

"Assemble these bones!" the puzzled paleontologists said.

No dinosaur emerged — instead, a prehistoric replica of the Eiffel Tower, which they frantically dismantled and buried.

CONSPIRACY THEORY NUMBER 27

The villagers had caught the fox at last, just spitting out a mouthful of blood and feathers.

"I've eaten several chickens," he admitted. "Not as many as the wolves, of course, but there you go. Small thieves will pay for big ones. Fire away, brave villagers!"

Curiosity threw anger off balance: "Wolves? What wolves?"

"You never hear them naturally. Dozens come, some nights."

"But wolves are noisy animals!"

"Extremely noisy. If it wasn't for the racket those church bells make, you'd hear them coming miles away."

The villagers frowned. For several nights, it was true, the bells had rung like mad for minutes on end. They'd thought it was the wind.

"The ones to watch," the fox continued, swallowing awkwardly, "are the doves. They gather in the belfry, fan the bells with their wings. They get the leftovers, see."

And so the doves were shot and the fox went free.

TO BE BROKEN IS THE DESTINY OF GLASS

A colorless man travelled through bright continents, holding up an oblong face-shaped pane of glass before him as he walked. At every village, different colored people stopped him and politely asked him why.

"Is it to protect you from the dust?" they said. "The wind? Perhaps the glare of the sun?" Without lowering his frameless window, the traveller shook his head.

"Glass is transparent," he explained, "so I see everything perfectly clearly; but it also reflects, enabling me to see my own face as I walk, and never forget it's me who's seeing all these other faces."

"Ingenious," they murmured, and moved away, with winks and sniggers.

Of course, it was impossible to cross the whole earth with this bit of glass intact. One afternoon his right foot caught on the root of a tree and his mask was shattered.

Thanks to that root, that afternoon a prisoner walked free.

— R. D. Valerio

Oaxaca Mexico

BUFORD AT COOKING SCHOOL

buford's at cooking school in his tall chef's hat & cowboy boots as he receives the question. "does saffron flavor or color the curry?"

"it depends on what dish we're talking about, sir," buford answers, looking out the window at the young woman eating her lunch on the lawn. "it both colors & flavors the poule au ruz."

"very good," says his old teacher watching the young woman packing her lunch basket, brushing crumbs from her skirts. "you may make assistant chef after all, buford. study hard & learn your lessons well."

BUFORD'S BUCKSHOT SATURDAY NIGHT

buford groans, picking bird-shot from his butt, tweezers alternating between pellets & cotton swabs dipped in a saucer of mash. what an awkward, vexing position buford thinks with disgust looking in his hand-held mirror. i look like a monkey fucking a football.

if sex is natural & pleasurable as recorded in the county library, buford reasons, supposed to be a meaningful expression without attachments of guilt — why must i suffer because dottie delacroix told me she wasn't married — especially when she furnished the condoms & an ice-cold six-pack of heinekin to go?