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# The Blotter

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## "Age"

Woke this morning with but one errand to perform – to get my driver's license renewed. (I'll be sixty-six by the time you read this. Had to go to the DMV in person to get the task completed.) Well, OK then. Signed in and waited in my car to be texted, per their instructions. And waited.

Sixty-six is a good number. A very fine old highway song. Ten short of the proper number of trombones. I don't feel sixty-six. I'm not sure what I do feel like, but not sixty-six. There's a lot of silly little boy still left in me. Don't believe me, ask any of my friends. They'll vouch for my immaturity in certain matters. And my sincerity that this is the proper way to behave.

I, on the other hand, see myself for what I am. I want to be able to write, and, therefore, feel an inexorable need to be able to dream, pretend, make-believe, and to do that with any success I must keep my childish, childlike perspective. In order to fly, you have to not grow up, not truly, not completely. And, having written those words, I find that even they don't do the idea justice. Maybe because it's not a matter that needs clarification. I don't know. I also don't care.

So, when I go do something *adultry* (the very typing of which undermines and disarms my whole point), like renewing my driver's license, I go prepared. I won't be annoyed by the wait. Oh, there'll be one, and I have nowhere better to be. But I bring a good book. Will there be extra rewards after I'm done? Maybe. Maple-walnut scones are good, I could look for one of those. And a large latte. Sit outside at a table and read a little bit, watch the world go by. Who's hurt by that?

In the meantime, there are five bays with five other driver-wannabes who are taking their tests, standing smiling for their photos, paying their fees. One of them, right in front of my seat, is an elderly woman. She's chatting with the DMV employee about this and that, making conversation. And I'm listening. Long enough to realize that what sounds at first to be what they used to call addle-pated is in fact just friendly banter. This seems to be her manner, I would guess, just to talk with the folks she crosses paths with on a daily basis. Sure, it's slowing things down a little, but who really cares? Or if they do, well, she's earned the right to chatter with strangers.

Little do I know.

It's time for her eye-test. The long and short of it is that this takes a good twenty-five minutes to get through. She starts without her reading glasses, then stops to find them in her handbag, puts them on, takes them off again because they don't improve the situation. Twice she stops to wipe her eyes with a tissue, either because of discomfort from the test-machine she's leaning

her forehead against, or because she's realizing how poorly she's doing just trying to read the top row of letters.

At one point, she asks if what she is seeing is a V. Yes, ma'am says the DMV employee, in an act of unusual kindness. Then the woman is informed that she has failed the exam and won't be getting her renewal. She explains that she has a note from her ophthalmologist stating she can see to drive, and she has both faxed it to this office, as well as "snail-mailed" it.

And this is where I realize that this little old lady has dropped a little clue that she is totally *with it*. She's used a term that is only used by people who do email, or DMs. *Snail-mail* implies a practical knowledge of the other alternatives. Or at least, this is what I – and possibly the DMV employee – conclude. Said employee – again, completely out of character – goes off to find that faxed note. And fifteen minutes later, does. And miraculously passes our heroine with semi-flying colors.

And I know it is difficult to believe, but we're not here to make fun of the little old lady, or the DMV. Because what happens next is...remarkable. Confirming her personal information, she informs the DMV person that her birthday is indeed tomorrow and that she will be 94. Ninety-four years old. Yes.

And my point here, the singular reason for regaling you with this anecdote, is that this is a woman with optimism. She is getting her license renewed when most of us will be, well, no longer driving at best and doing a dirt-nap at worst. We should all have optimism like that, about getting in shape or learning a new skill, growing a garden or doing rewrites on that novel. And no, I don't care how well she drives. In fact, I have but one regret.

Because at that moment, when this woman was standing to get her new photo for her license, they called my number, down to bay 5. And I went down there and didn't get to see the little old lady amble out the door and get into the car that she'd driven there that morning.

I like to think it was a Ford Mustang Cobra. Something her late husband bought long ago, and she would hate to part with it, because it holds corners like it's on rails.

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CAUTION

*about us for a long, long*



## "The Sucker's List"

by Anthony Acri

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It is 6 June, 1970.

I am in the eternal-ist of cities, a pilgrim returned to the old civilization at the edge of the middle sea. I am only here as a latest Gigolo, this town's biggest industry, that this ancient town has seen more than its fair share of in the least thousandths years, as old woman and those willing to pay for companionship have been willing to pay for men like me, willing to dick them for a fixed price, to the measureless and weed covered ruins of the acute town since Caesar was bedding every fourteen year old roman gal he could get his war mongering hands upon.

I am in a trattoria, here called Hercules's, as like me and my ilk, subtlety is not a prerequisite to being in Rome. If anything, it is a statement to being in the myriad of set spaceships of this eternal stage, casually in the already heated and healthful summers this early in the year. But then, I have come to know, the only God that means a thing in Italy, and eclectically its head city, Rome is heraldry anything that can be found in a Bernini stature of a kinky bearded Zeus, or gods knows the dower and despondent father god that one can find in Mussacchio, whose brilliantine adverbial work belies the horrid bloodlines of that Jewish mythology so out of place in old city Rome.

Missah Capote and his ilk are still big and so, the housewares like hearing of stories that create a Dante's inferno, which they can read

about and live vicariously though at thumbs edge with lyrically drawn tales in magazines with colorful pages and perhaps even seen now in magazines like Playpen, where pictures of pretty brunettes and blonds with torn hemlines and lacquered hair can be seen instructed with stories sixfold which, may or may not be, all about what it is like to be an oversexed teacher at a girls boarding school in Connecticut. So, I sit here, scribbling way at some notes—I don't know where this suddenness of reports note taking has come out of or where it will lead, — as will take the time to type them up later when back at home, and away from the sexual drudgery of having to plow the less than verdant fields of fat and old women whose trees were less arthritic and whose leaves were less dried and colorless and fallen, a while back.

But I will, as my new-found creed demands as it does for thieves and politicians, immemorial in these old walls, to soldier ahead and so what, of course, needs to be done. And I will do it with as much mustard colored paper as need be as see stretches of stretchmarks, pot marked, whale like and blubbery skin festooned before me in such environs as this. I supposed since the barbarian invasions, the setting does help to become more romantic about sex as a going concern, when one is faking so many of a certain type of woman on the wrong side of Sixty, as I find myself unavailing to have done.

I sit in the restaurant, one of them ones that is only open to 1, and only serves a kind of brunch, of which there are many of the constant as phony and wives and the hoodlums they fuck call the leftover parts of the once vigilant and grate Roman memoirs.

I write with a new type of pen called a paper mate, which has a two-toned cover and not crystalline shell, and a black tip, and a heart insignia on the barrel, and is preferable to me to any icicle like Bic. It leaves a thick, vibrant line, upon pages of blue lined composition paper that I am using, and had bought at the nearby school implements selling Apothecary, as they call them here, where, to be honest is a beguiling aesthetic to Italian Life, people trust with their health much more than they do any mere Dot-tore, or MD or Gyno, as the old women and even the lovelies here, and even the Carabinieri, a crack police force much more crackerjack than the prodding husbandry that plods through Vespasian city with their glum mid-century, Aurelius lives worth, gives them at all credit. They all, from what I have gathered here from navy boys on the prow-ell, as am I, who live in this most vital of cities, and the pretty streetwalkers and the chisellers and the thespians and the craftsmen who have been rats of this inferno-cathedral for millennia, all seem more alive and vivacious than anything I can think of as having seen in the underwhelming, unwinding empire that becomes no

one to return to it, back home.

I write this with a quick hand at this table, where indeed, true to pizza shop conventions there is a checkerboard chess like pattern on an old table which may or may not, charmingly, go back to the black shirts and Mussolini's dimwitted at heart idea that even with the New York Times on his side as he once did claim rightly to have, and with old cripple Franklin Delano's blessing, whatever they liked to recall it this late or not, was a cringe-headed move as they would never allow the downtrodden Italians to ever have a piece of their own imperial pie.

I'm trying to keep politicians out of this as much as possible to facilitate a sale to McCall's or the Saturday Evening post, or even Reader's Digest, any place Capote sold a bullshit story, but think, to these flag wavers any altercation of Italy in the nights of 1948 and the CIA and its Bolivia-like adventurers in making sure the road before the Coliseum not far from here did not fall into the ashcans of the socialists, or the reddest brigades, well is an admission or even a reelection that make things hard for the author who who'll keep his nose to the romantic grandstand and make sure as in Breakfast at Tiffany's there is always a role in the thing for a George Peppard that the hausfrau in air-conditioned Relatos find dreamy, and leave the political diatribes to more newsprint papered political rags edited by Buckley.

I sit here in the glass-enclosed old building, scribbling away at the notebook, seeing the festiveness that goes on outside of me, not too far away from me as the streets are closed today with more balloons and prat-iota goes as usual. It is after all 6 June, the fourth of July stamped

onto the ancient calendar here, as a kind of Independence Day as American once felt like the Sherwin Williams ad to cover the world in its tacky, sticky, varnish, to make everything look old, moldy, cheap and sickly. I sit here and look out at the collected little kids all in the similar-a uniform of a long-gone school aged fascism, a Pinocchio type of outfit, even this south as alpine as Mussolini tried to ape to, again a death knell in this country since Lorenzo, tried to placate his Batavian masters and their beer swilling menagerie of Black Forest rats.

Balloons are everywhere, as is the tripartite bunting of lava, weeds and ice, as I heard a raccoon always at the Roman triumphs since Germanicus, say with no grace or sweetness. *Then leave* I said abruptly to the scraggly older man, as I had enough of anyone who would in anyway, take for granted this amusing sunshine, and then being this close to women of a sort that only a thousand years of cavalier DNA mixing and slaves and patrons and waves of imperial hands and decrees could ever have cratered. One can see at any moment, a wisteria, a half-broken column, a portico once magnificent, and now just a charred ruin, and the effect is with some women too older and yet, well kept, still beauteous, so unlike the bags of empire and the hags of social security with which I make my meager living back at the rancid place. As Ameruca has always been a cesspool I've thought, but leathery, it seems to have put on airs and is a cesspool that thinks itself an Aqueduct, and that is just sad when you think about it.

I am eating at a plate of eggs something called a *fritata*, a cross between scrambled eggs and an

Omelet, though nit is neither and both, again, like many of the omen here. Served with it is a thickest toast over ever had, a café, and well, I guess you'd call them home-fries, a kind of double fried potato latke, and the Breakfast, is, though small is filling and I play at it and take forks of the eggs upon which are clumps of an emerald colored jelly, and the taste is unlike any breakfast I have had in the land of corn flakes. I sip at rather harsh and hard coffee, a thick, almost syrupy concoction, and the effect is almost like a caffeine drug, taken intravenously.

I took a drag on my Kool cigarette, as cigarettes, liqueur, women and sex were what made Romans think was what masculinity was all about, as more and more the land that bombed rice patties liked thinking was a noble house, or a kind of Restoration that came straight out of the horrid bible. And that book, thankfully, never caught fire in this paginate land.

Grazia, I said, But I didn't order—she smiled. That *issna* Okay, Sure, she said, with a giant smile that lit up with her, the Room as if she was a winged sprite out of Ovid's Art of Love, or at least the Prose version that Willie could read and still think amazing he was an artist of some sort. My-a Name is Veronica, she said, shinningly black and olive colored there, Missa Sur, and so, I give you *dissa piece* of cake for de Birthday of Italia, no...? She stood there before me, showing how sensuality enfeebles any uniform they might make a girl LIKE HER might have to wear.

With an ass one could play three-handed Pinochle on, a well-upholstered chest, tall for an Italian of any sort, and with a massive long midsection, as one might see on

pretty girls and pictures of Christ in Roman sacredness by some Low level unknown by tourists Italic Genius, as he was tortured thankfully on a Roman cross, she was with blue black hair, in a pony take, young but not a teenager, with legs like a porch swing screen-door they were so long and covered in one size too small black pants, again in a kind of outfit. She winked at me with massive blue eye of a Lombard invader that came this far down, boot again, with white skin, and an upturned nose, but with cartoon lips that dominated her face, she kind of looked like Carol Lawrence, when she played Maria in West Side Story all that while ago.

She stood there, as I wondered if she was expecting a tip already. As in the old Citta, in the civilization at the edge of time and space at the middle sea, who isn't awaiting a tip as much as these people? as Americans may find out have gone from masters of the mapped world to mere taxi drivers and hotel concierges.

My poppa, she added, say if you are interested in me, as he says he sees you looking at me, *dat dear* is a room in the back that we can go to—

I smirked. Oh, I said, Your poppa said *hub*...? I was not shocked, although, to be honest it wasn't an opportunity I would often scoff at or laugh at in its face. Your Poppa says there is a room huh, is asked. And, I said, where is your poppa, daddy of the year...?

She gestured to a seen inner kitchen where a man who looked like a tomatoes-canned-cartoon mixed with the worst parts of a dago on television at least one a week named Vito Scotti, him - always the stupid sing-songy wop who was perpetually playing the dumb Guido - stood at the stove, older than

Fascism, upon which-eh made the eggs. Hummmm, I said. I took out a business card, the kind to give out to various older woman I think in need of companionship, and I wrote my name and my hotel and my room number on. You take this, hunnie, I said, And this will be our little *secrete, capito, Belladonna*...? Tu, I said in immigrant Italian recalled from the mill fences of my youth, *Voyaggio e quay, ah tutta la monet aeh per Tia, no to Padre, Capit*...? She smiled a knowing understanding.

She yielded her unbelievable large smile, it made the mind reel actually, but I wasn't giving a dime to any daddy willing to pimp his daughter. And send him out, doll, send Poppa, is said, Out to hear me say something.

Eh Shu...she said sweetly, and with cuteness.

Out came the short dumpy stytic father, wearing an actual puffy chef's hat, again one of those horrid dagos who mix stereotypes with having an actual personality. He was awfully afraid, as I ate at the breakfast, he was the kind of wop that, like American coloreds and Negroes talks a big criminal's game, but at the drop of the word like Inspectorate, well, they quickly, like rats, scatter, as the Romans may have invited this sort and infected the Carthaginians growth such a strain, or at least that is what Annabelle thought.

I sat there, wanted to get away now, and leave after my great scene, like a starlet or a Royal Shakespeare sort might, or at least a conman ought, but didn't and wouldn't have paid 8000 lira, about two bucks for a breakfast that as just like one that this pimp's mamma just to make before the march on Rome. The girl, acting as a waitress, or hostess even

this early, as the pace blossomed with boated pigs and their dumpy, Evening-in-Paris entombed wives, all in yenta uniforms with giant tits and bigger stomacher stretching a kind of glossy fabric upon which were white pearl necklaces, the only kind they got or wanted from their husbands, came transporting through the doors, past a bust of two-faced, laughing and frowning drama, or Janus. He is the Italic god of looking both ways before you cross the Roman road, and looking before you reap. I found him as being there as the God of this machine was a perfect cameo, the best since an Englishman who gave the thing class and who was George in Of Mice and Men but showed he could make a campy satirical turn for the credit on ABC, played the tuxedo wearing criminal, the Emperor Penguin on a camp show called Rat-man.

She caught my eye, *and how!*, and she winked her gorgeous bluest eye, again less like American blue eyes you'd see often in Playpen or bad television shows, but a blue that almost looked like Cobalt or the barrels of guns that were made here in Italy by families that went back to the 12<sup>th</sup> sanctuary. She winked at me, and I returned the favor as despite what I had told the oafish, small-framed, but looking like an Italian stereotype that one would see in old Popeye cartoons in the Herald Tribune, there, I was indeed interested in the pretty Italian girl, as often thought of when being drug behind the wagon train of fat older woman through the imperial lands, that it as the least I could do to try to if not out and out rape, but impregnate and swell the trimmest of all these rusticity demigoddesses.

And, I had an inkling as with abortion gaining a white woman's

steam back home, among senators who alas like to have a plan B when a teenage girl of a Constantine race with deep pockets or a secretary of a dusky hue, might show up pregnant her own self at the Russell office building, our Satyricon. I had told the father I had no interests but that was a lie as showed by the card I still hoped that the old crone hadn't heard about nor seen, that if I did give this girl anything in each as I did everything in my life, that not a hey penny of it, not a bill with Victorio Emmanuelle Segundo on it would end up anywhere near his grand baby, sweaty, woppish palms.

The parade seemed to be getting off the ground, as clowns here at the birthplace of such made up idiots, started to walk down the street, as everywhere scaring the toddlers. She came by again and handed me the rather cheap papers and ragged check, as I'm sure the cheap father didn't think to buy anything for this restaurant that didn't come at the cheapest price, as he so willingly pimped his daughter, as I'd come to know. She winked again and said with as thick an Italian accent, but almost rather English, as I had come to recognize, said to me, My name is Veronica, big-a fellow. She smiled at me and I smiled back, sure that after so long of suckling a hag like Rosalinda and her ilk, that boy could I have used her now.

I saw the father looking, so didn't make my hungers apparent a bit. There was something I didn't much like about this cretin, and his pimping qualities were only part of it. He sulked everywhere with a cleaver, which was either tough guy affectation, or worse meant he was willing to use that blade at the drop of a affected hat. Either way I wanted no part of this and was still waiting for

Rosalinda to enter and make her Callas like entrance into the last set designed piece that was the Operatics in which she lived her lives, at least in her own actress-head. She was soon to enter the stage, into the stage that was perpetuate going on in her mind, and mostly wanted to get somewhere where I could get with or try to get close to this goddess that fate and a breakfast sandwich had presented before me.

I knew that I would get with this Roman goddess before me, this Echo had to be freed from this white rick called an egg stand, at the front of which was a rustic, but not very becoming Roman centurion, which, when done with folk art aplomb can be quite fetching, but not this chipped creation seemingly more worthy of a Jersey cal-zone emporium. I quickly wrote a note and placed it in the mass of overly colorful bills that I would pay the check with. In paper-mate ink, on a slip of torn composition, black marbled notebook paper, I wrote, Got to see you again, Minerva, come to my hotel room at The San Gennerio hotel Via Fellestrano 778,e Setta houra, and hid it to the maid, which was an invite slipped in between all of the bills.

Rosalinda, my great white whale had in fact come in, as she had stopped at a small store that sold such Shammatas and dresses that weren't everywhere back home, and which she had tried to make a seller in her family's department store. This was a bag that read a name gaining popularity called Gucci's as on television a girl who played on a Friday night show as sophisticated as anything on TV before or since, and being the daughter of a jewey-arab comic legend and an Italian showgirl

I guess that he married when not, decently, making a hospital for little kids who lived in crushes all their sad short lives, had already made a Mod awareness of men named Valentino that was thatching fire amid the gals even past the Hudson.

She babbled away, as I piled the money in a small flat book that this equivalent to a greasy spoon named incongruously for a Roman hero who tore temples down, didn't deserve. But it did fulfill my needs and saw as she counted the larger than I had ever seen money, the kind thieves love, she saw the small slip pf paper and smiled and like a coin magician, she then slipped it into her perfect slacks near her perfect bum. She came by the table as Rosalinda was prattling on about something or another, and she gave me the change in what looked like fake coins one would get in a game of a Roman type of monopoly.

She winked, and placed a finger to her fulsome lips, a-la the pictures of St. Anthony I had seen as a young altar boy there hung in semen-stained yellow-walled rectories, and I knew I had a date with this Giorgione figurine come to fleshy life here, as I'd have to do something to get the fatso hag who brought me to Rome or myself away from that room for at least a few hours this night and refill the almost ruddy reservoir that all the old ladies had so gleefully pissed within, they left my soul as vicarage as it ever had been.

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I don't know what made my guide, or at least my meal ticket, so late, for breakfast no less, but I wasn't about to look this gift cow in the mouth, God Knew.

But, as I noted the scrumptious way that the pimped Italian daughter, a go-to to many of these men



since they trafficked in getting GI's to fall for the belladonnas of the intact kingdom since the old, by now, War, and they even made films with the divine La Loolla in which American buffoons like Phil Silvers and Telly Savalas came back to Anzio to find out who fathered her daughter, and the idea of Jews and Greeks as soldiers much less even touching a creature as perfect as Gina as a young Hesperian gal, well it was all comedy fantasy being made back then. This was before as in the last few years, sneering creeps from Raven movies made by drive-in mavens like Roger Corman, had taken to per-ending their yippee all along.

There is one in particular, one of these sexual penitents, I have seen him about as I have said, who looks like he should play Mister Wilson in a coming b'way musical version of Dennis the Menace, as a play put on about Lil Abner starring the blissful figure of Julie Newmar, as the moonbeam, I take it, has made the alas dying since Plautus theater look for any Sunday comics as having a built in audience as an Uberman is in the works, though how a man flies on stage, I figure there will be much in the way of an actor in tights falling out of cardboard windows onto well-positioned Sealy Mattresses.

I would hate to think that Mud Magazine cartoon will somehow barrel and barbarian galumph his way into this small trattorea and will be more the willing to buy an hour with Veronica the daughter here, from a father who when saw his daughter at about thirteen saw the future gleanings of his familial, in way that allowed vulgarian white trash to say their rancid little Irish limericks, as they salivate at a Gina or a Claudia as

the antithesis of their horrid, bras as stropped on parachute like harasses, old bag wives, who must, if they have sex, only have it in the pitch dark of suburban torture castelloes.

But, I had made my attempt to at least make it apparent that want to meet with Veronica again, as smartly I had gotten my own room at the lace-curtained hotel, where Americans bitch about Italian food being nothing like that dog food that they often eat that comes out of electrically opened silver cans with cartoon chefs on the front. That stuff is true glop, and nothing, like the woman, is requisite as it is here, and would indeed fuck a thousand Rosalindas and read through a thousand suckers lists as shown to me by Cuban Joe, to get here, if not just by now *stay*, and leave the dying empire to the arts that collect at coal-ing coke ovens back home.

I looked back and gave the lovely young woman a smile that displayed my intents. But this was not me on the clock, god knows I had had enough of that, and gals like her, despite her father and his openly brazen monetizing of another pretty Italian girl for the pigs of a barbarian empire far away, again, she didn't need, as the old bags did, to pay anyone, and she certainly wouldn't pay an aging, hanging on for dear life, salt-and-pepper haired, old suit wearing grifter such as I, she in all her nineteen-year-old glory, didn't need me, as much as I needed her, and all that she represented, that was for damn sure. She was free in a strange way and I, as a gigolo was hardly so.

I was attached to these old nags, by the fact that I liked somehow getting even with them, the rich old cunts, I liked getting back, in some way as Italian as a once handsome

Italian man in mid-century in mid-life, in middle-speared, in mid-everything, as we entered the decline of the triumphant, to some 20<sup>th</sup> century, I liked getting even, and every thrust I had them with a big prick that I had, as Italian as a remnant of raping Carthaginians so far back, and never corralled in the land of a new found love of noble savages, I liked fucking them within an inch of their life, making them fall over, sometimes out of bed, giving them the circus act they think all Italians are to them. The old ladies and fatso in caked-on powders and badly applied lipstick, and fat jiggling arms, I got them, all and I got even for something that may or may not have even happened to me, I was at last a true Roman centurion, getting even and making the scales balance, the scales of Libra to all those cretinism and hubbies and blowhards and thugs and pigs and vicious wives, caught in their vicious marriages, as dishwashers and electric tooth brushes whirred and whizzed away. I fucked theses old coot biddies good, and I gave them what they wanted, seventy-one of the old biddies, and yet, with Veronica, I espaliered sex was something to my heritage, since the days my forbears first came upon the gracious gals of Naples, Parthenium, and saw the women with their brownish skin and long streetlight following hair, the Sabines who were always raped, the samnites who hooked Annabel's soldiers by their arms, in more ways than one and cut the throats of Tyrian soldiers when they thought the rape was over, I realized that Veronica had become for me, everything I was and could only be, and that in a way in her I had found a deep down center to all that I was and would ever really be.



I would at the end of this, I was sure, give her the bills that I had always teapot-ed for the ole women with double-chinned souls, and their jiffy-pop white hair and their wristless arms and stupid loos on their matronly faces. Not that I saw her as *Prostitute*, as her father did, but that she was the one who deserved the payment, not me, and I would be here long enough to find myself falling in love with her, if I even knew how by now.

I would pay her something I knew that, and I'd have to, as such a transnational was the only way I knew how to make things even, and that there was no other way to give her what she deserved. Here I was, an older middle-aged man from smokestack nation, what could I do, promise her marriage?... imagine that Me of all people even saying that word of apposite, that word I have avoided so very long. But no husband was I, that was for sure, I had no real trade but me own Roman-templed god-like dick, the pictures are still on the chipping walls here of a god who uses those procurement scales to hold up the dick that a Roman would think a god must have, as opposed to a tortured and beaten Jewish clerk, who has never taken fully hold of in a land that believes still as much as a anything in signora Fortuna.

We walked through the parade, my client and I, and we walked past the olden stores, and the wide bricked streets packed here by Trajan, if the stories are believed and I guess I do. She, Rosie, babbled on about something or another, and if seem vicious toward her she is not as awful as some, who I can sense think they have bought 'em not as a male concubine, but something worse, as

a sale is always on their petty little minds and their menace knows no bounds, unlike the tits of bloated whey that they sling in thick white fabric. So, I realized as we walked through the parade, something like a Columbus day parade, back home, in which small bald men with suits and shahes still, at last they are more honest here, stand on floats of paper-mache Ben-Hur-like horses and gladiatorial festooned Rose parade like moving bits of rusticity and yet charming cheap architecture, as they slowly move through the streets as pretty girls in a uniform of satin shirts and capri pants, they have always been somewhat emancipated since the days of Coriolanus and his primeval bellwethers, and older women, and men without work, these rats of these ancient streets, and policemen in white sashes and almost maître d' outfit finery, keep the padre moving ahead, and I realized that we were moving, incongruously, against the flow. A small puny man, what's less...?, a politician, standing on a horse dominated Circus Maximus-like installation that slowly moved through the balloons and the confetti, as he made Boxer-like pastime, he took both paws, clasped them together, and packed them over his head where she shook them in a strange kind of middle-managers, clerks, defiance.

Who is that Fool...? I asked aloud.

A Roman older matron in a head covering all older here women wore, a kind of pre-burka that the Roman elders had perfected an called a habit once, looked over as she sadly and elderly walked along carrying bags with her own early morning shopping from the ancient Gallery that again Hadrian had plat-

ed there. She obviously heard me and she spoke English, as pigeon-holed and charmingly as the younger version of her at the breakfast nook had a few moments before. *Data isss*, she said snidely and appealingly, *He issa da Senatore per la Provicaille of Lazio. That's was*,

I knew enough of Italian geography and plots and schemes that America had made its own long ago, the state or province in which we were in, today. Although as would happen in America too, ancient boundaries meant nothing after Risorgimento as to insure their being elected, states would be fundable and which neighborhoods would be resurveyed this way or that, some trying to make sure tenements were all kept hitherto to be elected, and then, liens erased when the senators found all the tenements in too much a space and no richer Roman higher class neighborhoods in a senator's state, and thus cutting down on the bribes. *He is telling de people*, the old lady said, not impressed, *Dat he is alas going to fight fer dem, and they have to fought fer him...be going to a Incasrserato next eek for what yew say, diddling little girls in his district. La Carchera*, she said, with a sour stare. The jail here since Romulus was awaiting his pouting, preening, Mussolini honed act.

The more things change, I said, and walked through the confetti and the sunshine and the pickpockets who collected on the streets. ❖

Two by David M. Harris

## "March in Tennessee"

I see it spattered  
on the trees, across the yard.  
Freya spilled green last night.

## "Exchanging Vowels"

Are you hot? Don't hit the hat! Best to baste  
the hem or the ham or the tom,  
but not a tam, or Tim's tum.  
Some fans have fins, though fens  
are big bogs, with bugs. For bags,  
go to the store and stare  
at a steer. Blind blondes have more fun  
than bland blends. Turn over a new leaf, and loaf  
for your life. Go with the flow and  
the flaw. Lave, and live for love.

## "The Old Piano in the Corner"

by John Grey

They are dead to the world,  
those 88 keys.  
Between them all  
they signify nothing.  
Watch them sleep,  
white, black,  
side by side,  
no desires, no destinies.

But go ahead, wake them  
Upset their iron dreams.  
Disrupt their cold rigidity.  
Place your fingers lightly  
on those 88 somnolent levers  
and begin.

Let those keys rise up  
from years of monotony,  
with clear notes, chords,  
like great souls released  
from a graveyard of polished wood.

Send their too long dormant message  
out across this vacuous world.  
Have them know that, but for your song,  
they are nothing but makeshift coasters.  
Remember, music put itself in their hands.  
But they have none.  
You do.



Two by John Grey

“Mount Washington”

Chill moves in like a wolf  
on the sheepish warm,  
Valley fills with fog.  
The tips of the firs poke clear.  
Their cones glisten  
like the rocks above the tree-line.  
Across the meadows,  
death pulls wings off  
the last swarms of a season's flies.  
I'm perched between eagle and cloud,  
buffeted and then calmed  
by air's capricious concentration.  
It's my final climb before the first snows.  
A week from now, I'll be holed up in my cottage,  
reading Melville by the fire,  
looking up at where I am now,  
seeing nothing of myself.

## "Running Into Someone I Hadn't Seen in Years

We talked and laughed  
about the old days  
for an hour or more.  
We wondered what happened  
to this one or that one.  
Did he end up in jail?  
Could she be as lovely now  
as she was then?  
Then it was time to part.

It's weird  
how you meet an old friend  
in such an unexpected way.

You make no plans  
to see each other again.

But you reel in  
a few moments  
of your old life  
from someone who was there.

You hold onto those times.  
But you lose the one  
who gave them to you.

# The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

There are already three of us on the front bench-seat of my dad's VW microbus. The girl driving stops and gets out and another girl slides onto the seat, propping herself precariously over the gearshift, and the driver gets back in. Four girls in the front, and I assume, without looking over my shoulder, that there are more in the two rows of seats behind us. The VW sways when we turn around.

Let's go to the water park! one girl says in that enthusiastic way some young people have that is infectious and so we head off. The car is parked and there are two entrances – one for women and one for men – for changing into swimming gear.

I haven't brought any swimming gear, but you can rent it. It doesn't seem terribly odd at the time to do so.

The showers – you have to shower before entering – have showerheads coming out everywhere, the walls, the ceiling, the floor. There's nowhere you can go to get dry. No one in there bothers to have a towel. When you are done showering, there's a tiny exit that you sit down for and slide out to the waterpark. There's a long line there, waiting for people to slowly crouch and move on. The one thing on my mind is where are my dad's carkeys.

There's nowhere to get dry enough to find the girls, get the keys and just leave. It seemed like such a good idea before, but now is just a merciless Birkenau of nozzles pointing every which way and never allowing one to blink away the water. And with that thought, everyone here is either an old man or a small, parentless child. No toilets, just holes in the floor. No sinks. This bodes ill.

JK - cyberspace




## Contributors:

**Anthony Acri**, from the environs of Pittsburgh, PA, writes, “A story of an American Satyricon, a picaresque novel of the sort New York used to make when it was Marlo and Truman’s emerald city; before, alas, it became a cesspool, as my father called it, of the sick and the dying, amid revamps and revivals of A Music Man or Guys and Dolls between forced dark nights. I started a book like this when I was fifteen and a magazine that as then trashing Citizen Kane and Elvis and Mad,, and had caused a Pulitzer Prize winner to commit suicide, I saw his mother on the old Tom Snyder show on NBC, and would move on to Trump, but doing it for a segregationist wishing to bring the democrats back into to its Crow eating roots, I wish to recall and remember when before it became so decent and noble , when it was as Gore Vidal noticed, a rag , he called it the police gazette without the warmth, and who had sent Kelley girlish writers, and secretaries to dull and boring and not sunny at all Barbarian Turin, to trash and spit at Italo Calvino as he was interred, as living obituaries for Tennessee Williams wasn’t enough. Hell-world, I see the swells call it now, ...?, that WE, are stuck in, what we, Kemosabe, I didn’t vote for a segregationist who at heart, as Ovid loving Bill said, was at heart a fuck up and would be a dimwit forever. Enjoy your Lobster, Steverino.”

Until 2003, **David M. Harris** had never lived more than fifty miles from New York City. Since then he has moved to Tennessee, acquired a daughter and a classic MG, and gotten serious about poetry. His work has appeared in Pirene's Fountain (and in First Water, the Best of Pirene's Fountain anthology), Gargoyle, The Labletter, The Pedestal, and other places. His first collection of poetry, The Review Mirror, was published by Unsolicited Press in 2013. He is on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/david.m.harris1>. He is also the author of Democracy and Other Problems, an essay collection; Bill, the Galactic Hero: the Final Incoherent Adventure (a novel with Harry Harrison); numerous magazine articles; several published short stories; and two produced screenplays.

**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Stand, Santa fe Literary Review, and Sheepshead Review. Latest books, "Between Two Fires", "Covert" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the McNeese Review, La Presa and California Quarterly..





# Found Objects: an artist's life

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