

TADDLE CREEK



CHRISTMAS NUMBER 2000
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TADDLE CREEK

VOL. IV

CHRISTMAS NUMBER 2000

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COVER STAR

Unknown, 1956. Photographer unknown.

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DON'T READ THIS PAGE

Or: How I learned to stop worrying and hate the editor's note.

I hate editor's notes. I hate editor's notes that try to turn the contents page of any given issue of a magazine into an enthralling eight hundred word piece of prose. I hate editor's notes that favour flagrant self-promotion over modesty. And, I hate editor's notes that desperately try to comment on a timely event of the day when the event has little or nothing to do with the magazine's subject matter. Editor's notes often exist simply to give the editor something to do.

(I should point out that the national magazine for which I work—my “day job”—is, of course, not included in this rant. It is a fine magazine with fine editor's notes. Honest.)

I have written many an editor's note for many a publication, none of which, in retrospect, I can stand to read, including the one I wrote for the first issue of this magazine. I have since sworn off writing editor's notes—especially in *Taddle Creek*—with very few exceptions. Unfortunately, since there is some news to relate regarding this magazine that is not easily gleaned from reading its other forty-seven pages and its covers, this is one of those exceptions. I apologize in advance, and will try to keep it short. (If your only concern is reading fiction—and good for you if it is—please stop reading here and move on to the next page.)

In what I will now refer to as the ill-fated editor's note of '97, I laboriously spelled out *Taddle Creek*'s mandate. That mandate has changed slightly, thus the main reason for my triumphant return to editor's-note writing. *Taddle Creek* was founded in 1997 as a showcase for writers living in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood. Living in the Annex was the only submission criteria, and the magazine published a variety of styles, reflecting the variety of writers in the neighbourhood. It was decided last year, for a number of reasons, that beginning with this issue we would change those boundaries to include all of Toronto. That said, over the past three years we have become somewhat fond of particular styles of writing, and will now limit our pages

mostly to those styles. We will not call it the “*Taddle Creek* style,” because there is not one singularly dominant style among the bunch. We will not call it a literary movement or claim to have created these styles, for that would be arrogant and unfair to our authors. In fact, we will not call it anything at all. If you must call it something, call it “non-traditional,” but we'd really prefer you to read the fiction rather than try to label it. It will simply be the fiction of Toronto, today (with possibly the occasional piece of out-of-town prose when the mood strikes us). We will also now publish this nameless fiction twice yearly, as opposed to the annual frequency we have enjoyed to this point.

The sharp-minded among you will have noticed the compact disc found in this issue, either via the sticker on the front cover (which I urge you to remove upon purchase to fully enjoy the cover art), the mention on the contents page, or the pocket on the inside back cover with the compact disc in it. It is a spoken word disc featuring three *Taddle Creek* authors we feel read as good as they write. For those who just can't wait for the next *Taddle Creek* reading, or for those who have always wanted to take Chris Chambers home with them, both are now as close as your stereo. We plan to do more such albums in the future to ensure the vocal talents of our authors are preserved along with their writing.

Finally, it was with mixed feelings that I agreed to build a *Taddle Creek* web site earlier this year. Loving print as I do, publishing stories on the web has held little interest for me. However, the fact that several hundred people visited the site and were exposed to the magazine before the site was even officially launched has made me happy. And so, the web site will stay. Its mandate may also change over the coming months, so please visit often. It can be found at www.taddlecreekmag.com.

That is all. Please move on to the next page—and pray my name never graces this space again. I know I will.

— CONAN TOBIAS



WHAT CHANGED

FICTION BY SHEILA HETI

After all, they were a man and a woman. There was no reason for them not to fall in love.

When the man fell, the woman fell, and when the woman fell, the man fell. It is hard to say now who fell first.

As they were falling, other things happened in other places, but where they were it was just he for she and she for he, and that very night they went out for pasta.

They could barely order, which irritated the waitress, but it was only because they were so much in love, and so leaning over the table, and so fondling each other's hands, and so fondling each other's arms, and so staring into each other's eyes, and so smiling dopily.

They were doped. Or. They were falling in love.

He said, "Come away with me this weekend. I must have you and only you and no one else around."

And she said, "Oh, that's a fantastic idea. Let's do it."

And so their attention shifted from each other's face and hands onto where they would go, where they would stay, how they would get there, what he had to clear up first, what she'd tell her family.

That night they kissed passionately on the front porch of her parents' house, but she went inside alone, and she thought of him when he was not there, and he thought of her when she was not there as well.

When the weekend came he picked her up in his car and they drove east down the highway, and she giggled and laughed, and he just laughed, and she squirmed in her seat and tried to touch his body, and their bags were in the back, and the sun was out, and the windows were open, and she sang songs that were playing on the radio, and she was so joyful, and he was damn happy.

They made a stop to get some lunch, and kissed each other's lips and tongues right outside the restaurant. She kept her eyes open to see who was looking, and he kept his hands on her.

Back in the car she felt sleepy, and so they stopped again to get her a coffee so she would not fall asleep, so they would not miss a moment of their weekend together.

When they arrived at the place where they were headed, she sat in the car and looked around while he got a key from the concierge, and he picked up most of the luggage, and she carried the fragile wine bottles. Together, they hiked down a path through the trees and she said to him, "Have you been here before?"

And he said, "No. My brother told me about it."

And she was happy, and he felt O.K. too, and though the lie was unnecessary, it necessarily made things better.

That night, they got drunk and did all those things, and in the morning they got up and did all those things. As he was cooking breakfast with the groceries they had brought, she called out from the bed, "I think we'll never fight. I could never see



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fighting with you."

And he called back over his shoulder, "You could never make me mad."

She wiggled gleefully into the covers, and he felt a loving rise at her high and musical voice.

In the afternoon, they went for a swim, and, swimming, he tried to pull off her bathing suit, but she coquettishly swam away, batting her arms and her legs at him. She called out, "Keep away, you madman! I'm being raped by a madman!"

And while this initially jarred him, he quickly relaxed and decided that he liked her impetuous, thoughtless ways.

In the evening, he made a fire, and everything was perfect, and had been going perfectly, and she lay back in his arms and thought, *It's picture perfect. It's just like we're in a movie.* And she said to him, "Doesn't it feel like we're in a movie? In some made-up fantasy land?"

And he said, "Mmmm," and kissed the top of her head, and it was even more like a movie, like everything she had seen and heard about love, and she was involved, and it was with him.

She said, "I wish this weekend would never end."

And when she said that, in a way, it made his arms just clutch her tighter, and her face withdrew into thinking about Monday, and the ride home, which would be worse, and he felt her thinking, and he starting thinking too.

She tried to brush it off, to cover it up, as if she hadn't said it, as if it wasn't true at all, that of course they would be at that cabin forever, and she said to him, to make it all better, "Truly, it's like a dream."

But it wasn't like a dream. Not really. And they got drunk and did all that and fell asleep, and unfortunately did wake in the morning, and she felt crummy, and he grew irritated. Because he had to pack their things and clean up everything while she lay in bed just watching him. She had said, "Just let me watch you. I just want to watch you." And he had said, "Well, you're watching me," in a joking sort of way, but he did not want to be watched. He wanted to be helped. And she flopped back into the pillows, into the covers, and she said, "I wish we could stay forever." And she said, "You take the first shower. I can't get up."

So he did.

And while she was in the shower, he opened the door and stood there watching her, but she cried out, "Get out!" And though she was joking, sort of, she really

did need her privacy in the mornings, especially in the bathroom. And so he left to pack the car.

"One last swim?" he asked when she got out, and was drying her hair with a towel. And she said, "No, the water will be too cold."

She said, "I'll make you breakfast. Sit down."

And she made them cereal with bananas cut into it, and she apologized, laughingly, saying, "I don't know how to cook." Yesterday he had made her gourmet omelettes with salad and juice, and he had squeezed the oranges with his own bare hands. But she just opened the box and poured in the milk. But the bananas were a nice, gourmet touch.

He said, "It's one o'clock." And she said, "I never want to leave." They took one last long look at the cabin, so as never to forget it, and they walked out to the car, him leading the way.

The ride home took five hours, and she lay back in her seat and looked out the window, and the sky was dark and grey, and he was tired, and he kept his eyes on the road, and they talked little, and when they did, it was only to reminisce about Saturday.

As they were driving into the city, she said mournfully, "I hate this city. I hate my job. And I don't want to go back to my parents."

And he said, "I have a damn early morning meeting tomorrow and I have so much work to catch up on." And he said, "We shouldn't have gone."

But he didn't mean it that way.

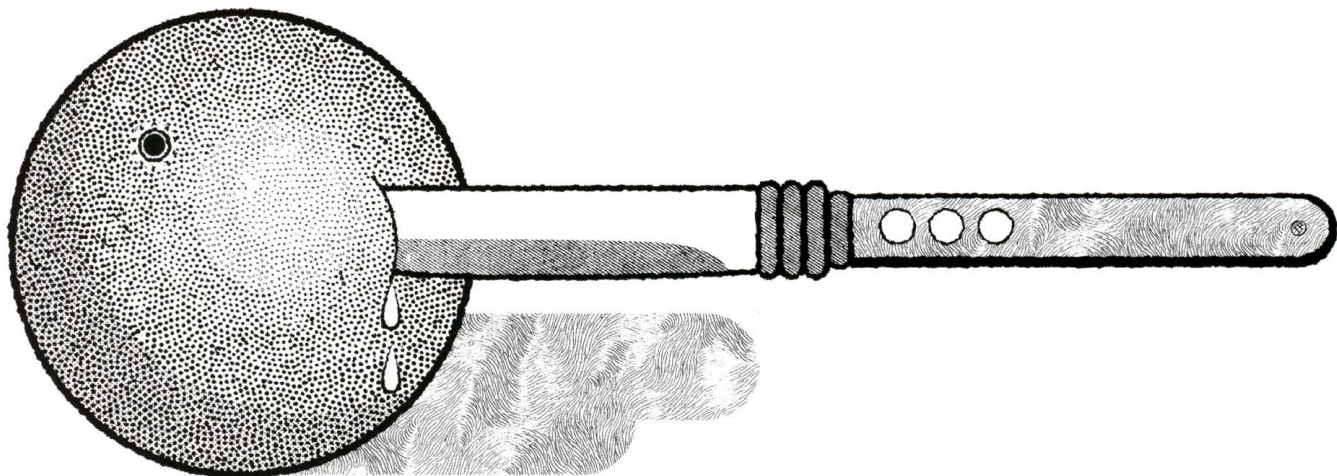
When they got to her house, he unloaded her bags and carried them to the door, and dropped them on the stoop, and they stood there looking at each other, but he seemed a little impatient. And she made her eyes so bright and melancholy both, and she said, "I had such a wonderful weekend. Thanks."

And he said, "I did too."

And he said, "I'll give you a ring tomorrow."

And he thought about the work he had at home, and she thought about her parents sitting around the table, and how she'd have to talk to them, and he and she kissed, and he went back to his car, and as she was unlocking the door, he drove off and away.

Sheila Heti lives in Seaton Village. Her work has been published in Toronto Life, Blood and Aphorisms, This Magazine, and McSweeney's. Her first book of short fiction, The Middle Stories, will be published this spring by Anansi.



MAEVE'S MURDER

FICTION BY CAMILLA GIBB

On January 25th, entirely against her sister Sylvia's wishes, and clearly against her own better judgment, Maeve Stuck-Alcott, wife of Henry Alcott of Sodom, Gomorrah, Alcott, and Associates, and daughter of Wank Harding Stuck, III, came downstairs from the bathroom—slid really, I mean down the length of the banister, a feat only the likes of Norma Desmond could have accomplished in some earlier incarnation—landed, “tit over arse,” as one of her ruder uncles used to say, upon the black and white tiles of the foyer, and, in one swift and perfunctory gesture, stabbed herself in the breast with a grapefruit knife.

Maeve Stuck-Alcott, who didn't even like grapefruit, was dead. Dead before her husband disengaged from the oral grip of the woman he had paid to sit beside him on his drive home from work. Dead before Wank Harding Stuck could even get it up in the weak grip of his decrepit hand. Dead before Mrs. Wank Stuck had massaged the cold cream all the way into the deep crevices of the bitter folds in her neck.

Sylvia had *told* her all one needed was a spoon. A ripe grapefruit should require no more agitation than a gentle nudge to liberate its fleshy folds from its determined kiss. Why, then, had she not heeded her sister's advice and opted for a spoon instead of a knife? More to the point, why had Maeve Stuck-Alcott, after dining on fiddleheads and risotto with her older sister Sylvia and Sylvia's latest good cause, a

bald twelve-year-old orphan named Alfie, excused herself from the table and ascended the stairs to the bathroom with a grapefruit knife in her hand?

A very good question indeed agreed Sylvia, less than three hours after the unfortunate event, to the not-altogether-unhandsome policeman who rang the doorbell. Two glasses of port before a half carafe of red wine, followed by a glass of Madeira, did not seem sufficient an explanation. These libations were, after all, par for the course in the life of Maeve Stuck-Alcott when she had company. When dining alone, of course, those quantities were likely to be more than doubled.

“Suicide, then?”

“I think not,” said Sylvia.

“I think not,” reiterated a bewildered Henry.

“Well, my mum did,” offered Alfie, trying to be helpful.

Sylvia glared at him.

So did Henry.

“He's an orphan,” Sylvia attempted to explain, placing her graceful hand upon the policeman's forearm and noticing, with distaste, an ostentatious wedding ring.

The officer glanced at her curiously.

“Sheer stupidity, I should imagine,” Sylvia sighed. “She was always such a clumsy girl. Tottering about in those ridiculous heels and spilling out of those most unflattering dresses,” she said, rolling her eyes and barely managing to conceal her contempt.

“Did you love your wife?” the policeman asked, turning to Henry.

“Pardon?”

“I said, did you love your wife? I mean, was there any animosity between you?”

“What an extraordinary question,” Henry puffed. “I don't like the way this is going at all.”

“Can you just answer the question, for the record?” the officer persisted. “Did you love your wife?”

“Well, of course not,” stammered Henry. “But I don't see how that has any bearing here. I mean, can you honestly say that you love your wife, officer?”

“Well, as a matter of fact, I do,” he replied, not lifting his head from his notepad.

“How very . . . charming,” Henry mused aloud, thinking the lower classes an awfully common lot, and eyeing Sylvia for reassurance.

“Indeed,” she said, agreeing, her eyes fixed hungrily on the officer's nightstick.

“Well, thank God that's all over,” muttered Henry, closing the door with a melodramatic sigh.

“Not quite, Henry, darling,” Sylvia said, pointing. “There is the small matter of a body lying in the front hallway.”

“Hmm. Quite,” said Henry, stroking his beard.

“I suppose it had better wait until morning,” Sylvia commented. “They probably wouldn't want us tampering.”

“But might it begin to smell?”

"Goodness, Henry. How should I know? I'm not what you would call *experienced* in these matters."

"It's never quite as simple as it sounds in prospect, is it Sylvia?" Henry lamented.

"I wouldn't worry," said Alfie meekly from the end of the hall. "It takes about a week. At least it took about a week before my mum really ponged."

"Thank you, Alfie," Sylvia said with some measure of disgust. "You have acquired some interesting bits of information in your short life, haven't you, dear."

"Yes, ma'am," he responded politely.

"Off to bed now, Alfie. Be a good boy and remember to wash behind your ears or whatever it is one is supposed to say to children."

"G'night then, ma'am. Mr. Alcott."

"Shall we retire as well?" Henry asked, planting his slightly trembling hand upon Sylvia's forearm.

"Yes, we had better rest," she agreed. "I'm sure we have a long day ahead of us tomorrow."

Sylvia lay with her silk back to Henry in the bed they had only shared in daylight before now. She listened to his sluggish breathing and sighed. So this is what she'd been waiting for. A bloated body snoring in bed beside her. She wondered why on earth she had so envied Maeve having a husband if all it really amounted to was this. He'd undoubtedly wake up in the morning, shuffle to the kitchen in his slippers, relieve himself of gas while eating his cornflakes, and then peck her on the cheek and say, "Have a good day, dear." There would be nothing illicit anymore, and without danger she couldn't see any possibility of romance, let alone entangled limbs. She lay wide awake beside Henry and wondered what on earth she'd done. She lulled herself to sleep with the thought of the fine, muscled, uniformed officer of the evening, waving his nightstick suggestively.

Henry rose in the morning to clear his throat in the bathroom sink after a night of heavy snoring. Sylvia had barely slept. She crept down the hall to find her protégé, young Alfie, whittling one of the posts of the bed with his pocket knife.

"Alfie!" she shrieked. "What did they teach you in that place? This is furniture, my boy, fine furniture. This bed is worth more than you could make in a year of looting and whoring."

"But I thought I didn't have to do that anymore," Alfie whined sadly.

"No, of course not, Alfie. I just wanted to offer you some *perspective*," she said sighing.

"Are you going to send me back?" he bleated.

"Now, now, Alfie. Stop worrying."

Just after 8 A.M., three policemen arrived and, shortly after them, the Wank Hardings Stucks—clearly informed of their daughter's death. Father, in his early dementia, stood in the doorway and wailed, "I cannot believe my daughter Sylvia is dead!"

"Maeve, dear," said Mrs. Stuck, nudging her husband and rolling her embarrassed, beady eyes.

"Who?" asked Mr. Stuck.

"Our *other* daughter, Wank," she said, turning to the police officer and smiling a mouthful of dentures. "Sylvia's sister."

"Sylvia's sister is dead?"

"Yes, dear."

"Oh, I can't believe it!" he wailed. "Sylvia's sister is dead!"

"Bring him a cup of tea, will you, Alfie," Sylvia said, leading her father by the arm to the chesterfield.

"Is your sister dead, too?" he asked her as he stared at his shuffling feet.

"She is, I'm afraid," said Sylvia quietly.

"Oh, Jesus. I don't know what's happening," he said in frustrated confusion.

"That's O.K., Dad. It's a bit of a mystery to all of us."

"It must have been the grief that sent him over," Sylvia said, staring at Henry's bloated body lying face down on the bathroom floor. "What an absolute tragedy. But he did have heart trouble, you know," she said, turning to the officer.

"I don't seem to recall him being particularly distressed by his wife's death," said the officer.

"Well, there was not a lot of love lost between them," she agreed.

"I think we both know who the murderer was, don't we?" the officer stated, clearing his throat.

"Do we?" she stammered.

"Well, obviously it was Henry Alcott," the officer declared. "He's probably just done himself in with cyanide."

"More likely to have been hydrogen peroxide."

"Is that right?"

"Well, it was handy," she said, running her fingers suggestively through her hair.

"But what could his motivation have

been? Was he a philanderer?"

"Notorious."

"His wife probably discovered he was having an affair then, and threatened to chuck him out."

"Hmm," Sylvia mused. "I suppose it will take weeks and weeks to clear up this nasty business," she said hopefully, imagining the bottles of wine she and the officer would share on the terrace in the dazzling gold of the late afternoon sun.

"I shouldn't imagine so," he said, clearing his throat. "The autopsy will confirm it."

"But I am sure you'll be wanting to come by the house and collect all the evidence," she said hopefully.

"Yes, we'll have to go through the routine procedures, but don't worry, it shouldn't take long."

"It's no bother," she said eagerly. "You just make yourself comfortable here."

"Right, then," he nodded.

"Would you like to interview me?" she continued. "I mean, I do know many of the details of their rather disastrous marriage."

"It won't be necessary until we have the results of the autopsy," the officer said, turning the handle of the front door.

"It's no bother," she said, reaching out and touching his arm. "Really, I want to be of help in any way that I can."

Sylvia sat at her sister's dresser and stared at her face. She pulled a stray grey hair out of her head and rearranged the bobby pins in her hair. She picked up Maeve's gold tweezers and started plucking her eyebrow. She idly tweezed, daydreaming about the officer, imagining his steel thighs gripping her around the waist. After several minutes, she looked in the glass and realized her entire left eyebrow was gone. Horrified, she let out one long and piercing cry.

Alfie appeared in the doorway, half asleep, looking lost in Henry's pyjamas. "Did you have a nightmare, ma'am?" he asked with concern.

"Oh, Alfie!" she said, turning around in alarm. "Don't sneak up on me like that."

"Sorry, ma'am. It's just, I heard a scream."

Sylvia placed her fingertips over her left eye and began to weep. "Oh, my God! I look awful," she wailed.

Alfie approached her and gently took her hand. "You don't look awful. It's just that you only have one eyebrow."

"I wish I were dead!" she wailed.

"It's O.K.," Alfie tried to comfort her.

SUI GENERIS

At twenty-two
Charlotte discovers her legacy to suicide—

six on her mother's side of the tree, including
the artist's mother, had taken

their own lives.
Chances are, she calculates, whatever

had struck her next of kin
would strike Charlotte too—

unless she could work the curse
of *Selbstmord*

into a new motif.

The C. S. who summons
salvation from paint, breaks
from her nature to save it.

— ELANA WOLFF

"We'll just get rid of the other one." He walked into the bathroom and came back with Henry's razor. "I used to do this all the time," he said, standing behind her and raising the blade to her right eyebrow.

She leaned the back of her head into his stomach and closed her eyes.

"Sometimes they used to give me good money just to shave them," he said.

"Oh, you are a comfort to me, Alfie," she sighed, staring at their reflections joined in the mirror.

"I have evidence," she whispered over the telephone to the officer.

"What sort of evidence?" the officer asked.

"Oh, not the sort I'd like to mention over the phone. The line might be tapped, you never know. I think you might just have to make a little visit to the house so I can show you in person."

She pulled Maeve's finest Dior silk out of the closet, sprayed her hair with toilet water and carefully drew in thin brows above her eyes. She had Alfie paint the nails on her right hand. "Tell me I look pretty, Alfie," she begged him.

"You always look pretty, ma'am," he offered.

"Oh, you do say the sweetest things,"

she smiled, patting him on his bald head like a pet poodle.

When the doorbell rang she greeted the officer with outstretched arms. He remained standing in the doorway.

"Oh, you do stand on ceremony, don't you, officer," she laughed. "Come in first and I'll fix you a little drink and tell you all about this remarkable discovery."

"I don't drink, Miss Stuck," he said, not moving from the doorway.

"Well, alright, a Perrier then. Come on. Don't be such a fuddy-duddy."

He reluctantly followed her into the living room, wondering about the significance of the exclamation points she'd drawn in over her eyes.

"Do sit down," she said, gesturing wildly.

"I'm on a tight schedule," he said, shaking his head. "If you could just hand me the evidence, I'll make sure it's examined."

"You'll get an ulcer if you keep moving at that pace," she smiled. "Do have a seat now, won't you?"

The officer sighed and sank down into the burgundy sofa.

"It's rather a long story," she whispered, sitting down beside him and placing her hand on his knee.

He took out his notepad and said, "Right, then."

"Well," she began. "About sixteen years ago . . ." and then proceeded to spend about ten minutes discussing the events of every year since.

After nearly an hour, the officer said, "I really am going to need you to get to the point."

"Yes, yes," she said, flustered. "I was just about to get to that. It's just that after that happened, Maeve said 'I could have killed him.'"

She folded her hands in her lap and leaned back against the sofa with a proud grin.

"Do you mean to tell me, that you asked me to come all the way here and listen to all of this so you could tell me that once, about six years ago, your sister said 'I could have killed him,' because he forgot their anniversary?"

"Precisely," she said with smug satisfaction.

"And what precisely is the relevance of this?" he said with exasperation.

"Motive!" she declared.

"Motive," he repeated.

"He probably realized she wanted to kill him, so he killed her first!"

"Uh-huh," he said, tucking his notepad under his arm and rising to leave.

"But officer—" she stammered. "I've solved the mystery for you!"

"Yes, well, perhaps you could just leave the detective work to us," he said, thinking, *What an absolute bloody waste of my time.*

Sylvia wiped her eyebrows off in the mirror. Tears slid down her cheeks and cascaded into her cleavage. She was losing her grip, her tenuous hold on the fantasy of her next life, where the officer handcuffs her to the bedpost and strips naked.

"Do you want me to kill him?" adoring Alfie asked, handing her a cup of tea and a box of tissues.

She looked at his reflection in the mirror and laughed through her tears. "Hungry boy," she said affectionately. "You do have a big appetite, don't you? Only if you can finish what's on your plate and leave room for desert though. What is it one is supposed to say to children?"

"I wouldn't know, ma'am," Alfie said.

Camilla Gibb lives in Bloorcourt Village. Her first novel, Mouthing the Words (Pedlar, 1999), was the winner of the 2000 Toronto Book Award, and voted one of the best books of 1999 by the Globe and Mail. Her second novel, The Petty Details of So-and-so's Life, will be published by Doubleday in 2002.

STEAL THIS LOGO

Jim Munroe challenges science fiction forms and political apathy in Angry Young Spaceman.

INTERVIEW BY KERRI HUFFMAN

Jim Munroe greets me with a gift: two zines created by a friend and colleague who has been staying with him recently. It's fitting, in a way, that Munroe would begin our interview by promoting zine culture rather than putting himself front and centre. While at first he appears to be more excited and animated discussing do-it-yourself publishing projects, zine culture, and left-wing politics, it quickly becomes clear that these three topics, combined with a creative bent, led to the creation of Munroe's most recent novel, *Angry Young Spaceman*. Munroe's book follows Sam Breen, a scrapper-turned-instructor, on an intergalactic adventure as he teaches English to a group of Octavians, a race of octopus-like aliens, on their home planet, Octavia, in 2959. Munroe envisions Octavia—and the rest of the galaxy for that matter—as almost cartoonish. People hop from planet to planet in rocket ships and move around town in flying saucers, all of which seems in keeping with the snow-globe world on the book's front cover.

But, as Munroe points out, he purposely created his vision of the future as it was imagined in 1959. "I did that because one of the things that I don't like about science fiction is the expository nature of it, where people have to invest a lot of time reading pages and pages about how hyperspatial drives work," Munroe says. "I don't give a fuck about that. I don't care about what a tank will look like in the future. A lot of things that mechanically really obsess a lot of science fiction writers don't interest me in the least. Although, I'm totally happy if people want to call me a science fiction writer—and usually my stories have fantastic elements in them—but, to be honest, it's pop cultural rather than science fictional."

That said, one might ask why Munroe set a culture clash story about a twenty-something guy teaching English on another planet, rather than in Japan or Korea. Although he doesn't play it up (in fact, he doesn't even mention it on the book jacket), Munroe taught English in Korea and his experiences there formed the basis for *Angry Young Spaceman*. In his book,

Munroe tackles some of the issues of colonization and feelings he experienced as a foreigner. His character, Sam, is often treated as a small-time celebrity; students point at him on the street, girls practically swoon in his presence. Munroe manages to elicit feelings of being a stranger in a strange land without ever being the tacky American tourist. "I didn't set the book in Korea for two reasons. One was just the creative charge creating something new from an experience I had. Two is that while there is a first-person narrative—and I felt very comfortable talking about Sam's feelings of disorientation and his first contact with another culture and the moral and mental gymnastics he had to deal with—I felt completely unconfident characterizing Korea. I was there for seven months and I feel that it would be quite depressing if I could understand a culture that was quite different from my own in seven months."

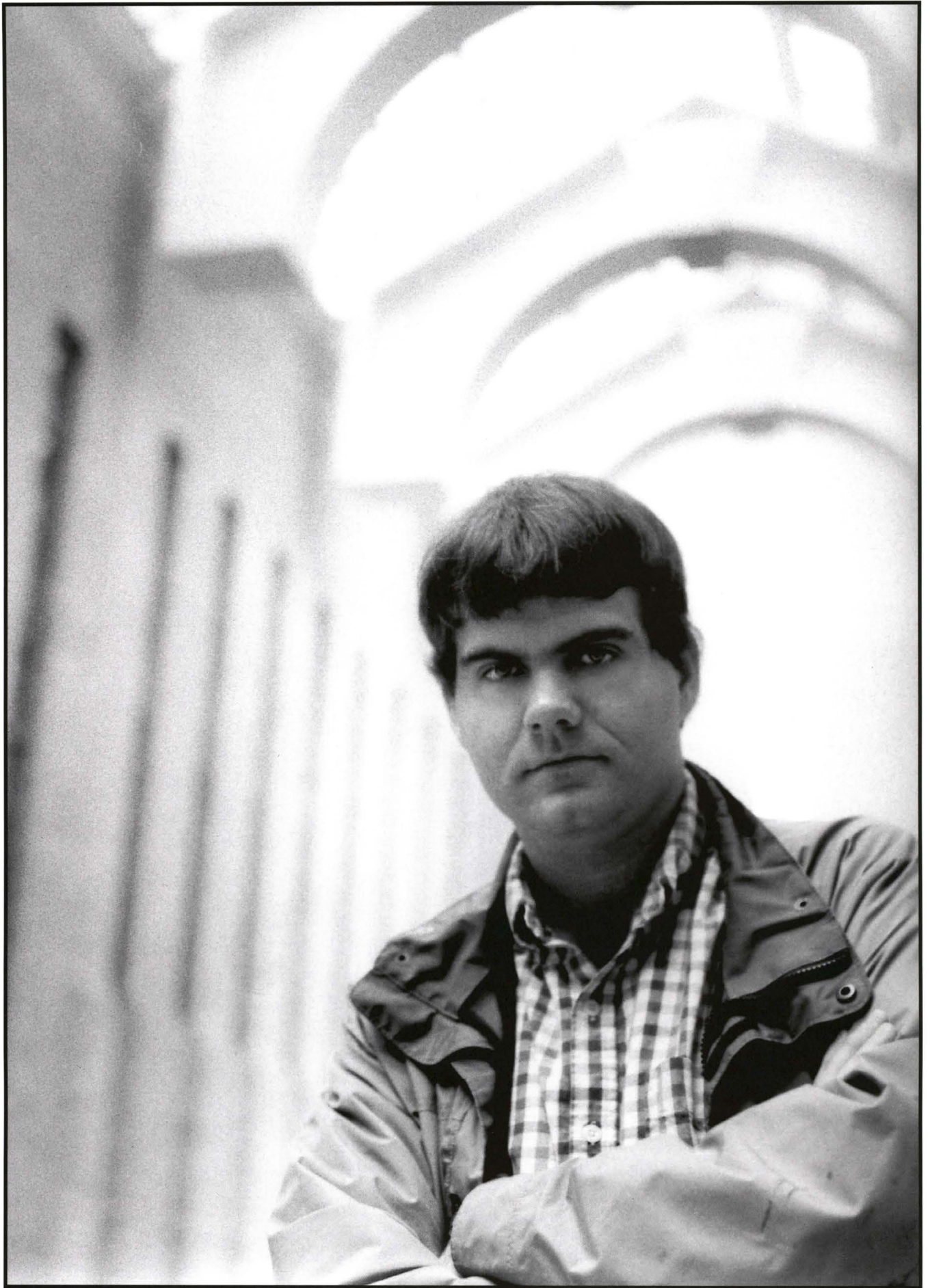
While the book is certainly a comment on the globalization of North American culture and the insidious ways powerful economies smother other cultures and countries (and planets in the case of *Angry Young Spaceman*), Munroe manages to avoid being didactic. In fact, Sam often expresses his feeling of alienation and of being the "other" in a foreign land, and wrestles with his seemingly automatic stereotypical thoughts. "I like the idea of having political content and definite biases in my work. As long as there are people like Rush Limbaugh putting out books, then I can put out my books—there's a balance," Munroe says. "What makes me different from being a completely dogmatic, blatantly political writer, is that I refuse to make characters that are ideal humans. I want them to try. Often they're idealistic, but they're not going to be without cynicism. That's one of the things that I like about working in the first person. I'm able to show the process. It's not like someone was born with the right ideas or the 'left' ideas. It's something you come to as an effect of your environment. It can be argued that it's more effective propaganda if it's believable, if the people are

human in it. The book could work with a certain amount of people if it was loaded and biased. . . . But they aren't going to be very smart people. They're not going to be thinking it through."

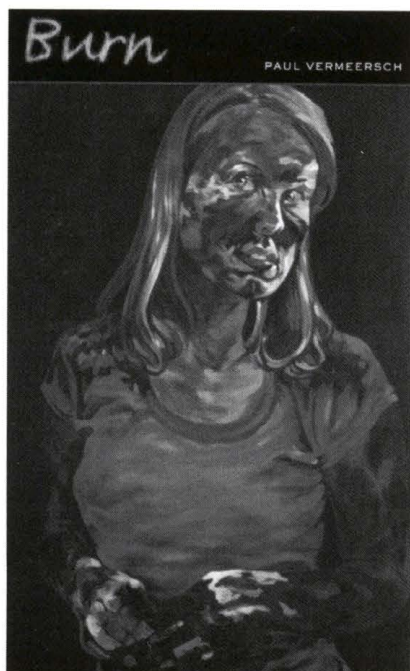
Munroe often makes his political comments with a quick brush stroke. Sam bemoans the fact that his mother cheated on her girlfriend, without making any special mention of her being a lesbian. Sam also makes offhand remarks that there was a time on earth when trees existed. While the book seems like a cautionary tale, Munroe positions it in the abstract for his characters. "I didn't want Sam to give a fuck, because we don't give a fuck about things that happened three hundred years ago that were probably incredible, beautiful experiences to have as a human being. What walking in the forest is to us, Sam will never know and never miss it, but as a human species, we've lost something," Munroe says. "I deliberately made the trip to the alien planet full of nothing but trees [in *Angry Young Spaceman*] an awful experience for [the characters]. A more earnest writer would do it more straight ahead; would show how humans eradicated the earth. I think in some ways it was more shocking to put it in as a minor detail."

Humans in *Angry Young Spaceman* are vegetarians, and Munroe admits that in an earlier version of the book people became vegetarians not for moral reasons, but because there wasn't enough room on the planet to house animals, so they just stopped eating them. But Sam wrestles with his beliefs when he discovers that the Octavians eat "wallen," a little shelled creature that Sam treats like a pet. Munroe likens this to an experience he had while in Korea when, as a special treat at a school picnic, dozen of baby octopuses were cooked alive in a pan. "When they were ready to eat, they would cut them apart with scissors, which was kind of horrific, and one of these teachers was saying 'Why don't you want to eat this?' and he was putting one in his mouth and the leg was still wriggling. I just said 'No, I don't eat those.'" Munroe almost laughs. "For me, the only context I had for someone putting

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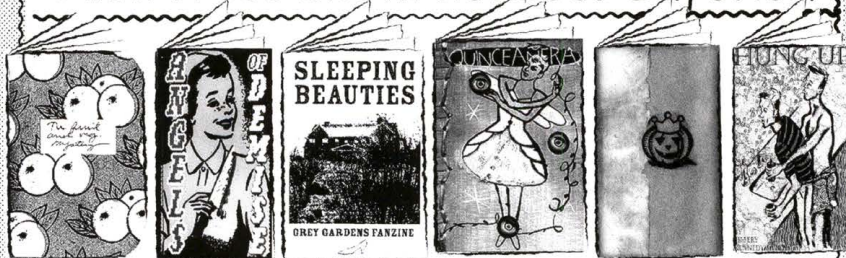
something wriggling into their mouths was a giant eating a human that was still kicking. It's great that stuff like that happens. I think they have no idea what they're doing is fucking crazy, because *fucking crazy* is a cultural difference. Everybody thought that was a great treat. It wasn't like they were hamming it up. They had no consciousness that I would find it disturbing. And there is equally stuff we would do that they would find odd. But that's why the Octavians are octopi—it was kind of revenge."

Despite Munroe's ability to deal with political and moral issues deftly and lightly, there are moments when the reader does see dark sides of Sam—specifically in relation to his background as a "pug." In the novel, pugs are a gang-like group that wanders the earth in search of physical violence. While most other countercultures are co-opted or, even worse, developed by companies and marketed to teenagers, pug has the distinction of being the one counterculture fabricated and marketed from the beginning—a fact lost on its members. Munroe never exploits Sam's pug past. In fact, there are times in the book when one wishes there might be more made of it; where it would be interesting to see more of Sam's involvement with the violent group. As it stands, while on Octavia, Sam is sent a video projection of one of his fights by an ex-girlfriend. The video forms an uncomfortable moment in the book when Sam's Octavian girlfriend, Jinya, comes across it, and Sam's violent past is exposed. "It helps to position him as someone who's critical but completely brainwashed by his own society," Munroe says. "Some people have read it as a commentary on the punk scene, but that's not the case. I'm still very idealistic about punk and it's still very alive, and somehow it's managed to avoid being completely corrupted, despite the fact that it's gone through the media twice. It seems completely indestructible. It's so amazing to me that everything else gets commodified and completely castrated, but punk's been through it twice now and for a lot of people it's still very vibrant. I think one of the reasons it survives is because its basis is oppositional. It's like 'we'll keep doing the opposite of what you want us to do,' and there is always an appetite for that."

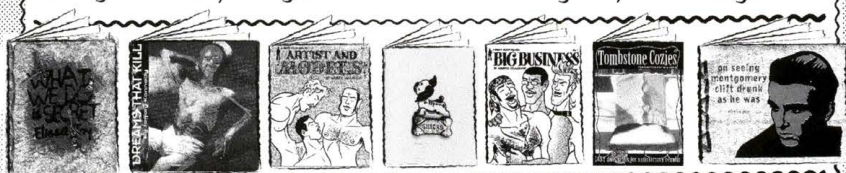
If there are politics in the text of *Angry Young Spaceman*, there are also politics at work behind the product. After publishing his first novel, *Flyboy Action Figure Comes with Gasmask*, with HarperCollins in

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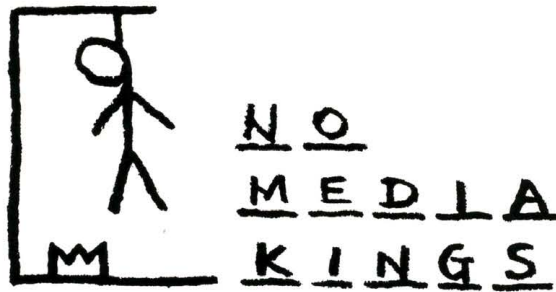
1999, Munroe became more and more alarmed at the growing trend of media consolidation. He wondered where independent cultural producers would fit in if people like Rupert Murdoch (whose News Corp. owns HarperCollins) gained control of more and more media outlets. Munroe decided to do something radical and self-publish his next work through his own publishing house, No Media Kings, despite successful sales figures for *Flyboy*. Not only did he want to break away from the stranglehold that Murdoch-types had on the big publishing houses, but, he says, he also wanted to see whether he could produce a work that was comparable. When Munroe first started talking about self-publishing a novel, reporters told him it would look as though he couldn't find a publishing deal. But Munroe had the last laugh with *Angry Young Spaceman* when he proved himself not only able to produce a product equal in quality to *Flyboy*, but match its sales as well, all while exercising control over the entire project from start to finish. This may not have been a route many writers would want, or be able, to take—especially considering the nine thousand dollar budget required for the book to see light, and the scope of responsibility Munroe had to shoulder in terms of promotion, publicity and finance. But, in the end, Munroe took home about four dollars per book, compared to the two dollars per book he received from HarperCollins for *Flyboy*.

Despite the splash he has made with *Angry Young Spaceman*, Munroe's route is not without historical precedence: Percy Shelley self-published his poems; Anaïs Nin paid for Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and printed *Winter of Artifice* on her own printing press. Still, self-publishing is only now beginning to be respected as more than a vanity project. For Munroe, self-publishing is the cornerstone of his writing background, and zine culture his inspiration to self-publish rather than move to a small press.

Along with the publication of *Angry Young Spaceman*, Munroe created the web site www.nomediakings.org. In addition to offering free downloads of his book, the site features several articles by Munroe on how to self-publish, and an archive of his previously published pieces of fiction and non-fiction. In another radical move, Munroe encourages others to steal his No Media Kings logo for use on their own

publications, effectively creating a global publishing house with no home office, and no one publisher.

This sort of information sharing seems anathema in the current climate of keeping secrets in order to protect business, but for Munroe that openness is an integral part of the zine culture he is a part of. And rather than seeing himself as someone who has moved out of the zine community and on to "legitimate" writing, he clearly feels he is still a part of the community and involved with it. He notes that after publishing his first book he didn't feel a strong connection to the literary community in Canada and, in fact, didn't make



a lot of friends within it. Nonetheless, Munroe recognizes how influential the small-press world has recently been in changing the profile of Canadian literature. Large publishing houses such as HarperCollins or McClelland & Stewart may have the finances to publish thousands of copies of a book, but small presses such as Insomniac, Coach House, and Anansi are taking risks on more innovative writers and alternative projects. Munroe learned this first-hand while preparing to publish *Angry Young Spaceman*. "On a basic level, the people at Arsenal Pulp, Raincoast, ECW, Rushhour, and, of course, Insomniac all gave me printers' addresses, they all gave me basic information about how to do it, how to get an ISBN number. This is information that I could have dug up on my own, but it would have taken a hell of a lot longer," Munroe says, appreciatively. "They also knew that me self-publishing would also be good for them."

When reading Munroe's books, or even browsing his web site, it is obvious all of his work is infused with a political perspective (Munroe was once managing editor of *Adbusters* magazine). Realizing this, one can't help but wonder why he commits himself to writing rather than being more politically active. "For me it's the mix that I feel is effective. There's a skill set aspect—I'm better at writing than I am at

talking or at any of the other things that politicians have to do," he says with a laugh. "I have lots of friends who are in OCAP [the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty], which would probably be more the route that I would go, like a professional activist—someone who was a more direct action kind of person. I know there's a lot of people involved in direct action stuff who think what I do is pointless or that I'm profiting on a political climate. And there has to be a political climate for a writer to work in."

It's clear that Munroe sees no separation in his identity as a writer/political activist—it all combines to make him who he is. Being able to use all aspects of his identity in *Angry Young Spaceman* clearly marked new and welcome territory for him. "I'm trying to integrate my political feeling with my creative side. And, for the first time in my life, when I was publishing this book I felt that all pistons were firing. I was getting to be creative, I was getting my political point across, I was getting to do a big project that was, in all its aspects, what I wanted. I wanted people to know about the book, but I didn't want to use the same kind of tactics that advertising uses. When I was with HarperCollins, the creative side of me was getting involved, but in other ways I felt limited. There are tons of writers who love to be at a café and write and send their manuscript off and to hell with what happens after that—they get the money and they're happy. The identity is of prime importance for them; being legitimate."

Despite his obvious commitments to his own brand of politics and to his work—commitments obvious in his conversation, his writing, and his publishing style—Munroe says he is no different from anyone else. "As much as I like to believe that I'm radical and extreme, and as much as that fed me through my high-school days, I look at myself and say 'Good Lord, I am so normal,'" he laughs. "I'm 99.9 per cent of the people out there. I am so mainstream." Fortunately, unlike the lead character of his novel, Munroe has learned to co-opt the mainstream with his own unique counterculture, and not been overcome by fabrication.

Angry Young Spaceman is currently available from No Media Kings in stores and on-line at www.nomediakings.org. Kerri Huffman is associate editor of *Taddle Creek*.

SUNKEN TREASURE

FICTION BY ANDREW DALEY

Rain had swept over the city while he had stopped at his apartment to shower and change for the evening. Downstairs again, Tim Franklin looked for a taxi on Spadina Avenue. The rain-slick street reflected the neon lights of Chinatown, creating shimmering patches of green, red, and blue. Tim stepped through them as he crossed to the east side, buttoning his raincoat as he went against the wet December wind.

Waiting with an arm extended, Tim ran his foot over the surface of a shallow puddle, smearing the cool blue-green light of a restaurant sign across the sidewalk. Two doors north, a grocer was hosing down the ground in front of his store. Ultramarine—that was the word for it. His local scratch of Chinatown, strewn with empty packing crates and rotting vegetation at the end of a business day, was somehow underwater.

Sliding into the back seat of a yellow taxi, Tim's inspiration transformed itself into an idea: he could shoot one section of the new spot in an underwater setting. Rent an undersea backdrop and have his art director do some waving strands of seaweed and some fake fish swimming by. Simple. Maybe put the talent into an old diving suit, then flood the whole set with blue and green lights and slowly wave the backdrop to mimic gentle ocean currents.

It was mostly a lighting thing, Tim decided, before giving the cabbie the name of the restaurant in Little Italy. The cabbie looked over into the back seat and used his thin face to express his own bafflement. "College and Clinton streets," Tim explained, though this time a little louder.

Maybe a fake submarine, Tim now thought, or some kind of superhero swimming by. When he was a kid there was the Sub-Mariner and Aquaman, and if he doubted kids would recognize them now, he was certain others had simply replaced them. Or maybe one of the client's trademark characters, something. Carolyn knew these things better than he did.

The budget, though, the budget would be a problem. He already had his three sets—the Arctic, the desert, and the jungle—and while all three had been approved, he couldn't imagine the client rejecting this last-minute idea. He would have to talk to

Carolyn about squeezing somewhere; order lunch in instead of having the shoot catered, or replace a few P.A.s with interns from a co-op program. It could be done.

Rain fell harder as the cab progressed along College Street, running in rivulets down Tim's back seat window and blurring the passing lights together. "Rain all night and tomorrow," the cabbie said. They were waiting on a red light at Bathurst Street.

"That's good for your business," Tim replied. "It's good for me tonight, too." Maybe one of the four sets could go. Options, he would impress the client with options. Tim sat in a silence interrupted only occasionally by the cabbie's radio, thinking, "I've got it now."

His happiness floated him between the cab and the curb. There was a small crowd in front of Pomodoro, through which Tim carefully navigated himself as he spotted an achingly gorgeous blonde woman standing alone to one side. He felt assured the place would be filled with beautiful people and that a table was difficult to get. A month before he had read a glowing review in a city magazine. And in early December the city had already assumed a Christmas buzz.

Inside, he was met by a pretty red-headed hostess with soft, wet, light-green eyes. She wore a simple white blouse over a short black skirt. "KTV," Tim said. "I hope you've got a nice table for us. This is a big night."

"They're all excellent," the hostess said through frosted lips. "Mr. . . ?"

"Franklin. KTV." The restaurant stretched back far beyond the hostess, wider than it appeared to be from the street, and roaringly full. "Kids' TV."

"Yes, it's here. Your table's not ready yet," the hostess said. Leaning slightly over her reservation book, she allowed Tim a peek at the side of a lovely, milk-white, lightly-freckled breast encased in a silky beige bra. "But some of your party have already arrived."

Tim could scarcely contain his grin. "Is there a coat check?" he asked. Looking around the hostess Tim could see Vanessa, his sales manager and immediate boss, and Carolyn, their departmental assistant, sitting at the bar. Vanessa shimmered beautifully in a silver, sequined cocktail dress.

Having checked his coat, Tim wound his

way through tables of radiantly youthful diners to the bar, a rectangular slab of black marble in the centre of the long room. Pomodoro was all chrome and mahogany chic, the high, hammered-tin ceiling the only indication that the space had probably, until recently, been a mom-and-pop variety or hardware store. The open kitchen, from which great hisses and the clatter of pans could be heard above the animated chatter of the diners and the slick jazz soundtrack, was at the back of the room. It emanated a comfortable warm breath of garlic. As Tim watched, someone's meal flamed brightly on the grill.

Closer to the bar, Tim could now make out the spindly shoulders—encased, as ever, in a charcoal suit—of Douglas, the V.P. of marketing at KTV. This was inevitable, but disappointing nonetheless. Douglas was the oddball in their department, a squirrely family man who to Tim seemed devoid of humour. None of his colleagues having seen him arrive, Tim slipped silently behind Vanessa, brushed aside her honey-blond hair and planted a large kiss on her long, arching neck. While she expressed her surprise, Tim shook Douglas's outstretched hand and returned Carolyn's friendly smile and hello.

"The man of the hour," Douglas said. "What will you have to drink?" The V.P. was drinking mineral water, an excellent indication that he might leave soon.

"Gin, gin, and more gin," Tim said to the waiting barman from around a metal basket of lemons and limes. "With tonic and lime."

"Me too," Carolyn added, holding up her empty glass. Her red dress was lovely, but Tim thought there was something dowdy about the way she wore her long, chestnut hair up. He had known Carolyn since first arriving at KTV almost five years earlier, a \$125-a-day production assistant with a B.A. in cinema studies and an idea that he could, if someone provided the opportunity, direct a superb movie. Carolyn had been the receptionist at KTV then and had quickly spurned his advances. Tim had long ago reckoned that she probably wouldn't say 'no' anymore. He reached out to accept his G. & T.

"We're all here now," said Douglas. "So

IAN PHILLIPS



listen up. I wanted us here early so we could have a little talk before our guests arrive." Preparing himself, Tim squeezed close enough to Vanessa to smell her perfume and draw a look from Carolyn.

"We're celebrating a lot more than a commercial for BrekFast Friendz™ cereal tonight," Douglas continued. "Our contract with International Friendly Foods is the largest cross-promotional contract KTV has ever signed. We have a deal to exchange over two million dollars worth of products and air time that is going to make us the most attractive cable station in the country. Within two years, International Friendly Foods will be the world leader in pre-packaged kids' meals. And it's on KTV that kids are going to find out about them first."

"And who's got the money to spend?" Tim asked no one in particular. "Kids and moms." He'd expected this speech from Douglas. This was where the old suit claimed the credit for the work he and Vanessa had done to convince the client to drop a bundle on ads over the next year. Tim had already decided that directing them all—there could be as many as seven or eight different thirty and forty-five second spots—would be a mistake. Too many things might go wrong, and he could use the opportunity the contract offered to position himself as a creative director.

Douglas droned on, obviously enchanted, like any executive Tim had met, with the sound of his own voice. Tim signalled to the barman for another drink and leaned back against the bar to scan the busy restaurant. He knew he looked sharp in his new three-button black suit and designer shoes; that he couldn't fail to score with an outfit like that. "We've become quite a team with the addition of Vanessa," Douglas said. "So here's to all of us."

"I want my BrekFast Friendz™!" Tim said as he hoisted his gin. He considered kissing Vanessa again but thought that might be too forward, even for him. "Hey, I have an idea. A great new set for BrekFast Friendz™."

"Really, what is it?" Vanessa asked, twisting in her stool to bring her beautiful blue eyes level with Tim's. It really didn't matter that she was an M.B.A.; she was a babe, and that's what got the deal done.

"Tim, no," Carolyn said, wagging her finger. "I had the production manager sign off on the budget for the first spot today. No more changes."

"Well, get it back, because this is what the spot needs," Tim said.

PYRO

Place me next to God
On your wrought-iron bookshelf

In the corner
In the dark

I'll be safe there
Dear

My how the grass has grown
Over both our heads

Lost in my own backyard
And grazing like cattle

I hadn't eaten since Easter
Not bathed since I became afraid of water

Even rain
And the liquid I'm pouring down my throat

In handfuls, bucketfuls
I heard a voice last night

From the sky
Fell into my head like snow

Freezing all my dreams
All my hopes of closing my eyes

In the comfort of someone's warm embrace
At the drugstore I bought a sedative

At the second-hand store I bought a surrogate lover
A poster of one of my heroes reclining on the hood

Of a blue Chevy pickup truck
I took him home, pinned him to the wall

Blew him kisses
Blew the candle flame across the curtains

Warmed my hands over the fire
Watched my heart go up in flames

— ALEXANDRA LEGGAT

"What is it?" Douglas asked, more impatiently than Tim thought polite.

"I'll tell you when them Friendly types get here. Don't worry, they'll love it. We're gonna make kids scream to get their BrekFast Friendz™ so bad their parents will beg us to pull the spot. Awards, too.

Oh, it's gonna be sweet!"

"The screaming part—I wouldn't phrase it precisely like that with the client," Douglas warned Tim through his smile.

Tim watched Douglas set his empty glass down on the bar, hoping the bastard would soon be on his way. He could feel the drinks

he'd already had working and, since this was his night, decided he didn't have anything to lose. "Another drink, boss?"

"I'm driving," Douglas replied with that smile again, feigning sincerity, and Tim knew then that he and Douglas would have quite a year together. "I'm not," Tim said before turning to the girls. "What say we get another round into us before those Friendly people get here?"

"I'm fine for now," Carolyn said.

"Me too," Vanessa said.

Tim ordered another gin and tonic and slid an ashtray across the bar towards him, using the lull to finally light up. According to Carolyn, the Friendly people were expected at any time, so when his cigarette was finished Tim excused himself for the washroom. He felt terrific as he descended the stairs, taking two, sometimes three steps at a time.

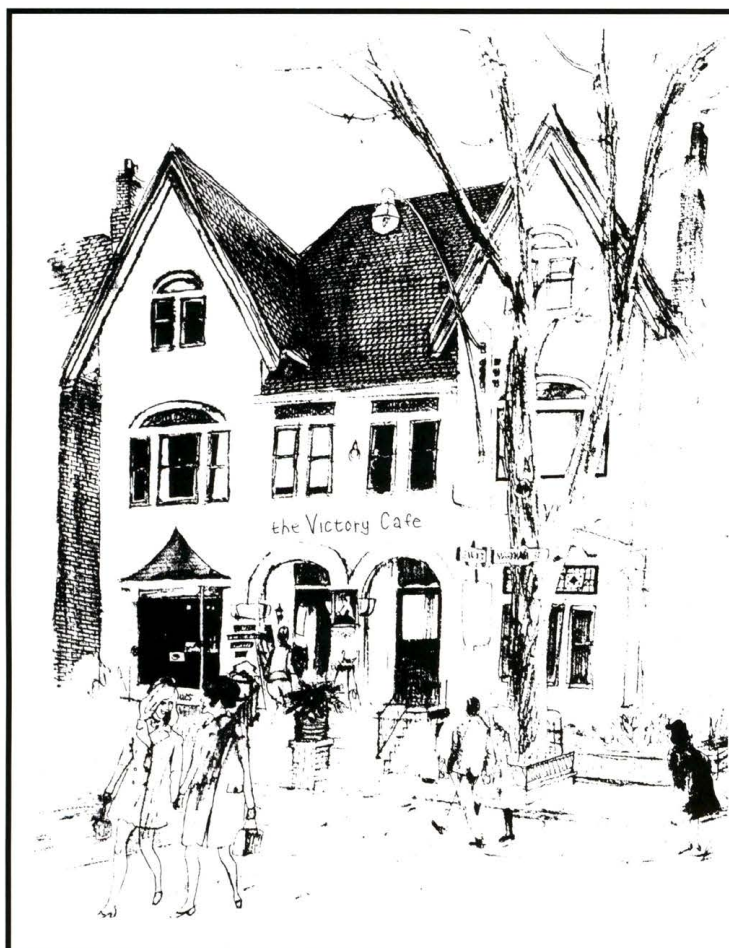
Zippering up, Tim moved to the sink and mirror and splashed water over his face, running his wet hands through his tightly-curved dark hair. His hair had begun to recede in the past year and, while he had never been very handsome, he now thought his thinning locks added an element of sexiness and maturity he had always lacked. Women liked

that he didn't look like a boy anymore. Or Vanessa did, anyway. She had been sending him signals since arriving at KTV three months earlier. Only now it was time to call her on them. And some action with Vanessa would also show Carolyn that he was not to be trifled with. Happy with his appearance, Tim brushed some cigarette ash off of his lapel and made for the door.

The basement stairs were narrow and without a handrail, the steps themselves edged with burnished chrome. When halfway up Tim was confronted with the rapidly descending bulk of another man. He squeezed himself into the right wall, annoyed that the fellow hadn't waited for him to reach the top before heading down. Then, suddenly, the man was flying by him, having lost his footing. Tim quickly reached out and grabbed the man by the arm, steadying him before he fell back against the stairs and cracked his back or head. Slowly, the man righted himself. He looked back at a puddle on the third step from the top, and then into Tim's eyes. The man nodded his thanks and Tim returned the nod, knowing they now had a tacit agreement that Tim wouldn't ever reveal this other man's momentary weakness.

Back at the bar their guests had arrived. Diane, V.P. of sales at International Friendly Foods, was a large, blustery, middle-aged woman with a leathery, speckled face that only years of smoking brings. She was talking confidentially with Douglas. Some vice-presidential nonsense, probably, in which Tim couldn't be any less interested. Still, he greeted her as respectfully as possible, hoping Douglas noticed the charm he was capable of turning on. Diane was hardly Tim's type—much too old—but she was a good woman to know in the business. And KTV was hardly Tim's last harbour.

It was Gordon, however, now deep in conversation with Vanessa, his counterpart at KTV, whom Tim couldn't figure out. He was in his late twenties, Tim's own age, but was hunched like an old man and flitted about nervously like Douglas. Gordon was all client, all the time; everyone's best friend until things got hot, when any of those friends could expect a knife in their back. He was also, with his grey checked suit, powder-blue shirt, and closely-shaved bald head, probably gay. And while this in itself didn't bother Tim, he knew the guy would be a stickler for detail and any copyright infringement or undesirable association of



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the product. Tim knew that he would have Gordon looking over his shoulder for every second of every shoot.

Drinks were handed around again and, in addition to another gin and tonic, Tim accepted a shot of iced vodka to drink to the health of the contract. He was feeling better now, looser, more confident. This was where he had always wanted to be, among the friends he had made along the way, especially Vanessa, hanging out where the gin flows. He lit another cigarette and scanned the room, wondering when their table would be ready.

Eventually, his eyes settled on the curve of Vanessa's soft, white neck, which in his mind he gently stroked. But soon Douglas was steering Diane towards him. "Tim was telling us just before you arrived that he has a last minute idea for the BrekFast Friendz™ spot."

Then everyone was looking Tim's way, Gordon most keenly, so Tim butted his cigarette and launched into his plans. "I think we're limiting ourselves with three sets. We need four: earth, air, fire, water. The four elements. We've got the earth and the snow, and the desert is hot like fire, and so is the fire under the cauldron in the jungle scene, and so what we need now is the water, you know?"

Vanessa nodded encouragingly, but Tim was troubled by the look on Carolyn's face. "We've got the money, so why don't we start big? Let everyone know this isn't any rinky-dink partnership here. Big splashy start." This much he addressed to Douglas and Diane, who received it without so much as a blink.

"What's going to be different, Tim?" Douglas asked. "What's the fourth set?"

"Undersea world," Tim replied. "I don't know why I didn't think of it before."

"We can't afford that," Gordon said quickly. "An aquatic crew. That would blow half the budget for the whole year."

Tim was ecstatic now: Gordon had taken the bait. "Oh, I didn't say that, Gordon. We can do it on the cheap, get some fishes, hang some swimmers from up above, that sort of thing. Kids don't mind that. So long as it's fun. Course I only came up with this on the way over, so I don't have any dialogue or a scenario yet. Gonna call my art director tomorrow."

"It's a good idea, Tim," Diane said. "And you're right about it being fun, that's the main thing."

Tim was extracting another cigarette from his package, which was difficult to

do with a drink in his hand. "I could have something by Monday, Diane. Whole new script of all four sets, maybe even storyboards."

"Tim, that sounds fine, but all of this is sounding too much like work for me," Douglas said. "We're here to celebrate tonight."

Tim wanted to ask what Douglas had to celebrate. "I can get you some new budgets, too. Gotta see the numbers, I know."

"Doug's right, Tim," Vanessa said. "Leave it for now."

Gordon moved closer as Tim lit up again. "Sorry if I sounded confused for a moment. I thought you might have wanted to submerge an entire film crew."

"Gordon, buddy," Tim said, offering his hand for Gordon to shake. "I know you know what's going on, you know. I just wanted to say it's going to be great working with you this year."

"I'm looking forward to it myself," Gordon answered as he accepted Tim's hand. "You're a very creative person. I like what I've seen of your stuff."

"And you're the money, baby," Tim replied as he leaned in to whisper into Gordon's ear. "What do you think of Carolyn? Pretty cute, eh?"

"She's a good-looking girl, you're right," Gordon replied.

"Vanessa's the sweet stuff though. She's the one that makes it all happen."

"I'm sure," Gordon replied, now obviously uncomfortable with Tim's proximity. "They must be a lot fun to work with."

"Talk to Carolyn, maybe, yeah?"

"Well, I have been," Gordon replied. He was spared further explanation by the arrival of the red-haired hostess, who announced that their table was ready.

Tim was eagerly watching the hostess's cute behind retreat back through the dining room to the front door when Carolyn entered his frame of vision. She didn't look happy. "Hey, there you are," Tim said, holding out his drink as if to make a toast. "We did it, eh? Now we're gonna show 'em."

Carolyn ignored the outstretched drink. "Tim Franklin, what the fuck are you doing? Are you aware of what you're saying?"

"Hey, this is my night. They weren't listening to you, they were listening to me. You never helped me at all." It was just like Carolyn to ruin his good time.

"You're drunk again, Tim. It's not a good idea to get drunk in front of your boss. Vanessa and I have worked very hard on bringing this together. Don't fuck this up

on us now. And leave Vanessa alone, O.K.? You wouldn't believe how much you frighten her."

As Carolyn walked away, Tim thought he would visit the washroom again before joining the group at the table. He couldn't believe her cheek, in front of a whole room of people on his big night. But she was right about the alcohol: he would watch the wine at dinner. It always messed him up anyway.

Only as he descended the stairs to the washroom did he realize that he was a little drunk. Not anything he couldn't handle, he thought, just as he felt his feet buckle beneath him and his body lurch forward. Tim frantically reached out for the handrail, which wasn't there. This was an unfortunate, if instinctual, move on his part. With his arms flailing uselessly at his sides there was nothing to protect his head as it bounced loudly off the bottom step of the stairway.

Tim would probably have difficulty remembering it at present, but for his eighth birthday he received from his aunt a large, freshwater aquarium. This was a February day many years ago, and his aunt was visiting the Franklin's suburban home from her own city on the West Coast. Accompanying the aquarium was a starter bag of basic guppies, a small tub of their food, gravel to line the bottom of the tank, and some plants, shells, and brightly coloured stones. Also included was a large, plastic castle, some mountainous rocks with holes large enough for small fish to swim through, and a four-inch long chest which opened to reveal a fortune's worth of gold and silver bars, mounds of gems and jewels, and many gold doubloons and pieces of eight.

Young Tim soon lost interest in his neighbourhood friends, with their snow forts, sledding, and games of street hockey, and devoted himself entirely to his new hobby. A properly functioning aquarium requires time and some expense to put together. Thus, from the Franklin household frequent trips were made to the pet store in the mall where graceful, striped angelfish, red and green swordfish, tiny tiger barbs, and flashing, silver hatchetfish were purchased, while books on tropical fish and their maintenance were withdrawn from the local library. There were also endless questions for Tim's harried parents, who hadn't been initially consulted about the gift and were left scrambling for ways to determine how such a small boy could raise money for his expensive hobby. For the remainder of that school year, Tim's

SPRING

out on the frozen lake,
somewhere between a beach and too far
away to see,
there is a brown thing
and a smaller, darker thing
beside it;
proportioned like a seated man
and his small, black dog
lying near him—
except, they've been there a week;
garbage, most likely,
ice-hut refuse, left to
find its way to the lake bottom
after all the huts have slid back to shore—
their true homes, where they
sit, shaded, through warm unchanging gestations;
nine months in leafy seclusion
between garage and hedge,
disturbed only for ninety short days
and long nights
of brilliant sky and distance

but what they leave behind remains;
a man and his dog.

ten minutes of nervous
ice walking brings them no closer,
and the slow heave of a lake's
skin cancels ambition;
whatever they are, out there
beyond binoculars, they are alone,
but for each other;
unknown, waiting for spring

— JOHN DEGEN

main topic, for presentations to his class or any other project, was tropical fish.

In the months following his birthday, the aquarium flourished under Tim's care. More fish, such as the tiny, schooling black mollies and even a Siamese fighting fish, were acquired. Tim also developed favourites, like the large blue, white, and silver angelfish that would occasionally, to Tim's great delight, swallow whole a lazy and distracted guppy. But even captive, brilliantly-coloured fish can grow dull for a lively boy and, against his parents' wishes, Tim began to play games in his aquarium. Submerging plastic figurines from the big Space Movie™—Tim's most recent fascination—Tim ignored his frightened fish to play pirate beneath the surface of the

aquarium. Eventually he acquired a large plastic galleon, which floated nicely on the surface, and it was for the safety and prosperity of this ship that the Space Movie™ figurines fought over and brought to the surface the large treasure chest.

Tim's father was also interested in prosperity and as a bank manager was forced to move his family quite frequently. Unfortunately, another move was ordered by the head office of the bank in the summer following the gift of the aquarium. Because the Franklin's were moving across the country to join Tim's aunt on the West Coast, Tim was told that another home would have to be found for the fish, which would not survive the rigours of the journey. But none of his friends' parents would welcome

the fish in their homes; Tim's school and others in the area already had freshwater aquariums and the pet store owner wouldn't allow the fish to return because some of them had been purchased at another store and might be carrying diseases.

Best intentions thus thwarted, the problem was ignored until a week before the move. Then, while Tim sobbed behind him, Mr. Franklin tried to catch and flush down the toilet all of Tim's exotic friends. When this proved too time-consuming, Mr. Franklin emptied the aquarium into the bathtub and then transferred those fish he hadn't already caught into the toilet with a kitchen spatula. These events proved to be sufficiently cataclysmic for Tim that the aquarium itself remained behind, sitting alone in Tim's otherwise empty bedroom for the new owners of the house.

But if Tim didn't have his aquarium very long, and had rarely considered it in the intervening two decades, it was with great relief that he found himself, moments after cracking his head on the basement stairs of Pomodoro, swimming through its comfortable, twenty-three-degrees-Celsius waters. Hovering about midway down, Tim was delighted to see that he was in his sharp, new three-button suit, and that, although bubbles escaped from his mouth, he wasn't wanting for oxygen. Swimming towards the bottom, he immediately spotted his favourite killer angelfish, as well as the two bright red swordfish that had always travelled together. Everything, including all the plants, the tall castle, and the treasure chest, appeared to be in place.

There had, however, been some changes. Instead of looking onto the dusty yellow wall of his former bedroom, the back wall of the aquarium was now covered by a watery blue-green backdrop of a coral reef teeming with schools of tropical fish and other marine life and plants. And in the front right corner of the aquarium, in what had once been the main feeding area of his polka-dot catfish, Tim saw rows of lights and grip stands, piles of sandbags, as well as black cases of camera equipment; indeed, everything a film crew would need to work. He also saw, standing alone near the film equipment, an old diving suit with a great length of hose reaching up to his galleon on the surface. It was towards this that Tim was swimming when he caught a sudden movement in the corner of his eye.

Somehow, Douglas, Diane, and Gordon, all of whom had traded their evening wear for the white cotton blouses, cutlasses and

colourful, baggy pantaloons of pirates, were approaching from the left side of the aquarium. Realizing they were after his treasure chest, Tim swam quickly toward Douglas, who was ahead of the representatives of International Friendly Foods. Despite having his arm slowed by the weight of the water, Tim managed to dispatch his wimpy V.P. of marketing with one blow. As Douglas's inert body floated to the surface beside him, Tim turned to meet the advance of Diane, who moved gracefully in the water despite her great bulk. Wrestling with her for control of a dagger, Tim received a blow to the back of the head from the cowardly Gordon, and so spun himself and Diane around quickly to avoid another. In an unprecedented stroke of luck, as Gordon drew his cutlass, Tim was able to manoeuvre the struggling Diane to receive the blow, which sliced the V.P. of sales almost in half.

Disentangling himself from Diane's corpse, Tim expected to have to race with Gordon to the treasure chest. Instead, he was surprised to find Gordon stuffing a very beautiful Vanessa, whose ample bosom was wonderfully displayed in a brilliant green velvet plantation dress, into the window of the tallest tower of the castle. Outraged, Tim swam towards Gordon with all his strength. In the final few feet he swung himself around so that he approached the castle feet first, bouncing Gordon's head off the rock of the castle wall. Another blow to the head was all that was required to finish off the meek sales manager. He, too, floated lifelessly towards the surface, as Vanessa swam from the window of the castle into Tim's arms. She folded against him quite nicely, head against his chest, as they settled gently onto the top of the treasure chest.

It was the red-headed hostess who discovered him, lying face first at the bottom of the stairs. He assumed that someone needing the washroom had sent for her, which in a restaurant so large meant that he probably hadn't been out for long. With her help, Tim crawled forward onto his knees and rested there while what little he could see of the basement hallway spun around him. Above the general din of the restaurant he could hear the intense whispering of a gathering crowd at the top of the stairs.

He had to move. There was a puddle—not a large one—of blood on the floor. Lifting his head, Tim could make out the crisp white of the hostess's blouse, and was im-

mediately alarmed by the gasp that escaped her mouth. Now he could feel blood on his face and taste it, too. The room spun again; he had been much happier with his head on the cool of the basement floor.

"Sir, do you need an ambulance?" the hostess asked. Tim didn't know. For some reason he was thinking of the aquarium he had owned when he was a kid. If he were drunk before, he felt entirely too sober now.

"Do you need an ambulance?!"

"No!"

"You can't just lie there on the floor."

Then the hostess's arm reached under his shoulder and Tim felt himself hurled, more than lifted, into the open door of the men's washroom. He was surprised that the hostess's small frame could wield such strength, and stood blinking at her in the bright, pinkish halogen of the washroom. Then blood dripped from his face onto the floor and he reluctantly turned to the mirror.

It wasn't as bad as he'd feared. He'd split his forehead, but most of the cut was buried beneath his left eyebrow. He might need a couple of stitches. Tim couldn't be certain until he cleared away some of the blood. Worst was the blood that had run down his face and stained the top of his suit jacket and shirt. The jacket he could probably have cleaned, but the shirt was ruined.

"You've got to get something on that," the hostess said as she wet a wad of paper towel. She was helpful. Tim liked her even better than before and was momentarily happy, just the two of them in the tiny washroom. Then pain washed over him; not the gash, but the dull roar of his head where it had struck the step. He was very thirsty and sat down heavily on the toilet.

The hostess placed the wet paper towel into his hand and Tim transferred it to his forehead, realizing he had to staunch the flow of blood. For the first time he thought of the others upstairs and wondered whether they had missed him yet or connected him to the tumult at the bottom of the stairs. He knew it had been an accident, and one easily explained, but felt ashamed.

"You hold that there and clean yourself up," the hostess said. "I have to see the manager."

"Don't get the manager," Tim managed weakly. He confronted his bloody visage again. "This was my fault. I'm not going to make a fuss."

"I have to tell him what's going on here."

"I understand," Tim said. "All I want is a glass of cold water."

After she left Tim wiped at the blood

on his face. The crisp, recycled paper towel smeared more than it absorbed, forcing him to constantly roll off and wet more. He didn't know what to do with the bloodied remains; the paper towel would clog the toilet, but he could hardly leave it in the small wastepaper basket. The urgency of the situation abated after he had urinated and eventually his neck and face took on the reddish appearance of having been rubbed raw, with which he was marginally satisfied. He decided to leave the bloodied paper towel in the garbage; it couldn't be helped.

As the blood on the gash, which he carefully cleaned again, began to dry, he knew he would need stitches. However, the more pressing problem was how to leave the celebration without anyone discovering what had happened to him. He sat down on the toilet again, loosened his tie and held the wet paper towel against his split forehead. Stupid of him, really, though the incident wouldn't reflect badly on him professionally, just socially. That was the crucial difference.

There was a knock on the door and the hostess reappeared, bringing a heaven-sent pint jar of water, the majority of which Tim drank off immediately. "How are you feeling," she asked.

"Better," Tim answered. Well, a little dizzy. His head was pounding, and the cut itself had begun to throb a warm, wet pain. But the hostess presented quite an amazingly specimen for him to concentrate on.

"Mr. Pedari—my manager—says he respects your right to privacy," the hostess said, blinking those green eyes again. "But he insists you go to the hospital to be checked up. He's already called a taxi."

"Not alone," Tim answered, peering up from his seat. He could get Carolyn to accompany him, maybe. And she could be the one to make his excuses to the others. He was surprised he hadn't thought of that before.

"No, I'm coming," the hostess said. She smiled bravely, though Tim knew she would rather be anywhere else. "When you're ready, I'll get your coat."

"Is there another way out of here?"

"There's the delivery entrance, out into the back lane." She pointed down the long hallway that ran beneath the restaurant.

"Uh-huh," Tim replied, rising slowly. "My name's Tim. What's yours?"

Andrew Daley lives somewhere between Little Italy and the Village of Brockton.



MONKEYS

FICTION BY STUART ROSS

We were talking about monkeys and monkey cinema. *Planet of the Apes*, of course—that goes without saying. All the parts: *Beneath*, *Battle for*, *Escape From*, they were all good. *Monkey Business*, someone said, and someone said that was the Marx Brothers, and someone else said yeah, but there was also one with Cary Grant and Marilyn Monroe. And Ed, how about Ed, that monkey baseball player—he sure could pitch—and all those Clint Eastwood orangutans. They were big and orange. We wondered about why there were no proboscis monkey films—those'd for sure be solid hits if the monkey was paired up with, for

example, Harvey Keitel, or maybe Reese Witherspoon. A scientist proboscis monkey would work, or even a surfer proboscis monkey. Or a proboscis monkey in a classroom that everyone thought was just a new student and it aced all the tests. Someone mentioned *Gorillas in the Mist* and we wondered if that was a monkey movie because, in fact, none of the monkeys wore clothes in that one. You have to wear clothes to be a monkey movie. Otherwise, what's the point? Then someone said something about bananas and it reminded us about food, and the guy whose house we were at offered us grilled cheese sandwiches, and someone said how

when they were a kid they thought it was "girl cheese sandwiches," and then we were off talking about sandwiches. In those days, we thought we'd live forever. Nothing could stop us.

Stuart Ross lives in a housing co-op near Christie and Dupont streets. He has authored numerous books and chapbooks of poetry and fiction. He is also editor of the literary magazine Who Torched Rancho Diablo?, and a founder of the Toronto Small Press Fair. His poetry collection Farmer Gloomy's New Hybrid (ECW, 1999) was short listed for the 2000 Trillium Book Award.

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My aunt died 4 years ago, and since then, my uncle hasn't gotten in much current stock. Even his Pokémon is last year's! He mostly makes his money on cigarettes.



I go to school part-time (Business) and I volunteer at my church (Protestant). But I also work during the week at an off-shore holdings company. It's a big company with a chance to make big money.



What we do is kind of complicated, but basically, we sell futures on all kinds of items. Even things like bottles of wine!



You can put money into almost anything these days.

I work there in the evenings, calling people and getting them to invest.



My boss, Rose, is so smart. She's only 40, but she also owns a Bagel-hut and a coffee-shop.



We went there together once for coffee-break and she didn't tell me until almost an hour that she owned the place. She likes me and is helping me take some courses to get accredited.



I used to see this guy and we would go for coffee and hang out sometimes. I liked him, kind of. But anyway, he was really western and I'd see how he would look at me sometimes.



One time he told me I had some kind of "new-immigrant" disease and that all I talked about was money.



We fought and I told him he thought he was better than me.

What he said really hurt me, though, and I thought about it for a long while after that.



I still do.

I ride the bus to Cannon Street and I look at all the ads. I like Ikea but I don't really like Tommy Hilfiger. I don't understand that stuff at all.



Does that make me plain?

I used to think I was very sophisticated. I wanted to have my own house and my own business and live the independent life. Now, I'm not sure what that means.



I look at all the billboards but I don't see myself in any of them.



After I dust and open up, I look through the new magazines, like I always do. But halfway through the first one, I'm already getting bored.



And when I hear my uncle coming down those creaky stairs, I'm happy for the distraction.

cho 2000



THE STREAMLINED MAN

Percy Faith smoothed out rock, jazzed the classics, and became one of the most important musicians Canada has produced.

ESSAY BY ALFRED HOLDEN

Sitting high on a bookkeeper's stool, Percy Faith bites into a crisp Northern Spy apple. Spotting him in the corner, Einar Rechnittzer, a reporter, steps toward the young musician. "You see only a sleek-headed youngster, nattily dressed, smiling, whom, if you were a truant officer, you would be inclined to order back to school," Rechnittzer wrote, a few days later, in the *Star Weekly*. The date is sometime in May, 1931, and the place is "one of the largest radio studios in Toronto," probably CKNC, among the earliest Canadian broadcasters. This young man is just twenty-two years old, but he has already made a name for himself. Indeed, "We single him out for your acquaintance," Rechnittzer wrote, "because, of all in his business in Toronto, his work is considered most distinctive."

Faith's "business"—really an art form, but rooted in fiscal reality—was the making of "modern" music for radio. Radio, so instant, so wireless, was transforming everything, people thought. Out of the ether, magically, it provided stock prices, bedtime stories, even advertising—a sort of Jazz Age internet; a cause of frustration early on when there were technical problems, but soon a source of excitement and wonder. "How is modern music made?" Rechnittzer would ask his readers, rhetorically, reporting from the radio studio. "Who mixes the ingredients for the delightful 1931 versions of the classics, and the fascinating potpourri of jazz airs laddled out to us these days in . . . staggering quantity from our dance halls, our theatres and our radios? Who is responsible for the blah-blah of this saxophone in this orchestra, playing one of our dearest song and dance favourites, or the vo-do-deo-do of that trumpet in that orchestra? Who, in short, makes the popular orchestral renditions of music to-day so characteristic of the age?"

Faith eased off the stool and broadened his smile. Here, fresh-faced, apple in one hand, pencil and paper in the other, was one of the "culprits"—a musical arranger, the "unseen and unsung member of a popular orchestra," who writes the part

for every instrument, weaving them around a melody until, "much as a writer weaves a finished play from the merest shreds of a plot," the three-dimensional whole emerges. Thanks to radio, Percy Faith, in May of 1931, was a busy man, in demand to satisfy the insatiable appetite of amplitude modulation (AM radio, the only band then) for content—fresh programs, new music, variations on any theme. He revised, that very day, the arrangement for the theme music of *Canada on Parade*, one of the first programs to air coast-to-coast. ("Would you like to hear it?" he offered, hurrying over to a studio piano.) He had lately been one half of a duo, Faith and Hope (Hope was singer Joe Allabough), which mixed music and comedy in a program broadcast live on another station, CKCL, Wednesday nights at ten-thirty. Since the fall of 1929, Faith had written arrangements for just about all of the big—as big as radio in Canada got in those early days—radio programs. "Sometimes he would work all day and all night and all the next day trying to keep up with orders for his work," someone remembered later. The shows' names—Eveready, Wrigley, Neilson, Imperial Tobacco, Spic and Span—communicate the commercial character of the Canadian radio landscape before the CBC.

"Asked if he thought jazz was passing, he said he doubted it," Rechnittzer reported back, on an important question of any age: public misgivings about the suspect tastes of youth. "He thinks it has quietened, softened, has reached its sentimental age." No one could have known it at the time, but Faith was right—the remarkable era of the big bands (swinging music, sweetly played) would shortly dawn across North America, and redefine, at least for a time, the character of popular music. Faith did not, strictly speaking, play jazz, but he understood it, just as, it would turn out, he understood so much else.

Faith's influence on music in the twentieth century was so far-reaching, so wide-ranging that it is still heard in the twenty-first. Yet, it is possible, especially if

you are under fifty years old, that you have never heard of him. Among other things, Faith has been credited as the inventor of, or certainly the person who best perfected, a genre: "Beautiful Music," now almost extinct, but which was once the mainstay of FM radio. This story spins out into a neat tale. One of the words the nineteen-thirties gave to the English language was "streamline," which at the time referred to how architects and industrial designers were smoothing out and taking the clutter off the designs of everything from skyscrapers to pencil sharpeners. One of Faith's CBC radio shows of the period (the arranger landed at the newly-created Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, as it was then known, in 1933, the year after it was created) was called *Streamline*, picking up on how an arranger could do to music what architects and designers were doing to buildings and products. Faith was twenty-six. Working as the CBC's staff arranger and conductor, he developed a smooth instrumental sound that could be applied to almost any melody, from baroque to (as he would one day prove) Beatles. "We jazzed the classics, and classicized the current pop music," said Faith. "Symphonic swing," some would call the lush orchestral music, heavy on strings. "He is the unemployed fiddle player's dream man," a columnist for *Liberty* magazine noted. "He has no hesitation whatever in saying that he thinks the only ideal orchestra is one that is at least half stringed instruments."

Like the futuristic buildings, cars, and railroad locomotives the Depression era is famous for, Faith's music seemed ahead of its time, and probably was. "Later on, American conductors and arrangers such as Andre Kostelanetz and Morton Gould would use symphony-sized orchestras comprised of classical woodwinds, brass, and percussion to perform popular songs," the Canadian trombonist Murray Ginsberg wrote. Faith was "adept at applying classical procedures to the popular repertory," said one critic. "He made use of the late 19th-century orchestra, typically with emphasis on strings, and with the occasional addition of saxophones or chorus."

For a number of reasons, Faith *was* doing

something new. At the CBC he benefited from what young employees often find at fledgling organizations: a limited budget that made it necessary to innovate, and a lack of constraints that made it possible to do so. "George Taggart [a CBC brass] said, 'This is your show, you do as you please—and here is your budget,'" Faith would remember. Among the much-imitated innovations he tried out on his later show, *Music by Faith*, was the use of 'vocalise'—women singers who would not sing, but create special effects.

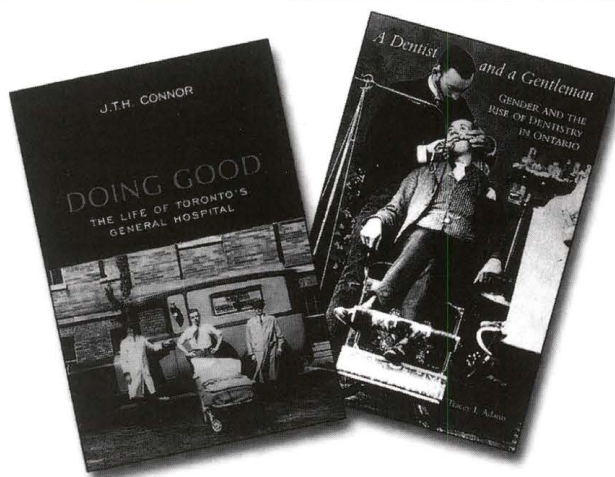
Toronto had been known as North America's choral capital when Faith was a youth, and perhaps this had something to do with his extensive use of singers. "The budget got me about thirty men [per show], and I had something like twenty-five, thirty dollars left over," Faith recalled in the sixties. "There was a trio around the studio at that time—three girls—and they said they would do the show for five dollars each." A few of their friends were recruited to round out the group, for a total of six. "I added them to the flutes and to

vibraphones," said Faith, "and we got fantastic sounds with them. . . . they add the feeling of 'the orchestra's human after all'—it hums and oohs and aahs."

The most important early CBC studio was located in a battery factory at 803 Davenport Road, just west of Bathurst Street in midtown Toronto. For a time, Faith rented a two-storey house at 104 Burnside Drive, at the crest of the Bathurst hill, so he could walk to work. These studios were inherited from CKNC, perhaps the very station where Faith was interviewed in 1931, the "NC" standing for National Carbon, maker of Eveready batteries. It seems like an odd connection, until you realize that many of the early investors in radio really had something else to sell—radio sets, for instance, or, in the case of Eveready, power for radio equipment.

On Davenport Road Faith faced obstacles. There was the rumble and clang of streetcars—then, as now, stored and serviced at the Toronto Transit Commission's busy Hillcrest yards, right under the studio's windows. Yet the acoustics inside the factory were "dead." "We had to put [supplementary] microphones in the lavatories to get an echo-chamber effect," Howard Cable, who succeeded Faith as staff conductor/arranger around 1940, said in 2000. "Sometimes people would come in and flush—that was a bit of a problem."

Adversity's upside was the critical and popular success of Faith's radio program, which was not—as some people believed—a religious show. The players included Toronto's best musicians of the day, among them trumpeter Robert Farnon, who went on to fame in England, Hyman Goodman, dean of Canadian violinists, and Albert Pratz, who would later become the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's concert master. Faith's string writing "was so spectacular that only the best violinists could play the parts," remembered Harold Sumberg, later a violinist for the T.S.O., and who played on Faith's first show. "It's music for moderns, treated with originality and vitality," opined *Maclean's* in 1940, by which time CBC's *Music By Faith* had been picked up by the Mutual Broadcasting System in the U.S. where, oddly, it won the ear and approval of gossip columnist Walter Winchell. "Don't miss Percy Faith's orchestra from Toronto," Winchell, not given to praise much and not fond of things foreign, wrote in his syndicated column. "Full of strings and melody—best since Paul Whiteman's vogue."



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The price of success, for Percy Faith, was a hectic schedule. "With only seven days between broadcasts, Faith hasn't much time to sit around and wait for the divine afflatus to come upon him. He *has* to work fast," Wallace Reyburn told *Maclean's* readers. "[R]emember that there are thirty pieces in the orchestra, and separate parts have to be written out for each of them." Colleagues from New York "were amazed to learn that Faith turned out the whole *Music by Faith* program by himself." There were regular concerts for the *Toronto Star's* Santa Claus Fund at the elegant—and very streamlined—auditorium atop Eaton's College Street store. Faith even wrote a tune, "Cheerio! (I'm Off to See the King and Queen)," for the 1939 royal visit to Canada, and was in charge of music for a round-the-world broadcast sponsored by the CBC during the king and queen's stay.

It seemed to friends like horn player Samuel Hersenhoren, and others, that Percy Faith worked all the time. While at the CBC, Faith and his family had moved to a home at 7 Westoverhill Road, in tree-lined north Toronto. (He'd married Mary Palange long before, in 1928; more recently they'd had a daughter, Marilyn, and a son, Peter.) There, he'd fitted up a basement workroom, "an exceedingly comfortable little den," with panelled walls and big leather chairs. Games tables were set up in an adjacent area and, a guest observed, "while several of his friends have an energetic and none-too-quiet game of ping-pong . . . he can curl up in an easy chair in the corner and, with blank score sheet on his lap and pencil in hand, turn out a sweeter than sweet arrangement of 'Love in Bloom.' In between choruses," the visitor wrote, "he's likely to join in the ping-pong. It's one of his favourite games, just as it was the pet diversion of the late George Gershwin."

The call would come, inevitably, but would Percy Faith go? The popularity of his *Music by Faith* in the U.S.—he was

No. 5 on *Variety's* 1939 list of top attention-getters—had registered among the leading lights of American popular music. "[W]e used to get calls from Paul Whiteman, Tommy Dorsey, [André] Kostelanetz," Faith said in a 1975 radio interview at CBC Vancouver. "How many men are you using?" they'd ask. "Do you want to come down here?" "He has not succumbed to the alluring offers," *Maclean's* reported in the summer of 1940. Faith, who liked to fish, knew that lures have hooks. He was aware that some of the biggest stars in showbiz were more showmen than musicians; he worried



Faith (centre, back to camera) conducting the CBC orchestra, circa 1940.

about playing second fiddle to them. In fact, the great Paul Whiteman—by 1940 the patriarch of symphonic bandleaders—had shrewdly found that the banner 'Paul Whiteman's Orchestra' "looked almost as good outside a cabaret, on ocean liners and cruise boats, as the more significant announcement, 'Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra.'" He formed a corporation, "farming out combinations of musicians, in any size band required, to be shipped where requested."

"Whiteman, as a matter of fact, said he was going to retire," remembered Faith, who was skeptical. "He [said] he would say, 'Paul Whiteman Presents Percy Faith.' I was a little suspicious that I'd suddenly become his arranger, and he's back up there leading."

Yet through the spring and summer of 1940, the planets were aligning for Percy Faith. On June 14th, the gifted, eccentric

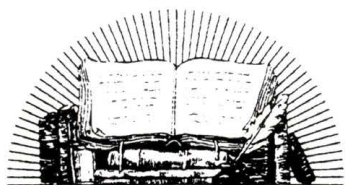
pianist Oscar Levant came to Toronto for a concert, *Swing in Symphony*, at Massey Hall, conducted by Percy Faith. The *Toronto Star's* reviewer, Augustus Bridle, who was dean of the city's music critics, saw Faith as a "musical meddler," and was unsure the local talent would measure up. "Most of these folk [in the audience] had heard Levant on the air and seen him, informationing on the screen," wrote Bridle. "Few of them had even seen the music-master of C.B.C. or his band of 40 in symphony uniforms."

The orchestra was placed on Massey Hall's gallery, in a jungle of potted palms.

It consisted of "about 18 violins and violas, cellos, two double basses, six trumpets and trombones, one tuba, four saxophones, two clarinets, bassoon, flute, piccolo, percussion, harps and whatever else makes a joyful symphonic jangle." Right off the top, Faith's "cleverly swingized" arrangements struck a chord with Bridle, who seemed surprised, finding them refreshing and upbeat ("no superfluous calisthenics," he wrote in next day's *Star*). Several popular numbers (such as Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are" and a "pepped up"

"Parade of Wooden Soldiers") were presented. Later, the audience would hear Faith's own modern operetta, "Radio."

Meanwhile, Oscar Levant ambled onto the stage. Without ceremony—beyond taking a full minute to adjust the height of his piano bench—wham! He "smacked" into George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." Faith's orchestra eased in smoothly behind him, and the rising, urbane "Rhapsody"—the signature tune of the interwar era, that jazzy, "nervous specimen of modern music"—filled the hall. They played the planned set, but it wasn't enough; an encore or two, but still the audience hailed. Finally, Levant lit a cigarette, which he propped by a microphone between puffs, and on and on they played—Oscar Levant, Percy Faith, and the CBC orchestra, through *nine* encores that night on Shuter Street. "I doubt if Gershwin ever played it so well," Bridle



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would say in his *Star* review, but the American piano player, sweating in an interview after the concert, pointed to Percy Faith. "The guy," said Levant, "is exceptionally talented."

Another limelight, indirect but important, shone on Percy Faith on July 20, 1940, when "I'll Never Smile Again," a song written and composed by Ruth Lowe, his friend and CBC radio colleague, hit the top of the U.S. hit parade, where it would stay for seven weeks. "I'll Never Smile Again" was to be the biggest hit that Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra would ever have. And while no one knew it at the time, the 78-RPM side recorded by Dorsey's band in New York City on May 23rd was a watershed in the history of popular music. Singing on the disc was Dorsey's cocky young crooner, Frank Sinatra. "I'll Never Smile Again" was really Sinatra's hit, a brilliant song, brilliantly performed—the song that made him. "From now on, people would come to see Sinatra as much as to see the band." More than that, "I'll Never Smile Again" helped usher in a new vocalist era, in which the singers, not the bands, were the stars. Peggy Lee, Doris Day, and others who'd typically played cameo roles singing a few lines in big band pieces would soon find their own names displacing their orchestra leaders' as the star attraction.

The popular version of the "I'll Never Smile Again" story casts Lowe as an amateur songwriter who produced a one-hit wonder. Indeed, to get Dorsey's attention, she had camped, fan-style, outside the stage door at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto when Dorsey was playing at the bandshell in the summer of 1939. But the truth was that Lowe was an accomplished musician. She grew up in west-end Toronto, plugging into the city's music scene at an early age, and, in the thirties, still in her teens, signed on to play piano with the orchestra of Ina Ray Hutton, one of the few successful all-girl bands of the period.

Touring with Hutton, Lowe met and married a Chicago song publisher, Harold Cohen, who died suddenly of kidney failure. Lowe returned to Toronto to be with her family, and her grief inspired the song, which she wrote at the home of her mother, Pearl, who by 1939 had rented a third-floor flat at Ernsbert Court, the apartment house at 723 Bloor Street West, on the south side at Christie Street (their telephone number: ME1rose 1092).

Lowe's son, Tom Sandler, remembered in 2000 that his mother "apparently let

Percy Faith listen to it [at work], and he thought that it was really quite a song." Faith arranged and presented "I'll Never Smile Again" on his CBC show, making an acetate demo for Lowe—the one she finally convinced Carmen Mastren, Dorsey's guitarist, to listen to. On it, Faith's strings were as smooth as a Packard straight-eight. Though Dorsey's version was the hit—Sinatra exploited the song's slow tempo and maudlin tone for a sound that resonated perfectly in the early months of the Second World War—Faith considered "I'll Never Smile Again," the top hit of 1940, as a tipping point in his career. "I began to receive bids from the U.S.," he remembered in 1952.

But it was not offers from the likes of Paul Whiteman, or acclaim and confidence gained from concerts with Levant at Massey Hall, nor the success of Ruth Lowe's song that finally pulled Percy Faith, now thirty-one, from hometown Toronto. No, it was something quintessentially Canadian.

His name is not recorded. There were others who came before, and many more who would follow. "In 1940, a CBC executive ordered the *Music by Faith* budget cut," a columnist in *High Fidelity* would explain many years later. By September, the show—the most popular in Canada and the only one that showcased the CBC's prowess south of the border, where the weekly program out of Toronto climbed to third in the national ratings—had been cancelled. As Faith remembered, "when you're making ninety dollars a week and suddenly there's none in, and you have two kids running around the house, you get hungry." After the cut ("Same story every year—any year at all," Faith's friend Norman Campbell, a former CBC television producer, observed in 2000), Percy Faith weighed the U.S. offers anew. Indeed, in June, just after the Levant concert, he found himself on a train to Chicago, with just a trunk and a suitcase, to answer an emergency summons to fill in as conductor of the *Carnation Contended Hour*, an NBC network show broadcast from there. The program's maestro, Josef Pasternak, had suffered a heart attack at rehearsal, and died. NBC was trying out replacements, four weeks at a time, through the summer. "I went down and did the four, and made more money on those four than I did in the full year on the *Music by Faith* show." The Toronto conductor was flabbergasted; when NBC offered him the job permanently, "I went."

The downside in Chicago was that the *Carnation Contented Hour*, sponsored by the Carnation milk company, was to *Streamline* and *Music by Faith* what a Model T Ford was to a sleek Chrysler Airflow. "I felt that [at the CBC] we were sometimes ten or fifteen years ahead," and the U.S. networks about that distance behind the times, Faith told a radio interviewer in 1958. "I slipped back about thirty years when I accepted that show."

The program, presented every Monday night, certainly had its archaic qualities. Instead of a slick opening theme, the music show started with the sponsor's jingle—a commercial—ponderously sung by a chorus: "There's contentment at the close of day/when the cows wend their peaceful way/down through shady lanes and nooks/going wading through the brooks"—the long way back to the barn, surely. (Strangely, the claim was made that the milk was "irradiated.") From premiering new works like "I'll Never Smile Again," Faith found himself rearranging such leaden classics as Brahms' "Hungarian Dance No. 1" and waltzes by Franz Lehar. Just the same, for Faith, who by now felt ready for a crack at the big time, it was an entree into the United States. He moved his family to a home in Wilmette, on Chicago's north side. Among the projects that kept Faith's talents sharp was an operetta, *The Gandy Dancer*, for which he won a prize. When the *Contented Hour* moved to New York in January, 1946, the Faiths settled at Great Neck, Long Island, a short rail-commute through Queens from NBC's studios at Rockefeller Centre in Manhattan.

Yet Percy Faith still counted himself among music's avant-garde. "Anyone who knows me or my music realizes that I stand with the progressives of jazz," he would reflect, a bit later, on accusations that his work on programs like the *Contented Hour*, or *The Pause That Refreshes* at CBS, where he moved in 1947 (guess who was the spon-

sor), made him "a symbol of commercialism." "I like bebop," he told the *Star Weekly*, which sent reporter Charles Dexter to interview Faith in New York in 1952. "I often go to cellar cafes to hear it. . . . But I've learned that no one can take the public where it doesn't want to go. Only a handful of musical highbrows enjoy modern jazz no matter how extraordinary it may be."

Then, as before, Faith saw his role as an

ting sides" (what they did in the era of 78s) for major labels like Mercury and Decca, but also smaller ones like Allegro, Design, Majestic, Varsity, Royale and Rondolette. It was just a walk from Columbia Broadcasting in New York to Columbia Records, where Faith moved in 1950 to wear several hats. "I could record with as many men and do as many albums as I like," he remembered. But, as director of Colum-

bia's popular division, part of his contract said "I must help develop these youngsters." CBS had on hand a veritable war surplus of still-young singers from the tail end of the big band era, and some altogether fresh men and women. Percy Faith's all-in-one job was to coach them, pick (or write) some promising material, do the arrangements, and in some cases, as he did with Tony Bennett and Johnny Mathis, go into the studio and back them up—musically and otherwise—at their recording sessions.

It may have been Faith's instincts, or his kindness, but he managed to pull some of them back from the brink. "Tony Bennett was actually on his last four sides . . . and then he would be through," Faith found, not long after his arrival. Columbia "had given him a year, and nothing much happened." So he studied Bennett's material and technique. "He began his career by singing rhythm

songs in too loud a voice and at too high a pitch. I advised him to sing smoothly and reduced his register by two notes," Faith said a year or so later. And "I did have this song in my desk, which I had planned for myself. But it needed words, and I turned it over to Tony." "Because of You" sold more than one-and-a-half-million copies, making Bennett a star.

Rosemary Clooney wasn't thriving at Columbia either, despite being known through big bands and radio. Faith added folksier tunes to her repertoire. She made a hit with one of them, "Come On-A My



Faith conducting his orchestra in the nineteen-fifties.

interpreter who understood "the shopkeeper, clerk, high school girl or truck driver" who might be repelled by abstract, distracting jazz. "The arranger can enrich recordings with advanced ideas. I haven't compromised—I still record music with my own special stamp for albums which are intended for a long-term sale. But I would get no hearing at all if I did not use my energy and experience to create music the people like best."

The reference to "albums" said a lot. By 1952, the radio artist was recording in a big way. He had begun in the forties, "cut-

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House,” and it was on and up from there. By 1957, according to some later liner notes, “she amassed more than thirty hits,” five topping the million mark.

And so forth at the label, as Bennett, Clooney, Mathis, Day, Guy Mitchell, and even a gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson, were moved onto the charts. On the hit parade, too, by 1952, had been some of Faith’s own recordings, in a range of tempos—the velvety “Song from Moulin Rouge,” the lively Latin number, “Delicado,” and an arresting, unusual version of “April in Portugal.” Few artists benefited as much as Faith from the new hi-fi (for high fidelity—that is, sound close to the original), which highlighted strings. Pressed on smooth, long-playing vinyl, and played on the new FM radio, the full, delicate sound of Faith’s arrangements was finally audible. “This is music in the true romantic manner: sumptuous, melodic, and brimming with beautiful harmonies,” an anonymous writer would state on the notes to the LP *Percy Faith Plays Romantic Music*, released in 1953. The album’s cover, a colourful Kodachrome of a couple sharing moments at a picnic, mirrored the audible realism inside the sleeve. Faith’s more upbeat interpretations of Latin music, on such albums as *Viva*, featuring Mexican songs, and *Malaguena: The Music of Cuba*, shimmered with strings and percussion and were big sellers. Hi-fi: in the fifties the very term came to mean clarity and modernity. Compared to hi-fi, the comings of stereo in 1958, and digital in the eighties, were merely fine tuning.

“Each Tuesday I begin to write arrangements. I often work from 10 a.m. until 2 the following morning,” Faith would say about his work habits (unchanged from his CBC days) as he polished music for his own records, and for various artists at Columbia in New York in the fifties. Others would say that the job made him “one of the ten most influential music men in the United States,” and that Percy Faith had reached “the peak of the music pyramid.”

Yet Toronto was never taken out of Percy Faith: not from his soul, not from his music. A certain self-effacing reserve—virtuous from a human, moral point of view, perhaps a handicap in the rough, higher echelons of the entertainment business—characterized his work at Columbia. He had a tough time breaking into film music. “They will not hire a man if he lives in Toronto or New York—you have to be there [in Hollywood],” Faith said. But in 1955, when Doris Day insisted Faith do the score for *Love Me or Leave Me*, he earned an

told a U.S. senate committee investigating the music-publishing industry that the songs kids liked were just “so much trash,” and having a bad effect on the morals, ideals, and tastes of the general public. Yet a subheadline on a United Press item covering the hearing, carried in a Toronto newspaper, read “NOT SHARED BY FAITH.” “He feels the oldsters don’t have too much right to throw stones at rock ‘n’ roll,” reported the *Star*, whose writer tracked Faith down at his parents’ home on Castlefield Avenue in North York.

Though he didn’t say it that day, the fact was that, if Faith didn’t like rock yet, he saw more possibilities in it than in “Yes, We Have No Bananas,” “Mairzy Doats,” and “Barney Google.” “In trying to be liberal about it,” he recalled in the sixties, “I discovered that the thing that gets them is the rhythm.” In 1963, Faith produced *Themes for Young Lovers*, an album made up entirely of Top 40 rock ‘n’ roll hits, to which he gave a big-orchestra treatment. Among the songs he arranged—all were more classic than anyone knew at the time—were “Rhythm of the Rain,” “Up on the Roof,” “Our Day Will Come,” “I Will Follow You,” and “The End of the World.” *Themes for Young Lovers* went gold; the jacket notes of the sequel, *More Themes for Young Lovers*, poked fun at the apparent contradiction here. A teenager is told to turn his radio

down: “Don’t you youngsters ever listen to good music nowadays?” says the annoyed father. A year later, the story goes, dad brings home *More Themes*—Faith orchestrations of the hits he had earlier deplored, songs like “Sugar Shack,” “Wives and Lovers,” and “Popsicles and Icicles.” “I guess you’re not really so old after all, Dad,” the son says. “Have a ball!” declared the epilogue to the story. An amateur reviewer wrote on Amazon.com’s web site in 1999, commenting on a compact disc reissue of *Themes*, “These arrangements were by no means ‘elevator’ versions of the original songs, but tasteful treatments which highlighted the quality of the song writing which made them hits.” Heard in



A mid-career publicity portrait.

Oscar nomination. Faith tried, but ultimately failed, to help Sarah Vaughan—“one of the most beautiful voices in the world”—cross over from jazz to mainstream. On “Music Row” at CBS in New York, Faith had to contend with the absolute rule of Columbia’s “famous bearded Mitch Miller . . . the all-powerful A and R [for artists and repertory] man.” And while they seem to have gotten along, “at some point Percy was shafted out, or something happened to him,” and his power as a music executive was on the wane.

But Faith’s albums sold, even as rock ‘n’ roll stole the imagination and record dollars—and, some thought, the minds—of youth. In 1957, a panicking Bing Crosby

2000, the album's sound and songs evoke images of the smart places, cars, and fashions of the day: open-air shopping centres, Ford Galaxies with red upholstery, women wearing white gloves, and Jackie Kennedy's pillbox hats.

It was modern music, but in its essentials it was vintage Faith, and in particular ways a manifestation of Toronto—*old* Toronto—of all things. "Percy Faith declares his musical philosophy is based on his experiences as a youth," a *Star Weekly* writer said in the fifties; "TORONTO EMERGES IN THE SMOOTH MR. FAITH," a headline of the same era declared. And it was so true.

Percy Faith was born in Toronto on April 7, 1908, the son of Abraham Faith, a tailor, and Minnie. He was first of eight Faith children who grew up at 171 Baldwin Street, in the Jewish pushcart market district that later became Kensington Market, and a few blocks west at 256 Palmerston Avenue, south of College Street, where they moved in 1924. "Our family was not a musical family," he would insist, but Percy must have broken the mould because, at six, he could be heard on Baldwin Street playing "ditties" on the family's dinnerware. His mom signed him

up for violin lessons; when he seemed allergic, she switched him to piano. And it *was* a musical neighbourhood. "Our families lived next door [on Palmerston]," remembered Toronto trumpet player Morris Isen. "Percy's mother would complain that her son couldn't practise the piano properly when I practised my trumpet."

Faith attended Lord Lansdowne public school, meanwhile studying piano at the Canadian Academy on Spadina Road, and wondering whether he should instead become an architect. (He later saw the new City Hall as a healthy sign Toronto had lost some of its reserve, though he still has his own.) At twelve, he landed a job participating in one of the memorable phenomena of the era—performing live to silent movies at the Iola Flicker Theatre, deep in Toronto's east end. The boy who, as a man, would arrange and rearrange, reinterpret and reinvent music from Bach to rock, learned a bit about improvisation here. "Youthful Percy didn't even see the movie beforehand," by one account. He'd arrive on the Bloor-Danforth streetcar (the theatre paid his fare), "dash into the darkened theatre, sit down at the piano [with a stack of sheet music or phone books on

the bench, for added height], and wait. The title, 'Triumph of Love,' or some such thing, would flash onto the screen and he'd at once launch into some 'love' music. He hadn't the least idea what the opening scene would be, but as soon as it appeared he would have to switch to something appropriate—perhaps 'ocean-liner departing' music, or 'football-game' music." (Faith would one day record albums on those themes.) "I was 15 when I played solo after school to Bill Hart's gunfire and the Talmadge's love scenes," Faith himself would recall.

With one breadwinner and eight kids in the family, the Faiths weren't well off. Their move, in the twenties, was to Palmerston Avenue, not the boulevard with its mansions, broad lawns, and fancy street lamps. Yet Faith was not working to support his folks, but, ambitiously, to pay for music lessons at the Toronto Conservatory of Music (later renamed the Royal Conservatory). The conservatory's excellence was known across North America; its enrolment, by the early twenties, would rise to five thousand students, boosted, in part, by the excitement generated by radio. But Faith probably knew the music school mainly

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by its hulking presence at College Street and University Avenue near his home—a red brick pile, three storeys high, on the southwest corner, capped by a wide cornice. The building was connected to a church-like concert hall with cupolas on its peaked roof.

"I was going to school during the day, you know, studying Latin, French, history, arithmetic—and music," Faith remembered. "I didn't have time for baseball." No, he didn't; the conservatory was run under the strictest discipline by musicians who were, or thought of themselves, as legends. Ernest MacMillan would become principal in 1926; composer Healey Willan was vice-principal while Faith attended and had been head of theory. At fourteen, the boy was studying harmonic structure under Louis Waizman ("purportedly born in the same house as Mozart") and piano with virtuoso Frank Welsman, founder of the first Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Waizman, a "musician of the old school," noticed young Faith's tendency to "jazz" the music he studied. "I was ready to jump two or three years ahead of what I was doing," Faith recalled. "But I was told

by my harmony teacher, 'You must learn the basics. You must learn Bach, all the preludes and fugues, on the piano, then orchestrate them for string quartet, for brass quartet; learn Beethoven. Learn that foundation, and then when it's become part of you, forget it and go on.'" At the conservatory's annual concert in 1923, Faith made his concert debut at Massey Hall, with a piano performance of Liszt's "Hungarian Fantasy."

But he would not be a concert pianist. One day in 1926, after the move to Palmerston Avenue, Faith was at home practising. The only other family member around was his sister Gertrude, who was three. He heard her scream. Rushing upstairs he found her aflame. She had been playing with matches. "I took her clothes off while it was burning," he remembered, "and it burnt my hands." Both kids would mend, but Faith, then eighteen, changed

direction. Unable to play the piano for nine months, "I put a pencil in the bandages in my hand," he said, "and I started to study composition. When I found that then I knew what I wanted to do."

Reflecting on the incident later in life, Faith said, "they say something good comes out of everything bad." And indeed, "it made a new life for me." When talking pictures came along, for instance, Faith was ready to arrange songs for the newly-swinging hotel orchestras, or do the music at the department store restaurants, like the glittering, Jazz Age Arcadian Court atop the new wing of Simpson's on



Faith with his daughter, Marilyn, circa 1966.

Queen Street. "Often, when I played at a restaurant, I had lots of fun in naming the note in which a dish crashed to the floor from a waitress' loaded tray, or calling the tone of the squeak made by the chairs as the patrons pushed them back to rise from the table."

By the time he landed in that radio studio on Davenport Road in May of 1931, Percy Faith, twenty-two, Toronto-born and shaped by the city, was already one of the most rounded, experienced, and accomplished musicians in Canada. "His life has been colourful," the *Star* reported. "And his ideas are ambitious."

"We went up to the balcony of a Montreal theatre," Norman Campbell, the CBC television director, remembered in 2000, "and saw *The Guns of Navarone*." Percy Faith had conducted the

music on the live TV special *Twenty-five Years Tonight*, broadcast out of Montreal, celebrating the CBC's twenty-fifth anniversary, and he and Campbell hit it off.

Faith was always turning up at the CBC, playing the C.N.E., coming back to Canada. In the seventies, he would establish a thousand-dollar music scholarship at the University of Toronto. ("Better than a few words on a headstone," he told music writer Peter Goddard.) Such a fixture was he at Camp Arowhon in Algonquin Park, where he'd go every year to fish, that some folks didn't know who he was. "Well, yes. I can play a little bit. . . . I can give it

a try," he told Corry Steenkist, who spotted him idly plunking the piano in the camp mess hall. She needed live music for the kids' aquatic show and drafted Percy Faith. "He and some of the other guests seemed to get a big laugh out of the way I bossed him around."

Faith, himself, was more careful. "I remember that he confided in me that he had a tough time remembering the names of people he hadn't talked to in many years, but who somehow expected to be remembered," said Alex Barris, a CBC

broadcaster, on an edition of Vicki Gabereau's program *Variety Tonight* in the eighties. "Faith never once let anyone feel the least bit offended. He chatted amiably with total strangers he pretended to remember. That was easier than hurting their feelings." Appropriately, Barris summed up, "Despite his long-running success, he was a pleasant, gentle, unpretentious man, known by many hundreds of musicians for his warmth and humour." Yet Faith was no pushover. In the forties, *Maclean's* had observed, "Percy Faith is tall, well built, very dark. There is a certain boyishness about his manner that is disarming, but his musicians know that he can be firm and far from easygoing with them if a piece they are rehearsing isn't coming along as it should."

By the late fifties, film music had become Faith's Holy Grail; the family

Reaching high
can lift the spirit
of an entire
community.

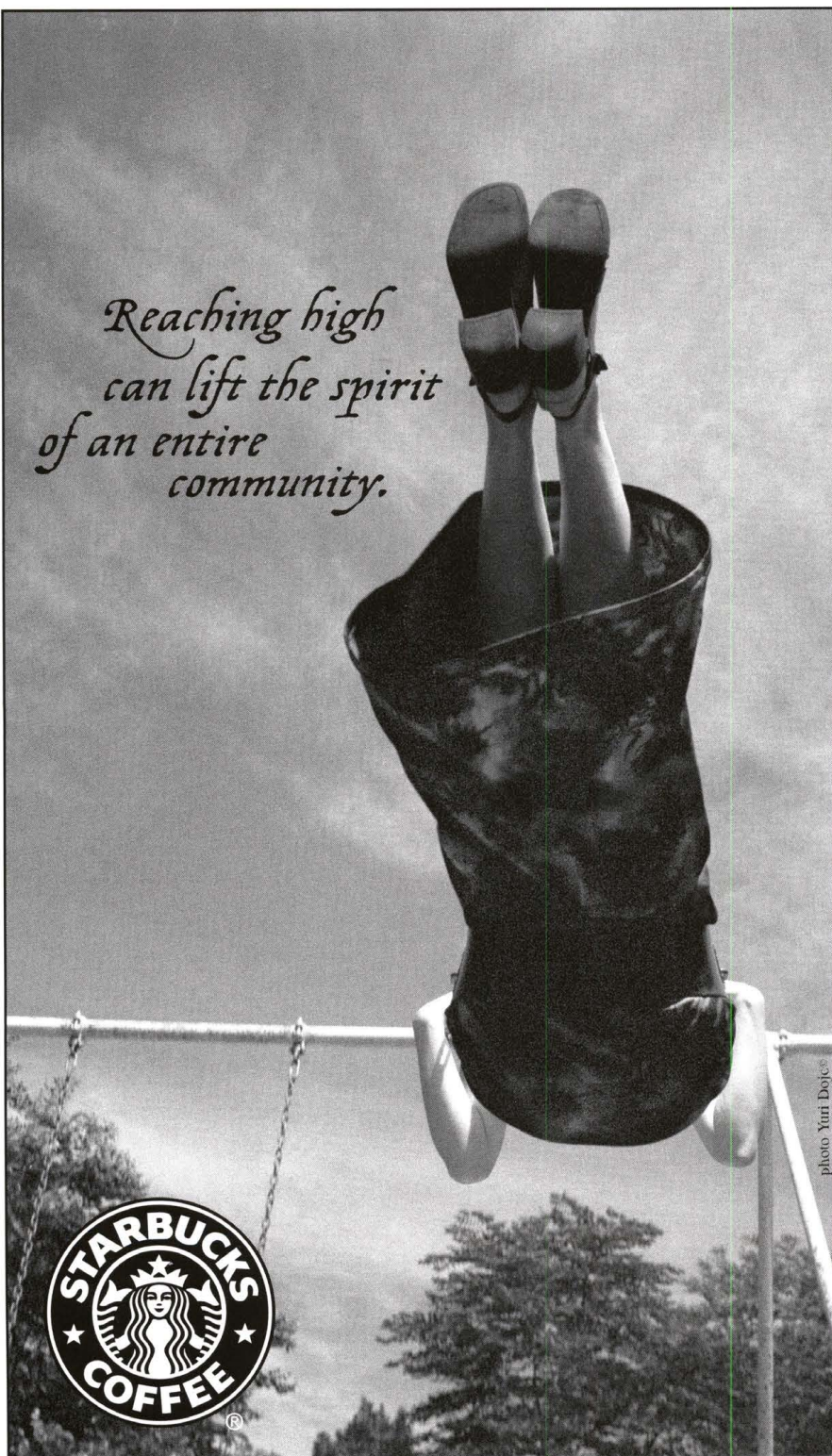


photo Yuri Dojke

Something magical happens when people work together to reach for a dream. What begins as something small can blossom into the efforts of an entire community. Over the past 4 years, you've helped Starbucks All Books for Children Book Drive raise over 30,000 books to make our children's futures brighter. You've joined our efforts to raise funding for Jacob's Ladder and

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(grown, and largely kept from the lime-light) moved to Los Angeles in 1960. "You do come to the end of the line. . . . You've done all of Cole Porter, you've done all of Gershwin," he would tell Elwood Glover, on the CBC television profile that Campbell produced in 1966 for the network's Music Canada series. "The release is out-and-out composing . . . through the medium of movies."

Faith, in the end, was "Not adept at the machinations of Hollywood—he was perhaps too testy and blunt for the politics of that Byzantine place," commented *High Fidelity's* Gene Lees in the seventies. Toronto broadcaster Greg Gormick, who spent some time in the Hollywood scene, thinks Faith was too cool in that wacky world. "He wasn't a screamer, he wasn't nuts, and he didn't drive people crazy. Faith just did his stuff." In the end, he wrote music for eleven movies—mostly terrible ones—for which he nonetheless wrote exquisite scores, like the one for *The Oscar* in 1966, which was "full of song—joyous, witty, sardonic, and delicately tender."

"[He] has not," Lees would lament, "received his due as a composer."

But the CBC profile, *Percy Faith: Off the Record*, made in Toronto the summer and fall of 1966, and broadcast November 2nd, would give him his due as a Canadian. It would reveal the essence of Percy Faith—a man serious about music that wasn't. But even then, he was never *too* serious. "I hate to say it, but you can play my version [of a song] . . . and go ahead and practice putting, or have dinner, or even take a shower," Faith himself said on *Off the Record*. Midway through the show, while directing the orchestra from the piano, playing his million-seller hit "Theme from A Summer Place"—written by veteran Hollywood composer Max Steiner and arranged by Faith for the 1959 movie—Faith turns to the camera and shrugs. "Go figure," his look says. "It is probably the largest sales-wise of any of my records. But it's not the one I'm most proud of by a long shot." *Off the Record* did present Canadian Shirley Harmer (who later sang in the Florida club and cruise circuit), singing one of Faith's best compositions, "Maybe September," from the score of *The Oscar*. The song "has an unusual or even startling construction," Lees would later write. "It reaches its end and then totally unexpectedly continues into an exquisite coda, an entirely new melody."

Much of the TV program was videotaped at CBC's Studio 7 on Jarvis Street. The orchestra included many of his old players from *Music by Faith*, but younger ones too, including Moe Koffman. Campbell commissioned from Faith an arrangement of "O Canada" for the program. A separate music soundtrack was pre-recorded at Hallmark Studios in Toronto, but even so, videotaping Faith's complex, tightly-woven arrangements "took an awful lot of preparation," Campbell remembered. "You have to be a fast cutter . . . because Percy didn't linger on any particular instrument for long solos. I would have to write in every moment, 'Open Camera 1, pull back from Percy Faith. Cut to Camera 2, over the back of the strings. Camera 3, through the harp. Camera 2 again. Camera 1 on the side shot.' I mean, the control room was bedlam. You hear the music, but that's just a guide to us yelling at each other."

Spliced, *Wizard of Oz*-style, into *Off the Record*, a black and white show taped in a studio, was one of the first colour segments to go out over CBC television's airwaves. It was filmed on location at Sandbanks, an area of massive dunes and beaches on Lake Ontario, near Picton. The camera was a special Kodak "which you could speed up, so that when you played it back it was in slow motion," according to Campbell. Martine van Hamel, a dancer trained at the National Ballet School, frolics across the dunes and dances in the surf, to the sound of Faith's recording of "Celia's Waltz." With the slow motion, "everything was just slightly easy."

Easy. As in easy-listening music by Faith, "the king of mood music," as Clyde Gilmour said, introducing selections from a two-LP opus, *The Columbia Album of George Gershwin*, on CBC's *Gilmour's Albums* in the nineteen-nineties. Critics of serious music never forgave Percy Faith for what he did. When Faith died of cancer in Los Angeles on February 9, 1976 (too many of his Columbia album covers showed him smoking while in the studio), the *Toronto Star*'s Dennis Braithwaite would write, "an exploiter rather than a creator, Percy Faith can't be said to have advanced the popular music of his time. Rather, he led a massive digression from its vital main flow and direction." True, in a way, but missing the point, which was never so serious. One of his last releases was called *Disco Party*; Faith's final Co-



Faith and Shirley Harmer during the taping of *Off the Record* in 1966.

lumbia album, *Summer Place '76*, which he arranged and recorded while he was seriously ill, bounces with the beat of the moment—the life-affirming thump of disco, the youthful twang of an electric guitar—against those shimmering strings.

"He admits there is precious little aristocracy about any of the popular tunes of the day," the *Star Weekly* reporter wrote after visiting Percy Faith in the studio that spring day in Toronto in 1931. "But with the same half-dozen rhythms and melodic formulae, they have been developed by the arranger to a degree of prettiness. He feels there is need for lots of this light, unimportant music, uninspired and fearfully perishable. Music meant for nothing but song and dance."

Alfred Holden is assistant financial editor of the Toronto Star and a regular contributor to Taddle Creek.

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FUTURE YOU

FICTION BY JASON ANDERSON

When I was six, I had a vision that my eight-year-old sister, Nancy, was sitting at the back of a city bus, coughing while trying to put rouge on her cheeks. I knew it wasn't a dream because I was awake when it happened, sitting at the kitchen table and colouring in a picture book. Then it felt like a movie had started in my head.

I told my mother that Nancy was going to get sick on a bus and start wearing makeup. She took Nancy to the doctor's office, and the doctor told her that my sister had a rare kind of tetanus and that she could've died if it hadn't been discovered. My mother was so happy that she gave me a chocolate eclair.

When I was eleven, I had a vision that God, who wore a blue bathrobe, would try to kill my father with a baseball bat. He chased him all over the field in an empty stadium. I told my father to stay out of the way of anything heavy in case God wanted to hit him. A week later, during a thunderstorm, lightning struck a tree next to our house and it fell over onto Dad's Cavalier sedan, crushing it. Dad called me lucky and gave me a goldfish.

When I was sixteen, I had a vision of myself after graduating from high school—I was wearing something like a nurse's uniform and sitting in a coffee shop. I was telling someone else about my job, where I could help people who really needed me—poor people with unpaid bills, crooked teeth, and no medical coverage, other poor people who stuttered. In the coffee shop, I could hear children crying at another table and knew that I could help them, too. Afterward, I knew I had to do whatever was asked of me by whoever had sent me the visions. I suspected that wasn't God, because as far as I understood His actions, He had something against us.

Graduation came and went. Six months passed and there were no more visions, and I wasn't so sure of my direction. I grew tired of waiting, but I didn't have anything else to do—I didn't expect to need anything else to do.

When I turned nineteen, I started work-



ing full-time in one of my father's dry cleaning stores—he has three. It was O.K., because that's a way of helping people, too. Some nights I would go home and my eyes would feel like they were burning, and I would have migraine headaches that felt like someone was trying to press a dime through the top of my head. I ate chocolate eclairs and gained weight.

My fourth vision came when I was twenty-three. The vision began with a title card like in a silent movie. It read: "A VISION IN TWO PARTS." The first part was that I would soon have a lot of money and a very nice red car. I wouldn't have to work in the dry cleaning store, I wouldn't have headaches, I would stop eating eclairs. The second part was that a space shuttle would explode while it was taking off in Florida. All the astronauts would die because something went wrong with something called a C-ring. After the explosion, people who had watched it happen on TV would feel guilty because they wouldn't feel as sad as they were the first time a space shuttle exploded.

I wanted to tell someone about the C-ring, but the telephone operator refused to give me a number for the space shuttle people. Two days later, the shuttle blew up.

The day after that, the operator who had refused to help me called and asked how I knew about the C-ring. "Are you a rocket scientist?" she asked. I found that funny because that's what Dad would call Nancy and I when we did something re-

ally dumb. But she meant it for real.

I told the operator, "No, I just knew that it would happen. I saw it. I can't tell you how."

The operator told me her name was Doris, and that she was interested in meeting people like me, people who saw things. She was starting a company that would help people by telling them their futures over the telephone.

Doris thought that people needed special help, and that people didn't like going to people who were wrapped in sheets. "They always smell like gypsies and there's never any parking," she said. Instead, they could phone one of her "super psychic ladies" and, in return for a few dollars a minute, they could get a highly accurate description of events to come.

Mostly, she said, callers wanted to know about romance—problems with boyfriends, husbands, or both. Doris said the company was just starting and she needed a few more ladies. It sounded like I was qualified.

I don't want you to think that I'm a liar or a bad person, because I never once cheated in school and never kept anything important from my mother and father. I would never deliberately hurt their feelings, or anyone else's. On the phone that afternoon with Doris, I thought this was what the vision said I should do, and that this would allow me to use my gift. I didn't have to wait for something to happen any more. I was going to have a car of my own. I had only had four visions in my life, and I had no control over them, but I was confident that this was the thing to do.

I told Doris that, yes, I would take the job. Then I went out and bought myself the sort of dress that I thought a super psychic lady would wear.

The office of PresciEnterprise Inc. was far away in an industrial park in the suburbs—one subway ride and two buses from home. I liked it because the walls were painted the colour fuchsia, and it didn't smell like cleaning fluid. I had a desk, a telephone, and a book to write down the names of my callers. The phone

number was 1-900-FUTURE-U, and my operator number was 514.

At the desk next to mine was a woman who said her name was Carolyn before I even asked.

"Your eyes are so nice," I said, because they were such a brilliant shade of green.

She thanked me and said that lots of women in this kind of work had green eyes. "Brown eyes like yours mean you're sensitive, too," she said.

I thought she might've been teasing me, but her smile was warm.

I had no regular callers yet, and I was too nervous to ask how I was supposed to attract any, so I spent the first few days watching Carolyn talk on the phone. People seemed to like what she had to say, even when her news wasn't good news, which was most of the time. One woman had to cope with the news her husband was cheating on her with her brother. Another was told that her daughter would be in an accident that would leave her with permanent injuries, but that she would still be a lovely piano player. "So you see," Carolyn told the mother, "it's not a waste to pay for her lessons."

It wasn't smart for Carolyn's callers to have pets or favourite aunts, because they were always about to die. Carolyn would cry after a call like that, but she couldn't do it for as long as she wanted to. Doris told her that crying slowed down the working day and didn't do anyone any good. Carolyn told me that to avoid trouble from Doris, I should learn to keep my feelings to myself.

At lunchtime on my first day, I asked

Carolyn how she could tell the future. She told me that there was a lucky stone in her pocket that spoke in a voice she could hear in her mind.

"I found this stone in a sandbox at school when I was a very little girl," she said. "And I just knew that I'd been waiting for it—you know those feelings you have, and you can't even remember when or why you first felt them? Anyway, I just put it in my pocket and kept it there ever since. But it's not like I told anyone about it when I was at school. It'd be embarrassing to tell other kids that you have a talking rock."

When Carolyn was a teenager, things got bad in her house—her father lost his job and he spent all his time and money gambling. The family needed money, so Carolyn told her father that she had been studying horse racing in her spare time, and that she could pick winners. To her father's surprise, she was right. But he spent the winnings not on stuff the family needed, but on a speedboat.

"And then," she said, while stirring a sugar into her coffee, "he tried to loan me out to his buddies as a 'consultant.' It was so weird. I had to break up with my first boyfriend because I couldn't explain to him why all these old men kept calling me. All the while, the stone was complaining, being a real whiner, you know? It's always been sensitive, but this was too much. I got worried because the stone was starting to pick the wrong horses—on purpose, I'm pretty sure. Then I noticed that there was another voice in my head, except this voice was higher than the stone's. I

thought I was really going crazy. And then I realized a bracelet was talking to me."

Fearing for her sanity, Carolyn stopped worrying about the horse track. She went to school to become an accountant, but lost interest and dropped out. A few years later, she read an ad that Doris had placed in a magazine, and now was trying to be a super psychic lady. The stone was happy with the work so far, and, Carolyn said, smiling at her joke, "I lost the bracelet a long time ago."

After lunch we went back to the phones. Carolyn was very good, very calm. I couldn't do what she did. I got flustered, I mumbled, I had no visions, and the callers got angry.

On my fourth call I became so upset that I began to cry, and then became more upset because I tried to hide my sobs from Doris. When the caller asked why I was crying, I told her it was because her favourite uncle would become very sick with pink eye or pneumonia.

"That's very strange," said the caller, "because I don't have an uncle. I have an aunt, but she lives in Hawaii." She paused for a long time. "Maybe this uncle you're talking about is a symbol for someone else, someone who assumes an uncle-like role in my life."

I didn't understand what she was talking about, but I told her that that was exactly what I meant.

Eventually, I noticed that all the callers wanted to suggest things like that when I was wrong. From time to time, a caller

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would wonder why I was always so short of the “ninety-nine per cent” accuracy that was guaranteed in Doris’s advertisements, and why was she paying for this. I said that my powers were too acute, that I knew so many futures that I couldn’t keep them straight. The caller would ponder this and then realize that that must be the case.

Someone in the office had been handing out articles about some psychic ladies who had formed a union at a company in California. People were unhappy to hear about this, so the super psychic ladies—there were fifteen in all—held a meeting at Carolyn’s house. Everyone decided it was a good idea to ask for raises and health benefits if we were to continue working for PresciEnterprise.

“The situation here is totally unreasonable,” said Carolyn. “We all know Doris is making a serious amount of money from our efforts.”

Darla, a super psychic lady I would often have lunch with, looked very concerned. “I have tension headaches so bad I can’t even drive any more and I need a second job to make enough money for rent. I want to be a model, but I can’t afford to see a dentist. Look how crooked my teeth are.”

We all looked.

“Last night, I dreamt that Doris had a purse that overflowed with one-hundred-dollar bills,” said Rolonda, another lady. “The bills kept spewing out like it was a volcano erupting. It made me feel terrible. I couldn’t get back to sleep.”

Jody, a lady I’d never met because she worked an overnight shift, claimed that Doris didn’t even keep the money in her bank, but in a bathtub in her basement. The thought of Doris bathing in that money—our money, my money—made me angry. It was a struggle to make payments on my red Hyundai.

“I think that this is awful and that Doris is a terrible, terrible person,” I said. “But I don’t know where else I could work. What are we supposed to do?”

“Strike,” said Carolyn, and all the other ladies cheered.

We agreed that a list of demands should be presented to Doris. Irene wrote it because she had the best handwriting. Then we signed our names.

I watched Carolyn and Darla give the list to Doris the next morning. Doris didn’t show any expression—she just took the paper, glanced down at it, returned to

her office and stayed there the rest of the day. My shift ended and I left before she came out.

The next morning, I took the subway, then the two buses to get to PresciEnterprise. When I arrived, most of the psychic ladies were standing outside. At first I thought that there was a walkout, like Darla said might happen right away—I was upset because nobody called to tell me. But then I saw Carolyn tugging at a padlock on the office door and some of the ladies were crying.

There was a note on company letterhead on the front door:

Effective immediately, the Denver office of PresciEnterprise Inc. has been closed, pending a transfer to Kuala Lumpur. Management would like to thank the personnel for all of their efforts, and for making this next step in PresciEnterprise’s evolution possible. Employees listed below are encouraged to reapply for positions available—please join us on this adventure! Applications are to be made in person to the Kuala Lumpur branch at 1014 Dang Khot Road in Kuala Lumpur between 1 and 3 P.M. local time on October 1st.

I was confused by the foreign place names. “Have we been fired?” I asked.

“As far as I can tell, yes,” said Carolyn. Then she started to cry.

I went home. When I told my mother that the office had moved, she said that I should try to go to Malaysia, too. Then I told her how far away it was and she said it was O.K. for me to take a little time between jobs.

But it wasn’t long. A few weeks later I was in a coffee shop and I met a man in the lineup. He was friendly. I told him that I had just lost my job at a phone company. He said that he needed someone to work as a hostess in his restaurant. I said yes.

It turned out to be O.K. I help people there, too, except most people have straight, nice teeth, and I don’t have to lie to them. My father thinks the work suits me. He helped me find my own apartment, one close to work so I didn’t need a car.

A while after I started, Carolyn came in the restaurant with a very handsome man. She was happy to see me—she said that she really enjoyed working with me and told the man that I was sensitive and talented. I didn’t feel like telling her that I really wasn’t much of a super psychic lady, because it would have been awk-

ward. I asked her if she still did readings and she said, no, not professionally. She was now taking a course to become a realtor, because the stone had expressed an interest.

I asked Carolyn about that day when Doris fired everyone, and how that made her feel. “I was just so surprised,” she said. “Shocked, too. I guess she knew we couldn’t sue because we were all on contract. Still, I could not believe that that nasty, horrible woman would take all of that away from us, all that we did. We gave so many people so much help, and I’m worried about what’ll happen to my callers without me.

“What’s worse,” she continued, looking more sad than angry, “is how little it must’ve meant to Doris. For her to close the office because she could make a little bit more money in a country where the workers are so oppressed and miserable and can’t expect more than a few pennies an hour to do really hard mental work like this . . . that’s so heartless. And I didn’t even see it coming.”

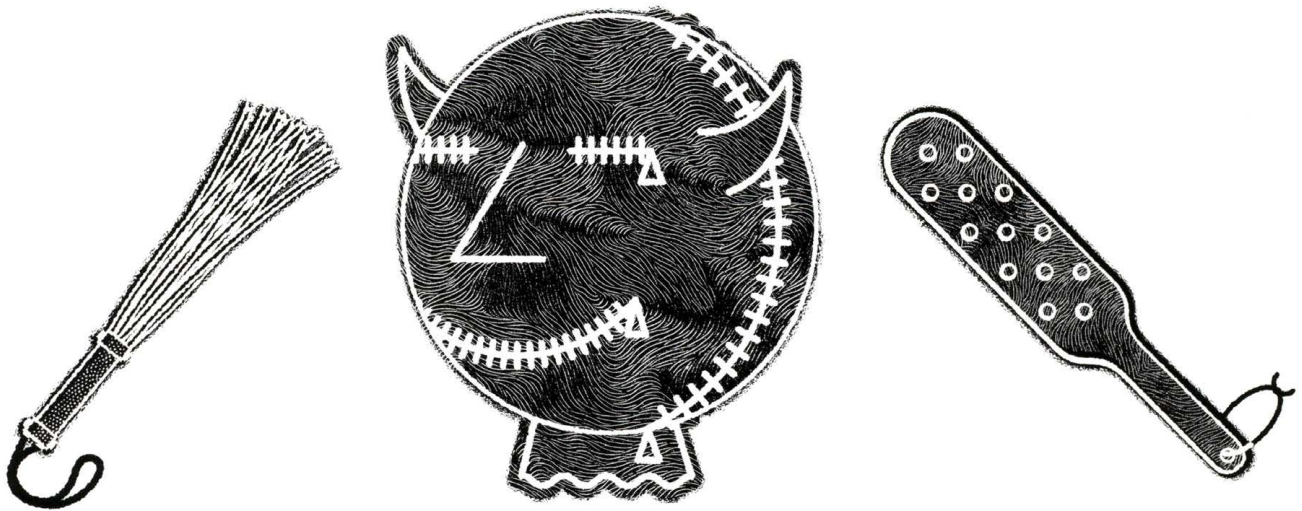
I thought that was a pretty funny thing for a former super psychic lady to say, but I didn’t tell her so.

When I was thirty, I had my fifth vision. A red telephone sat on a little black desk on a beach—the sky overhead was grey and miserable. The phone was ringing. In the water beyond the desk, I could see big seals poking their heads up and imitating the rings with their barks.

Then a figure came running along the beach, just at the water’s edge. As it got closer, I could see that it was me, in a nice green pantsuit. But when I was just a few feet away from the desk, I tripped on a rock and fell into the desk, knocking the telephone into the sand. I stood up and rubbed the spot on my forehead where I hit the desk. The telephone tumbled over again, and then started to blow down the beach as if it were a scrap of newspaper.

The seals kept barking as I heard a man’s voice behind me say, “Oh, that was just terrible! You people are pathetic. And those seals really are the worst I’ve ever seen. Can we get some new seals in here?”

Jason Anderson lives near Seaton Village. He writes about pop culture for Saturday Night, Eye, and Shift, and has been working on a book of stories for far too long.



THE CODE

FICTION BY PETER DARBYSHIRE

I was sitting beside an actor. We were talking to each other's reflections in the mirror behind the bar.

"I had an audition today," he said. "It was for Kurt Russell's body double. They're going to pay me ten thousand dollars to be in one scene in his new movie." He shook his head like he was disappointed.

"What is it, some kind of stunt?" I asked.

"No, it's for this sex scene. With Jennifer Lopez, of all people." He sipped his drink, some sort of martini, and made a face.

"Why would he want a double for that?"

"It's the studio that wants it," he said. "His ass is starting to sag. The studio figured it would cost them millions if people saw what he really looked like."

"What about her?" I asked. "Does she need a body double too?"

He turned to look at me directly. "You really think they'd cast her if she did?" he asked.

The bar was empty except for us and the one waitress working. It was two in the afternoon. He'd walked in and sat on the stool beside me; started talking like he was a friend of mine. He'd even bought me a beer. For that, I had to listen to him.

"You should have seen the audition," he went on. "I thought it would be something personal, you know? Maybe me and the director in some locked room somewhere. A lot of talking about motivation and that kind of thing."

"Something intimate," I said.

"Exactly. Only it was 9-fucking-A.M. in this bright office and there were two other people in there with him—the director of photography and some woman lawyer."

"Why'd they have a lawyer there?"

"I don't know. Something to do with lawsuits. Anyway, the audition consisted of me having to act the scene out. Only they made me do it with this blow-up doll instead of with a real person."

"You fucked a doll? With other people in the room?"

"No, no, I didn't fuck it. I acted like I was making love to Jennifer Lopez. It was an audition, remember?"

"I don't know," I said, "I don't think I could have done that."

"Oh, it wasn't so bad."

"And you don't even look like Kurt Russell," I told him.

"They're going to use wigs and all that," he said. "And it's only for the one shot of my ass anyway."

"But why wouldn't they at least get someone who looks like Kurt Russell?" I asked.

"You're missing the point here," he said.

I spent most of my time at the Code. It was one of those underground bars, the kind that, no matter when you leave, you're always walking up into the light. The walls were covered in old movie posters. Bogart. Dean. Hepburn. It was always filled with beautiful people. There was

some sort of modeling studio in the building upstairs, and a Club Monaco across the street. The actor told me that Liam Neeson drank there when he was in town, and Aerosmith had once booked the entire place for a private party. It was like I was living in L.A. or someplace like that.

Sometimes I would sit and drink all day. The waitresses got to know me by name. They never charged me for more than six or seven drinks. One of them—she was Indian or Asian, I couldn't really tell—wanted to be a model, but she had a lazy eye, so she was never going to get any work. She called herself Mercedes, but I didn't think that was her real name. I was in love with her even though she was going out with the actor.

One evening she sat with me at the bar after her shift was done. There was a man in a leather bodysuit a few stools down, drinking a scotch. We all watched one of those medical shows on television. A team of surgeons was operating on a baby still in the womb. They cut open the mother and then cut open the baby inside her. They were playing Vivaldi in the operating room to keep the patients calm. There was something wrong with the baby's spine, but the announcer said it would be O.K. after the surgery.

"Imagine that," Mercedes said. "If someone fixed all your problems before you were born."

"Why wouldn't she just abort it and try again?" I asked.

She lit a cigarette and looked at me through the smoke. "Why is it that you never go home?" she asked.

"What would I do there?"

"What do you do here?"

At some point in the night—I don't remember if it was before or after the surgery show—the man in the leather suit came over to us. "Would you like to come into the back with me?" he asked her.

"I don't think so," she said.

"You don't have to do anything," he said.

"You can just watch."

"Hey," I said, but neither one looked at me.

"I have a boyfriend," she said.

"Bring him along."

"Does your wife know you do this?"

"Married? I'm not married."

"I can see the ring mark on your finger." It was true—there was a thin band of scar tissue around his ring finger, like he'd been married for years.

"Divorced," he said. "I can't even remember her name."

"That's what they all say," she said.

"How about if I pay you?" he asked.

"Just to watch, like I said."

"You couldn't afford me."

"What about you?" he said, looking at me for the first time. "Could I afford you?"

The Code had a room in the back that was only for special events. The walls were painted black and all the furniture was covered in white sheets. There were no windows. When there wasn't an event taking place you could only get in with a key that was kept behind the bar. Sometimes the lights inside were red.

Every Monday there was a fetish party in the room. All night long people would walk in wearing leather or latex or even plastic. Sometimes men would show up in heels or fishnet stockings; women with safety pins in their cheeks and arms. Once I saw a man leading a woman by a chain tied around her neck.

But mainly it was normal people, people in suits or dressed like you and me. They came in and had a drink or two at the counter and then changed in the washroom. When they came out they'd be wearing handcuffs or corsets or sometimes just leather underwear.

I wanted to look inside, to see what they did in there, but you had to pay ten dollars at the door. The man who'd asked Mercedes to go back there ran the parties

and he stood outside the door most of the night with a little cash box. And the people inside all laughed and shouted at each other like they belonged there.

Once, though, no one at all showed up. It was raining so hard a storm sewer outside had overflowed and water was trickling down the stairs into the Code. Mercedes was out with the actor. He'd picked her up after work and the two of them had gone up into the storm, leaving me alone at the bar.

Now the man who ran the fetish nights—he later told me his name was Graham or Grant or something like that—was sitting beside me, drinking a scotch

again. This time he wore leather pants with a mesh shirt that had no back. I could see his pierced nipples through the shirt.

"How come you haven't come to any of the parties yet?" he wanted to know.

"It's not really my scene," I told him.

"I've seen you checking them out."

"I don't think so."

We were watching a basketball game on the television but then the screen went dead as the power went out. There was only the light of the candles to see by. I waited for the power to come back up, but it didn't.

"Someone must have hit a line somewhere," Graham said. "We'll probably be this way for a while."

SHOSTAKOVICH BLARING

Icy oval oceans cover his blue eyes
Neon tetras jump through the space between his teeth
Whales yelp, chocolates flip, the cresting waves
Throw gossamer sand between his toes
Ice melts in the mouth of a pelican
Shostakovich blaring in the shell by the lifeguard tower

He eats every note

Bette Midler rides a surfboard from Central Park West
His eyes are ice blue oval oceans
He's reading a public library book two months overdue
Sleeping on the wing on a Sunday summer morning
A dolphin's jive talking on a steamer rug

When the swollen sun hits high noon babies laugh in the jumbo waves
The desiccated sand of superficiality kicks up
Afternoon falls tightly as the sun hoards its ripe heat
He takes off his clothes, folds them
Neatly
Into his knapsack
And walks into a Frank O'Hara poem

It has been said that the whole world is static
Movement a dream we interpret
Honeypie can't understand the logic of it
She's swimming; waving; dripping
In her banana yellow bikini on his blanket

He will return from the Bowery with a pack of Gauloises
Night will be falling like water off a surfboard
Bette Midler gone, inherent sleeping wing
He'll be chanting *littera scripta manet* in banana yellow
To the dolphins' jive, Hey man, cool
She will dive into his icy blue ocean and be gone

— BETH FOLLETT

I thought about going home and looked out the front door. It was raining harder than before. I didn't even own an umbrella.

"We could go back there now," he said. "While we're waiting."

I pulled a couple of candles closer and didn't say anything, just looked up at the dead television.

"I won't even charge you."

The air in the back room smelled like it had been in there for years. All the couches and chairs had been pulled up against the walls, and the fetish gear filled the center of the room. There were large wooden crosses you tied people to, and benches for kneeling on, and padded handcuffs hanging from the ceiling beams.

"Try anything you want," Graham said. He leaned against one of the crosses and watched me.

"I'm just looking," I said.

"There's more in the corner," he said, pointing at a stack of boxes.

There was everything inside them—crumpled leather gloves, plastic balls with straps attached, wooden paddles. I put on a zippered face mask with no mouth hole, only openings for the nose and eyes. It tasted of salt.

"It's you," he said.

Another box held a collection of whips. I pulled up the mask so I could speak. "What are these for?" I asked.

"What do you think they're for?"

I took out a short whip with a dozen leather straps the length of my forearm and snapped it through the air a couple of times. "You don't actually hit each other with these things, do you?"

"Why don't you give it a try?" he asked.

"I don't think so," I said. "I'm not that way."

"Just once," he said. "You might like it." He turned around and spread himself against the rack. The bare skin of his back looked golden in the candlelight. I walked up behind him but didn't do anything. "I can't," I said.

"I don't mind."

I hit him with the whip as hard as I could. It made the same kind of noise as punches do in movies. I was surprised to see blood on his skin right away.

"Jesus Christ!" He jumped away from me, stumbled over one of the benches, and fell to the floor. "You fucking maniac!"

"What?" I asked. "You said I could."

"Not that fucking hard," he shouted. He felt around behind his back and then showed me his bloody fingertips. "Look at that! I'm going to need a doctor now!"

"Maybe they have a first aid kit here," I said.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?"

The only waitress working came to the door and stopped.

"Do you know where the first aid kit is?" I asked.

She looked at me standing there with the whip and the mask, looked at Graham, or whatever his name was, writhing on the floor, and then she closed the door.

Sometimes the people from the modeling studio upstairs used the room for shoots. It would always be one man—the photographer—and a group of women. They'd come in and get the key

from whatever waitress was working and lock themselves in there. Sometimes they wouldn't come out for hours. I imagined them having sex in there on the couches, or

maybe on piles of the clothes they brought in with them, like a scene out of Antonioni's *Blowup*.

One night I helped with a shoot. A photographer came in with three models from upstairs. None of the women looked over eighteen, but one of them paid for a round of drinks with a gold card. They sat at the booth underneath the Hepburn poster and smoked cigars all night long. They were sitting in the "No Smoking" section but the waitress working that night—a new woman I didn't know, and who charged me full price for the drinks—never said anything to them.

Around midnight the photographer came over to the bar, where I'd been sitting all night. "You work here?" he asked. I looked around for the waitress but she was nowhere in sight.

"Yeah," I said. "I work here."

"We're ready for the backroom now," he said.

I wasn't exactly sure what he meant, but I went around the counter and got the key anyway. When I opened the door the models all wandered into the room and sat down on the furniture there. Each of them carried a couple of garment bags that they

simply dropped to the floor once they were inside. "I could use a glass of water," one of them said. She held her foot up to look at her toenails. I went back to the bar and poured some water into a glass, threw a lemon slice from a bowl into it, and brought it to her. She took it without saying thanks or even looking at me.

The photographer had taken the sheets off the fetish equipment and was looking at it all. "We need this stuff brought out and, um, arranged," he said.

"All right." I dragged the wooden crosses out to where he pointed and turned them around under the lights until he told me to stop. The models watched in silence. One of them fell asleep for a while.

"That's enough," the photographer eventually said to me. I let go of the aluminum cage I'd pushed out of one of the corners and stood next to him, like I was his assistant or something. "Why don't we start with that black vest thing?" he said to one of the women. She nodded and stood up; started to take off her shirt. She had on a Hilfiger bra.

"Is this a Tommy shoot?" I asked him. I imagined seeing this room and these models on subway ads, or maybe even billboards.

"No, no, it's nothing like that," he said. "These are just, ah, audition photos."

The model opened up one of the garment bags, took out a sleeveless leather vest, and put it on. It zipped up to her throat. The photographer pushed her against one of the crosses. "Could you hold her hands?" he asked. I thought he meant me and I started to step forward, but he

was talking to one of the other models. She walked around behind the cross and held the first one's wrists. The third one took a cell phone out of her pocket and started talking on it. "I won't be making class tomorrow," she said. "Can you take notes for me?"

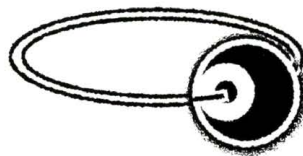
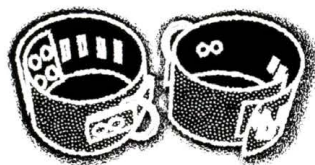
"Maybe one of those balls in her mouth," the photographer said, and this time he looked at me.

I went over to the boxes and searched through them until I found what he wanted—a red plastic ball with a leather head strap attached. "You want me to put it on her?" I asked.

Just then the waitress came in. "What are you doing in here?" she asked.

"We're working," I said.

"What are you talking about?" she asked. "You don't work here."



Pull Gently, Tear Here by Alexandra Leggat



Pull Gently, Tear Here is critically acclaimed poet Alexandra Leggat's first collection of short stories. In these short tales about fitting in, the lives of the characters are pulled in circles as pieces of their identity are torn away by the day to day events shaping their lives.

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Everyone looked at me.

"It's just for tonight," I said.

"No," she said, "you don't work here."

The photographer took the mouthpiece from my hands. "Maybe you should lock the door," he said to the waitress.

"Oh, come on," I said.

Now it was the day after and I was sitting alone at the bar again, watching television. Someone drove a Volvo off a cliff. A group of men and women in white lab coats watched. The sky was a shade of blue I'd never seen before. There was a quick close-up of the

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Alexandra Leggat ("*Pyro*," p. 14) lives just north of the Beach. Her poems and stories have been published in numerous publications across Canada and the U.S. She is the author of *Pull Gently, Tear Here* (Insomniac, 2000) and *This Is Me Since Yesterday* (Coach House, 1999). She is also the managing editor of *Write* magazine.

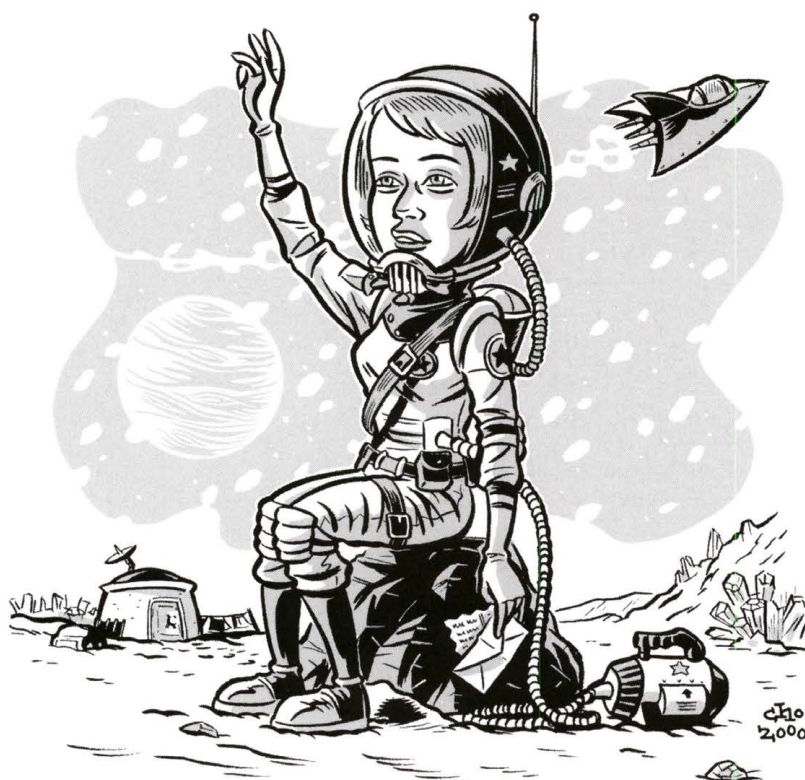
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www.michaelcho.com



driver of the car, screaming as it fell down toward the ground.

"Isn't that your boyfriend?" I asked Mercedes.

"I don't have a boyfriend," she said.

The camera cut to the wrecked car at the bottom of the cliff. It looked like it had been run through a crusher. Then the door opened and the driver stepped out; waved at the men and women in lab coats. The Volvo logo appeared on the screen.

"Yeah, that's your boyfriend," I said.

She looked at the television. "I don't know who that is," she said.

But he came in that very afternoon. He stood beside me and leaned against the bar. He was wearing a silver Rolex that looked new. Mercedes was sitting at the end of the bar, smoking a cigarette and reading a *Vogue*. "What do you want?" she asked him.

"I want my videos back," he said.

"Not the ones I'm in," she said. "No way."

"I don't want those," he said. "I want the movies. The Woody Allen tapes."

"Fine. You can have those."

"I know I can have them. They're mine."

"I'll drop them off on the weekend."

"All right." He sat down beside me and tossed a gold card on the counter. "In the meantime, I want a latte."

"I'm not serving you."

He looked at his reflection in the mirror. "I want a latte. With cinnamon."

"You hear that?" Mercedes said to me. "He wants a latte."

"I don't hear anything," I said.

He turned to look at me. "Who the fuck are you," he asked, "to talk about me?"

I looked at Mercedes but she just kept on reading the *Vogue*. I reached behind the counter, grabbed the key, and went to the back room. I emptied the boxes onto the floor until I found one of the whips. Then I went back into the main room.

Mercedes and the actor both laughed when they saw me.

"What do you think you're going to do with that?" he asked.

I stopped behind him. "The lady asked you to leave," I said, meeting his gaze in the mirror.

"All right," Mercedes said. "I think this has gone far enough."

"Is this what you've been reduced to?" he asked, looking at her. "*The lady?* You sorry cunt."

I hit him with the whip. I was careful

not to hit him hard, but the leather straps still made a sound like a slap.

"Hey," he said. He covered his head with his hands, even though I hit him on the back.

"Hey, hey, hey—HEY!"

I kept hitting him. He got off the stool and ran toward the door and I followed him. Mercedes was laughing even harder now, and I started laughing myself. "Who's the cunt now?" I asked. "Huh? Who's the cunt now?"

The rain had stopped and now I was sitting beside a table of three women who looked like secretaries. One of them was wearing a red silk blindfold, even though it wasn't a fetish night. A sign made of red construction paper hung from a string around her neck. It said, "KISS ME, I'M GETTING MARRIED." The others already wore wedding bands. There was no one else in the place.

Mercedes had stopped coming to work. I went to the Code every day for a week, sometimes staying ten or twelve hours, but she never showed up again. None of the other waitresses knew what had happened to her. That's what they told me, anyway.

"When are you getting married?" I asked the blindfolded woman.

"Next month," one of the other women said. She had blond hair that was black at the roots.

"Well, you've got plenty of time to live a little then."

"That's what we're doing," the blond-haired woman said. They were all smiling and pushing their gold bracelets up and down their arms.

"You know what I mean," I said.

"No, we don't," she said, but she was laughing when she said it.

I went over to the bar and ordered a round of martinis from the waitress, the one who charged me full price for everything. "Put it on my tab," I told her.

"You don't have a tab," she said.

"But I can put it on your bill."

"That'll be fine," I said.

"How are you going to pay for all this?" she asked me.

"I have three credit cards," I told her.

"Maybe you should give me one now. Just to make sure."

Back at the table I asked the blindfolded woman what her husband did.

"We're not married yet," she said. It was the first time I'd heard her speak. She sounded like she'd been drinking for some time before they came in here.

"What's your boyfriend do then?" I asked.

"He's a lawyer," she said.

"A corporate lawyer," the blond-haired woman put in.

"A lawyer?" I said. "That the best you can do?"

"What about you?" the third woman asked. She had

a huge purple blemish on her cheek, like she'd been burned or punched hard. "What do *you* do?"

"Me? I'm a doctor."

"A doctor."

"That's right."

"What's your specialty, doc?"

"I fix kids."

When the martinis came the two women who could see just stared at them. "We didn't order these," the blond-haired woman said.

"What are they?" the blindfolded woman asked.

"They're from him," the waitress said, nodding in my direction. The secretaries all turned their heads my way for a moment.

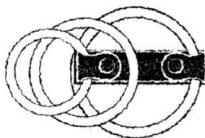
"To marriage," I said.

They sipped the martinis and started talking about something to do with the wedding—the colour of the dresses or the flowers or something like that. I got up and went to the washroom.

When I came out, only the blindfolded woman was sitting at the table, alone with the half-finished martinis. The others were at the bar, ordering more drinks. I stopped and stood beside their table for a moment.

The blindfolded woman turned her head in my direction, like she sensed me there. I bent down beside her. She licked her lips, flattened her hands on the table. For a moment I just looked at her, watching the way she strained against the silk covering her eyes. Then I kissed her gently, just brushing my lips against hers. I could taste mint on her breath. She put her hand on my chest. We only went on that way for a second or two, but it was like we had been lovers for years.

Peter Darbyshire lives in the Annex. His work has appeared in Canadian Fiction, Blood and Aphorisms, and Sub-terrain. "The Code" is taken from Please, a still-in-progress collection of short stories.





ART WAITING TO HAPPEN

If a picture is worth a thousand words, Greg Holman's are worth four thousand.

PHOTOS BY GREG HOLMAN

Greg Holman found his artistic calling in the most unlikely of places. While accompanying a friend to a Yonge Street card shop in the summer of 1996, Holman spotted a Sports Action camera. Marketed mainly to golfers wanting to examine their swing, the Sports Action was a novelty camera with the look and feel of a cheap disposable, save for one difference: instead of one lens, it had four. Coloured yellow, purple, red, and blue, and formed in a square, the camera shot four pictures on a single thirty-five-millimetre frame in quick succession. Best of all, the camera was not disposable, but reusable. Holman, then a professional photographer for some fifteen years, was intrigued and bought one, shooting off a roll on his way down Yonge that same afternoon. He quickly processed the film, the results of which forever changed his work.

Holman found the photos had almost a

film noir feel: grainy, blurred, and often inexplicably scratched. With no speed or focus control, the quality of each camera also varied. "The irony is I have professional training, but if I were to do this on purpose, the images would look contrived," Holman says. "I don't retouch the photos at all because there's so much in there. It's all part of it. I do like the poor quality lens because it gives it a nineteen-twenties feel. That's magic to me."

While the subjects of his first roll were shot candidly, Holman soon learned the camera also leant its magic to portraits. The best example of this in Holman's portfolio is a photo of film star Anne Bancroft, who Holman met on a movie set earlier this year. Within the one to one-and-a-half seconds of frame, Bancroft can literally be seen warming up to the camera. She acts young and playful as she spins in a circle

holding her shawl over her shoulders. "As soon as she found out it recorded motion, she opened up. Actors like it because it's like film—it gets them going. A Nikon lens is disarming to people. If you pull this out, people don't even think about it."

Unfortunately, the camera's plastic parts broke easily, leading to its quick discontinuation. Holman called a number of stores and several golf courses, buying up every Sports Action camera he could find, including a stash of fifty purchased directly from the manufacturer, and now shoots about half of his non-commercial work with the Sports Action.

A High Park resident who works out of the Studio District on Toronto's east side, Holman eventually plans to hold a showing of his Sports Action photography in New York City.

— CONAN TOBIAS





This page: A New York street scene, May, 1999.

Page 42: Actor Tamara Gorski, August, 2000.

*Page 43: (top) Artist Telford Fenton, July, 1999;
(bottom) Toronto, May, 2000.*



STILL THE SAME PIG YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN

An excerpt from the novel-in-progress.

FICTION BY RON HAWKINS

The wind is cool coming off the ocean, ruffling the umbrellas down on the beach like a hundred flags. The group gathered around the bar has fallen into a lazy hum of rumination that, given a couple hours, will probably turn ugly and fester into small, violent explosions, catching everyone, including the perpetrators, off guard. Cops and judges and civil servants with their husbands and wives on holiday. Most of them have been here since mid-afternoon. The bar is outdoors, like everything on the beach, and is throbbing with bad dance music.

Max and Alma are drinking rum with their left hands. Their right ones, devoid of the green plastic band that signifies admission, lay incognito beneath the counter. I hate rum. I'm drinking wine, which is leaving me heavy-lidded and quiet. I get careless with my right hand, leaving it brazenly upon the counter. The bartender sees it and smiles at me conspiratorially. I smile back. There's a class war going on, even here in the resort hotel. He tops up my glass and moves to put the bottle away, then reconsiders and slams it on the counter in front of me, grinning.

"... but by year-end we should be squared away. The home office is sending that bitch to check up on us, to oversee the whole thing."

The snippets of conversation float to me, intersecting in the air. The sheen is coming off the evening. The waxen smiles are melting and dripping onto the floor.

"... that bastard—and while I was pregnant."

The wine is sweet. It helps dull me, but I can still catch the sour stories left hanging in the salt air.

Alma and Max are rapt in conversation, so I decide to take a walk. I take the bottle, slide from the stool, and motion to the beach with my thumb. Max nods his head in acknowledgement and continues his discussion. I head for the sand and the sound of the breakers.

"It must have been quite different here then," Max says.

"Surprisingly not," Alma laughs. "It looked a lot larger, though that's probably

because I was little. Otherwise, it's exactly the same."

"Funny how things seem so huge when you're small. Not just size even, but that shine things seemed to have."

"I don't know about shine." Alma takes a long drink of rum.

"Well, a certain magic or something."

"That magic comes later, Max. It's called sentimentality."

"Come on."

"Sentimentality."

"You don't remember how the waves felt? When you were six? Cold, when you'd been in the sun all day? Goosebumps?"

"Goosebumps?" Alma screws up her face, has never heard the word.

"Yeah," Max laughs, "goosebumps. When you get cold and the bumps rise on your skin."

"That's called *goosebumps*?" Alma asks, incredulously.

"Yes."

"Really?"

Max waves to the bartender for more rum. "She's never heard of goosebumps."

The bartender smiles and nods his head. He's never heard the word either. He pours the dark liquid into wide-mouthed glasses full of ice while his assistant cuts limes and wipes the counter.

"O.K. then, snow," Max searches for an appropriate example. "The first time you saw snow. Wasn't it magic? Didn't it seem impossible, or awe-inspiring—that white powder coming down, and you could throw it, and you'd put it to your tongue and it tasted so clean, or metallic, or something?"

"I'm an islander. I've only seen snow a few times in my life. Mostly when I was older." Alma downs her drink haltingly.

"All right. You just don't want to admit it. Forget what you saw. What about what you felt?" Max tries another angle.

The drinks are placed in front of them without their noticing. The rum lulls them and leaves their speech slightly hindered, warms them, surrounds them in soft focus.

"The way you felt on Christmas Eve. That

expectancy, that electricity. You can never feel it like that again." Max had laboured the point for a half-hour, the booze slowing and stretching the conversation, the sentences hanging on air, taking shape in suspended time. "Or Christmas morning."

"One Christmas morning, my father fell into the tree and took it and all the lights and decorations over with him. He'd been up all night drinking with his friends," Alma says.

"No," Max laughs drowsily.

"Yes... and that seems a little funny to me now, but it also makes me sad—and angry."

"But that magic. You do know what I mean. The sight of your dad falling over the tree."

"When my sister helped him up, he slapped her across the face..." Alma stops. "Look, Max, we bring things back when we can live with them."

"What do you mean 'bring them back'?" he asks.

"Remember them. We manipulate them until they can't hurt us... 'till we can live with them. Then they become memories."

"That's bullshit. That's so bleak."

"No, it's not bullshit, it's just not sentimental," Alma replies, "You create that sentimentality as an adult, Max. With time. With distance. When you're a kid you just do these things."

Max waves his hand at her and sits back in his stool. He pours the last drop from his glass onto the counter, then dips his finger in it and moves the rum around, making designs on the tile.

A chair scrapes across the floor and two young men help another to stagger off to his hotel room. The clatter of conversation and music has risen exponentially, pulsing and spilling irrelevancies from the beach bar out over the ocean.

"I don't know if we should get another drink," Alma says, slurring just a little. "Maybe we should go find Irish."

"Ah, don't be silly. He's a big boy. He'll catch up with us. Besides, it's my birthday," Max waves to the bartender, "and it's free."

TREE

From the series "universal pictures."

pearl & olive skinned, grout black at its cloven
base strung with horned seed fruit the size
of ice cream scoops scarred pinballs, merry and plentiful as Mexican hatbands
and as quickly lost

arbutus you say aloud and think
of Arbuckle of poor Fatty of the many histories of ruined stars and

stop at a familiar corner step off pedals & pinch brake handles look and glide

over worm white roots teasing water from gravel, from clay
half a block later

— R. M. VAUGHAN

The man behind the bar smiles reflexively, but tosses the ice into the glasses roughly, showing his annoyance. The bar stays open each evening 'till the patrons stagger to their rooms, and the final hours are trying and unpredictable. He downs a quick shot, careful to avoid the eyes of the hotel manager or the young security guards who, impetuously amoral and looking for advancement, will squeal to their superiors, shrill as seagulls.

"When I was little, my grandparents took me to Italy to see some family on my father's side. We left Melbourne in the afternoon. The planes were so huge I couldn't believe them. That night, over the ocean, there was a storm. We were above the clouds when the lightning began." Max spoke softly, transported. "The entire sky lit up below me. The clouds flashed for miles around, lit from below. I still can't believe it. It was mysterious. And not because it had no meaning. Because it had so much meaning. I couldn't take it all in."

"I wonder what your grandparents remember," Alma says. Her hand brushing Max's.

"They're dead," Max lifts his glass, "but I don't recall if they even looked out the window."

Alma shifts in her stool, takes a drink of rum and returns it to the counter, leans an elbow on it to brace herself. The alcohol sits like an anchor inside her. Foggy. The racket is white noise, like an ocean on which their conversation floats, drifting toward something.

"One morning, I came down to have my

breakfast, and when I got to the bottom of the stairs I heard a noise from the living room. When I went in, I saw that the television was on and I could see my father was sitting in his armchair. I was about ten, so I could only see the top of his head from behind the chair, but in his hand there was an empty bottle."

"You were ten?" Max repeats drunkenly.

"I must've been. It was 1970. It was the morning my father found out that Salazar had died. I was afraid to walk around to the front of the chair. I could hear him weeping. When I stood between him and the television, he seemed to stare through me. His eyes were full of tears; he never even acknowledged me."

Alma catches herself and stops. A tingling rises in her fingers. The alcohol accentuates her melancholy 'till it stings inside her. Max is silent. He swims with conflicting emotions, dives empathetically, surfaces angrily. He reaches to Alma, then stops.

"I don't know why they ever married." Alma says, lost now.

Shaken straight, Max slurs, "Who?"

"He hated her family. My mother's people were from Pico. He always said they looked down upon him. He called them communists. They were liberals at most. She almost lost everything, marrying him. They almost cut her off. And when she moved to Sao Miguel to be with him it worked out that way anyway."

"He loved her though?" Max asks.

Alma starts, conscious, and looks into

Max's eyes.

"He didn't love anyone," she says.

"Well, why would he marry her?"

"I don't know . . ." Alma pauses.

The white noise is lost. Max and Alma are galvanized in the moment, inside it.

"The only strong emotion he showed her was resentment . . . to my sister and me too. 'Just like your mother,' he would say. She had gone to school in Pico. He hated that. He never finished. He felt embarrassed to be from Sao Miguel. 'A peasant.' He said the word like he was spitting. We never saw my paternal grandparents at all. For that reason, I think he hated my grandmother for giving birth to him in Sao Miguel."

"Why didn't your mother take the two of you and leave?"

"She loved him," Alma says, her voice resigned. "She thought she could change him."

"And . . .?"

"She couldn't," Alma hesitates. The tingle returns to her fingers. The words begin to catch in her throat.

"What happened?"

"They continued as usual . . . 'till the revolution came."

"Nineteen-seventy-four?"

"My sister and I awoke that night, shouts coming from the other room. My mother was pleading with him and screaming. There were loud crashes and things being broken. She kept yelling, 'Why?' We hid in the basement."

Tears run down Alma's cheeks. Max leans close to her.

"My grandparents had called her from Pico to tell her the good news. The revolution came at 3 A.M."

Alma wipes her eyes and reaches for her drink. Gaining her composure a little, her voice evens out and she speaks quietly.

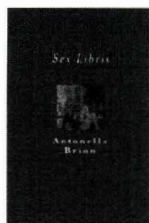
"He hated her then. He seemed to blame her for it, to resent them all to the point of hatred. He beat her so badly that she spent time in hospital."

The silence is invaded by dance music, as it returns to them. Alma's eyes are red and new tears well up in them and threaten to break loose. Max takes her hand and squeezes it, not knowing whether to smile or frown. Alma hugs him and then, all of a sudden, seems to realize something.

"Oh, Max, it's your birthday. I'm sorry." He shakes his head. "Don't be."

Alma leans forward and kisses him.

Ron Hawkins lives in Kensington Market. His stories have appeared in Repair and Stand Up 8.



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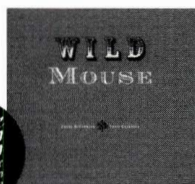
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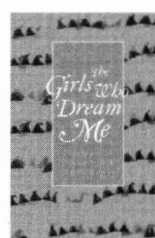
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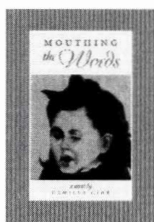
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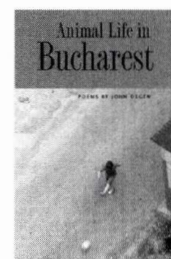


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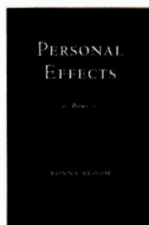
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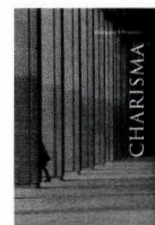
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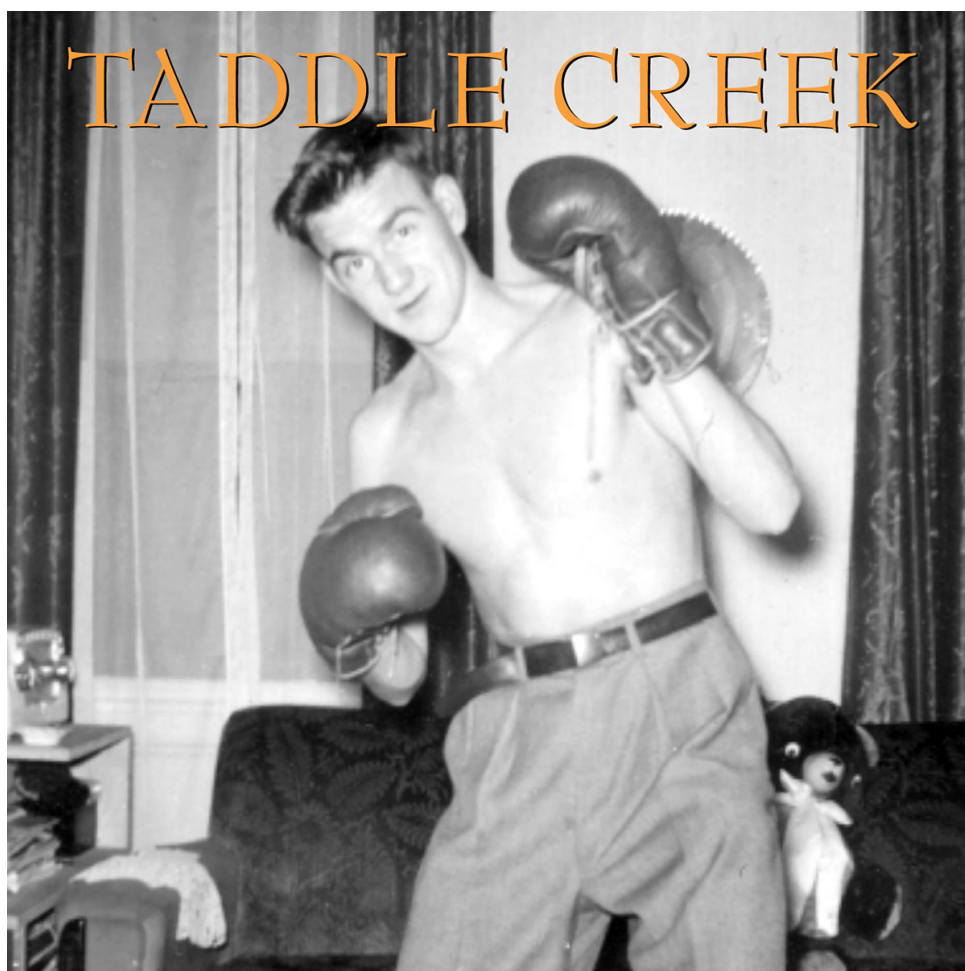
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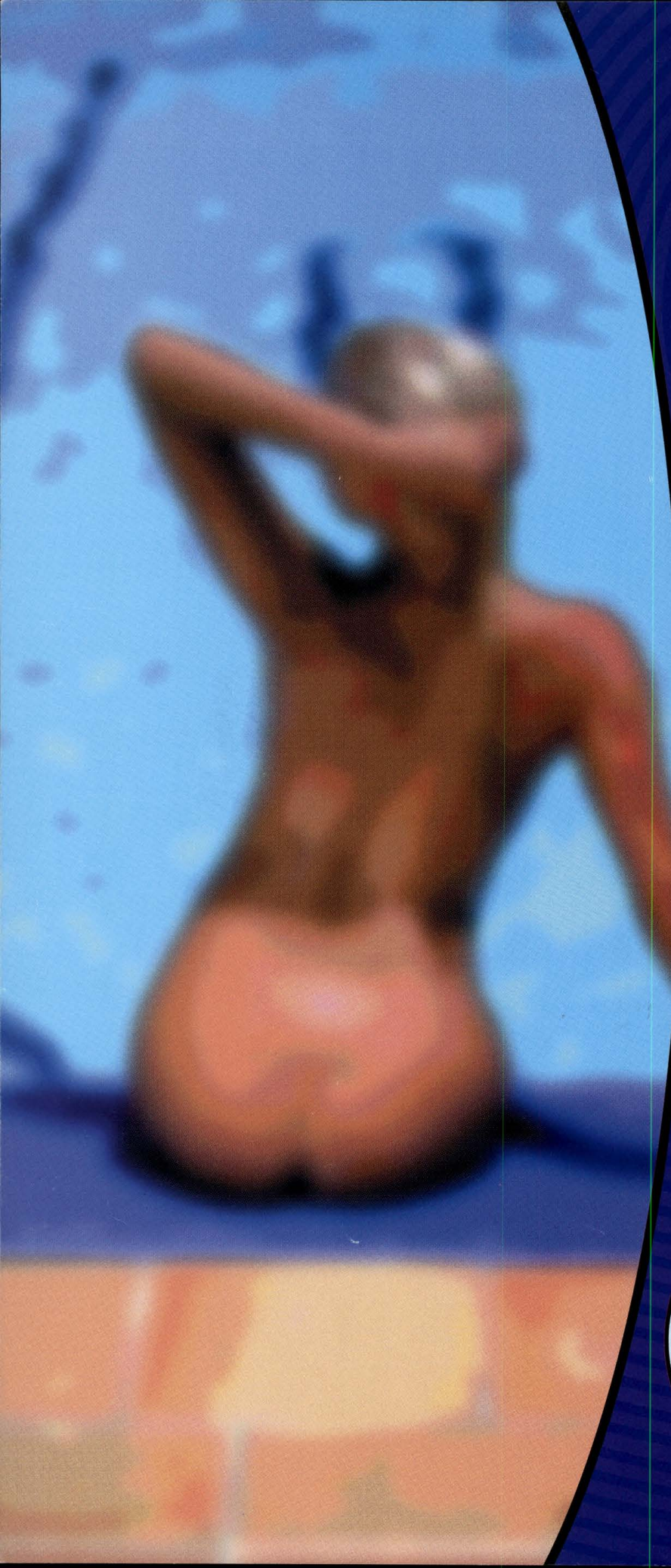


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