

OH THOSE
WONDERFUL
WINGS

BY MAJA D'Aoust



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the old



100

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your story

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scattered by the wind. You

stated out as the case.

...and the ...

the happiest man I'd seen

100

"Hark" "I hear her whistling,
I must catch her on the fly:
One more scoop of beer I'd like,
Once more before I die."
The hobo stopped, his head fell back,
he'd sung his last refrain.
His partner took his hat and shoes,
and caught the east-bound train.

Hobo poem

On the freeway in LA. It was summer and hotter than lava laid on lucifer. Traffic had slowed everything to a stifling smog smeared in the eyes of all its hapless harem. We came to a stop at an underpass, sighing sweatily, soaking up the shade. I looked over and you were there. Up against the side of the underpass in plain view of all under heaven you stood. A huge man, black as spit, your girthy belly hung down over your bright red speedos which did less than cover your ample testes. They were all you wore, save a small piece of cloth tied round your neck as a miniature cape. You were Superbum. In your plump swollen licorice fists you held two chicken drumsticks that had greased a perfect circle ensnaring your smile. Underfoot lay the evidence of your feast, scattered bones and chunks of flesh. You stared out at the cars that passed with icy white teeth set in a lubricated leer. You were the happiest man I'd seen all day.

Walking down the street in the city, suddenly a shrill shriek sharp as knives cuts my guts. Across from me there is commotion, community concern is centered around a single man: a Bum laughing. I stop and stand still, blending into buildings, tiger in the trees. The Bum, after emptying his lean belly of its substantial snickers shoots a snot rocket and resituates himself into position. He has limberly logged down two branches of lumber with ample foliage which he now covers himself in and settles in sitting stiller than stone. After a while all who saw him perform his present imprisonment have passed on the street. He waits. A young couple arm in arm come close to the tramps tree. The squirrely squatter parts the branches as a sasquatch and emerges howling with all the wild in the world. The couple scream the screams of dreams, and the Bum just lets loose laughter, soon the whole street can't defeat it and joins in. Laughing.

There is a man who sits on the stoop of a chinese restaurant. I pass him every day. He has a shopping cart full of empty cardboard boxes. He is always counting them moving them up and down in a furious flutter of rigid waves. Every morning he is eating a carrot, (carrots as you know reverse liver damage caused by alcohol) every morning we say hello to each other. I usually interupt his conversation, he is talking to himself. Cusing bloody murder, and cursing the day he was born, but he always looks over at me, smiles says hello, then continues on with his dicussions. One morning I was in a hurry, riding my bike on the street past him, and was pulling out to avoid a car door, "Watch out!" the bum screamed, I slammed on the brakes. I was nearly hit by a car, and he saved my life. This seemingly oblivious man trapped in his own head saw something I did not. Parting his psizophrenic sea, he granted me safe passage.

You were wearing a huge puffy winter coat even though it was the middle of summer. You were on a bicycle that was too small for your long spindly spider legs. They bent as stiff straws nearly hitting your chin on every pass of the chain. The wheels squeaked as they turned, laboring, iron on steel waiting for the slightest error to allow entropy in.

You saw me across the street and cut across the road through traffic to get over to my side. "Excuse me! Excuse me!" you shouted at me as you spun a silvery strand with arachnid appendages up behind me.

"I'm a homeless comedian and I wonder if you can just spare me a moment of your time." "ok" I answered.

You started to speak but then got lost somewhere along the way and looked down at the street in defeat. "I guess, I guess I don't really have any jokes." You said and your sad little bike carried you away from me, a black widow no web with which to woo.

I was working in a restaurant and you were pounding on the door. Waving something frantically, as a man deserted on an island flagging down a ship. I couldn't tell what it was. I opened the door and you wore desperation, a dress draping over drugs and flesh. A bum, you were holding a hemorrhoid pillow, smeared lipstick covered your pink face in a greasy grimace. A sad clown if e're there was. "Please!" you begged "please, I have this pillow, will you buy it from me, one dollar I need a dollar." You were crying, shouting with an urgency of need which frightened me. My boss yelled at me to close the door and I shut it. I was scared. Battered by your bereivement, and even though you were probably just going to buy dope with it, I snuck out the back door tracked you down and gave you some money, but told you to keep your pillow. You jumped in the air and clicked your heels as you ran away laughing.

Beach party San diego. A balmy summer night, a fire pit. The crowd was all a bunch of comic geeks (myself included). I was hangin towards the back and I watched a man who I could smell coming, an ancient Oannes who rose from the ocean to the shore to teach us all a lesson in the humility of humanity. He was making a bee line to our fire pit, no one noticed him at first really. He flanked the flames as they rose from the sand and swirled away in smokey circles surrounding our heads. He stood next to the pit, he was a lobster, one of those bums who live on the beach and are sunburned so bad they are crimson crustaceon. He had with him a bicycle, of the ten speed variety. He had with him a huge gash on his shaved head, bleeding profusely. He raised the bicycle up over his body and with a mighty scythian yell threw it on the flames scattering sparks, slivery scouring spears into the crowd. He looked through the demon in his view at all of us.

He yelled at the top of his lungs "He deserves it!" Our little army surrounding the pit all stared with white eggs of eyes scrambled in disbelief. Girls clutched the nearest lad in a swoon of southerly distress. The man then proceeded to walk uncomfortably close to the party goers one at a time. He would sway in, penetrating the proximity enough to unleash the blood from his unhygenic gash on thier designer shoes. No one said a single word to him, they all just tried to pretend he wasn't there, that he simply didn't exist. An entire group of people simultaneously arrived at an unspoken agreement to pretend another human being out of the physical plane and into the relm of shadows. I just stood in the back of the crowd watching as each person concentrated on making him invisible untill he dissapeared.

Every day I hated walking down that street because of you. Floating filthy fly on the side of my path. Every day some stupid sexual comment thrown at me like rocks, to bring down the doe. You were a teenage bum, who would snicker with his friends every time you talked about my tits. I would flit into flights of fancy where I forced you to bow down before me while I kicked your slimey teeth down your serpentine throat. But I never said anything to you, just chewed my own teeth till I tasted the bones. One day I left earlier to avoid you, but you were there, without your friends, walking in front of my building. You looked at me so friendly, and said "Hi! Good morning!" as if you hadn't been slicing the same cut in me forever.

"FUCK YOU". I said.

You seemed quite shocked at this outburst, as if it were unwarranted and unexpected.

"You Bitch! Its people like you who make Serial Killers you know!" was your reply.

How can you shit on someone everyday and think they'll feed you? More shit will come out. Suddenly a flash of truth struck me as a silver needle of light in the blackness of my eye. You didn't know. You didn't understand what you were doing to me. You had no idea I thought about the shitty things you said to me, and sometimes they made me cry. I spent the whole bus ride to work that day writing you a letter explaining how horrible you made me feel everyday and that my reaction was your harvest of all the shit seeds you planted, you made Frankenstein in me, and now he was back at the lab. I didn't go to work that day, I rode the bus back to you. I walked all day till I found you. I gave you the letter, touched your hand and I told you I was sorry for what I said. I realized I couldn't be angry with you because you had nothing to do with me. I never saw you again after that, you dissapeared.

I was walking down the street in San Francicso. I saw a man walk by who was fucked in a way that can only be quantified as "severely". The youngish man looked like most euro-aryan images of Jesus issued forth by the anglo saxons to trick people into thinking he was white and pretty. The Bum however was dingy and dirty and had some possibly poop on his pants. He was walking, staggering really towards me and I got out of his way. He had his eyes closed, his mouth open and his head thrown back, a position most unconducive to the proper navigation of any vessel. I could only stare in a sort of "no sound when you scream in a dream" way as he walked full force into a wall. He jerked back a bit, and a river of blood began to pass through the damn of his flesh down his shirt and onto the sidewalk. He kept walking, like nothing happened. His head thrown back and eyes closed. I wondered where he was.

You always stood outside the restaurant I worked in, begging for change. Your grey bowl cut falling over your eyes, sheepdog standing, a slim line of drool traced over your chin. Your wife(?) would wait in a van which you always parked in the handicapped spot at the 7-11 (leaving the wheelchair folks with slurpeeless summers). She would mouth breathe the hours away like a fish out of water. Sometimes you came in to use the bathroom. One day you were in there an awfully long time. The mexican lady who was always in the kitchen (from 10am-2am) Needed to use the bathroom (bad). You wouldn't answer though she beat her hefty, potato chopping fists into the door. Finally she kicked the door in, with stout sturdy legs that stood for 10 hours every day. You were revealed. As the doors to sodom parted you stood there masturbating into the sink. She threw ran laughing, shouting to all what she saw and you never used our bathroom again.

I was walking home from Art school, under my arm I held a sculpture I had made. It was a huge bust with its head thrown back in a cry to heaven. Brows knitted up in a sorrowful sweater, very tragic and all that. I started to notice that I was being followed. Footsteps festered in my wake, stealthily stealing closer and closer to my heels. Finally I wheeled facing my pursuer. You were a bum. White trash, with joint tattoos, long hair, harley shirt, drunk at 7 in the morning, black dirt encrusted fingernails scratching your body ceaselessly. Once your eyes caught mine and you realized I was hip to your happenings you approached me with the frenzy of a ferret as I readied my fists for play. "That's it!" You shouted "Thats a perfect rendition of me! That's how I feel!" you said pointing at my sculpture, grabbing it lovingly. You gave it a hug and then went on your way. It was the best compliment on my artwork I ever got.

You were sitting on the corner on a huge pile of garbage, a dragon languidly lounging in his lair on his jewels. It was no doubt trash that sat as prey to hours of hunter gatherer skill and sanction. You looked up at me and asked if I could spare a smile for an old man who had none left. I smiled at you and gave you a dollar. You leapt from off your heaping mound, and bounded to the street corner. There an old rotund mexican lady covered in grease till she shone like a big balloon was selling something. I walked by and saw you devouring with utter delight the spoils of her grill. Huge hot dogs sweating from every pore wrapped up in piece of blistering bacon dripped from every available inch of the firey festoon. "This is my favorite thing to eat!" You chuckled into your pork as I passed.

Party in L.A. It was Halloween. A bunch of art kids, being spooky. The array of costumes spread out in front of me, neat little sandwiches on a platter. Robots, cats, sexy school girls, zombies. Why is it halloween seems to be an excuse for girls to be whores? One costume struck me as surprisingly authentic, a man dressed as a bum. Dirty tattered and torn, ratted rotted hair. even filthy fingernails fluttered at the end of his fingertips. I watched as the willful wolf in shorn clothing approached the bar. He began pouring portions of every bottle into his cup, drinking from it till there was enough room, and then repeating the procedure. Again and again he hit the booze like a bitch untill some unknown force field staggered him into a corner to watch the party. The devil in the middle of a church unseen through the sinners, this man who we all ignored every other day now walked with us, the source of all his sorrow now serving as disguise.

A woman named Angel used to stop me everyday on my way to work. She sang songs of such sadness you forgot who you were because wrapped in the wings of her voice, feathers don't part easy. The sounds passed from her heart up through her throat and over gums blackened rotten gums, riders who had lost thier white horses in the swamps. She would say I was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen and wanted to serenade me like a siren to her queen. When the sound came up she pulled it from the ground that sank out from under me and turned into a sea with no one floating in it but her and me. All the world seemed to stop in the force of the winds which whistled from her wiles. No one in the street could bear it, and those who normally were rush and gush off to work without stoping to smile were paralyzed once caught in the zap gun beam of her voice.

I had another encounter with the same Bum who saved my life (which is somewhere in this volume) when I was riding my bicycle. He was outside of an Albertsons enjoying a beer at a picnic table with a bunch of his bum friends. they were all swapping stories and yelling and what not. As I approached he noticed me (since we said hello to each other every morning). As I walked by thier table I made a deliberate point of pouring on the sugar for him and was super nice, waving and asked him how he was doing. His friends dropped thier jaws in amazment that thier bummy friend knew a young girl, and they all just stared at me. His face shone out with a grace of pride. After I had passed I heard them congradulating him, and I knew I had made him King of the Bums for a day.

You've paid the going wages,
That's what kept us on the bum,
You say you've done your duty,
You chin whiskered son-of-a-gun.
We have sent your kids to college,
But still you rave and shout,
And call us tramps and hoboes,
And pesky goabouts. (Millburn, 105)

No Alcohol town	Chain Canc	Daylight	Don't Give Up	Go	Town Allows Alcohol
Traveller	Officer	Man with a gun	Beater	Don't go this way	Re-loaded
Judge	Dog	Nothing doing here	Be Careless On The Way	Get Out Fast	Good For A Moment
Remember look for signs	Poor Man	Elaborate Man	Unhappy Lady	Be Quiet	Not Much More
Unsafe Place	Case Inactive	Case Active	Not Trapped	Safe Camp	Bad Dog
Tramp Here	Wealthy	Here is the place	Keep away	But religion get lost	Afraid
Be ready to defend yourself	Alright OK	Gentlemen	Food for working	Doubtful	Easy man

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