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Introduction

Alicia Winski

Wild Ponies/Women in Chains

(Wild Ponies)

thunder resonates within slender cages carved of bone;
sounds reminiscent of the hard hammering of hooves
bruising tender terrain, free spirits in flight, lassoed
with enticing, soothing reassurances of quieting, gentle hands

warm pulsations flowing feverishly through subterranean rivers—
exhaling apprehension with each heaving breath, captive fillies
softly eased into confining corrals built high with slats of domesticity
painted in neutral, mute colors of safety and security

(Women in Chains)

futilely chafing against bits and bridles persuasively thrust between
the clenched teeth of resistance; shod in Versace, shackled by golden
Gucci tethers tarnished with time, tempestuous natures reined in by
deceptively delicate links heavy as lead, formed and forged in despair—

links seamlessly welded by the passing of years and loss of self

saddled by predisposition, aged and broken under weighty responsibility,
eventuality finds them discontentedly grazing in fields of middle-aged
sensibilities and moralities, bitterly digesting dry dreams and longings
for lost youth unbound by chains and

wild ponies running free

Previously published in the anthology, "In The Company of Women" ©2012

Chloe Mayne

scarborough

we fire vaguely-aimed arrowbodies beneath waves,
shoals of seaweed tickling and scratching
at bare skin. we try to clear the under-archway, but
every so often it catches our necks like a
hinge and catapults us backward by
our tendons, leaving us fumbling
for the familiar relation between ground and surface.

i've barely snorted the water from my nostrils, nor
wiped the stinging salt from my eyes before
i'm wrested down again, a wisp of flesh
in an endless sea.

i'm not even a paragraph in the book of oceans,
merely one-fifth of an aquatic full stop

.

mirndiyan gununa

i serve the old women tea in bucketmugs, a ring of
cardboard tetley tags running rosies around the rim,
spoons diving into the sugar jar like plovers –
you can't buy it in the store no more and so
it sits, sweet sediment at the bottom of a black sea.

sally holds up hands, dripping an offensive
shade of pink on her rubber clogs. she guides me:

there, the sleeping mangrove – there the
three-legged dingo and the wily croc
that nipped the other one off. there,
the stringy jellyfish in the channel with
long, transparent ghost fingers and there,
the fallen mangoes
cooking in their skins on the roadside –

she stops and swills, the world rendered
in a quiet tongue of imperfect circles.

hitching from pohoiki

stretched out on the rattling ute tray,
fists clutching the rim –

albizia fronds interlock fingers
over my head, a series of
wet foliage sheets on a clothesline
flying past at windneck speed, the

clouds are belching grey,
pregnant with monsoonal eve –
they begin to tap at my cheeks, natatory pins
sticking to my eyelashes, a

little blonde head of hair whips
from the window, wiry child's body reaching for the gust
like a thirsty dog

wooooooshhhh!

turtle etiquette

splayed in the current, a gangly neoprene
starfish, groping for rockholds
in the shore swell. a shadow pulls up beside me,
as big as a door with a shell to knock on –
eye the size of my fist, staring at me like
a discerning driving instructor.

i curl my knees to my chest, courteously
and we sway together – a pair of underwater buoys
bobbing to the twilight peak-traffic tide.

Kay Kinghammer

Summer Memory in Eastern Washington

Wandering down by the river,
Six years old, sent away from
Grandpa's forge, "Not safe here!
Go down to the river.
Take your little brother
And stay out of the water!"

We looked at the island in the middle,
Wished that we could get there.
Where we could explore, play with small,
Smooth stones, be safely lost
And be rescued in time for lunch.

We climbed over rocks and driftwood,
Me being bossy, "Climb here, not there,
Don't fall down, stay away from
The water or I'll tell!"

My little brother, following, for once,
Not arguing, no constant why's,
Then I managed to step on
The one and only board in
This jumbled flotsam of river
Carried timber, the one and only

Board with a nail standing upright,
Waiting for my bare foot.
I roared in fright and pain –
I could see the blood! –
Sent my little brother running –

"Go to the house! Get help! Hurry!"
His fat, four year old legs did
Their best, aided by my panicked screams.

Someone came to help me,
Someone told me to stop
Making such a fuss –
“They can hear you in the next county!”

This is all I can remember,
But I'd still like to visit
That island, the island I
Now know was no more than
Eight feet wide, maybe ten feet long,
Raised perhaps two feet above

The water, the bridge above
The river below. Even then,
Seeking safe isolation,
Seeing romance in the unknown,
The unexplored,
Seeking,
Dreaming,
Bossy,
Bellowing,
Me.

Daughter Poem

Closest I came to having a daughter
Was when I told the doctor,
Put it back. I want a girl.

Thought I'd be a better mother
To a daughter than a son,
Save her from mistakes like I made.

She could learn from my example.
When the doctor finished laughing,
He showed me my perfect baby.

Foolishness flew out the window,
All my world was filled with love.

Morning Musing

Iridescent angels dance across my morning ceiling
And my ears make the poem,
And my heart sings the song.
Yes, my spirit steams with passion.
Soon the bile will come along,
And it will twist the meaning,
Turn the lightest lay towards doom.
Singing heart's blood thickened ichor,
A monstrous metamorphosis,
A life that's filled with rue.
I do not want to live here.
I don't know what to do.

Force the body to some movement –
Change of site brings
Change of sight.
From my empty bed
Out to my overfull parlor,
(Welcome, welcome, says the spider)
Look at my lovely lavender frog,
My happy dancing frogs,
My multitudes of frogs,
My changeable, wonderful frogs.

Then do I dare to dream a carpenter,
A magic balance bubble,
A level to find my level,
A keystone for my arch,
A stable, steady, sturdy foundation
To cradle the whirlwind,
To swaddle the whirlpool,
To soothe my troubled soul.

A Day in the Life of the Poet

She is
Mourning in the morning,
Sad at six,
Sorrowful at seven,
Elegiac at eight,
Nostalgic at nine,
Troubled at ten,
Morose at midmorning,
Edgy at eleven,
Numb at noon,

Obsessive at one,
Tense at two,
Terrified at three,
Angry in the afternoon,
Furious at four,
Fevered at five,
Sanctimonious at six,
Sardonic at seven,
Teary in the twilight,

Eager at eight,
Nervous at nine,
Tender at ten,
Earthy and easy at eleven,
Aware and awake and alone at midnight,
Naked in the night.

Mike Perkins

Confabulation

Eddie was enjoying a few stolen moments with a video game. Eddie was a tow headed, pale, skinny kid with puberty looming just over the horizon, and soon he would have to leave his play when Father summoned him into the office for the word game.

After school he had followed his daily schedule by doing homework for an hour, taking a fifteen-minute break, and then twenty minutes with the daily math worksheets his parents assigned him. Then it was supper after Father came home, followed by piano practice for twenty minutes, then free time until it was time for his bedtime routine. Eddie was comforted by the schedules, even when he was inclined to gently rebel against it out of a developing teenage sensibility. Soon his Father would call him into the office to give him the word of the day, and review the word from yesterday. Usually his mother joined them if she was finished in the kitchen. It was like clockwork.

"Eddie," his father called from the office.

Eddie was slow to stop playing his video game.

"Edward!" Just a little louder. Father never yelled.

A little irritated at being interrupted Eddie yelled: "Coming, Faaatherrr!"

And he immediately regretted using that tone of voice. He admired his father very much for being patient, kind, and for never losing his temper except for the rare instance when he seemed to do so ever so lightly, in a controlled mechanical sort of way, just to make a point. When Father did that he did not even really sound angry. It puzzled Eddie but like all puzzling things he tried not to think about them.

Eddie got control of himself, and replied this time in a decent tone of voice: "Coming Father."

That sounded better. He had consciously mirrored his father's reasonable tone.

Eddie shut down the video game, taking care to put it up on the top shelf exactly where it belonged, next to the seldom used television, and just above the chronological stack of National Geographic's. It was time for the word game.

His parents smiled at him as he walked in. Father sat behind his big polished wood desk in an overstuffed black leather office chair. Mother was standing next to him drying her hands on a dish towel. She was wearing an apron over her house dress.

Father looked at his legal pad where the word of the day would be written.

"Confabulation," he said to Eddie, winking with his right eye. Father was always winking at Eddie, as if they were somehow involved in some conspiracy.

Eddie did not know that word, so he picked up the well-worn Webster's desk reference dictionary, unabridged, that was always on his father's desk, and looked up the term. It didn't take him long to find it, and study the definition. Like always, he would have to put it in his own words.

"It's sort of like a lie, but not really," he said.

His father nodded. His mother smiled approvingly.

Eddie continued: "Somebody tells you something not true, just like a lie, except the person thinks it *is* true. They don't know the difference."

His father said: "Yes. It's something that is not true, but that is perceived by the person, for whatever reason, as being true in their mind. It's factual in memory, but false in reality."

Eddie nodded his understanding. "Confabulation."

Eddie first repeated it to himself several times, then wrote it down several times on the yellow legal pad his father nudged in front of him. Father had taught him that saying a word and writing

it several times were two different ways to lodge it in one's memory.

"What was yesterday's word?" Father said.

"Contingency," Eddie replied. "It means what you do when something doesn't work out. Sort of like a backup plan."

"Give me an example, Eddie." His father was methodical, sometimes perhaps even mechanical, in his pedagogy.

"Like when Mother's van wouldn't start, and you had to take me to school on your way to work." Eddie remembered how calm his parents had been, even when he had begun to panic because he was supposed to go on a field trip that day and didn't want to miss it. As usual, it worked out. He had arrived at school a good five minutes before the bus left, just as his father had assured him he would. Father is precise and good with time.

"Eddie, my taking you to school that day was contingent upon your mother's van not starting," Father said. "The van not starting was unforeseen. Be prepared in life for unforeseen things. They can happen any time. Life brings surprises, and we must know how to handle them properly."

Looking at her watch, his mother said, "Now it is time for you to get ready for bed, young man," as if Edward were the most mischievous little imp you could imagine. She smiled though, to let him in on the joke. With that, Eddie was dismissed.

In his small bathroom Eddie brushed his teeth with his Star Wars tooth brush, and put on his Mickey Mouse pajamas. He then spent a few moments putting his dirty clothes in the hamper, and getting out a clean outfit for tomorrow, before climbing into bed. He would shower in the morning, but Eddie wanted his room tidy so he could sleep. He was uncomfortable when his room was messy.

From the bed he set the alarm clock and read quietly until 9 o'clock on the dot when his parents came to him. They tucked him in, kissed him gently, and turned off the light when they left. Like always, their reassurance remained with Eddie after they left. He fell asleep in minutes, tired from a full, structured day.

Eddie's last dream that night came, as last dreams will, in the wee hours of the morning before dawn. But this dream was different from any of the others. It felt so real. In it there were tinkling sounds, like wind chimes, and then Eddie was walking in his Mickey Mouse pajamas down an endless hallway whose open ceiling revealed a beautiful night sky with purple, tumbling clouds. Suddenly the floor began rolling, tilting, and creaking – just a little bit at first. Then the movement became more violent, like a scary rollercoaster ride, except not fun at all.

His eyelids flew open. In no time, Eddie was fully conscious, with no cushion to absorb the jarring effect of coming out of a deep sleep. The shaking and rocking became worse, and the tinkling sounds became even louder, no longer musical. His family pictures,

and movie posters, began to fall from the walls in his room. From the sound of it, objects were falling throughout the rest of the house, too. There was a sharp popping electrical sound, and the street lights went out, leaving behind a startling darkness. The shaking became so severe that whole walls went down, including the one with the big window right next to Eddie.

Then he heard a loud snap, and something hit him on the head. That was all he knew for a while.

In this new slumber he did not dream. But he again woke with a start. The sun shone deep into his room because some walls were missing, and part of the roof was gone as well. Off in the distance, Eddie heard the unanswered barking of a lone dog. He heard the keening of what he recognized as car alarms, and farther away he heard sirens. His head hurt. He felt a knot on it.

Across the street he could see destruction had visited the other houses as well. One was still smoldering, no longer in flames, having already burned to the ground. He was afraid in this new mutilated landscape.

"Mother! Father!"

He screamed it several times and then remembered one of his vocabulary words from a couple of months ago. "Hysterical." Eddie knew he was being a little hysterical now, and it felt dangerous to him. Then Eddie had an insight. It seemed to him that maybe at a

time like this it was fine – appropriate, even – to be a little hysterical, as long as he didn't lose control. His father would have called this critical thinking. Thoughts of Father and all the lessons he'd taught Eddie had a calming effect. With a clearer mind, he remembered to slow down and control his breathing, like his father had taught him. With that came a clarity that allowed him to understand that he had most likely just survived an earthquake. Only this wasn't on the news inside the TV screen. This was real. He prayed his parents had survived, too. He desperately did not want to be an orphan, and he tried to push that thought out of his mind.

He stood up and his feet felt the glass on the floor. He was lucky none of it had cut him. He saw that glass was everywhere covering the ground with a sheen of fine glittery crystals. He carefully found a pair of shoes, and put them on without socks. He managed to step over, and around, dangling, hanging, and protruding things from the nest of devastation that was his room.

Going into the hallway, he emerged to a changed architecture. Half the house was collapsed flat or sideways, and the rest was sagging. Some places in the house, like the kitchen, appeared surreally untouched amidst the devastation. Other areas were wrecked beyond recognition. He kept calling for his parents, making his way through the debris toward where he knew their bedroom should be. When he got there he noticed that his parent's bedroom was not just destroyed but somehow collapsed in the

middle. At the edge of the room he saw what must be the hand of his mother sticking out delicately from under a wall that had fallen wholesale on top of her. Her wedding ring and red painted fingernails confirmed the identification. The fingers did not move.

Then he noticed something. He noticed under the collapsed spot, was a stairway leading down partially obscured by large pieces of debris. Eddie wondered how it was that he had not known that such a stairway existed. Maybe his father was safe and sound somewhere down those stairs.

"Father!" He went to the stairs as fast as he could pushing away the debris and clearing the entrance enough that he could pass. Then he started down the stairs careful of the slippery dust, and fine glass fragments, that covered them until he got to the very bottom steps which were clear of debris. Down here the room was untouched by the chaos of the upper level. In the room the air was crisp, and cool, and he stepped under a vent feeling a strong draft coming out. The room was a sanctuary of order and durability compared to what was above. It was still pretty dark though with only some dim lighting, almost like night lights, low along the walls.

"Father!" He waited. No response. He began moving cautiously deeper into the room until he came to an alcove. In the alcove he noticed a desk with a series of video monitors, maybe a dozen, with most of them still showing some kind of picture. A few of the other

screens were all black or just static. As for the working ones, the angles were sometimes weird and some of them showed views too obscure to identify a location. Eddie did recognize his front yard in one of them, and on another screen what was left of his bedroom. Then, outside the alcove in the room, he heard a faint clacking sound coming from the back of the room. He moved toward the sound.

By this time his eyes had adjusted to the near darkness so that he could just see what appeared to be a large glass door in back at the end of the room. He moved toward the door. It was clear then that the sound was coming from behind the door. He tried the handle, but it did not move. Instead of moving there was a pop, a hiss, and on the other side of the glass an odd greenish light came on. What he saw brought horror, but also fascination.

With the garish light he could see a large revolving track mounted from the ceiling moving clockwise in a circle. That was what was making the sound. Suspended from the track, moving with it, was a row of headless bodies attached to the track with a big clear tube where the neck should have been. The tube was filled with what looked like a bubbling liquid. He counted seven of the bodies. The bodies had an odd bluish tinge to their skin that was exaggerated by the green tinted light. The bodies seemed to glow ever so slightly. The identical bodies were obviously those of a male dressed only in white boxer shorts. Then Eddie noticed there was something at the bottom near their feet.

At the feet of each headless body was a head mounted on some kind of small pedestal with the eyes shut, and with the same bluish cast to the skin. He realized the faces on the disembodied heads were identical faces of his father, each with shut eyes, and the bluish skin. All except one. One face was flesh colored with the eyes open, but unfocused, with one edge of the skull torn off exposing sharp looking shiny edges underneath with what looked like dozens of tiny tiny blinking lights and fine wire like wavy filaments where the brain should have been. Every now and then, from that gaping firmament, came faint sparks shooting out randomly. Suddenly, without warning, the vacant eyes from that one wounded face looked up, focused, and glanced at Edward with a look of glad recognition. It winked at him. With the right eye.

Eddie sensed a presence coming up from behind him out of the dark, but he fainted before he could turn around. Even as he fainted he felt something catch him, something mechanical, and take him ever so gently to the floor avoiding injury. He also felt just the tiniest of pinches in his behind, just like when he went to the doctor and received a shot.

Eddie slept yet one more time now dreaming mostly good dreams. He dreamed about his life, and things he had done with his parents. Sometimes he would start to dream about the earthquake, about his mother's still hand poking out from under the rubble, and the headless bodies and the bodiless heads, and finally the one bodiless

head that winked, ... but, then something would push it back. Then the good dreams would come floating into his mind, and Eddie would actually giggle or sigh contentedly and move as if to snuggle against something unseen. Gradually the bad dreams were pushed further, and further, back and found little purchase. Then the bad things mostly disappeared. The good dreams, the happy thoughts, took over. Shortly after the happy thoughts took control, Edward woke up. It was funny what woke him up. Frying bacon. The distinct sound and smell of frying bacon.

Edward sat up in his bed. His mouth watered. Everything was as it should be. Around him there were some signs of repairs completed, and some still underway but that was okay. They were remodeling. He seemed to remember Mother saying it was time to change some things. Father had agreed. As a matter of fact, now he distinctly remembered how they had all talked it over. He seemed to remember it better now the more he thought about it. It felt good to think this way.

He got out of bed barefoot, and for a second thought maybe he should put on shoes so he would not cut his feet on the glass, but then wherever that strange thought came from it went right back there just as quickly as it had appeared. It did not feel good to think like that. As the thought disappeared Eddie was rewarded with that now familiar soft tickling feeling that made him feel warm, safe, and even a bit giddy. Eddie actually giggled getting out of

bed, barefoot after all, moving toward the bacon, and the light coming from the kitchen.

His father was at the table with a cup of steaming hot coffee, and the newspaper. Mother was at the stove in her long apron. Mother started fixing his plate. "So my little sleepy head gets up after all! Good thing it's Saturday and you can sleep late as you want" as if Edward was the most mischievous little imp you could imagine. She smiled though, to let him in on the joke.

She brought over his plate bending down to kiss him lightly on the head before setting his food down which was two scrambled eggs, two toast triangles, and two strips of bacon. There was even a sliver of orange on the side as a garnish. Her red nails were perfect. Everything was perfect.

"Eddie?" It was his father.

From the look of his father Eddie knew what was coming. A surprise word game was coming. Every now and then his father liked to surprise him at breakfast reviewing the vocabulary word that they had learned the night before.

His father put down the paper, and picked up his coffee mug. Eddie noticed that his father's head was still bandaged covering some kind of injury. Eddie felt the tickle feeling again. Then he remembered how his father had fallen in the tub while taking a

shower, but that he was mending just nicely. Eddie was glad his father was making a full recovery.

His father looked at him and smiled. He stared over his coffee cup at Eddie. "Eddie, give me the definition of confabulation," and then he winked. With the right eye.

END

The Thief of Dreams

An original stage play by

Mike Perkins

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

PSYCHIATRIST

PATIENT

SANTA

COWBOY/COWGIRL

WITCH

FARMER

CLOWN

JANITOR

MAN IN THE RED HAT

TIME

The present.

PLACE

A psychiatrist's office that could be located anywhere. The office is in the middle of the stage, formed by two walls that meet to create an open V facing outwards and downstage at a 60-degree angle. The angle opening up to the audience. There are two identical, overstuffed, chairs against the wall. The chair for the Psychiatrist is on the right, and the chair for the Patient is on the left such that the occupants face each other, albeit at an angle. There are identical doors downstage from each chair on each side, and each side mirrors the other. The Psychiatrist has a notebook that he occasionally consults or writes in during the session.

Scene I-1: Lost Dreams

(The PSYCHIATRIST and the PATIENT are sitting in the dark talking. We seem to catch them mid-conversation.)

PSYCHIATRIST

... so you don't remember your dreams anymore...

PATIENT

(impatiently)

No, that's not it at all. I keep telling you. I used to dream, and I can remember some of my old dreams. Now I don't dream at all, and it bothers me.

(The area where the PSYCHIATRIST and the PATIENT sit starts to brighten until it is fully lit.)

PSYCHIATRIST

It's common to go through times when you don't remember your dreams. It's happened to me. A lot of things can cause that.

PATIENT

Like what?

PSYCHIATRIST

Stress or some other emotional problem, and some physical factors can interfere with remembering dreams. Even for an extended period of time. There are things you can do to help you remember your dreams, though. I could help you with that.

PATIENT

I was the picture of health when I noticed I wasn't dreaming anymore. Everything in my life was going well. Maybe it was hubris that brought this on. Maybe things were going too well.

PSYCHIATRIST

What do you mean?

PATIENT

It sounds crazy, doesn't it? Everyone else thinks I'm nuts when I talk about it, so I stopped bringing it up. I can't seem to explain what's happening. Not to you or anyone else. Everybody thinks I'm crazy. Probably you, too. Nobody believes me.

PSYCHIATRIST

I don't think you're crazy. I just think you're most likely dreaming, but you don't remember.

PATIENT

So you're going to help me remember my dreams? Remember the dreams you think I'm just forgetting?

PSYCHIATRIST

There are things you could try. There are tried-and-true techniques that help people remember their dreams. There are even medications that might help.

PATIENT

I know all about those things. I know all the tricks. Tricks like keeping a pen and paper by the bed and writing down your dreams as soon as you wake up. Some people say you should lie still when you wake up and concentrate on the dream before it fades. I've done all that. The problem is I have nothing to remember. And forget about the drugs. I'm not forgetting dreams now, because I'm not dreaming now. That's why I'm here. My dreams are gone.

PSYCHIATRIST

You said you remember your old dreams, though.

PATIENT

That's right.

PSYCHIATRIST

Let's start there. Could you tell me about one of those?

PATIENT

Yeah. I had this one recurring dream. I remember it all the time. I was just thinking about it this morning.

PSYCHIATRIST

A recurring dream? Tell me about it.

PATIENT

I'm at this New Year's party.

(The lights begin to dim up center. PATIENT gets out of his chair and walks down center where the lights are getting brighter. PSYCHIATRIST leans forward in his seat to listen.)

Scene I-2: The Recurring Dream

(SANTA, COWBOY, WITCH, FARMER, and CLOWN come out from stage left. In a merry mood they dance and cavort with one another. CLOWN

juggles, and COWBOY is brandishing a cap pistol and firing it in the air.)

FARMER

Happy New Year!

(FARMER holds up a party popper and pulls the string, releasing the confetti. The witch comes over and takes PATIENT's head in her hands)

WITCH

Happy New Year!

(WITCH kisses PATIENT and then dances off stage right with SANTA, COWBOY, FARMER, and CLOWN. JANITOR appears from stage left pushing a broom to clean up the confetti, exiting stage right.)

Scene I-3

(PATIENT goes back to his chair as the lights begin to dim down center and brighten up center)

PSYCHIATRIST

Fascinating dream. What do you make of it?

PATIENT

Who knows. Had that dream for years and could never figure it out. It certainly is a weird group of people, though. What do you think that means? All those characters?

PSYCHIATRIST

Some say everybody who appears in our dreams is actually us.

PATIENT

Us?

PSYCHIATRIST

Yes, us. Characters in our dreams represent some aspect of us, but often in a symbolic way that might not be recognized at first glance. So all the characters in your dream, such as the cowboy, and the rest of them, too, all those 'characters' are really you. At least according to that theory. Or at least some aspect of you. At any rate, dreams are filled with metaphors, allusions, and intriguing puzzles.

PATIENT

The Talmud says every dream is one sixtieth prophecy, but we don't know what part. Supposedly the lesson is that dreams can't be completely trusted.

PSYCHIATRIST

There's a long tradition of dreams predicting the future. The things that many people agree on, though, is that they're puzzling and uniquely personal. I think that is what Freud found intriguing, but he also believed that dreams were a window into the unconscious with the ability to teach us something about ourselves we might not otherwise be aware of.

PATIENT

Teach us something about ourselves. You see that is what I am trying to tell you? They're part of us. So you miss them when they're gone. My dreams are gone. I miss my dreams, and I would like to know what happened to them. Where did they go, why did they leave, and can I get them back?

PSYCHIATRIST

You miss the New Years dream too?

PATIENT

Yes. Even though it began to get creepy.

PSYCHIATRIST

Creepy? Tell me about that.

(The lights begin to dim up center. PATIENT gets out of his chair and walks down center where the lights are getting brighter. PSYCHIATRIST leans forward in his seat to listen.)

Scene I-4: The First Change

(SANTA, COWBOY, WITCH, FARMER, and CLOWN come out from stage left. In a merry mood they dance and cavort with one another. CLOWN juggles, and COWBOY is brandishing a cap pistol and firing it in the air. MAN IN THE RED HAT follows behind them, but keeping his distance. He does not join the revelry.)

FARMER

Happy New Year!

(FARMER holds up a party popper and pulls the string, releasing the confetti. WITCH comes over and takes

PATIENT's head in her hands. At that point MAN IN THE RED HAT turns around and exits stage left.)

WITCH

Happy New Year!

(WITCH kisses PATIENT and then dances off stage right with SANTA, COWBOY, FARMER, and CLOWN. JANITOR appears from stage left pushing a broom to clean up the confetti, exiting stage right.)

Scene I-5

(PATIENT goes back to his chair as the lights begin to dim down center and brighten up center.)

PATIENT

What did you think of him?

PSYCHIATRIST

The man in the red hat?

PATIENT

Yes! The man in the red hat.

PSYCHIATRIST

Hard to say without knowing more. Had you seen him before?

PATIENT

Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST

He was in other dreams?

PATIENT

Oh, yes. He just showed up one night, and seems like he got bolder after that.

PSYCHIATRIST

Bolder? Tell me about that.

(The lights begin to dim up center. PATIENT gets out of his chair and walks down center where the lights are getting brighter. PSYCHIATRIST leans forward in his seat to listen.)

Scene I-6:

(SANTA, COWBOY, WITCH, FARMER, and CLOWN come out from stage left. In a merry mood they dance and cavort with one another. CLOWN juggles, and COWBOY is brandishing a cap pistol and firing it in the air. MAN IN THE RED HAT follows closely behind them, this time as if he is clearly part of the group now.)

FARMER

Happy New Year!

(FARMER holds up a party popper and pulls the string, releasing the confetti. WITCH comes over and takes PATIENT's head in her hands.)

WITCH

Happy New Year!

(WITCH kisses PATIENT and then dances off stage right with SANTA, COWBOY, FARMER, CLOWN, and this time as they exit, MAN IN THE RED HAT goes with them.

(JANITOR appears from stage left pushing a broom to clean up the confetti, exiting stage right.)

Scene I:7

(PATIENT goes back to his chair as the lights begin to dim down center and brighten up center)

PSYCHIATRIST

Interesting. That time he came in with them.

PATIENT

Just like he was one of the gang. And left with them, too. Getting bolder like I said.

PSYCHIATRIST

How does that make you feel?

PATIENT

It makes me feel strange. Want to hear something weird?

PSYCHIATRIST

(jokingly)

That's how I make my living.

PATIENT

(laughing along)

I guess that's true.

PSYCHIATRIST

Go ahead. I do want to hear what you have to say.

PATIENT

Now that I think about it, I think that guy....

PSYCHIATRIST

You mean the man in the red hat?

PATIENT

Yeah. That guy. Now that I think about it, I think that guy has been around longer than I thought.

PSYCHIATRIST

You mean in your dreams?

PATIENT

More than just in them. It feels like maybe he was around, around somewhere, before I actually saw him. Like he was watching me from the wings, waiting for his opportunity to come in.

PSYCHIATRIST

An opportunity for what?

PATIENT

To get closer. To get closer to me. I guess I am not sure. I suppose that really sounds a little paranoid doesn't it? Maybe I am crazy.

PSYCHIATRIST

Dreams are strange things, where strange things happen. That's their nature. With a little work, though, we can make them give up at least some of their secrets. However, we don't have lots of time left today. But maybe we have time for one more dream before the session

ends. Can you tell me something more about him, the man in the red hat? Is there a dream that perhaps sticks out in your mind? We could end on that today.

PATIENT

There is one. It was particularly vivid. It's one of the last dreams I remember before my dreams stopped.

(The lights begin to dim up center and brighten down center. PSYCHIATRIST and PATIENT both lean forward in their seats to listen.)

Scene I-8

(SANTA, COWBOY, WITCH, FARMER, CLOWN, and MAN IN THE RED HAT come out from stage left. In a merry mood they dance and cavort with one another. CLOWN juggles, and the COWBOY is brandishing a cap pistol and firing it in the air. MAN IN THE RED HAT is now clearly one of them, and when they stop he stands where PATIENT once stood.)

PSYCHIATRIST

Fascinating. He took your place!

PATIENT

There's more.

FARMER

Happy New Year!

(FARMER holds up a party popper and pulls the string, releasing the confetti. WITCH comes over and takes RED MAN IN THE HAT's head in her hands.)

WITCH

Happy New Year!

(WITCH kisses MAN IN THE RED HAT, and then they all dance off stage right including MAN IN THE RED HAT, who has fully joined the revelry. JANITOR appears from stage left pushing a broom to clean up the confetti, exiting stage right. This time he's wearing a prominent black armband on his left arm.)

Scene I:9

PSYCHIATRIST and PATIENT lean back again in their chairs as the lights begin to dim down center and brighten up center.)

(Without speaking, PSYCHIATRIST and PATIENT look at each other)

PSYCHIATRIST
(breezily)

Well, that certainly gives us something to talk about next week.

(There is an uncomfortable silence when PATIENT does not reply.)

PSYCHIATRIST
(serious professional tone)

Next week I want to go back a little bit further. Perhaps explore losses. Explore early issues of abandonment, and how that has played out in your life so far. I think I saw some hints of that in your dreams. Particularly the last one.

(There is another uncomfortable silence. PATIENT gets up and the two men shake hands perfunctorily. PATIENT exits through the door stage left. PSYCHIATRIST sits down in his chair and picks up his notes. He writes some final comments and pages through what he had written earlier. After a moment there is a knock on the door stage right.)

PSYCHIATRIST

Come in.

(Lights begin to fade slowly as MAN IN THE RED HAT comes in and takes the patient chair.)

THE END

Steven Stone

DREAM MALL

Walking into the forever
of a day, sleepy chambers
of a yawn, the joy of
nothingness; is it all a
dream devoid of charm,
Time that doesn't bargain
with fools;

I drag my shoes through the door,
put down my weights,
look back one time. I can sleep,
grateful for the interruption
in consciousness. Somewhere
is a wise heart that presses my
face to the pillow, turns on
the ceiling fan, and sells me
dreams that last the night.

Someday I will cross the
threshold into the great
surreal plains, winds that
kick the evening dust into
frenzy; winds that bring
the indescribable visions
to astounded reality.

May 2013

NIGHT RIDE

Down
I rode the
midnight streets
with legs that
were horses
that turned white
with the lights
with the stones
on the sidewalks
that were slabs
of time

I tallied the
days of my pale
years, ran down
the moments as
they sailed by,
And no dawn with
its silver promise
watched me; only

a grey mass hiding
the moonlight;
Long strides took
me far, still waiting
for the moon; I wait
still, palms firmly
pressed together,
intoning.

May 2013

POEM

So much can be
ascertained
from whatever micro-
scopic key is turned.
The door inches
open, heavy and
cold, and the fist
of a screw is turned.
So much is latent in
a day's green mist,
So much memory,
so little future, the
bendable portion
of this thinking straw.
I eke it out. The nerves
obey, barely.

May 2013

Lamont Palmer

The Early Ones

You wake up in some little
Paradise, with the sun and wind
Dueling in front of mountain peaks,
And sounds of breathing in rooms,

Shot through with your own personal
Philosophy, some Proustian
Vision of tasting excesses, or
Letting simple rain cleanse your hopes.

This life: an edit room.
Rerun the ambiguities,
The deaths, the Lazarus
Comebacks, the impending

Debacles, for the sake of
Old times and retribution.
Smoke THE joint (not a joint),
The joint that houses

Jewels created from wisdom.
Hear that voice,
The Chickering piano, lost
In its own perception of music.

Early to bed; early to
Despise the earliness;
Facing what has effaced the face,
The sun lights the way; vociferous train.

Some things go unfinished.
Lauded, in that bastion
Of hot, white light, the correct moves
Are attempted; valiant attempts

Against deteriorating theme.
And what of days born of fear?
Myths, hard and baseless, melt like
Sand castles which never return.

Cutting The Losses

Haircuts brought to us a guarded closeness,
Now in tune to what strives to be last the strand touched.
As he sat, motion displaced in the muscles,
(inertia tricks the eye to see what is sad)
He trusted my hands, those nervous appendages
Moving across the hairline like eyes on stanzas.
In his world, closer than I would have thought,
Sobers at any age, when all was orchestrated
By him, the lyricism of independence.
Now me behind him, tentative barber,
Behind this dwindling customer who
Ran with iron hands, this establishment,
Submits to razors, whirring love-tools of grooming.
His naked back, a map of aging, mole-strewn towns,
With wisps of his hair, skirting the 80-plus skin,
He mutters, thanks, like I do not owe him these cuts
Before loss seals off all follicles of hope.
The strongest spark? The father of triumph ,
Heroes who you see in whole scenes, whole
And shirtless, ego-less, as they are; man and son
(nervous in paradigms held together by need)
While the reaper takes the broom and sweeps.

Broken Umbrellas

Beauty there, which rests in rain.
It is not so much a collapse in dryness but the

But the derivation of dainty drops,
The mix of aspiration for only clean days.

A museum in the distance, gas stations
Still and stolid. Yet they speak, nouns of the world.

Above failing clouds, the sun
Meets the city and lives there hot and quick,

Under which a cover has malfunctioned.
Keeping protected is the mystery,

The mystery of hands searching for
Other hands: the holiness of wayward water.

Steve Klepetar

Your Blessings

Too cold in your blessings, I lean into wind
and find a flower blooming
there, dew-soaked, lustrous as pearl.
Suddenly an angel speaks, voice trumpeting
out across the dessert of our hands.
They touch nothing, only air fluttering
in the gaps between our fingers.
We've been strung on a necklace
of straw, we dangle like teardrops of glass.
Heavy and clear, we fall through chilly air,
we are rain and rivers and mud, we grow
roots in the fibrous bodies of our hollow bones.
Who could predict this flying and these visions
nailed to our starlit eyes? Nowhere to hide,
we open ourselves to the raucous companions of night.

Winter Sleep

With the coming of
winter sleep
oceans seem
to spill into black
night and gnarled
trees
bow. Not like princes,
of course, but old
courtiers versed
in the politics of withdrawal.

When We Walked Home in the Rain

Closing time, lights blink off and we step out into wet streets, right into the mercy of headlights blurring to beauty in sleepy rain. We're so young we still

believe the trees were planted just for us. "I love the rain," you say, and it's true, your tongue out to catch those sweet drops as if this liquid falling

through a city night were clean as spring water bubbling up through sand. Truth be told, I hate walking home in this kind of downpour, feeling the cold rain penetrate

my electric yellow raincoat, the one I bought for half price and hated ever since, half blinded by the hood as we splash through puddles, soaked past our ankles.

I want to say something grumpy, befitting the young curmudgeon I am, but suddenly we're bathed in misty green light and a car whooshes past the corner and we've

fallen into a painting, we're small black figures lurching into mist and all that refracted light, green and red and foggy white, and the closed shop windows dimly lit

and sounds rushing from everywhere - syncopated rain and splashing cars and your face beaming beneath your tightly blue hood, cheeks streaked wild with rain or tears.

When I Crossed the River

There she stood, girl in the night, high-beam
smile illuminating black ribbons of road or gravel
by the shoulder bruising my feet as I tramped on,
wary of insects and trucks. When I crossed the river

it felt like a hat in my hands, a way of announcing my
inevitable return. Beneath the bridge, water burbled
and I smelled fish and reeds and muck, those instruments
of home. Somehow my jeans were ripped at the knees

and there were stains on my shirt from some hasty, half-
remembered meal, something pulled hot from a microwave,
metal spoon and drooling red sauce. Is it your cooking I've missed
or the way your voice heals those bloody tears in the fabric of air?

What the Frogs Sang

Wheels in the sky, those bodies
of light swimming in bubbling sea -

you burn my eyes to chalk. I have opened
myself to the music of your rage.

I am the storm and the battered coast,
apocalypse burning on your television screen.

Night lingers long and all the glittering
stars wind through an arduous path

to home. On the riverbank, frogs gather
to bathe their heavy throats in dew. They send

up clouds of notes, deep tangle of taut
strings plucked with fingers raw as wounded earth.

Michael McAloran

The Zero Eye

1

...in zero eye/ from out of which/ trace without trace/ ice black/ non-ask/ non-else in
absence of/ shadow/ overture of nothing/ pace here or there/ asks of absence of/ eye
disclosed/ throughout/ from out of which/ no nothing from begin until end/ ever was/
such as/ as given of un-bled/ yet bled yes lest excise of/ no not/ cannot/ and yet of/ or/
or of/ no distance until tread/ savage shock of eye/ exposed/ till tread upon/ basking in
or of/ remnants yet to taste/ no not a trace of/ no nothing of nor delivery from/ all said/
yet as if to continue if/ blind weight in symphonic of final silenced/ cast out absent light
what matter/ yes given unto bled/ allwhile in purity of/ un-gouged socket or another/
option of/ settle it/ fall unto or not/ erased/ eradicate/ yes ever-lack/ no force/ motion/
how now in jaded pyre of I/ in shed of flame that was never light/ better yes never of it/
bite down upon edge-solace of/ trade anguish for oblivion/ yet naught as ever/ final as/
less or more/ ever was/ remnants of then or nothing left to/ no/ no breaking forth/ no
never again/ let it/ decline of/ yes death of/ yet will not/ clings unto/ as if to say/ the
zero eye/ un-scattered none/ falls unto or not/ utters without pause for/ as if to say
that/ no cannot any longer/ stray from echo held between once distance/ another/ in
vibrate of it/ yet not of in-between...

...translucent/ carrion of/ given to voice/ (non-adequate)/ silence ever/ shadowed
 unlike zero/ grieving allwhile of/ non-being/ absenteeism/ remnants of once/ given to
 follow/ rejected by zero's emblem/ cold light of embalm/
 given to empty caress/ sun exting-uished/ plight-non-flight/ central/ disregard of else/
 nocturne of silhouette caress flight aband-oned by/ yet ever-claim/ settled non-settled/
 hence proliferation of/ amass of/ text non-text/ a drapery of toothed cloak upon/
 emptily/ defor-med/ subtle sharp edge of vacuum/ the zero eye will ever be/ shape
 without form/ density of rind branded by sting of inescapable/ rots through unto/ until/
 yet given to silence/ scatters breath of nocturne/ clasp of weight/ says nothing more of
 I/ clean break/ subtlety of design/ crafted in absence of voice/ here or there a nothing
 of/ claimed yet ever-fading/ yet silenced ever/ still yet/ breakage upon rock of night's
 forever distance/ motion of which feeds flame of/ yet ever to rage against/ shift unto/
 remnants in midst/ shadowed by final yes/ once absence births/ hands cold/ search
 through weight of cold/ silhouettes of/ cannot lacks cannot or cannot/ hence
 proliferation of/ sound upon distance/ and of echoing/ undoing...

3

...welt what/ stasis of light +1/ obsolete as/ in breath-reflect of chasm/ mirror/
transparent as/ caved in/ blank pace upon/ distance of which erased/ from outset/ snag
upon voiceless/ no weight no nothing/ as elect from outset/ or/ a taste of shit in vocal/
no nothing will yet/ does not/ yet spectral as/ illusory/ no no glimmer head/ no
nothing/ not a trace/ leaving aside in stench of yet/ what was/ ill-done not done/ till no/
not on/ rooted/ without division-distance/ meat of earth what earth of soil/ what of/
bone mass yet nothing clings to/ ever stun of/ refracted/ deflected/ non-embrace of/
that which/ given just a spell of/ laughter of absurd/ recoil of/ spasm clock tick onward
nowhere/ obsolete as scar/ blend of cold wind wishful/ not a trace of it/ as if/ head
down/ pushing forth into naught which gouges out/ entirety/ non-distance here or
there/ abort/ no retort/ empty prayers of entropy/ yes guess again no distance to/ trace
again/ non-voice/ effortless/ in spite of/ as if to spite/ rixt to marrow of spliced until/
sudden ash/ reek-blind of horror in/ flesh of none/ given unto lack/ where spell's
division reclaim again and/ no solace in what solace ever else/ decorative/ illusory tears
unto foreign of what matter/ what welt/ black light + 1/ absent disregard...

...tell how/ or of no matter/ cannot/ a-breathe for given sake of/ all lapse and returning to/ carry forth without any/ or other than/ steel point of the zero eye/ reflexive/ echo upon echo by design/ of/ all flexed-resolved/ in given lax of non-descript/ as was/ so shall/ it be/ collapse/ nothing tearing hyenic trace/ eradicate/ child's toys assault yet dissipate/ in meat of tears/ some breath/ final/ of final no longer asked of/ nor step by which/ purpose still-birthered/ of voice ever lacking of voice/ hence forth without motion/ yet never-step/ I still spills blood from out of illusory light so forth/ some fabricant/ a parasitic upon the plain/ here or given of outreaching/ yet in reaching for/ of what but other than lack +1/ delivery eye zero eye yet nothing of/ so-be/ reflexive/ non-light abounds illuminates/ allwhile in grip of cast/ or/ in anti-casket of/ where now word or shadow of/ all lapse and all-returning/ what splendour/ defecate upon/ rubbing shit into eye un-zeroed/ in cylinder of/ vertigo of/ spin lapse/ naught of/ in clamour of non-being else no no nothing/ a-blend with silence of/ non-weight or blessing following/ non-gratitude or so shall in/ light slashed out/ evident...

...given as/ not a/ trace ever-done/ lilt of/ shadow cast what damage of/ claimed as if/
speech dead what of/ erasure teeth/ measured/ locked bone against/ ever-sense what/
no nothing ever/ translucent walls/ encase of/ writhe/ eyes bared/ no no zero eye/ cold
distance ever/ devoured by scream/ shadow of/ senselessly adroit in face of/ unseen/
mark upon mark what mark/ seeks not to/ as if ever did/ settled to fall unspoken ever/
voice elected to/ stun cleft of/ given to/ blank distance ever of/ zero eye/ from which it
cannot other than/ no not a trace of blind/ no not of the retrace/ no not of the light or
dark/ in respite of/ purity asks/ in respite of/ claim purity asks/ given as/ some cadaver
cadence/ echo echo tumour of/ all stripped of brail/ said aloft-negates/ yet noth-
ing left
what matter/ as if to silence/ context of which is of/ cast cards/ silhouettes/ non-
speech/ given that symbol exist/ so to follow on from/ night-speech is not the darkened/
origin of/ claimed as if/ given of/ in obscene of non-descript/ stun/ indifference a
settled eye/ from what abort/ lapse in or out of/ speech again/ hurtles having cut/ a
loose of this or that/ echo-stillness/ obsidian stealth/ measured/ clear/ yet no nothing
ever again/ merely an excise/ tears to render obsolete...

...naught but once/ extract of/ shadowless/ zeroed/ else of ever-yes/ in midst/ rat tooth
climate no/ reclaim of eye/ zero eye/ filtering/ ever unto none/ blind arc no depth of
which/ slash-terse/ (can/ cannot)/ walls/ walls/ truncate of sound/ butchered as if to/
night's pissoir frenzy/ mock sun paper thin/ rupture dead waste/ words sunk no
treasure in/ or/ feel blind of/ silhouette smoke/ dense/ lung hack/ from which nothing
uttered/ thinner still/ all falls unto/ yet through or/ over/ unto/ either way through/
zero of yes/ tense of devour/ lacks all yes all for lack of all/ returns to nowhere/ begun
from which/ light shock no mastery of/ no/ no not a trace/ given to expire all that
matter of/ yet all hence/ devoured/ given lack or else/ memory's stitch/ abyss clear cut
no nothing else/ (can/ cannot)/ yes or no/ trace no of/ trace yes of/ catascope/ design
what matter/ transparent light/ mimicry of voice/ scatter upon none of/ nothing there/
vortices of bled/ of bleed/ opened once more fresh wound/ click-clack/ depth what/
what of/ seen not ever/ in collapse of/ foreign as of/ given taken few/ zero eye of/ ever
violent of confront with/ returns to nowhere/ black/ black to point of/ of frenzy light/
naught but once/ absent point of..

...opens up in/ forth or no/ (acclimatised)/ not of/ flesh no answer/ desolate/ distance never to measure/ is all/ text nothing zero eye/ no not of redeem/ wall strewn with blank faces/ seals unbroken/=/ not a matter of/ question of/ given to fail/ falter/ disembowel/ black light return/ in pupil of zero/ gazes not/ unblinking/ roves not any longer/ trace light what shadow what of dark/ what of light/ pure/ emblem does not believe/ ceased yes/ there never nor of in ever was/ redeems not no answer/ as if to say that/ fleshed bone survives only until/ counterpoint takes form unto formless/ nothing more or else/ else wise/ text zero nothing eye/ no not absent until final/ yet embedded in/ mocks the blind rhythm of/ ocular fold of cloth/ sky none/ sky what/ ever only once/ or not yes or no what matter/ absent allwhile of/ trace density for/ given unto fail/ text is indifferent/ +1/ lack/ stamp- erase/ =/ forth no chance/ not of/ given to fail unfailing/ there never or in of was never/ replete with silence/ voiceless/ no not silhouette/ merely unend of echo/ dead space/ non/ non-space of/ given of/ settled dusts of approximate/ obsolete/ nullity/ of an endless scream...

...voidal as/ clear-sharp/ distance of nil/ non-zeroed eye's ever clear/ blood blind in
spurious until/ havoc negate of havoc once negated/ sentence becomes/ becomes
obsolete/ taste of velvet nothing/ not of the sun's devour it cannot/ lack all/ it is said/ in
climate present/ not known/ eyes slashed out as of in candle/ in/ rot clamour stillness/
breath-lock a burn of/ sharpened/ all of/ frenzy absent/ lock turn in apathetic/ I drifts
down gutter of/ aborted nothing/ absolute/ a turning of waste spray design in/ nothing
gathers in/ parched throat of/ spread of desolate sands/ silences/ as if was said/ life
what/ no question/ answer no answer/ dust taste/ broken glass as if/ climate of zero
what matter/ density light abandon/ lapse of eye or eye or other/ non-settled as/ till
discollect/ abandoned as of sphere/ bone useless as/ as sentence dead/ a-knock/
stillness of cadaver's emptily carouse/ unknown/ the zero eye devours dark-light waste/
suffocates abound/ mock rat air surfaces to silhouette's brim/ walls dissipate/ reform/
through which is visible macabre a carnivale/ ever it bites clean/ non-devours/ devours
without/ obsolete becomes/ +/ given unto final yet of/ null's approximate/ dead spent
no gathering of/ teeth bare to rot of some other this than/ silenced ever/ speech none/
dead out of...

...erase/ all stepped undone/ blind haste devour/ as is said/ in beckon of/ what matter/
there is/ un-speech in given unto/ spectral as/ semblant as/ rot through with empty silt/
blood white/ echo/ echo of/ +/ zero else from/ out of which ever none/ ever/ bite-
bleed/ syllabus/ vapours/ zero of/ all stripped/ cleft/ circuit of/ given unto virus of/
extract of teeth in/ (dark or light inherited/ what of)/ the zero eye collects none
ungiven/ marvels not/ answers not/ cold chill resume in/ as flayed/ given to prey upon/
text none of naught of zero else/ not for lessened or of/ rejects spinal/ ash cold as/
cadaver voice in midst of text/ fibre meat/ dead air fills blind lung of/ treads along/
throughout/ system disrupt/ (repeat)/ text none of naught of zero else/ echo/ echo/
benign as/ flesh of which slides from/ bones/ non-sense of/ climate of final/ excreta of/
stasis-ever/ not a trace yes or no what matter/ no light without shadow/ as is said/ yet
all/ zero but once/ as is said of/ +/ -/ hence fingers devoured/ erupt of bile in light of/
liquid light of danse/ black space unend/ zero black pupil of/ of what/ (question once in
text/ believed)/ no matter/ erase/ recommence where there is naught/ raging blindly/
hop-scotch...

...the zero eye fails/ cannot/ can or cannot only in/ barren vice of obsolete/ of film upon eye in glimmer tide/ of cataract projectile upon/ itches to be gone in eye of/ absurd of/ zero else of black/ no nothing of/ zero eye not feel/ unblinking black/ gallows none/ razor none/ (+o)/ skeletal as if/ no not infinite/ yes infinite/ yes or no/ etches into regardless/ silenced/ silences voice/ voice will not survive in given/ as dead goes end/ no docile razor of/ it cannot nor only of/ the zero eye cannot fail/ zero is rat in lung/ eat/ eats from out of which/ zero is rat in skull/ perambulate/ it is the disfigured/ no/ it is disregard/ -naught-/ absence-disregard...

(...text no/ this is not a/ this is not/ not this/ is/ a text not/ not this a/ this/ this is not text/ not a text/ text not this is not/ a/ this/ not a/ text no this is a/ not a text this/ this is not a/ this not a text is/ this not a/ not a this a text is not/ not/ not this/ a text/ not a/ text not this is a/ this is not a text this is not a text/ text no this is not a/ text no/ a text not this/ not a/ text not this is not a...ad infinitum).

Post Scriptum

VARIATIONS ON THE POLIS:

IV:

THE MIDDLE EAST

A Play in One Act

by

John Ladd

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CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Voting Official Number One

Voting Official Number Two

Right Sect Group of Heavily Armed Male Voters

Wrong Sect Group of Heavily Armed Male Voters

Right Sect Virgins in Paradise
Wrong Sect Virgins in Paradise
(Additional Voters and Virgins as Casting Allows)

SETTING

A polling station somewhere in a country in the Middle East. The station has been established so as to choose the "Supreme Sectarian" and the dividedly dysfunctional "Sectarian Parliament." There is a table and a chair on each side of the stage. On the tables are some pencils, ballots and a ballot box.

AT RISE

Enter from stage-left and stage-right, VOTING OFFICIAL ONE and VOTING OFFICIAL TWO. They go to their respective tables, look them over, organize them and then take a seat in the chairs behind their tables. Enter, then, from stage-left and stage-right, RIGHT SECT GROUP OF HEAVILY ARMED MALE VOTERS and WRONG SECT GROUP OF HEAVILY ARMED MALE VOTERS. At first, both groups ignore the other. Then, slowly, at first, but intensifying in a mercurial manner, they start talking and finally shouting at each other.

The shouting escalates to both groups of armed men turning their respective tables over, on their sides- for cover- and commence to begin firing upon each other.

Throughout the play an armed man from one or both sides will come out from behind his cover, shouting, screaming unintelligible utterances while at the same time firing his weapon. Invariably- always- the armed man- or armed men- are shot and fall to the floor where they ultimately die.

Upon this happening, enter from stage-left and stage-right RIGHT SECT VIRGINS IN PARADISE and WRONG SECT VIRGINS IN PARADISE who proceed to sing and dance around their fallen men.

This process is repeated until there are no armed men left. At this time, VOTING OFFICIAL ONE and VOTING OFFICIAL TWO stand up, brush themselves off, and exit at stage-left and stage-right. All of the VIRGINS IN PARADISE continue to dance and sing.

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY

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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

Submission and comments should be sent to Klaus Gerken, Chief Editor at kgerken@synapse.net

Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.