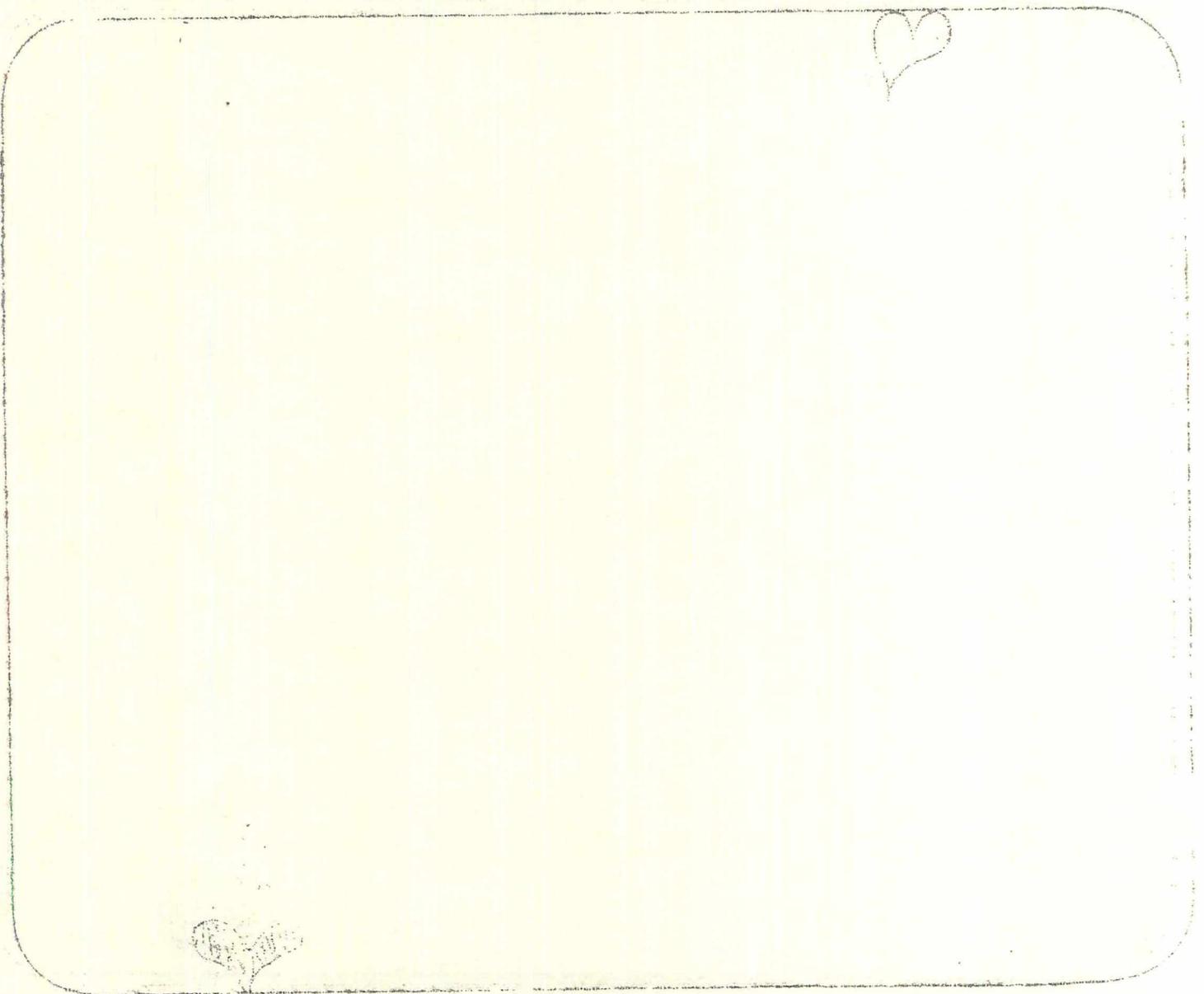


Masque



W. P. 25 M



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MASQUE

16

MASQUE, Volume III, Number Two, Whole Number 16, is brought to you in comparable color by that lovable rogue William Rotsler, fabled in song and story (some of which could even be told in mixed company). This scrap of flippery bursts forth all shiny new from 971 North La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles 69, California, whether you are ready for it or not.

As you trudge through this tribute to toxiferous love-making keep in mind these ingenuous flummeries:

It is the nature of man to cry in the night and sing in the sun, to desire beauty and create ugliness, to dream bigger than himself and to act less than human.

There are only five proper gifts for women: love, admiration, respect, flowers and money.

To be jealous is to be vulnerable. To be unable to be jealous is not to feel.

Love is ego turned inside out.

One man's grape is another man's raisin.

Don't say it if you don't mean it.

Wise men learn by other people's problems; fools never everlearn by their own.

In the kingdom of the kind, the one-eyed man has two.

It's better to have loved and lost than never to have been missed at all.

P. S. Despite what I sometimes think, Michele is a real person who is, inside and out, quite beautiful.



special edition

A DIARY FOR MICHELE

Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love Weekends At Dachau

Part One

7 Oct 64

"God made woman as a package deal. That way we know joy, horror, delight, frustration, agony, release, love and happiness all at once." WR

The solitude of night. The clearing of quiet in the jungle city. The hum of the typewriter. Quiet! Long ago I tamed your electric thinking! Your insistent "WRITE WRITE WRITE--I'm electric--I'm alive--write!--I wait for you to speak with your interpreter, your one typing finger." Begone Imp of Satan! You are but a tool! My thoughts flow out faster than the keys move, even the sluggish thoughts that flow like cooling lava are faster than the one flying finger of Fate. Thoughts pile up wrist-deep on the keyboard. Brilliant images fade before they work their way down to the @\$%&*()_+234567890-=QWERTYUIOP!qwertyuiop!ASDFGHJKL:'asdfghjkl;'ZXCVBNM,.?zxcvbnm,./ of literate creativity. Astoundingly clear theories, verging on the mind-boggling, somehow muddy up and get all crackly with seamed age before their turn comes. Waiting in line seems to dull the gorgeous plumage of the best of repartee. Standing around while the caveman carves out his painful prose puts a lot of deathless Thought to sleep.

The world turns slowly--yet all is relative. The light peeps up over your shoulder before you have finished looking at the sunset. You are still savoring flecks of lunch and someone is setting out the candles. You remark upon the cold beauty of the great bubble night and someone says "Stars at midmorning?" You turn away from the mirror for a moment and look back at the future.

The past becomes misty; the present slips into the past no matter how tightly you hold it; the future rushes towards us like an avalanche of offal, bounding toward the growing past with great leaps. Cartels of obstruction litter the path. The batteries in your light of life burn dim. The moist flesh of young beauty seems like a Giant Inflatable Sophia Loren to Use and Abuse in the Privacy of YOUR OWN HOME. Food becomes fuel, air becomes habit, the mind becomes a directional device, aiming your body and soul like a broken toy.

Words flow. Thoughts grow ripe on the vine and burst with rotteness. Butterflies are snagged by the hidden toad, dreaming of forgotten palaces. Unicorns are tamed by sham virgins. The reward of love is never more love. Chains are forged by sullen blacksmiths. Dullards ride in tickertape parades through the deep cement canyons someone carved in your head. Beauty marries the Beast. Eve divorces Adam on the grounds of mental cruelty and gets custody of the Snake. Romeo and Juliet were Teen-Age Swingers. Lancelot put horns on Arthur Baby.

Christmas is spelled with two \$\$\$. Easter eggs are hardboiled. Sex becomes S*E*X--love becomes LOVE LOVE LOVE with three !!!

Questions punctuate the dark of the moon: what is Life? Where did the Yellow go? Is this any way to run an airline? Is "Love" a four-letter word to lovers? Is riding on the outside of an airplane the only way to fly? Will the next moon be as full as the last? When a heart is hurting will a Band-Aid help? Where is Heaven? Is Hell straight down? Will Death release me from Life? Are you different than yesterday? Does life have flavor buds? Where does the sun go when it's night? What is the escape velocity of a heart, anyway?

The night yawns and is too polite to So What me.

I stare with numbed brain and numbed finger at the words that come unbidden. Midnight wanderings. The Noon of Night brings the Saturnalia of all Monster Thoughts. Great limping Thoughts with electrodes in their necks. Dead-white thoughts with a trickle of blood at the dreamline. Flittery, gibbery thoughts with furry wings. Good-natured thoughts that turn hairy at the full moon. Great stout-hearted Thoughts that change color in phone booths. Crime-fighting Thoughts that bleed in three colors.

Black things come twitching in the shadows and tear living flesh from Thoughts freshly felled by those great warriors Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Honesty, Patriotism and all that gang. Black things nibble at the toes of Hope, lashed naked to a metaphor and crowned with thorns. Mind-spiders make your hair ripple. Dead thoughts are sloshing around in the scuppers, which are traditionally awash with blood (green added during the holiday season). The screams of someone I know are spun back on the turntable and erased from my memory. You step over something Unspeakable rutting with something Speakable in the doorway and go out for air.

The night is cool, as nights are as bound to tradition as we. The habit-forming cloak of darkness is thrown around you with a swash, buckled on with a rakish tilt and, fooling no one, you saunter away.

The night keeps secrets, they tell me, spilling the best secret of the lot. I stuff my night with secrets and hurry on into the day to arm myself with a fresh harvest of s*e*c*r*e*t*s for the next night's work.

I leap from simile to metaphor, hop from cliché to bon mot with dazzling ease, astounding all who know me, stunning those who have only heard The Legend of Me. I pirouette on a hard-won point until I am reminded I don't dance. I sit the next one out on an independent clause, my feet propped up on a pile of @@@@. A dainty taste of flesh and fantasy steps from behind a fence of \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ and winks at me, movie-style flirt. % go my eyes and = = = = = go my feet.

I'm off and running, a slave to idealism. I come trotting back in a few minutes and set her squirming and embarrassed on a quickly wrought pedestal, hooked into place by my toe.

But... sigh... as soon as I look away for a moment---(zing!)---she's gone. Then the only fun is watching the pedestal fall thunk among the &&&& and // and thorny #####, bending the \$\$\$ and starting the to : : : :

At least when walking away the cloud over your head gives you a little shade and some water for your Scotch.

one two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve fourteen fifteen

zero: "He was always unlucky."

thirteen

They are making people out of inferior meat nowadays. It's as if there were only so many "good" genes, only so many satisfactory chromosomes and decent genetic building blocks. We seem diluted genetically. More and more people seem "cheap" and of shoddy workmanship. The population explosion has more pops with less poop. More people with lower standards. We seem to allow mediocrity to become a standard, accept less as a precept, to think of inadequacy as a satisfactory guide. People seem to have universal bad taste, compulsive herd instincts and no "quality" at all. Their morals are indifferent, their thinking muddied and fruitless, and creativity a vast unknown and fearful area, best left to "the other guy."

I know so many people with ideals and goals I find not appalling but dreary, not awesome but petty, not evil but scabby. It's as if we were compelled to produce more and more bodies and to achieve this self-destructive goal we lowered standards, passed defectives, slurred the language, dirtied the noble thoughts, and made the product Cheaper, Quicker, All-New and Non-Returnable.

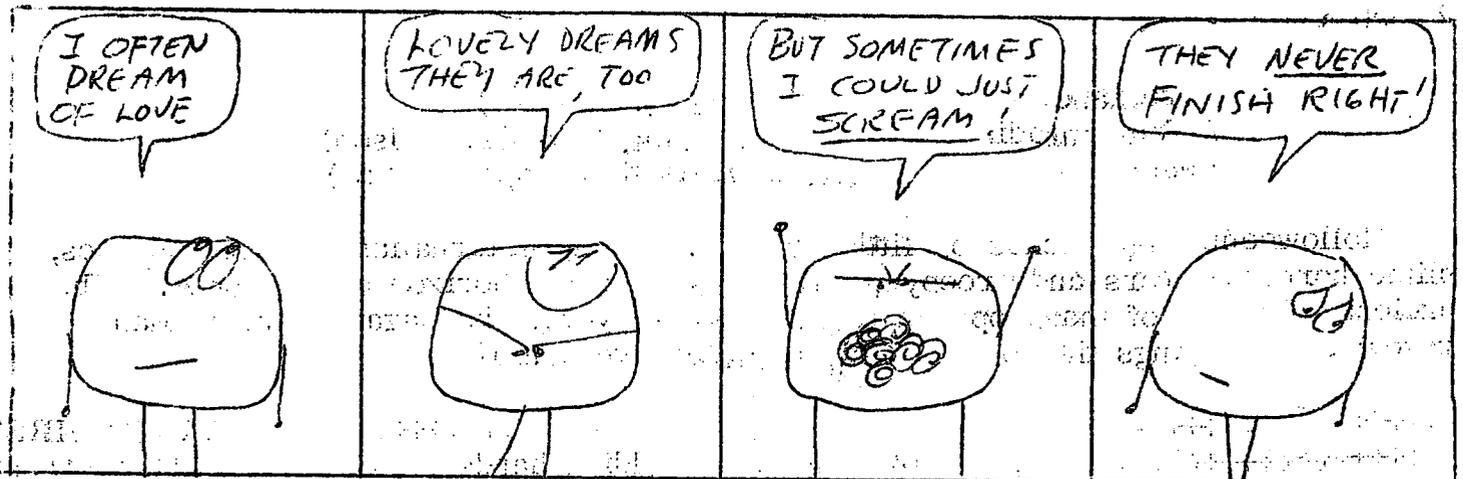
Someone in The People Factory seems to have lopped off Honor as a needless vestigial appendage, labeled Decency "optional" and let the Parts Room run out of Beauty.

Truth has become Expediency; Beauty has become a Commodity; Education has become something to be suffered through, then feared. Country has become Region; Food has become plentiful but tasteless; our Quik-Bilt cities have become instant Slums; our architecture tax-write-off "constructions"; our National Direction has become aimless. We are bilked and cheated and deceived, insulted and misled and "adjusted."

Our politics have become The Lesser of Two Evils. Our children will never know Childhood. Our youth do not know love, only desire and uneasy, life-long compromise truces. Our minds are boxed, sterile, sealed in plastic, San-it-tized and given a Number.

I used to think every person born was a chance at a new Einstein, a new Sophia Loren, a new St. Paul, a new Michaelangelo. But now I wonder. Maybe each new soul born is plastic, a Genuine Imitation Entity with a Money Back Guarantee. Try this marriage on for size... seal your armpit pores with Spray-On Conformity... be sure your cell has a window wall... stop wriggling and writhing in your hard-shell cocoon... Be Happy Or Else!

See the writer write! See Spot, his faithful Indian companionable blood stain... see Spot drip... see Michele... see Michele run! There is Bill. See Bill run. There is Bill and Michele. See how they run!



19 Oct 64

SEMI-COLON OF ADJUSTMENT

Van ity rewrites a broken love.
 Ego rebuilds a shattering.
 The subconscious does its peace-making unseen.
 The protective armor of self is shined anew.
 A man redraws the world with his eyes shut.
 (Onward, ever onward!)
 The light mutates the gold to sand.
 The sun changes the tint of flesh to mud.
 The night hides the scars and fresh new wounds.
 A milestone is read by moonlight and logged in a poem.
 The direction signs have two faces, both blank.
 (Onward, ever onward!)
 Fresh air rushes in to fill the perfumed void.
 The eyes adjust from heart to horizon.
 The hands forget the landscape of flesh.
 The mind squeezes the brain like a sponge.
 I, me, self, the nameless one... I go on.
 (Onward, ever onward!)

20 Oct 64

You must be yourself, I guess. The lure seems to be to be something-- someone--some image that would please others, especially those that you like or love or want to like or love you. It will get you all fouled up, this business of not-being-the-Real-You.

The trouble is: what is the Real You? Is the Real Me the one I meet alone at night? Or the one that jokes and laughs and people like? Or the gloomy one, the nasty one, that people shun? Or is the real me the one that is so clever he can bleed invisibly? Or is there a Real Me? Maybe I'm an alien golf ball that you can unravel, looking for the kernel, but simply unravel right out to nothing.

We go in over the top, taking the long slide through the mossy slime and drop into the cesspool with little more sound than the big gulp of breath just before we hit. The surface boils, then calms and the bits of yellow green drift together again, unbroken.

26 October 64

- "A romance is mutual self-illusion." (WR)
- "A fool paradise is better than none." (Ray Nelson)
- "Lust is the bread of life; love is the wine." (WR)

Hollweenie approaches on little cat feet. Great saturnalias of naked witches, slime born monsters and creepy-crawlies loom on the horizon of tomorrow. The ancient baseness of man pops in pistules once a year, the pagan heart of Man revealed, the things that go bump in the night live again?

+++++BARDED WIRE?
 +++++ No, a lot of + + + + holding hands+++++

27 October 1964

Now I know right out in front that you are a bit of a kook. It seems that I have been attracted to kooks and extraordinary females all my life. If a checklist of the ladies in my life were ever compiled it would be the Honor Roll of Kookdom. Nice kooks, though. Not weirdos... or at least, not many. Perhaps "gifted" would be a better word. "Extraordinary" perhaps. "Unusual" certainly. I like that quality.

Too often a man can read a woman clear down to her spinal column, at least as far as is practical. People come stamped out of the same pliant plastic. Brains are mass-produced, sealed in cellophane, and stocked with thoughts and goals so appalling similar and so pathetically petty that I am often disgusted. Bland type ladies with invisible stock numbers turn me right off.

You are not like that. You are a beautiful, sensual, semi-uninhibited original.

And what about me? (I'm glad someone asked that question...) Well, I think I'm one of the Good Guys, not one of the Bad Guys.

But I guess being a Good Guy isn't enough. You gotta be part bastard, part Savage, part Uncaring Male, part Adonis, part satyr, part stag movie, part dream, part easy-laughter. You have to be Kookie and Witty and Cutely Shallow and hung like a prize bull. You have to breathe charm and exhale joi de vie. You have to act as if you did not care, to put on the Put Down, to create images of Rape and Father and Domination in the mind of a woman.

Whatever happened to two intelligent people working out mutual needs and desires?

I am none of those things mentioned above, or few of them... at least with you, my love. I am simple and bitter and deep and loving. I care. I cover, but I care.

You turn the knife in me so easily... the curve of neck, the quick warm laugh, the sudden opening into your complex brain like a zoo-coo's door, that terribly infectious case of Prettymouth you have, the deep soft laugh, the sheer magnificent beauty of you. Our brains strike sparks and I'm the one that runs around with holes burnt in my pants. We are steel fist and velvet glove; the touching kiss of two pouter pigeons; the sea and rock; the tinkly tiny clang of two champagne glasses saluting; the wall and the wallpaper; the bullet in the chamber...

28 October 1964

We are flesh, Michele, you and I. We are blood and sinew and synapses. We are conditioned responses and flowercentres. We are several yards of gut and the product of our culture. We are finger-nails and nippletips and armpit hair. We are plunging pistons and finely spun hair and teeth with cavities. We are 92% water and 100% human. We are strung between the stars like captives and we cry when hurt. We are people. The words are mirrors for the imagination.

We are of the genus homo, but with happily different genders, you and I. We are eyes that see museums full of art, and museums of the mind, where hang every tender moment, every quickened heartbeat, every hand that ever caressed your body in fact or fancy. We are mouths that have spoken harshly and murmured tenderly, caressed palm and cheek, breast and statuary.

We are bricks built into poetry and we are the flight of songbirds across the sun. We are feet that hurt and hands that blister and hearts that burst. We are bowels that malfunction and the continuing seed of life. We are foolish and brave, stupid and caring, trapped in these different bodies with only two ways out--life and death.

We are of this Earth, where snow-cold water spills blindly to the sea, where feathered bird cants on the morning spore-wind. We are of this Earth, where a yellow star warms the arctic day and bursts the seed pods in the rainforests. Someday we will be of the earth, with mindworms feasting on our memories and our trace elements returning home.

But between now and then there is all of life to paint in our memory books, Michele. There is the hop-skip-hop of the invisible water bugs, the crunch of plastic-white snow, the spin of neon ferris wheels. There are the fresh wet convolutions of brain-coral, the worn wild flotsom of the sea, the brown strong flanks of a horse. There are the curled leaves of autumn, with hints of your coloring, and the long red thread on the black coat that becomes hair... and a memory. There is framed art and wild, untamed art. There is pink flesh, steamed fresh by touching and the reality of you, moving beneath me. There is speed and motion, the illusion of a stretched-out landscape. There are tower cities and drab grayness. There is the lime-green of fresh spring grass and that very first flower. There are mossy rocks and dresses crisp from the cleaner. There are thick steaks, bubbling with taste, and male scent and the ticklish bottoms of feet. There are golden-brown fish to eat, with the tide on the rocks below and the fading sunset glow. There are words to paint new worlds, and old words to delight. There are the full round weight of breasts and the suddenness of manhood. There are crimson cushions and the reddest sunset of the year seen through your hair. There are flights of fancy, of doves, thundering obliquely into the sun. There are curves and triangles, rectangles and circles, the pure geometric patterns that man has brought into the world. There is the night, swimming in moviefog, too beautiful to be real, set with the nebulous jewels of streetlights.

There is laughter and the dullness of exhaustion. There is discovery and illusion and winter fires. There is the full spectrum of color, caressing you in your half-dreams. There is love and Love and L*O*V*E. There is friendship and annoyance and dislike and forgetfulness. There is a small cry of joy in the night, the face of a friend smiling, the swirling of autumn leaves in the damp gutter.

There is you, uncaring about the swirl of gold and red around your face and the cold rush of autumn night around you head. There are stars overhead and beyond the city mist, still more. There are the supernovae of city lights and the ageless dotted menagerie of fantasy. There is the whisper of silk andlover. There is the softness of a mouth and the acceptance of reality. There is the richness of you, the golden smooth firm round warm exciting sleek soft wealth of you.

29 October 1964

Sometimes I delude myself. Sometimes I think lightning bolts flicker from my fingertips and that there is thunder in my voice. Sometimes I drip slime and rosewater and golden glitter. My head rises above the swamp, above the sluggish currents of blood and pus, above the great mold forests and unmoving dead trees, above the scutting gray clouds, above the age-old dotted lines of satellites and moonbirds. My feet are encased in mud, in stone cairns, in bright blood, ankle-deep in coins and crushed beetles.

Sometimes I delude myself. I am Apollo and Hercules, King Stud and Hero, twisted Richard and the iron-clad man from tomorrow. I crush words into rigid lines, tempting fate, tempting immortality and ignoble death.

Sometimes I delude myself. I think I am Noble and True, Honest and Brave, Kind and Tough, Tiger-quick and Wise, Intelligent and Truly Talented.

Sometimes I delude myself. Sometimes I think I am drab and ordinary, cloddish and awkward, doomed to mediocrity, a featureless shadow on life's stage.

Sometimes I delude myself. I say "Rise!" to the Sun and "Glow!" to the stars and "Shine!" to the moon and they obey. I sprinkle temporary jewels on the crests of faroff waves, I cause flowers to color, I give that special tender flesh of a woman's thighs the softness of cushioning life. I wave my hand and the whole vast curving dustcloud of stars and planets light the summer night.

Sometimes I delude myself. I say to me, you have known the love of women of worth, you have caused art and life and laughter; you are unique and solid.

Sometimes I delude myself. I am self-consciously arty and unreasoningly vain. I set neon-tinted words onto scented pages and pretend I am filling your writhing body with flesh and love and life. My ears hear only the grunts and splatters, only the mouse squeaks of life...only the tuning up, never the symphony.

Sometimes I delude myself. I say, you, Bill Rotsler, you understand you. I say, I have ordered my house, I have stencilled Great Slogans on the inside of my head, I have armoured my heart against Life, I have installed intricate alarms, I have unfurled the ancestral banners, blazoned with last week's clichés.

Sometimes I delude myself. But better me than someone else.

A hundred moths flutter against the flame... but which one is screaming?

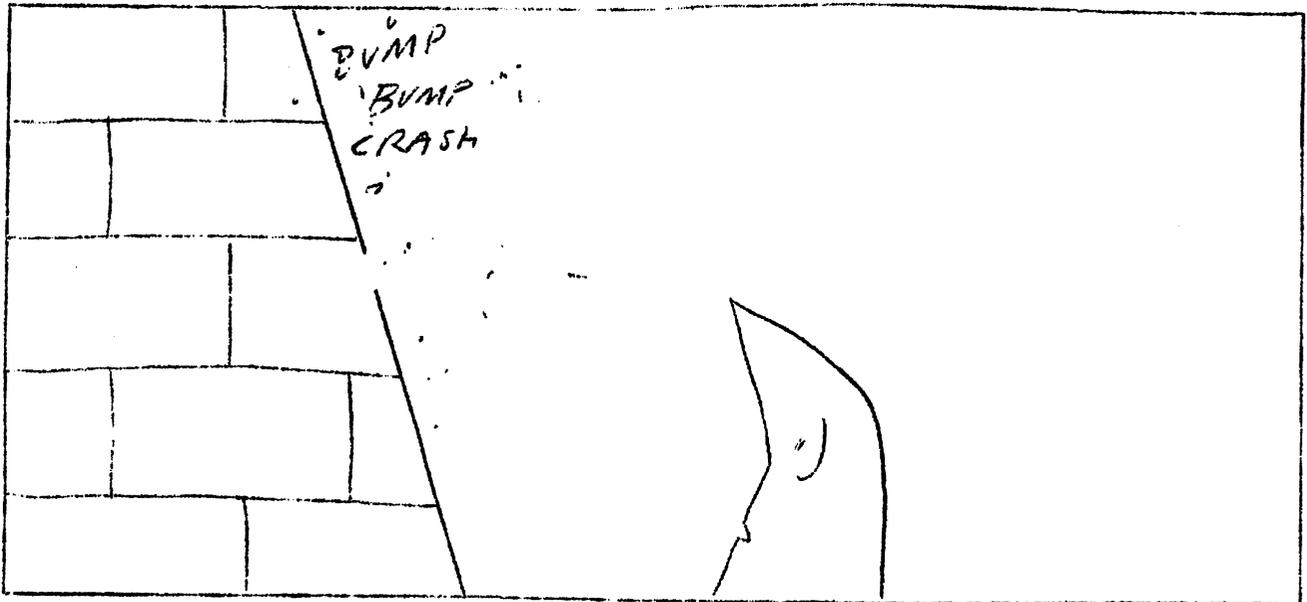
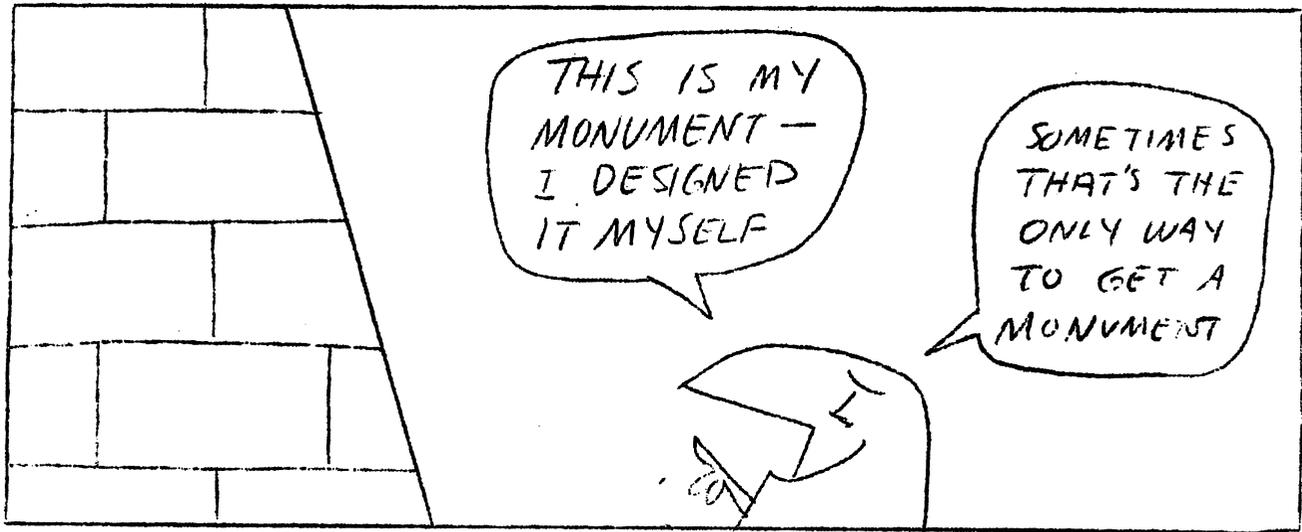
The distance from brain to typewriter is vast, from typewriter to heart infinity, from heart to love almost impossible. I am the Sad Man, the "last lover." I deflect the charges of armoured insects with a battered heart. I fling words like flaming oil. I slice through unreason and farce and anti-thought with a nicked sword of Truth. I billboard the Road of Life with gaudy invitations.

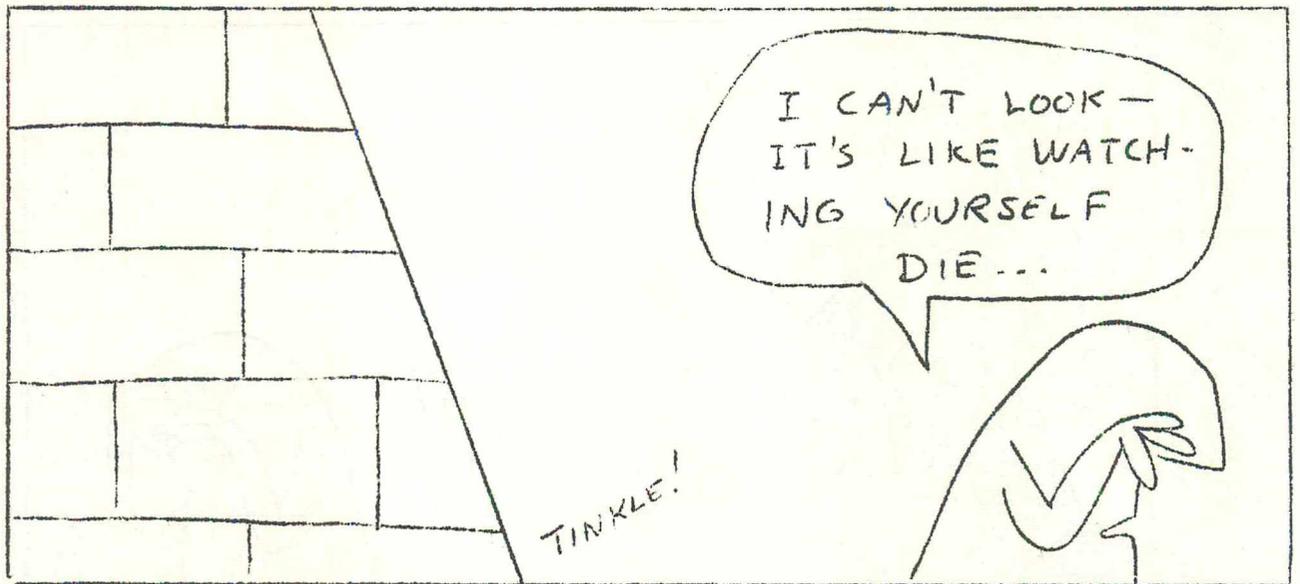
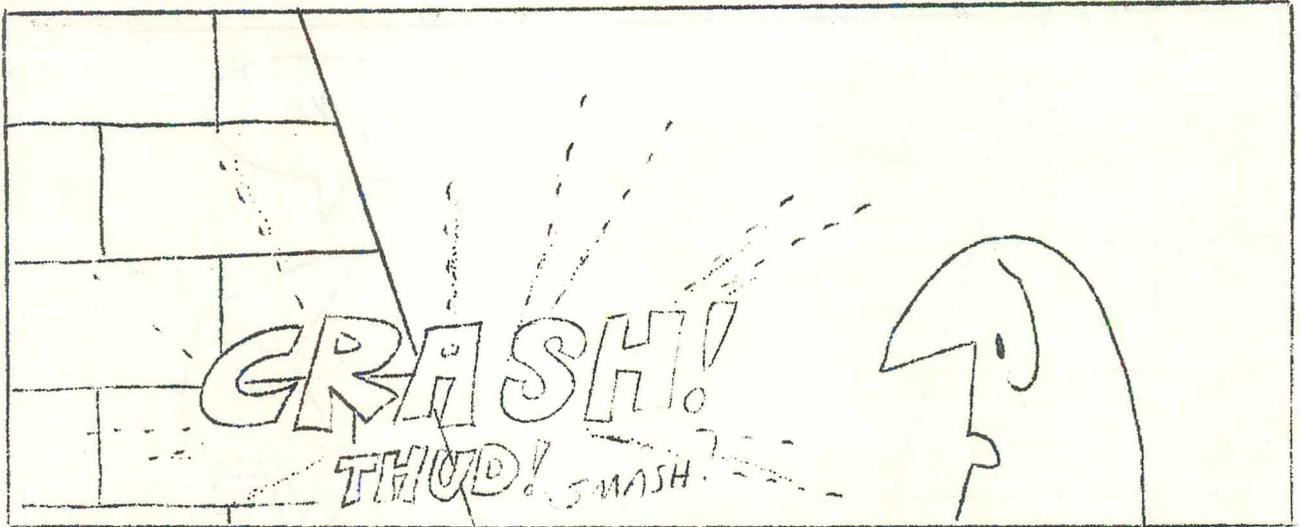
I confuse myself with The Total Lover, the Compleat Seducer, the Talented Artist, the Incurable Romantic, the confident Great Lover... to put myself on, to construct great monuments to myself, to hang the walls with shining new trophies, each as meaningless as bird droppings.

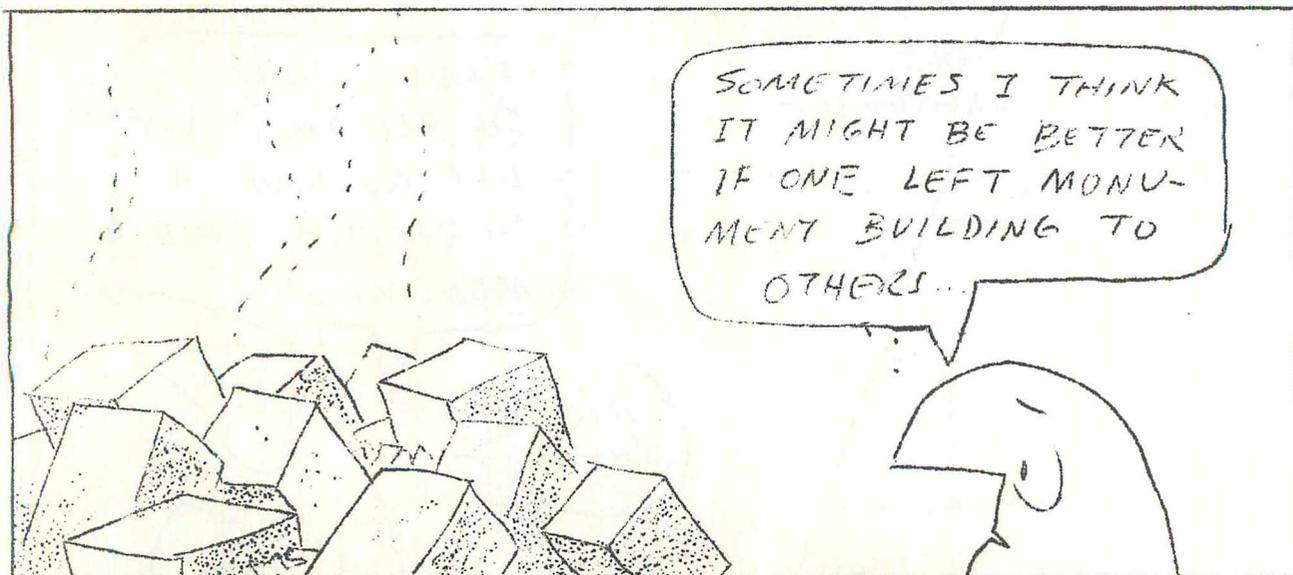
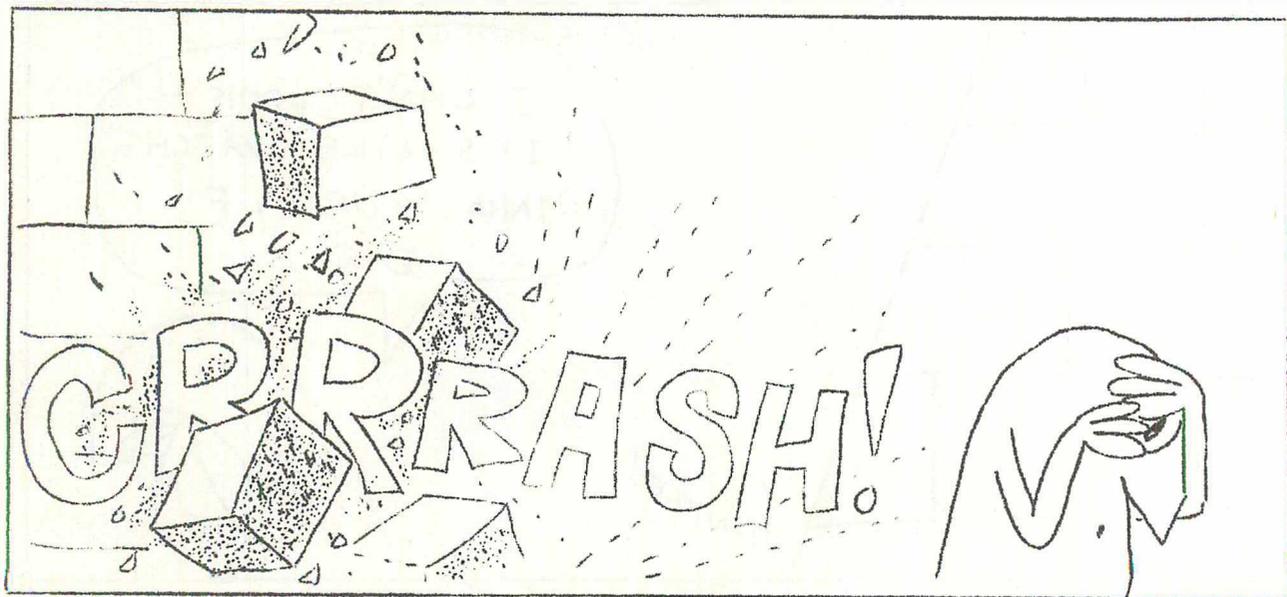
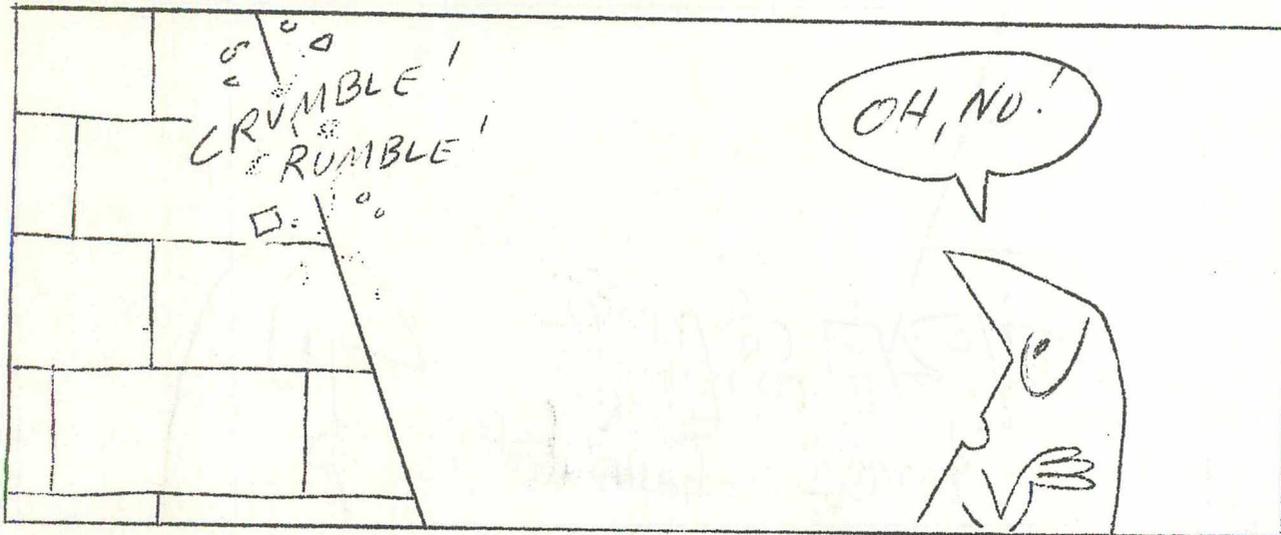
You came to me, hoping I would put a Band-Aid over your mind and you find the skyrocket and smoke of another Diary, another dreary little cant down Memory Lane, another monologue that starts, "Yeah, sure, you're bleeding, but TALK ABOUT HURTING--WOW!--LOOK AT ME!"

We've been there before. We're taken that trip. (Thumbtacks on the bathroom floor and a burnt-out bulb.) The Greatest Lover I'm not. (Strike that last line when you publish your memoirs.)

How do you sign a scream?







1 November 1964

You are all the islands I have never seen, the far places, the magic. You are the long-dreamed Great Beauty, the princess rescued from the dragon's rock, the taut and rounded voluptuary seized from the raided harem, the golden prize won at risk of death.

Your name is Romance and Beauty and Eve. You are the well-spring, the source, the goal and desire. Your voice is the whispered thunder of mint-fresh angels. You are Michele and I color you golden.

Words are such strange things. Twenty-six wiggly characters and a few !?"/@#%&*() += plus 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and up. Abstractions, every one. Muted screams--words. Shouts of glee, terror and fulfillment--words. Love words. Hate words. Hasty words, sculptured words, slow words. Words that tell the death of a king, the losing of a battle or the birth of a princess. Words that enrage and endear. Words that caress and shock. Words that comfort and direct. All these combinations from a few hen scratches, wedges pressed into clay, soot rubbed into rock, deeply cut sandstone markings, movabable type, punched tapes, invisible aerial billboards. A billion, billion combinations of love, hate, indifference, boredom, excitement and the monthly bills.

Do words shock you? They shouldn't and I know they don't. Thoughts might, words no. Thought, Si!, Words, No! Words are just g the heralds, the couriers of thought, the smoke signals of creativity.

Words. Words pile up like vomit in my mind when I am with you. Now, anyway. I feel constricted, feel that I cannot truly talk the way I want with you. Perhaps you left out of boredom and the walls were closing in, all studded with poisoned daggers, thumbtacks and unicorn horns.

Perhaps my inner life is saner, perhaps not. When everyone I know cannot touch drink, or touches too much, when they exchange bed for thought, prefabricated minds for even the most primitive use of their own, when they clothe their intellectual nakedness in newspapers then I am alienated. I am not one of these. Oh, I use as much predigested philosophy as the next idiot and I check my brain at the box office. I have my own version of chronic alcoholism, dope addiction and cabin fever--you.

You are my hangup, my nirvana, my nemesis, my goal, my fear, my frustration personified, my Mona Lisa. You sit there, a Midas of beauty and charm and strange, marvelous, wild personality while this pauper does his sad, tired tricks and holds out his ragged cap.

Crap. You give a woman the best in you and she wants the savage. You use restraint and thought and care and she wants the Master, the unthinking rutting use of her that requires no brain anywhere. You build towers of light and paper them with future and they want dress dummies and men constructed out of puppy dog entrails and silly putty and rusty nails.

SALE

All that is you... and it isn't you. It's every Woman. Certainly every beautiful woman. Why is it that they are all screwed up, every one? They are either uncertain of their beauty and constantly reassure themselves with mirrors and compliments and bedmates and adulation... or become bitter with the world, when the accident of their physical appearance is something they cannot comprehend or handle.

Yes, I have taken women I did not love. But I took her out of pleasure and lust and liking, and I never lied to her. I have never told a woman I loved her when I truly did not.

I have heard the "locker-room-braggart", the bar romeo, the back-of-the-set philosophers... "Don't let 'em know you love them--keep them guessing." "Find 'em, fool 'em, fuck 'em, forget 'em." I have heard a thousand men tell of real and fancied conquests of beauty, stuffing their membrane egos full of soft breasts and soft cries and soft hearts. I have heard the boasting man-talk that tells of fooling a trusting girl with love-talk. I have listened to the stallions speak of beauty and honesty and fragile egos. And I am as guilty as the rest, perhaps.

Yes, and I have heard the woman-talk... the man unknowingly seduced, the man "taken", the man fooled, the husband blinded, the lover deceived. I have seen the roving eye, the twitching hip.

And I still don't understand it. It's like an alien race inhabiting the same kind of body I'm in.

THE MONEY ROAD

Go where the money is.
Sleep with it.
Bathe in it.
Smell it, eat it.

Money will ease the pain.
Money will hold you when you cry
Money talks seductive words of love
Be certain to listen

Gather the money fort around you
Hold off the savages with golden spears
Kill them with silver swords and diamond bullets

Go where the money is
Be happy
Be loved
Gold is a very loving metal

"Everything changes and you cannot step twice into the same river." (M.R.)

"Always say goodbye. This way you are not burdened with appointments you will not keep." (W.R.)

"One does not feel such grief for the loss of what one never had, however excellent; I grieved rather for what had once been mine." (Mary Renault.)

"The heart has eyes the brain knows nothing of." (Anon)

AN ISLAND OF FLOWERS

My imagination races, my mind leaps:
Look out below!

Love, love, lovelovelove!

The madonna face, the virgin's smile,
the flesh blueprinted by Moloch,
The lightly armored houri, the untamed impala,
the dream-designed reality of a girl.

Love, love, lovelovelove!

Greedy man, a very greedy man,
wants and wants and wants,
wants more than a second's fractional ownership,
more than a two-dimentional leasehold.

Love, love, lovelovelove!

Let me fill your mind with me.

4 November 1964

I saw a redhead today. From the back. In a green furry sweater. The rest of the day was not so hot.

I have a memory or two to stomp on.

stomp!

stomp!

stomp

STOMP!

S*T*O*M*P

squish

drip drip drip

d

r

i

p

dripdripdripdripdripdrip

I find I've tightened up. My thoughts are cased in hard little boxes, hermetically sealed against corrosion. I duck behind graphic devices and semantic barricades. What is it we want? Sometimes I am not certain I would know it if it came up and stepped on my foot. The armor is up. The armorers are running swiftly through the spider-webby old halls with newly forged pieces over their heads, sweating in their leather aprons, ruddy from the heat. They throw the shiny pieces down at my feet and scurry off to design new ones to cover the weak spots and crevices of the old ones while the clang of metal is still echoing among the tattered tapestries and old garbage and mossy stone. Soon--if I pick them up and strap them in place--I

will be totally invulnerable...and totally immobile, like Charlie Brown wrapped in layers of winter clothing. Nothing can get through...and nothing out. I'll stifle in my own discarded wastes. I'll go mad with boredom once they rivet that last protective faceplate over my eyes.

Perhaps I should investigate Suspended Animation. After all, by the Year 2000 (or so) they might work out antidotes and counterviruses to Love, Lust, Like, and the Common Cold.

"A memory is a gift," I once wrote, or maybe carved in a field clod. If so, you have given me much.

I remember the hundred reds in your hair in a hundred lights. I remember the long golden feel of you that first night with the pulsebeat of the sea inches away. I remember the fortnight we spent one day in The Harbor. I remember you in a thousand photographs, movie-star beautiful on the bed, the fairy-queen with the diadem, young and innocent with the fountain of mohogany hair, dishelved and happy on a boat. I remember you all glitter-eyed at the bullfight...pleased and plump at Paoli's...serene and aloof and warm at the Santa Barbara breakfasts...casual and real in a score of places. I remember the day in the TV set...under the pier when we were so new. I remember you at Jungleland, at Disneyland, at the Huntington Library in the rain, with jewels of water in your hair.

I remember you as gold and pink and red and tan. I remember the gift of your body, your mouth, those fantastic eyes. I remember your laugh, your hundred ways of smiling, the sensual move of you. I remember you by candlelight and starlight, by shaded bulb and shaded sun. I remember you spoonfashion and at armslength. I remember you so trim and supple, swinging through stores and steets and lives as if on a stick-shift cloud. I remember the soft pink feel of you in my arms, shyly against me. I remember the dawn awakenings, the kisses at night so carefully sculptured, the bitter twisting of parting...and the fresh happy surprise at every new meeting.

I gather all these gifts like gaudy Christmas wrappings and put them into their waterproof, time-proof, tear-proof capsule. Once in awhile I'll take them out and look at them, expecting them to have changed. Sometimes, perhaps, they will fall out and go sprawling embarrassingly across the floor at my feet when I suddenly hear Streisand, or see a great pile of Sunday Red hair or moss green or tiny teardrops of jade.

Let's remember the good things, like a gourmet's dinner or the first fresh rust glimpse of the Golden Gate is remembered. Let's treasure them like the memory of the sudden rush of jets overhead, or a hillside of poppies. Let's forget all the other things...or since we can't really forget, let's put them where they won't be in the center of the aisle.

A memory is a gift and this is a thank you card.

Somewhere a comet falls endlessly through the night.
Somewhere a star takes a deep breath and bursts.
Somewhere a heart explodes like popcorn.

Somewhere there are unmarked sands,
Somewhere there are fields of flowers and green islands.
Somewhere there is love, a love for me.

1234567890

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 "They're a tight group"

10 November 1964

(This portion of "A Diary For Michele" is brought to you by HAVVA-NU-HED)

Remarkable new scientific advances made after lunch today brings you Charm, Success, Love, Truth, Moral Disintegration and Sweet-Smelling armpits!--with

HAVVA-NU-HED!!!

Tired of the same old head filled with the same old thoughts? The same traumas clogging your nervous system? The same old fears stopping up your reactions? Those tired old eyes tired of seeing the same old blots on the pure white world? Try HAVVA-NU-HED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Act Now--Act Without Thinking! Send in your old head and we'll send you a BRAND NEW HEAD jam-packed with bright summery thoughts, a whole new set of 1965 hopes and dreams, jim-dandy memories selected from the very best hedonists and philosophers available today! Best of all, if you act quickly, we will include an automatic cut-out system and overload circuit. Yes, be the first in your psychiatrist's waiting room to have a BRAND NEW HEAD!

You'll never regret sending in your head for any one of HAVVA-NU-HED's Winter line. Just give us your preferred head size and specify what color hair (blonde, midnight black, light blonde, semi-light-blonde-with-red-highlights or medium drab brown) and skin tone (ruddy, ebony, pink, peaches-and-cream, sunny, or Teen-Age) you want. We'll send you a BRAND NEW HEAD, complete with carrying case and neck adjusting wrench. If you are not satisfied, FOR ANY REASON, tough s--t.

Remember HAVVA-NU-HED when you are thinking of suicide, marriage, falling in love, falling out of love, starting your own business, Major Decisions of Life, opening a record club account or marketing on Saturday. We can help you! HAVVA-NU-HED has been in business for well over a week now and let our Know-How, forged on the Great American Anvil of Free Enterprise, Public Subsidy, The Little Cheat, Momism and the teachings of Jesus Christ, help you!

Write HAVVA-NU-HED care of this Trauma.

15 November 1964

Awake at dawn. The long night. Babylon and Troy. Ninevah and Shangri-La. Snow from the mountains. The Persian girl in the Babylonian bed. Nymphs and satyrs, pagan dreams of Nirvana. Ancient dragons cavort on the dusty graves of unborn saints. Flower blossom beneath the sea. Siren songs drift to misty Venus and far icy Neptune. The Dome of Night is pierced with stars, poetry and blood. They crucified Eve and burned Aphrodite. They beheaded Helen and scuffed Cleopatra into dust. Midas turned to gold by playing with himself; Adam went into bikini manufacturing; God is in the Unemployment line.

Exotic flowers, crowns of iron and gold, jade and diamonds all rust and melt. Sea mists cool a lovers first night. Wine cups and desert treasure. The unsmoothed cat-like Sphinx, as new as spit, stares at the blue Nile. Caravan bells tinkle towards unseen distant harems. Drifting winds hide Cleopatr's mirror and bare Scheherazade's jewels.

The Magic Horse snorts and stamps his feet in the courtyard of the Palace of Troy. The Janissary from the land of the sunset lords watches the dance of the jeweled nudes. Sheba and her captive princesses watch through slitted eyes, deep behind the filigree.

The girl from the East. The Pleasure Dome sparkling wickedly in the moonlight. Aladdin enchanted, djinn encased, firebirds and the excrement of dinosaurs. Blood dripping from my fingers splatters the walls with gestures of incantation. Chains of office and slave lie rusting by the bones of the gutted Zeus. Cretan statuary line the shore, ankle deep in history from the beginning of Man. A god scratches star paths across the sky with his fingernails. Paint from the roof of Heaven falls to Earth in flecks of dark.

Sunset.. dawn.. night.. the pyramid of sand in the bowl grows too quickly. Golden boats, torture chambers, sacred elephants, unnamed horrors in the Pit, madmen roaming the empty streets. The palaces of Arabia, mirages, magicians and princes, trollops and new mothers, majarajahs and slave traders, banquets of passion, feasts of love...and Queen Cleo's handy asp.

The stars are like daggers as Caesar's legions trample spring flowers. Sea priests sing their cant in forgotten tongues. The Palace of Splendors is a muffled cry of pain. Golden Rajahs, helmeted warriors, sealed jars of wine and mystery. The Crusader's sword is buried in the entrails of a eunuch. Odin and scampering elves, gnomes and bloody Aztec gods line the dim halls. Excaliber in stone, Damballa in the darkness of men's minds, the Intruder in the harem, turning on worn boots to face the charge of the odalisques.

They tumble through the mind like dice from a battered cup. They corrode the lining of my mind with their unattainable lure. They jumble the night and lurk in sunspots, leaping from mind-pits and burrowing into the brain like apple-worms.

Pharaohs and kings, rajahs and princes, haughty dukes and cruel czars. Presidents and robber barons, sultans and lords, wizards and mandarins. Warlocks, naked witches, the dregs of Samarkand. Harem-masters and slayers, King Solomon and the island kings. Caesar and Attila, Saladin and Moses, King Arthur and Queen Catherine. Princess and countess, handmaiden and slave, the mistress of the King and the charwoman of the Grand Vizier. The daughters of Zeus and Thor and Isis. Naked odalisques bearing the coffin of Dracula, the merchants bearing the God of Gold, the children bringing the fairy ring. The son of Merlin steps over the bones of the Minotaur lying in the blackened Labyrinth, ruined by the fire of Theseus.

Captain of the Guards, attend! Admit all! Seal your mind to none! Rebel slave and proud knight... sturdy samarai and belted lord... masked unknown and veiled beauty... Sheba's spies and Mata Hari's corrected image... bloody centurion and that one, armored against space and antibody.

Admit all to Paradise. The Keeper of the Seal, the beggar with the sores, the fisherman from the Enchanted Sea, the GI in dirty fatigues, the fabled Queen Theodora. Admit all. Come, old man, come child of love, come nameless wretch. Come. There is room for Emperor and dancing girl, for accountant and unborn child. There is room for the schemer from Jaffa and the Thief of Bagdad and Points East. The mind stretches out, creating new rooms faster than you can hook up the plumbing. Welcome, viziers and alchemists, moonlight and mermaids, golden birds and beauties of the night. Welcome to wine and music, to harem lights swinging in the breeze from the sea. Welcome to the time before dawn in the garden of delights.

You, you want the jeweled crown of Apollo? Done! You, you want a battlefield done in decorator colors? Done! The Dome at Xanadu with the original cast? Valhalla's carved doors? Road map to Cathay? Ondine with Neptune's very own personal trident? Done, all done! The Palace of the Moon, of the Sun, of the Silver Maiden? Done! Cleopatra's barge with an outboard motor? Over there, beyond the prayer rug concession, past that ruined tower. The jewels of Ur? Those great crude globs of starlight wrought when the world was a baby? The gardens of Babylon? The manuscript of the Necronomicon bound in a virgin's skin? Down the street, past the magic carpet surplus store and just before Vulcan's blacksmith shop.

Ah, you desire Eternal Youth and you want Great Love...turn right at the statue to me and follow the Euphrates to the dock. Give the swarthy man with the patch a purse of gold. Ah, of course--the Most Beautiful Woman In The World! Naturally, naturally...that way...do not pass GO, do not collect 200 dinars...go to the Great Palace...all the Most Beautiful Girls in the World are there.

And you, sweet-faced child--the magic maker? Snap your fingers and jump back. You, sir? AH, she awaits you in that great sweaty bed beyond. You, sir, what might I do for you? Um, well, he may be seen by appointment only. Yes, I know that's annoying but Master Lucifer is very busy these corrupt and exciting days. What's that, good sir? Oh, the Public Harem? There, sir. Yes, most convenient. You're welcome, sir, anytime.

Lover's Leap? Continue on this path--you'll find it. The Sun? Wait until sunset when he gets off work, will you? That way, friend, the crypts of the Black Pppes are much further on. Ah, Lord Charlemagne! I thought you'd never get here! The entertainment is about to begin. Ghenghis Khan is supplying the fun tonight. I do hope you'll join us. Ah--good!

Excuse me, won't you? The duties of a host, you know.

19 November 1964

You are 23 today. Happy Birthday, Far Off Exotic Michele Baby. (The cold winter winds sweep the night, draping the moon with murk.)

WE EACH LIVE ALONE

The stars are neither solid, stationery nor eternal.

Earth is neither friendly, intelligent nor singular.

Man is neither destined, deathless nor special.

Honor is neither real, useless nor vital.

Men are neither brave, indestructible nor saints.

Women are neither faithful, chaste nor truthful.

Love is neither solid, stationary nor eternal.

Anyone for bitter new wine?

Anyone for love?

20 November 1964

The night folds round again, cool with fresh starlight, dark with the moon in hiding. Soon the city will be awash with moonlight and with the noise of hurrying cars. The people in them will be faster than their vehicles and therefore impatient. The birth of Christ will soon be celebrated with the gnash of teeth, the green splash

of envy, the scarlet choke of frustrated anger and the blue gloom of those who think all the rush and bother denotes fellowship and love and the other things they think they are missing. Don't they know everyone misplaced them somewhere?

The gritty grind of cars spurting to short runs come from far-off, exotic Santa Monica Boulevard. The tinny thunder of those rushing up La Cienega to their drab little appointments in Samarra comes thinly through the filter of plaster and wood. The clock says 5:30... the hero mind says "heart of the rush hour."

Question for Today: Is there a patriotism to the human race?

3 December 1964

"The lover's criterion of love is: I want you to be happy--but with me." (Marlene Dietrich)

"If love isn't blind it's at least a poor judge of beauty." (WR)

"Men always say more evil of a woman than there really is; and there is always more than is known." (Pablo Picasso)

"However beautiful and expressive themouth it does talk and it must be fed." (WR)

"The only difference between hate and love is direction." (WR)

5 December 1964

THE REALITY OF NOW

The flesh we have, the flesh we hold
is the only reality that our flesh knows.

Reality is unreal to those not sane;
insanity unreal to the sane.

The reality of wanting gives birth
to the unreality of love.

Flesh wants flesh, love wants love;
the concrete wants the solid assurances of reality.

But where is reality
when insanity and flesh are joined?

I do hope you'll pardon these curses in rhyme, these incantations in a metric beat. If indeed there is a metric beat. I'm afraid I whet my poetry on strange stones, not all of which are mill-rounds. Sometimes I create odd little physical shapes for these word-baskets, if indeed they are poems and it is creation. Like the Chinese, who take care to make poems in certain shapes, or like the calligraphers, doing "The Twelve Days of Christmas" in a Christmas tree shape, Bill Rotsler "creates" his "poems" to contemporary shapes like a crushed Pall Mall package or a twist of string from your laundry or a freeway filled stiffly with cars.

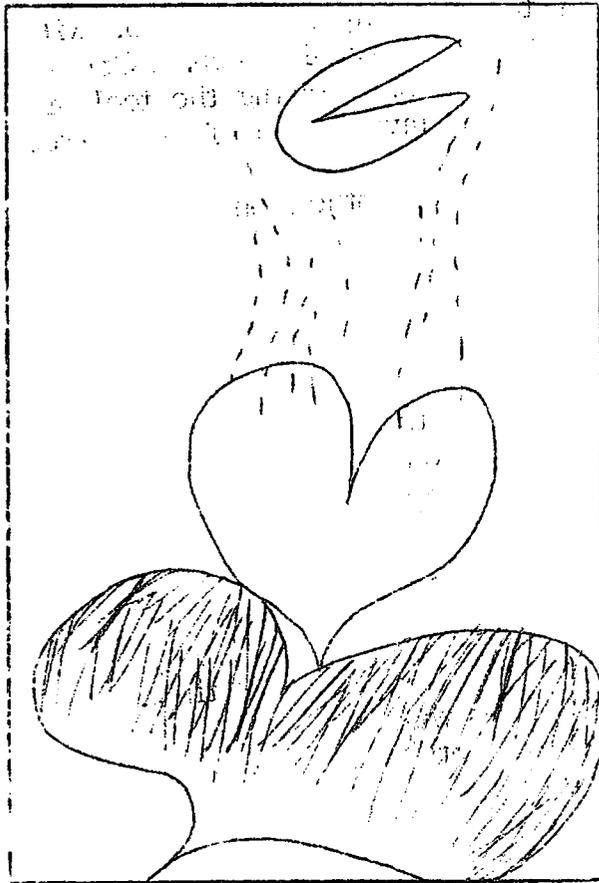
December 1964

The stars shine without my guidance.
The sun burns without my aid.
The earth turns without my help.

The flowers bloom, the sea churns, the birds fly.
I have come to offer help but no one hears.
(Man, that's frustration!)

8 December 1964

The mind twists and turns and looks in a different direction... the mythology of the future: shy, quiet John Glenn riding a column of fire thrice around the world. Anderson making the first long step from the soil of native America to the strange grey pumice of the moon. Calhoun's sad death in the twenty-ton coffin in the sky.



Harris riding the fading tail of fire to his own sudden death. Pell's body, covered by the drifting red sand and never found. Tatsuko forever circling the sun in his spidery ship. The stumble that discovered the tombs of the men of Mars to the men of Earth. The great pagan cathedrals and somber keeps of the Old Race. Nabakov roaming the canals, insane from the desert powderbuds. Discoverer XII sinking forever through the sludge-swamp of foggy Venus.

Merrick, finding the jewels in the Vaults of the Sky. Rorgan's long battle with the grey steel Robotic Legions. The small wiry men of France dying in the poison air of Jeannedark. Turner stealing the crown of Ares. Felton's wife and the Prince of Blacksword. George's vain battle with the fire plants as the last Princess of Mars looks on with pale hand to throat. The swords of Gresna against the guns of the renegades from Callisto. The bronze girl warriors from Nudia dying bravely in the Games of War on distant Hulkis.

Barlow, dying without ever knowing he had ended the Reign of the Star Kings. The secret rites of the Sirenese, seducing lonely spacemen

with electronic witchery. The nameless virus that destroyed the invincible Methrane Warrior Cults. The Planet Eater. Var. The Giants of Gemini III. The decaying Empire of the Star Lords, producing the fabulous Queen Talura. The Valkis-Sigma War, destroying the Crystal Citadels and creating the Brain Batteries. Valkron's Time Changer. MacDonald's mind searcher. The Throne of War.

The capsules of the Federation Marines burning brightly in the chill outer reaches of Bolivar II. The smoking, melted slag of bright, decadent Athena City. The hold Centurions storming the Star Center, dying like bacilli, moving like men, driven by the steel will and rigid training of the space sergeants. Holden and the Second Eve. Elsa on the tip of the great scarp over Valhalla, sobbing out her heart to the gods.

12 December 1964

Sometimes, when I'm doing something exciting, like staring at subspace, I wonder what I am doing in the world. Beside scratching the ////////////// of the years on the grey gritty walls of this Top Security prison of life, what am I doing? (Hush...the gods speak...)

Feed the hedonist his pound of flesh...give the adventurer his few well-separated seconds of gut-clenching thrill...award the artist a brittle stem from a used laurel wreath...serve the drunkard a drop watered by the melting ice of a cold shoulder...set a plate of stale goodies before the gourmet...give the sailor a puff of wind from a collapsing word balloon...blow the lover a kiss during a hurricane...toss the gambler a dime chip and hang up the No Credit sign...give the blind man a single wink at the light...

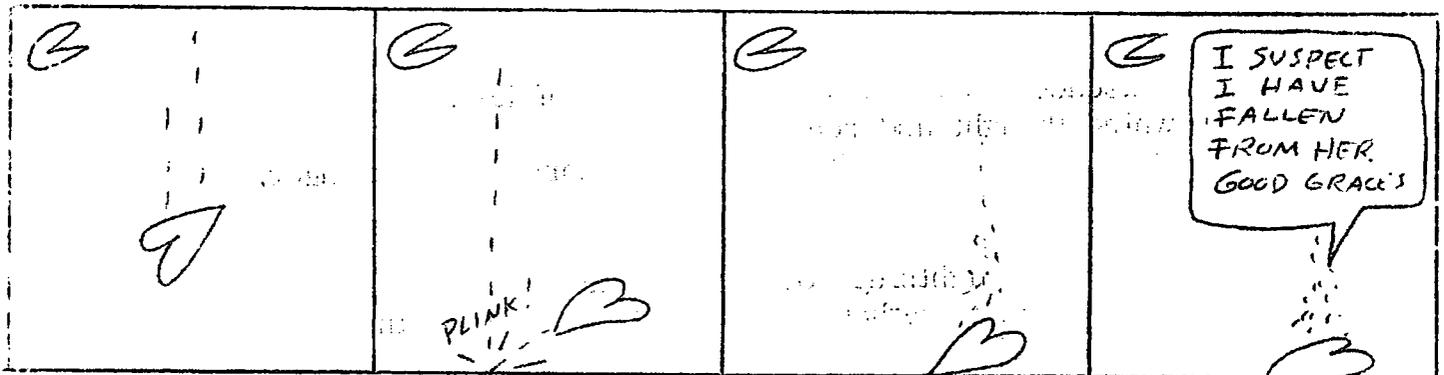
I mark time in one spot, scuffing out a pit throat deep, sinking through the base of my own statue to myself.

I carve a Mount Rushmore with images of old loves.

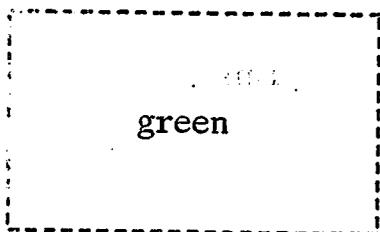
I am gainfully employed at making molehills out of mountains.

Sometimes I wonder how I can stand myself, pawing around in the muck of my own brain, standing knee-deep in soggy memories and unused thoughts, bent under the skull dome of my head, watching the slippery crud seep out the eye sockets like the overflow of a bathtub. I bang my mind against the mossy inside of my skull as I try to straighten my back. I curse and the noise is hollow and wet, the darkness dank and filled with the buzzing of gnats and the swoops of the vampire bats of my subconscious. I dipper a mouthful of green filth with my hands and spew it onto white paper with a great burpy Bleah!

13 December 1964



14 December 1964



I bring you Spring. I bring you the sound of buds popping into blossoms: (Put! Pop! Popp! Put! Pppp!) I bring you the sound of grass in the spring winds: (Swish... swoosh... hummmm... mmmmm...)

I bring you the distant lonely hollow hoot of that last steam locomotive in America. I bring you the sunlight, warm on your back, with the coolness of a dying winter on your shadow side. I bring you the tenderest of green growing things, sticking their heads up as if to say, "Hey, are you sure Winter is gone?"

I bring you the spring stars, the first summer blouse, the last winter coat. I bring you fresh, un-heated air. I bring you the first green sweater on each tree. I bring you the first bird's first love call. I bring you the sound of the first power

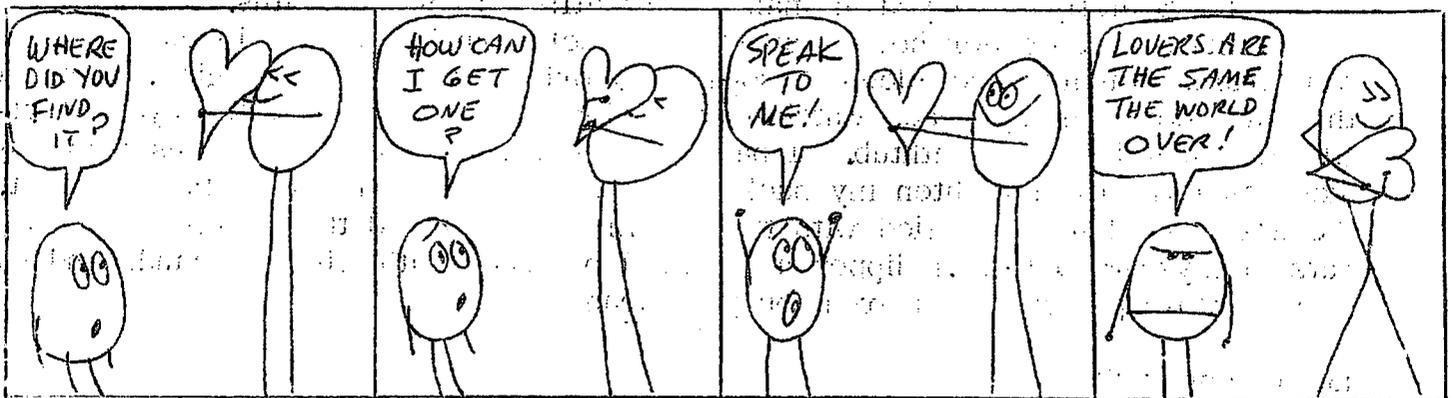
mower and the chop of water on the Bay beyond the first white sail. I bring you a remembered kiss, a sigh once lost, a re-read book with new eyes. I bring you fresh fruit and the exhilaration of a day in the wind in the first car with its top down.

-I bring you Spring, giving back to you a Spring you once gave me.

15 December 1964

I want you to know the very latest Hip Thing. Maggie Denver started it. She wanted me to photograph her and the kids for Bob's Christmas present and sent me a telegram. Due to a Western Union foulup they sent me two identical telegrams. I called Maggie and accused her of starting a New Thing: stereo telegrams.

16 December 1964



18 December 1964

THE STORM

She cascaded over me in a tidal wave of lust,
drowning thought and reason,
flooding my senses with the erotic storm of her hunger.

When the hurricane slowed,
when the last lightning bolt had thundered,
we lay together, without thought: staring, breathing,
feeling the tide of lust ebb away,
slowly, very slowly.

Her voice came softly, asking for assurances,
quietly hoping for an erotic medal.
I answered, knowing that in my answers were my own praise.

A job well done, a superb performance:
a charade without love, a play without plot.
A meaningless, mindless athletic act,
flotsam on a nameless shore.
A shipless pirate,
guarding a looted treasure chest.

21 December 1964

Ah, if things were different. If things were not as they are I would say, blurting it right out, what I wanted for Christmas. I would want the smile, the cascade of red, the deep-throated laugh, the warm pink and tan of a certain reality. I would want my hands moving over you like Midas over gold.

If things were different that's what I would want. But Reality rears its ugly head... the Loch Ness of Now... the Gorgon's myriad heads, each with its plastic derby perched jauntily.

I analyze all this too much. When you look at the genes and chromosomes of basic life through a microscope the very structure changes by the act of examination. Perhaps it is the same with this, with love, with friendship and situations, with life. I poke it with a stick to see if it's still alive. I dissect it under photofloods. I carve it with infinite care. I stuff its formaldehyde-soaked carcass with old love letters and set it on a public mantel.

There are times I know I write all this just for myself. Just to "hear" myself talk. Typographical masturbation. I construct great monuments to Boredom from pasteboard and spittle. I pile high a bier of dried memories, soak it in self-pity and set it afire. The bright flames in the night send white furry things scampering into the darkness on the edge of your vision. The leaves of nearby traumas turn brown and wither. Evergreen hope curls and blackens. The dry earth around is warm on the feet of prancing nightmares.

I dramatize.

I parade the skeletons of thought in bizarre funereal extravaganzas of corrupt effort.

Limping, club-footed secrets drag along, holding aloft the banners and streaming pennants, gaudy with obscene slogans.

The fife and drums of a pick-up band from Hades set the pace. Colorful devils prance and strut behind the Grand Marshal. The caged beasts from darkest Id are trundled by. Chained prisoners crush the strewn rose petals with their horny feet. Slavegirls in brazen nakedness carry the curtained litters of demon princes past the reviewing stand. Hobbled unicorns are led by those certified Unvirginal. Human sacrifices grin with frozen faces.

I gesture and the color changes to black-and-white, polarizing God and obscenity and truth. The flick of a mental synapse and the sound and fury of a death-knowing culture bursts from the silent speakers. The tempo of an IBM Executive is paced by the clatter of armored protection and the sandal-shuffle of saintly sinners.

I listen to my own thoughts played back from echoing crypt made by a blind man. I look over my shoulder to see the turns I missed. I search the pockets of my shroud to find I misplaced the key.

I put my ear to the mossy north side of the marble crypt and hear the faint shouts of a memory. I walk around to the front and see carved in the lintel, "Live Fast, Die Young and Have a Good-Looking Corpse." I glance around and try the door. Over on the edge, near a concrete angel, someone has scratched "Live and Let Die."

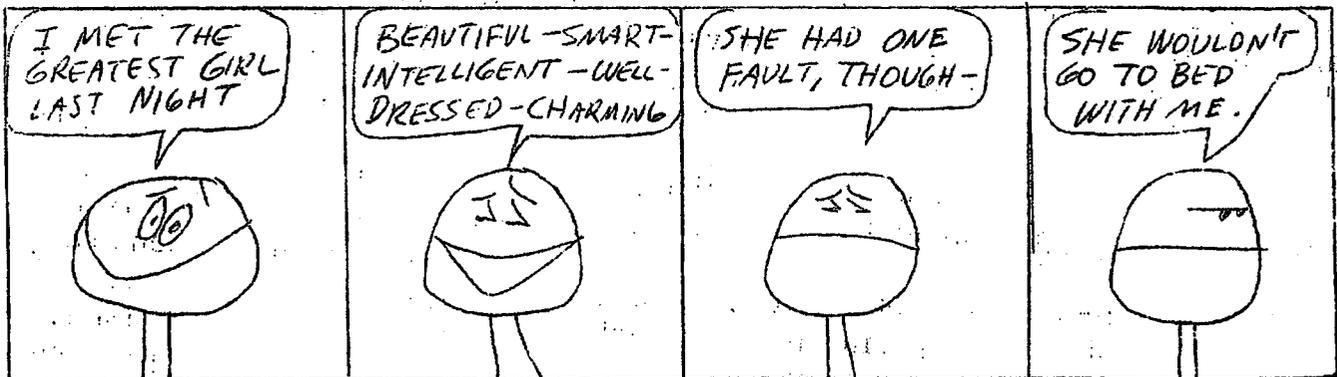
I stick a handful of plastic flowers in the mason jar by the graven door and wander off, following a tuneless whistle beyond the wall with the broken glass top.

So now I send you this for Christmas. It's full of right jabs to the gut and tickles under the chinny-chin-chin. It has hate and love and indifference and the gift of beauty. So I guess it has in it everything that we had.

Think of it as a rumcake of the mind... a fruitcake of the heart... a patterned stocking full of H... Santa Claus found in the chimney in hot July... a record gig at Gehenna West... a sleigh ride in the Mojave... a snowstorm in Tahiti... a cheery fire in the Files of Heaven.

Merry Christmas and a Happier New year. (A gift in your name has been sent to me.)

24 December 1964

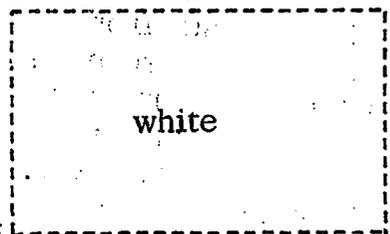


25 December 1964

My thought for today:

"For me the world seems full of women, but not a woman."

28 December 1964



I bring you winter.

I bring you the first snowball, the first mekting flake on your cheek, the sudden thunder of a tree dumping its load of white. I bring you the first fire, the flames curling around the logs, the twinkle of spiraling sparks, the hiss and popple, the overhot face. I bring you the bare black trees against the drama of coming rain. I bring you a pretty girl in a dark raincoat, nervous against the shower. I bring you the skid sound behind you, the spurt of adrenelin, the thousand jewels on the windshield display case.

I bring you a California winter, complete with the sneers and gratitude of Easterners. I bring you the first freeway rain and the silly feminine fancy known as plastic raingear. I bring you the brisk bite of cold and the red-orange fire grate. I bring you the smeared blurry relections in the streets.

I bring you the wrinkly feel of the seal of a bottle of Scotch under your thumb and the thick leden feel of the foil as you slit it. I bring you the golden cascade down the fantasy of a glass of ice. I bring you a welcoming kiss from the Outside, the quick dark swirl of coat against the wind and the high furry collar caressing your face. I bring you a night of love-making while the storm batters the house like Zeus looking for his wife.

I bring you a City of Ice, a City of Fire, a long look across the swell of plain towards the new snow on the mountains.

I bring you a winter cave of memory, quick-frozen for this later release to the West Coast, stalagmite by stalactite.

31 December 1964

As the year ends (lots of whimpering and no bangs) we come to wonder what it was all about. This is traditional and we are all bound by tradition, are we not? Perhaps I should list my Ten Best, Ten Worst and Ten So-Whats, scrawling them into this journal (Open To The Public, 9-5 Weekdays, Closed Sunday. This Genuine Cave was used by Ancient Man for Secret and Mysterious Rites No Spitting on the Floor No dogs) as hieroglyphics of the heart. Perhaps the writing of it will drain the nasal passages of the brain, lance the boil of the mind and give Instant Relief.

But I'm not going to. I have purged myself with words enough for one year. This IBM enema has made for a Lighter, Brighter World.

I could point with bursting pride at a sentence well turned (literally spinning!) and a chance thought-line that brought in a clever cliché. I can harrumph and hope people will notice how devilishly clever I was to string together a lot of unpolished words into a necklace of dead albatrosses. The world can look into the Freak Tent. The gods of pagan times can stir in their vaults, knowing someone still recalls their imprisoning immortality. The police can stake out a Letter of Ill Repute and wait for it to be Capitalized. The wiggly mind-spiders can find dark, moist corners to lurk in. The tides of time can gurgle around the barnacled pilings of a burning bridge. Historians can reconstruct the Age from a stela of dung and gold and used newspaper I have constructed and paint the World at the Dawn of the Atom as a place to avoid. When the electronic boys in the backroom have finished tinkering with that Time Machine they will hang a notice of condemnation of the whole Era.

And yet...I have been building a kind of archive...with one pretty side, and tar paper on the sides not facing the street.

Happy New Year and God Save The Queen.

1 January 1965

"The war from which we can never disarm is the battle of the sexes."

"Don't say it if you don't mean it."

"Let he who has not thought cast the first philosopher's stone."

"Although you can understand a turtle falling in love with an Army helmet you can't always understand why people are attracted to one another."

"I always resent being the newest in lovers."

"Women never surrender--they only go underground."

(WR)

January, 1965

We think: I am basically a good guy. I am a good person, really. I'm not at all all bad. With just a little luck, a little more effort I could be very nice.

We think: It's not me, it's the other guy. He's the one that louses up the world. It's the other guy that litters the streets and builds the endless tasteless houses. It's the other guy that hurries past without a smile, the other guy that gets us into wars. I care. I worry. I do my best, really I do.

We think: I am capable of a Great Love, the kind of love they write about. Without much prompting at all I could own and operate a Great Love with savoir-faire, equanimity and lots of Cool. I feel it in me.

We think: I'd like to get away from it all--live on my wits, live in Tahiti, on the Riviera, in Paris. I'd really like to bust loose and show them all! Boy, wouldn't that be something? Me, me living it up in the Big Time. I just gotta do that soon, real soon.

We think: She loves me...he loves me. Well, that figures...just as soon as they know The Real Me how could they not fall in love? Or do they really understand? Do they love me for their reasons or mine? It makes you think...

We think, We are. We exist. We dream, we live, we sleep, we eat, we rut long gorges in another's flesh and soul. We let the days slip by--there will always be tomorrow to get things straightened out.

We think bigger than life. We sculpt cloud castles from little puffs of wind-blown mist. We enlarge ourselves to Rushmores of flesh. We adventure among the planets and the seas and the great kings of legend. We fashion around us a nebulous armor of illusion, deceiving everyone, including ourselves.

We think: I am me. Often, that is sufficient for our needs.

"I have to be honest when I can't possibly rationalize!" (Mae Helms)

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Don't worry--it's
an even match!

\$

And so we end another day, another episode of that ever-popular "A Diary for Michele." Yes, this tender story of young love has been brought to you by the United States Postal Department, makers of Better Stamps for Better Living! And here's Bill Rotsler to speak for the Post Office... Bill...

Thank you, it's a pleasure to be here. Folks, are you getting all you should out of life? Are you spending too much time hand-carrying that trite birthday card to Aunt Clara in Des Moines? Let the United States Post Office do it for you! Let them do it for you! It's new! It's different! All you

need is a stamp... let me spell that for you... s-t-a-m-p... just a nickie will get your letter all the way across the country to anyone you want -- imagine that!?!?!? Inquire at your local Post Office--you'll be glad you did. Just say Bill Rotsler sent you and ignore the stare.

And remember, folks, some of the best junk mailers in the country use
THE UNITED STATES POST OFFICE!

3 January 1965

IF I GO OUT, LOVE WILL CATCH ME

The moon is an old lure.

It has trapped humble peasant and haughty king,
nubile wench and naked goddess.

It has floodlit siege and conception, death and love.

It's names are many: Diana, Luna, Target,
Mensal clock, destroyer of stars, the night's gaudy light.

Sometimes the moon deludes us.
We think we're gods or warriors or worse:
magnificent lovers, deft, sure, untiring, brave.

You there!

Don't you have enough sense to come in out of the moonlight?
to come in out of the moonlight?

The dinosaur at the cave mouth. Footprints in a sandstorm. The giants in the darkness of a stairwell. Poems flung to the hurricane. My Mark IV sense of Sophistication handles it all with a gesture, a "Well, that's the Way of the World" attitude.

THE END

Suns and stars burn themselves out in solitude.

Comets hurtle in ~~the~~ absolute silence.

Blackened planets whirl in funereal quiet.

Shattered moons orbit in dusty stillness.

The choked and sluggish air moves in muted whispers.

The unmarked graves of man and animal are still.

No flower adorns the global graveyard.

No insect buzzes a dirge.

No tombstone, monument or cross has been raised.

Man chose cremation instead of a decent burial.

"It is well to love; not to love any more is well also."

(Paul Gerdny)

5 January 1965

rust

I bring you autumn.

I bring you red, brown, parchment yellow and the first bulk of sweater. I bring you the gutter full of chance leaves, the skirl of wind scattering the carefully raked pile, the smoky taste of the afternoon. I bring you a canyon full of golden sycamores, the great white castles above the green thrust of mountain.

I bring you the first heavy jacket, the last of the summer grapes. I bring you orange and gold and scarlet. I bring you the last ride in the open air and the first country fair. I bring you the sparkling new television series, the last trip to good old Disneyland, the first tentative thoughts about what to do about Christmas.

I bring you the sadness of summer's end, the bittersweet taste of regret and the first fire, gay and crackling. I bring you the great cotton fog, stealing softly in, hiding the rust-gold of the Bridge, then the spiny white-grey of the City, as it hangs its nebulous jewels around every streetlight.

As your personal impresario of Nature, the World, and the Mind of Man, I have brought you autumn.

(Cue the theme... start countdown on the commercial... Number Three camera ready... theme out... cut...)

This Act of God is brought to you in sparkling, All-New ENGLISH! The miracle language! Gives relief in seconds. If you had taken English when this thing began relief would already be working its way into your bloodstream, little canoes of compassion manned by mutated apes from the Garden of Eden on their way to the River Styx. In the secret, sink-stained recesses of your low-suds mind it's power-punch would already be at work, draining your nasal passages and giving you 21% fewer traumas.

Taken as directed, ENGLISH can exalt and depress, enrage and enrapture, delight and annoy, relieve nagging mind-ache and clogged thinks. ENGLISH-- the All-New, All-Powerful Panacea--try it!

6 January 1965

I guess every man builds a woman in his mind, whether it be his conscious or subconscious mind. I am certainly no exception. In fact, I may even lead the pack. She's beautiful, of course, because thinking is cheap and every man searches for beauty in his way. (Besides, the production budget on free-lance thinking would stagger a von Stroheim in his prime...) She's warm and loyal and strong. She's a lady--but my definition of a lady, which is not necessarily the world's.

But who am I to get such a woman? What have I done to carry off Helen, to sail with Cleopatra, or to court Miss Universe? I'm not rich, famous, handsome or particularly deft. I'm no Casanova, bed-hopping across a continent, one step ahead of my reputation. I'm no scalp-hunter. I am no mountain of gorgeous muscle or the possessor of a menagerie of animal magnetism.

But I do have some sensativity and some talent and I do try for understanding, of myself, the world, and of that woman for whom I search. I have love, like gold to Cortez's mark on Montezuma's wall. I think I have warmth and feeling and would

like to think very hard that I have character. I don't, but every man must have an illusion or two. My trouble is, I have built a woman too good for me to get.
I think I'll go soak my head in a pail of Escape.

7 January 1965

Blank white space can have a terrifying effect. The works of Shakespeare were once scribbled on white space. All the words of creation lie hidden on white paper; they have only to be developed as a photograph is developed. They need only be developed in the mind of man. All the dirty words, all the love words, all the challenges to Man, all the insults and praise and exaltation can lie unseen on a white space. Each man sees for himself and what words he sees are the words that we will see, like picking a certain pebble from a rocky beach. And the words for today? Let me look into the white space...

And what words did I see in that band of white? What chain of letters did my eyes drag kicking and screaming from the obscurity of the White Wilderness?

"Courage, Compassion and Conscience; if you do not have them, you have nothing."

ZOTZ!

8 January 1965

It crosses my mind today to ask, "What Michele am I writing to?" I know that I am really writing to myself, but to what Michele do I scribble these gibberings? The Michele of Yesteryear, with a score by Streisand? The Michele of Santa Barbara, of The Harbor, of Texas Avenue, of the Corrida? The Michele of bed, telling me what each burn and scab and scar on her mind means? The Michele of "Cooling It", the Michele of Love, the Michele of the hundred laughs?

Do I write the Michele of Disneyland or the Michele of lust and hunger and beauty? Do I rip open my gut's zipper and spill out the great boredom of my Thoughts On The Subject to a great auditorium of Micheles? Do I scratch out my cunifrom to a warm, pink, naked Michele or to Michele-Out-To-Think? Do I mumble to Michele the Frank or Michele Le Grand?

Do I stumble through a semantic forest to set a basket of goodies at the door of Michele the Ogre or Michele The Great Laughing Beauty? All this crosses my mind tonight like an invasion of army ants from some sticky jungle, guided by the gods of Truth, Justice, Hope, Charity, and Overkill.

But you are probably tired of it by now. Isn't the greatest bore the one who takes as his subject matter that which I seem locked to like Canobus? Or is all this a slum tour, a roller coaster ride through Disneyland printed in negative?

How I do go on... zippity-pow! Look! he talked all the way down! Step back, let the medics through! All the way from the 13th floor, you say? Didn't know the Ivory Tower was that high... son of a gun... look out, you'll get your shoe sticky...

January 1965

Over my head, in the living room, Streisand is rushing towards her vocal orgasm and the music vibrates the house. The traffic below, down the hill, is humming and swishing and growling like metal rapids as it feeds itself into Old Man Freeway, around the curve of hill. The rippling thunder of a jet lowering towards L. A. International bisects the sky.

The house is clean, wearing its best, though shabby, suit. Little bowls of goodies stand about near clean ashtrays. Bites of cheese and meat are laid out in geometric sunbursts. Several score glasses stand in transparent ranks on the dining room table. Huge antique candelabrum flank a display of statuary and flowers. The mossy green telephone is quiet for a change. The candle castle sits in a spiny mound, awaiting the torch.

The invitations are delivered. ("You are invited to the Second in the 1964-1965 Orgy Series...") Streisand still tears herself open, feeding her soul into the little grooves of the black discs. The world and music and the sounds of the night flow past. The Troy House is like an island, awaiting the invasion of the hedonists.

I opened the door of my bedroom and stepped out in the chill of early evening. The scattered houses across the pass are alight, many still festooned with Christmas lights in looping garlands. The big thrust of hill topped by the TV transmitter over Hollywood is siloutetted by a pale orange glow. The sky is deep blue, not yet black, and the country's Third Largest City bottom-lights a series of Big, Dramatic Clouds. On the other side of the opposite hill Hollywood and Los Angeles and Beverly Hills are all laid out in geometric lines of lights, stretching out in a fantastic blanket of brilliance to where the little patches of duplicate, identical suburbia comes up from the sea.

The streetlight up on the street throws a lacy design, simulating a tree, across the wall of the house down past the pool. I shiver against the cold, trying to absorb everything quickly, a deadline for sensitivity, disappointed that I can't zoom to a significant closeup of some landmark or chance juxtaposition that would point up the whole paragraph.

There are a baker's dozen of single, sparse stars, the first pioneer stars of the night. Their light started before Man unhooked his hairy tail from a fern tree limb and came down in a burst of nervous experimentation. Before Abraham was born the light was still zipping through the Great Void in the Sky, blindly rushing all the way to my blind eyes.

All that trouble to stud the bowl of darkness with a handful of imitation diamonds. God is a wastrel.

1 2 3 4 FIVE 6 7 8 9 10

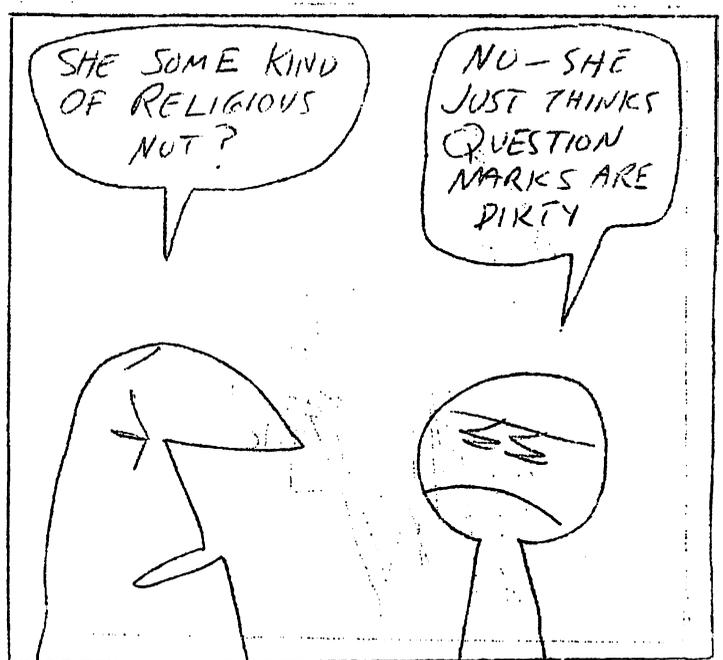
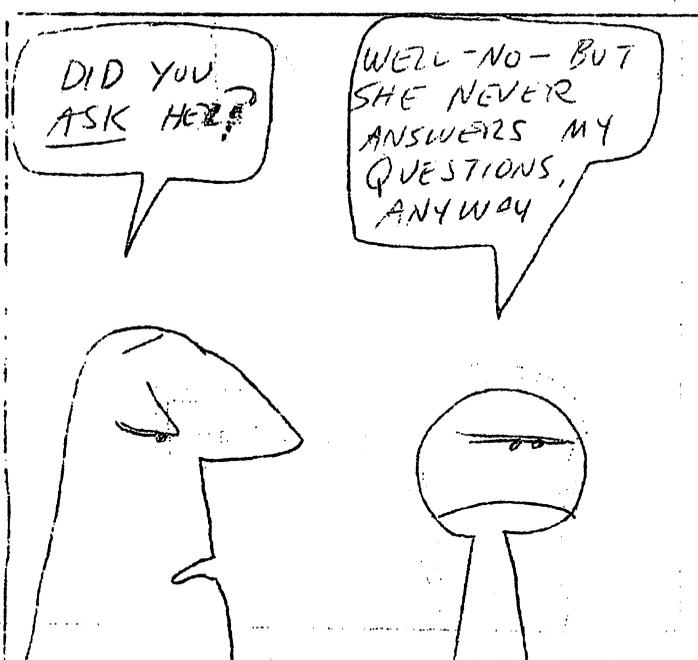
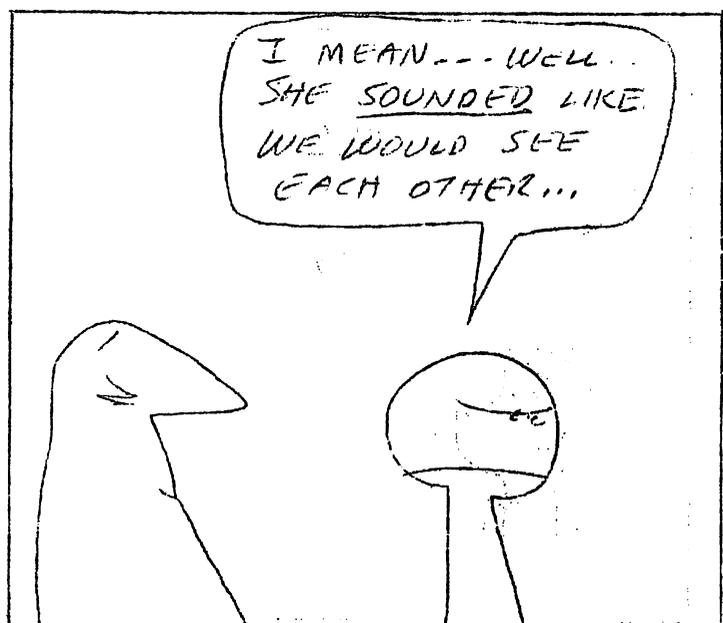
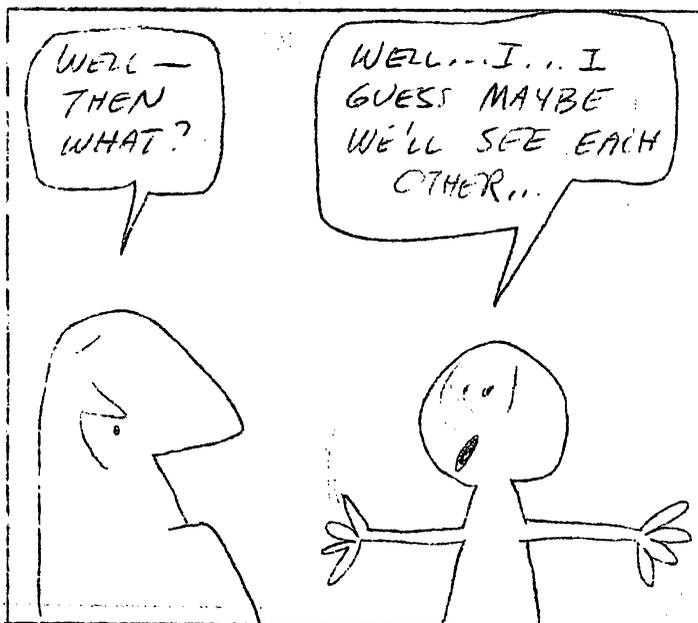
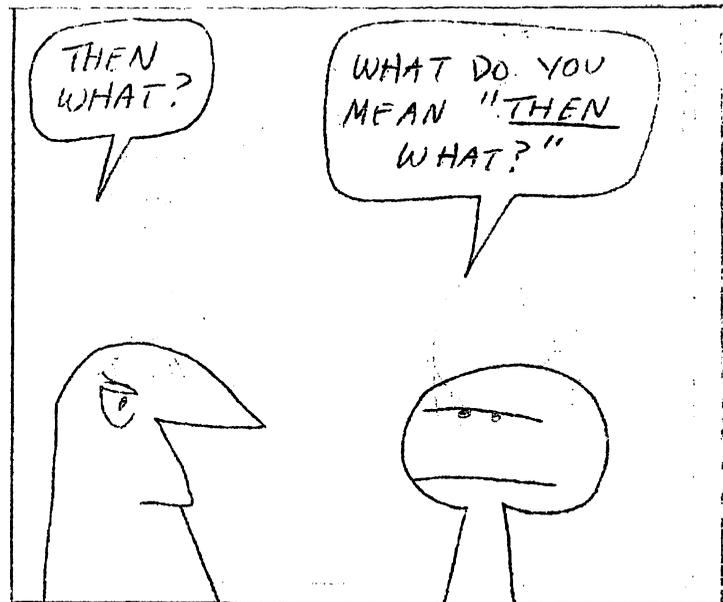
"Non-conformist!"

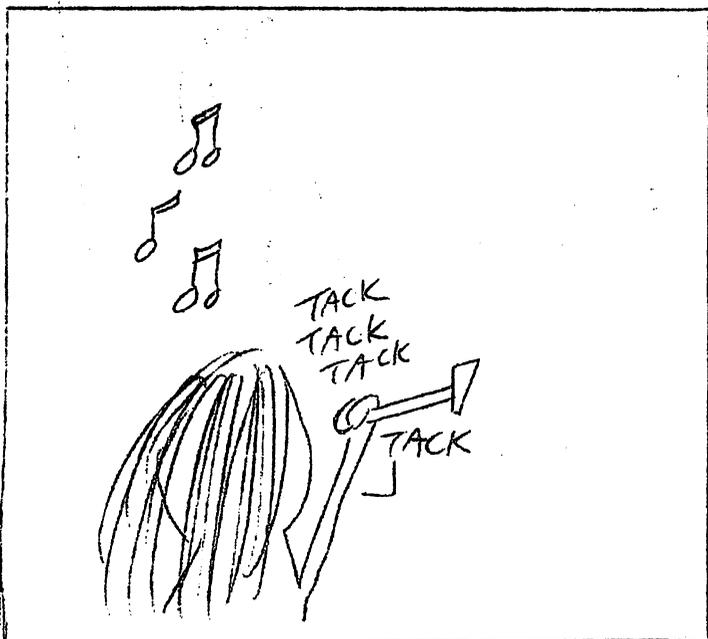
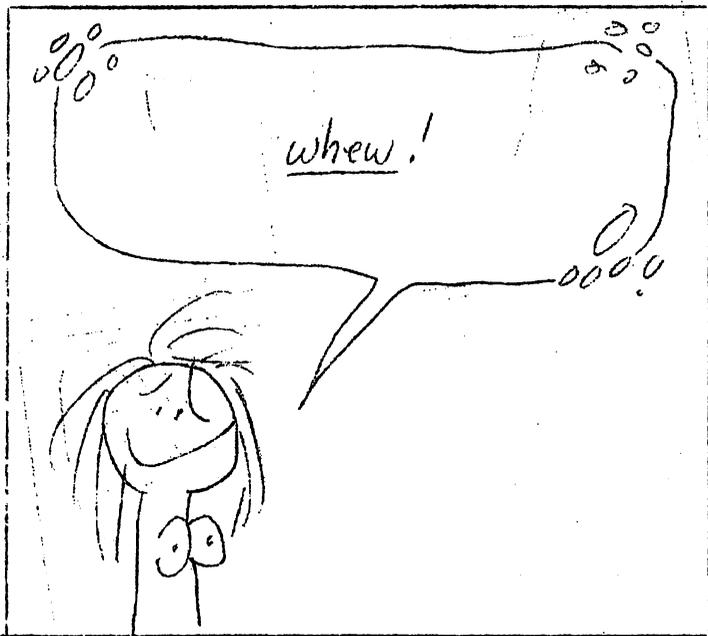
10 January 1965

The next thing you'll know I'll be "bringing" you the Days of the Week, feast days of Lesser Saints, bank holidays and a Portfolio of National Days Too Insignificant to Have a Whole Week To Themselves.

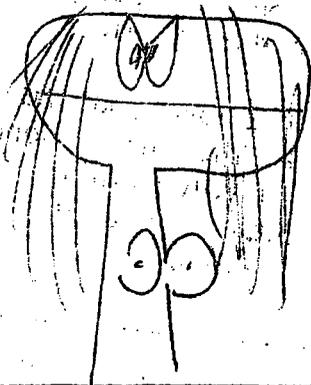
11 January 1965

You are back, I glee.





GRIM GRIM GRIM GRIM



WHAT'S THE MATTER, BABY?

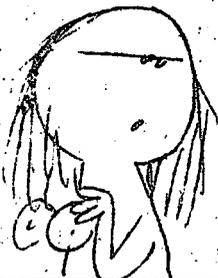
YOU!

THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER!



YOU WROTE ALL THOSE THINGS TO ME—

YUP



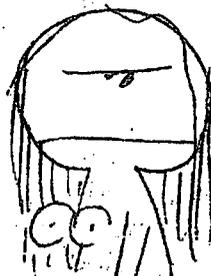
AND THEN YOU PUBLISHED THEM!

YUP



WHAT WILL PEOPLE THINK OF ME?

THE TRUTH



EPILOGUE

High on a great swooping yellow ferris wheel, way up in the neon-streaked night sky of a midway I asked her to marry me. She accepted, clinging to me in fright as we swirled around and around in the erratic orbit of a double wheel.

It lasted almost three weeks. Prefacing her words with I love you and You are the best thing that ever happened to me... she broke the engagement. The reasons are no one's business, except that they do not involve other people and that there was no fight. In fact, we never fought. Nor is it the difference in ages, a matter of some fifteen and a half years.

The blind man has seen and is less content with the darkness now. WR

5 April 1965

yellow

I bring you summer.

I bring you a hillside of poppies, running like grassfire to the horizon. I bring you the last brief rain, the first sweaty shirt. I bring you the endless cloudless sky, doming the known world until autumn. I bring you the first day at the beach, with hot sand all the way from the car to the wavering edge of the sea. I bring you the bronzed surfers, lemmings to the sea. I bring you the hot, mindless rituals under the pagan sun. I bring you melting ice cream cones, oiled skin and the first drive-in movie.

I bring you the bubble of irrigation pipes, summer re-runs and a myriad of tall, cool ones. I bring you, courtesy of God, the coolness of the dark. I bring you music filtering through the trees from a distant neighbor. I bring you bare shoulders and boys selling violets on streetcorners.

I bring you a score of sails on the blue chop of the Channel. I bring you a basket of impossible strawberries and a supermarket full of the fruity loot of a dozen states. I bring you summer madness--flagpole sitters, sex murders, and fur-clad starlets on blocks of ice.

I bring you dew on your sandals, grass stains on your rump and a green foxtail in your hair. I bring you a sandy car mat, a damp bathing suit in the trunk, a six-pack of empties, a laugh heard from a passing conveyer. I bring you restless feet, a horizon gained, another seen far off. I bring you dusk, with God fumbling for the night-light switch. I bring you the first barbecued steak, the first midnight swim, the last of the evening's wine.

I bring you joined flesh slithery with sweat, and the cooling night breeze from the open bedroom window. I bring you the bowl of night, the great bubble night, the fantastic display of distant exploding atoms. I bring you a sky filled with God's stars, like the Opening Night of Creation.

I bring you summer.

10 May 1965

It is a tower city, all gray and dreary, spotted with jeweled lights and other neon gilt. The cars race, the people race, the world is not new tonight. It's an old world, full of shadows and tiny patched-up rips. It leaks sawdust into space. There are fingerprints on the glassy oceans and coffee stains on the future of Man.

I grunt and groan and feed myself twaddle with a bent spoon. The earth turns towards the dawn with a sigh. The great G-type star will tomorrow burn away the mental smog and mists of misadventure. Time will pass, each grain of sand a falling planet...

I fuse another brick of thought into that glory-bound tower to the Moon. I spit on my hands and slap away at the rough surface of the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't monument to my Great Effort.

The sun gives birth to flowers and salt fields and warming seas; to lusting green things and towering trees and hot car seats. Wounds dry quickly in the sun; the festering unseen. Sweat runs into the eyes of a dead-rigid Brigadier Guard. Words fall from my fingertips, splattering on the floor of my hollow mind like ink blot tests, covering up perfectly good white paper with black blood and other diseases of the delirium day.

Beyond the dying sun stars are waiting their turn in the wings, waiting for the delicate glory of night. The sun creaks and slithers towards the horizon, turning red with effort. Young girls hurry towards deodorants and fresh dresses, towards a shared steak and boyish laughter. Dirty old men sigh, their visions of youth turned slowly into memories, some of which were true. They remember fresh smooth flesh and an incongruous laugh. Young men lie to each other and laugh too hard. Women fill their minds with gold and glitter, fashions and folly, the tiniest spot of education, just enough to give tone to the whole mess. They put in the invisible ear plugs and journey to the end of night, which was a book I could never finish.

Night's Black Agents pull across the worn velvet doublet of Apollo and night comes again. Another day a memory. I pull up a rock slab and lay out my chisels and carve: Days that are filled with nothing dribble away through our fingers; days that are filled with excitement and doing and love leap from our hands like falcons.

The tinfoil sea streaks away into the night. The moon comes again, to wash everything with pale milk. The tall ship leans into the midnight wind, whispering slithering sleek across the black water. From the distant misty island I conjure up Tahiti and Crete and Samos, the Misty Isles and a landfall on an unknown island. On that distant cliff there is a ruined temple to the gods where a priest-shepherd hides and makes his prayers in the dark of the moon.

From over the edge of the horizon I create vast despotic kingdoms to be looted, dusky voluptuous maidens to love and great messy treasure rooms to be casual about. From a farleaning sail I imagine scarred piratical faces peering at us, the rasp of a whetting stone against nicked steel, the whiskery throaty grunt of a savage captain.

The Aegean mists surround me with mystery and history, with imaginings and reality. My muscles tense and lift as the ship rolls beneath me. Pagan princesses stand on stone docks, their full breasts bared in the midnight tidal wind, too proud to beg my staying. Armored centurions clatter

a brassy salute. A white-bearded king lays a hand on my shoulder, trying not to look like a character actor. Flesh and fantasy weave basket traps in my mind.

The ship sails on, with me, without me, it doesn't care. I go with it, then and now. The fantasy of freedom, the long sought danger of the unknown, the fact-ridden reality of The Way It Is contrasting to The Way I Want It To Be.

The tall ship, the fresh unknown girl, the stroke of hand on flesh, the creak of ship and unheard moan of love. The fruit-filled canoes, the flower-strewn sea, the brown-skinned girls--all this lies just over the horizon of reality. Time is a waster of men and man a wastrel of time. Fleeting moment arrowed on flight, falling into the memory-pit: the playing field of love, rumpled bed and golden woman gleaming in the dimness...

The words rush out and pile up around my feet. The insanity of endless words. The type-now, act-now, act-with-out-thinking insanity. The barred cell of inhibition. The padded cube of frustration. The cold stone caves of squared inability to comprehend. The burst pipe of irony filling a shackled cell with sloshy gush and shredded television guides.

Don't think, rush on. The flower plucked from a roadside bouquet by a knight on a charging dragon. The windmill lies around the hill.. you have time to tie your colors to the spearhead. The pothole turns bravery into farce; the clatter of armor frightens the field mice into momentary stillness.

Stars burst. Suns burn at various speeds. Planets blacken and wither. Love grows fresh new red hearts out of the potash and char. Greenery comes purple-black into the night sky, the starless sky. The bitter fret of William Rotsler. The whole universe revolves around my specific center of gravity, spinning on light years of radii, ripping loose galaxies with the wind.

12 May 1965

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the cliché-maker once said. And it is in his hand, his heart, pressing painfully against his mind like a ton of salt. Beauty is the racing rabbit, the Holy Grail, the brass ring, the pot of gold. Beauty is trouble, excitement, pleasure, the oubliette of the emotions.

22 May 1965

Think. Think of the flooding blue sea, the whisper of sparkles from here to there. Think of the wisp of redness across your eyes, shrugged away with a smile. Think of the moss-green sweater, the rust-red couch, the long stretch of golden sun-worshipping body.

Think of the button-nipple pressing into my palm, the stiffened gasp of passion. Think of my mouth, exploring, memorizing, my pioneer mouth opening a new world. Think of the sea pulse and ice cubes diluting a duet of drinks.

Think of the brassy thrill of the corrida's bugle, the sudden black thunder of the second lead in the pageant, the belly clutch of excitement. Think of a glass, cold in your hand. Think of the way your lips reach with languorous greed for a cigarette. Think of beds pushed together and the twisted rumple of white sheets. Think of apple juice in gallon globes and of Chicken Delight, like a stolen feast.

Think of the memory bank--that vast storehouse without inventory--the incredible collection of trivia and world-blast... great heaps and files in duplicate, each half of a stereo-sensation filed separately, but not equally. Towers of night lights, long streamers of half-rubbed flesh, shimmering collections of iced liquids, a million TV impulses, a hundred movies, halves of a thousand carefully sculptured kisses. Think--flesh gleaming in candle-light and slivers of moonlight. Think of sound tracks by Streisand and the surge of surf, "Appalachian Spring" and city static. Think of the unbreakable lock of your legs and the unbeatable Real Life Adventure of your laugh.

Memory plays tricks. It prettifies ugliness and beautifies prettiness. It dramatizes nature and polishes the apple in a pig's mouth. Memory plays tricks on the trickiest. It castrates and enobles, captivates and terrorizes.

But memory is food. When I starve for beauty there is a feast of you. When I am thirsty for the wine of beauty there is you.

Think of that, pussycat!

24 May 1965

ON WOMEN

The siege of Troy was a silly thing:
Is one woman worth nine thousand lives?
A knight dishonors his liege lord king;
Across the land lay bloody knives.
A naked Eve believes a snake:
A world is lost before its birth.
A glossy queen says bread or cake:
She lost her head to shouts of mirth.
Women have made the life they know:
They call it liberty and love it.
But their creation has brought much woe:
Should man have to rise above it?

AN ORACLE, OUT OF FOCUS

in a night without darkness,
in the soot and lava of a tower city,
I hear songs and washing rain.

a music shape, a muted horn,
a fingertip romance:
synonyms for pain, for dust and phantoms
and broken shards of time.

an oracle, out of focus
bubbling
babbling
I own my own body.

"To understand women I think back to when they were little." (Rex Harrison)

CLOWNS WITHOUT MASQUES

sit up straight and take a look at
a civilization that
owns a globe but not its soul,
has a Bomb but not a heart

a civilization that
plays at world with comic opera diplomacy
while people starve and die like bacilli

a civilization that
has wars like musical chairs
and Einsteins that read comic books

question: who can separate the judges from the judged?
question: is there a cheap antidote for death at the drugstore?
question: does the heart absolve what the mind has damned?

shade your eyes and look at
a civilization that
has bread as pure and as processed as alcohol
and buries the dead in an earthly Paradise

a civilization that
has age without wisdom, intelligence with reason

a civilization that
is fine and noble, ambitious and proud
but is certain to market the virtues in cellophane

question: have you seen the latest in Integrity?
question: are you a string-saver?
question: do you want your loved one to lie in a leaky vault?

take a good long look at
a civilization that
has special household gods of paint and tinsel
with temples of piped light, gilt and popcorn

question: without a shave and a haircut
could Christ buy a house in your block?

28 May 1965

"The higher the dream betrayed, the deeper the bitterness; if a man survives, he will be on guard against dreams as a shepard watches for wolves." (Mary Renault)

"Tiger got to hunt, Bird got to fly; Man got to sit and wonder, 'Why, why, why?' Tiger got to sleep, Bird got to land; Man got to tell himself he understand." (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.)

7 April 1965

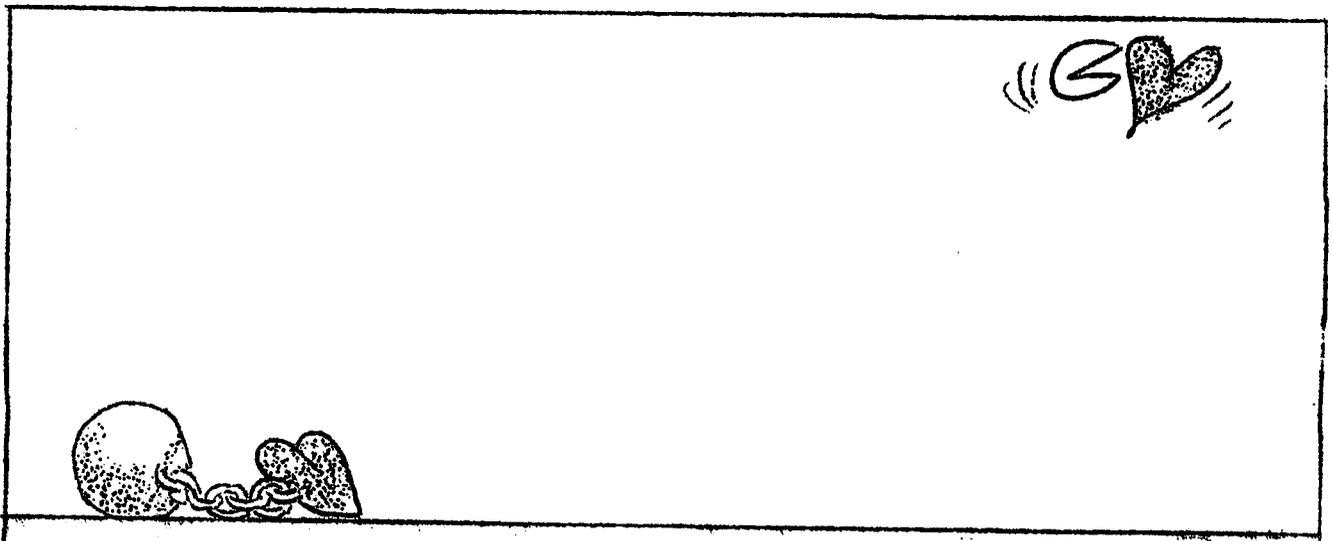
Concrete towers and paper facades line the road to Hell. Champagne glasses make a peculiar tinkly sound when touched. Evil thoughts populate my night. Fifty-foot toads and inch-long dragons scamper through the dripping forest of my mind this night. Stripe the walls with orange and stars. Checker the light bulbs. Sweep the busted hymens and nail parings under the rug. Sing hymns of praise to invisible beings and goat-like humans. Polish the shields of war. Get ready to love. Set in a supply of plastic laurel wreaths. Spray paint the olive branches something that will show up better on the newsreels. Smile. See your dentist twice a tooth. Put toilet paper on strange johnny seats. Adapt "Medea" to "The Beverly Hillbillies." Snap pff the tast fertile da sy in the world to adorn the crown of the Jester King. To see a girl with inverted nipples is good luck. Never go out in public without a hardon. When ten feet tall, look out for midgets. When two feet tall, look out for giants. A dog is man's best friend, barring bartenders who pour doubles when the boss isn't around. Water your lawn with the tears of living. Honor your father, mother and mistress. It's not too cold, once you get into love.

The English language is inadequate to express the thoughts I carry in my brittle brain basket. Or maybe my brittle brain basket is inadequate to carry the English language. Or even American. Or even a lower case alphabet. Words run out my ears. The cop-out of inadequate expression.

I finally figured out what my style is: drunk. that's what style it is. Pure-ass drunk out of my mind drunken style. Wine-drunk, star-drunk, love-drunk, life-drunk, drunk-drunk... starbursts, sunbursts, flowerbursts, smile-bursts, love-bursts, burst-bursts... things gone all gang aft aglee and tippycanoe, too. The bursting drunks, the IBM cowboys, the electric knights, the bursting drunk electric cowboys. The pots of pourii boil and bubble, distilling sin and fantasy and drunken IBM typewriters.

Right?

Right--mark the spot with chewing gum and chalk. There is Where Rotsler Discovered His Destiny. Make a bloodspot. Turn three times and spit into the wind. Dry yourself off and read the cartoon.



11 April 1968

It's a beautiful day. The sky is gorgeously blue and great cloud castles and snowy ramparts sail above. The air is clean with just a smidgin of Crisp in it. Down here on earth, however, there is a pillar of bitter. My stomach seems filled with clots of sour milk and my brain is awash with milky blood and rusty knots of barbed wire.

I stare at my words, etched in drying blood and carbon. My fingers are carved from beetle's legs and caked with river mud. I seem to have misplaced my mind in my other head. Thoughts are bubbling and popping like some witch's brew, burst like rotten eggs against the mossy inside of my skull.

I sat for a minute and stared. I wanted to launch myself into a brilliantly conceived, irresistably formed, scintillating display of verbal fireworks that would reduce your ramparts to crushed strawberry boxes and diluted water. But my brain refused to push the Start button. The whole thing was programmed, set up in 10-point type and italics, even-edged, indented, numbered and filled with decorative footnotes.

All I wanted to do was type out one word--bullshit--and rip out the paper. I guess I didn't do either because one would be fruitless and the other untrue.

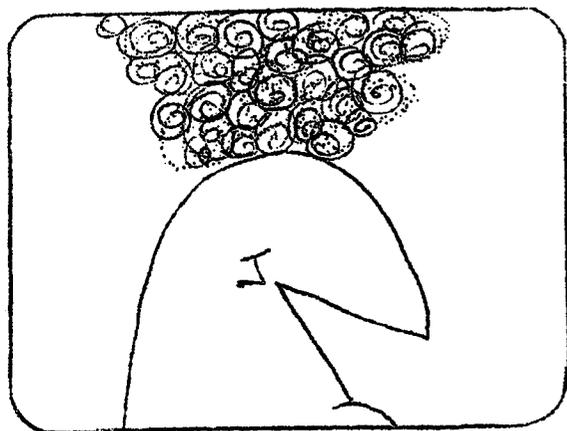
You have become remarkably self-contained. That armor that encases you really has become your home. You have all the plumbing and cooking facilities in there that you need to feed, clothe and entertain your mind... and all the drains are neatly stoppered. You were so afraid that someone would pry into it with an icepick, or pour boiling love into the cracks that you dipped yourself in plastic and climbed up on the horse before it set.

You tell yourself your reasons--the words echoing in the roomy helmet--and cringe at the cold air coming in the cracks. So you snap to attention and the whole glittering structure clangs shut.

At this point my own armor begins to close, like a drawbridge unused for years, complaining and groaning. I've been papering the cracks in my suit of tin with nine parts of love-hate-like-anger-love-desire-want-love-lust-future and one part hope.

I don't want that, but burned fingers react quickly. I don't want the bitter gut, the clenched mind, the heart with the Scotch-taped patches. But I must go on living in my brain, exercising my life-time lease, just as you must go on living in yours. The Woman in the Iron Mask. Cobwebs will eventually close the slits and the Grand Passions may ride by and you pass off the sound of the stallion's hooves as illusion in the night.

Perhaps you see it differently. You are a marvelous gleaming plexiglass astrodome with windshield wipers, automatic defrosting, compass bearings,



power steering and a clear view of life for a hundred miles. The birds will never shit on your helmet, the mud will never clog your outlets, the river of blood will never get sticky, high-blood marks on your armored thighs. "You go your way, soldier--I'm going this way--no Indians in sight thisaway!"

This is the Way of the Truth. Signboards to Reality and Love and a Greater Life... erected by gibbons and madmen and dark cloaked figures with horns. The blind-man in the trap. The child in the center of

the fever jungle. The midnight race through the swamp. The blood sucking leeches diacovered on your arms and feet and anus and crotch and armpits. The unheard scream. The drip of dark blood and staring eye.

That's you...or me...or someone. It's the fevered fingers, the mud-crusted hands hunched like goblins over the keyboard, dancing strange erotic little rites on the transfigured pedestals of the alphabet. It's the bursting release of albumen and rot and spilled gold and carefully measured vomit. It's the scampering of roaches in the sudden light. It's the steaming mind of William Rotsler retching in the midnight sun. It's the fetid shallow breath of a rotting dragon, whose yellow eye still looks wearily at the world.

It's love with a pencil in its eye. It's lust with chains. It's the future with a blown bridge. It's a broken child's toy, a clock without hands, a lost key. It's "I have no mouth and I must scream."

I vomit across 25% rag bond with an IBM Executive. I put salt on my wounds and purge my gut of thought and guilt and response and perhaps even love. Love will not grow on rocks. Love is not fed on air and iodine. Love must grow in the light, in the sun and in bursts of flowers, where each bud is a memory, an act of love, a sharing.

I run on through these pages like a madman fleeing his own reality, like a forest animal before the fire, like birds from a cannon shot. I built quick walls of mud and straw and severed fingers. I carve initials in rain and make entwined hearts of long lines of festering blisters. I mix beauty and slime and pour it into champagne glasses. I crush a thousand roses for their essence and swab out the garbage pail of my mind with the scent. I make music by dumping a carload of guitars over a cliff. I create sculpture by standing embalmed bodies on mounds of offal, impaling them on pikes to stand erect. I admonish them for not paying attention and drift off into gibbering and playing with myself.

I use my very own private head for the ramthrust of the battering ram. I catapult myself in gloriously destructive flames onto the cruel slate and barbs of your fortress. I slip through the slimy moat and break fingernails on the granite. I gut myself on the pikes and hang until rotten on the outermost wall, the ants crawling on my eyeballs and the steel in me rusting with my blood.

The trumpet calls drift away, the banners flap and fade, the green grass grows between the machines of war. A ragged scrap of tunic caught under the carriage of a ruined cannon is the only sound heard above the sigh of wind. The dead lie in approved positions, their feet grown numb and their eyes aching to bunk. We think, from time to time, that we hear the rustle of silk or the tinkle of laughter from beyond the stained walls but we delude ourselves.

Noon and twilight. Dawn and dusty morning. The sun spins around the earth and the lucky ones are those frozen into the skyview, where something moves and changes. Some of us lie with our faces in the mud of a charger's track, the rain water rising and falling in our nostrils. Something with too many legs makes a home inside a shattered jaw and where a brain once pulsed ants have set up a convention hall.

So much for portraits painted in feces and landscapes in black. I must have gone off and left my brain running, the gears grinding, the unoiled joints whining their complaint and the spinning wheels slipping and sliding. Captured by the sound of my own typewriter I constructed a tour de force of whipped cream and whip strokes.

The clouds race faster across the sky. The wind snaps the pennants and ruffle the hair of those without helmets. The match flares and almost goes out before the edge of the tour de force catches fire. The flames bend and twist in the wind, the whipped cream blackens and the whip strokes curl like paper and the soft popping sounds of dwarves and pigmies burning in the twilight can be heard.

The darkness twitches around us like a great dying bird. The dark fire burns on, flaring weakly, then dying, to flare again as it finds an unburned soul to feed upon. The night deepens and the things are heard again, as they were last night and the night before. The things that go plop in the mind-night, the unseen ids and egos and malformed fantasies that pull themselves through the night with broken arms and pus-gutted sacs of fear and anger. By day their snail-trails of wetness are seen across the bent flowers and green grass...but by night you track them from the corner of your eyes and the fear-corner of your mind, trying to keep each one pinned in the darkness beyond.

By day the night-built traps are sprung or decayed, the bent trees freed, the pit filled with bloated bellies and rainwater. The flowers straighten themselves in the warming sun. Your eyes learn to avoid the still smoking crosses, the helmeted figures on the barbed wire, the stinking pits where twitchings can be heard. Steam rises from the wetness, a lone bird pauses for a moment on a gun carriage before arcing into the sky.

Someplace we all imagine we hear the sweet soft voice of a maiden in a stone tower. We grow sad at seeing our armor rust under the pearly dew and ache to move to a new view of the battlefield. Those with closed helmets can slowly let the bile bubble from between their teeth and those with eyes whisper the morning sights to those without.

Someone whispers to me, their words spore-borne on the breeze. I shift my eyes ever so slowly to the ridge top. There, beyond the graveyard and walls and human-headed pikes, there is a graceful figure with a helmet of copper. She stands a moment against the skyful of clouds, her fingers straightening the sign, her boots with a crust of drying bloodmud around the heels. She turns away, the past ignored once again, and goes on over the hill. A cloud slithers a shadow after her.

After a time, after a long pause, a buggy thing with whom I have made a sort of truce (he never enters my brain without knocking and I never frighten him with a sudden thought) creeps back with a message.

The sign on the hill is blank, pointing a sharp arrow beyond, its face scrubbed clean of reason or use. It does not surprise me and I let my friend burrow down for a feast. After all, the sooner my brain is beetle shit the quicker the whole thing is finished.

My eyes are still on the ridge, unmoving, unordered to not-see. My mind still hopes to see the rise of the copper helmet, the scimitar flash of the smile...but some of my friend's family tromp across the hollow, echoing cave of my rib cage, up to their hard little bellies in stagnant juice, and go up my throat to the brain feast at the top.

I feel them eating away at the memories, at the feelings, at the nerve endings and connections that bi



I... I HAD A... A
FORTUNE COOKIE
TODAY... AND...
IT DIDN'T HAVE
A... FORTUNE
IN IT...



NOW I'M AFRAID
OF GOING OUT -
YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT IT MEANS
NOT TO HAVE A
FUTURE



ONCE I THOUGHT
OF BEING A SPACE
MAN OR A MOVIE
STAR. EVEN A
MUNITIONS MAGNATE
OR A SUCCESSFUL
CARTOONIST.



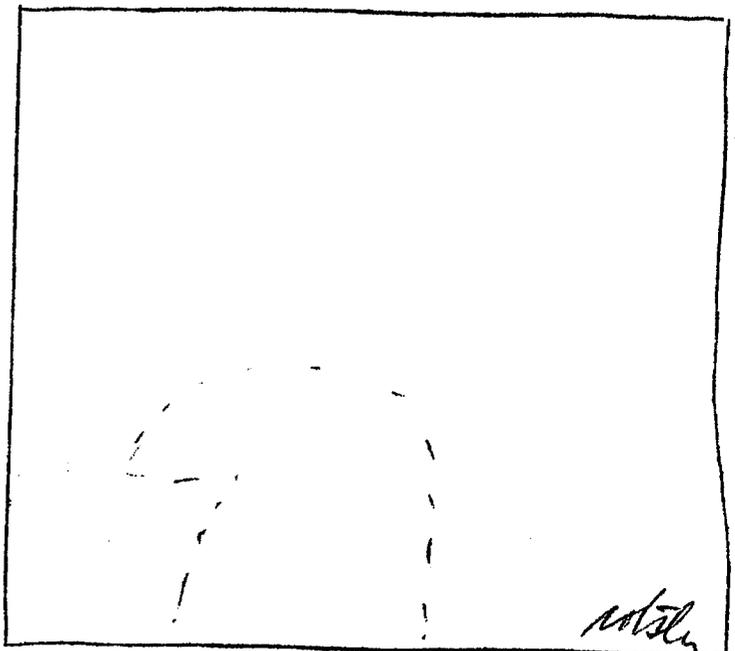
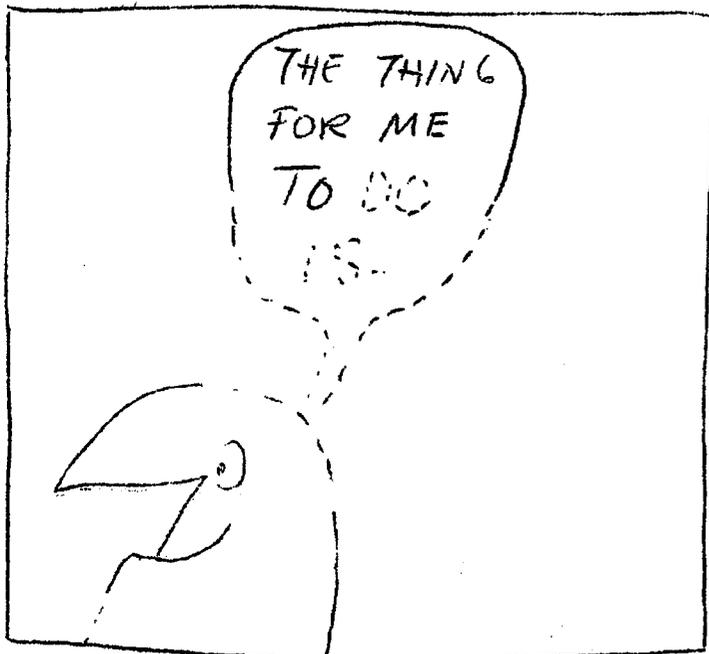
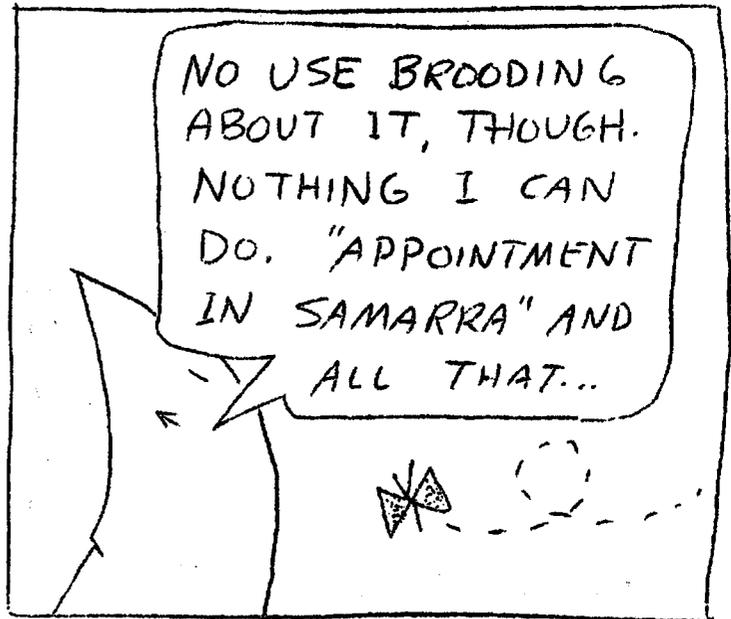
ONCE I THOUGHT
I MIGHT BECOME
SOPHIA LOREN'S
LOVER OR DISCOVER
A CURE FOR
FRIGIDITY



BUT THAT'S ALL
OVER NOW - -
WITHOUT WARNING...
I FEEL PEOPLE
ARE STARING
THROUGH ME.



IF I GO TO THE
OFFICE SOMEONE
ELSE WILL BE
THERE - ALREADY
I DON'T SEEM TO
BE GETTING AS MUCH
MAIL



15 April 1965

I stand and let the rain sluice the bitterness from me, running in sticky rivulets down my body, cutting through the dirt and sweat. I don't want that. I want only peace and love and comfort and security. I do not want war and axed fingers and burnt-out hearts.

I have pressed thoughts and feelings into these pages like screaming butterflies. I have run on and on at the typing machine, grinding out words and English and terror and herds of words that are called sentences and great dusty clouds of words that are called paragraphs and even greater thundering horizonfuls of words that are called pages.

I fill up Time and Thought and paper with inarticulate mumblings. I dam up the stream of consciousness with paper until the pressure builds and bursts forth in shattered logjams of a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y and z-z-z-z-z-z-z...

I try to let Love be Triumphant. I try to let Reason and Truth prevail. I endeavor to get Thought a fingerhold on the rampart. I hope Light will come, that Truth will send out a cry of victory. But mainly I mumble and threaten and fist-branish and sulk. I brood with the best of them. I can sulk with the sulkiest. I rain tears inside like a vast lime-green and black-orange rain forest.

I stand posturing before the mirror of my mind and say, What a marvelously ironic figure you are! What a profile of courage! What sacrifice! What vast nobility! Look how truly wonderously you have weaved a great tapestry of words and slithering snakes into a marvel of the Rejected Lovers art!

I posture and pose and catch glimpses of myself from the corner of my eye. My Hero's Suit is glittering. My shield of Righteousness is a wonder of shining strength. My face is a Hero's face for sure, reflecting Thought and Strength and Depth and Truth.

But I turn and the strings that hold on my breastplate and tie down my plumed helmet are broken and frayed and knotted. The straps that bind my dented shield to my good left arm are cracked and loose. My terrible sword of Vengeance and Right is nicked and the pommel is losing some of its semi-precious jewels. My boots have holes, my scabbard is scabby and termites have chewed my emblem.

My words echo hollowly in my pitted helm when I cry out words of Wisdom. They dribble down my chin and spot my crested tunic. My arm grows tired waving my sword around and I sit down on a rock. A splendid horse, until recently the property of Don Quixote, crops at the spring flowers and tender grass nearby.

The white clouds still stride majestically across the sky and the sounds of a fresh spring day ping off my armor like insects. The dark moist earth pushes forth the new greenery, fertilized by the dead winter.

1 May 1965

We love what we lack, for if we loved that of ourselves we see in others we would soon grow bored. Bored marriages are those based on surface love, the easily recognized mirror self, that soon wears thin. We should look deeper than that, for the stimulation and regeneration a different mind will give us. Love and marry a heart like yours but hunt for a different mind.

2 May 1965

"You can't love a person unless the way is open.

Cupid--an attempt to explain love in the third person.

To love someone who does not love you is like trying to run a race with your shoelaces tied together.

Love is lust involving a friend.

Most marriages involve cliché-faced women and rubber-stamped men negotiated and re-negotiating a dull treaty unfair to both parties.

Caprice--a woman's iron whim presented frivolously.

It's better to have loved and lost than never to have been missed at all.

"I am Great! My name shall ring down through the Ages!" (Anonymous)

3 May 1965

NIGHT

the smear of orange in horizon's lap

feathered veils of changing colors

the plunging life-giver trailing glory

(whither thou goest)

the world turns away from the sun:

night calls, night sounds

we hunt the pleasures of the night: sound and touch
the staples of pleasure:

pale flesh... bright music

cold wine... old-slippered thoughts

the sigh into a seat

eye wrinkles wrapping around a laugh

(the night deepens and takes hold)

a sentence... a phrase keying old responses

a watch hand pushing you towards an unpadded box

(not yet! not yet!)

slowly melting bones and dissolving thought

the eyes slide down... the vision blurs

(it's so hard to look up!)

a thousand feasts of food and flesh untouched

(delirium is the disease of the night)

the stars, the darkened moon, the hilltops spin

the wind slithers through the trees;

and I follow...

Notula

The object finally has direction and if there was anyone to observe it could be said it was now falling. It has drifted for an unknown time in the void and now it is falling toward Earth.

It still drifts but the tendrils of gravity are like smoke swirls on its pitted surface. Reluctantly it leaves the wandering caravan of space notes and heads for the spinning mudball. The tendrils strengthen into ropes, invisible ropes, pulling down with irresistible force. It's own unimaginably tiny weight is its own death, for the electromagnetic mysteries feed on mass and weight and they are hungry.

It falls faster now. Tiny molecules of used-up air and lonely dust dots are passed. The molecules thicken and there is one every mile or so. If there were air the anguished shriek could be heard but there is only the cold and silence and eternal emptiness of space.

It falls past the sign that says Inner Space Begins Here and past the wornout satellites and past the startled eyes of a pair of pioneer astronauts, riding their fragile cone like men tied across a cannon's mouth.

The mudball enlarges. Continents take shape, the larger lakes and green places. Mountain ranges are long crinkly plaster festers and the cities are twinkle dots on the night side. The sun gleams in shimmers off the curving oceans and familiar shapes appear and spin past, each arcing into their own dawn.

It falls until the world is no longer a disc but a great smokey, blurred target. It falls past the thin gray clouds, past the haughty, long-nosed jets, past the fluffy white blotches and into the thick, bile-tinted murk of Los Angeles smog.

If you were listening, you would not have heard it. The sound of a love falling to its death is not the distinctive sound of ice in a glass or a gunshot or a toilet flush or a bugle's thrill. It hardly makes a sound at all, that tiny dying, crushed little love. A squeak, a smear on a sidewalk like an ant's spit, a checkmark against Cupid.

Everywhere people deplore the lack of love, of brotherly love, of love of kind and country, or kindness and warmth and friendship. They sit in their vaults and complain they do not hear the music. They bind their eyes and say there is no more color in the world. They stumble about on stumps and complain there are no great faces anymore. They sit in their masques at the gaming tables and never ask for a hand to be dealt.

Everywhere people complain that love has passed them by, that love has peed in their soup, that love has done them dirt. They whine and stare and cover with bravado and artifice. Sore-covered beggars hold out battered cups, carmined whores gesture, sweet-faced children scramble in the streets for a cast-off love. Men shrug and accept compromises; women sigh in the night and make do. Heroes rattle swords and roar out their desires into rocky headlands. Heroines simper or cry or shout or lower their eyes from the dawn, each according to her nature. Villains snarl, heavies snap and glower, ingenues stare with wide eyes. Each wants love, each desires the comfort and satisfaction of love. They stand on treasure houses shouting their poverty. They are vegetarians in a meat market, blind warriors of the emotions, explorers without mirrors to read the maps tattooed on their backs.

Love means caring and trust and involvement. It means sex and admiration and truth and mutual concern & interest and liking and a thousand tiny unnameable check marks on an invisible list. Marriage is sharing and it is sex and love and, yes, even growing old together. Marriage is having someone to talk to that isn't out to

"make" you or defeat you or put you down or gain something from you. Marriage is having someone to trust in the whole wide world. Marriage is love on a day-to-day practical level. Marriage is not stultification, smotheration or ball-and-chain--not to intelligent people, not to me. Marriage is not something to be amused with this week and water polo the next. Marriage is not bars or cells or check-out-your-pass-to-go-to-the-supermarket. Marriage should be fun... and quiet times... serenity... and something new to discover... and joy, sadness, companionship, sharing, even an education in living.

Now either you grow up and fill that beautiful shell of a woman you are animating around... or go someplace else and kick apart their sand castle. Go straighten your brain. Swab out the crevices with Q-tips. Flush your mind with quietude. Wear thin the crust of the earth in that circular path. Think. I have given you my best, these carved stone effigies, these fire-and-thunder poems written in blood and feces. Scratch a tiny hole in that frosted plexiglass capsule and look out at the world of love (not strife & fear & biting back & hurt) and the world of emotion (not frost and fearsome monsters from the closet) and the world of... well... me.

Whirr-click! This has been a recording. Push the reject button for Oblivion.

"We like someone because. We love someone although." (Henri de Motherlant)

COLOPHON AND FINI

I wish to thank F. M. and Eleanor Busby for the generous use of their printing device. They are good people. My special thanks to Jim Webbert, who volunteered to run this off, assemble and even pay for the paper. Now that's the kind of friends to have!

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William Rotsler

Addenda, Errata and Nod: change that address to 3342 Troy Dr. Hollywood, California. Change the ending to one or two more false starts towards marriage but with the same result. Forgive the lurid pyrotechnics and squalid wallowings. Write if you get loved and hang by your thumbs.

