

# Bread of Tears

Nathaniel S. Rounds



Fowlpox Press  
©MMXI Nathaniel S. Rounds  
All Rights Reserved

© Copyright 2010

Nathaniel S. Rounds

All Rights Reserved

Printed by Automatic Train Control

Published by Fowlpox Print

This is an Egg Tooth Imprint

## Contents

May contain traces of naturally occurring mercury in  
the form of poetry from other components  
(life is one such example) at less than one part per trillion.

## Living Bird Loose

1.

She pushes and thrusts and prods and curses the washtub over scorched  
Living Bird Loose  
Ground  
Blood does indeed mix  
With sweat  
And tears  
She dead reckons  
With a Coyote tail  
Knotted and ending  
In a thigh bone  
One good eye  
Searches out fine fruit  
Bondmaid Dina Voederbiet  
Of 3663 Sunset Trail  
Circumnavigates from the belly of a cast iron washtub  
Ball-and-claw feet  
Meet wheelbarrow tires The  
vessel's captain is a  
Knock-kneed crabapple dumpling  
Who  
Suffers confinement inside  
Eaton's finest figure former corselet  
Feet in waders tread  
Rain water turned to rhubarb punch  
Mossberg 12 gauge Is  
used as a paddle  
Fingernails drip black and white  
Household enamel  
If blows were books  
Dina is a well-read woman  
Where the Schulte farm house used to stand

2

An old Chrysler combination ambulance and hearse  
Gathers dust and rust and seats on very quiet driver  
Named  
Billy "Slobber Box" Schulte  
He was the only man in Cumberland County  
To have made a million- and- a- half dollars selling blueberries  
And still wear the same pair of coveralls  
Mighty 100-proof Oedipus complex clogged the cornmeal mash  
Between his ears  
Billy defiled the rakers Dina included  
Hoarded junk cars  
Buried cats alive

His own fate was sealed  
With a bag and a twist tie

3

Dina's glass eye keeps vigil  
Over the Chrysler Mausoleum  
She has burned, burned  
And burned these fields again and again  
Fifty-nine acres of low bush blueberries  
Minus the inventory  
But Dina can still see them  
Sometimes painted black like a cloud-covered  
Sky at midnight  
Sometimes a foggy blue-gray  
Or a solid blue like her baby's cotton blanket  
She stops her vessel when she spies some untouched berries  
These ripe ones defy season's passing  
She drops her 12 gauge in the tub and gets out to investigate  
The berries pass from her hand to a small baby rattle and driftwood marker  
A stone's throw from Billy  
The marker has the name "Blue Boy" on it  
And some plastic lace and a glass eye  
A blackbird settles on a nearby branch  
It warbles pook-pook-pook  
And flits off with the north wind

## Mind Your Martyrs

1.

In a coffee lineup at end time's end  
I was cultivating small talk with  
A half-baked potato in a ball cap  
Coughing up chestnuts like  
"Corners are holding cells for cowards"  
And  
"Baskets are prisons with softer bars"  
Then it was back to the coach's board  
To set up the game just so  
Knocking urban legends and  
Papistical idolatries  
Into the goalie's net  
I had dissuaded the man from overeating  
Until a spirit of sickness overtook him  
And his intestines spilled out at his pant legs  
There was little that could be done  
And so I took his last cup of coffee  
And drank it

2

On a moonlit mission frightful I  
Sent a message via Photophone slide trombone  
All about the land mass falling into tinted water  
World's last otter sobbed over gobs of provolone  
Balinese banana leaf daybed soaked up sadness in the night  
Mass hysteria was dumped into the punch bowl  
Man and his dog were wound up tight  
By the half-commission hatful (sigh)  
Sodden gunner cannon balled into a shrieking secretarial pool  
And I could only watch and paddle watch and paddle  
Cling onto logs and small children  
A catfish surfed the flood waters  
Swept its way to the top  
Of my head  
Marked its territory  
I didn't mind getting vitamin D the hard way  
But could kill for a bucket of vinegar  
And some beer-battered beer  
I bottled my whine and swallowed  
My last Vicodin  
Dreaming of sunshine and free  
Therapy

Uncapped and Sleeping

Tooth by tooth We  
are all dying  
One by one they abdicate their thrones  
Leave their bitter dust in apples and scones  
Fangless truth is tempered by the shock of pink  
In a dull pit  
Lit by light unmarred, unmoved  
We sink into our graves  
Reproved

## The Garbage Tree

And the world is an upturned tree  
Of repurposed copper coil and aluminum  
Welded but stretching out  
From rusted dump truck hood  
Angled and covering  
Springs suspended above mud-caked piano  
Utterly decomposed and yet  
Still playable for the incorrigible

Your Albino Aquatic Frogs Are In  
Or  
One Plague in Four Voices

*To Ed, the blond titan in a Lite-Brite sky*

**Voice One:**

CONSUMER WARNING.

This leaflet comprises Part IV  
In a 36-part product monograph  
Originally published when anecdotes  
And self-doubt were introduced commercially  
In caplet form under the convenient description  
"Poetry".

ABOUT THE MEDICATION.

Death/Explosions/Malaise  
Were the tri-factor powerhouse  
Behind Mr. Prairie Tooth Timothy Hay  
Standing up in the course of his Wednesday evening  
Anxiety group to declare while under its influence:  
"King Josiah followed me on rollerblades  
Around an electronics and bedding store  
While burdening me with facts  
Regarding his personal life.  
You know, things like  
„I told my wife that I have a recurring desire  
To drive my Rolls-Royce Phantom V  
Into an oncoming Mack Truck. But with the  
Law of loving kindness on her tongue she squeezed my arm  
And said that she could never afford to lose such a precious  
Car. Subsequent models just don't have that classic look,  
She assured me.""

The other members of the group shook their heads,  
Swore beneath their breath, and generally conferred  
Sympathy that Mr. Hay assumed was for himself, but was  
Actually intended for King Josiah.

The nine-hundred milligram dose of poetry  
Culminated in Hay's bloodstream. He started to  
Wrestle both heart disease and peptic ulcers. His  
Voice thickened and lent a dark tone to his story.

"That was the idiot card for the supporting actor  
In the third act. I pried the sliding door off a wooden

Box and watched a toy picture disk spin its 2-D depiction  
Of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in a traffic accident  
With a mountain of legs in leotards, exposed hearts strung  
Together with a single guitar string stuck in a scratch. The  
Vienna Choir Boys sang in mangled English, „I was Mama“s  
Confidant. I killed her enemies to sleep with her dreams.“

#### SIDE EFFECTS

- Changes in vision, i.e., patient sees two angels rather than one,  
And both are wearing jogging outfits with Legea athletic shoes  
Which are worn by amateur athletes throughout Italy.
  
- The ability to read scathing remarks in arbitrary combinations of letters  
And numbers. In one recent study, a woman in test group 3 found the code  
YRDK3M7 on the back of a candy box. From this she compiled the message:  
*Where are you, Maya Angelou, with your greeting card rhymes and your carton  
Of wine?*

#### **Voice Two**

Mr. Burmis Tree  
Seven centuries of age,  
Drove an “83 GMC Wrecker for Hebron 24  
Hour Towing Services.  
He said to a brick wall while drinking from a fish-shaped bottle  
Of Bianco Antinori sweetened with Pennzoil on the edge of town  
Well past midnight:  
"I was overtaken and therefore forsaken  
By your apostolic power with its two-page flyers  
Staring at me in a stroke of whore-coloured pronouncements  
Regarding Black Friday, speculation and profit."

Brick wall was of the asbestos shingle variety and  
Felt too old and resigned to life“s cruel twists to  
Respond.

Mr. Burmis Tree,  
Seven centuries of age,  
Suddenly looked very, very, old.

#### **Voice Three**

Henry Herman Blackheart  
Got his life locked up  
In a semitransparent, plastic dollhouse  
That split down the middle. The thing

Remained locked together like a cartoon brain  
With two chimneys to carry the two  
Hemispheres around.

You laugh now, but you played with it for hours  
Before you attended primary. You and your little sister  
Used to open it, toss poor Henry into the hallway,  
And stick your candy-smearred faces close to the  
Dollhouse parlour to sneak a peek out the window  
At the stranger standing there on the steps, who  
On one occasion was an old, wheezing lizard from  
Hibbing, Minnesota.

And from beyond this reminiscence, a flesh-and-blood girl  
Of four greets morning with a definite demand for Pop-Tarts.  
She holds a fragment of Henry in her lily-white palm.  
Her father sits in an armchair, scratching his nose,  
Too many god names tattooed on his clothes.

#### **Voice Four**

Inside, Ivan Melvin  
Lights the end of his paintbrush,  
And  
Releases the string on his crossbow.  
There follows a daub of paint through crenellations  
Piercing the walls of Ms. Ida's heart.  
This heart is a catacomb.  
Ms. Ida waits for darkness. She'd rather no one see her  
When she crawls inside.

*All voices cease.*

Surreal Estate (Antic Loo, Antic Loo)

Take a hint from your neighbours  
Graciously barge through the  
Sugar-coated throng  
Of fair cousins speaking of the weather  
To fair weather cousins  
And punch holes  
Through the local headlines  
Roll them through a music box  
Around and around they go  
Maple leaf meets  
Maple butter  
It's  
Cheaper than two-ply  
Deconstruct by simple means  
Meanness in the simple  
All that remains  
Is an empty pit  
Coated with sugar

## A September Tale: Georgian Bay<sup>1</sup>

There,  
Beneath gale-pummelled trees with  
Writhing limbs sleeved in wet, green rags  
Stood Muppin and Huppin, the systemic twins,  
The chandler and the cooper. Both  
Shared a kindred affection for  
A green door that adorned their upended  
Double-ender-boat-turned house workshop.

Their brother, Ard, got a job down at the gristmill  
For two summers before going to trade school on an  
Air hockey scholarship. He emerged with an encyclopaedic  
Store of knowledge  
And an unchallenged, practical facility for the repair of  
Clock radios (all models and makes).

Meanwhile, back at the boat shack,  
Muppin and Huppin made candles and  
Soap and round barrels to ship them in. They silenced  
Their own profanity with grease and lye.

Ard sold a prototype radiophone to the military, selling them  
On its secondary applications as a nut cracker  
And doorstopper.

Trees of Georgian Bay were stripped to their raw flesh.  
Rocks received their ribbons of green rags, dividing them  
And casting them on the water.

Ard punched Dickens in the bush plane when  
His stories from *The Northern Review* were collected  
And published in book form, winning rave reviews.  
He went to expensive parties with expensive people,  
Became a successful distributor of televisions in kit form,  
Dabbled in collecting Haida carvings.

Ugly spines of broken trees guarded Muppin and Huppin out of  
Habit. They in turned continued making wares that piled up with no  
Buyer in store, until there was scant room to move about. They  
returned the boat to its original vocation.  
Its engine was retrieved from a junk pile and soothed and primed.

As Ard pulled up in a new ragtop convertible, he saw a queer boat  
Sinking in the water. Muppin and Huppin smiled broadly,  
Clinging to a bright, green door.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Samsara Magazine* No. 18

Daytime Drama, Noon Hour

The handsome doctor leaned forward,  
Speaking in a low, thin voice.

"You'll lose sixty percent of your fluids,"  
He said, "and you'll doubtless be  
Gone in seconds. Seconds! This is a  
High-risk, invasive procedure."

He leaned forward, raising a single eyebrow.  
"Do you have any questions?"

The bowl of soup greeted him with silence,  
Simmering.

Soft Eject  
(Who is Right, Who is Left)

Amarillo Naranja was  
A woman with a starlet's face  
Xeoroed over Butterball fresh turkey and  
Fragrant pears  
And a  
Geisha-turned-geyser

She was the genuine article  
If the genuine article  
Were made from  
Fluorocarbon plastic  
In an Osaka novelty factory

I can still hear her cherubic words  
Of dissent, watch  
Her silhouetted profile attack  
A typewriter until  
It vomits wallpaper tongue rolls  
Of apocryphal exposés  
Feet stamping off-tempo to  
Sprightly elevator pap  
Going down,  
Down,  
Down

Hers was a funeral dance  
A spastic eulogy descending a staircase  
For the classmates of her youth  
(They were not dead; they had turned  
To better things)  
Using veils of untruth  
In the trade of kings

Flimflam Flammable Unification

DJ Rabshakeh "Safecracker" Purdey  
Grows lots of agile and chirpy  
Discontent for you right here  
In Happy Valley  
And did you know  
That discontent is high in naphthalene,  
Sodium nitrate, matches and mothballs  
And much, much more? Lots to extol,  
Lots to extirpate.  
When not composting porridge  
And freezing your puck,  
Masticate  
Locally grown discontent!

Super Wash (Cold\*Warm\*Hot)

The mechanical, moth-eaten dog  
Who strikes  
The Inglis super capacity washing machine  
With rubber mallets between cycles  
Is not a fraud

A freak, perhaps  
But not a fraud  
And  
The Casiotone keyboard  
Plays in automatic counterpoint

The chicken in the unlined,  
Forty dollar suit and banjo is a fraud  
She's  
Down on the floor  
With the Moabites  
Measured on two lines  
To put one to death

Warning: Not a Life-Saving Device

It took years for the manifestation of  
Unwavering individualism to declare itself  
In the frostwork and parquetry of the everyday.  
And then,  
In a shifting townscape caught in the throes  
Of the Apple Blossom Festival, underneath  
The gumshoe goosetep of high school marching bands  
And war veterans dragging their green-tinged medals,  
Unheard against that screaming clown car siren  
Pronouncing foregleams of frivolity wrapped  
In the patriarchal cloak of yesteryear,  
Heinz Feindschaft, an unassuming chicken catcher  
Of few words and fewer allies, turned his hunched back on  
The weary piecework of grabbing four broiler chickens at a time  
(For chickens cannot be herded) to load onto a truck to be  
Driven to the nearest abattoir.

He had been prepared to request pardon from his employer,  
Mr. Maxwell Minor Worthylake, for the inconvenience  
Of his presence for some thirty-eight years, holidays and sick days  
Notwithstanding, and to beg leave.

But Mr. Worthylake was not to be found. He had not picked up  
The Chronicle Herald from the driveway in front of his new house,  
And his truck was gone also. Feindschaft hitched a ride to town  
And found at Mrs. Brighton's boarding house.

The runt chickens he had kicked aside haunted his mind. He felt a strange  
Kinship with them. A knife slit the lining of one large pillow and with some  
Paste and an old sou'wester he produced a fine coat of feathers. A facemask  
Was made to complete the new role. He lined his room with straw and made  
Large eggs out of papier-mâché. All of this framed and adorned his great  
Expectations in a sort of haloed *Gemütlichkeit* replete with Spitzweg depictions  
Of *The Chicken in Repose*, *The Chicken Awakens*, or, *The Chicken Toasts*  
*A Stale Bagel*-- all painted scenes possessing a luminescent and rosy hue in their  
Celebration of the Bourgeois from a fowl point-of-view.

But painted dreams can crack.

Feindschaft's savings and occasional town commissions  
Dried up in rapid synchrony.  
He was no longer the overlooked but accepted chicken catcher,  
Or the culler of staves, or the town's inspector of pickled fish. He could not  
Produce the extra money for warm meals at the dining room table.

But then manna in the form of a job collating flyers came along. In a warehouse

Devoid of dust and the scent of ammonia, Feindschaft stood before two fold-up Tables made into an "L", with boxes on top to create a second level. Store sales Flyers totaling a dozen or more were scooped up and shoved into A large flyer like a sandwich then piled twenty-five at a time and bundled together. Such bundles were stacked nine-over nine with a cardboard sheet in between On top of a truck pallet. No bones or wings were dislocated, no skulls cracked.

For a beginner such as Feindschaft, an evening's work yielded minimum wages Paid in cheque form at shift's end. There were thirty people and occasionally their children engaged in this labour, Including a pregnant teen. She charmed the flyers so that They leaped to her fingertips like enchanted Butterflies. Her husband watched the rapid migration While his mouth slowly worried a bread roll Into oblivion. People were not paid to give Feindschaft or his odd presentation any concern.

Two years of fluorescent lights and grey winter skies were broken By a two week vacation in Florida. A day's visit to Gator Villa revealed cruelty Of a sort unseen since the bloodshed of martyrs in the Roman Coliseum. On this day, hundreds of visitors endured the sun's incessant stare to watch Alligators make war with live calves and lambs.

Feindschaft had never taken delight in killing poultry or pigs or anything else, But had endured not a few who did. He found this strange circus of the damned Unconscionable. He produced from his backpack an inflatable, bagel-shaped Pool lounge. A fellow tourist's cell phone video Shows him throwing the inflatable lounge over a A high fence and climbing over the fence with Obvious effort, entering the artificial pond in his ever-present coat of feathers, The stunt catching the attention of a 362.873 kg, 3.3528 m, leucistic monster Imported for *a limited time only*—and for this alligator, it was lunch time. An onlooker's back suddenly blocks the eye of the cell phone, but the high-treble Screams that distort into a piercing crackle indicate what we are mercifully Not witnessing ourselves. Then the dark T-shirt-cum-curtain is removed and we see a tail swishing away from A floating mess of feathers and torn PVC vinyl.

Then, the inexplicable. Hundreds of ring-shaped loaves surface and rise from the water Like Olympian swimmers who have tired of fancy jumps and want to go the other way, Maybe see what this flight-thing is all about. There is no specific leader of these things, But it is obvious as the cell phone follows their ascent that they are negotiating some Form of migration. Their fall some hours later over Orange County, eclipsed the freak Snowfall in the *Orlando Sentinel* and other major news forums.

Coincidentally, the German-Canadian's demise and resulting bagel phenomenon Tied in neatly with another oddity covered by *The Chronicle Herald* of Halifax, N.S. A short item describes how farmers from Shelburne to Antigonish watched helplessly

As their chickens stood motionless and silently for upwards of an hour. All the while  
The normal stench of the farm was replaced with the delicious smell of fresh bagels.