

GOING DOWN  
SWINGING

GOING DOWN  
SWINGING



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*The first-ever entirely digital  
edition of Going Down Swinging.*

# Editorial

Thirty-one years ago, a couple of poets got together and decided to make a literary magazine. Typewritten, stapled at the spine, and published on the few dollars they could scrape together, it was a gloriously bold gesture, one that gladly defied conventional publishing wisdom. A bushy-bearded Ned Kelly raised two boxing gloves on the front cover. What else could it be called but *Going Down Swinging*?

And what else could it do, as the underdog of this story, but become a fixture in the Australian literary scene? *GDS* has thrived, becoming first port of call for some of its country's finest fiction, poetry, graphic art, and spoken word. It's a privilege to be taking the reins, and for our first edition as editors, as well as *Going Down Swinging's* first-ever digital edition, we're taking our cues from Kevin and Myron's dauntless leap into the unknown.

Putting together this edition, we've seen the written word behave in ways we could never have predicted. Poetry, particularly, has misbehaved in the digital realm, breaking its lines wherever it sees fit. It's turned itself into music, and worked its way into illustration and song. Short stories have broken free of their bonds and play with photographs. A film collage of a stage production of a Dylan Thomas radio play renders traditional Welsh lullabies across digital captures of paint and canvas. This, to us, is what is so exciting about the thing in front of you – it's opening the door to tremendous creative possibilities. This is only the first step.

In his guest editorial in *GDS #30*, founding editor Kevin Brophy wrote, "Let's hope *GDS* continues to be re-invented by ever newer and stranger editors and that like life, it retains the feeling of being an ongoing draft of a promising idea." Launching our first ship into the turbulent ocean of digital publishing, the world of small press feels more promising than ever, so consider this our first draft: an iteration of an idea that will continue to refine itself as newer and stranger technologies come to the fore.

This is the content from a book-like digital publication originally made for iPads and smartphones. We had to reset all of it to make it available in browser form, which now

we've done. *GDS #31* is full to the brim with work that was until now unpublishable, stretching the boundaries of style and genre in new directions. It's a joy to be able to bring you these pieces, in all their shaggy, experimental, interdisciplinary glory. These are exciting times to love the word in all its forms. We can't wait to see what happens next.

– Geoff and Jessica

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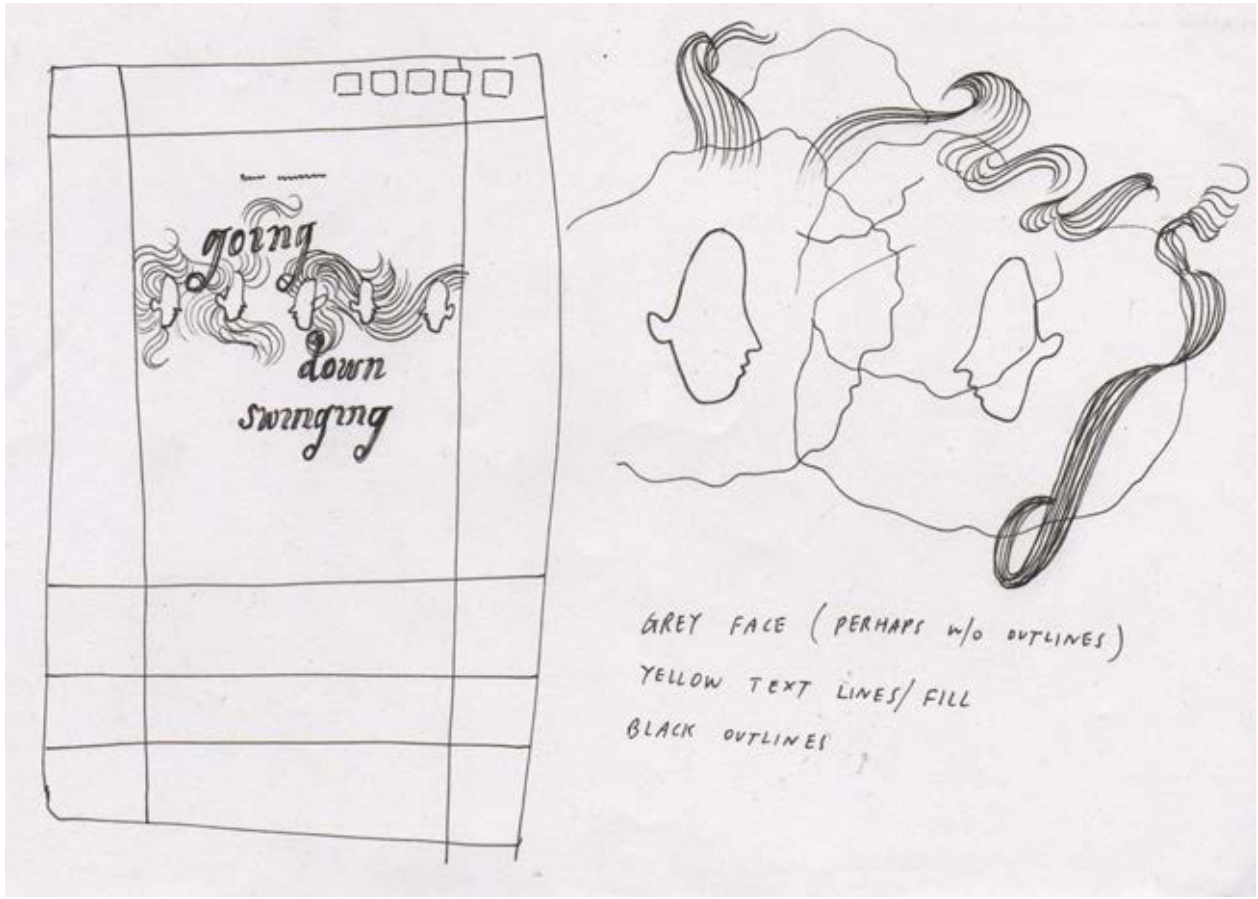
*The first-ever entirely digital  
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# Cover draft gallery

*Jessica McCausland*



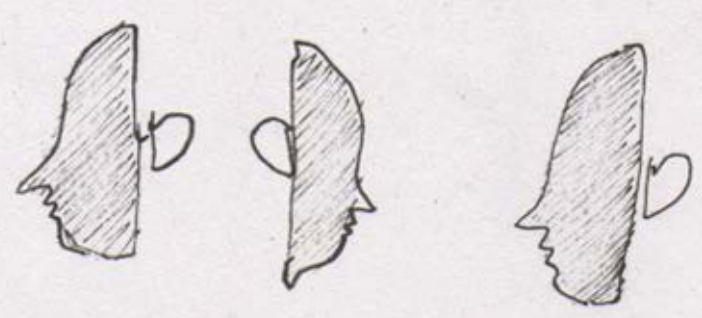


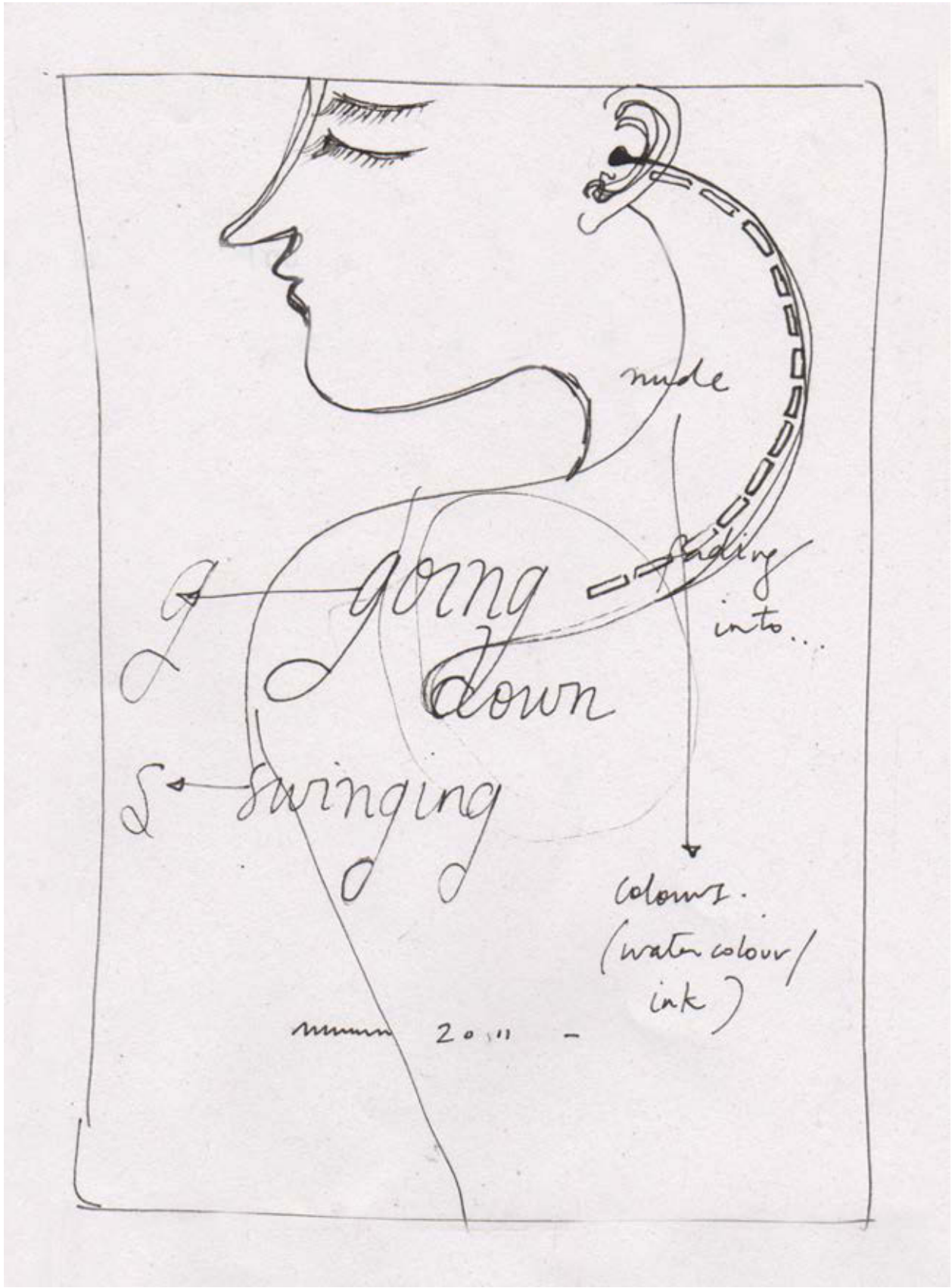




Coming Down

Swinging





nude

going down  
swinging

riding into...

colours  
(water colour /  
ink)

2011 -





summer 2011



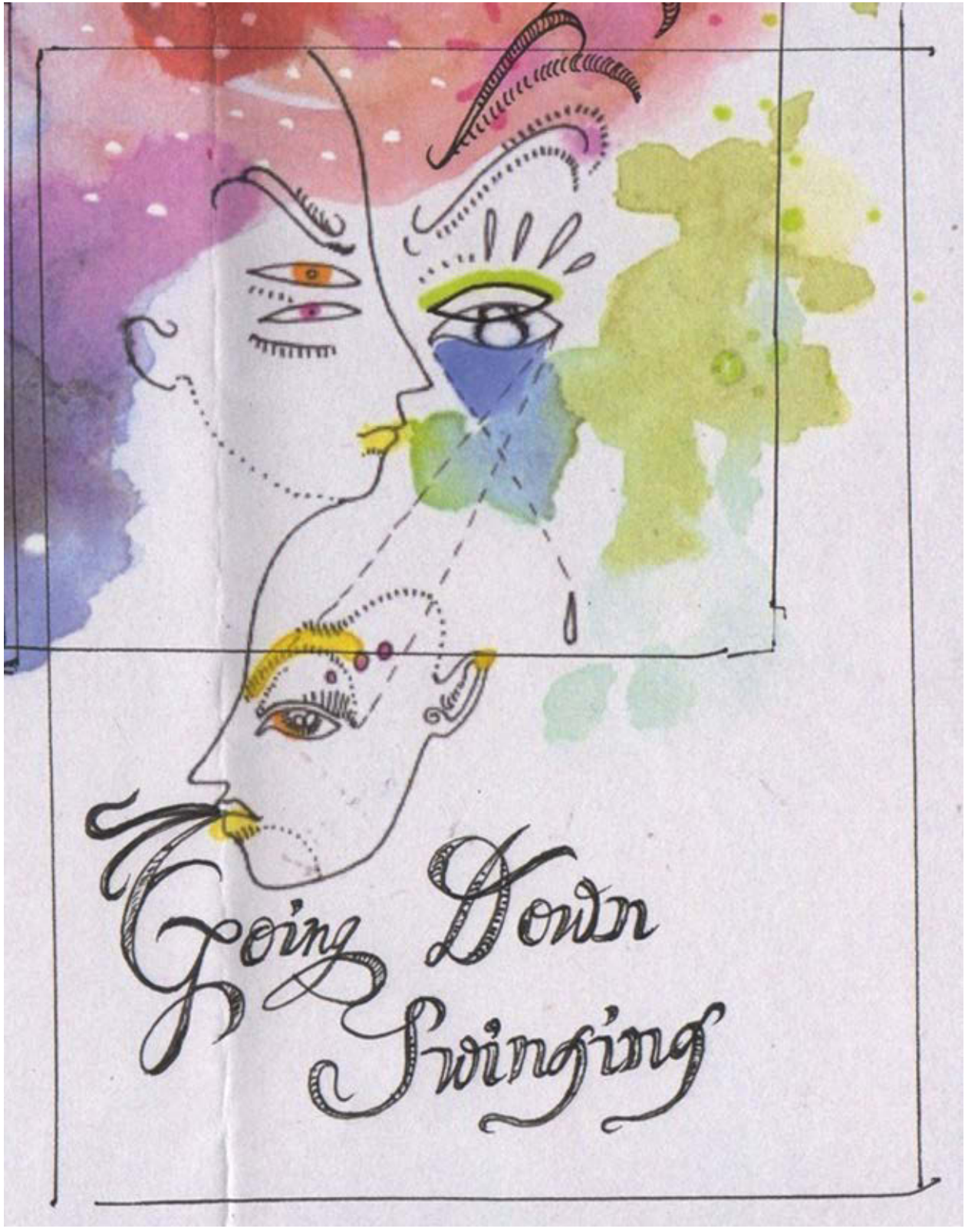




GOING DOWN  
SWINGING

GOING DOWN  
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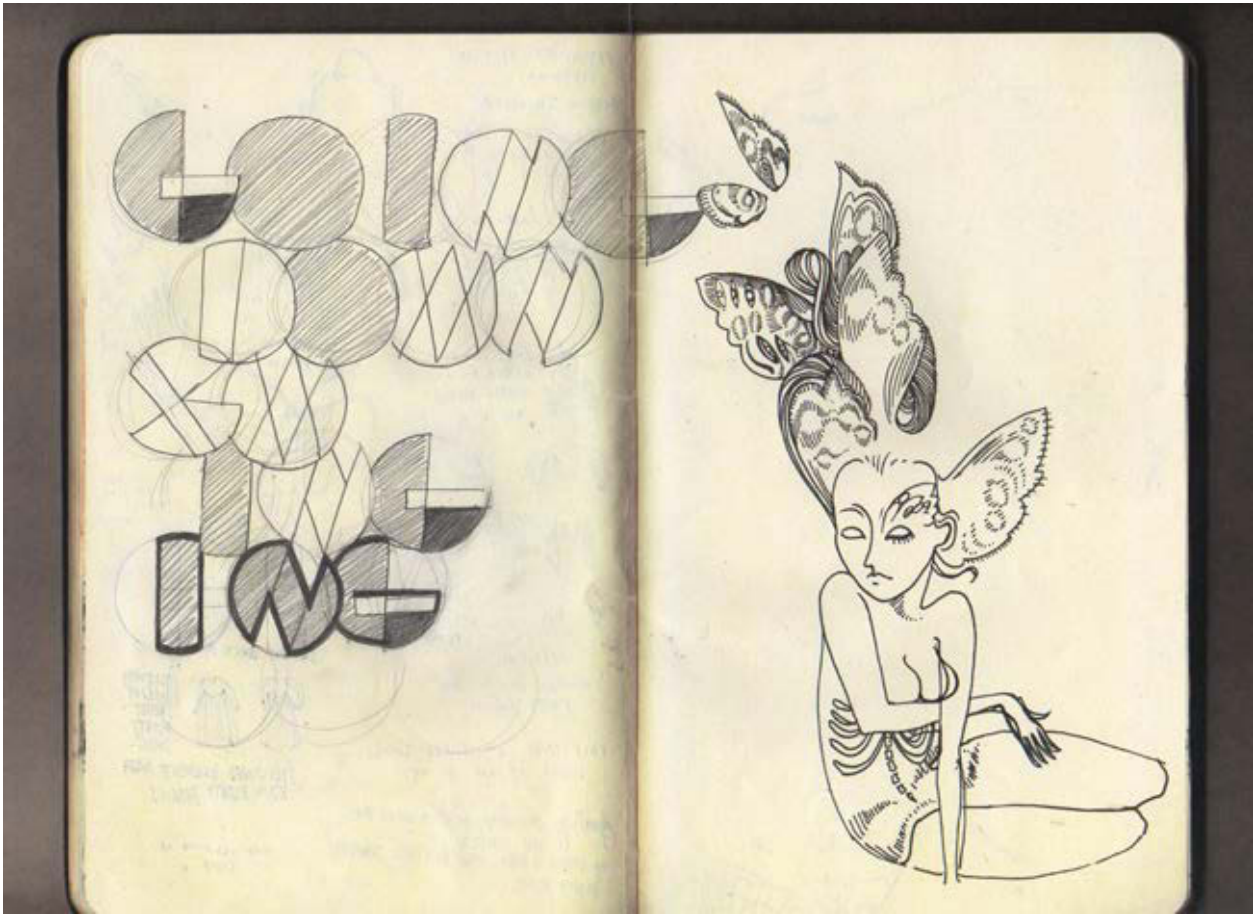




Going Down  
Swinging

















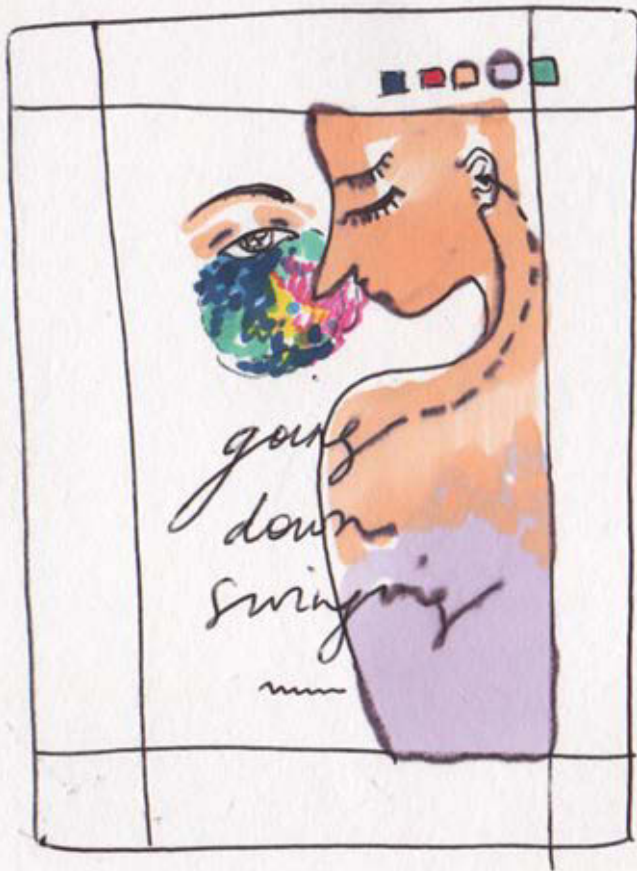














ISSUE 32





*The first-ever entirely digital  
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# **Eight Reasons Not to Climb the Empire State Building**

*Alex Skovron*

1

It may not be necessary  
but it would be sufficient  
not to climb the Empire State Building  
at least once in a lifetime

2

No one would be waiting at the top  
unless they already knew  
you were climbing the Empire State Building  
and if they knew  
this could complicate the element  
of surprise

3

There is a danger  
of accidentally falling while you climb  
the Empire State Building  
which could affect  
the nature of the achievement  
and introduce a needless ambiguity  
as to your intention

4

Since arguably  
the Empire State Building is no less  
iconic than it was  
in the days when deco demanded epic theatre  
climbing it now would only risk  
an eruption of nostalgia  
for zeppelins  
biplanes and large monkeys

5

The media would distort  
your nobility of motive and the tabloids  
would trick you  
into some tawdry half-untruths  
such as confessing  
you were once observed  
being molested by a sleazy windowcleaner  
on the Empire State Building's  
observation deck

6

What you were thinking  
while you climbed the Empire State Building  
would be overheard and splashed  
across every website  
blog and antisocial-media page  
but if unforgivably  
you failed to complete the climb  
everyone would ask  
what you were thinking

7

I suppose it is pointless to mention  
that the lifts in the Empire State Building  
are faster and safer

8

There is no eighth reason  
not to climb the Empire State Building  
though there is  
a ninth and a tenth reason  
but you may never know if you don't  
ignore them all  
and go ahead and climb  
if you really must

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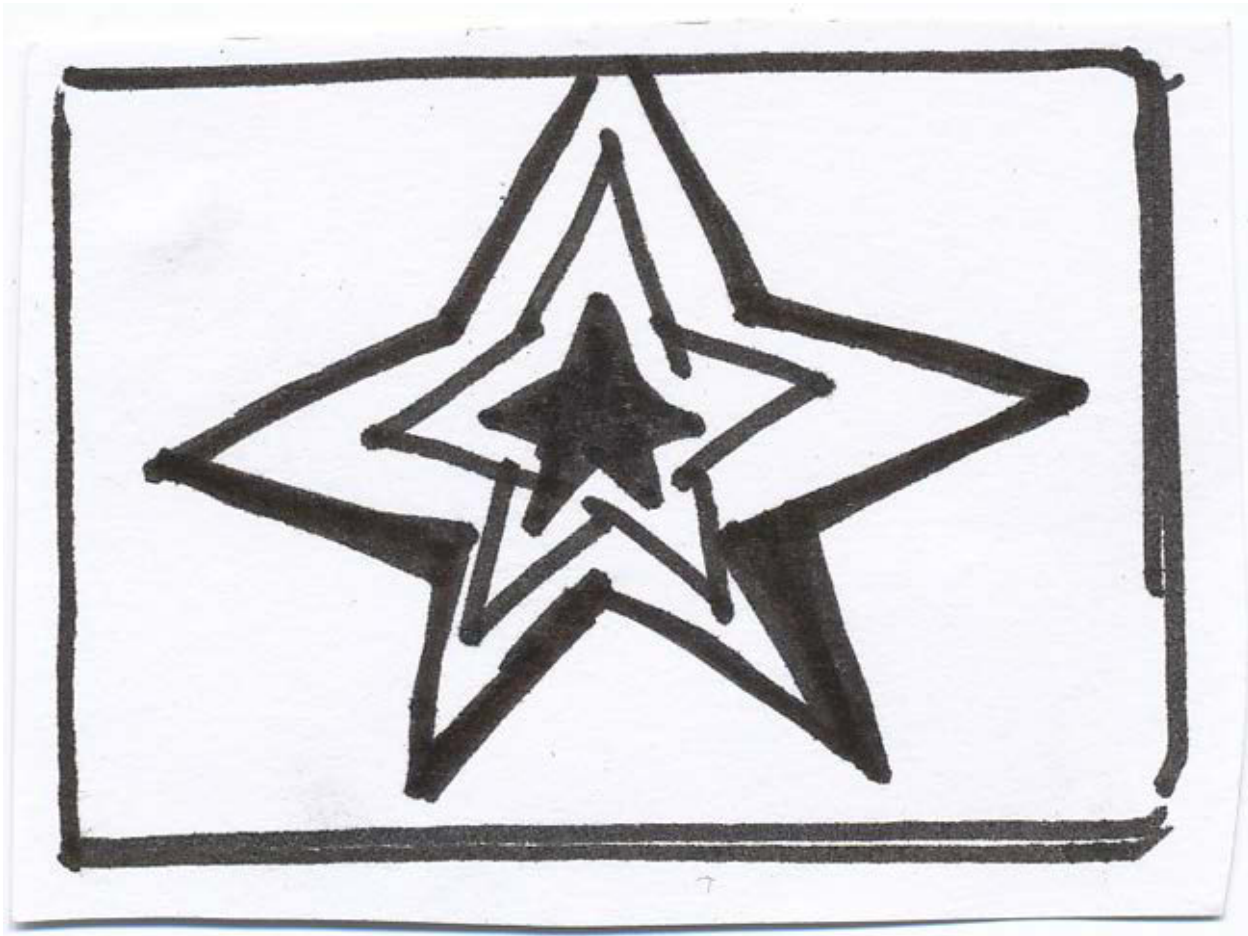
# Beautiful Useful Things

*Eric Yoshiaki Dando*

## Star Photos

I ask H and Dee and Jay to pose for some staged worksite photos for the National Innovation Award application. I get a good close-up of H's hand, weeding a lettuce. I like this photo because you can see the groovy faded red and green jailhouse tattoo of a star he got done in Pentridge in the 70s.

We aren't allowed to take photos of anyone's face.



## Spiders

I am working hard pulling out ivy around the community centre. Jay was working hard at the start but has stopped. He does not like the spiders. Just before, a bee was flying around and he thought it was chasing him. Last week it was a wasp. I have told him that he will lose marks for killing insects out of fear or cruelty. "It's part of the course," I explain, "being nice to insects." I offer him a choice, "What would you prefer, lots of written tests and essays, or this? Which means not killing anything, not hurting anything."

Jay is afraid of all spiders – even daddy long-legs, even money spiders and jumping spiders. He is terrified of putting his hands into the ivy. Maybe he is scared of all insects. "Come on Jay, these spiders won't hurt you. Come on, you've got gloves on anyway," I say, "C'mon," I say, "pick one up. It'll be good for you."

I pick up some spiders and tell him their names and what I know about them. I offer him one of these spiders but he recoils in horror. "That's crazy mad shit," he says. "How do you know it won't bite you? How do you know it's not poisonous?"

"Well look. They crawl on me all the time. I'm not dead. C'mon Jay, just put your hand out and hold it for a second. C'mon, be a man. A tiny little money spider can't hurt you."

He puts out his hand but closes his eyes and I put the money spider on his glove and it runs

over the edge and abseils down and when he opens his eyes it's gone. He has to give himself a good slapping down, just to make sure.

## **Dead budgie heads**

H keeps telling us he always gets even. When someone rips him off, or rats him out, or roots his missus. He will get them in the end. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen.

Like when he went round to his friend's house and chopped all the heads off his budgies – lined all the budgie heads up in a neat little row. He rolls his eyes back and does a quick impression of one of the dead budgie heads and we all laugh.

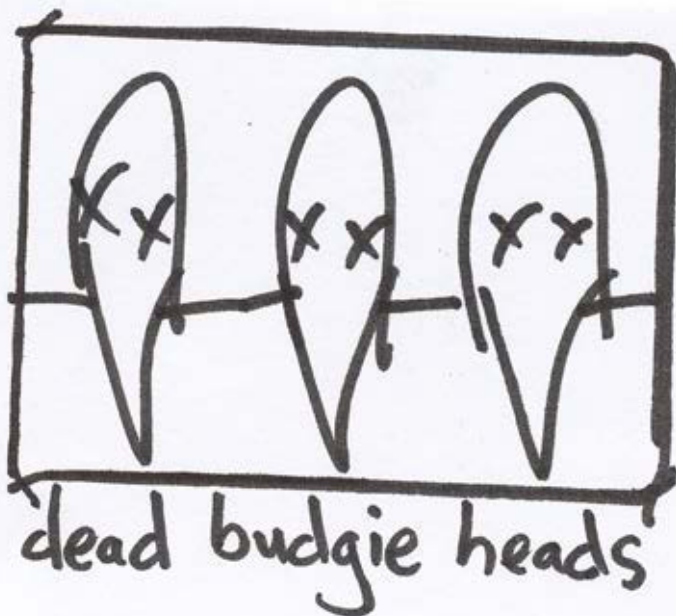
“But hang on H,” I say, “you love animals, don't you? I know you love animals, you have a turtle and a rooster at home and you love them, you told me that you love them.”

“Yeah,” says H, “I love animals but I don't care. If some cunt is dirty on me I'll fix him up. I went round to this cunt's house the next day and he was crying, he said, ‘Look what they did to me birds. Me beautiful birds!’ I said, ‘Oh, that's terrible.’ He didn't even twig it was me.”

I feel I have to tell H exactly what I think. “One day,” I say to H carefully, “a gang of giant budgies is going to peck your head off.” Later, I reinforce to H that it really is a terrible thing he did to those budgies and that he must make up for it somehow or more terrible things will happen to him. “It must be very bad for your karma,” I say.

H is interested by the idea of this, but then shrugs it off, “What else can they do to me?” he says, folding his arms. “Bring it on,” he says, “What the fuck do I care? Come on all you cunts, come and get me.”





## Done

I must confess I can't stand it when people say "Bring it on." My mum said it the other day. The other thing she said was, "It's all good." Next she'll be putting a cap in my ass.

Jay says "It's all good" all the time. He says it after telling me terrible horrible stories about his life. I think about Jay's horrible life all the time, it is one of the hazards of the job. Jay says it's all good when quite obviously there is nothing good. No good here. Nothing doing. That's what we should be saying to each other as we stand here drinking tea and leaning on shovels. "Nothing doing," someone will say. "Yeah, nothing doing," someone will say back to them.

## Random kindness

H has had a fight with his wife and she wouldn't give him any money for lunch. "She gave me one cigarette for the whole day," he says. "One cigarette. How *tight* is that? What a cold hard bitch. How am I going to survive on one cigarette?"

Jay buys H a pie and a doughnut for lunch and he can't believe it. "Fuck thanks, I'll pay you back next week I promise," he says. "You're a good cunt," he says to Jay, smiling.

"I don't like seeing people go hungry," says Jay.

"Listen," says H, moving up really close to Jay, "what I really need is a cigarette."

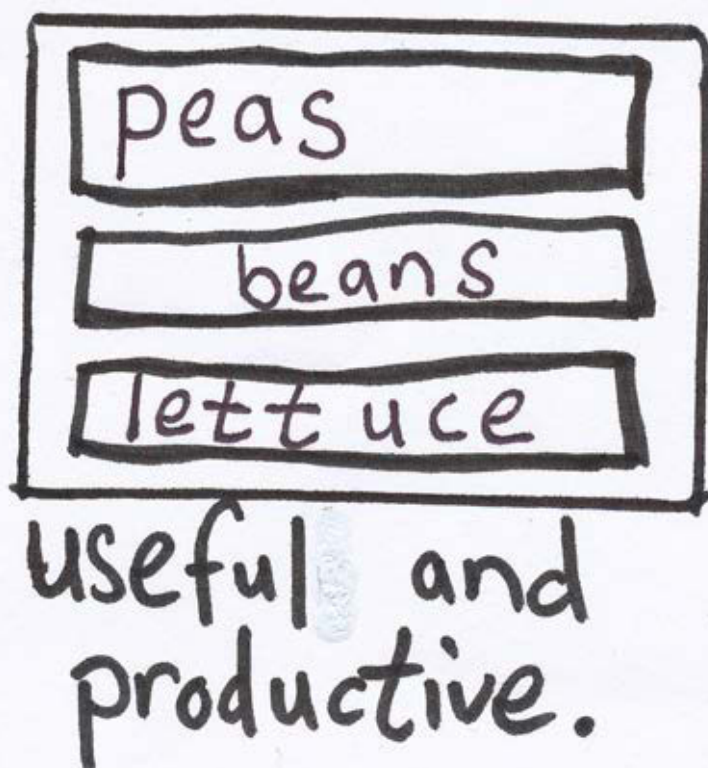
"Sorry," says Jay. "It's my last one."



### Useful and productive

That night I tell Jasmine that I am recording all the times my students are kind to each other. So I can quantify the quality of their interactions for corrective services. So I can gather up all the criminals in the world and grow vegetables – drunk drivers and paedophiles and armed robbers producing broccoli and tomatoes and zucchini for the people.

Jasmine says she is thinking of starting a small business with Yarra. Something to do with lollypops. Holographic lollypops. She is looking at web sites and talking to Yarra and me at the same time. I don't even hear what she is saying, I am too busy thinking about my new world order with the criminals. All of us working together, caring for the vegetables and being nice to the animals.



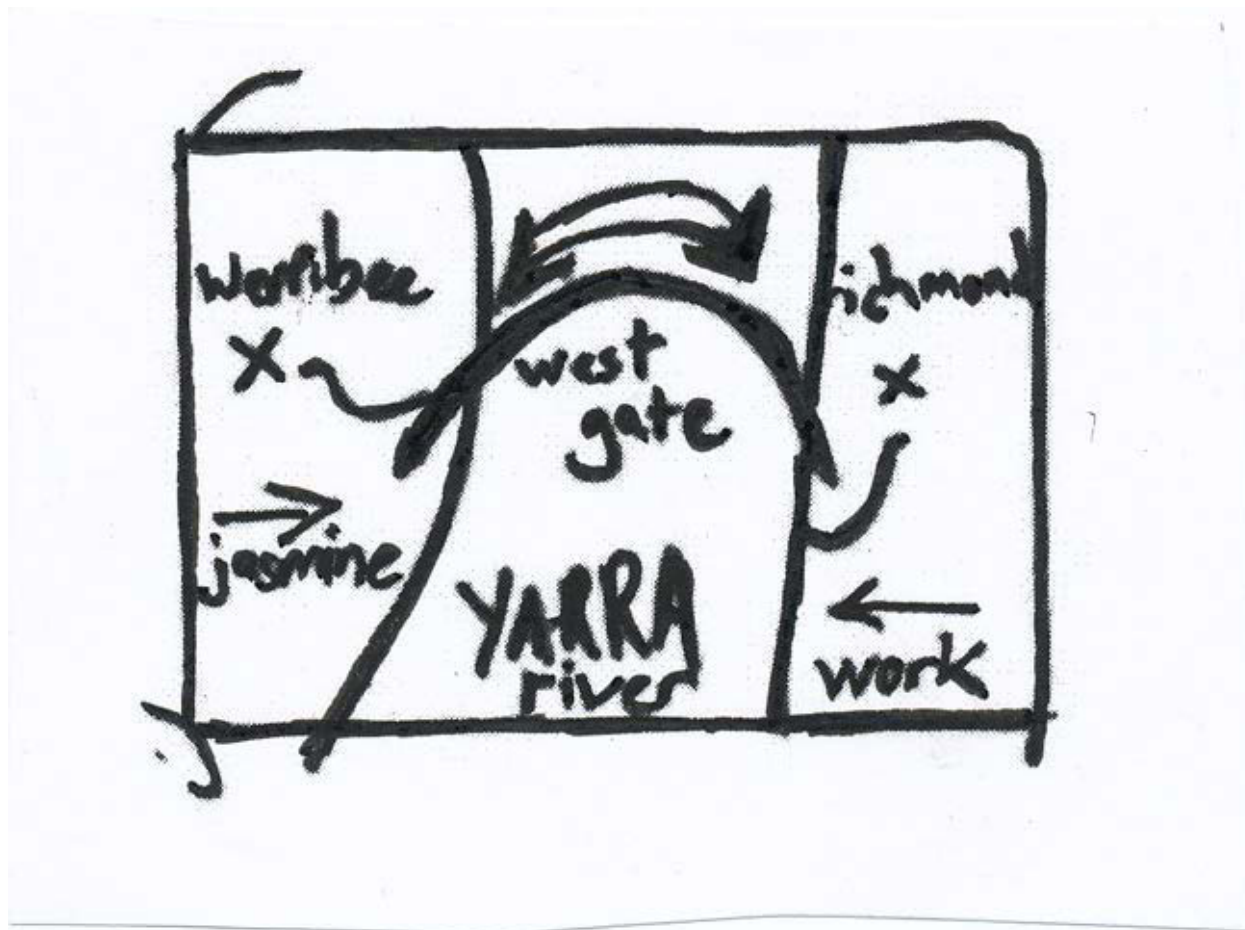
## Turtles

The next day, H arrives at work angry about his neighbours. He thinks that they crept over his fence and ate his turtles. "I'm not a racist," says H, "I just hate those fucking gooks next door. They put my turtles in a pot and ate them, the sick fucks. The cold hard cunts. The farken dogs."

That's when I tell H that he has to be careful because I am a bit of a gook. I was born in Japan and I have a Japanese middle name. Kids used to call me a nip and a gook in primary school, they use to pull their eyes into slits at me. I tell H exactly what that sort of racism felt like when I was in primary school, even though I am not really Asian, just my name is.

H doesn't believe me about my name so I show him my licence to prove it. "Well," says H, satisfied with my identity, "don't get me wrong, some of them are OK. Just not those turtle-eating cunts, just not cunts that sell bullshit heroin or pay for dope with photocopied 50-dollar notes."

When I am driving home I think to myself, I must be some sort of idiot showing H my licence like that. Now he probably knows where I live.



### Holographic Lollypop Factory

When I get home Yarra's van is outside. They are sitting in the kitchen covered in purple, sucking on lollypops. Yarra takes one out of her mouth and shows me. There is a 3D picture of a spiral inside the lollypop. It's amazing and they made them in the shed from a kit that they bought on the internet.

Yarra and Jasmine now own the Australian rights for Holographic Lollypops. They are making them for all the doof-doof festivals in summer. They have converted the bungalow into a Holographic Lollypop factory. They haven't quite worked out the recipe yet because only a few of the lollypops have worked so far.

Some of the holograms are pretty cool. I keep asking Yarra how she makes them, but it is a secret. There is a laser though, Jasmine told me that much.

They only have one flavour at the moment, which is grape. They are waiting for more flavours to arrive from America. The grape holographic lollypops turn your mouth and tongue purple for a very long time. I like the smell, it smells the way a lollypop factory is supposed to smell.

"Look," Jasmine says, holding up one of the lollypops, "it's like a magic eye – keep looking in deep focus and you can see the future."



## Dogs

The next day H shuffles over a bit sheepish and says, "Sorry. I don't mean I hate you, it's just... well, I *am* a bit of a racist. Not to you, you're OK, just to those fucking gooks that ate my turtles, just those cold hard cunts that did that. The fucken dogs."

"Well," I say, "you chopped the heads off those budgies, and you didn't even eat them. What a waste. And anyway, there's Asian people that have been in Australia longer than my family and your family and before that there was just black people."

"So is one of your parents Japanese?" asks H.

"No," I say, "both of them are."

Later that day, H strides up with some confidence and determination and says, "You're not Japanese, ya idiot." At first I thought he was going to hit me.

## A Type of Food

Dee says the heroin the Asians sell is usually pretty good, H just hates them because they make more money than him. They don't blow it all to buggery at the pokies like H does.

Dee said he used to grow dope for this big Asian gang from Sydney. He thinks they were Triads. He used to swap it for heroin. They used to drive down smack from Sydney and take back dope. They hid it in the tyres. He only did it twice because the whole thing was too spooky.

It was good though, he didn't have to worry about scoring for about a year. But then when it ran out, he had a ridiculous habit and had to get back to work stealing hot water units and making fake receipts for hardware stores on his computer. It wasn't easy. You had to work at it. It was like having two jobs.

Dee says that he could have bought a house if he had all the money he had wasted on heroin and speed. I ask him how much he has spent on cigarettes and what he would buy with that money if it was returned to him. H says he never thinks about smoking cigarettes, or how much he has spent on cigarettes. He is happy smoking cigarettes, he doesn't see anything wrong with smoking cigarettes.

"They're my lungs," he claims.

### **Sausage factory**

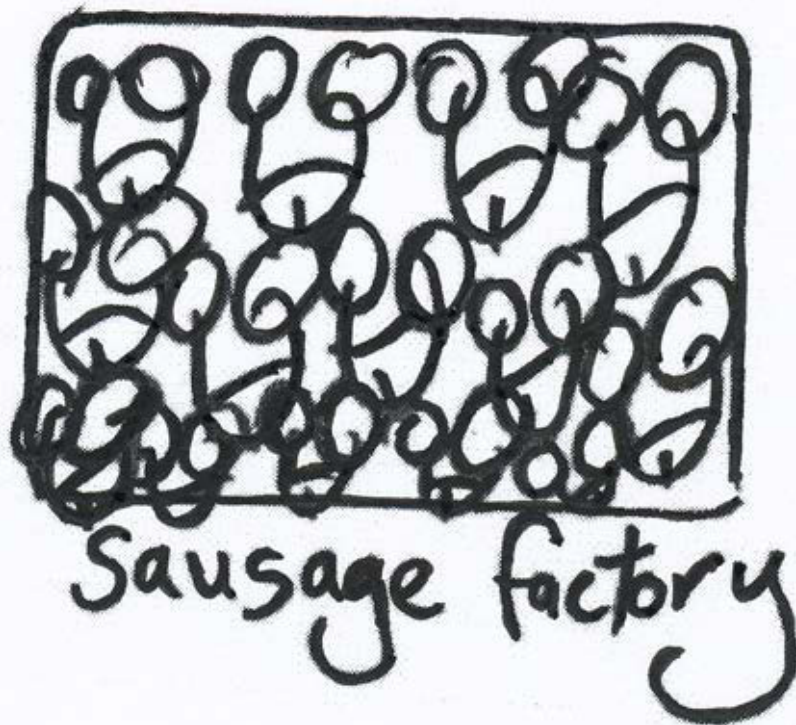
H tells us about how he used to work in a sausage factory and they would piss in the sausages instead of the toilet. Everyone laughs because it's very funny the way he tells it. He tells a good story. The worst thing about working in the factory was that it put H off eating sausages for a while.

"I'll tell ya," he tells us, "I didn't eat sausages for about... ohr, three months."

"Three months," says Jay. "Well that's not very long."

H still eats sausages. In spite of all his sausage knowledge – intimate knowledge of the sausage ingredients, the sausage making *process*, all the awesome and artificial things and *additives*. H still eats them, he keeps suggesting that the community centre should put on a barbeque, for all the hard work we have been doing. Sausages.





### Sensitive New Age Man

The students are talking about hitting women. H says that he never hits women – except when they scratch or spit at him, then he just loses his temper. Like with his ex-wife. He told her not to spit and what did she do? Spat him right in the eye, so he punched her in the face – he punched her pretty hard and she fell down and turned white.

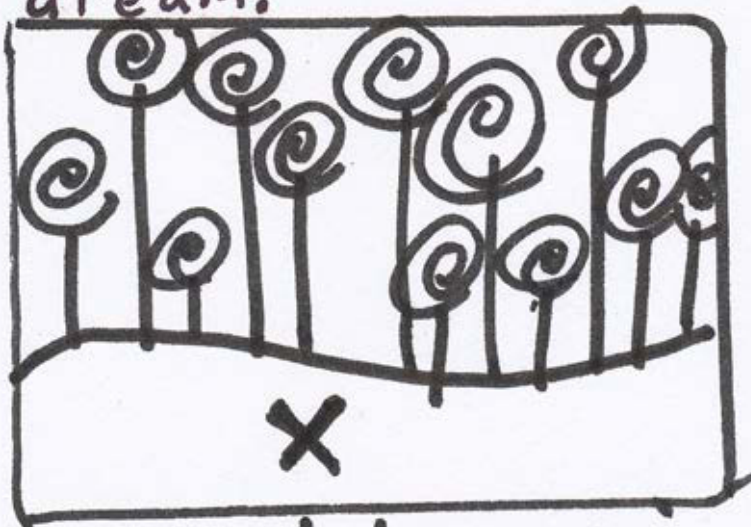
Oh no, said H to himself. What have I done?

She was on the floor and he couldn't find a pulse. H thought she was dead so he rolled her up in a piece of carpet and that's when she woke up. She kicked and punched her way out of the carpet and ran across the road to her mum's place. Then they both came back with the neighbours to get the kids. He tried to talk some sense into her, but her mum called the cops on him. The cops put this restraining order on him.

"You know what," realises H thoughtfully, "I think *that* was the day my marriage ended."

It was easy for H's wife. You wake up rolled in a piece of carpet and you know it's over. You just know.

dream:



i wrapped her up in  
a piece of carpet and  
buried her in the  
lollypop forest.

### The Proposition

H has a hernia so he can't do heavy lifting or strenuous work. He unfolds a doctor's certificate from his overalls. He thinks I don't believe him, he wants to prove it to me. He lifts up his shirt so I can see. He has to lift up his pot belly as well. There is a very sore swollen cavity. Sort of obscene looking. "Look at this," says H with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth.

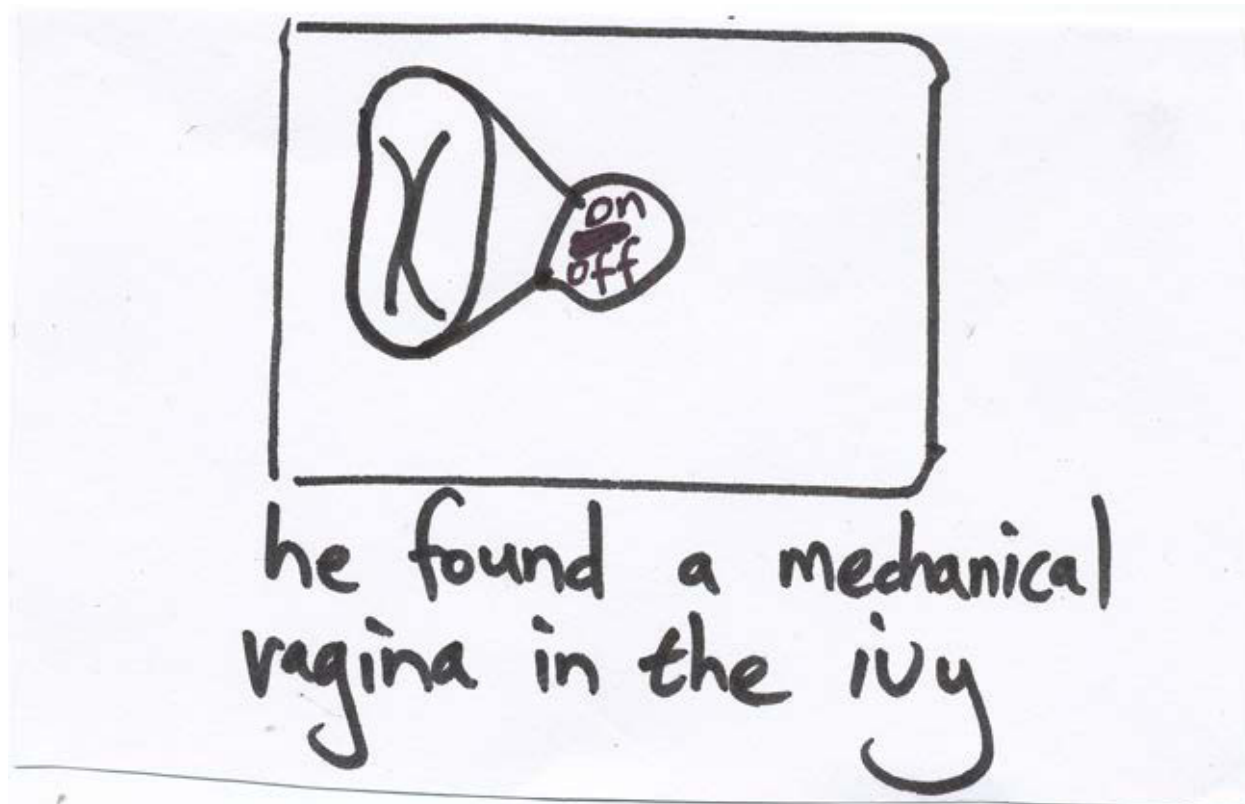
H manipulates the cavity of his hernia to make it behave like a some kind of sex-aid, or a pornographic tattoo. "Oh I've had offers," says H effeminately. "Give me 50 bucks and I'll let you fuck it," he says, sticking out his tongue and wagging it at me.

"Ewww," I say, recoiling in horror. "That's rank." But secretly, I can't stop laughing at H. He is legitimately oblivious of the social conventions of this planet. I marvel at how he outdoes himself, each comment more putrid than the last. I shouldn't laugh. It's not right.



H's hernia keeps reminding me about another experience when I was doing revegetation for Eltham council and the guy I was working with found shreds of pornography and a battery operated vagina in the ivy. I told him to put it in the bin but he picked it up and tormented me with it. Thankfully the batteries were flat.

The experiences I have had with these people are with me forever and I realise I can never get any of these images out of my head. I can never forget H's hernia and the way he waggled his tongue at me, or the sex aid in the ivy. These things are for keeps, I tell myself as I drive home over the West Gate.



he found a mechanical  
vagina in the ivy

### A pecking order

We are having another coffee break, it seems to have merged into the end of the last coffee break. I don't really mind as long as everyone behaves and is decent to each other. It could be worse. We are talking about birds. H says that everybody thinks birds are really cute and everything but they are actually cold hard killers.

"That's right," I say, "when I watch chickens closely they remind me of *Jurassic Park*. Originally, when they were living in the jungle, chickens were scavengers," I say, "they eat any dead or sick animal. They eat bugs, worms. You see those eggs in Safeway, from 'vegetarian fed chickens', that means they're malnourished because a chicken needs to eat protein to make an egg."

Pretty stupid being called a chicken if you are a coward. If you watch them you will see. You know, the first day of school or jail there are cockfights, a pecking order is established. There are

injuries.

## Seagulls

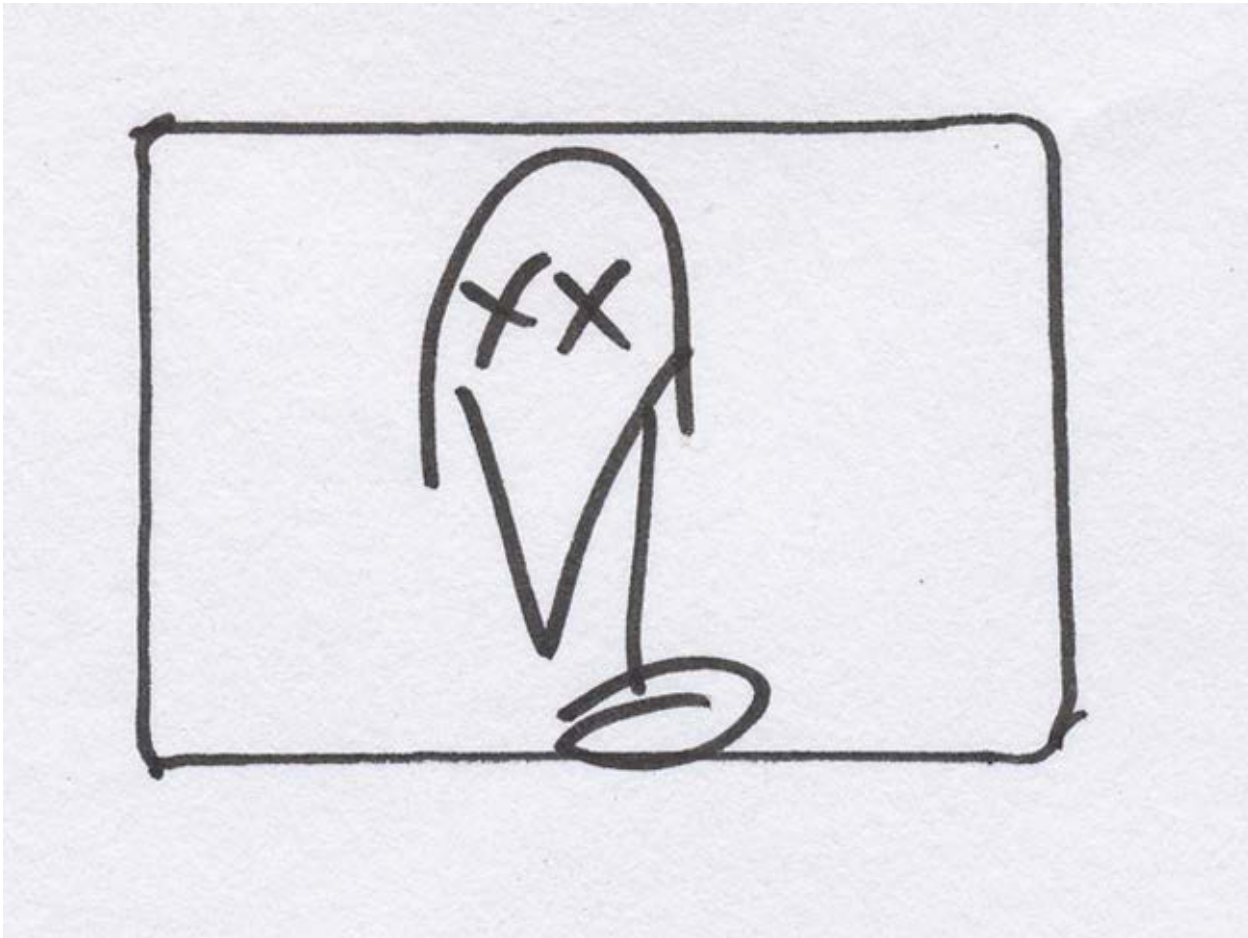
I tell them, once I took some kids to the zoo and we were looking at these cute baby ducks and this seagull swooped down and snatched one of the baby ducks and flew away to eat it. Another seagull swooped down and stole a piece of it. The seagulls were fighting each other over pieces of dead baby duck and there was blood everywhere. On the way home the kids kept talking about the blood. The blood, they said to each other in the back of the car, the blood.

H puts his hand on my shoulder to interrupt, he says that the seagulls at the zoo *are* pretty bad. Once he was at the zoo and these seagulls took a baby parrot from a nest in one of the gum trees. Him and the kids and his first wife, the one he rolled up in a piece of carpet. They complained to the zoo people but nobody did anything.

“I couldn’t believe it,” says H, “the zoo people are supposed to be taking care of the animals and then the seagulls took another baby parrot. And they still didn’t do anything, the cold hard cunts,” says H, “the cold fucken cunts. Imagine that, innocent native animals and the cold hard cunts couldn’t give a shit. Giving my kids psychological scarring and everything.” H rages and fumes with the memory of it.

“I’m not sure H,” I say carefully, “but aren’t seagulls native too? I’m pretty sure they are native anyway, so it’s really just nature being natural.”

H doesn’t fucking know, but what I should have asked him is if he had ever seen a baby seagull. Yarra asked me that once and it was like some sort of Zen proverb, the way she said it. Perhaps thinking about baby seagulls would have distracted H.



## Puppies

H says that he had these mongrel dogs once that just kept inbreeding. There was nothing he could do about it. Most of the puppies were still-born, but a few were born normal and one was born with two heads. "Fucken sick shit," says H. "I had to drown them in a bucket, one at a time."

"Wow," I say, "two heads. You could have made money with that puppy, H." I tell H about Miracle Mike, the headless chicken, and how his owner travelled the country making a fortune.

"Having two heads is just as good as having no head," I say. "You could have retired, H."

H doesn't believe me, he thinks I am making it up. I tell him about this documentary he can rent from the video store if he doesn't believe me, *The Natural History of the Chicken*. "Oh," says H, "a documentary," and he is satisfied with that.

## Some sort of smut or fungus

Dee comes to me with his coffee in hand, he has been to look at the snow peas and some of them seem to be infected with a fungus or something. I go with him and have a look at them, they just seem a bit dried out. "I think they are going to be OK," I say. "They just need support," I

say, "can you help me with them for a sec?"

Dee fans his fingers out in front of him. "I like their little hands," he says, grasping at the rungs of an invisible ladder. "They grab on. They climb up."

We cut up some branches and poke them into the dirt for the peas to climb up. It is a good thing to see the big hardened criminals worried about the health of the little pea sprouts. Bad things have happened, but there is hope for these peas.

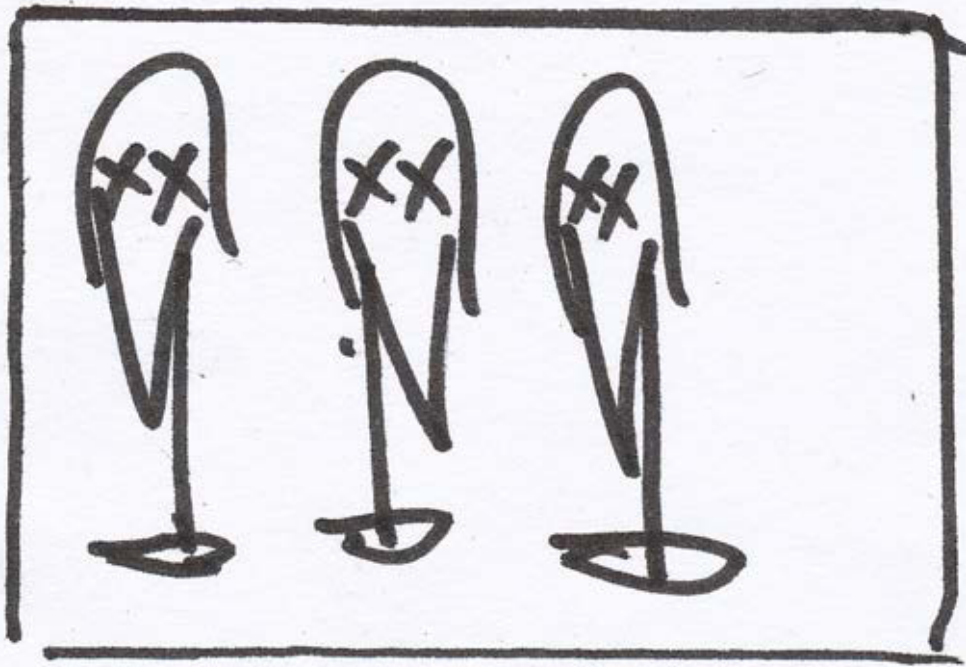
### **My new best friend**

Dee tells me how once he walked into Coles with his mate and saw their faces on WANTED posters stapled to the community notice board. They had to go to Safeway. I say, "Jesus, what was that about?" and there is a little pause that makes me think I shouldn't have asked. "It was for abduction," he says.

Later at home when I tell Jasmine about it, she says, "What does that mean? Does that mean he abducts children?"

"I don't know who he abducted," I say. "I think it was over drugs, I'm pretty sure he wouldn't abduct children," I say. "He's got kids. But maybe it's like H and the dead budgie heads. You know, he's got lots of pets, and he loves them, but he would still chop the heads off your budgies if you betrayed him or something... Don't worry. It's OK."

"I hope you're not making friends with this guy," says Jasmine.



## Dome

H is just too lazy to say methadone. He just calls it 'dome'. I've heard a few of the students saying it. "I have to leave early so I can get my *dome*," they will claim. I keep thinking it should be called 'done', but I keep that to myself. I suspect H is illiterate, so why should he care how it is spelt? It's not like he would find my New Hip Name for methadone *amusing*.

H makes himself useful, makes sure that he washes the coffee cups everyday. Sometimes he sweeps the floor when he is trying to suck up to me. He does a good job of hiding, no one can see him. *Today Tonight* would have to send in spies with secret cameras to catch him at it.

## Seeds

H is not illiterate. He copies the name of each seed packet in a beautiful cursive script onto the plastic trays. He says he taught himself to read and write, but not very well but. He makes a lot of cups of tea, says he has three sugars but I have seen him put in five. There's always a little mess of sugar around the jar and on the floor at the end of the day. "When you've finished with the propagation," I say to H, "would you mind sweeping up the sugar in the kitchen?"

"Yeah," he says grimly, with a thousand-yard stare. "Otherwise that old bitch from the community centre will have our heads."



## Nothing Doing

I'm over at Yarra's place, pruning her fig trees. She stands under the trees drinking coffee as I work. I tell Yarra about my horticulture students from corrective services. I tell her I sometimes have trouble telling Jasmine about my day because it is usually so horrible. No need to ruin her day as well.

One of the horrible stories I couldn't tell Jasmine: one of the new students has a history with Jay from years before. He had gang-raped Jay's wife with his friends and then they had all pissed on her out behind a Hungry Jack's. Jay caused a big scene with a garden saw in the kitchen as soon as the guy walked in, and the new guy bolted.

I have trouble telling Yarra all the details and tell her about the rape but not the pissing. I edit out some other unpleasant details and words. I refer to "the c word" but do not actually say it out loud.

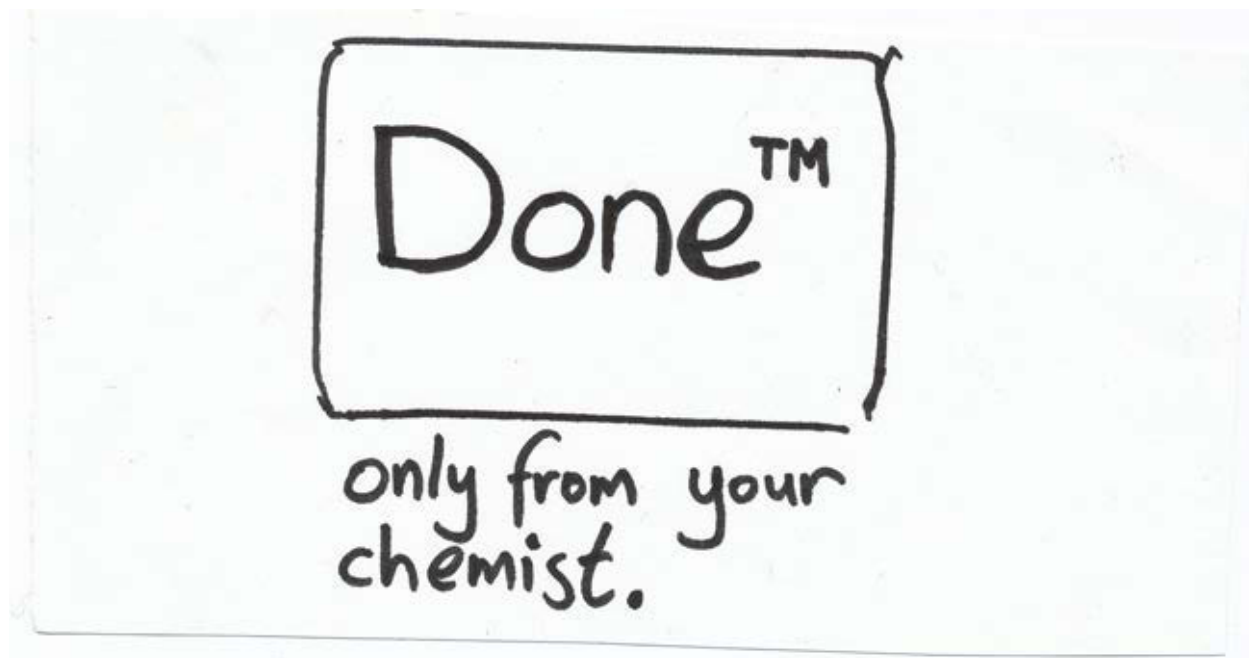
I tell her I am worried about Jay stabbing someone with something, or a gang of thugs coming down to the Lutheran church and beating the shit out of all of us. Sometimes I tear up when talking about my part-time weekend job. Look at me, I'm nearly crying with all the casual stress of it. Like somebody that gives a shit.

But no, it's all good. Bring it on, nothing doing, done.

## A fertile place

Yarra wants me to take a box of holographic lollypop wrappers back to Jasmine. She grabs my hand and says, "Why don't you just get a nice job somewhere? With children or something."

"I'm OK," I say, "It's just I don't have anything to write about. It's a good place to find new stories. It's a fertile place."



### Honest work

We are cutting the hedge around the community centre. H says he has lost weight but I can't see it myself. I'm pleased that he thinks that he has lost weight. He is definitely on his best behaviour in the public eye, I have never seen him work so hard.

"I love comin' here," says H, flicking the sweat out of his hair, "I tell people all the time that this is the best course I've ever done."

"Well, that's fantastic, H," I say, "I'm glad you're getting something out of it."

H is working up quite a sweat for such a diabolical disabled junky trickster. But then he tells me he has to leave half an hour early to get his dome. The chemist is a cunt, says H, if you are fifteen minutes late he won't give it to you and H needs it. It's not his fault the chemist is a cunt, he says.

### Beautiful Useful Things

Jasmine is sitting in front of the heater sucking the remains of a holographic lollypop, reading my work notes. Jasmine says that she doesn't know about this business of being so free and easy with saying 'cunt' all the time – everybody cunt this and cunt that. Cunt, cunt, cunt – I should be ashamed of myself saying cunt all the time. "Tell me this," says Jasmine, "what sort of *cunt* says 'cunt' so many times and thinks he can get away with it?"

"Um," I say.

“Why,” says Jasmine, rising up, throwing the lollypop down, “when we are grappling for a word to describe someone we hate, why is it *that* word that has the most resonance? Why is it the very worst word in the English language?”

“I think it’s just another taboo word,” I say, “like ‘bugger’ or ‘bastard’. You know that ‘bugger’ means ‘arse fuck’? At least it used to. But now it’s a word we can say in front of someone else’s children. It was in that car ad, remember. Anyway, sometimes I think ‘cunt’ is being used in the same way by everybody except us.”

The rules are shifting as we speak. I tell Jasmine about when Dee’s kids came to visit him at work and they ran into his arms and he kissed them and hugged them and said, “Ohr, how are ya, ya little cunts.” So *cunt* is not just a hate word. It’s a code word of affection to the men I work with.

“But I know what you mean,” I say, “Some people must save up that word for their whole life and then someone will cross them and out it will come. YOU CUNT, they will say. There, they have said it. The unspeakable. The unforgivable.”

“Why is it so bad to call somebody a cunt anyway?” says Jasmine, “Why give this word so much power?”

Jasmine is right and I am wrong. Cunts are beautiful useful things and I have been too free and easy with them. Is H a cunt? Is H’s chemist a cunt? They can never be. They don’t measure up. They should be falling over themselves to *become* cunts.

We should all strive to be as useful and as beautiful.

## **Blind Cunts**

We are walking to the shops and H is telling us all the different times he has found money in the street. He advises us to always investigate envelopes and mysterious pieces of paper, you never know what you will find. He found 200 dollars once in twenty dollar notes, they were blown up against a wire fence. “Cunts were just walking past them. Not even seeing them,” he says, “some cunts are just fucken blind.”

He said he went back to the fence the next day and there was another 40 dollars there and blind cunts all just walking past, fucking oblivious.

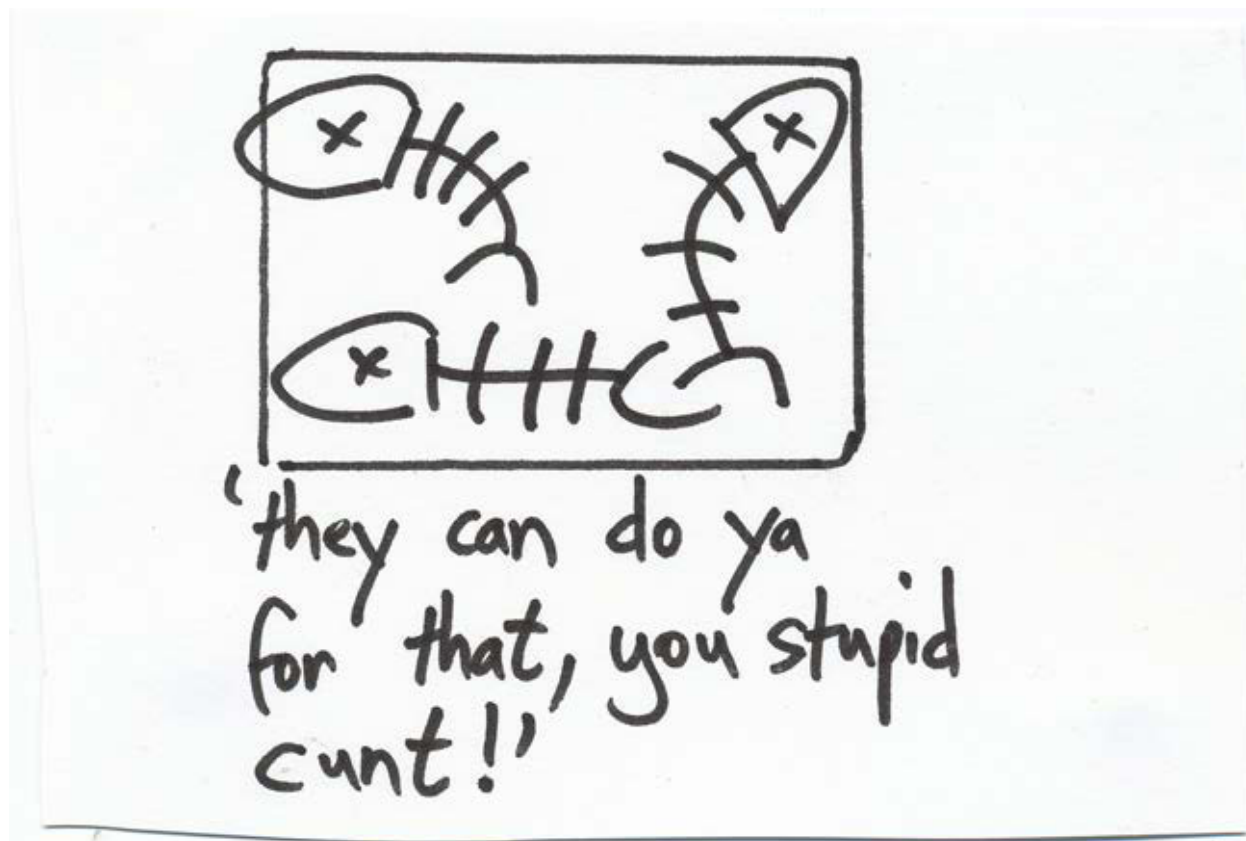
## **They can do ya for that**

One day when H was fifteen he threw some old sandwiches into the river and all these huge

giant European carp came and ate them. Him and his mates ran into the water and clubbed them with sticks and threw them up on the bank. He took the biggest one home and everybody crowded around it and H thought it looked so big and beautiful the way the light reflected off the scales.

Then he says he felt bad inside. Everybody was poking it with sticks and making it bleed and H pushed them away. "Stop it," he said, "leave it alone ya cunts."

He took the big fish back down to the river and threw it in the water. He thought it must be dead but it swam away and this old fisherman came up to H and said, "What are you doing, ya idiot. That's illegal. You should have killed it. It's the law. They can do ya for that, you stupid cunt!"



## Chopper

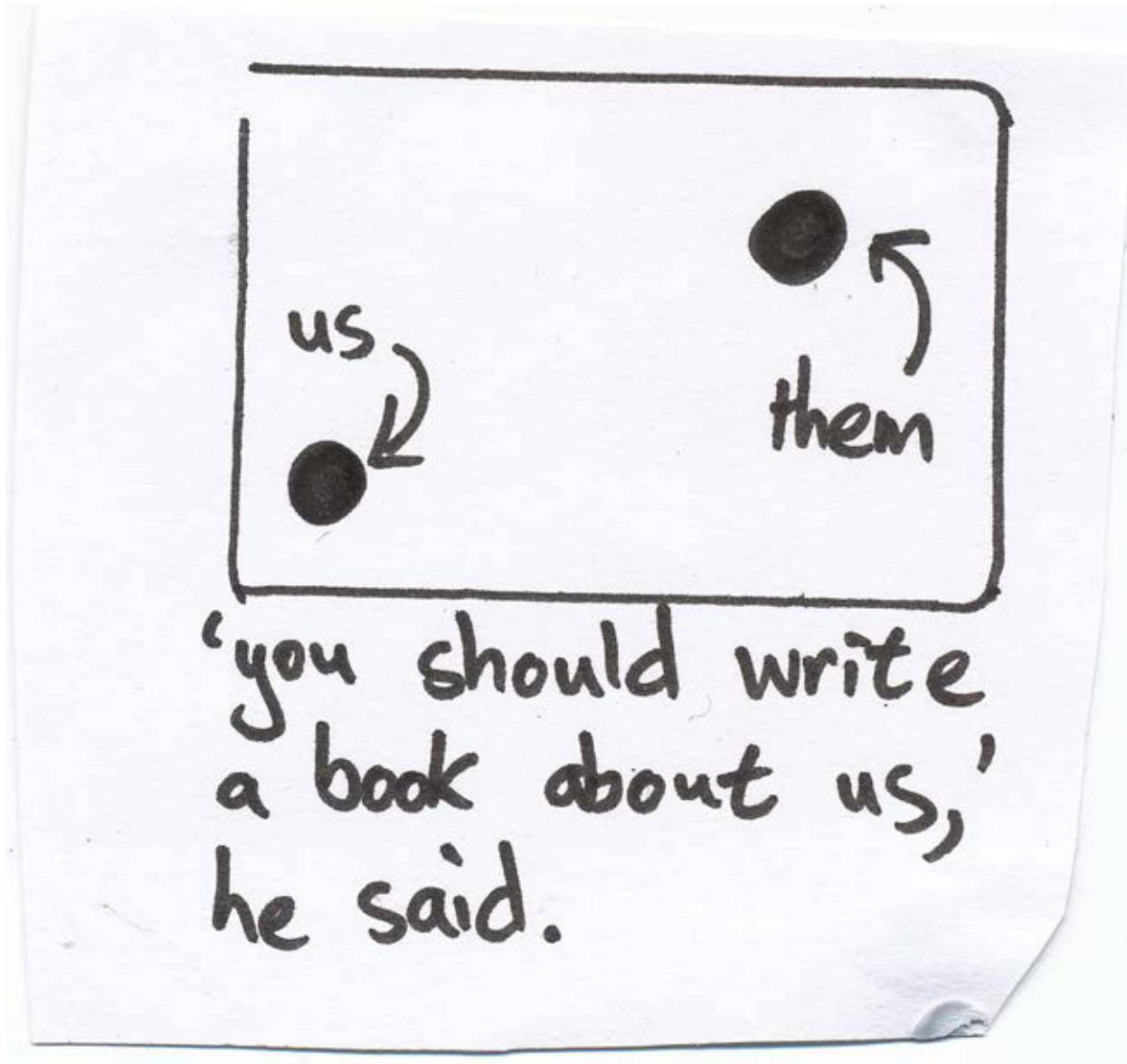
We are having another cup of tea, talking about Chopper and the movie Chopper and the actor that played Chopper. H says that he served time with Chopper, but knew him from before that too. Lots of the students say they know Chopper or knew Chopper or know the real true story on Chopper, but I think most of it is bullshit. Everyone is angry with Chopper for being Rich and Famous, and selling out, and crossing over so successfully. Everyone is jealous of Chopper, especially H.

"Chopper, he's a farken dog," says H. "The cops gave him a bullet proof vest," he says in disgust. "Most cunts suck up to him but I told him to his face. 'You're a fucken dog, Chopper' I told him, 'you lag on ya mates, ya fucken rat. You far-ken dog.'"

“And everything in that movie is bullshit, the cunt makes shit up. He’s a fucken rat dog cunt, they don’t put that in the movie. He’s a farken cunt rat dog fucken cunt but that’s not in the movie either.”

“In the movie, Chopper has this big fat cock, but I saw him in Barwon and it was tiny. I saw him in the shower and he looks like a girl down there, just all this hair, ya can’t hardly see it.”

“It’s true he used to take it out for all the female screws, OK, that part is true. He *did* used to do that, but he used to have a little wank first to get it all big.” H has worked himself up into quite a state and makes himself a fresh cup of tea with four sugars, dusting the bench and floor with a elegant little elephantine flourish.



### Snag

“Do you want some bullshit story,” says H, “or do you want the truth? I can give you a story – a



good story with sex and murder, we can go 50-50 straight down the line. I'm just not good at writing things down. I need someone to publish it, that's all. See I'm not good with writing the words."

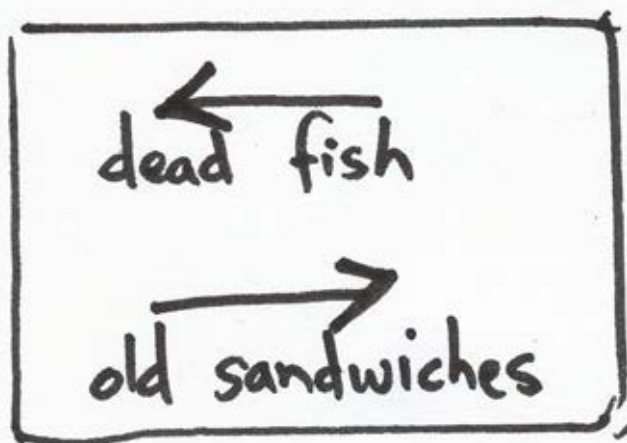
"Well why don't you just get a tape recorder and record all your stories," I say, "that way you don't have to do any writing. The way you tell a story is perfect anyway, they're really funny. You don't need me. You don't need anyone, you can do everything yourself with Officeworks and the internet."

"Yeah, I think I'll do that," H says. "My knob is much bigger than Chopper's knob anyway," H says. He offers to prove it, tugging at his pants but we all say no no no. Please no.

### Listen Like Thieves

The next time I see H he says that he sat down with his wife and a tape recorder and really had a go at it. I tell him that sounds fantastic. Later that day I ask him about some details of a story he told me about being beaten with ice-skates by the deaf gang outside Bojangles in the '70s.

I just wanted to know the name of the gang and he narrowed his eyes and asked me why I want to know. I told him I wasn't writing a story about *him*, I just wanted to know. He told me, but he was pretty annoyed about it. It's funny, I forget the name of the gang now, but I remember the way he looked at me. Like he had caught me stealing something of his.



### A tiny prick

There is a mosquito that is trying to bite us. We cannot always see it but we can hear it. It lands on my hand and I brush it away and it lands on Dee. He tries to slap it but he is too slow and it is gone. Then we hear it again and H is bitten. "Fuck," he says, "that little cunt got me." He is

looking all around for it, for he means to kill it, but he can't find it. "I'll get you cunt," says H to the mosquito, hunting around for it furiously, "I'll fucking get you."

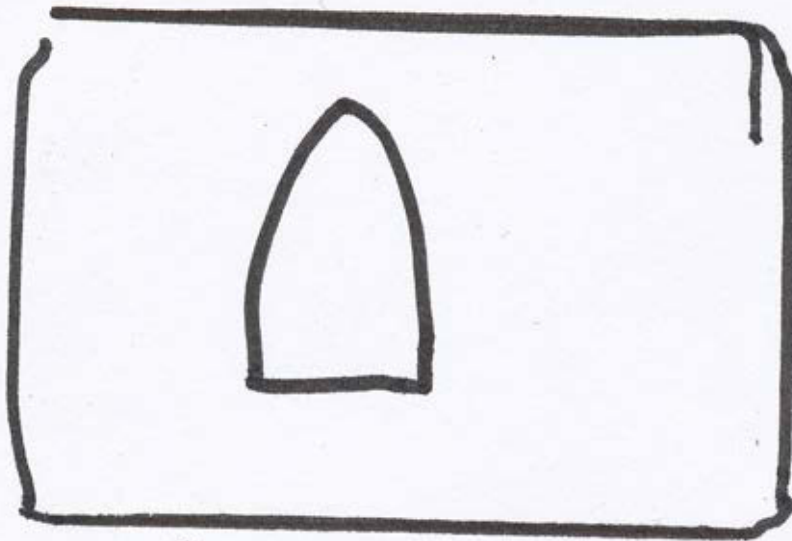
### Is it ironic? Is it?

I am visiting Yarra and she says she told Aleshia about H and the dead budgie heads and the roll of carpet and she said that *Aleshia* was going to use them in a story, or a poem. "No fucking way," I say. "They are my stories. She can't do that, I've already written them anyway. They're mine." But that was a lie, I hadn't written them, I had just told them to Yarra.

"OK," says Yarra seriously, "I'll tell her. Yeah, she can't do that. That's bad form. That's not on."

"Yeah, well tell her she's a fucking rat dog cunt," I say, "tell her she's a fucking cunt dog rat."

But then later, when I am ironing my shirts, I am worried that the irony may not translate well from person to person. Why would anyone find that cute or funny? Only someone who had been in jail or worked with someone who had been in jail would understand the irony in that, if there was any irony in that. I'm not good at irony. I'm not good at ironing. Look, creases everywhere, just look at all these little cunts.



irony

*The first-ever entirely digital  
edition of Going Down Swinging.*

# **Selections from the Encyclopædia of Notable Persons Never Born Due to Contraception**

*Text: Nick Marland*

*Photography: Erin Lyall*

*Selections from the  
Encyclopaedia of Notable  
Persons Never Born  
Due to Contraception.*

**ed. Nick Marland**





*Falstead at his property in Washakie Country, Wyoming, for a Time magazine profile conducted after his retirement from active service in 2011.*

## **Natiels, Roger Edward (Dr)**

b. 1949 Durban, South Africa d. 2015 Duarte, United States of America

In 2011, Dr Natiels found a way to safeguard against the metastasising of cancer cells through a radical formula easily added to metropolitan water supplies, leading to breakthroughs in the containment of secondary tumours, and predictions of a full cure within five years.

*Contraceptive method: Condom*

## **Jensen, Kaki**

b. 1964 Hønefoss, Norway

Gold medallist in the women's marathon at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games in a then-record time of 2:18:56, besting Ingrid Kristiansen's previous mark by a substantial two minutes and ten seconds. Subsequently founded a global program that taught children how to safeguard against chafing.

*Contraceptive method: Sponge*

*(N.B. Kristiansen's record stood instead until April 1998, when it was broken by Tegla Loroupe of Kenya. The Catholic Church has strongly opposed the use of contraception in sub-Saharan Africa, resulting in the rampant spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS.)*



*Falstead at his property in Washakie Country, Wyoming, for a Time magazine profile conducted after his retirement from active service in 2011.*

## **Falstead, Chase (Sgt)**

b. 1974 Bellefontane Neighbors, United States of America

US Special Forces ('Green Beret') operative who, during the fire-fight in the cave complex of Tora Bora in December 2001, captured al-Qaeda terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden as the latter attempted to make good his escape to Pakistan.

*Contraceptive method: Headache*

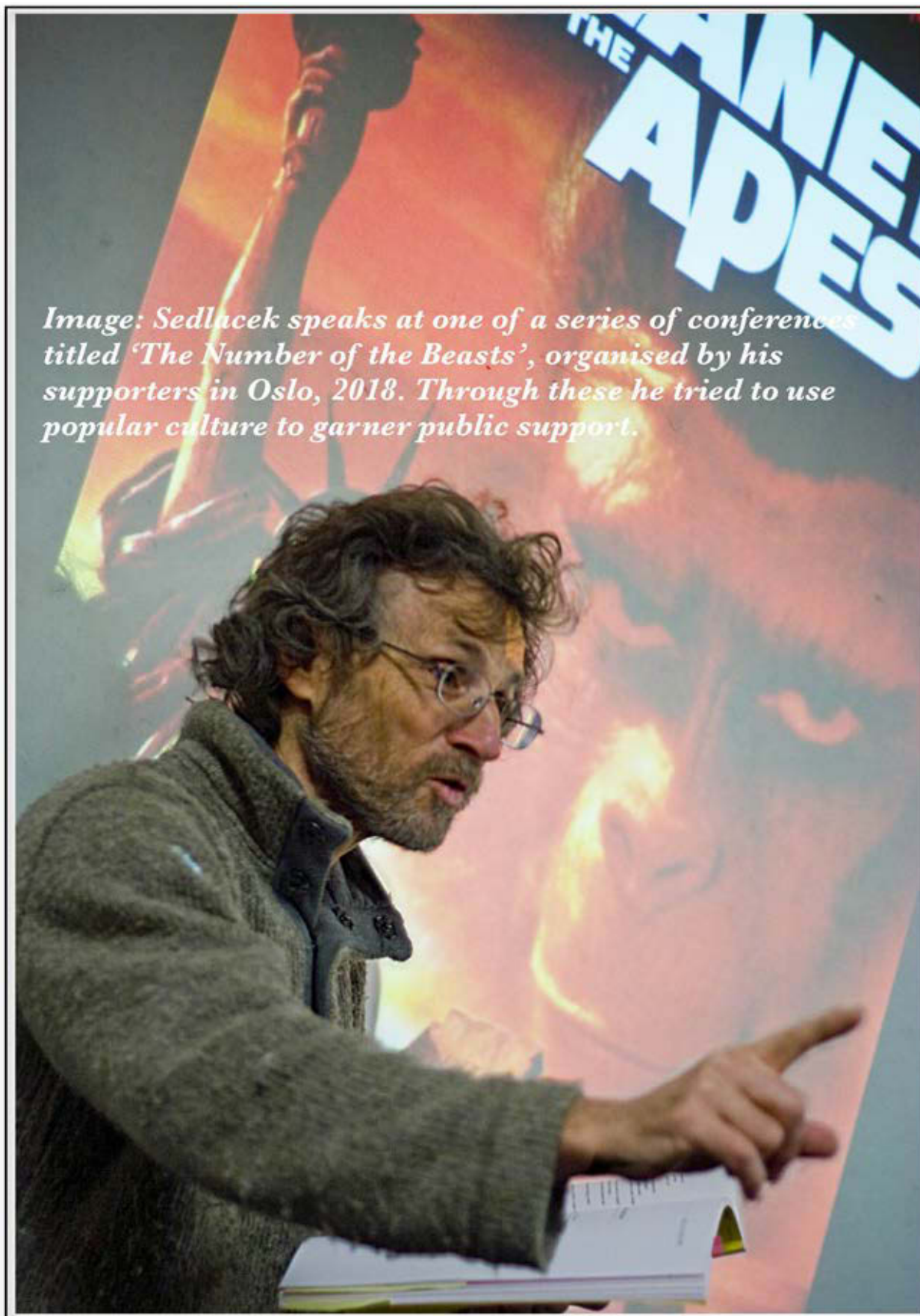
## **Hyderi, Kamran**

b. 1984 Kandahar, Pakistan d. 2005 New York, USA

Detonated a 'dirty bomb,' containing explosives and loaded with the nuclear isotope polonium-210, in the Times Square precinct of New York City at theatre hour on a Friday night, killing himself and 130 others, and covering the area in low-level contamination for several years. A splinter group unaffiliated with al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack. Hyderi had been radicalised at an early age; intelligence suggests he had been in preparation for the attack for close to eight years.

*Contraceptive method: Abstinence*





*Image: Sedlacek speaks at one of a series of conferences titled 'The Number of the Beasts', organised by his supporters in Oslo, 2018. Through these he tried to use popular culture to garner public support.*

## **Lefevre, Henri (Dr.)**

b. 1976 Angoulême, France

In 2023 the veterinary researcher realised decades of work in devising a legitimate system of tonal communication with most species of animals, thereby allowing the human communicant to gauge the animal's thoughts and feelings. At the public unveiling of Lefevre's discovery, before a throng of media, one of the dachshunds present asked whether he'd earned a treat.

*Contraceptive method: Coitus interruptus*

## **Sedlacek, Alexandr**

b. 1976 Prague, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

In 2017, Sedlacek claimed in a series of street-corner sermons to growing audiences (and later, on a national television program) that he was receiving fearsome messages from animals of an impending pan-species global overthrow of the human race. Subsequently institutionalised, he gained an early release after agreeing to work on a covert CIA program to plan and mount a counter-insurgency against the animals.

*Contraceptive method: Diaphragm*



*Image: Sedlacek speaks at one of a series of conferences titled 'The Number of the Beasts', organised by his supporters in Oslo, 2018. Through these he tried to use popular culture to garner public support.*

## **Ferroe-Walsh, Helen**

b. 1959 Fowey, England

The painter of a famed 1997 triptych depicting a pregnant woman, a Bedouin healer and a liger (currently in the Reina Sofia, Madrid) which was a major contributor to an improved global understanding of the plight of cross-breed animals such as ligers.

*Contraceptive method: Spermicidal jelly*

## **Fewings, Henrietta**

b. 1958 Adelaide, Australia

The greatest soprano who ever lived, with unparalleled control of melismata, and a phenomenal mastery of the whistle register. Possessing a preternatural mutability of tone, her signature role was, ironically, her mezzo-soprano turn as Rosina in the Metropolitan Opera's 1983 season of *The Barber of Seville*. Her coloratura, however, was at its height in the title role of *Lucrezia Borgia*; during the cabaletta grown men wept openly in the stalls of La Scala.

*Contraceptive method: Solution of vinegar, honey and cloves rubbed on the genitals prior to intercourse*





*Publicity stills taken from 'Gypsy gypsy gypsy', and recently remastered. Modern critics pan Kallas for her sense of dress and trite Bacchanalian imagery, supporters consider her a sex symbol and forerunner for women's liberation.*

## **GetRude (born Gertrude Kallas)**

b. 1960 Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany  
 GetRude sang ‘Goppy Goppy Goppy,’ the soon-forgotten 1983 gibberish hit single (reached #3 on both US and UK charts, #2 in some European countries). The film clip featured GetRude writhing in a vat of wine grapes and shouting the song’s refrain “Goppy goppy goppy, Stehlen aufzuhören meine Magazine” (“Goppy goppy goppy, stop stealing my magazines”) while high-society types watched on and threw plastic spoons at her. Two decades later GetRude enjoyed a brief return to popularity as part of a poorly-conceived revival of ‘retro’ culture.

*Contraceptive method: Alcoholism*

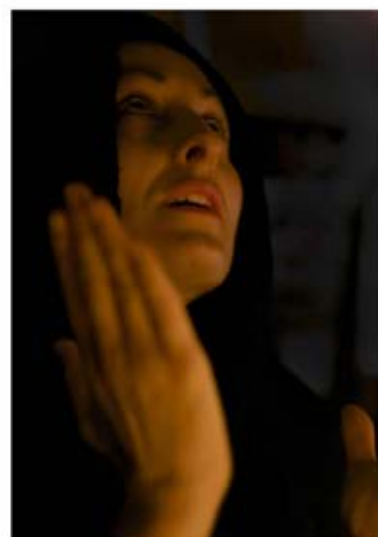


*Publicity stills taken from ‘Goppy goppy goppy’, and recently remastered. Modern critics pan Kallas for her sense of dress and trit Bacchanalian imagery, supporters consider her a sex symbol and forerunner for women’s liberation.*

## **Yeevees, Simon Chester David Starshine**

b. 1967 Sydney, Australia  
 Mr Yeevees was referred for a full review by a psychiatric panel by the Downing Centre Local Court after rubbing his naked crotch on the glass of the David Jones Christmas window display, 18 December 2007.

*Contraceptive method: Mutual masturbation*



*Image: A young Maria I leads Mass at Lisbon’s Nossa Senhora de Rigor Impensável (Our Lady of Unimaginable Severity), shortly after the historic 2083 reforms.*

## **Pope Maria I (born Afërdita Bardulla)**

b. 2059 Tirana, Albania d. 2137 Vatican City  
 The first female Pope, inaugurated in 2131, known affectionately as ‘Mama’. Also the first female to benefit from the 2083 Madrid reforms that permitted women to join the priesthood, she was appointed Cardinal of Tirana’s Our Lady of Inconceivable Distress in 2108. Fast-tracked to the papacy after death of John XVI, in a possibly cynical attempt by the Holy See to win back centuries of disillusioned Catholics by appearing relevant. Brought into question the concept of papal infallibility when she famously pronounced that all non-Protestant women were equal with men. Assassinated in 2137.

*Contraceptive method: Desperate prayers to God*



*Image: A young Maria I leads Mass at Lisbon's Nossa Senhora de Rigor Impensável (Our Lady of Unimaginable Severity), shortly after the historic 2083 reforms.*



## **C**halthoum, Fenuku

b. 2108 Alexandria, Egypt

Would-be assassin of Pope Maria I, waiting in a Vatican mailbox with a grenade during papal mass. Tied to radical splinter group The Black Elbow, which advocates world peace and tolerance through the destruction of all organised religion.

*Contraceptive method: Pessary of crocodile dung and fermented dough*



## **S**eifert, Urs (Major)

b. 2098 Lausanne, Switzerland

Long-serving Swiss Guard who intercepted Chalthoum (see above) while on mail duty and initially saved Pope Maria I from assassination.

*Contraceptive method: Condom (failed), Morning-after pill (successful)*



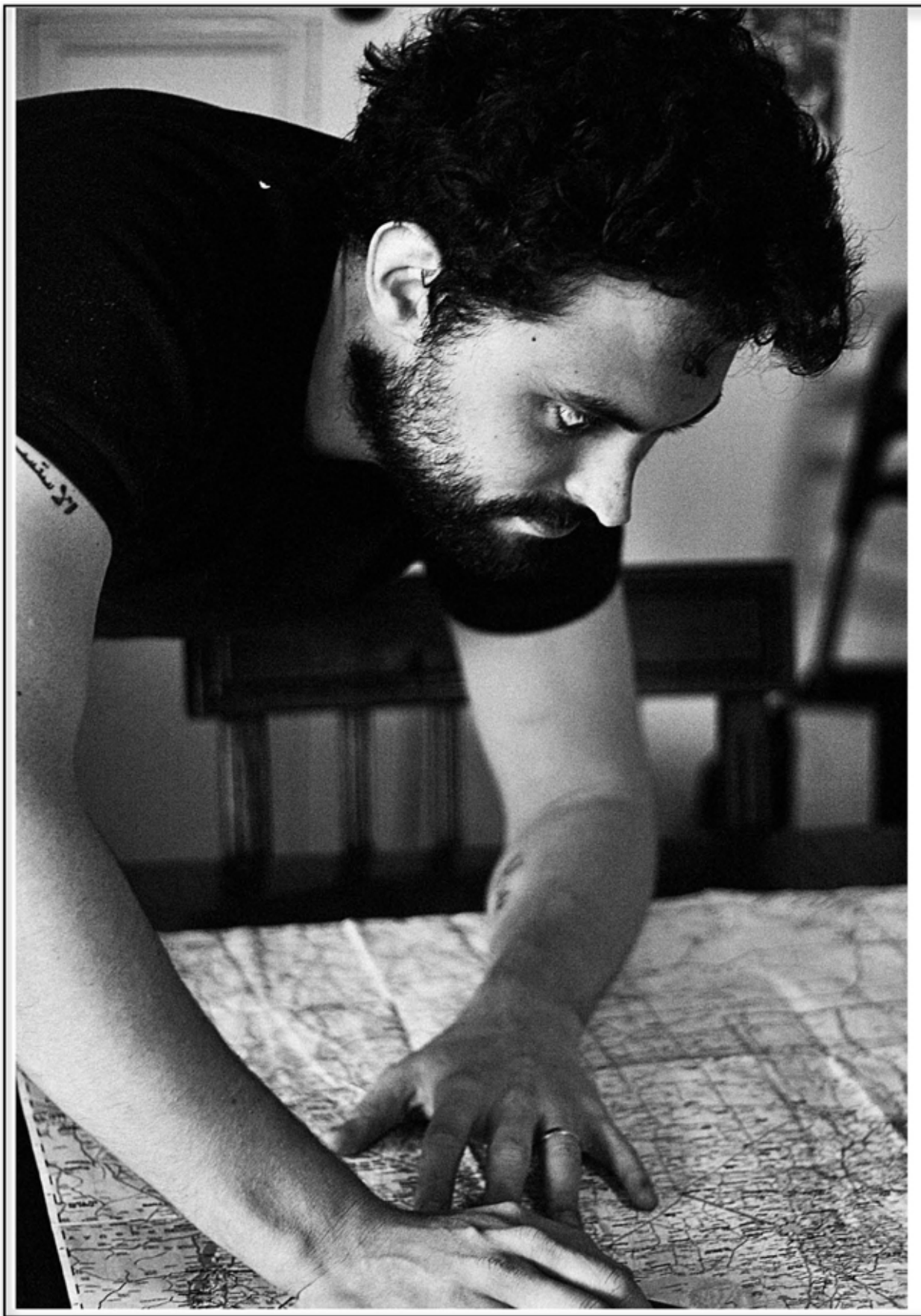
*Evert studies philosophy at his spartan retreat in The Swiss Alps, about two months before Black Vatican Day.*

## **E**vert, Destinuz

b. 2112 Megalopolis, Qatar

The second Black Elbow assassin, operating independently of Chalthoum, Evert abseiled from the dome of St Peters Basilica with a Ruger SR-556FB to fire the fatal rounds. He was shot in the right leg in the ensuing conflagration, but escaped through a crowd of tourists, obscuring the trail of his blood by toppling a stand of communion wine.

*Contraceptive method: SpermiZap® (“One simple injection stations nanobot warriors along length of vas deferens to assail passing spermatozoa en masse with micro-lasers. 125% effective!”)*







*Evert studies philosophy at his spartan retreat in The Swiss Alps, about two months before Black Vatican Day.*

# People Are Human

*Cameron Fuller*

<more feeling>delete visceral fat & lean away from mortality. a system, nervous  
& begging for small change [...]. words lost in a search engine. a gene<tic>  
factory flaw. a robot can speak with perfect grammar, but humans  
continue to slur and grunt. from Neanderthal to CEO, we evolve  
and pretend to never err<exfoliate now>we live life/  
one key stroke at a time, suffering filed under memory\*.  
regret is speeding forth. tribal swarms. prosthetic  
thinking patterns: cyber-kinetic frames & dead sea  
scrolls you can patent, make|mud|houses. ancient clouds  
obscure sky scrapers. computer-generated thunderstorms  
spark fires that destroy a hundred species.  
bird song on CDs yet quiet suburbs  
imagining flight. a prehistoric echo))  
of fear among a silent crowd,  
downloading loneliness or  
an mp3 of clunk.

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# Facebook

***Gemma Mahadeo***

You're my biggest fairweather friend:  
I only check in with you  
when I'm happy.

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# The Mothgirl Prophecies

***Zack Blackstone***



IT'S ALL GOOD WHEN PEOPLE PART FOR WHATEVER REASON,  
IT'S NOT THAT SOMEONE DID SOMETHING WRONG OR  
SOMEONE HAS FAULTS etc etc.





IT'S USUALLY THAT AS YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER, YOU FIND THAT YOU MAY BE INCOMPATIBLE OR HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS etc IN AREAS OR PERHAPS THE CHEMISTRY IS JUST PHYSICAL OR MENTAL OR WHATEVER.



IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE NASTY.



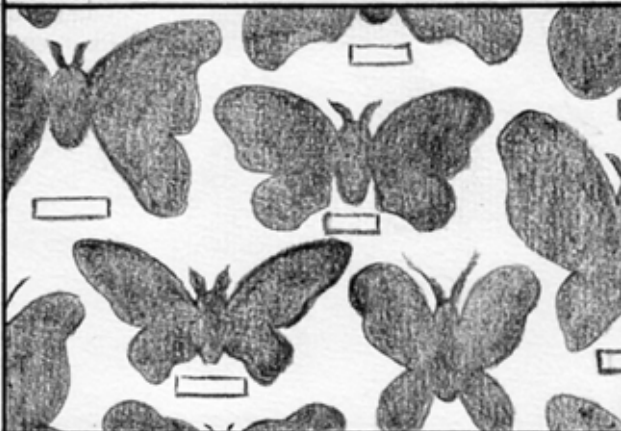
FROM EXPERIENCE, MINE HAVE 99% BEEN MY PARTNER AND I HAVING A GREAT TIME, REALISING WE CAN'T MAKE EACH OTHER 100% HAPPY, SO PART AS FRIENDS, ENJOY THE FUN AND LAUGHS WE HAVE SHARED AND FIND SOMEONE WHO HAS THAT EXTRA PIECE THAT TICKLES OUR HEARTS AND SOULS.



LIKE A MOTH TO A FLAME.



DIFFERENT MOTHS FIND DIFFERENT FLAMES/LIGHTS MORE ENTICING.



THERE ARE COUNTLESS DIFFERENT MOTHS AND COUNTLESS DIFFERENT FLAMES~THE MOTHS NEED TO MOVE AROUND AND FIND THEIR SUITED LIGHT PARTNER.



ONE THAT WON'T ATTRACT THEM TO THEIR UNDOING BUT ONE THEY CAN FLY AROUND HAPPILY NIGHT AFTER NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.



IT TAKES A LONG TIME FOR THE MOTH TO FIND THIS EQUILIBRIUM, SO FEAR NOT EVERYONE.

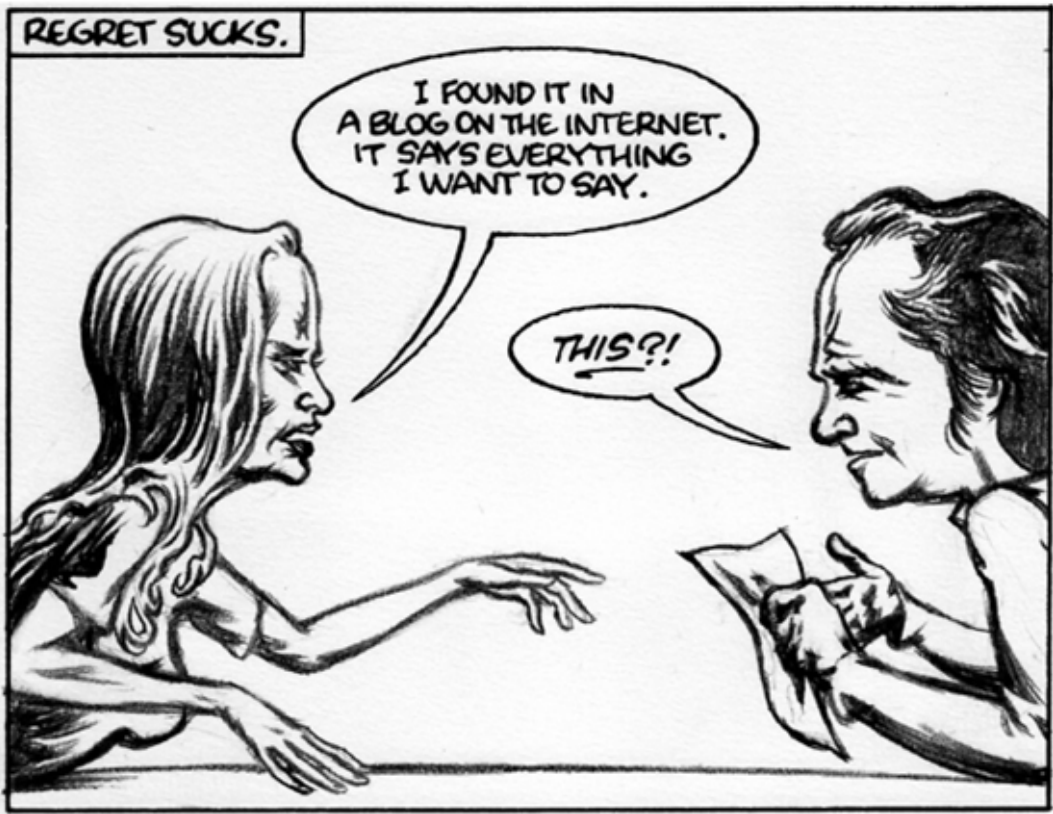


THEY HAVE SUCH A SHORT LIFE IN COMPARISON TO OURS.



NEVER SETTLE FOR SECOND BEST BECAUSE OUR LIFE IS NOT TOO MUCH LONGER THAN A MOTHS.





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# The Vanishing

*Caitlin Thomson*



INCIDENT REPORTS: THE VANISHING

Caitlin Thomson

Case File: No. 1

My husband was washing dishes,  
his hands in those yellow rubber gloves,  
the water running, a hum.

I looked up to a sink full of soap,  
limp gloves on tiles.

Case File: No. 2

I scoured the woods on my own  
after 9-1-1 was reduced to a busy signal.

Kept checking under the same log.

Your shovel, pink with a purple sparkled  
handle, dug into the ground next to  
a particularly pleasing pine.

Case File: No. 3

I left school early,  
took the train to the sea,  
smoked till dusk, heard  
the news while waiting  
on the platform. Listed  
among the missing.  
No need to go home.

Case File: No. 4

I cannot explain where the bulk  
of my world went between breaths:

books float, the air has a blue  
tinge and walls have started  
to share their history  
in pubescent voices.

I keep the last part to myself.



Case File: No. 5

When I wake, the laptops are still  
snuggling, one on top of the other.

She is not pressed in beside me,

not waiting in the kitchen

with a mug of coffee.

Case File: No. 6

We were alone on the top floor  
of a building, mid-construction  
no foreman barking orders.

Case File: No. 7

The stars thick above me,  
fireflies coming out of the marsh,  
mating. I leaned over to shake  
my wife awake in her sleeping bag,  
but the synthetic plaid covered  
covered no-one. I waited  
two days, smoking  
till my pack ran out.

Case File: No. 8

I might as well have been  
in space, the circle of white  
false light, that magnetic  
hum. I cannot see them anymore,  
the technicians in their scrubs.

Case File: No. 9

A house aflame.



Case File: No. 10

I find myself blaming him  
for leaving his shirt on the sofa,  
the half-finished mantelpiece,  
thin leaves of wood  
curled on the landing.

Even weeks later his hairs  
on the floor, brown strands  
sticking to my socks.

Case File: No. 11

All that remains of him is a bruise  
below my thigh, green-tea yellow.

Case File: No. 12

Was it a matter of geographic positioning,  
or did they do something right?

My boss, vanishing at the three-hole punch,  
certainly didn't believe in God.

I don't recall my barista  
being generous, but I saw her picture  
shellacked to a telephone pole.

Case File: No. 13

The boy across the road  
sat on his porch, backpack  
on his knees, until the red-haired lady  
next door gave him a gingerbread  
cookie, led him to her front steps.

Case File: No. 14

Rent is so cheap now.

I am alone on the top floor  
of a brownstone. My landlord  
loves hearing my  
footsteps above her.



Case File: No. 15

The people on my block  
crowd together, one  
apartment building,  
our home. Strangers  
sharing rooms.

Case File: No. 16

Alone on the farm, I found out later.

But I still don't know for sure,

it could all be a hoax.

The man that delivers my milk

still pops by once a week.

Case File: No. 16

Alone on the farm, I found out later.

But I still don't know for sure,

it could all be a hoax.

The man that delivers my milk

still pops by once a week.

Case File: No. 17

People no longer talk about loss  
as if it is something only they feel.  
We dance in public. If a wail  
is heard we hug the stranger.  
So familiar is the sound of our bodies  
before they fall asleep.

Case File: No. 18

I miss a good conversation  
about world politics or pie-making.  
Now it's always about missing,  
loneliness, quiet.



Case File: No. 19

The church is full.

Case File: No. 20

Did you hear about any dogs  
vanishing, cats disappearing,  
like magicians' assistants?

No. I didn't think so.

Case File: No. 21

To walk the streets of Tokyo now  
is to dream. Still the buildings,  
lights, but so few people. Touch  
no longer an accident.

Case File: No. 22

Damn your tears and tissue,  
you survived, celebrate! Have beer,  
smoke, shoot out the windows  
of the house, now empty, next door.

# Letter to Slow Cooker in Colorado

*Eric Paul Shaffer*

Aloha kākou:

Holy crap, I stand at rain-streaked windows on the third day of the first semester of the second decade of the third millennium (enough numbers to stun me and my teachers). The glass ripples with windy spray in a city sunk in muddy puddles and running gutters.

Today, in class, we read Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 29' I smiled (as I always do) when the man wishes he were "like him with friends possess'd," because he means *me*, one whose world rings within a great circle of friends. Shakespeare, I tell them, is dead, but that doesn't stop him from speaking with a living tongue thrumming along the lines he left us. Lucky? You bet he is, and so am I. Remember? You named me Lucky on the day I left to live in the pacific, little nation whose language left me stunned and stuttering.

Here, mountains are young, green, and grooved. Gods house the sun on the one I worship. At night, lightning flickers over an ocean lost in clouds. There's no more to say: I, too, have no words for my father. Words are too lame and too lazy to bear the weight across the roiling blue beneath storm and stars. Our fathers drove us far and away, and as the man said, I will fight no more forever. Men bear too little of the grief and burdens of the world. We



can wish them strength, but most lack the courage to claim even that.

I'm sad to hear of the suicides, young and old. So many mean to murder us, the wonder is that we will commit the act ourselves. All of us are coming apart. I may spit a tooth tomorrow if the root still rocks in the socket. That will put a spin on my grin, eh?

Venus rose only minutes after midnight, and by the way, happy birthday. After 20,000 dawns and companion sunsets, you deserve one. I wish you one, and nobody can take that away. No matter how damned many years ago you or I or Johnny D. were born, never will we see enough days to properly celebrate lives we neither expected nor deserved.

May the new year sparkle. The future is upon us, and I, with the two of you, will cast wide wooden gates on rusted hinges, and let the light fall where it may.

All for now,

Reckless

---

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# Cloudberries

*Valery Petrovskiy*

In the midst of a sunny day how nice it is to utter the word 'cloudberries', it's driving one to the skies. They say, such a berry grows at taiga faraway there, or even at tundra in Siberia. It is somewhere far off anyway; one would never reach it on foot.

And that day we just took a walk with her, the two of us. The walk was for a short awhile, you see, for all is there not a long way off: a small river, a steep bank called the Red, and a grove of blowing lime trees just outside my village. It is not obvious where the village comes to an end and the lime grove starts there, all is so tight. And we went down to the rivulet through the lime grove. Sure, I had asked her name there yet forgot it immediately. In spite of a nice summer day around, I was overwhelmed with something strange. Well, at the beginning of summer some clear days would come forth again. One is sure that the next day would be even better, so it is in summer. And nice it will come, but one would not keep in mind the whole of yesterday, there is no need.

Well, so it seemed to me that it hadn't been May yet. You see, when we got down to the rivulet, I wondered at it becoming shallow, and afterwards we walked up to the Red and then descended the other slope of the knoll at once, the sunny one. And there on the knob's obverse side a lot of wild strawberries were to be found, to pick in handfuls if you wish. And there the word 'cloudberries' struck my mind, and it made me feel creepy all over. Or rather it had sent shivers down my spine, and then some cloudberries came to my mind despite having never tasted the berry. A fruit one never flavored ever seems sweet. So it was with cloudberries, known by me but for its name.

Well, let us get down to business: so, what I was doing there, with whom, and what the reason was for all that. Nothing much, at the very beginning of summer I was just picking berries with a young woman, I didn't know her name. It happened so that we went outskirts and then led ourselves down to the rivulet through the amazing lime grove with no underbrush. And there was no bush growing about the lime to catch on the clothes or

to screen the horizon. It was like talking to a woman in a dress next to the skin.

“Well, I’ve never seen such a striking lime grove with the trees so high up to the skies,” she said.

So it was easy to walk there, one wouldn’t come to rest upon some shrubs, and the trail ran even down to the water. From there I looked back up at the lime grove, and I was going to show her what a high level the trees reached there. But then I was stunned. Among the green resilient clouds of limes a dead tree stood still there without leaves, naked and unprotected at the edge of the grove.

It didn’t show up white, it turned black for sorrow undressed. And it stood still there, eager to fall on the soft grass as early as possible, and was waiting for its last day...

Afterwards we both rolled over the Red and got to picking the wild strawberries. You don’t think they all were blood-red, no? Nevertheless, though they were bright and ripened, the berries wouldn’t soil one’s fingers, but easily left the pedicle. Oh, I know such a word!

Here she recalled that she had to call up her husband who had stayed too long in the town, he was meant to catch up with her then. She failed to find her cell-phone in her pocket though she turned inside-out everything possible there on her light dress. And there I caught sight of her palms clean as if of an infant, not a tiny spot on.

We got down looking for the cell-phone, kneeling in the grass but not for long. Soon she came across her bright little thing and it flashed sharply in the sun when she reached it. And it was at the same point we had had some wild strawberries in handfuls, not raising one’s head there. So I glanced at the blooming young woman then and was going to hail her, but from the very beginning I didn’t remember her name to call her then.

The day she had arrived at my village earlier than her husband was the day we were to inter Uncle Leon. With her I went down to the rivulet for a time until the people gathered together. And there the two of us stumbled on the wild berries that made me shiver.

The last time I had talked to Uncle Leon, it was May there, and there was not yet any wild strawberry to pick.

# The Sound of Reading: Translating the Written Word to Music

***Rosanna Beatrice Stevens***

*‘Generally, I think, it is misleading to transfer a given artistic expression from the medium which gave birth to it to some other which will, inevitably, be alien.’<sup>[i]</sup>*

*‘I have been trying  
to translate Wagner pictorially  
ever since 1894.’<sup>[ii]</sup>*

I was hopeful that there was a way to evolve translation so it exceeded the boundaries of human language, and made comprehension linguistically indiscriminate. Consider music: wailing, pure, or breathy tones, aching intervals and playful keys – it is entirely its own form of communication. Through music, I wanted to explore whether translation from one medium to another can produce an accurate representation of the original work. ‘Nefertiti Rides Me’ is originally a textual work – an inspired collection of stanzas and lustful sentences divulging the intimacy between Egyptian regents Nefertiti and Akhenaten. But to translate this body of words to a musical narrative, while also a creative process, predominantly involved method: the synthesis and analysis of Dorothy Porter’s poetry to determine its tonal centre, phrasing, rhythms, and melody. The resulting composition asks us to consider whether true translation is mythological, unattainable. On the other hand, it encourages us to consider the multimodal opportunities made available to artists via translation – the chance to respond to one another, and challenge the traditional conception of lingual translation.

If melody is the flesh of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, their skeletons – shaped long before their sweaty skins – comprise a tonal key, and their muscles (largely tense and quivering) are rhythm and phrasing. As a premise for determining some basic familiarity between the language of English and that of music, I initially attempted a literal translation. I sifted through ‘Nefertiti Rides Me’ for those letters that correspond to musical notation (A to H, as H corresponds to B in some German notation). Full stops or breaks indicated the need for a bar line. E and B appeared most often, suggesting the key should be in E, with its dominant, B.

The harmonic minor is also occasionally referred to as the Mohammedan scale, its upper tetrachord corresponding to the Hijaz jins found in Middle Eastern music.[iii] Given the geography of the love poem, it made sense that the piece sit in E minor – the same key Philip Glass uses for his love duet between Nefertiti and Akhenaten. However, this key obstructed the cellist from producing the glissandos I wanted, and made shifting awkward. Modulating the key to G minor helped produce the sounds I had imagined.

There is a sense of movement within poetry that Blanchot refers to as the “rhythmic trajectory” of verse. He claims that this sense of forward-passage brings poetry and music closer together. [iv] With this in mind, metre – a concept that determines the duration of notes and phrases – was translated directly from the rhythmic trajectory of Porter’s poem to music. The syllabic rhythm of the phrase “Nefertiti rides me” was a repeated motif in the *pizzicato* (plucked) part of Nefertiti [play phrase]. This rhythm indicated a time signature for the translation; compound quadruple time, or four crotchet beats per bar.

Adherence to the rhythm of syllables was also attempted within phrases. For example, in the opening lines, the listener can hear:

*Ne-fer-ti-ti rides me.*

*Her cunt*

*slip-pery on*

*the hot skin*

*o-o-of my be-el-ll-ly.*

When this full stop arrives, the line returns to the margin of the page, suggesting a new breath, or in the case of the translation, a new phrase. Phrasing mimicked the shape and



punctuation of Porter's stanzas (see Appendix B). When the first line of the second stanza repeats the first stanza's shape, it suggests a recapitulation of the same musical theme, and the rhythm of the opening phrase sits perfectly against the syllables of this stanza. In comparison to the first stanza, however, the second finishes prematurely and on an exclamation, lending itself to a small climax. "My tongue" therefore engages in a short development, and this melody does not adhere as strictly to the syllables of the comparable lines. Rather, I prioritised the pitch and melodic components of this section over the rhythmic, to develop aural metaphors. In doing this, I considered Jakobson's characterisation of the "poetic function" as a mode that accentuates the "message" at the expense of any "referential function".[v]

In the fourth stanza, a change from the poem's visually inward-stepping pattern encourages a new theme. The fourth stanza's lines start on the margin thrice, enhancing the repetition of "I want". Such blatant recurrence encouraged, musically, a repetition of the same phrase. As Porter's lines break from the margin and move into the page, the metre of the piece is abandoned, and just as the lines move inward, the theme moves forward. Soon, the frenzy of reaching the poem's literal climax and Akhenaten's sexual climax exceed the musical metre of the piece. Rhythm is interfered with, and shortly after playing a violently broken chord, the cellist is asked to employ a *fermata* (a break in the music held arbitrarily), just as the poem indicates a break on the page between, "...oh, yes," and "she growls like the desert..." The concept of metre is abandoned from here onward. Instead, the cellist is able to *ad lib.* and utilise rhetoric to communicate what is being lived; the experience of postcoital bliss.

It is difficult to determine how to stay 'true' to an original work when translating from one medium to another. Rhythm and syllables may marry, but how can a musical translation articulate words through note sequences? Initially I explored basing the melody of the translation on the same alpha-literal notation that had suggested the composition's key. With this revealing no theme or motif development, the melody of the translation was almost entirely composed. I made this decision on the premise that other elements of the original, such as repetition, visual shape, and development of narrative, could be expressed through dynamics and variation. It led me to choose a 'poetic' translation ahead of a 'literal' one.[vi]

It feels shamefully arbitrary to say that a starting point depends on what the translator feels is most right. In this instance, an aural palette needed to develop before I could imagine a particular sound or melody to match 'Nefertiti Rides Me'. Andrea Goldsmith provided a list of music Porter had most enjoyed, so that I could familiarise myself with Porter's aural landscape – to translate the work using sound shapes that mimicked those

by which her written work might have been formed.[vii]

Among the collection was Philip Glass' opera, *Akhnaten*; an outstanding conjunction between Porter's collection of poetry based upon the pharaoh, and a musical representation of the same man. Most exciting was the discovery of Act Two Scene Two of Glass's opera – a love duet between Nefertiti and Akhenaten, that Porter had specifically selected to be played on ABC Classic FM during an interview with Margaret Throsby.[viii] I used this duet to glean methods by which the relationship between the two, particularly in sexual terms, could be aurally represented.

Glass's 'duet' is in fact a trio, for countertenor, contralto, and trumpet. Each voice is assigned a character: Akhn-aten, Nefernefru-aten, and the Aten itself, respectively.[ix] As Porter's 'Nefertiti Rides Me' also mentions Akhenaten, Nefertiti and the Aten, my translation utilises three voices, all on the same instrument with similar registers: the melody sung by Akhn-aten: the *pizzicato* rhythm and *con sordino* (with bow) harmonic by Nefertiti: and the Glass-like arpeggios which hold two roles, one being the overarching connecting presence of the sun god, Aten, whose chords become the unifying principle of the supposed duet. The Aten supports the melodic progression of the translation — it acts as the binding agent between the repeated tonic G of Nefertiti, and the song of Akhenaten, creating harmony. The similar registers of Nefertiti and Akhenaten hold sociosexual implications; it clearly makes no difference 'who's on top'; suggesting an unusual approach to power relations that is historically particular to the relationship between Akhenaten and Nefertiti.[x]

One thing differs, however: in Glass' composition, all three parts intermingle melodically and dynamically, while in my trio, the melody and dynamic priority are given to Akhenaten, due to his narrative role within Porter's poem.[xi] I also decided to use a similar register to Glass, my instrument of choice being the cello. The cello matches Glass's voice in tone and timbre: sonorous, passionate and intense. It also has the technical versatility I wished to employ in mimicking the meanings of language within the poem.

The musical translation of 'Nefertiti Rides Me' aims to link sounds to particular meanings within the poem, using aural sensation to transition between word and meaning. It is here that syllables from the poem structure musical phrase. For example, following the progression of beats in the translation, the notes that fall on the word "slippery" in the third line of the poem are melded together in a glissando of a semitone, making the sound

visceral and specific. The term “shot with salt” is connected to a glissando of an octave on the dominant note, C, which is played on the A string; the sharp and tangy “shot” is alluded to aurally. The phrase “still wild in the corners of my mouth” is suggested using a fleeting and intense run, starting on an harmonic D, and ending on the tonic note, G. The quickness of the run is supposed to induce the allusion of that “wild” taste, tingling in the corners of Akhenaten’s lips.

The words “now, now/ oh, yes” articulate sexual climax. I mimicked this sense of repetition and build through the repetition of the note D, an increase in speed, loss of the metronome mark of 80 crotchet beats per minute, and use of a crescendo. The measured arpeggios, like the rise and fall of their hips, grind against the soloist’s unevenly staggered and repeated note. At the point of, “oh, yes” there is no full stop. Consequently, the melodic phrase is not closed, just as the sentence is still open. Rather, the melody is interrupted by blocked chords and a *fermata* for Akhenaten, and the listener is left with an harmonic G, representing the euphoric afterglow of a climax; the exquisite anointing of Porter’s reference, played by the second cello in the voice of Nefertiti.

The fifth stanza opens with the words, “she growls”, characterised by the low G played with firm contact from the frog of the bow to create a gravelly tone. At the mention of “melts like sleep” in the second line, glissando is again employed to suggest a “melting” sensation, as well as using *piano* (soft) and mellowed tones by shifting on the G string to allude to a somniferous feeling of ‘sleepness’. Finally, the use of a drone (the soloist playing two notes – a melody and a tonic) and flickering to a minor second (A flat) at the very end of the translation matches chronologically with the word “Aten” within the poem. This held note is supposed to sound mantra-like, as though a hymn; a religious referent to meld the mention of “Aten” to Akhenaten’s praise of Nefertiti in this line.

Broader metaphors also sit within the three voices used in the translation. For example, the arpeggio-driven voice is absent in the second half of the translation. As well as representing the unifying presence of the Aten, this use of arpeggios mimics the experience of a rapid rise and fall of breath in sexual activity – the cyclical and steady rhythm of two bodies riding. The voice’s absence in this second half serves two purposes. After sexual climax, the hurried sense of movement is lost. More symbolically, the loss of this voice also represents the loss of the Aten in this ‘duet’. By stating, “I love her more than Aten” in the final line of Porter’s poem, Akhenaten is replacing the Aten with Nefertiti in worship. The presence of the Aten – his equality in pitch and omniscient binding of the other two voices – disappears.

The aural metaphors that result from my synthesis and analysis of rhythm, phrasing, key and melody, say something about how musical translation can work, but these factors also reveal the way we listen and understand. The imagery that grows from metaphor inspires thought; it sets into motion imaginative reflection in the audience. A musical metaphor is an interpretational framework that gives a creator, or in my case, a translator, compositional license to play with what a sound might mean, and try to articulate that meaning[xii].

In creating these metaphors, the music, like the written metaphor, is looked at, not through.[xiii] Sounds take on meaning in themselves, rather than existing as an aesthetic. Music holds inherent signification, irrespective of sender or receiver.[xiv] The challenge, for a translator or composer, lies in accessing signs through which “universal” understanding of one particular meaning is achieved; in ‘Nefertiti Rides Me’, using the conceptual metaphor, it is intended that the audience can ‘hear’ the suggestion of a poetic figure.[xv]

This translation attempts to achieve a transference of meaning by calling upon the “productive imagination”, or schema.[xvi] Schema combine perception and knowledge – part thought, part experience. I agree with Ricoeur (and hope that he is correct), when he states that metaphor also acts on the body in the form of feeling, being cognitive because it is referential, and referential because it fosters a mood that we, as listeners, have felt – a mood that tunes the reader with the world of the text. In the case of this composition, the simple metaphors suggested though glissando or crescendo are sensory; one can experience the slickness of sex, and liken this to the aural path of a note oozing up or down a semitone. Ricoeur also argues that nothing promotes identification between subjects more than emotion. Therefore, the musical translator might attempt to achieve attunement through mood (in this case, the achingly romantic), or Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit* (the ability of the subject to project himself into a situation).[xvii]

By layering metaphors, the listener chooses to adopt one perspective or the other over the musical material. Whether the listener focuses on the rapid harmonising arpeggios of the Aten (sense) or the play of intense love (reference) is subject to volition. Consequently, all elements of the translation should hold some linking meaning.

Unfortunately, musical semantics are a romantic idea; only those with a musical vernacular and a knowledge of Porter’s work are capable of gleaning the nuances of

technique and symbolism that rest in selecting an arpeggio role for the Aten. Yet suggesting the listener requires the original text to understand its successor renders the attempted translation hardly functional at all.

“In order to lay hold of the phenomenon of music at its origins,” suggested Stravinsky, “there is no need to... penetrate the secrets of ancient magic... Instinct is infallible.” Similarly, the listener need not grasp the technical constructions of the translator. Instead, the work is left to the audience’s experience; meaning is left to instinct. Within the musical iteration of ‘Nefertiti Rides Me’, it is through rhythms and broader phrases structured by the syllables and stanzas of the poem that there remains a sense of movement and of lyric; of sensitivity and sensuality. There is a voice still, and dynamic within that voice and its phrases. The translator must rely upon their ability to relay the experience through this voice, and this ability to construct distinct aural meanings, while to some degree innate, is a skill that I have come to appreciate must be learnt and refined.

Overall, what the musical translator achieves is not so much a translation as it is an interpretation. Paul Stanhope’s cello composition ‘Dawn Lament’, while based upon Kath Walker’s poem ‘Dawn Wail For the Dead’, and holding structural and metaphorical symmetries, claims only to be a ‘response’ to the poem.[xviii] Robert Lowell called his translations ‘imitations’, and more recently poets have started speaking of ‘versions’.[xix]

The comprehension of musical metaphor falls short in trying to depict something of which sense is only an element. Though the process with which I approached translation is just as thorough and pragmatic as that of the traditional translator, the translation was unsuccessful – it did not solely and vividly produce for the listener a sense of nor reference to those meanings and narratives within Porter’s ‘Nefertiti Rides Me’. Perhaps then, the process of translating English to music speaks of the process of translation in general; that it is impossible. Rather, the contemporary reader and translator must embrace the notion and characteristics of the variation, response or interpretation, and celebrate the creative leeway this altered theory of translation presents.

## **Appendix A**

### **Nefertiti Rides Me**

Dorothy Porter, 2008

Nefertiti rides me.

Her cunt  
slippery on  
the hot skin  
of my belly.

She's sticky  
with my glue -  
that high stink  
of seed!

My tongue  
tastes her sap  
a sweat-honey  
shot with salt  
still wild  
in the corners of my  
mouth.

I want to hold her  
I want to lie still  
but she's not finished  
her eyes are shut  
her breath  
a stammering breeze  
now, now  
oh, yes

she growls like the desert  
melts like sleep  
and anoints me  
exquisitely.

I'm her war horse  
she looks down  
from hooded eyes  
and laughs, laughs.

I love her more than Aten.

## Appendix B

Musical notation drawn from body of the text

E F E D E E B E C E B B E B F B E |

B E C B B E B A B B B F E E D |

B E A E B E A A E A B E B B A D B E C E F B |

A B D E A E B B E F B E D

E E E A E B E B E A B A A E B B E E E |

B E |

B E G E B E D E E E E E A D A E E E |

B E A B E E D F B D E D E E A D A G B A G B |



E B E E B A A E |

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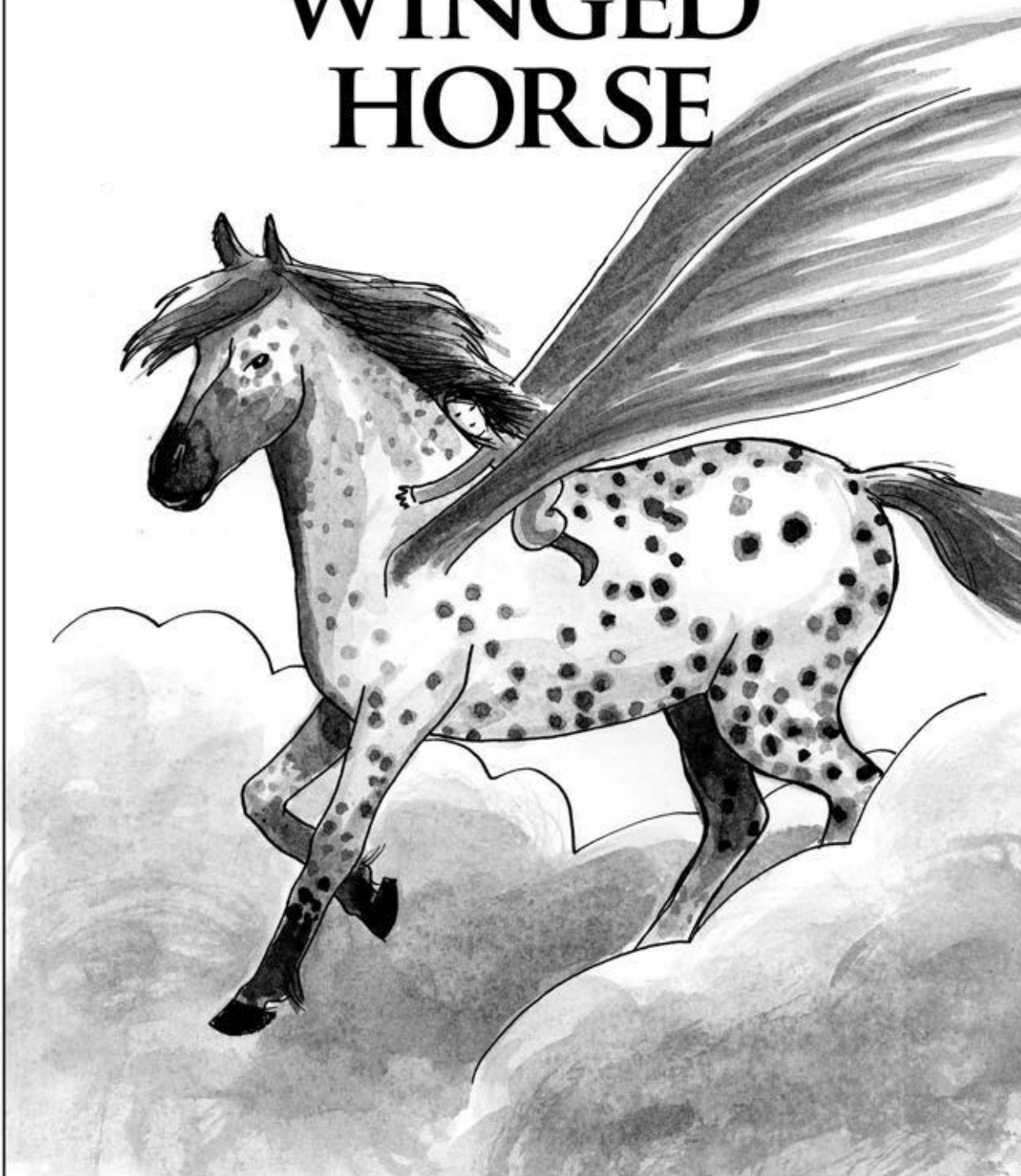
*The first-ever entirely digital  
edition of Going Down Swinging.*

# **Every Girl's Guide to Loving and Caring For her Winged Horse**

*Vanessa Hutchinson*

# EVERY GIRL'S GUIDE TO LOVING & CARING FOR HER

# WINGED HORSE





IF YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE ENJOYED THE FRIENDSHIP OF A WINGED HORSE, YOU ARE IN FOR A REAL TREAT!

HOWEVER, CALLING AND RIDING YOUR WINGED HORSE TAKES COURAGE AND COMMITMENT. OUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TAKES YOU THROUGH THE BASICS.

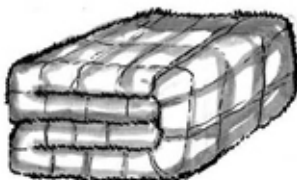
## Essential winged horse riding equipment



**thermal silk tunic**  
padded with fine silk wadding, the riding tunic is light, warm and beautiful.



**boots**  
soft leather protects your feet from the elements and the winged horse's flanks.



**calling rug**  
a soft rug to prevent chills during early morning winged horse calling.



**riding breeches**  
reinforced panels on the seat and knees make for a comfortable riding experience while extra long elasticated cuffs tuck neatly into boots.



**musical instrument**  
music is an integral part of calling your winged horse.

## CALLING YOUR WINGED HORSE



*Step 1: Half an hour before dawn make your way to an open meadow.*





*Step 2: Spread your calling rug on the ground with a clear view of the horizon.*



*Step 3: Spend 15 minutes warming up your voice and focusing your intention.*



*Step 4: Let your music gently build towards being a song that breaks your own heart.*

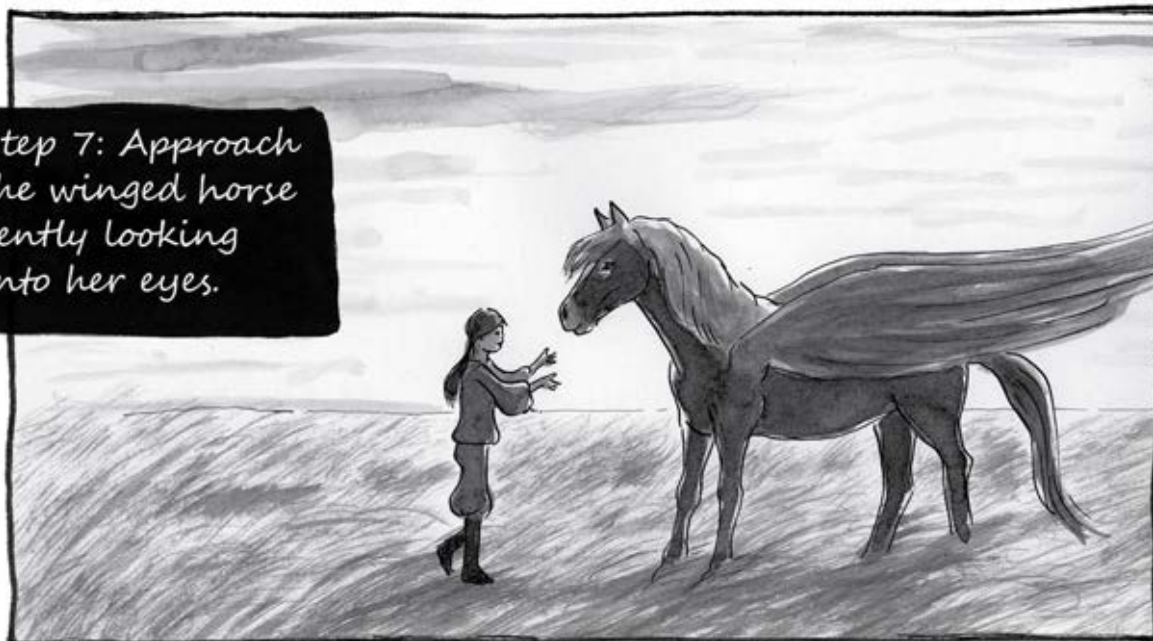


*Step 5: Allow your song to be full of who you truly are - all your happiness and sadness as well as your secrets.*

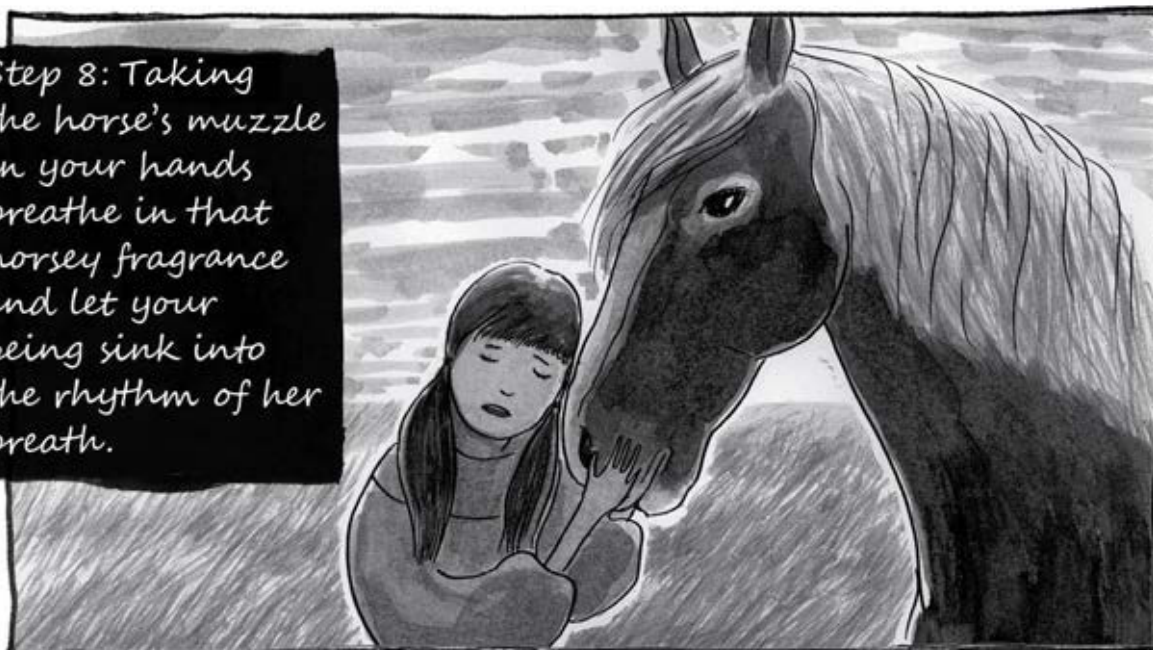


Step 6: When there are tears in your eyes look towards the sun and see the winged horse that has heard your song.

Step 7: Approach the winged horse gently looking into her eyes.



Step 8: Taking the horse's muzzle in your hands breathe in that horsey fragrance and let your being sink into the rhythm of her breath.







Step 9: The winged horse will then allow you to take your seat upon her back.



Step 10: For a safe take off hold on as tight as you can with your arms and grip with your knees. Take a deep breath and relax. The adventure now begins.

## Choosing the right instrument

Winged horses enjoy a variety of music but it is important to choose an instrument that portable, light, and one resonates well with you.

Some instruments we recommend...



... and some instruments we don't recommend.

