

# What is the DEAL With The Alien Buddha???

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# Wayne F Burke

## The Old Lady

I asked the wife to blow me.

She said

blow yourself

I said

I can't

she said

then get one of your girlfriends to do it

I said

I don't have any you bitch

she laughed bitterly

said

who do you think you are fooling?

I wondered how much she knew and

how she knew it—

I said

why would I have a girlfriend with you  
around, honey?

She said

I don't know MISTER, you tell me.

I hated that “Mister”

hated those black knee-high boots she  
wore  
too

(that always meant trouble for me).

She stamped her foot and  
threw her mane of auburn hair around  
like a prima-donna racehorse in the gate  
at Saratoga.

She said

do not think you are getting away with anything  
Mister! I can see right through you!

I asked the wife if she was comfortable  
she said yes  
as comfortable as I can be around you

I said

what does that mean

she said

figure it out yourself

I said

you bitch, I should

she said

should what?

I said I don't know what

she said

how about you should wise-up a little?

I said

how about you should shut-up, a little

she said

don't tell me "shut-up" who do you  
think I am, one of your bimbos?

I said

my BIMBOS, oh boy, you have really lost it!

She said

you think?

I said

Yeah, you are gonzo, way out there...

She said

and how about you? Do you think you are "normal"?

I said

I never said I was

(whatever "normal" means)

she said

it means not you

I said

oh, it means you though, right?

She said

more so than you.

I said

do you know how idiotic you sound?

She said

me? Oh brother! You are something!

Said

people see through you from a mile away

and you don't even know it!

I said

what the hell you talking about?

She said

wouldn't you like to know?

I said

yeah, I would.

She said

I bet you would

MISTER.



## **Dick at the Fair**

Yeah

we was there one time

my wife and I

she was still alive

'68, '69, must have been

they had these pop-guns

you get five shots for a dollar

knock the pigeon off the

wire

my wife hit one dead center

it did not even budge

they must have nailed them down

my wife was ready to shoot

the guy

oh she was mad,  
you did not want to rile her  
she'd a killed you,  
threw a knife at me  
once,  
parted my hair--  
she beat-up two guys in a DENNY's  
one night  
then got into a fight with the cops  
I had to go to the station  
bail her out  
I should have left her there,  
hell,  
the cops begged me come and get her  
she told me they put her into a straight-jacket  
I don't know if it is true  
they could not stop her from  
talking though  
she talked more than anyone

I ever knew,  
like the radio--  
you think I am bad  
hoo-boy you should have heard her,  
could not get a word in edgewise  
I got so sick of listening,  
one day I pulled the car over,  
got out, and  
took a cab home,  
she had to walk back,  
had no money with her,  
I laid low after that  
did not dare make a peep,  
slept in the garage,  
with the door locked...  
What was it I started to say,  
anyway?  
Something about the Fair,  
wasn't it?

# **Heidi Blakeslee**

## **The Cats of 621 Sandwich Shop**

If my cats had a sandwich shop and each sandwich was named after one of them:

The Theo- Small pieces of hamburger mixed with small pieces of chicken patty on a bun soaked in tuna water (The water left over in an open can of tuna)

The Beans- organic field greens atop a bed of crunchy cat treats with a foie gras schmear, black bean tapenade, your choice of white or wheat

The Mimi- macerated tuna hidden inside a pita pocket

The Fern- two slabs of ham, thinly sliced turkey, and some mayo on a French baguette

The Lola- bologna and cream cheese on buttered Italian, comes with a side of sugar free jello

The Vinnie Vin- a big bowl of tomato soup and a toasted cheese

The Schmoop- a saucy meatball with cat treat dust and a purr (Extra purrs, 50 cents each)

## **Erntedankfest**

a woman and man enter the Erntedankfest  
the woman has fluorescent sneakers  
and short shorts on  
the man has tapered sweatpants  
and a long hoodie

the woman asks,

“Is this the Bedonkadonk Fest?”

the elderly woman wearing a crocheted vest  
featuring apples says,

“No ma’am. This is the Erntedankfest.”

confused, the man says,

“Wait, so this isn’t the Bedonkadonk Fest?”

the elderly woman says, “What’s a Bedonkadonk?”

The younger woman starts shaking her butt to an imaginary beat.

She said, “You know, Bedonkadonk.”

“Oh,” the woman exclaims laughing.

“No. This is a German harvest festival.”

# Mike Zone

## Mr. Good-Time

Like a faded second-rate candy bar  
chock full of nuts  
more nutty than sweet  
a pile of melted sorrow  
but he's having a good time  
bouncing gait  
on the way to the corner store  
sack full of empty tall boys  
in exchange for more  
tells me, he's conservative  
believes in hard work  
an aggressor against socialism  
"I'm a believer in the market"



Striking workers “Don’t bite the hand that feeds  
you”

“Fuck socialism”

Walks around all day

just fine

on disability

living

collecting cans, smoking pot, getting laid

nice place, 1pm corner run

like clockwork

everyday

always a smile on his face

talks about capitalism and Jesus

“as soon as I get better, I’ll go to work, get some  
land... 1200 acres unclaimed, put a trailer on it,  
grow my own food...fuck the government and their  
welfare whores.”

Pimpily faced strawberry blond not half bad, just left  
his place

multiple kids from multiple fathers

one of each flavor

a genuine rainbow of diversity

“fuck that, my kids don’t play here, I drive them  
across town to the nice park. Found designer jeans,  
shirts and skirts for them online.”

She’s an up and coming success story

A real networker

Mr. Good-Time’s brother just moved in

Chubby raisin caramel goo-drooper

they always argue

wanted to show me their guns

Goo-drooper “you’d like em’ my shit’s not  
registered. Fuck the government.”

always walking now with an army of slugs

egg drunk children ready to hatch

following

smile wide everyone!

Mr. Good-Time

his head goes down

his brother’s up

posture slumps

one smiles and bounces

the other does not

interexchange of hands on strawberry's ass

all of a sudden slug are gone

car backfires

Mr. Good-Time

shot by his brother

candy bar off the shelf

## **Red Focks**

Are you or a loved one suffering from lacerations in the uterus, from haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal mesh?! That's pretty gross! Here at Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka, we're thinking you should sue the people who made the defective trans-vaginal mesh, which you haphazardly inserted into your uterus...

Due to a recent class action lawsuit, Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka has awarded millions of dollars to women who suffer from lacerations in the uterus, from haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal mesh. If YOU would like to seek compensation for pain and suffering from haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal

mesh, CALL US NOW at 1-877-256-6398! That's 1-877-BLOODYV! Here at , Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka, if we don't get paid, if you don't receive compensation for your lacerations in the uterus, from haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal mesh! That number again is 1-877-256-6398. THAT's 1-877-BLOODYV! CALL NOW!

## **The Burrito**

Max and Joe Foote used to grow hydroponic bud in their mother's greenhouse that she hadn't stepped foot since the Carter administration. Every weekday in the summer of 2020, after their mom went to work, the brothers would fetch their gravity bong, and smoke dubious quantities of homegrown sticky-icky while playing Grand Theft Auto on Xbox Live and calling other teenagers 'homo' and 'retard'. Their mom usually kept the kitchen stocked with pizza rolls and whipped cream canisters that were always out of gas.

One day shortly before the beginning of the school year, the brothers were frustrated to find that there were no pizza rolls; there were no bagels; no fudgesicles. The baked teenagers had no car and no cash. They were hungry.

Max tried eating flour while Joe tried looking for coins in the sofa. Deep in a crevasse under the

armrest he felt a piece of paper. He pulled it up hoping it was money. It was a taco bell wrapper folded up with half of an old, cold, and moldy burrito inside the pocket. Joe tossed the burrito over to Max who put it in the microwave for ninety seconds to kill the bacteria. They ate it fast with their noses plugged holding back yack.

Max and Joe turned on the Xbox and prepared themselves to pone some newbs. Joe felt a revolution in his gut, and Max started sweating something truly salty and wet.

“Maybe we shouldn’t have eaten that burrito out of the couch” Max said just moments before projectile vomiting across the room, all over the brothers’ marijuana and video game paraphernalia. Joe ran into the bathroom and sprayed putrid black magma all over the floor. The kids lost track of up and down, and space and time became far out and funky.

Joe walked out of the bathroom drenched in shit and sweat. He was grinding his teeth. He wasn’t blinking. Max thought his brother looked like a

supernatural, extra-terrestrial, brain-slug, soul invader, so he picked up a lamp and hurled it across the room at Joe. The lamp shattered across Joe's skull. Joe ripped his t-shirt off like Hulk Hogan, and with his pants around his ankles, and still covered in sweat, shit, and finally blood, Joe charged Max. He tripped immediately and shat another splatter of crap across the living room carpet. Max picked up his mother's favorite folksy americana ceramic figurine and spiked it onto the back of his brother's head like a football player. He wanted to run out of the room, out of the house, and down the street to fresh air and freedom; but he slipped on his brother's dookie and fell back into sharp shitty shards. Max vomited some more.

Both the Foote brothers were incapacitated on the ground. Max felt a sensation as if he was tumbling vertically through parallel dimensions. Joe felt as if the ground below him was ascending while the heavens fell faster and faster, until everything intertwined and expanded.

Mrs. Foote came home on her lunch break to bring her sons a pizza, after she realized that she



hadn't left any food in the house. Her sons were naked and rolling around in their own shit and vomit. Mrs. Foote blamed herself. She brought her boys out back, hosed them off, bandaged their wounds, and brought them inside to feed them pizza and mop up their mess while they played video games like a couple of derelict shithead teenagers tripping balls on a type of fungus that was birthed in their couch; a fungus so rare that it would have been named after the little jerks.



The worst cancer plaguing the bowels of western culture is "Rob", the current 3-day-running Jeopardy champion, with his pussy face and the dickhole way he puts a smiley face in the 'o' of his name. I fucking hate that guy, and if you don't, you're part of the problem.



I walked into that 99cent store, and started sneezing, and sneezing, and sneezing. I sneezed 99times and an old man started following me around saying "bless you, bless you, bless you". All I wanted was some sleeping pills, and dog food. He followed me to the check-out line. I tucked my face into my shirt, and I sneezed, and I sneezed, and I sneezed. He assured me it was probably just allergies. I was like "Is that your professional opinion, Dr. Fuckface?!". I could have sworn it was hobgoblins.

Octane is just electrolytes for people who have tires as appendages.

DEVELOPING STORY: Top scientists confirm; prevent the spread of Crypto this summer by NOT shitting in public pools.

Crap babe! That keh d ovah there, with the caht, sells the best fukkin fried-dough in all of Reveah! Guaranteed to be biggah than your head; can you believe that? I asked him one time (I say), "What would you do if some Andre the Giant-ass-mongoloid-motherfucker walks up to you, trying to milk the situation?"... He say's to me (he say's) "Fack bro!, people like that got it r o u g h. Being all retahded, and disproportionate like that. Kehds in Africa dying of Colora n' shit. It's freakin queer, dude. It make it bigger than their head still". Class act.

Hands down, my favorite scene in *American Psycho* was when the dude fucked the pie. That guy was psycho af.

In my timeline, a member of the Rainbow Family managed to infiltrate the White House's kitchen staff, and slip a 10 strip of White on White Family Fluff into Donald Trump's chocolate milk. He freaked the fuck out, and nuked New Zealand. Dumb hippies.



Have you or a loved one been sexually assaulted by a celebrity or politician? That is NOT okay. Here at the Law Offices of Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka, we will seek legal compensation for your pain and suffering. Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka has gained an irrefutable reputation by receiving over fifty-eight-hundred-million-bazillion dollars for victims of tares in the uterus from haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal mesh, and now we're kicking it up a notch. Four out of five Americans have been sexually assaulted by a celebrity or politician in the year 2017. If you are one of them, you NEED to contact The Law Offices of Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka RIGHT NOW! Did Topher Grace touch your butthole, that's WRONG! Did Ted Cruz make a harassing comment

about the shape of your penis? Let's sue the monster! After a decade of successful malpractice lawsuit for tares in the uterus due to haphazardly inserted trans-vaginal mesh, Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka can and WILL make these famous pricks compensate you for your pain and suffering. Quentin Tarantino stick your feet in his mouth? What's wrong with him? Nancy Pelosi slip you a micky? Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka BELIEVES YOU. We don't get paid unless you gain compensation. Call the Law Offices of Carter-Weinstein-Piccolo-Piccolo-Morgen-Schwartz and Tahshanakka today at 1-877-256-6398! That's 1-877-BLOODYV!

# Pseudonym Lastname

(Ammi Romero and Red Focks)



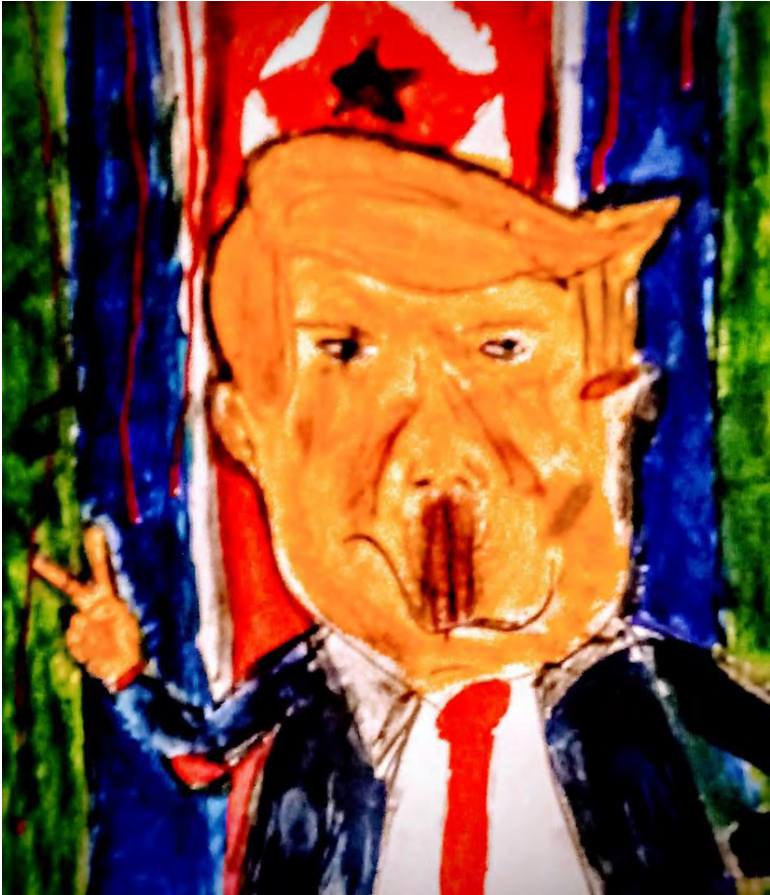












# Lewis J Beilman III

## Serial Senator

“Election day is here,” the newscaster said. “And polls show that Republican Theodore ‘Ted’ Cowell’s once narrow lead in Mississippi’s senatorial race is increasing. This comes as a shock to many since Mayor Cowell was the prime suspect in a string of murders in the early 1990s. The murders involved...”

“Change the channel,” Ted said to Mark, his campaign manager. They stood in Ted’s campaign headquarters as volunteers bustled around them. “We have a long day ahead—and there’s no reason to let the fake-news, scandal-mongering media sully this otherwise beautiful day. We’ll have some breakfast before we head to our rallies.”

Mark changed the TV channel from CNN to Fox News and took his keys from his pants pocket. He appeared slovenly in an untucked shirt and stained khakis. “Let’s roll,” he said.

Ted, however, looked a politician—strong jaw, blue eyes, wavy brown hair parted to his right. He was a lawyer, by trade, who, two years ago upon a platform to restore religion in public life, had become the mayor of Brandon—a small town outside of Jackson. During his

mayoral campaign, he had vowed to place a copy of the Ten Commandments in the rooms of each and every municipal building, including the restrooms. “Where most people do their reading anyway,” he said. And he made good on his promise until a federal court ordered the copies of the Ten Commandments removed from all government buildings.

Still, the controversy stirred up by Ted had created a media sensation. In the past couple of years, he was seen or heard on every conservative news outlet and was nicknamed “Ten-Commandment Ted”—or TCT for short—by his supporters. Then, when one of Mississippi’s Republican senators had declared that he would not run for reelection (after being caught having an affair with his “illegal” housekeeper), Ted took little time to throw his hat into the ring. He won the Republican primary handily, despite accusations that he may have been a serial killer.

Unlike “Ten-Commandment Ted,” the “Pearl River Killer” was a moniker Ted refused to embrace. The unpunished murderer had committed a series of ghastly crimes in the early 1990s, having used stones to bash the heads of seven prostitutes before disposing of their bodies on the banks of the Pearl River outside of Jackson. According to police, the killer seemed interested solely in murdering his victims since no

evidence of sexual assault was found at the crime scenes. However, one FBI profiler familiar with the case posited that the murderer may have obtained involuntary sexual gratification from the act of killing itself. Yet, to this day, the theory remained pure conjecture.

Ted, who was a student at Mississippi College's School of Law at the time, became the case's prime suspect and had been questioned more than once by local police. Police had been alerted to Ted because several people reported seeing a man who fit Ted's description in the areas where the abductions took place. Moreover, a law student who thought the police sketch of the Pearl River Killer bore an eerie resemblance to Ted had recounted to police that Ted often railed against "painted harlots" who deserved the "best of biblical justice."

Yet, Ted was lucky.

"No one can link me to those murders," Ted would tell the press whenever the allegations resurfaced. And he was right. In the summer of 1994, an intense storm had brought tornados and widespread flooding to the Jackson area. The storm destroyed several of the Jackson Police Department's evidence lockers, including the one that contained all of the physical evidence from the Pearl River Killer case. And,



as if to add to Ted's luck, shortly after the flooding, the case's best eyewitness—a prostitute who allegedly saw Ted walk away with one of the killer's victims shortly before the victim was murdered—had overdosed on heroin.

With no hard evidence—and no additional killings occurring—the eyewitness' death effectively ended the investigation.

Still, even if Ted had been the Pearl River Killer, he had learned his lesson. Once he was no longer under active investigation, he redoubled on his faith. He became a self-proclaimed "Soldier of God," married a woman from his church, and never again roused the suspicions of the law. He hadn't even received a parking ticket in more than twenty years. In addition, even though some in the press suspected him of having figurative—if not literal—skeletons in his closet, Ted didn't let that bother him. In fact, as a political candidate, he reveled in declaring himself "tough on crime." In a recent interview, echoing his sentiments from law school, he stated that he thought most of America was soft, mired in immorality, and in need of "righteous justice, particularly of the type found in the Old Testament."

Ted's tough talk endeared him to much of Mississippi's electorate. And his support was in full

array as he and Mark parked near Jimbo's Diner, where he often ate breakfast. Many of those walking on November's sun-drenched sidewalks wore red campaign buttons with white text that read "Ted for Senate!" One volunteer who stood on a corner waved a picket sign that broadcast Ted's campaign slogan, "A vote for TCT is a vote for me!"

As Ted exited the car, he waved to his supporters. "Thank you all for coming out," he said. "With your support, I'll be a winner today no matter what happens."

"Give 'em hell!" a man in denim overalls shouted. His red "Keep America Great 2020" hat shaded his black handlebar moustache.

Ted gave the man a thumbs-up. "Give 'em hell?" he said, chuckling. "Why should I do that? Our opponents will be in that infernal nether-region soon enough."

The crowd whooped and cheered.

Mark ushered Ted into the diner. "Let's move along, *Senator Cowell*," Mark said.

"Don't get too cocky," Ted said, walking to his usual booth. "I haven't won just yet."

A petite waitress wearing a purple apron approached. The apron had a "Have a Blessed Day" pin attached to it. The waitress smiled and brushed back

her blonde hair. Her blue eyes sparkled beneath the fluorescent light.

“Good morning, Mayor Cowell,” she said.

Turning slightly, she added. “Good morning, Mark.”

The waitress reached for the pen and paper in her apron pocket. But, before she was able to grab them, Ted spoke. “Sally, no need to write this down,” he said. “You know what I’ll have—two eggs—sunny-side up— and sausage and toast with coffee. Like always.”

“I’ll have the same,” Mark said, stroking his stubbled chin.

Sally smiled. “Your orders will be right out,” she said. “And good luck today. You know you have my vote!”

Ted gave Sally a thumbs-up. “That Sally’s a nice Christian girl,” he said to Mark. “You’d be hard-pressed to find one as sweet as her.”

Mark craned his neck. He looked Sally up and down as she walked toward the kitchen. “I wouldn’t say Christian thoughts are what come to mind when I see her,” he said.

Ted guffawed. “You unkempt rascal,” he said.

Ted’s warm feelings, however, were soon doused. Looking over Mark’s shoulder, he spied the television on the wall behind their booth. He did a

double take. “What the heck?” he said. “When did Jimbo start watching MSNBC?”

From the graphics at the bottom of the television screen, Ted saw that the TV was tuned to the network known as the scourge of conservatives. He struck his fist on the table. On the screen, a female field reporter was interviewing three voters who were leaving a Jackson, Mississippi, polling station. The voters—an elderly man, a middle-aged woman, and a younger man—all white—wore Ted Cowell campaign paraphernalia.

“From your apparel, I think I can guess who you supported in this senate race,” the reporter said. “Can I ask why you were drawn to Mayor Cowell’s candidacy?”

“Ted’s a God-fearing man,” the elderly man said, removing his Ole Miss baseball cap.

“And he’s right on the issues,” the matronly woman said. She wore glasses, a white blouse, and a plaid skirt. “He’s pro-life, pro-gun, and anti-Washington.”

The younger man nodded in agreement. He wore khakis and a navy-blue polo shirt. “He’ll show those establishment types a thing or two—and he’ll support the agenda of our great president.”

The reporter adjusted her earpiece. “And none of you has any concerns that Mayor Cowell may have been the notorious Pearl River Killer?”

“That’s a bunch of malarkey made up by *MSMBC* reporters like you,” the woman said, her eyes growing red behind her glasses. “Even if he had done it, he’s a man of God now. Surely, he’s made his penance. I don’t see why the press insists on tarnishing the name of such an honorable man.”

“Damn straight,” the younger man said, raising his right hand like a preacher holding a bible before his congregation. “You people come down here and try to rile real Americans up. But just think about how those so-called victims died. They were stoned, which is the way the Old Testament says adulterers and fornicators should be punished. Whoever killed those sinners was exacting biblical justice—which is just what Ted says we need.”

The older man stepped menacingly close to the reporter and glared directly into the camera. “I’ll tell you another thing—and everyone watching your fake news network should know the truth. Whoever killed those painted harlots was pardoned by God. I guarantee it. For proof, look at how the evidence for the case was destroyed—by flood and fury! Who else but God would have done something like that? I have no doubt that Ted Cowell is one of our Lord’s emissaries here on earth.”

The reporter stepped back from the man, her eyes wide. “So, if I understand you all correctly, you would vote for Mayor Cowell even if you knew for a fact he was the Pearl River Killer?” the reporter said.

“I’m still saying he didn’t do it,” the older man said. “But, even if he had, I would rather vote for someone who believes in swift justice for the wicked than for some Democrat who thinks baby-killing should be the law of the land.”

“Amen to that,” the woman said.

The younger man patted the older man on his shoulder. “You tell those snowflakes,” he said.

The reporter turned from the voters toward the camera, shaking her head. “There you have it,” she said. “Obviously, Mayor Cowell has strong support in Jackson. We’ll have to wait till tonight to see if that support translates to victory.”

Once the interview was over, Ted and Mark approached the cash register to pay their check. Jimbo came from the kitchen, leaving two aluminum doors swinging in his wake. He wiped his hands on his apron and squared the shoulders of his six-foot two-inch frame. “Hope you weren’t waiting long, Mr. Mayor,” he said. He nodded in Mark’s direction. “Oh, hi Mark.” His cheeks arched as he grinned, and he looked younger than his fifty years.

“No, we weren’t waiting long,” Ted said, paying for both his and Mark’s breakfasts. “And the food and service were great, as always.”

“We’re always proud to serve our next senator,” Jimbo said. He counted Ted’s change back to him.

“I’m glad,” Ted said with a smirk. “I thought you might have turned.” He pointed over Jimbo’s shoulder toward the television in the corner. “When I saw that channel on your TV, I started looking around this place for a ‘Black Lives Matter’ sign.”

Jimbo’s grin turned to a scowl. He seemed to age instantly. He glanced over his shoulder and saw that his television was turned to MSNBC. “What the hell?” he said, screwing up his eyes. “Someone must have been playing a prank or something.” He scrambled for the remote control, which he found on the far end of the counter several feet from the register. He hurriedly changed the channel to Fox News, exhaling when the familiar faces of the hosts of *Fox and Friends* appeared.

“Order is restored,” Mark said.

Jimbo apologized again. “I don’t know what happened, Mr. Mayor,” he said. “I’ll have to block that channel—and CNN too—so something like this doesn’t happen again.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Ted said. “We were just giving you a hard time. Anyway, what I learned this

morning is that the liberal media can no longer suppress the desires of American patriots. I have a good feeling about today.”

Outside Jimbo’s Diner, a gray-haired woman in a floral print dress waved to Ted. “Good luck, Senator!” she shouted.

Ted waved back to her then gave her a thumbs-up.

Mark opened the passenger-side door for Ted before getting behind the steering wheel. “We better get this show on the road,” he said. “We have a busy day today.”

The rest of the morning and afternoon was spent at campaign rallies in Jackson, Hattiesburg, and Gulfport. Ted, his wife, and their two teenage daughters stood on stage and waved to the throngs of TCT supporters in a last attempt to get out the vote. At each event, Ted leaned over a podium, flanked by the flags of the United States and Mississippi, and railed against those who wanted “to take God out of our statehouse, our workplaces, and our schools!” He ended each speech shouting, “Now, get out and vote if you haven’t already—and remember, a vote for TCT isn’t just a vote for me—it’s a vote for you!”

The crowds of white faces gazed ardently at Ted, and the attendees hooted and hollered at the conclusion



of each speech. Many of them waved Confederate flags in the air. Amidst the cheers and applause, people shouted, “Go get ‘em Ted!,” “Give Washington a swift kick in the ass!,” and “Jesus loves you, Ted!”

As Ted left the stage at his last rally, he wiped sweat from his brow and told Mark, “They love me. Let’s keep our fingers crossed, but I think we’re going to win this one.”

Mark allowed himself to smile. He felt confident too. “Let’s get back to Jackson, Mayor,” he said. “Polls will close in a few hours. You need to start rehearsing your victory speech.”

Ted patted Mark on the back before he kissed his wife and daughters goodbye. “Rest up when you get to the hotel,” Ted said to his family. “I think we’re going to be doing some celebrating tonight.”

His family drove back to Jackson in a separate car. Despite living in Brandon, which is a short drive from Jackson, Ted and his family would be staying the night in the hotel where the victory party would take place—in case the event went late into the evening.

On Ted’s and Mark’s drive back to Jackson, Ted rehearsed his victory speech. Mark interjected occasionally with a word or phrase he thought should be changed. In most cases, Ted took Mark’s advice, scribbling edits in the margins of the pages. Ted felt

remarkably calm. In fact, he experienced a serenity he hadn't felt in decades—a sort of release he had only felt a few times in his life.

Ted made the final adjustments to his speech then stared out the passenger's side window. He closed his eyes, but the adrenaline wouldn't let him sleep. Instead, he watched the scrub and tall pine flit past. At times, an expanse of forest or farmland interrupted the monotony of the landscape.

As Ted and Mark neared Jackson, the browns and greens of soil and foliage disappeared, replaced by the grays and silvers of concrete and glass. Ted sighed as he sighted the familiar homes, offices, and strip malls he had known for most of his life.

When they approached the bridge from Richland to Jackson, Ted spoke, more to himself than to Mark. "So this is where it happened," he said.

Mark, who hadn't heard Ted's voice for an hour, glanced at him. "Where what happened, Mayor?" he said.

Ted continued to stare at the muddy water flowing south beneath the bridge. "The girls," he said.

Mark shook his head. "Don't worry about that crap now," he said. "That's ancient history."

“Still, it’s a shame what happened to them,” Ted said. “Some of them were barely grown—just teenagers.” He bit his bottom lip.

“And all of them were junkies, whores, and parasites,” Mark said. “Don’t let rumors and innuendos about trash like that spoil what could be the best day of your life.”

Ted shook his head and snapped from whatever strange reverie had consumed him. “You’re damn right,” he said, straightening his spine and turning his eyes toward the city that awaited him. “The Lord deemed those Jezebels surplus to his requirements—and who are we to question his will?”

\* \* \*

Ted spent the remaining time before the polls closed in a hotel executive suite, holed up with his family and Mark. They watched election-day reports on Fox News, and Ted paced in between the room’s two queen-size beds, waiting for the returns to come in.

“Relax, Teddy,” his wife said as she applied powder to her face. “It’s going to be fine.” She shut her compact and blew a kiss to Ted. She wore a red dress that revealed a modest amount of cleavage.

Mark bit his nails. He had shaved and even wore a blue suit. “I’m going to check on the ballroom,” he

said, heading for the door. “I want to see how many people are there. I’ll be right back.”

Ted’s daughters played with their phones. They wore matching pink dresses that covered their chests and were cut below the knee. One of them looked up briefly. “It’s seven o’clock now, Dad,” she said. “The polls should have closed.”

Ted took the remote control from the nightstand next to the bed. He switched from Fox News to the local Fox affiliate. A reporter spoke with a voter outside a Jackson polling place. The voter said he had been one of the last people to vote.

A few minutes later, Mark reentered the room. “We have a full house,” he said. “Any news?”

“Not yet,” Ted said, switching from the local channel back to Fox News. “The polls just closed about ten minutes ago.”

Then, a surprise occurred. Across the bottom of the television screen, a banner appeared. It read, “BREAKING NEWS: THEODORE ‘TED’ COWELL WINS MISSISSISSIPPI SENATE SEAT.”

Ted’s jaw dropped. He had anticipated spending a long night waiting for the election returns—not for such a swift verdict. Ted’s family and Mark cheered and approached Ted. Ted waved them off, still in disbelief. He increased the volume on the television.

One of the Fox News pundits explained why they had called the election early. “Our exit polls show that Senator-Elect Cowell overwhelmingly carried Mississippi’s rural areas and did surprisingly well in the suburbs,” the pundit said. “Even though he fared less well in urban areas, the large margins he claimed outside of the cities should be enough to carry him to an easy victory. We feel quite confident declaring him the winner.”

Ted needed no further explanation. He loosed a feral howl, turned toward his family, and opened his arms wide. His family embraced him.

“My husband’s a senator,” his wife said, wiping tears from beneath her cheeks.

“Way to go, Dad!” his daughters said in unison.

After basking in his family’s congratulations, Ted turned toward Mark. He hugged him, too. “I couldn’t have done it without you,” he said.

“You deserve it, Senator,” Mark said. “We had God on our side.” He patted Ted on the back. “Now, we better get you down to the ballroom. I’m sure there are a few hundred ecstatic TCT supporters waiting to hear your voice.”

\* \* \*

With his family and Mark close behind him, Ted approached the stage. He waited—obscured by a

curtain—as an emcee announced his arrival. “Let me introduce to you, the next senator from the great state of Mississippi, Theodore ‘Ted’ Cowell!”

Ted’s supporters went wild. They clapped and cheered, hooted and hollered, stomped and shouted. Soon, a chant arose. “TCT, TCT, TCT,” the crowd bellowed.

As Ted stood on the stage’s periphery, still hidden from view, the sound system erupted with the Hank Williams Jr. classic, “A Country Boy Can Survive.” Ted looked at Mark.

“Go ahead,” Mark said. “That’s your cue.”

Ted strode across the stage, waving to the throng. His family waited in the wings with Mark. Ted gave the cheering crowd a thumbs-up.

After a brief speech in which Ted reveled in vanquishing his liberal doubters and restoring righteousness to politics, he invited his family and Mark onstage to celebrate. “Always remember, we’re the party of family values,” he said to the crowd.

As Ted’s family and Mark neared the podium, Ted heard a dull thud that reminded him of the once familiar sound of stone on skull. Someone had released the balloons and confetti from the rafters above the stage, and the lever used to release them had created the hollow sound that drew Ted’s attention.

Ted gazed upward and opened his arms wide. Hundreds of red balloons and thousands of strands of white confetti descended upon him. He grinned ear-to-ear. *Like being bathed in blood and brain matter*, he thought. Reflexively, he ejaculated in his pants. His grin faded, and his face became a portrait of inner peace.

The crowd chanted ever louder, "TCT, TCT, TCT."

They loved their senator.

# LB Sedlacek

## Happy Little Clouds

Some kind of fluff  
there's plenty of that  
it means really nothing  
shouldn't we be rhyming  
or writing about rainbows  
and clouds or clowns  
painting or water colors  
all that fun fluff  
the dark sets in  
and all around but  
if you don't read  
poetry and come on  
if you aren't a  
poetry teacher or student  
or consider yourself a  
poet are you really  
reading it or are  
you watching public TV



and learning how to  
paint or write or  
to paint with words  
while all the while  
insides churn minds twist  
overlooked, we all are  
and while it's expected  
sometime it's too much  
so know this and  
know only this we  
meaning us poetical poets  
if we so choose  
would write the very  
best suicide notes ever.

## **The Ducks are Missing**

at the park

I fondly call

the duck park

how can I

call it the

duck park with

no ducks all

I see are

squirrels and in

the creek there

are no fish

either, yes the

ducks are missing

and so are

the signs telling

you not to

feed the ducks  
and the duck  
feeders that sold  
the duck food  
are gone too  
which is probably  
the real reason  
the ducks are  
missing!

## **Cacography of Chickens**

if chicken scratches were  
writing  
then possibly maybe they  
would  
rule the world with  
their  
less than beautiful writing  
written  
in secret bad spelling  
chicken  
scratching in the dirt  
only  
the chickens can read.



## **WITH GEORGE ORWELL IN HIS FARM**

Known the day of general elections  
That to any astrologer  
It would have dared  
Coinciding with the "holy week"  
To my Ass "Calambre"  
To whom I have in Orwell's farm  
Noticed him find a great void  
In the manger  
And a dilemma in his thought:  
Thinking about choosing going to vote  
Pacing the leaves and tips  
From tree branches  
Or leaving in the procession of bouquets  
Full of grace and majesty  
With prayers, palms and branches.  
- "The procession is too long  
And going to vote is worthy  
Of a peculiar apology of the Asses "  
He think  
He knows that he not have to defraud  
Especially to children and youngs  
Because singing after the procession

They will want to come ride him  
Doing, also, the favor of the possible vote  
For the quadrupeds that will govern us  
That men esteem for them  
Being the honor and boast so much  
For others.  
That democratic glory they have;  
Vote that Cambriles has by useful  
Limited to the asses' thinking.  
On the other hand, convenient and fair  
To be part of the compliment  
Of the eternal and sacred rebellion  
That is heard in yards and barns  
Villages, farmhouses, countries  
That the press and television  
Renowned acclaim  
Being, as they announce  
The light, life and path of the mortals.  
Although wide is the path  
Very small is the field  
In which one can lord it over  
Well, Man and Hee-Haw  
Are as inseparable as Sancho and Rucio  
Being almost impossible

Do not listen to the ringing of bells  
Announcing the glory saying:  
Come, holy fascism, come without delay  
May your holy people waiting  
Extending in a vast field  
Full of grace and majesty  
From the ears to the tail  
Your physique and your moral  
Patenting the Asses' beautiful qualities  
The honors and glories  
With whom together  
They will come to reign over us.



# Denise Thompson-Slaughter

## Brooding about Billy Collins

I load the dishwasher,  
listening to Prairie Home Companion on the radio.  
Billy Collins is reading three new poems.  
I love Billy Collins but  
famous poets always make me wonder  
why I'm not a famous poet too.  
Billy Collins dispenses with meter, rhyme,  
alliteration,  
and usually even metaphor.  
True, his poems are funnier than mine,  
although mine are often funny,  
and I can wring all the poetic elements out of mine  
too—  
like right now, for instance.

My husband gets off the phone with our daughter  
and comes to the kitchen to make a sandwich.  
He starts speaking over Billy Collins,  
saying our daughter is finally reading  
Murder on the Orient Express  
and is stumped because everyone has an alibi.  
“Keep reading,” he told her. “Don’t see the movie  
until you’ve finished.”

He starts telling me about the conversation  
that I’d already overheard.

“Sssh!” I tell him. “I’m listening to Billy Collins.”

“What’s his issue?” he asks, assuming Billy is  
commenting on the news  
or has joined the ranks of this week’s fallen idols.  
I ignore him.

The poetry segment finishes, and

a band starts playing a country tune

that sounds like “Turkey in the Straw.”

It is very compelling.

I stop worrying about my poetry and the dishes and

fold my hands under each corresponding armpit,

flapping my wings while

keeping time with my right-foot clog—

carefully balancing on my stronger left leg.

My elegant purple robe sways in time to the music,

like that robe seen disappearing down the train car

in Agatha Christie’s mystery.

Turning round from cutting a tomato, my husband  
pronounces dryly:

*“No good can come of that.”*

## **Yard Sale Haiku**

What a perfect day  
to sit outside in the sun  
and not sell a thing!

# **Dustin Pickering**

## **The God Choice Awards 2065**

i.

Everyone knew the apocalypse was coming someday. After all, the Christ told us the endtimes were due and he left a few signs for us to look for. Some thinkers speculated that the endtimes already happened during the times of Paul the Apostle. Jewish scholars often tempered their arguments against the divinity of Jesus with rhetoric concerning Paul's eschatology.

In the year 2025, it was announced that the final days were upon us. Television anchors and newscasters were in doubt—how could it be? The Holy Scriptures were right? The secular world was aghast in outrage. God could not come to our planet. He was made of fairy dust and he corrupted our world with his dogma. Freedom was a joke under his thumb. The concept of the endtimes had declined in popularity and people developed their own religions and thoughts around new concepts. St. Paul's eschatology indicated that the end already happened when Jesus was buried and resurrected. No one, I mean no one, trusted the announcement of the endtimes.

It came over a large speaker.

“Attention! Attention all civilians! Civilization has reached maximum corruption. We are the most decadent race in existence. Humanity must be redeemed and the world forgotten. There is something new ahead of us. The end is near! The end is near! Beware of falsehoods and faithlessness. We are in the final stages of civilized decay. Continue on your path. Do not renounce your dreams. Salvation is at hand. Beware! The future of humankind is above us.”

After the dozens of wars recently fought, the birth of neo-colonial far right identitarian policy imposed from above, the races in riot against one another, continuous earthquakes and floods all over the world, disease and famine growing, poverty among women at a height not seen in hundreds of years, and cruelty among the masses at its worst ever, hopelessness flooded humanity in a way never before seen. Even Scripture was tossed to the fire. People grew in doubt toward deities and stopped trusting one another. The apocalypse would emerge soon.

The spontaneous emergence of fear and desolation accompanied by hope and revelation: the apocalypse. How can these two streams of being flood the universal human soul at once? They had for thousands of years. The Lord picked up these trippy vibes in the air—the twelve currents of IsReal, mistranslated into twelve tribes, were actually states and phenomenon, not political entities. However, the future of human awakening bled into the text of Scripture and the word “tribes” became the source material for Zionism. The shifting realities within the human soul, dubbed “IsReal”, became manifest in the country of Israel in 1948. The United Nations reluctantly acknowledged the country as it’s kibbutz were struggling to fight off Arab warriors. When the British visited the small villages to assess the situation, they were chased off by Jewish farmers who believed strongly in Israel. For years, they had toasted to “Next year, in Israel.” Now the Zionism they dreamed, that beautiful mountain of the soul, became a political reality and utopian visions melded with truth in splendor.

To his chagrin, Michael Drezier lost his doubt. A stern atheist for most of his life, he decided to visit Israel to see this new political reality. If it was everything said of it, he would turn over his agnosticism for good. He would convert to the ways

of Christ. God was already at work on his destiny. His head was blessed with golden fire.

Michael spent six weeks in the country of Israel in the year 1952. This was prior to the Six Day's War. Hostilities were not at their peak. Yet Michael talked with the Prime Minister.

“We all believe this is God's land and we are God's people. It is our holy mission, we tell others, to bring God into the world,” PM Ariel Bleikowitz told Michael. “The Jewish people are survivors. In your country, a survivor becomes a whiner. We always had hope that God's justice would come to fruition through us.”

Michael asked, “What if you are destroyed? Do you have enemies? Why the violence?”

“We must protect what we have. God ordained our mission. He gave us this land. We are bringing the next state of being into the world as we did when we wrote Scripture.”



“But Scripture, as you call it, is human. A human hand held an instrument and composed it. It was edited, translated, and anthologized by humans. How am I supposed to believe it is truly God who speaks from it?”

“Much of what the Scriptures told was meant for us, strictly. Books were removed that did not contain the universal message of salvation.” PM Bleikowitz blinked sullenly. She didn’t really have the answers.

“But why do you not believe in Jesus Christ? Most of the Western world believes in his divinity. Even the Arab people believe in him as a prophetic voice. However, you deny him as Savior.” Michael paused. “If he isn’t the Savior of humanity, all of Scripture is based on pretense as I have often argued.”

“Michael, I consider the Gospel to be a kind of midrash.” She paused and scratched the sweat from her brow. “I cannot explain this. It is a mystery. The truth is Jesus was one of us—a Jew. We are tired of being slaughtered and mocked. He is the very face of us. Was he real? As real as Israel. I cannot confirm any more than that.”

The sun shone into Michael's eyes and he grew tired and impatient. As an atheist, he was often rebuked concerning his views on Biblical texts and it annoyed him. He couldn't buy that God descended and expected his worship, him, a small man in a lousy world.

"You know, we are a tiny fraction of this entire being in life. We are small creatures cast by God into a large universe. We aren't alone, though, I know it." The Prime Minister smiled, deep sorrow in her eyes. "The pogroms were bad enough. I had some grandparents who were tortured during them, their houses burned to the ground. A certain mystic in Russia advocated Jewish extermination. That book—Protocols of the Elders of Zion? He wrote it. To dismiss our mission. The world hates us. Why, Michael? We are people trying to live. We want the best for everyone."

Michael had tears in his eyes. In his heart, he felt for this person. She continued to talk to him, his ears open.

"After Hitler, what was next? Our people have grieved the loss of God's land since before the Christian era. God promised return. We have

returned.” Prime Minister Bleikowitz sighed. “I can’t discuss this anymore. Enjoy your visit.” She closed the curtains to block the light and heat from outside. She then looked Michael in the eyes directly, calmly. “Michael, it is the end. Don’t doubt this. This is my faith.” Something in her words struck Michael deeply. When he left her presence, he was not the same.

Late night, at his hotel Michael smoked a cigar. When it reached its final ash, he stuffed it into the ground and went to his room. When he got to his bed, he pulled a notebook from the drawer. He picked up the pen on the dresser and began to write. What he wrote is considered the last of the Solemn Prophecies.

War after war challenged the legitimacy of the State of Israel whose flag stood tall in spite of the death toll. As humanity rolled into the next millennium like a limousine into an impoverished neighborhood, fear escalated and people lost their minds in the millions. Energies were at their height when finally something happened that relaxed things. Hope sprang eternal.

Michael died and left the paper he wrote with his family. He requested it be opened on April 1, 2065 by the eldest of the sons. When the son opened it, he passed out on the floor. It echoed what had taken place for the previous 100 years and noted what would take place in the coming months. The text follows.

“Sons and daughters of humanity: a moment has struck me anew. The State of Israel will face war after war, and will struggle relentlessly on Yom Kipper. The Suez Canal will be the end of the British Empire as we know it. After the wars, America will become the world power. After the year 2000, American power will begin its decline while the dollar remains steady. An unpopular president will be elected who will move the American embassy to Jerusalem, signifying an attitude that will dominate until the end of the world. Israel’s struggle to exist will end as the Son of Man returns.

In the year 2065, a plan will be unveiled yet to be disclosed. This plan will finalize the existence of humanity within the ideality of its preconceived intention, before darkness set over its eyes. You will find this prophecy buried under the Hill of the Skull where Jesus Christ was crucified. It is there the

contest of the endtimes will take place and determine the fate of the world.”

In November 2016, President Trump came into power. His hair slightly messy and numbers short at his Inauguration, he still appeared suave and strong. He would be the one to begin the end.

ii.

President Trump had been locked in a cryogenic mold for the previous four decades. His mind, it turned out, was so brilliant that science needed to study it. His ability to negotiate revealed itself in his second term.

In November 2020, after the SCOTUS struck down multiple laws concerning reproduction that were abysmally stupid, President Trump was elected to a second term. The blue cities turned red with rage and began destroying everything. Riots went on for 30 days and 30 nights. Finally, the President issued a proclamation.

CNN reported in full. “My fellow Americans! Please do be bold and stop this despicable behavior. I do not plan to take your rights, your dreams. You may continue your lives with the rule of law sacrosanct. My first term was dirty with the Mueller report, the investigations following, the violence in Russia that annexed Ukraine, the entire world set ablaze after climate change was revealed to be a hoax. I promise you peace, so please have a seat. Come to the White House, pay me a visit. Send your emissaries. Let’s discuss. I have knowledge as revealed in the President’s book only I have access to. It is time to reveal the 12 secrets only I know, only other presidents know.”

This shook the country. Rioting stopped.

ANTIFA negotiated carefully with its allies to determine who would visit the White House on their behalf. Comrade G. Stern Woody was finally appointed. The leaders of the alt-right finally admitted they were a satirical art movement designed to infuriate the left, but even they appointed their own ambassadors to hear the 12 secrets. AFL-CIO appointed Don Drummand to visit. Each organization voted for their own emissaries to the White House.

President Trump cooked hamburgers himself. He said his wife made a “mean salad” for everyone. Everyone nodded delightfully as they stuffed their faces.

The President pulled the curtains and smirked. “Folks, you are here for a reason. Many wondered why I moved the Embassy, why I had Schiff assassinated, why I did all the things I did. Yes, I even dismantled the Federal Reserve. But I am not the one in control.”

“Mr. President, who is?” said Mr. Drummand. “If not the leader of the once free world, who?”

“I don’t know,” the President responded, “but I can say I know things. We are here to hear what I can reveal.”

Everyone nodded as they stuffed their faces.

“Most of the 12 secrets are irrelevant.” He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket. It was soft and wrinkled. He unfolded it carefully. “Sorry, it’s been washed a few times.”

The President spoke carefully and concertedly to the crowd of emissaries.

“The 12 secrets. I am going to give you the gist of the plot. Lyndon Johnson killed Kennedy. This signaled the end of the American Dream. Johnson was a Soviet spy all along. Nixon, the one I modeled my presidency after, turned out to be perfectly innocent. The entire thing was a setup. The powers created the illusion necessary to get him out of office before he saved the world. Nixon had a lot of connections. Reagan didn’t exist. He was a talking head on Animal Planet they just pasted a mask on. He didn’t even know the Star Spangled Banner. Finally, the end is near.”

“Mr. President, what end?”

“The end of our world as we know. You know, the REM song.”

Within hours, the rioting stopped, the economy drastically improved, wars ceased completely, and everyone was happy until 2065 when the Solemn Prophecy was read. All faces turned sad.



Scientists revived President Trump so he could dig up the final prophecy.

“I’ve been asleep for decades! Call this beauty sleep,” he joked. They flew him to Israel. They had already dug under the Hill of the Skull and found a plastic box which was possibly 3000 years old, and it was sealed with dry bloodied fingerprints.

“The blood of Pilate.” The President wiped his teeth as he adjusted them. “Yes, that was one of the 12 secrets.” He paused for a moment. “Let’s sing the Star Spangled Banner.” The world sang.

The President solemnly opened the box. The lid was tight. Finally, his frail hands lifted it as it broke from the box itself. He wiped the dirt off. He pulled a scroll from the center of the box. “The Seventh Scroll.”

Former President Trump read the writing.

“The contestants for God of the Year are Loki, Hammarabi, Venom, Jesus Christ, and Marcel Duchamp. How do you vote?”

The world voted for Jesus Christ.

“Jesus Christ, you are the winner. Please come forward for your trophy and give us a speech.”

Jesus appeared at the top of Mount Golgotha. He held the trophy in his hands. He lifted it. It was a golden hammer on marble stone. In the stone was carved “God of the Year 2056”.

Jesus smiled. “Thank you all for this award.” The world cheered. “I would like to thank the committee that sponsored this! Thank you, former President Donald Trump. Now, this contest promised to be the final one. I tell you, there’s one thing the world forgot years ago.” Everyone was silent. “I can’t tell you enough how unfair the world has been to you all. I know this, I suffered with you. I carried my cross and you have as well. Be a good sport! I have to tell you, though, you have everything wrong.”

There was silence as the world waited for Jesus to tell them why they were wrong.

“You can’t vote for God. This contest is a fraud.”

There was universal outrage.

“I have always been your god. You can't vote for me, or vote me out. Godhood is not a democracy. You can't vote for the outcome.”

Jesus' ratings fell significantly, constantly, for the remainder of the existence, yet he steadily remained God and did not give a damn.

# Charles Rammelkamp

## Bio Tag

“Include a fifty-word biographical statement with your poetry submission,” the journal’s guidelines read.

I cringed, thinking  
of my boring bio tag,  
advertisements for little magazines,  
“a finalist for the Nobody Gives a Shit award.”

Why not punch it up with lies?  
This is creative writing, after all.

“Charles Rammelkamp lived with wolves  
for the first twenty years of his life,  
their howls evident in his verse.”

“Charles Rammelkamp traversed the length  
of the Orinoco in a canoe  
he made with birchbark and soda cans.  
He invented the famous sarkidiomi form  
after the indigenous waterfowl.”

“Charles Rammelkamp’s two years  
orbiting Earth aboard the space station  
prepared him for his cosmic poetic explorations.”

“Charles Rammelkamp bit off Mike Tyson’s ear.  
And he liked it.”

## **Magical Watermelons**

“They’re like a natural Viagra,” Ollie advised.

“Rich in citrulline, an amino acid  
that relaxes and dilates the blood vessels,  
just like Ciallus, Levitra, all the others.”

But Baxter looked skeptical.

Was this really all he needed  
to make his wife Denise happy?  
After twenty years of marriage  
he’d lost his desire for his wife,  
who in her mid-forties,  
had become horny as a cat in heat,  
rubbing against him in bed,  
fondling him when least expected.

“What have you got to lose?”

Ollie’s shoulders rose and fell  
with the tidal rhythm

of his simple proposition.

“I don’t even like watermelon,”

Baxter muttered after a moment.

But was this the magic

to save his marriage?

## **Curses and Plagues**

“Zolstu veren azoy raykh az deyn almonehs mahn  
zol zikh kay nmol nit zorn vegn parnoseh,”  
the stooped old man with the hat and beard  
muttered when I narrowly missed him,  
pulling the car into the curb  
outside Zake’s Bagels in Pikesville.

I apologized all over the place,  
but fortunately, I reminded,  
I hadn’t hit him.

Still, he looked annoyed.

“I should watch where I’m going,”

I concluded, heading into the bagel shop.

Paying for my half a dozen poppy and sesame seed  
bagels,

I asked the guy behind the cash register,  
peyes trailing down his cheeks like vines,  
if he knew what the man had said to me,



repeating as best I could remember.

“You should become so rich,” he laughed  
“that your widow’s husband  
won’t have to worry about earning a living.”

### **How Can I Use This?**

Filling my car at the gas pump,

I watched the Honda pull up

at the pump next to mine.

When nobody got out,

I glanced over: a man and a woman

apparently arguing in the front seat,

cigarettes waving like wands

as they made their points.

A few moments later the passenger door flew open,

a tall, haggard woman got out,

bags under her eyes like a frog's throat,

a blue nylon jumpsuit whose stripes

made her seem even longer,

cigarette pasted to her lip like Andy Capp.

She stalked into the kiosk

where customers paid for gas,

chips, candybars, junk food and cigarettes

displayed in wire racks.

The man stayed in the car,  
hunched over the steering wheel,  
ballcap pulled over his eyes  
like the getaway driver.

A minute later the lady came back,  
opened the passenger door, climbed in.  
“I wanted that Charleston Chew so bad,” she  
sighed,  
slamming the door after her.  
The engine revved and they drove away.

## **Doing the Twist**

“Don’t get your panties in a twist,” Brenda chided.

“All you have to do  
is say you’re going to the men’s room  
when she brings the check,  
then just keep on going out the door.  
I’ll be waiting in the car.”

“But it’s wrong,” I whispered,  
trying to put an ethical spin  
on Brenda’s implicit accusation of cowardice.  
She rolled her eyes.

“Listen,” she hissed, “  
“I’ll change your diapers for you  
if you’re really so upset.  
Want me to do that?”  
Mischievous in her smile.  
“Change your diaper?”

She stood from the table,  
skirt swaying a promise  
as she sauntered out the door.

“Check?” the waitress asked,  
interrupting my reverie  
as I watched Brenda  
disappear around the corner.

# **Nelson Kamkuimo**

## **Trouble in the bush**

It was a man, a hunter

He was moving on a narrow path

Followed by his dog

It was during the rainy season

But that looked nicer than the day before

The sun was smiling like a child

From its humble dwelling

At this period of the year

There were more predators for less preys

So hunters didn't have great dreams

And intended to catch anything they would see

As they moved along the bush

They saw a rat hole. The hunter stopped

And so did the dog, sitting on its hind legs

The hunter dug the deep and endless hole

He went on digging when a rat sprung

Out of the hole. The dog neither barked nor chased

The hunter raised the gun. "Save me my God!" said  
the rat.

"save me from the attack of an armed robber."

The hunter put the gun down and laughed

"I never knew that animals could talk" he said

"Neither did I," said the dog, laughing.

The hunter threw the gun

And ran away, calling for help and crying to God

# **Khristian E Kay**

## **How Other People Talk**

my wife does not like my poetry

actually that's not true

my poems she likes

well some at least

it's my writing she does not like

she says it's slang - vulgar

too profane

she says the value of words

shouldn't be desecrated

for shock



I say I just recreate

I write how other people

talk everything I say

has been spoken and done

before - she says

"nobody fucking talks that way"

## **Eighteen Hundred “Good mornings.”**

I stand post outside the classroom door  
welcoming my children in each morning  
Other students, not mine, pass by:  
“What’s up?” they say with a head nod,  
a handshake here – fist bump there  
a few even smile and wave but mine –  
mine are afraid to show affection  
show that they like me - to violate that code  
is a sign of weakness – no emotion –  
not until they are safely hidden inside the room

I say to them: “Good morning.” as they enter  
They respond with scowling faces and  
sour groans mumbling “fuck you bitch”  
“shut up talking to me” or worse: nothing –  
I think once someone said ‘good morning’ back  
but then corrected themselves  
“I mean, fuck you”

# Kevin Ridgeway

## When Her Father Saw My Penis

I gave my beer-slurred  
commentary to him of  
photographs we had  
developed from a  
disposable camera  
we'd used the previous  
Thanksgiving with her  
mother's family.

I accidentally shared  
a photograph his  
daughter had taken  
of my penis while

I took a beer-drunk piss  
in the upstairs bathroom  
of her Aunt Chrissy's house,  
and I tried to shuffle it quickly

out of view while I apologized  
for showing him the same  
floppy boner he would go  
on to be sure never  
violated his daughter  
with mediocre sex again.

## **Bunk Bed Empire**

my brother slept in the bottom  
slot of a bunk bed carved from  
artificial wood that was painted  
in midnight colors similar to  
the wrapper of a discontinued  
gourmet candy bar in a bedroom  
across the hall from my bed-less  
room that was overpopulated  
by armies of mismatched action  
figures, disfigured wind-up dolls  
who sang obscure demented  
lullabies outside the plastic front  
entrance to a playhouse  
very few other kids visited,  
sleeping next to my mother  
with reruns of The Gong Show  
as our televised night lights  
which led to my desperate  
attempts to convince  
my brother to let  
me sleep in the empty,  
unused top bunk

of his slumber palace  
which he refused my  
access to until the day  
he went back east  
for college, and I stared  
at the ceiling, jacked off  
and dreamed of it being  
my turn to get  
the fuck out of there.

## **Playthang**

her booty shines  
from the cover  
of a semi erotic  
novel about  
chocolate  
fuck thunder  
and we read  
it out loud  
to each other  
in the back  
of the bookstore,  
but we never  
bother to buy it.

## **What I Do with My Rejection Letters**

Upon reading the form opening that means I'm in trouble,  
I begin to unbuckle the belt on my relaxed fit jeans.  
As the editors go through how my poetry is just not right  
for them at this time, I begin to wiggle out of my pants  
until they are around my calves and down to my ankles.  
I stand up to announce my latest rejection letter to the  
cute young librarians at the small branch near the Pacific  
Ocean that I now frequent, and I hand my trousers over  
to the one librarian I've got the biggest crush on and then  
I read them some of the rejected poems in my boxers,  
and they all agree that with a little revision, those poems  
could be stand-out gems in a small journal of renowned,  
and that's when the lady at the front desk starts laughing  
to inform me that my poetry indeed stinks, but she bought  
a copy of my chapbook anyway just in case I get arrested  
or become famous for something more ridiculous than  
spending my hours pining for librarians, reading  
my sloppy poetry until those spoken for ladies of  
the dewey decimal sisterhood must lock me out with  
a kiss on the cheek and a prayer I'll finally get a job.