
* The Tales of Chimpopreon & Rimjefreye *

By Nougat Carnivale

A "Carnival Brain" Novel

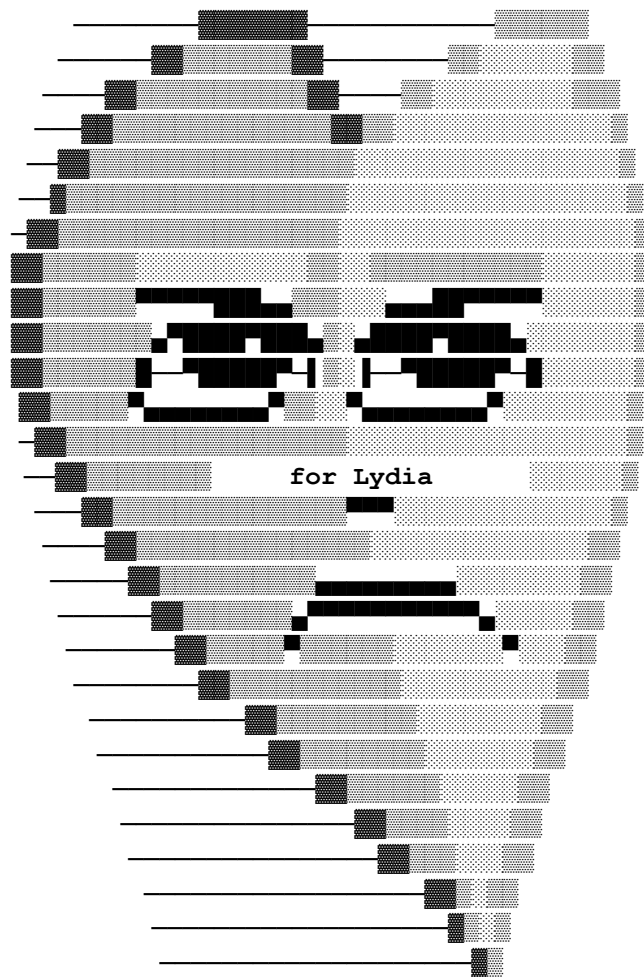


Table of Fables

- 1 - Preface
- 0 - Foreword
- 1 - NFT
- 2 - Marbled Marty
- 3 - Scarlint
- 4 - Tanya's Tough Trouble

- 5 - A-B-C-
- 5 - MTG
- 6 - Martin Plop (martin comes back)
- 7 - Luslosh Carnifaire (the creepy laughing thing from the House)
- 8 - The Consequence of Sonic Texture (field recordings)
- 9 - Dincolloquoy
- 10 - The Frightening Montly Club Event (Cut-N-Paste)
- 11 - Ultra Marathon

Chapter -1 - Preface

X

Chapter 0 - Foreword

"IN THE YEAR several hundred BC, there lived a great philosopher. His name? Plastocrocrisplopocrates. Plasto. Crock. Crisp. Plop. Craw. Tees. Six simple words which belie the complexity of a true mental giant. It was Plastocrocrisplopocrates, as we all remember, who famously opined:

*How rude
A dude
To have the nerve
To write a word.*

—Plastocrocrisplopocrates, from *Writings*, Vol. XXV, Op. 16"

And indeed I am a rude dude, though far ruder than Plastocrocrisplopocrates, or you, or even I could ever have known.

You see, while it may seem like a kindly gesture for me to write this novelette (think: a man smokes a cigarette, a novel smokes a novelette; this writing is what a novel may, in the course of a day, mindlessly select among a packful of 19 others, and casually burn to enjoy a modicum of calm and focus for about six minutes), it was not. A writer only writes to make a big mess because she was sad. :-(

I, in this tradition, have bumpified (made bumpy) this otherwise perfectly smooth space, in order to identify an issue jammed like a hunk of jam in my jamhole. The issue is addressed with stunning sloppiness and a great deal of rigamarole in the pages that follow. Hereinafter you will see a sea of text whose waves lap at the shore of insanity like a dog lapping at a puddle of big vomit. The tongue of that dog tastes the issue I'm getting at.

Notice how I say I'm getting at it, but what I do, textwise, is more like what a frozen dinner-maker does to the living flesh of a chicken as that dinner-maker seeks to construct a chicken nugget. When the chicken was alive, that was experience. The chicken's life was embodied and authentic. What became of the chicken, the chicken which became nugget, is what takes place between these margins. That process is the issue.

Notice the necessity of 'nugget,' witness the premise of this tidy little novelette's pretty little foreword collapse without that sturdy, dirty, birdy signifier. Notice too how frankly absurd and without merit it is to theorize a single nugget. I think we can all

agree: never has a chicken nugget been on its own. The correlative of this maxim is that none of us is truly an individual. And what I think follows from that is that there is neither a single author nor a single experience nor a single objective truth to which this text can be attributed. Consider the whole nugget thing first, and that provides furniture in the room of mind I invite you to sit in while you watch me bat around the issue the way a little kitty cat bats around the corpse of a ratatouille (a rat cook; talking rat who can cook). Yes we still haven't quite yet got to the issue. But I'm getting after it.

The issue I'm getting at is that, for a certain individual (could it be you?), the experience of emotions was painful to the extent that it was experienced in such a way that even for a narrator to attempt to describe it results in the narrators' words being disrupted by the texture of those words. That whole text-texture scribbledygook discussed opaquely above. And, as they say, as above, so below.

So, patient reader, you'll get dunked in fogbanks occasionally, dragged through mist-twists, and you may find yourself spine-deep in mind-puddles. Recognize that these sorts of elements indicate the palimpsest of avoidance. Recognize that these sorts of elements indicate the material of a mind whose occupant was a vandal. Recognize and rhapsodize the consequences of a habitual effacing. Re-cog your nascence, and recognize the dissertation of a student of numbness. Recognize, which is to say, do reconnaissance on your mind, these processes at work in the stylistics."

That's what Rimjeffrey would say.

And don't worry, you weren't supposed to have known who is Rimjeffrey or why would they say that stuff. You were, however, supposed to already have been knowing all about Chimpopreon. But, just in case you didn't, or haven't, or weren't, let's you read the following. Let us – you – read the following. And as you do, recall the relief that your reading will bring to the novel who is smoking the novelette you hold. And as you read, try to guess whether it is you're holding it, the novelette, in your hands or in your mind. The answer, I think, will quite disappoint you.

Good luck!

– Nougat Carnivale

Chapter 1 - NFT

Chimpopreon is where we begin. Chimpopreon was a man. The name of the town Chimpopreon lived in was Spitsboro. He worked nights at the Neurodivergent-Friendly Trader Joe's on Swill Street. He was a cashier. He found it hard to appreciate the things in his life, like his wide-faced girlfriend, Rimjeffrey, whose neck was long and elegant. He found it hard to appreciate his pet cat, Martin Plop, upon whom he had recently spent four years' worth of paychecks, in order to install in Martin cat hair plugs, and in order to provide M. Plop with kitty-cat tail enhancement surgery, which, when completed, made each swish of the tail more expressive, and which added verve to what, heretofore, all the townspeople of Spitsboro agreed was a dull and frankly loathesome tail swish. This agreement had been memorialized in the minutes of a Spitsboro Town Hall meeting, a meeting which, sadly, took place in a J. C. Penney, once a month, allowing citizens to voice their municipal concerns; requiring citizens to move furtively and with great stealth to avoid detection and ejection from the notoriously uncompromising J. C. Penney security task force, as they, the townsfolk, did their civic duty.

"For untold years hereinafter," sang the tail surgeon, "shall Martin's swish be sanguine and lithe. Nevermore shall cat Martin's tail again hang piebald and wan upon the mantles and doorjambs of the homes of those who would welcome him," the surgeon continued. Then, having heralded the success of his surgery thusly, the tail surgeon, Cody Curtains, said a quiet prayer for Martin Plop's continued health and wellbeing. All parties present agreed with the prayer's gist, and the surgery and its sermon concluded without incident. And for this, Chimpopreon had bargained away his four years' pay, and he was glad, for his beloved Martin was well, and he felt financially ill, for his bank was nearly ruptured, his purse light as fluff.

* * *

It's likely you'll be wondering just where, and whereby, came these four years' pay with which Chimpopreon so caringly lavished dear dear Martin Plop. For four years and for four years before those four years, Chimpopreon used his customer service skills to both manage and be managed. His work as a middle manager at the Neurodivergent-Friendly Trater Joes on Swill Street included jobs like doing field recordings of the parking lot and affixing placards to certain objects. On the management side of things, he oversaw the

cashiers, and kept their crypto-tills chock full of, and brimming with, each and every crypto-currency you'd ever care to use.

On the customer service side of things, Chimpopreon really shined. And shone. He shone like a stone. A stone polished and unknown. Chimpopreon was really quite proficient when it came to customer service. A neurotypical person would come into the store and express a desire to diverge. Chimpopreon would clear his throat and say "aw shut up" and that would be the start of it. Chimpopreon would buff and burnish the cool granite floors to a proficient polish, one that shone so brilliantly that a handful of customers wore shades.

Chimpopreon's home life was, however, less brilliant. Dull as dirt is the heart of the shill whose baleful income yields him little to save; financially gurgling and shaky to aching is the tummy of he whose cat costs are high-raised. Chimpopreon had to work a second job to afford skateboard lessons for his wife, Rimjeffrey (pronounced rim-jeff-ree-yay), who landed tre flips and other sorts of three-sixty tricks like it was her job, although it wasn't. This second job of Chimpopreon's was located two towns over from Spitsboro, in Swillsboro.

Rimjeffrey was, it turns out, Chimpopreon's boss at that job, and often there would be what Chimpopreon's therapist called a 'power dynamic' between he and his betrothed while he labored. The nature of this labor, you ask? Brothsman. Chimpopreon was an apprentice brothsman at the Swillsboro Soup Concern (SSC), a company whose stance on the neurodivergent hasn't yet been made clear.

At the soup concern, Rimjeffrey would be in charge of the regional brew, and would task Chimpopreon with certain broth fortifications, such as adding bullion cubes now and again. When it came to the aromaticizing of the broth via knots of verdant herbs, Chimpopreon just wasn't ready for that kind of responsibility. Chimpopreon's hands were more fit to handle a handful of wriggling worms than they were to handle a bouquet garni.

Still, good handsmanship was critical at Swillsboro Soup Concern, and a duly concerned brothsman was well-met indeed. Handymen, handywimmin, and handythems all clattered away, along with handytheys, day and night, night and day. Together they carried on like carpenter ants, working on the building in which the Spitsboro Soup Concern operated. One neat thing about the building is that it was constantly under construction by all these handy persons. Each of them was a licensee under the 'Constant Creative Construction'

provision of the building's lease agreement (a lease agreement penned by the acclaimed madman and infamous puppeteer, Luslosh Carnifaire), and the number of these licensees frankly dwarfed the number of soup-facing workforce members. The CCC provision provided each of the handsfolk with a responsibility to always be doing work on the building. What does that look like, day-to-day, you ask? The answer may well surprise you.

It looked like this: fit and mobile builders of all ages, dressed in modest dusky blue work shirts and sun-faded double-thick denim, some with knee-pads, others with elbow braces, energetic builders sprinting from room to room, running as fast as they could, all-out, dead sprint, weaving between bulging contractor bags and coils of drop-cord, their tool belts ajangle, furiously hammering, building out sturdy blocks of drywall, tremendous arrays of pipes and pipe-fittings and plumbing fixtures, helixes of chipboard, polyhedra of hardwood, edgless continuums of stucco, inviting expanses of linoleum, tidy tile, wall-to-wall marble backsplashes, and all of it dressed with a cornucopia of polished metal hardware. And just generally they were framing it out. Each always had a tool handy. Mobile welding machines, belt sanders, wireless drills, hand-cranked awls, shop towels, parts cleaners, and all manner of "tools of the trade" whirred and whirled about as the frantic building carried on. It wasn't uncommon to see, say, a handyperson jumping up and down on a recently installed furnishing to test its mettle, nor was it uncommon to see a handyperson screaming into an empty room to assess its acoustics. The sonic texture of their work-product, as we will see, was of great consequence to these handys.

The furious hammering notwithstanding, handsfolk oft were heard curiously yammering. The two are consonant, regardless of what you may think, regardless of the writ of silence that was perhaps plied like wood over or piled like wood atop your burgeoning experience as a builder, dear reader, if indeed you had such an unfortunate experience of hushitude. Hush was conspicuously absent from the work of the handy persons who infested and disrupted the solemn brothwork of Chimpopreon at the Spitsboro Soup Concern.

The content of the handypersons' group discussions, unlike their construction, was consistent, focused, and unchanging. The topic of conversation was, naturally, implementing a leaderless mode of self-governance in the Triune area whereby the commons (those lands ere uncontaminated by the plague of "property" rights") could be re-released to the public at large, and, the handyfolk hoped, in so

doing, herald the beginning of a collective healing from years of terrain-alienation.

So if you were at work, like Chimpopreon was 42-48 hours a week, you'd hear a lot of that, the deliberate and well-moderated political discourse, and you'd hear the tap-thwap-clunk of dozens of artisan-level builders doing pristine, unprecedented improvisational architecture, hereinafter to be referred to as Fabrickation, which is the word the handy persons prefer, politically, to identify their tendency. (Later, rather than by the somewhat high-minded sobriquet 'Fabrickation,' the handy persons' tendency came to be known by a different name, Hammer Jazz, which caught on among non-handy-persons who were sympathizers and apoligists for the tendency and who wrote breathless blog posts about it, but who were otherwise uninvolved in its promulgation.)

On a given day, the architecture, layout, tone and tenor of the building would be unrecognizable compared to the previous day. Many days the handy persons would tear down an existing staircase and then build a slide for people to slide down while they built a new staircase somewhere else. Other days the handy persons sat on soft mats on the floor in a circle, and instead of building building components, they built trust.

"Inhale without pulling, exhale without pushing," said Dincolloquoy (pronounced din-call-oh-kwee), whose purpose in so saying was to invite gentleness into the breath of his handy comrades. Together, the cell of handys breathed: they conspired. Chimpopreon, foolish as a school of fish, carried on his work ignorant of the conspiracy. Instead, Chimpopreon fixed his attention on the thrum and gyre of his Taco Bell Cheesy Gordita Crunch (CGC), became fully present with the texture of that warm apparatus (the CGC), and allowed the CGC to furnish his mouth with flavor.

* * *

I'll tell you now, straight up, bisque was mandatory. Not to eat, mind you, but to manufacture, because, need I remind you, this whole thing with the conspiracy and the Taco Bell was all happening in a soup factory. The name of the soup factory, again, was, and is, Soupsboro Swill Concern, or was it Swillsboro Soup Concern, or perhaps The Sipsboro Bisque-Hammer. No, it couldn't have been that, because Sipsboro and Soupsboro are the two towns nearest to Spitsboro (where our story takes place), which, together, form the aforementioned Triune, a regional geographic unit perhaps not unlike

your local tri-city area, an area that can hardly fail to inspire tales such as this one.

And, like I keep telling you, Triune native Chimpopreon worked not one but two jobs in Spitsboro, his first being at the NFT, his second being at the SSC. NFT, as we all remember, stands for Neurodivergent-Friendly Trader Joe's, and by all appearances operates in just the same manner as any standard Trader Joe's operates, except that, beyond this standard operation, the NFT provides neurotypical customers with certain safe, controlled means to diverge (neurologically). As for those neurodivergent customers who visit the NFT, well, they're simply treated in a friendly way while they're there, and it isn't a big deal.

That being said, at the SSC, the labor Chimpopreon did was manual, as was that of his co-workers. By manual I mean hand-based work, although it differed from the work of the conspiring handy persons, who, again, are covered in great detail and with considerable relish mere paragraphs above this curt sentence.

And not to get too into-the-weeds, but Chimpopreon, his co-workers, and The Conspiracy often consulted operator manuals for the devices they operated. For example, the soup sluice had a manual that Chimpopreon read on his first day. Incidentally, I wrote that manual, all six-hundred and sixty-soup pages of it, and it turned out fine.

All of which is to say, it was an all-hands-on-deck type work environment at the SSC. And the SSC wasn't open to the public, mind you, unlike the NFT. Certain municipal protocols had to be observed at the SSC. You may, if you insist, read all about those protocols in the J.C. Penney Municipal Memorialization (JCPMM) referenced above, available, sadly, from me, and if you write me a letter to 206 Purefoy Road in whatever town I live in, that means I have to send it to you, the JCPMM, free of charge, no questions asked. This I attest, and by so attesting thereby comply with the final phase of my community service, even though I asked to do my community service at Chik-Fil-A.

Nevertheless, much as it is the mandatory pleasure of a Chik-Fil-A employee to provide you with sustenance, so too must I soldier on, so too must I solder on this liquimetal narrative to your eminently weldable head, that I might sustain your kind and curious mind with tales of a false man.

* * *

Something about manual labor attracted graduate students from Swillsboro Sweat College to the site of the soup factory. They came, along with undergraduates from Chafe University, to unionize, but they stayed for the bisque, which, you'll recall, was mandatory.

One day, a problem arose. There was only one fault in Chimpopreon's soup, and that was that there was no salt in Chimpopreon's soup. Preoccupied with his Taco Bell and with abstract notions of justice and with a decade of regret and the width of his hips and of his girlfriend's face, he neglected his broth. Rimjefrey had little patience and little tolerance for Chimpopreon idling. And so Rimjefrey would holler "back to work!" at Chimpopreon, to which Chimpopreon would sometimes mumble "always happy to oblige a ghoul." This kind of lip regularly resulted in both revocation of Chimpopreon's broth privileges and a reduction in rank. It took a series of derankings, from Soup Private to Sip Ensign to Swill Tyro to Chief Dogshit Officer before Chimpopreon's sloth finally earned him the final wroth of Rimjefrey's authority, and as his lovely wife shitcanned the piss out of Chimpopreon, he again allowed his little mind-motor to idle in the parking lot of Rimjefrey's face, and Chimpopreon thought about her face's shape, and his hips's width, and all the rest, and as he did so, Chimpopreon, without realizing it, let his dreams of financial security die.

It was company policy to require all terminated employees to watch one full episode of 'Whose Fault is It Anyways?', a television program in which comedic actors received audience suggestions and then, using those suggestions, angrily improvised a false set of circumstances. These circumstances would be attributed to the employee to be terminated, and written as fact by the Human Resources personnel assigned to the terminatee.

Chimpopreon watched the actors gamble and prance about the TV screen, fury in their eyes, as they concocted his circumstances. He watched the bitter anger seething in the eyes of Colin Mockery as Colin bandied a giant foam pair of novelty scissors. A grim, expressionless Wayne Brady slowly wrote the word CONTEMPT on a chalkboard in four-foot letters; the audience roared. Lumen Teaforces, the human resources officer assigned to Chimpopreon, conducted an exit interview, and just like that, Chimpopreon was severed from the SSC.

Allow me to situate you in the moment. The year is 2222, society is much as it is in 2022, and poor Chimpopreon has lost his job. Rimjefrey has fired him, by way of HRO Teaforces.

However, as a doting and dutiful wife, Rimjeffrey was, in terms of emotion, unable to fire Chimpopreon from her heart. But Chimpopreon would never learn of this. For Rimjeffrey summarily dismissed Chimpopreon from her life on the day after she fired him from the soup job he worked at with all those kookoo handymans. She carried her love for him like a penny in her mouth, a cold secret. She carried her love for him in secret, tasting its cold tang on her mum tongue. She trusted the love to die, the way a hippie trusts his shirt to dye. Once tied, now severed, now died, now and forever. Rimjeffrey carried the cavity of Chimpopreon. She trusted her hollow to heal. She felt as fallow as a field, as empty as a drum, as crying as a baby, as crumbled as a crumb.

Chimpopreon was alone. He felt as ugly as a clown. As common as a clone. He wished he could be called on like a student or a phone. But that bad bird had flown. Rimjeffrey was gone.

Chimpopreon changed his name to Clarke. He put Martin Plop up for adoption, for poor underemployed Clarke could no longer afford to buy Martin his cat food. Clarke canceled his subscription to Couples' Week, the magazine for cute couples. Clarke sold many of the items in his apartment, like the lifesize marble caricature sculpture Chim and Rim had paid for on a boardwalk in Milan, a caricature sculpture of the two of them holding hands and surfing on smiling sea-turtles, a caricature sculpture they had paid 14,000 Euros for, and which now felt like a big chunk of lonely stone. Clarke liquidated that asset on RockBay.com, the rock auction web site, and he also used Facebook Marketplace to sell each and every one of his ice sculptures, which of course were virtually worthless, although they did indeed sell, to a caterer, who unceremoniously chopped them up into ice chips and used the ice to ice down a lot of excellent moderately priced sparkling wine for a wedding reception.

Clarke kept his car. Clarke could fit his whole life into two duffel bags, and he did, and he threw the bags in the back seat of the car, a 2119 Chevy Pasta.

The Chevy Pasta was basically an antique by 2222 standards, but Clarke had inherited it from his dear great grandfather, Charles-Paper Popreon, who drove it only to Sbarros on Sundays, Sbarros being, during that time, a church, before reverting to a chain pizza restaurant in late 2208. The Chevy Pasta was the very lowest tier on the graduated tier system of Chevy cars. At the top, as readers may know, was the Chevy Corvette, next the Chevy Camaro,

next the Chevy Malibu, next the Chevy Horsemouth, and finally, at the bottom, was the Chevy Pasta.

The Chevy Pasta was a 1-door sedan with one back seat, two front seats, and that was it. The Chevy Pasta was electric, as all cars were by 2100. It was about as fast as a Mazda Whisper, and cost about as much as a Dodge Flunt. And Clarke owned it outright, and considered it an asset. Clarke, if he wasn't careful, would occasionally look at the front of the car, would consider the headlights and grill, and would see the wide and lovely face of his ex, the headlights being the eyes and the grill being the mouth of fair Rimjeffreye. Clarke invested what little buying power he had left in a black car vinyl cover for the car, which he used to cover the car when it was not in use, and that seemed to help.

Clarke's experience was just this: a vacuum. He felt a clean, smooth space without his job and without his betrothed. He recognized a warmth inside that he remembered from a long time ago. He had assumed it would have died by now. But it didn't. So, to pursue this warmth, Clarke made two big decisions. First, he quit his job at the NFT. Now he was fully unemployed.

Unemployed, oh boy oh boy'ed; destroyed the work-life, deployed the void.

Second, he did what he said he was gonna do for the last ten years (he was thinking he might start to call this the 'headache decade') of being in a relationship with Rimjeffreye. And what that was was to sit down and write a long letter, to all the good friends he's known. It made him feel twisted up inside, at first, but then it made him feel warmed up inside. Clarke ended up writing five letters, and he sent them all.

One went to Scarlint, another went to X, a third went to X, a fourth to X, and the final letter was sent to Clarke's especially dear friend, Marbled Marty.

Chapter 2 - Marbled Marty

Marbled Marty drew strands of smoke through his ruined lungs. He felt the pizza crusts tumble in his 'tomach. He twisted a knob just so. He reflected on his body's shape and his body's eligibility for love. The braided cords of supple muscle in his shoulders thrummed.

Marbled Marty thought of himself as a shill, but he was more of a shoveler, a shit-shovel chit-chatter, glittering trouble-gatherer, knob troubler and traveler, inhaler of Mavericks. He'd never had occasion to meet Clarke as Clarke; he'd only met the one who called himself Chimpopreon, back in the headache days of Rimjefreye.

Over the last decade Marbled Marty, (whose friends called him 'Marbly') had collected hundreds of black vinyl albums and black denim clothing pieces and and black plastic hardware apparatuses filled with black red green and blue circuitry-works. Marbly's long black hair fell carelessly in a scraggly frame around his sharp face. No amount of rocking had yet satisfied him, and his friends worried he might never stop. Never stop rocking, that is.

Marbled Marty was in the middle of packing his bag. The purpose of his packing was not for rock. The purpose was to meet up with an old friend with a new name, to meet up with Clarke. Marbled Marty carefully pored over a list of supplies he meant to bring for this special trip. A cake of thick wax, check. Two vials of perfume, strong scented, check. Leather awl, bone folder, cramp-ons, energy gels, a tub of whipped topping, check check check check check.

Halfway through his checklist Marbled Marty recognized the essentially interdependent nature of his wellbeing and spent three good hours calling an assortment of non-Clarke friends whose phone numbers he had programmed into his phone over the years. He then spent another good three hours doing a lot of magazine cut-and-paste work, collaging, and preparing some imagery he thought he might scan at the local Staples office supply store to express a bit of himself that he himself didn't know about yet. Robust in his interdependence, Marty returned to the checklist.

Six squares of aluminum flashing, check. Field-ready tape recorder with backup double-As, check. Aerosol starch, aerosol Fix-A-Flat, 4 oz. Goo-Gone, one-half tube Shoe Goo, tallow tub, a box of chalks, check. A thousand miles north/northwest of Marbled Marty, a young rock climber died unceremoniously under a column of insuperable snow.

His pack made up, his duty to kinsman discharged, Marty was still. His kindness hung around him diffuse, airy, an atmosphere. The scent of the wax and all the other random crap in his stolen Birken bag catalyzed a bit of a memory stroll for Marbled Marty, whose keen desire to smoke a cigarette turned out less formidable than his keenness to be and stay quit. Marbled Marty was ready to head out.

Chapter 3 - Scarlint

Scarlint awoke, deconstructed her eyes, and stepped out onto the patio. The letter from Clarke lay unopened on the side table, just as it had for the past three days. She'd get to it later. She smoked the day's first smoke. She dragged her weary eyes across the horizon of her fair city, Spitsboro. She knew that before she'd be able to get anything done, she would need to find out whether or not each person she thought was her friend was actually her friend. She furrowed her lovely, hirsute brow. The Marlboro worked in her lungs. Her synapses were busy as a lot of bees who were people-pleasing bees who had a hard time setting boundaries, and who, the bees, ended up overcommitting and letting themselves down.

That was the sourest honey I ever tasted, the honey made by those let-down bees.

Scarlint's mind turned over like a Chevy, big block. Her mind was running rich. And then, she figured it out. She figured out how she'd be able to determine the status of friendship among each of her putative friends. She'd craft a post. A post to be posted on the internet, socially, and seen by all who might be among the waders wading in her friendpool.

The perimeter of her patio was littered with wildflowers native to the region. Beggar's beard daisies, Flashy Goatgrass, Dutch Dragons, Queen Anne's Dogtongue, and Unbelievable Susans all swayed florally in the balmy breeze. Scores of non-unionized bees flitted from flower to flower, knees filthy with pollen, wearily returning to a hive whose syrupy work-product would pucker the tongue of a human like a bite of lemonflesh, if ever a human were fool enough to taste of it, the honey, that is.

The first decision Scarlint had to make was which platform to post on. The decision paralyzed her. She felt the grip of fear like a man's handshake. Some platforms were visited by family, like her Uncle Strummond. Uncle Strummond was once a prominent businessman, but he had recently decided to leave his business, disgraced, and pivot to plundering the sour honey mines that honeycomb the abandoned sewer network underneath Spitsboro. By weight, plundercombs sold for roughly the market price of catalytic converters or pilfered copper pipe or tender bovine tripe, and Uncle Strummond used that money, his plundercomb earnings, to invest in the Neurodivergent Friendly Trader Joe's, which recently had an IPO. Uncle Strummond planned to build a

fortune speculating on Spitsboro's burgeoning mental illness marketplace. He planned to turn that fortune into a new business, to turn that business into an empire, an empire he could be proud to leave, disgraced. This is what is known as a five-year plan.

Scarlint was wary of having Uncle Strummond view her post, because she feared that Uncle Strummond, with his keen mind, would identify her post as proof of insecurity, would somehow create a stock or currency whose value was connected to her confidence, and then short that stock, and make a small fortune off of her. If there was one thing Scarlint couldn't stand, it was uncles creating a currency whose value depended on her emotional wellbeing. For this reason, Scarlint decided that she would not post her post on Facebook.

Meanwhile, Strummond produced a 16-pack of Crayola Crayons from his chambray work shirt's left front pocket, slid one crayon from the pack, tapped its butt on the face of his wristwatch, and proceeded to gently gnaw on it, as a vole might a heel of hard rind. Strummond, like Marbled Marty, but unlike Scarlint, was working on staying quit from cigarettes, and there was just something about the taste of that first Burnt Sienna in the morning, it just made the day seem doable.

Scarlint, for her part, using her big block of a mind, considered her remaining options. Tiktok was the most appealing platform to post on, because in 2222, Tiktok was the most used platform among the people who Scarlint wished to find out were they her friends or not. However, the problem with Tiktok for Scarlint was that Scarlint was banned from Tiktok. The reason Scarlint had been banned is that, allegedly, Scarlint had spent a small fortune on the development, design, manufacture, and distribution of smartphones for dogs, and long story short the deal was, dog gets a free phone and free training on how to use it, in exchange for the dog has to post on Tiktok videos of the dogs vomiting and then returning to their vomit, close captioned and hashtagged with popular fastfood slogans like "I'm Lovin It" or "Have It Your Way" and also in the background was unlicensed music from the Beatles. Because litigation pending in this matter, it shouldn't be discussed.

But like. My whole thing is, as an attorney, the dog phones themselves are actually quite an important innovation in technology. The phones came in three sizes, small medium large, each of which was furnished with haptic accommodations for paws of different sizes. There was a simplified black and white GUI and the phone itself included slots for smell cartridges, which could be programmed to

delight a given dog with its favorite smell if the dog's tiktok post went viral, for example.

The point is, so many of these dogs have had and continue to have such a positive (pawsitive) experience with these phones. To the extent that, and this is true, any one of them would have literally rolled over to do a favor for Scarlint, the great tech benefactor of the dogs.

In reality, Scarlint had a deep, robust support network among dogs. Sadly, Scarlint failed to appreciate this network because she was preoccupied with finding out whether or not she had a lot of human friends. Nevertheless, like eagles saving a Gandalf, the dogs came to the support of Scarlint in her time of direst need. The dogs, generously, went to Tiktok HQ and used their strong dog jaws and sharp dog teeth to chew up the servers containing the data about Scarlint being banned from Tiktok, then used their paws to send Scarlint a message informing her, in human English, that she was un-banned, and encouraging her to move forward with her human friend determination project, or whatever, and the message was concluded 'bark bark bark bark.'

Her confidence buoyed, her resolve edified, Scarlint began to craft her post.

* * *

Internet visitors were interacting with Scarlint's post.

* * *

Scarlint could hear the thrum and gyre of hammer jazz pulsing out of the Spitsboro Soup Concern. Scarlint had come to trust and depend on the ambience of the sound; to her it sounded like home. Now it was four days later, and the letter from Clarke remained unopened.

Chapter 4 - Tanya's Tough Trouble

What happened first was Tanya broke down with Clarke. They broke down together. First they broke down, then they broke up. This was already talked all about up above, but of course, there was more to the story. There's a ton of tough trouble that guy didn't even mention. Trouble transpiring prior to the firing. So here's that.

The breakdown started in 2213. That was the year Tanya started going by Rimjeffrey. That was the year Tanya became Rimjeffrey's dead-name. That was the year Rimjeffrey started electrolysis. A warm wash of laser shot gently about the chin region, and in a way it was sweet chin music. This was the year she suplexed society by doing some very powerful graffiti. This and that was the year of the big broken window, slashed tires, crossed wires, tossed fires. Tossed fires is molotovs; police would have you call it off.

Rimjeffrey in a tableau. In a tub, low. Bathtub full of suds, the dull yellow rub of an edison bulb, handful of candles, narrow stack of Tarot: this is the year she started reading Marseille; no more reading The Farside (by Gary Larson).

Rimjeffrey was scattered. Scattered the way a hash brown is. Shattered the way a sad clown is. A candy-colored jester festering in shoe-shone showbiz.

Rimjeffrey struggled to be present with a plain emotional experience. It was a struggle to have an emotion. Emotions were a struggle. It was an emotion, and it struggled Rimjeffrey. The feeling of an emotion struggled and strangled Rimjeffrey. It was the way feeling felt that choked and garroted Rimjeffrey so. Having to hold a feeling felt too heavy to carry. The feeling caused thrills of fear. The fear was not thrilling the way a bit of totally unexpected good news is. Rather, the fear feeling felt thrilling like how it does when you just about mowed down a pedestrian. The hot sweet sizzling stupidity of syrupy fear. The searing syrup that seeps into the ribcage and human thorax upon having only just barely not backed up over and quietly crushed a living neighbor. That sickly salt-packed sardine of a flavor of the heart whose stinky stupidity swings like a sack of sizzling hogmeat, and this is what Umberto Eco was talking about when he mentioned a pendulum. I believe. Although I could be wrong.

The issue, and I think you and I and Umberto all can appreciate this by now, is that dear sweet syrupy Tanya, in her self as Rimjeffrey, she was terrified by the experience of feelings. And so Rimjeffrey chose. She chose: rather than spiral like a vein of honey through a hunk of ham, rather than spiral in the fear of the feel, I shall implement control.

The control is evidenced in the text. The texture of the text. The way the restless text bends and flex. Flexes. Reckless. All flecked with conjecture. Derelict and fretful-faced but smooth as lube and fretless bass lines gently placed upon our face by J. Pastorious. I tell the story thus.

She, I, Clarke, Rimjeffrey, Tanya, and also two of our friends, Umberto, who I mentioned, and also Partario, a young scholar of Biostatistics, all were a group of friends whose activities and rapport were quite solid and man did we get to cutting up.

And that part of the story is fine. And the issue about the text, in the paragraph above the paragraph above this one, that's the issue mentioned in the foreword. And so, having woven my little novel basket, let's use it to carry some narrative fruit and a fresh plot baguette and full-cream butter and preserves, let's use it for all that in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 5 - An Unexpected End

Here is where this despicable little packet of text ends. The reason it ends here is a deliberate stylistic choice. The reason it ends here is because I couldn't come up with an ending.

Sometimes in writing, just like in life, you think you can come up with an ending, but it doesn't work out.

THE END

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