

Winning literary entries

The Gateway staff would like to thank all those who entered the Nuclear Age Literary Contest. The judging was tough, and we're sorry we couldn't award prizes to everybody. We did manage to dig up another set of tickets to see Helen Caldicott, and both of the entries below won grand prizes.

Our nuclear (tr) age (dy)

by Neale Smith

Living in our nuclear age,
Living in our nuclear age yeah,
It ain't as hard as it's
Made out to be,
Living in our nuclear age.

"Armageddon's a'comin'! Prepare yourselves for the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord!" Hosiiah Sutter, travelling evangelist, screamed over the pulpit to the awestruck crowd, his fist thumping a bible with the conviction of a steel press. "The only defense is faith in the Lord Jesus! Fall down on your knees, brothers and sisters! Pray for your salvation!" The crowd obeyed, frothing in orgiastic repentance for imaginary sins. Better than sex, Sutter thought. He smoothed the lapels of his custom-tailored suit, adjusted his mirror sunglasses, straightened his gold crucifix-necklace (only 150 tax-deductible dollars), and smiled into the ogling eyes of the TV cameras, sending a representation of his grass roots face, with gleaming white teeth and every hair plastered firmly in place, into the homes of five million enthralled viewers. Speaking directly to them, he cried, "Send your donations to the Free America Bible Institute! God bless the Bomb! G'night, y'all!"

Classroom vignette: two ordinary friends speaking to each other over the booming of the bells. A: "I have these horrible, sweaty

dreams. I'm afraid to talk to my parents because they're afraid. Prenatal nuclear stress: I had it and it's never left. I know there's no place to hide. I'm afraid we're the last generation. Human society is stumbling through the inglorious ruins of its nobility."

B: "Don't get your balls in a knot. It's just another scheme meant to keep us in line. It's all phony. There was no such place as Hiroshima: it's only a myth. You know, like the Holocaust."

Only cleaning ladies know the clay feet found in the corridors of power.

A VIP muses to himself over a light breakfast of Corn Flakes and Geritol, energy pulsing through his veins. No evil empire can out-muscle me, I've been taking lessons from Mr. T.; I don't bend to pressure from the female or the gay, because I've got the backing of the NRA. I can have my thumb on the button as fast as a finger on a trigger, he thinks. Now where did I put it? Lethargy creeps through his hardening arteries.

"General Secretary, sir, we need a decision on our new policy concerning the use of surplus shoe leather as tank treads." No answer. "Please, sir, just yes or no." No

answer. The major put his hand on the cold, sloping steel. He could hear the pumps working, sucking air in and out. The flickering lights and steady beeping of the heart monitor soothed his tensions.

The captain spoke. "I have an infiltration lecture to deliver. Let's hope we get an answer from "Old Iron Lung' soon."

"Captain, you do not address your Supreme Ruler in that disrespectful tone! He will answer in his own time. The major traced the thin intravenous tubes with his fingers, watching the vital current of nutrients flow through them like fertilizer bound for a vegetable garden. All in good time, he reminded himself.

"Major," the captain exclaimed. "He moved."

The major whipped out his notebook. "That's a yes, then?"

"Peace Through Strength!" + "War is Peace!" = "Strength Through War!"

...but the farmer's daughter said, "Don't get so upset, daddy. it was just a cruise missile."

"Peace train? You won't catch me wasting my time standing in the rain with one of those stupid signs," the gourmet said. He sampled Chef Louis' Grecian Lamb in Mushroom

Sauce and pronounced it excellent. A pity he didn't care for the mushrooms which now grew over every city.

Abelard huddled with his shivering family, pulling the ragged blanket close around their shoulders. The winter months would be here soon, and there would be no more of these balmy -15°C days. He glanced up at the tiny flicker of light in the black noon sky, knowing its ultraviolet rays burned through the layer of dust like it wasn't there, knowing that even now it was searing his flesh. Soon, cancer would be devouring him while he starved. A crash echoed from the rubble, and he reached for his rifle. The days in the Militia had taught him well, and he had used the weapon to good effect many times. He crawled over to his small fire and rotated the hand-made spit. No one would get this meal from him. He felt kind of sad in a way — but then, Jacques had never been a very good neighbour.

Dying in our nuclear age,
Dying in our nuclear age
yeah,
It ain't as easy as you
Hoped it would be,
Dying in our nuclear age.

Mr. Tanimoto
by L. Odland

Remote apocalyptic ruins, 1945:
you run through the ashes of screams
while incinerated neighbors rise
in a firestorm of dark hot death;
you swim a river of peeling bodies
rushing home to your wife miles
off track
a desolation between you and them
between the present moment
of stunned panic
and the shocked future of disbelief;
sores savage dreams of the past.
through the hell of muted voices
you race down streets of utter
wrath,
a silent bomb (there was no
warning)
now the cry of man rages abroad
a storm of groaning; around a
corner
you collide with your wife,
an everyday greeting
so coincidental you are shaken to
being;
again separated you run through
the night
early morning, a migration has
begun;
hands everywhere, you carry
water while
the world laments thousands of
victims
scattered to the winds (always
warning).
Remote and radiated: ruins of
revelation.

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the realm of dreams and danger.
To the point where reality meets
fantasy, and truth touches illusion.
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