

THE PORNOGRAPHIC FLABBERGASTED EMUS

by Wred Fright



Previously in The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus:

A college student named Ted Abel moves unexpectedly into a house occupied by other college students--Alexander Depot, Funnybear, and George Jah--who also happen to be in The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus, a rock and roll band. It isn't long before Ted joins the band, but he soon discovers it's not easy juggling rock and roll with school and work . . . plus there's this gal named Flannery that he's got his eye on. And as usual he and the others are broke from living la vida indie rock and need a new housemate to help pay the rent. As spring semester starts, they're almost ready to ask the mafia band The Our Things for a loan just to afford their new textbooks unless they can think of something else, anything else!

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth installment of the serialized novel The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus! I hope you enjoy it! This issue includes three chapters--numbers 12, 13, and 14--as we head to the end.

The fourth issue was released in April 2003 at the Small Press And Comics Exhibition (SPACE) in Columbus, Ohio. Bob Corby and the rest of the SPACE crew were real nice to me even though I don't do a comic. The response to the fourth issue was swell. Thanks to everyone who read it!

I'd like to indicate here my support for the following independent press movements: The Underground Literary Alliance (www.literaryrevolution.com), The Bukowski Hangover Project (www.babelmagazine.com), and The Perpetual Motion Roadshow (www.nomediakings.net). In the face of the rise of fascism (even if it's the new improved friendly version) in the USA (wish I was joking or being hyperbolic but I'm not; The Constitution's civil liberties are currently being dismantled, please consider doing whatever you can to fight this such as joining the ACLU--www.aclu.org), independent media and joining together to stand up for freedom--real freedom not the pretty word tyrants like to use to fool people into supporting war and injustice--are more important than ever. Still, it's good to remember to have a laugh too and I think this issue of The Emus reminds in a humorous way that ultimately totalitarianism begins at home.

Thanks to Michael Dee (mp_escuela@yahoo.com) for the great cover image! I'm responsible for everything else herein.

Cheers!
Wred Fright :)
June 2003

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12

Multiple Income Stream Opportunity

b/w

Another Multiple Income Stream Opportunity

"The Holy Stockbroker visited me in a pyramid dream,
Said to swindle the suckers I should try this scheme!"

Intro--Alexander Depot

I think I'd rather open for a puppet show like Spinal Tap than be part of the backing band for a wet t-shirt contest but here I am playing keyboard behind a parade of half-naked women. Each time the drunk M.C. pours a bucket of water over a contestant on the stage, I get a little more terrified of being electrocuted. The contestants are supposed to be standing in a kiddie pool but since the organizers of the contest have to get most of the women drunk just to even get them up here in the first place, the women and the water are going everywhere.

This is definitely the sleaziest thing I've ever been involved with.

It's not the sleaziest thing I've ever seen though because some of the porn Bear leaves lying around the house makes this wet t-shirt contest look like a Girl Scout jamboree.

In any case, we only got roped into this debacle because Zand at the Grasshopper screwed up and booked our show and the wet t-shirt contest on the same night. He said he was sorry and to make it up to us he'd give us a cut of all the money he's making from the contest. Which is a lot.

But. The quintessential but. We had to agree to provide music for the contest to placate the crowd of salivating fratboy boners inbetween contestants so we're doing our best burlesque imitation music to strip by material.

Except Jah. He said he'd make more money by videotaping the show and broadcasting it on the internet so he's out there somewhere in the audience of hard-ons filming the contest.

Yes, Jah, I really want to remember this high point in my musical career. I identify as a feminist. I don't think I'll ever live this down. I'll just tell people I was doing anthropological research on sexism.

After it's over and before our show begins, I ask Zand why he

was taking the low road by putting on this event, and he says he needs the money to keep the place open. I have to hand it to him. He knows what the people want, or at least what unenlightened aggressive young men want. The atmosphere in the club during the wet t-shirt contest reeked of testosterone and was the stuff nightmares are made of but I had never seen an audience that large at the Grasshopper so that's quite a wad of cash Zand drew in this evening. He sure wasn't going to get anything like it for our show even with Gold Circle, Velocipede, The Hot Glue Guns, and Gone Daddy Finch also on the bill.

Swelling the audience isn't without a cost however. Besides our dignity, some erection kicked in the toilet so the rest of the night during the rock and roll portion of the evening's festivities, people have to go outside into the cold January air and steam away while they're yellowing the snow.

Still, even if most of the audience have full bladders and are crossing their legs, our performance goes well. The highlight is when Bear pours beer over his shirt in a parody of the wet t-shirt contest. His breasts are actually bigger than those of some of the women in the contest so that draws residual jug applause in addition to the laughter. From the audience, Insane Ishmael yells out "Take off your pants!" so Bear drops his pants to emulate the winner of the contest who took it all off too. If having to see Bear, er, bare is painful, it's made up for by the fact that his little stripshow succeeds in driving off the remaining nonregulars and makes the Grasshopper feel more like home again.

After the show, Jah is too busy editing his fitty tape, Bear is too drunk, and Abel is running off somewhere with Flannery, who says he needs to buy her a drink to make up for tonight's sordidness (I hope she enjoys milk because he's still underage) so I go to collect our cut of the cash.

Zand's nowhere to be found but I'll just pay him a visit later in the week since I want to go home and sleep. I'm tired from getting up early for student teaching this semester.

I hope none of my students were here. And if they were, I hope they kept their clothes dry and on and didn't see me.

Verse--Funnybear

Interpersonal Communication 101 is the worst class Funnybear's ever had. Funnybear avoided it for years but Funnybear's advisor said Funnybear has to finally take it this semester since it's a prerequisite for some upper level communication courses Funnybear still needs to take.

Funnybear asked why Funnybear needs to take IPCO 101 since Funnybear's already passed other courses it was a prerequisite for too, and did quite well in them without it.

Oh, Funnybear's advisor said, well in that case, Funnybear should be doubly sure to take 101 this semester to make sure that those credits actually count for graduation.

Funnybear really needs to change advisors.

But for now Funnybear is stuck in 101, which presents trite and obvious descriptions of the way people interact as startling and dynamic revelations. The professor who designed it, Dr. Chris Witte, took an introductory course off the hands of grateful professors who wanted to concentrate on their specialties and while they weren't looking remodeled it into a grade-A for Arsehole swindle. For the course, which only Witte teaches, students have to buy three required texts, all authored and published by Witte: a textbook, workbook, and study guide. Then the students meet in small group sections taught by graduate assistants twice a week, probably since Witte's too busy working on figuring out what else he can sell to his captive audience without anyone higher up in the university hierarchy catching on to his scam, while Witte himself shows up once a week in a giant lecture hall to be arrogant and annoying and make sure no one actually learns anything except that he thinks he's cool and they should too.

The only reason Funnybear sticks with the course is that this semester Witte's on sabbatical so all the lectures are videotapes of last semester's lectures. The class and even the graduate assistants who take attendance, which is mandatory by the way, heckle the onscreen Witte (that is if everyone doesn't fall asleep from boredom instead), making the course as good as it's ever going to get. It's still a depressing state of affairs but Funnybear has discovered it's tolerable if one gets drunk enough beforehand.

But the buzz has been wearing off about halfway through the videotaped lecture so today Funnybear has decided to try out actually drinking during the class.

As Funnybear sits down and unscrews Funnybear's bottle of Dead Crow hidden in a brown paper bag, a student in the row in front of Funnybear says to another, "This course is torture. I'd pay money not to have to sit here and watch this schmuck."

"Yeah, me too," the other student says.

The nearby graduate assistant recording attendance hears them and says, "You think you guys have it bad? I've had to endure seeing this twice already today. I'd pay a fortune not to have to sit through this thing again."

"How much would you pay?" Funnybear says, leaning forward, "And what do you want to see instead?"

The class votes for a pornographic romantic comedy.

Verse--Alexander Depot

After I get done with student teaching for the day, I head on campus to hang fliers for our next show since it's my turn to make a flier run. Toting my publicity kit of fliers, scotch tape, duct tape, a staplegun, and push pins, I go to the big bulletin board in the university union and notice the flier I hung last week looking for a new roommate is gone. I look around and find it underneath a glossy corporate advertisement for discount magazine subscriptions. Tsk, tsk, there was plenty of blank space on the bulletin board but whoever gets paid to hang up these magazine brochures coveted our space instead. That's some bad flier hanging etiquette. You're only supposed to take down fliers that are no longer needed, like a flier for last weekend's show at the Grasshopper. Otherwise, flier karma's going to get you. I rip the magazine ad down, toss it in the paper recycling bin, and our roommate flier is showing again in all its glory. Then I find a spot for our gig flier.

I head upstairs to the next bulletin board. Once again, the magazine ad is covering up our roommate flier. Grrr. All right, corporate flier hanger, now you done riled me up. I rip the magazine ad down, and for good measure all the other corporate fliers for long distance, credit cards, and spring break vacation packages. Now there's space for the people who actually go to school here and care about the community to hang fliers. I hang our gig flier and move on.

On my flier run, every time I see the magazine subscription

ad, I rip it down, usually unearthing somebody else's flier it was covering up. I'm doing this in the history building when some guy yells, "Hey! What are you doing?"

He runs up. He's in his thirties, wearing a hockey knitcap, and carrying a shoulder bag full of corporate fliers, and a staplegun. I say, "This was covering my flier, which violates the unwritten custom of flier hanging etiquette, and thus must pay the price and be banished from ye bulletin board and ye kiosk."

"What?" he says.

"Don't cover up any more of my fliers," I say.

He points at the roommate flier. "Is this yours?" he says.

I say, "Yes."

He tears it off, crumples it up, drops it to the floor, and kicks it down the hall. "I'll just be sure to rip it down first in the future instead," he says.

I can't believe this. I think I'm going to get in a fistfight here with the corporate flier guy. What a week! I feel like a caveman. First sex, now violence.

"Now don't you ever tear down one of my fliers again!" the corporate flier guy says, shaking his staplegun at me, and then putting up another magazine ad.

I take off my glasses and put them away. It's not that I'm worried about breaking them. I just don't want to really see what I'm about to do. I tear the magazine ad down and use my staplegun to staple it to the front of the corporate flier guy, who gasps. I grab his bag and throw it down the stairs. Magazine brochures flutter everywhere. He tries to stop me but I stick my staplegun in his crotch.

He stops and begs, "Hey, easy now, man! Let's just forget about everything. I'm sorry. I'm just trying to make a living."

I smile and do my best badass Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry, "Well, it's unfortunate for you that I'm trying to make a killing. Now if I ever find you covering up a flier again, I'm going to come back, and then you're going to really have to hang some fliers not just for your corporate overlords, but for yourself because you'll be looking for a new penis."

I push him away. He runs down the hall holding on to his crotch with both hands. I fire staples at him whenever I think I see him looking back.

Note to self: Get the fuck out of here before he reaches the campus police.

I book before I get booked.

Verse--Theodorable

"I can't air this," I tell Funnybear, looking at the copy of It Happened Twelve Times One Night in my hand, "It's porno."

We're at the closed circuit center at the television station on campus where I work. We're surrounded by shelves upon shelves of computers, vcrs, monitors, and cables. The center broadcasts videos and satellite and internet streams to classrooms all over campus.

"So," Funnybear says, "It's what the people in my Interpersonal Fornication class voted for. We have to give them what they want."

"But it doesn't just go to your classroom when I air it, it plays on channel eight all over campus."

Funnybear smiles, "Son, we just tore the roof off the profit potential in this enterprise."

"Huh?" I say, "I just told you I can't do it. My boss would fire me if she found out, and all she needs to do to find out is some bluenose tuning in to channel eight on campus and calling in about it the next day."

"Professor Bear," Funnybear says.

"What?"

"Professor Bear," Funnybear says, pointing to the phone, "When somebody calls up and places an order for a classroom showing, do you check and see if they're actually on the faculty?"

"No," I say, "Who else would call and order a video for their class?"

"Exactly," Funnybear says, "And professors drop off their own personal tapes to air all the time, right?"

"Yeah."

Funnybear raises his eyebrows a couple of times and smiles.

"Oh, I get it," I say, "So Professor Bear calls up and orders a video to be shown and drops off the tape, a tape that probably should have labels on it that say Amoeba Growth Vol. 2. I just do what I'm told and air the tape. If anyone complains and my boss investigates, it's all Professor Bear's fault, but of course Professor Bear's nowhere to be found, and the tape is long gone so there's no proof anyway. Quite ingenious."

"I knew there was a reason you got straight A's last semester," Funnybear says, "Until now, I just thought you slept with your professors, but the boy's smart."

"And, since it's an evening class, not too many people are just going

to be sitting around in an empty classroom flipping through the channels," I say.

"Unless they've paid up and know when there's something on those channels that's more educational than usual," Funnybear says.

"How much money do you think we'll make?" I say.

"Son, I think you can bank on it being more than the minimum wage you make here," Funnybear says.

"That's good," I say, "There's this girl I want to ask out on a date."

Funnybear looks alarmed, "Was she in the wet t-shirt contest?"

"No," I say, "Why?"

"Good, Zand and I need all of them for the donkeyshow next week," Funnybear says, "We're calling it An Asspectacular."

"You must be kidding!" I say, "A donkeyshow?"

"Yeah, um, no," he says, "Next week'll probably be the gay thong contest instead, Homo Run Derby."

"Whew!" I say.

"But only because we're having trouble finding a donkey."

Chorus--Alexander Depot

No police show up to arrest me for my altercation with the corporate flier guy, but I avoid campus anyway for the next few days. At practice, George says our fliers are still up and there was nothing in the newspaper about an assault in the history building.

He passes me the college newspaper and says the police blotter has a couple funny things in it. The first is a call about a suspicious person on campus. When police went to investigate they didn't find a terrorist, just a college student reading a book while waiting for the bus outside.

Hmm . . . a college student actually reading a book, that is pretty suspicious. I'd probably call the cops on that too.

The second is about somebody impersonating a professor in order to air pornography on campus closed circuit television. Too funny. I guess the tv station caught on when they were flooded with calls the next day from people requesting a rerun of Amoeba Growth Vol. 2 for Professor Bear's class. They couldn't find the tape so they went to call Professor Bear to borrow it again, and found out he didn't exist, and put everything together from there.

Professor Bear? I look over at Bear, and say, "Hey! Are you related to this Professor Bear? He's a real absentminded professor,

he forgot he didn't exist!"

Bear just grunts at me. He's in a bit of a funk. He probably should be hibernating for the winter instead of playing the drums I wager.

Abel's depressed too. Since Jah is still dating Karen, Abel probably collided into the old only one Emu can have a girlfriend at a time curse with Flannery.

So after practice, only Jah is up for coming with me to get the money Zand owes us from last week. We've decided to put it in a band fund so we can make a record sometime. I ask Jah if he wants to play the good cop or the bad cop when we shakedown Zand for the money. "I don't know. But I have to get a job real soon," Jah says, as we get into my car and I start it up and turn on the heater, "That wet t-shirt tape didn't come out too well. Most of it was the fratguys sticking their face in the camera and yelling about how much they wanted to fuck the chicks onstage."

"Yes, Jah," I say, pulling out of the driveway, "It's too bad you couldn't exploit those women's humiliation for more cash."

"Well, it was still worth doing," Jah says, "After I saw it didn't come out very well, I sold it to one of the contestants so she could burn it."

"Jah, you old softie you," I say, lighting a ciggie.

"Too bad she didn't know it was a digital camera though," Jah says, "Did you see her ta-tas? They were huge! So I saved some stills from the video in the camera's memory and I'm going to print up some shots of her and abstract them for my photography class."

"You're definitely the bad cop," I say as we head to the Grasshopper.

Middle Eight--Zand Timm

I finish fixing the toilet.

All week I tried to avoid it.

The yahoo who broke it for fun,

Clearly never had to fix one.

I sit down just as Emus show.

I forgot something. Oh, their dough!

One of them goes to take a piss,

Says, "Works great! But the seat's amiss!"

Verse--George Jah

Good thing I only had to pee. How anybody can fix a toilet yet forget to attach the seat is beyond me. Maybe Zand was in a hurry. I'd be in a hurry too if I was fixing the shitter. Gross.

This is how hard up I am though. I actually ask him if he needs some help, but he says that he can barely afford to pay himself. He does dig out the money he owes us though, probably because Alexander is intimidating. He's been acting a lot more macho lately since he beat up the corporate flier guy. When I went to the restroom, he probably worked Zand over.

And I thought I was supposed to be the bad cop.

So we leave and I get Alexander to drop me off at The Don's Doughnuts And Black Hand Espresso. Karen's place isn't far from here and I want to see if my work experience at The Coffee Catheter is marketable.

I go in and it smells great: coffee, donuts, sweet Italian cigars, and newspapers. Frankie The Face and Sid Fishes are at a corner table. They wave me over.

"George Jah!" They say and kiss me on both cheeks, "What are you doing here?"

I sit down, "I'm looking for a job. It's depressing."

Sid and Frankie look at one another. They both shrug.

Frankie says, "We know of an opening."

"Where?" I say, "Are you sure, like every other job in this town, it isn't reserved for rich kids who don't actually need to work or stupid townies?"

"Hey!" Sid says, "'That's life,' as Sinatra sings. It's who you know."

"Fortunately for you, we know you," Frankie says, raising his wee Italian coffee cup, "This is one time nepotism's going to work in your favor."

"I don't have to kill anybody, do I?" I say.

"Sssshhhhhh!" both Frankie and Sid say.

I say loudly, "I mean I don't have to deal with Buddy, do I?"

Frankie looks at Sid, "He catches on quick."

Sid looks at Frankie, "Who's Buddy?"

"Shut up!" Frankie says to Sid, then to me, "All right, if this is what you want, this is what you get. We recently came into a controlling interest in Vic's Happy Hour Club."

Sid laughs, "You wanted the best, you got the best!"

"Are you done?" Frankie says to Sid.

Sid shrugs and takes a bite out of his donut.

Frankie continues, "It seems that for some time Vic has been wiling teenage girls with shots in the back of the Club and then telling them that the liquor ain't on the house unless they take off their blouse, if you know what I'm saying. Well, one enterprising one lassie caught this on film and came to the right place."

"Us," Sid says.

"Thank you," Frankie says and continues, "So Vic has agreed that in return for us not inviting the district attorney to a viewing of the film Vic Gone Wild, he'll now be an employee of his eponymous niteclub. No one else'll be the wiser though and to guarantee that, Vic regrettably had to let the rest of the staff go over the weekend, accusing them of stealing money from the till."

"Which they were," Sid says, "Especially when Vic was in the backroom playing spin the bottle with the high school girls."

"Grazie," Frankie says and continues, "Vic gave his employees a real guilt trip and agreed not to press charges since they were like family to him. It's bullshit, but it should keep their traps shut. However, as a result we need a new staff, bartenders, bouncers, you know, the works. You like to talk. I'm thinking you as a bartender."

"But Frankie, I thought we were going to get all transwhatthefucks for the bartenders," Sid says.

Frankie looks at Sid and then looks at me, "Sid's got this daft idea that we should hire all transgendered individuals. Any trannie who can shake his/her fanny."

"Did you ever see that movie with all the hot girl bartenders?" Sid says to me, "Or the one with Tom Cruise as a bartender?"

I nod.

"Well, I figure if we get good looking androgynous type people, everybody--guys, girls, straights, gays--is going to come and hit on the bartenders and we'll make more money," Sid says.

"I'll try to look nondescript," I say.

"Just one thing," Frankie says, "Since I'm doing you a favor, you have to do me a favor. Are you guys still looking for a new roommate?"

"Yeah," I say, "The only people who call about it are all divorced women with three kids. Funnybear always says they can move in because he knows that Mom is lonely and puts out but the rest of us always veto it at the last minute."

"Buonissimo!" Frankie says, "My cousin's getting out of the army soon and needs a place to live. His name's Il Duce."

"Il Duce?" I say.

"Si, but you can call him whatever you want," Frankie says, "Oh, except 'Douche,' he hates that."

"I think it's funny though," Sid says.

"Which is why Il Duce's not living with us," Frankie says, "I gotta keep peace in the family."

"Great!" I say, "When do I start?"

"You're already late, you Americano!" Frankie yells and slaps me on the back congratulations.

"No tip for you!" Sid says, smiling, "But you can have the rest of my donut."

Chorus--Alexander Depot

I look at my alarm clock. It reads 4:20. There's laughter and music downstairs. It's a Wednesday morning and I have to get up at six. What's going on? I turn on the light and get out of bed. I stumble out of my room and find Abel standing in the hallway. He's wearing thermal underwear and rubbing his stomach with one hand and his head with the other. "What's up?" I say.

"I don't know. I just woke up. I've been listening. I think George has some people over," Abel says, yawning.

"People over? I have to get up for student teaching in like an hour and a half and he's throwing a party? What the fuck?" I say and head downstairs.

It's like a bar down there. There's all these people I don't know smoking and drinking and talking. I find Bear hitting on some barfly in the living room and I say, "What are you doing?"

Bear staggers up to me, puts his arm around me, and slurs his words, "Aleshander, we really sh-should of thought of thish yearsh ago."

I shake off his arm before I break it and say, "Thought of what, Bear?"

"Hoshting an afterhoursh. George came up wish it. Everybody paid to get in and now we're shelling them beer," Bear says as he falls over on the couch unconscious.

Oh, I get it. It's Jah's new job. He must have invited everyone at Vic's Happy Hour Club over here when the bar closed. I go find Jah. He's in the dining room, into which he apparently has recently installed a minibar. He's standing behind it and polishing

some glasses. "What can I do for you, sir?" he says to me when I approach

"Jah, it's me, Alexander," I say.

"Oh," he says, "I thought you were sleeping."

"I was, Jah," I say, "I was sleeping. As in the past tense."

"Oh, you want a drink now? Go ahead, it's on the house." he says.

"I hope so considering it's my house," I say.

"What'll you have?" he says, "This is the first night of The Modern Spectacular Speakeasy so I don't have the bar completely stocked yet, but hopefully we'll find something you like."

I lean in and say in my best badass Clint Eastwood in a spaghetti western, "Don't worry about it. I thought it was B.Y.O.B. so I brought my own. In fact, I'm going to open up one right now, a big can of whoopass!"

"Last Call!" I shout, "We're closing in five minutes! You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here in my home so finish your drinks and get the fuck out!"

"What are you doing? These are my customers! I'm just trying to establish my brand and market niche so I need to maintain good relations with them. At least that's what the consultant said," Jah says, grabbing my arm and pointing in the direction of the comatose Bear.

I shake off Jah's arm and ignore his pleas. I walk around the room pantomiming chugging beers and pointing out the exits like a flight attendant. To hurry things along, I start dragging the passed out people and throwing them out in the snowy back yard.

The conscious people start getting the general idea and leave. On the way out, one guy says to another guy, "That's the meanest bouncer I've ever met! I wasn't done with my drink so he just took it out of my hand and finished it himself! What a dive this place is!"

"Yes," his friend says, "But what other place is open at this time of night?"

Coda--Alexander Depot

I don't bother going back to bed since I'd have to get up in about an hour anyway. Jah's mad at me but he promises not to

hold another afterhours after I refuse his offer of a 10% cut of the business, then a 20% one, then a 30% one, then a 40% one, then a 50% one, and then a 60% one, declared "the final offer, after that it's not worth the investment of capital and labor."

Jah goes to bed and I wait. To pass the time, I watch a videotape of The Young Ones on the living room television with the sound turned down while Bear snores gently beside me on the couch. Then at about the time I think Jah has hit his first REM cycle I go up to my room and crank up the stereo with some Slayer. I whistle along to "Seasons In The Abyss" as I get ready for the day.

I don't even hear Jah knock on my door. I just run into him outside my room as I head downstairs to the shower. "What are you, crazy?" he says, "I worked all night. I'm exhausted."

"Were you trying to sleep, Jah?" I say, "I'm sorry. I thought we had a laissez faire household economy now and I could do whatever I wanted. I figured the magic of the marketplace would straighten everything out."

"That's not funny," Jah says, "But you proved your point. Money's the root of evil and all that."

"Very good, Jah," I say, "The actual quote is 'The love of money is the root of all evil' though so money's not so bad in and of itself, but greed is."

"Just please turn down the stereo please," Jah says.

I say "O.k., Jah, you've suffered enough," and shut it off.

He sleepwalks back into his room and I head downstairs to take a shower but I can hear it already running. Who else would be up at this hour?

The bathroom door's open so I just walk in. A fully clothed Bear is standing upright in the shower, snoring. His clothes are soaked.

I don't think anybody would pay to see that but I take a picture of it anyway.

#13

The Friendly Fascist

b/w

Woo Coups And Boo Hoos

"Just relax, leave everything to me,
Trains'll run on time and you'll be happy!"

Intro--George Jah

The bald sound guy's turned off the soundboard and the balding club owner's telling us to stop. I turn up my amp louder, run my fingers through my hair, and flip them off. They take the hint and disappear. We're playing The Rubble Rubble in Akron, the rubber city, although I personally prefer to refer to it as the used rubber city. The show is a disaster, but maybe we can at least get a good practice in. It's been hard to find the time to practice lately with me working nights at the bar and Alexander student teaching mornings, and Funnybear and Ted going to school and work inbetween those hours. I suppose that's partly why this show stunk. Another reason it stunk is because no one hung fliers for it. I thought Alexander was going to do it and he thought Funnybear was going to do it and Funnybear thought Ted was going to do it and Ted thought I was going to do it.

So no one did it.

We're kind of disorganized lately. I'm kind of surprised we even remembered we had a show tonight. We forgot about one in Youngstown last weekend. Some kid called us up and said we'd never play in his town again.

I told him that's impossible; we never played in his town in the first place.

Tonight, we got our act together enough to show up and some people did come to see us. However, most of them didn't actually get to see us since they left before we played because it's a weeknight and the worst band I've ever seen, Pudding Reasoning, played a three hour opening set of what sounded like stoner rock meets jazz fusion meets techno. Of course as soon as they were done the guys in Pudding Reasoning split the scene so we didn't even get the small consolation of making fun of them from onstage. By the time we played, there was almost no one left to see us but Flannery, Ted's crush, who probably would have left too except she rode out with us so she's stranded here until we're done. Karen was going to come as

well but then one of her friends had a crisis, you know like a hangnail or a stubbed toe or something, so she had to stay in Rock and hold his we're here, we're queer hand.

My political correctness is waning. Dealing with members of historically oppressed groups all day and night like I do has made me realize why they were historically oppressed. Because they're fucking annoying. Don't worry, I don't discriminate though. I'm equal opportunity. I hate everyone.

At this moment, I'm channeling my misanthropy into energy, which is good for the band. We're actually jamming. We got the flow, yo. It started when Funnybear began grinding a hairbrush into a microphone and thrusting both into the monitors for caterwauling feedback but once the soundguy killed the sound, Funnybear went back to banging the drums and we got a fascist groove thing going. If there was an audience they'd probably be waving their hands in the air like they just didn't care right now. But there's not so I don't care and I'm not even waving my hands. I mean it's fun but I'm spacing out and pondering the absurdity and ridiculousness of playing rock and roll. It's freezing and snowing outside and we have to once again go out in it to load up our cars with boxes and amps and instruments and drive back home when we could have just stayed at home in the first place and studied or worked or had some fun. Oh well, the only good thing about being here is that at least we get to play loud.

The electricity goes off. Only Funnybear's drums thud through the dark bar. The club owner comes back with a flashlight and shines it on the gun he's holding in the other hand. Well that trumps my bass. I was going to whack him in the face with it if he kept bothering us but it's not bulletproof and neither am I. Funnybear stops the tribal beat and the club owner explains in the fresh silence that he's not making any money so he wants to shut down for the night. The lights turn on again and we start packing up. On our way out, still at gunpoint, the club owner claims we drove off the bar drinkers, throws a crumpled bill at us for gas money, and says don't ever come back.

No worries there, fucko. This place blows.

Verse--Alexander Depot

Well loading up, I tell everyone I don't want to play another weekday gig while I'm student teaching. Shoving his bass amp into the back seat of his car, Jah says, "Boo fucking

hoo. You cry more than a wah-wah pedal."

"Jah," I say, helping Ted put his amp in my trunk, "I think we need to talk. Why don't we step over to the side in private?"

"No," Jah says, going back inside to get his bass.

"Fine," I say and look at Abel and Flannery, "You guys ready?"

They nod, happy to get out of the cold and into the car and we leave.

"Shouldn't we wait for George and Funnybear?" Abel says.

"No," I say in my Jah voice, then add in my regular tenor, "I've got to get to sleep. I'm happy the show ended early."

When we get home, the window on the back door's broken. I hush up Abel and Flannery's flirting, "I think someone's broken in."

We sneak around to the front and creep up on the porch. Someone's inside watching professional wrestling on television, but the shades are drawn so I can't see who it is. I tell Abel to knock on the front door, while I slip in the back door.

"What about a weapon?" Abel whispers before I go.

I look around on the porch. Chuck and Wendy's little grill is in the corner. It's snow-covered and frozen but it'll do. I pick it up, dust it off, and say, "Use this."

Abel takes it while Flannery says, "What are we supposed to do? Barbecue the burglar?"

"I don't know. Smack him with it I suppose."

The porch light comes on and the front door opens. A young man with a shaved head and wearing an army uniform is smiling at us, "Hello! I'm Il Duce! Are you my new roommates?"

Abel drops the grill. It clanks on the floor and rolls to the corner, where it thwops in the light snow there.

Looking at it, Il Duce says, "Bit out of season for a cookout, isn't it?"

Chorus--George Jah

Il Duce's only been here for a few days and he's already like the best roommate ever. He's always friendly and eager to help out with whatever. He fixed the broken window on the back door the next morning. He apologized, saying it was regrettable and mistakes were made but since no one was home and he was freezing he had to get inside somehow. While he was back there he organized the foyer. Since then, he's moved on to organizing the rest of the house. It's

starting to look good.

The only quirks he has is that he's always dressed in military fatigues and while watching television or listening to the radio, usually political talk shows, he occasionally breaks into a furious rant, shaking his fist in the air, talking back at the screen or speaker about how the country is out of control and needs a strong hand to bring it back on course.

Oh yeah, he watches pro wrestling on tv too but he's always quiet while that's on.

He's also a much better personal assistant than either Sweeter or John X ever was, mostly because Il Duce knows how to follow orders. This is important because now that Knibbled Knipple has broken up, I've determined that I'm now president of the Roll State Rock scene. It's a lot of responsibility so I can use whatever help I can get.

We're out working on my new sculpture, combing junkyards looking for a toilet. I'm going to set a mannequin on the toilet, after Rodin's "Le Penseur," heat the toilet seat, get viewers to move the mannequin and sit on the warm toilet seat while I videotape and ask them what they're thinking and if they prefer their toilet seats hot or cold.

I think it's going to be a metaphor for the struggle between public and private spheres and society and the individual, but I don't know, I haven't thought it all out yet. I'm operating on instinct.

When I tell him that, Il Duce says, "That's good. Trust your heart and not the intellectuals. Did I ever tell you about my struggle?"

"No," I say, checking my watch, "But we're late to meet Karen so tell me in the car."

But in the car, Il Duce just tells me how he's worried about the band because he thinks Alexander's gay and in denial about it, which is why he's been so cranky lately.

"What?" I say, stopping the car.

"I've had buddies go through it. It's rough, you just have to hang in there with them," he says.

"You just met him, how can you tell he's gay?" I say, starting the car moving again.

He points to his Roman nose, "We have that don't ask, don't tell policy in the army, but I can sniff them out."

"Well, so what, if he is gay, he's still Alexander. He's not going to act like Karen's annoying fashion friends, who are annoying if

they're male, female, gay, or straight," I say, as we pull up in front of Karen's apartment building.

We go up and knock. Karen answers and jumps on me and gives me a big smooch. I pull her off. I say, "Geez, Karen, Il Duce's here."

Il Duce smiles and kisses her hand.

"Hi, Il Duce," Karen says, "But George, I thought we were going to have a date since you're working on Valentine's Day?"

Shit, I forgot! "Um, Il Duce was just leaving," I say, nudging my head at the stairs to Il Duce, "He just wanted to come up and say hi."

Il Duce looks taken aback, and his perpetual smile disappears. It quickly returns though and he raises one arm in salute and marches down the stairs.

"Your new roommate's weird, George," Karen says.

"At least he isn't a fashion major like all your friends," I say, "As a result, Il Duce isn't completely self-obsessed and can actually figure out when we don't want him hanging around."

That becomes the thread of conversation, but as it winds on, the date starts unraveling.

Verse--Theodorable

Il Duce's getting the mop, the broom, the feather duster, and the vacuum cleaner from the closet. "Hmm," he says, "If we had an ax and tied these all together we'd have a fasces."

"Well I don't know that we need an ax to clean the house Il Duce, but I sure appreciate you helping me clean it up for my big Valentine's Day date with Flannery," I say, putting water in a bucket.

Il Duce starts sweeping the kitchen floor, "I hope it goes well. Don't let her dominate you like Karen does George. You must show her who's in charge and then get her to push out little soldiers to restore our great nation to glory again."

"Uh, it's just our first date," I say, wiping the kitchen counter, "We're hopefully just having pizza, not a baby."

"Well, just in case make sure you eat some hot peppers beforehand, they'll put plenty of lead in your pencil," Il Duce says, sweeping into the dustpan, "How's the band coming? I'd be happy to be your guys' roadie."

"I don't think we have any more gigs booked at the moment," I say, putting some dishes in the sink, "We had to cancel the one with The Appeal and Lester because it was on a weekday."

Il Duce pauses and puts his chin down on top of the broom. He looks at me with his dark, magnetic eyes and says, "Democracy is too slow. That's why you guys aren't getting anywhere. You need to elect or appoint a leader who can make decisions quickly and then things will start moving."

"You mean like a manager?" I say, starting to mop.

Il Duce straightens up and sticks his fist in the air, "Exactly! Someone who can focus all your collective energy into one unstoppable force so we can win the culture wars!"

"I don't want to fight in a war. War is stupid," I say, squeezing water from the mop into the bucket, "There's better ways to settle differences than killing one another and a bunch of innocent people besides."

Il Duce grabs me by the shoulders and looks me in the eyes. I drop the mop. He shakes me, "Ted! Don't listen to that pacifist claptrap! War alone ennobles us, bring our human potential to its peak. War confers health and vitality. It is to the man what motherhood is to the woman!"

He spins me around so I face the kitchen window. Over my shoulder he points outside, "Just think, all those garage bands out there with all that talent gone to waste and all those great songs gone unheard while some undeserved elites sit at the top of the charts enervating us with their debilitating pop music. Why should this be, Ted? It shouldn't be, Ted! We should end it, Ted, and we shall end it, Ted, and we will end it, Ted. What we need to do is gather a brigade of garage bands and give them the guidance necessary to unleash their creative power and channel it into action. We should make them believe, obey, and combat! Then we could storm the radio stations, storm the record companies, storm city hall, and make them all meet our demands! The whole world needs to be marching to one beat and that beat is ours!"

"Is it in 4/4 time?" I say, shakily picking up the mop, "Because I'm not too good playing guitar in other time signatures."

"Ted!" Il Duce screams, picking the vacuum cleaner up over his head, "Today the living room, tomorrow the world!"

Chorus--George Jah

It's Valentine's Day so of course it's only the depressed single people at the bar tonight. The way they're pounding shots of Zurp Syrup ("All Zurp! No Burp!") makes even me feel desperate and I have a girlfriend.

In fact, she's sitting at the end of the bar. It's not too romantic an evening for me and Karen though. Every time I get a moment to speak to her, somebody wants a refill or somebody's puked on the

floor and I have to clean it up. At least she's not bored since she can watch the bands when I'm not around. The GoGoBots and The Man I Fell In Love With are playing tonight.

She came in by herself too so for once all her annoying friends aren't around.

It's only my annoying friends around for a change.

My roommates are all here since Ted's wining and dining Flannery at our house. What a dork! I've heard of people dumping their girlfriends before or on a holiday so they don't have to buy them a present (they usually plan on making up after the holiday's over, the craven cretins!), but you don't start dating a girl on a holiday because then you have to buy her a present before you know if you really like her or not.

I think he really likes her though. Ah, young love!

Yeah, it makes me want to puke from happiness too.

Karen waves me over with a bill in her hand. When I go over, she says, "Ah, I've discovered the secret to getting you to pay attention to me. Cash."

This is starting to get annoying. "I'm working," I hiss.

"Bartender, give me another shot of Zurp Syrup!" Karen says, sticking her glass in the air.

"You should slow down," I say, "You've had a lot of those already tonight."

"George, if you really cared about me, you would have called off work for Valentine's Day," Karen sneers, pointing down the bar, "But I guess you'd rather spend it with all your derelict pals than with me, so tell your conscience to fuck off and tell your arm to pour me a drink."

Great, drama queen outbreak alert. I just head back down the bar and get her a shot. While I'm pouring it, I eavesdrop. Alexander and Il Duce are having a spirited conversation.

"But you see Duce, by making wrestling heels either, as you put it, 'Fags or foreigners,' the bookers know they're tapping into the deep anxiety most American males have about their own heterosexuality and national allegiance," Alexander says, black russian in hand.

"No, that's just who the bad guys are!" Il Duce thunders, "And good guys must be straight and American!"

Oh, boy, that's a real meeting of the minds. I think Sigmund Freud's got George "The Animal" Steele in a headlock there. Where's Plato when you need him to preserve this dialogue for the ages?

I look over at Funnybear who's rubbing his chin. He looks at me and says, "My mouth hurts."

"Maybe you're growing a tusk," I say and go back to Karen, carrying two shots.

"Here," I say to her, "I'll do one with you."

We clink glasses, and I hope the storm's passed. I down mine and Karen downs hers and then she spits hers out in my face.

"Thanks for the condescension of penciling me in for five minutes in your busy schedule. School, art, band, job, I guess I know where I come in the pecking order now," she says, putting her glass down, "Make that came. Goodbye, George."

I grab a cup of beer from a nearby patron ("Hey!") and pour it over Karen's head. She clenches her face and starts to cry then she grabs her purse from the bar and leaves.

The whole bar is quiet and watches her go. I hear Alexander say, "The Emu curse tolls once more," then I vault the bar and run after her.

Middle Eight--Flannery Mahone

Ted burns his fingers on the stove,
Over me, they're welcome to rove.
He drops the pizza on the floor,
I think he's nervous, oh, adore!
Rest of the meal, there's no mishap,
On the couch, I ease near his lap.
His arm goes round me, first try miss!
On our second attempt, the kiss!

Verse--Funnybear

"What's this one?" Antigone says to Il Duce as we sit around the dining room eating his Army Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs).

"I think that's Country Captain Chicken," Il Duce says, mixing his powdered beverage base with water.

"Did Captain Chicken do a bad job leading his company, and that's why the Army decided to eat him instead?" Antigone says, putting cheese spread on a cracker.

"No, he's more like a super-hero Captain," Il Duce says, taking a swig of his beverage, "His super power is that he tastes good."

"These actually aren't too bad," Funnybear says, munching on a fruit filled bar, "I've eaten worse."

"They're quick too," Antigone says, smearing hot sauce on her chocolate, "That's the best thing about them."

"No, the best thing about them is that they're free," Funnybear says, popping a piece of chewing gum in Funnybear's mouth, "Thanks, Il Duce."

"No problem, I have a ton of them," Il Duce says, heating his beef ravioli with the flameless heater, "They last a long time but not forever so we might as well use them up."

"So, Il Duce dude, did you have to kill people and stuff when you were in the army?" Antigone says, making a cup of military mocha cappuccino.

"No, I was hoping it'd be like that, but it was really boring. That's why I quit," Il Duce says, eating his wheat snack bread.

"That's good news to me. Because I'm anti-militarism, but the armed forces might be the only way I can pay for college so I can lie around and be a lazy bum like Funnybear," Antigone says, sipping her cup of G.I. Joe.

"What you consider laziness is actually my pursuit of enlightenment," Funnybear says, making instant tea with sweetener and lemon flavor, "Movement is overrated. Do you ever see stressed out plants?"

"I disagree. Movement is grand like the Italian Futurists celebrated in their paintings and poetry," Il Duce says, gnawing on a potato stick, "Violence and fast machines are beautiful."

"Violence is beautiful?" Antigone says, using her spoon to play with the buttered noodles, "I don't know about that, dude. I've seen pictures of domestic violence and war victims and they weren't pretty."

"Oh, it is, just not in the conventional sense. Violence is life itself unfolding. Even the plants, Funnybear, aren't peaceful. If you pay attention, you'll see they are waging a war for survival, for territory, for propagation. This is nothing to be scared of, it is only nature's way, the strong must dominate the weak," Il Duce says, crushing his fudge brownie into his beef ravioli for demonstration.

"Yeah, dude, but everything works together too. There's a lot of cooperation in nature. For example, the plants make the air we breathe," Antigone says, using the hand cleaner.

"And social darwinism's wack," Funnybear says, sipping tea, "We get further when we work together, not when we're competing with one

another. It's needless duplication and a waste of resources otherwise."

"Ah, good, then you believe in centralized authority," Il Duce says, squeezing jelly in his mouth.

"No, I prefer decentralization. I don't trust concentrated power. But competition and decentralized authority aren't the same thing, though I know people often conflate the two, albeit incorrectly," Funnybear says, pounding his pound cake.

"What do you do with your trash when you're in the field?" Antigone says, holding up the remains of her MRE.

"Blow it up with a hand grenade," Il Duce says, licking peanut butter, "That decentralizes it nicely."

Chorus--George Jah

Alexander tells me about the Emu curse, something about how only one of us at a time can have a girlfriend and now it's Ted's turn.

Il Duce's right. Something's up with Alexander. If he's not having trouble accepting the fact that he's gay, then he's having difficulty facing reality in general because he's being clearly delusional here. "A curse?" I say, "That's superstitious goo-goo ga-ga."

"Jah, I know it sounds crazy, but I mapped the pattern out on my computer and everything fits," Alexander says, calling up a file on his computer, "Furthermore, I think I've traced its origin. Maybe it was coincidence before but right about the time relations go sour with the witch last summer, it kicks in with a vengeance. There hasn't even been any one night stands since then, only the passing of the love baton from one couple to another."

"So you think the witch put a curse on us?" I say, looking at the computer screen, "That seems unlikely."

"Jah, I'm into science, you know, computers and keyboards, but nothing else makes sense," Alexander says, a baffled look in his eyes, "You know how The Happy Hour Hos operate, they all date guys in the same band. Well, we had Jugsy their leader living with us and still no nookie for us. The Happy Hour Hos, Jah, they're nymphomaniacs, any of us satyrs would have obliged them at any time, and they went weeks without boyfriends, isn't that bizarre?"

"All right, now that I think of it that is rather strange. Plus Funnybear will have sex with not only anyone, but anything, and he hasn't gotten laid in ages," I say, sitting down on Alexander's mattress on the floor, "But I don't understand, why let even one of us have a

girlfriend? If witchie-poo really wanted to mess with us, you think she'd just cut us off entirely."

"I puzzled over that a long time," Alexander says, pointing to his bookshelf, "I looked at the books she left, and came to a conclusion. I think she didn't cast it on us individually, but on the group, the band itself. You might think it'd be more frustrating if none of us were copulating, but really it wouldn't."

We hear Flannery have an orgasm across the hall.

Alexander turns up the volume on the speakers for his computer and The Wedding Present cd drowns out the cum cries. He continues, "As I was saying, but if nobody was getting lucky, there'd be no sex in the house at all, or in our immediate peer group so we wouldn't miss it in quite the same way we do now, when we know somebody in the house is getting it but it sure ain't us."

"So the witch is trying to create dissension with the curse and break up the band," I say, hearing what sounds like a bed slamming into a wall repeatedly and getting a boner from it.

"Yes, that was my conclusion. The term 'Rock and roll' originates as slang for sexual intercourse," Alexander says, fixing his pants.

"And it's the type of music a lot of people use for getting down, so she wanted to use rock and roll to destroy rock and roll," I say, trying to stand up without my pitched tent being noticeable, "But I still don't get it, why not just turn us all into frogs or something?"

"Well, besides the fact that I don't know that the witch could actually do that (I still want to believe that the curse is psychological rather than magical), I think it's because we were a united front against her when she lived in the house and that's what she wants revenge on. She wants to break us up," Alexander says, closing the file on his computer.

I head out of his room, "And a house divided against itself cannot stand as the old saying goes, so what do we do?"

"Well, we can try consciously not to make this thing a self-fulfilling prophecy. That's why I didn't mention it to anybody until now," Alexander says, not swiveling his computer chair around to face the doorway, "But beyond that, I don't know. I guess we can talk about it at the band meeting."

"When's that? Five minutes?" I say, heading to my room.

"I think whenever Abel stops playing hide the salami with his new girlfriend," Alexander says from inside his room.

I go into my room and shut the door. A curse? I put a spell on

you? I still don't believe it, but I also don't believe that Karen and I broke up. We got along so well until recently. I still don't know what happened, so yeah, a curse is as good an explanation as anything. And with a curse I don't have to take responsibility for realizing that I'm probably to blame.

I bang my head into the pillow a few times until I get dizzy.

Well, me and her fucking annoying friends. A relationship with two people is hard enough to maintain, and much harder when everyone else is sticking their noses in. At least I didn't get fired from Vic's Happy Hour Club too. I just gave the guy whose beer I stole to dump on Karen's head free drinks for the rest of the night.

He gave me a big tip at the end too.

Then I told everyone else that Karen and I were doing performance art to illustrate that they were better off being pathetic single people drinking by themselves in a dive bar on Valentine's Day instead of being in a relationship and cuddling with their special loved one significant other on the seas of romance, but also possibly getting in a horrendous fight like we just demonstrated.

Nobody believed me, not even me.

Coda--George Jah

At the band meeting, Il Duce sits in and offers to become our manager. He says that we're too busy and the band is on the verge of falling apart. He says that would be a shame because we're really good so he proposes that he help us out and handle the booking, publicity, and everything else for us. The only thing we'll have to do is play music. He says we could go really far with the right guidance but we need somebody with the time and vision to build things up and allow us just to concentrate on the sound instead of all the little distractions that get in the way. He says he can get us on the road (Funnybear nods emphatically) and making a record (Ted lights up) sooner than we think. He says we'll even make a lot of money down the line if united we stand (Alexander perks up at that). It's excellent timing to make such a pitch. We're all worried about the witch's curse (me especially), which Il Duce says he'll handle first thing. And Il Duce's proven he's a hard worker by helping us all out since he moved in. The house is testament to that. It's looking great from his cleaning and organizing. And, it sure would be nice to just have some fun again and let somebody else make all the decisions, instead of arguing endlessly over each little thing we do. Individually too, Il Duce's offer appeals. Alexander's busy with student teaching, Ted's in

love, and Funnybear, as always, is lazy. And me, I'm afraid of losing the band like I lost Karen. So we vote him in as manager.

Il Duce wants us to sign a contract though, but we balk at that. He said it's just a formality, that he wants to make sure if he's doing all this work for us, he'll get his just desserts. We say it's gotta be trust all the way. We finally compromise on giving him decision making authority for everything except the music but we don't sign a contract. Instead, we agree that it'll take a unanimous vote to remove him just like it took a unanimous vote to elect him. He agrees to that and we all shake hands and pass The Dookie on the left hand side, The Dutchie on the right hand side and Il Duce down the middle.

Il Duce gets up and gives a brief speech, saying leave everything to him and we're bound for our destiny of glory. He says we'll never miss a gig or have a bad show again. He'll make sure the bands run on time.

Alexander says that line's familiar, but he's probably just thinking of that old Paul McCartney and Wings song. Silly love songs blow to the square root of my anus anyway. No more talk, we want rock!

#14

Do The Reich Thing
b/w

Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Lots Of Beer

"Goosestep to the right, then goosestep to the left,
Now stop, goose yourself, and plan your next theft!"

Intro--Funnybear

That little shlut of a season, Spring, sneaks in early with the odd warm and pleasant day in February which wafts, taunts, and lures Funnybear outside the house and onto the creaky trampoline in the backyard. Funnybear plops into the middle of the black, bouncy, rusting beast and is unscrewing a new bottle of Rabid Cat 20/200 when George comes out too. "Hey," George says.

George is wearing a long-sleeved blue shirt, jeans, running shoes--all normal Georgewear--and a necklace with a small charm in the shape of an animal horn hanging from it--not normal Georgewear. "Hey," Funnybear says, "Nuttybar, what's that around your neck?"

George holds the necklace up and out over the edge of the trampoline, "This? It's something Il Duce gave me to ward off the evil eye."

"Not the witch's curse thing again. You guys are delusional," Funnybear says, then takes a swig of Rabid Cat, "But not half as delusional as I'm going to be when I finish this bottle."

"Funnybear, it's true. I don't know why you can't believe it. I mean the fact that the world exists at all is pretty strange and you have no problem with that, so what bugs you about the existence of magic? Anyway, Alexander has it all mapped out on his computer," George says, leaning on the trampoline, "Although I don't understand why Alexander's upset about not having a girlfriend since he's gay."

Funnybear starts to bounce on the trampoline, "Number one, son, the world's in my face so it's not a matter of faith, obviously something's there, unlike the imaginary curse you guys made up because your studly machismos couldn't handle being dumped straight up. Number two, son, about the computer, garbage in, garbage out. If you plunk in a bunch of superstitious yikyak, then it's going to plunk out a bunch of superstitious yikyak, albeit in a spreadsheet. Number three, son, Alexander's not gay. If he were gay, he wouldn't be sneaking into my room when he thinks I'm not

home to borrow my porn mags, which are quite hetero even with the faux lesbian girl on girl stuff, which in the words of my homophobic first college roommate, 'You know Funnybear, I'm straight as an arrow, but there's nothing I like better than to watch two girls go at it.'

George stiffens up, "How do you know he sneaks into your room and borrows your porn mags?"

"Because I've seen you all do it from my closet," Funnybear says, pointing at George, "And I want this month's issue of Tig Ass Bitties back in my room tonight!"

"What are you doing hiding in the closet?" George says, looking horrified.

"Uh, never mind that," Funnybear says, looking around.

"I bet you're hiding from Il Duce because he's been getting on you about your drinking," George says, reaching for the bottle, "Don't worry I won't snitch as long as you hand me dat!"

Funnybear passes him the bottle, "I don't understand the guy, he gets on me about drinking but then gives me a huge cigar for winning 'Emu Of The Week' last week."

George chugs some Rabid Cat then wipes his mouth, "I guess he figures smoking, unlike drinking, doesn't impair your ability to play the drums until about thirty years later when you die of lung cancer. What do you call a cigar that size anyway? A Churchill?"

"He told me it was a Mussolini when I asked," Funnybear says, bouncing over to take the bottle back, "Then he told me drummers should keep the beat and not ask questions."

"Well, Il Duce may work us hard, but at least we're getting somewhere. He's booked us recording dates next month and he's already lined up a ton of shows, some of them out of town," George says, climbing up on the trampoline.

"Yeah, but how are we going to get to them? We can't all drive our own cars like we do in town," Funnybear says, scampering off the trampoline, cradling the bottle of Rabid Cat.

"Look!" George says, pointing while bouncing up and down on the trampoline.

Il Duce is driving a van, which seems to be held together by duct tape, down the street. It breaks down in front of the driveway. Il Duce gets out, beaming, and says, "Eh, how do you like our new tour van? I bought this cheap from These Fags Are Pissed. They're invading Europe over spring

break and needed the money for airfare. Now you two push it in to the driveway, I have more important business to tend to."

What a dick . . . tator! At least he didn't see the Rabid Cat. Funnybear finishes the bottle and breaks it over the front of the van, "I christen thee 'The Emumobile'!"

The hood pops open and smoke billows out.

Verse--Alexander Depot

"Il Duce used the recording fund for that piece of junk outside?" I say, finishing my Chicken PolPotPie from Burrito Hell, "Who said he could touch that? What are we going to pay for the recording with?"

Bear is flipping through a music magazine called Shake Air Molecules Emotionally (S.A.M.E.) at the dining room table next to me. He doesn't even look up as he answers; he just keeps flipping the pages and looking bored, "He says he's the C.E.O., C.O.O., and C.F.O. of Emu industries so he has control over the budget. He's got some scheme cooked up in which the van will enable us to make money because we'll play more gigs more efficiently and make more money with it to make up the recording fund and then some."

"He's the K.O.O.K. of Emu Industries too. The only way that van is going to make money for us is if we fake an accident with it and collect on the insurance," I say, gathering my fast food debris for the trash, "Otherwise, we're going to go broke fixing the thing constantly."

Bear looks up, "Don't give Il Duce any ideas please. I don't want to go to jail for being an accessory to insurance fraud."

The front door slams open and Il Duce runs in the house. He dives under the dining room table. "What is it?" I say, jumping up.

"Ssshhh!" Il Duce says from under the table.

Bear gets up and shuts the front door, then comes back to the table and takes a seat. Il Duce rolls out from under the table to under the window and sticks his head up like a slow periscope rising. He looks outside to the right slowly, then ducks his head down. His head pops up in slow motion again and he peeks outside to the left. He breathes deeply and stands up, dusting himself off. "What was the matter?" I say.

"Oh, nothing," Il Duce says, smiling, "Just my new exercise regime."

He slaps Bear on the back, "How's my Emu Of The Week, eh? Still staying off the sauce, huh?"

Bear squeaks something inaudible, and Il Duce turns to me, "And how is Teach today?"

"Great, Duce," I say, "Hey, what's this about you using the recording fund?"

Il Duce pulls a chair out, spins it around, and sits on it backwards leaning his chest against what is normally the back of the chair, "Eh, did you see that beauty of a vehicle out there? No more wasting time and money in separate cars. We're a unit and we get in the van and play out like a band. We can try it out for the first time tomorrow night. I got us a show at the new bookstore downtown, Zine Zenith."

"Tomorrow?" I say, "That's a schoolnight. You know I don't play out on schoolnights. I have to get up too early to student teach the next morning."

"Alexander, you know how we call the letter 'z' 'zee'?" Il Duce says.

"Um, yes,"

"Well, up in Canada and elsewhere, they call 'z' 'zed.'"

"'Zed' like rhymes with 'bed.'"

"Yes, but even though they call it 'zed' and we call it 'zee,' it's still the same letter, right?"

"Right. Can we get back to the discussion about the show now?"

"Well, unlike 'z,' a schoolnight is called 'a schoolnight' regardless of it being evening or nighty night, but there's a difference between the usual late night rock show starting at ten or eleven at night and one starting at seven in the evening, so even though our show at the bookstore is on a schoolnight, it's not really 'on a schoolnight' since it's an early show, so it shouldn't present any great difficulty for you in educating the youth of America on the next day."

I turn to Bear, "Did you understand any of that? Because I didn't understand any of that."

"I got lost at 'zed,'" Bear says, going back to his magazine.

"Alexander, we must make sacrifices! Are you in or are you out?" Il Duce stands, shaking his fist in the air.

Il Duce really needs to read some books on management. The One Minute Tyrant perhaps. "All right, I'll play the bookstore," I say, "but no more shows on schoolnights because I need to catch up on my Zeds."

Note to self: Kick Il Duce in the head when we string him upside down.

Chorus--Funnybear

Inbetween songs Funnybear browses through books, mostly collections of comic strips, in the humor section, where the drumset is set up in. Funnybear still isn't sure why Funnybear's band is playing a bookstore, but it's a pleasant change from playing in bars and having people spill beer on Funnybear.

Spilling beer really should be a sin, and sinners should firstly have their beer taken away and secondly be pummeled into unconsciousness so they don't spill anyone else's either.

No beer here so instead Funnybear is drinking free coffee and eating free cookies courtesy of the bookstore.

After three cups of coffee, Funnybear starts playing in doubletime. George turns around to yell at Funnybear but the amps are so loud he just looks like he's talking underwater. Funnybear can't hear a word he says and reading lips is hard while one is trying to do a drumfill so Funnybear looks away. Amazingly, despite the racket, one old guy is still perusing volumes on a nearby bookshelf. All the other customers are sitting down in chairs enjoying or at least enduring the show. Uncle Teddy's sitting in people's laps playing guitar while Alexander's neck veins are sticking out as he sings his new song, "Trundling Gnomes Home."

When the song finishes, Alexander says, "Bear, the song's at 33 rpms, not 45 or 78."

Funnybear nods and snatches up the store cat, searching desperately for a place to hide from the noise. Funnybear sets the cat on the floor tom. Funnybear yells, "Look, he's a tomcat!" as the cat leaps off.

"Enough tomfoolery," Uncle Teddy says, "Are you ready for the next one?"

Funnybear counts it off. They play two bars and quit. "What was that?" Alexander says to Funnybear, "You play better when you're drunk, I

swear."

Oops! Funnybear turns the setlist back right side up, "Sorry, the set list was upside down. I was playing 'Mail Order Husband' not 'The Question Is Good Vs. Bad Government, Not Big Vs. Small.' Hey, can I put a polka beat on 'The Question'?"

"No," George says, holding his bass straight up so it doesn't knock into a bookshelf while he's turning around, "Let's go. Hurry up, assmear."

Il Duce speaks up from his vantage point in the vicinity, "He's Emu Of The Week. Let him try a polka beat."

A few audience members do the polka during the song, but the dance floor is limited in a small bookstore.

The set concludes with Funnybear using some used self-help paperbacks as drumsticks, before stopping and then quietly reading a Bloom County collection on the snare drum while the other Emus read selections from their favorite literary works into the microphone, even though the bookstore is small enough that they don't really need a mike once the instruments are off. The boys take "open mike" literally. There must be a mike or it's just chatter!

After the show, the red-headed, friendly poet/bookstore owner thanks them for helping out with the grand opening and asks them to sign the ceiling for her. Funnybear stands on the bass drum and draws a cartoon bear. Antigone walks up as Funnybear drops back down to the floor.

"Dude, that was cool, you should play more all ages, early shows," she says, sporting a parka with a fakefur furry trim on the hood.

"Yeah, it's kind of nice to be done with a show before we'd normally even leave the house to go play one," Funnybear says, unscrewing his cymbal stands, "Who was your boyfriend earlier?"

"Oh, that was Lawrence. He liked you guys but he had to go. His Mom wants him home by nine on a schoolnight. He's a dork. He keeps bugging me to go out, and tells me my lesbianism is just a cover so I don't have to tell him that I think he's ugly and that's why he can't get a date. He's not even ugly, dude. I'm like, dude, homosexuality is not a cover, it's not a phase, I'm a dyke, get real, why don't you ask out Helen, she's in love with you, dude. And he says, get this, 'She's fat.' So he's accusing me falsely of being superficial and mean, and then he doesn't even realize he's really being superficial and mean, not to mention stupid, Helen's pretty cute, I'd do her, except I can tell she's a total breeder," Antigone says, acting out the replayed conversation.

"I believe the technical term for Lawrence's behavior is 'hypocritical,'" Funnybear says, folding up a cymbal stand, and then taking a sip of coffee.

Il Duce strolls up with a cup of coffee, kisses Antigone on the hand, takes the coffee from Funnybear's hand, and says to Funnybear, before strutting away, "No more coffee for you either, you kept speeding the bpm's up on everything."

"Dude, I believe the technical term for that is 'totalitarian,'" Antigone says, watching Il Duce collect some cash from the owner of the bookstore.

Verse--George Jah

Somebody asks me what having Il Duce as our manager is like, so I say it's kind of like having Sharon Osborne, Malcolm McLaren, and Adolf Hitler all rolled into one, telling you what to do.

They were mortified.

But not as mortified as me. They don't have to live and work with, excuse me, for Il Duce. Boy, Acton was right, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absofuckinglutely. That's an infix, Ted told me by the way, and the only ones in the English language involve sticking swear words in the middle of another word like that. Dedamnlicious! Words are fun!

But "infixing" isn't the word of the day, "infighting" is. Il Duce's sowing some badwill with his high handed authoritarianism and there's some disestablishmentarianian grumbling from the back seat of the van that even though he's gotten us shows and a van and recording dates, it isn't worth losing our freedom. I won't mention any names though.

Cough, cough, Funnybear, Alexander, cough, cough.

The only one who hasn't noticed Il Duce's oppressive ways is Ted because he's too busy fooling around with the neohippie chick Flim-Flannery to notice. They were playing frisbee in the snow the other day like it was still that one nice day in February. Pure retardo loveickiness.

But I digress. I've taken Il Duce foodshopping with me to Food Wigwam so I can hint that he needs to chill out.

Naturally, I wait until we're in the frozen foods to make my pitch. I'm pushing the shopping cart of course while Il Duce opens every freezer door we pass and sticks his head inside. "How can you see what's there? The windows are all fogged up! What a sloppy

store! The manager should be shot or at least sent to a reeducation camp!" Il Duce rages.

"We need waffles," I say, looking at the grocery list I wrote on my hand, "Get the generic kind, they're cheaper."

"Why bother? I threw the toaster away," Il Duce says, opening yet another freezer door to peer inside.

"What? Why? We can't afford a new toaster!" I say, looking up from trying to decipher the rest of the writing on my hand.

"It kept launching my toast in the air and they would land on the kitchen floor. Disgusting and not fit for a man of my stature and social standing! Just be a man and eat your bread straight from the bag," The Duce closes the freezer door, "Ice Cream. Let's try a few doors down."

"But I showed you the baseball glove trick," I protest, trundling the cart along, no gnomes though.

"That's no way to live. You may have been content to loll around in poverty before I arrived, but now you need to get ready for the big time and start living bling bling so you don't freak out when we become overnight zillionaires," Il Duce says, stopping and opening another freezer door, "Oh, by the way, I opened up a corporate charge card in the band's name to fund our new lifestyle. I'm still waiting for it to come in the mail though."

"What?" I say, stopping and almost getting run over by the shopping cart of the old lady behind me.

Il Duce starts piling frozen dinners in the cart, "It takes money to make money, George."

"Look," I say, slamming the cart to the side of the aisle so the pushy old lady can get by, "I'm in enough debt already from going to school. I can't afford any more."

The old lady stops and hands me some coupons, "Here, sonny, it sounds like you need them more than me. At least I have social security."

Chorus--Funnybear

Funnybear digs the toaster out of the trash out back. It's frozen and dented, but in it Funnybear and the others will heat the eternal flame of liberty and justice for all.

And bread.

Funnybear hides the toaster in Funnybear's closet room and it becomes the symbol of the resistance. The partisans. The minutemen. The

revolutionaries. Although Funnybear, George, and Alexander call the movement by its codename: "Toasty."

When a meeting is called, one of the rebels says something like "It's a bit TOASTY in here, isn't it?" and then Funnybear and the other freedom fighters meet in Funnybear's closet for a Boston Toast Party ten minutes later.

This evening even though Il Duce is out, they still meet in the closet clandestinely. One can never be too careful. His secret police are everywhere. They're so secret that Funnybear has never even seen them but George claims they woke him up in the middle of the night once, shining a flashlight in his eyes and demanding to know where the bread crumbs in the hallway came from. George claimed he was eating crackers in bed and they let him go back to sleep. George said he was sort of disappointed because he had his final words already prepared, after Nathan Hale, "My only regret is that I have but only one slice to give for my band."

George really shouldn't eat right before bedtime, Funnybear thinks, he gets offensive to historical figures with his delusions of grandeur.

Alexander puts a sliced bagel in the toaster and says, "I think we should change our name. 'Toasty' isn't fierce; it's cute."

George, sitting on a stack of Funnybear's porn, says, "How about 'The Masters Of Toast'?"

"No, no masters, no slaves. All bakery goods are equal here. Let's pass on to more important business please. Any luck on getting Uncle Teddy to join us and vote 'The Dude' out?" Funnybear says, squatting over some of Funnybear's old shoes.

Alexander puts on the baseball glove, "I approached him the other day, and said that he should join us for some TOAST, but he said he and Flannery only ate raw food now. Then 'The Dude' came in the room and I had to drop it."

"We should just approach him openly. I guarandamntee he'd side with us," George says, his ear against a closet wall, listening for movement in the house.

"We should just kick 'The Dude' out ourselves and not worry about it," Alexander says, getting into position for the bagel.

"No," Funnybear says, putting Funnybear's hand over Funnybear's heart, "We'd be no better than 'The Dude' if we did that. We've got to win Uncle Teddy over freely and democratically boot 'The Dude.' What's the Nietzsche line? Whoever fights monsters should guard against becoming a

monster oneself."

The bagel pops up, slaps against the shelf at the top of the closet and drops into Alexander's outstretched glove. "Who brought the butter?" Alexander says.

There's a knock downstairs. Funnybear and George and Alexander look at one another. "The secret police," George whispers, "Catashitstrophic!"

Funnybear volunteers to go down and answer the door, while the others hurriedly eat the bagel unbuttered and hide the rest of the evidence of the meeting.

Funnybear goes down and opens the door, to be greeted by two men dressed as military police complete with white helmets reading "M.P." The secret police! They exist!

Middle Eight--II Duce

They finally caught up to me,
AWOL six weeks from the army.
The M.P.s were in my bedroom,
When I came home from zip zap zoom.
My merry chase led to the brig.
How will the Emus get a gig?
The absence of my leadership . . .
No! I must give the police the slip!

Verse--Theodorable

Flannery and I are lying in bed naked when there's a knock at the front door downstairs. "I hope it's not the M.P.s again. That was heavy," Flannery says.

I roll over and kiss her sweet lips. "Let's let somebody else get the door," I say, playing with her hair.

From downstairs, Funnybear yells, "Hey Uncle Teddy! It's your folks!"

I throw off the covers, jump out of bed, and scoop up my clothes from the floor. "I'll be right down," I yell to Funnybear, then I hyperventilate to Flannery, "Oh, oh, oh, I forgot. I thought it was next weekend! The parent visit! Quick! Get in the closet!"

Flannery looks on, bemused, putting on her glasses and reaching for the rest of her clothes, "Ted, you don't live in the dorm anymore. I'm sure they'll wait in the living room, until we're ready. Just calm down, and we'll

go down together. Now where's my underwear?"

I try to put on my pants both legs at once. I slip on a library book and fall down on the floor. While I'm prone, I see her tiger striped panties under the bed. I grab them, sit up, and take a deep breath, "It's just that they've never met you before. Here's your panties."

"Gross. I wish you wouldn't call them that, you sound like a dirty old man, 'Little girl, let me see your panties,'" Flannery says, taking them from my hand, "They're underwear."

"Whatever they are, please get them on!" I say, struggling with my shirt.

Where's the neckhole? Where's the neckhole? I stand up and stumble around the room bumping into walls. "Stop!" Flannery says.

"You were trying to stick your head through an armhole," she says, pulling me by the ears into light, "Stop being a spazz and mellow out, Teddy Boy. C'mon, let's do some deep breathing."

Flannery does some deep breathing while I put the rest of my clothes on. "Ah, om," she says, "I feel much better and ready to meet your parents and I'm still half-naked."

"C'om, c'om," I say, listening for footsteps on the stairs.

"Oh, Teddy Bear, you forgot something," Flannery says, holding my tighty whiteys between her right thumb and index finger, "I wish you'd wear boxers by the way. These things really should be called panties, they're so silly looking."

I exhale deeply and drop trou. "Hey! You must not be that nervous, you're getting poky!" Flannery says, "Hi, Mr. Winky!"

"Are you quite satisfied?" I say, irritated, putting my underwear on while Flannery puts the rest of her clothes on.

"No," she says with a wink, "Think we have time for a quickie?"

Chorus--Funnybear

Uncle Teddy's parents come for a visit and watch television all day. Uncle Teddy says that's what they do at home too. They order pizza for everybody though and talk the entire time. It's as if the television is just another participant in the conversation. Uncle Teddy's Mom is the typical Italian mother, pretty, round, talking constantly with mouth and hands, and urging everyone to always eat more. "Mangia!" she says, or something like that whenever a plate is empty. Uncle Teddy's Dad is a small, quiet guy dressed in an uncomfortable suit and tie, but pretty funny once Funnybear and the others get him talking. He's from England and you can hear the

accent when he talks.

They ask about everybody they've met before and who Uncle Teddy's mentioned on the phone. They're actually asking about Il Duce when the front door slams and he comes running in. He says, "Hurry up and pack! We've got to go on the road! They're right behind me!"

Il Duce sees Uncle Teddy's parents and says, "Oh, hello, pleased to meet you. You'll have to leave now I'm afraid. The M.P.s will likely be bringing the SWAT team since I stole their jeep."

As Supremes Allied Commander, it falls to Funnybear to end this. Funnybear stands up, sticks Funnybear's hand out, palm up, and says to Il Duce, in a Motown lilt, "Stop! In the name of love! Before you break my heart! Think it over!"

"What?" Il Duce says, frantically gathering things of his from the living room and shoving them in a black plastic garbage bag, "This is no time for ha-has or insubordination! We must go! Load the van!"

"It's over, Il Duce," Funnybear says, taking the garbage bag, "Just surrender."

"But the band! I have to be the leader of the band! You need me!" Il Duce says, taking the garbage bag back.

"I think we need to have a band meeting," George says, shutting off the tv.

"So moved," Funnybear says.

"Seconded," Alexander says.

"We have a quorum then," George says.

"We don't need a meeting! I'm in charge here! This is an emergency! I declare martial law!" Il Duce says and runs back to his room.

Uncle Teddy's Dad gets up. "Well, the television's off so looks like it's time to go home," he says, yawning and stretching like this is an everyday occurrence.

"Wait, honey, sit down," Uncle Teddy's Mom says, looking worried.

"O.k.," George says, "I make a motion to dismiss Il Duce as manager."

"So moved," Funnybear says.

"Seconded," Alexander says.

"Any discussion?" George says.

"Do you think the SWAT team will block our car in?" Uncle Teddy's Dad says, "And, if so, will we be on the telly?"

"Uh, I don't know Dad," Uncle Teddy says.

"I call for a vote if there's no further discussion," Alexander says.

"I second that emotion," Funnybear says.

"All in favor of dismissing Il Duce say 'Aye,'" George says.

"Aye!" everyone says, even Uncle Teddy's parents and Flannery.

"All against the motion to remove Il Duce say 'Nay,'" George says.

It's quiet except for the sounds of Il Duce pillaging his room.

"The motion carries, even with the unanimity qualification. Il Duce is dismissed," George says, "I call to adjourn."

"So moved," Funnybear says.

"Seconded," Alexander says.

"All in favor, bang your heads," George says, raising the devil sign of pinkie and index fingers raised, thumb across middle and ring fingers on each hand.

Il Duce comes out of his room loaded with garbage bags full of his stuff, "Well, are you coming or not?"

Funnybear stands, "Il Duce, you have been dismissed as manager. I must ask for the keys to the van and for your unconditional surrender."

"What? After everything I've done for you, this is how I'm treated? When the wheel of fortune turns a bit to the south, you cast me off like yesterday's garbage? What happened to loyalty? What happened to our plans together?" Il Duce says, looking hurt.

"What happened to our toaster? What you did to the toaster has been done to you. Spin that karma on your wheel of fortune," Funnybear says.

"Well, I want you to know that whatever I did, I did in our best interests. Now I'm taking the van and leaving. Somewhere out there is a rock and roll band that will show some gratitude for my hard work," Il Duce says and walks off.

Everybody looks at one another, glad we didn't have to shoot him, string him up upside down, and kick in his head.

"Are you just going to let him steal the van?" Flannery says, after the moment of silence.

"Oh, please please please let him steal the van," Alexander says, folding his hands to pray.

"He did do some work for us so I guess it's all right if he keeps the van," George says, shrugging, "It can't be worth much anyway. It's always on the verge of falling apart."

"Can we watch The Wheel Of Fortune?" Uncle Teddy's Dad says, "It

should be on soon."

We go out on the front porch. The van jerks its way up the street, backfiring like a 21-gun salute. We salute Il Duce by mooning him as he rolls past. He gives us the finger and smiles.

Coda--Funnybear

The M.P.s arrive in a tank and retrieve their jeep. Funnybear and the others tell them Il Duce's trundled off, and they leave in cold pursuit. Apparently they have yet to catch him since The Duce sends the house a postcard every once in a while. Funnybear always hangs it on the fridge. Il Duce must harbor no hard feelings towards the band since the postcards are pleasant like the kind you'd get from a friend on vacation. There's never a return address, but so far he's managed a mariachi band in Texas, an Elvis impersonator in Vegas, a pop-punk band in the Bay area, and a folksinger in Portland. He must have to keep moving on whenever the M.P.s catch up to him. Funnybear wonders why they don't just let him go but a deal is a deal Funnybear supposes. Still, if someone wanted out of a relationship with Funnybear, Funnybear would just let them go. People should be free, even if they are flakes. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and all that. Some people shoot their lovers when they want to leave them, but get over it. Go drink a beer instead and soak your head. Maybe if you weren't such a control freak to begin with, people would actually want to stick around you voluntarily. Funnybear isn't even mad at Il Duce; Funnybear's just glad he's not making Funnybear live under prohibition anymore. And when the corporate charge card finally arrived in the mail, George cut it up and sent it back, so no harm done there. Plus the gigs Duce booked have been good. So happy trails Il Duce!

Yips!

1) The Golem's Mighty Swing by James Sturm

Great graphic novel about a Jewish barnstorming baseball team called The Stars Of David who take on a golem as their cleanup hitter. The results are more than just R.B.I.s. Clean stark artwork and excellent comic storytelling. (Drawn and Quarterly 2002)

2) It Can't Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis

This 1935 novel by America's first Nobel Prize in Literature winner imagined how fascism could sweep to power in the USA. Reading it in 2003, the America it describes is oddly familiar and that of course is quite disturbing, which probably explains why teachers in America use 1984 and Brave New World as their fave dystopian novels warning of totalitarianism and the future, great works and all, but they're also nice and safely British. This one hits a little too close to home, but because of that it might be what we need more.

3) Punch & Pie edited by Felizon Vidad And Todd Taylor

Great short story collection from the publishers of Razorcake. It features a host of underground and indie fiction writers such as Jim Munroe, Sean Carswell, and some clown named Wred Fright. (\$8 postpaid from Gorsky Press, PO Box 42024, Los Angeles, CA 90042 www.gorskypress.com)

4) The Singles 1977-1980 by Riff Raff

Oh, boy, I've been waiting for this a long time, finally a collection of Billy Bragg's old punk band. And it's great! Just imagine Bragg backed by a scrappy bash 'em out band and that's what you have on this cd, including an early version of the Bragg classic "Richard" and the sublime "I Wanna Be A Cosmonaut." (available from Wiggy at www.billybragg.co.uk)

5) Big Blue Comics #1

More comics surrealistic brilliance from the Fightin' Fun Collective. This one's a tribute to one of the toughest superheroes in God's America. He fights fifth columnists, fourth dimensionalites, Adolf Hitler, camels, a giant crab, clowns, Horseshoe, yeti men, Dr. Brainbeard, Trojan Horses, aliens, Roman soldiers, superhero sidekicks, vampires, Mr. Magical Punches, tornadoes, Father Time, pro-wrestlers, trees, mummies, sword-swallowers, The Bomb, a man dressed as a bunny, and robotic Abe Lincolns, all in 24 pages! (300 cents or a bottle of vodka postpaid from P.O. Box 770332, Lakewood, OH 44107 www.mediocrityoflife.com)

6) Eddie Campbell's Egomania #2

This half comic half magazine by artist Eddie Campbell replaced his long-running and most excellent Bacchus series. Now this series has

gone to the great newsstand in the sky as well. But it was great while it lasted and this issue was even better than the first, featuring a long and insightful interview with writer Alan Moore on his magical beliefs and the latest installment of Campbell's comic essay about the history of humor. I don't think comics get any better than the works of Campbell and Moore, and this issue, like From Hell, puts both of these greats between the same covers. (www.eddiecampbellcomics.com)

7) Enter Avariz by Marc Ngui

Cool graphic novel book with nifty foldouts about a charming naive land, Zak Meadow, threatened by greedy corporate (I'm sorry is "greedy" and "corporate" redundant?) interests. Ngui's art is most excellent and his political sensibility even better. (www.bumblenut.com)

8) Perpetual Motion Roadshow

Wonderful idea by indie novelist Jim Munroe, get 3 indie artists/writers/whatever and put them on the road. The initial run was a 7 day tour to 7 cities each month for 3 months and the show I played on in Cleveland with Charlie-Girl Anders and Marc Ngui at Mac's Backs was most fun as was the show I caught the next month featuring Emily Pohl-Weary, Matt Blackett, and Bill Brown! (www.nomediakings.net)

9) The Joslyns

Playing guitar in this Cleveland band is a lot of fun! Thanks guys! (www.thejoslyns.zom.com)

10) Pat's In The Flats

This Cleveland club located in the real flats next to an oil refinery hosts the coolest underground grass roots music shows in town. Very nice and friendly place! (www.patsintheflats.com)

Yips! Are Good Things!

Zine Yips!

1) The Heart Star by Christoph Meyer

Charming one-shot well-crafted minicomic about a ghost in "Gohio" trying to rest in peace. Comes complete with heart shaped holepunches.

(\$2 postpaid, Post Office Box 106, Danville, OH 43014 USA)

2) Lunch Hour Comix by Robert Ullman

I've always enjoyed Ullman's slice of life comics. He's gotten better with his art over the years and now he's getting conceptual on us. This minicomic is composed of strips he completed start to finish in an hour. Nice and zen. (www.lurid.com for info)

3) Zine World: A Reader's Guide To The Underground Press #18

More zine reviews than you can shake a Luddite at! If only it could be published more frequently! But given the amount of work this project takes, it's a miracle that Saint Jerianne and crew get it out at all! This is definitely the best looking issue ever as well for those who care about style. (\$4 postpaid, P.O. Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156 USA)

4) **Tight Pants #10**

Maddy writes a column in Razorcake, which is great, but Tight Pants is all Maddy and that's even greater. Class-conscious punk rocker obsessed by cereal and the midwest and can tell a story like few others, complete with hilarious simple doodles. Fun reading! (\$3 postpaid, 296A Nassau Ave. #3L, Brooklyn NY 11222).

5) **The Inner Swine #30**

A hilarious issue! I love Jeff's rants, and this issue is full of them on mostly violence-associated subjects such as world peace, video games, Junkyard Wars, weddings, piracy, moviegoing, giant rat hallucinations, and things that piss him off. (\$2 postpaid, Jeff Somers, PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030 mreditor@innerswine.com www.innerswine.com)

6) **Guerilla Deprogrammer 01.01**

Yes, there's lots of nifty things online, but let's be honest we don't always have the time or patience to sit in front of the computer and read them all so this 4 page pdf factsheet designed to be downloaded and disseminated offline is a great idea to get ideas about real freedom and real democracy (not the mockeries of those things our current political structure praises) out and about beyond the world wide web. This thing has more truth in one paragraph than Fox News has in an entire day of broadcasts methinks. (www.gnn.tv)

7) **The Ineffables #0 by Craig Bogart**

Usually comic book science is long on imagination and short on explanation (Hey, Mr. Fantastic, how do those unstable molecules actually work again?), but The Ineffables, while as fun as The Fantastic Four, use real life math and science to take on threats far scarier than Dr. Doom like religious conservative think tanks trying to impose their nutty schemes such as "intelligent design" (creationism in a new suit, since the old one got ripped to shred by evolutionary theory--why can't these people accept some Biblical stories as allegories? Is it that hard to postulate a God behind evolution? Are they really that offended by being the descendents of apes?) on the public school system. (www.theineffables.com)

8) **Low Hug #8**

Well produced popcult/perzine. This issue features features (yes, I wrote "features" twice on purpose, now three times) on coffee consumption, closing album tracks (with special Replacements and Elvis

Costello sections), Ghost World, laundry, the Underground Publishing Conference, and Ozzfest, all subjects I'm fond of (well, maybe not Ozzfest so much), all well-written and engaging. Good reading! (\$3 postpaid from A.J. Michel, Low Hug, Station A PO Box 2574 Champaign IL 61825-2574 lowhug@yahoo.com www.lowhug.blogspot.com)

9) Leeking Ink #27

Well-crafted perzine that covers nearly a year in Davida's life. It's kind of like following a soap opera addictive, but the best parts were the breakout articles including recipes and an update on the subway vigilante Bernard Goetz who now dresses up as a giant peapod (Penelope Pea Pod to be precise) to support vegetarianism (I swear I am not making this up), an article so funny I nearly wet myself! (\$3 postpaid from Davida Gypsy Breier, PO Box 963, Havre De Grace MD 21078 davida@leekinginc.com www.leekinginc.com)

10) Judas Goat Quarterly #17 "Anti-Peace Issue"

Intelligent commentary on contemporary politics (you know, war without end and the rise of fascism in the USA). There's some good sense here so you know our government will probably do exactly the opposite. (\$3 postpaid from Grant Schreiber, 1223 W Granville #2N Chicago, IL 60660 egospark1@juno.com)

Zine Yips! Are Good Zines!

Oh My Gosh, It's A Letter!

Wred . . .

Thanks for sending the latest installment of The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus--I quite enjoyed it. The chapter about George's art project based on the Marianne Faithfull/Rolling Stones candy bar legend got me wondering about all the other music-related legends that George could stage: 16oz of semen being pumped out of Rod Stewart's stomach; Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, the groupie and the shark; Alice Cooper biting the head off a chicken . . . the possibilities are endless! I want a P.F.E. t-shirt!

Take care,

A.J.

Grazie for the kind words! George tried to stage the Led Zep legend once but Funnybear said the shark costume was too hot and quit right in the middle of the video shoot! George was so mad that he threw all the tuna out the window and swore never to work with nonprofessionals again! There are no plans for t-shirts, but concert t-shirts are an integral part of rock lore. I've never been too good at silkscreening so my bands usually just went to the thrift store bought a bunch of cheap t-shirts, and just wrote our bandname on them with a Sharpie. The t-shirt idea is good though. O.k., if anybody wants to make a PFE t-shirt to wear (no selling them to the punters please) that's cool with me! Please send me a picture of you in it and I'll run it in the next issue. Thanks A.J., great stationery too!

Merch Table

The next issue (#6) should be out by the end of September, but email me first to make sure. I enjoy trading with other zine publishers so it's usually a done deal but please email or write first to make sure. Otherwise it's \$3 postpaid. Additional copies of this issue, #4, #3, and #2 are \$3 each postpaid as well. Issue #1 (32 pages) is available for \$2 postpaid. Get any 2 back issues for \$5 postpaid or the set of 1-5 for \$10.



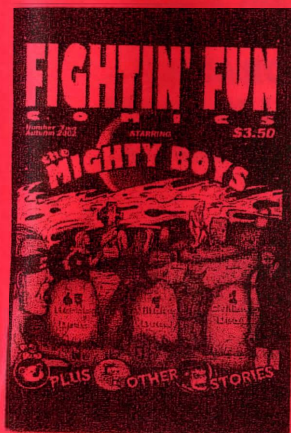
Yeast?--Dick Bennett 7" Ep. This wonderful record's on clear vinyl and has four songs on it: "Johnson Wants To Rant," "Generic Smokes," "Big Daddy Pane," and "Warm Fuzz." \$2 postpaid and 10 years old. Could this be what The Emus sound like? Decide for yourself!

V/A--Let's Get Killed 12" LP. This compilation from Kent's Cockpunch Records has lots of great stuff on it including Kill The Hippies, Radar Secret Service, and me!

Maximumrockandroll called my contribution "bizarre" and Punk Planet called the whole record "a quirky collection of obscure bands." \$8 postpaid and you get a free 7". Guess which one?



Fightin' Fun Comics #2. Very funny superteam comic book including the Secret Origin of Astronaut Urine Gorilla written by me. Plus the world's horniest superhero The Bucktoothed Ghost & more! \$4 postpaid and you get a free 7"! Wonder what that could be? Hmm . . .



Well-hidden cash, money orders/checks to "Fred Wright," or Paypal please. Prices are for those residing in the USA. If you're residing elsewhere, please write first and we'll figure something out. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery.

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THIS IS A FICTION. THIS IS A SERIALIZED NOVEL. THIS IS THE FIFTH ISSUE. THIS IS ABOUT A GARAGE ROCK BAND CALLED THE PORNOGRAPHIC FLABBERGASTED EMUS. THIS IS QUITE SILLY. THIS IS \$3 POSTPAID.

**"MULTIPLE INCOME STREAM OPPORTUNITY"/
"ANOTHER MULTIPLE INCOME STREAM OPPORTUNITY"
IS THE TWELTH CHAPTER. THE BAND'S BROKE AS SPRING SEMESTER STARTS PLUS KEYBOARDIST ALEXANDER DEPOT BECOMES A TOUGH GUY, BASSIST GEORGE JAH OPENS AN AFTERHOURS CLUB, DRUMMER FUNNYBEAR COMES UP WITH A PAY PER VIEW SCHEME, AND GUITARIST THEODORABLE MOONLIGHTS.**

**"THE FRIENDLY FASCIST"/"BOO COUPS AND WOO HOOS"
IS THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND'S NEW HOUSEMATE IL DUCE MOVES IN PLUS GEORGE JAH FIGHTS WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, THEODORABLE CLEANS THE HOUSE, FUNNYBEAR EATS ARMY GRUB, AND ALEXANDER DEPOT EXPLAINS THE WITCH'S CURSE.**

"DO THE REICH THING"/"GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME LOTS OF BEER" IS THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND'S IRONFISTED MANAGER SEIZES CONTROL PLUS FUNNYBEAR HIDES IN HIS CLOSET, THEODORABLE HAS TROUBLE PUTTING ON HIS UNDERWEAR, ALEXANDER DEPOT LEARNS HOW TO PRONOUNCE 'Z' IN CANADA, AND GEORGE JAH BUYS SOME WAFFLES.

THIS SHOULD BE PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER. THIS IS NOT REALLY PORNOGRAPHIC BUT DOES CONTAIN LANGUAGE SUCH AS THE WORD "TOAST" WHICH MAY OFFEND SOME READERS. THIS IS COPYWRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT FOR THE COVER IMAGE WHICH IS COURTESY OF MICHAEL DEE.