

IN A COUPLE OF HOURS

He has a sign taped to a tree outside the apartment house: EVERYTHING GOES. I go in. I talk to him. "Florida," he says, "I am moving to Florida. Does it rain in Florida? I mean -- does it rain like here?" "Not like here," I tell him, "and, when it does rain, it is a warm rain." "Yeah," he says, "Florida, here I come." Then I notice this nude animal in a bird cage. "How about him? Is he for sale -- too?" "Sure he is. And he is cheap. Real CHEAP!" I tell him: "I never saw a bird without any feathers" "He pulled them all out," the man tells me, "he's lonely. Some birds do that -- you know." I look at the bird. It is 90 outside. The bird is violently shivering. And the cage is in direct sunlight. "Why is he shaking like that?" The man either did not hear me or he pretends not to have heard me. He keeps repeating the word FLORIDA as though it is some sort of religious chant. Then he tells me: he is leaving -- in a couple of hours.

SHOOT EM UP BANG BANG

When I was a boy they gave me a toy -- a toy gun. And they told me: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG!

When I got to the age of Grammar School my mother gave me a Bee-Bee gun. She said: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG (and my best friend lost an eye).

When I got to the age of High School my father gave me his rifle that had a high power scope on it. We killed animals who didn't even know we were shooting at them. And my father laughed and my father told me: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG.

When I got to the age of College I went into the Army and they gave me a machine gun and they told me: men/women/children/babies ... go and shoot em up, BANG BANG. And I did. And everyone laughed.

When I got home from the war, I was homeless, so I got a gun. And I shot the first person who happened to get close to me. Then -- I shot them all up, BANG BANG. And no one laughed.

-- Al Israel Rose
Portland OR