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The Strayed Reveller, No. 7

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May 1970



THE STRAYED REVELLER

Editors

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Charles Hopkins

Cover

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Offices of THE STRAYED REVELLER are located in Ferguson 104A and 206. All manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced.

THE STRAYED REVELER

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During the spring, Billy Brian would often walk through the tree-lined, hilly streets of Santa Barbara, enjoying the sunshine and the fresh smell of pine and the flowers which bloomed in the gardens of the houses he passed. He would wake early, eat breakfast, and start walking usually staying out until lunchtime. These daily walks pleased his mother because Billy often got on her nerves while she was doing housework, and even after fifteen years it still saddened her to see her mentally retarded son sit aimlessly in front of the television, occasionally groaning an incomprehensible sound, and she knew that the fresh air was good for his health, and she loved him, and she knew that the walks made him happy.

Billy would come back for lunch, smiling and happy, often bringing back a flower that he had picked for his mother. Mrs. Brian understood how her son loved the flowers and she would gladly accept Billy's gift and give him a kiss, and he in his happiness would break into a wide grin and hugging her, return the kiss, and then she would sometimes leave the kitchen and go to her room and cry in happiness and sadness.

One day Billy was walking along the sidewalk on the way home from his morning walk. It was March and apring, and the smell of pine and flowers was in the air, and there was no smog covering the blue sky as there often is in the hot summer when the wind blows from the south, bringing pollution in from Los Angeles, but this day the air was clean and good.

Almost home, Billy stopped on the sidewalk in front of a large stone house. He crossed the house's spacious green lawn and walked over to a tall, distinguished looking gray-haired man who was working in his garden. The man got up from his knees and turned to Billy. Billy looked hard into the man's face and groaned; "Can...have... flower... please?"

"Of course, Billy. Take all you want. Here, let me pick a pretty one," the man answered, bending over to pick a chrysanthemum. "One that I'm sure your mother would enjoy very much."

He handed the flower to Billy.

"Thank...you...uhh," groaned Billy.

"You're welcome, Billy," the man answered. "Please come back tomorrow and I'll pick another one for you. Goodbye now."

"Yeah," said Billy loudly, turning to leave.

The gray-haired man went back to his gardening after Billy had left and returned to the sidewalk.

Billy began to feel hungry so he quickened his pace. The thought of a warm lunch and the flower delighted him.

He meant to go directly home, but he stopped at the playground of a junior high school that was near his house. He stopped to watch the children swing, and run, and have fun, and he wished that he could play with them, but he still enjoyed watching.

A group of five boys, who were playing keep-away with a softball, spotted Billy. They huddled in a group, whispered among themselves, and then walked towards him.

The leader of the group, a dark haired boy about eleven or twelve years old and bigger than the others, walked ahead of the boys as they

approached Billy.

"Hi!" Billy groaned, wide-eyed and tilting his head from one side to the other.

The dark haired boy tilted his head from one side to the other and groaned: "Hi!"

The other boys laughed quietly.

Billy took the chrysanthemum from his shirt pocket and showed it to the group.

"Got flower," Billy said cheerfully.

"Can see?" the dark-haired boy said as the other boys began to laugh harder.

"Sure!" Billy said, handing the chrysanthemum to the dark-haired boy.

The boy took the flower and sniffed it. Then he passed it around to the other boys who each put the flower close to his nose and sniffed loudly. By the time each boy had handled and sniffed the flower, most of its petals had either fallen off or been crushed.

The dark-haired boy handed the flower back to Billy, then turned to leave and the boys followed, laughing and grunting, and tilting their heads from one side to the other.

Billy stared dumbfounded at the remains of the flower in his hands. He looked sad for a moment, but then a happy expression spread over his face. He put the flower back in his pocket and started walking home, hungry and eager to give the flower to his mother who would put it in the vase on the kitchen sink.

CADILLAC PEN

James Hunt

Sitten, written with my
Cadillac pen.

Letten navy blue
ink run d

o

w

n on paper.

Glancin at high
hemmed attire,

with long, smooth
10" above the knee legs staren
me in the face.

All thought in m t o
o i n

within me.

Settin u^P to my
ears in girls.

Sitten, written
with my Cadillac pen.

Lettin that
navy blue ink run
d

o

w

n on paper.

You like the feel
of cold steel
in a warm embrace
with your gun body.

Fur and feathers
are best
when
stuffed or tailored.

Green numbers
scratch your hand as they leave
to pad some other pocket.

(I pity you.
After such careful courting,
she wouldn't stay forever.)

Satin sheets cool your rocky body
only after the love machine's been
paid.

Friends (?) oil your Ferrari ego
only to watch the unending race for
More.

Your fingers habitually smooth rough sideburns
and check cufflinks.

I wish
you would rub
my back
sometimes...

IT WAS A GRIM BUSINESS

Bj Adams

It was a grim business,
Drinking ourselves to insensibility.
We stood there
Taking it straight -
Until the bar cleared enough
For us to sit-
Still we took it straight.
You concentrated on
Holding your stomach,
I on holding my tongue.

The bar closed down.
We went to the park,
To finish the job.
We rolled the empties down hill,
Finally you fell,
I staggered off
To bed and aspirins.
That afternoon
We passed on the street.
Neither of us spoke.

#1

I loved you
Even when you walked away
Your back was straight,
But I knew. It hurt you too.

#2

Quiet talks in quiet bars
Just off Washington Street
Made the time pass
When for us, time was too long.

#3

You and a friend
Went out early to buy
A can of chili.
You never came back.
I had to eat rice
Without chili.

My feet are thirsty
 Slushing through angel tears,
 they sponge up mud and muck.
 Did you know that the drains are clogged?
 I hope you know how to build an ark;
 I don't.
 I only work with arcs.
 The great yellow god is dead.
 I suppose they buried him somewhere up there
 behind that big grey thing.
 Chicken Little must have been wrong--
 or a freak;
 the sky only leaks--
 like my holy umbrella
 (which really isn't blessed at all).
 I'm tired of bumping into unicorns
 and wading in the gutter.
 I want to get wet all over--
 to lose my umbrella;
 maybe in some mouldy bar,
 reeking of beery sweat and cigarettes and tinned
 music.
 You know the sort of place;
 I could easily lose it there.
 Or perhaps I could just casually
 toss it away at a party.
 No one would censure me if I got giddy
 from too much liquid reffeshment.
 But people without umbrellas
 are viewed with suspicion.
 Besides--
 I might get the sniffles.

Alex stopped to wipe the bitter sweat from his face. He looked up at the hot August sun poised in a cloudless blue sky. Pulling the pack from his back, he rotated his cramped arms. He squatted down and reached inside the pack for his canteen. His throat burned.

Lifting the canteen high, he swallowed several mouthfuls of water. It was warm and unpleasant inside his empty stomach, but it stopped the burning. As he dragged the brown khaki shirtsleeve over his mouth, he gazed down the boiling-soft asphalt road. Far ahead, he observed a strange, yet familiar, symmetry in the trees and a white fence bordering the road. He recognized it as an apple orchard. Pushing the canteen inside the brown Boy Scout pack, he hastily tied the flap.

As he walked toward the orchard, he surveyed the green field to his right. Several horses grazed quietly in the high floating grass, and he could not resist throwing stones at them. He smiled as one young colt, its tail held high, raced to its mother across the field. But one horse was not disturbed by the stones bouncing off its side. Its grey hide was probably an ancient target for the local youth. Alex loved the strength and vitality of the horses. And he was happy.

A man was leaning on the fence, but he could not distinguish him plainly. His face was hidden by a huge straw hat. The man remained motionless leaning in the fence, as if he had not yet spied the transient. As Alex approached, he could see that it was an old farmer who, nevertheless, continued to stare across the empty

road at the woods on the other side.

"Good afternoon," Alex said.

"Good afternoon," he said, slowly turning his head and looking Alex over. His left hand played with a long weed, which he occasionally stuck into his mouth, but hastily removed.

"It sure is a hot day." Alex tried to make conversation.

"Yeah, yeah. It's mighty hot. Too hot, in fact. Bad for the apples," he said shortly.

"I've been admiring your apples." He hesitated. "They are yours?" he asked.

"Sure are," agreed the farmer proudly.

Alex took a deep breath. He could smell the gentle scent of the apples mingling with the acrid smell of the newly whitewashed wooden fence.

"How many trees do you have?"

Alex surveyed the broad, lovely orchard.

"461," he answered proudly.

"That's a big orchard." Alex said, astonished at the farmer's exactness. "It's very pretty."

"Of course it is. I've spent forty-five years developing this orchard. No one can equal it. I know every tree, its good qualities, deficiencies. . ." He put the weed into his mouth and turned toward the thick woods across the highway.

"I guess..." Alex began.

"Yeah," he interrupted. "I've always produced the best apples in the valley."

Alex examined the orchard. Every tree was perfectly shaped. In fact, he could not even see a bad apple; they were all a deep, shining crimson. The branches sagged under the weight. On the hill behind the orchard he saw a large white house.

"Is that your house?" he said, pointing in

the direction.

"Yeah. I've lived there for forty-five years."

"It looks..." He stopped when he saw a woman leave the house. Looking quickly in all directions, she ran to the well and tossed something red and white into it. "It looks very nice," he continued.

"Had it painted last month."

Alex was still watching the house. It was neat and clean like the orchard which surrounded it.

"Where are you going?" the farmer asked, still playing with the weed, but never letting it rest in his mouth.

"Seattle. I've been traveling for seven days. I left Louisiana last Saturday."

"Why are you going there? Nothing up there you can't get in Louisiana, is there?" He grinned at Alex.

"I want to get a job on a boat and try to get up to Alaska. But I'll be going back home after a few months."

"Well, that certainly takes a lot of courage. I wish I had done something like that when I was young. But an apple orchard has to be cared for. A man can't go running off to Alaska."

Alex pulled the pack from his back and leaned on the fence. Looking at the apples, he felt the hunger gnawing at his stomach.

"Could I have an apple? I haven't eaten today," he asked politely.

"Well." He hesitated and scrutinized the boy closely. "I suppose."

The farmer lifted his elbows from the fence and turned toward the orchard. He watched the boy wade through the deep grass underneath the nearest tree.

After plucking a large red one from a low branch

he climbed back over the fence. Alex turned the apple in his hand. It was dark red, heavy and fragrant.

"I'll bet it's sweet," Alex mumbled hopefully.

"Certainly."

"I imagine after forty-five years, you've lost your taste for apples," he said, smiling.

"No. I've never waten any of my apples. I raise them to sell."

"Never?" he inquired, twisting his head to the side.

"Never."

"But you said they are the best apples in the valley. How can you be sure if you've never eaten one?" Alex demanded.

"Forty-five years. Forty-five years of my sweat and muscle.. and even my tears; of working every day and sometimes night. I know they are sweet because I planted and raised every one of these trees. I'm their father."

His voice had raised to a roar, and he was no longer leaning in the fence. Standing before Alex his right hand pointing toward the orchard, he held a clenched fist toward the boy who remained silent.

He rubbed the apple in his sleeve till it shone and put it to his mouth. He took a large bite and chewed slowly.

The farmer continued. "I let you taste my apples because you remind me a lot of myself when I was young, full of energy and life... with a core of goodness. I've never done that before, so I'll expect you to eat the apple and say nothing about it to anyone... not even me. I

already know it is sweet." He returned to the fence and resumed the game with the weed.

Alex remembered the woman tossing something into the well. "What about your wife?"

"She doesn't eat apples wither. Besides Emma doesn't like them," he said blandly.

"I don't suppose your children eat the apples?"

The farmer turned toward Alex. His black eyes peered fiercely from beneath the straw of the hat. He focused on the half-eaten apple in Slex's hand. The cold silence of the farmer's icy stare was suddenly disturbed by a sharp clanging bell. Slex saw the farmer's wife on the front porch of the house beating a round metal rim.

"Have you eaten?" the farmer asked.

"No."

"You're welcome to eat with us. Emma likes to have company." He had already turned toward the house.

"Okay. Thank you," Alex said, uncomfortably.

As they walked through the orchard, the farmer told Alex about the apples.

Emma was polite. As she moved about the kitchen she watched her husband closely, and he continued talking about the apples. She had prepared a good dinner, and Alex was hungry. The old man's head eclipsed the setting sun shining through the window. When he or Alex moved, the bright yellow rays struck Alex in the face so that it was almost impossible to look at the farmer during the meal.

"Where are you from?" Emma asked, smilingly pleasant.

"Louisiana. I'm going to Alaska."

"Don't you get lonesome so far from home?"

"Sometimes."

"I know I would," she said, passing him a heavy bowl of potatoes.

"Thank you," he murmured.

He noticed a small picture on the wall of a man, woman and young boy. He recognized the man as the farmer, but he was wearing a suit and holding a derby hat full of apples.

"Is that your son?" he said to Emma, lifting a hand toward the picture.

She hesitated and glanced at her husband who raised his head. The sun struck Alex in the face; he covered his eyes. He saw the same fierce stare which he had received at the fence when he mentioned children.

"Thomas left," the farmer said. "He didn't love the apple trees; couldn't stand to work in the orchard. It was wrong to feel that way... and God called him."

He looked defiantly at Alex, penetrating the delicate blue eyes of the boy. Alex turned to Emma; the old man's tone confused him. She glanced furtively at the boy, but continued to watch her husband silently.

The farmer rose and walked to the picture; he seemed sad and tired. Alex thought the old man would cry, but he began speaking to the picture.

"Why did you do it? You knew it was forbidden," he murmured.

Alex listened carefully, watching Emma for a hint to the old man's actions.

The farmer turned toward Alex. The cold eyes were now warm and bright. Alex moved un-

easily in his chair and shuffled his feet. The rasping sound of his boots grinding into the oak floor was the only sound in the kitchen.

Suddenly the old man narrowed his eyes, walked quickly to a door across the room, and closed it behind him. His actions were deliberate and decisive.

Emma's face was flushed. She leaned over to Alex.

"Did you eat one of the apples?" she asked. She glanced at the closed door.

"Yes. He said that I could eat one." Alex admitted.

"Oh, no." Her eyes widened; her mouth was ajar. She grasped his hand. "You must leave... now."

Alex was too afraid to question her. Still chewing a mouthful of chicken, he threw his chair back. It rattled on the floor, as he grabbed his pack.

"Hurry...Hurry," she whispered, shoving him toward the door. "He means to kill you. Please hurry."

Outside, Alex pulled the pack onto his back and began trotting down the narrow dirt driveway through the orchard. Looking over his shoulder, he saw her disappear into the house.

When he reached the road, he stopped to catch his breath. He looked at the house, barely visible against the moonless sky. The old man appeared on the porch with a light in his hand. Something dangled from his other hand; Alex thought it was a whip.

Seeing a truck coming down the road, Alex crossed and held out his hand for a ride. His heart pounded inside the dirty khaki shirt, but the truck slowed down to pick him up.

There were two men in front, so he crawled into the canvas-covered rear deck. It was cool. Alex pulled the coat from his pack and cuddled up between some crates.

SMILE,

Patty Jones

Smile, Mr. Moody Man,

and

forget that

summer died

at

approximately

3:04 p.m.

on

that foggy and fall

afternoon

when

you were licking

up

its sugar-sweet

warmth.

He'll be back

in

the

Snowman's

eyes.

They are like unfinished paintings
the afternoons here, in Dover,
as if the artist did not remember
he had ever started that work.
They are like those Victorian paintings
grandparents keep in the attic,
buried in the darkest corners
decomposed by the white dust.
They are like an epic poem
read only till the fifteenth chapter.
They remind me of clocks
that suddenly, without reason,
stop.

Sun, ease deep
into a sea bed, flame-yolked
and sheet the beaten waves
with sequin chips of rays.

I watch from a slender shore
the sail-lipped horizon,
to see an hour bend the sky
and ocean into a curve of black ivory,
recumbents looked over by pearly motes.

For a mile I walk
the narrow space between
the land and sea.
And with a foot on each
my trumpeting voice throws
to sky brass words which fall
back, winding into waves.

My love is in the sleeping sea
a sequin-eyed dove inbued.
While she sleep, if I stroke
her flowing bars, she'll drown
me in a rising wake.

Everyone in Vietnam is looking for Captain Clancy. He knows the secret of the war.

In his latest novel, William Eastlake depends on a mixture of black humor, fantasy, and stark realism to create a penetrating comment on both the war in Vietnam and the human condition.

The novel centers around the search for Captain Clancy whose company has been wiped out by an ambush. Looking for Clancy is a weird group of characters reminiscent of the oddballs in Castle Keep. Among them are: Captain Knightbridge, who makes love to a nurse in a helicopter at 10,000 feet; Yvor, an armless colonel who uses his teeth to pull a string tied to the trigger of his machine gun; a pair of flower children; and Clancy's mistress, the wealthy Mme. Dieudonne.

The Bamboo Bed is filled with Eastlake's own brand of humor. "The sign of a good outfit is that the dead are kept to a minimum. One dead is not many unless the one is you. Then one becomes an enormous figure."

Or: "Where are the Gooks? Still there. Raining down phosphorus grenades. Must have been well dug in... God is missing. Must not have been well dug in."

Eastlake also uses a heavy humor to point out the causes of the failure of U.S. intervention, such as, "After you have been in this country for a year you don't trust any Asian. After you have been in Vietnam for two months you want to kill them all, three months and you regret that you didn't. Four months and they

kill you."

Eastlake juxtaposes passages describing the grimness of combat with the comical scenes. One example is a description of a medic treating an infragel wound.

The wound was big as a giant silver dollar and dark and deep, all the way to the white bone. And now Appelfinger shook his head like a priest, wiped the blade on Weintraub's leg like a butcher and began to peck away down there someplace in the huge silver dollar wound like a hunter, and each time he found a piece of something he placed it like a hunter of gems on a stalk of nearby bamboo....

Near the end of the novel Clancy reveals the secret of Hill 904, which is the secret of the war. But this secret is as puzzling as the war itself. Hill 904, Clancy says, just ceased to exist; it was blown away by an air strike. And the men killed on it? Written off as eaten by tigers.

The Bamboo Bed is, finally, more than a novel about men in combat in Vietnam. It is the story of all men faced with meaninglessness and absurdity, bravely searching for an answer.

ELEPHANTS WEARING LICENSE PLATES... Philip Gallo

WHERE? I lush, lethargic Laos,
A place someone would have to invent
If it didn't already exist.
A land where ninety percent
Of the people are sure
The world is flat.
The major cash crop, opium.
The best guidebook, Aesop.
Unlikely place?
But there it is -- a lotusland
Oblivious to turmoil:
On the rifle range
Their troops set up Buddhas,
Then deliberately miss.

(A found poem taken from an advertisement for
VENTURE: The Traveler's World, in LOOK,
February 8, 1966.)

ENCOUNTER

Vik Ives

Trooper and I walked in the rain.
He had swallowed his sword to keep the blade from rusting
And moved with a very military limp.
(Today's Action Army is built on brains--
Which is very bad is you happen to have a soft head.)

I was looking for a very light train
To run on the rails of the rainbow,
And I had to find it before the rain stopped.
Because Iris was expecting me for lunch.

"Do you know," said Trooper, "that some people have called you eccentric?"
He walked ahead of me, but he was easy to follow,
Because he left a trail of olive drab and dead butterflies
Wherever he went.

"But no one ever called me boring," I answered, climbing into
A convenient firey chariot and giving the conductor a ticket and
An Eveready battery. The last time I saw him,
He was drinking Coca-Cola and reciting the Fifth Amendment.

Oh John, I've found a poem for you; on the Elm Street bus of all places. And it's so beautiful I just had to call you right away; this might be the very thing to get you out of your writing slump--I mean you're always telling me to be more observant.

...Well, I rode the bus downtown this morning so I wouldn't have to look for a parking place-- you know how hard parking places are to find, and I just happened to sit next to this little old man with a white beard. He looked so sweet and peaceful, you know, poetic. Well, I asked him if the seat was taken and he said, "No ma'am." Imagine a man probably twice my age saying "no ma'am" to me. I thought then what a beautiful aura he must have, and I wished I could see it even if I dared to stare at him, which I didn't. All of a sudden I remembered what Lobsand Rampa says about seeing auras better of the person is nude and I know I must have turned red as a beet. I mean it just popped into my head. Do you think that was a Freudian slip? I mean my father didn't have a white beard.

...Oh, o.k. John. I know you have to get back to work. If you don't want to hear this... I mean it could be the difference in being a Shakespeare or something!

...Alright John. Well, soon as I sat down I noticed a peculiar odor, like the smell of mother's old cedar chest, but I couldn't exactly name the smell. I thought of mothballs, but knew that wasn't right. I kinda sniffed around trying to figure it out without being too obvious, I mean I thought maybe they had perfumed the smog or something. I held my hanky up

It is raining now and I am inside,
Like a cup put into the darkness
Of a shelf,
Listening to the muted, one-sound
Riveting of light raindrops,
As if they were tapping wetly
On putty, and beading
On roofs to cushion the fall
Of others.

It is raining now and I am unpleasantly inside,
Pacing the soft wood,
Like a newly captured bird
Treading uncertainly over the bottom
Of a cardboard box, threatening
To charge and flail his wings
In a blur, to disappear into a bright
Blinding sky.

It is raining now and I am inside.
Comfortably daydreaming of warm sunshine
On my hands,
And smoking dry tobacco, watching
Its smoke curl up to the sounds of rain,
Coughing sometimes, and wondering
If I will ever be free.

I be bright. I be effort. I be a grade. I be shaped like a villainous pin all pointy prim so's I be sharplike. But for spite in spite of it and wit I be versatile indeed. I chug-a-lug ink oily gray purple coloredish with mad matching eradicator plugged in behind so's my mind might be switched with a flick of the rear. But when's I sneeze no god-bless-me's blot the inky blips blown round random, so's I pepper my point and blip it high and down. I see I be a meanie, a gray-purple meanie, a bitter bright plum for polishers to pass for industry on parade. I be the bruised terror of dummies who squat goose-bumping in the draft of my lower regions, who grit-pray to the gods for a lift, who offer sacrifices of mind and honor for escape from my blip-blasted hell. But I be spiney-stiff and sharplike and I be purple putty versatile and I be bright, I see, cause I be a grade.



