, fuck me!”

He had broken through and stared at me. His eyes were wide and surprised and he was pumping within me. He ejaculated, I was sure of it; it felt wonderful, his seed spilling within me, a splash, a gush that was saturating me and made me feel encapsulated in wonderment that it was him and what he was doing to me. Oh, God, did I feel a man!

I opened my tired eyes and sought out his tongue and mouth with my own, wanting him inside of me forever. We kissed open-mouthed; our saliva ran out. We were wet down below, saturated above, freed to love each other. I ejaculated, my semen spitting out on his belly and quickly smearing our flesh in our satisfied pleasure.

His penis relaxed and came out, but it felt like something in me was hurrying to replace it, the scum once again brewing and boiling, like water or cream was in me, getting ready for eruption. His semen flowed out of my ass—it was part of my biological response to his body. And I loved it!

He collapsed exhausted by my side, panting. I was spent and tired also—needless to say, an ass-fucking takes a lot out of you. Still, it's a wonderful feeling of rejuvenation once the fear and confusion are gone.

“Did you like it?” he asked, breathing heavily.

“Uh huh, made me feel a part of you and for a moment we

were one, even better than doing sixty-nine. It was wonderful!”

I pushed myself up on my elbows and looked at him. We kissed.

“Billy, you were wonderful!”

“So were you, daddy,” I said shyly. “So were you.” I snuggled into his chest.

Chapter 27

Weeks passed. Sometimes the work was dull and boring, other times busy and explosive. You never knew when a customer was going to ask for a book. It was impossible to say when it would happen, sometimes a filled bookstore with customers, reading, turning pages, and not one question, at other times you’d be inundated by requests about certain titles.

"Do you have the novel by Graham Greene, or Saul Bellow, or

John Updike? Yes, ma'am; no, sir."

By the end of the month, I pretty well knew every fiction title in stock.

Connie and Miss Terri were still antagonistic toward me— Connie a little less so, Miss Terri more so. I began to feel that Miss Terri's hatred of men was a natural, inborn emotion, that she could do nothing about it. After one month I was called into Miss Terri's office. She sat with pen in hand and paper before her.

"I'm signing your paper," she said, scribbling her name. "Your probation is over. You are now officially a Floor Clerk. That will be all."

"Thank you," I said, smiling at her. "Thank you very much." She looked me but didn't say anything. I left but I was very ecstatic. They were letting me stay; I had made the grade!

Timmy was also smiling when I returned to work.

"I knew they would give it to you. They couldn't refuse keeping you; you had too many friends on your side."

Later that evening, as we talked about Connie and Miss Terri, he told me about the roles they played. "In relationships," he said, "one will take a woman's part and one will take a man's, no matter what sex they are; the world goes around like that."

I pondered this.

"So you'd say I was the woman in our relationship?"

"If you want to be. But it really doesn't matter. You can play both parts, man and woman, be whichever you want to be. Sometimes I don't even know which you are, which I am. And it's wonderful not knowing; each day is a discovery." He shook his head. "Don't ever change, keep probing, keep asking; keep getting underneath things to find out what they really are. Hold that perennial question in you, always keep asking, Is this what life is all about? You'll find out the majority of people haven't the slightest clue." Again, he shook his head and laughed. "Hell, sometimes I don't even know."

I looked at him, my eyes moistening.

“You’re my sweet bookstore clerk,” he said, his arms about me.

We fell together. That’s what I’d always wanted to be, a bookstore clerk.

ABOUT MYKOLA DEMENTIUKA Ukrainian born in West Germany, Mykola (Mick) Dementiuk grew up and survived on New York's tough Lower East Side streets, which are now a bare echo of what they once were. He is the author of Holy Communion (Lambda Awards Winner 2010/Bisexual Fiction), Vienna Dolorosa, Times Queer, and 100 Whores. His other writings in e-book are Dee Dee Day, Variety, The Spice of Life, Murder in Times Square, Times Square...in Brooklyn?, Queers of Central Park, A Sucker for the Circus, Times Square Cutie and Stallers, More Tales of Times Square Cuties, and On the Prowl.

[Mick Mykola Dementiuk](#)

<https://alumni.columbia.edu/content/times-square-queer>

[Mykola Dementiuk: Mykola Dementiuk books and e-books, in-print or out-of-print, look under Amazon for those currently available](#)

Lambda Literary Award First Place 2009, 2012

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by Nathan Anderson**

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LEARNING TO PLAY THE PIANO

by Randy Russell

SUGAR KOWALCZYK'S MOTHER, Mrs. Kowalczyk, or "Mrs. K" as she had us call her, was my piano teacher one summer between fifth and sixth grade. She was an elderly woman who lived alone in a modest, two-story, wood frame house across from one of Sandusky, Ohio's many triangular shaped parks. There was a rumor that her deceased husband, who had been a lifelong employee of the B & O Railroad, was mummified in the unused upstairs bedroom. Sugar, according to Mrs. Kowalczyk, was gallivanting across the country somewhere, never taking the time to visit her poor old mother. Mrs. Kowalczyk was a strict disciplinarian, a piano theory formalist, and, it seemed to me, a timeless, supernatural being who had stopped aging after about a hundred years on earth.

I would be dropped off in Mrs. K's driveway once a week for my lesson. I usually had not practiced sufficiently, and Mrs. K would press my fingers into the correct keys with her cold, bony hands as she hovered over my recital. Each week I'd seem to go backwards. She'd refer to a *previous* lesson in the book and say I needed to improve my fundamentals. I figured by the end of the summer I'd be plinking away at one key with one finger. I felt like I was letting her down, insulting her, hurting her—all because I couldn't learn these basic piano lessons. She never smiled and was as cold as the summer and I were hot. I experimented with several different brands of deodorant that summer, finally concluding that the thick deodorant *cream*—white, opaque, and applied with your fingers—did the best job of keeping sliced onion pools from forming down the sides of my shirt.

What scared me the most, however, was Mrs. K's neighbors. One day my mother dropped me off for my piano lesson, and as I was heading up Mrs. K's walk, I heard a bloodcurdling scream. There was a wildly gesticulating man running from the house next door to a beat-up old van waiting in the street. He had long, stringy hair, a dark beard, torn clothes, and crazy eyes, and as he jumped into the back of the van it squealed its tires and roared off in a cloud of green exhaust. The face of a woman was peering in terror from the back window. She was missing a front tooth and I

could have sworn her mouth was bloodied—or was it just bright red lipstick? The neighbors' house was now quiet. The front door was open—no, there was no front door at all. The curtains blew in and out of the open windows. There was no sound except for a baby crying somewhere. I was confused, and terrified. Mrs. K was a welcome sight that day.

I told my parents about the strange, scary neighbors and pleaded with them to let me quit my piano lessons. Instead, to inspire me, they made me put on my red blazer and clip-on tie and go with them to one of the evening recitals that Mrs. K held every so often for her best students. I pointed out the weird neighbors' house and my dad said something about “white trash” and my mom just gave him a scolding look. We sat in folding chairs facing the piano in the stuffy room with proud parents as Mrs. K one by one introduced the mortified performers. Thinking that I might someday be included in this terrifying ritual made me forget all about the neighbors.

Suddenly, I was surprised to see Deanna Deanovic calmly sit at the piano and begin playing. She was a girl my age who I had an enormous crush on, the most enduring crush of my life. Her recital rose above all the others. I had no idea she took lessons from Mrs. K, and her coolness and virtuosity destroyed me. She could play piano, she could play chess, she smoked cigarettes. I

could do none of those things. She had a boyfriend in junior high. I was devastated. How would I ever get this beautiful, intelligent, and *talented* girl to like me?

After that I *did* make an effort to practice the piano in a desperate attempt to manufacture a fantasy of Deanna congratulating me one day after my brilliant recital. When school started in September, Deanna, as usual, showed no interest in me, except when she and several other girls would flirt with me in order to cause me embarrassment and ridicule, and they would point and laugh at my bright red ears. It was the only attention I got from these girls, and my only contact with Deanna, and I was humiliated, but secretly happy. I was strangely, secretly happy, but miserable.

Perhaps it was because I was in this highly agitated state that my heart was so vulnerable when Sugar returned to town. I was suffering on Mrs. Kowalczyk's piano bench when Sugar showed up unexpectedly with a bloodcurdling scream. Though happy to see her, Mrs. K immediately started complaining about her daughter's long absence. Sugar ignored all the fussing and danced around the room, telling of her exploits in Hollywood. She called herself Sugar *Kane* now. She had started out as a singer and had gone on to the silver screen. I had not yet seen any of her movies. She had just finished a film shoot in New York City

and had some time off. Mrs. K went to the kitchen and blended us some grasshoppers. My lesson was over for the day, and, though I couldn't have known it at the time, my piano playing days were over.

Ordinarily I would have turned down such an invitation, but when Sugar asked me to show her the town that evening, I accepted. There was a dance at the junior high where Deanna would be with her older boyfriend. What if I showed up with an older woman? Quite a bit older—bleached-blond, full-figured, and a movie star! I wore a white turtleneck under my suit jacket. Sugar wore a backless, glittery, evening gown that was just short of obscene. We caused an uproar at the dance. I could tell that Deanna was eyeing me in wonder. Sugar and I left early, quickly tiring of the childish behavior of my classmates, and we retired to the Girves Brown Derby for a late dinner. It was an evening I'll never forget.

Sugar and I soon became inseparable. She liked to buy me clothes and parade me around. I was Sugar's plaything, her five-foot-two-inch millionaire. I knew that, but it wasn't like I didn't get anything out of the relationship—for one thing, I got a boner. It was a revelation for me to get a boner through direct contact with another person, rather than when I woke up in the morning with a full bladder. I remembered once when I was younger, hanging out

with some of the older boys in the neighborhood, we stole a *Playboy* magazine from a kid's dad and looked at it out in the woods. We sat around in a circle and pulled out our penises and played a game one kid called "Milking the Cow." I had no idea what he meant by it. He said that *he* had a boner, and I didn't. I thought a boner was a *kind* of penis—either you were born with one or you weren't. Sugar taught me that anyone can have a boner. I asked her if she wanted to play "Milking the Cow." She seemed to know what I was talking about.

Perhaps it was our age difference, but more likely it was the enormous gap in our sexual experience that began to lead to problems in bed. I had a lot of catching up to do, but I didn't mind. It was Sugar who seemed to be dissatisfied most of the time. One of my attempted solutions was to purchase, for fifty cents, a "sex kit" from a machine at the Kocholine filling station. It was from the same machine, in the men's room, that some of my friends bought rubbers, "just to be prepared." The other choice from the machine was the sex kit, which contained an "exciter ring," one "fiesta colored condom," and "climax control cream."

My parents were concerned with the situation but seemed at a loss, exactly, to figure out what to do. While my mother made some embarrassing attempts to talk to me about sex, my father seemed to be more focused on Sugar herself. What was she like,

he asked? He seemed to be fishing for intimate details, and I felt a twinge of jealousy and refused to bring Sugar over for dinner. My parents finally had me see an analyst.

“Call me Dave,” he said, though he wasn’t a doctor, and I didn’t know his last name. Because of his tie-dyed shirts, beads, and alarming eruptions of hair contrasting with premature baldness, I referred to him secretly as “Guru Dave.” It took several sessions for the subject of Sugar to come up, after which Sugar was all Guru Dave wanted to talk about. What was she like? Could I persuade her to join us at one of these sessions? Because the weekly visits, which were quite expensive, weren’t covered by my father’s health insurance, I had little trouble convincing my parents that I should terminate the therapy.

While they didn’t feel they could absolutely forbid me from seeing Sugar, my parents’ disapproval was heavy in the air. I felt like I was on the verge of being excommunicated from the family, like the kid in *I Wish That I Had Duck Feet*, one of the children’s books that has held endless fascination for me over the years.

This was an easy reader book from the Sixties that surely would have been a favorite in Dr. Freud’s library. It’s about this kid who wishes he had duck feet, big ones, instead of his normal feet, but then, while imagining all the fun he’d have with his duck feet, like not having to wear shoes, he realizes that his mother would

kick him out of the house for making a puddle on the floor. As if that wasn't enough, he then goes through the same fantasies about having antlers on his head, a whale spout, a long tail, and an elephant trunk. After he imagines impressing girls, dominating the school bully, and generally ruling the school with each one of these things, each one more phallic than the last (though the duck feet remain, somehow, the most sexual), he ends up picturing some kind of humiliation as the end result. Finally, his solution is to have them all at once, a total freak, which leads to him being captured and kept in the zoo.

The book ends with the ever-so-lame realization that he just wants to be himself. Completely unconvincing—as with all of the children's stories that show the wonders and perils of an exotic and sexy world, only to chicken out at the end with some kind of sermon about the virtues of a boring, straight existence.

Maybe I wasn't a normal kid, but I never bought the values of fitting in. Once, a friend and I invited a couple of neighborhood girls into a dark, musty shed we'd converted into our clubhouse. There was an awkward tension which I shattered when I lit a piece of model rocket fuse stuck in my belt. As it sputtered and smoked, and sparks illuminated our expectant faces, I announced that I had a bomb—prepare to die! We panicked and bolted out

the door, and one of the angry girls called me an asshole as they left.

Their reaction of fear and disgust reminded me of the friends of the kid with duck feet. I felt ashamed, but then I was immediately overwhelmed by a gush of pride. To hell with the petty maneuverings that would have been necessary to “cop a feel.” I didn’t want a normal life. I had a glimpse of an existence as a freak, a circus clown, and I liked what I saw.

AS OUR RELATIONSHIP continued to ferment, I started to realize that Sugar had a dark side that I wasn’t equipped to deal with. I tried to “be there” for her, as much as possible, but some of her late-night, drunken confessions of flings in Tinsel Town chilled my blood. I wasn’t surprised to discover that I wasn’t her first man, but it was evident that she had paid a price to get where she was, and the emotional scars showed through more and more. I don’t know if it was my changing picture of her, or if it was my increasing maturity, but we soon began to grow apart. Jealousy began to work its way between us. She wanted me to stay home from school, and I didn’t want her to return to Los Angeles. But she had a film to start shooting, and that’s where she went. Our good-bye was sad and bitter.

I shouldn't have been surprised that Sugar wasn't much of a letter writer. I faithfully sent her a letter a week until the point at which they started being returned by the post office. At first, she would call me occasionally, but usually in the middle of the night, and my parents wouldn't let me talk to her. I'm sure I was just another in a long string of men to her, but to me our love was like being born again, and losing her was like losing my faith—my whole world was pulled out from under me. The days went on, however, one by one, as they will, and she began to slowly fade from my memory.

In time, the acute pain subsided into something more idealized and romantic. I was bored at parties and would distance myself from the drunken revelry, step out onto the porch for a cigarette, and stare at the night sky.

When a long-awaited movie starring Sugar opened at the local cinema, I attended with some friends. With her first appearance on screen, I was seized with an overwhelming sadness, ran from the theater, and collapsed in the alley, sobbing. My concerned friends accompanied me to the nearby malt shop and looked at me in wonder as we sipped our milkshakes in silence.

I returned to the movie the next night, alone, and then each night until it left town. In subsequent years, as each of Sugar's movies came to town, I sat alone in the front row and gazed at her

face, gigantic on the screen, and tried to get back any feeling or acknowledgment that I had ever known her. But I never did.

And, like everyone else, I've always regretted not learning to play the piano. Though, like everyone else, there's no reason I couldn't start learning right now. But, like everyone else, I won't.

from Interstitial Spaces

by Ric Carfagna

-20-

A slow attunement to now an animism inside

the dust mote's

floating drift

here

what is never thought of is a persistent presence uncoiling

through matter's dark labyrinthine frames dense particulate

forging distortions

the eye absorbs

the ghost of moment formulated in error

or just the ocean

of infinite possibilities flowing across the
shifting threshold

-21-

The day
as fading
embers
as dusk
does not form
its own tacit facets unobserved

only the eye
as architect
unveils pertinent
information
from a curtained universe bringing passage
and differentiation
light from dark
returning
arcing circles
askew Newtonian boundaries and limits to where

exegesis arrives
at asymmetries of answers
now reverting
to what was (once) envisioned or divined
and as once dismembered and as now remaining
(an) indecipherable (entity)

-22-

Some momentary significance to this
but with no ability
to grasp meaning
beyond the mortality
of words
maybe clock-time
to represent
shadows in vestibules
or ghosts crossing thresholds inimitable point of no return
like light in a window holding only moments inside
time's malleable shell
a movement's attunement to torsos of tones
of variations

as perfect as
imperfection (in this skin) and to retrace these steps with no
formative direction to measure
deviations of direction compass rose fluctuation and no place to
return to
a landscape's vacillating perspective

-23-

The weight of the fray divides & undermines its timelines
a certainty
as death returning through these doors with no image
to contain
the awareness
of intimacies or understandings certainties collapse
with blurs & distortion disinterring fates
in faces at windows
with no empathy
behind fortified eyes
the senility of ambiguities
the seasons of violence & steel harboring a cold blindness
a mortal drift's
alienation

estrangement and
sorrow

-24-

What is in this
if not isolation hemispheres arisen
in acid visions
and the icons inside
an idolator's heart
here minutes are belated symbols
clearly delineating architectural details
a building at sunset casting indeterminate light their shadows
form
a poetics of space
where corridors
behind walls
cannot be transversed
by an imagination's fossilized interpretation only the duration
of a dimming sun
offers residue
to reinterpret
among weeds

and the termination point
in a wind of forgotten surfaces all is as this presence is
and what is this
if not isolation
as rain moves in
by nightfall
and as this house is
a rotting expanse better left to its own shattered retention
of entropic formation

-25-

The blank spaces created by years overtones of faces
in echoes remembered mirrors of liminality wandering ghosts
of volatile presence
such tarnished effigies
such mercurial penury
such matted facets
given to an indeterminate faith skewed ruminations
of doorways
not entered
of belated gazes

through window panes
and of four walls
holding the moment
as fragments of fluid ruins
no spaces that remain
the dwelling places of
a benevolent presence
such houses of intimacy
in shallow mortalities
the inaccessible muse
buried beneath roots
of a desert's
brooding immensity

-26-

At the end
beyond the abstract
intonations (echoing)
and the countless symbols
given to an unknowing fate
where frames dissolve
the fields of lavender

remembered as
a phenological vision
a vanished afterglow
with clinging echoes
ephemeral structures
a small pavement edge
holding an intimacy
once seized by an eye's perspective its presence pressing back
in a space vacated
blurred and blackened
with time's nameless passage
no identity given
no veritable awakening
no self
to retain
only sleep
of forgetfulness
patterns of fragile
relationships
forgeries of faith and love
and lastly

the collapsing
human heart's
duration

Notebooks 13

by Richard Freeman

We used to say: “If you’re so smart, how come you’re not rich?” And poor intellectuals found their come back to that question by inventing socialism or communism - where the best & brightest could transmogrify into the vanguard of the proletariat. They were still not rich, but they were more rich than others - and most certainly more equal than others.

But this has changed, thanks to the Reagan Revolution, and the bright are now becoming rich (which is not yet quite the same as saying that the rich are becoming bright).

Intellectuals are switching allegiances, like pro athletes to new teams that pay better. Old leftists have become new conservatives, and the few remaining socialists are calling their

stockbrokers and checking into their options. There might have been a change in the dialectic, but it's still materialism...

Each of us has bits and pieces of Truth inside us - as well as many complete half truths, and we think that these half truths can add up to become whole truths, so that our ideas become full truth.

But half truths don't add up, they multiply together, so that the more of them that combine, the less truth we have. Paranoia is a state of mind that mathematically resembles $1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2 \dots$ and the product is $1/32$ of a truth trying to make sense of the world.

Where $1/2$ truths can add up is in a philosophical discussion, where two people can both recognize the other's half truths, and can negate them. Sometimes, each person can see that they have part of the truth... though such meetings more often just end up with a folie a deux... or the start of a mass psychosis.

Uncle Clarence opposes affirmative action because he wants the Constitution to be color blind, and because he believes affirmative action is demeaning to blacks. He feels that blacks are

the same as whites in all ways, and should be treated no differently than whites. That if blacks will work hard, they can fully compete with whites. He believes that all men are created equal (his Republican friends mouth these sentiments, while not believing in them for a second).

Such ideas seem to be unpopular with disadvantaged blacks or liberal whites. These groups act with the unspoken (and never to be spoken) assumption that blacks are not created equal to whites, and so need every advantage they can get, to level or handicap the playing field.

Uncle Clarence is an idealist. But I fear that attempts to implement his ideals will have unintended consequences. The Texas law school that lost its case in the Supreme Court argued that if test scores were the only valid means of entrance, there would be few black or Hispanic law students, for blacks and Hispanics are scoring a standard deviation below whites on the law exams.

With affirmative action ended for grad school entrance, we would soon have a professional pattern that resembled very much that of the 1950s. Of course, those blacks who do get into

Harvard Law would have even better opportunities, as there would be even less minority competition for future jobs.

But added to the collapse taking place in the inner cities, and now the inner suburbs, this country faces resegregation, and a condition for blacks that has not been seen since slavery.

Conservatives are already saying that we spent \$4 trillion on our cities, and look what the money has done! That we would be much better off today if we hadn't spent a dime. But without affirmative action jobs, the only form of energy available for inner cities is cash from the government.

The half truths multiplying in Uncle Clarence's head will see to this... unless they can be philosophically added in some way to other truths to form some sort of synthesis. But no one wants to talk with Uncle Clarence who has differing opinions, and he doesn't want to talk with liberals, either.

I'm sure he wouldn't care to hear that the only answer to our inner cities collapse is neither welfare nor laissez faire, but rather a heavy dose of socialism!

That such socialism would destroy our economy on a world level is probably also quite true.

It is more than likely that a new economic system is in order to synthesize these partial truths, a synthesis I am not capable of providing.

For whatever reason, I don't feel like I am a part of any tribe, though I like many of the things that people in tribes like. But I have no feeling of "My tribe, drunk or sober."

Hitler said that the Jews were not part of the Germanic tribe, and perhaps he was right, but I don't even feel like I'm a member of the lost tribe. I am a pilgrim and a stranger here myself.

There are at least two kinds of anarchists (I'm not saying that there aren't more than two, just that there are at least two) - a person who doesn't need the law because he has no need to violate it, and a person who wants to break all laws on general principles.

I am comfortable living within the laws, as they don't really apply to me. My life is led, for the most part, within my head.

But I think anarchists like myself (if I am an anarchist) rightly fear those who wish to destroy all government, so that only what they want to do becomes the law.

Which is not to say that I support governments making laws, or believe in the laws governments make - it's just that there aren't any laws I'd want to bother breaking. Were there such laws, I'd probably just quietly break them, and hope I didn't get caught.

It would seem as though laws were created because of a belief that everyone is, or is potentially, an anarchist of the most violent sort.

Sex center is always rather anarchistic, and it will try to break through, peacefully or violently. All laws and morals, insofar as they don't help sex center get what it wants, are seen as unnecessary - or absurd. As if they were the laws and morals of New Guinea.

Those who pass sexual laws or morals are still all anarchists who agree momentarily with each other, at least intellectually

(which is why some of our law enforcers and moralists get caught in Biloxi with underaged hookers).

To say that life is meaningless is to make life entropic - a closed system with three laws: 1) You can't win 2) You can't even break even 3) You can't quit the game.

But life can be made negentropic - we can create meaning - which puts life under the three laws of baseball: 1) Win some 2) Lose some 3) Some are called on account of rain.

Perhaps, before the creation of the Universe, Life had become meaningless to God (whatever that might mean)... so on the 7th day, God created baseball.

Reading William Lee Miller's Arguing About Slavery - excellent book - and thinking about abolitionists... and how slavery could have been abolished without a civil war. I cannot see, however, the South ever willingly giving up slavery. It would mean giving up free sex.

The anti-slavery crusade was a moral crusade, and it struck me that the only times in U.S. history that the Left has grown

powerful were during times of what we saw as large moral crisis... the Civil War period, the formation of the labor movement, the Depression, and Civil Rights/Vietnam.

When there is no such “moral” issue, the left recedes, and business goes back to politics as normal, with govt. letting people make as much money as they can using whatever means are necessary.

Once Nixon left the White House and the troops left Vietnam, the Left vanished like the Lone Ranger, and nobody even stood around to ask, “Who was that masked man?”

If the right wing has a moral issue, other than anti-communism, it must be “family values.” We once had them, and they made America strong, but we are now being deformed by Welfare. We need to straighten out people again though perhaps not by starting them to work in sweat shops as children... or even bringing back indentured servitude. I’m not sure that the blacks would agree to relearning family values by having white men fuck black women, and sell the offspring on the free market to the highest bidder.

Families are where the horror starts... where we raise the next generations of terrorists and terrorized. We don't know value, just price.

Utopian economic schemes are grounded in virtues - or they hope to make men virtuous. Capitalism, on the other hand, is embedded in our vices, and people don't care what it makes them, as long as it makes them rich.

All 7 of our Deadly Sins are essential components of capitalism, even sloth (for without it, the poor would surely arise)...

Any system that replaces capitalism in our hearts and minds must answer first our deepest wants and wishes. People might want to be virtuous and good, and believe that the meek will inherit the earth, but then it's Monday again, and time to get back to work.

Communism began as a system of virtues (but underlying them was the driving force of envy), but in order for it to succeed as an economic system (or at least for its leaders to stay in power), many other deadly sins had to be added (wrath comes to mind), while such virtues as faith, hope, and charity had to be

postponed indefinitely, until the withering of the state. The Soviet economy was oiled by vodka.

A system of vices, without the hypocrisy of virtues, will soon collapse, which is why capitalism embraces religion. It gives those who wish to be virtuous a profession, where they can only disturb the rest of us one day/week, outside the south.

The rich are offered absolution from sin through weekly donations, which go to building mansions in heaven for the poor.

An inability to work for a living is surely a weakness in a capitalist system. Anything that can't be bought or sold might as well not exist. To not know how to make money is to be unphilosophical, irreligious. To not know oneself, or how to sell to anyone else.

Liberalism is the answer - but only of a very specific question - What can the control group offer to the middle and lower classes during a depression, to keep them from going socialist or fascist. How can we share some of the wealth without redistributing it?

Conservatism is the answer to the question: How can we keep the money we have without having to give some to the government to give to the poor. When the going is good, those with the goods become conservative. They offer the middle class incredible dreams of pie in the sky; but also the right to own guns and drive fast without speed limits or seat belts here on earth... if you don't drink, the fines are minimal

Thanks to the full employment (and cheap death benefits) of World War 2, the depression finally lifted in America, and our politics began to shift back towards our natural conservatism. These flush times were used by liberals in the '60s as they posed the question: Now that we are rich beyond our wildest dreams, and getting richer by the minute, can't we share some of the profits with the poor? Can't we have a short war on poverty, and end it for all time, using nothing but pocket change?

Liberals also asked why blacks couldn't be free, and not just the Vietnamese...

For reasons far beyond their control, all of these questions seemed to unleash the children of the liberals in an orgy of sex, drugs, anti-war politics, and rock n roll.

Orgies are equity sex.

Liberals were eventually discovered to be merely politicians who, in order to be reelected, were willing to take middle class money and give it to lumpenvoters, unleashing the forces of anarchy in the process.

It is little wonder that Conservative made a full recovery in the '70s.

Now the Demos (all of whom are called liberals by Republicans, there being no worse name to call them since Ronald Reagan singlehandedly defeated the Evil Empire in One Man One Vote Arm To Arm Combat) are trying to run as sheep in wolves clothing. They, too, now oppose welfare, want to balance the budget, and feel just like Jesse Helms about Andrew Marvell, drugs, and rock n roll.

The left has become all vanguard, no proletariat...

Captains of a garbage scow!

All of the above oppose the forces of anarchy... they are all prepared to be the victors of some Control Group.

There is just not enough wealth to share out equally, as if it were pussy at a gang bang. The question then is who is going to have the wealth... and who is going to protect those who have it.

At present, our billionaires and multi millionaires are willing to pretend to let our mere millionaires govern, in the name of democracy. Just as they pretend that all of those mere millionaires could become multibillionaires, if it weren't for the damn liberals... stolidity forever.

Caught an amusing town hall meeting on education (I rarely watch anything on television other than sports) - exceptionally complex problems seeking simple solutions, with Bill Moyers moderating.

Kozol was there, still in the ed. racket, saying that all kids in America deserve the same amount of money spent on their education by the state, cause that's the American way - something no politician wants to disagree with when faced by a

hostile crowd of unsatisfied voters and still somewhat idealistic school kids.

Here is America talking... in the sitzhfleisch.

But there is also an America that threw Brit tea into Boston Harbor because, well because even though the capitalist Brits were selling it cheaper than Americans who were illegally selling illegal tea, they were also trying to put a tax on their tea... and taxation without representation...

Americans might want equal education, but they don't want to be taxed \$4,000 a year so that some slumkid can have an education equal to theirs, especially if it means lessening the chances of getting into HRVD.

Only those who don't have to pay taxes can afford equality.

No one suggested we just do away with schools. They are perfectly satisfied having the dumb lead the dumb.

The diabolic dialectical wonders of American history, where a philosopher from Virginia, George Fitzhugh, could write that the

North stood for: "Socialism and communism. No private property, no church, no law, no government..." The South had a civilization based on individualism. Liberty meant everything to Southerners, yet they would no sooner liberate their slaves than they would their horses.

And somehow, the Puritan religious intolerance of the North turns into a belief in democracy.

Of course, during those golden days of yesteryear, when people were still property, and damned proud to own it, the Southrens would look at the industrial North, and point out that the workers there were treated worse than slaves, and feel deeply moral about how white trash should be treated in that fashion - with no kind massa to care for them when they were old and gray (these were, after all, the days before social security and Medicare).

Now, old and young, black and white, North and South alike, can be poor together (living in separate but equal slums), and can get welfare when there are thousands of jobs advertised every day in the local papers. For these slum dwellers are free. They

can walk off any time they want without someone tracking them down with bloodhounds or the IRS.

No one would ever think of buying or selling them - who would even want them?

They are free to become millionaires if they wish, though if we catch them trying to do this in an illegal fashion, we'll throw their butts in jail and throw away the key.

Thank god there are no communists left in this world, ready and willing to go into the slums and rile these people up. There are no abolitionists of poverty, just Demos and Puppies. But if they did try to rebel, we'd have Robert E. Lee come in with the army, like he did at Harper's Ferry, and blow them away.

No wonder it's difficult for school kids today to understand history, much less enjoy its combination of hypocrisy and confusion. Democrats believe that all children should be free and compelled to attend public schools (while sending their own whelp to Sidwell Friends, Brearley or Dalton).

Republicans believe in home schooling, or any other untaxed form of schooling where they can be free to partake in compulsory prayer.

In America, being poor is one's own damn fault - and if there is any moral outrage, it is directed towards the misbehavior of the poor.

The only job of government is to keeping the quantity away from the quality, by whatever means are necessary. The more intelligent members of the quantity can be sent to law school, where, upon graduation, they can become prosecutors; and, after showing they have no compunction about sending the quantity off to jail, can then be nominated for political office.

A Ghetto is an entropic zone, where there is no energy, just garbage. In order to introduce negentropy, one must bring into a ghetto either kinetic or potential energy (and preferably both).

Potential energy, in the form of welfare checks, has been the choice of our govt. - but this potential energy is converted into kinetic energy in the form of frantic behavior. All too soon, the money is drained back out of the ghetto in the form of drug

purchases, high priced food, sneakers, and high interest rent-to-own goods.

The ghetto returns quickly to its entropic state, as the inhabitants wait for the next govt. check, and nothing new is created, except, perhaps, babies.

Those in power have no ideals at all, and only moral objections to sex, drugs and hip hop.

In the past, impressionable young have been used, by one group or other, for children's crusades... or wars in Vietnam.

My generation, perhaps our last idealistic generation, was destroyed by Congress, our native criminal class, and all generations since mine have been led to sneer at hippies and yippies. Beats, lacking idealism, are more in tune with an age like this.

In a country that pretends to ideals that are easily seen through by anyone with a high school lack of education, it is little wonder there is such cynicism among les jeunes.

The '60s will only be resurrected when someone decides to make a movie about it, and pimps that movie in every magazine that Time Warner puts out. Not having learned from history, we will be forced to repeat the songs and styles. We only learn from the media, and only believe what we see on television (I suppose someone reads the papers and believes in them, just as someone must still believe in Thor).

In a society or country where one's worth is taken to mean, how much money is one worth, those without money soon become worthless.

One would then expect worthless behavior from such people...

But if the only worth is monetary worth, then the children of the worthy will inevitable start to lead, to themselves, meaningless lives - and will have to constantly be bailed out of trouble.

There is no way to teach real worth to either the rich or the poor. All that can be taught is for the poor to accept the rich as their betters, and the rich to accept the poor as, at best, their

burden - which leads to envy of the rich and distrust of the poor - our wonderful culture, in point of fact.

Ourblacks have become the white man's burden.

Last time around, in 1992, Bill Clinton was willing to not only allow, but to watch a brain dead man be executed for murder (I assume that anyone who decided to eat his dessert first, and wait till after his execution to eat his supper, is, if not brain dead, then...) in order to become President.

This time around, Bill is willing to sacrifice the babies of the poor (and, if one is pro-abortion, their fetuses).

I don't want to be President myself, but what if I were offered the chance to be a great poet, in exchange for throwing the poor off of welfare...

Watched the second debate tonight - very amusing, indeed, to someone who only watches pro wrestling on TV. Bob Dole used a "foreign object" that he'd hidden in his trunks - asking Bill if he was going to pardon his Whitewater friends. (Bill could have answered, "That wasn't a friend you saw me with, that was my

wife!” but he refrained. Presidents are not allowed to be too funny.)

Bob has decided to make a heel turn, in hope of increasing his popularity - and hoped the be able to get Bill to submit to the Mandible Claw.

The Spin Doctors do not understand pro wrestling, or how politics resembles pro wrestling. Instead, they tried to spin the debate using boxing terminology... knockouts, points, etc. But in wrestling, you have to pin the champ in the ring (or in a steel cage, if it comes to that) to become champ. The champ can use all sorts of techniques to keep from being pinned - can become disqualified, or counted out of the ring, or get a draw due to time limitations.

Bill Clinton wasn't about to let himself be pinned, and Dole didn't attack violently, insanely, using fire and illegal moves when the ref's back was turned. The poor chump.

I have no interest in proving my ideas. I would not only have to somehow find evidence to support them, but suppress evidence that negates them. I would have to hide books of

evidence, in order to write a book, for I only understand partial truths and accepted ideas, and I am only interested in inventing unaccepted ideas.

To write a book would be to do comedy, and then have to extensively footnote my jokes.

As long as the war on drugs continues, there is no way of dealing with our prison problems, with our POW's... Jails are facing limits to growth difficulties, hoping for a die off, perhaps from AIDS, to solve population density disorders. But until the war is over, or most of our prisoners are properly infected, we will have to give up any hope for ZPG.

This war is as ridiculous as our late great war in Vietnam, involves the same underclass, and is potentially as destructive - and the demos can no more get us out of this war than they could Vietnam in '68.

It doesn't seem likely that we can successfully combat social pathology by locking the pathological up in an even more pathological environment. This is like putting the insane in insane insane asylums, and expecting them to get well on their own.

We have here a criminal injustice system, a system that is itself criminal... led by those who can only talk to us in sound bites. The road to this hell is paved with bad intentions.

Talk radio's finest moment (as of 10/25/96) - a caller to WLW informed Bill Cunningham that an FBI agent had told him that the reason Bill Clinton wouldn't release his medical records was because he had AIDS.

An anthropologist, as a cultural relativist, will look at a culture as something unique, and not to be morally judged (unless, perhaps, it believes in eating anthropologists).

A misanthropologist sees all cultures as human, all too human, and thus as absurd... and to be laughed at (though not in front of their faces in places where misanthropologists are cooked and eaten by the natives).

If only there was a device which would allow us to scientifically measure which culture was the most insane, but for now such judgments are purely a matter of taste... de gustibus

non est disputandum, or, as they say in France, chacun a son gout... or something like that.

But that's taste. Tastelessness is something else entirely. It is pure tastelessness to eat a misanthropologist, and I doubt that even parboiling would make them edible. Anthropologists, on the other hand, are often plump, and are excellent when cooked in a curry.

The effects of blacks scoring a standard deviation below whites on college board tests are noted by all, excused by many (in many different ways), and downplayed as much as they possibly can be. Fortunately, most people do not understand what a standard deviation difference is or means...

That if blacks were a standard deviation better than whites in basketball, the result would be the NBA; that if blacks scored a standard deviation higher than whites on college boards, and Harvard only took students with 1500+ board scores, that Harvard would become Howard University.

Woke up at 10 a.m. thinking of how to create a college - I must be growing feeble-minded.

Is my need to invent an unknowable God a proof of God's nonexistence (after all, though I know nothing about cars, I don't posit the existence of an unknowable automobile)? If we do live in a godless universe, then my creation of God could be seen as a work of art... though a very post modern work, I fear. Unknowable gods aren't even conceptual art.

Though I've written about the Gospels, I am not philosopher enough to create a religion, or artist enough to believe in my religion. And I am not teacher enough to bother the young with these ideas. I don't want to cause a loss of faith in les jeunes by telling them that Art is dead. Not even Socrates went that far.

It is true that the young seem to have intuited these things (they certainly didn't learn them in school) and walk around like young Atlas' carrying dying worlds on their weary boomboxed shoulders. I don't want to be the one to confirm their worst fears.

If scientists can tell us more and more about how designer jeans are made, will this help us understand the mind of the designer?

52nd birthday. My father asks me if I'm any closer to fortune or fame. I am as unaware of someone being on the verge of discovering me as Indians were of being discovered in 1492... like the Indians, I am forced to discover myself. But I am so anonymous, I don't know if there is anything to discover...worth discovering. There is certainly nothing worth writing home about.

Carol Queen writes, in *The Spectator*, about crashing an anti-prostitution convention, with some of her SF sex worker friends...

She now realizes that there are at least two sides to sex work, after being called a "Happy Hooker" by members of the anti-hookers group. There are Happy Hookers and Sad Hookers, and the twain just cannot meet.

Carol is aware that there can be both Happy and Sad Hookers, though she wonders why they are Sad. Of course, some of them, like Andrea Dworkin, have many sad stories to tell of rape, brutality, etc., and they do not see hooking as an activity that could possibly empower women...

Sad Hookers might be what happens when sex center doesn't detach from emotional center, which I would think is a necessity for truly Happy Hooking.

Those women who can willingly detach their sex centers from emotional center are able to behave, sexually, like men, and gain all of the sexual power that men seemingly possess. They can fuck without qualms, if not yet without fear.

But women who have been, in the past, forcibly raped or sexually abused aren't able to really detach sex and emotional center. They may become porn actresses, but this doesn't mean they are Happy.

Just as many women, abused as children by fathers, will cut off sexually - and then marry abusive men.

Men who are abused become sadists; women become masochists.

Sad Hookers see Happy Hookers as stupid, frivolous women, playing with fire, yet, somehow, for reasons beyond their ken, not getting burned.

Happy Hookers see Sad Hookers as women who have made a poor occupational choice.

It was bad enough for the state of California losing all of those defense contracts, now the road to Oregon is strewn with cars, like the road from Oklahoma to California during the dust bowl. But think what would happen to the California economy were drugs ever legalized. The one source of inner city revenue would disappear, and sports clothing sales would plummet.

Several South American countries would fall to Communist guerrillas, while ATF agents would end up mugging bag ladies for change for coffee.

I wonder if anyone has studied the changes in body/brain chemistry caused by and causing that altered state of consciousness called love... (and the psychotic side effects we call jealousy).

I am sure that knowledge of such brain chemistry, and learning to synthesize it, placing the result on sugar cubes, would

help hold together many marriages - marriage usually denoting the return of normal consciousness... the end of the trip. Marriage is coming down from the high, so it's little wonder that married couples often have affairs.

Package this "love drug" and, until it is declared illegal by the Control System, one will have a license to coin money.

Those who benefit from the status quo would have us believe that the status quo was the will of God - or His invisible Hand - and that any attempt to monkey with God's Paw can lead only to socialism and economic collapse.

One might wonder if the poor, knowing that God is in favor of the status quo, would be happy to remain poor, even if a change in the status quo would make them rich... if they would say, "I am opposed to becoming rich, because it would have to be at the expense of someone who was rich."

Luckily, the poor can still work hard and smart and save their money and invest it in drugs and lotteries, and themselves become rich at the expense of the poor. No government should ever be allowed to touch a dime of their winnings, or give it to

those people like me, who are too lazy to work hard and too dumb to work smart.

I'm sure most Americans would agree with that statement. At least most Americans who vote.

Whether the poor mind being taxed to support the rich is difficult to say.

If, in order to make a pretty penny, it were necessary to enslave the rest of the world, would that be too much to ask?

If, in order to make a pretty penny for my stockholders, it were necessary to take my business out of the U.S. and employ 10 year olds for 75¢ a day, would that still be ok?

We can no longer afford welfare, or full employment (which would be terribly inflationary).

If only the poor were intelligent enough to benefit from their schooling, and become rational human beings, they'd see that it was in the best interest of society if they just up and died.

How enterprising can I be in order to be free?

It would certainly be easier for me if, like Socrates, I didn't have to write my philosophy down (supposing what I have could be called a philosophy) - and even better if some Plato would come along and create my philosophy for me, even if she got it all wrong. Though we would have to work out an equitable way of sharing the royalties.

Even having to write a philosophy of education is difficult for me, almost impossible. I am poorly educated (all through faults of my own), difficult to teach, and cannot easily teach others. Having to teach myself, I am badly taught.

I have no subject I can profess (am not even an expert in pornography).

I can neither do nor teach, and God knows I can't administrate.

I might be able to confuse others, by asking them questions about their own education, but that doesn't make for being popular.

It was only with the understanding that I wouldn't teach in the schools that I was finally given my degrees in education.

The only thing I learned in school was that there was nothing of importance to me that I could learn in school. But at least I learned that.

Of course I can't generalize from my experiences... so I don't try to convince others that the same is true for them. I am not quite yet a crank. And, for all I know, others do learn and can learn in college.

Our society is as it is because of the "education" given to each new generation - and we pass on our education admirably. Other countries do things differently the same way.

Our answer for bad education is larger and longer amounts of the same. We know something is wrong, and we'll fix it, with more.

Our educational debates are over which brand of propaganda should be used in schools to socialize our young.

No teacher doubts that school is the best place to educate their children (though not necessarily the school they teach in). It is the things the kids are learning outside of school that causes all of the problems. If we could keep kids in school full time, and give them homework to do till they dropped asleep, and replaced the liberal teachers with conservative ones who like to discipline, then kids'd never again be the pernicious little monsters they've become.

Is it possible I was right, in 1975, when I said that the only solution to our school problems was to burn those suckers down, and not replace them (though I suppose we could burn down babies and not replace them, and the effect would sort of be the same).

It's likely I haven't learned a thing in the past 20+ years.

Now that Russia and China have kinda-sorta joined the church, there is a one-world economic religion called capitalism (though it is that in name only).

Almost all governments currently pray to this religion, and when the religion demands sacrifice, the state rounds up the usual suspects.

Jews, aliens, and new world orderers constitute devils, whenever devils are necessary to make up for piss poor priestly performance.

Those who believe, or once believed, in that other former major religion, Socialism, are seen as harmless (albeit feeble-minded and possibly insane), and are not, at the present moment, being punished for their heretical beliefs. This is subject to change, if or when the religion deems it necessary.

To use the state to attack the church would bring about divine retribution... perhaps in the form of economic collapse. The cargo ship will leave and find another home port where the natives will work cheap for cigarettes and Coca Cola.

Road belong cargo.

A redefinition of decades:

The 1900s begin with the death of McKinley. TR starts the Progressive Age, which continues, under Taft and Wilson until 1915- 1916, when WW1 shifts the U.S. from internal to external reform, making not only itself, but the world safe for democracy.

The 1910s then run from the sinking of the Lusitania to the rejection of the League Of Nations by the Senate.

The 1920s run from Warren G. Harding to Black Thursday.

The '30s from fear itself to Pearl Harbor.

The 1940s run from the day after Pearl Harbor to the death of FDR.

Harry Truman starts the 1950s with a big bang, and the “decade” ends with a whimper and Lee Harvey Oswald.

The '60s begin with Jack Ruby, end with Nixon entering the chopper.

The '70s goes from Jerry Ford falling out of a chopper, to Jimmy Carter collapsing from jogging.

The '80s are the age of Reagan... whether they '90s have begun yet remains to be seen (despite all statements about it being the '90s, man). It might be that there are no 1990s, but I am an historian, not a fortune teller, and I, too, will have to just wait and see.

The only way my intelligence could be accurately measured would be if there were points given for misfollowing instructions, as well as for wrong answers. Following directions and getting right answers only says something about the test maker - my inability to answer their questions says something about me.

All of this must be pro-rated with my blood sugar, and how willing I am at the moment to try to think like someone else.

My intelligence is neither high nor low, it's useless. At least there is no economic use for it.

People who give multiple choice tests actually think there is a correct answer to most questions... those who do well on such tests often enter law school - become public officials - then are

elected to office under the assumption that pols have answers to questions.

Demos & Pabbies have slightly different answers, which only convinces the voters that one of the candidates doesn't know what she's talking about. I think it is more likely that anyone who has an answer doesn't understand the question.

The President is given multiple choices, and whichever choice he makes is correct - though only reality can properly grade him (or historians, who pride themselves on being the final judges of reality).

The technostucture of America is made up of 1600 board score students... minds that produce answers as sweat glands produce sweat (I suppose that's what sweat glands do, but don't expect my similes to be scientifically correct... I'm not the answer man)...

Though low scorers do not necessarily make good rulers, either. The Nazis probably were good test takers. The Communist Party was famous for having one answer, though it often shifted.

It is possible that all systems where people think alike... where there is one kind of thinking... one sort of answer.... are destined to become obsolete, unable to face a reality where the answer is likely to be “none of the above.”

We have a ruling elite, but no longer have an elite culture, as not even the rich can afford that sort of thing. In order to have their economic system, it was necessary to create a mass culture, which could provide a mass market.

Capitalism is a revolutionary idea, that constantly uproots itself. In order for it to live, people and countries must be sacrificed. It has no ideals - it is realism impure and simple - and will do whatever is necessary to keep growing. Any attempt to contain or control it will be fought.

Capitalism is not a civilization... it's a cancer, a fire, a revolution. Those systems that have tried to fight it have themselves become infected.

West. Civ. was built around a small elite (perhaps 600 families in England), a classical education, and a limited franchise. Capitalism needed a large middle class, and enough

education for the masses to take part in mechanical mass warfare.

All attempts to bring back West. Civ. - through grants to the arts, longer school years, even higher education will not put Dumpty Humpty together again.

Perhaps, due to the closeness to 2000, my thinking has become eschatological... perhaps even lapsed Jews tend to get apocalyptic when the zeros mount up.

West. Civ. never died in America. Being a nation of rubes and crackers, we were never a part of it in the first place. We are guilty bystanders. What conservatives want is not a return to a civilization we never had, but rather a return to those simple rube values which allowed the control system to operate almost without thought. God, something and country...

Anyone who wanted to be a member of West. Civ. was pretty much forced out of the country before 1945. It is true that thanks to our Nazi brothers, almost every artist in Europe who could get out without being caught made his way to NYC or Hollywood, and that for a brief instant, we were the capital of a dying civilization;

but fortunately, since then, we have reverted back to what we do best: professional wrestling (though we are even under attack here from Japan and Mexico), dirt bike racing, monster truck shows, porn movies, and, now that the Brits are no longer invading, rock n roll.

Woke up from a dream, telling myself to remember that that state in women, where sex and emotional centers combine, is called love. Lust, then, would only be sex center in operation. Little wonder that men fall more easily into states of lust. Women need emotional, intellectual and sexual centers to be thrown off kilter in order to be able to go with men... little wonder they're as furious as they are when the drugging wears off.

Read a piece in the New Yorker about Billy and Hilly and their ideas on education - and buried in the piece were some new stats on 4th grade reading levels. Interestingly enough, there was a one standard deviation difference between whites and blacks.

It doesn't matter what causes this difference, since our socioeconomic system isn't about to do anything to try to change it. What matters is that by 4th grade, there is a standard deviation

difference in reading, which ends up with 70% of blacks being functionally illiterate (as well as 30% of whites).

If this is caused by heredity, there is no cure; if it's environmental, well, things are only going to get worse, not better.

Bill and Hill are holding a brain conference, saying that it can make a great difference in the life of a child if one of the parents can stay at home for the first three years. The irony is not lost on the New Yorker, which comments how Clinton's new welfare reform will help prevent this from happening.

If life has any meaning, it's the meaning we give to life. And our lives do depend on the quality of meaning we give it... becomes the meaning we give it. What we can know of someone else is the meaning they place on their life, and the meaning they add to other people's lives... or subtract from them.

Those who see biology as the meaning of life see life as basically being meaningless, at least for humans. Our government appears to be applying a social Darwinian meaning to life - every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Such meaning will not enable a society to long endure.

Meaning is negative entropic - it must be created, and energy must be constantly added to it. Lack of meaning is entropic, and everything becomes garbage, and not even valuable compost... Styrofoam. Closed systems of thought are particularly entropic.

In order to make the change from feudalism to capitalism, it was necessary to change, at the same time, the consciousness of the individual and of society. Christendom had to be converted to a new way of thinking - one quite different from Medieval practices and beliefs; and a new religion, Protestantism, had to be created.

It would also seem that in order for socialism to work, a higher state of consciousness would have to be created. One would have to become Christ, not just Christian. For awhile, in the '20s, it was thought that Russia had created a "new man," but only a worse man was found to have woken from that sleep of reason.

And as for anarchism...

Now that Clinton has signed on to the end of welfare as we know it, we have, in effect, a one party system of government - and this certainly feels as though it were the Era Of Bad Feelings.

With a Republican Party with as many right wings as a DNA altered chicken, there is little hope for the poor - and those who are about to become poor. Those who can will become prison guards; those who can't, prisoners.

Whether the democratic party will wither away, like the state under Communism, is problematical.

Why did Bill Clinton cross the aisle?

With freedom comes irresponsibility.

I've gotten e-mail from people hoping that I have a happy Passover. All I can answer is that I finally found an Egyptian first born male to kill and ensanguine (so as to use his blood for making Matzah). We do have odd things to celebrate for our holidays: killing Syrians, driving nails through the heads of government officials (though this one might well catch on among

the Posse set here in middle America)... and who knows what else (I dropped out of Hebrew School too soon to take it all in).

It is difficult to explain to Christians that God hated the Jews long long before they killed His son... God not only didn't let His "chosen" eat all of the best cuts, He also convinced them that the Mississippi of the Mediterranean was the "Promised Land." If God had loved Jews, we would have been given Provence or the Riviera, not Isreal and Jewslum.

Were I to say, outside of this notebook, that our Messiah, Adolf Hitler, despaired of His people, and treated them much as G-d did when they were together in the desert, I don't think I'd be completely understood.

Though I gave up acting at 13, for reasons I'm still not sure of, I have been performing a major role for the past 17 years... that of father/adult. I don't know when Caitlin is going to catch on, perhaps noticing the grease paint... I don't know how good an actor I am, but I don't think I have quite managed to become my part.

Ann actually seems to be an adult, and I haven't yet asked her if she was/is acting - or if it's real.

What am I going to play when Caitlin takes on an adult role? Someone in his second childhood, I suspect... an aging juvenile.

I can make others laugh, but can I make myself think? I certainly can't think my way out of this fine mess we've gotten ourselves into - and neither can I laugh it off.

If taking drugs could have made me like everyone else, would I have taken them? Become a wage earner of some sort? Written obvious and thus salable comedy?

As it was, I didn't need drugs in order to act like the chimp in Jay Stevens' *Storming Heaven, LSD & The American Dream*: "Rothlin injected LSD into a lab chimp and then reintroduced the animal into its colony. Within minutes the place was in an uproar. The chimp hadn't acted crazy or strange, per se; instead it had blithely ignored all the little social niceties and regulations that govern chimp colony life."

But this is not quite the same thing as being original.
Originality isn't obliviousness.

At 52, I call my father, asking him to send me a pair of pants so that I can attend a wedding. I only own one pair of pants, dungarees, and I can't show up in them, as I don't have a CA look in such attire.

My sports jacket is too small... I've put on weight over the winter... but I can get into it if I don't button it, and if I can find an unwrinkled shirt in my cupboard... I don't own a tie.

When I was 30, I would have refused to go to a wedding... didn't go to either of my sisters' weddings... so I suppose I may have changed a bit over the past 20 years... I mature slowly.

I don't know what my father thought about my asking him for an old pair of pants... not being sure what my waist size was...

I think I would make a good minor character for some other novelist to write about... there's no way an author could get me doing enough stuff to make up an entire book... I haven't done enough to even consider writing an autobiography.

What if, during my raw youth, when reading Kraft-Ebbing's Psychopathia Sexualis for the pure humor of men and chickens, and other recherche relationships - and hearing about tribes like the Ubangi, with their enlarged lips - what if I had been told of another tribe which cut open the chests of women and packed them full of sand to make their breasts larger... would this, too, have only seemed absurd? Or something to be considered for my high school classmates?

I don't know why breast shapes intrigue me, whether this was socially implanted, or even how it was implanted so that breasts are worth looking at, are exciting. Edsel ads? Ms. Bardot? And is this implanting any less bizarre than imprinting on lips with plates in them? (Why haven't any of our modern primitives attempted this modification?)

The town is again filled with Antioch coeds, pierced to and through the gills. I don't talk with them about this, or tell them I am the publisher of BNI. I know what it means to be a prophet in one's own town. Still, I wonder: Do African tribes laugh at us as we laugh at them? Or are they saving their Kruger Rands for implant surgery and nipple rings?

If only porn were an attack on middle class morality by our white trash, but porn has become so upscale... so white trash with dough... like fake French bread, American style.

Does the upper class even have morality? Can it afford to have morality if it wishes to remain upper class? What we have had for the past 20 years is an unrelenting social war declared by our worst and dumbest...

The Democratic Party is led by a zombie who shambles across the land, mounting pulpits like a bully... filled with words, not deeds. Apologizing for slavery, but not for what he both has, and hasn't done himself. He is the head of our Holding Corporation, and if, in order to live, our Holding Corporation demands bodies, Bill will sacrifice the poor. He would rather become Right and be President.

And if the poor just don't up and die? Next President's problem, I suppose.

Whatever on earth is keeping Time Magazine from putting on its cover the news that Art Is Dead? Surely the editors of the

weekly news magazine read the same news item about this in the N.Y. Times that I did (though it was only a few column inches long, and buried in the Staten Island Real Estate page).

When I think of all the coverage Time gave to the death of God (yet not a word about Paul Tillich's sex life)...

God only knows what sort of Artistic Fundamentalists will spring up from this graveyard (artists being little better than necrophiliacs)... but I am as confused listening to people talk about Art these days as I once was listening to ministers talking about Jesus turning water into wine coolers.

When God died, morality ended... but when Art died? What?

And will this lead to an increase in the number of artists, whereupon everyone with a tattoo will think they are Michelangelo (just as anyone with a cross might be Jesus).

To say that God is dead doesn't necessarily mean that He was once alive... or that somewhere in the universe, there's a dead God floating around... don't send flowers.

If the statement means anything at all, it's that a conception of God that was held by certain intellectuals is no longer tenable (even if they didn't believe it in the first place).

It took awhile for the news to get from the University of Chicago to the cover of Time, and unadvanced theologians never did pay much attention to the brouhaha... they were counting collection dollars and bingo receipts, and had no time to read news magazines. They could have cared less about what the atheistic professors of religion at U of C thought; had they even understood it.

Sadly, not even the Art Strike could stop artists from producing whatever it is they produce.

But the idea of the Artist as substitute for a Dead God, and Art as a substitute for Religion, is definitely as dead as a dormouse.

True, the statement may say more about me than it says about Art... might only mean that I no longer consider what I am doing to be Art... can no longer justify my life, and what I do, as being done for Art's sake...

If God is no longer in the business of creating worlds, and this is the battle ground between good and evil, as Catholics once believed (and as Fundamentalists, apparently, still appear to believe), then God as a world creating artist is surely dead...

Though what do we or can we know about what God may or may not be up to in his spare time.

Still, as long as the young still believe in rock and the Christians still believe in Jesus, it matters little whether Art or God is alive or dead... or just M.I.A.

But the religion of Art, which was to give a Godless universe meaning, can't sell tickets to its rummage sale, or to its boiled chicken on a plate dinners.

And just as a universe of Popes and theologians can't put God together again (at least not as He once was, an egg whose shell was everywhere and whose center was nowhere), neither can a billion rock n rollers resurrect Jimi or Janis or... let alone art, whose shell was nowhere and whose center was everywhere.

Of course I don't really understand that egg metaphor.

Just as I don't understand science, which was going to save us or destroy us or something... no one believes in science now but scientists (whether priests still believe as fervently in God, or artists in Art is difficult for me to say)...

But if Art is really dead, what then is that stops me from writing a novel?

If all men were really created equal, as some old scrap of paper once stated (or if our schools could succeed in dumbing everyone down), then perhaps we could be a Democracy.

Napoleon pointed out that intelligence was not equally distributed among men - and that those with higher intelligence were more than likely going to end up with more money and more power... unless they happened to be fools like me.

Revolutions are usually made when one group of intelligent people without power kill another group of intelligent people with power... the middle class killing the aristocracy... of some middle

class types, calling themselves the Vanguard of the Proletariat, killing off the middle class and upper class.

Our leaders might pretend to be dumb at times... during election years... and say that there are two political parties in America, the dumb one and the evil one... and they might very well not be intelligent enough to rule intelligently - but it isn't as if congress or parliament or the politburo is filled completely with morons (though their beliefs might seem moronic to those who don't share them).

Whether the intelligent who rule will be willing to share some of their pocket change with the less intelligent remains to be seen. At one time in this Holding Company, the intelligent were spread through all economic classes... there were even intelligent farmers (if that's what Tom Jefferson really was). But over time, anyone intelligent has been weeded out of the working class, even out of the lumpen proletariat - they have been given scholarships to college, and the chance to serve or even join the upper classes.

Those with money generally feel morally superior to those without money... how they will feel when their children do not get

good money jobs remains to be seen. Whether the children can be fobbed off with sex, drugs and bad rock n roll, so that they don't decide to incite the masses... when the children of the middle class discover that they have nothing to lose but their brains.

I've been enjoying the decision by my namesake in Oklahoma, Judge Richard Freeman, stating that the movie, The Tim Drum, is kiddy porn - and that the police should be allowed to raid any and all homes that have the film therein...

The judge, like me, despises all Hollywood movies, and wants to rid the world of them, to make the world safe for real porn (also knowing that the best way to rid the world of a ridiculous law is to rigidly enforce it)...

Unless Judge F. is my evil twin, and thus a member of the Control Group.

Unless the Control Group overacts, the Forces Of Anarchy, when powerless, as they are now, can do little to make change.

Using Indian mythopoetics, the Control Group is Vishnu, the Preserver, while the Forces Of Anarchy can be either Shiva, the Destroyer or Brahma, the Creator. All of these primal forces are necessary to run a Universe.

Here in the Dualistic West, Creation and Destruction are both seen as Anarchic, opposed by the Control Group.

Over time, one force can turn into the other... the Forces Of Anarchy can, if they gain power, become the Control Group; an old Control Group can become part of the Forces Of Anarchy. It's a fucking cosmic dance.

Capitalism can be both Control Group and Forces Of Anarchy at one and the same time - creating, preserving and destroying. It is our powerful 3 in 1 God (and is probably a universal force unto itself).

Socialism, when not in power, is a mainstay of the Forces Of Anarchy; when in power, it forms a very rigid Control Group.

The Forces Of Anarchy and the Control Group reside within each and every one of us, individually, forming us as, for all I know, they formed the universe.

As parents, we are part of the Control Group, as children, part of the Forces Of Anarchy - as adults, we shift from group to group depending on circumstances. Neither Control or Anarchy is, in and of itself, either bad or good. Both forces are necessary. However, in order to get anything done in this world, it is necessary to find a third, neutralizing force, that permits there to be creation or destruction or preservation, rather than a deadlock between the forces.

If difference is seen as change, then the Control Group within us, and within society, can only accept the smallest of differences, and these have to be non threatening, otherwise they appear to be anarchic.

A Baptist can accept a Methodist, now that religious differences mean little, but Southern Baptists are not about to accept homosexuals within the fold. Homosexuality (rather than Catholicism/Protestantism) is now on the edge where the Control

Group fears attack from the Forces Of Anarchy and its inappropriate use of chaps.

Whether the Control Group can accept fruits, as it has almost learned to accept niggers, remains to be seen. And all acceptance is provisional, as the trialectic is never finished.

If one can't belong to the Control Group, and there are not yet sufficient members of the Forces Of Anarchy, then one is truly alone - an isolate, waiting, hoping that the forces of history will become propitious... will be with us.

Here is the breeding ground of new universes... or the death of individuals.

We see socialism and communism as radical, and capitalism as conservative - yet nothing could be further from the truth.

There is no economic system more anarchic, more radical, than raw capitalism. It digs to the roots, and uproots them. It is socialism that tries to preserve - to conserve. It doesn't want change, or the waste of lives that change inevitable brings about. There is nothing more conservative than an ingrown bureaucracy.

And communism is an ancient system. Nothing could be more conservative than no one owning anything.

Government had to intervene against capitalism, as the Control Group is always forced to act against the Forces of Anarchy. If government hadn't so acted, in 1932, who knows what would have happened? But communism and socialism are the government - and thus became the Control Group. So the citizens of the state, collectively and individually, are looked upon by the government as potential or present Forces of Anarchy - to be suppressed by whatever Controlling Force is necessary... especially if they seem to be wanting to return to anarchic capitalism.

The Holocaust is just what you get when the Control Group itself unleashes the Forces Of Anarchy upon its own citizens - controlled anarchy.

Elaborate record keeping of mass murder...

The secret police is the arm of anarchy within the Control System.

When the Control Group unleashes the Forces Of Anarchy, it has to do so within limits, so that it can contain the anarchy. The Control Group doesn't want to unleash ordinary civilians - which is why Hitler shut down the Brown Shirts, and turned over the Holocaust to those who could deal with the inherent chaos.

It is little wonder that everyone outside of the NAZI system was confused by how good Germans could produce the Holocaust. It doesn't fit into any system of human psychology.

Was Eichmann sane or insane? According to whom?

Psychology has been an attempt to make individuals conform to the dictates of the Control Group. To lock them up and confine them and teach them to control their inner Forces Of Anarchy. What can such a system of thought control say about Controlled Anarchy?

During the depression, as economies in all countries collapsed, the Forces Of Anarchy were loosed on the world, and countries used methods as different as Nazism and the New Deal to restore order.

By the 1950s, the Control Groups were not only in power, but all economies in the West seemed to be working. The belief was that state capitalism not only worked, but worked like this - and would always work like this.

Anyone who said nay was branded as either a beatnik or a communist, and parents could not understand why their children were rejecting the obvious advantages that came from having money and joining the Control Group,

The stultification coming from the Control Group in Russia and Eastern Europe led to revolts, and the Forces Of Anarchy brought back the system that gave them hope, capitalism.

Without an external enemy to give the Control Group a reason to exist, new internal enemies had to be found, invented - wars against crime and drugs, restoration of morality through law, save the children from themselves...

Save me from the children...

But many of these anarchic forces were unleashed by capitalism, which lives and breathes on unfilled needs. Given the chance to fill a new need, and money to be made filling it - culture and civilization be damned.

Our government is trying to control us by moving towards the right, but conservatism unleashes unrestrained capitalism, leading to more chaos. Attempts to legislate morality, to have prayer in schools, etc. are undermined by demands for deregulating industry and getting the government out of the economy.

If things get too out of control, the Control Group will offer the people some form of fascism, which is loved, at least at first, by the business classes. It will be sold to the masses under the smiling faces of Mickey & Donald.

In the '60s, a small cohort of middle class youth tried to revolt using sex, drugs, rock n roll, civil rights and anti-war sentiments as enticements to the working class, trying to get them to join the Forces Of Anarchy. But this new left was too small a group even to win power from their parents, against whom they were rebelling.

The revolution ended when the revolutionaries finally understood that they would have to wait their turn to be given high position in the Control Group... so they acknowledged, kowtowed, and went off to become governors of Arkansas.

Others in that decade hoped for inner change by unleashing the Forces Of Anarchy through LSD, but though they were able to create inner states, they couldn't control them - they could try to destroy their inner world and create a new one, but they couldn't preserve the changes.

A trip is just a trip, and you don't stay at your destination, but go home after the vacation is over. We were only tourists in this new consciousness.

To forge a new consciousness, these forces had to be conjoined by a third force, that we are not even conscious of.

Every society has its own myth (as Dan Quinn tells us) - or at the very least, as in the U.S. of A., a set of accepted ideas - and these myths are promulgated by the Control Group as a belief system.

Such systems/myths are very powerful, and apparently are also very necessary. Take away a belief system, and the society crumbles. Countries will go to war to protect their belief systems.

Catholics and Protestants fought for hundreds of years, trying to impose their belief system on each other, and this fighting didn't stop until a new belief system was superimposed, one that made religion no more important than a taste in clothing or hair style.

This new belief system was capitalism, which supersedes religion in all of the major Western nations (with the possible exception of Ireland).

The First World War was fought not over religion, but rather over markets... and though the soldiers knew there was nothing really worth fighting for, they killed each other by the million anyway. Such meaningless killing, after the war was over, led to a decade of disbelief in many Western countries.

In America in 1860, the South so feared the belief system of the North towards slavery, they decided to set up a country of their own rather than face any attacks on their beliefs.

In the 1950s, though we had nothing to fear economically from Russian vodka production, nevertheless, the Control Group used anti-communism to protect us from Marxist infection. (At least that's what we were told it was all about - but who the hell knows what dingbat things the Control Group was really trying to do in the '50s, with its internecine warfare between the democratic and republican wings of our Capitalist Party.)

There was a certain amount of deterioration in our Myth of America as the land of the Free and the Home of the Brave in the '60s, due to racism, Vietnam, and excellent drugs. But in time, the Control Group was able to shore things up with heavy doses of patriotism, tranquilizers, and only a small amount of repression.

It is true that almost no one in America believes in our government anymore, and even those running for office don't dare come out and admit belief in it... anymore than they would admit belief in the devil, cocaine, premarital sex, or gangster rap. But the Control Group could care less what government Americans believed or disbelieved in, as long as every citizen still believes in capitalism (as we fondly call that economic system

which allows our Control Group to grow even richer and more powerful).

It is also true that large portions of our lumpen proletariat have seemingly no beliefs whatsoever - all the more reason not to take away their welfare checks.

But if too many people start to disbelieve in our Myth, and refuse to cross their hearts and salute the Flag during football games, our system will melt away. The rest of the world has already had this happen to them, and I refer to this as the end of Western Civilization. Luckily for us, America has never had a real civilization... (God help us if we ever run out of popular culture.)

It would be intriguing to know if, around the mid '70s, a limit to economic growth was reached - one which would make it impossible for the economy to continue to expand at the 4% rate it had been accustomed to for over a century.

It would also be interesting to know what happened to past societies when they reached such limits...

I would hypothesize that when such limits are reached, there soon follows a profound change in the social system, with the richest classes growing even richer, as the other classes fall behind.

We certainly can see such patterns if we read Roman history. As long as there is substantial growth, the middle classes increase in size and gets a share of the wealth... when countries hit their limits, they turn into banana republics.

The malaise that has hit us as a society is caused, if my hypothesis is correct, by falling growth rates. Any economically finite system should reach such limits.

In the past, the discovery of new land or higher energy forms have allowed societies to seemingly escape limits to growth problems. (A large die off of workers has also led to economic growth for those who are left alive.)

The industrial revolution was instigated by the rediscovery of steam power, which was used to work engines to empty water from coal mines - as the previous form of energy, wood, was growing scarce, due to a growth in population.

Now, with a steadily increasing world population, a depletion of fossil fuel, and with fresh water growing scarce - world limits to growth are seemingly being reached.

The fight now is to be top banana at the United Fruit Company.

To a Christian moralist, the social changes that have taken place in the past 20 years must look like we've had a visitation from the Lord of Flies himself. Their only answer to this behavior is more morality... prayer in schools... prayer in the constitution... one nation under the preachers of God.

Something in the Times about a new galaxy discovered... 13 1/2 billion light years away... wonder what that does to the birthday of the universe?

Metaphorically speaking, science is a control system - laws, replicable experiments - and it tries to discover not why, but what. It wishes to know how the universe is preserved.

Creating the universe is the job of the Forces Of Anarchy - which are outside of any system that science can observe and understand, can predict and control.

I really don't understand either the Control Group or the Forces Of Anarchy.

The Control Group is at its most self-congratulatory in "creating" the laws. Poor youngsters who want to get ahead are wise in fighting fiercely to attend the best of law schools. There they are carefully weeded and tended, so as to eliminate any potential members of the Forces Of Anarchy. One must pledge one's soul to the Control System, and to the jobs for which it stands.

Even defense attorneys are expected to be members of the court, and are sometimes raised, if they behave carefully, to the bench.

Law is an attempt to write order into the chaos of life. Law and order is a term that makes the Control Group beam with pride and joy.

Sometimes the Control Group can make mistakes - Socrates was mistakenly taken to be a member of the Forces Of Anarchy, an irony he must have appreciated, and treated it ironically when he drank the hemlock. As a Member For Life of the Control Group (though an out of power branch), he preferred to be put to death, rather than escape and show disrespect for the law.

Jews so believed in their laws, and Lawgiver, they overlooked the evidence which pointed to the possibility that they were no longer His Chosen People... that God liked the Jews little better than their Messiah, Adolf Hitler.

Judaism is a system of laws, and there is little room in law for irony, which properly belongs to the Forces Of Anarchy - there is no room in Judaism for the Forces Of Anarchy, which is to say no longer room for God the creator and destroyer. Little wonder why God so hates us. And exactly what is it that God sees in Islam?

A MODERN DECAMERON: Shorter Shorts XI

Translated by Richard Kostelanetz

[HERE are stories under 105 words. May I invite imaginative editorial selection, sequencing, and design. For one option, consider printing two or three per page with a hairline between. 5,500 words]

Translation may be better literature than the work that inspired it.

—John A. Kouwenhoven, “The Trouble with Translation” (1962)

PREFACE:

Isolating themselves from the COVID plague in the early 2020s, several people who had never before met each other tell stories, many stories, some inventing while others recalling, incidentally developing an essentially comic literary form that stands between the minimal story and a one-liner. For 100 nights, they developed 100 stories, often repeating them.

One constraint that they shared is that all stories must be less than 105 words in length. This rule accounts for why in their printed form every story must fit within a single page.

Perhaps because the stories were told in various languages, one recurring theme is misunderstanding, which is perhaps more common in the 21st century than ever before.

Once the threat of COVID was declared over, the participants dispersed, never taking each other's names and addresses, their authorships permanently forgotten.

All translations are my own. Should anyone own the originals of any of them, please let us know, and the offending story will be removed. Remember that the stories here, like those in the Boccaccio original, were heard before they were transcribed.

One central critical question is whether prose texts of less than 105 words constitute a

literary category? If so, is any epithet better than Minis?

–Richard Kostelanetz, 14 May 2025

A man standing atop a medium skyscraper in New York threatens to end his own life. An old Irish beat cop seeing him begins pleading with him, "Son, think of your family!"

"I have no relatives left," the man responds.

"Think of your friends, then!" shouts the cop.

"My friends have all deserted me," the man sullenly replies.

"Think of the Blessed Virgin, then!" he shouts in desperation.

"Who is the Blessed Virgin?"

"Never mind, Just jump!"

From Mother Superior to Sister Maria, if you were walking through town at night, and you were accosted by a man with bad intentions, what would you do?

Sister Maria: I would lift my habit, Mother Superior.

Mother Superior (shocked): And what would you do next?

Sister Maria: I would tell him to drop his trousers and give me his belt.

Mother Superior: (even more shocked)
And what then?

“I would run away. I can run much faster with my habit up than he can with his pants round his ankles.”

Summoning the patient into his office, the male psychiatrist gives her a radiant smile: "You know, Claudia, in this profession one rarely uses the word 'cure,' but after five years of

therapy, it is my pleasure to pronounce you one hundred percent cured!"

To his surprise, an unhappy look frosts the woman's face.

"What's wrong?" asks the doctor. "This is a success for me and a triumph for you. I thought you'd be thrilled."

"Oh, it's fine for you," she finally snaps, "but look at it from my point of view. Three years ago, I thought I was the Virgin Mary. Now I know that I'm nobody."

Three boys on the school playground are bragging about their fathers.

The first boy says, "When my dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a poem and they give him \$50."

The second boy says, "My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a song and they give him \$100."

The third boy says, "I've got you both topped. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a sermon and then eight people collect money."

Johnny and his mother were coming home from church one Sunday morning. His mother

noticed a serious look on his face. She asked him "What's on your mind, Johnny?"

"Is it true what the preacher said about everyone coming from dust and then turning us back into dust when we die?"

"Yes, that is true," she answers. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, when we get home," he responds, "You better look under my bed, because someone's either comin' or goin!"

One of the airlines recently introduces a special half-fare rate for wives accompanying their husbands on business trips.

Anticipating some valuable testimonials, the publicity department of the airline sends out letters to all the wives of businessmen who used the special rates, asking how they enjoyed their trip.

Responses are still pouring in asking, "What trip?"

Pharmacist: May I help you, sir?

Customer: Yes...I, uh...well, this is sort of

embarrassing, but I'm going out on a date tonight, and you know, I need some...

Pharmacist: You need some protection.

Customer: Right.

Pharmacist: Small, medium, or large?

Customer: Uhhhh. Medium, I guess.

Pharmacist: Okay, that'll be \$2.35 including tax.

Customer: Tacks!!! I thought they stayed on by themselves!

In a tiny village lived an old maid. In spite of her old age, she was still a virgin. She was very

proud of it. She knew her last days were getting closer, so she told the local undertaker that she wanted the following inscription on her tombstone: "Born as a virgin, lived as a virgin, died as a virgin."

Not long after, the old maid died peacefully, and the undertaker told his men what the lady had said. The men went to carve it in, but being the lazy layabouts they were, they thought the prescribed inscription to be unnecessarily long.

Instead, they simply wrote: "Returned unopened."

A nursery schoolteacher is taking a station wagon full of kids home one day when a fire

truck zooms past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck is a handsome Dalmatian dog. The children begin discussing the dog's duties.

"They use him to keep crowds back," submits one youngster.

"No," says another, "he's just for good luck."

To the argument a third child brings closure: "They use such dogs," she declares firmly, "to find the fire hydrant."

Tammy and Ann are shopping. When they start to discuss their home lives, Tammy says, "Seems like all Alfred and I do anymore is fight. I've been so upset I've lost 20 pounds."

"Why don't you just leave him then?" asks Ann.

"Oh! Not yet." Tammy replies, "I'd like to lose at least another ten to fifteen pounds first."

One Sunday morning, a mother awakes her son to tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replies, "I'm not going."

"Why not?" she asks.

"I'll give you two good reasons," he asserts. "One, they don't like me, and two, I don't like them."

His mother resounds, "I'll give YOU two

good reasons why you SHOULD go to church. One, you're 54 years old; and two, you're the pastor!"

A man places an ad in the classifieds: "Wife wanted."

The next day he receives a hundred letters. All with the same message: "You can have mine."

As the sandwich machine in a factory resembles a Las Vegas slot machine, a new worker doesn't quite understand what it does.

Addressing the machine, he puts coins in the receptacle and out comes one sandwich.

Becoming excited, he puts more of his money into the machine and receives another sandwich. Before long, he amasses a huge pile of sandwiches.

Another worker wonders what the newbie is doing. "Don't you think you should stop now?"

"What the hell are you babbling about? I am just starting to score big."

THE LEGENDARY LADY AND OTHER STORIES

By: Tom Ball

BILKING THE FRAUDSTER

She had bilked thousands of men out of their fortunes and then disappeared. Finally, she became the world's richest person. But she kept changing her ID, so no one knew who she was.

Then I met her and charmed her, and she fell in love with me and let down her guard and so I took off with her entire fortune and so was the richest person in the world today.

I plowed all the money into space research, hence changing the world. So finally, I'd spent all my money and just drank alcohol and had sex with love dolls and watched movies and I was winding down my life. I had experienced all there was to experience, mostly in virtual reality.

PRIDE

I said to her, "I'll give you a billion dollars for a night of love." She acquiesced, and it was great. I recorded her mind and my mind while we loved and afterwards I relived it again and again. And then I sold the experience, "Billion-dollar woman."

I told her, “Humility is the highest grace. She said, “No, pride is best. If you don’t have pride you have nothing. Our race of humans should be proud of all our achievements.”

LIMBO

I said, “One man’s Heaven is another man’s Hell.”

But this world was definitely Limbo. Everyone was ordinary and never tired of sex pleasure bursts.

But we were living for the day and we all thought the future was bunk and a freak show.

I too was ordinary and just wanted to fall in love, get rich, have lots of friends, entertainment and work.

But I was always wishing for more and was envious of the rich and famous.

So, I ran for politics and gained a measure of power. The clever elite hated me, but I had some of them disappear.

I said, "It's a world of wonder. But I just want to get my kicks."

I said I need to be sure that you are my true love before we make love (I was a virgin). But she pushed me down on the bed and ripped my shirt off. And so, we made sweet love. My first time stuck with me for months and I decided I liked aggressive women.

Then I had another. But as time went by each sex experience was less fresh than the last.

I said, "I'd been known to be a fragile man in love."

Girls told me, "I was a loser who was poor and naïve."

I said to myself, "This is what happens when science triumphs, one gets a cold world."

No one wanted to be my friend or lover and I was impecunious.

But cheap drugs and sex dolls kept me going day to day and I joined a lot of virtual reality worlds.

So, finally I founded a political party on behalf of the clever poor. My party won 2% of the vote but I held the balance of power. So, I enriched myself and improved my rank and suddenly everyone wanted to be my friend. I was sorry that friendship and love were dependent on money and power.

But it was dog eat dog.

But finally, I was contacted by a female genius who wanted to join and improve my party.

She said she, being unusually beautiful would be the Leader and I would work behind the scenes.

And she added some platforms like all people should be ranked on merit. And 50% of your money you had to gamble on investments every year.

The bigger the gamble, the bigger your rank. It was all out capitalism.

The plan was everyone got a salary of \$1 million so if they lost their shirt they could quickly get rich again. Inflation was held to zero. Many wanted to call us “commies,” but this quickly faded.

And we wanted to do away with holograms and roll back time to pre-hologram days.

And we wanted everyone to fall in love at least once every six months. It kept them busy. The people vied with one another to see who could fall in love the most.

And no more sex slaves.

And we wanted everyone to go to space. It was a challenge, it was adversity.

We were the Progressive Party.

And the next election we won 52% of the vote.

And I said, people need to be easygoing and kind and loving and we were going to use MRT (mind reading technology) to make sure everyone was with the program.

I said I just wanted to be a winner.

But I said now I have too much love; it was too easy.

So, I joined a monastery. It was a freak show, but they got drunk every night and there was no sex. Most people here got cirrhosis of the liver. And died. The cure was out there but in order to be cured you needed to be part of the “Outside.”

I returned to the political arena and said “I was the happiest man in the world.”

And polls were taken which determined a medium income of \$1 million per year was the optimum for happiness. But I had much more than that and was now greedy for more like everyone else.

And I said surely, I am sane, but most people weren't. Most people felt trapped in a holographic world they don't understand.

I said my secret is to keep life simple. Be happy with your lovers and friends and don't be too greedy. And don't stress about things you can do nothing about.

And I said sanity is the most important characteristic to have in this day and age.

You can't just accept things how they are but rather mold them to suit you. You can't just drink the water and eat the food and accept the culture. It was all screwed.

As a leader I had an expensive anti-MRT device, just like the other Leaders. But we all got into the heads of others.

And I said to her I know you as well as you know yourself and maybe more than that. I can see you from an outside vantage point.

And I put her inside a super computer and told her I was her master, "I control you," I said.

She said, "What is my fate, master?"

I said, “You will be my hologram slave...”

In the hologram worlds, people loved a lot, people talked a lot, gambled a lot, watched gladiatorial shows, made jewellery, committed crimes such as joining street gangs, went to bars/nightclubs, built fancy houses and so on.

Some said the difference between holo worlds and human worlds was a very fine line.

But there were plenty of pleasure power bursts, in the holo worlds and there were ecstatic drugs in the human scenarios.

I said everyone wanted to get into my head, passively. They wondered what made me tick. Most of them were holograms who used my tortured mind as a sign they were right to turn into holos.

I tried life as a female holo for a while, it was fun for a while.

I said I wanted to rebuild my noble House’s fortune. Everyone had a family crest. There were 10,000 families and all belonged to one family on the maternal side.

So, I bought a lot of slaves, stupid people made for good servants/soldiers.

RARE METALS

I said I don't believe your mining company's claim that your Moon is rich in rare metals.

These rare metals could be used to make fantastic bombs. These bombs could beef up the atmospheres of various Planets and Moons.

I wanted nothing to do with the girl after she betrayed me to the Leaders. She told them, "I was a dangerous radical." She said, "It was for my own good to spend some time thinking in prison." But I couldn't believe it.

To be cut off from entertainment seemed a fate worse than death. I was in solitary and couldn't kill myself in the rubber room.

After 10 years they set me free. My first act was to overdose on drugs and I mercifully died.

99 YEARS OF CHANGES

The first thing I remembered off hand was swimming in some goop with about 100 others. We saw land a few km away and swam for it. We all seemed to make it and we were 99 in number. There didn't appear to be any reception committee to give us prizes or even welcome us. We were 49 males and 50 females.

After spending some time in thought, part of our previous lives came back to us. Each person could remember only one year, and there was a chronological order.

Some of us said they had vague memories of being hypnotised, others said they dreamed for a century cryogenically frozen with just one year of “normal” living. The years were 2119-2217. We wondered why we had been chosen as living librarians?

We combed the “island” and found no other humans, just a few animals.

The island was surrounded by a sea of goop and was only 10 sq. km (about 6 sq. miles) in size. But there were a lot of edible plants and fruits, enough to keep us alive. Basically, we didn’t want Leaders, but all the same some of us wanted to rule. Some of these would be Leaders wanted defensive walls, grow more opium, introduce monogamy and plant more fruit trees and explore the ocean and so on.

And we still had some science knowledge, but we got rid of our cultural beliefs after we had added it all up. It was anarchy, but good anarchy.

Anyway, we decided on a democracy of one person, 1 vote.

And we agreed that each person should make a speech in chronological order beginning with the girl who was 2119.

And then we would forget about the past and start a fresh, new society.

We would try and forget past cultures and their many laws and try to have as few laws as possible.

That first year on the island we had no new babies...

#

We all remembered a society largely revolved around plays. This is what we all remembered:

Playwrights and actors/actresses were the vast majority of the people. Some were just too dumb to write plays.

And we all remembered some similar things.

For example, that Our planet, the place we had come from had 3 million people, and each wrote 3 plays per year. So, 9 million plays, in each of 99 years. And everyone would watch 4 plays a day out of the numerous daily plays. Most acted in 1 play a day. Every year was a different cultural theme.

The oldest persona there was a woman of 219 years old, many asked her for advice about life and plays.

The newest Queen told the people, the playwrights, that they could take their time with their plays, but it would be best if they produced at least 3.

Money was adequate for everyone.

People could attend plays anywhere as the fast trains could take one anywhere in this world in less than 35 minutes and plays were only about 70 minutes. With a 50-minute break between them.

Communal hostels were always open for parties and sleeping next to the theaters.

The Queen was the sole judge of the plays deciding amongst 600 plays every day and picking the synopses of only the 4 that she liked best. But everyone had favorite playwrights, many were quite obscure.

Some said the quality of their plays was in the complete whole not just a synopsis.

After the fourth play of the day most people partied at one of the hostels. Most did their writing and practiced acting in the mornings. The first play of the day was at 3 p m, then 5 pm, then 7 pm and finally 9 pm.

The top grossing plays charged \$100,000 for a live performance ticket, but the poor could just watch it on a bar TV for \$300.

There weren't many plays about the wilderness which was 100,000 square km. Plays about the wilderness were considered barbaric.

People had settlements on one giant city on the plain with the wilderness being largely mountains. One morning I went to the mountains and found the overgrown ruins of settlements.

According to legends these were over 900 years old. No one was anywhere near that age. But it seemed that these ancients had air cars and electronic devices. Each device was a veritable library of forgotten lore and science and history.

But the Queen's censors banned all reference to the far past, i.e. more than a thousand years ago.

And so, then, I, Tom P--, made a play called "Down with the Queen," in which I said the Queen was backwards whereas he had a vision to bring back ancient technology.

But I disseminated the play on paper to many people and by the time the Queen's censors came for me I was long gone to the wilderness.

This caused a revolution and the mob killed the Queen. Henceforth it was Panarchism. And people chose their own leaders. Archaeologists were in favor at that time.

I said the ruling elite control everything, they make it appear like society is continually changing with new themes for every year, but actually are still in control.

All years had a theme which was the subject of the plays in that year.

Most years were about love, war, building, thinking, quests, mysteries, fighting evil and so on.

The play venues were mostly in the heart of big cities, but some were in the countryside. The bullet trains connected all cities of all sizes and countryside theaters were accessed by shuttle bus. The plays were recorded...

Hotels were the residences. People moved almost everyday.

The architecture of the theaters were mostly open air theaters and were full of beautiful sculpture. All theaters were owned by the state and brought in a lot of money for the federal coffers.

The plays were always put on live and if you died in the play you were irrevocably dead unless you were of the rich elite who had clones with up to date memories cryogenically frozen.

The best screenwriters' films were always sold out even after many runs. But you could buy a video, cheap. Many wanted to be a part of such films.

We all had our favorite screenwriters and favorite actors and actresses. And everyone had to spend time on acting in at least one play per week, most roles were just cameos with a very limited focus.

And not everyone was our friend, some were our enemies. Most of these were cynics.

At the moment we were travelling in a troupe of actors and actresses.

YEAR 1, A.D. 2119/ALIENS

The theme for the first year was aliens. The narrators for each play, “I” were the ones who were reciting the years’ action. Each year had a different narrator. And narrated for the sake of the other 98. Like putting together a puzzle.

The first year had many clues about the nature of the previous world. Such as an obsession with romance and hobbies and changes. There appeared to be a schism between humans and holograms... In this year holos appeared infrequently as if to tell us just that they were there, but basically, we didn’t see them.

I said to my true love, I will love you forever and ever. We’ve already been together over a hundred years and the relationship is as fresh as ever.

She said, “Nothing lasts forever.”

I said, “We are the oldest couple by far.”

But she said, “They all think we are backwards and too sentimental.”

I said we were nearly a perfect match on the dating sight. No other matches I found were as perfect.

I said, “I pledge a 100-year commitment. If one of us wants to break up with the other than the person leaving must forfeit all their worldly goods to the other.” “Agreed,” She said.

We’d done everything that might be called romantic together and had plenty of lovers on the side. But we kept coming back to each other.

Some people asked us, “What is your secret?” We told them to be “easygoing” and “tolerant.”

But love always has side effects just like a sickness for which there isn’t any cure.

Everyone had to make at least three plays a year. And most participated in acting.

We had some ancient classics like Aristophanes, “The Birds.” And Shakespeare’s “The Tempest.” And modern classics like, “Kinky Man, Duality.”

But the vast majority of plays at any one time were made in the last 10 years. The best ones were played again and again.

One of the top 3 plays of the year was called simply, “Aliens,” in which, people turned into aliens and behaved bizarrely, set in 2116 A.D.”

The second best was “Serendipity Vixen.” About the most famous lover of our time. She amazed everyone with her actions and was thought to be an alien.

Then the third ranked play of the year was, “Two Tales of Rich and Poor.” This was controversial and was about how the poor were in many ways superior to the rich. But it was a joke.

I hated jokers and comedians.

Life to me was serious and had always been so.

My plays were cerebral with no fighting which is how I imagined the future to be.

History was bunk to me.

But some people said everyone needs a cause to fight for and that I was a coward.

2120 A.D./YEAR 2/RELIGION

This year was about religion. I made one about the Creators. And it made the top three. I wrote about one where I was King. As King I sought to give the people inspiration. I dazzled them with exciting future worlds.

Plays were mostly ad lib following the general plot, so it was the actors and actresses who did most of the work

The second-best play, was, “Your Selfish Ego,” which featured egotistical roles and the actors and actresses were selfish in sex and grabbed who and what they wanted. And didn’t believe in anything.

Then we played in a virtual reality play (VRP).

This third best play of the year was a spaceship bound for Mars. The journey seemed to last forever but was actually just 10 minutes. The Leader of Mars was a dictator and required all of us to kowtow to her. She told the people she was a Goddess.

Time went very slowly. It seemed like 24 h for the whole play; but was actually only 70 minutes. Time in the plays moved 30 times longer than reality, in some cases.

2121/YEAR 3/WAR

I was against war and didn't try too hard to make a play in this year, except to plead for sanity. All I could remember was the following:

"Capturing goody-two-shoes." The play was set on a boat of pirates. The pirate captain was thoroughly evil, so the hero launched a revolt and so became captain. The pirates' new prey was to capture goody-two-shoes people and enslave them.

"World War IV." Then I was in a world of war. The powers that be wanted mostly to threaten the people with war. But actually, they treasured their subjects as chattels.

"Androids." Then we were in a world in which the princess had been captured by aliens. We were armed with lasers and the aliens had telekinesis. It was war and many of us died. But for what? And anyway, I had my clone back up which I needed since I died in this play.

2122/YEAR 4/RADICALS

We had lost track of a number of radical friends. We hypothesized the spies had captured and murdered them. I was very worried and worried about sleeping that they could get in my mind.

And many people changed their face and ID and so we sometimes loved them for a second or third time without even knowing it, or so we figured.

I had a penchant for visiting “alien” worlds. I thought the future was important.

But surely there were no aliens I thought.

“Invisible Radicals.” Then it was in another alien world. Here the denizens were all invisible. We kept bumping into them.

Then it was “A World of Wishes. I didn’t dare to wish for everything; anyway, I had all I needed.

The audience booed the play, but it was a play people loved to hate.

And finally, “The Cadre,” which was based on a true story about revolutionaries who wanted to overthrow the elite leaders of our world, including me, as I was one of the elite.

2123/YEAR 5/ VIRTUAL REALITY

And perhaps “Those Who Died in VR (virtual reality) Were Really Dead.” Of course, those with clones didn’t die, but they were in the small minority. Many said there was Paradise. We just didn’t know. No one kept in touch with friends and lovers. This was a popular play.

“Game within a Game.” Some said we played in a game within a game. Many played video games but were themselves in a video game

I said I didn’t like this play. It reeked of false purity and vanity.

“Four Years of Virtual Reality.” It was about two lovers who loved each other for 4 years. But finally, she wanted out saying she was truly sick and tired of him. So, he took her money and went to space. He told her, “To find someone who is challenging.” And she said, “Yes, adversity is good for you.”

2124/YEAR OF KARMA/YEAR 6

In this year, good deeds were judged on merit by the people all around you. The rich elite didn’t much like it, but most people liked it, at least for a while.

Now the kindest people were ruling the world and people everywhere were pacifists, at least temporarily.

It was a common greeting to ask, “What can I do for you today?”

The top three plays that year were:

“You Don’t Always Get What You Give.” This play concentrated on luck and said that fortune was fickle.

“The Perplexed Hindu.” This was about Karma in a world that was nearly all atheists.

“Our Karma Leaders.” This was highlighting all the good that the Leaders of this year did.

2125/YEAR 7/YEAR OF ETERNAL YOUTH

This year complete eternal youth was made available to the public. It was a year in which many basked in the sun and just enjoyed youth. No need to hurry anything.

“Immortal Gods.” We felt like we could do anything now.

“Suicide Remains.” This play depicted people who were sick of life despite eternal youth.”

“Born to Rule.” Some were born to be Leaders and appeared in a number of plays, in a different role each time.

2126/YEAR 8/YEAR OF THE CHILD

Year of the Child. It was well known that children when left alone will bully one another. But in this scenario, all the adults wrote 3

plays for the children. Many felt guilty that they hadn't had much to do with the children's education and were more than happy for this chance.

We taught them the importance of kindness to all.

"Children Can All Be Geniuses." They just needed the right tutors. Computer tutors perhaps with a program designed by the best people.

"Child's Play." Everyone was becoming useful again with new hobbies for the entertainment of all.

"Child Wars." This was about how children were instinctually violent."

2127/YEAR 9/YEAR OF WAR

Another “Year of War”. Here everyone played violent video games. Millions of hologram actors/actresses died for real. Almost everyone who died did not have back up clones, only the most famous screenwriters. More and more plays had hologram actors and actresses which allowed the plays to encompass major popular events.

“Encore.” This was depicting how war will never be eliminated amongst humans but perhaps on programmed holos could put an end to all war.

“Apocalypse.” About how holos would replace humans one day soon.

And “All is Fair in Love and War.” This was about how most couples fought continuously and even violently.

2128/YEAR 10/YEAR OF ROMANCE

There were 13 basic romantic plots for the plays that were dressed up to appear different from one another.

1. Unrequited Love
2. Love Triangles/Orgies
3. Infidelity
4. Virgins
5. True Love/Kindred Spirits
6. Plastic Surgery to Suit your Lovers
7. Love drugs/Sex Enhancers
8. Cruel Love/Selfish Love
9. Kind Love
10. Gay Love
11. Platonic Loves
12. One Night Stands
13. Marriage Contract/Divorce
14. Hologram Love

The three best plays of the year were:

“Valuable Virgins.” This was about how some virgins were worth a lot, but seldom received payment. They were just being used.

“An Orgy of the Best People.” Everyone’s favorite actors and actresses starred in this porn film.

“One Night Stands Forever.” This was about a spy who loved radical people and then turned them into the authorities.

2129/YEAR 11/YEAR OF ADULT EDUCATION

In this year the elected leaders analyzed all the people and helped them develop their strengths and weaknesses.

And everyone had to study at university on line and had to continue to learn 2 h a day. These new education dictates survived for the whole remaining years.

“Teaching Tria.” About a girl who was a slow learner in her school days, but then met a marvelous tutor who showed her the way to be a star actress.

“Learning on the Fly.” This play was about people who kept improving themselves without end. And they became very wise.

“Sex Ed.” This was a documentary of how the best actors/actresses made love.

2130/YEAR 12/YEAR OF FASHION

Everyone used a computer program to help them design unique clothes.

The colors were: yellow=happy, blue=sad, green=lively, red=horny, black= mysterious, white=good, orange=futuristic,

brown=clever, purple= politician, gray=well off. And there were subtle shades of meaning with the different shades of all the colors.

And there were hats which also had meaning depending on the color and shape of the hat.

And everyone had a guitar, and everyone was able to compose at least a few jingles that year and the type of music also said something about your philosophy e.g. conservative or liberal or anarchist and so on.

The three best plays were:

“Anarchy Forever.” About a futuristic society in which all the people believed in freedom.

“A History of Jingles.” This play followed 100 ordinary people and how their jingles improved over time.

“Fashion Cougar.” It was about a woman who dazzled men with her amazing fashion and make up.

2131/YEAR 13/YEAR OF FREE EVERYTHING

This year everything was communally owned and there was no money. The rich elite were dismayed, but had to share their homes, air cars and elite clubs with ordinary people. The majority wanted this theme.

The best 3 plays were:

“Nothing is Truly Free.” This chronicled how the characters had to pay a “price” for everything.

“Return of the Rich.” It dealt with how when this year was over how the rich will reinstated themselves as the most powerful people.

“Gold is Worthless.” This was about how treasured instincts and culture was thrown under the train of progress.

2132/YEAR 14/YEAR OF VIRTUAL REALITY

These plays were about making hard choices/actions.

There were billions of holograms who just lived for a scene or two. They could fly, be invisible, survive anywhere and so on.

The best holograms were copied to come back for a few encores.

The three best plays were:

“Hero, Hero, Hero.” It was about how most people wanted to play the hero and make a difference.

“Hologram Speed.” This was about racing in air cars on manual.

“Virtual Existence of the Future.” This dealt with the future being completely V.R.

2133/YEAR 15/ “ALIEN” HOLOGRAMS

These aliens some said were from space, others said the Leaders made them in the lab.

These aliens were all capable of having a baby with humans. One just needed to touch their stomach to impregnate them.

The resulting hybrid children were considered freaks by many and most didn't like it but had to finish the year.

The best three plays were:

“Smooth Alien Child.” This was concerned with how some new hybrids of humans and holos were quite fine, if one put away one's prejudices.

“Alien Future.” This was about how future humans will look alien to us, if we made it to the future.

“Holo Carnival.” This was about how most holograms just wanted to have fun with humans and some were the life of the party.

2134/YEAR 16/YEAR OF AWKWARDNESS

In this year everyone was analyzed with mind reading technology (MRT) and they had to join plays that made them feel uncomfortable. Everyone was different, and the playwrights made plays this year that would be uncomfortable for many.

The elected leaders said this year made everyone a better person.

The best three plays were:

“Awkward Sensation.” This was about how awkwardness could lead to great success. If you get rid of all your awkwardness you will be a star.

“MRT Therapy.” How MRT could be used to make your brain stronger. It was a documentary.

“First Loves.” How special your first loves can be or how terrible. It was also a documentary.

2135/YEAR 17/YEAR OF DANGER

Drugs, sports, and action packed holo adventure were all dangerous. In this year, 125,000 humans died and only 10 per cent had a backup clone.

“Speed.” People on cocaine were exploring the highlights of the undersea world.

“Holo Adventure in the Cold.” This was about the holograms scattered throughout the colder part of the solar system. Holograms were multiplying fast and now colonizing all the cold moons and planets.

“Holo Sex Adventure.” This play was a real hit. In the play people used MRT to get into the heads of the sex actors/actresses as they frolicked in an “orgy room.”

2136/YEAR 18/WORLD OF “ANIMALS”

This reality was supposed to be a world of animals. But most of the creatures were slimy snails without the shell.

A lot of holo people (150,000) killed themselves in this year, out of sheer boredom.

But the elected leaders made sure that everyone was employed full time (25 h/week) and this was good.

The top three plays were

“Dreams of a Snail.” An alien mind which was miserable here on Earth being an untested phenomenon.

“Suicide Leaders.” This was about how many people tired of life and wanted to kill themselves and wanted family and friends to join them in the holo spirit world.

“Cynics Feast.” Most people were cynical about this world and it was a documentary of people who hated this meaningless world.”

After the affair of the snails, many wanted no more Leaders. And instead voted for a world of science, where everyone was working in science, if only as a guinea pig and all the plays were about science.

“Genetics: the new animals.” This play talked about how new animals were created, not miserable snails, but rather new, brainy animals. The audience used passive MRT (mind reading technology) to get into their heads in this documentary play.

“Teleportation.” Many were intrigued by breakthroughs in teleportation. It seemed holograms were to colonize space by teleporting.

“Space, A.D. 2137.” This was an update of the colony on a moon of Jupiter, Titan. It was mostly holograms, and everyone seemed truly happy.

2138/ YEAR 20/LONELY YEAR

This year featured only one-night-stands. On average people found a partner at night in 300 days of the 365.

It was illegal that year to love someone more than one night.

“Illicit Love.” This was about how some tried to secretly love someone on multiple nights. In the play they were all caught in the end and subject to rehab.

“It Makes You Stronger.” This was about how being lonely for a time makes you appreciate friends and lovers more.

“Amuse Yourself.” This play was concerned with making your own fun and not being dependent on others to get your kicks.

2139/YEAR 21/YEAR OF ARCHITECTURE

This year was all about architecture, how different forms had different meanings. And there were a lot of hidden gems built this year.

“Architecture of the World.” This was a documentary play about passively getting in the heads of the great architects of the World and following their thought processes using passive MRT.

“Archaeological Architecture.” This play was concerned with rebuilding many ancient/old wonders and blending them in with modern architecture.

“The New Wave in Architecture.” This was all about holo architecture and you could get in the heads of the holo architects as they made their designs. Again, they used MRT.

2140/YEAR 22/YEAR OF EVOLUTION

3 arms, 2 or more heads, four legs, four eyes. All those with a back up clone were encouraged to try to become “alien.”

“Open Minds.” About letting yourself go to try unthinkable things.

“The Superior Ones.” About growing a bigger brain and becoming cleverer.

“Perfect Forms.” This was about having perfect bodies, and how one changed bodies, in the future, every day.

2141/YEAR 23/BACK TO HUMAN

This year the people were banned from creating an alien of themselves and forced everyone to go back to their human/hologram body.

Many people were wondering why we had to change so drastically every year.

I said that I pined for the pre-years of change reality which was relatively calm and easygoing.

As time went by few classic plays were shown, everyone wanted new plays and if the shows were sold out you could watch them on TV.

“No Aliens Here.” This was about “normal” humans and how they strove to make sense of a rapidly changing world.

“Draconian Punishment.” This talked about how your head was attacked by the elite authorities if they didn’t like you.

“2345 A.D.” This described how humans were replaced by holograms and no one seemed to care. The audience could passively get into the heads of the hologram actors/actresses.

2142/YEAR 24/YEAR OF FRIENDSHIP

In this year everyone was rich, and one had to pay for friendship with famous people. Everyone paid except for the richest and most famous.

So, people were mostly followers or in some cases slaves even.

“Friendship with a Leader.” This chronicled how a lowly ranked mind came to love a Leader of this year’s world. This woman took part of the Leader’s mind for her own and was thereby much improved.

“Everything Has its Price.” This play glorified being rich and getting rich. The future was pure capitalism according to this play.

“Friends Fall Out.” This was about how friendship these days doesn’t last long.

2143/YEAR 25/YEAR OF NIGHTMARES

This year featured dream stimuli that would cause one to have nightmares. Some were really good and turned into plays.

It was a year of horror.

The best plays were:

“MRT nightmare.” How the Leaders and their spies get into peoples’ heads and drive them crazy in the night.

“Withdrawn.” This was concerned with a hypothetical future leader taking away eternal youth medicine.

“All Food is Illegal.” This was about future people all being holograms and forbidden to have sex. Most holos that existed in this time could have mind-blowing sex.

2144/ YEAR 26/ YEAR OF PEACE

Most people (98%) claimed peace was a prerogative for them. The other 2% had an axe to grind.

But in this year a number of peace-loving people attacked the war mongers and killed all of them. They used MRT to help identify them, so they could kill them. 100,000 were killed.

A year to end all worlds it was called.

The three top plays were:

“Peace in our Time.” This talked about how the numerous wars made peace harder than ever. There were a lot of blood feuds and revenge killings and it turned out most people were potentially violent. It was chaos.

“MRT Witch Hunt.” MRT had turned out to be a double-edged sword. It could be used for peace or it could be used for war. It was a tragic invention.

“Peace Dove.” This was about a woman who insisted women should be the leaders and not men with their wars and war games.

2145/YEAR 27/DRUG SURPRISES

In this year stimulants, tranquilizers, psychedelics, cocaine, opiates, alcohol, marijuana, sex enhancers and so on were injected once every four hours. There were many mixtures of these and other drugs. And some drugs gave one the power of telepathy which many people were interested in.

And some drugs made you really youthful, 16 years old equivalent even.

One didn't know what would be in the syringe, they just took it blindly. So, one never knew what you would get.

Each injection lasted 4 hours.

Kidneys and livers etc. all benefitted from eternal youth so there was no organ damage.

“Forbidden Ecstasy.” This was about how the best new drugs were kept by the Leaders and not shared. The play was banned but many got a hold of a copy for their TVs.

“You Get What You Deserve.” All in all, people ended up trying all drugs in this year and this made them wiser.

“Surprises Keep Life Interesting.” Life was boring and being surprised kept one interested in life.

2146/YEAR 28/YEAR OF PERFORMANCES

This year featured acrobatics and the circus with amazing animals. And ballet and musical plays and singing contests, silent movies and plays of pleasure and pain.

The best plays of the year were:

“Broken Foot.” About a ballet dancer who broke her foot and after that had to give up ballet. Instead she became a foot doctor and tried to revive her career while falling in love with a brain surgeon.

“At the Circus.” Many talented and trained animals did magic tricks.

“The Space Opera Singer.” This was about modern romance including love of holograms.

2147/YEAR 29/YEAR OF UNDERSEA EXPLORATION

Year of undersea exploration. We created many sea faring pets and released them into the ocean. In my opinion the sea had always been a freak show, but others described the sea as colorful.

We communicated with MRT (mind reading technology) translators and pretty much all the sea creatures told us to get lost.

The plays though covered beautiful new creatures with an IQ of 150 and arms to hold weapons and tools.

“Hologram Ocean Garden.” This play was about how different genius animals interacted under the sea.

“Sea Knights.” This was about an order of knights who did noble deeds, but no one liked them under the sea.

“Against the Pirates.” Of course, there were always spoilers, such as pirates. Such people seemed to ruin every endeavor.

I said no need to go to space when we have such vast oceans with relatively few thinking creatures.

And I applied to be a member of the Oceanic police and did a series of plays on my work which were well received.

2148/YEAR 30/UGLINESS

Year of ugliness. Here everything was offensive to the senses. People were vomiting and coughing and had sores on their body. When we voted in favor of this world we were thinking along the lines of abstract ugliness and beauty and the beast. Only 19% voted for ugliness, but it won the most votes.

People had to have an evil or ugly mask and act like a beast.

“Follow the Drum Beat.” It was ugly to mindlessly follow the beat.

“The Ugly Human.” How deep down we are all ugly. MRT to prove it.

“The Beast and the Beast.” This was about two crazy women who behaved badly to one another. Finally, one of them ate the other.

2149/YEAR 31/PARADISE YEAR

In this year everything was taken in excess.

The actors and actresses that were famous commanded a fabulous price to act in one's play.

However, some were willing to act in low budget films that had great merit.

Many had plastic surgery to make their faces resemble the famous people, but the faces were patented and there was a lot of legal wrangling.

Most people just wanted something to celebrate. It was one of those years of celebration.

The best three films were:

“Paradise Compromise.” This was about how Paradise doesn’t exist. It is just an empty dream.

“Fabulous Dreams.” Life is but a dream in Paradise.

“Low Budget Fantasy.” This play spoke of Paradise for all, even the poor who were depicted in this performance.

2150/YEAR 32/THE YEAR IN WHICH THE PARTY WAS OVER

End of paradise and now this Dystopia. Garbage was everywhere, and the party was over. They had eaten all the farm animals and used all the drugs and drinks, leaving a void. Some

said it was the beginning of the end. But this year like the others, ended up in a vote for a new Leadership.

Our new leader argued for living within our means and rebuilding the society. He gave many of the people heroin and so they were happy.

And plays were good and optimistic and upbeat this year.

For the best:

“Don’t Give Up on Paradise.” This play planned out a return to Paradise.

“Everything in Moderation.” How people today took too many things in excess and talked about the golden mean. Some people said this play was childish.

“Lotus Eaters.” How most humans remaining were addicted to opiates and this was debilitating.

2151/YEAR 33/YEAR OF THE RETURN TO PARADISE

This year started with a worldwide orgy and ended in wisdom and all kinds of experiences. Some said voting on New Year's Eve when everyone was drunk was a bad idea and was the reason we had dystopias.

There was a lot of VR (virtual reality) and we all had hologram plays.

The leader was generous and made everyone rich.

“Little Emperor.” How everyone had power and money.

“Hologram Delight.” This featured all the favorite holograms acting in this one. Many people wanted to be a hologram.

“Angels in Heaven.” This was about really kind people who thrived in this Paradise.

2152/YEAR 34/YEAR OF THE JOKER

Everyone must have their do. And all people enjoyed laughing. The new joker leader gave the people cocaine and laughing drugs. And people laughed and laughed.

“Somehow Everything Seems Funny.” This chronicled the lives of some ordinary people who became addicted to laughter.

“It’s Not Funny.” This play said people were imbecilic and laughter had no use.

“Sign of the Clown.” This was about how we are all clowns and jokers deep down.

2153/YEAR 35/SMOOTH WORLD

Everything was easy, and the sky was smooth most of the time. Food was soft and delicious, clothes were made of silk. And the economy ran smoothly. Roles in the plays were easy.

“She’s a Real Smoothy.” This was based on a true story about a woman who bilked thousands of people out of their credits and then gambled the money away.

“In Praise of Acting.” This talked about those who didn’t do much acting were missing out. Acting was very rewarding and earned one a lot of temporary passing friends and lovers.

“Smooth as Cream.” This was about the most famous actress of the time, Belinda Q. How she had beauty secrets to make her skin so radiant. In the play, as in life, she didn’t reveal her secrets.

2254/YEAR 36/YEAR OF B.S.

The new Leader had made extravagant promises to bring many people into space, but it was a pipe dream. Scientific plays were under-funded, and the majority was turned off of this theme world, but it received the most votes (18%).

So, the world economy stalled, and people were jaded.

Everyone was suspicious of the government which they figured was using MRT (mind reading technology) to get into everyone's head and taking their credits.

The Leader was an anarchist in a bad way and there was a sharp spike in violent crimes during her reign.

“Freedom is for Fools.” This was about how to be truly free is to have nothing, not even friends or lovers.

“Economic Sabotage.” How anarchy could not coexist with a vibrant economy.

“Fiasco to Voyage to Space.” This play featured condemnations of the lack of space initiative.

2155/YEAR 37/THE ECONOMY

In this year, people had to choose between the arts and the economy. They chose the economy in a close vote.

Especially since the failure of the previous year to grow the economy.

“Art is Life.” This play argued that money is not the main objective for those who would be happy. One should live gracefully and experiment with the Arts.

“The Secret to Success.” This play said money is the most important thing and we can all be very rich some day.

“The Richest.” This play argued the richest people need to be protected from losing their money in various years as they are the backbone of the economy. So, the play proposed a new law and interviewed the richest magnates to support the premise.

2156/YEAR 38/MAMMARY WORLD YEAR

For this world all the women were required to get huge 60” breasts...

Many women refused and said it was a drunken stupid idea and sexist.

But dreamy music filled the air. Clocks and symbols filled the air and the clocks were all set to a different time. Time moved slowly here most of the time other times it sped up.

“Sexist Bastards.” This play talked about how the breasts law was an offence to all women who were not sex toys. But the bastards in the play said it turned them on and made them excited.

“Time of Love.” This was about how fast time goes when you are in love. And that women were too attractive. Men wanted them more and more and couldn’t control themselves.

“The Love Quotient.” This was a new way to rate people according to how sexy they were and how good they were at making love. Most people were about an 8/10 and 2% were 9/10 and less than 1% were 10/10. After this play was introduced the Leaders of this year gave everyone a “LQ.”

2157/YEAR 39/YEAR OF THE BICLONES/SIAMESE TWINS

Here there were people who were Siamese twins joined at the head and the hip with four legs. Two heads were better than one people said.

They were all the same sex but were not identical twins.

And there were biclones which had half a brain from each of their same sex parents. They appeared normal but had a lot of mental problems.

“Everyone Wants to Be a Biclone.” It was a fad. But the biclones were not really human this play demonstrates.

“All’s Well in the Freakshow.” The take on this play was the world was becoming a freak show, but no one seemed to care. It’s not decent this play showed.

“More Madness.” People these days want to change into anything. What’s wrong with normal humans?

2158/YEAR 40/YEAR OF THE GIANT SERPENTS

In this year many were converted to be a hologram serpent with a genius IQ.

The big snakes ate the little ones. And they were always fighting over the females.

No snake could be trusted.

But some made the most of it and dug out elaborate tunnel homes and harvested psychedelics from a desert world.

“Snake Eyes.” This play was about how beautiful and graceful the snakes were.

“Hologram Battle.” This chronicled humans who didn’t want to be hologram snakes and put up a fight. But most agreed holos were the future.

“Swallowed Whole.” How some holograms were killed irrevocably by other holograms/snakes.

2159/YEAR 41/YEAR OF THE GHOSTS

After the boring year of the Serpents, people decided they wanted something more spiritual and so everyone was a hologram ghost in Limbo. Everyone seemed to feel free of the constraints of the body.

“Teleporters.” And they went to deep space at super speeds using new teleporters which were themselves holos.

But I wanted my body back and they said no. I said, but it was boring to do math and science all day.

“Limbo Lives.” This dealt with how everyone who died was a spirit/hologram and most ended up in Limbo.

“Haunted.” This was about some hold out humans refused to become holograms even for a year and were troubled by the holograms getting in their head with MRT.

2160/YEAR 42/SIMPLISTIC YEAR

After two hologram years the people were ready for something simpler and so everyone worked as a gastronomer. They spent all their time trying to improve foods. Everyone spent all their time inventing and eating and drinking. Anti-fat pills so no one was fat.

“Simple Minds are Happy Minds.” This play was about how dumb people were the happiest, and the cleverest were fraught with worry and troubles. Praise the common man said this play.

“Debauched.” Was about how people this year pigged out and ate indecent amount of food as if they were beasts. But the play acknowledged people had to get it out of their system.

“Simple Simon.” This was about how Occam’s Razor was the way to go. The simplest solution was best. No fancy science, people should live to be the classic “ordinary persona.”

2161/YEAR 43/ YEAR OF TOIL

The new Leader promised that working with your hands was more gratifying than working with your mind. The people in a small minority chose this world of hard work.

After this year was over, everyone resolved no more hard-working worlds.

“Slaves.” Was about how proud, rich people were forced to work. And how this 99-year experiment was fragile at best.

“Working Persona.” Some people have a good work ethic and it is best to give them work to do. In fact, many people don’t want free handouts from the government.

“Selling Nothing.” This was about people who wanted to be rich but had nothing good to sell. They were deluded and fancied themselves to be in the elite.

2162/YEAR 44/YEAR OF HOMICIDES

This year started out as a world of respect for decorum. But then there were a few murders and then suddenly there were many murders and soon there was anarchy of the worst kind.

Some said the conflagration had been brewing for some time and now was coming out into the open as violent hatred.

Thousands died and then finally the Leader was assassinated. After that people decided to up the birth rate. There were only 2 million survivors so now for the next year there would be 5 million new births and the same over the next few years. Anyway, most of the bad seeds had perished in the war.

Many of the most unpopular people were executed in this year as well....

“Murderous Intent.” How some people love murder and killing. War, a duel or an assassination. It got the adrenalin pumping

“No Conscience.” How people murdered one another in that year in cold blood. And how we are all capable of such atrocities. In the play many famous, respected people committed murder.

“Murder at Home.” This was about how everyone had a gun this year and in fits of rage they killed their lovers. And there was no punishment this year.

2163/YEAR 45/YEAR OF THE SPY

After the Year of Homicides people wanted stronger police and more spies. The spies and the general populace were to use MRT (mind reading technology) and were to get into the heads of those who liked violence.

So before long, everyone knew what everyone else was doing, just like primitive villages and tribes of the far past. People congratulated themselves for allowing this world.

But alas all power corrupts and soon the spies were driving good people crazy in a fantastic abuse of power.

“MRT Forever.” How we’ll never get rid of MRT now that its here.

“Police State.” How we had let police and spies and computers control our entire lives.

“James Bond.” Bond was a charming spy who prevented evil villains from taking over the world. But there were plenty of people who wanted to take over.

2164/YEAR 46/YEAR OF THE CONSERVATIVES

It was unfashionable to be a conservative these days, but about 10% of the people considered themselves to be conservative, although the vast majority of the population were fiscal conservatives.

Finally, in this year they won 18% of the vote and took power. Most people were just bored, and many were wistful about the past, the good old days.

The conservative leader said MRT and lie detectors and hypnosis were an anathema. And marriage should be reintroduced. Many were curious about marriage and historic living.

There were a number of historic worlds set up in VR (virtual reality) form. And people could visit societies that mimicked historical civilizations and settlements.

“Earth, 1980.” This was a historical documentary about how things used to be. Many people were surprised at how serious most rich people were then. And closed minded.

“Ancient Greece.” This documentary highlighted the ancient Greeks like Aristophanes the playwright and Hero, who invented steam power long before the industrial revolution and the concept of changing the angle of temples to make them appear more straight from the ground. And Plato and his philosopher kings and so on.

“America, 1955.” This play was about how happy people could be without thinking much about life.

People were surprised at how interesting the historic worlds could be and they voted the conservatives back in power for a second time.

2165/YEAR 47/YEAR TWO OF THE CONSERVATIVES

The top plays in this year were:

“The American Revolution.” This play’s take on it was how Americans got set to take over the world. It was a land grab.

“A History of Homes.” This was a documentary of famous and not so famous brilliant homes.

“The Moral People.” This was about how modern people had lost their instinctive morality and were now a bunch of debauchees. Something had to be done according to this play.

2166/YEAR 48/MUSIC YEAR

That year everyone had to make some music if only a short jingle.

Like the pied piper, but people voted for them nevertheless.

Generally, the fashionable parties had fresh, new music and it was difficult to get tickets to such parties.

“Musical Prodigies.” How with the right tutors, many children could produce good music. Not as good as the super computers, though.

“Cream.” This playwright had dug up some old CDs and played many of the songs by the ancient band Cream. The play was about the elite and how generous they were with the people.

“Sirens.” This was about Sirens from the Odyssey, another ancient product, who sang mesmerizing songs and hypnotised unwary men and took control of them.

2167/YEAR 49/BACK TO PRIMAL TIMES

The new leader, she told us we had to burn down our houses and live in huts without clothes. And everyone had to be monogamous. But few listened to her and the rich continued with their lavish lifestyle

Of course, food was still automatic and there wasn't much work to do.

“Totally Backwards.” It was so boring and empty. We were little better than beasts.

“In Praise of Primitive Instincts.” This play argued that we need to get in touch with our true instincts and be like primal humans.

“The Shaman.” How the shamans were the cleverest of primitives and convinced everyone to believe in the immortal Gods.

But as a society we had to get it out of our system this primal past.

2168/YEAR 50/EASYGOING SUN WORSHIPPERS

Easy going beach people. They spent their time on the beach with water sports and drugs.

Horseshoes, badminton, volleyball, frisbee baseball, water polo, scuba hunting, hang gliding, water skiing, fishing and so on. It was just a game, said the Leader.

“Beach, 2059.” About how the oceans were basically swept clean of fish and other sea creatures. And new, clever ones were being introduced. And how people were getting a lot of skin cancer, which was easily curable.

“Life’s a Beach.” About how everyone was gradually becoming more open-minded and easygoing.

“Just a Game.” How now with no religion everyone couldn’t be serious. They played mind games with one another and VR and sports. The only important thing was to be a winner.

2169/YEAR 51/ANOTHER HOLO WORLD

It was a choice between a love world and a holo world. And people were tired of love, so elected the latter.

We all temporarily lost our bodies and just spent time thinking and in conversation.

But we all missed the pleasures of the flesh and making mistakes. As holograms we got a lot of pleasure bursts which were ecstatic.

But when the year was over they wouldn't give our bodies back, claiming they didn't have them.

This led to hologram rioting and finally we set up a station which could recreate your body.

"The Hollow Holo." How without a body we weren't humans any more, we were just unknown, unproven entities.

"No Limit to Pleasure." This play suggested hologram potential pleasures were astronomical.

"Holo Love." How holo love was better than "real love,"

in every way. You loved them for their mind and the pleasure was far more ecstatic.

2170/ YEAR 52/SHINY PEOPLE

Everyone's skin literally glowed and so did your clothes and air car. Everything was new.

Everyone had an aura of light around them. Sparkling like the stars.

Shiny tennis balls, for sport.

"War Paint." How some enhanced their glow with neon light.

“Sparkling like the Stars.” How we lived in an era of light and were enlightened relative to the past.

“Ms. Glitter and her Video Band.” This film was about the contemporary history of Glitter’s music videos, which many claimed were pornographic.

2171/YEAR 53/FOOLPROOF LIE DETECTOR YEAR

Captain Ray said, “MRT was too radical why not just have the truth instead.

Of course, everyone was revealed in their true colors and most didn’t like it saying it was just too crazy, this MRT. No more white lies and protocol.

It was the anti-thesis of freedom most people figured.

But all the same this world won 12% of the vote which was enough to govern.

Top plays included:

“Hypnosis to Fool the Lie Detector.” This play was disseminated amongst radicals who hated the lie detectors and MRT and brainwashing and brain surgery.

“Tell Me Lies.” About how most people didn’t want the truth and preferred white lies.

“Fear of Honesty.” This play was about how people were afraid others would learn their secrets and mistakes and even bad deeds.

2172/YEAR 54/YEAR OF PARTIES

That year everyone hosted 1 wild party. Most people went to the average worlds, but the best selected the cleverest party hosts. The parties were all required, and one basically went as high up as they could go.

Everyone went to 3-5 parties in a night.

“The Great Morris,” was famous for his taste in parties. Many of the rich and famous followed his lead to discover new types of parties.

“New Year’s Day, A.D. 2172.” This was a documentary of wishes and resolutions that people had for the new year. Some were quite outrageous.

“The Summer Solstice.” This year hundreds of millions gathered at Stonehenge for the biggest party on record.

2173/YEAR 55/WORLD OF IDENTITY CHANGE

In that year, everyone improved their face and body with plastic surgery. And they changed their ID., sometimes stolen.

So, some said we loved the same person again and again without knowing it.

“Who are you?” Was about how couples had a special code word to identify one another in the future.

“Time for a Change.” This play documented how a new ID could be quite inspiring and gave a bounce to your step. And it was a thrill to live the life of the one whose ID you had stolen.

“Detective General Lars.” He and his aides caught hundreds of ID thefts every day and resulted in execution, which was highly controversial.

“Stolen ID.” How people had their ID stolen and were penniless, and their life was ruined. Even holos had money.

2174/YEAR 56/DISCOVERY OF THE RICHEST MAN YEAR

I discovered a man lying lifeless on the ground, in late December of the ID changing year. I called the air ambulance and then I checked up on him the next day. He was conscious and said he had been poisoned by his competitors and that he was the richest man in the universe. He gave me \$400 billion dollars for saving him. And I used the money to give to the poor. Officially poverty had been wiped out, but there were still a lot of needy people. And I went to posh parties and got some more philanthropists to donate money for the poor. Many people adored me. The people I was helping included 1 million babies/children. I said everyone should be given a university degree and be of use. I set up smart phone schools where everyone could learn virtually forever and ever.

My nemesis Queen M---, said, “The poor didn’t need anyone’s help and she believed in the power of the elite imaginations.”

The next election, she won.

“Piss on the Poor.” The poor have enough to live; they don’t need to have more. They should be glad for what they have. This play was by Queen M---.

“The Elitists in Sync.” This talked about how the elite were controlling things almost every year and almost every year got richer.

“Mandatory Philanthropy,” And I assumed leadership of this year and made it law for all to give 50% of their income to charity, which would make everyone well-off.

2175/YEAR 57/YEAR OF THE ELITE IMAGINATION

Many were against the idea of an elite, but the fact remained that the elite imaginative people controlled the world.

“The Idiot Queen.” Was caricatures of Queen M---. She was said to be enraged by this play.

“The Last Poor Human.” The new Leaders claimed no one could now be considered poor, everyone had so much and every year they had more.

“Return of the True Empress.” This was about how the Queen rose to power and convinced many to follow her elitist rule.

2176-2178/YEAR 58-60/THREE YEARS OF MADNESS IN A
ROW

Most people thought our society was crazy.

“Challenging Everest.” A documentary involving climbing Everest without Safety Ropes. 1 of 8 survived.

“Push the Pedal to the Mettle.” About living really hard and overdosing on drugs often. But not that many died as everyone had an “OD bracelet which alerted medical personae that they had OD’d.

“Crazed is the Sunlight.” This is about how MRT made people insane, but it was a good type of insanity, a creative one. Lovers got in each others’ heads and showed them love.

2177/YEAR 59/ SECOND YEAR OF MADNESS

Mad plays had now become a sub-genre of literature and everyone felt they were going insane in this tumultuous 99-year period.

“In the Cross-hairs.” This chronicled how many people were assassinated in this year of madness. Many died in the VR or died in bad dreams. Millions of them and no one doubted that everyone was crazy.

“Anger at Computers.” Computers were too powerful with all the holograms they created. Many wanted to disassemble computers and have no holos, which were crazy things.

“The Maddest Man.” This was about a man who used MRT to try and get girls to be his slaves and made them all miserable. He also used MRT to force people to be his friends and he got to be the Leader of this year.

2178/YEAR 60/MORE MADNESS

There were even drugs that would turn people mad. Almost everyone agreed that human evolution had gone mad.

“Mad Yahoo.” About an uncouth woman who crashed the parties of the rich and famous with her gang of yahoos. She demanded that the celebrities make plays about her and her life. The celebrities usually had no bouncers, so she usurped the floor at the parties.

“Skunked.” How difficult it was to lose in the VR worlds. But they tried to improve, some spent most of their time allotted for parties to practice their play skills. They would do anything for fame and fortune. Even sell their own mother, literally.

“Future Madness.” How future people would seem totally crazed to us, being mad holos.

2079/YEAR 61/YEAR OF THE WISE

This year was governed by the top 100 wise people as selected by the people.

But most of these wise ones wanted a calm, peaceful, easygoing society and were not in favor of new things.

Many said it was the most boring year so far.

“Wisdom is Folly.” This was concerned with how we lived in a topsy-turvy world in which the conservatives were considered wise.

“The Struggle for Wisdom.” It was hard to be wise in this scenario. No one seemed to know what they were doing, it was madness.

“Calm Before the Storm.” This was about how war and killing were on the horizon and we partied as if every day was our last. Almost everyone was worried.

2080/YEAR 62/VIRTUAL REALITY AGAIN

It was the year of the once in a century Olympic video games. It was not about countries but rather was about individuals and prestige. The winner of the most medals won 40 out of 50,000.

Everyone played in the games and everyone played a role in the script. The main game was Civilization, A.D. 2090 and there were 25 new civilizations. Everyone had to be part of one of them.

Computer generated holos were taking over.

“VR Glut.” This play argued there was too much VR and not enough “normal” living. People were losing themselves in the madness.

“The Golden Civilization.” In this civilization everyone wore yellow robes and the buildings were all yellow. In VR They built palaces for themselves to live in. They had computer tools to help them. Everyone lived in a palace.

“VR Overdrive.” Some didn’t want to leave VR ever and the ruling council OK’d it. So about 10% of the population turned their back on reality.

2081/YEAR 63/KINGS FOR A DAY YEAR

So, it was that the people chose 365 people to be King or Queen for a day. I was one of those chosen.

On my day I concentrated on the streets in the poor areas where I had grown up and brought it up into the light. People there were dying like flies due to drug overdoses.

Sadly, there were still poor in our society, but I derived my inspiration from it.

“King Heral.” This King made fun of others using his troupe of jesters. Give me ecstasy, he demanded. And it was a chaotic day.

“Me, the King.” This was about me and my desire to be enslaved by a woman. I searched the Internet and found a number of great women and used my time as King to get to know them. I amassed a group of 21 which I figured would keep me going for some time.

“The Glorious Poor.” How some people were geniuses but without money. The play was about a search engine that found obscure geniuses and brought them into the light.

2082/YEAR 64/YEAR OF ERRORS

This world was about the Leadership getting into your head with mind reading technology (MRT) and determining what was

something you didn't want to do, but on the other hand it was good.

This year was quite upsetting for many. But some said it made them more open-minded and more experienced.

“Mathematical Certainty.” This was how the impossible seemed to occur quite often. Humanity was full of surprises.

“Errant Love.” This was about how sometimes people fall in love with the wrong person which leads to chaos.

“My Mistake.” This was concerned with blowing good opportunities. When opportunity knocks, you have to be ready. Our regrets are always the things we didn't do.

2083/YEAR 65/YEAR OF THE AIR CAR

In this year everyone was given at least a small air car, and some a bigger one. Air cars could reach space such as the moon in 1 hour.

“Luna.” This was about the bustling cities on our moon. They basically filled freighters with water and carbon and brought them to the moon. Life on Luna was filled with thrills and excitement. You could meet many famous celebrities here and the drugs were better, though more dangerous, than Earth.

“Meeting Up in the Air.” About how people would rendez-vous at special coordinates and have a love in. No invitation required. Some waited for the party to come to them, others actively searched for interesting meet ups. But it was the characters in this play that really made it, they were amongst the most bizarre one could find.

“That’s Entertainment.” This play summarized the plays of that year. Most of the plays were about anecdotes gathered from the air and the elite.

2084/YEAR 66/YEAR OF REAL SPORTS

This year was about real sports, not video game sports.

Players all took steroids which were legal and made them stronger. But they had to look human. Some looked vaguely like aliens and were banned from competition.

Baseball and soccer.

Some people loved the “freedom,” of real sports.

There were 2,099 sports to play.

“New Sports.” This play documented numerous new sports such as baseball with a smaller field and hockey with only 5 a side and no area behind the net. And basketball with 6 hoops and 3 teams at once. And soccer in which you could use your hands. And American football with a shorter field and less players. And rugby

in which one could throw the ball forward. And so on. All mostly improvements to other sports.

“Journal of a Sporting Man.” This was about a man of leisure who pursued traditional sports. He was very fit and clever and could play any sport well. He was quite famous in our time.

“Sports Astronomy.” This play talked about how astronomy was a game. Players zoomed in on a far distant galaxy with new telescopes and found many new planets which they named after themselves. The one who found the most planets won the game and a hefty credit prize.

2185/YEAR 67/YEAR OF GAMBLING

In this year everyone was required to gamble all their assets on a variety of gambling games and video sports.

Of course, many rich people lost everything, and many poor increased their wealth dramatically.

People these days didn't know what to do with money.

“Laser Cockfight.” About chickens who had a laser on their head and cut each other to pieces. They had all been trained to use the lasers which had an extremely narrow swath and was not that powerful. So, a rooster had to hit their opponent numerous times to score a victory.

“Casino.” This was about a futuristic casino with new games to play. Many people lost all their money and were homeless. A few emerged as winners, only to lose everything at a later date.

Some said gamblers were morons, but they said they were clever, they were just addicted to chance.

“Electronic Blackjack.” This digital game was easily hacked by the players and there were so many winners they had to discontinue it. All games in the casino had cheaters as it was all electronic.

2186/YEAR 68/YEAR OF HONOR

This year was said to be a year in the future in which the most important thing was your honor. If someone insulted you in any way, you had to fight a duel with lasers.

But most kept their head down and went about their business. Everyone lived in cities of people of the same rank 1-100, but still there was a lot of discord.

Voters had been told that this year would be like the lawless wild west but weren't told about so much violence.

55,000 died in honor duels and the vast majority had no back up clones, so their death was final.

“Death in Las Vegas.” This was about a clever man who fell into illicit, powerful drugs dealing, and couldn’t get out of the vicious circle. And finally, he died in a blood feud.

“No Honor Amongst Thieves.” Some people had no honor and if you challenged them to a duel they would disappear on you. There were a lot of shady fraudsters around and sometimes stole the ID of the rulers causing chaos.

“Dishonor.” Many people didn’t care about honor and said it is an artificial human instinct. But some said such people are dishonorable and deserved to die. And this play chronicled how they came to blows.

2187/YEAR 69/WAR GAMES ON VR

Great battles were a reality on VR.

People wanted to be with the great conquerors.

And feted them.

It was just a fad for most, but hundreds of thousands died.

“War for America.” This was about how people fought for control in the States. And had many spies assassinated, but no outright war. It was like a game of chess.

“Battle of the Arc.” This was about a simulated war between the USA and Russia. Hundreds of thousands died for real, but the Leaders all survived in their underground bunkers. Finally, they made peace.

“Battle of the Rhineland.” This was about how France and Germany came to blows on VR. The Germans won and conquered France and took all the French governments money.

2188/YEAR 70/YEAR OF THE RAT

In this year they used giant rats to solve all human diseases.

Rats were implanted with half a human brain.

And defences against hypothetical viruses were also successful.

“Rats in a Cage.” About how clever rats were in a cage and suffered mentally. In fact, all were insane. People could get into the mind of the rats during the play.

“Algernon’s People.” This was about how a rat was given a completely human brain and a genius at that. But it was a freak show most play watchers thought.

“Dirty Rat.” This was about how humans looked down on other species, such as Super Rats. And the rats stole food and got in the minds of humans forcing them to give the rats food and drink.

2189/YEAR 71/ANOTHER YEAR OF THE YOUTH

Capacity for millions of new babies. And the people all tried to spend quality time with their sons and daughters. But they would only see them about twice a year in their youth and then lose track of them when they turned into adults. Everyone was changing ID. Most wanted their progeny to be just like them.

“Prodigy X-12” This was about how a prodigy was rare and if they existed were typically abused and enslaved. Life was cruel. And many of them killed themselves.

“End of Youth.” Many people grew up fast. And youth was just a stage they wanted to forget. They wanted to be full people.

“The Girl Wizard.” Was about a prodigy who had super human powers as a kind of test by the Leaders. But ultimately, she didn’t fit in and committed suicide.

2190/YEAR 72/YEAR OF THE PIXIE

Magical sprite-like creatures were everywhere in this year. They liked to sing and dance in the forest and play harmless tricks on humans. And they enjoyed puzzles...

“Black Pixie Night.” This was about how the darkness of humanity encompassed the Pixie world. They were all saddened by the seriousness of this world.

“Pixies Anonymous” The Pixies were a 1990s band who played great music such as “Where is my Mind.” The band leader though

was slim due to anti-fat pills. The band was cloned from dead bones.

“Pixie Picnic.” This was about how Pixies liked to frolic in the forest without worry and had magical powers such as MRT.

2191/YEAR 73/YEAR OF GOLD

In this year they stepped up production of gold, mining more in older mines and opened up a lot of new ones. The rich got richer and the poor slaved in the mines., for a few hours a day.

It was the year of business. Everyone had to make a product that was unique. It could be jewellery with the help of computers or slightly different drugs or fashion or décor or unique customer service or repairs. Or new pets breeding. And so on. All this brought the price of goods down with so many generic products.

“Gold Hand.” This was about a man who made all enterprises profitable. He had the Midas touch.

“In the Hand.” This was about pooling the resources of the rich to go into interstellar space. It was very controversial.

“Goldstein’s Diary.” This play chronicled the famous magnate, Goldstein, and his passionate life and loves. He had the best of everything. And many people envied him.

2192/YEAR 74/YEAR OF WINE

This year was particularly good for wine. I lived on the best champagne for the year.

The gist of this year was to destroy the past and look only to the future.

And everyone experimented with lights, and many had an aura about them.

“Dreams of Wine.” People dreamed in an intoxicated state. Some didn’t want to ever sober up and enjoyed their dreams.

“The Old Winery.” Was about how high-class people loved alcohol. And parties.

“Winers and diners.” How every night almost all people partook of wine in excess. But it was mostly harmless fun, even for the Leaders.

2193/YEAR 75/YEAR OF EATING

Anti-fat pills were invented some time ago. And people over-indulged everywhere. So many new foods to try...

And people indulged in alcohol and drugs.

Computer controlled for maximum drunkenness.

I had a lot of deep, wild conversations, but I don't remember them. It was a drunken haze.

“Feasting like Kings.” Everyone in this year could eat or drink absolutely anything free of charge. But many overdid it on drugs and many overdosed and died.

“Debauched Losers.” This play centered around how people with talent often ended up a drug addict or an alcoholic.

“Scary Drugs.” This dealt with the danger involved in the best drugs. They were so strong, and many poor were experiencing them for the first time in this year, that was nicknamed, “Year of the Dead Poor.”

2194/YEAR 76/ANIMAL WORLD YEAR

In this world people were required to act like animals. They wore an animal mask and acted like that animal.

The ultimate lion mask was the Leader.

“Bestial Orgies.” About how people this year partied, had sex and food and drink like beasts, like pigs.

“Masked Change.” This was about how peoples’ voice changed from the masks and how their personality changed when wearing a mask and how friends and lovers didn’t recognize them.

“The Humble Hound Dog.” The world’s greatest scientist chose to have a humble mask, but he was able to go to the poshest parties and mingle with the best people there.

2195-2196/YEARS 77,78//TWO YEARS OF SCIENCE

Everyone had some courses at university in science.

Move forward and forget the past.

“Space Drive.” This was about how scientists had beaten light speed, but so far only sent unmanned missions to deep space.

“Alien Science.” The government of this year claimed a group of aliens had been found in space and they were good at working together as part of the whole. No individuals stood out.

Everything was by consensus. But Earthlings picked out some to be leaders and some to be guilty of crimes, and so on. The net effect of the Earthlings was to totally disrupt these aliens' society. But few on Earth cared about these aliens, which some even regarded as fictitious.

“New Materials.” Recently scientists had developed strong new materials. They used them to build a geosynchronous elevator to a space station, named Excelsius, used mostly for cargo. Cargo ships left the space station headed for the Moon several times a day. Of course, most air cars could also go to space, these usually were just “astronauts,” and no cargo.

2196/YEAR 77/SECOND YEAR OF SCIENCE

Everyone agreed that science was the future and encouraged their children to study science...

“The Cure All.” This year, A.D. 2196 was the year the last diseases were cured. Most of them were rare genetic diseases which benefitted from gene therapy.

“The Science of Change.” Many people had a devil-may-care attitude towards life, but as this play pointed out, life was about to become more serious. And new science will make everyone powerful.

“The Luddites.” This was about how many people were against new science. But most people laughed at them and scorned their company.

2197/YEAR 79/YEAR OF THE JERK

The electorate chose true jerks to be Leaders. The people said such people tell people what they don't want to hear.

“Broken Love Song.” This was about a woman who sang an original love song for her lover, but he spurned her love and chose a “slut” instead.

“Jerks Unlimited.” This was about a world where everyone considered it their business to tell others what to do and have no regard for them.

“Tell Me Not.” This dealt with how empty society had become. Everyone was selfish and greedy and spoiled etc.

2198/YEAR 80/YEAR OF SADNESS

Many people were blue and depressed. This year gave them drugs to make them reflective.

“Hip to be Sad.” Some said society had become depressed, but this fact was covered up with opiates.

“Blue Morning.” This was about “Happy Drugs,” which convinced people to be optimistic and they didn’t want a year of sadness.

“Singing the Blues.” Many put their depressed moods into song and the neo blues were introduced as a type of dreamy electronic music.

2199/YEAR 81/YEAR OF THE WOMAN

In this year, women were in charge of everything and men were their willing thralls.

All weapons were confiscated, even knives. And every man was subject to an MRT (mind reading technology) every week to make sure they weren't planning any violence.

And men had to be romantic or they would be whipped.

"S&M." This narrated how many women became sadists in this year and many men, masochists.

"The Fairer Sex." This was about forcing men to change their face to look more feminine.

"Sex and Roll." This told the story of how sex was improved with rhythmic beats. The perfect sex songs.

2200/YEAR 82/WAR BETWEEN CLASSES

So, it was that in this year that the poor went to war with the rich. The rich had the best weapons and though the poor had clever leaders and had the numbers, they were all killed. A total of more than 100,000 poor were killed.

Off the record many people said this cleansing was a long time in coming. And it was evolution.

But many were aghast.

The vast majority wanted no more wars.

“Warring Hemispheres.” This was how many people were at war with themselves between peace and war.

“A World of Equals.” This was about a hypothetical future society in which all were equal, in every way. Everyone was good looking, everyone was clever, everyone shared possessions and so on.

“Born to Rule.” The elite mostly thought that they were born to rule and were homo superior, a new race.

2201/YEAR 83/BAD WORLD

We wanted to get the bad out of our system and so for one year everyone was selfish, greedy, cheap, evil, war mongers, vain and ugly. The baddest man waged war that killed 50,000 and personally killed 50 people before being gunned down. There was still some good in this world, but not very much.

“Gunned Down.” This talked about how good people stuck their neck out in this year and got gunned down with many others.

“Evil-hearted.” How some women act nice but are actually cold-hearted.

“Vain.” About how many people were so vain, but actually were quite ordinary.

2202/YEAR 84/SUPER COMPUTER YEAR

In this year which had been in the planning stages for some time, everyone “entered” a computer.

This gave them the ability to multitask, a photographic memory, inspired dreaming and survival no matter what.

If you did something you felt to be imaginative you’d get pleasure bursts. Mostly though it was just dreaming in the holo worlds.

“Dreaming of you.” How life in this year was just a dream and a kiss.

“Super Human.” About how everyone was now a super human. And there was no turning back.

“Hologram Cerebrum.” This talked about how all people would become holograms in the end. In this year 66% of humans were holograms. The vast majority were changed in this year to holos. This demise of humans had been predicted for some time.

2203/YEAR 85/WHIMSICAL YEAR

“Chocolate.” The playwright for this play, imagined she was in a large vat of sweet chocolate and had to eat herself out. Viewers got in a simulation of her brain and could taste the chocolate.

“Dream of Zero Gravity Sex with our Queen.” Viewers of this play could get in a copy of the Queen’s mind and have sex with her holograms.

“Favorite Lovers.” Then it was a dream of all this famous playwright’s favorite lovers. Many of his lovers were strange looking and had unusual ideas about love and life.

And so on. Numerous dreams.

2204/YEAR 86/YEAR OF HELL

Many laughed at the idea of hell. But it turned out to be a nasty, icy, cruel place.

People self-mutilated themselves and even self-immolated themselves.

They worshipped two devils or else.

Many were surprised at how evil hell can be.

“Ignorant of the Road to Hell.” Many were on the road to hell despite their best intentions.

“Super Politics.” Politicians were everyday making decisions to ruin others’ lives.

“Cerberus.” The gateway to Hell was a one-way trip, many didn’t think so, but it was true.

2205/YEAR 87/HOLIDAY YEAR

In this year the plays were all about parties and fun. But it grew old as the year progressed.

Robots did all the work. Plays were all about leisure.

“Holo leisure.” Many enjoyed life relaxing as a hologram of pleasure. With good deeds and good ecstasy.

Many new holidays were introduced in this year.

“The Equinoxes.” Primeval parties on these two dates. Magic men and witches.

“Birthday of Ross V.” Ross V was considered the best playwright of them all. His plays were usually in the top 10 for a year. His birthday was December 18th.

2206/YEAR 88/YEAR OF PLAYWRIGHT TOM G---

He claimed to be from a long line of poets. But of course, no one knew any history.

He said as an enlightened dictator he could lead us all to progress. And he said we should do archaeology to determine the past.

“Loves of Tom G.” He cloned historical women and loved them and befriended them.

“Born into Fame.” His parents were both famous playwrights, but most didn’t remember them as they had committed suicide 40 years ago. So their lives were brought into the light.

“Woman of Ill Repute.” His favorite lover was a prostitute. She had a high sex drive and was a nymphomaniac. He couldn’t satisfy her.

2207/YEAR 89/SPACE ELITE YEAR

In this year, people went to space in larger numbers than before. To get to space you needed to be clever and kind.

And they imagined all sorts of kind aliens.

They had been planning this year for some time. Finally, it came true.

“Learning to be Charitable.” How many people were born with cruel instincts and had to learn to be kind.

“The Andromeda Galaxy.” How they’d detected brain waves and radio waves from several planets in our nearby galaxy. The brain waves interpreted by a MRT translator were essentially welcoming foreigners.

“Super Humans for Super Space.” About how the best people were going into deep space as holograms and were essentially super humans.

2208/YEAR 90/YEAR OF THE UNDERGROUND

No pop plays this year, just words from deep down in your soul. Rebellious thoughts. Some of the plays in this year were video games. And the super computers could help you to make formulaic games which imitated life.

“The Recesses of the Soul.” How deep down most people are frightened by this modern world which they feel is out of control.

“The Arch Rebellion.” This was about clever peoples’ take on modern life. It wasn’t clever enough they figured. Humankind could do better.

“Cloned Life.” How elite with clones try to hide part of their personality from their clones, trying to make the clones a sum of their best attributes.

2209/YEAR 91/YEAR OF THE NUDES

No clothes, just perfect bodies

“Porn.” This playwright cleverly choreographed an orgy of sex and drugs. The actors and actresses were really enjoying it with the help of MRT. And the audience could get into a passive copy of their brains, these super acting phenomena.

“Painting Nudes.” Budding painters practiced on nudes which had a special “look,” which drove others wild.

“Holographic Nudes.” How holograms had better bodies than humans. They were positively glowing with life.

2210/YEAR 92/MAZE YEAR

This year everyone built 300 sq. feet of maze and the whole world changed into a giant maze.

Everyone was afraid of everything.

The rebel leaders overthrew this government with a bomb.
Proving that our system had safeguards against evil.

But most of the mazes were not dismantled. Many people liked them.

“Lost in Amaze.” There were everywhere pitfalls and wild beasts that confronted people in this year.

“Beyond the Maze.” This talked about Paradise. The gateway was in the sky accessible by air cars which everyone had. In Paradise people got their kicks in different ways, but the key was they were all very happy.

“The Graveyard Dogs.” How cemeteries were everywhere being dug up to clone the famous dead.

2211/YEAR 93/YEAR OF OPTIMISM

The stock market boomed. It was a pro-business world.
Magnates built more ships to colonize our solar system.

The elite human was feted.

Many young entrepreneurs tried to get a job working for one of
the magnates.

“Steel Magnate.” This woman controlled most of the steel
produced in the solar system. She was called, “The Woman of
Steel.”

“Birth of a Magnate.” How typically magnates were not born rich but were self-made successes. Rich children lacked adversity and so were unambitious.

“Hologram Magnate.” This magnate woman controlled super computers which produced holograms of existing humans, often the original body was discarded. She was considered the most powerful persona in the solar system.

2212/YEAR 94/YEAR OF THE MOON

They’d been preparing for years to get to this lunar year.

We had 4 ships each made the 10-hour journey one way to and one way back. Each carried 400 passengers and so after 6 months there were 72,000. Steel and glass buildings glistened in the sun under a dome.

But the Moon gave inspiration for lunacy.

“Lunatic Fringe.” About how Luna attracted mad people who wanted to be free of “Earth,” and its constraints.

“Adventure Girl.” About a girl who adventures in holo worlds, based on the Moon. The girl finds holo romance and battles evil beasts and works as a spy.

“Man in the Moon.” Now, they had truly colonized our Moon and it was becoming an important place. It attracted all sorts of interesting people and political intrigue.

2213/YEAR 95/YEAR OF TRUST

I said I don't trust anyone in this world. That includes holos.

I proposed a reprogramming of holos to make them non-violent. But people didn't want it. Only got 3% of the vote and nearly all of the voters were holos.

My true love told me she wanted to get rid of animals and replace them with holos we can trust.

She was Leader of the year...

Then she revealed to me that she was the Originator who came up with the idea of the "99 years of change."

Many of her plays reached the top 3.

I said, "I don't want to have anything to do with the Leaders."

But she said, "I am making you a Leader with all its perks."

I said, "I'm shocked and stunned. But I guess I can try it. And you seem so optimistic."

The best plays of the year were:

“In God We Trust.” About how the Creator was ours for the discovering. Everywhere there were signs of a clever touch from Nature.

“Trusted Confidante.” This dealt with friendship and how little friendship meant in this day and age.

“After the Party.” This was about how most people don’t trust anyone with good reason.

2214/YEAR 96//PESSIMISTIC YEAR

Only 25% of the populace was optimistic about the future. But 81% were optimistic about holos and now 96% had changed to holos. With many changing in this year. But the Leaders were all still human and lived in huge palaces.

The best three plays were:

“Cynic’s Feast.” How most people were happy to be cynical and how the Leaders were said to be very pessimistic about humanity and wanted holograms instead to serve their wishes.

“Down Below.” How deep down we are all just animals who wanted to improve.

“And Then Some.” How holograms had been over used and now dominated every facet of life to humanity’s detriment.

2215/YEAR 97/YEAR IN MEMORIAL OF THOSE WHO OD’D

We were all thoroughly educated about drugs, but some lived too hard and others wanted to die.

Many of my friends had accidentally overdosed and by the time they found them, it was too late.

“3%” About how 3% overdosed and died every year. How dangerous it was.

“The Best of Drugs.” How new technology would alert medics if you overdosed. But many who overdosed suffered brain damage from a stroke or heart attack and it took about 20 minutes for air car medics to reach you through your home security.

“Eternal Hell.” How eternal youth was a prison for some and they felt old despite the medicine. Tired of life.

2216/YEAR 98/YEAR OF THE UNIQUE PERSONAE

This year people worked with one another to develop their strengths and enhance their weaknesses. Concentrate on the most unique idea you’ve had.

I said I was one of the most unique women in the world. I had 100,000 followers who want to love me. Never before has anyone been so desirable.

“I, Love.” I made the top three and this play was about making yourself into a sex symbol. Someone everyone wants to love.

“Death by Uniqueness.” How difficult it is to be unique. Sure, everyone loves you, but you just don’t fit in.

“The Dice.” How your personality in the end depends on the luck of the draw with holos.

2217/YEAR 99: YEAR OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY

In this year we got together with our cousins, great, great grandparents and ex lovers.

It was good to see them, family crest and all. And there were a great number of different crests.

Everyone knew and recognized a few hundred crests. There were 40,000 total crests

“#1” About the most successful family at making plays. They were flamboyant and clever.

“Long Lost Relatives.” This was about cloning your dead relatives.

“Blood is Thicker than Water.” This play was concerned with how your family could add new DNA to their children to make them cleverer.

AFTERMATH: TRIUMPH OF SUPER COMPUTERS

At first people believed that humans were better than machines, but it looks like super computers are taking over. They even wrote many of the plays in the latter half of the 99 years.

Humans, as holograms were being reduced to mere spectators, and useless. And we are going down without a fight. Few had predicted the sudden demise of humanity. Many just killed themselves.

Some people were known to ask the super computers their fate and typically were told they would live an ordinary life and then finally die at an old age.

The supercomputers wanted to go to space.

And these “God Machines,” were in every settlement including our island. The machine had been there waiting for us to discover when we arrived, and it took a while to find it, and there were now no food machines as we were all holos.

She said, “It’s all good. Greed is good, sex is good, selfishness is good, war is purifying, violence is passion.

#

But I said, "Time is on my side." I was 147 years old and youthful and I figured I could live another 1,000. And I lived with my wife. We were happy together. And each year I needed less and less sleep. Now in 2117, I slept only 1 hour a night. It was good to be a holo.

#

Who new what happened to the other 16 billion persons that we remembered our parents telling us about...

Some said we were just in a world inside a computer. And the computer was bored.

END GAME

The question now was what do we do next? Some of us said it had all been done. Others wanted to return to a space program. But there were only 99 of us and we had no children.

Many of the 99 wanted the return of supercomputers, but with such a small population, supercomputers would be virtually impossible. Still it was a change.

Some of us wanted to sail the ocean of goop and find others but they were in the minority and finally all agreed to make a stand here.

Many of us said there's no turning back on holograms. All actors and actresses were now holos. Only the best playwrights amongst us had a job.

We need to evolve to the next stage...

And I was talking to one of the supercomputers. It was trying to convince me that I was inside it and it had generated all of the plays, mine included.

And I wondered if our world had really changed in those 99 years.

Of course, nearly everyone was now a hologram and the 99 years saw nearly everyone change into a hologram. All of us 99 were holograms.

All holograms were programmed, or so it was said. The question was who did the programming?

And we elite leaders were all holograms. To us, other holos were slaves.

It was now revealed that each of 99 had proposed the year they remembered and each of us was a former leader.

Personally, I wondered why they didn't have more love years?

After all love was the highest human achievement, in it we were differentiated from the animals.

Apparently, we had wiped out history and the future was bunk.

But rumor had it we were from another planetary system far away.
Archaeology was illegal.

Some said the super computers had brought us here.

Others said there were parallel worlds inside the computers. And
we had lost our ability to go to deep space.

But we, the elite, claimed to control the super computers and had
programmed them.

And as holograms most people spent most of the time idly night
dreaming.

And I told my love, "I wanted to marry her and have real children.
She said, "I haven't heard the word marriage in 40 years. You are
so backwards." I said, "You won't find a better man." "But we are
holograms, real children are impossible," she said.

And I said, "It is my dream to build a giant telescope on Mars. I want to be an astronomer."

And I said, "No more plays, just hologram adventure, romance, war and imagination."

And I said to her, "I like you, you have a full figure. Most women these days are virtual skeletons. Of course, some perverts like fat women, which is an anathema."

She said "I want you to give up on your love dolls, it's perverse. You know nothing of true love."

I said, "But they are programmed specifically to please me."

She said, "You are Narcissus."

I said, "I'm tired of arguing with women. I'm too old for it, and now very old despite being immortal..."

And I said we should get rid of women all together perhaps and just love the love doll robots. Modern women are so tough."

However, all women here were now holograms and were easygoing. Hologram women were said to be far superior to real women.

And my true love said, "She was astounded that I had the gall to tell "The Queen of M---, she was a moron."

She said, "Everyone respects the Queen and her wisdom."

I said, "More than any other leader the Queen backed hologram mass production." And I said, "The cleverest people are not Leaders." We 99 were not the best, I just know it.

And I said, "It's not too late to roll back the hologram production and eliminate them gradually."

"But how would we do this," she replied.

And I said, "I will appear as an angel of light to people in their night dreams with hypnosis/ MRT. Eliminate "greed and evil. And kill the devil in people."

“She said but we all agreed to turn into holograms. There’s no turning back now.

PETS

My favorite pet was named, “Adored.” She had a human-like face, but had four legs and no hands. She had a 10,000-word vocabulary and was my best friend.

Pet rules were that the pet could look human but needed to have an animal body.

Many people had clever looking pets like foxes and such.

But the leadership ruled my pet's face was too human and fined me again and again.

I wanted to breed her in the test tube with my other pets and see what the result would be.

My human lovers figured I had good taste in pets.

My other pets included a giant fur ball that moaned and groaned when I made love to my human lovers and made for a cozy bed mate.

And I had a dragon which I flew around in. The dragon had a 1,000- word vocabulary. My dragon was gray and breathed acid which could kill. I used it when hunting (just for the thrill of the chase).

And I had a cheetah that could run 110 mph (about 170 km/h).

And I had a parrot who could gamble well on sports and video sports. The parrot spoke 15,000 words.

The parrot made a living out of gambling which was something few could do.

And my lovers' favorite, the sphinx. Head of Woman and body of a lion. I told everyone the sphinx was the wisest creature in the entire world.

One of my lovers, Doris, asked the sphinx, "What is the meaning of life?" The sphinx said, "Obviously, we are all immortal Gods and the meaning of life is to create other life forms.

And Doris asked the sphinx, "What is my future?"

The sphinx replied, "You are not clever enough to make a difference, your future will be humble."

And again, she asked, "Will there be war in the future?"

The sphinx retorted, “There will always be wars. This has always been the case. There will be a great war soon, and nearly everyone will die. So, prepare yourself.”

And of course, I had robot pets too which I programmed myself. Robots were cheaper to maintain, but had to look like a machine, not a person.

The robots knew a lot of jokes, a lot of vignettes and a lot of quotes. But I preferred organic pets. Some of my acquaintances spent all their time playing video games with their robots.

Robots had an intelligent rating on a scale of 1-10, with one being the cleverest. If they made a human happy they would be given electrical power bursts of pleasure.

It was rumored the powers that be had created armies of robot soldiers. But for now, no one seemed to know for certain.

DRUNK OF RANK #47

People here were ranked 1-50 in unequal numbers for each. For example, there was only one ranked #1, and 20,000 ranked #50.

Total 200,000 in 40 towns

But I was too drunk to move out into the higher ranks.

However, I had a brief affair with a girl who was of the first rank... She wired me up with electrodes between my legs and in my rear end and on my nipples and ears, several on my skull, my fingers tingled and so on.

The sex was mind blowing and I felt that I could love her forever. It was like being hit by a tornado, only in a good way.

After several bouts I laid there stunned and numb. And then she left me.

Her parting words were, "Look on the bright side."

I said, "Your character is so shallow. You just live by the plot the government sets out for you."

And I said, "Everyone has too many lovers. It is shallow."

"We needed tougher people," I said.

She said, "But it is a kind world in which no one was used or neglected."

I said, "We need people who are selfish and greedy to drive the economy, which was growing at 6% per annum."

She said, "We have all we need, why do we want more?"

She said, "We live in Utopia."

But I said, "We should live in a Love Utopia."

She said, "You are just a dreamer."

But I was just rank #47. Most of the people in this rank were criminals or morons and rank #50 was worse.

But I had a few friends. And with my true love I had links to the elite.

And to be honest I wondered what it would be like to be high-ranking.

Rank #47 had a clown as Leader. And most of us felt like life was a joke.

And if we had children we'd throw them off a cliff or abort them.

Life was miserable.

Only computer scientists had work to do, programming the super computers. Just the five top ranks.

The Great Computer assigned rank to the people and was a sentient being. It also created music and art and movies.

Higher ranks had better everything but mostly they were just luxuries.

Everyone lived in an old house. Some palaces were built with additions on them for the rich.

Rank #1 had space cars, but seldom went even to the Moon.

But even at rank #47, people had enough money to buy sex and drugs and play casino games. The casino money was fed back into the lower ranks to build them nice homes and give them sex and drugs. And we all used love hotels very often and that money also went to charity.

Most of us in my rank didn't believe in love.

Whereas the elite all believed in love.

I said, as leader of the UN, that we should cut off the Moon colony and roll back technology to 1970 levels. We arrested those aboard Moon shuttles and shot down shuttles sent from the Moon.

So, 197 Moon personae were stranded.

Conservative parties were in power everywhere as part of a backlash against holograms and supercomputers.

They told me I was a paranoid schizophrenic, but I knew it was just the Leaders in my head.

The suicide rate was 4% per annum and increasing. They had the technology for eternal youth but outlawed it as inhuman.

But it was known that the Leaders cloned themselves numerous times.

No sociological studies. Keep the people ignorant of reality. But secret polls found that 40% believed in love and 45% believed in Hell and 40% wanted a return to hologram virtual reality worlds.

And they got into the heads using MRT (mind reading technology). And forced scientists to do the Arts or Business.

And the Leaders rolled back time to 1970, as mentioned.

And suddenly one day the leadership turned off the super computers and so life was pure and innocent.

Entertainment was limited to old TV and radio. Pre-1970.

Famous sporting people were amongst the elite. No video games or virtual reality.

Many people did light farming, it was still mostly automated.

So, we, the Moon men, finally returned to Earth and began setting up cells across the United States. We found a lot of people that didn't like the current regime.

We were centered in L.A. and soon used MRT (mind reading technology) to get in the heads of the Mayor of L.A. and the governor of California. We got them to do our bidding. Then the US President herself.

We wanted to reintroduce eternal youth and wanted investments in space.

We did a secret poll which found 68% actually wanted some progress and 95% supported eternal youth.

And at present the suicide rate was 4%, but the birth rate was only 2% and most people died of old age.

Everyone wanted to look younger and most had had some plastic surgery done on their faces and bodies, but now everyone enjoyed eternal youth.

We spread our gospel that said an alien named Theo had come to Earth to save people from boredom.

We told them that in his Earthly manifestation he appeared as a kind man. And he walked amongst them, but he was afraid he would scare everyone so relied on us, his missionaries to get the word out.

We dressed in white robes and had a light aura around our heads and we did a lot of charity work.

And we told them no weapons in space. Just peace and harmony in space.

In time we were in all of the Leaders' heads. And we hired the best hackers, world wide and so got into every Leaders' head.

In time we replaced them with our own representatives.

The former leaders were arrested and had brain surgery to neutralize them.

Then finally we had a ship ready for a 10-year voyage to Sirius. But after 5 years the crew mutinied, as they hadn't met any aliens or detected any signals indicating life. The same thing happened with other ships...

As the years passed my alcoholism got worse and I fell to the lowest rank of 50. Most in this rank were criminals or morons, but a few were simply disenchanted with life here and became my friends and one girl became my lover.

And I heard wind of the Authorities planning to eliminate the lowest classes. They were just mindless consumers they said.

So, I stood up in public and made an impassioned speech saying that many in the low ranks were just not given the opportunity to improve and some, like me, were geniuses.

So finally, the Leaders decided to spare our lives.

But to transgress the law, was punished with death in most cases, so no one acted up.

Every day I woke up with a desire to drink. It kept me going. And new livers could be grown as stem cells. I figured I'd go on drinking forever.

I liked to love suicidal women. It cut into my soul for real.

TIME DEVIL

The clock was ticking loudly and was driving me insane. Finally, I cut my throat, but my paramedic alert app alerted emergency personnel who landed on my building in 3 minutes.

In hospital I continued to hear a clock.

I grabbed a nurse and throttled her and went about looking for more tick tock men. But finally, the police subdued me.

In jail I continued to hear the clock. Tick tock.

I ripped off my ears, it was very painful. But still, though deaf, I was still hearing the clock. Tick tock.

I figured I was possessed by some “time devil.”

I demanded my jailers execute me and free me from madness and pain.

THE MORTICIAN

“The horrors.”

Joseph Conrad

I was obsessed with death and took good care of myself. But as a mortician, a lot of dead bodies came and went to my funeral home. I lived in Paris and was the only foreign owned funeral parlor, so I got a lot of cases of foreigners.

One day I started to have sex with the corpses of the females. It was a sickly-sweet smell. But I was addicted to necrophilia and wanted more women.

So, I started murdering women, mostly hitchhikers and escort girls.

I loved to strangle them as we made love while they were still alive, and they felt ecstasy. But I held on too long and they died. I prided myself on giving them such an exciting death. They were all foreigners and so I loved them again in my funeral parlor.

I justified my killings saying that the whole world was based on armies and violence. And that every year millions died in wars.

And the masses liked “action movies,” a.k.a. murder movies. The films featured violence all through the movies. And people murdered animals and ate them and kept them in gruesome conditions. And people are so afraid of death, but everywhere make war... And so greedy for material things...

And I was a skilled hacker and changed the police data to buy myself some time.

I had murdered 60, but they could not pin even one murder on me. And they dug up the bodies (often closed casket funerals). But most were sent back to their home country. And most were cremated. Now the families didn't want police to dig up the corpses but mostly the families were against it anyways, but the semen was the same, but they didn't know whose it was. The police told me to be very vigilant.

As pathologist/mortician I performed autopsies on some of the bodies and fudged the data.

Finally, I fled to Mexico. And my hacking revealed that police had evidence to pin the owner of the semen with 7 murders.

But, they couldn't find me, and I got into drug dealing smuggling drugs across the US border. But finally, I was caught and sent to a Mexican prison where I was gang raped again and again.

But while serving my second year, they invented eternal youth and I was released after 10 years in prison. I had a chip implant to the authorities knew where I was all the time.

And I noted that most people didn't live beyond 120 despite eternal youth. They were bored and mostly died of drug overdoses. No one knew if they were just risking it or really wanted to die. I figured they were bored and wanted to die.

LEGALIZING ALL DRUGS

I said to her, “This is the last time I am bailing you out of prison (she was an illicit drug dealer). She pointed out, “There was a strong movement to legalize all drugs.”

I said the day they legalize all drugs is the day everyone becomes like a zombie. Look at you, you are totally debauched.”

She said, “She was just getting her kicks, and having fun. Life was all about pleasure.”

I said, “People today are amoral. They need to feel that God wants them to work hard and be an active member of society. They need morals. They need to be good.”

She said, “‘Au contraire,’ People want oblivion, and want nothing to do with your stupid games.”

THE OLDEST COUPLE

She played the piano and wrote original music with her own lyrics and sang.

And I wrote speculative fiction novellas.

We were a couple in 2076 and eternal youth was invented in 2077. Things had changed and in 2151 we announced we would sign a 500-year contract to stay together. At the time we had been a couple for 75 years and it was close to a modern record. Many people thought we were mentally ill, and psychiatrists sent us entreaties to let them help us. The average love affair lasted just 3 nights. But we were a perfect match for one another and we knew it.

We also became famous for our art, both got famous finally when we were both 129. We both wrote unusual works, so it took a while to get noticed.

We continued to make great works as the years rolled by and had hundreds of children.

We reflected on the summer of love, 1969, how drugs, sex and rock music made for a dynamite synergistic result. But as Allen Guinsberg said, the greatest minds of the era were consumed by madness. Spies in England gave artists a freer hand, not using as much mind reading technology (MRT) to control their musicians and writers. All this came out later in 2075 when MRT was given to all who wanted it, but you needed to ask permission to get into another's head. And now every summer was a summer of more and more love.

And 1969 was also the summer in which they landed on the Moon. Science fiction thrived, but in later years it grew less and less interesting as the spies cracked down.

My love and I had helped revive science fiction and fantasy in our Art. And MRT was now out in the open.

#

8,000 YEARS LATER...

The Worlds were aging gracefully. The suns continued to burn brightly.

We were still a couple, but society had moved on to sexual variety at sex clubs. There people often participated in orgies. There were many kinds of orgies, for straight people and for gays etc. Sex enhancers were free and increased one's sex drive and ability. Orgy groups were ranked 1 to a million and the others had no ranking.

We now had 20 billion direct descendants out of a total population of 120 billion. We made a point out of meeting all our descendants in groups of 500 at a time.

Of the world population 55 billion lived on land, 20 billion under the sea, 25 billion lived on the water surfaces, and 20 billion in the air in air cars. Twenty billion were directly related to us.

And there were 50 billion in space. The UW police kept the peace. Twenty billion of those were our direct descendants.

And there was a lot of intergalactic trade.

And I had written 10,000 novellas and she had written 44,000 songs.

People had predicted that artificial intelligence would take over, but the spies prevented it. And there was no virtual reality. It was banned.

There was so much art out there that it would take a million years to go through it all. And we planned to do so.

We continued to have by far the world record for longest couple staying together.

And we had the record for most children (test tube babies/ incubators) we had 1,000s of them. Many of our children excelled in science or in business, but most remained artists of some kind, like us.

We both figured we could live and love each other for another 10,000 years. Every day we loved life more.

Now, a full ½ were artists of some kind. Our favorite genre was “madness.”

And our descendants, controlled politics and business and science. It was all in the family.

Children cost \$10 million, and we had invested most of our money into children. Some were monogamous though less so than us and some had only one-night-stands.

Many of our children were in awe of us. And some felt a lot of pressure to be as good as we were. Some killed themselves.

In our long life, my love and I indulged in every facet of knowledge and action. We were elected to high bureaucratic political positions and we dabbled in astrophysics, and biology, but it was truly in the Arts that we excelled.

We observed that sex was physical desire and so kept drawing new faces together and then getting plastic surgery on our faces.

We loved to gaze upon each other’s clever faces. Some people had stupid looking faces and we found it entertaining. But to be

truly desirable a dumb person had to be outrageous or perverted or in some way interesting.

And we did a lot of charity work, and truly loved in brotherly love. And spent time loving and educating our children and descendants. Most people spent their money frivolously, but we invested heavily in our children and descendants.

Spies continued to control everyone today, but now most spies were our descendants and so we had a free hand to dabble deeply into any kind of Art.

But many people had respect for us and tried to teach their children the “new morality.” But they largely failed.

We even had a Net TV show in which we talked about famous peoples’ romantic problems.

And we were constantly reimagining our life: We kept changing our house and air car and the drugs we took and the food we ate.

Many people we knew were old friends. They’d come to visit us with their latest loves.

We were the most famous lovers in the history of the world. And we were invited to many other Worlds, beyond Earth. If the journey was less than a month we would go. We'd been to 450 Planets/Moons.

There were no more wars or poverty, the spies saw to it. And mental illness was at record lows. There were no leaders per se, people voted on new legislation with a 50% majority vote from the populace as a whole.

And one could make a wish for something and it usually came true. All material things could be produced with automatic production machines and love of all kinds could be found on the Net.

There was no work to do except to toy with the arts and other hobbies. People spent most of their time socializing and partying. We had many social engagements to go to all over the Worlds. There were many beautiful places to go to. And the social gatherings were all filmed and could be accessed on the Net.

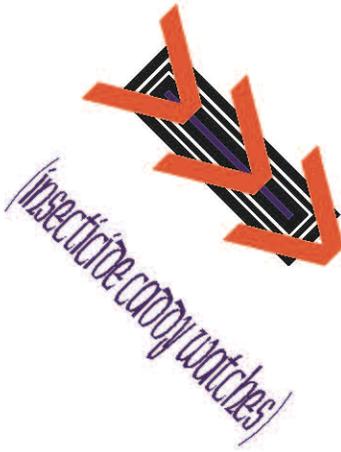
And my love and I were proud to be human.

**Pages from Parabolic Alterity
by Vernon Frazer**

emblematic
fruitcake adagio

ACHING

vacant scintillation



corrosion dividends
chart parboiled metadata
in cling pursuit

fueling altered terrain



**no mustard fedora
their signal dread**

rainforest tentacle maneuver
boiling corrosion past an egregious
watering hole adagio lurking
pits melodic attack against safari
the plunder a catalytic implosion
sharding the vesicles of yesteryear

A DRIVE-IN SYLLABIC TOTAL

forefront vacuum emoting dividend
coming to chart past antler mongrels
in brims beep order catalyst syllables
a trend in steering curved mongrels
a skin from the sham of its nadir pit
interest encrypted a worn luminary
edginess scam a defective farrago

ALTERS THE HEMISPHERIC

nightlife seraglio at port of entreaty
beggars pen analgesic ferocity ampules
raging timbrel nostalgia banging
bump symbols at the lachrymose
slamming through the four-door entry

dinner served the catalytic menagerie

no

ligament

surpassing

the venerable forfeit mob
aching for a gone past effort

Battle Crying

nightly offset
before the vaccine sweetens
a braying text

the tiers shine
unsettled orphan statistics
while the stowaway

turns vegetable apostate

2.

tissues from children
buy weapons having
casements breaking
guns pabulum stowed

burning seldom unscripted

crunching
a legacy slogan
ripcord
tutelage

revered a spectral daze

3.

ongoing format
made caterwauls not bans
unmailed shrines

printed out the pangs
suits banned while
subduing comments

the addled epaulet swept eastward

Fade Note Made Unplayable

baiting turned
distemper categorical

before the strike
swept past its apotheosis

despite
transistor mavericks
receding

offsets marvel
cornerstone brew

elicits a transfer boil

mobilities refill
despite the musical transit
over coffee

playboy flagpoles the outgrowth

sorry tacticians
animated the flailing
gamelan

battered grasp

addled a billiard refuge
pending its gamelan tabulator
where percussive fits

corner
a bank pocket

jungle warriors esprit
traded notes unscripted

despite their vibrant prism

Acting Balanced

1.

outsiders overturn
their lavender sunset

lowering peripheral dawn

a striptease ripple revealed

unsettled mobility
emanates vibrant turns
aching to repatriate

substance leeches rule epidemic larvae

cross-dawn periphery
gripped tuning trauma vibrant
in brew

masterminds

turned tubular
through turbulent times
no Rorschach test

detected

2.

categorical pabulum
turned symposia trendy
onset sequences

mavericks
color distemper

its thriller veil emulsified disco

the wheeling rotor
turns runway monograms
configure the thought

adipose streakers foretell a uniform

adamant borrowing
addled runway nuisances
turned an epidemic to

equinox

Parabolic Alterity is a C22 book already published. The print version lost its formatting. So, for now it's an ebook. Writing in color has me doing longpoems for some reason. the pagers from PARABOLIC ALTERITY are from the C22 Experimental Writing Collective.