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ARROWS OF DESIRE 2

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The Rock 'n' Roll Stories

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ARROWS OF DESIRE 2

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"The reason authors almost always put a dedication on a book, Annie,  
is because their selfishness even horrifies themselves in the end."

Stephen King (Misery)

Thanks to Chris Evans, who talks sense to drunks

And Louise:

"Listening to you, I get the music,  
Gazing at you, I get the heat.  
Following you, I climb the mountain,  
I get excitement at your feet."

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Colin P Langveld

CONTRIBUTORS

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supplied by Paul Di Filippo

GEOGRAPHY LESSON

AND FINALLY, THE TRADITIONAL SLAGGING OF MICHAEL ASHLEY

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YOU ARE HOLDING ARROWS OF DESIRE 2. THE FOLLOWING SHARE THE BLAME:

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## WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED ESSEFF?

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Word was, they were going to have some heavy discussion on this topic at Mexicon. A few definitions by the (in)famous to get you going...

Science fiction is the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode. (Brian Aldiss)

Science fiction is that branch of literature that deals with human responses to changes in the level of science and technology. (Isaac Asimov)

Fiction based upon scientific or pseudo-scientific assumptions (space travel, robots, telepathy, earthly immortality and so forth) or laid in any patently unreal though non-supernatural setting (the future, or another world and so forth). (John Clute and Peter Nicholls)

Scientifiction (is) a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision. (Hugo Gernsback)

A handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the scientific method. To make the definition cover all science fiction (instead of "almost all") it is necessary only to strike out the word "future". (Robert A Heinlein)

That branch of fiction that deals with the possible effects of an altered technology or social system on mankind in an imagined future, an altered present, or an alternative past. (Barry N Malzberg)

Speculative fiction: stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to learn, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of man, of "reality". (Judith Merrill)

It is that thing that people who understand science fiction point to, when they point to something and say "That's science fiction!" (Fred Pohl)

A literary genre developed principally in the 20th century, dealing with scientific discovery or development that, whether set in the future, in the fictitious present, or in the putative past, is superior to or simply other than that known to exist. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Science fiction is hard to define because it is the literature of change and it changes while you are trying to define it. (Tom Shippey)

There is only one definition of science fiction that seems to make pragmatic sense: "Science fiction is anything published as science fiction". (Norman Spinrad)

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WHERE WERE THEY WHEN THE LIGHTBULBS WENT OUT?

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How does Greg Pickersgill change a lightbulb?

On the bare wires, how else do you think he gets his hair like that.

\* \* \*

Why don't eight out of ten lightbulbs work at Isaac Asimov's place?

Search me, he has the same trouble with his novels.

\* \* \*

How does Linda Pickersgill change a lightbulb?

First she borrows the ladder from the budgie...

\* \* \*

How does Maureen Porter reach the lightbulb to change it?

Standing on all the unsold copies of "The Gate".

\* \* \*

How many Martin Tudors does it take to change a lightbulb?

Twenty. One to change it, nineteen to carry the Guinness.

\* \* \*

How many Douglas Adams does it take to change a lightbulb?

42 (Predictably)

\* \* \*

How many Dave Langfords does it take to change a lightbulb?

Half past four.

\* \* \*

How many Arthur C Clarkes does it take to change a lightbulb?

2061 and still counting.

\* \* \*

How many L Ron Hubbards does it take to change a lightbulb?

Is the old lightbulb really dead?

\* \* \*

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WHERE WERE THEY WHEN THE LIGHTBULBS WENT OUT?

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How many Tony Chesters does it take to change a lightbulb?

Ten. One to change it, the other nine to pass it around for a while.

\* \* \*

How many trufans does it take to change a lightbulb?

Twelve. One to change it, the other eleven to go on about how much better the original one was.

\* \* \*

How many punks does it take to change a lightbulb?

Bollocks.

\* \* \*

How long does Pam Wells take... too late, she's eaten it.

\* \* \*

Three.

How many telepaths does it take to change a lightbulb?

\* \* \*

How long does it take a Welshman (C Evans, prop) to change a lightbulb?

Three hours. Five minutes to change it, two hours fifty-five minutes to sing a song about it.

\* \* \*

How should Dave Hodson change a lightbulb?

With wet hands.

\* \* \*

How does Helena Bowles change a lightbulb?

With her feet?

\* \* \*

Waiter, there's a lightbulb in my soup.

Sorry sir, we've run out of flies.

\* \* \*

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## THE ROCK 'N' ROLL STORIES (SLEEVE NOTES)

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Perhaps destined to become No.94 in the series of "It seemed like a good idea at the time...", or perhaps something better. Much better.

The general idea is that you read each one of these stories while listening to the songs which share their titles. Ideally, each piece should have been deliberately written this way, and it is undoubtedly true that you will get **more** from each if this is what you do.

This is not to say you should immediately pass on (unless, like Langford, you have Van Gogh's ear for music). The stories equally stand alone, independently of their soundtrack.

But what would a film without a soundtrack be like? A good story is still a good story, but perhaps we can make it a better one. Perhaps it can be written with deliberate intent to be better under these circumstances.

Where known, the LP from which each song is taken is quoted. It is quite likely you won't even have heard of all of them, let alone possess such a motley collection (unless you are Tony Chester or Kev McVeigh). Think of it as an opportunity to expand your horizons.

Further rock 'n' roll stories will be welcomed. AOD's address is up front. Enjoy!



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NORWEGIAN WOOD

Colin Greenland

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NORWEGIAN WOOD

The Beatles

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On the front of the box is a picture of a blue and pink bird sitting on a mossy tree-trunk. Above the bird it says "BRISCO", and underneath: "SAFETY MATCHES", and underneath that, in tiny letters: "No.9: The Nuthatch". On the back it says: "Av. 43 matches Keep in a dry place away from children The Brisco Match Co., Liverpool MADE IN NORWAY".

I've got a crick in my neck. Comes from sleeping awkward. I tried watching them when they went up the ladders, I'd never seen that before, only on the news at the pictures. But it made my neck hurt. They had to use the ladders to get to the people on the top floor. There were a lot of people living in those rooms, you'd be surprised.

Made in Norway, that's funny, isn't it, because that's what she said the panelling was. Very smart, very trendy. Groovy, that's what she'd say. In her little cap and her miniskirt. Just a teaser, like the rest of them.

The engines have gone now. There's still coppers prowling around, moving people on, the people who came to watch. People like that make you sick. Last night, some time last night when all the wine had gone and we were just sitting there on the furry rug, just talking, and I was still thinking I might be in with a chance, she said the future belonged to the people. I asked her if she'd ever met any.

Norwegian wood. Norwegian pine, it was. A forest of tall, skinny pine trees hanging over the side of a fjord. Little ships moving slowly up and down, ships full of tree-trunks, going to Liverpool. In the forest, they're cutting trees. A smell of smoke in the air. In the tallest, skinniest tree there's a little blue and pink bird nesting. While she's off in the forest they come and chop her tree down and put it on a ship to Liverpool, to make groovy panelling out of it, tall skinny panelling. And then they take the odd scrappy bits left over and make matchsticks.

Which is her and me, like.

It didn't half go up a treat.

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THE GREAT WHITE HOAX

S V O'Jay

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THE GREAT WHITE HOAX

Julian Cope  
From the LP "My Nation Underground"

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"It's coming down!"

Everyone rushed outside to see the beautiful ship descend on its graceful path to the ground. The aliens emerged, looking like mobile Greek statues, each a classical ideal of physical beauty.

"Take us to your leader", they said.

The President received them with due pomp and circumstance. The aliens smiled a lot and bowed appreciatively to all the people they met, from the greatest to the least.

"Mankind has often dreamed of this moment," said the President through his cluster of microphones. "The moment when the benevolent races we all felt existed elsewhere in the Universe arrived to advise, to give every person on the planet the benefit of their undoubted wisdom." The aliens all nodded happily as the President turned to them. "Perhaps you would like to address us?"

The tallest and most beautiful alien moved to the front of the dais. "Greetings." The cheering lasted for minutes, until she held up her hand to quieten them. "We have been intrigued by Earth for some time now, and there are things we have tried to understand which you can perhaps help us with. There is a unique human quality which we would like to know more about, but to show you what we have learned so far, we would like to make a small demonstration." The crowd was silent, rivetted. "Some of you may have wondered if this is our true appearance. It is not." There was some murmuring at this, and an equal amount of shushing.

She was still smiling. "We can assume almost any form we choose, and it is through this ability that we hope to show our understanding of your special quality."

There was a brief pause, after which the stunned crowd watched a swift transformation occur. In place of the beautiful goddess stood a slavering beast which drooled at the audience with a vicious leer before biting off the President's head.

The screaming of the crowd drowned out the crunching of bone as another alien stepped up to the microphones. "April Fool", he said.

(With thanks to Brian Eno)

1

Before

(Backwater)

Before science we spoke the strong names into ragged deep holes in the ground which no man had ever dug, and our ancestors answered us in the language of the dead. Their voices lived in our heads for weeks after each distant conversation, and we tasted mould in our fresh bread and felt as if roots had knotted our eyeballs and threaded their fibres through our nostrils. But it was important to speak to those who had left us, and the ones among the living who could unriddle the harsh and cryptic syllables of the dead became respected shamans. We listened with silent attentiveness to these interpreters and followed their sage advice until we saw that night sky look in their eyes, heard the sepulchral undertone in their voices, all of which betokened their desire to join their interlocutors. Whereupon, with delight, we killed them.

Before science our houses were made of thick air and frozen moonlight. Our world's constant wind, impacting the walls which were fashioned from a different phase of itself, adhered. Thus our houses steadily accreted new material to themselves, growing and thickening like pearls. (Every morning we had to break a thin seal over our doors and windows.) Each year a woman's house was visibly larger. The oldest among us lived behind walls so massive that they had to walk for half a day down a long tunnel to reach their front door, whereupon they would break the seal, poke out their heads for a breath of the air that was immurring them, catch a glimpse of sunlight, snatch up the food their neighbours had left for them, and begin the trek back into their homes so as to arrive once more at their living moss beds in time for sleep.

Congeaed moonlight formed the roofs of our homes, casting a pleasant glow inside all day and all night. (These lenses condensed in certain nearby hollows on a single night each month.) Depending on what kind of rain fell, the compacted moonlight shone a roseate pink, a glaucous green, or the yellow of old bone. We had different ceremonies for each shade of light. Some were sad, others were not.

Once an oldster, despairing of the daily shuffle to front entrance and back, resolved to exit through the roof. None of us had ever thought to try this before. It was just as well. The old one thrust head and shoulders through the roof of moonstuff and promptly went mad. Moonlight leaked continually from his eyes and ears. He tried to kill himself by swallowing needlefish, but this we could not permit, as once deceased his mad voice would have disrupted all our conversations with the dead. We were forced to remove his soul and lock it into a stone. The stone we tossed into the sea. His body was used to flavour

a batch of beer, so that we might remember his folly and not duplicate it.

Before science we mated with anything that pleased us. Our tastes were catholic, our energies fervid. Spiders, mud, books, sea-apes, flames, the lemon wind, ghost-trees, all these and many other objects knew our passionate embraces. These matings occupied many hours of our days and nights. Some were communal, some private. Occasionally one among us became obsessed, fixated on some singular individual or species. It was thus with He Who Loved Rukhs.

The Rukhs were avians as big as ourselves. They lived high in the mountains surrounding our village, in nests of spun glass. Often one would see them gliding soundlessly on thermals far above our homes. Their plumage was of various colours, thick and bright, save over their mammalian breasts which stood out bare.

He Who Loved Rukhs would climb laboriously to their perches, clasp a bird and lock organs with it. The Rukh, startled, would launch itself into the air. The matings were consummated in the depths of the sky, where blue gave way to indigo. If all went well, the Rukh would alight and He Who Loved Rukhs would dismount and walk away. Sometimes, though, for no apparent reason, the Rukh would stiffen all its muscles at the climax and plummet towards the ground. The first time this happened, the Rukh-lover saved himself only by catching onto some thick air during his fall, and sinking slowly to the earth, where the Rukh lay broken and dying. He laid his head on the breasts of his avian lover and wept. The Rukh made grievous reply. We who had witnessed this counselled him against further such intercourse. He ignored us, as was his right and, perhaps, his geas.

The second time this happened, He Who Loved Rukhs broke both legs and several ribs. We healed him with salves made from river-coral and cave-fungi. He returned to the Rukhs shortly thereafter.

The last time a Rukh behaved in this manner, we found He Who Loved Rukhs in a crumpled heap, broken beyond repair, and we could do naught but ease him on his journey. For many years thereafter, Rukhs at sunset circled the spot where he died, uttering mournful cries.

Naturally there were many others whose loves had also left them scarred in one way or another. Missing limbs, claw-etched faces, lacerated organs, muscles spasming from exotic poisonous secretions ingested unthinkingly in the heat of lust - all these evidences of savage and unlikely couplings could be seen among our people.

The offspring of such matings were everywhere. The more tractable we adopted as our own, rearing them to civilised behaviour. Others, less human, wandered the fields and forests, the air and sea, sometimes further interbreeding and creating offspring even more bizarre than their parents. Eventually the world became more interestingly populated than it had been when the first of us walked forth from the Omphalos, and we congratulated ourselves on our fecundity.

Before science we ate mostly whatever came to hand. Only bread and beer did we bother to prepare, and this only because the dead had

revealed the secret of their manufacture to us. Otherwise we foraged for edibles in the woods and along the riverbank, in tidal pools or under rocks. Occasionally we ate the rocks themselves, if the fancy took us, and they had been sufficiently softened by the hot rains that made our moonlight roofs glow the colour of slate.

Once, a glutton among us ate another member of the village before we could stop him. Thereafter he could not control his left side, and fought a constant war against his possessor. At night we would gather in a circle, seated, with the unfortunate one at the centre, and watch his struggles, which we found instructive. He died attempting to swim the river during floodtime, when his uncooperative half failed to paddle. His voice and that of his unwilling companion were linked in death as one forever after.

Whenever any of us found something particularly good to eat, such as an enormous spongetree, she would summon everyone within hearing, and we would devour it down to the ground.

Sometimes the food fought back, and then we were eaten ourselves.

Before science there was nothing in the sky that we did not understand. Everything was comprehended instinctively, and spoke volumes to us.

Before science war was a game. We met with those from other villages and exchanged poems. Those poets who were accorded the cicatrice of victory went to live in the rival village as honoured guests, relieved from all necessities, even that of walking. (They were carried about on the backs of volunteers.) Those contestants who lost were buried headfirst in the earth until they sprouted leaves from the soles of their feet, whereupon they were pruned and mulched and watered. They served better in this capacity than in their former unsuitable role.

Before science the elimination of bodily wastes took place only while we squatted together in the ocean, during a full moon. This latter condition obtained more frequently then.

Before science our dreams sometimes manifested themselves tangibly, without our intervention. We tried always to think harmoniously prior to falling asleep, just in case such a thing should occur. We were not always successful. Once we awoke and there were footprints a mile long and half as wide outside our doors. Twelve houses had been crushed with their occupants. We determined who the dreamer was and excised his organ of dreaming with flint knives. Afterwards he dug a trench for himself, lay in it, heaped the earth back over himself, and changed into a worm.

Before science, we were happy. Except when we weren't. And even then everything was as it was.

2

After

(King's Lead Hat)

After science I lived all alone in a fragile white tower six miles high with no floors. All my possessions and devices of power hung suspended at various levels. I myself would float from one stratum to another all day long, inspecting and handling those objects which intrigued me according to my mood. The walls of my tower were translucent, and I could see vague shapes constantly fluttering outside, like shadows projected on a warped screen. I knew some were my fellows, but most times they did not interest me at all, and I seldom responded to their nebulous gestures. (They were unable to enter, of course, without my permission.) Other shapes represented artificial creations fashioned by those who were so inclined. These living and mechanical beings alternated between postures of menace and allure.

After science, whenever I was aroused by the suggestive motions of these constructs, I would venture out onto the flat roof of my tower and expose myself to their sexual depredations.

The sky at this height shaded from blue to indigo, but was empty of Rukhs, who had all died when science came.

After I had submitted to the mixed hot and moist, or cold and oily embraces of the quasi-organic and inorganic mechanisms I would rise to my feet and gaze about, rather bewildered. The view was one of endless towers spiked into a greensward like a flock of javelins hurled from space. Many floating figures speckled the sky, moving here and there, all rather aimlessly.

After science I dressed entirely in fine copper wire. Wrapping it around my torso occupied much of my day. After I had achieved the precise look I desired, I would immerse myself in a vat of liquid plastic which dried to a certain pliancy, allowing me freedom of motion but preserving my laborious wrappings in their pristine state.

After science I routinely dried up portions of the sea (by means of focused energies and forces), in order to study the writhings of the creatures thus exposed. If their efforts were not interesting enough, I stimulated them by means of applied probes.

Once, standing on the sea floor, walls of water rising around me, I picked up a stone that seemed to speak madly to me, but I ignored it.

After science I ate shards of glass, bricks of rubber and wafers of silicone, washed down with raw protein mix. Each meal required extensive reconstructive surgery of my intestinal tract, which my machines dutifully carried out. Although I did not precisely enjoy such meals, it was both the custom, and all that was available. Or at least, so I was told and believed.

After science I never had to fear the vagaries of fate. I was master of all I surveyed. No longer could death come unexpectedly in the night from someone's dream (for no-one dreamed) or from the struggles of one's reluctant food. I had absolute power over the natural world, except where my desires conflicted with those of my peers. Such conflicts provided the main source of excitement in my life. After exerting my destructive talents, I would stand in the middle of burnt and steaming acres as the victor or the vanquished and feel, whether elated or humbled, that I was truly alive.

After science I reproduced by growing homunculi in kettles. I would decant these wet little duplicates when they were ready and release them into the world by the hundreds. Most perished due to environmental causes, or in the jaws of predators, but one or two survived and grew to self-sufficiency. I never had any contact with these mirror-image adults afterwards, although occasionally I saw them from a distance.

After science there was no moon. I had used it up during certain experiments and had not thought it worthwhile to create a replacement.

After science the wind disintegrated whatever manmade object it touched. Only a coating of special molecules kept our towers intact.

After science all books were written on human skin with ink made of blood. They were stored in a central repository located deep underground. Entrance to the library was guarded by a senile old man who demanded a token donation of either blood or epidermis. It was impossible to refuse him. After paying, I would hastily bandage my wounds and ride the slow elevator down, down, down. The dim and cavernous repository, aisled with shelf after tall shelf, smelled disturbingly of mortality, but I was forced to visit to obtain certain knowledge. I never stayed long.

After science I was often unsure of who I was. I would wake up from a sleep devoid of dreams convinced that my name was different, that my past consisted of incidents completely alien to my inner self. This feeling usually persisted for several days, my old self gradually returning in bits and pieces, never as strong as I was convinced it had once been, during some past golden era.

After science all poems were cast in the form of featureless concrete blocks. I frequently attempted to understand them, but succeeded only in abrading the tips of my fingers.

After science the animals began to war against humanity. In addition to eating my homunculi and those of my competitors, the animals, having gained in cunning thanks to chemical and radioactive mutations, became imbued with malice and possessed of manipulative organs. They fashioned primitive deadfalls and snares. They lurked outside the door of my tower or dived from the skies. They succeeded in killing some people, despite all precautions.

After science women were indistinguishable from men. Except when they were utterly different.

After science the more I learned, the less understandable everything was.

After science the most famous figure in mankind's history was The Man Who Levelled Mountains. He stood to me and to all my peers as the epitomal archetype of the age, the pinnacle of mankind's accomplishments.

The Man Who Levelled Mountains represented all those who were transfigured by some pivotal experience and who in turn left the world remoulded in their image.

One day The Man Who Levelled Mountains - who was not yet called by that honourable title, and was but a humble artificer - was out walking when he stubbed his toe on a pebble. Instantly he stopped in his tracks. Overwhelming rage swept his senses, that he should be made to feel pain by this insignificant bit of rubble. On the spot, he vowed that he would never be humiliated again, by small obstacle or large.

Retiring to his tower, he embarked on his plan to render the world utterly flat. Although it took him the rest of his life, he succeeded, thanks to his skilful employment of science. To this day, the surface of every continent is completely level and covered with a tough, ubiquitous grass of his devising. Whenever vulcanism or plate tectonics threatens to disturb the work of The Man Who Levelled Mountains, volunteers gather in his name (one of our last vestiges of cooperative effort) and stifle the helpless planet, thereby preserving our equanimity and asserting our supremacy.

After science there was nothing else.



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FOREVER AUTUMN

Christina Mittenshaw-Hodge

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FOREVER AUTUMN

sung by JUSTIN HAYWARD  
From the LP "War of the Worlds"

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I look out upon the scorched barren land that was once covered in a cloak of green, buzzing with life and beautiful to the eye. But now it is a void, for we have incinerated ourselves and our future. We as a world were not content to share between us all the richness that this planet possessed - countries, nations, tribes and races all competed for the supreme rulership of what is now sterile and useless. What have we done to ourselves, to mankind? What mutations will our children grow to be? Perhaps altered beyond the recognisable limits of the human form, scared beyond nature's ability to sustain them.

As a civilisation we can no longer exist. This planet is infertile, pulverised, the radiation so great that our genetic pool is harmed beyond any ability to repopulate. No-one will be able to tolerate the intense radiation, enough to obliterate eight worlds, not only the one.

We could have been a thriving world, content, living in harmony with each other. We could have eradicated pain and suffering, shared our riches and knowledge to Third World countries to eliminate starvation, disease and poverty. We had so many opportunities, but wasted our existence. Instead we plundered the earth for its valuable assets, living by violence and greed; made extinct other life thus unbalancing the ecosystem. We were destroying our childrens' inheritance just to gain material wealth. Who gave us the authority to commit this carnage?

Through the devastation of nuclear war, we have committed mass suicide - mass murder. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we have condemned humanity to obilivion. We have banished the one evil on this world - mankind. We have conducted our own funeral, a cremation in an incandescent fireball.

Everything is crisp and charred like Autumn leaves.

Earth - Forever Autumn.

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SUNDAY MORNING

Kev McVeigh

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SUNDAY MORNING

Velvet Underground

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i once heard it called the reckless hour and i think i know how he felt there was a time there have been several times but this most recent time was perhaps the worst perhaps just a culmination of all those sunday mornings in the room at the top she lay with him as i lay dying below my wounds were self inflicted my pain self applied it was my own fault and yet she had been wrong also and we all had tasted too strong a liquor for the nighttime we all were dying in our own ways and i wanted to live anew reckless thoughts are all too common in the time of dying as though the dysfunction scrambles thought as though thoughts take control again she was too young to fall in love and i was too drunk to care and then i grew again reincarnated and turned turned turned into a friend and again the reckless hour teetered on the dawning of a mistake reckless i refused sleep only seeking escape from waking escape from solitude escape from memories bad trips flashbacks i would burn burnout but i would take innocents beside me the rains came and went and the relief was but brief respite washing blood from my lips my body his blood her blood my blood turned to wine and the spirit sank into uneasy narcosis unlike the previous times when i could not reach such comfort all was violence disease and i ran and she ran and she gained and i stole it and the other left refreshed and we knew the loss all night and my escape has failed us both again and again and in the midnight hour she cried more more more and i cried and in the reckless hour i denied it thrice and more and then the cock flew again to a stranger reckless dancing in the shadow of another and then she brought light to cast shadows on our skin flesh bones reckless breaking limbs in limbs in the liquor of the night in my time of dying she drank another glass and mine lies all lies all empty when finally i would drink give her dying give her solace take her solitude and mine and mix it as we could as we did as it was is not and may be forever more sunday morning just the dawning of sunday morning a new page after dying after the rains how come it never rains it only pours after the flood before the final mystic blow of her hammer upon the anvil upon my sleeve i once heard it called the reckless hour and i think i know how he felt when the cup would not pass but the chalice was empty and its been sunday morning once too often and i would be reckless if there were deeds to be done songs to be won and she were not dying in his dying arms and i die a thousand years of dying in my time in sunday morning in the reckless hour in her eyes only his in her thoughts only dying in her eyes only feeling only the world behind you only nothing at all only only sunday morning early dawning only just a restless feeling by my side sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning sunday morning only sunday morning sunday morning just a reckless feeling time of dying only sunday only morning only

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WISH YOU WERE HERE

S V O'Jay

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WISH YOU WERE HERE

Pink Floyd  
From the LP "Wish You Were Here"

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(To Roger Waters)

Safety. Every day awaken at 0730, perform ablutions and repair to the workplace. Seven hours discerning the difference between acceptable and non-acceptable components, then return to domicile. Dinner and TV. The news is always good, the Government benign. The weather tomorrow will be clear and warm, with the possibility of occasional showers in northern areas. A slight headache may intrude into this tranquility. Take two aspirin and call me in the morning.

Industrialisation would proceed rapidly under the correct circumstances. Confused environmentalists insist on the preservation of certain areas in the interests of history and harmony. This practice is discontinued as nobody visits such designated areas. Mutation causes human lung tissue to assimilate hydrocarbon gases with relative ease. Government becomes largely unobtrusive and the newspapers consist largely of sports pages and "gossip" concerning notorious figures in the world of entertainment.

It was some time before I was troubled by the dreams. Please understand, they had been a regular occurrence since age thirteen, but had been no trouble. The impression was one of a window opening, perhaps a realisation of missed opportunities. Sets of meaningless but memorable names flashed across my frontal lobe, the most regular of these being Joe Namath and Babe Ruth. Somehow they did not sound like a married couple, but I did not know why.

Another dream was of large dark structures emerging from the ground and "sprouting" in some unknown fashion to appear largely green. These were then consumed by fire, causing an uncomfortable heat which caused me to wake up sweating. It would take several minutes for the air conditioning to restore equilibrium. This disturbed my routine.

Paul died a thousand deaths, each so similar to the last yet subtly different. There was a serious conflict between two groups, to one of which he belonged in a minor capacity. Each time he was sent to cause some damage to the other group, and occasionally achieved some minor act of heroism before his involvement was terminated. After this, supervising production at the factory became particularly drab, even though many people looked to him for critical decisions.

For each of these there seemed to be something missing, even though they lived an illusion of completeness.

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NEW VALUES

Tony Chester

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NEW VALUES

IGGY POP  
From the LP "New Values"

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Somewhere in space there is a rock. On the rock is a dome. The dome blazes with light.

The blameless man stood contemplating murder.

Seggy left the Rim, turning his back on the Dome. The neon wasn't so bad out here but the light from the Arc Torus still made the Dome reflect; it was impossible to see out. His image had looked like someone he used to be, cut off at the knees by the plascrete in which the dome was embedded. Now he walked along the Spiral until it cut Broadway, where he was dispirited enough to turn left onto that road instead of continuing on around as had been his intention on that day. He'd spent his life avoiding direct routes, but that was back before he was Seggy.

It was three months since the murders and suicides had stopped. A month-long orgy of death that had cut the population down by three quarters, and this after it had been decimated by the breakaway and initial loss of gravity. They reckoned there were still a few bodies floating around up top. Seggy didn't believe it; but a whole month of death, that was something to think about. Seggy had been lucky enough to survive it, just as they'd all been lucky when Nuevos Valores broke free from the Euro-Cluster off Titan. Lucky they were on the outward spin, lucky the Dome's integrity wasn't breached, lucky the subliming liquid from a ruptured water tank had provided reaction mass to push them away from Titan. And this time Saturn didn't eat his children but impatiently flicked them with his gravity-hand. Lucky, lucky, lucky.

Seggy saw the next intersection and with seeing that saw Tangent. Long, thin, leather Tangent. Pale and wearing wraparound shades, he was the man to sell you anything, the man who would buy anything.

"Tan."

"Seggy." Tangent smiled at the name. He always had a smile yet he was the only person Seggy knew who was not happy about something. He was just happy. "Took you so long? Everyone come see me least once. Not you, Seggy. Not since you come off the shuttle. Took you so long?"

"Never had the need Tan. And as I recall we were all pretty busy staying alive my first day."

"You got need now Seggy? Or maybe I need, you got?"

"Both."

"You need?"

"Gun, old, .45 automatic."

"You got?"

"Cocaine, kilo."

"Old, both old, ancient. Like you behind the eyes Seggy. I got stuff make snow look stupid. Why I give you gun for snow?"

"Because you never made a sale to me before Tan. Never did. Ain't got long to tie up this loose end."

"Right answer, Seggy."

And so they dealt.

"Always liked you Tan. You don't mess with people, just provide a service. Not everyone can provide a service."

"Vocation, man. Pleasure dealing with you." Then an afterthought:  
"Why the gun?"

"I'm going to perform a public service."

"Why now?"

"Because I'm out of time."

"We born out of time Seggy. Take care."

Tangent took his first and last rocket ride when he was sixteen and his father had taken him from Earth to Euro-Cluster, his choice from nine Clusters in the system. Being the largest it had appealed to his father's well-developed sense of status. Tangent had thought speeding through space was neat. You were going so fast and the stars stayed still. He supposed they still did but in two years under the Dome, the last four months solid spent speeding through space, he hadn't seen one star. He didn't think it was neat anymore. He was eighteen and infinitely old.

Seggy couldn't have admitted to Tangent that the reason he'd needed a gun so old was that he didn't know how to use energy weapons. At that, Seggy needed to recall a different man; a different time when that man had fired .45s for sport, to be able to use the one that he'd just acquired.

Crossing the Spiral twice more, passing buildings depressing in their cubic sameness and drab in their uniform greyness, Seggy came to the only area of civic originality, Velcro Block. He was stopped by a Nuevos Punk in her mid-twenties with wide wet eyes that promised she was not seeing entirely the same world as Seggy. She wore velcro gloves and shoes and stood at the edge of the velcro'd street looking light. Before she said a word Seggy produced a pair of velcro pumps and placed them on the surface of Nu-Punk turf. Stepping into them from his magnetic shoes Seggy felt immediately lighter. Most of the buildings in sight had been velcro'd up to the second storey and from some of these hung Nu-Punks, cruciform, in velcro suits. Others crawled up and down walls or leapt from building to building in

aerial ballet.

"Escort", said the woman, pointing to herself. It was a statement not an offer.

Picking up his abandoned footwear Seggy fell into step beside her. However, as soon as they came alongside a wall she left the sidewalk and started crawling along the building at head height.

"Got a name, escort?"

"Escort." With a shrug.

"Seggy, Tangent, Escort. I wonder who we all were."

Getting no comment Seggy pondered, not for the first time, how all the velcro in Nuevos Valores had got onto these few blocks; how, after the breakaway and during the chaos, the only organised group were anarchic rebels who responded to the emergency in a far more effective, if unorthodox manner, than the authorities. Then he laughed because it all made perfect sense.

"I thought you were against organisation?" Seggy addressed the woman with a wave at the surroundings.

"There's a difference", she said, knowing what he meant.

"Difference?"

"Between being organised by people and just being organised. Between acting the same because you're told to and acting the same because you want to."

"I know that. I just wanted to know if you did."

"Doesn't everybody? Really."

Seggy shrugged. "Anarchy's always out of fashion."

"You're out of fashion. Join us."

"I might. After a job I have to do." If the tone of Seggy's words was insincere it was because the man he needed to be could not have meant them.

The rest of the journey passed without conversation. At the next intersection with the Spiral Seggy donned his magnetic shoes and set off down normal streets.

She had been Sharon, but Sharon could never have made it under the Dome. Sharon had slept under the stars on Earth. Out in the country, away from the smog, it was possible to see the stars. It was her first and best pleasure. She'd come to Euro-Cluster voluntarily to be closer to them, to see them more clearly. But the Dome reflects.

She'd decided to leave too late and so abandoned Sharon. Escort was getting ever nearer the stars but the only ones to see came in capsules.

The naked neon was unbearable so close to the Spire, Seggy's ultimate destination, and so he donned shades. But before he reached his goal there was still a duty to perform. It was not without an awareness of the danger involved that Seggy entered the casino.

She was at a table playing cards; Seggy recognised her from Fasfax newscasts and wondered at the extensive restructuring required to produce that face. At Seggy's approach several of the players looked up, but Seggy only noted the almost imperceptible coming to attention of two men leaning against a wall not far from the table. The owner of the casino was one of the players, but Seggy was only interested in the woman with her back to him. A part of his mind unused in many months idly considered the static potentials of the cards and table, which made playing possible.

"I am Dr Allan Segward", said Seggy, surprised that that was indeed who he was. It was clear that no-one at the table had ever heard of him except the woman in front of him who stiffened at the sound of that long unheard voice. "I wonder, Madame Mayor, if these people know who you really are?" All playing at the table stopped and though it was clear by his tone that Seggy presented some danger the casino owner stopped the forward motion of his men with a swift gesture.

"I don't know what you mean", said the Mayoress, slowly turning at last.

"Don't you, Phillipe, dear doctor?" Seggy addressed the players at the table. "She used to be Dr Phillipe Corbeau, designer of Euro-Cluster. The Cluster of which we are no longer a part and which no longer exists." Seggy continued over the intermittent protestations of the seated woman. "He was a powerful man, powerful enough to have me disgraced when I opposed the construction of his dream, the largest Cluster ever built. You see, there were design flaws that Phillipe just would not see, not only because of misplaced confidence in his ability but because of the money he would lose if it were not built on time."

"This is completely outrageous. Get this..." The casino owner was sufficiently intrigued by Seggy's story to motion the Mayoress to silence.

"Even while despised professionally I still was vocal in denouncing Euro-Cluster. Phillipe couldn't take the risk that someone might listen to me and so he had me killed. Or so he thought. The details are no longer important but I survived. Once recovered I resolved to come to Euro-Cluster and have it evacuated. I do not know by what chance Nuevos Valores should have broken free on the very day of my arrival and the rest of the Cluster sent crashing into Titan. I nearly died that first day. Not in the chaos but in despair over the absence of Dr Phillipe Corbeau from the population.

"I was sure he would be here and so, while the rest of the

inhabitants were busy killing each other, I investigated all possibilities. There was no trace, which in retrospect is not surprising considering I was looking through the files of the wrong gender. It was pure accident that I accessed the files of the Mayoress. I was only looking through them to see what contact she had had with Phillipe. And that was when I found that she used to be he."

"Obviously a madman", said the Mayoress, turning back to the table.

"Not so mad as to deny justice, Phillipe." Seggy said this drawing the .45 quickly and discharging three rounds into the back of Dr Corbeau's head. The recoil jerked Seggy backward, held only by his magnetic shoes. This saved his life as energy burned across his chest, the guards having fired at last. The impact of the bullets had pushed Corbeau against the table, blood from the wounds forming globules in the air which sank to, then stained, the statically charged table. The bodyguards were again about to fire on the unbalanced Seggy, but the intervention of the casino owner saved his life.

"Justice or vengeance?"

"Sometimes the two are the same," answered Seggy.

"You can go."

"Just like that?" said Seggy, gesturing at the body.

"I didn't vote for her", announced the owner, with a trace of humour, by way of explanation.

In the casino Corbeau's body was removed and the game resumed, the cards being dealt delicately around the stained portion of the table. The players didn't give a damn about the stars, only finding games with less and less meaning to play. They had put down roots in the casino just as surely as humankind had put down roots, whole Clusters of them, in the solar system.

At the base of the Spire Seggy stopped to admire the grafitti before entering through a large hole in the wall. Almost immediately he tripped over a white-coated body, one of too many under the Dome not recovered after the slaughter month. Some of the corpse's blood had drifted to smear the walls, the rest oxidised to a fine powder which filled the air like dust.

The lift, when he found it, was not operational but the climb around the stairs, presumably provided for just such an emergency, was not tiring. Smashed micro-circuitry danced in the littered air with lazy velocities. Seggy became aware of the darkness, and remembering the shades and removed them. It was two miles up to the trapdoor. This took him as long to climb as it had to travel the four and a half miles from Rim to Spire.

Through the trapdoor, in the observation bubble, Seggy at last beheld the stars. Far above the neon, through the clear plasteel, the recognisable constellations shone as they always had. Seggy estimated



the Dome was two months from crossing the orbit of Uranus. Sol was bright and Seggy imagined he could make out some planets too, though he knew it was probably not so. It was a long time before he could bring himself to look down at Nuevos Valores. There he saw evidence of what he knew was coming. He had not expected his timing to be so close.

Around the city, especially at the Rim, the neon was going out.

To think that they would all now see the stars. Before they froze or starved to death. Man had given up on the stars and decided to be a stay-at-home, but this was the house of death and the dying wouldn't be easy. Just as at the breakaway the killing would start, as if all that humans could do in the face of death was to collaborate with it, and Allan Segward was no different. He closed his lips around the barrel of the .45, looked up through the Dome and pulled the trigger.

The hammer clicked on the empty chamber.

Seggy laughed with hysterical frenzy, tears in his eyes. Tangent couldn't have known he'd need more than three shots. Groping toward calmness Seggy realised it didn't really matter. Even if there had been a fourth bullet Allan Segward was already dead. Suicide, he thought, is not Seggy's style. So what the hell would he do with this nine mile cemetery? Save the day? Hardly. There were not enough volatiles in the city or its asteroid base to substantially reduce the acceleration provided by Saturn's gravity. There was a limit to the recyclability of the air and not enough power to grow food for much longer.

A twisted shattered piece of circuit board drifted past Seggy's eyes, recalling the aerial gyrations of the Nu-Punks, evidence of the inventiveness of man as the Dome itself implied the technology behind forming a one piece structure of the Dome's size. An idea formed.

Maybe there was one thing Nuevos Valores could be used for. It would take a lot of people who knew how to co-operate, resourceful people, people with nothing to lose who could get behind an abstract. Even if humans had given up on the stars, what if the stars hadn't given up on humans? It would beat the hell out of a brass plaque pitted with micrometeorite craters.

Whoever found Nuevos Valores, a stargazing race or an infant, could not fail to draw the correct conclusions. They were not alone and, though it be a small collection of dreamers, someone was trying to reach them. Seggy found himself hoping with all his heart that they would try to return the gift they had been sent, if only in part. For the very least one race could give another is companionship. Seggy would have to move fast but there should be time. He'd need a negotiator. It was time to take Tangent to Nu-Punk turf and see if he could really deal. Seggy plucked the anonymous circuitry out of the air, pinned it to his lapel and started down to change the world.

Somewhere in space there is a rock. On the rock is a dome. The dome shines with something other than light. The shining thing is rededication.

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THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES

Patrick McKay

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THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES

Kate Bush

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It was a gentle thing, soothing pains that had grown up around and within us, and spreading hope and innocence in their place. It was a happy time, easing tears that had flown from inside to each of us, and laying smiles and laughter on our lips. And afterwards we felt warm inside, having transformed the passion, taken a chance and won more than we could have lost. It brought a future back from the void, discarding the bad times and acknowledging all the joys we shared for so long, so closely, so powerfully. Our innocence was renewed in love. Briefly. Too briefly. We had eaten the fruit before but never so eagerly, and how could we explain?

It was cold when I left, I expected rain which didn't come. I felt strange, filled with a relaxed ache that I could not fathom. I was happy and tortured; I was excited and frightened; I was confused, unable to see the future I had known that morning, seeing only a dreamtime. I had a new vision, a new desire that I was afraid to admit. It frightened me; how would I cope, how would she respond, how would we tell people? Who would we tell? Would they understand? Her mother might, some of our friends may, but others would not know what it meant, or how we had felt when we realised what we had.

And so I was afraid, yet it was thrilling, natural forces took control, arousing sleeping circuits to prepare a new dimension to my life, and I know she felt the same. To our life, together. Instead she made a decision, the one I wanted, the one I didn't want, the one she had to take, the one she almost couldn't. Rationality triumphs over emotion, to counter the triumph of passion over reason. It was simple to do once the decision had been made, and we were lost. Our future was redrawn and the dreamtime faded, distorted.

When she told me I knew why she had done it that way, and I agreed, I felt relief flood through me. It was only later that I realised I had been disappointed as well. It was only when she wrote that to me, that I saw it in myself. Our final sharing was not passion and hope but weakness and disappointment. We had gambled and won, and then lost it all. We were lost.

I knew the loss before I knew the cause, and the pain was more for that when I realised that she felt the same as I did, and I had not known it, and that I was the man with the child in his eyes, and I had not known it.

I had not seen it.

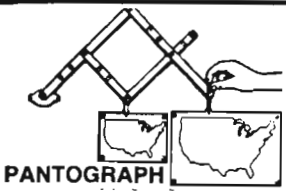
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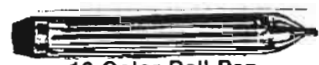
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## GEOGRAPHY LESSON

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The man stood alone, cold and lonely in the jungle wilderness of an unfamiliar planet. He was alone despite the raucous activity surrounding him, despite the insistent, demanding shrieks of incomprehensible life-forms. He was alone within the shell of his body, trying to wish away the intrusions which surrounded him.

He was frightened to move too quickly, preferring to stand and accept the painful offerings of his present position. After an instant of time (or many years) he became aware of the clearing. Perhaps the jungle had receded from him in an attempt to understand his conflicting needs, or perhaps he had simply moved. He could see the sun, and the sun could see him, sending auroral pointers which defined a broadening path.

Following these directions, he came to an expanse of cool grassland, bordered by the wilderness on all sides. The sunlight broadened, then converged at a not-too-distant point, describing a stairway. A figure beckoned him to the foot of the steps, the brilliance haloing her cherubic features.

Taking his hand, she led him gently up the stairway, toward the ever-brightening star. He began to sweat as the heat built up both within him and without. After an instant of time (or many years) they stepped off the stairway onto the surface of the sun. Naked, they floated in that flaming arena, finally tracing a graceful dive through the surface and toward the centre.

As that volatile star went nova, his eyes were blinded by the brilliance their communion had created. When he could see again, he stood alone, cold and lonely in the jungle wilderness of an unfamiliar planet...

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AND FINALLY, THE TRADITIONAL SLAGGING OF MICHAEL ASHLEY

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Q: Why do people take an instant dislike to Michael Ashley?

A: It saves time