

# *It's a High Voltage Adventure*

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## *Contents:*

Can I level with you? Like the bread you buy these days, this is mostly air.

## Red-Handed Dial Bliss

Hit banal, inebrant truth  
With the story of a downhearted pop  
And his grown boy  
Old people still talk about them  
The fatherless, motherless aurochs  
Chuck Steak Durabrand  
Who came out of Nowhere  
And disappeared down a crack in the sidewalk  
And his adopted pig  
Blind Ludwig Howdybrant

Chuck Steak is sitting in his skivvies  
Scrutinizing television  
And coaxing a beer  
Sofa and floor boards bowing beneath him  
And he recounts while he takes in the Leafs score  
How he was pushing hard this old ambulance  
Up a steep hill and his tires gave out  
All eight horses gave out  
And his spirits gave out  
He had been a fast driver  
Saved countless people from death  
Including one kid who had slashed his wrists  
Horizontally

Chuck Steak *wanted* to say  
"If you want to do it right,  
Cut this way,"  
Showing vertically  
"Not like that"  
But calmness of the tongue  
Is the Tree of Life  
So he bound up the kid's wounds  
And took him to emergency  
And the kid mended his ways  
And sold radio ad time in Toronto  
Until his early retirement

But after the burnout on the hill  
Chuck Steak was shaken for good  
He drove taxi to make ends meet

That's how Blind Ludwig the pig  
Came to live with him  
He was left in a blanket in the backseat  
With a note that read  
"My husband died of thorium poisoning  
In a lab explosion. After settling our affairs  
I have no money to look after Ludwig,  
So please take care of him,"  
Which Chuck Steak did for eighteen years  
No complaints  
He had always been skeptical of his own parenthood  
So it just seemed the right thing to do

He kept the taxi top light in a steamer trunk  
With a Bible and some pictures  
But he kept no secrets  
His sins gibbeted in full view of neighbors  
There above the laundry lines and chalk-marked sidewalks  
He drew his lost loves and regrets in the air  
With a broken hoof  
Dreamt of green fields  
And streams in spring time  
And no enslavement to CB radios or taximeters  
And time to get it right  
With this father thing  
And making peace  
With peace

## Home Amongst the Ruins

I tried to build a building from the sky down  
Didn't get the roof top level  
That's why the stone foundation  
Floats over the dugout cellar on the east side  
Crows took to sliding off the slanted roof line  
Wild boars wandered into the cellar  
And settled in  
Seems a sin to ask them to leave  
It's like they were meant to always be  
Below the frost line  
And I now have affection for  
Their adaptation as endorsement

Maddening, Large Arsonist

There goes Pink Al on a pale horse  
That febrile poet  
The largest of the lesser apes

His horse dances forward  
Then backward on chair leg stilts  
Pink Al rewords in finger-cymbal sing-song  
*Seneca's Apocolocyntosis divi Claudii*  
Reeking of marigolds and tangerines

Then he writes rabbinical babble on bottles of soap  
Decrying the plasticization of both cobbler and cook  
After their journey to the Kingdom of Kush  
In search of a whale shark refugee camp  
Stuck aboard a jollyboat  
Rife with factionalism and bad sushi

This old heel and the good soul, says Pink Al  
Were so very far from Sanssouci  
And he meanders into their alchemic fate  
As cadavers circling a water wheel  
Pulling up wisdom from a deep well

Pink Al then takes a non sequitur by the collar down a long  
Dark alley and shakes him down for some change  
Moments later  
He exits the alley  
Agitated and alone

His solitary prize:  
A one hundred dollar bill and a signed declaration of stagnation  
So he and his horse board a crosstown bus  
Now they're off to ask Gambrinus  
For a pot of ale and safety

Fake References (Keen Farce Frees)

When Devorah Vasconcelos  
Came from apartment 2204  
To babysit my Chihuahuas  
I was initially grateful  
Until  
Following the concert and dinner with my wife  
I received a full report from my eldest dog  
Detailing how Devorah  
Drank all my beer (which I substantiated)  
And dressed herself in my chicken costume

(It  
Was in a locked security box  
So how did she...)

Devorah lined up all three Chihuahuas  
In the kitchen  
(ages 1-3)  
And told them a tale about her near-murder  
Of a college roommate  
*And how they would need to be careful*  
*So as not to distress her*

And then she made them watch *Midnight Express*  
And now my three-year-old Chihuahua  
Wakes up barking *Billy Hayes*  
*Billy Hayes*  
Staring into middle distance  
And biting his kennel door  
Like prison bars

## Pull

One arm grappled around that summer house that sits on the crag over New England foam  
While the other brushed away that gull  
And my eyes told the chatty Kathy from Rhode Island to *shut up shut up shut it and bury it*  
And then I tried to pull you closer to me  
As we rode on that bus-as-trolley so popular in Ogunquit and York

Words failed me

I see you as a wild doe might  
Or as a nocturnal feeder  
I can't deal direct  
Ly  
With you nor can I  
Build a bridge  
And let you cross it with confidence

We walk along the Marginal Way  
I fear asking questions that dig too deep  
Even in this sea rose vista  
Then  
Hours later at the Fun-O-Rama  
We smash our way through pinball games  
Until they are matchsticks and fragments of numbers  
Perhaps we'll count the time together  
Against the score we forgot to hold on to

## Paysage

The bachelor apartment on South Park Street  
Has this thirty-year-old poster reproduction  
Of a Rouault landscape  
That looks like a Ryder  
But it is not—there are too many greens for Ryder

And look at that bold yellow  
Maybe it's too abstract even for that eccentric fart  
But I can see the two discussing it  
Man to man  
With a certain camaraderie  
Like a preconceived conversation  
For a 1940s newsreel

The cracks in the painting  
Seem to have been contributed by Ryder  
The  
Sketch-like quality seems to belong to Rembrandt  
With that bold afterthought of the man  
When the Dutch genius made field sketches

A sketch blurts descriptions of the opening scene  
Like a sharp blast of European  
Jazz reinterpreted as a theatrical backdrop  
As visualized by Chinese followers of Basho

And neither the indifferent reproduction  
Or the sun's rays on old ink  
Can diminish the immediacy  
Of this entombed land

Like A Red Morn

*That shameless little guy, she mused  
That smooth-talking King Cottonmouth  
He needs to be reminded of his glass house  
Get ushered inside  
Bolted inside*

In this room of orphaned china bisque dolls and pyrite  
Tar-scented ship rigging and sail  
The wooden ladder positioned under the cross beam  
Succumbed to a broken leg and step  
Declaring its weaknesses by imposing them upon an  
Unsuspecting girl of twenty-six with broom in one hand  
Her head stopped by slab stone while King Cottonmouth  
Descended a jack post  
To examine  
Her flailing hands rebuked by rusty saw blades while  
She waded through rising rivulets of red

And now we've no word regarding the early life  
Winterberry wife cake  
Zoha Diakonos  
Although it is widely understood that she  
Did not kick up the dust on the floor  
She relinquished not an inch of precious time  
For her pocket-sized feet to reach it  
And in the morning light  
She whipped the warehouse on the wharf  
Into presentable-to-the-public-shape  
To a new jack swing  
There in her page-boy black hair  
Black tee and shorts  
And  
M- 1965 field jacket  
She had a broom-as-mallet  
And an incendiary compartment  
You could feel razing the streets with the cop cars blocking us  
From passage  
She was a heat that scared Atlantic gentle winds  
And motorcycle bar draught beer/mesquite/ white bread and gravy jabber

This  
Only child of a man born near the Cave of the Apocalypse  
And his wife  
(A correspondent cum copy editor from Mumbai)  
Sweeping out uncertainty and pained condescension  
Leaving no place for dust balls or devils

With her eagle's watch  
Who dared creep amongst this sleeping pile of porcelain  
Palms and knees and clothed loins in this many-sided sickbay  
Born in the Hôtel Nelligan

Art is not a handicraft you leave in the alley there on Beach Street in Daytona  
Art is not something you abort because it counters your programme  
Zoha was ART all in uppercase letters  
ART had to bleed through all the disparate currents and somehow find a home  
She had her long tresses and objections cut with shears by an obliging carpenter  
And she worked against the superfine and the self-exalted without the smallest of  
Provocations or dog bites

The high tessitura of her role ruined her voice  
But the angels still listened with persistent devotion  
She gave birth to a man  
An out-and-out he-man in snake skin booties  
She ejected him from her long, navy kit bag-shaped womb  
Which she had often pointed like a finger at King Cottonmouth  
I.e., "I want YOU to act like a provider, spade head"  
But somehow accepted that she would be busy fighting and feeding  
Like a hawk everlastingly

While getting crushed and melted down into  
A fly's breath falling through a passing shadow  
She was that muse in the closet to  
That bookish poet with the tongue of silk  
Who painted her with words  
Which variously praised and damned her  
As either Queen Esther or Jezebel  
And now  
In this red sea fashioned from ill ladder and serpent  
Made her downfall red amongst the heartwood within  
And the palms and evergreens without  
While her offspring in cobwebbed pram  
Cut through darkness with beaming eyes  
While King Cottonmouth minded his own head

## Pirate Talk

Rómulo Delgado Raúl Humberto Soto  
The paradoxical frog  
Had jumped off the Venezuelan tall ship  
*Simón Bolívar* onto a Halifax dock  
And through a series of mishaps and mishops  
Found himself fighting sleep  
While attempting a fluent conversation with a harbour seal  
Who had thought it might be nice to bask in the sunshine  
On the Shore of Point Pleasant Park

The seal made a few comments in Spanish  
Quoting Rafael Cadenas  
Then launched into a disquieting story in his customary sailor talk  
Which was softened somewhat by his easy smile  
Complete with thick tongue and saucer-sized eyes:

*While me mate Maurice were walkin' 'is tart hammer and tack home  
I flushed me trophy winnin' arse berries dahn the john  
And tried ter break the bloody neck of that  
Flat-toned tin-eared clammy-fisted Laodicean 'oo spieled dinner speeches  
At a table runnin' riot wiv marmoset monkeys dressed as buccaneers  
Breafink discontent  
(This  
Were not a singular event)*

*And then I 'ad a most delightful Bowler Hat wif a Charles Fox in the bloody Johnnie Horner of the  
Bleedin' washroom and I 'ad kept me Hackney Marsh mince pie upon it and me Robin Hood  
Mince pie upon it and could tell from its dimensions that it was a most comely cardboard  
Charles Fox and I said ter it: Are ya not familiar ter me? Did I not spy ya in New York's Central  
Noah's Ark away hammer and tack in 1987? Were ya not then a resplendent oak tree and Pope  
In Rome ter a fousan red squirrels?*

*And I were at its feet sprorled out much like I'm now. And its recourse were as follows:*

*"If yer plan ter spread out as yer do now and ter stay that way, know that I 'ave a mucker in an  
Axe man 'oo will gladly cut yer frough and turn yer into an 'earff rug. So kindly leave me be and  
Make yorself scarce, yer froffy seal, right, yer. "*

*And so I spot frogs and kings and and the quiet and the bloody loud all go pass me by, and I  
Smile like a child and wish yer well. Anyfink yer wish ter say before yer wish me leave?*

To which Rómulo Delgado Raúl Humberto Soto  
The paradoxical frog replied:

“El velero lustroso de la muerte  
Pasea tu silencio por mis mares sombríos...”  
-- Esto de mi amigo, Vicente Gerbasi

## You There

Laugh lines and signs of failing liver  
Wrinkles and knobby belly  
They say one thing:

*The child has turned old*  
*The child has turned into a crooked man*  
*And he crumples up like a dry leaf*  
*On the dance floor*

Ask the janitor for a shovel  
Scoop up that dry corpse from the dance floor  
Do it quickly  
Do it fast  
Let the music last  
And last