

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 his girlfriend Flannery. 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. But as it's almost the end of spring semester and Funnybear's quit school, Alexander's graduating, and George is busy with art projects, other things are on their minds, not least among them finishing the band's first album.

Introduction

Welcome to the seventh and final installment of the serialized novel The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus! I hope you enjoy it! This issue includes three chapters—numbers 18, 19, and 20—as we wrap things up. To celebrate the successful conclusion of the serial publication of the novel, I'll be touring on the Perpetual Motion Roadshow, along with Toronto rapper More Or Les and Chicago zinester Jessica Disobedience from September 16-23. The exact schedule isn't known yet but it looks like we'll be in Toronto the 16th., Ottawa the 17th., Montreal the 18th., New York City (Brooklyn) the 20th., Cleveland (Mac's Backs) the 21st., Cincinnati the 22nd., and Chicago the 23rd. If we'll be in your area, then please come on out as it should be a fun indie press show/reading/signing. There should be an additional local act on each night as well, adding to the festivities. You can find more information at www.nomediakings.net courtesy of Jim Munroe and the other volunteers who work on this fine project. I'll also try to post a schedule on my new website (www.wredfright.com).

I'd like to thank everybody who's read the novel, talked with me about it, traded zines with me, printed it (Print Center in New Castle and Curry Copy Center in Lakewood), delivered it (USPS), let me participate in their events, sell it at their stores or distros, etc. Special thanks go to Mike Dee (mp_escuela@yahoo.com) for providing all those great cover images! As a lark, we thought about running a porno image on the final issue but I went ultimately with the more, uh, tasteful shot of a rock and roll toilet. I took the photo and Mike made it look good with Photoshop. Mike and I played in the GoGoBots together so it was grand being able to collaborate again on a project. Rock on!

Cheers!

Wred Fright :)

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#18
On The Record
 b/w
 Love Depot

"You can quote me on this,
 When I'm near you, it's bliss!"

Intro--Alexander Depot

"Do you have any porn on here?" Bear asks, sitting in my easychair and pointing at my computer.

"Bear, we're here to work, not look at porn," I say, opening up another sound file for editing.

"Looking at porn gets me worked up," Jah says, lying on his back on my bed, elbows propping him up.

"Do you think 'Monkey Toothbrush' should go before 'Phylogynist Tryst Twist' or the other way around?" Abel says, leaning against the wall.

"I think the monkey's toothbrush should be shoved in the phylogynist. Do you have any pictures of that on your computer, Alexander?" Bear says, sticking the index finger of his right hand into a cavity formed by his left hand repeatedly.

"Let's just put them in alphabetical order, then we don't have to worry about arguing over sequencing," Jah says, yawning.

"It doesn't matter what order we edit the tracks in, we just need to put them in order when it's time to burn the cds," I say, excited we're finally finishing our record, even if we have to do it ourselves off the rough mix Karl Knipples gave us before he disappeared into rehab.

"Yes, but we'll need to decide the track order then so we might as well do it now while you're editing," Abel says, "Let's start the album off with a fast one!"

"Let's start with some porno samples like someone moaning having an orgasm. After all we don't want to disappoint all the perverts who are going to be buying The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus based on the name alone," Bear says, scratching himself.

"I think we should be atmospheric like the beginning of a film and have one of the dreamy instrumentals kick things off, like

'Chromatic Chihuahua,'" Jah says, soundtrackly.

"I actually like the porn idea, but we should mix it with people being flabbergasted, saying 'Oh my goodness!' and such," I say, adding, "Oh! We should have emu sounds too. What does an emu sound like anyway?"

"The female makes a booming sound and the male kind of makes a sound like a hog grunting, I read somewhere," Abel says, mimicking the sounds.

"Son, where are we going to find some Emu sounds? They're from Australia," Bear says, "We'll have to do them ourselves. I'll boom and George can squeal like a pig."

"I'm not squealing like a pig. I saw Deliverance," Jah says, sitting up, pulling his knees in, and wrapping his arms around them, "But there's emus in Ohio. There's a lot of Emu farms, they grow them for meat and their oil, which is supposed to be good for your hair and skin or something. I'm not sure that if I saw a big greasy bird that the first thing I would do is smear its grease on me, but some people swear by it."

"I bet an emuburger tastes just like chicken, since everything else does," I say, activating the modem, "I bet we can find some Emu sounds on the internet. I'll go online."

"Good idea, son. Dial up some porn while you're at it!" Bear says, pulling my easychair closer to the monitor, "We, um, need some of those sounds too."

Verse--George Jah

As if staying up all night after working at the bar to finish up my art projects and the Emus' record isn't bad enough, I can't sleep during the day either because there's squirrels in the walls of my room and they start loudly running around and chewing at first light.

The worst is taking a shower though. It sounds like they're right underneath the bathtub. I'm afraid one of these days I'm going to get in the tub and step on a squirrel.

So I haven't slept in days and I haven't washed in days. I look like a drifter. I'm so desperate I go to pick up the phone to call Karen to see if I can sleep and take a shower at her place but the phoneline's dead. Then I hear what sounds like a waterfall under the house.

Great! They've chewed through the phoneline and the waterpipe. I go outside and look around and sure enough I find a

broken window leading to the crawlspace underneath the house.

Well, I guess we know how they got inside the house now.

I stick my head in the broken window and look into the frankly horrifying crawlspace and I can hear the water clearly. I also think I see several sets of beady eyes staring back at me from the shadows.

There's no fucking way I'm crawling in there to shut off the water.

I go inside and get the phone and take it outside. I tap into the phonebox on the side of the house and plug the phone in.

Ah! A dialtone!

I call our landlords, the Blanks, and tell them that squirrels have invaded the house, cut the phone lines, and flooded the crawlspace. I tell them that if they want to protect their real estate investment they should get over here quick before the squirrels go to work on the rest of the house.

As I do this, neighbors walk down the street and stare at the homeless guy talking on the phone at the side of the house.

I wave at them.

Actually, this is a pretty good idea. If I ever need to call overseas or somewhere expensive, I'm just going to carry a phone and plug it into the phonebox on the side of somebody's house.

The whole situation is also absurdly brilliant. I should film this. It's like a Fellini movie or something. No, Hitchcock! Instead of birds, it's The Squirrels!

I go inside and get my video camera and start taping.

The results are better than I could have imagined. When the Blanks arrive, they bring their kids and everybody's packing bb guns. Instead of doing something sensible like fixing the window, repairing the phoneline, or shutting off the water, Mr. Blank climbs up on the roof and launches a squirrel jihad.

While he plays sniper, his wife and children patrol the perimeter of the house, shooting at birds, squirrels, and anything that moves, including me once.

It's terrifying but it makes for great cinema!

A few hours later, when the Blanks are satisfied that they've killed all the squirrels and most of the rest of the wildlife in the neighborhood, Mr. Blank crawls under the house and fixes the phoneline and waterpipe, but of course not the window.

He says he'll be back tomorrow for that.

Yeah, right.

Still, I'm happy, I've made a brilliant documentary about life in Ohio, illustrating the human relationship with the rest of nature (kill, kill, kill!) that I'm going to call Midwest Molest, and I'm going to get a good day's sleep for once.

Maybe even a good night's sleep too! For as soon as the Blanks leave, I get in bed and drift off to blissful slumberland.

I wake at dawn to the sound of chewing!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I get up and follow the sounds, ready to kill a squirrel with my bare hands. I feel like the angel of death and there'll be no Passover for any rodent with a fluffy tail I see. The sounds lead me downstairs. They get louder and louder. This squirrel must be huge! I could be in for a fight!

In the dining room, Funnybear's eating a bowl of cereal and chewing with his mouth open. "Hey! Morning!" he says, "This nutty cereal's great! Acres Of Acorns they call it! Look at the cute cartoon squirrel on the box!"

I crush the cereal box with a flying tackle.

Chorus--Alexander Depot

We finish the record and start burning off cds on my computer. It comes out even better than I hoped for. Even though we didn't get to finish recording and pretty everything up, I think it's better this way. It's rawer, more honest. It sounds more like what we really sound like at practice and at shows than it would have if Karl had put all those Knipple studio tricks on it. Honestly, after Karl disappeared, I didn't think our album would ever be finished, so holding the finished artifact in my hand gives me a tremendous feeling of accomplishment. The cd booklet is great too. Jah did the cover, which is a picture of us staring at a picture of an emu in a porno magazine centerfold. Of course, we look flabbergasted. The rest of the booklet is credits and liner notes written by each of us, which are pretty funny too, especially Abel's in which he seems to thank everyone he's ever met. Of course, he dedicates the album to Flannery.

Ah, pukel

Finishing the record is a nice way to wrap things up. We're going to play a cd release party at the Grasshopper in May right before school ends and though we haven't said as much, I think everyone knows that it'll be our last show. I'm graduating. Bear's

moving away. This is a victory lap. What's the Booker T. Washington quote? "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles one has overcome while trying to succeed."

We don't even have obstacles in this band, we have whole obstacle courses so I'm stoked to have our record out, even if we're handcrafting each copy lovingly at home with a little computer and printer magic.

We send out a few copies of the album for review, and the campus newspaper runs a big article on us and some other local bands who have put out records recently including Phelps Hex, Fifteen Year Old Hitchhiker, Trip 20, and The "New" Terror Class. Our friend Lora Rattleoffini writes the article so it actually is accurate unlike the one they did last year where the reporter asked us what our influences were, to which Bear said "forties" meaning of course forty ounce bottles of malt liquor. When the article was published though, the reporter wrote that we were deeply influenced by music from the 1940s.

Yes, Benny Goodman's our idol, and people just love to jitterbug to our swinging big band beat.

I'm sitting outside on the front porch, reading about us in the newspaper over and over, when I hear someone climbing the porch steps say, "Don't believe everything you read."

I look up. It's Jess.

"Hey, stranger! What are you doing here?" I say, heart starting to pound.

She takes off her sunglasses and pulls up a seat, "It's kind of embarrassing, but I need to know if my old room is still available."

"You're in luck. And doubly so, the rent's already paid for the rest of the month and Mister Boogie, the previous tenant, has already moved out," I say as my mind starts to shut down just to scan her face.

"Wow! Great!" Jess says, sighing, "So I can move in right away?"

"Yes, what happened to Professor O'Please though?" I say, going on a fishing expedition.

"Oh," Jess looks down, "He got back together with his ex-wife so I have to go. He's offered to put me up in a motel until the end of the semester but I'd much rather just put it all behind me."

"Oh, I'm sorry," I say, trying to sound sad while inside I'm doing cartwheels, "That's too bad."

"Well, it was sort of ridiculous anyway, to tell you the truth."
Don't nod, don't nod!

"But enough about me, you guys seem to be doing great. I saw the article in the paper. Congratulations! I hope you guys will autograph my cd," Jess says.

Cd, what cd?

Yippie! Jess is moving in! Yippie! Jess has broken up with O'Please! Yippie! Stop the presses! Extra, extra!

"Alexander, are you all right?" Jess says.

Never been better.

Note to self: Try to speak.

Verse--Funnybear

So Funnybear tries mailing the Emu cd to God, but it comes back marked "Return to Sender, Address Unknown." Funnybear got the idea from a character in *The Bluest Eye*, a Toni Morrison novel, who writes a letter to God.

Funnybear guesses you shouldn't believe everything you read in a book. Even if it's *The Bible*. Today's Easter so Funnybear is pondering questions of a religious nature. Like why the world, or anything exists at all. Funnybear finds it hard to conceive that nothing could exist since even nothing is a something of some sort, but Funnybear could conceive that existence could be a big puddle of nothing like nothing but a vat of darkness. Funnybear guesses that having lots of different things is more interesting than just a vat of darkness, which explains why God invented the universe.

O.k., that problem's solved.

But why all the gobble gobble about a master plan and humans being part of it? That doesn't make any sense. Why pick a special people like the Old Testament claims? Doesn't every group of people and indeed every individual think they're special? And if everybody's special, which everyone is Funnybear guesses since everyone is unique, then why make a big deal about it? That whole section just reads like the us versus them propaganda the rich and powerful use to convince the average working people in their country to go to war so that the rich and powerful remain rich and powerful. The scam is almost completely obvious in some of the Old

Testament sections, bring the best goats to the priests and we'll sacrifice them to God, and yeah, um, if anything's left over, don't worry about it, we'll take care of it by, um, eating it or something. Thanks! See you next week! Enjoy eating the second rate animals and vegetables while us priests and kings and queens enjoy the best! Oh, by the way, God wants you to kill the people in the next valley over. We, I mean, God needs their land and material resources.

It's all about social control.

O.k., that takes care of the Old Testament pretty much.

But then in the New Testament God goes from kicking ass on enemies of the Israelites and constantly being pissed off at the Israelites themselves when they don't do it what he tells them to do (subliminal propaganda lesson: obey the boss or the boss will kill you!) to being all lovey dovey to everybody.

Of course, the people benefitting from the Old Testament confidence scheme say the sequel's unauthorized bunk.

Funnybear disagrees. Either the New Testament's less of a scam (despite the best efforts of many scumbags over the centuries) or Funnybear guesses God came down and saw it wasn't so easy being human as it looked from wherever God was, so God eased off.

But why sacrifice yourself or your son like a goat? That part doesn't make any sense. Funnybear can see coming down to Earth and seeing what it's like, but hatching some bizarre plan to sacrifice oneself to make up for the sins of the world? Why invent sins in the first place? To test people? Test people for what? It doesn't make any sense.

Oh, right, mysterious ways.

Funnybear guesses you don't know why either, why not just admit it?

Oh, if you admitted that you didn't have a clue either, then you couldn't control people by pretending that you know what's going on.

Sad that people want someone to tell them what to do and let you get away with fleecing them. Funnybear would rather take responsibility for Funnybear's actions. If Funnybear fucks up, Funnybear fucks up. It's not so scary once one's done it a few times.

Freedom? Try it today. It's nice.

Thinking for one's self? Try it today, it's nice too.

Chocolate rabbits? Bring those to Funnybear immediately!

Funnybear will make sure they get to God. Um, you can keep the broken ones for yourself though.

Chorus--Alexander Depot

It's a kick to hear yourself on the radio! The cd's getting played a lot on the campus radio station. One of the djs, an older man named Freddie James who hosts a music show on public access television too, calls up and asks if we want to be on his next show.

Despite a painful flashback to the Mark Tintin Variety Show, I say yes, although I've got to check with the rest of the band.

Bear asks if we'll get paid.

"Bear, do we ever get paid?" I say.

That ends that objection, the only one.

So on Earth Day, we commune with nature by visiting a nearby Emu farm, where Freddie tapes us bonding with our namesakes.

Those birds are huge!

They're fairly docile though so Freddie gets some good footage of emus of all types cavorting with one another.

After the farm, Freddie comes back with us to the house to tape some Emus (the human type) at home material. This is fun because Jess, Antigone, Flannery, and Insane Ishmael come over to dish dirt on the band like they're on a trashy entertainment program.

To my shock, on camera, Jess pulls out a copy of my love resume, the thing I had made for a laugh a couple of weeks ago, detailing my past romantic exploits. Mister Boogie had apparently left it behind in his room when he moved out.

"Tantral" Jess says, "Wow! I had no idea. And Alexander didn't lose his virginity until he was eighteen, and to an older waitress at the restaurant he was working at. He has experience with bondage too!"

The meters in my skin jump into the red.

Note to self: Strangle Mister Boogie if I ever see him again.

Middle Eight--Insane Ishmael

Dude, Ted likes to asspinch a lot,
And George is really a robot.
Alexander's the head mason,
Funnybear's had a sex change done.

**They all met in a halfway house,
And they still enjoy a good souse.
They said I couldn't say this, well . . .
They made a pact with the devil!**

Verse--Theodorable

Flannery tells me she thinks she's pregnant when we're alone in my room.

I drop the pile of books I was moving off the bed.

"Wh- wh- what?" I say.

She takes my hands and looks me in the eyes. "It's been awhile, too long I think. I've been feeling weird too. I think I'm carrying," she says.

"But we always used protection," I say, pinching myself on the ass to make sure I'm not dreaming.

"Not always," she says, "And even protection isn't fullproof."

We sit down on the bed and hold one another, each in our own thoughts.

Finally, I say, "What are we going to do?"

"Well, let's find out for sure before we make any decisions we don't have to make yet," Flannery says, slapping one hand karatestyle into the other, "I can make a doctor's appointment."

"Isn't there a way we can find out sooner?" I say, "What about those tests they sell in the drugstore?"

We nearly knock each other out scrambling for the door.

When we get back from the drugstore, Flannery takes the pregnancy test and goes into the bathroom. I pace in the kitchen outside. Funnybear comes in, "Somebody in the loo?"

"Flannery," I say.

Funnybear says, "Oh," and leaves.

He comes back a few minutes later. "She's still in there? Did she fall in?"

"Uh, female problems," I say.

"I'll just water the plants outside," Funnybear says and leaves.

The bathroom door opens just as he exits and Flannery carries the test over to me. "What did it say?" I say, looking at it.

"Negative," she says, "But it's not 100% accurate so we can't be sure. I still feel a lot better though."

I pick her up at the waist and we twirl.

"Isn't it weird we're so happy though?" she says when we stop.

"Well, it would be a big change, maybe we know we're not ready," I say, not being able to stop smiling.

"Exactly, which is why I think we need to have a talk," Flannery says, her smile dissipating.

Uh, oh.

Funnybear comes in the back door. He looks at Flannery and says, "Oh, good, I was beginning to wonder if you were having a baby in there. Just in time too, I've got one to squeeze out myself through the back end. I'm going to name it 'John Wayne' because I think I'm going to need the stirrups for it."

I'm too young to be a dad but I think Funnybear's all set to be an uncle.

Chorus--Alexander Depot

It's a beautiful spring day so Jess and I play frisbee in the backyard. She tosses it to me, "So, are you nervous about graduating?"

I catch it, "No, I'm kind of excited to tell you the truth."

Jess says, stretching, "So am I, but it's bittersweet. A chapter of our lives is closing. After a few years of seeing them everyday, we might never see some of our friends again."

I toss the frisbee, "Yes, that's true. But it just feels like I've been doing this forever. I'm tired of being broke all the time and constantly studying for tests and writing papers. I just have to write my student teaching paper and take the certification exam, and then I hope to be done with homework forever."

"Not me," Jess says, catching the frisbee, "I feel like I was just starting to piece things together and now they're tossing me out. I guess there's always graduate school."

I light a ciggie, "No thanks. Whatever school I end up teaching at will probably force me to go get a master's degree but I'll be kicking and screaming the whole way."

"But don't you like learning?" Jess says, sending the frisbee on its way.

I crunch down on my ciggie with my lips and grab hold of the frisbee, "I love learning. I've just missed too many beautiful days like this one because I was in class or had homework. I can read and learn on rainy and snowy days."

"But won't work be just the same? You'll miss beautiful days

because you'll have to work," Jess says, delightfully furrowing her brow.

"Nope, I get paid to be there at least so that's some consolation, plus once you're done with work, you're done, so I won't miss the whole day the way classes and homework could conspire together against me here," I say, guiding the gliding.

Jess catches the frisbee on one finger and spins it round, "So, you're raring to move on then?"

"Pretty much," I say, wondering where all the squirrels are.

"Isn't there anything you'll miss? The band?" Jess says, firing the frisbee at me.

"Whoa!" I snag the frisbee, "Oh, I'll miss those knuckleheads. I don't think I'll miss living with them though. Jah's crazy noisy art projects. Bear sleeping in until noon everyday and staying up all night while I had to get up at six in the morning. Abel and Flannery constantly getting it on."

"Yeah, it's too bad about them," Jess says, fixing her glasses, "They were a cute couple."

I don't throw the frisbee. "Wait a second," I say, thinking about the witch's curse, "What do you mean 'They were a cute couple'?"

"You don't know? Ted didn't tell you?" Jess says, waving for the frisbee, "Men and their fragile egos, I guess. They broke up. Flannery told me."

"Well, that's a news flash," I say, tossing it high and slow, so maybe Jess'll have to jump and her shirt will lift up, "Why?"

She backs up and lets it drop in her hands. No bellybutton flash for me. Damn! "I don't know, she didn't say. She just said it was amicable."

"Hey, Jess, whatever happens, I want you to know we can still be friends," I say, nearly guffawing, but wondering if I've got a chance.

Jess sends the frisbee between her legs, "Yeah, that's always a good one, isn't it?"

I have to run for this one, and nearly start wheezing doing so, "Man, I have to give up smoking. I'm so used to smoke, when I'm in fresh air like this, it makes me sick."

"It was hard giving cigarettes up," Jess says, walking over to

me, "I would sneak one every so often but Patrick could always tell when I did from my breath no matter how I tried to hide it."

I sit down in the grass, "I think I'm turning over a whole new leaf, and not a tobacco one when I graduate. I'm moving, getting a job, quitting the band, and giving up smoking."

Jess sits down beside me and takes a hit off my ciggie, "Don't forget your new girlfriend! You have to start sending out your love resume too."

"Oh, God, I can't believe Mister Boogie left that behind," I say, taking my ciggie back, "I tell you, we should have put a revolving door on that room. So many people went in and out of there this year, but out of them all, you were the only one I really liked. Some of the other ones were o.k., but most of them irritated me to no end."

"Really, you like me?" Jess says, elbowing me, "You won't be glad to leave me behind too, Mister Grownup?"

I don't want to face her or I'm going to try to kiss her and she's going to slap me and I'll get the "I just want to be friends" speech so I lie back in the grass and look up at the sky. "No, Jess, I'm going to miss you. We always have good conversations."

"So you wanna stay in touch?" Jess says, leaning back, head supported by hand with elbow in the grass.

I can feel her looking at me. I'm sure I'm blushing. "Of course," I say, "Do you know where you're going after graduation yet?"

"No idea. That's probably what scares me the most about graduating. I have no clue what I'll be doing in just a few weeks or even where I'll be," Jess says, "Up until a couple of weeks ago I didn't think about it. I figured I'd just be with Patrick."

"You miss him?" I say, rolling over to look at her.

"A little, but I don't think it could have lasted. We were too different. In many ways beyond our ages," Jess says, lying on her back, crossing her legs, and looking at the sky, "Maybe I was like you, in a hurry to get on to the next part of my life. Now that it's staring me in the face, I'm not in such a hurry."

I lean over her, "Ooh Jess, I'm the next part of your life, I'm staring you in the face, I'm scary!"

Jess shoves me back, "See, that's what I mean, living with you guys is so much fun. With Patrick, everything was so serious

all the time. Everything had such gravity to it, such importance, even small things like moving a sculpture an inch to the left or an inch to the right."

"Well, when you play in a rock and roll band, it's so ridiculous that it's hard to take anything seriously," I say, picking at the grass.

"And you're really going to give that up?" Jess says, leaning over me, "Ooh, Alexander, I'm your new life, it's time to put away childish things like rock and roll. Better pawn your keyboard for a new suit so you can job interview dressed right."

I tickle Jess and she breaks out laughing. She tickles me back and somewhere in there we start kissing.

It's pretty romantic until we roll over a dead squirrel.

Coda--Alexander Depot

One night while we're lying in bed, Jess and I listen to the Emus record. She asks where we got the sounds for the introduction. I say we took the sounds of people having orgasms from Bear's porn movie collection and downloaded the sounds of Emus from the internet. The sounds of people saying "Oh my goodness!" are us with the pitch shifted, and the background music is one of our instrumental tracks called "Chromatic Chihuahua" which leads into one of our most rocking songs, "Brown Eyed Squirrel."

"Wow! Is that some sort of record for the most sounds piled up on top of one another?" she says.

"No, probably not, some musical artists use hundreds of tracks in a recording of a single song. With computers, it's pretty much infinite anymore," I say.

"That could get confusing," Jess says.

"Not if you know what you want," I say.

"And what do you want?" she says.

"I've got her in my arms," I say.

The rest is even mushier than that. Go away. We don't kiss and tell. No comment. Everything else is off the record and off the charts.

#19
Exit Waltz
b/w
Jah's New One

"They are mortal too so every song, every dance comes to an end,
Until a shimmering shimmy in memory strikes up the band again!"

Intro--George Jah

"No!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" I hug Funnybear's bass drum, "Don't go!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

We're having a band meeting after practice in the living room and I'm getting a bit emotional. Funnybear says the cd (seedy?) release party at the Grasshopper next week is going to be his last show. He's quitting the band. He wants to make a fresh start when he moves he says.

Alexander clears his throat, "I've been thinking the same thing. It'll be my last one too."

I think I faint. When I come to, Ted's crying. "But I thought we were going to go on tour this summer. And the record's just finished. Why quit now? We're finally getting somewhere!" he says, trying to hide his sobbing, "Sorry, my allergies."

"Well, Knibbled Knipple probably thought they were getting somewhere and look what happened to them. I don't want to end up like that," Alexander says, turning off his keyboard, "And I can't go on like this. My student loans will be coming due after graduation. It's rock and roll retirement time for me."

"Mayday, Mayday!" I shout into the pickup of my bass, "Our band is sinking, not just stinking as usual."

"And, son, I don't know what I'll be doing in a month but I probably won't be living here. And if I have a job, then I'll have just started it, I can't go on tour. I can't even commit to playing any shows because I don't know where I'll be or what I'll be doing. I don't want to mess you guys up. That's why I'm telling you now so you have time to start looking for another drummer," Funnybear says, doing a light drumroll with brushes.

"But I don't want to march to the beat of a different drummer!" I say, putting down my bass.

"Oh, geez, how long have you been waiting to say that line," Alexander says, groaning.

"What?" I say, turning off my amp, "It's true. It isn't the Emus

without you and Funnybear."

"Maybe we should make the cd (see Dee) release party our last show," Ted says, moving the mikestand from the center of the room, "I agree with George, it won't be the same without you guys."

"Sounds good to me, gentlemen," Alexander says, pulling out a ciggie and heading out to the porch, "Let's go out with a bang!"

"Gang bang?" Funnybear says, climbing out from behind the drums, "I know this one . . ."

"A regular bang is fine, Funnybear," Ted says.

Verse--Alexander Depot

"Is this where they shot the hippies?" some poindexter asks me and Jess on campus near the memorial for the Roll State Slaughter.

"Well, that's one way of putting it," I say, pointing to the memorial, which poindexter shuffles on towards.

"Oh, look," Jess says, patting me on the arm, "There's the guy who comes every year to the memorial wearing the same pair of jeans."

I look up and see an old hippie wearing jeans that are more patches than original denim. "His pants are living history," I say, scanning the memorial crowd for other ocular delights.

"I've been to the memorial ceremony every year," Jess says, as we spread out a blanket and sit on the grass, "It sounds stupid, but I'm going to miss it."

"No, I understand. It's pretty interesting. It's a cultural landmark," I say, putting on some sunblock, can never be too careful when you're pasty, "Some of your instant nostalgia must be rubbing off on me because after being here for four years, I'm finally reading up on it."

"Oh, good, maybe you can tell me whose bright idea it was thirty years ago to invite the National Guard to declare martial law on a college campus?" Jess says, taking a free newspaper from your friendly neighborhood Stalinist.

"It was a pretty popular idea at the time," I say, watching Jess hand the free newspaper back now that the Stalinist wants money for it, "A lot of the townies thought the war protests were getting out of hand."

"Well, the protesters weren't getting out of hand, the war

was," Jess says, waving the Stalinist away, "The protesters were just telling the truth, the war was wrong."

"It wasn't the first time that telling the truth got somebody shot, that's why I'm a liar," I say, pointing down the hill, "Hey, there's Jah!"

Jess waves to him and Jah huffs up the hill to us, carrying his video camera.

"Hey," he says, "Do you wanna be in my video?"

"What video?" Jess says, as Jah sits down on the blanket, squeezing us over.

"Midwest Molest. I've decided to make it a full-length documentary. I'm going to compare the landlord shooting the squirrels to the army shooting the students. I've been trying to get one of the campus police officers here to wave a gun at me and charge the camera but they're all being noncooperative," Jah says, shaking his head in disgust, "But I should be able to piece together something. Hey, did I tell you I'm going to get my friend Bonnie to tape our last show? I'm going to call it The Last Pogo."

"Like The Band's The Last Waltz?" Jess says, humming "The Weight."

"No, I want to make it more like Scorsese's Taxi Driver," George says, standing up, "Can we all get mohawks for the last show, Alexander?"

"Only if we all dress in really bad golf clothes too, Jahster," I say, having learned over the years that the only way to counter one of Jah's bizarre ideas is with something even more bizarre.

"Uh, that's o.k., I look terrible in plaid," Jah says, turning on his camera, "I'll see you guys later, that cop over there's swatting at a bee, maybe he'll get pissed off enough to pull a gun on it."

One can only hope, Jah, one can only hope.

Chorus--George Jah

It's our penultimate show.

That's what Ted tells me anyway. We're playing the sculpture studio, warming up for the world premiere of my movie, Midwest Molest. It's also an art student party to celebrate the impending end of the semester. It's pretty much an impromptu gig. Everyone was home and up for it so I told them to come on down to the studio. Spontaneous, sugar.

I'm trying to make it like "a happening."

I'm not sure what's happening though.

Professor O'Please doesn't look amused, but I think that's because Jess is here. I'm not sure if she's trying to make him jealous but I've never seen so much french kissing in public before. Somebody told me that in France they call french kissing "english kissing." Whatever they call it, Alexander and her are doing a lot of it. I'd tell them to cool it, but I'm getting some good footage for Midwest Molest 2.

I don't feel too bad for O'Please anyway. Hmm . . . I'm middle-aged and like to mumble, should I get back together with my crabby ex-wife or stick with the twenty-two year old hottie?

That guy decides my grade but I must say I'm starting to doubt his judgement.

In the middle of our set, Ted says, "I feel like art on display, like everyone is rubbing their chins considering our meaning."

"I feel like I'm hungry," I say, "So let's hurry up before the audience eats all the party snacks."

We finish playing, and people keep asking me if we're officially "art rock" now. I tell them we're "artcore" and that sure beats being "rockschool."

Ted comes up to report that he's not so self-conscious now that he's drank five whiskey-sours.

"Great," I say and ask him to help me hang the sheets for the video projector screen. It's showtime! We've just got it about hung up when he trips and rips a sheet in half.

Great. I had to pick the drunk clumsy guy to help me.

Ted offers to fix it with duct tape but I tell him "you've done quite enough, thank you."

I try to make it look the least like shit I can but no matter how I fix it, there's a bit of a hole in the right side of the screen. I go ahead and show the movie. I'll have a riot of drunk art school types on my hands if I don't.

In the middle of the movie, Funnybear goes behind the screen and sticks his arm through the hole, shakes his fist at people in the movie and makes shadow puppets to boot.

Ted tells me the word for how I look is "apoplectic" while he and Alexander restrain me. Funnybear disappears when the party runs out of booze so he's nowhere to be found when the lights come back on.

Afterwards, everybody tells me that the shadow puppets were

a brilliant idea, and asks how I came up with it.

I tell them it was a found object since I certainly "objected" to it initially anyway. In my retrospective though, I can see that my unconscious genius was at work by inviting Funnybear to the premiere.

Hey! Who took all the crackers I bought? I was planning to eat the leftover food from the party all through finals week.

Verse--Funnybear

Funnybear likes crackers. That was nice of George to supply Funnybear's food for the next week. Funnybear should go to art openings more often.

The art's usually terrible but the free food and booze are great!

Funnybear eats saltines out of the box and looks out the kitchen window. Well, Funnybear looks at the flies covering the kitchen window anyway. Where'd all these flies come from? Funnybear grabs one of the spice bottles on the windowsill and shakes garlic powder at the flies.

Funnybear guesses that only works on vampires because the flies don't budge.

O.k., time to bring out the big guns then. Funnybear sets the garlic powder back underneath the flies and opens the cabinet under the sink. Hmm . . . dishsoap mixed with window cleaner and some of the other cleaning stuff under here, that should make something pretty toxic.

George comes in the kitchen as Funnybear is pouring the liquid soap into the window cleaner bottle. "What the hell are you doing?" he says, "That's my dishsoap."

"I'm getting rid of the flies," Funnybear says, squeezing the soap bottle.

"What flies?" George says.

"Lift up the window curtain," Funnybear says, screwing the sprayer lid back on the window cleaner bottle.

George does, screams, and jumps back. "Wh-wh-what are we going to do? This is worse than the squirrels," he says, cowering in the corner.

"I'm going to spray this homemade napalm I mixed up," Funnybear says, the bottle growing warm in Funnybear's hands, "Hold up the curtains, please."

George gingerly picks up the right blue happy homemaker curtain (courtesy of the landlords, The Blanks) and Funnybear starts spraying the

flies. The flies start dropping like, well, flies onto the spicerack (i.e., the windowsill).

"Die, die like a fly" George chants in a war whoop.

"Quick lift the other curtain, this stuff's starting to burn my hands!"

Funnybear yells!

George rips the other curtain up so hard it tears off and the curtain rod goes flying across the kitchen. "Perfect! I always hated those curtains!" Funnybear yells! and blasts the remaining flies, who again drop like, well, something that drops quickly.

Funnybear tosses the napalm in the garbage, "Fire in the hole!" and Funnybear and George scramble into the bathroom, slamming the door.

Funnybear washes the napalm off Funnybear's hands. "Those are going to be some cool scars on your hands," George says, sitting on the edge of the bathtub, "I wish I could have videotaped this. It was like a biblical plague."

"I'm hungry," Funnybear says, "Let's wait a few minutes for the poisonous fumes to wear off and then make some, uh . . ."

"Garlic bread would be good," George says, rubbing his stomach, "I've got bread and butter."

"I've got garlic powder," Funnybear says, remembering the spicerack windowsill, and hoping that George won't notice Funnybear dig the garlic out of the fly graveyard, "I'll vacuum up the flies while you make the garlic bread."

When George takes it out of the oven, the garlic bread has molecularly bonded to the pan. "Did I leave it in too long?" he says.

Funnybear gets a hotpad, holds the pan upside down over a plate and slaps it.

The garlic bread doesn't budge.

Funnybear shakes it violently upside down.

The garlic bread doesn't budge.

Funnybear throws the pan at the wall, and then picks it up off the floor.

The garlic bread doesn't budge.

Funnybear takes the pan and stands it up sideways on top of the fridge.

The garlic bread doesn't budge.

Funnybear stands back, looks at it, then steps forward and straightens it. "I think you have your next art project, George," Funnybear

says.

"Well, it does have a nice symmetry," George says, "But why's it glowing now?"

Funnybear throws the rest of the spices from the windowsill away and writes "Hazardous Waste" on the kitchen garbage bin.

Funnybear and George eat crackers for dinner.

Chorus--George Jah

I can't believe this is our last show. I can't believe this is the last night we'll ever lug all our equipment from the house to the cars. This is the last night we'll ever take leftover flyers and drop them off in the restrooms of bars in downtown Rock. The last night we'll ever have our friends call up the house and ask what time we're playing. I can't believe we'll never again make up a set list and argue about what we're going to play and in what order (no arguments tonight--we're going to play everything and in alphabetical order because we're too tired from taking finals to figure out anything else, I'm lucky I can remember the order of the alphabet after that exam today!).

But this is it. Tonight's the night. I'm putting the finishing touches on the guestlist when Alexander comes in from loading. "Anything else, study?" he says, "Geez, is that a guestlist or the phonebook?"

"I guess I got a little carried away since it's our last show," I say, handing it to him, "I just want all our friends to be there. I don't care if we don't make any money. We never made any money anyway."

"Dead Hot Dog? You think they're coming in from New York? Their drummer didn't even seem to like playing across town," Alexander says,

"Well, you never know," I say, "I did send them a postcard."

"Maybe Ferdinand from The Pinstriped Pinstrike will ride in the car with them, huh? Job? Tanny Minor? Are you still trying to get us signed so we don't break up?" Alexander laughs.

"Well . . . I didn't want to leave anybody out." I say.

"No worries there, Jah. Assmeat Buffet? Dragondyck? Vehicular Vomiticide? Dr. Chris Witte? Professor Bear? Professor Patrick O'Please? Susan Sonhideandseek? Mark Tintin? Uncle Chet? The Blanks? Donna from The Coffee Catheter? Brother Micah and Sister Kimberly? Officer Trahan?"

"Well it's warm outside again so I figured since he was

probably going to show up anyway, if he was on the guestlist, maybe he'll let us off with just a warning," I say, taking the guestlist back.

"Well, I don't think you forgot anybody, but if you did, they'll have to pay their own way because it's time to saddle up and ride off into the sunset," Alexander says.

I can't believe I still get pre-show jitters.

One last time anyway.

I better shat before I scat.

Middle Eight--Gao Miao

Karaoke Pectate sets up,

He pours some beer into my cup.

I sing favorite PFE song,

The audience all sing along.

Each one gets up in turn to croon,

More beer in cup, I start to swoon.

I sing again, with a shy cough,

I surprise crowd, take it all off!

Verse--Theodorable

I don't know how we're going to follow an extemporaneous Chinese striptease, and Emu Karaoke was just the first act!

Gao also made more money in five minutes than we made in our career. I'd be jealous but I'm too happy for him! I'm happy in general. The Grasshopper is packed and for us! Plus, every time I turn around I run into another familiar friendly face, including some I haven't seen for a while. I'm looking for someone so I only get to chat with each of them for a minute or two. You know how it is before a gig. Mass confusion. There's George's friends, Clark Yuns and Steeler Penguin; they drove all the way from Pittsburgh to come see us! They might get the "traveled the furthest" award. They're hanging out with Antigone and John X and their friends Lawrence and Helen. Glad to see that at our all ages shows, all ages drink beer. Speaking of the aged, Dr. Late's here and early too! He's drinking with Dr. Onions and some graduate students from the English department Dr. Onions says I got an "A" in her class while Dr. Late says it's not too late to fail me if I don't dedicate a song to him this evening. I excuse myself before the demands grow and since I'm still looking for someone, and run into Keith Knipples. He's with Kent! He says they've made up and are forming a new band. They haven't heard from Kip but they say Karl's almost done with rehab. I head outside for some fresh air and to see if whom I'm looking for is

out there and I run into Alexander, who introduces me to his high school buddies, Jimmer and Phil, and one of his student teaching mentor teachers, Mr. Gore. Jimmer says he's heard we kick ass and asks me to solo on "Freebird" just for him. Uh, I'm about to tell him we don't do "Freebird" when Vic from Vic's Happy Hour slaps me on the back. He's come down the street with some of the staff from the bar. He complains that we're killing him tonight and unless we send the crowd to his place after the show he says he's going to fire George. Then he tells me to "break a leg" and says we should play another last gig at his place some time.

Another last gig? Well, maybe a reunion show sometime I say. Pencil us in for ten years from tonight.

I still haven't found whom I'm looking for so I follow him back inside. It's getting hot in here! Er, herre. I bump into the guys from The So. I tell them we're covering one of their songs tonight and ask if they'll come onstage and sing. They say sure, and one of them, Slim? Bob?, asks me to introduce him to some women. I say I'll get right on that and push my way through the crowd. I see members of Pudding Reasoning and Spider Cider hanging out in the corner. They're being interviewed by Mr. Boogie, who's scribbling notes frantically. Must be too noisy in here for his recorder I guess. Speaking of audio/video, Freddie James is here taping us for his tv show. Can't wait to see that! Next week, he tells me. Jon Lenin asks Freddie when he's going to do a show on his solo project, and I'm tempted to see how Freddie gently tells him never but I'm still in the hunt. I don't see her though. I do see George's friend Bonnie though. She's also taping the show for George's next documentary, The Last Slam or something. I would talk to her but I get distracted by the college radio gals, Traci DC, Lora Rattleoffini, and some other ones whose names I don't know. It looks like the rumors are true, they are all dating their trainees. That radio station's incestuous is what I'm thinking when I trip on the stage, and fall down.

Leroy Shell helps me up. His band's just finished playing. He says they've changed their name from My Mother, The Toothbrush to M.O.S.H. He swears it's the last name change but we've all heard that before. I help Leroy carry the bass amp offstage, and see Birgit our old guitar player. She's here with Hilde, Alexander's old girlfriend, and Jess, his new girlfriend. Since they're old friends, they seem to be getting along, but I'm still hoping to see a catfight! I'm about to ask them if they've seen another friend of theirs when Insane Ishmael gooses me. He's drinking with Nigel from the comicshop and they both laugh hysterically at how high I jump. Ishmael says he's sorry he yelled "take off your pants" at Gao. He never thought he'd actually do it. That's the first time I've ever heard Ishmael regret anything.

Oh, he's just kidding. He says he's going to yell at us too. I say it's a tradition. He has to. We have to move out of the way for These Fags Are Pissed, who are loading their equipment onstage, and I get into a long conversation with The Our Things, who are also playing tonight. I love those guys but I want to keep looking around for her. Every time I think I'm out of the conversation, they pull me back in. Vinnie Piano tells me that next week they're playing with The Fashion Period. Sid Fishes says no, it's Black Minds Of Music. Frankie The Face says it's The Sygn. Salvatore Tellmeastory says "Fuggedaboutit! It's a Psychobilly Cadillaca!" Zand comes up and tells them whoever it is next week, it's them now because These Fags are done. The Happy Hour Hos give them kisses for good luck, Jugsy Carmichael to Frankie, Paulina P. Pazzo to Sid, Jada Spada to Vinnie, and Eroina Cocaina to Sal. I'm about to see if she's in the crowd, when Frankie's sister, Vera, who's not the she I'm looking for, asks me how Funnybear's been. Fortunately, he appears and they start gabbing. I'm just heading off into the crowd again when somebody taps me from behind. Oh, Vera's as bad as her brother! I ignore the tap and keep pushing through the crowd.

I get tapped again. I resign myself to turning around and giving up the search again.

It's Flannery. "Looking for someone?" she says.

I smile yes even though my mouth says "Uh, no."

The next thing I know it's time to go.

I'm on stage checking the sound on my amp looking over at Flannery in the corner. I smile at her. She smiles back at me.

Zand works his way in front of the crowd and stands in front of her. He cocks an ear while I strum my guitar. I check my tuning and play the riff from "Louie, Louie." He yells, "Ted!"

I nod at him. He holds two fingers up sideways close together in front of his face and says, "Sounds good but turn it up a cunthair."

I adjust the volume on my amp, er, a cunthair, and play the riff from "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?" and Zand gives me a thumbs up. "Perfect," he says.

Chorus--George Jah

"Go, baby, go!" I yell into the mike. This is the money shot. Our last song ever. It's a new one I wrote just this week. It doesn't even have a name. Alexander just calls it "Jah's New One."

We don't really know how to play it, but that's never stopped us before, so why stop now? Can't stop the world, why let it stop you?

to quote The Go-Gos.

I look around and take in the scene. I saw this a lot this past year but I'll probably never see it again, except on digital video of course. Won't be able to smell it though so I take a big sniff and try not to cry. Sweat, beer, perfume, fresh pizza, cigarettes. Alexander's smoking a ciggie while pounding on the keyboard with both hands. It looks like his glasses are about to go flying off into outer space at any moment. Funnybear's playing the drums so hard, I can feel the floorboards underneath me vibrate. Antigone's onstage and pouring beer in Funnybear's mouth so he can drink and play at the same time.

Ted's playing guitar while crowd surfing and being passed around by the audience. They drop him back on the stage and he runs towards me and slides on his knees, bending backwards the guitar above his head, squealing out squawks squeakily.

He would say that's alliteration.

I take off my bass and toss it to Gao Miao, who puts it on and starts playing, and I tear the mike off the stand and wade into the thrashing audience, most of who are my friends, and the others are just friends I haven't met yet. Beer flies through the air, and I sweat some more and that flies through the air too as I shiver and shake. I call Jon Lenin and Birgit, and then the entire crowd onstage to help me sing. The mike gets passed around while I dance in place. Nobody knows the words but it doesn't matter. They make the sounds or make up something.

Hell, I don't even know the words and I wrote the thing.

We head into the big finish to end all big finishes. Alexander's actually standing on his keyboard and playing with his feet. The stand is wobbling, but his high school buddies prop it and him up. He leans over and kisses Jess while his toes tap a toe-tapping medley or melody or whatever it is. Funnybear's broken about all the heads on his drums and then he goes to work on the rest of his drumset. Insane Ishmael sticks an empty beer case on his head and eventually ends up lying on the ground with his head in the bass drum, while Funnybear hammers the cymbals above him. Antigone flips the snare drum over and starts playing a tribal rhythm on that with empty beer bottles. Ted's turned his amp up so loud it's ridiculous. I think it's on twelve. Somebody better call Spinal Tap. He's thrusting his guitar into his amp like he's fucking it and getting this horrendous feedback. I take my bass back from Gao and start strumming all four strings at once.

I can't hear a thing. I think I'm deaf. Then we look at one

another and jump in the air, even Funnybear.

Once.

Twice.

Thrice.

What the hell is four times, frice?

Um, 1-2-3-4.

The fifth time we let everything ring out and collapse in a pile onstage and on top of one another. Spent. Exhausted. Done. Flaccid.

People yell for an encore but that's it. I don't think my bass works anymore anyway. I broke two strings during that last bit! I've never broken a string before ever! Good night!

Well, thank you, thank you very much. Elvis has left the building and he's taken The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus with him.

Coda--George Jah

That felt great, but it doesn't take long to come back down from the rock star high. When I go outside after toweling my sweaty self off, I find that somebody's broken into my car. It's all ransacked. Good thing my bass and amp were inside the club. The burglar must not have found anything valuable because everything's there. They must have actually felt bad for me after seeing my car from the inside and what was in it. They left me some money on the driver's seat!

Back inside, the Grasshopper's clearing out. Zand says he's going to miss us. I bet he will. Who else can he call up at seven in the morning and get to play that night?

A couple people come up and ask me to sign their cds. Wow! An autograph! Alexander says we ran out of the cds we burned and we have to burn a few more for people this weekend. Will do, koo koo ka koo!

A bunch of people are going to Vic's Happy Hour Club for last call. They claim they're going to save my job. I tell them not to worry, Vic's too cheap to fire me. He doesn't want to pay unemployment. If he wanted to get rid of me, he'd just make it so miserable I'd quit.

Hmm . . . maybe he is trying to get rid of me. That place has been pretty horrible lately. I guess I've had so many atrocious jobs, that I just have a high tolerance now and didn't notice. I might have to tell The Our Things that Vic's acting up again.

Anyway, Alexander, Ted, Jess, Flannery, Birgit, Hilde, Insane

Ishmael, Gao, Nigel and some others head down there after we finish loading out. I say I'll catch up. I have to use the facilities.

On the way there, Funnybear asks me if I want to go to Burrito Hell with him and Antigone. He says not to worry, Antigone's driving.

I say that's what I'm worried about.

He says he'll see me back at the house for our usual postgig too wired to sleep recap.

I tell him that if I'm sleeping, don't hump me to wake me up like he usually does.

He says "Ooh, gimme dat skinny ass!" and I run away.

I pee in the Grasshopper restroom and I'm happy to see that no one kicked in the toilet tonight. Our fans may be lunatics, but at least they're well-behaved lunatics. When I'm done pissing (I don't bother washing my hands because the bar of soap in there and Grasshopper sink are far dirtier than my willy will ever be), I give the stage area a onceover to make sure we haven't forgotten anything. Zand says if I'm driving drunk, to drive fast since the cops always look for drunks who drive slow trying to pass for normal.

Um, I'm glad I think I'm sober enough that I don't have to test out Zand's advice. I look over the stragglers to see if anybody wants to go to Vic's with me.

Or if there's anybody I want to go to Vic's with. I don't even bother looking for women because of the stupid witch's curse. Bonnie comes up and hands me the video camera. She says it came out well, and that the batteries died right when the band did.

"That's fitting," I say, "Wanna go to Vic's with me?"

"Sorry, George, I'm way tired, Leroy's going to give me a ride home," Bonnie says.

"Good show, man, I'm going to miss you guys," Leroy says and gives me a hug.

Ahhhh.

They split and I have a sneaky feeling he's going to be giving her more than a ride home. Just call it a hunch.

Well, I still need somebody to go to Vic's with me. I don't want to go by myself! Noooooo!!!! He'd probably make me work if I did.

Maybe I just won't go. I can just go home and listen to Funnybear plead with Antigone to try it.

On second thought, maybe killing some time at the bar, either side of it, wouldn't be such a bad idea after all.

Zand's talking to the last person left. Maybe he'll want to go with me. Or whoever's talking with him.

Say, it's a she and she's pretty cute.

That's about all I can tell since it's dark. I go closer to get a better look.

Karen!

"Uh, anybody want to go with me to Vic's?" I say, just to say something.

"Oh, man, I'm too tired," Zand says, "I'm just going to lock up and crash, dude."

"I'll go," Karen says.

They're closing the door at Vic's when we get there but because I work there, they let us in for a nightcap. One drink leads to another and then we go back to the house for a little afterhours action in the aftermath. One by one or two by two people drift off and eventually so do we.

I guess that whole witch's curse thing is over with.

Then so's the band.

This is a nice consolation though. With apologies to the Who, meet the new girlfriend, same as the old girlfriend.

Yessssssssss!!!!!!!!!!

#20

Cha-Cha-Change Of Address

b/w

Excuse Me While I Kiss This Guy

"Lift the box, turn the corner, out the door,
What was seen daily will be seen no more!"

Intro—Theodorable

"George, you're living here next year, right?" I say, as we sit on the porch, enjoying a brief sprinkle on a warm May afternoon.

"Uh huh," George says, eating a banana, "Why?"

"I just wanted to make sure. It seems everyone else is leaving. How many new roommates should we try to get? Two or three?" I say, thinking about all the trouble we had this year filling up the old Emu practice room.

"Let's get as many as we can. Maybe if we sublease enough, we won't even have to pay rent ourselves," George says, throwing the banana peel into a bush.

He says "Compost" when I look repulsed.

"Where would we put them though?" I say, wondering why I'm even considering this bit of lunacy. Must be a full moon tonight.

"We could clear out the shed in back," George says, glancing at his watch, "Well, it's 4:20, I have to go."

George heads inside, while I worry about how we're going to get two or three new roommates. I thought we'd only need one, to replace Alexander because he was graduating, but with Jess graduating too and Funnybear dropping out, we almost have to fill up the whole house. It's a bit late to be looking for roommates too now that spring semester is over and most people already know where they'll be living next fall. Maybe we can convince Insane Ishmael or Gao Miao or one of our other friends to move in. If possible, I would like to avoid the real nutjobs like some of the people we had this year. But at this moment in time I don't think we have the luxury of being picky. George and I sure can't afford this place by ourselves.

A green pickup truck pulls up and parks in front of the house. Our landlords, The Blanks, get out. Mr. Blank, a beefy guy in his late thirties wearing business casual, and Mrs. Blank, a lithe blonde in her early thirties wearing business casual, wave to me and say in unison, "Hey, Alexander! How are you doing?"

"Pretty good. Just the other day I said to myself, 'Ted, life is pretty sweet at the moment,'" I say, hoping they'll pick up the hint about my name

as they come onto the porch, "How are you doing?"

"Oh, good, thanks for asking," Mr. Blank says, leaning against a porch railing, folding his arms.

"We have some good news and some bad news, Funnybear," Mrs. Blank says, looking me in the eyes, "It just depends what perspective you want to view it from. From our perspective, it's good news."

"O.k., let's hear it from your perspective then. You know just the other day I was saying to myself, 'Ted, every cloud has a silver lining. It just depends how you look at it, Ted'" I say, emphasizing my name each time.

"That's a great attitude. I wish we had more people with that attitude at our workplace," Mrs. Blank says, looking intently at Mr. Blank who avoids her gaze, taking a sudden interest in the porch railing.

She turns her laserbeam back on me, "Well, the good news is that we sold the house."

"Wow! Congratulations!" I say, bracing myself for the flipside of this news flash.

"The bad news is that we obviously can't renew your lease so you guys will have to be out by the end of the month," she says, shrugging her shoulders.

"Oh," I say.

Well, the silver lining is that we won't have to worry about finding new roommates now.

Mr. Blank straightens up, "As you know, you guys have done a lot of damage to the place, but since we sold the house, we're willing to give you your entire security deposit back anyway as long as . . ."

Mrs. Blank takes the biscuit, "My brother needs a place to live. We got him . . . I mean, he got a job at our workplace and has just moved up from West Virginia. We're hoping that somebody will be moving out soon, and he can take that room until he can find a place of his own. Our house with the kids and everything is just too small."

Oh, no. I bet he's a redneck, or, worse, a junior yuppie. Well, I'm going to need the security deposit money for the next place. It'll be nice to get it back for once. The landlord from the place that burned down where I was supposed to live before moving in here still hasn't given my deposit back. He keeps claiming an arson investigation by the insurance company is holding everything up. I might have to have The Our Things pay him a visit if he doesn't pay up soon.

"Sure," I say, smiling, "That sounds great. Just the other day I was saying to myself, 'Ted, you should meet some new people.'"

"Good, glad that's settled. We'll send him over sometime this

weekend. If a room isn't free, just stick him in the shed," Mr. Blank laughs.

Mrs. Blank punches him in the stomach. "Oof!" he says as he nearly falls down the stairs.

"Thank you for your assistance," Mrs. Blank says, and they head back to the truck.

We're being kicked out. Oh, man.

"Oh, George, don't forget to take the refrigerator with you when you move!" Mr. Blank yells out the window of the truck as they drive off.

The refrigerator?

George comes downstairs, stinking of pot, and rambling. He says, "Do you smell skunk? I think there's a family of skunks living under the house. They probably got in through that broken crawlspace window that the fucking landlords never fixed. First the squirrels, then the flies, and now the skunks. It's like one plague after another living here. I think God is trying to tell us something."

"Yes, move out," I say, exasperated.

"No," George says, giggling, "Fix the window."

Verse--Alexander Depot

I burn the last Emus cd and pass it to Abel. As I turn the computer off, I say, "From now on, we'll have to tell people to download the tracks from the website and burn their own cds. You're going to keep that thing up, right?"

"Yes," Abel says, standing up, "Might as well. It's already there."

"Cool, I'll visit it occasionally for old times' sake," I say, putting on my windbreaker, then breaking into my drunk guy voice, "You, uh, you ready to drink?"

"I'm not just ready to drink, I'm ready to get drunk!" Abel says, reeling around my room, "It's your graduation celebration. I wouldn't miss that! I'll even buy you a drink if you're lucky."

"Woo-hool Let's roll!" I say, and head out of my room, "Shut the light, will you?"

"Hey! You forgot your smokes," Abel says, tossing the pack of ciggies to me and shutting the light.

"Oh," I say, looking at the pack I instinctively caught in my hand, "I wasn't going to take them."

"Why not?" Abel says, heading down the stairs, "You always smoke."

"I'm trying to give them up actually. The 'experts'" I make quotation marks in the air with my fingers, "say that smoking's easiest to give up when you make a big life change. I figure graduating, getting a job, and moving in with Jess in an apartment in Cleveland counts as a big life change so I'm throwing giving up smoking in there too."

"Hey, you haven't graduated yet," Abel says, stopping to wait for me since I'm just standing in the hallway staring at the ciggies, "There's still time to smoke like a fiend and catch cancer."

"Hmm . . .," I look at the ciggies, Packa Sacka Whacka Tobacco, my favorite brand, their mascot Charlie Cockroach lighting up and grinning ecstatically at me from the back of the pack, "O.k., Abel you convinced me. Say, you don't have a summer job as one of those people who goes around bars handing out free packs of cigarettes, do you?"

"No, I'm pushing heroin instead. It's more rock and roll. It kills you while you're still young usually," Abel says, and we head down the stairs.

"Live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse, eh?" I say, hurtling the railing, "No thanks, I'd like to live to be a dirty old man."

Bear and Jah are waiting in the living room. "Son, you want to do a shot of Dead Crow with me, don't you?" Bear says, thrusting the bottle in my face.

"Well, I was going to wait until we got to The Toon Tavern to start slurping the sauce, but o.k., you talked me into it," I say, adding to Abel, "The critical thinking skills I honed in college seem to be evaporating quickly. I'm quite open to the power of suggestion this evening."

"Oh, cool, you wanna swing then and switch partners tonight, you and Karen and me and Jess?" Jah says, raising his eyebrows.

"No," I say, jingling my keys, "They haven't evaporated that much yet, Jah, but nice try."

"Oh, well, the females are meeting us at the bar," Jah says, putting on his shoes, "Maybe they can change your mind when we get there. I told Karen not to wear any panties."

"Good to know, but the answer will still be no, Jah. This is my

night of debauchery since tomorrow is commencement and family stuff and Sunday, Jess and I are moving, but I think I want to ease into the whole domestic thing. I'm not quite to the 'we need to spice up our lovelife somehow anyhow' stage yet. Call me in about ten years. I might be up for swinging then," I say, putting on my shoes.

Bear's poured the shots and passed them out.

I face the lads as we gather in a circle. "I'm glad we haven't left the house yet and it's just us, the boys in the band. This one should be a private toast," I say, holding my glass up, "Gentlemen, I've enjoyed living and rocking with you. I'm excited to move on and out but I'm pretty sure I'll always remember these times with fondness. And you better keep in touch. I sure will try to."

Note to self: As long as Jah doesn't touch my girlfriend.

They say "Congratulations" and "Here, here" (or "Hear, hear" or however you spell it--never did get that straight, nobody better tell the dean or Roll State might not let me graduate) and we clink glasses, down the Crow, and head out that door.

Chorus--Theodorable

I went to a show last night with George and Funnybear. Thin Blue Lounge, Liquid Alice, Dink, and Gil Mantera's Party Dream played. It was weird being at the Grasshopper and realizing that we'd never be on its stage again. I still want to play. Funnybear's moving away, but maybe George wants to get another band going. I'll ask him when I get back from visiting my parents for Mother's Day.

I pack up my stuff for the trip home and as I'm getting a bottle of water from the fridge, I look at Jess's room. The door's open and there's almost nothing in there. She must have taken some stuff up to Cleveland already. I think back to all the people who lived there this school year, starting with me when I was waiting for the witch to leave.

The witch! I wonder whatever happened to her? Mary Black was her name. Somebody told us that she moved to Germany to marry some dude in the army. For awhile after she moved out, mail kept showing up for her but I always just sent it back. We didn't know where she was. Well, I hope she found what she was witching for. Maybe someday she'll pay the guys back the money she owes them too.

Not bloody likely I know but hold on hope, to quote Guided By Voices.

Who was after her?

Oh, Chuck and Wendy and their dog. Ugh! I heard they moved to Denver and set up house there. Hopefully the fresh mountain air cured them of their obliviousness where other people were concerned.

Better odds are on divorce though. One of them's bound to discover how annoying the other one is sometime down the line.

Then there was Sweeter Trustfundski. We got a copy of the Yahweh Yodelers newsletter in the mail and there was a picture of him testifying yodelayheehoostyle in California. He looked happy and peaceful like he'd been slapped with the Yahweh yardstick a few times.

Well, it's probably better than being George's personal assistant, I guess. The Yahweh Yodelers are supposed to be hushhush bigamists so maybe he ended up with both Ingrid and Kim Kim, the women he ran off with. Funnybear said he had a dream one night about that.

But I didn't stick around to hear any more about it.

Then there was Jess and she moved out and the high school kid John X moved in. I just saw him at our last show. He's doing well. I guess he's getting along better with his parents now. He must be onto objectivism because he was trying to get me to read an Ayn Rand book.

I said no thanks. At least when I act selfish, I know I'm being a jerk; I don't try to intellectualize it and pretend it's for the greater good.

After John X, I think it was Jugsy Carmichael. She's doing well too. Still dating Frankie The Face, and she told me she's going back to school next fall. Good for her! Good in general!

Then there was Il Duce. The last postcard we got said he was in Canada so I guess he's taking his management agency international and the M.P.s still haven't caught up to him. I guess they'll have to turn over the hunt to the Mounties now that he's made it over the border.

Uh oh, I hope what they say about the Mounties always getting their man is just propaganda or Duce's going to be in trouble.

We got a postcard recently from Barry Cary too. It was mailed from down under. Sydney or Melbourne? Perth? Somewhere over the rainbow. He's in Job's tour crew now. He says it's great seeing the world and being single.

I bet, especially if you're a roadie for one of the biggest pop stars in the world.

After Barry, it was Mr. Boogie, who's still working on his ethnomusicology dissertation. Maybe if he hopes and he prays he'll be a doctor someday. Last I heard, he was living with the Spider Cider guys and studying them. There's a good match for you.

And the last person to move into the room this year was Ms. Jessica Marine again, and now she's moving out and it'll be empty.

Wow! There's a lot of history in that room! Alexander's the history major but he's moving so maybe I should write it all down. This way whoever moves in next will know what went before.

Nah, I gotta get on the road. The walls will have to tell the tales themselves.

Verse--Funnybear

Funnybear likes books but do they have to be so fucking heavy? Funnybear drops the box of books down on Funnybear's mattress and lets them spill out. Funnybear doesn't feel like moving all this crap. Funnybear will just leave it here.

"Dude, what do you want me to put in your car?" Antigone says, browsing through a stack of Funnybear's music magazines.

Funnybear hands her a stuffed animal toy--a rabbit--and a couple bags of cds and tapes.

"Anything else?" Antigone says, taking them, "I can probably take a couple more things this time, and that'll save us a few trips up and down the stairs."

"This'll be the only trip," Funnybear says, looking around Funnybear's old room, "I don't think I need anything else."

"Dude! Your tv, your vcr, your stereo, your mattress!" Antigone says, pointing at things in the room.

"They're all beat up. The mattress in particular should be taken out and shot. I think only the cumstains hold it together," Funnybear says, looking in Funnybear's old closet, "I'll get nicer stuff when I'm in Columbus. This stuff isn't worth dragging there."

"Dude! There's still some whiskey in this Dead Crow bottle!" Antigone says, shaking the bottle, "And what about your porn collection?"

"I don't need it. I've looked at it so many times that the images are ingrained in my brain," Funnybear says, scooping up a porn mag from the floor, "I guess I'll take this one as a souvenir or in case I get amnesia. Bring the whiskey, we'll drink it while we're loading up the car."

Funnybear hoists up the laundry bag of clothes (dirty, of course) and a box of very important stuff and follows Antigone down the stairs. "Dude, what about your drumset?" Antigone says, when she and Funnybear get to the living room.

"You mean what's left of it. It's yours, dude, you're starting to get pretty good on the drums. You'll get better with a set of your own to play on. Anyway, the apartment building I'm moving into has a no drums clause specifically on the lease," Funnybear says, heading out the front door, "You can have anything else you want from my room too."

Funnybear and Antigone load up the Funnybearmobile with all that Funnybear can't leave behind. "Well, I think that's it," Funnybear says, ducttaping the trunk closed.

"Dude, I'm going to miss you," Antigone says, getting misty-eyed.

"Ah, I'll only be a couple hours away. I'll visit. You can even come with me if you want," Funnybear says, leaning Funnybear's arms on the roof of the Funnybearmobile.

"That'd be fun, but I have to finish school. And my Mom, you know," Antigone says, looking over at her house.

"Yeah, I know," Funnybear says, taking a last look at the Emuhouse.

Funnybear and Antigone hug and Funnybear says, "Say toodles to the fellows for me, will you?"

Antigone nods and wipes her eyes. Funnybear wipes Funnybear's eyes and gets in the Funnybearmobile.

Funnybear hates goodbyes, but they're better than badbyes.

Chorus--Theodorable

Bleary-eyed, I eat some Apple Crack for breakfast. I didn't sleep too well last night. I got back from my parents' late and the house was all quiet then but somebody else got back later than me and started having loud sex just as I was drifting off to sleep. I tried to read but I couldn't even concentrate on that so mostly I just laid in the dark listening to someone else have a good time, probably George and Karen, though I've never heard them go at it quite like that before.

A blonde man wearing only boxers comes into the dining room. "Hi! You must be George, right?" he says, pulling up a seat at the table.

"No, I'm Ted," I say as we shake hands, trying to figure out why this guy is in my house.

"I'm Zoroastrian, but everyone calls me Zoro," the blonde man says, smiling, "Although my sister and other family members still insist on calling me Bubba. Thanks for taking me in, I love my niece and nephew but staying with them was driving me crazy."

"Oh!" I say, realizing who he is finally, "You must be Mrs. Blank's

brother!"

"Of course, who did you think I was?" he says, laughing.

"I'm sorry, I'm a little out of it. I didn't sleep too well last night," I say, drinking some more of Alexander's leftover coffee to help me wake up.

"Oh! I'm so sorry about that!" Zoro says, blushing, "I was so excited to be out of my sister's house, that I went out to the bar to celebrate, and ended up getting lucky. It had been a while so I guess I was feeling more frisky than usual. Sorry if that woke you up."

"Oh, that was you?" I say, chugging more coffee, "I thought it was George and Karen."

"I haven't met them yet," Zoro says, looking at the fingernails on his right hand, "Nobody was here when I moved my stuff in, and then I went to the bar. So you're the first one of my new housemates I've met. I just knew you by name from when sis used to complain about you."

"Really?" I say, putting down the empty coffee cup.

"Oh, I'm just kidding you! She likes you guys," Zoro says, looking at the fingernails on his left hand, "Believe me, big sister takes good care of me. She wouldn't have let me move in with anybody she didn't trust."

Another man, a brunette, also wearing nothing but boxers, comes out of the old Emu practice room and looks around while yawning. He spots us and comes into the dining room.

Zoro says, "What's the story, morning glory?" and the two men kiss.

That wakes me up. I don't need another cup of coffee.

"Peter, this is my roommate, Alexander," Zoro says, motioning an introduction with his hands.

"Uh, Ted," I say and shake hands with Peter, "Pleased to meet you."

"I'm going to take a shower. I've got to get to work," Peter says, stretching.

"So do I," Zoro says and gets up, "I'll join you."

They go to the bathroom, and I hear the sound of running water and then more loud sex. Then it's all quiet until Zoro sticks his head out the bathroom door, and yells, "Hey, Funnybear! I forgot my shampoo at my sister's. Can I borrow some of yours?"

Middle Eight--Zoroastrian Wilde

The good people end up happy.

Bad people end up unhappy.

That is why it is called fiction,

Real life has a bit more friction.

In marriage, all comedies end.

Does the guy get the girl? Pretend,
I care. It doesn't make me sigh.
I want the guy to get the guy.

Verse--George Jah

On the phone, I tell Ted I found us a place to live.

"Great!" he says, "When do we move in?"

"September," I say.

"September?" he says, "Where are we going to live for the summer?"

"Well, I don't know where you're going to live, but I'm going to live with my parents in Pittsburgh," I say, "The Blanks kicking us out is a blessing in disguise. Praise be! For once, I don't have to pay fucking rent over the summer just so I can have a place to live in the fall. If you want, you can store some stuff at Karen's place. I put most of my stuff there already. She's taking summer classes and delivering pizzas so she's not around a lot but her roommate Meg can let you in."

"Okay," Ted says, "I guess I can live with my parents and work landscaping again. On my Mother's Day visit, they were bugging me about not coming home for the summer so that'll make them happy."

"It's good to be happy," I say, "Karen was telling me the other day that a feminist critic once wrote that comedies usually end with a marriage because that's the last happy day the woman ever sees. So I said if that's the way she feels, the wedding's off."

"You were going to get married?" Ted says.

"No," I say, "That's why the wedding was so easy to cancel. But it's nice being with Karen again. What about you and Flannery?"

"We're just friends," Ted says.

"Fuck buddies is more like it," I say, "I heard you the other night."

"That wasn't me, that was Zoro, I told you," Ted says.

"Yeah, right, the imaginary roommate. How come I've never met him then?" I say, "You just put some stuff from the shed in the old practice room to fuck with me."

"What should we do with that stuff in the shed anyway? The Blanks said we had to get rid of it all and the fridge," Ted says.

"I can't believe we had to get a fridge when we moved in. We got it from some old lady who gave it to us for free as long as we took it away. Getting that thing from her house to ours was such a

nightmare that I repressed the memory. The Blanks took their fridge with them when we moved in because they were too fucking cheap to buy a new one for their new house so we got stuck with having to look for one," I say, "I can't fucking stand The Blanks."

"They're all right," Ted says, "We're getting the security deposit back because Zoro's living here."

"You're getting even more delusional," I say, "I'll believe that when I have the cash in my hand. Anyway, did you find us a drummer yet?"

"What?" Ted says.

"A drummer. Did you find us a drummer yet?" I say.

"A drummer? What do we need a drummer for?" Ted says.

"Our new band," I say, "I didn't want to say anything while Alexander and Funnybear were still in the house because I didn't want to hurt their feelings."

"Oh, you still wanna play?" Ted says.

"Heavens to Betsy, yes!" I say, "Maybe if I make enough money working at the Mart Mart electronics department this summer, I'll buy us a drum machine. It'll hopefully drink less than a real drummer. Cleaning puke off my amplifier because a certain drummer drank too much got tiresome. I won't mention any names though. Cough, cough, Funnybear, cough."

"Uh, the band idea sounds good but let's try to find a real drummer," Ted says, "What should we call the new band?"

"I don't know, we've got all summer, we'll think of something," I say, "If worse comes to worse, we'll just do what I did when I came up with the name 'The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus.' Three times (for the father, son, and holy ghost), I threw a dictionary across the room and picked the best word on the page it fell open on. I'm glad it wasn't my dictionary. It was pretty beat up afterwards."

"Well, that's good, I'm glad we're starting a new band and that you found us a place to live, but what are we going to do about the fridge?" Ted says.

"Um, I'm calling from Pittsburgh, not Karen's apartment. Couldn't you tell? If I was calling from Karen's I'd be sneezing from her stupid cats," I say, "So do whatever you think is best with the fridge. I don't want to see Rock until next fall. If you miss me, you can come to Pennsylvania. Karen's coming next weekend. In hopefully more ways than one, nudge nudge wink wink,"

"What? You went home already?" Ted says, "Some of your

stuff is still here!"

"Just throw it away or have a garage sale or something," I say, "Um, my Mom's calling me, I, um, gotta go."

Ted told me once that Hemingway said that all stories, if taken far enough, end in death. So do conversations so I wanted to get off the phone before that happened.

Chorus—Theodorable

I want to kill George. I'm saddled with a house full of stuff to get rid of all by myself. And before I can leave for the summer and absolutely by the end of the month.

Arrrgh!

At least moving my stuff will be easy. Aside from the witch's mattress, which I store at Karen's, everything'll fit in my car so I'll just take it with me when I go to my parents' house.

It's getting rid of everybody's else's stuff that's a pain.

Zoro takes some of it, like Funnybear's books, tv, stereo, and some other stuff, for which I'm thankful. He declines Funnybear's porn collection though. "Too hetero for me," he says.

For being forced on us (well, me, since there's no one else still living here), Zoro's actually a really good roommate, one of the best I've had, in fact. He's very neat and considerate, always picking up after himself in the common areas like the bathroom and kitchen. He's also always friendly and helpful, and helps me with the big stuff like the furniture when I have to move it. Aside from having to listen to loud sex (and loud gay sex, something new that I'm still getting used to, uh, not personally though) every night, living with Zoro's a pleasure.

However, living with all this stuff people left behind and that I don't want is a punishment. It's hard to responsibly get rid of stuff. It takes days. Some of the stuff I keep for myself like some records, some books, uh, Funnybear's porn collection, and some more books.

I hope my parents don't find Funnybear's porn collection. I'll have to hide it well this summer.

I don't want them getting any ideas.

Ha, ha.

To get rid of the rest of the stuff, I hold a garage sale.

From garage rock to garage sales, I know, I know. Still I make some money and it helps clear out the house and the shed. What's leftover I take to Retail Resurrection, the thrift store, and what they won't take I leave out on the curb for the trash.

So that's that. The only thing left is the fridge. I ask Zoro if he thinks the people who bought the house will want it, but he says his sister told him that those people got a new refrigerator for a housewarming present so they don't want our fridge.

My fridge now.

I try to sell it to Zoro, even offer to just give it to him, but he's having none of that. "I think whatever apartment I move into will come with one," he says, laughing at me, "Thanks for the offer though."

Peter doesn't want it either. "Thanks, but I've already got one," he says, laughing too, "Besides I don't like the color."

It's white. I've never seen a fridge in any other color.

"Oh, no," Peter says, sillyboying me, "You can get them in any color you want. Any shape and size too. Just like people."

So I call Mom and say it'll be a couple more days but I hope to be home by Memorial Day weekend.

Home? This place feels like home. Or did. It's not quite the same anymore now that everyone's gone. Where is home anyway? Where the fridge is always stocked?

This fridge is becoming an albatross.

I put an ad in the newspaper but the only person that calls is a female student from India, who's escorted by a suspicious, overprotective American male "guide" when she comes to look at it. He seems to think I'm running a scam when the price of the fridge rapidly drops during the course of their visit. When I'm finally begging them to just take it, they leave and he says they'll call if they change their minds.

They never do.

Different day, same refrigerator.

I call an appliance store that sells used appliances. "No, I got too many used fridges as is," the guy tells me, "You couldn't pay me to take it."

I call the electricity company. They were running an appliance recycling program.

Well, not anymore.

I call the social services agency. They say they'll be happy to take it as a donation.

Yippie!

But.

Of course, there's a "but."

They don't have any way of picking it up. Can I drop it off?

Well, it won't fit in my car. I ask Zoro if The Blanks will let me use their pickup truck. He says probably but they've just left for two weeks

vacation. Their kids aren't schoolage yet so they're beating the rush at their vacation spot.

I call some of the bands in town but everybody's out on tour or gone for the summer. Rock is quiet, the quintessential college town in the summertime. There's nothing going on, which makes me want to get out of town too even more.

But I can't take a fridge with me. I could leave it with Zoro, but then we probably wouldn't get our security deposit back. Anyway, it's not Zoro's responsibility so that wouldn't be very fair.

Even an ethical egotist wouldn't do that.

I brew up the last of Alexander's coffee and hatch a plan. I take everything out of the fridge and put it in the cooler that was out in the shed but is now Zoro's. I defrost the fridge and clean it. When Zoro gets home from work, he helps me lug the fridge outside into the front yard.

I can't believe how heavy that thing is, and it's empty!

The next day I go rent an appliance dolly and try to strap the fridge on it.

Antigone must see me tussling with the fridge in the front yard because she comes over. She says, 'Dude, what are you doing? Is this some bizarre new extreme sport, appliance wrestling?'

"Uh, hi, Antigone!" I say, sweating and breathing hard, "No, I'm just going to wheel the fridge down to the social services office. It's the last thing I need to get out of the house, then we'll be all moved out."

"The end of an era, huh?" she says, looking down the street, "Where's the van or truck you're going to take the fridge in? Are you waiting for it?"

"There's no van or truck. I'm going to wheel it down there on this," I say, trying again to get the dolly under the fridge.

"You're crazy! That's like a mile away!" Antigone says, openmouthed.

"Well, it's a downhill grade most of the way," I say, the insanity of my plan dawning on me.

"Dude, I hated carrying my drums from your house to mine," Antigone says, shaking her head, "I can't imagine hauling a refrigerator for a mile, even on wheels."

"Wait a second, isn't the high school still in session? Why aren't you in class?" I say, leaning against the fridge to catch my breath.

"Dude, I hooked out. I've been playing the drums since my Mom went to work," Antigone says, airdrumming.

"You play the drums now?" I say, looking at her.

"Yeah, Funnybear taught me," she says, finishing an airdrumroll, "He gave me his drumset when he moved."

"Hmm . . . are you playing in a band?" I say, unable to help noticing that she's grown a bit too, especially in a couple of places.

"The school band?" she says, crossing her arms to cover her chest, "No, dude."

"Do you want to play in a band?" I say, fixing my shorts, "Because George and I are forming a new band and we're looking for a drummer. I think it's going to be a power trio."

"Dude, that rocks!"

Coda--Theodorable

I rock the fridge and roll the dolly under it and it's cool. Wheeling it down to social services isn't too bad either once I get it up and rolling. I guess a man pushing a refrigerator down the street isn't something people see every day because people stop their cars and point and laugh at me. Some of them shout encouragement, saying "Go, cat, go!" and stuff.

The women at social services are pretty happy with the fridge and say it'll go to a good home that needs it. I sign a form and then hike back to the house, exhausted. I take a nap. Since Zoro and Peter are both at work, I actually get some rest. I wonder when they ever sleep since they seem to stay up all night.

When I wake up, it's 4:20. I check the mail and the check's in the mail. The landlord of the place that burned down finally sent me my security deposit back.

Yippie!

What a most excellent day! I got rid of the fridge and got my money back after so long. And wait'll I tell George I got us a drummer for our new band, and who it is.

Funnybear always wanted a female in the band anyway.

I load up my car and do some last minute cleaning. When Zoro gets home, I tell him he's the man of the house now. I ask if he's found an apartment yet. He says he hasn't even started looking. He's just going to stay here until his sister kicks him out. He likes living in the house.

Peter comes in, "I like this place too. It's got a good vibe."

If only the walls could sing, the lyrics they'd hear, I think.

Peter says goodbye and says he's going to go take a nap.

I wondered when they slept.

I say goodbye to Zoro and say it was good living with him. I tell him that homophobia would be pretty much ended if everyone had a gay

roommate. So would racism, sexism, homelessness, poverty, ageism, religious intolerance, etc. if people had open minds and really got to know one another he tells me. In fact, he says the only thing it's good to be prejudiced against is people with bad taste in music, and they're to be more pitied than scorned.

I say, "People are people, I guess," and he starts singing some Depeche Mode.

Time to go.

Zoro and I hug and I grab the last of my things. He says, "Take care, George!"

I head out the front since that's the way I first came in. As the door closes, I look back at it. Could I have guessed all those months ago when I first stood before it what an adventure was waiting for me behind it?

I wonder if there's an adventure behind every door, just waiting for somebody.

I go around the house to my car, all loaded up with stuff, my stuff now, and I start hearing the familiar sounds of loud gay sex. All you need is love, I guess, and it comes in spurts, uh, many forms. Rock and roll is good for the soul. I put in one of the tapes George left behind and turn up the volume on the car stereo.

The house still throbs as I drive away.

THE END

Written in New Concord, Ohio and New Castle, Pennsylvania from May 2002 to August 2002.

The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus by Wred Fright.

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Novel published in seven issues of zine serial form from June 2002

- September 2003 in print runs ranging from 100-200 some.

The novel will soon be posted online at www.wredfright.com unless somebody's crazy enough to publish it in its entirety as a printed book. Get in touch if you are or know somebody who is as I'm tired and broke so have no plans to self-publish it. This has been fun though. Please check out my new publication vehicle www.wredfright.com for future writing. Don't fret, I still love print so don't be surprised if you see the occasional one-shot zine from me as well. Thanks for reading. Be well. Take care. Stay free.

Liner Notes

I always liked rock and roll and reading about it too, but nearly all the books I read about it from fiction to nonfiction always dealt with successful rock and rollers (no surprise there, I suppose). But there was a whole another side of rock and roll, all the great local bands that never really made it out of their hometowns and remained unknowns just doing it for the love of the music. I wanted to tell that story because after all there was a lot more of them than there were success stories. And, the definition of success is up for debate as well. I'd argue that most local bands are successful. They make music and have some fun with their friends. So this book is dedicated to them.

This book is also dedicated to all the great zine writers, many of whom are moving on to books and creating some of the best reading out there, especially Crazy Carl Robinson, Sean Carswell, Jim Munroe, Victor Thorn, and the members of the Underground Literary Alliance, all of whom served as inspirations.

Writing a novel's hard work and takes as Virginia Woolf might put it, "A Room Of One's Own," so I'd like to thank my parents for providing one the summer I wrote the novel, and Muskingum College for unintentionally providing me the means (by paying me 3 months late for teaching so I pretended I was paying myself to hack out a novel). Yes, I wrote the Emus working 9-6 on it, with an hour off for lunch Monday-Friday, an opportunity I doubt I'll see the like of again.

The Emus are fictional, and the characters are amalgams based on my actual experiences playing in garage bands, but there's a great deal of truth in the novel, even in the most ridiculous scenes. I really did live with a couple who got married without telling me or the other roommate and I really did push a fridge for a mile just like Ted does in the last chapter. As for why the novel, one might think oddly, begins with a witch college student and ends with a gay man, well, that's how it happened. The first time I lived in a "bandhouse" (The Escaped Fetal Pigs) in the summer of 1991 in Bowling Green, Ohio, I lived with a witch who wouldn't pay rent but also wouldn't leave and the last time I lived in a bandhouse (The GoGoBots), in the summer of 2000 in Kent, Ohio, the landlord foisted her brother off on us (one of the better housemates I've ever had actually). I sort of condensed my decade of rock and roll living into a representative single schoolyear and the result was The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus. These bookend housemates also fit the underlying themes of family and home because no matter what society says, a gay couple or a house full of college students or a rock and roll band is ultimately a family, and so the novel begins with Ted, the newbie, finding a new home, and ends with him leaving it to return to an old one. May we all be so lucky.

Merch Table

I've got a new website (www.wredfright.com) so please check it out. No plans for new print zines yet but I'm sure I'll do the odd oneshot in the future and the website will no doubt clue you in about it when the time comes. Additional copies of this issue are available (the first 50 copies come with a free bonus 7" record). I enjoy trading with other zine publishers. Otherwise it's \$3 postpaid, and #6, #5, #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. Get the whole collection, all 7 issues, for \$15. I'll take orders until 31 December 2003, after that I'll hopefully have it all available on the web as an ebook or published as a printed book. 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," Punk Planet called the whole record "a quirky collection of obscure bands," while Razorcake summed it up best, writing, "While all of the bands here easily fall under the punk banner, there's some diversity in sound and the bands are in top form." 13 rocking songs on vinyl for \$6 postpaid. 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! 64 pages of fun reading for \$4 postpaid. Punch & Pie. Great collection of short stories from the indie literature world, including Maddy Tightpants, Sean Carswell, Jim Munroe, me, and many more, courtesy of Gorsky Press. 160 pages of good reading for \$6 postpaid. 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.

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

"ON THE RECORD"/"LOVE DEPOT" IS THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND RELEASES THEIR FIRST ALBUM PLUS DRUMMER FUNNYBEAR MAILS A COPY OF IT TO GOD, BASSIST GEORGE JAH EXPERIENCES SQUIRREL JIHAD, KEYBOARDIST ALEXANDER DEPOT FALLS IN LOVE AGAIN, AND GUITARIST THEODORABLE HAS A PREGNANCY SCARE.

"EXIT WALTZ"/"JAH'S NEW ONE" IS THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND PLAYS A GRAND FINALE PLUS THEODORABLE SCANS THE FACES IN THE CROWD, FUNNYBEAR MAKES NAPALM GARLIC BREAD, GEORGE JAH PREMIERES HIS CINEMATIC OPUS, AND ALEXANDER DEPOT MOURNS THOSE LOST DUE TO AMERICAN STUPIDITY.

"CHA-CHA-CHANGE OF ADDRESS"/"EXCUSE ME WHILE I KISS THIS GUY" IS THE TWENTIETH AND FINAL CHAPTER. THE BAND MOVES OUT OF THE BANDHOUSE PLUS GEORGE JAH DEMONSTRATES HOW TO NAME A ROCK BAND, ALEXANDER DEPOT GRADUATES, THEODORABLE WHEELS A REFRIGERATOR DOWN THE STREET, AND FUNNYBEAR EXPLAINS THE PROBLEM WITH BOOKS.

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