

Rainy day real estate

The Little Monkey Chronicles

Dan Hoerner

73 pp, \$20

Author, Brian Kidd

Could it be the quest of human nature is more detrimental than it is beneficial to the nature of the earth as a whole? This is the implied theme in Dan Hoerner's (the guitarist of Sunny Day Real Estate) new book, *The Little Monkey Chronicles* — four short stories about a mischievous, naughty little monkey whose big brain gets him in all sorts of trouble. The root of all his misfortunes lies in some of the most basic human vices such as greed and lust. In a recent e-mail interview, Hoerner talked to *Intermission* about his new book.

"I will say that ignoring information about the nature of life on earth is the major human crime of the last two millennia," said Hoerner. "The hand of man has smashed and slaughtered and burned and toxified and drowned in concrete the greatest living treasures of the earth in a fury of stupid, pitiless greed."

In *TLMC*, the little monkey (who remains nameless throughout) embarks on one adventure: to "give [his] existence some purpose." At times using force, an arsenal of grenades and other modern weapons, he obtains all the sand dollars in the land, only

to be thwarted when the currency is replaced with robin's eggs.

The irony lay in Hoerner's use of a monkey to portray modern man.

"Imagine for a moment, what sort of beings, fellow denizens of the earth if you will, had to die or be displaced so that the city of Seattle could exist as it does now,"

Hoerner said. "If I could, I would trade all the arts and sciences and cities and cars and televisions and machines and concrete and plastic of the hand of man for a chance to walk, even for one day, through the forest that once lived where Seattle now stands."

Though Hoerner's thoughts may be extreme, he may have a point about man's innate tendency toward destruction.

"The comical thing is that the greed of the hand of man is so deeply rooted in our psyches, that destruction is taken, *prima facie*, as a necessary component of our existence," says Hoerner. "It's just what we do! It's who we are! It's a hunger that seems so natural to us, that it is totally unquestioned. Someday, perhaps soon, it will kill this culture."

Hoerner's book elaborates on such themes in a very witty and entertaining manner. The symbolism in the book is insidiously orchestrated, as when the guardian of the sought after "treasure of endless entertainment" turns out to be the monkey himself. In

Rainy day, see p.12



Art by Chris Thompson.

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Rainy day, from p.11

this way, each story reveals the ironies of human nature.

"I do like to take cheap shots at human nature whenever possible. I just enjoy that strange, dizzy sensation of trying to fit a human mind around things like infinity, god and so on," said Hoerner.

Not to say Hoerner thinks he is more enlightened than others, or is trying to be condescending toward his fellow human beings.

"I'm already what I am: another cog in the machine of the hand of man."

TLMC is definitely worthwhile for readers interested in philosophical ideals. Though not a children's book, the content is written in a direct and simple fashion, similar to Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh* — a complex interpretation of a children's tale.

Hoerner's career in writing and human nature began as a philosophy major at the UW. He is currently working on a second novel.

The Little Monkey Chronicles is only available through www.clearlytheunderdog.com.

