

Yellow continued

were filling a scrapbook of evil — clipped stories and pictures of savagery and cruelty — and I suggested that the world is like that, but (always the big but — a stuttering but stuck in my throat) why not fill another scrapbook with good — and you almost swallowed your face with disgust and said you didn't read *Reader's Digest* and ran along the bluff into the trees, away like the princess you always seemed. And I was glad you left because I needed to urinate and didn't know how to mention things like that to you and I knew when I was holding the shriveled penis in the February air and tracing your yellow initials in the snow you were right and I was wrong, but when you came back — long after — I couldn't speak. It seems that my words were a part of the world of hope I'd manufactured and now saw exploded, and in the next months I seldom spoke except to say I was going and going, until eventually, I was gone and words were no longer necessary for explaining since there was nothing to explain.

"David, I've brought you to this island because I want you to think a little about the people who once lived here, people like my grandfather who sailed on the *Effie Morrissey* with Captain Bob Bartlett. Helped bring back the first polar bears for the San Diego zoo. When Bartlett stopped sailing Arch Winsor found himself in the Sydney mines. From the white summit of the world to its black center, all in a life-time. When he was finally ready to retire the government resettled him over in Robert's Arm. Floated his house across Green Bay on a barge and plunked it down on the beach. And he was too old to care anymore and he lived three years in that house leaning forward to walk across his kitchen floor. It seems that life is like that, David. Up and down, down and up, sometimes a cool breeze on a sweaty back but mostly leaning into a strong wind."

"David once enjoyed Pastor Winsor's stories, but old stories are like museum exhibits — shelled fragments of machines that don't work."

"I fear for you, David. You're addicted. Some might say to religion. You know the stories, my friend. You told me yourself about your Aunt Carrie, Ross' mother, years in the Waterford — religion made her mad. Turned her head around and around till she didn't know how to wash her face. And Ennis testifying about the demons eating his insides and no pastor ever able to exorcise the demons like Old Sam and Coke. But it's not religion that turns a man's head. You're addicted to your religion. You want to save the world. You want to be a martyr. For reasons I don't know you had to suffer. We've all had to suffer. And the pain, the pain is hard. But healing comes with pain."

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"I believed in God, in his love. Believed he cared." David fights his jaw, can't keep them steady. The words are pushed out between fused teeth. And I was wrong. He didn't give a fuck about me. Not one little teeny-weensy goddamned little fuck. Oh he's up there alright watching goddamned fucking reruns of *Star Trek* and dreaming he's James Kirk searching for new worlds because he can't face the fucking mess he's made on this one."

David is shaking, his body ripples, the words are coming, a flood of fire. Pastor Winsor clings to a rock, trying to crush it into dust and pain roars through him, lye gorges his stomach. "No, David. It's not like that."

But David is alone now — running, glad for the branches lacerating his face and shoulders, runs for hundreds of years until a rose thorn branch slices his left eye and the pain is a condensed nugget of all the pain he's ever known and he screams and the screams explode clouds and ocean and rocks, fish sink to the earth's center and birds

chase clouds into heavens on the universe's edge, he screams and the island is filled with no sound but his scream reverberating in wave after wave without end and after weeks or months David's scream stops but the echo never stops and David doesn't know if the scream is his or somebody else's. Perhaps God's, and years or centuries pass and he opens his right eye and sees the grave-yard where dust becomes dust and he knows the community of people killed by smallpox and old age and gangrene buried under his face are dust, and worms turned for eternity in that dust and it doesn't matter because it isn't the end and God too is screaming with the rose thorn slicing his eye.

David and God both weeping and Pastor Winsor holding David in his arms. "Cry, my brother, my wounded, hurting, dear brother. Cry, let the tears wash over your body. Healing, David, can happen."

The shadows in the graveyard lengthen through the afternoon and when David wakes among the shadows he knows God and God won't go away and David's feet are cold with sweat because he's given up so long ago believing he can ever know God but now knows God is knowable, not that he will necessarily like the knowledge but God is knowable and God is here. David smiles thinking about Caitlin who pulled that stunt on him a few times — "You don't want me. You don't care about me. Fuck you then." — and no Caitlin — worse than dead — alive and laughing and flirting with Harry and Gerry and even Pleaman — dead only to

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David and David finally so pissed he couldn't talk straight in his classes and gave in and showed up outside Caitlin's bedroom window like a voyeur tapping apology and desire and here's God pulling the same stunt. A gray steel wall constructed around the yellow rose — the rose hidden, but the fragrance still typing phylacteries around David's neck until like Joshua he beat his fists upon the impervious gray steel wall and it collapsed.

On the trip back to Miles Cove Pastor Winsor sidles up the waves and slides down. His cargo is delicate. David's left eye is closed, but there is a hint of joy in the red distorted face.

"Pastor, why did Pleaman make those accusations against me?"

"Pleaman?"
"Why did he push for my resignation?"
The sea is growing more calm as they approach land. A seagull swings through the blue emptiness of the sky. David wishes he could fly with the gull.

"Pleaman had nothing to do with your resignation. Where did you get that idea?"
"I just thought he did."

"David, I think there are some things I thought you understood which you don't. When you refused to speak at the meeting we just assumed that the accusations were accurate. You wouldn't refute the charges. So, we asked for your resignation. The charges were serious. What we did was unjust. I've been hoping you'd speak up, but you haven't."

David hadn't spoken up because Caitlin had advised him. "Just tell them to fuck off. You don't owe them a thing. Don't say a word." And David liked the bold courage in her advice and said nothing.

"What do you mean, Pleaman had nothing to do with it? Who brought the accusations then?"

The pastor's face looks like burnt porridge. "You don't know, do you? David, in late April Caitlin came to me and confessed that she'd had an affair with you and that the guilt of her sin was more than she could continue to bear and she just wanted to confess and resign. And that's what she did. She left Miles Cove the next day and I haven't heard from her since and I don't even know where she is. She was a good teacher, especially for her first year, but there was always a strangeness about her. I had to investigate such charges

and when you wouldn't defend yourself, what choice did I have but to find you guilty and ask you to resign?"

Caitlin, why would you hurt me so? I loved you — my best words were yours. Ours was an incredible friendship. You didn't want me sexually. Now I realize you didn't really want me at all. You wanted to consume the last flower on the last planet of the universe. I am just one more picture for your scrap-book.

Third Place

The Real Calgary Stampede or, What Really Happened in the Subterranean Depths of the Four Seasons Hotel, Calgary, Alberta, Sunday, June 15, 1976.

I cannot forget the meanest one of them who, at that particular moment, was looking up at some imaginary sky and shouting "Damn! Damn!" The sight is branded red hot like a caramelized sugar burn into the cherry center of my mind. What did he mean to do. Who was he talking to? He was sweating and covered with a fine mist of whipped cream and shaved chocolate. His face was inhuman. One sour cherry lying unnoticed by him on the tip of his shiny black shoe. His spirit was broken. He was — the Pastry Chef of the Four Seasons Hotel, Calgary, Alberta —

A DEVIL IN WHITE

PIERRE GRUYERE: A chain-smoking Explosive Frenchman. Thirty-nine-years-old. A black spot on his lung. The sense of humor of an incendiary. In mid-sentence little puffs of white smoke rise out from the back of his throat or curl from underneath the hairy black holes of his nose. Frustrated by an apartment-sized freezer filled with offal. At the age of seven charged with armed robbery. Removed from his parents and raised by the finest Pastry Chef in all of Paris, Jacques Les Inesensitive, to whom he was apprenticed at the age of fourteen. Ran away at 21. Snuggled into Canada by Gerhardt Hauser-Heimer-Burger, an overweight gourmand, and immediately put to work at Gerhardt's favorite grazing spot, the Four Seasons Hotel, in its pastry kitchen below downtown Calgary, Alberta. Peering into this abyss, a wary fiend stood on the brink of Hell and looked awhile. Where the Black Forest Cake is always fresh. Where almost-paste roses are painstakingly sculptured by rat-like assistants from thin pastel sheets of rolled out marzipan and shaped into miniature long-stemmed beauties.

DEATH IN THE WHIPPING CREAM

The panic never really began until moments after the last course... THE DESSERT... was served. The scurrying and squeaking set off the first stampede. Of course, we had to do it all without alarming...

BIG EDGAR: A Swiss nihilist and Pierre's bodyguard. Twenty-seven-years-old. Face resembling a hairy marmot: thick brown moustache, slightly damp, curling at both ends. Desperate to own his own creperie. Desperate to go to California in search of fresh, young blondes as he was running out of raw material in Calgary. Known extracurricular activities: blow-drying his hair... and his moustache.

The morning had not begun well. I'd been late for work again, and so, standing stoik-like against the surgically-clean stainless steel counters, I awaited the BIG BLAST from Pierre. Instead he sent me sharply inside the fridges to take stock for the day and so I went in and closed the door. What lay ahead of me were countless frozen minutes of counting cartons of whipping cream, eggs, pounds of butter, and cubes of fresh yeast, pails of sour cherries, crates of strawberries and kiwis, and cakes and cakes and cakes. How many were left from the day before? Had the night staff sneaked away with any. Let's see, there were six Mille-Feuilles, eight different Rum Tortes; one Almond Butter Creme, one Lemon Butter Creme, one Sacher Torte, and three

"Some terrible things have happened, Pastor. I have made some bad mistakes. It is time for me to start pulling the weeds."

Miles Cove opens up like a balloon from the ocean. The log house is nestled among the spruce. David sees a man standing in the window and begins to laugh and his laughter rings off the rocks and trees and sky. It is time for Sarah and Virginia and Adam to come home, too.

by Carl Leggo

Hazelnut Butter Cremes; three cheese cakes, six Black Forest, one French apple tart, and thirteen egg-yellow and chocolate sponge cakes to be used in the *mise-en-place* for the day. I especially liked the smell in the fridges. It always made me think of the BIG, BIG SKY... you know that awesome prairie sky, dark blue, holding all the water it can get from God knows where, just waiting to HAIL, RAIN, SNOW down upon you, you poor chelita, little whitey... one of the sunless captives of the dark, interminable, subterranean depths of the sugary bowels of the Four Seasons. We were like blind white mice. There was no way you could see that gorgeous Calgary sky from down here. I needed some Milton to ease my spirits.

The dismal Situation waste and wild, A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames No light, but rather darkness visible Serv'd only to discover sights of woe, Regions of sorrow, doleful Shakes, where peace

And rest can never dwell, hope never comes...

In the Fridges my university education never failed me. I knew from reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* that he must have been a pastry chef apprentice, first, and then a writer. I'd already experienced "darkness visible" in the Great Icing Sugar Wars during the blackout

I was blue in the
fridges.

of two weeks before. I'd begun to wish I'd paid more attention in my seminar on *Paradise Regained*. But where, O where were all the dreamers and poets now? They've gone underground and into the fridges. Was it time to strike out? I was blue in the fridges. This job as pastry chef apprentice had taken me down further than I'd ever meant to go. Funny though, something about the fridges made me feel good. Something about the privacy and the safety of the dark: the darkness visible. My smoky breath billowing, I yelled out to fill the hoary acoustic depths: "Better to resign in Hell, than serve in Heaven!" But soft, all was quiet. Too quiet. You could taste it. I inhaled the Big Sky and BANG Edgar opened the door with a HUGE carving knife in his hands. He eyed me suspiciously. I grabbed a couple of cartons of whipping cream and a handful of kiwis for camouflage and walked like a coolie into the kitchen to thaw quietly beside the red hot ovens. Pretending to be busy, I waited for the inevitable obliteration beside the greasy embrace of HADES' ARMPIT — our nickname for the ovens — Pierre really took his disciplining of LATE junior staff seriously. And Pierre was in full rut this morning, bellowing, and stamping the concrete floor with both feet, trying to summon some other devils from some other HELL, snorting out a full morning's carbon from the tarry breath of his *Citaines*, *Gauloises*, unfiltered Camels, and anybody else's cigarettes when he ran out. I listened and inhaled his second-hand smoke. I knew I was in line so I waited while Pierre reared and pitched his horns at...

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