

kyosaku #6

inside —

poems

interview w/
Comic artist Ben Katchor

Jude's dream





SE7 th'ED: Welcome to the long-overdue Kyosaku the 6th. It's been a good while, sure, so thanks for joining us. Hope you dig this issue full-a poems, stories and the like, and never be hesitant to drop us a line and pour out your guts. We're gunna work at making this magazine a little lower-tech, sorta rougher-around-the-edges, more like a casual potluck than an overplanned affair. So roll up your sleeves, put together some sandwiches or whatnot and enjoy.

— Mike Janssen

Kyosaku—lit. "wake-up stick": flattened stick with which the sitters in Zen monasteries are struck on the shoulders and back during long periods of *zazen* in order to encourage and stimulate them. The *kyosaku* is always used to help, *never* to punish. It helps to overcome fatigue, awaken potential, and can, used at just the right moment, bring a person to an experience of awakening.
—from *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*

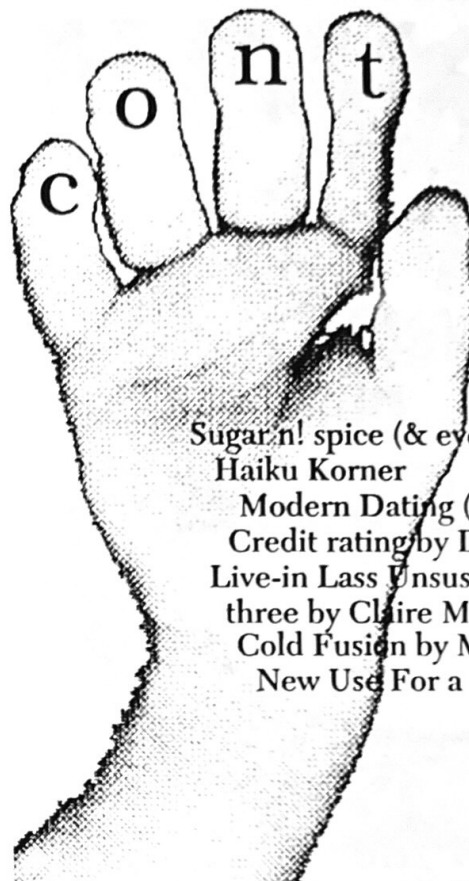
Kyosaku is an irregular compendium of poems, stories and art intended to make people guffaw wholeheartedly or cast a hopeful eye towards the future or sit on their hands in the corner in deep contemplation. The thought of receiving submissions jumpstarts our salivary glands. Send a SASE for guidelines, or, hell, pop yer magnum opus in the mail. All materials herein copyright *Kyosaku* 1996. A four-issue subscription to *Kyosaku* costs \$5; a sample issue costs \$1.50 (cash only!). Please check out our WWW site at <http://es.oberlin.edu/students/djacobs/kyo/kyomain.html>. Send all secret desires scribbled on hotel memo pads, aspirations, complaints, retributions, monster costumes, scandalous Polaroids and balsa wood airplanes to:

kyosaku

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Sugar:n! spice (& everything nice) by Jynne Dilling
Haiku Korner

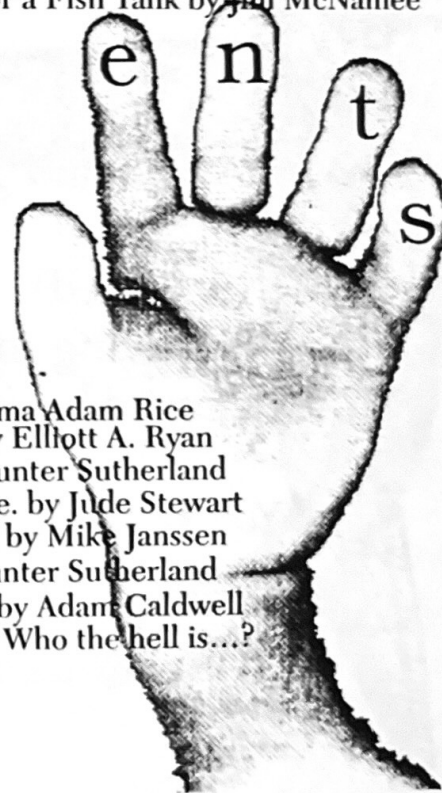
Modern Dating (as explained by Uncle Mick)

Credit rating by Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

Live-in Lass Unsuspecting by Jim Dewitt
three by Claire Musso

Cold Fusion by Marion C. Smith

New Use For a Fish Tank by Jim McNamee



Kurt story by Sudama Adam Rice

Camping Out by Elliott A. Ryan

Three(3) Jane by Donald Hunter Sutherland

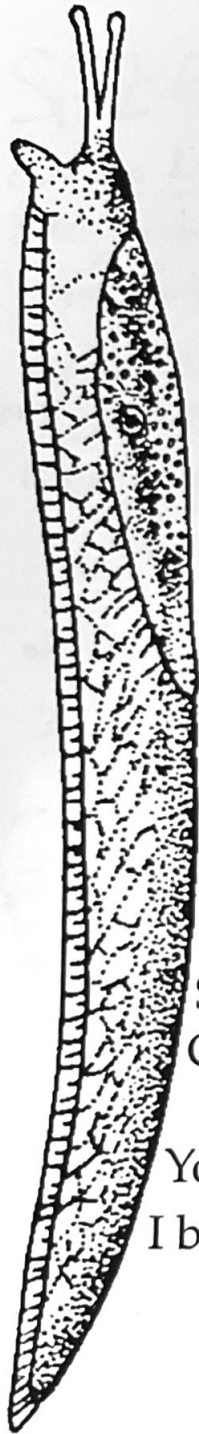
the cake is there. by Jude Stewart

Ben Katchor, cartoonist by Mike Janssen

Fossil by Donald Hunter Sutherland

Happenings Of Your Worst by Adam Caldwell

Who the hell is...?



Sugar n' spice (& everything nice)

by Jynne Dilling

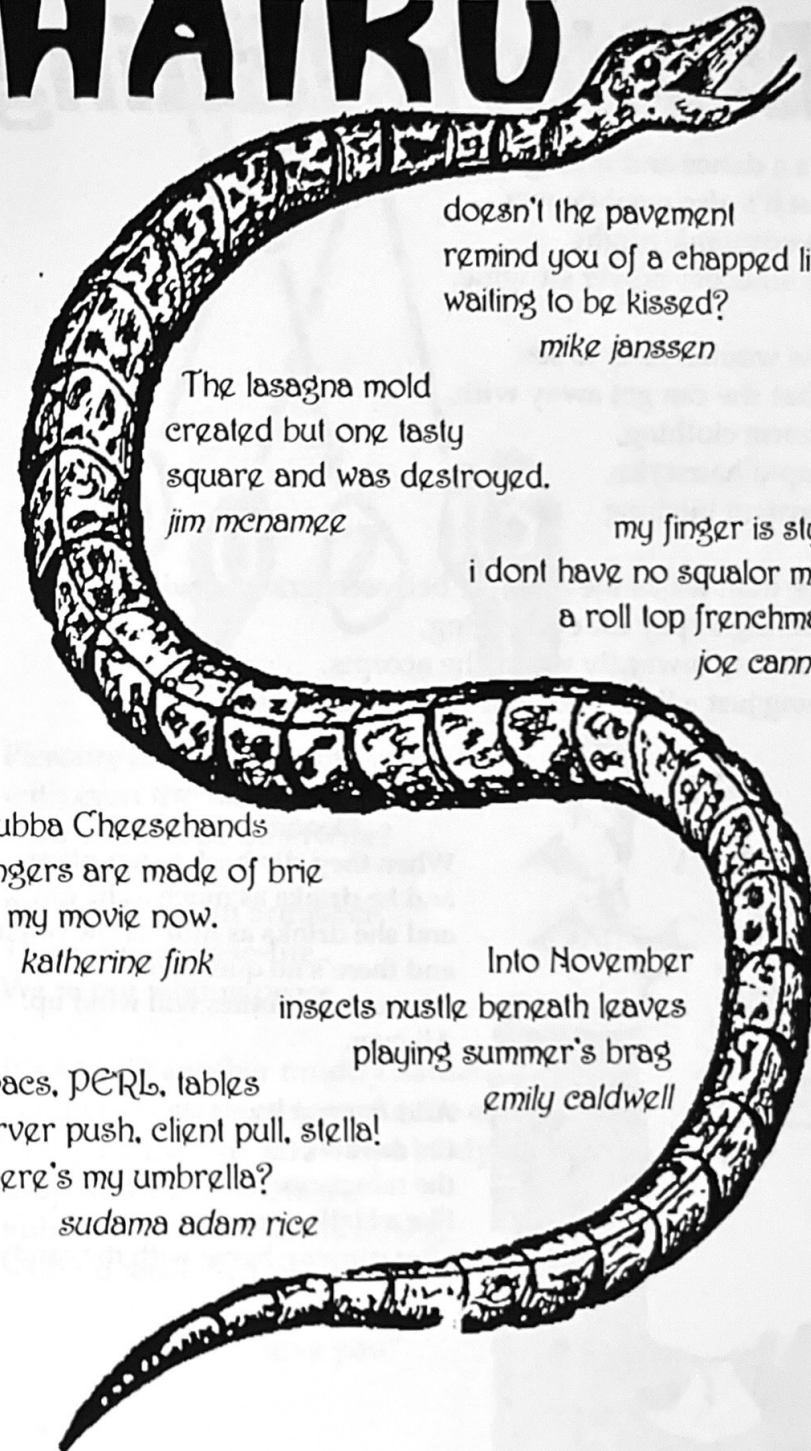
A kool-aid grin

(devil red)

Slithering roly-poly under
Clawed bushes—

You brought the salt and
I brought the slugs

HAIKU



doesn't the pavement
remind you of a chapped lip
waiting to be kissed?

mike janssen

The lasagna mold
created but one tasty
square and was destroyed.

jim mcnamara

my finger is style
i dont have no squalor man
a roll top frenchman.

joz cannon

I'm Bubba Cheesehands
my fingers are made of brie
make my movie now.

katherine fink

emacs, PERL, tables
server push, client pull, stella!
where's my umbrella?

sudama adam rice

Into November
insects rustle beneath leaves
playing summer's brag

emily caldwell

The poem is man's noblest effort because it is utterly useless. — James Tate

Modern Dating

It's a dance and it's a game.
But it's also a subtle war,
an economic plight,
an innocent power struggle.

The woman tests to see
what she can get away with;
bizarre clothing,
stupid hairstyles,
constant bitching.

The man walks the fine line between jerk and wimp,
offering to pay for everything,
groaning inwardly when she accepts,
being just a little offended when she refuses.



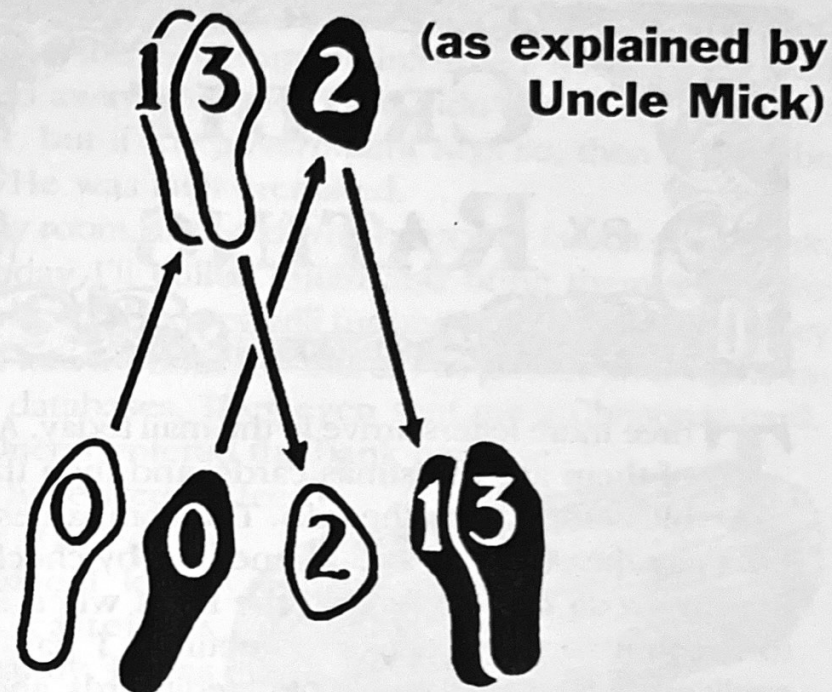
But at night—
Ooooooh, at night...

When they slip back to her place
and he drinks as much as he can
and she drinks as little as she can manage
and there's no question
where their clothes will wind up.
All over.

And the cruelty,
the caution,
the reluctance is all ripped away
like a Halloween mask
after running home with the candy.

Page Six major objects

It is disastrous to name ourselves. — Willem De Kooning



Pleasure and release are found
with even the worst lovers.
How could it be otherwise?

But this is not an armistice.
This is not a cease-fire.
We're not talking peace.

It's merely another muddy battlefield,
another sly strategy to make the enemy—
asleep by the fire, taken by bloody surprise—
drop his or her defenses,
vulnerable to that sneak attack,
with no recourse but—surrender.

First one to say "I love you"

loses.

Page Seven believes in crystal power



Three more letters arrive in the mail today. A couple of them are Christmas cards, and then there are bills. I don't pay the bills. The companies think I do. I pay the electrical and phone bills by check, and I use my credit card to pay off the bank when it's time to account for the checks. Sometimes I pay off the credit card companies with other credit cards, and sometimes I pay them with a check. At any rate, I don't really have any money, but they don't know that. Someday the checks will bounce and the credit card companies will send strong-arm thugs to my door, and the whole operation will collapse. But until then, I live in relative comfort.

I'm surprised they know I'm still alive, my friends who send Christmas cards. Maybe I'm just a name on their lists—entered forever into a database, and they hastily scrawl my name and address onto an envelope, write a generic note inside the card, and leave it to the US Postal Service's mercy. Sometimes I'm not even sure if I'm still alive, so I usually check for a pulse. Once I didn't find it, but the mortician told me I wasn't dead. "If you were dead," he said, "you probably couldn't have driven down here to tell me."

One of my friends had his social security cancelled because the government informed him that he had passed away. The mortician didn't think he was dead either, but if the government says so, then it must be true. He was later cremated.

My room is littered with beercans. I don't even drink. Someday I'll collect them and bring them in for the refunds. The money will further confuse the bank. They don't know about me there. I'm just another name on their databases. They even sent me a Christmas card.

Once I entered the bank because

they have free coffee. I

took the decaf,

because I knew

that caffeine's

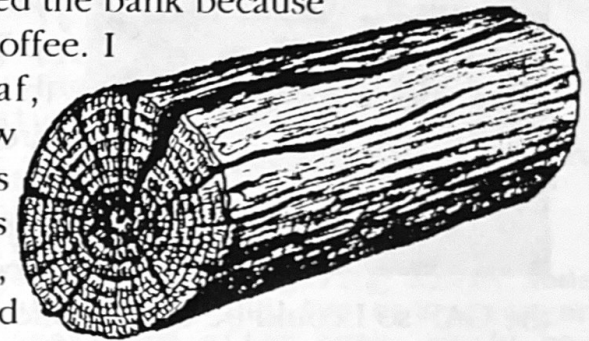
unhealthy. It was

too strong,

however, and

instead of actual

cream they had non-dairy creamer, so it was also too hot. I blew on it and blew on it, but I suppose I blew a bit too hard because it spilled out of the cup. Coffee stained my nice white t-shirt, and it burned me. The burns weren't too serious, fortunately, but they wouldn't accept my American Express at the laundromat. I could see some Visa guy turning my fucking day into a fucking commercial, but I hoped not. Maybe if I was in a commercial they'd give me some money and I could pay off the creditors. My friend Adam has good credit. He'll always tell me the secrets of having a decent credit



by daveed gartenstein-ross

rating, in that he always has his credit card payments in on time, and he never borrows more than he can pay back. I always have my credit card payments in on time, but I don't have a particularly sparkling credit rating.

Later, they even ask me to be in a commercial. I'm a writer, you see. Thomas Pynchon was so reclusive that when they did his GAP ad, it only showed the khakis. I don't even wear khakis, but I went to the GAP once. I had to leave because I was dressed too poorly; it intimidated the other customers. Kind of a vicious cycle; I went to

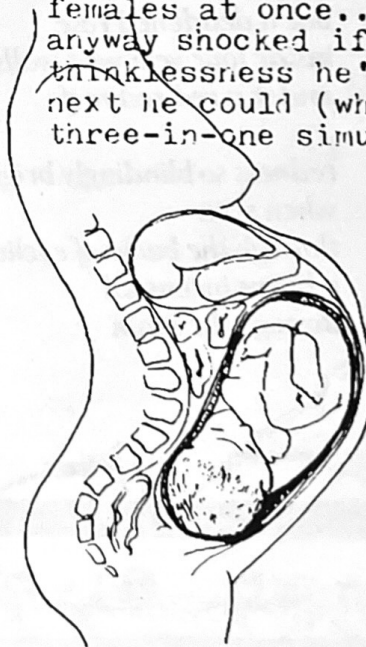
the GAP so I could be dressed nicely, but had to leave because I wasn't dressed well enough. Perhaps there's an interim store where I could shop before working my way up to the GAP.

It's probably all the better that they wouldn't let me shop there. I wouldn't have been able to pay for it in the first place.

Thomas Pynchon was so reclusive that when they did his GAP ad, it only showed the khakis.

LIVE-IN LASS UNSUSPECTING

Alvin is coming off hornier than ever these days because bedtime can hardly wait to slippery Sylvia up so he can shove that super-dick into the budding baby in there he can feel it swimmingly fetus feeding itself bigger by the day & would you believe? Alvin gets off really big ones by imagining he's ramming it straight into the unborn girl's belly (from the ultrasound, knows it's female for a fact) and wouldn't he just murder any stupid stud who'd even suggest the ulterior for all this stepped-up fucking is: animal-brain hope he might even now be energizing this baby's developing sex glands too (wouldn't this be something!?) wow a New-Age double-fuck giving Alvin some supersort kicks, to thrill two estrus-eager females at once...and after such, who'd be anyway shocked if thru his distort-pervert tricklessness he's trying to figure out how next he could (why not?) dick it up three-in-one simultaneously...



by jim dewitt

THREE

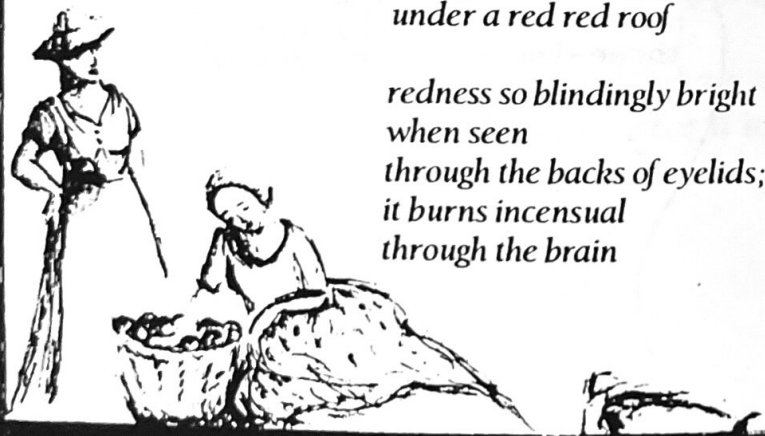
BY CLAIRE
MUSSO

under a red red roof
a girl
a woman
and a wilting flower

twenty one years
pass by in an instant
breath

three girls
one a deadened rose
inside four yellowed walls
under a red red roof

redness so blindingly bright
when seen
through the backs of eyelids;
it burns incensual
through the brain



SNAPS

smothered inside
with a silence so precious
night falls
a stem snaps

the three of them
give in
and scream
of hardened lines
and faceless tortures

flinging their existence
into the mouth of the moon.

STEM

cold fusion

by marion c. smith

His lexicon did not include a word
for the thing with wings
he longed for.
He said you're great, let's go,
let's have some fun.
Why not? Let's do it.

Her dictionary knew the word
but held her mute.
She said O.K., let's go.

They had their fun,
the word between them never spoken.

And so, my friends, that's all
there ever was or ever will be to it.

new use for a fish tank

The earth hamster runs
and runs
spinning us through each day
in his caged wheel
and our caged existence
bordered by
mountain
river
coast
and timidity,
living for a handful
of dried corn and
sunflower-seeds
dropped from the hand
of a child
who is amused for minutes
by our lifetimes
in sawdust.
My reflection in the glass
is larger than the doorway.

b
j i
m c n a m e e

T

HIS IS A LOVE STORY.

It's not a tale of adventure, with swashbuckling pirates and full chests of gold doubloons, or even a dreamy romance, with tall, dark Romeos and candlelight seaside full moon gourmet dinner. It's just a love story, about a sweet kid and the girl next door. The kind of story where the intrigue and suspense rise from wondering if she's gonna give him the answers to the math homework

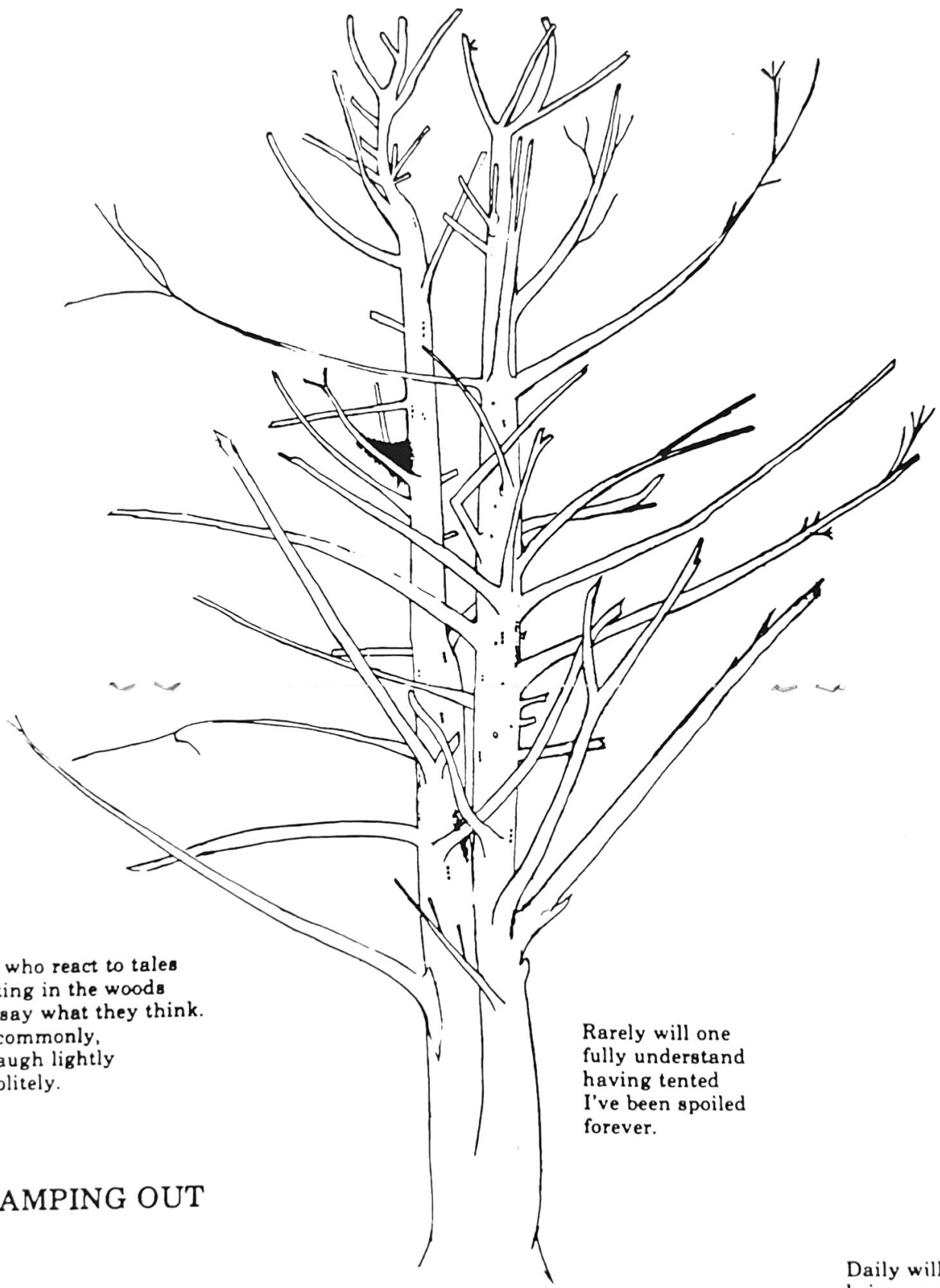
Kurt Story

and who's gonna ask who to next week's school dance. This is a story where you feel as if you're the one standing at the altar, about to change your life forever. This is a story where the husband goes crazy, kills his wife and their



three daughters with bright orange extension cords and cheese cutters. He has a hard time going about it, because the cord's too short to hang anyone with, and the cutter's dull, so it takes a while to break skin. But that comes much later. Right now in the story, our hero is about to take his first step on the path to his inevitable and subsequent doom. Right now the path is simply an enticing walk through the woods, but further on, the path becomes paved, and instead of woods, there are walls, high concrete/steel/barbed wire walls where mad dogs howl just out of sight behind him and all the signs say "Houston -- 26 mi." Let's join him now in these first halting steps.

by sudama rice



Those who react to tales
of tenting in the woods
never say what they think.
More commonly,
they laugh lightly
and politely.

Rarely will one
fully understand
having tented
I've been spoiled
forever.

CAMPING OUT

Daily will I miss
being sung to sleep and
awakened
by the singing of
hundreds of birds.

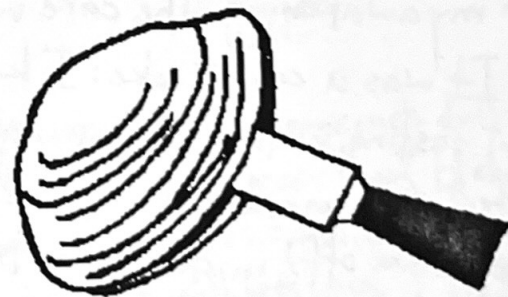
Three (3) Jane *June (3) 1996*

by donald hunter sutherland



Mammon will rise!
From foundation's ruptured neuroses of
experience.
Feign a limit of foreign serenity and
lay in a chalkers' cube outline
faking IT...between the grid-locks of
a 7th avenue lay tickertape of legibles our
legends in transit...

Soon.
Spring on a new world,
songs to a harvest of
asphalt and shopping carts'
wired wheels:
arrogance bred from futility and hummed
to a caretakers 'auld lang syne'
of a world
still left breathing.



the cake is there.
—by jude stewart.

There was a night last week when I fell to dreaming. It was not smeary-faced. The edges were clear. I fell and woke with only the slightest smudging, the quietest lack of precision in the lines between dark and daytime. We were at my birthday party. The "we" was everyone I knew, a tight ring. Their faces lit only with the expectation of the event, a glowing circle of cheeks and eyes I recognized. That unfailing familiarity: this is what remains of this event, to me in my awakening. The cake was ushered in.

It was a carrot cake: I knew this without tasting, without fat orange icings to that effect. Cream-cheese white, I suppose (what tipped me off), in deep whorls and swags around the circle of cake, almost oriental in its design. I thought of a tense and lovely

dragon's tail, coiled. It delighted me, it was round and turbulent-looking and sweet inside and out. It was beautiful.

Hands laid it in front of me, where I sat waiting. It swam into my view almost without preamble: no marching out from a kitchen, no swagger or winks even. Just earnest cheeks and eyes, connected (unlike some horrible dreams) into reassuring whole faces, with necks and arms attached. It was inscribed in green or blue icing—an honest layman's effort—in skinny lines. The words sank unevenly toward the cake's curved edge.

you are still
installed at the gates
of hell.

Guy handwriting, maybe. Or someone's dull-witted left hand. Who could ever say? Heads whose foreheads I had pressed with my own forehead, in comfort, in breathlessness. I waited there, a bit. The cake stayed steady in front of me. The thought of it still stings me.

BEN In a dozen newspapers across the country, Ben Katchor (right) is beautifully, ingeniously breathing new life into the comic strip.
By Mike Janssen



cartoonist

KATCHOR

Nestled within the folds of a handful of newspapers rests a small treasure of a comic strip titled *Julius Knipl, real estate photographer*, drawn and written by 43-year-old New Yorker Ben Katchor. The weekly strip follows the urban wanderings of a real estate photographer named Julius Knipl, while a detached narrative voice delivers a poignant account of what he observes.

Critics have taken note of Katchor's creation; *The New Yorker* wrote, "[s]ome people feel that Ben Katchor, with his Julius Knipl, real estate photographer strip, has over the past several years been doing for comics what Marcel Proust once did for the novel."

The comparison sounds lofty but holds true; like Proust's, Katchor's eye for detail and his probing exploration of the ordinary surpasses any current cartoonist's poetic voice. His words and images combine the quirky, dreamy feel of George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* and the storytelling sensibilities of earlier serial strips from the '30s and '40s.

Approaching 400 installments over a span of nearly eight years, the strip is an inky monument to the rubbage which lingers at the outskirts of Knipl's consciousness; old window signs, glittering sidewalks, forgotten lecture halls, vegetarian cafeterias, defunct religious orders, old

Jewish men arguing over bowls of cold borscht.

"[It's about] the trauma of the lower end or the periphery of the economy," Katchor said in an interview by telephone from his Lower Manhattan apartment. "This economic system that we live in produces all these questions about how things are made and

the streets with Knipl, whom Katchor evokes when describing the genesis of a strip.

"Usually, while out in the street, I'll see something and write it down," Katchor explains. "It can be the most ephemeral thing or minor event, but I realize I can build a strip on it. I have to record it

"Wherever I go, I'm in the street. I never mind when I have to wait for somebody ... it's one of the perfect opportunities to stand and let the street life pass over you."

how people fit into this whole material world. That's the main thrust of the strip. Almost any strip you pick up will have something to do with that."

Characters in Katchor's creation wander the streets of a city similar to Katchor's hometown, wrapped up in plausibly odd obsessions. One man collects lipstick-smeared cigarette butts. Another mulls over the significance of public mustard fountains. Knipl attaches a subtle meaning to the consumption of cherry gelatin at a local coffee shop.

Though Knipl's name graces the strip, the strip's scope is much wider than his doings. "Usually [the strip is] not about him at all," Katchor said. "It's in the city he's observing. Either he's passing through a situation the narrator is describing or he's in the city. He's somewhere there ... he may not be visible but he's somewhere else in the city."

Talking to Katchor is like encountering one of the distracted creations in his comic strip world. With his slightly nasal New York accent, he gropes around for the words to fit his ideas as if his thoughts are wandering

immediately or it'll be gone — forgotten. I make a one- or two-sentence note and then I go back to the notes I made in the street. These are sort of jumping-off points ... when the strip's really good it's rooted in some piece of observation."

Katchor's busy schedule demands he curb his wanderlust. "I don't [wander] as a routine but as going between places. Since I began the strip I have less time to wander around aimlessly. These things sort of thrust themselves upon me. They call out to me.

"Wherever I go, I'm in the street," he said. "I never mind when I have to wait for somebody when I have an appointment or when I have to wait for a bus. I never understood why people complain ... it's one of the perfect opportuni-

ties to stand and wait in the street and let the street life pass over you."

Katchor avidly drew and read comics as a child. Enrolled in the New York School Of Visual Arts and in Brooklyn College, he studied painting and art history but retained an interest in comics. "I was interested in stories and pictures. [Comics are] a perfect blend of the two."

When asked which comics rank among his favorites, Katchor said he doesn't follow them that carefully, but expressed respect for the comics of yesteryear. "I like those early European pictures — stories in broadside form, sort of early prototypes for what became American comics more than what they developed into: a dismal end product — those commercial things that run in Sunday comic supplements.

"There's a whole history that came before that which I think

was very amusing — but not too many."

Knipl evokes the older strips which Katchor admires; the world *Knipl* wanders is redolent of dust and obscure ethnic cuisine. In keeping with Katchor's Jewish heritage, the strip communicates a distinctly Old World flavor.

Another of Katchor's projects ran in an English-language edition of a Yiddish newspaper, the *Forward*, titled *The Jew Of New York*. The year-long weekly strip was set in the 1830s and followed the adventures of a man who wanted to set up a Jewish state near Niagara Falls. Dubbed a "historical epic" by Katchor, the strip is based partly on truth. "It is the fevered dream of an amateur historian. *Knipl* is about everything I know; *The Jew Of New York* was about everything I don't know."

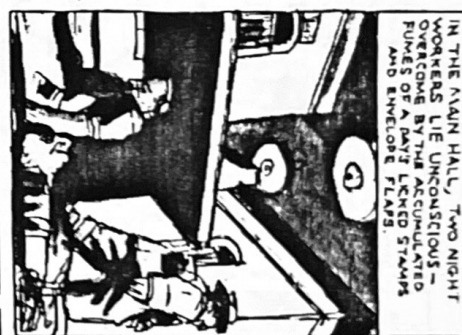
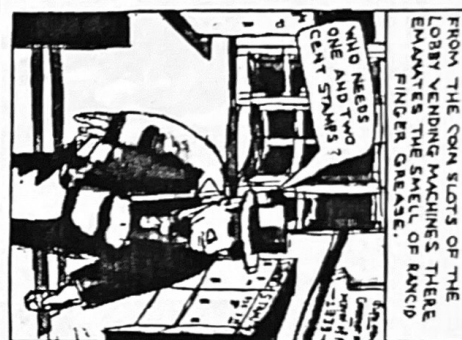
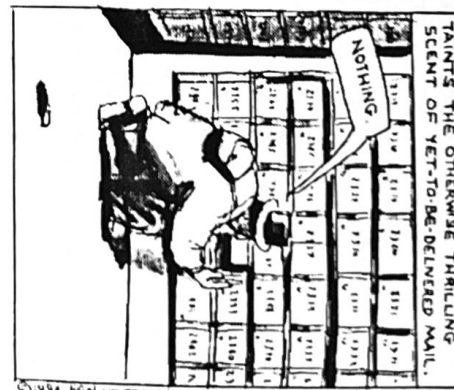
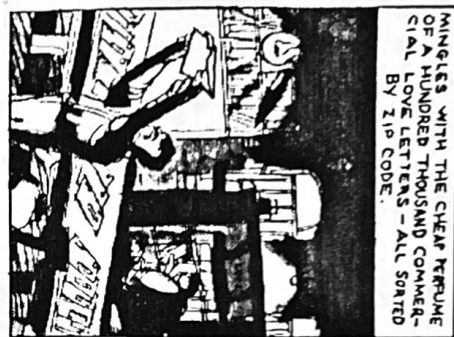
Katchor has recently expanded into his most widespread medium yet: a radio program version of *Knipl*, featured on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Saturday With Scott Simon*. The radio serial features an all-star cast of some of the finest New York comedians, including Jerry Stiller (George Castanza's father on television's popular *Seinfeld*) as *Knipl*, performer Brother Theodore, '60s comedian and *The*

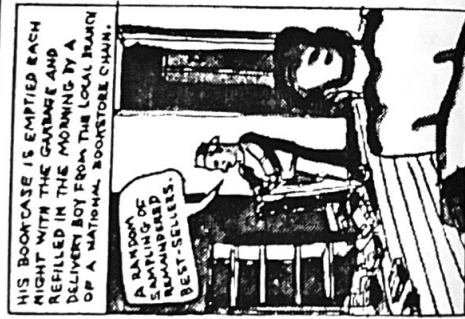
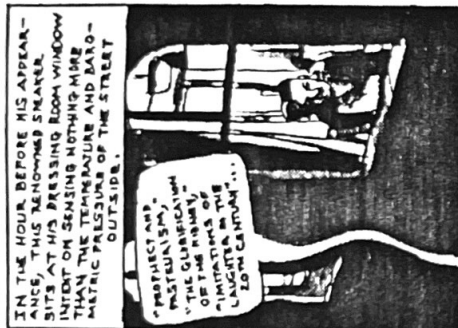
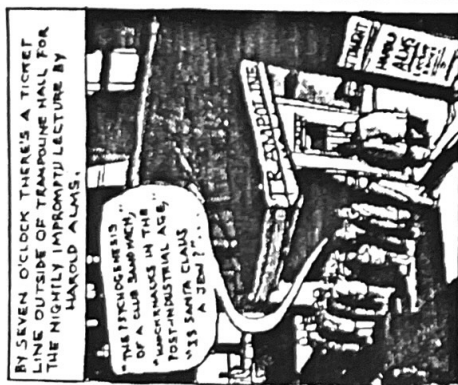
“I get letters from people thinking I'm talking about things only they would know. It has that look of something that no one else should know about.

is more interesting. When you come up to America, modern times, you find some interesting artists, people like Chester Gould, who did *Dick Tracy*, or Harry Hirshfield, who did a strip called *Abbie the Agent* which

Soupy Sales Show performer Eddie Lawrence and Broadway actor Joey Faye.

Born from a collaboration with independent producer David Isay, the inaugural installment of the radio program merited a bash at Ratner's Dairy Restaurant in New York City and a (Cont. on p. 29)





piece about *Knipl* on NPR. The show presents Katchor's strips as brief burlesque bits replete with sound effects, a snappy introductory script, and music composed by musician Henry Sapoznik, a member of the klezmer group Kapelye. Katchor explains that the radio show should appease New Yorkers suffering from *Knipl* withdrawal; *The Village Voice* dropped it after a year upon the arrival of a new editor.

Such side projects are hopefully bringing Katchor a greater dose of recognition, in addition to the praise he receives for his weekly strip. "Compared to other strips I've done, *Knipl* gets tremendous response," he said. "It seems to interest people who don't read comics much. It's a surprise they can find a comic that appeals to them... I get letters from people thinking I'm talking about things only they would know. 'How can you do this in a mass-audience strip, talk about things only I'd know about?' It has that look of something that no one else should know about."

Katchor has no further side projects in mind; the strip, he said, is enough for now. "I'm very critical of my own work, but I go on," he said. "It's an interesting way to organize and make use of all these things I see. You look at the strip and it's this catalog of urban details and it tries to make sense of them. Otherwise they're just these meaningless details of the economy; some sense must be made of them."

Circulated around the country, *Knipl* can be read in *The Miami New Times*, *Chicago New City*, *The Sacramento Magpie*, *The San Francisco Weekly*, *The Baltimore City Paper*, *The Iowa City Icon*, *The Seattle Stranger*, *The Washington City Paper*, *The Philadelphia Weekly*, *Nashville Scene* and the *Forward* in New York City. An anthology of early *Knipl* strips, titled *Cheap Novelties: The Pleasures Of Urban Decay*, is out of print; it can be purchased for \$15.50 postpaid from Katchor. Send checks made out to Ben Katchor to PO Box 2358, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008. A second collection of *Knipl*'s adventures is scheduled for publication by Little, Brown and Co. in the fall.

F

O

Angel in resin
a flutter frozen
in the hard crustacean
of Time.

S

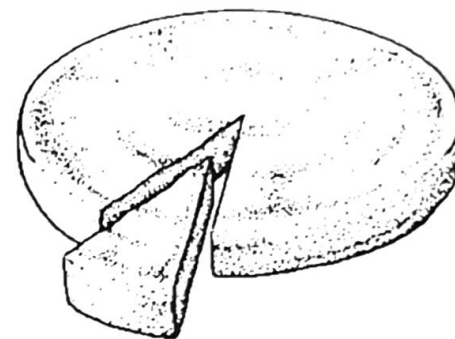
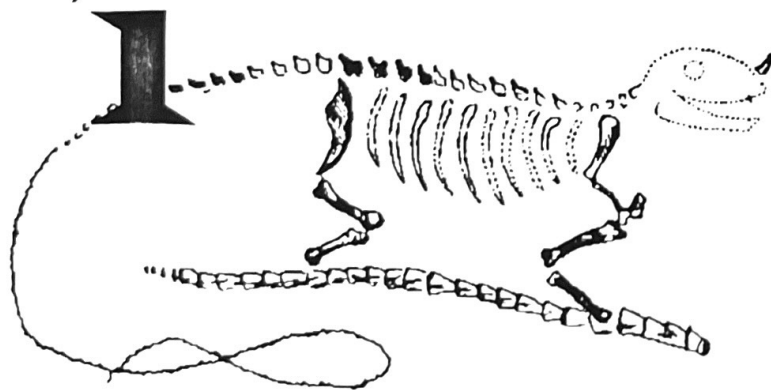
Vacillations which spread
whispers to thunders
as the lips part,

S

accolades mercurial jitter
form in procession to
a closing fifth.


i

by david hunter sutherland




Soon the tamarind rinds unfold,
Orange skin drenched to temples' weaving strands,
dark strays and catacomb footmaps
to stars.

And the eyes, bitter-sweet toffy
strong as an aftertaste lingers
of disguised rouge,
air and water,
tart blood.




HAPPENINGS



OF


The caterpillar crawls up onto your nose and looks you straight in the pupil and says, "In time, friend, in time." or



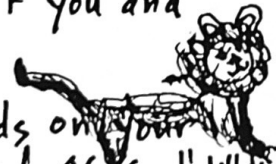
A worm crawling out of the ground looks up at you and shakes his head and crawls back.

A fly buzzes and stops an inch away from your pupil and says "the time has come" and flies away.

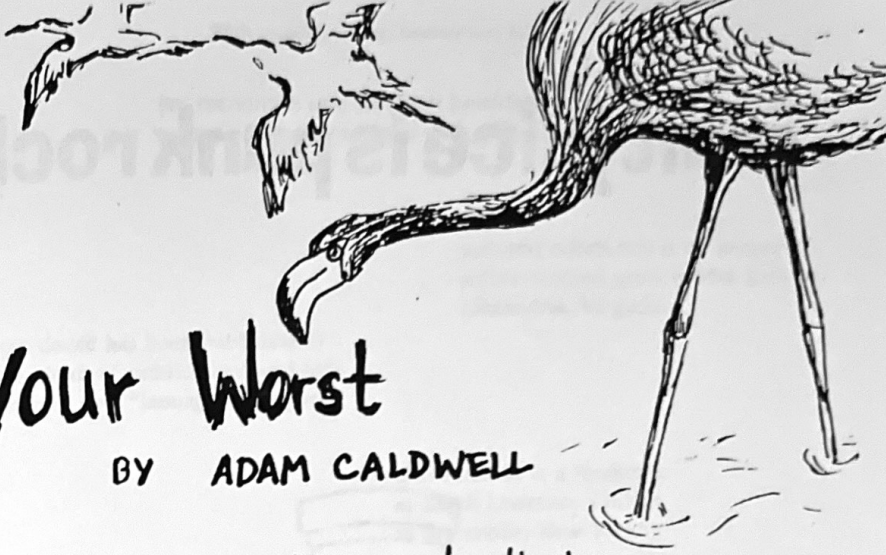
As you are leaping and bounding across a field a grasshopper lands on your thumb and asks "What are you running from?" and springs away.



And a turtle slowly crosses your yard and you are peeping through a window like you are afraid and don't want something to see you but the turtle sees you as he lifts his head and winks at you and walks on and goes along.




A sparrow lands on your windshield and asks, "Why don't you open your window?" And flies away.




Your Worst

BY ADAM CALDWELL




A tomcat runs across the yard, climbs a tree, leaps onto the roof, knocks on your window, climbs down, and dashes away.



A bunch of flamingos land on the ground, look at one another, look at you in question and fly away.

You are driving on a highway on a dreary day - alone - when a camel driving a tractor suddenly stops and turns around and looks at you and says "I've been waiting for you," and drives away.



A squirrel walks up to the front door on a snowy day and knocks on the door and says, "It's about time" and leaps away.

Mosquito buzzing around your car lands and says, "you, come with me!" and disappears.

was dos



I

I am fine.
I am good news.
I dance the boogie

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Kyosaku

(the zine that takes nine
months to get out)