

## Untitled Outbursts

1.

During my wayward and innocent life, I have been a bad Christian, a failing hippy, a bumbling Zen practitioner who can't hear the sound of one hand clapping, a sub-par Pagan with ungainly drumming skills and poor fire circle etiquette, a lousy atheist who ends up believing in a God that doesn't exist.

Even the outcasts cast me out.

I tried to believe in the Trinity, but the three-in-one thing seemed more like psychopathy than divinity to me.

I tried to grow my hair long, but it was stringy and it all fell out leaving me in due time the old and weird bald guy flashing the peace sign.

2.

I have suddenly come to the realization that my capacity for becoming a *bete noire* diminishes with every fading year. I am indeed edging toward *eminence grise*, but I'm over the hill I guess for *bete noire*. I weep.

Damn. I've always wanted to growl, and be respected for it. My growls might shake the world to its very core and set old men and young kids trembling in fear.

But then along came the word "curmudgeon" that stuck itself to my gnarled and wizened form like a sign.

Damn. I wanted to be a *bete noire* and ended up a bad-tempered, cantankerous old crank grumbling about the meaning of life over in the corner somewhere.

Come to think of it, actually not a bad exchange trading *bete noire* for curmudgeon. At least I'm good at being difficult. You've got to know what's important in life, and being good at something, anything really, that is crucial, even if it's merely to serve as a major obstruction to the progress of the human race, but then hey, why not?

3.

Several times I have reached the great alkali flats only to discover I had forgotten to retrieve my pipe wrench and my torpedo water pistol where I had buried them in my cache slightly to the left, or east of the old juniper tree.

Why do I forget the precious and necessary things of this life in favor of the hundred box of Costco cream puffs?

Is there a God? At least a living God who will allow me to eat cream puffs in this forsaken and barren landscape and then allow me to grit my teeth as I laugh into the wind, a God who might allow me to write sentence fragments, long trails of verbless semi-sentences that stretch in thin letters out to the horizon, only to disappear for lack of some damn action, at least something that makes sense, that I can take a pipe wrench to, that I can shoot with my water pistol as I wait for God who is a regular guy and who might come along any minute.

Perhaps I can shoot this God dude with my water gun. Perhaps I can crawl toward sunset, perhaps.

4.

When I first discovered the giant creature's legbone, I thought it merely a log that pressed into the gravel by the useless gray fence.

On closer inspection, however, a vision of this giant creature appeared to me, and sang to me about the days of yore when it roamed the forest and plains down by the river, a monster made of sinew and logs that played the lyre and made long poems down by the bog.

Many stories, many adventures, many mishaps and journeys the legbone related like an ancient bone flute made of wood while I sat transfixed by the ongoing invention that seemed like the wind, or the clouds, or the rustling of small creatures in the woodpile under the wall.

How difficult then to be restricted to the confines of this backyard and all the fences strung to hem the giant bone in until it withered away leaving only its scaly remnant, a skeletal relic of its diminishment. The once powerful tale, the once great song had come to this, bleached, forsaken, and half buried.

I told my neighbor the creature's harrowing story and showed him the great legbone by the pathway.

"That's no bone," he smirked, "It's just a piece of old wood. You could chop it up and burn it this winter in your fireplace." He laughed, and he ridiculed me, and he made fun of the story of the great creature that had as he said, "come to so much nothing."

It could have been the wind, it could have been the mice rustling in the long grass, or a raccoon scratching for crawdads somewhere near in the ditch bottom, but a voice seemed to whisper in my ear, "Don't give yourself away to fools," said the voice, voice of the giant bone.

5.

The snake came along and ate me. I was unprepared (as usual). The snake left its skin as payment for the meal. All those clothes, I thought, must not go down with ease. And how about the Rolex watch and the credit cards? They passed but caused the snake an agony beyond agony.

Then the shedding began, the sloughing. The snake had to hide near the ditch somewhere, a somewhere where no one would find her.

And then I discovered the snake was no snake at all, but nylon outer sheathing to a rope that somehow had disappeared.

How, I asked myself? What had happened to the rope? I deserted my snake fantasy. From henceforth my life's purpose would be to decipher the rope's past and its future, should I be so fortunate as to live long enough to discover the meaning of the rope, why it had cast itself in front of me as a snake, why the snake had swallowed me, and yet why the snake had spared me, and what my salvation had to do with the rope.

6.

I was feeling just fine walking along my path when the snake came and bit me.

And then I was not all right. I was sick. I could no longer hear. The world seemed a far away irritation that impinged upon my sanity, grating away at the egg-thin walls of that fragile vessel.

I trembled in a fever. I sweat blood.

I asked the snake who remained there lolling by the pathway, "What the hell did you do that for? What did I ever do to you to deserve this disorientation, this pain as if the nerves might tear themselves from this body, a suffocation, a derangement of brain ligaments?"

"As usual, you exaggerate," the snake laughed. "It was not what you did, but what you are that makes you so richly deserving of my fangs, and frankly, I bit you because you looked quite tasty, but I was mistaken. Indeed, you are tough and you taste of leather, piss, and dusty grammar, so I spat you out as the bad thing you are."

I thanked the snake. In fact, we became lovers, the snake and I, until one day I smashed the snake's skull with a great axe. "That is for dusty grammar," I hissed, for I had become half snake myself.

7.

The fish had come a long way across the wide waters up the weirs and through the impossible torrent and falls and many granite boulders that made the water cry out a flume, a roar that wears away at things.

A large old tree spied the small fish and said, "Hop aboard, little cousin, I'm going to show you the big wide world."

And so the small fish flipped up onto the big tree nestling high in the gnarley.

"Well, well," thought the fish, "It sure is open up here, and it sure is dry." And with that the tiny fish shriveled up and turned to bark and the tree gobbled him up, crunch, crunch, as trees, especially cottonwoods, are wont to do when they cast up a root in the path shaped s like a little fish where many people pass and where the little fishform is remembered by the tree, memorialized there in arboreal flesh.

8.

At night I cross my arms over my chest, assume flying pose, and let my dream self exit through my forehead to travel past the ceiling and into the darkness and to this place where the closest and furthest tree and the writing on those trees tell me the forest life, only I

haven't the tools, I haven't the understanding to translate those centuries of standing silent,  
but try I must.

When I tell skeptics the trees are people like you and I, they laugh and shake their heads, but  
to get down to the root tip where the tree's mind molds into the soil, speaking, always  
speaking over the rhizomes, that remains my dream flight's desire.

One morning in shadow and sun I thought I saw there in near distance the spirit of this  
forest place, but I wasn't sure. I'm never sure, I have my basketful of questions and doubts.  
The translations, the tree words, are they right, or do they simply go astray?

In evening of that day they promised me, the trees, to make me one of them. Only then  
could I understand, only then could I really live in the knowledge of the trees.

9.

every morning at three a.m.  
some fool I don't know who  
whacks the courtyard bells three times  
waking the entire household

even the cat looks for all  
the world like a deranged owl with  
half an orange moustache

this interloper who always disappears  
wait til I catch you  
and force you to give up  
your secrets you poor  
excuse for a teacher

some day you will  
answer my questions  
some day you will set me free

10.

I've told you the story of the two snakes, not a word of which was true. I've told you of the trees who talk, and the little fishies, and if you stick around, I'll get brother marmot to whistle in your ear. Ah, but he is far away in the tundra popping out between the boulders on the wide tarn.

I've shown you my snapshots taken with my little Brownie. The camera talks too, but only the wind can hear what it says, only the west wind, to be exact.

I come from a faraway place in the corner of your pocket. I come to you from beyond the beyond. If you are smart, you will heed my word, and if you are smart beyond smart, you'll discount it all, as you take me to heart.

Your heart-- I hear it beating through the pocket wall, this heart of yours, a strong and good heart mostly, as strong and as good as any of the Great Ones.

Sometimes the Great Ones get sick by what they see of our realm, the cheating and shortchanging: The poison. The greed. The murder. The war. And those misguided who think actions leave no echoes. They taste the bitterness, the Great Ones do, but they know all these hearts one day will be measured and weighed.

Is it Isis, or Anubis, or Buddha, or Jesus, or perhaps even Ba'as, who weighs these hearts? The story changes. Everyone who can adds to it, or chips away at the brickwork that inevitably melts to dust.

Believe me, for it's true and every word a lie.