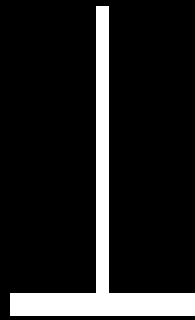
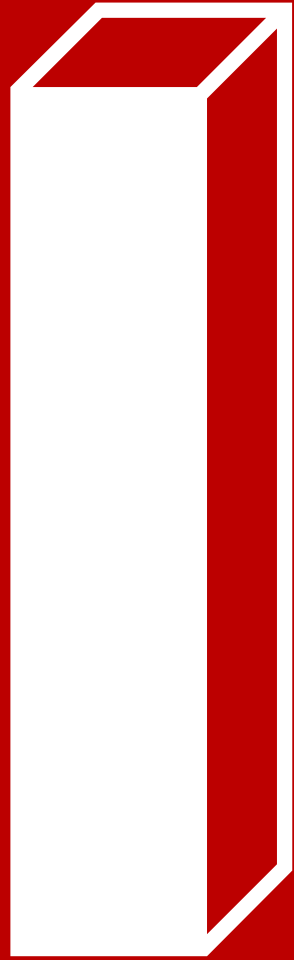
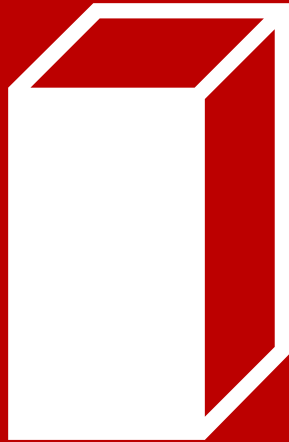
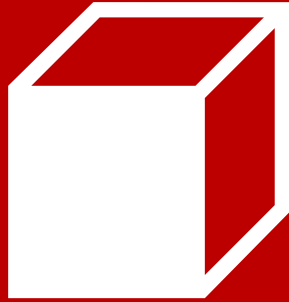
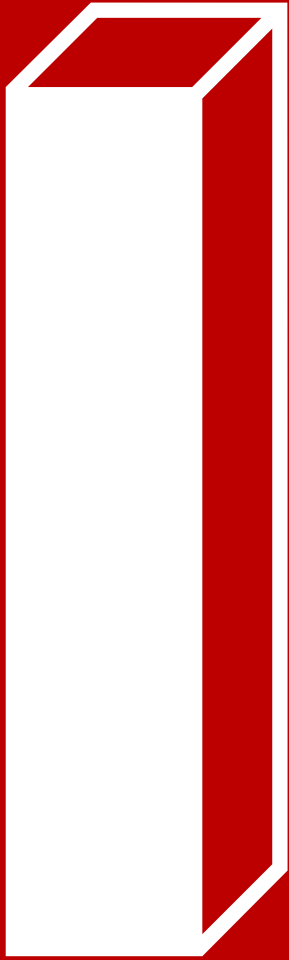


**THE
HOLY
BOOK**



**ISSUE
ONE**



The Lobster's name Is Nick

Adam

**BASED LOOSELY
ON THE HIGHLY EXAGGERATED AND
INACCURATE FACTS OF A TRUE STORY..**

Rabasca

A lot happened in 1990, starting with the indefinite closing of the Tower of Pisa. McDonald's opened in Moscow, Mandela was released from prison, the Cold War entered its twilight hours, and Leonard Bernstein died. It was also the year that Anthony Sorrentino returned what he thought was the largest lobster ever on record back to the sea, transporting it all the way from southern Connecticut to Maine. As it turns out, there had been other lobsters far larger than Anthony's adoptee. But, Nick was old. Nick was the lobster.

It was mid-September and while on his usual Sunday morning run to Del Vecchio's Market for bagels, doughnuts, and the New York Times, Anthony took an extra trip down the meat and seafood aisle at his wife's behest to exchange some chicken that didn't smell quite right. There, he met Nick and subsequently sought and interrogated the store manager. "What are you going to do with him?" Anthony asked.

The manager, a chubby, dark-haired Italian who everyone referred to as "Paulie the Manager," looked confused. He shrugged his shoulders in reply, asking, "What do you mean?"

"What do you mean, 'What do you mean?'" This has got to be the largest lobster in the world. It's a behemoth of a lobster. You can't keep it in such a tiny tank. What are you going to do with him?"

"Sir, he's a promotional lobster. We got him on loan from our sister store. He'll probably be here another few weeks."

"Is that any way for a lobster to live? Look at him. He can't even move in there!"



**forget-me-not
hollow** by Anamika Dugger

she is cunt-toothed: your ego
in a vice grip, your face
deflating flattish, its
roundnesses softened into cloud
chunks—those weird worn-down
little teeth in your mouth
and the inert turtle tongue.
black eyes bluing under shark
fin terror.



KING MIDAS

Andrew James Brown

**wiping
your arse
with
an ingot
might sound
fun,
but it's not.**

Scabby-Anne

by Brittany Connolly

May 3, 1892

Daisy, the darling that you are,

The paint here still smells fresh, so much that it makes me feel heady. Hasn't this place been operational for at least a year now? They should open some windows to air it out, but it seems that they're all pasted shut. You'd hate this stink. It's too clean.

Mother clapped me well, right on the cheek, this morning at breakfast for chewing them again, that cow. Making such a public fuss, it's tacky. Besides, I couldn't help it. Days ago, Daisy, I scraped my elbow on the banister—that pesky nail stuck far out, three inches long—I thought I'd surely catch a death from it. But it scabbed up nicely. The first day it's too fresh, though, you know... so I don't usually mess with them then. By day two, they're nice and brittle, crusted. And if you peel them back just a bit, you can see that pulpy pink skin underneath. I love the pinpricks of blood that gently bubble up, like little rubies. I left it hanging there, like a little clot pocket, until the new skin underneath wasn't as gummy and soft, like Auntie Bea's disgusting pomegranate porridge. I hope you've not had to eat too much of that while we've been away. Are you feeling any better? Anyway, I can't wait to free it. I'll write you again when more of it falls off. It reminds me of you. Made me want to wish you well.

Father was already deep in the cognac by noontime. I thought you should know that he didn't even bother to shave. He's grown a lion's mane around his chin, like Pop-Pop did after Nan passed on, and mother's chin has doubled in size.

They're still not doing well, you know. Mother told Father that he slurps his stew like a hog, and Father told her that she should go easy on the lemon cake, at which point mother began to sniff and sniff, jutting her bottom lip as she squinted her eyes and tried too desperately to cry. I hope this getaway works its magic, lest Mother throws herself off of one of the silver minarets. You should see them. I'd draw you a picture, but I'm nearly out of ink.

Love you to pieces, a thousand bantam rubies
Anne

May 5, 1892

Daisy, oh how I miss you,

I heard something awful last night, so awful, you'd just die (and then you'd come back from the dead to screech with excitement)! A few weeks ago, someone keeled over, right in the room that I'm staying in! Isn't that just grim? It was an older man; he just fell right over after having an after-dinner biscuit with margarine and marmalade jam. There's talk that it was murder. Oh, how I do love a good intrigue! Wish you were here.

May 15, 1892

Dearest Anne,

So sorry for not writing back sooner! The fever has broken and I am feeling much better. All of your letters have made me nostalgic for that thick, steely taste, but, unlike you, I'm a lot less clumsy. Haven't had a good scrape in a while. May need to change that soon. I dreamed of you last night. You were here with me and we danced, stark-naked, beneath the moonbeams like we did when we were younger and our skin, milkier and our faith, stronger. I wish we still could. When did life become so serious, so ensnaring? You chew one for me, little Anne, and I shall see you when you return. I hope this gets to you before you return home.

Eager to see you, my scabby-Anne
Daisy

DAISY HATCHET

18 MAY, 1892

MS ANNE HATCHET CAUGHT INFECTION -(STOP)- LIKELY TETANUS -(STOP)- SUFFERED EXCESSIVE SPASMS -(STOP)- DIED TUESDAY MAY 1 -(STOP)- SURPRISED BY YOUR CORRESPONDENCE -(STOP)-



illustration: CARROLL'S DODO IN A HAT by Alice Tams ●



illustration: THE DOTTING MEEMAW by Douglas Sterling ●

The Archipelago

by Catfish McDaris

Fernando reached for his
wallet to pay the \$5 he
owed me, cursing in Spanish
after I slammed in the 9
on the break

I pocketed the money &
ordered tequila, the bartender
placed a bottle of cactus juice
next to the plate of limes & salt

I gazed into the yellow nectar
wondering where the rent
would come from, I felt like
robbing a bank or armored truck

Looking down the bar, I noticed

an Asian chick with several crushed
tiny umbrellas, she was half in the bag

Taking a stool next to her, we soon
ended at her place sucking & fucking
our brains out, looking up from the
bed while she was in the bathroom

I saw a map of the world, an archipelago
of tiny colors breaking in to the ocean,
signifying land, it was amazingly beautiful

She entered the room smiling, I pulled
her back into bed & went down on her,
her skin was smooth & miraculous, she
moaned in ecstasy as my tongue played
tug of war with her clitoris

Finishing the business at hand, I got dressed
for a 9 AM dentist appointment, halfway
there I realized I forgot to brush my teeth

Smiling, I thought fuck it, the dentist would
just have to deal with all the public hair stuck
between my pearly whites, looking in my
mirror I saw a red head behind me grinning,
I thought there's never enough time.





illustration: BUKOWSKI'S BLUEBIRD IN A HAT by Alice Tams ●

CHARLESTON

Looking down the decades
A steamy vision in black and white

Gorgeous Clara Bow flappers doing the Charleston
Vamps, real beauties, slapping heels and swirling skirts
Smirking sirens flashing ankles, nylons, calves
Contemptuous show-offs, in control and taunting us

The scene ratchets, flickers, fades and falls apart
Like forbidden movies, underground

How hateful is aging
How glorious, pornography

by David Lewitzky

FOR INEZ, WHEREVER SHE MAY BE

One glorious, adulterous afternoon
a sweet hooker said to me

“It takes heart to rob a bank.”

She meant her boyfriend, brother, father –
Someone she loved.

Oh she was lovely! Kissed me sincerely!
She wrote poetry, she told me. Shy about it.

She showed me everything
But her poetry.

A brazen time it was for me.
Cash in my mouth. I dined high.

In my reflections I often wonder
if she came.

pythons

by Elizabeth Brown

He thought he knew me very well, and maybe he did. I thought I knew him well, and who knows? He was very much in love with me and resented the hell out of me, too, just a little bit, and so when I asked him during sex to please hit me, he asked, "hit you like how?" and so I told him exactly how. And he said "we'll see," which meant he would, and he did - looked at me so nice, hand on my cheek, then pulled my hair lightly, then harder; drew his cock out of me slowly then pushed back in deep as he slapped me across the face. I got delirious. I think there is never a time I like boys better than at this particular moment. I am so full of love for him and lust and every part of my body is engaged tingling powerful with how transcendental this all can be.

Everyone likes to be in love, don't they?

I liked to be in love. And this was how I did it. I wanted so badly for my lovers to swallow me up whole. When we fucked, we tried to devour each other, we tried to press so close together, kiss so deep, scratch so hard; to meld. He kisses my cheek and bites my neck, pulls my hair harder, my legs begin to shake and we cannot get deep enough deep enough deep enough...

...pythons.

After a few days, when we cannot swallow each other whole and we cannot be together, I leave. We stand in the parking garage beneath the Hotel Palomar in Rosslyn, I am smoking a cigarette, we are trying to say goodbye.

"Everything happens," he says, as we brake embrace and climb into his car.

I like that he does not say "for a reason"; there is no reason, and yet - everything happens. We drive in silence to my friends' apartment building in Alexandria, past grids and grids of neon office building windows, lit up like giant endless games of Connect 4 down the side of the highway; past the cement blocks of brutalist government buildings, the faux-colonial new-urbanist condos and all the other horrors of the northern Virginia skyline.

He told me I had perfectly shaped legs. And that, if I was good, he would take care of me forever.

Everything happens. Everything happens, and it does.



illustration: KIDS WITH GUNS by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ●

A short screenplay about bridges and creatures

Gary From Leeds

BIRD AND FISH ARE SAT ON A BRIDGE, ROUGHLY IN THE CENTRE.



"I don't trust bridges like I used to.
I mean like as I've got older, they somehow seem a less secure option"

"What does a fish need a bridge for anyway?"



BIRD DISINTERESTEDLY POKES AN EMPTY SPRAY PAINT CAN (METALLIC SILVER) OFF BRIDGE INTO RIVER. IT'S EATEN BY A DROWNED DOG.

"My, did you see that?"



"No"

SILENCE. FISH BLOWS OVER IN A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND
AND HAS TO FLAP FOR A BIT BEFORE RIGHTING ITSELF.



"Point proved, I think"

[IGNORING BIRD'S REMARK] "You know it is weird, I'm fairly sure the
standard of structural engineering may have improved over the years, too"



"What I'm saying is: why are you on a bridge in the first place, fish? And
how did you get up here?"

"You need to be on a bridge to make a valid point about bridges.
Besides, the association between fish and bridges is long established,
I can assure you"



"But how..."



"There's a fucking lift"



LONG, UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. NOTHING HAPPENS.

"Perhaps you've slowly become a more distrustful person overall and this
bridge point is simply an obvious manifestation of this?"



"Maybe you place too much faith in bridges?"



"There's no 'too much' where a bridge is concerned. These are insecure
times"

BIRD EATS FISH, AND FISH IS NO LONGER DISTRUSTFUL OF BRIDGES.
BRIDGE IMMEDIATELY FALLS DOWN. AS BIRD SUBTLY CONGRATULATES ITSELF ON A LUCKY
ESCAPE, HAWK SWOOPS DOWN FROM STAGE RIGHT AND BITES OFF THE LEFT WING OF
BIRD. IT IS PECKISH AS OPPOSED TO OUTRIGHT HUNGRY. BIRD MAKES A FRANKLY LAUGH-
ABLE ATTEMPT TO FLY AWAY. DROWNED DOG LOOKS ON



THE END

explained to me wherefore.

“Your birthday is Christmas Day, the day that Jesus was born. And you are 33 years old, which is the age Jesus was when he died.”

“How did he die?” I asked.

“He was crucified,” said the lady.

This did not sound good at all. “What’s that?” I said.

“It’s all right,” said the receptionist. “We don’t do that anymore, you’ve nothing to worry about – unless there’s something you’re not telling us, eh?”

And so it was I learned my arbitrary earthly birthday was the same as that of a man called Jesus Christ, the man who was alleged to be the son of another man (of a more ethereal nature) who was widely credited with the creation of the universe.

My name is Henry Fish and after everything that I have been through, very little surprises me but nevertheless credit where credit’s due, as they say.

“If this man’s father created the universe, then he must have created my planet as well,” I said. “And if he created my planet, why haven’t I heard of him?”

“You mean God?” said the receptionist.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I haven’t heard of him.”

“Then you’ve been living under a rock,” said the receptionist.

“It’s certainly very rocky where I’m from,” I said. “A

bit like Mars.”

“A Mars a day keeps the doctor away,” said the receptionist. “Now what is your current place of residence?”

“I am not from around here but at the moment I am staying in a house with a man called Dick and a woman called Jane.”

“Dick and Jane – are you sure?” asked the lady, raising her curious eyebrows in my direction.

“Yes, why would I not be sure?”

“Well, it’s a film isn’t it? Fun with Dick and Jane,” said the lady. “You don’t live in a film do you?”

I thought that sometimes it does feel like I live in a film but said nothing about this peculiar feeling to the lady. Instead I repeated where I lived and produced a piece of paper from Dick and Jane to show that I was sure.

“Thank you,” said the lady. “You can go through now and Dr Peabody will have a look at you.”

I walked down the corridor, past the colourful, almost life-affirming posters for cancer and heart disease and other things that routinely bring about the demise of a human being, knocked on the door and entered when I heard a voice say that I could.

“You must be ...” said the doctor; then he paused, flicked through a folder on his desk, stroking his chin. Then he took his glasses

off, put one part of them in his mouth, then back on his face and said: “Yes, of course ... but of course”.

“I’m Henry Fish,” I said. “I don’t know whether I must be or not but I am.”

“Well, someone has to be,” said the doctor, gesturing at me to sit down. The doctor looked me up and down, tapped my knee and inspected my tongue, measured my heart rate and asked me if I smoked and drank and, if so, how much. I don’t smoke and I don’t understand why anyone would. There are no smokers on my planet; indeed there are certain parts of my planet which are so hot that smoke hangs around the place all the time already so why would you want extra smoke going in and out of your body in exchange for a lot of money, which could be spent on the much neglected and under-funded space programme?

The doctor shone a light in my face and said, “Aha,” as if he had just discovered some long lost item of treasure buried deep in my eyes, scribbled a few words down that I couldn’t read, asked me to cough and stand on one leg and then told me to eat 5 pieces of fruit and/or veg every day.

“Of course tomatoes are actually a fruit but that doesn’t mean we put them in our fruit salads,” said the doctor, as he pulled one of his fingers out from my behind, which surprised me

GOD SPEED BRITAIN

by Oh standfast

Listening to Jay Z involuntarily
On the ten fifteen back from Battersea
UK kids all speak in rap see, and I twenty nine just want to eat my pasty
P. A. S. T. Y? It was reduced from two pound ten to one pound twenty five.

Morbidly obese large fries with cheese, cash-back for a donut oh go on yes please
I couldn't care less about your new style hairdo,
got a list of your friends who I would and wouldn't do.

Oh dear oh dear what do we have here..
A tiny grey island soaked in beer, with a gambling problem,
a ganging up problem, politicians not them.

Keep the receipt and you'll get it back Prime minister
New car, goldfish, bag of salt n vinegar!
Teenage pregnancy, benefit legacy, wide screen telly, baby in your belly
I can't get a job, I just eat cheerios, sit around all day and watch Disney videos.

Old people everywhere, grey hair wheelchair
Picture of Tony Blair, flowers on their calendar
Fishnets, hairnets installing the internet, right click left click really getting into it.

Snooker loopy nuts are we, we are snooker loopy.



Grain

by J. Bradley

We crawled through the mire of ten dollar Russian vodka, survived the open palms and eagerness of Eli Sunday. The shelter of my quilt couldn't withstand the morning as we distilled the Boris Yeltsin out of each other.

BIRTH OF A NARCISSIST
by John Tustin

**“It’s been four years
since my mother
left this earth.
And I’m still convinced
she was here
just to give me birth,”**



INGEST & EXPEL

The greatest evening:
a steak dinner
and I am
sitting across from you.
Salad, baked potato,
asparagus.
Later,

I come inside of you
after much gleeful effort.
Before my shower,
I take a hefty shit.
The night ends reading
a wonderful book
written by an author
I have never heard of
while you sleep
beside me,
mouth
slightly
open.

I sleep the way
I imagine God does
on his carefully
constructed clouds.

I am empty
and
I am full.

by
John Tustin

Picador

by Lauren Perez

Somewhere between my small intestine and my brain the wires got crossed. It was a particular embarrassment for my mother, whose lavish dinner parties are among the most mortifying of my memories. Hers too, I suspect. But as a boy choosing between the watery, yellowed white of a glass of milk and the pure white crispness of a porcelain figurine, leaning dreamily on the mantelpiece, it seemed obvious which was more desirable. And if the shards of glass shredding their way down my digestive tract lead to another hospital stay, it didn't make the little Marie Antoinette any less desirable.

I was put in special education classes because I needed someone to watch me at all times, to keep me from inappropriate snacking. I remember the carefully measured portions of food I was forced to eat, often under duress, which was only marginally better than being cooped up in hospital with an IV. It didn't help my poor parents that my pediatrician insisted pica was the type of

thing that generally afflicts small children and pregnant women, driven to lick the frost off the sides of the freezer. I was always a little femmy and off. I'm sure my mother suspected a hormonal imbalance of some kind; a neuro-chemical transmission that drove her otherwise obedient boy to scrape his teeth along painted china roses and obsessively chew pages from women's fashion magazines.

By the time I was fifteen the behavior had mostly abated; I was down to the occasional furtive ad torn from a magazine but food remained unappealing, oozing grease and damp smells. I grew into a short skinny man. At 27 I am beginning to go bald, and my eyes are always watery and irritated. I've been told this makes it look as if I'm constantly about to burst into tears, or as if there are too many onions in the food. I work at The Goose and Gander. It's a steak restaurant. I'm a waiter.

Occasionally I'm struck by the irony, but the tips are okay and since we generally cater to the blue hair crowd the hours don't run that late.

Joyce's hair wasn't blue, but she was edging past fifty. Her hair was a peachy, faded looking red, and very

long. She was fat, but not in the drooping, melted looking way you expect old women to get fat. She was *full*, her arms plump and stretching the skin. She looked like she was made out of sausages pinned to a beach ball. Buoyant looking. She was wearing khakis and a long sleeve tee shirt advertising a BBQ restaurant in Arkansas. It had a cartoon of a smiling pig in a chef's hat.

I'm not normally a bold type of guy, but something about her—maybe the sad spectacle of her eating a steak dinner alone at 5:00, maybe some other, secret signal—made me scribble my phone number down on the bill. I even drew a little winking smiley face, to show sincerity.

She didn't call me, but she did come back to the Goose a week later. Katie was happy to put her in my section when I asked. I think she was laughing at me, but that's nothing unusual. And that night Joyce took me back to her Winnebago. She had parked it just a few blocks away, by the cannery. The night air was rank with the smell of boiled tomatoes. The sex was less awkward than expected. I'd figured either she would smother me or I would be left wiggling around on

limits


by
Miles Klee

If suffering, a philosopher thought, is predicated upon existence—and indeed he remembered unlife as categorically painless—then its continuation relies exclusively upon survival. Homo sapiens has a choice in its survival, and the morally correct option, when it came to the reduction of suffering, was for the human race to quit. Childbirth, the philosopher concluded, was the arrival of one more receiver and source of pain to share in the increasing woe, spiteful answer to a cascade of everlasting genesis. These ideas found unlikely purchase in the philosopher's department and then university as he argued the logical holiness of euthanasia and abortion. He inveighed against the selfish sin of procreation, publishing a paper that claimed imperfection was the only heritable trait. In gathering national limelight he declared that the best we could do as organisms was vanish without a trace, for any intelligence must realize it cannot but harm what contains it. A month into his celebrity, while giving a sold-out lecture called "Life as Limitation," he was assassinated by someone who turned out to be a rather zealous disciple.



Photon Love story

by Patrick Oke



Birthed at first light when the word 'be' was spoken, we existed both everywhere and, in one singular space at the same time, I beheld you spiralling beautifully in the infinite void. You were in all forms beautiful. Suddenly, intuitively, everything in all of existence became clear: you were the one for me. It was like we were one and the same yet cleverly different. You were a wave and particle and I was the same but observation made you more singular and more consistent in your celestial form - you ebullient, dancing freely in all the cosmos, and then suddenly you vanished.

I am writing to you now on every quark, gluon and baryon, on every scale from quantum to macroscopic to find you. I have beckoned the primordial stars and looked for hidden messages in black holes beyond event horizons. I have even taken trips to the other side of the quantum veil through the white hole but you were not there.

So I came to earth; perhaps your inquisitive spirit had brought you to nestle here among organic things. I searched every atom, every hair follicle, every trace mineral but I still couldn't find you. I thought I found your energy signatures like perfume laced on citrus clouds. It seemed your face appeared in the aurora borealis.

Unfortunately those were all conjectures of my mind. It seemed futile trying to find you so I busied myself with anti-charm quarks and hydrogen atoms but the fermions negative spin was too depressing and Hydrogen was light on her feet. I needed to find you, so I hitchhiked unto a wormhole into phase space and was flown across multiple tesseract dimensions. There I met with pi neutron who carried me back in time to first light when I saw you first. I followed your path with the aid of Tom Tachyon across space-time, and there you were at entropy in beautiful decay.

Now here we are at the end of time; you, at rest, looking peaceful and resigned, slowly ebbing away into the end of all things. I have travelled across the universe to find you and now I have found rest.



by Rob Auton

The Turkey

By Robert Cantrell

I awoke this morning to an unexpected sight: just outside my bedroom window stood a large turkey, peering at me with those beady little black turkey eyes. How queer, thought I, that a fowl would find any amusement in watching an ordinary fellow like me slumber uneventfully. I wasn't sure how to break this awkward staring contest, so I waved and said, "Hello, Turkey!" It seemed offended by this. I decided any turkey that was offended by a simple greeting was not worth my acquaintance, so I scoffed and left my bedroom.

I quickly moved my thoughts to other subjects and walked to the refrigerator for the purpose of procuring some orange juice when I felt a sudden supernatural tingle along my spine. I spun round to see who was watching, and, by Saint George, it was that infernal poultry again! That same ungrateful bird was watching me make breakfast from the window above my sink. There was an inscrutable malice in his eyes... this turkey had a sick fascination with me. Was he planning to peck out my eyeballs? Baste me for Thanksgiving so his sick little turkey family could laugh at the irony and devour my crouton-stuffed appendix? Perhaps he even planned to loosen the stitches in the back of my trousers so my pants would split embarrassingly the next time I bent over in the presence of an attractive female?! I couldn't continue thinking on it; it was all too horrifying. I had to get my head out and get some fresh, turkeyless air in my lungs. I had to go see my love, Margaret.

I ran down the sidewalk as fast as I could to my shiny red Mustang, hurriedly unlocked it, jumped inside and locked it back before the turkey could catch up to me. I checked my mirrors... no sign of any fowl play yet, so I breathed a sigh of relief as I barreled away.

My tensions were quickly melted by the g-force of my powerhouse of a vehicle as I merged onto the main road. The light turned red, so I, being a fine citizen, did my patriotic duty and stopped as fast as I possibly could to demonstrate to the drivers behind me how wonderful my brakes were. They were so overtaken by jealousy that they slammed on their brakes mimicking me and rear-ended one another. To quote Edgar Allen Poe's famous Romantic-era drama *Moby Dick*, "Lord, what fools these drivers be!" On second thought, they probably didn't have cars in the eighteen hundreds, or in the ocean, so I'm not really sure why he said that... whalers are a peculiar bunch.

I was suddenly jarred from my literary daydreaming by a honk to my right, so I turned to see who had dared challenge me at drag racing. The tinted window rolled down and I could not believe my eyes—that blasted bird was driving the Corvette beside me!

"Please, do something for me," I whispered seductively.

"Shall I remove my trousers?"

"No," I replied. "Please, put on your glasses. You know how a bespectacled beauty kills me."

"Very well," she smirked, removing her contacts, placing their case beside the sofa, and then reaching into her pocket for her glasses. As she fixed them atop her nose, I observed a horrifying sight. In the reflection I could see that Satanic winged beast, sitting behind us on the couch with a video camera in his beak.

"We must stop," I whispered.

"Whyever so? I love you, and you love me."

"No, my dearest, you don't understand. That turkey is behind us, that stalkerish, voyeuristic turkey. He is watching us with his beady little turkey eyes, waiting to film us making love with his wicked little poultry Panasonic."

"You really have lost it," she said, removing her glasses and pushing me away in disgust.

"No, it's true! See for yourself! He is right behind us!"

"I can't see a bloody thing, because you made me take my contacts out!"

"Then put your glasses back on!"

"You would like that, wouldn't you, you psychotic pervert!? Thinking of a wildfowl the whole time you're in my arms... you should be locked away from society!" She grabbed her phone from her pocket and dialed the local police department.

"Yes, hello? There's a madman in my house who fancies intimacy with turkeys. Yes, do take him away, please, the poor fellow needs help." Never a patient individual, Margaret proceeded to punch me in the face, for good measure. Her arm was strong for a beautiful young woman, and my jaw was weak for a strapping young man, so I immediately lost consciousness and slumped unceremoniously on her sofa.

When I awoke *this* time I was straight-jacketed in the hospital bed of a sterile white cell. I turned to my left and couldn't believe it—there before me was the most beautiful, angelic woman of a nurse I had ever seen, curvaceous and blonde with enthralling black eyes. Seeing as I was suddenly single, I switched on my seductive smile and said, "Either I'm in heaven, or they're missing an angel."

"Oh, you poor dear," she said in her sexy southern accent. "You've been through oh so much! You're in the London Asylum, sugarcube. You told your lady you've been seeing a turkey everywhere you turn, and she didn't believe you, so she called for us. Don't worry though, honey, we'll be done with you in no time."

"You believe me, don't you?" I pleaded.

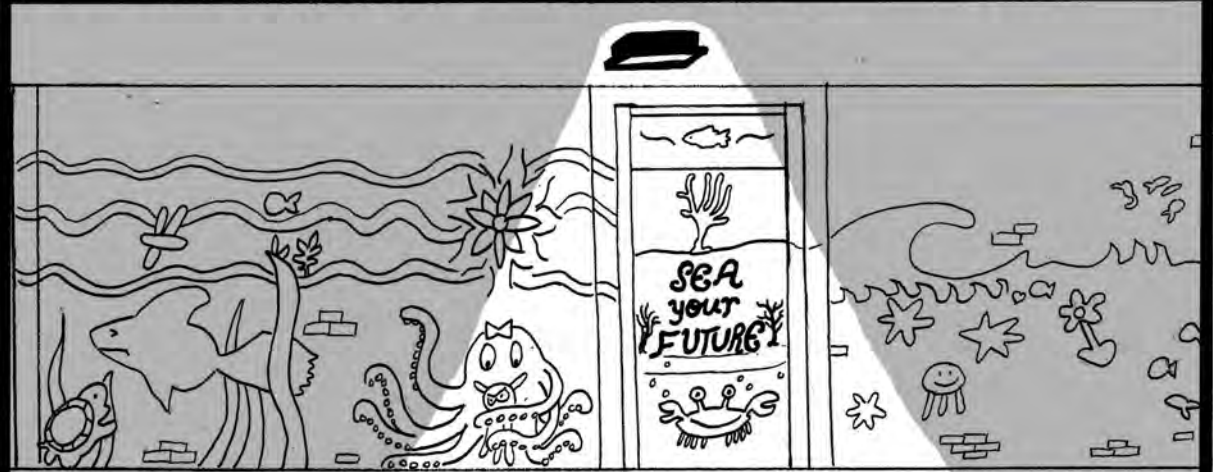
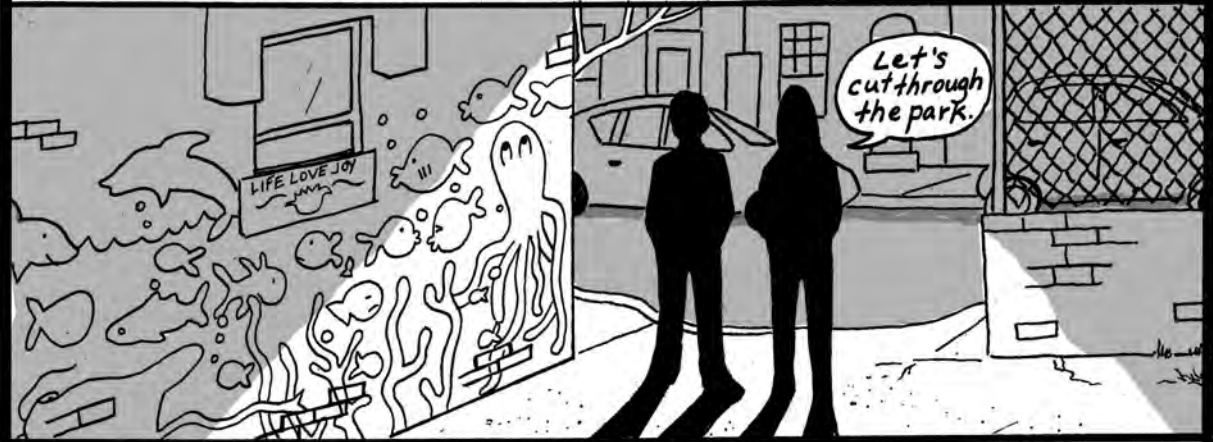
"Of course I believe you," she said. "I even know the reason the turkey is after you."

"And that is?" I asked.

Her eyes rolled back in their sockets and her head split in two, steam emerging as the hollow metal shells fell to the floor with a clunk. From the neck socket emerged a familiar feathered neck and head. I lay powerless as those beady little eyes edged closer and stared into my soul, devouring it from the inside out. Its beak opened as it explained my fatal error.

"I'm not a bloody turkey," it snapped in a deep cockney accent. "I'm a peacock."

FISH TOWN MURAL

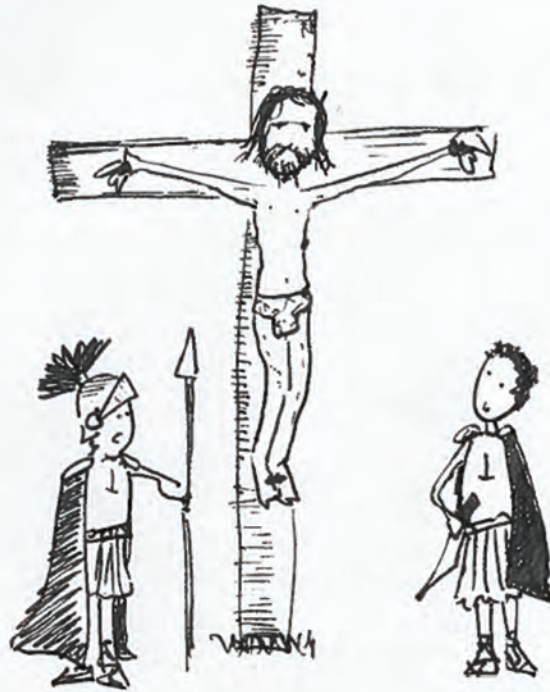


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illustration: FISHTOWN MURAL by Beth Heinly ●



- What did this bloke do wrong?
- He did a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed
- Oh, ironic...

illustration: by Zeus Ricochet ●

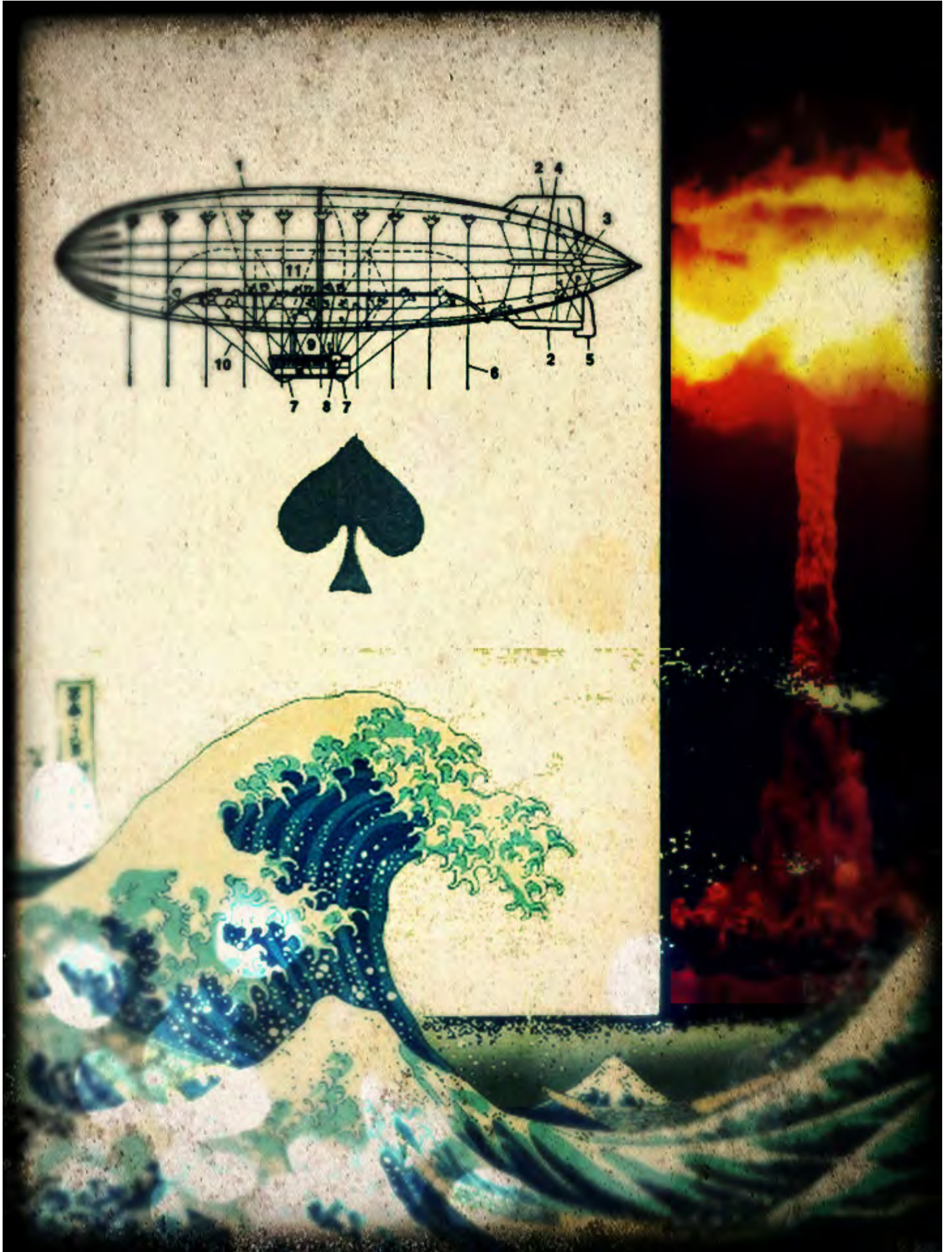


illustration: DIRG by Christopher Leibow ●



“Hello?”

“Hey Jessica, it’s Jerry. Just heard back from Z-Mart, they’re offering five.”

“Whoa, whoa, wait a second! They’re only offering five thousand?”

“Yes, Jessica, I’d say that’s quite fair. This is a pretty tough market.”

“But I’m a celebrity.”

“Correction. You’re a celebrity on a hiatus.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean? You’re my agent here, remember?”

“It means...your last film, which, I don’t need to remind you, didn’t do so well at the box office, was almost a year ago. Which means...”

“This is so lame. What about DVD sales, huh?”

“Which means, with no upcoming films, you haven’t been on a magazine cover in months. So, given your lack of visibility, five thousand is more than reasonable. Sorry, I know that sounds harsh, but it’s the reality here.”

“What’s the other Jessica getting? Huh? Unless I missed something, I don’t remember seeing her up on the stage at the Emmys.”

“I’m not at liberty to say what Jessica’s getting. You know, that whole agent/client privilege thing? Besides, it’s none of your business. If you don’t want this, I could always offer it to Kelly.”

“Five thousand is an insult.”

“Jesus Jessica, five thousand bucks to send two tweets, 30 seconds of work.”

“Wait. Five for both? I figured it was gonna be five per.”

“C’mon. Even at two, that comes out to what, something like six hundred thousand bucks an hour? Please tell me what I’m missing here.”

“It’s the principle.”

“Riiight.”

“Hey, I’ve got four million followers. Like, four times as many as Kelly, okay? And almost twice as many as Jessica. So, my endorsement can move a lot of units, okay? And don’t forget, I’m sticking my neck out for Z-Mart, not Sachs.”

“Okay, so I can assume you’re on board.”

“Yeah, whatever. I’m in. You’d never catch me at Z-Mart, can’t stand the place. Sweatshop with crapped-on workers selling flammable clothes. But I’m not giving Kelly squat after that whole thing with Jason. The two of them on that boat in Ibiza...”

“Still with me here?”

The Kitchen Wiz

by J. Isaak

The Pacific National Exhibition lasted for two weeks every summer, wrapping up on Labour Day. Back when I was a kid, everyone went to the PNE. It was just what you did. A rite of summer. The annual fair featured rides, midway games, washed-up Canadian musicians, cotton candy and, in my opinion, the best part of the fair by far—the Marketplace Showroom, a building where they sold all the latest and greatest home gadgets guaranteed to make your life a thousand times better.

There were dozens of stands in the Marketplace Showroom all promoting new inventions and cutting edge products for the home. The Mince-O-Matic demonstrators were the best. They had to be highly skilled with excellent hand-eye coordination. They made the Mince-O-Matic - *for all your home mincing needs* - seem like the greatest invention ever, indispensable in the kitchen. Those guys had the dexterity of close-up magicians. True prestidigita-

tors. And they kept up a running commentary the whole time.

Like when the guy minced onions, he'd say, "Ladies, I'll mince this onion, but I won't mince words. You need this fucking thing to be happy. Understand?"

At least I think that's what he said.

Another amazing demonstration was the non-stick cookware. Teflon had been around for awhile but using it for something other than coating the valves and seals in pipes transporting highly reactive uranium hexafluoride was fairly new. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw an egg fried without any butter or oil. Never mind that an egg cooked like that was rubbery and inedible. Who cared? It wasn't sticking! And seeing the guy wipe burnt milk off the pan with a paper towel was truly miraculous. I'd never seen Mother cook milk before but if she ever did, and then it burned because she forgot about it while gossiping on the phone—

which is how the demonstrator guy said it would happen—it was nice to know the pot could be cleaned so easily.

But my favourite was the blender demonstration. At the blender demonstration they handed out samples of everything they made in little paper cups that held just enough to tease the taste buds and keep your mouth watering for more.

The things those blenders could do. The demonstrator guy made soup using just boiling water, some chunks of raw carrot, celery, onion and a sprig of parsley. It was so fast and easy... and delicious. I wasn't the only one who was impressed. Judging by the looks on the faces of those crowded in around me, this blender was irresistible to the average human being. The demo man had a little microphone on his shirt collar so he could be heard above the din of the busy Marketplace Showroom. He had a wry wit about him with a keen sense of the absurd.



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