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A COLLECTION OF STORIES

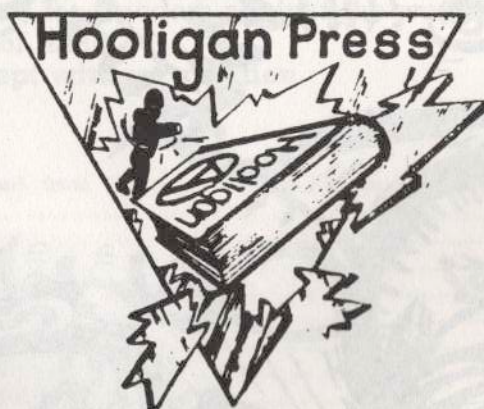
FROM BENEATH THE KEYBOARD

—A COLLECTION OF STORIES AND POETRY

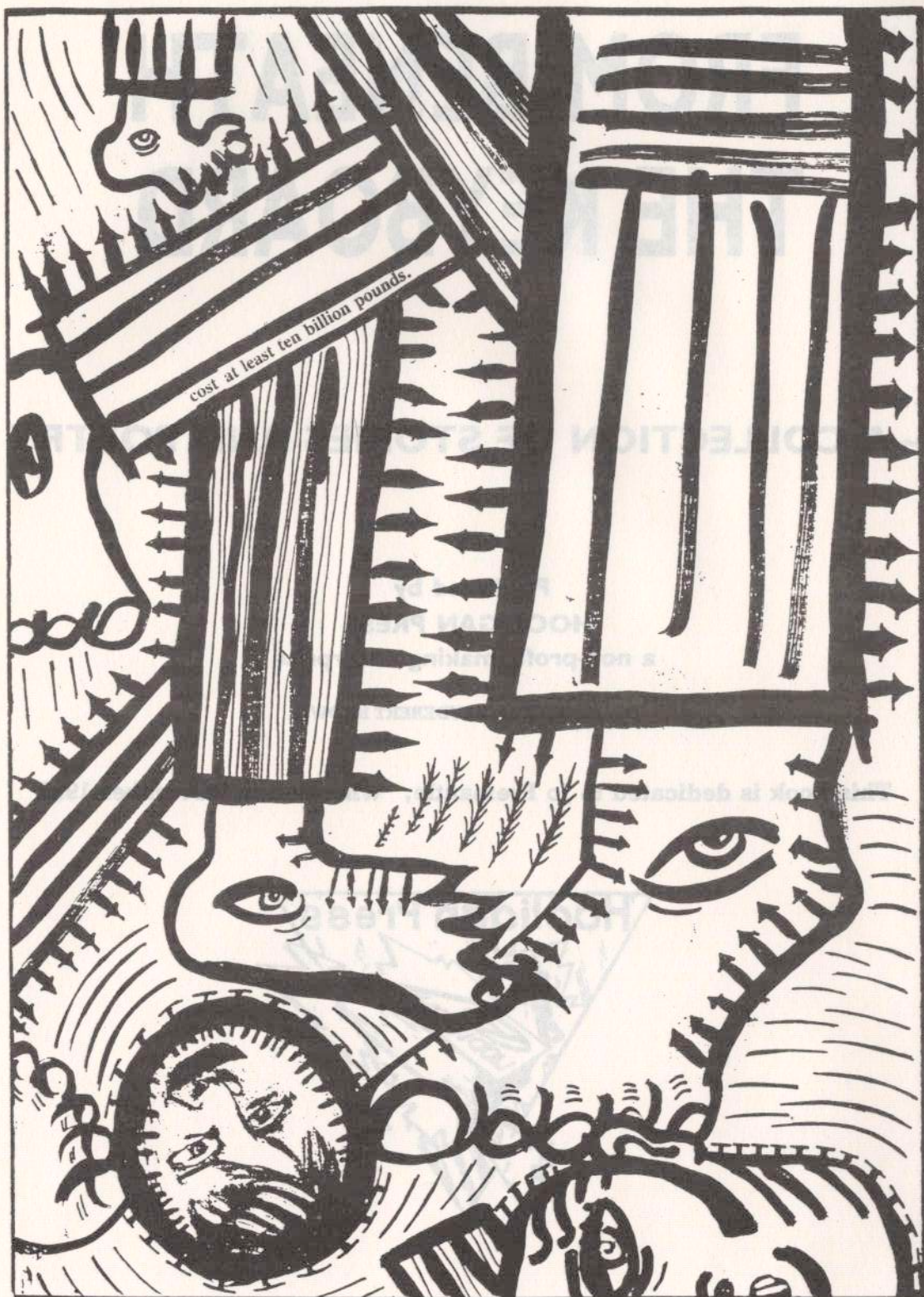
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DESIGNED BY J. HEUDEBERT BROWN.

This book is dedicated to Jo Fremantle, who died in November 1986



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FROM BENEATH THE KEYBOARD

THE INTENTION of this book originally, was to compile a collection of "anarchist short stories," but everyone seemed to have a different idea of the term "anarchy," which is great because that's what anarchy is, after all—you cannot impose rules on anarchist writers, it's a contradiction in terms.

Another intention was to publish everything without discrimination; this proved impossible for a number of different reasons (money) but it would be wrong to say that the material was selected. It chose itself. There was no problem in deciding whether to include the poetry, it was just so good it couldn't be ignored.

All the material in the book reflects not so much a desire for a lawless society as an unmistakable intention to warn of a future without hope, a future itself disintegrating into an unmanagable and socially disastrous state. Anarchists are not all the stereotyped drug taking "terrorists without a cause" or middle-class drop-outs, as the mass media would have us believe, even if CROWBAR, original publishers of SQUATROADS, could confirm that there are a few such creatures around.

Just as SQUATROADS satirises such conceptions, UPRISING takes the situation a stage further to illustrate a not so fictional scene in which all such aliens from an impossibly restricted society are terrorised out of existence until they finally turn on their captors—sounds familiar?

On the other side of the scale are the tales from very real situations with frightening implications, THE WAR AT 3 O'CLOCK tells of a young boy subjected to the double standards of a priest who preaches peace then beats him, set in a situation of impending war, sordid in fact, but glorified by the comics the boy reads—a story of confusion, guilt and sadness.

Double standards are just as self evident in BACK, a reflection of a capitalist society gone haywire with a moral in it somewhere about naivety and wisdom.

BARCELONA: WORKING DAY and LIGHTHOUSE are both about what it is like to be human, two isolated experiences of characters caught up in situations out of control, senses of isolation, frustration and hope, that vital spark. The surreal episodes in OF THAT BRUTE ENGINE transform that spark into a veritable fire, fighting for freedom against the warning of the tolerance of situations getting out of hand.

It is too easy to accept without question.

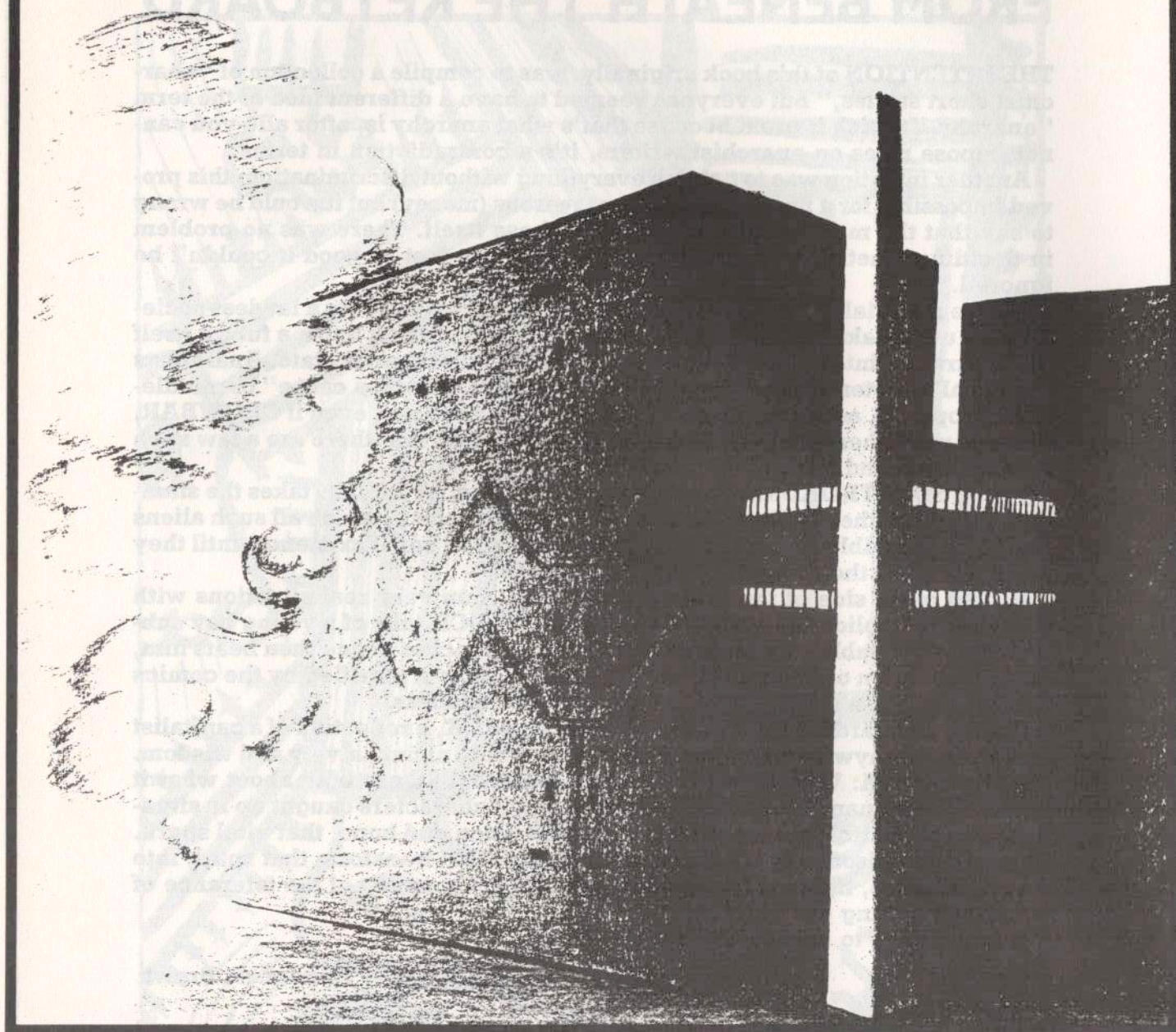
J Heudebert Brown

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Special thanks to Leveller Graphics for the use of their typesetting facilities.

UPRISING

by Mavros Black



ALEX LEANED CASUALLY against his desk, beside his console. Jean stood a metre in front of him, the camera on her helmet auto-focused and ready to transmit.

"So, Alex, when are you leaving?" Jean asked.

Alex shrugged, "Today I suppose," he mumbled.

"Wouldn't you like to give us a few details?" Jean suggested hopefully.

"No, not really." Alex admitted, "Anyone who's really interested can call me up on the console."

"Please Alex be a bit more cooperative, as a favour to me," Jean urged. She didn't particularly like running the TV station but someone had to do it and it had been a year since her last turn.

"Oh come on Jean, we all know TV is redundant," Alex snapped.

"You bastard!" Jean took off the camera and tried to attack Alex. That at least gave the fifty thousand consumers a laugh. Alex skipped out of reach and left the room. Slightly calmer she checked the console on her wrist, viewing figures had jumped by 17%. Combing her pink hair away from her eyes

she switched to auto.

"Sorry folks," she smiled, "you all know what a shit Alex is. As far as I'm concerned he can go fuck himself. Anyways, you can watch a rerun of an acid trip till I get over to Drew Wilson's flat where he'll show us some more masturbation techniques. See you then." She switched to run and the acid trip was broadcast. That was the trouble with local broadcast stations, they were full of shit. Still she only had another two days to go before someone else got lumbered with the job.

As she left Alex's flat she saw him packing away dozens of pairs of disposable underwear in preparation for his expedition to Brixton. She knew that it was fairly safe to go there now, especially after the Sanitation '92 campaign, but she remembered her last trip out of Richmond, it was a nightmare. She spent two weeks in Camberwell for her PhD in social-anthropology.

Alex saw her to the door. "Fancy coming? I could wait a couple of days until you hand that over?" He gestured at the TV equipment.

"Me? Go with you?" Jean was shocked, "You must be joking, jerk! I just hope the natives cut you up into little pieces and cook you over charcoal stoves."

"Charcoal stoves?" he chuckled, "and what about the olive oil and the lemon marinade? Christ, even when you're angry you're bourgeois through to the bone."

"Fuck off!" Jean turned and left, seething. Once in the car she keyed in Drew Wilson's name and whilst the car set off she dropped some tabs and settled down for the trip.

★ ★ ★

Alex laughed out loud once she'd gone. He had only invited her on impulse. The fact was that he didn't really like women, especially following his gay consciousness course. But then he didn't like men that much either. It was a pity he would miss Drew Wilson's masturbating techniques but he felt it was time to go. He programmed the console for home security, set it to stun on approach and kill on entry. As a final thought he set it to record Drew's programme, he really was a wanker at heart.

The car, a vintage 1986 VW Golf hatchback, was laden with supplies for the expedition, guns, food, some cash, dope and a couple of wrist consoles. He really was an explorer, twice he'd done the Paris red light district and he'd only pulled out of the Watts LA trip because of a strained psychis muscle. But his favourite was Brixton, dirty, vicious and still out of control.

As always he set the car on manual drive so that he could get used to driving before he really left the safety of the suburbs. He asked for music and the car asked him what he really fancied. He thought for a moment and decided on Crass, he always felt pure after a blast of 'Stations' or 'Feeding the Five Thousand'. Alex felt good, he snorted some coke and let things go easy.

★ ★ ★

Trev stood at the window, peered through the wooden slats that made the barricade and saw the thick black smoke belching into the sky. It was a nice contrast against the dark blue of the weather.

"What are you looking at?" Alice wanted to know, she didn't like windows, not since she'd been hit in the shoulder by a fascist sniper.

"It's the Barrier Block; look's like it's gone up for good," said Trev, reluctantly turning away. It was a good sight, the dark red flames flickering across the brown flats, eating quickly though the dam that had never held anything back.

"Probably the Jesus freaks burning out the Rastas, they've been getting biblical lately." Even as Alice spoke she worked diligently filling the bottles with mysterious fluids.

"You sure these are gonna work?" Trev picked one up and balanced it in his hand, it felt right, a nice weight and easily grippable for a long and accurate throw.

"The same formula that cooked those racist bastards two months back," Alice smiled. She took real pleasure in her tasks, she refused to accept any of that science equals big pricks junk.

Trev went back to the window, the fire was just as furious, the smoke was threatening to obscure the sun. "Now that the Barrier's gone I suppose the Rastas will want to take up some other place. D'you reckon they'll come here?"

Alice shook her head. "Not unless they want to come up against the Women's Militia, no Christians here I can tell you.

Trev nodded but didn't want to say anything. Whilst he agreed with the work that the Militia did he couldn't really cope with their pagan mystics. Still, at least some of the anarchists, like Alice, managed to balance things a bit.

"Finished." Alice stood up and screwed the tops of the bottles tightly. The latest batch of self exploding petrol bombs were earmarked for use against the small hard core of punks and skins, all fascists, who were attacking an Afro-Asian family across the street. The Black People's Army had tried selective knee cappings but the racists took it as a point of honour not to give in. And so the BPA approached the anarchists for

help. The BPA were okay with guns but not too good with incendiaries. With anarchists it was vice-versa.

Trev carefully placed the bombs in a plastic Harrods bag, he knew that one slip and the whole flat would go up but he was pretty well used to it. You kept a tight arse and got on with the job. Alice cleared some of the more volatile ingredients and unlocked the front door. The balcony was clear so they both went out and double locked the door.

The streets was pretty well empty, except for a few brave souls out doing some last minute visiting. It was Thursday of course. The police were due for their weekly patrol, so people either got inside for safety or got in a good position for some sniping.

The flats across the way were deserted, the only sign of life were the fresh turds on the stairs and the puddles of yellow piss. The Afro-Asian family lived on the third floor, the nearest near the stairs.

Alice knocked on the door, two rapid knocks and a slap, and half a minute later the door was open and they were met by a tall West Indian with a tasty line in clothes and a sawn-off shotgun. Silently he gestured to them to go in. Trev went in, clutching the Harrods bag, and Alice followed.

The Indian woman was at the kitchen table breast feeding her baby girl.

"How's the little one?" Alice asked, taking a seat at the table.

"He's okay, and the baby's fine too," laughed the Indian woman. Her real name was Indira but she preferred to be called Afia.

"We've got these," Trev pulled out a bomb and proudly displayed it to Afia.

The black man came back into the room, he was wearing a police tunic complete with badges.

"Wee, Mustafa? Where did you get that from?" Alice asked pointing at the uniform.

Mustafa laughed and turned around, he poked his finger through a little hole in the back. With the blood stain carefully cleaned away, it was almost impossible to see the bullet hole against his dark skin. All five of them, the adults and the baby girl laughed out loud.

★ ★ ★

After eight years in the force, three of those as Major, Tony Kinnock still felt a knot of fear in his guts whenever he went on duty. Thankfully as Major in the National Police Constabulary he only had to go out on patrol every six weeks. It was all the fault of the bleeding heart liberals at the Home Office. After the semi-civil war of Operation Sanitation back in '92, they had decided that each cop had to do at least one day every so often of Community Service. As Major this meant a gut stirring day on patrol in Brixton once every six weeks. And every six weeks his ulcer gave him hell, but what else could he do. With an IQ of 74 and weight 200lbs life was not easy.

Actually patrol wasn't that bad. Six cops (he being the superior officer) would get into an Armed Social Work Vehicle (ASWV) and cruise the streets of Brixton for five hours. This usually consisted of being a moving target for five hours. But seeing as only heat-seeking SAM 32 surface-to-surface rockets could pierce the armour it usually meant a lot of noise and no danger. The last SAM 32 had been confiscated in Brixton in April '97 so there was little to worry about.

The younger cops loved patrol, they lived for it. They were safe inside the ASWV and could wipe out assorted blacks, anarchists, squatters, old people and cripples. Sometimes things got a bit heated, especially when there were disputes over who'd made the kill, but that was all part of the game. The cops' union, the Grassroots Mobilising Committee for Civil Servants (Amalgamated), was actively engaged in a campaign to increase patrols to at least four a week per area, but the Home Office and National Commander were against the idea.

Two hours into the patrol and events had already progressed beyond the norm. The ASWV had gone down Coldharbour Lane quietly, a few snipers had wasted their ammuni-

tion, that was all. But as they passed the fortified automatic benefits office the Barrier Block was up in flames.

Major Kinnock even let out a yelp of pure joy at the sight, the Barrier Block held bad memories for him. During Sanitation '92 the Brixton People's Soviet had taken the building and it functioned for three long and bloody months. In the end it took the SAS to clear the place out.

In a fit of uncharacteristic excitement Kinnock ordered full speed ahead. The place really was alight, tongues of flames leapt high into the sky. A cascade of broken glass turned into molten droplets and rained down.

The ASWV stopped at the foot of the inferno and the cops watched, stuck dumb with joyous amazement.

"D'you reckon them niggers still in there?" one of the rookies asked another.

"Nah, course not," replied the other.

"I don't see why not. Immolation is a holy and beatiful concept," said the Sergeant and wiped a tear from his eye. At this they all fell silent, filled with reverence and respect.

Suddenly out of the flames a dozen Rastas staggered, some black and some white, blinded by the smoke they stumbled forward like zombies. The cops stuck safely inside the ASWV were caught by surprise. At last the Sergeant grasped what had happened and with a quick jump reached the machine gun before any of the rookies. "Immolation man wow..." he muttered and let loose a hail of leaden death to wipe out the five blinded Rastas.

★ ★ ★

Alex spotted the plume of black smoke rising from Clapham and immediately sussed on that it was Brixton. He would have liked to turn the car over to automatic, the commuter drive was not programmed to function in the inner city. Cursing silently he accelerated, luckily once outside the suburbs the roads were almost empty. Only other intrepid explorers and adventurers ventured into the inner city. He switched on his data recorders, cameras and audio, and swept quickly up Acre Lane.

★ ★ ★

"Move!" cried Major Kinnock and the laughs and jeers turned to silence. The ASWV jerked forward and clear of burning rubble. The Barrier Block at last began to collapse in on itself, the walls imploding and the storeys disintegrating. By nightfall all that would be left would be the crackened shell, getting colder in the darkness.

The ASWV rumbled down the street away from the building and it's dead Rastas. Kinnock directed that they head through Loughborough Estate. A snout had informed the Freedom of Information Bureau (the reformed Special Safety Squad who used to be called the Special Branch) that Loughborough was where the revolutionaries had regrouped. Furthermore the anarchists, feminists, and militants were working together on a minimal basis. Kinnock knew that if this were true it would be a disaster, but he doubted that it was so, he knew that the three streams had serious disagreements, all attempts at unity had failed in the past.

At the junction of Coldharbour Lane and Loughborough Road they received the first petrol bombs of the day. It was sugared of course, but the ASWV could cope with the higher temperature. Some of the rookies fired a few rounds, but it was a desultory sort of response, the petrol bomber was well hidden in the flats. Kinnock contented himself with looking at the flats through the periscope.

"Sir, look at this," the Sergeant tapped his console.

Kinnock looked at his own screen. Another vehicle was in the vicinity, the computer couldn't provide accurate info on such an old sort of car, all it could do was provide the type. A VW Golf firedoor hatchback, year uncertain. "Attempt radio contact," Kinnock barked. He wasn't sure, either it was

a trendy tourist from the suburbs or the anarchists using cars again.

★ ★ ★

Alex stopped the car and got out. It was an awesome sight, the massive Barrier Block, one of the first of the inhuman school of architecture to be built. Often copied but never surpassed in brutality and ugliness, its alienation to comfort ratio was high. Alex was filming the death of an original.

He put the camera on his head and switched to record. Of course the equipment in the car was more than adequate to record the whole thing but he liked the personal touch.

"At the very feet of this monument to Brutality the last victims lie dead offering silent homage to the Monster, to the Juggernaut, to the Penis. Even now at the moment of its death this Geometric Nightmare still commands nothing but respect..." he zoomed into the charred and bullet ridden bodies and didn't hear the radio in the car.

"No reply sir," the rookie said.

Kinnock scratched absentmindedly at his crotch. "Where is it?" he said at last.

"At the Barrier."

"Okay, reverse and get back to the Barrier."

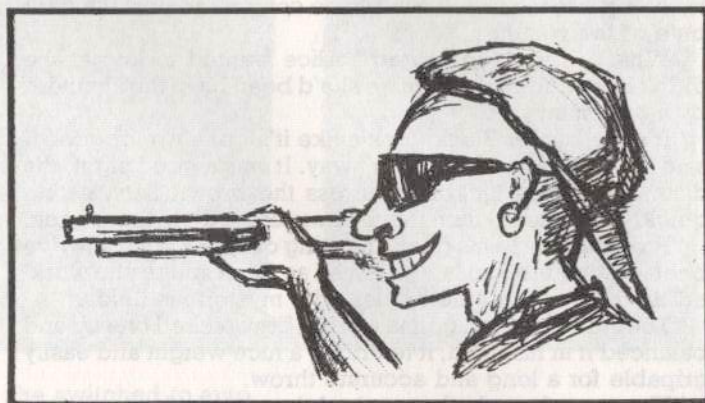
★ ★ ★

"Hey," Afia called to the others. "The pigs are going back the way they came."

"What?" Mustafa wasn't sure he'd heard right. The pigs never turned back, they followed one route and stuck to it.

Alice peered out the window. Sure enough the clumsy but powerful tank was doing a three point turn at the junction. "Something going on," she said and they all knew she was right.

"I'll get the rest of the block unit," Mustafa, shotgun in hand, set off to rouse the rest of the BPA unit in the block.



"Let's get going," Trev picked up the Harrods bag with the bombs.

"Who can we get the baby to?" said Afia and smiled sweetly at Trev.

"Oh come on. I'm no good with kids," Trev pleaded.

Alice took the baby Hope, "Well, get set for a crash course in consciousness raising," and handed her to Trev, who reluctantly handed over the bombs.

★ ★ ★

Mustafa rapped twice and then slapped his hand on the door before it was opened an inch.

"Come on man, it's me," he explained pushing his way in to the flat.

"It's not the fascists is it?" demanded a young black man, his bald head glistening. "What happened to the alarm system?"

"No man, dis is da reel t'ing." Mustafa explained joyously. "Hurry man, onto the short wave: something's going down, it's a general lert. Everybody to the Barrier."

"But the Barrier burn down guy," said Baldy, relaxing.

"The filth just turn back to go there. Why they do that? Summat going down."

At once the bald headed man realised the urgency of the situation. What could force a massive reinforced tank to turn back, not snipers, not molotovs, not bricks, something big!

The bald headed man switched on the transmitter and reached for the microphone. "Oh brothers and sisters, oh friends and comrades, we have joyous news, wonderful news. Arise, wretched of the earth. Arise! Arise! All to our posts, all to our arms. Pigs at the Barrier! Oh friends and lovers and peoples . . . Arise. Arise!"

All over Brixton, and into Camberwell and Stockwell and Clapham people heard the magic words, the words of joy, the best and the truest poem. The word spread from mouth to mouth, heart to heart, soul to soul. Guns were made ready, bombs unpacked, sticks and stones, barricades were ready to go up.

In Brixton they had long been ready, blacks and whites, gays and straights, men and women, anarchists and radicals. In minutes groups of people were on their way to the ashes that had been the Barrier Block.

Trev held baby Hope and wept with joy at the thought of the uprising and the frustration at being away from the action.

★ ★ ★

The ASWV stopped in front of the VW Golf. Alex didn't even notice, he was weeping bitter tears of sadness at the loss of the Barrier. His eulogy over the flames was nearing its end. All around him swirled swathes of black smoke and ash.

"Man has built many monuments of pain and suffering but could any compare with this . . . ?" he asked almost choking.

"He's one of ours," the Sergeant reported, the infra-red detector saw the TV equipment and camera on Alex's head, a cross between a crash helmet and a crown.

"The silly bastard could get himself killed," Kinnock sighed.

★ ★ ★

The effects of the coke were beginning to wear off, so Alex swallowed his last few tabs of acid. The flames were beginning to die down most of the structure had collapsed, apart from the outside walls which still seemed strong. In the embers he saw a few household effects which had miraculously survived. He moved in a little closer, the embers were glowing and the crisp crackling seemed to be rhythmic music. Wow, thought Alex, even when it's down to this level the Barrier blows my mind. He almost jumped up and down when he saw the statue. In amongst the glowing embers was a massive bust of Hailie Selassie which had somehow survived in one piece. Alex couldn't tell whether it was the acid but the bust, still upright, surrounded by glowing patterns of orange and reds, seemed the holiest of shrines. He zoomed in and began the litany and liturgy to the Lion of Judah, an incantation he'd learned from the fundamentalist Rastas of Forest Hill.

★ ★ ★

"It's no use," Kinnock switched off the megaphone in resignation. Even at full volume the trendy tourist failed to acknowledge his warnings. This meant that either the tourist was too near the flames to hear or he was a deaf reporter from one of the TV for the Disabled stations. Kinnock was uneasy, he felt his sphincter contract and his bum get sweaty. Things

were not going well. The next step was obvious, someone had to go out and get the silly bastard. What Kinnock really wanted to do was to turn around and leave, but that was impossible. They could shoot the bastard but Kinnock couldn't trust the rookies to keep quiet.

"One of us will have to go," the Sergeant offered tactfully.

"I know that," Kinnock retorted angrily, he hated pushy minions. "I won't ask for volunteers," the rookies looked disappointed, "I know you all want to go. As the senior officer I give up that honour to you Sergeant. You can go."

The Sergeant shrugged. He zipped up his protective suit, donned the helmet, grabbed the gun and was ready to go. A rookie checked the periscope, it was difficult to tell with the smoke, and the heat sensor was useless by the fire, but it looked all clear. The hatch was opened and the Sergeant crawled out, whistling the Clash's 'Guns of Brixton'. He looked around, felt safe, and casually strolled towards the ruins and the camera man.

Alex saw the flash of silver in the corner of his eye. He was almost out of it by now. He turned and saw the silver suited being approaching him. Oh Jesus, Alex thought, the Lion of Judah and a spaceman. "It's too much!" He zoomed onto the astronaut and tried a negative effect, the blue sky became black, the flames were black holes, the Lion of Judah became a Teutonic Aryan. Alex stepped back trying to take in the whole cosmic significance of the concept. He slipped and fell back into the flames which suddenly leapt up around him. He seemed to fall for an age, an epoch even. The flames licked around him, somehow it didn't seem hot. His last thought was, shit man this is almost like spontaneous combustion, it's so natural and healthy man.

★ ★ ★

The Sergeant stood and watched the body burning brightly, somehow he had expected a lot of screaming, or even some smoke. But it was such a clean burn, tidy and smokeless. He tried to remember which Eastern religion practiced body burning, and whether it was called immolation or was immolation something to do with injections? After a while he got bored and headed back to the ASWV.

★ ★ ★

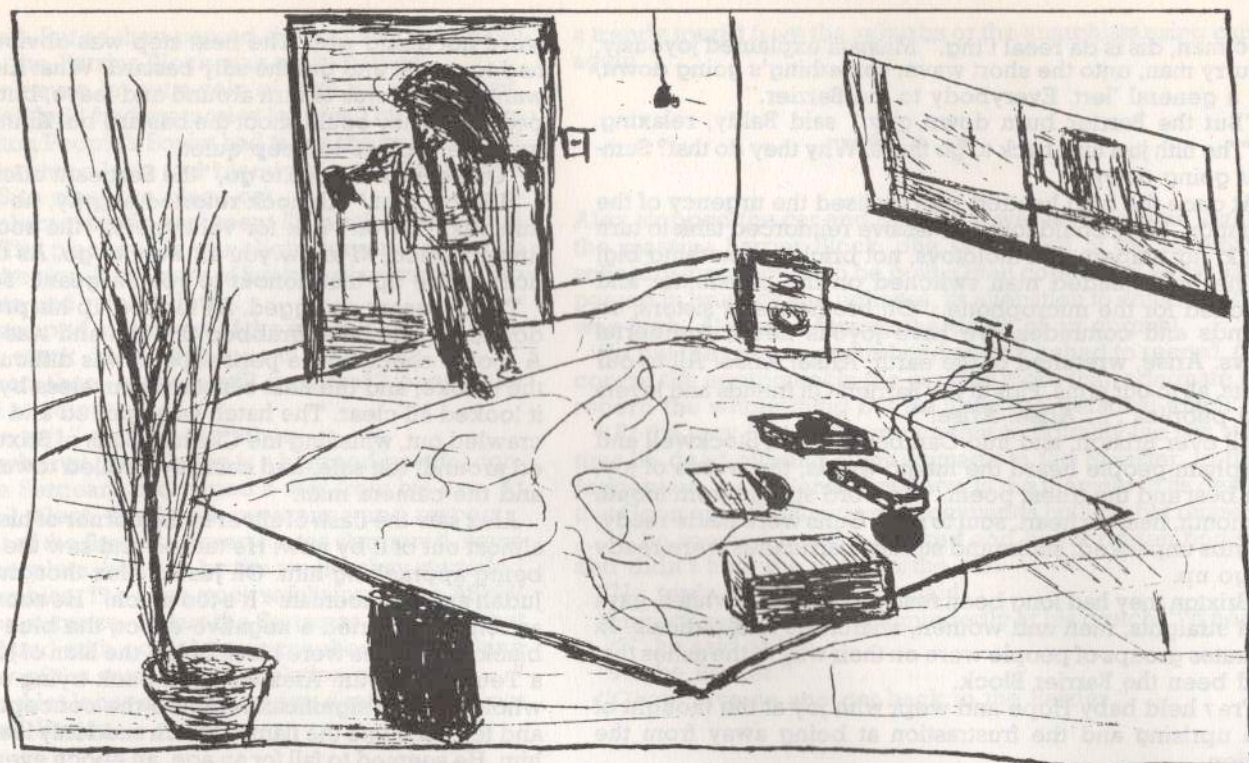
Alice flattened herself against the rubble, the smoke offered some camouflage but the wind could change leaving her exposed. To her right some of the syndicalists had come up with their machine gun. It was an old model but lovingly looked after. The spaceman cop looked bored and in no hurry as he headed back to his truck. At last he got there, had a cursory backward glance and then the hatch opened in the roof of the pig truck and he took a step up. The smoke was suddenly thicker.

Alice seized her chance, she stood up, balanced the bomb, pulled back and chucked it. She hit the dirt, praying her aim was true. It exploded with a bang and a flash. A burst of machine gun fire from the syndicalists and all was silent.

The smoke cleared. A little fire was blazing from inside the ASWV. Two dead cops lay on the ground. A triumphant cry and suddenly the streets were filled with hundreds of happy people. The Women's Militia put the fire out in the pig truck and an anarchist woman took the controls. The truck was theirs!

Already the first clashes were taking place on the Battersea/Chelsea border, Streatham had fallen. The Revolution had begun. Radios flashed the message across the land. The revolution had begun. The REVOLUTION had BEGUN!

The BEGINNING



LIKE CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of the fourth kind a rectangular bright blinding beam of light bursts out into the dark street. The door limped off its hinges threatening to crash down on a Mohawk, a glue bag stuck to her lips. Mixed in with her breathing exercises were shouts, screams, yelps and polite squatters' talk pouring out of the house.

A twelve hole DM was thrown through a window and Mr Godwin phoned the police for the sixth time. Not only had Crystal Palace lost 3-0, (the Ovaltine had run out, also,) but there was a repeated hammering on his wall like a re-enactment of the Battle of the Bulge.

Next door Julian was putting on a Cab Voltaire single; it was his party and he had invited all his wierdo trendy friends. The week before he had gone a bit arty and as an arts performance he superglued a hundred fag butts in his hair, had PICASSO tattooed on his forehead, sellotaped sausages to his chest and went to the launderette.

Mercedes agreed to photograph him in the spin dryer. Unfortunately the mechanism stuck and Julian was nearly minced. He spent six days on a life support machine. Jane went to see him every day, but Sabrina had been angry with Jane, saying she should be stronger, and he's "just a wanker".

The music was loud. Bill was looking at everybody menacingly, someone had stolen his Leonard Cohen bootleg collection. Mad Frank, the self-confessed ex-Foreign Legionaire had done it.

By one o'clock the party is really jumping, like crazy, people sit, sleep and fall down the stairs. Julian is practicing vomit painting in his bedroom. Homebrew cascades down throats forming septic pools in their stomachs. IRA rebel songs are being sung in the basement and the sound of oral sex (groaning) can be heard from the back room.

Christian had bought a book from Collets called *Socialist Way to Androgenous Pansexuality* and it had influenced him deeply. He puts on a lover's rock record and asks Bob to dance. He agrees and they

hold each other tight, moving hips in time to the rhythm. Christian can feel Bob's rasping stubble on his neck.

Jane smiles, thinking Christian is getting to know his inner being, and really she should start the osteopathic course for treating cats with back problems.

In the toilet Harry is feeling a bit ill. He notices something green plop out of his arse. Harry just can't believe it and uses Julian's toothbrush to fish it out of the pan. Urrrgh! It's a congealed lump of curried okra.

Just then one of the 'guests' bursts into the loo, sees the green shit on the toothbrush, thinks Harry is going to put it into his mouth, whimpers, rolls his eyes upwards, vomits in mid-air and hits his head on the washbasin.

Elsewhere the floorboards creak and thump. Mercedes puts OMO up her nose, Julian has dropped some acid and is "really freaked baby". Jane is having a serious talk to Sabrina about her attitude, Christian is showing Bob, in his bedroom, his collection of the works of Kropotkin, and Harry is giving the kiss of life to his bleeding victim in the toilet when Bill walks in for a pee (embarrassing).

Next door Mr Godwin has a headache, with 19,000 people on the housing waiting list he knows he's going to be in this street, next to the squatters, for a long time. Unless . . .

In the next issue of SQUATROADS find out what Mr Godwin is planning. Also—Christian and Bob split up. Jane's acne erupts, Sabrina joins the Society For Cutting Up Men (SCUM), Julian is nearly killed again when the roof collapses. There is an invasion of slimy frogs in Mercedes' bedroom and Harry tries to commit suicide in a bottle of Dentafix.

And the house is raided for obscene publications and the gas bill arrives.

BARCELONA: WORKING DAY

MISS IRENE REGRETS, ALL SHE CAN SEE IS EXOCETS

*Miss Irene regrets she has no food today
And she regrets her children had no play
Like Miss Otis she didn't dine or dance
Gave her kids bread and onion sandwiches and no chance
To travel only from one street to another
Didn't even know Father or Mother
And Miss Irene regrets that she starved her family every day
Slaved and worked eighteen hours for low pay
All because Miss Irene was born on the wrong side of the street
Didn't know the right people one had to meet
Oh why did we have such fools no one knows
As numerous as they say are the crows
And Miss Irene sits and sees all the mistakes she made
Wondering what to do watching that long cavalcade
The ones who've always done as they were told
Had all the hassle and none of the gold
They say that the streets are paved anyway
With that commodity as we pay every day
And I look in vain and Miss Irene regrets
That all she can see is the exocets.*

WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF, I DIDN'T HEAR

*What are little girls made of did you say
Sugar and spice and all that's nice anyway
And what are little boys made of did you say I didn't hear
They include politicians puppy dogs' tails and I believe a smattering of fear.*

THE HORRORS OF MISDEMOCRACY

*Good homes equality and education and heat
That's the solution and enough to eat
Come on down and see the hovels of bureaucracy
And all the horrors of our misdemocracy*

Irene Romilly

BARCELONA: WORKING DAY

by Matthew Tree

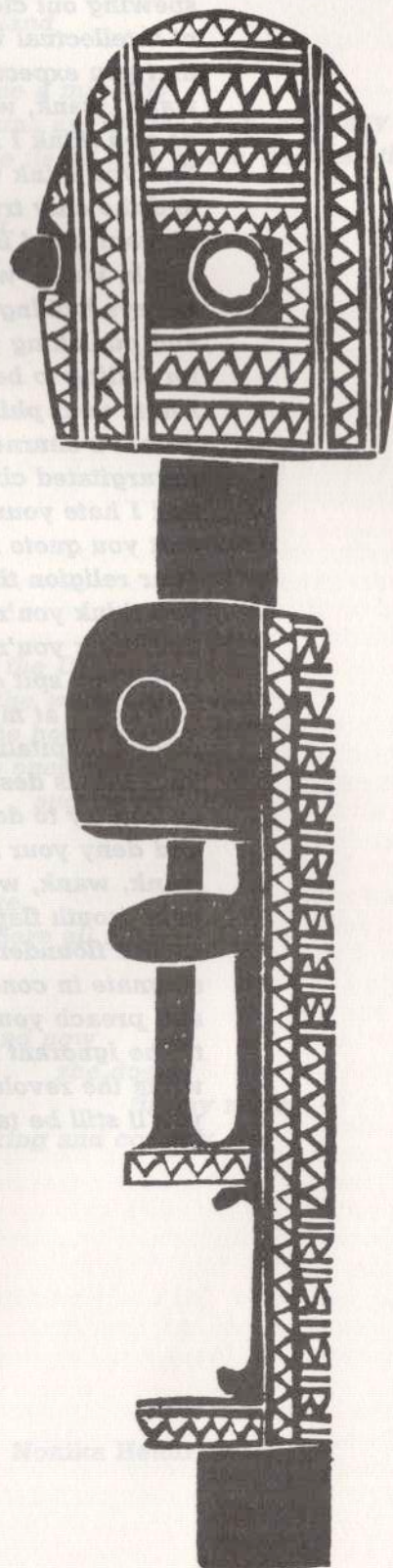
"Regular, unchanging work is a dangerous drug. It is addictive, harmful to the body and mind, and it reduces people's natural intelligence . . . Work creates anger by killing time, and as long as there is enforced work there will be a threat of violence; violence and work are equal."

***From The Honest Practical Guide to Modern Living
by Milanera Okumbo
Macht Frei Press 1984***

YOUR ALARM GOES BIP BIP and you open your eyes, remember how little sun comes into your room in the mornings because all the buildings in Barcelona have lightless tunnels in the back, and lie in bed for all the time during which you should be shaving, showering, crapping, and going downstairs to the shop next door to get some mineral water and a cake, then you get up and do it all anyway in fifteen minutes, pick up your bag, and run into the street (blue sky, yellow-brown walls, heat); as the sausage dog belonging to the stationers is blocking the pavement crossways and looking lost but you step over it and trip into the metro a few minutes later where you stand in awesome silence for a few more minutes and check your watch constantly, working out that if the train is four times faster than usual you won't be late for your first private English lesson. The train screams in. At the *Diagonal* stop you get out run hard up the stairs but take it easy easy to the student's house though you are still sweating like a little pig when the cleaner opens the door and shows you down a hallway to a cool room where you lay out your books and wait for the student who arrives ten minutes later, then you start the lessons, trying to be as professional and cheerful as you can given that your hangover from the three and half litres of beer the night before is giving you trouble putting one word in front of another and you need a second shit and urgently but you finish the lesson chat for a while to the student then notice you're running late for the next lesson so you pocket your fiver leave the building and run down the Passeig de Gracia (blazing sun, plane trees trembling, fascists selling badges on a corner) and remember you've got to have something to eat and quickly, so hoping no one you know can see you you go into a *Burger King* and order a cheeseburger swallow it almost whole and then you remember your stomach's earlier request and run downstairs into the toilet and sink with relief on the seat; when you get up you find that the roll dispenser is a new invention designed to save on paper and you can't get any of it out at all but eventually, by taking half of it apart you manage to get what you need and then you go out with muzak humming in your ears and walk to another tube station where you push past the dozens and dozens of mothers-with-tiny-slow-walking-children and get onto a train; it's a fifteen station journey so you curse all the cripples who are constantly being offered seats while your legs ache and you realise you're in one of the new super-modern carriages, which have no ventilation no not even when the temperature is an average thirty degrees, but sooner or later, largely

because where you are going is out in the sticks, the crowds thin and you sit down ignoring the man who doesn't have work and has got a wife and six kids to support and who is holding out his cupped hand to you until you get to the last station on the line where you step out into a blinding open space and have to adjust your eyes before you can work out where the bus stop is and then you run to it just as the bus is pulling off so you sit and wait reading the anarchist propaganda which is scattered all over the ground then get onto the next bus you know the driver he is the one who likes having a go at his passengers and sure enough whenever a dear old trout who can hardly walk gets on he shoots off fast acceleration—watching her squawk—and, naturally, whenever he sees a crowd of people waiting with whole paniers of shopping he stops a few metres up the road and watches them puff and pant and then when they're barely through the door he shoots off again fast acceleration leaving the door wide open just in case any of them should slip or stumble you imagine; you get off cross the road walk into a factory yard then up the steps to the office section where you apologise profusely to the waiting students for being so late and then get on with the class they look a bit bored so you suggest a game at which they all perk up the game is guessing jobs and of course one of them pretends to be an air-hostess hoho enough said we all know what air-hostesses get up to when they leave the plane don't we? All that goes on for a while and then you chat a bit at the end about money because it's your payday and then you have a bit of a private conversation with one of them who's different from the rest, "executives who think they're in a film" he calls them and you notice he is on the edge of a nervous breakdown and you say goodbye and leave having a few words with the receptionist who reminds you that the summer is starting and that half these *gentlemen* as she calls them are now sneaking off to the beach or the tennis courts every other day she knows because she has to cover up for them and she is one of the lowest paid people in the company and finally you say goodbye to her too and walk the twenty minutes to the station stopping off for a *frankfurt* and a beer on the way; on the platform you sit in the sun waiting for the train and then decide you need another beer so you go to the station bar which is cool and full of soaks (heads swaying over the dishes of olives and tripe and squid laid out under glass) and you don't have to say anything because the barman knows you and what you have and then the train comes in so you swallow down fast and find a smoker; you haven't bought a ticket because often they don't check but this time they do so you pay double the fare and get out at the other end cursing yourself and walk to the bus-stop; after a few minutes the bus comes and you get on and someone says "This is a table" five times to you because he sees you're reading a book in English but it isn't a long ride and you get off with relief and walk up to the shops to get something for your supper but they're all closed because in Barcelona they all open at six so you open the door of your block to go up three flights panting like a labrador as you enter your flat which is as dark as Hades and say hallo to your flatmate who has just broken a leg caught an eye infection and lost her job all in two days and isn't in such a good mood so you go straight through to your room put the satchel down and decide to write a letter to someone you're in love with who naturally is a thousand

miles away in London so to help you get in the right mood you collect your empties and go down to the *bodega* round the corner where a sprightly middle-aged woman who has helped you often serves hand and foot a crowd of grumpy old farts who do nothing all day except drink and eat and sit in her shop you think as you go in and you have a chat with her, get the beers checking that two of them at least are cold and go back wondering if your flat mate thinks you're an alcoholic put one in the fridge and crack one of the cold ones place it on your table get a glass light a cigarette and write the letter then take it to the tobacconist where they sell stamps post it and go back up and crack another beer which you finish then you look at your watch and notice you have to leave for your evening lesson so you pick up your bag go out and wait for the bus remembering you haven't eaten so you cross the road get a sandwich to take away chew it until the bus comes and then sit on the bus take out some exercise this student did a week ago and try and mark it but the bus is bouncing too much because you're sitting in the accordion section the curtain of which is torn and you can see the grey rush of the road through it (and through the windows you can see twilight, crowds, rush hour traffic, flashes of a wide metal floor as you pass over a motorway) and you get off ten minutes late already cross a road dodging cars and run up the stairs three flights to where your evening student is waiting for you, she scrapes a living together working as an artist's model so you don't like taking money from her but you do and then sit and chat over a bottle of beer she's bought and talk over your respective problems and then you nip down the three flights (sky purpling nicely) cross the road run for the bus catch it home, where you pull open the street door climb the stairs thinking only of the last bottle of beer you have left which should be chilled by now well not that much you find when you open it anyway and your flatmate comes into the living-room with the month's bills and the telephone has been unusually high this month and neither of us can understand why the electricity bill should be too so you offer her a glass of beer and work out that of the eighty pounds you earned this week you have ten left but at least the lights still go on and you can still use the phone so you say goodnight to your flatmate and switch on the television but there is only an interview with an expert in Catalan heraldry so you switch it off and go to your room and read a book for a while then get restless and try and type something and then you remember you've got an early lesson tomorrow and it's already one o'clock so you get undressed and get into bed and switch the light off and then you want someone to put your arm around or in fact the more you think of it to make passionate love to but she, as has occurred to you before, is in London and moreover is probably wondering what the hell did you go to Barcelona for and at the moment you can't remember yourself but sleep is stealing up before you have time to get to the heart of the matter (release from the dole? break in the routine? joy of earning your own living? cheap beer and tobacco? artistic inspiration? masochism? escapism? late night bars?) well in the end as the room is spinning and the security guard next door and his aged mother are yelling blue murder at each other and the four dogs who live downstairs are crooning like Frank Sinatra you let it pass and sink into the sleep of the dead but not that dead because in the morning the alarm goes BIP



BARCELONA: WORKING DAY

by Matthew Ties

wank, wank, wank
your words disgust me
spewing out clouds
of intellectual vomit
that you expect me to swallow
wank, wank, wank
do you think I haven't noticed
that you think with your prick
and the only true fact
on your mind is your ego
wank, wank, wank
always looking in mirrors
and punishing your women
for failing to be you
I hate your philosophy
with it's churned out, chewed up
regurgitated clichés
and I hate your gurus
that you quote like a bible
your religion that stops you from thinking
you think you're so clever
and think you're so big
when you spit on my anger
and laugh at my pain
fascist, capitalist, marxist, militant
your labels describe you
as you try to decide what I need for my freedom
and deny your hypocrisy
wank, wank, wank
your mouth flaps like a fish
as you flounder in dogma
stagnate in conceit
and preach your revolution
to the ignorant masses
when the revolution's happening, brother
you'll still be talking excuses

Jo Fremantle

Sad brown faces

remember back home?

**Nursing a spliff or a beer to numb the cold that is more than just the weather.
followed a dream to this promised land
found a lie**

became a minority.

**All your children know the stories of sun, mountains and better days, and they
strive to make a home of this our england because its all they know, because they
have no better days to remember,**

**and maybe because they love it,
but often because they have no choice.**

Go home old man,

or at least die on the way,

**they don't want you here,
do you want them?**

Have you seen the mad woman raging in the DHSS?

Kissing all the men and writing on the walls;

she was some bodys baby

some ones golden girl

once upon a time.

Your laughter wont help,

nor will your pity

nor will a cigarette.

She doesnt know her number, shes been here all fucking day.

She used to live in a house some where

some thing went wrong

and now

she doesnt

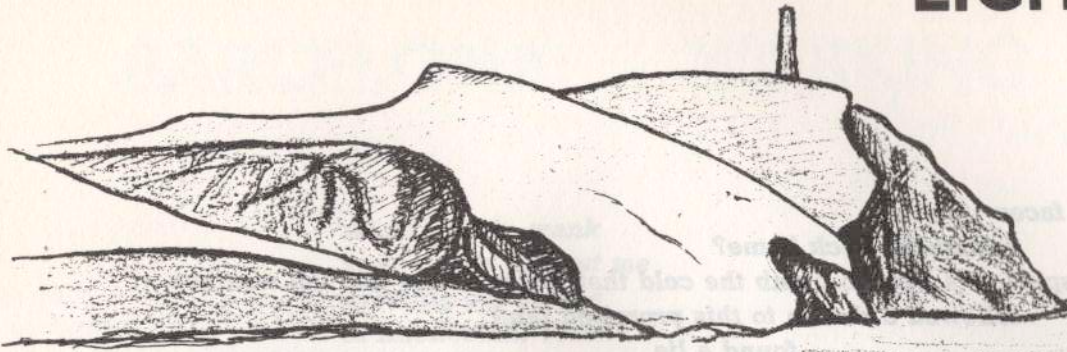
fit any more,

How can she believe in king and country

Nonika Hendrickse

LIGHTHOUSE

by Dolly Kaplan



I CAN REMEMBER the first time I saw the sea. I stood on top of a hill, at the very top, where the wind was strong and salty and right down on the other side you could see blue, bright blue, with houses and cars bustling alongside. It didn't move—the waves weren't visible from here. I was disappointed. Gulls caw-cawing overhead seemed vulgar and I was very small on top of that hill. The thing that impressed me most was, can you guess? On the furthest point of the headland a finger of white pointing skywards—look at me, I'm a lighthouse. Beat that. I watch and stand sentinel. The mighty sea has a challenger. It winked at me it did, I saw it so—then turned back saying I'll see you again sometime if you like. You're my kind of girl.

Now in the city. Smells like back alleys where the cats piss, where you get mugged. Gangs of kids push by. The world turns and where are you? About to fall off. Like an initiation ceremony you must first of all survive alone on as little money as possible before the streets are your friends because you know them so well, and before some of the clamped grey faces crack into smiles and welcome home. When the man in the shop knows your name, you will be a regular.

Not for me all this drudge. I took the easy way out and got a dog. So then I had a friend who'd think I was the bee's knees, and never have to try. Get involved. Man is a social animal. Well I'm a woman and what can society do for me? Twenty-seven last birthday and I'm certain sure that I'm the most solitary beast on earth. Where do I stand? Here in the dark outside the pub. I guess I could have a drink. There were two men who wanted to pay for my beer. I said no thanks very much. They had red eyes and bloated faces. I don't like to have anything to do with those types. Me and my dog are just fine thanks. Those sort of pubs have high ceilings that have yellow peeling paint, no matter what colour they really are. They are the natural habitat of pissed up pillars of society. The working man. I'm a woman as I said before, and I don't belong here. This I know. The eyes of the regulars tell me so. But I only wanted a drink you know. I live all alone and beer from cans isn't the same. The eyes don't let up and I'm leaving with my dog.

We weren't so lonely and if the winter hadn't been so hard then I know we'd have been okay. Very cold that winter, and it never did let up. We were so hungry. That's what I remember, being most painfully hungry. And nobody wanted to give me a job. I did try. I said—I have a dog and a stomach to support—but employers are very hard in the city. And we had nothing to offer. So I sold what I had,

which was my body, just like in the jokes. This is another reason why that winter was so memorable.

The first time I remember only indistinctly. I felt foolish standing on the corner, and I never really believed anyone would stop anyway. Things like that aren't real life after all—where's something you call the woman who stole your man (or your purse). Women on street corners are waiting for a bus and no one in England starves these days. I thought the car pulled up so it's owner could buy cigarettes. Or maybe he's lost. Dodgy traffic systems round here if you're not a local (a regular).

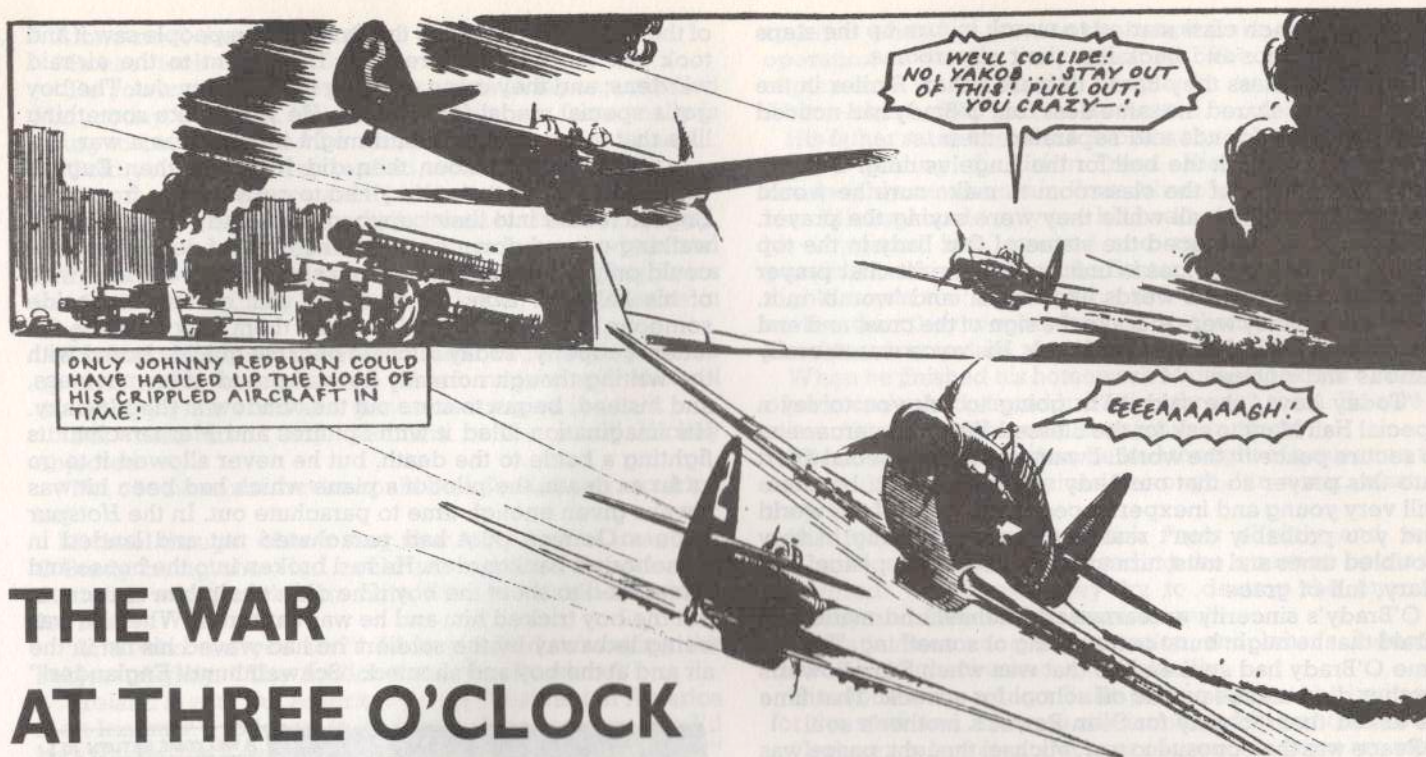
He rolled down the window and said—how much. I named my price, and that was the business end dealt with. He was fat and fleshy and called me love, and other than that I don't remember. Was I doing ANY one any good? Those punters, they were all vampires. Treading all over you—feeding on the flesh. Carnivores, used you like a toilet. I sort of half hoped I'd catch something and pass it on. Then I was in a funny mood for most of that winter.

And so I took a holiday. Just for a day I'll go away, to the seaside. I have enough money—me and the dog need a rest—we'll catch a train and forget the drear and the dull. On the first warm day of the year. See the sun—pale but it means well and not a cloud in the sky, we went back to the lighthouse—you might have guessed by now. The lighthouse is my home. I tell this as a close, close secret—don't whisper a word—here goes—but if you speak the vampires will come. I'm sure of it.

There is a lighthouse far away built just for you and me (this to the dog) it's white and stands, perfect stillness, right down close to the shoreline, if I see it, the sun is very bright, like something sharp, easy to break. So, the sea is bright blue—aqua-marine is it?—and gulls caw-cawing and wheeling about on the breeze. Always a breeze by the sea. Such a calm, the sand's damp and cloggy, can you see it? . . . do you ever think about children and what they think? Is it an adventure for them. They usually seem to be on the level.

My lighthouse is strictly my own and I don't believe I'm interested in anyone else's lighthouse. Can you imagine the smell of someone else's lighthouse? It would be altogether too powerful. You understand that two identical jumpers are quite strongly defined after they've been worn by two different people. Imagine green lamb's wool—how insulated is the lamb.

Oh for the sea again. Desolation, peace no sex. Plenty of freedom trapped in a lighthouse.



THE WAR AT THREE O'CLOCK

by Frank Jackson

ABOUT THREE HUNDRED schoolboys, ranging from between seven and seventeen years of age were running wild on the hard concrete playground of Saint Brendan's. Michael, aged ten, was with his friend Hickey. They were at the gate, they usually hung around there even though the knew that the Killer had warned them often enough not to in the periodic speeches he made to them from the stop of the steps, after he had brought every boy on the playground to immobility and silence with one long shrill blow on his referee's whistle. But, Michael and Hickey reasoned, the gate was in the playground, so they had some sort of right to be there, and anyway, the Killer had not given anyone the leather for being there yet. The reason they were there, and the reason they were not supposed to be there was that when the Brother on guard duty at the top of the steps at the other end of the playground was not looking, they could nip out the gate, down the steps, and cross the street to Dywer's sweet-shop.

O'Brady was on guard duty today. He stood in the distance at the top of the steps, the open main door of the school behind him, a thin wiry grey-haired man in Christian Brother black, smoking quietly and looking out menacingly over the noisy playground. One of the lay teachers came to the door, and he turned around to speak to her. Michael and Hickey saw their chance and made a quick burst for the gate. A second later they were half-way down the steps and out of view, the screams from the playground above them eerily distant.

They crossed the narrow street to Dywer's.

"There's going to be a war, you know," Hickey said out of the blue.

Images from the *Hotspur* and the *Victor* flashed through Michael's mind. Last week Captain Roy Bradford and his Spitfire Squadron had destroyed a secret German submarine base. They had flown in with the sun to their backs so the Germans could not see that they were coming and were taken completely by surprise.

"Who told you that?" Michael asked, it sounded too good to be true.

They turned into the doorway to the semi-darkness of the sweet-shop. They stopped talking instinctively, Mrs Dwyer was behind the counter. She was nice but she was an adult.

Michael bought a penny's worth of black cats. Hickey

asked for a gob-stopper. He stuttered a little as he asked and when he finally managed to get the words out, his mouth jerked open twice and he squinted. Michael looked at him and thought how it did look as if Hickey was trying to catch flies. That was the reason they called him the Fly Catcher. They shouldn't Michael though, just as they shouldn't call him Cabbage Ears because his ears stuck out a bit. He would show them some day, the way Captain Roy Bradford showed the Germans. But Captain Roy Bradford and the men of his Spitfire Squadron were always good looking, while the captain of the Germans was always ugly, wore glasses and was skinny; that made him feel sorry for the Germans and sometimes he wanted them to win, but they never did.

Back out in the bright street and out of earshot of Mrs Dwyer they continued their conversation.

"My Da said it to my Ma," Hickey answered the question of a minute ago.

Michael looked at him unbelievably, it was probably another ma-ya story, you never knew what to believe, even with Hickey.

"Cross your heart and hope to die!" Michael demanded.

"Cross my heart and hope ti die!" Hickey replied and made the sign with an unexpected earnestness.

So it could be true.

"He said," Hickey went on authoritatively, "that at three o'clock tomorrow the Americans and the Russians are going to go to war and they're going to bomb each other."

They reached the narrow steps that led back up into the playground, and while they worried about sneaking back in without being seen, the forgot about the war. At the top they peeped over to see if O'Brady was still watching. He was not, his distant black shape was bending down and he was patting the head of the brown and white mongrel that they kept at the monastery. They were in luck. They made a rush for it, and before O'Brady had straightened himself and returned to his vigil, they were a safe ten yards from the gate.

Michael did not get another chance to ask Hickey more about the war, because the Killer appeared on the steps beside O'Brady. He blew his referee's whistle and silenced the playground immediately. Every boy froze in whatever position he happened to be in. Any movement would have meant the leather from the Killer himself. He surveyed them coldly for a few seconds, and then blew his whistle again. This was the signal for them to run to the top of the playground and for each class to form silently into rows of two abreast. Then, he blew the whistle for the third and last time and starting at one end, where the older classes had

assembled, each class started to march in turn up the steps to the main door and back into their classrooms.

During the class they could not talk either. Earlier in the year they had shared the same desk, but O'Brady had noticed that they were friends and separated them.

At twelve o'clock the bell for the Angelus rang. O'Brady went to the back of the classroom to make sure he would be able to see them all while they were saying the prayer. They stood up and faced the statue of Our Lady in the top corner. Their forty voices in unison said the familiar prayer which had mysterious words like 'virgin' and 'womb' in it.

Just before they were to make the sign of the cross and end the prayers O'Brady started to speak. His voice was unusually serious and sincere.

"Today boys," he said, "I'm going to ask you to say a special Hail Mary to ask for the Blessed Virgin's intercession to secure peace in the world. I want you to put special effort into this prayer so that our Lady will hear it. You boys are still very young and inexperienced in the ways of the world and you probably don't realise that we are living in very troubled times and must turn to God and pray for peace. Hail Mary, full of grace"

O'Brady's sincerity embarrassed Michael and made him afraid that he might burst out laughing or something. The last time O'Brady had spoken like that was when Sean Power's mother died and Sean was off school for a week. That time he asked them to pray for Sean Power's mother's soul.

Peace was the opposite to war, Michael thought, peace was what they had now. So Hickey was telling the truth, it was for real. He wondered what war would really be like and of the chance it would give him to be brave, as brave as Captain Roy Bradford and his Spitfire Squadron. The comics were full of boy heroes who were always beating the Germans or the Japs and who never went to school.

The class joined O'Brady in the prayer. Michael kept silent. O'Brady was behind him so he would not see that he was not moving his lips. He did not understand why anyone would want to pray for peace, and anyway, if he changed his mind, he could say the Hail Mary on his own later, it was not a prayer like the Angelus that had to be said at a special time.

At dinner time he sat on one of the wooden benches in the shelter behind the toilets and ate the cheese sandwiches his mother had made him the night before. He ate alone, he was the only one in his class who brought his lunch to school.

Afterwards, wandering in the backstreets that surrounded the school, he had time to think properly about the coming war. In the olden days there was always wars, not like today which was a very boring time to live in. The Romans, Robin Hood—he had run off and hid in Sherwood Forest and robbed the rich to give to the poor. He would have liked to have run off too but he didn't know any forests, and robbing, another word for stealing, was a sin now, though it must not have been then; and neither were there any poor anymore, except perhaps the tinkers, but they weren't really poor anyway—Mrs Flannery had told his mother that it was a waste of time giving them anything, because you got no thanks for it, and if you gave them old clothes and they didn't like them, you would see them thrown in the ditch the next day, and his mother agreed with her. No, the only real poor these days were the blacks in Africa.

If there was a war, it would be different, he wouldn't have to go to school and life would be full of all sorts of adventures. He remembered a story he once read in the *Victor*, where a boy and his sister and their baby brother were all alone in their house when there was an air raid. When they heard the sirens they all hid under a big oak table for protection. The boy had his train set with him. A bomb hit the house and it collapsed and they were buried by the falling rubble, but because they were under the table, none of it hit them. After a while the boy had an idea that got them rescued. He started sticking the tracks of his train set out through a small tunnel under the rubble, until eventually, he had built a track right out onto the street. He wrote the address of the house on a piece of paper and stuck it into the funnel of the toy steam engine, which he then wound up and put on the track. It drove out through the tunnel, and when it came to the end

of the track, it drove along the street. Some people saw it and took out the note and read it. They went to the air-raid wardens; and they came and dug the children out. The boy got a special medal for children. He would like something like that to happen to him, it might if there was a war.

In class that afternoon then did Irish and then English Writing. As an exercise they had to copy a page from their English reader into their copybooks. O'Brady spent the time walking up and down between the rows of desks. Michael could only tell where he was from his footsteps and the swish of his habit, or from the sound of him getting in beside someone in a desk behind to show them how to make the letters properly. Today Michael became quickly bored with the writing though normally he was proud of his neatness, and instead, began to stare out the window at the blue sky. His imagination filled it with Spitfires and Messerschmidts fighting a battle to the death, but he never allowed it to go as far as death, the pilot of a plane which had been hit was always given enough time to parachute out. In the *Hotspur* once a German pilot had parachuted out and landed in somebody's backgarden. He had broken into the house and threatened to shoot the boy if he didn't help him to escape, but the boy tricked him and he was captured. When he was being led away by the soldiers he had waved his fist in the air and at the boy and shouted: "Schweinhund! Englander!"



O'Brady's hard fingers pinched into the soft flesh of his earlobe and twisted it. His head jerked forward in a reflex action to ease the pressure. O'Brady twisted further.

"Daydreaming again, Johnson!" The voice of the Christain Brother was almost gentle.

"No Brother," Michael said, stiff with fear, his head in his copybook.

"Then, what were you doing, may I ask?"

"I was just looking out the window for a second, Brother."

O'Brady released his steel grip on Michael's earlobe and Michael, thinking it was over, raised his head; then, suddenly and without warning, the full force of O'Brady's hand cuffed him from behind.

"Don't lie, Johnson, you should know by now that I don't have any patience with little fibbers," he said and moved onto the desk in front.

At three o'clock the bell rang and the school day for the lower classes at Saint Brendan's ended. Michael joined the mad rush for freedom which emptied the classrooms and poured out onto the streets around the school; a mad stampede of boys in wine red and yellow braided uniforms screaming and yelling with pleasure, teasing one another, and playing football with whatever was at hand—a rusty tin can from the gutter or some misfortunate's cap.

Michael and Hickey met at the corner. They had been walking home together since last year. Hickey did not live as far out as Michael but they both had to go the same way. They went with the crowd to the top of Oliver Plunket Street. There, they turned right and headed out the Low Road on their own.

Alone now, they could talk.

Michael took the initiative.

"Do you know why O'Brady wanted us to say an extra Hail Mary today?" he said. "It's because this time there really is going to be a war—and he wanted us to pray for peace."

"Told you so," Hickey replied, acting unimpressed.

"That means he's a coward if he doesn't want to go to war," Michael went on, not having really heard his friend, "or a spy. In the *Victor* once a German spy dressed up as a vicar, and in England a vicar's a priest or a brother or something. Spies just look like ordinary people, you know, when they're in disguise."

This was often the way between them, Hickey would come up with some unusual piece of information and Michael would apply his vivid and generous imagination to it.

"But there aren't any Germans in this war," Hickey objected.

"No, of course not, but he could be a Russian spy, couldn't he!"

Michael thought of how they shot spies and he imagined O'Brady being shot, but could not visualise it—and even though it would serve him right, Michael would feel sorry for him.

"And who are you for?" Hickey asked, changing the subject slightly, "The Americans or the Russians?"

"Ireland is with the Americans—the President of America is an Irishman—so I have to be for the Americans or else I'd be a traitor, and a traitor is worse than a spy. And so do you!"

"So the Russians will bomb Ireland then, won't they," Hickey speculated.

"Of course they will," Michael insisted aggressively, "they'll have to, won't they, if Ireland is with America."

They were silent for a while then. They walked further along the familiar road noticing the things they noticed everyday. Wondering what tomorrow would bring, Michael gazed at the footpath in front of him. When he became conscious of the cracks between the paving stones he meticulously avoided stepping on them to avoid the bad luck doing so would entail. He sensed it was a time to be careful.

He wondered if he could tell Hickey about his not saying the Hail Mary. He wrestled with the decision for a while.

"I didn't say the Hail Mary for peace today," he said eventually. He spoke defiantly but he was not at all sure of himself.

Hickey looked at him afraid; his mouth jerked open and he squinted. Michael immediately wished he hadn't said anything.

"You'll have to tell that in confession," Hickey accused him, "it's a sin not to say prayers."

"Don't be stupid," Michael answered him immediately, bitter at the betrayal even though he had half-expected it, "that's only for prayers you have to say—like the Angelus."

They argued the point until they came to the Presentation Convent and Hickey turned off to go to his house. Neither had got the better of the argument but Michael was left with the nagging feeling that perhaps he had done something terrible. He continued on his own way home out past the football pitch and the new factory, trying to reason the guilt he felt away. And why, he wondered, couldn't he have ordinary and proper friends like everybody else.

After dinner that night, when his mother and Ann had cleared back the kitchen table, he and Ann sat down at it to do their homework. Ann was two years older than he was. As usual she immersed herself quickly in her books and copybooks. She always came fourth or fifth in her class. He resented that and her bossiness, he was a boy and hated being told to do anything by her.

His mother was at the sink doing the washing up. She wore her flowery apron which outlined clearly the round contour of her next baby, her fourth and due in two months. Michael had followed her swelling stomach with a mixture of uneasiness and ignorance over the last few months. He knew that it was a baby, but he had only the vaguest notions of how it got there and how it would be born. He was certain that Ann knew a lot more about those dark women's things but he was equally certain that he was not supposed to ask her. Finally he came to the conclusion that she had taken a pill

and that when she went to the hospital she would have an operation to get the baby taken out. The only flaw in this explanation was what did people do to have babies in Africa—there, they had no doctors.

His father sat in one of the two armchairs in front of the gas heater reading the *Irish Press*. His large body sunk comfortably into the chair. From where he was sitting behind him, Michael could only see his head of thin brown hair and his slipped feet, crossed and stretched out as far as possible to the warmth of the heater. He was always tired at nighttime, in the mornings he had to go to the CIE office earlier than they went to school, so their mother made his breakfast first and he was always gone before they got up.

When he finished his homework Michael took out a bundle of old comics and started browsing through them. He reread some old war stories with bombings in them.

"Daddy," he asked when he had thought of a question the comics did not answer clearly enough, "in a war, what do they bomb?"

His father lowered the *Irish Press* slightly and said: "What?"; and then, understanding the question belatedly answered: "Well, em, they try to destroy the enemy's industry and lines of communication."

"What's lines of communication and what's industry, Daddy?" Michael asked automatically.

His mother was using a Brillo pad on the pot she had used for the stew and Ann was still immersed in her homework.

"Industry is factories, and lines of communication are roads and bridges and airports and railway stations. You see, without those things a country can't work, or fight back," his father answered him factually and then brought the *Irish Press* back within reading range again.

The words 'railway stations', uttered so casually by his father, silenced him. His father worked in a railway station—they might bomb that—his father might die.

He had often been afraid that his mother and father might die before he did—in a plane crash or something; and he often prayed to God to let it happen to him instead.

His mother put the last of the dishes away and sat down in the other armchair in front of the fire. She took out a *Woman's Own* from under the cushion and began to read.



Every now and again she interrupted the silence to comment on something or other to his father who replied, from behind his *Irish Press*, in as few words as possible.

When it was time, she said to them: "It's nearly ten o'clock, you two'd better go to bed now."

There was the usual argument but they went.

Michael was in a room on his own, Ann shared a room with Mary who was only three and stayed at home all day. He hoped that the new baby would be a boy baby so that he would be able to share his room with it.

He lay awake in bed. Several times the headlights of cars passing on the road outside shone through the window and for a moment filled the room with a ghostly light. After a while

he turned over on his side and closed his eyes, and thinking of ways his father would escape if the railway station was bombed, he fell asleep.

He woke up excited the next day. When he looked out the window it did not particularly look like a day on which there was going to be a war, but that did not deter him much; the sky was nearly covered with light grey clouds and the ground was wet, it had rained during the night, but there were patches of blue and it looked as if it would get fine. When he went down to breakfast his father had already gone out to work. His absence made him think of the railway station being bombed, but he reassured himself by thinking that it didn't start until three o'clock anyway, and then went on to wonder if they would get a half-day at school.

School was not particularly different either. He thought O'Brady might say something after the morning prayers, but he didn't, he just started doing Irish as if it were like any other day. Michael was disappointed.

At the break there was the usual rush to the toilets. After that the bigger boys took over one half of the playground; the smaller boys kept to the other half, out of the way of the bigger harder fast-moving bodies. On the steps the tall round black shape of Blubber walked up and down impatiently, his hands sunk deep in the pockets of his habit.

When Michael and Hickey found each other there was still some resentment about the argument of the day before, especially on Michael's part, but as they talked, it faded. For privacy they wandered along the railings, it was quieter there and they would not be surrounded on all sides by their schoolmates. It was this tendency in both of them to be excluded from the crowd and to shy away from it which had first brought them together.

"Are you sure your father said it was today at three o'clock?" Michael asked when he was sure that their relationship was back to normal.

"Course I am," Hickey answered, without the slightest doubt in his voice, "and it was on the television last night as well."



Michael was reassured. They did not have a television yet, they were going to get one at Christmas though, his father had promised they would. His Uncle Liam had a television, but they had been there in the daytime, so they didn't have it on. It must be great, like having the pictures at home.

At the Angelus O'Brady did not ask them to say another special Hail Mary. Michael was relieved, he would not have wanted to say it, but he was afraid that with his father being at the railway station, he might have.

Afterwards at Cathecism, he missed his question and was told to stand in the line at the wall with the other boys who had also missed. At the end of the questions O'Brady gave each of them one quick slap of the leather on the left hand.



At dinner time it was raining again. He sat uncomfortably in the damp chilly shed eating his sandwiches. They hadn't gotten a half-day. The cold rain, falling lightly over the empty playground, shrouded everything in a grey twilight. Maybe there wasn't going to be any war at all. He crossed his bare legs to keep them warm—he still wore short trousers—and wished he was back in the classroom, at least it was warm there. At one stage water started dripping through the roof of the shed onto his sandwiches and he had to move. He felt miserable until, when the other boys were coming back from their dinners, the rain slowly stopped and the clouds opened and let through some blue sky and sunlight. The greyness lifted and he felt better, and then later, walking along the railings, he began to imagine the world of war and adventure again. He was glad when the Killer came out and they marched back into the classrooms; three o'clock was getting closer.

The rest of the day they did English Reading and Poetry. His excitement survived the habitual boredom and fear. When O'Brady decided to give them their homework it was already a quarter to three. Several times while was taking down the sums from the blackboard he looked out the window at the sky. At the back of his mind was the thought of his father at the railway station; it kept him from committing himself totally to wanting the planes to come. It was the same feeling he associated with committing a sin—in the cathecism it was called his conscience—but he didn't know of any sin he could be committing. He heard the sound of a motorcar or a lorry somewhere in the distance and he listened to it carefully, wanting to believe that it was an aeroplane, but the sound faded away slowly and nothing happened.

At five to three he had packed everything, except the pencil and copybook he was using, into his bag.

Slowly, the clock on the classroom wall reached three o'clock. The bell would go any second now. It did—the metallic scream ripped through the school silence. They shoved their books into their bags and rushed out of their desks, trying to make as little noise as possible—O'Brady was still there. Outside, the corridor echoed with the running footsteps and the yells of a class which had been quicker than they had been. Michael was one of the first out the door and into the corridor to join them. He ran with them, carried along by their momentum. The cramped cloakroom was packed. He found his duffle coat buried under several other coats, grabbed it and ran on. He rushed out the door and down the steps; it was only then, when he reached the playground, that he could stop and look up without being knocked down by the boys coming down the steps behind him. The sky was empty—blue and empty; the grey rain clouds of earlier on were gone. Staring up into it, he turned slowly around, and listened to see if he could hear anything. He didn't. He faced the high school building; it blocked off half the sky. Maybe they'll come from that direction, he thought hopefully, and ran towards the side gate. There were schoolboys on the

street but he ignored them. The view was worse; only a narrow slice of the sky was visible between the houses on one side of the street and the school wall on the other; and with the noise of the traffic coming up from the town, he couldn't hear anything either. He ran up the hill; from the top of it he would be able to see everything, even the church on the other side of the river. He was out of breath when he got there, but that did not keep him from immediately looking up and searching the blue emptiness. It was all visible, except for the bungalows behind him and some lingering clouds on the horizon beyond the river. He strained his eyes scanning it; he wanted so much to spot some tiny speck or hear some faint hum in the distance; the speck would grow slowly into the shape of a bomber, the hum become the roar of its propellers. He searched for a long time before he allowed himself to realise that they were probably not going to come—it had been too good to be true.

He had missed Hickey now, he had probably gone the usual way home. It was just as well, he would have felt awkward with him after this.

Alone, it was a long walk home. All the way the sky remained stubbornly empty above him, but he could not help stopping every now and again to stare up at it for long tantalising stretches. Russia and America were a long way away, maybe the planes hadn't had enough time yet to make the journey.

He got home late. Ann, who got out of school at four o'clock was there already. His mother asked him what kept him; he said he'd stayed back and played football. She believed him and he felt how easy it was to lie. Seeing her believe him, he felt himself going soft inside with a tenderness that was almost pity.

Dinner was bangers and mash, but he gulped it down and did not enjoy it as much as he should have. His father's absence hung over them, becoming more oppressive every minute. It was the same every Friday night, when he went

to Ryan's with Mr Connolly, another man who worked in CIE. Michael would be in bed when he came home but sometimes the argument downstairs woke him up. His mother's voice would be so bitter and his father's so loud, almost like a stranger's.

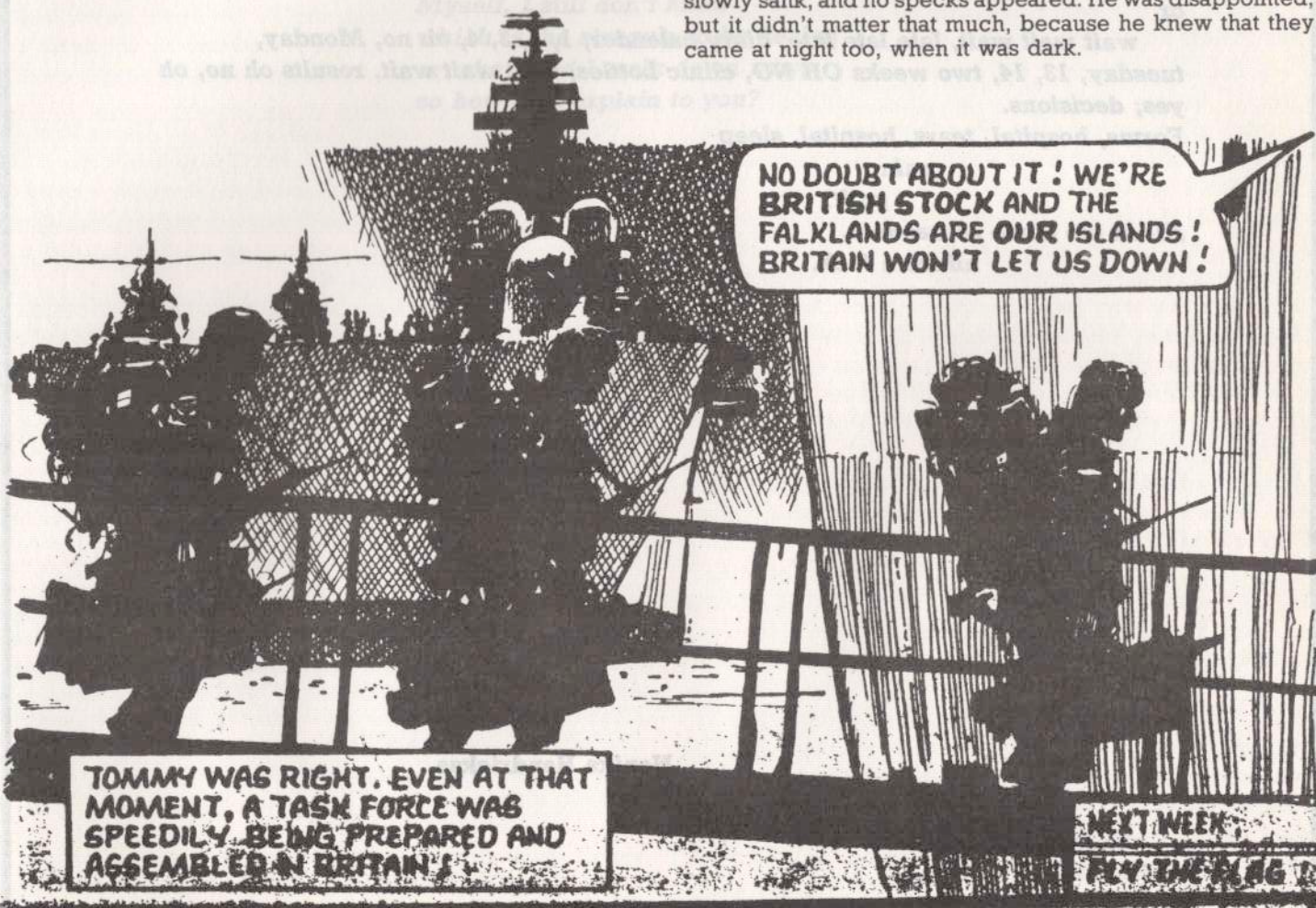
Afterwards, when she was clearing back the table with Ann, his mother stopped pretending.

"Wouldn't you think he would come home in time just for once," she said, "especially at a time like this. The only time we ever see him is when he has no money. What in the name of God am I supposed to do!"

Neither Ann nor Michael answered her. Her pain and a sense of shame kept them silent. Mary was on the floor playing with her doll. She doesn't know what's going on, Michael thought and envied her. Another night of it was starting.

On the pretext of going to the toilet Michael escaped from the kitchen and went upstairs to his room. There it was quiet and he could try and forget about it, though he knew that in a while he would have to go back down again. He took an annual from the shelf and lay down on the bed to read it. If he came home now, he thought, the row would be over in a few minutes and everything would go back to the way it was. But he knew he wouldn't. He was annoyed at his mother too. Why did she have to go on and on about it anyway, they were okay without him and he could always make his own dinner when he came in.

From the window she could see the sun just about to set behind the mountains; a bright red disk reddening the clouds on the horizon gloriously. A few faint stars had already appeared in the darkening blue higher up. The purple mountains were magical and alluring. What adventures you could have there, he thought, but then he remembered that they had been there last summer on a picnic and there had only been rows and no adventures at all. He stared hard at the disk of the sun and looked for dark specks. Captain Roy Bradford and his Spitfires had attacked the Germans with the sun to their backs, maybe the Russians and the Americans would do the same. He waited and watched, but the sun slowly sank, and no specks appeared. He was disappointed, but it didn't matter that much, because he knew that they came at night too, when it was dark.



The rough chin rubbing against my face began to annoy me, the light bulb was very interesting, I couldn't see it, it was off.

X came inside me and immediately began apologising profusely, falsely. I really didn't give a shit, heard it once, heard it a thousand times;

bet he's said it a few times too:

Thanks for the ride, don't call me . . .

and on to the clinic

"Another morning after pill?"

Frowned at, moaned at, plastic gloved fingers up my cunt, bits of metal;

"That doesn't hurt does it"

a statement rather than a question.

Leave with a plain brown bag full of rubbish, to put in my mouth and make me fat, sick, depressed or hygienic looking looking bits of rubber that go yellow after a while and tubes of smelly jelly that makes me itch.

All in the name of freedom,

all for a fuck

or

wait wait wait, late late late, diary calender, 1, 2, 3, 4, oh no, Monday, tuesday, 13, 14, two weeks OH NO, clinic bottles, wait wait wait, results oh no, oh yes; decisions.

Forms, hospital, tears, hospital, sleep

pain

guilt.

All in the name of freedom,

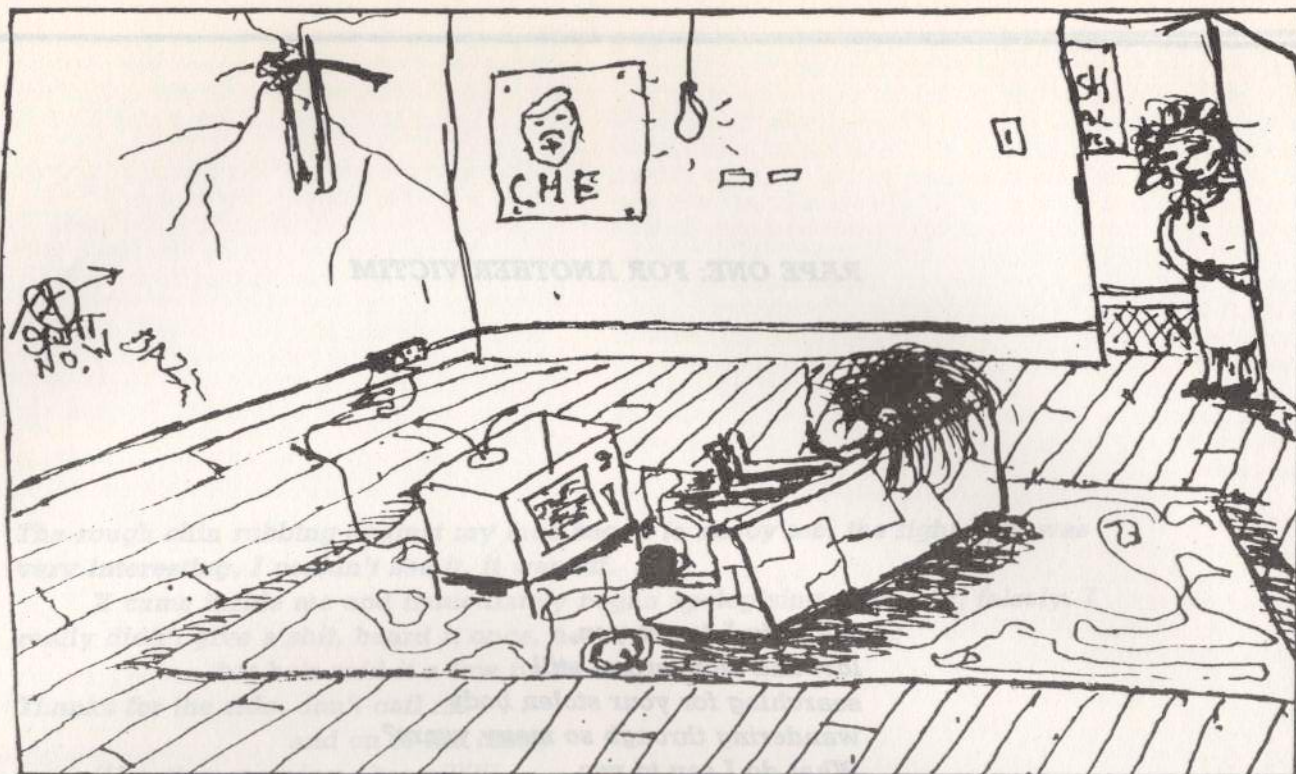
all for a fuck.

Nonika Hendrickse

RAPE ONE: FOR ANOTHER VICTIM

**What do I say to you,
lost and wondering, still
searching for your stolen body
wandering through so many years?
What do I say to you,
though I was once theived, or
more than once, even if over
a hundred times, it doesn't matter;
how can I speak when all my words
must seem like laughter, mocking?
What do I say to you
from this body so newly returned
and lost again, and still being found!
Myself, I still don't know
which is the struggle to be healed
or what road I walk down now,
so how do I explain to you?**

**Jo Fremantle
July 1986**



BILL LOOKED LIKE a pregant miner when he came back from the shop lifting spree in the co-op. He sneered at Mad Frank belching on the sofa asleep. His feet stuck out of the raggish blanket, blue with cold, chilling wind blew in through the broken window. On the second egg smelling belch Bill left, really he wanted to smash his face in (he is very violent). Little did he know but Mad Frank was awake, a trick he had perfected in Angola in '77 when he was a mercenary. Everyone in the squat hated Mad Frank. They despised his orange hair, stories about the SAS, the smarmy smile, the broken teeth, tattered denim flares, his bulging codpiece and yellow biplane print shirt. Had they known what he was up to they would have really killed him, "before it was too late".

Meanwhile Harry was having a heavy time. His amp blew up and on the same day he was caught by the manager of Woolworths urinating in the photographic kiosk. On the way back from the 'nick' a piece of falling masonry fell on his head. He was put in the same ward as Julian who, when cutting up the A-E section of the telephone directory to see how much could fit in a matchbox, accidentally cut off his finger . . . blood, blood, blood . . .

Jane had batiked some get-well cards and brought them wholemeal doughnuts. Sabrina said she'd like to cut off his nob.

Mercedes and Christian were in deep discussion: M: "If you stop eating meat but still eat fish, okay, but what if someone offers you a turtle?"

C: "Uhhh," he ponders, "well I wouldn't eat a newt."

And to the backdrop of this conversation Bill is horrified to discover loads of drowned mice in the home-brew. It was terrible, as it was the beer supply for the forthcoming benefit for the local claimants' union. Bill reckoned that it would probably add flavour and it couldn't hurt anyone.

Earlier in the week however, a lethal poison was being injected into pet shop mice by Mad Frank, who

was being paid by Mr Godwin. These were put in the beer-making buckets, half a pint would be fatal—there were 200 pints! It was Godwin's plan to kill off lots of lefties, degenerates, scroungers and the squatters, especially the next-door filth.

The benefit gig was really groovy. It all went slightly wrong, the PA fell on the band, a loony drunk kept on grabbing the mike singing "bloosh, bloosh, wooahahh", but everyone was having fun, that is until people started dropping to the floor, cavorting and trashing, gripping their throats. In an hour a hundred of them lay scattered in pools of vomit, eyes turned upwards, dead.

The newspapers called it suicide. The Labour Party raised it in Parliament. Tory Councillors had a celebration. Mr Godwin was unbelievably happy. The police traced it back to the squat and with a little pressure Harry made a confession saying he did it because he was depressed.

But really, Brains from International Rescue sends Virgil on Thunderbird One over to Brixton with a miraculous antidote and saves all the people at the benefit just in time. As the puppet hero leaves, Julian turns banging his head against the bedroom wall and realises it was all just a dream.

In the next issue of SQUATROADS Mercedes becomes a vegan and Christian joins the Anti-Buddha Society. Jane goes on hunger strike as a protest and chains herself to a traffic light in Trafalgar Square. Also—ten tabs of acid are secretly slipped into Mr Godwin's cocoa, and Harry has a mad plan to strap explosives to his chest and detonate them inside Brixton Police Station.

"DIH, DIH, DIH, DA, DAH, DAHRRRR."

BACK

by Marcus Preece



AT HOME HIS MOTHER called him precocious, jumped-up. He was not content to work on the farm for the rest of his life, that much was clear to his parents, brothers and sisters. The boy would run away for a few days at a time, merely to get away from the cruel labour of the plough, the digging, the barn-building. People often came from the big city and the distant towns. They were mostly wealthy people; some were only petty clerks, shop assistants and so on. Mostly however they were wealthy and their money glittered in the eyes of their rings and jewels. The scent of gold dripped from their lips when they spoke. They came on weekend get-away-from-it-all trips on first class trains and in luxury coaches. What they were getting away from the boy was never quite sure, but he had come to understand that the pressure of life in the city must be almost intolerable.

Life was especially difficult for the rich, he gathered. They were under constant pressure to make crucial financial, political and managerial decisions, to attend board meetings, to be seen at an endless stream of charity balls and banquets. And of course there was the clothes they were compelled to wear! The boy was staggered at the brave sufferings of these well-to-do wretches who, even on the hottest of days were to be seen staggering along under the weight of gold coats, thick sequined jackets, diamond-studded socks, knee-high leather jewel-encrusted boots.

The boy would run away leaving his tractor sitting in the field to sit by the river. He would throw stones into the deep water and puzzle, his thoughts as unfathomable as the river. He did not like the hard dull grind of farm work. He did not like to work for the big corporation who owned the land for miles about. It seemed to him that the family, all of them from his old grandfather down to his youngest sister, were worked harshly and continuously for little reward. They barely scraped a living, even more so because there were nine of them. But he saw the barn stacked high with all the rich

produce of the farm, produce that, had they been allowed a share of it that was reasonable, would have easily lasted them through the winter. But the corporation took the bulk and what was left were no more than subsistence rations. The same was true for all the neighbouring farms. Everyday, before the sun rose in scarlet and long after it had set in purple, the poor thin farmers and their families worked at a furious pace. Just in order to stand still they had to keep running.

Who was happy? The question tormented the boy. He would lie on his back and stare at the oppressive sky. He would absentmindedly throw a few crumbs of bread to the fish below the dirty waters of the river. But when he realised what he was doing he would stop at once. He should have been catching them instead of throwing them his dinner. He knew that his family might be glad of even those few crumbs when winter came.

The sky warned that winter was not far away. Ominous cloud whispered cold death secrets; a carpet of silence began to be unrolled across all the fields and valleys and the birds left.

The question still vexed him: Who was happy?

He began to see how ugly his small agricultural world really was. It was not beautiful at all. That was only what the visitors said. The ugly dull sky; the withered grey trees; the carpet of dead thorny grass; the pockmarked moon and the watery sun; the killing wind that cut without mercy across the fens and marshes. He spent one miserable day sitting on the marshes. A few thin cows chewed the tough grass and must have wondered why he, who had a warm house with a roof, should choose to shiver in this place.

We aren't any better than animals ourselves, he thought. And yet we laugh and sing and dance and meet together to get drunk and celebrate our wretched lives. Why? He remembered a time past when one of the important men from the head office of the granary corporation, an under-manager, had paid the farm one of his rare visits. He appeared at the end of each month and seemed happy to sit and take tea in the small back kitchen. He was here to check the figures, inspect the produce to see if it was up to their standards, but most of all to berate the whole family and the few workers and urge them to work harder, ever harder. It was a routine speech and he repeated it mechanically but passionately on every visit. Once it was done with and the family made all the general promise that they were constantly striving to

improve (also a setpiece) the under-manager would sit down to tea. He was uncomfortable sitting in the cramped humid kitchen (with the occasional dog or pig snuffling round his feet) and he made little attempt to join in the gossipy small-talk of the labourers. He made himself busy polishing his gold watch and cuff-links until it was time to leave. In the meantime the boy would look out of his window and see his father and brothers labouriously cleaning the smart man's car. He felt a sickening resentment. It grated and dulled him against all the events that surrounded the man's presence. Seeing this personage, this fine-cut figure in a blue suit that was mud-spotted but not frayed or even too large or small, he was struck by the spectacle of the deception of proximity and distance between them. Outside the other sons and his two sisters laboured together to make the big car sparkle under the watery sun; inside sat a lustrous figure, slowly growing begrimed. The stains and deeper wounds swum before the boy's eyes like migraine.

He lay in bed and close behind the thin wall his father and mother snored restlessly. The boy stared at the moon through the open window. He could have quite simply reached out and picked it out of the sky had he wanted to. The great and wealthy slept under this same moon, that was true and yet somehow false. How could such contradictions—between the lessons of humility and charity that he had learnt at church, between hunger and obesity, struggle and laziness—exist in the real world? It belonged to the world of his tortured dreams. The reality of the day-world was poor people fighting with all the strength in their bodies, minds, souls, to eke a living out of the resisiting land (both over and under ground) while in the city the rich sweated the sweat of idleness and greed.

The rich city-people lay on their backs under suns always warm and drank and ate every manner of fine food and exotic fruits, breads, spices, from every part of the world. Yet they sweated. They felt compelled to wear their wealth. There must, he thought, be something noble in such futile labour. How else could it be explained? They sweated for nothing because they had nothing to sweat for.

Before dawn and before his family had risen to resume the round of harsh dull labour that constituted the circle of their day, The boy was gone. I must go to find the city, he had decided. There I will find not only fortune but nobility. To be noble was to be good and this goodness resided deep within him, he had only to find a way to tap it, he was sure of that. I won't find it among these rusty ploughs and dying animals he thought.

He found that it was a long hard journey to reach the city. He did not know the way, he got lost. One bitterly cold morning he saw an old man with dried blood caked around a wound being carried on his daughter's back. She explained that he had been attacked by a wild animal. The boy saw that this was an act of goodness but also of necessity, and necessity did not make for nobility. He could see that, otherwise he and all his family and friends would be nobles too. And then who would do the work?

When he reached the city initially the general drabness disappointed him. There were many people but few were obviously wealthy. Most of them were no better off than he. Everywhere were beggars, sitting forlornly in the middle of even the busiest roads. Crippled ex-soldiers in shabby uniforms smoked hand rolled-cigarettes, those without hands or arms had them rolled for them by comrades or had perfected their own method with their legs and mouths. Old women, fat and skinny, populated the cafés and bars in great numbers. All this was strange to the boy, especially the lone thin children who screamed abuse at him. There were no beggars in his own village, there the needy were generally looked after by relatives or neighbours. In this marvelous city the poor were looked after by the Council and City Fathers but still they starved and were forced by the laziness of Council bureaucracy into crime just in order to survive from one day to the next. The hand-to-mouth struggle to exist was as real in the city as it had been in the country.

He seemed to be staggered by the size and complexity of the city. Everything of human value was dwarfed by its gaunt spires and undermined by the deep underground train

tunnels. Poverty and loneliness were simply diminished as problems, catching the train on time and maintaining the cathedral floodlights seemed far more essential and immediate. He knew this was wrong and grew afraid that the longer he remained the likelier he was to forget, memory washed clean by the glitter of wealth. He made his way fearfully among the splendour and found the great cathedral. An old woman who was praying on its steps told him of the great wedding taking place inside. A madman lay on his back on the steps gabbling, babbling, spitting, fuming. "He has stolen my life, my life!" he screamed. He was quickly removed by two policemen wielding large truncheons. The woman explained that the madman blamed the King for all the bad luck that befallen his life.

"He has been mad for forty years," she explained. "Ever since I threw him out after his father died, the old bastard. I told him not to say such filth about our King and time he made his own way in this cruel world. I haven't got the time the money or the patience to care for him."

The boy saw a great procession leave the cathedral. He heard a military band and then saw the King. The nobles and dignitaries and many ordinary folk milled around to watch and cheer (the cheering being orchestrated by the Royal Behind the Scenes Organiser). Once they had gone the boy crept into the cathedral to marvel at the high ceilings and the golden decoration and the central throne of gold. Fierce light poured through the huge stained-glass windows. Light, he thought, surely direct from the eyes of God. He felt that this must be the real God, not the one he had heard about in his small village church; not a God of meekness and love but of urban wealth and ferocity.

Outside the streets had become wind tunnels for the harsh cold winds that blew from the bleak plains and seas of the north. He could not keep himself warm but while his chill flesh crawled his brain seethed with a molten lava of thought. And it was only then, after he finally felt too tired to go on and had slumped down in the cold grey mud, his back against one of the city walls, that he noticed the strange thing.

Everywhere about him the rich were riding to wherever it was that they felt they had to ride to. They were going to balls and board-meetings and the palace and the Stock Exchange and to break up strikes and to sleep or feast in their great homes. This was not in itself strange. But they were riding upon other people. The ridden were clearly working under a great strain as well as under generally fat people, but none of them seemed inclined to stop or drop their burden. They ferried rich men, women and children about on their backs as if their lives depended on it.

The streets in this bleak weather were muddy frozen rivers down which flowed the slop of mess, animal and human waste, food decaying, all the dead or decayed parts of the city. An old woman staggered through this mess under the weight of a middle-aged lady. The boy thought the gems alone that she wore must be unbearably heavy but together they went on. The carrier finally, after a few slow painful steps, knelt down before some marble steps so that the fine lady was able to disembark. The old woman rose again. She was gaunt and ash-grey, the colour and importance of a discarded cigarette. She sat on the steps head down and knees (worn out like two butts) drawn up. The boy ran out meaning to comfort her in some way but instead ran into the path of another oncoming pair—a boy as young and thin as himself carrying a distinguished man upon his back.

"You! Careless boy, you have lost your rider it seems."

The boy was not slow-witted and saw that he must lie to save his own skin. He replied that he was as yet too young and too weak. He said that he hoped to be in service soon. "Nonsense," said the man benignly. "Your kind are never too young. Always willing to work hard for your pennies. You are naturally strong."

"That is true sir. But for now my ignorance also makes me weak."

The gentleman tutted. "Don't be sorry for it boy, you must not expect to be wise. That is the terrible burden that the likes of myself must bear. The path to wisdom is fashioned out of gold sterling and washed with the tears of our profits." He sniffed at his own particular wisdom: he knew that profit was

apt to entail sorrow, especially when fallen below projected estimates.

The boy understood some of this, he thought the phrase 'tears of prophets' very beautiful. "But sir," asked the boy "because I am ignorant and a poor country boy I do not understand why it is that here others like me carry you on their backs, even the children and old people."

The man almost wept for the boy's ignorance. But he himself, being a prosperous tea merchant, and being wise and noble, forestalled impatience and anger and replied: "Of course you, the poor, carry we the rich about on your backs. How else could you usefully live and fulfill your lives? We keep you from beggary (only the lame beg here) and we feed and clothe you. In the dark times, long ago, your kind were forced to work in the terrible mine-shafts until an enlightened few, whom I for one model myself on, put a stop to it. We are beyond such barbarism. Also you are superior to the horse because we can give you orders and direct you from place to place and you do not foul the streets with quite the same abandon. After all while we are on the Earth we must all help our fellow Man. And you also make less mess and noise than automobiles. Everyone lives off the backs of others, that is a truth well known by the Wise. We must harness you because sadly not many of you are fit to run your own lives. We are on your backs to guide you, to steer you across the rugged waters and to instill benevolent discipline. When you are older you will understand and thank us." When he had gone the boy thought of the village priest, and the under-manager from the granary corporation. Will they be on my back wherever I go?

For the rest of the day the boy walked the streets brooding. During his speech the boy had appealed with mute eyes to the gentleman's carrier but the young man had only returned a dull gaze. In his eyes there was no fire, only a glassy reflective calm. The boy remembered people like the gentleman sitting at his parent's table, drinking their tea and telling them they must increase their work-rate, had seen them trampling blithely across their poor farm, trampling on crops and dirt alike. They were always trampling over living things.

A day later, cold and groggy from hunger, the boy attacked the King as he rode through the city on the back of a brightly-plumed servant. In the scream and struggle the King landed in the slop and the servant fell on the knife. The boy was seized, beaten and trussed-up and carried off by the police. In prison he heard that the servant had been only wounded but was in the event dismissed because he was too injured to carry the King on the rest of his journey.

After a night in prison he found he had been summoned to meet the King. The King lay up in a huge white bed encrusted over the headboard with a jewelled image of the Royal Coat of Arms. The King, a kindly but strict ruler, wished to know why the boy had done it. If he proves to be insane, thought the King, I shall not execute him but merely throw him into the madhouse to prove to my subjects that I am a wise noble ruler. The King scratched his very fat stomach contentedly and regally farted. The boy, having thought long and hard in the cold cell, knew that he had to lie again. The boy explained that he had not sought to attack the King at all but in fact his carrier. He explained that he was angry at the slovenliness of the man in such an esteemed position. He carried the King without regard for the Royal Dignity.

It was not surprising that the last servant had been so slow because the King was, though it was never said even in whisper in the Court, very fat. He could barely climb onto the back of his servants, let alone walk, without support. The boy added that the King needed a carrier who was befitting to his stature and that furthermore he, the boy, was the very one for him. The King was a wise and noble man. And generosity was after all a prime hallmark of nobility. So after some thought the King decided the boy must be forgiven and instated in the exalted position of King Carrier. The boy was given severe training in order to build up his body but he

bore it all with thoughtful patience. Exhausted from running across mountains and up the sides of steep valleys and around the city walls, exhausted from lifting many heavy weights, he would lie prone on the ground watching the sky as it moved like his restless mind. Quiet like a cat after it had eaten he watched the sky.

On his first day of duty he managed to persuade the King (for he was favoured, due to his humble courtesy, with the Royal Ear) that because he was so fast it would be a wise precaution to attach himself by means of a belt to his steed. The King realised that not only would it maintain his safety but also would demonstrate just how fast his new steed was and he agreed at once. A belt of the finest leather was fashioned and it was secured by a great gold buckle. On a fine clear morning the King set off on his first ride. Servants helped the King up onto the boy's back with the aid of a high stool and a mini-lift device. They were joined together by the belt which fastened under the boy's stomach.

The boy set off at a furious pace. His energy seemed inexhaustible as he ran out of the city and across the wide fields. The Royal rider was exhilarated and giggled like a madman. He beat and whipped the boy to encourage him. The boy cried at the pain but took the command silently and ran ever faster. If only I had an army of young men like him, the King thought, I could build an invincible army that would conquer all the neighbouring lands and perhaps there find even more young steeds like him to conquer other lands. I must remember to put him out to stud before he gets too old.

The day grew older and colder and at last the King commanded the boy to turn back to the city. But the boy seemed not to hear him for he kept going. He kept going towards the high dark mountains where slept the hosts of the dead, as superstition had it. The King whipped him and cried out and whipped again until blood streamed from the boys flanks but still he went on. He carried the King high into the dead mountains and try as he might the King could not reach the belt buckle.

At last, after many days, the boy stopped. He unbuckled them and the exhausted rider slid off and landed with a squashing thud. He was having trouble breathing because he was so fat, so tired, and the air was so thin. They were soon descending but now their positions were reversed. The King, hardly able to walk anyway, had immense trouble and after only a short time, compared to what the boy had undergone, the Royal Personage, First Lord of the Army, Navy and Air Force, Noble Father of the Territories and Defender of Democracy, largest landlord in the nation, sank slowly sideways into the snow and died.

The boy returned to the city by river. It was the same river that flowed past his parent's home. His river transport was the noble body of the King. He floated on the King's back and found that he could navigate by twisting the King's legs and arms, at least until rigor mortis set in. He stopped to pick up his father and mother (who he could easily accommodate on the Royal back) and then they floated into the city through its main sewage system. When the populace discovered the state of affairs general panic broke out and the rich tried many and various methods of solving the crisis: when they tried to hold a General Election (putting forward two of their pet candidates, one a prosperous diamond merchant, the other a marginally less prosperous and more liberal tea merchant) this collapsed into farce as a group of ordinary people tried to propose a dying horse, which began to recover as the votes began to accumulate for it (had the City Fathers not called the election off the horse was most certainly going to win). The next move among the most properous was to indulge in fainting fits, suicides, and disguising themselves as beggars and trying to escape the city in the dead of night. Within a day of the City Council being swept away the rich had packed what few belongings they could carry and were fleeing the city. What possessions they could take they were made to carry for once on their own backs.

RAPE TWO: FOR MY SELF

**Turning her face blank to the wall, she stares
eyes pressed against stone
desperate to force tears from a body
already sucked dry, and old, and tired
as rusted metal; decaying she left
brown stains on his towel, on his pants,
once red and wet on his prick
as it drained; now she could crumble
like old cars into sour dust when touched,
as high and fragile as lines
of coke on glass; she could weep if
she dared even to speak against
the silence supporting her.**

**Leda was raped by Yeats as a swan
in feathers and heaven, not an aging man
foul in his fat with stinking breath
dripping sweat and saliva into her mouth.
Pope raped his madona's hair and
laughed at the world; these men created
high wit, lust and passion with their words
when she can only find disgust and ugliness,
ugly words and ugly thoughts
and poems that hurt.**

**No one's virgin, no one's whore
with no one to create beauty enough
to shatter the dark and quiet
but herself, lost in horror; sometimes
wondering if being strong was an answer,
if there were solutions easier
than freedom, if someone years from now
will ever be enough inspired by
his noble sadness to turn
that awful hour into genius?**

**Even her nicely independent friends and lovers,
full of suitable outrage and anger,
are not enough, belonging only to herself
she cannot claim their kindness as a right.
Humbled to her knees in the faces
of their sympathy, her gratitude
destroys her, over and over in circles
of guilt. Alone, and stolen from no one,
when she climbed down off her pedestal
the world forgot her.**

**Jo Fremantle
July 1986**

IT was red on the sheets like

BLOOD ON SNOW

and they weren't even white they were blue, it looked brown against them, but the redness of it wasn't in the colour nor was it in the smell, if you touched it the dampness could have been sweat or sperm in fact some of it was, but the WHITENESS of that holy liquid was smothered by the REDNESS of it all.

I was accused

"You're on"

I was guilty:

guilty of flaunting the dirty secret in the face of the sacred act. Now it was up to me to make my excuses . . .

"Oh sorry I thought I'd finished"

. . . or some such bullshit.

I pondered my approach and watched his reasonably impressive erection dying, crusty and red. He covered it protectively, eyeing my bloody thighs as though IT had somehow caused his manhood to shrink.

A moment ago he was worshiping me . . .

could have fucked me forever so he said.

"You didnt say anything"

"I didnt think it was worth mentioning"

I traced red patterns across my stomach, daubed my nibbles then licked my fingers clean, leaving my index finger which I offered him

I made a gesture

"Fuck off"

I was rejected.

Employing my redundant finger I masturbated loudly . . . how he stared at the great red wanking monster.

. . . and with my orgasm I let out all the cries of anger and pain that I was too much of a coward to show him honestly. All he knew was what some one had told him

I tried

"Only natural normal harmless blood"

"Time for a woman to be alone with herself"

(essence of cunt yuck ugh)

I failed

I started shouting. He started shouting. We argued.

I told him to get out and started wanking again defiantly. He freaked out, he left, then popped back to have the last word just in time to catch me one foot on the floor, one on the bed putting in a tampon . . . he left silently.

Nonika Hendrickse

OF THAT BRUTE ENGINE

by Dave Haden

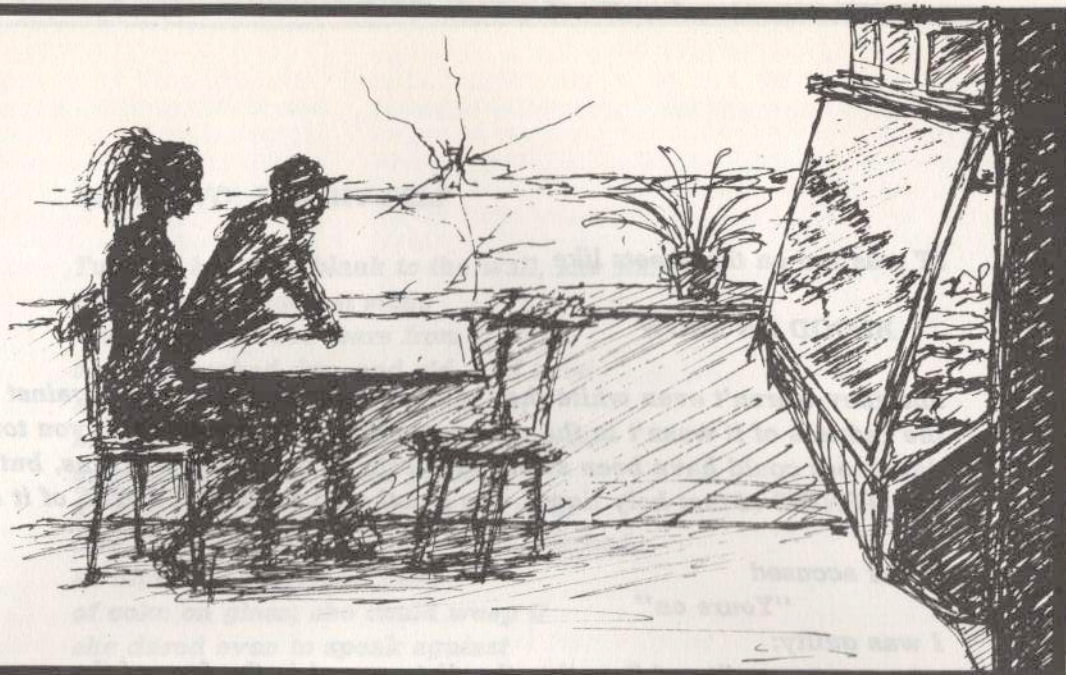


Illustration by J Heudebert Brown

FAR OFF DOWN the misty lane a thin black figure emerged with the pale sunrise from a group of trees and set off towards the town. He did not walk like ordinary men with a heavy stride, but danced his way along the lonely roads, tiny silver bells on his tatty black cloak ringing in wild abandon.

In the early haze that hung damp over the autumnal fields and hedgerows, he turned a few cartwheels, brushed off his hands on his patched trousers and plucked a few late daisies for his buttonhole. As he saw the first few houses he stopped as though in wonder, then shrugged his bent shoulders, and singing a song under his breath continued on his way.

The countryside faded and a neatly manicured town suburb took over. Children being bundled off to school in gleaming cars pointed and laughed as he passed, and for those that laughed kindly he tipped his battered old top hat and smiled a broad smile.

Onwards he danced, passing an army roadblock unseen; a whirl of black, silver bells chattering and six coloured ribbons at the back of his hat fluttering in the early morning breeze.

★ ★ ★

Garry traced a word slowly and neatly into the condensation that covered the grimy cafe windows. 'Catalonia' it said for a moment, then began to disintegrate as wet drops slid down the glass. He sipped another mouthful of hot tea and leaned back on the warm plastic chair. On the other side of the hard formica table Pete and Julie sat close together with one arm around each other's waist, cups of thick frothy coffee steaming before them.

"I think you know that me and Pete are thinking of leaving the band, we're just holding you down," Julie asked Garry searchingly.

"Oh christ Julie," said Garry quietly, "I keep on telling you, you're good, both of you, why on earth do you want to leave. You saw how people were over Pete's violin solo last night?" Garry tapped his nails on the cracked tabletop to emphasise his points.

"But the excitement's going out of it now," Julie protested, "it's getting dangerous to play some places".

"Look, we're a good band, we just need the right publicity and exposure, we won't be playing the underground clubs for ever," Garry said, raising his voice.

"Yeah," said Pete absentmindedly, "I read somewhere that they might cut the TV to six hours a day." He looked as though he was going to say more but Julie gave him a squeeze.

"You're getting to sound too much like your dad," she said. Pete rolled his wide slow eyes in mock horror.

"Well we're not exactly in the video charts yet Pete, so don't let it worry you too much," Garry replied as he got up and weaved around the empty tables and chairs to the tiny counter, nestled between cliffs of sweets and glass cake cases. The plain young woman behind the stained wooden length looked tired and bored. At ten o'clock in the morning she would rather still be asleep, and perhaps was, thought Garry.

"Four rounds of toast please."

"One for each of you?" she asked, making conversation.

"No dear," he said patiently, "two for me and one each for the others."

"But there's four of you," she said blankly.

"No love," he said, "look, just give us four rounds of toast and leave the higher mathematics to me, eh?"

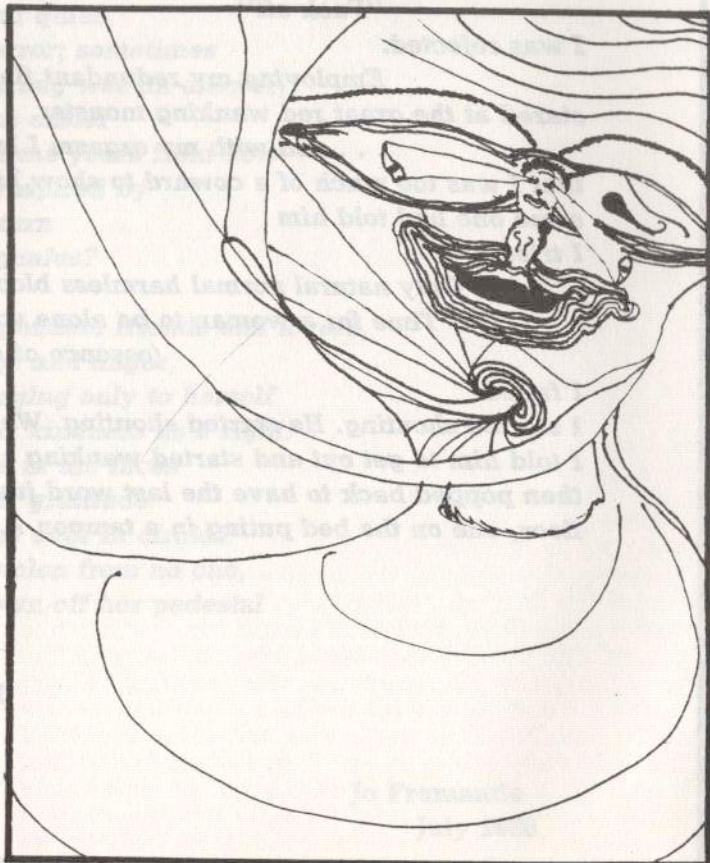


Illustration by Stuart Riddell

She looked at Garry, sighed, pressed her lips into a tight line and went into the bright kitchen. Garry looked at the soft cream cakes arranged in their glass case like a row of dead butterflies. The high tones of a radio newsreader drifted out from the warm kitchen door along with the smell of toasting bread, mingling in harsh contrast as they ventured out into the yellowy cafe. . . "activities continue, there will be no cessation of the use" . . . scrape, scrape, butter on toast . . . "said the Home Secretary last night at" . . . clatter, crash, plates being pulled from racks. The radio was switched off and the young woman brought out three plates of buttered toast, one pile taller than the others, and crowded them onto an unvarnished wooden tray.

"That's two pounds and fifteen pence," she said forcefully, then added, "Please".

Garry fished into his pockets, his mouth watering and produced two tarnished pound coins and a handful of coppers. "Thanks" he said, tipping the money into a narrow gap between the edge of the tray and the display of sweets and crisps. He picked up the tray, turned carefully and began to walk back across the ancient yellow tiles towards the table, but slowed down when he saw someone sitting in the chair next to his. Garry looked at Pete and raised his eyebrows, but Pete just shrugged his shoulders.

When Garry reached the table he slid the tray slowly onto the tabletop and stood in silence for a moment, scrutinizing the stranger's narrow face.

"Do we know you?" he said in a flat voice.

"I don't think so" said the stranger in an odd accent. Garry edged around him and sat down, shoulder against the damp window, and pulled his plate of toast towards him. The last bits of butter merged into the moist surface. He finished off his lukewarm tea.

"Your outfit's good, go down well on stage, that," Julie said to the stranger to break the silence. Pete began to scratch his head and Julie kicked him under the table. He winced and stopped scratching.

"On stage," replied the stranger.

"Yeah, all those bells and ribbons and things, the top hat's a treat," exclaimed Julie.

Garry suddenly thought he knew what the person was after—he wanted to join the band, and that might be a good idea if Pete and Julie were set on leaving. He looked away into the dark pastel blocks of colour that permeated through the misted windows, trying to think of something to say. The word that he had traced on the window had been reclaimed by the condensation around the edges, as he looked through it, the grey haze of the wet road outside was replaced by a slow slide of khaki and green. A low throb of a heavy engine outside made the plates rattle. An APG patrol.

A low hissing came from Garry's left ear, drowned out for a moment by a stifled shriek from Pete and a gasp from Julie as she put her hand to her mouth. Garry looked around quickly and was confronted with a round black sphere like a painted tennis ball, held gently between a mauve gloved finger and thumb. From the top of the sphere a long thin tail of fuse hung fizzing and spitting. The stranger looked into Garry's eyes. Garry froze.

"It is the bomb of Freedom, and though it can be detonated at any time, it should only be used when absolutely necessary," the stranger said carefully and slowly.

At the instant he finished speaking two loud bangs sprang through the glass as the heavy doors of the APG vehicle were slammed and shut. Tense eyes flashed outwards for a second at the explosive sounds, then came back to rest on . . . nothing.

The stranger was gone. The only sound was a quick ping of the bell of the cafe door as the APG patrol, one man and one woman, pushed open the worn door and closed it again quietly. They walked sharply to the counter and said something to the plain woman. They were dressed in what could have been army uniforms, but they were dark blue. They wore lightweight thin black helmets, dark glasses and gun holsters on their hips. One of them turned around to scan the empty groups of tables. She saw Garry, Pete and Julie, touched her companion on the arm and moved her head in

their direction. He looked around, nodded at her and went back to questioning the girl.

The woman moved across the floor, heels thumping on the hard tiles and stopped next to Pete, wary.

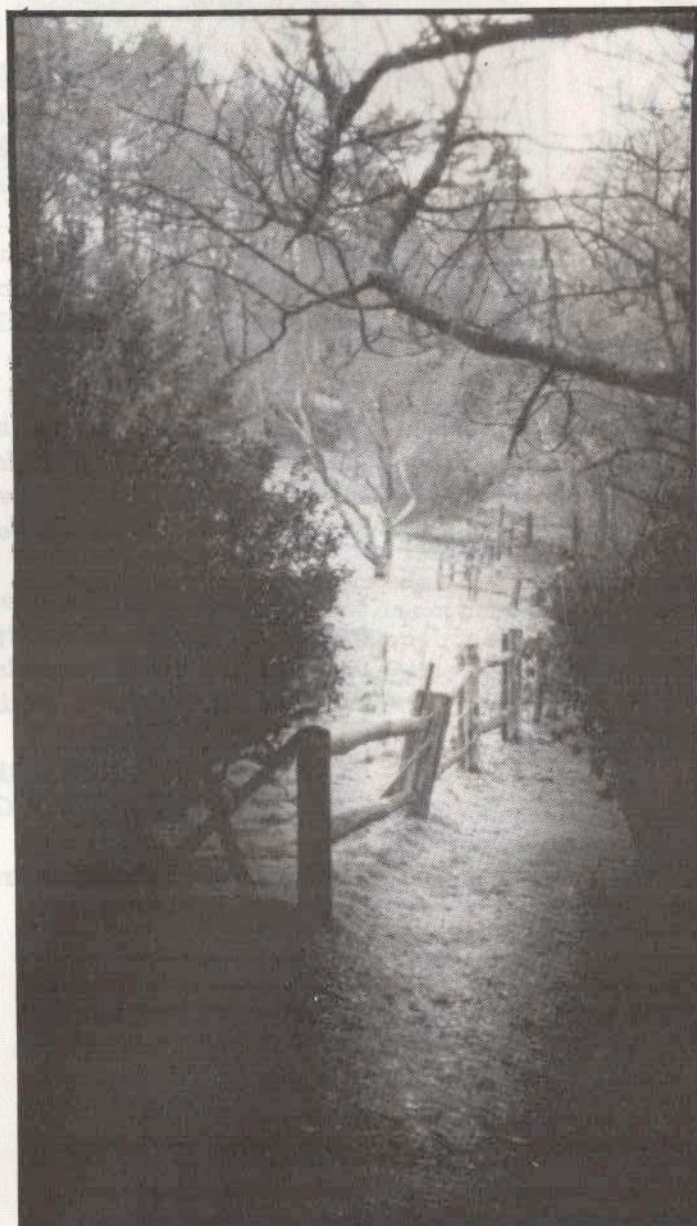
"Passes," she said, sharply.

They produced the plastic cards slowly and laid them at the chipped edge of the table. When all three had been produced the woman reached out her thin gloved hand to pick them up.

The window cracked all over but did not shatter as a low rolling thump sounded from outside. As the sound echoed away the woman flung the passes back at the threesome and ran skidding to the door of the cafe, pulling her gun as she ran, and joined her companion, each pressed low either side of the open door, guns ready.

Garry wiped the cracked window gently until a streaky fragmented blur of black coiling smoke could be seen, rolling from the broken and flaming patrol vehicle.

"This would make a great song, you know," said Julie. Garry smiled at her.



"Is this the road to Utopia, Old Friend," asked the man in the fluttering black cape, bells laughing in the wind. The old woman wrinkled her walnut face with a broad smile and chuckled like gravel.

"Aye, Friend," she grated, leaning in her worn stick and gesturing behind her, "stay on this road and you'll get to Nowhere, that's near enough."

"Thankyou," he said and danced away into the dusky evening.

CAN PIGS FLY?

Helicopter, Helicopter where have you been?

We all miss the sound of rotor-blade scream!

**And Infra-red cameras, recording the signs,
of extortionate rents, food, dope and fines.**

Helicopter, Supersnoop! Is it true what they said?

That you're mothballed away in the maintenance shed,

lenses of scanners all scarred by a flash

from yacht flare or rocket, nearly causing a CRASH????

Chocolate chopper! is there nothing to do?

—even if we pay for a nimrod or two, to

watch o'er you as you watched o'er us—

plus satellites and marksmen atop every 'bus!

MACHINE SUPREME! Don't leave us this way

your almighty din gave such fun every day

comforted mothers and children Abed—

just can't hear crimes with you overhead!

Where oh, where can you now be seen?

Dispatched to the Falklands or Camberwell Green.

In Kensington, if it is allowed.....

directing lost tourists up Pem-br-oke Road!

There's another job we need air support for,

tracking infringers of safety-belt law,

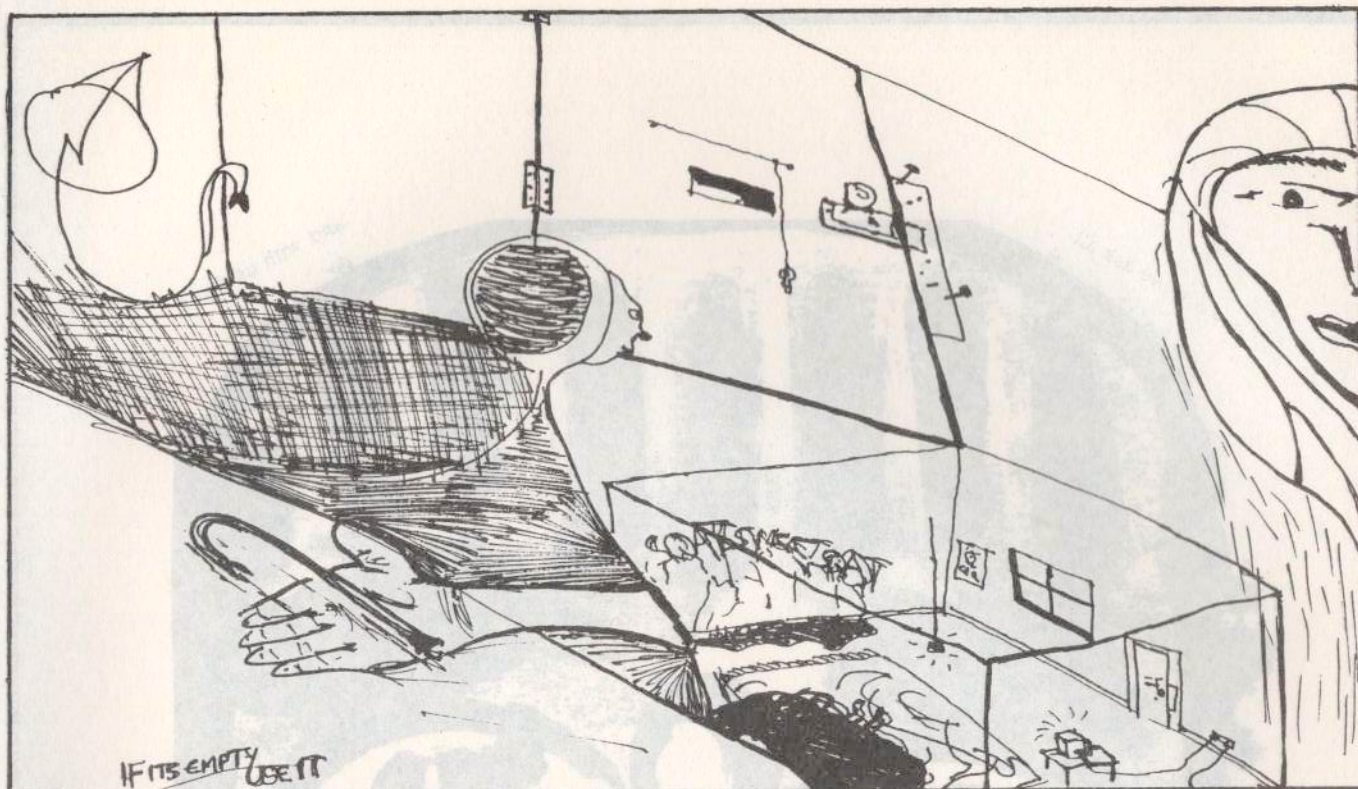
no point in letting criminals run to ground,

call 'em David Martin, claim your five Rounds.

**PLEASE TELL US DEAR READERS, HELP US TO TRACK
THE MILLION POUND PIG WITH EGG ON IT'S FACE!**

Rev. ARMITAGE. Can't Pray—GOTTA RIOT!

Rev. Armitage



THE CLOCK on Lambeth Town Hall chimed four times on a cold spring night. Rain danced on the pavements, water rushed along gutters waterfalling into drains. Three blue lights licked the wet streets as they headed towards the squat and OPERATION DUCK.

Their wheels skidded on the road halting to the sound of doors slamming and feet running to the front door. Ten or so uniformed figures squashed themselves into the porch prepared...

Inside the house Mad Frank woke up with the noise, confused, thinking it was a jungle ambush in Angola, he grabbed his machete and lashed out into the dark, accidentally stabbing the TV. This created a rather loud explosion.

The whole house woke up. Christian, always prepared for a riot and being radical, put on a black balaclava. Bill was terrified as he looked down on the three police cars below. Hash, coke and speed and the brass scales were hastily bundled into a bag as he reached for the rope ladder that was attached to the roof.

Meanwhile, the front door had been flattened and several groaning, grunting, burly, coppers were galloping up the stairs. Julian, wearing purple pyjamas, sat bolt upright in bed clutching his furry rabbit toy, Booboo. One copper grabbed him while the other started to viciously rip off the head, legs and bunny tail desperately looking for drugs. Julian was reduced to tears snivelling, "You bastards, poor Booboo, my Booboo, what have you done to my Booboo."

In the next room Jane was screaming "Fascist pigs" and "Dickhead scum" as two men emptied her drawers and threw her collection of eggcups from all over the world around the room. Bursting into Christian's room, with a loud, "You're nicked sonny", they found him wearing a balaclava. Immediately they spotted a box spilling over with fancy lace knickers. He was arrested, making jokes that anything he said would be **TAKEN DOWN** and **USED AGAINST HIM**, ha ha ha ha. Christian tried to explain that some pervert had been sending them to

him, one pair a day ever since he had left the Liberal Party, and he thought these things were shackles of womens' sexuality.

By this time many of the neighbours had come out onto the street, in their slippers and gowns. They saw Bill in his TI CHI suit clamber up onto the roof and then his silhouetted body running frantically slip on the wet tiles, hands wave like a Cramps fan and then disappear. Bill's life flashed before him—nosebleeds, lumpy potatoes at school, sacked from MacDonalds... as he fell through tiles, attic, lampshade and finally coming to bounce on Mr Godwin's bed. The old man's body shook in panic (please do not have sympathy for this bastard) his Horlicks slopping out of the cup.

Brushing off the plaster from his shoulders Bill mumbled an apology and rushed down the stairs bumping into Mad Frank who was clutching a hatchet and a bundle of sawn-off shotguns. With popping eyes and dribbling saliva Mad Frank explained he had been trapped in the toilet, and smashed his way through Mr Godwin's wall and was going to "blow away" any copper getting in his way.

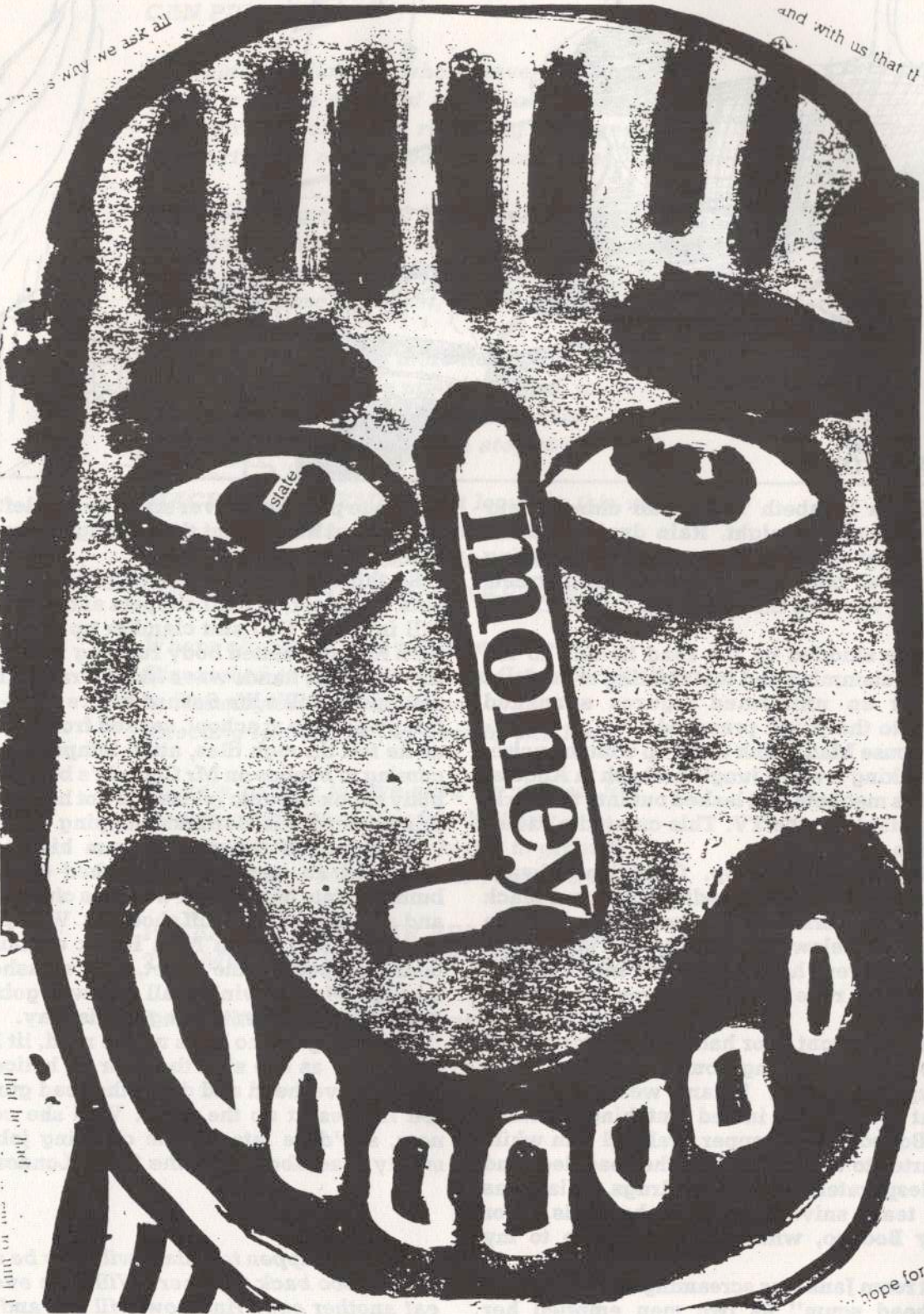
Mrs Pledge, who lives up the road, lit her first fag of the day as she shut the door. A helicopter wock-wocked overhead and down the road gun blasts and red flashes lit up the night. Well she couldn't stop now, she'd be late for the cleaning job, but she'd surely read about it in the South London Press.

What will happen to Julian, will they be able to stitch his Booboo back together? Will Jane ever be able to eat another egg? And how will Bill and Mad Frank escape?

In next week's SQUATROADS, Mad Frank has a religious experience, Harry returns from New York with sexual leprosy, Jane tries to eat jellied eels and Christian discovers a long lost brother in Southend who runs a hot dog stall for tourists in the summer, and tries to get him to sell veggie burgers....

all ask why we

and with us that it



that he had

hope for

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