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Editor's Note: Had We But World Enough, and Time

Hello and welcome to the twenty-fourth, and last, monthly issue of Jersey Devil Press. That's right, we're going quarterly from here on out.

When I started JDP, I told myself I'd give it two years. And while I enjoyed it more than I thought I would, it's also taken up a lot more time than I thought it would. Time that I – we, all three of us – have less and less of nowadays. So rather than force ourselves to finish twelve issues a year, we figured easing off a bit on the journal part would be the best thing for Jersey Devil Press. And for us. The last thing we want to do is get completely burnt out and close up shop.

That said, if anyone's interested in signing on as a reader or taking over as editor of the online journal, let us know.

But this is not a time for being maudlin. This is a time for the September issue, with vikings, llamas, and space Nazis. Oh my.

We start with, as Stephen Schwegler put it, "the saddest story I've ever read that had 'balls' in the title," also affectionally known as "Where Did My Balls Go? or, The Story of Oliver: A Canine Memoir," by Shannon Derby. Next is the writer free-for-all "Colony," by Samuel Snoek-Brown, followed by Christian A. Larsen's "Projekt Gesichtskreis," the aforementioned, and incredibly hard-hitting, story of astronauts and Nazis. After that is Rowdy Geirsson's essay on the modern-day Viking movement, "Fear and Loathing in Western Sweden." And bringing up the rear is Vincent Purita's tale of alpacas, drugs, and idiot hipsters, "We Love Lucy."

Have at it.

– Eirik Gumeny

Where Did My Balls Go? or, The Story of Oliver: A Canine Memoir

by Shannon Derby

Part One: The Beginning

I never knew my father. And my mother was a tired old bitch by the time she gave birth to me. After years of breeding, her womb was exhausted and she barely had time for me. My litter was a small one: only my brother, Newton, and myself. And yet I never knew the joys of my mother's milk. My name, back then, was Mr. Peabody – a moniker that never quite fit my persona. But I will get to that in due time. We were allowed to sleep next to our mother only one day before we were taken away to another part of the puppy farm. Even now, I suffer from separation anxiety and a deep filial attachment to my human mommies.

The farm was a large expanse of green space located in northern Pennsylvania. It is important to note, however, that the only thing grown there was puppies. We were never allowed inside the big house, but rather relegated to our dank, cold quarters in the barn. Our beds were piles of damp straw and water dripped on our noses from the leaks in the ceiling as we slept. I was born in September and so mosquitoes and horseflies were abundant on the farm and I often woke up with large welts covering my paw pads. To this day, I still have no desire to return to that awful, land-locked state.

Newton and I never fit in with the other puppies on the farm. Our mother was a poodle, but we never knew what our father was or where he came from and we felt a hereditary absence within ourselves. But none of the puppies seemed to know their fathers and I've often wondered whether or not we all perhaps shared the

same father or same few fathers. Studs whose only purpose was virility. No matter, it was made clear that Newton and I were the only two puppies on the farm without papers; that is, we were not purebred. Nobody liked us. The other puppies, the purebred Bichon Frises, or “white devils” as Newton named them, would steal our food, hide our only luxury at the farm – one Milk-bone biscuit per week – from us and run circles around us, yelling degrading taunts like “poo-poo poodle” and “half-breed bastard.” I never understood this last insult.

We were *all* bastards at that farm.

There were other puppies on the farm – a small litter of three golden retrievers – who never hurt us directly. Rather, they would watch from the sidelines as the Bichon puppies tormented us, silent, complicit.

Needless to say, Newton and I were relieved to learn that we were not only leaving the puppy farm, but leaving together.

Part Two: I Lose a Part of Myself

The drive to upstate New York was long and tiresome. Newton and I were caged in separate crates in the back of a large sports utility vehicle. I could hear Newton whimpering and vomiting in the corner of his crate – long car rides did not agree with him – and I was powerless to help him.

“Hang in there, baby brother,” I whispered to him, making sure to keep my voice low so that the driver, a teenage young man with greasy hair and spots all over his face, would not yell at us to hush. Our first vision of him quickly smote any hope of a better life in New York.

“I’m scared,” Newton whispered back to me, shifting around in his crate to avoid having to sleep in his own filth.

When we finally arrived at yet another farm, a small blond woman greeted us, yelling at what I presume to be her son for not cleaning up after Newton. We were picked up, still in our crates,

and carried to a garage behind her house. She set the crates down on a table, let us out and held us up in front of her face. "Hello Newton." "Hello, Mr. Peabody." Her voice was raspy but not without tenderness. She smelled liked aged cheese and lavender. Then she set us down on the floor in a pen – a larger space, but another cage nonetheless. There were two other puppies in the pen, miniscule terriers whose white fur reminded us of our violent past. They were sisters, huddled around their bowl of raw meat, and they left us alone. The blond woman then gave Newton and I our own bowl of raw meat and we ate ravenously, caring little for how impolite we might have seemed to our new neighbors. She left the garage, turning off the light as she walked out. And thus Newton and I were alone again (the terriers slept together in a crate on the opposite side of the pen), our bellies full of raw hamburger and our bodies and minds exhausted from the long trip. The garage was cold and the concrete floor sent shivers through my body.

The next morning, one of the terriers took tentative steps toward Newton and I and then sat down. In a hushed voice, she said, "It's going to happen to you too." We asked her what she was talking about and she snapped at us, demanding that we keep our voices down. "She'll hear you," she warned us. When we asked the terrier what her name was, she told us that it didn't matter, that no one stayed here for long. Her voice was ominous, her words cryptic, and Newton began to cry. The terrier then rolled over onto her back and showed us her lower abdomen – a long pink scar and a black tattoo of numbers and letters decorated her haunches.

"What is that?" I asked her.

"Neither my sister nor I know," she said. "The blond woman came in and took us, her first and then me, to another room where we got a shot. Then all went black. When I woke up, I was back in this pen with no memory – only these marks on my body and an empty feeling in my tummy."

I was determined to get to the bottom of this mystery. A few hours later, the blond woman came back with a clipboard and another woman.

“Those two,” she said, pointing at Newton and myself. The other woman, who was wearing blue latex gloves, walked over and picked my brother and I up. We were then carried to another building behind the house and put in yet another pen.

“What is happening to us?” Newton asked, visibly shaking.

In the room adjacent to where we were being held captive, I heard the blond woman say, “We’ll do the little one first.” Newton also heard this and began to cry. Before I could console him, the women came to our pen and took him away from me. I jumped up on top of my crate so that I could see what they were doing to Newton.

For a long time, I couldn’t talk about what I witnessed in that brightly lit room in upstate New York. But now I am here to tell you, to warn you, so that you may never go through the tragedy that was my young life.

Just like the terrier had said, they pulled out a syringe filled with a clear liquid and stuck a very long needle into Newton’s shoulder blades. He yelped when the needle penetrated his skin, but then he grew very woozy and laid down, as though to take a nap. The blond woman then took out a black, metallic object that made a buzzing sound. An electric razor! They were shaving Newton’s haunches, moving dangerously close to his penis. I was next, I kept thinking, and fought the urge to close my eyes. There were knives and scalpels and all sorts of other surgical tools arranged on a cloth next to Newton’s lifeless body. There was also another needle, though this one buzzed just like the razor, and a pot of black ink. I understood that this was for the tattoo that the terrier had shown us. Why would they want to mark us, I wondered? And couldn’t they mark us with something more aesthetically pleasing than a row of letters and numbers? I took a deep breath and fought the

urge to vomit; I was so scared. The woman in the blue gloves then made an incision right below Newton's penis and took something wet and pink out of his body. I strained my eyes so that I could figure out what was going on. And then it hit me. They had removed Newton's balls! They took Newton's balls and they were going to take mine.

Before I could devise my escape plan, the blond woman walked into the pen and picked me up. I tried to move away from her, but I was paralyzed with fear. The next thing I remember is getting pricked with the needle and then a black cloud blurring my vision.

When I woke up, my belly hurt and the skin around my tattoo was sore. I could barely stand, let alone walk or run away. I was back in the first pen with Newton. The two white terriers were gone and the one sister's words echoed inside of my head: "No one stayed here for long."

I felt empty. I am not a man, I kept repeating to myself. I am not a man. Never would I know the joys of sex. Never would I know the joys of fatherhood. To this very day, I still spend long hours licking myself, trying to undo wounds that are permanent.

Part Three: I Have Two Mommies

Newton and I spent another three weeks with the blond woman. Other puppies came and went and one day, I realized what was happening. They were getting adopted – by families with children, by couples and sometimes just by individuals who looked so full of love. So there was hope for Newton and I after all. We were not going to spend the rest of our lives in a cold garage in upstate New York, but rather were just waiting for someone to choose us. Newton was so enthralled when I told him this and every Sunday, "adoption day" as the blond woman called it, we made sure to be very well behaved and sit up very straight in the hopes that someone would pick us. We understood that without papers to

prove our canine heritage, we would have to sell ourselves on our appearances alone. We awaited every Sunday with anticipation and, when the end of the day came and we were inevitably left behind, we would strategize about how we would look even cuter to potential families the next week. I tried not to lose hope, but it was difficult to watch the other puppies come and go while Newton and I remained stagnant.

And then one adoption day I found myself at the bottom of the wheel of fortune. Newton and I were minding our own business, waiting for our daily serving of raw meat, when the blond woman came into the garage with two young men. They stood before Newton and I, making baby talk and cooing about how adorable we were, when all of a sudden one of them exclaimed, "He's just adorable. We must have him!"

I could not help but notice the singular pronoun usage and, since Newton and I were the only puppies there, began to worry. *We* are just adorable, I thought. You must have *us*! I had never been separated from my brother and could not imagine a world that breaks up families.

That was the last time I saw my brother. I miss him and not a day goes by where I don't think of him and hope that he is okay and well provided for. Perhaps finding him was always my goal in writing and publishing this memoir.

Life, though, has a way of righting itself. Ah, Fortuna – you have not forsaken me and your wheel continues to spin!

Later that very day, two young women – sisters – came to the garage late in the evening, long past adoption hours, and proclaimed that they weren't going home without Mr. Peabody. You see, the blond woman was very strict and almost always enforced the rule that all adoptions must take place by 2 p.m. on Sundays. But these women were very determined and cried that they had driven all the way from Boston, through freezing rain and fog, for the sole purpose of adopting Mr. Peabody. I could barely contain my excitement and hoped that the blond woman would let

them take me home. They were very beautiful, one had curly hair like mine and the other had pale hair like mine, and one of them smelled like dry-roasted peanuts, a scent that I will always associate with love and protection. They gave the blond woman some money and the one with curly hair picked me up and gave me a kiss. My very first kiss.

So you see, dear readers, my life has taken a turn for the better. I have two mommies that I love so much they should have named me Rex. Instead, they named me Oliver, a name most befitting to my regal and delicate nature. Yes, delicate. Gone are the days of strife. Gone are the days of sleeping on wet straw, the days of needles, the days of taunts from fluffy white dogs.

I spend my days now lounging in the sun, having my belly scratched by my mommies, playing with the man who comes over to see curly-haired Mommy, and chewing on the finest rawhide and I am happy. So happy.

SHANNON DERBY received her MFA from Emerson College in 2007 and first performed this piece at *Literary Firsts*, a Cambridge-based reading series. Her work has previously appeared in *apt: a literary journal*, *STORYGLOSSIA*, *The Molotov Cocktail* and *Anomalous Press*. She has just completed an MPhil in Irish Writing at Trinity College and is packing up her life in Dublin in preparation to return to her loved ones, both human and canine, in Boston.

Colony

by Samuel Snoek-Brown

The first one who turned up was some thick-chested guy in an open-collared shirt and khakis. He had a mustache black like the grip of a gun and an unmistakable aroma of cigarettes about him. I found him in the kitchen of the house I shared with my brother, my friend Jake, and my girlfriend. I went downstairs and there he was, sitting at our kitchen table, goddamn typewriter and everything, banging at the keys. Jake joked that he looked like Hemingway, but it wasn't a fucking joke. This guy never said a word, just sat down there all goddamn morning typing away in the kitchen as if we weren't even there. At least he made us all coffee.

Then Whitman showed up. He liked to sit in a wood deck chair and stare at the trees in the back, bleak in the late fall, the limbs creaking in the wind as gray and wiry as his beard. The Hemingway barely acknowledged him, but the Whitman sometimes sneaked a longing glance into the kitchen.

I thought someone was fucking with us, paying their buddies to put on thrift-store clothes and show up unannounced. My brother swore he knew nothing about it. I was a little annoyed because my girlfriend kept eying the Hemingway. He looked back at her infrequently, but enough.

Two days later, Gertrude Stein pushed through our front door. Squat, domineering, and, unlike the men, loud as hell. "The light in here is terrible the light is wan. The light is the light and needs to be lighter." She pointed at a Vermeer print my girlfriend had hung over the couch, this big poster of a woman at a table in the sunlight. Stein pointed like she wanted to cut the thing, her finger sharp in the air. "You call this art?" she said.

I liked her immediately, but all of us were starting to freak out.

We had a meeting in the garage, where Jake discovered

Kerouac sleeping in the back seat of his car, and we discussed what to do about all these writers. My brother looked over at Kerouac, sound asleep and smelling like fortified wine, and said, "I tried to kick some of them out, but Austen. She lit into me. It was so bad I got weak in the knees. I ain't saying shit to anyone." He ran a nervous hand through his hair. "And I am not pissing off Hemingway, man. You know what that guy is capable of?"

My girlfriend said, "I wouldn't mind seeing you fight Hemingway."

"Sell them," someone said and we all yelped there in the garage. It wasn't that we weren't used to new voices by then, it was just rare that any of them talked to us. We crept around the back of Jake's car and found Charles Dickens hunched on a milk crate, writing by candlelight on a stack of cardboard boxes.

"Sorry," he said. "Everywhere else was taken."

He didn't say much else, but we got the gist, and the other three loved the idea. So they put out ads, cleared furniture from the living room, roped off pathways like we lived in some royal manor. Come watch the authors at work, the ads said. Five dollars, and later fifteen dollars, a person. Jake moved his car out of the garage and set up tables, and sure enough, more authors came, men, women, men we'd never realized were women writing under a penname, people whose language we couldn't speak. They rented a pavilion tent and set it up in the front yard, and more authors came.

I wanted to move out, but no one would let me. I even tried to break up with my girlfriend. She said, "What the hell is the matter with you? This is why we came here. We've finally got the company of writers and you just want to fucking run away." I'm pretty sure she was sleeping with Hemingway by then.

They'd moved a bunch of the furniture into my room to clear more space for the writers and the tourists. The refrigerator was in there, the stove, both the washing machine and the dryer. A couple

of hall tables. Even the other bedroom furniture. I had three beds to wake up in each morning and I couldn't get out of any of them.

But today, I don't know why, I'd had enough. The partying and drinking and vocalized philosophizing keep me up all night. I opened the window and started throwing out bedding, quilts floating like parachutes into the lawn, pillows sliding down the canvas slope of the pavilion tent. I disassembled each bed, even my own, and threw out all the pieces, and I tossed out all the artwork then leaned the mattresses against the wall. Out in the yard, Stein was eyeing the wrecked paintings then nodding approvingly up at my window. I threw my stereo at her, then I threw my brother's television and all my girlfriend's clothes. I shoved the appliances out into the hall and all afternoon I could hear my brother explaining, "Sorry folks, detour!" But I didn't care. Fuck Hemingway.

I've cleared out everything and moved a mattress to cover the door. I had what I'd actually moved here for: an empty space, plenty of light, and a little quiet in which to write.

"Colony" was originally written for Our Band Could Be Your Lit.

SAMUEL SNOEK-BROWN is a writing teacher and a fiction author, though not always in that order. He lives with his wife in Portland, Oregon; online, he lives at snoekbrown.wordpress.com. Sam's work has appeared in Ampersand Review, Forge, Midwest Literary Magazine, Orchid, Red Fez, Red Wheelbarrow, Temenos, Tonopah, and others, and is forthcoming in Sententia.

Projekt Gesichtskreis

by Christian A. Larsen

"Jesus, Barranco, do you see this?" asked Markevitch, peering through the solar visor of his pressure suit and waving his thick gloves as if to hail the pilot.

"I'm looking at the charts right now," answered Barranco from inside the lunar module's descent stage cylinder. "What is it?"

"Whatever it is I'm looking at is not on any chart. Are we recording? Christ, how I wish we could transmit back to Houston from the far side of this rock."

"Watch your mouth!" scolded Barranco. "*She'll* hear you."

Markevitch rolled his eyes. Barranco could be *so* superstitious—and she was, referring to the moon as 'Luna' like she was a real person. Like she *could* hear them. *Damnit, Barranco*, he thought, *now you have me calling the moon a 'she.'*

"Son ... of ... a ... bitch," whispered Barranco, as if in answer. "You're rolling, Marky. Can you talk me through what you're seeing, though, just for the record?"

"Sure, sure," said Markevitch, loping lightly over the lunar surface toward the structure—a structure that had no business being there. The Russians had done the first flyover of the far side of the moon back in 1959, but *Altair IV* was the first mission ever to make a ground exploration of that hemisphere. At least, that's what everyone believed until now.

"Looks like a metal cylinder, about ten by twenty."

"What does it say there, next to that 'X'? It says something."

"It says," said Markevitch, wiping the lunar dust off the metal sheeting. He sounded it out as the dust fell away like crematory ash. "It says *Projekt Gesichtskreis*. And it's not an 'X', Barranco. It's every Jew's worst nightmare—burned into our collective

consciousness deeper than the Roman occupation. Deeper than slavery in Egypt. That, friend," he said, pointing so the camera in his helmet captured his finger in the frame. "It's the symbol of the Third Reich. A Nazi swastika."

"No shit." Barranco hadn't asked a question. "Are you going in?" That *was* a question.

"Should I?"

"You're the commander. Until we're back in radio contact—and that won't be until we go back up—you're judge, jury and executioner. You make the call and I'll back you up every step of the way. So to speak."

"Easy for you to say from *Altair IV*," said Markevitch. "I think I'd better try. We're scheduled for ascent tomorrow, and with all the cutbacks, it might be another fifty years before we're back on the moon. And we can't exactly phone home for orders. Let me try the handle."

And that answered it. The door was locked, or fused, or just plain gunked up with electrically-charged regolith that stuck to everything it touched, and he didn't dare force it without the proper equipment. There would be time. Another day and one more moon walk, in fact, before the ascent stage of the *Altair IV* mission.

He came back to the descent module, took off his pressure suit, and rewatched everything that the camera in his helmet had recorded two and a half times before Barranco put a hand on his shoulder.

"Not exactly the return of humankind to the moon that you expected, eh, Cap?"

"Got a joke for you—a Jew and a lady Dago go to the moon and what do they find?"

"An abandoned Nazi moon base."

"Abandoned?"

"Well, I suppose I can't know for sure, Marky, but except for the wackaloon white party fringe, the Nazi party kinda fizzled out

after the Second World War. Anybody in there that long would be about 150 years old, and that's a helluva lot of freeze-dried wienerschnitzel and sauerkraut, even for one person. Besides, I'm not getting anything as far as power output coming from anyone but us on the lunar surface. Looks pretty abandoned to me."

Markevitch rubbed his chin.

"What are we going to do, Marky?" asked Barranco.

"Next moon walk, I'm going in."

Markevitch carried nothing but a dual-tanked oxyacetylene welder. He was glad he didn't have the ability to talk to mission control. If anyone other than Barranco knew, cutting into a Nazi moon base would have felt a lot more like Geraldo Rivera opening Capone's vault—and he didn't even expect to find so much as an empty bottle of moonshine. The Nazis had built the base, sure, but assuming they had manned it was something else entirely.

"Are you reading me, Barranco?"

"Like a shot, Marky."

Markevitch lifted the oxy-welder and started cutting the lock mechanism. The persistent white glow from the welder swallowed up the light from his helmet, but he was glad he didn't have to switch on his camera again, because the welder took both hands—especially considering that a dropped welder could kill him in a matter of seconds if it gashed his oxygen tank, or cut open his pressure suit. The tension in his arms multiplied. Sweat crawled and rolled.

"You okay out there, Marky? The camera's shaking a little."

"Almost got it."

"Hang in there."

"Almost there."

"You don't have to do it all at once, Markevitch."

But he found that he did. The horror of the Nazi party wasn't Hitler—one man couldn't be responsible for all that depraved

carnage without a lot of help—it was everyone involved that made the monster. Markevitch's grandmother had survived Auschwitz, but was scarred, bar-coded, and orphaned by it, and now the last, untouched vestige of the Third Reich was in a Jew's hands, the same hands that held a oxyacetylene torch. If he didn't open the Projekt Gesichtskreis base all at once, he might not have the courage to walk in there later, even if he had the time.

Something inside the door mechanism clanged.

“That's it, Barranco. I think it's open.”

He set the oxy-welder down and grabbed the skipper's wheel in the center of the door and it swung slowly open without even needing a turn. Moon-dust swam like motes in the cone of light shooting out of Markevitch's helmet, and he felt a little like he was in that Titanic documentary, and one thing was sure—whatever footage and audio he laid down in the next hour or two would be part of an even bigger documentary, one that would change how people viewed World War II and the last hundred years.

“What do you see, Marky?”

“Just what it looks like from the outside—a metal tank about ten by fifteen. There's a metal desk and chair and some clipboards and things hanging on the wall. They're all in German, but I might be able to remember enough from high school and my grandmother's pidgin to make it out. Looks like they're charts and timetables, mostly. Shouldn't be too hard, really.”

And he was right, more or less. The hard part was picking them off the wall with his fat-fingered gloves. According to the paperwork, researchers at Peenemünde Army Research Center delivered the outline for Projekt Gesichtskreis to the Wehrmacht just before the outbreak of the war. It was projected to cost more than 25 million Reichsmarks, and—if Markevitch knew anything about government spending—it probably cost twice as much. The V-2 moon launches began in earnest in 1944, about the time the Allies were invading Normandy and undoubtedly became far more

important as Nazi Germany shriveled in the wake of the Allied advance.

"Barranco, you still copying this?"

"Yeah ... Keep talking."

"Want to take a stab at when the first manned mission was?"

"I'm afraid to guess."

"April 1945."

"The Battle of Berlin," said Barranco. "The end of the war in Europe. Know what the initials are on the bottom of the log?"

"A.H. — Adolf Hitler."

"What else does it say?"

"That's it," said Markevitch, but there was something tempting in his voice.

"But?"

"There's another door."

Markevitch had no trouble opening the interior door. There was no oxidization, no regolith, and no impact damage to keep it from opening like an empty jar of pickles, but what Markevitch found inside looked more like beef jerky. One was covered in tan, brown and black fur, and while the muscle tissue had deteriorated to almost nothing, the unmistakable bone structure screamed "German Shepherd," even to Barranco, who saw it through a mostly colorless and constantly tiling display.

"What is that tied around it's neck, Marky?"

"Looks like a woman's scarf." He tugged at the knot to pull it free, and the dog's head crumbled from its shoulders, its sunken eyes staring at the far corner of the room with an almost accusatory expression.

Markevitch looked at that corner bringing his light and the camera in line and found a woman with red lipstick still visible, though applied sloppily. Her close-cropped blond hair was in disarray, but smoothed down, seemingly by hurried fingers and palms rather than a brush or comb. Her eyes were closed, and, if it

weren't for her shrunken flesh, she would have looked like she was just sleeping with her hands folded neatly under the mounds of her breasts. Captain Markevitch crouched and crawled toward her.

He knew he shouldn't, but he wanted to touch her. Examine her. The dog had been strangled with one of her scarves, and Markevitch found it hard to believe that she died from natural causes. Space travel was only now becoming something that most people could handle without any kind of formal training. He wondered how rough the ride to the moon was in a Nazi V-2 with a cockpit. Probably life-threatening. But then, who killed the dog? And that's when he saw the dent in her head that her rearranged hair had at first hidden.

"Who is that?" asked Barranco.

"I think that's Eva Braun—Hitler's wife. And the dog is Blondi. The Soviets thought they found their remains with Hitler's after the Battle of Berlin, but there are a bunch of people who think they were only body doubles. I'm starting to think they're right."

"Then where's Hitler?"

"Right there," answered Markevitch. "Do you see him?"

"Yes," whispered Barranco. "Oh God, this gives me the willies."

"My grandmother told me stories about how they killed the Jews at Auschwitz. The showers were legendary. The women, the children—the Nazis would tell them they were going to be put to work according to their education and skills, but first they needed to take a shower. So they herded them into this giant, communal shower room, only the shower heads were fake and there was no water. Then they'd lock the doors and gas them. They say you could hear the screams for 15 or 20 minutes, even through the concrete walls with motorcycles revving."

"That's awful," said Barranco.

"But I think the worst way, at least how my grandmother told it, was that they would take individuals into these dark cells in the basement. They'd seal off the doors and windows and let them

suffocate. Sometimes, the Nazis would put a candle in there, make it go a little faster, but if they were feeling really cruel, they would just let you die in there in the dark, all alone. How long would that take, do you think?"

"Hours? Longer?"

"How long do you think it took for him?"

Adolf Hitler, architect of the Third Reich and one of the greatest genocides in the history of humankind, sat with his back to the wall, his chin slumped on his brown military jacket. His arms weren't laced over his belly like Braun's, but had fallen to the floor, palms upward like he had been asking God 'why?' in the decades since his entombment. A crinkled piece of paper had long ago rolled out of one of his hands and blossomed into a final missive in Hitler's fist-like handwriting. Markevitch couldn't resist. He scooped it up with both hands.

"What is that?" asked Barranco through his helmet.

Markevitch held up one finger as if to say 'hold on' and then realized she couldn't see it if he couldn't. "One sec. Let me finish reading it." His gloves were so big he had to shuffle the page in both hands to read the whole thing, and as a result, Barranco could monitor his deliberate progress from the *Altair IV*.

"Christ, are you almost done?" she asked.

"Well, it's not exactly a suicide note," said Markevitch. "He talks about how if Otto von Bismarck had gotten rid of the Jews when he created the German Empire in 1871, the idea of the Third Reich would have worked. He says his own problem was that the Jewish 'infestation,' as he called it, was too complete by the time he took power. There were too many people in his own government, he said, that were tainted with Jewish blood."

"Hey, that's kind of poetically true," said Barranco. "But not the way he meant it."

"Jews, Jews everywhere," answered Markevitch, perverting a verse of Coleridge's to fit the situation. "But I think he was a couple

of thousand years off. After the Romans destroyed the Temple and Jews scattered across Europe and the Middle East, that kind of sealed the deal that people living in the 20th century were probably *all* Jews, at least by degree, if genetics counts for anything.”

“Or eugenics—and Hitler sure thought it did,” said Barranco.

Markevitch shook the paper, refreshing his memory. “Projekt Gesichtskreis was conceived as a military base, but he admits here that he picked this place as his final redoubt instead of holing up in Fortress Bavaria when the Red Army breached the German front in January 1945. He said, and I quote: 'there are too many Jews in Bavaria to hold out hope.' He said the moon, by contrast, would be free of Jewish pollution, and at least he and his wife and dog—”

“Dog and wife?”

“Maybe. Maybe they could rest in peace.”

“An Aryan tomb. Wonderful. And there you stand, a Jewish man and a grandson of a holocaust survivor. What are you going to do?”

Markevitch let the scrap of paper in his hand flutter to the ground, and in the moon's low gravity, it took a very long time.

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Fear and Loathing in Western Sweden

by Rowdy Geirsson

Björn Svensson lurched out of his seat and collapsed on the cold metal floor, the empty flask of Viking firewater clanging hollowly beside him.

This development presented me with an awkward dilemma: attempt to awaken a drunken and potentially ill-tempered Viking, or simply leave matters to fate and just walk away? Odds were he wouldn't choke to death on his own vomit while sleeping it off, so I grabbed my tape recorder, flipped off the light switch, and started to make my way up towards the deck of his industrial fishing trawler.

But it just didn't feel right. He had welcomed me into his buoyant abode, generously kept my shot glass full of firewater throughout the evening, and thoroughly indulged my curiosity about the pivotal role that he had once played during the spasm of Nordic hostilities that has since come to be known as the Modern Viking Movement.

The Movement had kicked itself off with a bang in June of 2004 when a crew of renegade Norwegian whalers sacked the Northumbrian island of Lindisfarne. As word of their glorious victory spread throughout the Northlands, so did the number of Scandinavians who took up medieval arms and followed their example. These modern Vikings plundered numerous, unsuspecting coastal settlements over the course of the summer, temporarily plunging pockets of the North Atlantic and its constituent land masses into a technologically regressive chaos until a series of monumental defeats finally crushed the phenomenon in the early autumn of the same year.

Few outside the modern Vikings' very own inner circle even

know of their escapades, so I'd taken it upon myself to seek out those honorable men and women who had most heavily influenced the Movement and record their personal stories. As the most prominent—albeit plagiarizing—warrior-poet to go berserk in the last thousand years, Björn Svensson naturally ranked very high on my list. And now that I had finally succeeded in hunting him down and pestering him with annoying questions, I was about to show my appreciation by abandoning him on the cold, hard floor of his boat's salon.

I turned and looked at the crumpled heap of intoxicated humanity lying motionless in the dark. After a moment's further hesitation I walked back down and knelt beside the fallen skald.

His breathing was a steady gurgling noise, a snore almost, but not quite and the pale moonlight spilling in through the salon's portholes cast a silvery sheen upon his gruff face. He looked eerily at peace, his stony heart clearly warmed by the faithful companionship being provided by the always-dependable friend now circulating through his veins. Björn Svensson had never adjusted well to the mundanity of regular, everyday life in the post-modern Viking world.

Like so many others who had subsisted by going a-Viking in the summer of '04, Svensson found himself falling on hard times when the neo-medieval, battle-glory-based economy crashed in the autumn. But unlike most of his peers, he had at least forcibly acquired enough booty to be able to put up the down payment on a custom-built trawler. He had then started his own recreational fishing company and through it has managed to make a relatively resplendent living by harvesting herring and charging exorbitant fees to adventurous, well-to-do tourists who wish to temporarily forget the inhumanity of office life by pretending to untangle nets and gut fish for a living instead. Which is all good and well, but it's got to be difficult to return to the daily grind after having singlehandedly vanquished the Spear-Danes' monstrous afflictions at the instigation of the gods.

During our earlier conversation he had explained to me that Odin, in the guise of a phallic gallows, had come to him in a dream and revealed, truthfully if somewhat misleadingly, that his destiny lie not in manning the deck at the behest of a cranky captain, but rather in seeking battle glory across the whale-road.

“I believe it was a message from old One-Eyed himself,” Svensson had told me impassively between gulps from his cherished flask. “An agitated gallows making pronouncements for the repeated deployment of the sword storm on the other side of the Kattegat is unlikely to come from Sif or Idun or one of the other goddesses. But the eloquence of its words and the fact that I discovered my own penchant for skaldic verse soon thereafter suggests that Bragi may have played a role as well. And, naturally, its boner-like shape could only have meant that it was a joint effort between the two of them and Frey...hell, even Tyr could have had a hand in it for all I know!”

We laughed heartily at this little joke—because the brave god Tyr only has one hand. It’s a long and ancient story, but he basically got it bitten off by a demonic wolf during a brazen bit of drama that unveiled the true enormity of his gigantic gonads. Like Odin, Tyr has thing for battle and warfare.

Our laughter subsided and I asked, “So, sort of like a symbolic call to cleanse Denmark of its unholy terrors by re-fertilizing it with valor and poetry in a way not seen since the days of the original Vikings?”

“Yes...exactly.” He seemed pleased with my summation, which made me feel somewhat worthy in his presence. “It made for a powerful statement. The gods gave me the impetus and direction that I needed to break out of the ruts of the world and make something of myself on my own terms. I have always hated being subjected to the apathetic whims of those in positions to judge me and belittle my previous accomplishments—I’ve always harbored a particular sensitivity about my swimming abilities, but that is

another story entirely. How some of these imbeciles ever manage to make it as far in their ‘careers’ —he made the quotation gesture with both hands as he said that word— “as they have is beyond my understanding, but that is the way the spinners weave the skeins of our lives...”

But that was then and this was now and I was presently reaching my battle-untested hand out to slap his furry face. I hoped he wouldn’t bite it off; I had no desire to go through the rest of my life as an uncourageous, mortal mirror image of Tyr. I much preferred to earn the inebriated gratitude of a morose hero. I held my breath.

“Hhhkkkththwww!” He gurgled vehemently and I lost my balance, flinching like a maniac and toppling over backwards, slap pathetically undelivered.

I struggled back to an upright position and froze. I was really having doubts about what to do now. That gurgle had obliterated my confidence. Completely obliterated it. The last thing I wanted was a roused and angry Viking on my hands. And even if I did slap him, he might not wake up. Maybe I should just leave him as he was and go.

Or maybe would he appreciate being covered with a blanket? Or would that just get the blanket dirty and then cause him undue irritation upon waking? Why the hell was I even worrying about this?

I got to my feet and went up the stairs.

The illumination wasn’t much better up on deck. The town of Rönnäng’s street lights shimmered only dimly, with the moon’s faint glow casting a desolate and uninviting aura across the buildings along the harbor’s edge while the island of Tjörn spread itself out in complete darkness behind them. The whole nightscape felt foreboding and I couldn’t help but recall the troubling conversation that I had overheard earlier during the 1.5 hour-long bus ride north from Gothenburg that same day.

A local father and son had been discussing Tjörn’s prevailing

ailments and according to them, the island is not only full of gangsters, spies, and grizzly bears, but also pestilence, smoke, and—most shockingly of all—even Volvos. As I have always done my utmost to avoid talking to strangers, I didn't engage them to find out more, but as soon as I heard the word "gangsters" I found myself conjuring up unsolicited visions of segregated, socioeconomically disastrous immigrant slums such as the notorious Rosengård or even the bad parts of Gothenburg's very own (and for English-speakers, ironically-named) suburb of Angered. I spent the rest of the ride silently hoping that I wasn't heading straight into a world of abject poverty, rampant unemployment, violent crime, and religious hatred.

Thus it was with great pleasure that when we finally rolled over the bridge to Tjörn I saw that it didn't possess the appearance of a slum at all—rather than a decaying concrete jungle comprised of tenement housing and burnt-out car carcasses, it's a green oasis surrounded by rocky outcroppings and the deep blue of the sea. But looks can be deceiving. Angered is reputed to contain some scenic nature reserves of its own within its municipal boundaries, so maybe these views of Tjörn were likewise misleading. Or were my fears just the unsubstantiated byproduct of a senseless world overrun with hysterical frenzy? I wasn't sure, but I wasn't about to run the risk of getting accosted by a drug dealer, assassinated by a covert operative, or mauled by either a wild bear or a militant Islamist on my way back to the hostel. The streets were dark and the seed of fearful doubt had dug itself way too deep. The only person I knew who could set the record straight for me was passed out drunk down below.

Shit.

I went back below decks.

The Viking hadn't budged and his snoring continued unabated, intermingled with the occasional mumble. I knelt beside him once again in the shadowy darkness and resolved myself once and for

all to slap him. I exhaled slowly, calling on Thor for the courage to help see me through this predicament.

It had no effect, so I slapped him again, a little harder. Again, no effect. I tried a few more times, all to no avail. I sat there shaking my head. What to do?

But then he mumbled something: "...*jävla lilla sjöjungfrun...*"

I leaned in closer to see if he had any other pearls of wisdom to impart.

"...*den där jävla lilla sjöjungfrun...betalade med livet men jagar efter mig ännu...*"

His words suggested that he was suffering from antagonistic dreams about the Little Mermaid. His slurred voice quivered with fear even though she posed no current threat to him, which he knew better than anyone else.

"I sent her down Hel-road in the middle of the summer," Svensson had told me. "I saw her head roll in Copenhagen's waves. Well, it was more of a thud really. The waves just kind of washed over it."

"So you just chopped it off?" I was impressed.

"Yes, with my axe."

It wasn't the first time that the fairytale statue had lost her head, but it was the first time that she'd lost it to a genuine Viking. The other beheadings had typically been acts of subversive vandalism. Svensson's action was more like a public display of berserker rage.

However, thanks to the latest techniques in bronze surgical procedures, the *Lille Havfrue* was repaired and now gazes longingly out to sea once again, just as she has always done for nearly a century. But with Svensson's axe having scattered her soul into the underworld beneath the sea foam, I didn't understand how her present form could be anything other than the hollow shell of a sorrowful existence. And to be totally honest, I hadn't understood why it had been a threat in the first place.

"I felt something sinister awaken when sailing past her during

a prior voyage to Copenhagen,” Svensson had revealed between gulps of firewater. “But little did I know that meant she was going to start projecting her own spiritual damnation into my dreams. The misery of the insomnia she created was unspeakable...and there was no suitable alternative. She was the mother of all monsters and had to die...”

“Did she torment anyone else?” I was curious.

“No...only me. And believe me, I’d much rather dream of an angry boner any day than deal with the misery that she inflicted upon my spirit...she doesn’t bother me anymore, but I still worry that someday she might break loose from Ran’s prison beneath the sea and haunt me for the rest of my days...it is times like those that make me wish I had never heeded the call of the boner in the first place...and when that happens I inevitably start thinking about how the glory days are gone forever...and then I get out the firewater...”

And then shortly after making that proclamation he took his last chug and fell out of his chair and so here I was now, still staring at him in the dark because in all my own goddamned incompetence I didn’t know what the hell to do.

He wasn’t waking up in response to my meager slapping efforts, but his bunk was in the next room over. Perhaps I should just drag him over to it? Why the hell not. I was too much of a coward to leave the boat anyway. I could try to figure out what to do with myself once I was done dealing with the grossly inebriated Norseman.

I bent down, reached up under his arms, and started to drag him backwards across the room. He was a heavy guy and it almost made me feel mighty—like I was tugging a giant’s boulder across a majestic fjord to a colossal mountain rising vertically straight up out of the watery depths below, or something. The illumination provided by the moonlight spilling in through the portholes only contributed to the epic atmosphere of what was in all honesty, a

ridiculous mission.

And his beard kept brushing up against my hand, which was off-putting. I admired his beard, but I didn't really want it to be touching my skin. There were traces of firewater and spittle in it and only Odin's ravens knew what else.

We had made it about halfway there when he stirred slightly and distraughtly muttered something mostly unintelligible about the dead mermaid again.

"...död, död...sjöjungfruns blod har rinnat överallt...hon jagar i mörkret...måste bawara mig själv..."

I just about lost my grip but continued onwards. We were almost there now. I could nearly reach out and touch the bunk and its bedding of salvation. I pressed onward, Svensson dragging along the floor behind me like a useless sack of disassembled Ikea furniture.

And then we were there. Just like that, the voyage had ended and the time to scale the summit had arrived.

I propped him up against the base of the bunk, but he slid downwards against it when I let go to reposition my hold on him. I stepped over his body and turned to face him and noticed a mirror mounted on the wall above, casting our dark, absurd reflection right back at us.

I grabbed him under the arms again, and heaved upwards. His head slouched forwards as I continued to push and pull his torso up the bunk's siding. It flopped backwards again once his shoulders breached the edge of the mattress and his mouth leaked out something that sounded a little more agitated than his previous outbursts, *"...var är hon?...hon måste dö...helvete tar henne för alltid!"*

I half squatted and braced my feet to nudge the rest of his torso onto the bed. With that over, it was simply a matter of kneeling on the bed myself and dragging his lower half up to join his upper half. I caught another glimpse of our shadowy reflection in the mirror and nearly laughed. I was kneeling over his contorted body like a sadistic serial killer, the blankets were rumped into total

disarray, and his feet and ankles were still dangling over the edge.

I started to crawl backwards when he opened his bloodshot eyes, peering disconcertedly in the direction of a porthole beside my head, then blinked, focused, and looked straight at me. Several tears slid down his cheek to nestle among his blond bristles.

My heart froze, and so did my tongue, as we stared at one another for a brief moment in the dark silence.

Then, still holding my gaze, he spoke one of his infamous skaldic verses:

“The light in the window is a crack in the sky.
A stairway to darkness in the blink of an eye,
A levee of tears to learn she’ll never be coming back,
The man in the dark will bring another attack.

Your mamma told you that you’re not supposed to talk to strangers.

Look in the mirror, tell me—do you think your life’s in danger here...???

No more tears.”*

And then he passed out again. I hesitated, curious to see if he would do anything else worthy of amusement, but he didn’t, so I clambered back down off the bunk. Svensson lay in it disheveled and filthy from his disgraced retreat across the floor, but I was pleased with myself.

I still didn’t know what I was going to do with myself, but I was pleased.

*Lyrics are taken from the 1991 song “No More Tears” by Ozzy Osbourne.

When not moping about, **ROWDY GEIRSSON** endures the downward spiral of western prominence by occasionally conducting research for his McSweeney’s column, Norse History for Bostonians. Other lamentations of his have appeared at Word Riot and the now deceased Bananafish. He can be hailed online at

www.scandinavianaggression.com

We Love Lucy

by Vincent Purita

To describe John's Friday as just "shitty" would be like describing the Atlantic Ocean as wet. He had been working thirteen hour days, six days a week, for the last six months which added a general sense of irritability and instability to his mind. Fresh out of college, to pay his half of the rent, John worked at a Starbucks on Wall Street. At least he did work there until management called an employee meeting to discuss its new drink size: the centi. A 100 oz. drink option that rose from the notion that Americans can never have enough coffee, the behemoth was served in a reusable BPA free bucket, and the physical volume of the drink was 2.8 times greater than the upper maximum of what an average human stomach could hold. John's initial reaction was uncontrollable laughter for three minutes until he realized it was no joke. This prompted John to violently throw up over the sickening fact that such a drink would be approved, followed by uncontrolled rage which instigated him to flip tables over in his mentally fragile state. He was quickly restrained by the rest of the staff members and asked never to return again, which John was completely satisfied with.

John's real money was yet to be made. The majority of his work day consisted of an unpaid internship at a Merrill Lynch financial firm where he managed the sum cash flow of his clientele's collective \$9.8 million dollar accounts from one fund to another. Paired with the fact that John had a BA in finance from NYU and was working towards his MBA, he was a shoe-in for a job. At least this was what he thought until his supervisor took all his contacts and explained that he could never make it in the business without at least \$10 million in client cash flow before letting him go. John voided his stomach again, enough to fill a centi, and then sobbed in

a fetal position until security physically picked him up and threw him out of the office suite.

John walked home less than the hollow shell of a beaten man. He felt empty, and not just because he voided the contents of his stomach twice that day. His thoughts of “How will I pay the rent and for college” were only broken when he mechanically trudged down his apartment complex’s hallway and his nostrils were accosted by the ghastly smell of what could best be described as boiling cabbage too long inside a horse’s rectum. He immediately awoke from his mental funk long enough to hold his jacket against his nose to block the smell while his fingers fumbled around in his pocket like blind pilgrims searching for the object that would deliver him from the brimstone-scented hell.

With his key finally in the lock, it would have turned the full 180 degrees if not for the loud warking sound that emanated from behind his apartment door. In this moment John debated whether he wanted to see what kind of animal his roommate Parker brought home this time. The way he saw the situation, he had two choices: possibly risk lacerations, evisceration, or poisoning from some unknown creature, or he could take his chances with the fetid fear-inducing smell that wafted around the hallway corridor. John took a deep contemplative breath and immediately regretted it; however he concluded that whatever lay beyond the door, whether clawed, venomous, or fanged, it had to be better than the prior events of the day. This especially included the odor lingering around the halls.

The door opened only enough for Parker to pop his head out, taking John by surprise.

“Oh, hey John, I thought I heard you. I’m gunna need the apartment to myself for maybe an hour or so and... is that vomit?” Parker stared at John’s soiled business shirt.

“Its been a long and depressing day Parker. I just really need to come in and sleep, whether you have an animal or a girl or...” The warking sound grew louder and John raised an inquisitive

eyebrow. "What *do* you have in there?" John tried to peek into his own apartment but Parker desperately blocked off his view

"It's a girl... sort of. It's really not that bad, I swear."

Parker looked around the corners of the door, making sure that no one else was in the corridor.

"It's illegal isn't it?" John facepalmed himself and shook his head in a mixture of fatigue and disappointment. "Didn't you learn after the spider monkey?"

Parker smiled wryly and ushered John in. "That monkey was a gift for me. This is like a business venture or whatever."

John wasn't fully prepared to see what was in front of him. It stood roughly eye level with John at six feet tall and was covered in coarse red hair, or rather wool. With its small beady eyes peering into the emptiness that was John, it looked beyond daunting.

"Is that a fucking llama?!" John shouted in disbelief.

Parker motioned with his hands for quiet lest their neighbors hear them through the paper thin walls of their shitty little apartment.

"Nope, it's an alpaca. But more importantly, it's going to be a goldmine." Parker reached into a duffel bag and pulled out five thousand dollars in hundreds and tossed the stack to John. "This is your cut right there since we're sharing the space and it would be selfish or whatever not to spread the green around."

John counted the stack and then counted it again as his eyes grew wider the longer he stared at Ben Franklin's green face.

"This is more than I make in two months!"

Again Parker motioned to the walls and tried to shush his loud and disbelieving roommate.

"Something to maybe lessen the blow of what I'm about to tell you." Parker took a deep breath, put his hands squarely on John's shoulders and looked him straight in the eye. "I'm dealing drugs."

The rage and disbelief boiled over in John's face like a baking soda volcano. "Are you a fucking idiot?!" Parker shushed him again and John complied in his whispering fury. "Are you a

fucking idiot? Not only are you dealing drugs, but you used the money to buy a fucking llama.”

“OK, first of all, it’s an alpaca. Second, it *is* the drugs.” Parker stated defensively pointing a finger at John.

John looked at Parker then back at the alpaca and then back at Parker again.

“Wow, so you really are an idiot. How can an alpaca be drugs?”

“Hear me out. It’s the latest craze in Peru. You feed the alpaca wormwort like in absinthe and then the hair gets imbued and shit with hallucinogenic properties. You smoke a little, and instead of seeing the green fairy, you see the fucking green Incan Sun God who’s there to take you on an epic fuckin’ spirit journey through your imagination. If I go into Soho and sell this to some rich trust fund hipsters or whatever who are looking for a good time, I make bank in a single night.” Parker motioned to the alpaca. “This thing is like fifty pounds of hair, and an ounce sells for five hundred dollars, plus it’s totally legal. Well it’s only technically legal, but still, son. All that money was only half of the preorder sales I made from some of my hipster friends. There’s a whole market to corner here. A little word of mouth and boom, we’re the only game in town to cater to the designer drug needs of our clientele and shit. You’re like a numbers guy, John. Do the math. Ten thousand dollars a night, plus double on weekends times fifty-two weeks a year is enough for me to be almost as successful as you when you get that job at Merrill. We can do rich shit together.”

The pit of John’s stomach dropped out and he started to feel sick again. “They actually let me go at Merrill Lynch today.”

“Aww shit, man. That fuckin’ sucks. Is that like fear vomit from losing the chance at Merrill?”

“And rage vomit from Starbucks. They fired me today too.”

“Word, son? That’s fuckin’ great.” Parker said with a grin from ear to ear.

John held back anxious tears from his eyes. "How is that great?! I have no job to pay for college, the only career choice I ever wanted slipped through my fingers, I can't even pay the rent, and I'm an emotional wreck!"

"Those jobs were killing you, man. Now you can work with me on this and we can both make bank. We haven't hung out in forever and you're like good with numbers and shit. I could be the supplier or whatever and you could be the numbers guy to make sure we're like financially stable.

John *was* a numbers man by trade and did the math in his head. During an entire year they would make over \$300,000 divided by two, minus expenses and living costs. Both would be making six digit salaries and would have flexible work hours. His financial logic said "Do it" but his moral reason asked "Are you crazy?"

John eyed the giant red creature next to Parker that was chewing on a bale of wormwort solemnly.

"Is it safe to keep?"

"Lucy here?" Parker asked as he patted the creature. "She's a doll. A little loud sometimes, but on the whole, a fuckin' sweetheart."

"Lucy, huh? I guess she'll have some splainin' to do. Right?" John tried to crack a smile.

"Huh?"

"I Love Lucy."

"I love her too, man. She's going to make us rich if you just say yes to selling her hair, son."

John gave Parker a defeated look. "No, I meant like the TV show. Lucille Ball. Ricky Ricardo."

Parker gave nothing but blanks stares. "I'll Netflix it when I have the chance. But what about your answer? Can you help me sell?"

John stared hard into Lucy's eyes and then Parker's before he sighed and cracked a smile. "Why the hell not."

"This guy!" Parker motioned to John with a wide grin. "Hell

yeah, son. Go raid my closet for some skinny jeans and ironic tees while I bag this hair up. We're going to Soho it up at a hipster club."

A wave of apprehension washed over John's face.

"I don't know if I can pretend to be hipster for the night. I'm tired as fuck and emotionally drained man. I can barely care about anything tonight."

"That's good, son. You have the attitude, now all we need is the look." Parker reached into his duffle bag and threw John a wool knit sherpa hat with an emerald alpaca insignia on the side. "Put this on too, that's how people know we're selling."

After squishing his testicles into a pair of super skinny jeans and donning a vintage tee that was two sizes too small from Parker's closet, the two were on their way to Soho in Parker's 1999 Nissan Maxima. Their equipment: two duffle bags full of wool and a list of buyers who pre-ordered.

Endorphins were pumping through John's body replacing any fear and apprehension with elation and confidence. His smile said it all and more.

"So what are we doing tonight?"

Parker turned a corner and began pulling up in front of the club. "You're taking care of the pre-order list and I'm going to see about running up some impulse buyers here. You know, makin' moves."

"Have I ever heard of this place before?" John inquired as he stared at the brick wall exterior.

Parker parked in front and hand John a duffle bag of his own. "It's 'Some Place You Never Heard of Before.' Hipsters talk about it all the time."

John slung the bag over his shoulder. "Yeah, but what's the name?" His roommate pointed to a sign labeled 'Some Place You Never Heard of Before.' "Huh. Well OK then."

The two bypassed the small line outside as Parker pointed to

John's wool knit cap and gave the bouncer a friendly nod. Immediately they were in another world. The decor was vintage futuristic like something lifted from a 1950s' furniture magazine about what the year 2000 would look like. Sharp lines and angles everywhere in black and white. The DJ was playing something that John later found out was called Electro House Death Synth Step. He had never heard of it before, but everyone seemed to be enjoying it or at least looking like they didn't hate it.

The people were otherworldly as well. John had only known about the skinny jeans, vintage shirt, and black framed glasses look, which there certainly was plenty of, but this was different. Men wore blouses and shirts down to their knees, women wore 1950s' sun dresses or short skirts with long jackets.

Even the dancing was different. For most it was either looking at the ceiling and convulsing or staring at the floor and running in place like some odd Charlie Brown imitation. All were intentionally dancing off the beat. It was a scene that was beyond surreal, it was Soho surreal.

Parker ushered John to a fairly private corner away from the fray of the dance floor. "You're dealing to the pre-orders, son. They tell you their names or whatever, and you mark it off the list. You take their cash, and give them a piece of the stash. Simple right?"

"Yeah, how hard can it be to deal drugs?"

"I like that attitude! We're making bank tonight!"

With that, Parker was gone to the dance floor mingling with anyone who looked like they would be the first adopters of the new designer Soho drug. John on the other hand was just waiting around. Should he try not to look conspicuous so as not to arouse suspicion? Should he look more like a drug dealer so people would know he was holding? How does a drug dealer carry himself? All these questions flowed through his mind as it drifted deeper into space until this private bubble was broken by a voice.

"Sup, man, I'm Derrick P." The stranger went in for some handshake-high-five fusion that John was taken off guard by and

caused him to deliver a semi fist bump instead. The result of which caused Derrick to drop something from his hand that John promptly picked up from the club floor.

"You dropped this." John replied handing Derrick a wad of cash back.

Derrick's eyebrows knitted a look of confusion on his face.

"Aren't you John?"

"Yeah, that's my name."

"I'm Derrick P."

"OK." John's face gave a blank stare of utter incomprehension from lack of sleep and lack of street smarts.

Derrick tried to force a smile and a wink. "I got a tip that you have my pre-order from a dude named Parker."

"Oh... Oh! For the drugs! Sorry, it's been a long day, and this is my first drug deal. I guess I don't know the etiquette."

Derrick's face contorted in horror over how loud John blurted out 'drugs' and 'drug deal.'

"Jesus Christ. Keep that shit on the DL, man!"

"Oh, sorry. I'm used to a different sort of business. I mean how does this go down?"

Derrick face-palmed himself and took a long, hard look at the inept dealer. "You're serious? I put the money in my hand and you have the drugs in yours and then we sort of do a shake thing and everything is passed along."

John blatantly took a packet of wool out of bag in anticipation for the do-over while Derrick stared with an open jaw.

"This really is your first deal, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but I'll get it down in no time. If I can manage distributions at a Merrill Lynch, I think I can handle drug trades at a club."

Derrick went in for another handshake high five fusion and the goods were traded.

"Alright then."

This was immediately followed by Derrick turning John around and cuffing him.

“Not alright!”

The Soho stranger pushed John into the wall and pulled out a badge. “NYPD DEA office! This is a bust!” Twelve more officers popped out of every conceivable nook and cranny taking aim at John with their guns. The drug dealer’s immediate response was to fear vomit, but he could only muster a fear dry heave that caused the officers to feel pity for John and queasy at the same time. John was notified he had the right to remain silent, the right to an attorney, and that anything he said could be used against him in a court of law. Parker was nowhere to be seen in the club as they hauled John out and into the back of a police car to be interrogated down town. His bag was processed as evidence and John was taken to an interrogation room.

John, being that he was scared, tired, and a pussy, immediately broke down to undercover officer Derrick Petros. He told him and the other officers everything. About Lucy, about Parker, the hallucinogenic wool, the green Incan Sun God who’s there to take you on an epic fucking spirit journey through your imagination. Everything. Of course the police didn’t buy the story, thus the interrogation continued. Just what was he distributing at Merrill Lynch? Coke? Marijuana? Meth? Heroin? What was the average Wall Street banker’s drug of choice these days? Was it a scheme to cause financial instability in America, devalue the dollar, and cause a full blown depression due to high bankers and execs becoming junkies? Did John have any ties with the Chinese? Al Qaeda? How far up the chain did this really go?

John kept spouting out the same story, so they tried everything. Misinformation, bargaining, sleep deprivation, gifts. Good cop, bad cop, happy cop, sad cop. It was a frighteningly Seussical ordeal for John, until morning arrived. The drugs were pronounced harmless and without any hallucinogenic properties at all by a team of highly-trained lab technicians. The worst thing that could have

happened was an asthma attack when smoked, or the ability to make a cashmere sweater when anyone possessed it. John was free to go and sell as much of the wool as he wanted as long as he got a vendor's license and answered one question from Officer Derrick Petros.

"I'm not here to judge, but can you honestly live with yourself, selling wool and telling people it's drugs? I mean what did you do before this?"

"Well..." John fidgeted under the intimidating gaze that emanated from behind the officer's mirrored sunglasses. "I worked in food retail and finance before this mess."

The officer gave a long pause before he spit on the ground and gritted his teeth in disdain.

"You make me sick. Get the fuck out of here. Some scumbag friend of yours is here to pick you up. And take this God damn bag with you!" he yelled as he threw the duffle full of wool at John.

Outside the interrogation room Parker waited in a chair with his laptop out, in between a skin head thug and a hand cuffed tranny prostitute all watching the screen.

"Sup?"

John looked at his friend in disgust. "Sup? Is that really all you have to say?"

"Well, I guess I should tell you that I instant streamed 'I Love Lucy' on Netflix with Alan and Ruby over there. Chocolate factory episode is by far the best thing ever. The guy who wrote that should have gotten an Emmy or something."

John's face reddened. Total meltdown was imminent.

"I was in fucking jail last night! How can you not comprehend the severity of the situation!?"

"Chill, son, I got you a present." Parker pulled out another stack of cash totaling \$20,000 as John stared at the green mound in disbelief.

"How did you possibly make that much money?"

“Supply and demand. After you got arrested I was all like, ‘yeah, I got some of that stuff that guy was selling or whatever’ and everyone was lining up to pay double... triple... five times as much for this shit. I sold out of my entire bag in less than ten minutes and hopped on over here. So between us now, there’s fifty grand in one night.”

John rubbed the back of his neck and could feel the heat of embarrassment.

“You waited here all night?”

“Yeah, man. You’re my friend. I didn’t want you to get arrested or anything. You were having a shitty day and I thought I could share the wealth and that you would have a good time. Sorry everything got all messed up.”

“It’s OK. Sorry I yelled at you. Did you realize that the wool doesn’t have any effect on people?”

“Hell yeah I knew. Dealing will get you ten to twenty-five. I just tell people its drugs and they think they’re high as fuck and lose control for a while. It makes them feel better. It’s like when I told you that you would be a drug dealer. You were happy after a shitty day. Sometime people just need an outlet to really unwind and be happy sometimes. For some its drugs, for others it’s a job. Know what I’m sayin’?”

VINCENT PURITA is a semi-agoraphobic substitute English teacher from Northern New Jersey. He made the terrible decision to continue his education after his BA in English and now is having panic attacks that no school will hire him full time. He is often mistaken for a waiter at clubs and feels guilty because he will never be back with that Red Bull and vodka that the hot brunette ordered. He likes to write absurd fiction when he isn’t doing awkward things that make people laugh or cringe.