

ALBANO

SEBASTIAN



Karyna McGlynn

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Karyna McGlynn

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction by Stephen Brownblatt	1
Alabama Steve	8
The Kilgore Rangerette's Winter Banquet	11
Orgy at the Thurber House	13
Big-Dicked Zeke & the Deke Shant	16
The Know-It-All Poet Who Squirms and Stutters	19
My 3rd Appointment with the University's Writer-in-Residence	21
You Might Think I'm Delirious	24
Steve Is on Top of Me	25
Revenge of Alejandro the Giant Mantis	28
Steve Busts a Nut at the Flagship Jack-in-the-Box	30
Stevie Nicks' Fine-Ass Lingerie	32
Revenge of Alejandro the Regional Flight Attendant	34
Why Would Anyone Want a Wedding in Peru?	36
The First Ecuadorian Spoken Word Festival <i>Ever</i>	38
When I Move into a White Birdhouse	41
When a Wall of Water Blackens My Birdhouse	43
Grunge Othello	45
My Big Audition with Steven Perry	47

My Movie-Making Workshop with Steve Guttenberg	50
We Saw a White Pick-Up Idling on the Unfinished Overpass	52
Steve Beowulf's Race across America	54
Notes	56
Acknowledgments	57

## INTRODUCTION BY STEPHEN BROWNBLATT

Karyna McGlynn's latest ink zeppelin is certainly her most psychedelic to date—an experience I've not endured since I mixed spirit gum with donkey heroin during my infamous experiments at Berkeley.

Her characters—of which there are several—appear to us more archetype than human, skeletal personifications that lap at our thighs like daffodils as we gaze, joyful, running to the middle distance where we will grasp at their subtext like a ripe summer lover.

Steve shows us a McGlynn exhibiting genuine capability in the unmagical fantasy genre, and while her efforts could have been far better under my tutelage, she posits a blue collarscape that will certainly inspire and delight scores of young adult fans belonging to the now-outré Judy Bloom oeuvre, not to mention countless hacky sack players, the easily confused and the recently deceased.

Steve is the hermeneutic allegory wrapped in the enigma of recursion—and let me be the first to issue a warning in respect to the collection’s Infinite Jestitudinal quandary. More inexperienced readers may find themselves trapped in the collection’s Möbius Strip conundrum: which came first: Steve or *Steveness*?

I should additionally caution that Karyna takes heavy artistic license, particularly with areas of the text in which I appear. I’d like to use this space to state that I have never once insinuated that I have any issue with Lawrence’s pants. Mr. Ferlinghetti is a good friend of mine, an esteemed colleague, not to mention, truly, a great poet of any generation.

But I digress. Before one can feign even the most rudimentary sense of familiarity with McGlynn’s eponymous protagonist, one must first ask why we feel such an uncanny familiarity with him. Is it because he symbolizes the quintessential post-shemp slacker—the beach bum possessing just enough theory to be dangerous to any co-ed Sleater-Kinney fan? He is like some kind of alcoholic unicorn to the supple and uninitiated, but lest you be fooled, dear reader, I need only mention that the fall from his short-lived romance with the ivory tower was far indeed.

Granted, he can namedrop Charles (*Bukowski*, that is, if you are one of Ms. McGlynn's more addled readers, of which there are untold numbers, I'm sure), but the wear on his copy of *Ham on Rye*, I assure you, is as seminal as it is telling (emphasis mine).

This miscreant, who somehow bears my namesake, appears in the opening of McGlynn's opus as a man on the advent of ascending to the pseudo-esteemed heights of the Lebowskian Overman. Yet, he hasn't quite been browbeaten into the Zen-like apathy that codifies his pedigree's codpiece. He has a few things to learn before he can perfect the excrement that he embodies.

He has yet to realize that it's seasoned academics—such as those in my position—ones whom (sic) can appreciate the nuance of a Schrödinger's cat joke (of which none exist)—that ultimately get the girl.<sup>1</sup> This is the destiny of the Steves of the world: in the twilight of their power, women-crazed and oversexed, to ultimately lose out to the power of a real man—maybe, for instance, a “Stephen”?

---

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of which, interested parties should refer to my profile at [www.myspace.com/brownblatt](http://www.myspace.com/brownblatt).

But what strikes us most in our enjoyment of Steve is perhaps not our inherent superiority to him, but rather that he has primed and tempered the female spirit in her raw form for us. Like a horse whisperer, or role-reversing Enkidu, he has delivered many a woman from the malady of her physical beauty to the maturity in which she is best equipped for partnership—a woman who doesn't mind if occasionally—*occasionally*—you have a very, very brief problem with erectile dysfunction, because at least you still possess the intelligence to make compelling arguments about blackface. Women's priorities have been finally, albeit crudely, realigned. We raise a glass of our finest 2005 Dönnhoff Weißburgunder to Steve—he has made us very happy men indeed.

The inherent vulnerability and lack of agency omnipresent in Ms. McGlynn's chapbooklette are immediately reminiscent of my more recent work: *Word Symphony* (1979) and *Skull Native* (1977). While perhaps lacking a bit of the strength they possessed, McGlynn still manages to make a notable showing.

Indeed, though the greater part of her work is a near-miss, one catches that glimmer of promise I first spied in Karyna when she was enrolled in my Spring 2003 workshop, *Poetry Ship: Manning*



*the Craft*—the influence of which is particularly evident in pieces such as the one about the space station (I apologize; I’ve forgotten the title and misplaced my copy) but sadly falls short of say, *Word Symphony’s* penultimate crescendo, “My Father Damns/You Midnight”).

I take great pride in having influenced her, um...“protagonist” if you will, in such a profound way that I can reflect on my merely implied intertextual triumphs. *Steve* is nothing if not bejeweled with half-concealed allusions to my own musings; one can barely turn a page without catching a not entirely unpleasant whiff of my lesser-known works, such as 1972’s *The Nipple Matinee*, or even later works, such as *The Omnipotent Factory* (1973). If I’m not mistaken, there’s even a shout-out to one of my most recent collections: 1980’s *Dream Worm*. Perhaps the delight we most take in *Steve* is that he allows us to pine for the days when this sort of topic wasn’t irrelevant and rife with cliché.

While I question the Destructible Heart Press’ oversight in passing on several of my current unpublished chapbooks such as *The Richard Dreyfuss Slut Machine*—which I’ve been continually submitting since 1978—and *My Grandfather Wept, Briefly* (Adam, I

need current contact info for you. Your phone number seems to have changed?<sup>2</sup>), I'm glad that one of my protégés has found an acceptable home with a press that generously allows its artists to creatively borrow from what I have to offer. As I've told Karyna for years, "great artists don't steal, my dear, they sleep with their writers-in-residence."

After all, we've got equity. What's Steve got aside from the occasional bout with VD?

Yours,

Stephen Brownblatt, MFD '72, PHDAS '73, MMORPG '74

The University's Writer-in-Residence, on sabbatical in Costa Rica with an empty nest and an open mind, 7th of May 2008

---

<sup>2</sup> (415) 228-0207 —Ed.

*a tendril curled around his leg  
as he got up to leave  
he said, 'a friend of yours was here but we all call him steve'*

*we had a party three years later clean steve wore a robe  
he brought a new nick lowe cassette and played it in the road*

—Robyn Hitchcock, “Clean Steve”

*Steve is the prototypical cool American male. Y'know, I'm talking about Steve McGarrett, alright? Steve Austin, Steve McQueen. Y'know, he's the guy on his horse, the guy alone. He has his own code of honor, his own code of ethics, his own rules of living, man. He never, ever tries to impress the women but he always gets the girl.*

—*The Tao of Steve*, 2000

## ALABAMA STEVE

Yesterday I was so depressed I couldn't *live*, and the neighborhood boys kept going, "Is it because of your birthday?" "Is it because you're getting old?" But the *truth* is I didn't even *know* it was my birthday until they said something. After that, they all sort of felt like they should *do* something, so Tommy says, "Let's take her to see Alabama Steve!" and everybody goes, "Yeah! Alabama Steve!" "Who's Alabama Steve?" I go. And somebody says he's this neighborhood whack-job over on Jefferson St. who tells people's fortunes for a nickel. So we all sort of bound down the sidewalk toward Alabama Steve's, and Johnny makes me an Indian headdress out of construction paper. The red feather's crooked and there are little boogers of rubber cement all over the thing, but I don't mind. Tommy leads the procession with a kazoo—he's all high-steppin' his way through the autumn leaves and kids are crawling out of doghouses and old dishwashers to join us.

By the time we get to Alabama Steve's, the neighborhood kids are hip-deep and we have to wait in *line*. Alabama Steve is this wiry guy with a strawberry blonde goatee. He lurks over a table on his porch—a piece of plywood on two sawhorses. He holds a thin robe closed with one hand.

His other hand holds a can of Labatt. When it's finally my turn, Alabama Steve motions me to sit on this milk crate, which I do and I give him a nickel, and he starts to shuffle these big spiky nut-pods. My *fortune*, it seems, is beneath *one* of them. I close my eyes in concentration and point to a nut, but when I open my eyes, all the nuts are upturned and someone has stolen my *future*.

I turn around. There's this little Guatemalan girl behind me. She must be about 5 because she's, like, two feet tall and looking all *guilty*, kicking her feet on this bench like she just stole somebody's *future*. I look at Alabama Steve and he just shrugs, so I give him another nickel and we start over. This time though, I keep one of my eyes open and catch the little Guatemalan bitch with her hand on my nuts. She scampers back over to her bench and starts swinging her feet like mad, trying to act like a 5-year-old, but I know better. "*Listen*, you bitch," I go, getting all up in her face. Tommy and Johnny and all the neighborhood boys are up on the porch trying to hold me back, because I just start *swinging* at the bitch, and she's sitting there all dark and dumb looking with her big cow eyes like she doesn't speak English or something, and Johnny keeps going, "What are you *doing*? She's only *five*!" but I know better. "She's not *even* five," I go. "The bitch is thirty."

The boys all hustle me off the porch and out onto Alabama Steve's driveway where there's this orange Trans-Am on cinder blocks. Johnny tells me to go home and *cool off*. Tommy's going off about how I embarrassed him in front of Alabama Steve. "Fuck *you!*" I scream at Johnny, tearing off my stupid headdress and throwing it at him. "Fuck *you!*" I scream at Tommy as I flip off the midget-bitch. "And most of all," I go from halfway down the block, "FUCK ALABAMA STEVE!"

## THE KILGORE'S RANGERETTE'S WINTER BANQUET

I keep getting roped into chaperoning every community college event ever. Like, *this* year the Rangerette's Winter Banquet is being held on a *bus*; I'm late so I have to run to catch it. The bus stops and the door opens. I board, out of breath, only to find that—*fucking Christ!*—Asshole-bama *Steve* is driving. But, whatever. Unexpected grandeur! It's a double-decker with pews and a white baby grand. I'm wearing plaid pants and a floral shirt. I feel elephantine. The Rangerettes are dressed up like Christmas angels: golden ringlets, French twists, crushed velvet. I hold the prototype of the toy I've designed on my lap and try not to act like a bitch. Still, no one's talking to me because they think I'm old. Suddenly, Alabastard *Steve* turns around in his seat and asks to see my toy. Begrudgingly, I show it to him. It's an elephant-bus-tugboat-plane that SQUIRTS, HONKS, PROPELS through water, FLIES for short distances, and DRIVES over the roughest, toughest terrain. Steve says I'm going to be rich. Steve says I'm a genius. The Christmas angels' faces darken and bloat. Their upper lips sweat. One girl begins to howl into her untouched cranberry sauce. She says there are bloody leeches on her thighs. We see them moving under her thin white gown, but when we lift it up it's only a surprise period. Apparently nobody told her that anorexia wouldn't

*necessarily* make her amenorrhoeic *indefinitely*. “C’mon Carrie,” I say, “Plug it up, plug it up, plug it up, plug it up...” but my chant doesn’t catch on. I take her aside and tell her how to take a lover within the French court. She’s so grateful she offers to trade clothes with me. We go into the bathroom; it’s dim and pitching. She strips and hands me her dress. Her menstrual blood has turned the white satin into raspberry taffeta. It grows a scalloped neck as I finger it. Its back grows a thick caul of vintage beadwork. It grows heavy in my arms. We’re both naked and pitching as her dress grows increasingly Victorian—grows too small through the shoulders to fit me.



## ORGY AT THE THURBER HOUSE

*Somebody has said that Woman's place is in the wrong. That's fine. What the wrong needs is a woman's presence and a woman's touch. She is far better equipped than men to set it right. The condescending male, in his pride of strength, likes to think of the female as being "soft, soft as snow," but just wait till he gets hit by the snowball.*

—James Thurber

I'm walking by the Thurber House in Columbus. There's a girl just moving in. "Hey!" I say. "Are you the new Writer-In-Residence?" She nods. "Do you want some help with your stuff?" She nods. "Isn't this house beautiful?" She nods. I follow her up the spiral staircase with a big box of blown glass and wonder why she brought all this stuff. "Are you a glass blower?" I ask. She nods. At the top of the stairs she starts to take the box from me, but her fingers linger. We simultaneously lean in and start kissing, violently. I jab into her mouth with my tongue and drop her box of blown glass down the stairs. A man in his mid-30s is running up the stairs toward us. He looks like Steve: pale and unhealthy looking, far too thin. The skin around his face is flaccid, as if he's

lost weight very quickly. He puts his arms around the both of us and we all make out.

After a while, I move to the corner and just watch because they start doing some kinky stuff that I'm not into. For instance, she slices open his skin with this bowie knife and inserts small objects into the incisions: grapes, nuts, marbles, charcoal briquettes. Then she sews up the cuts and massages the objects under his skin. I make tiny gasps of protest, but I don't really want to intrude; this activity seems to satisfy her immensely. He, on the other hand, is almost entirely unresponsive. This gives her courage; she starts making cuts in the tip of his penis. Then she slices his balls open, butterflies his sac like a big gulf shrimp. He says nothing, but they both turn to look at me. I disrobe.

She stuffs me into this blown glass cask—a big crystal pickle jar with a door in the side. I don't struggle because I feel guilty for being a prude. She seals the cask matter-of-factly, as if recapping a jar of apricot jelly. Then she inserts the cask up through his open testicles and into the main cavern of his body. At first, I'm hot, cramped, and can't really breathe, but after she sews me in, the glass cask dissolves like sugar and I find I have room to

somersault. I start to understand why people would engage in this sort of play. His fluids and organs swirl like the northern lights, or, how I would imagine the northern lights, as I cum like this snowball exploding on the curious ink nose of a Thurber dog.

## BIG-DICKED ZEKE & THE DEKE SHANT

But the *real* reason Kristen became a man was so that she could join Steve's super-secret fraternity ΔKE and become a "Deke." She changed her name to Zeke (because Steve thinks guys whose names begin with a 'Z' are cool. *Always.*)

After fall rush, Zeke moved into the old ΔKE fraternity house, a gas-lit Victorian mansion they called "The Shant." Some mornings you could see him sneaking over the eight-foot ivy wall of the Shant just in time for breakfast because he forgot the wrought iron key in his "other pants." There was talk of venereal disease. There was talk of his expulsion from Phillips Exeter Academy. Most popular explanation: arson. Sometimes Zeke wore his old school tie as a headband and carried a flask full of bloodies in his blazer. Other Dekes tried this but Steve said they all looked like *total* tools.

Zeke had a big dick (guys in Steve's Fraternity have enormous schlongs. *Always.*) There was talk of big-titted girls swarming like ants over his topsiders (sans socks, *always*). It was true. Zeke had

chicks crawling up the legs of his chinos, girls swinging from his fleshy chandelier, yodeling beneath his fecund banana plant.

But, make no mistake about it; Zeke slept with boys, too (which was okay by Steve so long as he received his weekly supply of pot. *Always.*) He was often spotted dancing at clubs or cruising the park with a bit of plaid cloth hanging out his back left pocket, which led to many snide speculations among area queens, such as the oft-overheard: “What in hell is *that* supposed to be hanky code for?”

Because Zeke was *always tardy*, only a handful of people knew that he was black (because Steve thought guys with ‘Z’ names should be mocha-colored. *Always.*) Hence, he was big-dicked Zeke, the *black* twink who lived in the Deke Shant, which was, for all intents and purposes, his own personal den of inequity. He brought home chicks and tricks and chicks with dicks and whips of every racial mix until the dean had finally had enough and cried out “NIX!” which was exactly what Steve wanted all along...

Still, the entire town wept to see Zeke, the notorious Greek, pack up his big black twink dick and turn in the key which opened the

wrought iron gate to Steve's super-mysterious Deke Shant (which took longer than anyone expected because both key and dick, as Zeke explained, were in his "other pants.")

*Always.*

## THE KNOW-IT-ALL POET WHO SQUIRMS AND STUTTERS

This poet is competing with some scrawny guy for my attention. “Jokingly,” he throws him off the roof to show off his “muscles.” The scrawny guy lands on a mat that looks like it was put there for that very purpose—like, suppose two poets got in a pissing match and decided to throw one another off the roof like, enjamb *this*, bitch! “Is it soft?” I yell as the guy does yoga stretches like he *meant* to get thrown off the roof. “About as soft as a truck bed!” he yells back. And, you know, despite the fact that the know-it-all poet is obviously crazy, I get quite turned-on by his big muscles and all, so I start making out with him on the roof, but then when I tell him I have to go pee, he gets really annoyed and asks if I’ll be back before his dick goes limp. I tell him I’ll try, but then I get lost, which turns out to be for the best because it’s all a ploy to get me out of the way so that Steve can throw me a surprise pool party on the roof. It’s a nice gesture, I *guess*, even though I know he’s totally trying to get in my pants, and the whole thing is pretty cool, except that neither Steve nor the poet guys even bother to show up—just my extended family, and there’s no pool, and we’re actually in the attic.

We all sit in a straight line of metal lawn chairs as my grandpa hands out plastic cups of Coors Light, and then we watch Breece D’J Pancake saw wood in a corner. Just then, I have a new idea for a novel: I’m going to write about the Brontë sisters trying to escape the imagined utopia of Verdopolis and get back to their attic! “That’s great!” my estranged aunt says. “It’ll be like Narnia, or *Wizard of Oz*, or *Flowers in the Attic*, only *completely* derivative.” But what do I care what she thinks? It’s my birthday, and the ceiling is low. The room is dark and full of heavy bran smells. I could argue, or I could simply enjoy the mellow strains of the Steve Miller Band and appreciate the know-it-all poet with half a hard-on leering at me through the window as a partially concealed D’J saws wood.



## MY 3<sup>RD</sup> APPOINTMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

“A few years back,” he says, “I was *badly* blocked. I couldn’t write a goddamn thing to save my life. So, Allen calls me up (Allen *Ginsberg* that is—good friend of mine, *great* poet) and he says, ‘Stephen, what *you* need is to get out into nature, *lose* yourself there, get *naked* in it.’ And I said, ‘Okay Allen, I’ll do that.’ Donald was always telling me you had to *humor* the man sometimes (Donald *Hall* that is—good friend of mine, *great* poet). So I went to this isolated cabin in Big Sur that Allen had stayed at with Lawrence and Denise (*Ferlinghetti* and *Levertov* that is—good friends of mine, *great* poets, *good* friends of mine). Denise once spent the summer at my house and I’m *sure* there was something between us, but I was *married* at the time and she was *older* and converting to *Catholicism*, and we were joking around one night and she said she thought I was ‘too *short*’ and—*heh-heh*—that was really funny, and—I don’t know—the timing was just FUCKED UP! ...but *great* poet, *great* poet. I ended up publishing a limited edition chapbook by her that’s selling on e-Bay now for five-hundred and thirty-seven dollars, so *you* know. And Lawrence too, you *know*? What a *decent* human being: Mr. “Coney Island of the *Mind*,” Mr. “My Dog *Peed* on a Policeman’s Leg.” I mean, how counter-

cultural can one guy *GET*? Always dancing around like: ‘Hi, I’m Lawrence Ferlinghetti and I started City Lights *Bookstore!* *Woo-woo-woo!* Hi, I’m Lawrence Fucking *FUCK-HEAD* Ferlinghetti. Come *on*, Denise! You don’t really want to stay with *this* guy, do you? He’s too *short*, and he’s always walking around with a BONER for you in his *stupid* pleated PANTS!’ Anyway, I went to the cabin and all I brought with me was a notebook, a pen, and a collection of erotic verse by the ancient Chinese Poet, Li Po (good friend of mine, *great* poet, *great* poet). And I wandered through the wilderness for *days* until I came to a clearing in the first heat of morning with the fog quickly dissipating and it was so *goddamn beautiful* I just had to take off all my clothes! And I frolicked nude through the virgin field and was *moved* to recite part of a poem by Adrienne Rich: ‘When to her *lute* Corinna sings neither words nor music are her *own*; only the LONG HAIR dripping down her CHEEK, only the *song* of a silken negligee on her THIGH. Poised, trembling, *unsatisfied*, dew dripping from your *secret* inner VAULT. The ruddy MOUNTAINS of your BREASTS melting under my touch. OPEN sweet Lotus! OPEN for ME!’ ...Well, I’m *paraphrasing* now, but *anyway*, when I had finished reciting the poem, I stopped, and looked down, and lying at my feet was a *steer’s* skull, and I picked it up, and the heft felt good in my palms, and it was *bleached* by the sun and *warm* to the touch. And that was the moment when I tasted my first *skull!* You can’t know what it’s *like*—the *life* that surges through

you, when you *first* put your tongue to the BONE, but I'll tell you *this*: My writer's block? *Gone!* And when I told Allen about it (good friend of mine, *great* poet, *great* poet), he said, 'Giddy-up, giddy-up, giddy-up, you bad *BAD* horsey, giddy-up, giddy-up, giddy-up...' So, m'dear, you wanted to see me about something?"

## YOU MIGHT THINK I'M DELIRIOUS

I'm home sick today with a high fever. The doorbell rings; it's Stephen Brownblatt, the university's writer-in-residence. He's come by to see how I'm feeling. "How do you feel?" he goes, only he asks in old English: "Hu don ge gefelan?" or *something* like that. "Delirious," I go. "Me, too," he goes, only he's got this whole lusty hump-your-bones look in his eyes. "No," I go, "I mean my temperature is 104. I'm seeing things, Dr. Brownblatt." "Me cnoasian," he goes; we start making out. "O me freond, me freond, me freond!" he groans. Suddenly, I hear someone fall into the shrubberies under my window. I think it's Steve coming over to get the rest of his Trojans. I put my finger to my lips and go "Shhhhhh!" Dr. Brownblatt nods, only he's turned into Ric Ocasek. He presses a flagon of mead into my hands and goes "Shake it up." Steve's yowling like a feral cat caught in an engine block. I open my window and dump the flagon of mead on his head. Only, it's not Steve; it's a big skunk who drops trou and raises his nethers in the moonlight. Is he going to spray? No, he's a perfect Pepe Le Peu. He serenades us from a garbage can, then turns to inquire: "Okay, so...*who's* going to drive me home tonight?"

## STEVE IS ON TOP OF ME

Steve is on top of me again. His hair keeps changing color: fluorescent red, bleach-streaked, Maui blue. “Wow,” I say, “You dyed your hair *again*?” He pulls away, wounded. “No,” I assure. “It looks hot. You’re so hot you can get away with anything.” I kiss him reassuringly. I give him a slice-of-cake smile. I’m always doing that. Is Steve my son or what? We go back to making out, but, really, I’m being half-assed about it. He wants to know why I’m not more eager for his dick. He keeps trying to press it into me, but I’m dry and he’s manic. Seriously. He can barely keep still or shut-up. His eyes are somewhere else. He’s babbling about Johnny Cochrane; he’s dancing in place. *Jesus*, I think, he’s *so* high. He gets up, so I get up.

We go on a mad sweep through the apartment building—imagined domesticity: *If* we lived here. *When* we lived here. For example, this bathroom has a spiral staircase leading to nowhere, and I’m showing Steve how I could/did/would lounge on it with a glass of Franzia while he shaved. I’m showing Steve this little statuette of the Space Needle I’ve found in the medicine cabinet. But he’s already off. If only you could keep men on leashes. And how am I with someone so unemployed and self-absorbed? So sloppy and unpredictable? I want to bring things down a

notch now with indie rock. And I can. I will. I have to: Steve wants us to be “monog.”

I go outside. It’s the college quad in early autumn and everybody is spread-eagle in the leaves. The whole world smells like a refrigerated zucchini loaf and everyone is kissing. *You know*, I think, this is exactly where I want to be. But that’s just too bad, because Steve starts screaming my name from inside the apartment building. He doesn’t know where I’ve gone. Have you ever seen a little boy who’s lost his mother in Woolworths? Have you seen him scream holy hell into the towels? That’s what I mean. He’s flipping out. The Doppler effect as his desperate howls move through the building!—through other people’s apartments, just screaming my name. And to say the general vicinity is alarmed...? Well, they’re all out in the hall looking at one another in their bathrobes. What to do about the madman?

Of *course* I’m responsible, but by the time I get inside, it’s too late: he’s shot a girl. Everybody heard it. Everybody knows it. *That* girl. Right inside apartment 3C. Just then, a door opens and a tall goth girl steps into the hall. “Excuse me,” she says. She’s just passing through. I know it’s Steve escaping in drag, but, bewigged, Steve’s perfectly composed. Well, that’s ginger-peachy, but I’m the one who has to hide the dead girl’s

clothes. I rip open her papasan chair with a bowie knife. I try to stuff all of her clothes & scabbards & candle sconces inside, but there's just not room for all of it. I mean, if her mother sits here and all this metal pierces her corduroy tush? I'll be found out. Now, where do I put all these old baby clothes? These water wings? Maybe in her mattress? I cut the ticking open with the bowie knife. Steve is on top of me again.

## REVENGE OF ALEJANDRO THE GIANT MANTIS

Another time, Steve takes me to this observatory to meet his friend, “Alejandro, the science guy.” Instead of fucking me while I stare through a telescope at Venus, which, frankly, is what I expected—“Oh god! It’s so...*tumescant!*”—he flicks on the lights. In the flood of sudden fluorescence, I see that the white circular room is ringed with women attached to the walls, each in a Styrofoam ejector seat, each naked and ready for sex. A Shania Twain song plays softly in the background. Steve introduces me to his friend, “Alejandro, the science guy,” who, it turns out, is actually a giant mantis. Alejandro dismisses Steve with a “Gracias” and a wave of his foreleg. He carries me to the one empty seat—seat No. 23—and straps me in. He perches on a blinking center console and unsheathes his cock. It’s long, thin, pale green and coiling like a blanched dandelion stem. It creeps toward woman No. 1, curls like a question around her calves, insinuates up her inner thighs and services her with a single rude jab. She yelps; the rest of us sigh. The cock retracts quickly, coils back into the mantis like fishing line. The serviced woman is then ejected—*whoosh!*—through the open roof. Each woman is provided in turn. Each receives a single



thrust, no more. As the mantis's cock twines up my leg, I ask him about the function of my ejector seat. He says: "After you get what you came here for, don't you want to leave?" I nod. The sepals of his approaching cock head open wide as a cotton pod at midsummer. "Then it's good for both of us," he says with a green smile, "and it happens as efficiently as possible."

## STEVE BUSTS A NUT AT THE FLAGSHIP JACK-IN-THE-BOX

Steve says he's "*real* sorry," so he takes me to the flagship Jack-in-the-Box in San Diego. At first I'm skeptical, but as soon as the revolving doors deposit us in the lobby, I understand that Steve is making the "grand gesture" if you will. The place is fucking posh. There are chandeliers and fainting couches, and the whole place smells of peonies blooming in vats of holy oil. It takes us about 15 minutes just to get to the counter because with every step we sink deeper and deeper into the wine-colored plush of the carpet. By the time we get to "Hello! My Name Is MINETTE," the counter girl, we're in it up to the waist. I try to order a Sourdough Jack; Steve and Minette laugh gently, condescendingly. Minette insists that the closest approximation they have is the Pistachio-Encrusted Tilapia Ciabatta Jack with Avocado in a Beurre Blanc Reduction. She insists that this is all Jack-in-the-Box has *ever* had. I blink. It takes me a minute to regain my bearings because who'd have guessed that Ala-BAM!-a Steve was a goddamn Emeril-watching *foodie*? Steve and I wait for our food on this crushed velvet divan which looks (and *feels*) like a field of goldenrod on a foggy morning in 1923. We're the only ones in the dining room, and the

employees keep turning off the lights to give us *un peu d'intimité*. Steve's making advances in the dark and I can't help but suspect he's rented out the place for the evening. Steve pours me another glass from our bottle of ironically-named "Wine-in-a-Box." He places his hand on my upper thigh and his breath blooms in my ear like a hothouse flower. When he lies on top of me I feel like I'm falling down a glass staircase. "*Now* do you want your future?" he says. I nod. We start over.

## STEVIE NICKS' FINE-ASS LINGERIE

Everyone, it seems, has fancy lingerie except me, so I go into a room at the Four Seasons and steal some from a drawer. Steve tells me I'm going to get in *trou-ble*. I'm like, what are you, *five*? They'll blame it on the maid. He turns out to be right though, because *apparently* I stole Stevie Nicks' lingerie. When we get back to our room the TV switches itself on and we see Stevie Nicks on the hotel's closed-circuit channel—she's issuing a code red alert for the entire hotel, which is about to go into lockdown. Steve and I stare slack-jawed in disbelief as Stevie walks us through a reenactment of the crime—we see things from the criminal's viewpoint. Suddenly, the camera spots a dirty threadbare towel in front Stevie's dresser, and Stevie, being the part-time crackpot detective that she is, somehow knows exactly whodunit. *Room 2323!* she yells into the camera like a shit-talking wrestler, *I'm coming for you!* Well, holy hell, we just stuff the incriminating lingerie down our pants, cover ourselves in a hotel sheet and *vamoose!* We're running down the spiral staircase as fast as we can, but Stevie Nicks is gaining on us—there's *trouble* in Shangri-La. By the time we get to the outside steps, she's

practically on top of us. *It's all over*, I think. But, suddenly, she stops chasing us because she's spotted the car we're running toward—a rusty old Miata with the engine already started and the ragtop down. Stevie Nicks is standing at the service entrance, braless and out of breath—she knows she could never dig her keys out in time to catch someone doing the classic “getaway-in-a-Miata” trick. *Hey, Stevie!* I yell as we zoom past, *Better check your T.H.O. —you're blinding me with those high-beams, bee-yatch!*

## REVENGE OF ALEJANDRO THE REGIONAL FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant is a “reformed man.” He’s burst out of his old exoskeleton on a shiny pair of American Airlines’ plastic pilot wings but Steve *refuses* to acknowledge the acquaintance. No matter. Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant is fab-u-*licious*. He has new green dimples that we only see when he finally speaks into his mic-ro-*phone*. Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant says: Lay-deez, this includes your pur-ses. When Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant says “win-dow shade” the whole airplane smells of geraniums. Alejandro’s got a BIG silver ring on his tarsus and he just *luvs* Shania Twain. Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant *totally* has root beer! He fondles his sample oxygen mask like an oilskin butt plug.

Over the intercom, the captain says, “Alejandro, prepare for take-off.” Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant has a cartload FULL of mini-pretzels that he’s just dying to give us. Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant says: good manners get you *ex-tra!* Alejandro would like to know, in the highest of possible voices, would Steve and I like a moist towlette?

Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant says: Welcome to *Pis-co!* but it sounds like a Disneyland coke disco, an extramarital seaside weekend, a hot tub filled with mojitos, a Donna Summer orgasm, an Oscar party where *everybody* wins a door-prize! When Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant advises a very drunk Steve to “keep your *tush* on the *cush*, *mu-cha-cho!*” Steve nearly bites his head off. Alejandro-the-regional-flight-attendant just dismisses Steve with a wave of his foreleg and says, “*Fuck* that breeder” under his breath. He sweeps up and down the aisle, his white trash bag rustling like a debutante’s ball gown.

## WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT A WEDDING IN PERU?

Well, Kristen would, and everybody spends all of their money to get down there, even though Kristen is totally, like, *already married* and hel-lo, she's a fucking *dude* now, but everybody's just too polite to say anything. Steve and I can't even get a flight into Piura—just this little shitball airport in Pisco. So we rent this lime-sherbet-colored moped and take off up the Panamericana. There's a bunch of farmers up ahead of us with a tarp over their truck-bed, and Steve thinks there's probably something really valuable under there, so he noses the moped right up against the butt of this truck, and I grab the tailgate and pull myself up. I reach under the tarp and pull out a big clot of dirt—smells like manure. "It's just manure!" I go, tossing the clot out onto the highway. It explodes on the asphalt behind us like a black fart. "Stop that!" Steve goes. "Those are imported orchid seedlings! Can't you *read*?" But I can't read the side of the truck from where I am, and besides, I don't know Spanish. But, whatever—I reach under the tarp and start pulling out the little orchid turds, shoving them down the neck of my t-shirt. "Good girl!" Steve goes. "Grab as many as you can!" I do, until I'm like 200 lbs. pregnant with his monster dirt baby. I'm leaking out the armpits as I plop onto the back of the lime sherbet moped. I'm leaking dirt from my bellybutton and going,



“How much further to Lima?!” And he’s going, “Suck it up, sweet cheeks!” as—*shit!*—I realize I’ve forgotten my goddamn toothbrush.

## THE FIRST ECUADORIAN SPOKEN WORD FESTIVAL *EVER*

Yeah, I go. Steve's there and I *really* need to talk to him. There's not an Ecuadorian in sight. I ask someone why this is, and they're like, "Hel-lo! It's a spoken-*word* festival not an *Ecuadorian* festival." As always, I feel like I should be more involved than I am, more schmoozy, but it's too goddamn hot to work up any enthusiasm for Sarah Vowell. I hike over to stage 6 where Lyn Lifshin is performing, because I'm like, *wow*, she's been published in *every* literary journal in *existence*, so she *must* be good! But the location is damn inconvenient—it's in this mountainous pass with all these fucking waterfalls and llamas everywhere and by the time I get there, pretty much everyone has gone off in search of good Tex-Mex. And I think, *yeah right*, good luck with *that*, until somebody tells me that they all followed Steve, so I should just shut my trap.

I walk onto the empty stage and sit down to eat my stupid airplane sandwich. It's disgusting so I fling it into a trench. Several big birds swoop to snatch the bread, but there are these skinnier, sleeker birds up in the amphitheater's natural canopy. I ask someone why *they* don't go for the food. "Those are the female

boobies,” they say. “The males get the bulk of the food, but the females secrete six feathers and six crumbs in a sac in their throats—they regurgitate this to provide nesting material and nourishment for their young.”

I find this *so* disturbing that I have to leave Ecuador *immediately*, which is convenient since my return flight is scheduled for that afternoon. It sucks though because American Airlines screws up *royally*, rerouting me through some rinky-dink airport in Tiputini and making me miss my connecting flight. They’ve rescheduled my outgoing flight to Seattle for next *year*.

Upon telling me this, the AA customer service representative moves on to her next customer. I lose my patience and start following her along the counter, going, “Excuse me. *Excuse me!* You stop what you’re doing and help me *right now!*” I even try being nice: “*Listen, I realize that it’s not your fault that I got rerouted through Tiputini and missed my flight, but I can’t hang around in Ecuador for a year—I’ve got stuff to do.*” Finally, the customer service lady turns to me and says “You know what’s the matter with your outfit? It belies what a fucking bitch you are.” I

start crying on the shoulder of a large understanding Jamaican woman who calls me baby doll, *baby doll*.

Eventually, I get a flight, but it's on a tiny single-engine Cessna that's full of colonial-style furnishings grown rickety with use, and as soon as we take off, things topple over and people start sliding around in their rocking chairs. Mine's backless and, *apparently*, the plane's backless too, because before we know what's what, we're hanging out the back of the Cessna by a blue bungee cord. The plane dips over the tropical peaks and basins of Ecuador. Sometimes we're half a mile up, but other times we're only a few inches from the ground so that our feet drag across the backs of all these dumb tapirs and get tangled in the foliage. It looks like parts of Ecuador are *really* littered, but then I realize that the litter is art, or maybe a series of S.O.S. messages. There are all these solid gold plantain skins everywhere, and each skin has a message etched on it, but there's just no time to read, and besides, there's no flight-attendant call button on this goddamn bungee cord. "Wow, this really *is* an economy flight," I say. The large Jamaican woman agrees wholeheartedly.

## WHEN I MOVE INTO A WHITE BIRDHOUSE

Newly homeless and heartbroken, I must remember to *choose*: basement, ground, or attic. I have to decide quickly or my cottage by the sea will disappear completely. I choose the ground floor apartment. You can only see the sea from there. It's only the only floor with a yard and a patio. I choose the ground floor. The sea is soothing at first, but it will turn violent. The sky is bruised throughout. Am I having a barbeque? If so, perhaps the chairs are saffron yellow and I have a new bouffant hairdo. If so, I feel like a famous poet from the 60s, you bet! If so, I must be aware of the mechanical scorpion inside; he will chase me. If so, I go lay outside where the patio stops and the sea starts. Am I wearing my glasses? No? Then I will miss the railing and roll into the sea. I'm *always* miscalculating distances. If I don't get out of there, something will bite me. Are the guests at my barbeque paying any attention? There's Cat Stevens waving around a cheese cube on a toothpick. Does he see me? There's my estranged aunt with a forkful of ambrosia salad. Does *she* see me? No? Well, here are the two poet guys who have sidled over to the railing to laugh at me. I'm *such* a drama queen. *Apparently*, I could get out of the water if I really *wanted* to. One of the poet guys says the other guy has "offered to demonstrate" and shoves him over the railing. The other guy

manages a graceful dive, like he *meant* to get thrown into the sea. He sinks to the bottom of the bay, bends his knees, and launches up and out like a performing porpoise! “Now *you* try,” he sputters. As I bubble down, I find myself face to face with my predator. Oh dear. This old folded in half license plate has been on the ocean floor so long it’s turned into a saltwater crocodile. He wants to take a bite out of my ass. It sounds dumb, I know, but is actually *very scary*. I try to hide inside a giant clamshell, but it’s already occupied. Through the water I can see Stephen Brownblatt, the university’s writer-in-residence, gesticulating wildly to someone on my patio. He has a mouth full of macadamia nuts and is saying *I’m just mad about Saffron*.

## WHEN A WALL OF WATER BLACKENS MY BIRDHOUSE

The tsunami's here and there's no time to remove my plants from the fire escape and crawl into the attic. Besides, the thing's *decorative*. I should've bought a phone—one with a real long cord. It might've been my lifeline. Oh, well. Better hold my breath and cover my face—it'll almost certainly get sliced up by rusty mailbox flags. Do you know what it feels like to have your life-breath punched out through the eye-socket of your dormant kundalini? I do. I wash up on the bench-seat of a wrecked white pickup—eels writhing at my feet. ISO-swathed men are circling in punts with their bird dogs. They have Eveready flashlights big as clubs. They have shaky camcorders on their shoulders—lenses flensed with spray & flotsam. Women are wandering the streets with canary yellow hair, black roots; they aren't on TV, but *could* be, like that one woman who said *It was like a freight train!* I walk along the looted streets looking for my cat Steve. I find him at the bottom of Pike. There's a gaping hole in his back where I can see the dark viscera down inside. I run to the veterinary clinic in the big old house across the street. It's after-hours, so I go around back and ring the bell. I ring and I ring, as if veterinary clinics are open during tsunamis. Finally, I break the stained glass window, shouting *Somebody Help Me! Help Me, Please!* An old man appears on the landing of the stairs,

alarm surfacing in his bleary eyes. “Are you the vet?” I ask. How has he slept through the wall of water? Why is his house intact? “I was sleeping,” he says. “What’s the matter?” I tell him about the hole in my cat, but then I look down and realize Steve’s totally fine. “You don’t have a cat,” says the vet. Sure enough, I don’t. “There was no tsunami,” he says. I run my hands over my clothes—completely dry. The vet is afraid I’ve gone mad, but is very understanding about it. He offers to drive me back to my birdhouse by the sea if I ask him politely. On the ride home, I don’t tell him that I’m attracted to him, and he doesn’t tell me his name is Robert Lowell. I thank him and step out of his taxi onto the sun-parched lawn. I make a mental note to buy a phone with a *real long cord*. I make a mental note to *always* answer my door.





using Robert Lowell's prep-school nickname. "Is that short for *Caliban* or *Caligula*?" He chokes a little on his rum and starts to make a move as if to strangle me, but he collects himself. "That depends," he says, "on whom you ask." Realizing I'm in the possession of prime blackmail fodder, I lean forward and whisper, "Can I ask *anybody* I want...say, another dead poet?" Eventually he promises to bring Robert Browning over to my house at an *ungodly* hour, but only on the condition that I keep the whole Cal thing a secret from anyone who even *looks* like they might own a pet. I agree and he walks me back to the theater. Used needles crunch under our feet as we go. When we arrive at the mouth of the theater Cal is visibly appalled to find me working in such squalor. He gives me a recriminating look. *But Cal*, I protest, *it's Grunge Othello!* I invite him to come watch rehearsal, but he says he'll just see me tomorrow night, with Robert Browning reluctantly in tow. *Better answer your door*, he says.

## MY BIG AUDITION WITH STEVE PERRY

I'm doing really well! I'm in the front line wearing this little Ruby Keeler polka-dot number and hoofing like I've never hoofed before. The director asks me and Steve Perry to step forward. She leads us aside and tells us that we've already gotten our parts and don't need to audition anymore. She gives us big hugs and tells us to go wait in her office until the audition's over and she can break the news to everybody.

Steve Perry and I are wandering around the community college campus for a long time. It's raining. That's all it ever does anymore. Where the hell is the Prufrock building? By the time we find it, the director is already in her office. It turns out that Steve got the lead role—he squeals & jumps up and down & pumps the director's hand enthusiastically. I, on the other hand, am meant to play the part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Elephant. I try not to look disappointed, but it's hard not to when Steve Perry is always outperforming me. I try to rationalize this. Like, maybe, just because the director is my estranged *aunt*, she's engaging in some sort of reverse favoritism. If this is true, it really sucks because she's also the poetry editor of the *Paris Review*—which makes sense because this is the future and my parents are dead. Anyway, I think it's really weird that the *Paris*

*Review* is a community college-based journal, and that its offices in the Prufrock building look like the inside of Goodwill.

My lower lip trembles uncontrollably. My estranged aunt sees this and makes me out a check for \$20. It's a check from the *Paris Review*, but it's been given to me out of pity, not because I got anything published there, which really sucks. "Thank you," I tell her, deadpan, "I'm going to use this to buy a vacuum cleaner." When she finds out that I don't plan to buy the vacuum cleaner from the *Paris Review*, she's appalled and a bit offended. She urges me to do a little shopping. There's this little teak dinette set that I like, but I can't afford it. My aunt apologizes for not being able to offer me a family discount; she says discounts are reserved solely for people who are members of the Academy of American Poets. "You had your chance," she says. "Didn't you get a letter from Ted Kooser outlining all the benefits of becoming a member?"

Anyway, it doesn't really matter because everybody keeps *insisting* that I buy this *huge* decorative clamshell that's exactly \$20. Steve Perry keeps trying to tell everybody that it's an oyster shell, not a clamshell. But what does it matter? When I bring the enormous shell home, I have nowhere to put it because my carpet's filthy and I still don't have a vacuum cleaner. I try putting pillows in it and using it as a papasan chair, but it's really

uncomfortable. I put in front of my fireplace and fill it with half-dead potted plants. *I'm too old for this*, I think. I practice lumbering around my living room like a small elephant that doesn't want to upstage anyone. I stub my toe on the scalloped edge of the shell and cry for three weeks straight.

## MY MOVIE-MAKING WORKSHOP WITH STEVE GUTTENBERG

So I go to this movie-making camp with Steve Guttenberg and a bunch of other people in the industry. On the third day, Steve and I sneak out of camp and hide in the bathrooms at the Space Needle until it closes. From that moment on, we claim the Needle as our own after-hours apartment. It doesn't take the security guards long to find out, but none of them want to throw Steve Guttenberg out of the Space Needle. Who would? Besides, it's good publicity. The media keeps calling it "Andy Warhol's Factory of the Oughts" or "the Zips," or whatever.

After we get back from the World Series of Poker, Leo DiCaprio throws us this big welcome-back bash. Somebody starts handing out these weird acid aperitifs on contact lens croutons, but they're hard to pick up, especially for those of us who have never worn contact lenses. An hour later everybody's rolling around on the floor *ooohing* and *ahhhing* in ecstasy. One guy is "so gone" that he rounds up a big group to go down to the monorail with him so he can reenact a scene from the Elvis movie, *It Happened at the World's Fair*. Except the acid totally isn't doing anything. I tell Steve, *Hey, Steve, this shit is totally bunk. All these people are poseurs. Let's get out of here.*

So we take off in a Mini and he gives me some real good junk from his personal stash in the glove box. And all this time I've been thinking Steve's clean, so I go: "Goddamn it, Steve, I thought you were clean! You're supposed to start shooting *Police Academy 8* in two weeks and look at you! You look like shit. You haven't washed your hair in months and people in the tabloids are starting to call you *Sloppy Steve*." Then the asshole tears across five lanes of freeway traffic, kicks me out onto the median and drives away. There are other people stranded on the median as well. Some of them have been camped out for years. They've built a pretty decent deck and all these Adirondack chairs. I start to get a little bit nervous because I don't know any of them and I'm starting to *come on* pretty heavy, but then Steve's dad ambles over with a big fuck-off bottle of sarsaparilla and he says: "Hey, whatever happened to acid rain? It seems so quaint now, *n'est-ce pas?*"

## WE SAW A WHITE PICK-UP IDLING ON THE UNFINISHED OVERPASS

Daddy Guttenberg, Robert “The Calster” Lowell and I were drinking sarsaparilla out on the deck per usual, and we were looking up at the overpass and speculating about how the truck’s headlights were dimmed and who knew whether my ex-boyfriend, *Asshole*-bama Steve—who’d become some sort of big-shot foreman or something—was up there getting lucky or smoking dope or trying to make me jealous, or whatever. But the thing had no guardrails and we said those construction guys are intrepid sorts of fellows ‘cause the thing butted up to the moon, and Steve had backed that truck right up to the top where the highway sailed clean off into the night, just two steel girders—like hardened arteries pulled from a severed hand—that’s all, between him and nothing. Robert Browning showed up and Cal was drunk and threatening to tell him Steve’s last name, but then we all just sort of forgot about it because my tooth almost came out in a burnt beer-nut and Daddy Gootch said it’d have to come out right then and there, and tried to put his fingers in my mouth but I jerked back and spilled the bottle of sarsaparilla all over Robert Browning’s lap. We all laughed because RB was being kind of a



stiff, but I guess he didn't take that too well because he reached over and slapped me across the face with his lemon yellow kid-gloves and cried, "Why won't you people let me *sleep*?" But just then I noticed Steve's headlights again, only they were on high, and then the truck lurched and started speeding down that half-humped camelback like something scared it. It got some air under it at the bottom, and then the whole thing went *ka-bam* over the median and before I knew any better, the truck was coming about 80 toward the deck we were sitting on, like the only two sources of light in the whole county were about to collide—like the truck was a moth and we were just some goddamn porch light. "Deus ex Machina!" screamed Daddy Gootch, throwing his hands in the air and up-ending the card table. By then there wasn't much time left, so I daubed my bleeding gum with a wet-nap and hailed a tour bus headed for the border, while the two Roberts downed their drinks and ran like hell.

## STEVE BEOWULF'S RACE ACROSS AMERICA

Steve Beowulf has become this gorgeous man. Sort of like Jonathan Rhys-Meyer, only more Apollonian. He decides to take part in this race across North America. The rules say "by any means possible—only, you have to stay on land—no taking to the sea or sky." After 23 days of racing, the top two contenders are Beowulf on his chopper (even though he keeps stopping to sell cocaine to small-town twinkles along the way like some sort of gay *Easy Rider*) and our tour bus driver.

So I'm having this conversation with some cute guy at a rest stop up by the Canadian border. I'm drilling him with questions, really giving him the third degree. I ask him whether he smokes and he totally lies and says he doesn't. Suddenly, I turn into Lady Bracknell. "That's too bad," I tell him, "because smoking shows signs of a *very* passionate personality *indeed*."

Just then, I spot Beowulf buying teriyaki peanuts. I point him out to the cute guy and he's all interested and asking questions because, as it turns out, this *is* a small town and *he's* a coke twink. We start having a conversation about the difference between the Sacred and the Gorgeous.

He asks whether Beowulf is Sacred or not, and I say: "Oh, no, he's *Gorgeous*. The fact that I've *told* you is Sacred." This is a big revelation to the twink. I excuse myself to find the bathroom.

"Where's the bathroom?" I ask the Flying J employee. "On the Canadian side of the store," he says. "You see that line of red tape down the center of the store? That's the border. It goes right through the middle of our store. Hold on. I'll go ask the Canadians if it's okay for you to come over and use the can." After a minute or two he comes back and tells me to go ahead, but as I step over the red line, an announcement comes over the loudspeaker:

"Attention. There's a woman coming over from the *Other Side* right now to rob us blind. But, *hey*, that's okay. At least the *Americans* were kind enough to *warn* us first." The whole store breaks into uncomfortable laughter and a couple of the employees make the "raise the roof" gesture. "Go Yanks!" one of them says. We all jump as Beowulf's chopper suddenly backfires in the parking lot.

## NOTES

A guy's sitting in the stands at a hockey game when he hears a bunch of people behind him yell, "Steve! Hey, Steve!" He turns around to see if he knows them, but he doesn't, so he goes back to watching the game. A few minutes go by and they holler again—"Steve! Steve!" He turns around and looks, but has no idea who these folks are. After another few minutes the group shouts again, "Steve! Steve! Hey, Steeeeve!" At which point he stands up, turns around and shouts back, "My name's not Steve!"

A grasshopper walks into a bar. The bartender says, "Hey, wow, we've got a drink named after you!" And the grasshopper replies, "You've got a drink named Steve?"

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the following people without whom Steve would cease to exist: Alan Bajandas, Christian Drake, Ohio Jake, Cyan James, Megan Levad, Adam Rubinstein, Jon Sterk and Adam Theriault.

Many thanks to the editors of the journals in which these poems first appeared, sometimes in earlier forms and with different titles:

“My 3rd 9 A.M. Appointment With the University’s Writer-in-Residence” appeared *RATTLE* and *Spoken Word Revolution Redux* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks).

“Steve Busts a Nut in the Flagship Jack-in-the-Box” and “My Movie-Making Workshop with Steve Guttenberg” appeared in *Wigleaf*.

“Alabama Steve,” “My Big Audition With Steve Perry,” and “The Know-It-All Poet Who Squirms and Stutters” first appeared in *Unpleasant Event Schedule*.

“Big-Dicked Zeke & the Deke Shant” appeared in *The Open Face Sandwich*.

“When You Move Into A White Birdhouse” and “Revenge of Alejandro the Giant Mantis” appeared in *La Petite Zine*.

“Steve Beowulf’s Race Across America” appeared in *Quick Fiction*.

Sundress Publications

*Alabama Steve* © 2014 by Karyna McGlynn  
First Edition 2008 by Destructible Heart Press

Editor: Erin Elizabeth Smith  
erin@sundresspublications.com  
Book and Cover Designer: Rhonda Lott  
rhonda@sundresspublications.com

This book is set in Palatino and Gobold Light.

ISBN: 978-1-939675-06-4