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# THE SOLDIER

BOOK ONE

6 - PORTRAIT OF A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SNUFF FIGHTER

**G. WELLS TAYLOR**

# **THE SOLDIER**

## **BOOK ONE**

### *6 - Portrait of a 21st Century Snuff Fighter*

G. Wells Taylor

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**Dedicated to Jane Goodall**

*For introducing me to the other apes in  
the jungle.*

**Book One**  
**THE SOLDIER**

Where to begin? Cassette player in skull-crushing hand is on. Flesh-ripping teeth, blood-drinking mouth and marrow-tasting tongue are tuned to the same artistic pitch, working the gentle truce together now, labia peaceful in action—coexisting licking the numbers testing one, two, three...

“That Animan, oh yeah! He sure is a monster. Course, in my own special way, so am I.”

I pause for a scratch and twitch, thinking over many vicious ways that I could tell my story. Starting me the hero fighting in the ring or scrapping in the



dustbins back in Ireland. But that wouldn't be true, and truth is the only thing that ever fought me to the final bell and won.

Problem was I rarely remembered my childhood, it being a great boring collection of rubber teat sucking and the like, so many soiled diapers and cradle caps. It was boring to me: all the day in, day out tests for the body and mind.

Oh yeah, I remember all those pasty birds in white coats giving me the IQ quizzes with ink blots and the pressure cuffs and the eyedropper squeezing and the like. It was no place for a young fellow, just a wee boy with nothing but a bouncy ball for protection.

All alone, you might say, with a

bunch of featherweight men and women in white, plastic hats and all glaring, staring and pairing—digging into the old cogger box yours truly calls his brain; but, I did all right, I guess.

I grew up calling the doctors and scientists, whitecoats; funny, I still do, when I see some little pigeon-breasted bird with pop bottle lenses and the like, I howl, “Hey, there goes a fucking whitecoat!”

I guess it’s hard to shake.

They worked me round the clock, you might say. The boring bastards burning the midnight oil as I dreamed and dreamed—they ciphering like Freud with Jung itch and counting the pitter-pats of my heart and the electrical

lightning strokes in my brain. Shit, the times I woke up coughing, spitting wires and duct tape.

I was brought up in a big cinderblock house in the Canadian Rockies. A really big house, just rectangles and long straight halls covered in hard creamy paint I could see my reflection in. There were fifty people there whose lives revolved around me. Little ol' me, little wee ol' me fifty pounds on my first birthday me.

Once I talked to a whitecoat shrink about the whole thing. He said I turned out violent because of unconscious resentment for those who deprived me of love. 'Those' in this case being the whitecoats interested in the fibrous and

gaseous natures of me more than the parts that the gods might squabble over.

That surprised me, because I always felt it was a conscious choice my taste for blood, and I never laid the blame for my violent nature on my past. I was violent because I was good at it. Damn good. You might say I came out swinging—from whatever pink, fuzzy and unnamed corner of the ring I entered.

I remember at the cinderblock house they used to put me through all sorts of physical training for pumping up the old body, piling on the muscle so to speak. The program I loved the most was boxing. I loved it. Course, once I took to that, I kind of gave up on the old headwork—in a serious way. I learned

anyway, having an aptitude for cogging and setting notions in their proper time and place.

And I mean I really didn't have time for schooling. Oh, they'd sit me down with a book, but all I could think about was the way it felt slugging my fists into something soft and warm, like a man's belly, or that jarring kind of cement feel a jaw can have when you lay into it with a haymaker.

Even the times I did read, I kind of changed the story on my own, so I guess that's headwork in a way, but it never felt like work. I'd imagine, old *Great Expectations* Pip like laying into Miss Havisham, just kind of punching her three ways of Sunday, just pulling her

veil down and bang, bang, bang on the cheekbones for all the cockteasing, till she can't remember if she was getting married or what; and Jagers the lawyer fellow with the smile and dirty hands, I could see our hero Pip knocking over his big happy teeth like tombstones.

And Pip's sister, well she needed to be put in line, as simple as that—bent over something and screaming.

*Moby Dick* was a favorite of mine because of all the spearing and the flesh rendering and the great boiling pots of blubber and the thick black meat smoke in the air—though he yawped our Melville did, sometimes making a sleepfest for the coggerbox with all the extra stuff flowing out of his pen.

But I read that and imagined old Queequeg diving in and going a real violent round with the white whale. Then, he kind of KO's the big bastard by knocking his eyes out and punching through the backs of the bony sockets into the brain. Real bloody shot, you know—the crowds would be screaming.

Oh yeah, I remember, then Queequeg comes out of the water like a fisherman king, and that crippled bastard Ahab goes at him with a harpoon because he's been cheated of his prize, and then doesn't Queequeg pick him up and sit him down hard on his ivory leg. Just, bang, in a kind of wrestler's flying mare proctology thing. And me seeing and laughing at the look on old Ahab's face

as the ivory slides home.

I knew that wasn't the kind of thing a schoolboy should think about, but it got me reading.

So you might think yours truly was being a little short of sight by abandoning the mind for the body, especially after the great mechanization that took place at the final count for the twentieth: just digital machines and no one working like. You might say it was kind of stupid to go out into a world equipped with only a strong body and limited skills.

You might think I'm a kind of a retard for giving up all that high and mighty headwork for a life using my body. Well, fuck you anyway. I'd like to hear you say



that to my face.

An average man would probably splash his brains to the four winds at this point with a heavy handgun. Not me, though. I always had violence to fall back on. Now, I wasn't always hurting someone. It was the video movie library we had there, at the Cinderblock house that got me going.

Grainy black Sonny Liston honest fights on the tapes and Blu-rays and young Cassius Clay beating on Joe Frazier's head made me think of the punch and jab as a method of expressing my emotional subtext. I used to be content just banging around my coach a little bit or punching the heavy bag until the sawdust poured.

But there came a day that I drew first blood, and it was beautiful. Like your first lay, or one of those really rare magic sunrises when the air's all misty and the dew shines like diamonds on the leaves. It was beautiful, and I never looked back. The scene was this:

I was about sixteen, and sick and tired of the cinderblock house in the mountains, I mean, what am I going to do up there anyway? I used to headwork a joke that I would just settle down with a nice mountain goat for the fast and furious and raise a big-balled and bearded family of billy boys.

Anyway, I asked them if I could go into the city for a movie or something. They showed me movies up there, but I

always had a whitecoat with me, monitoring a wire in my dick, or something. Anyway, they say no—and that's enough for me. I wait for night and then I beat the shit out of the four big guys that were there to handle me, and the closest thing I had to equals, or friends for that matter.

Then something came over me when they tried to push me back into my room because I just started swinging and kicking and breaking. I killed each and every one of them with my bare fists. I couldn't help it once I got started, it was like hitting putty, and when they screamed it only made me smile and hit them harder. And they screamed—oh they didn't like that at all.

Anyway, by sheer luck and violence, yours truly escaped even though they have all kinds of electric crap that could track me down or fry my ass: me running and headworking that they'd kill me now that I've whacked four of their whitecoat musclemen. I got away, quick-like by jumping into a big roaring river and splashing away like a salmon.

There were times when I was lost in this monster frothy cloud that I thought I was done for, like my bill was paid; but, somehow I washed clear past the sharp and nasty rocks that wanted my flesh and blood.

I went to a big city. It was some place with a real sissy name, something royal and you could just see the guy in

pantyhose, but I was so pumped I barely remember it, and from there I went to the states, then, Mexico; and before you know it, there I was living in Argentina.

Why Argentina? Well, it wasn't from fright or any great hatched egg from the coggerbox. You see, when I was traveling through Mexico, which was somewhere I had planned to stay, I looked for a job that didn't require too much headwork. You see, in Mexico they still have lots of human machines who require less care and money to run than real machines, and they're cheaper to replace. The fuckers!

So, I'm roaming those dusty streets. It's a real nice night, and this little guy comes up.

I guess I look like a fighter. I got a big square jaw, broad nose like a tuna can, and heavy low forehead. I keep my hair cut in a stiff brush and I make sure my big body is in tiptop shape, being an early bloomer with all the veins and muscles bulging.

So this guy asks me if I like fights.

“Señor,” he called me, can you believe it? I kind of chuckled. I tell him of course I do, and he asks me to follow him. I get this little voice in my skull saying maybe he’s a fag and he wants me, so I size him up and think if he is, he’ll be a dead fag soon.

We go, and end up at this real seedy looking hotel that smelled like rosehips and whores, me knowing this since at

this point in my adventures I had become acquainted with both fragrances. He leads me into the basement of the place.

One hundred pesos he whined at me, and I gave it to him, having got some money in a kind of dishonest fashion that I'd rather not tell you about.

In through this door we go, and there's a dark room full of seats, all pointed at a screen. He drops into a chair and waits for me. I figured it was going to be fuck flicks, plenty of drooling fun that I don't go in for much. I'm there and pumping up just about to clobber the living shit out of this Mexican when the movie starts. I had my wide back to it, but swung around when I heard a bell.

First thing I notice in the movie is this big cage maybe twenty-five feet tall. There's a couple of guys in it, both of them about the same size. One looks Chinese, and the other's a black brother of African ancestry. I let the little Mexican's collar drop and sat down beside him. I noticed the black guy has big steel knuckles on one fist and I see the Chinaman moving like a karate expert-type: slinking and underhanded. Well, they square off as I watch, and I begin to feel a little homesick.

They always had popcorn at the cinderblock house.

The battle was fast and furious. It reminded me of Ultimate Fighting, a fun form of entertainment from the twentieth



century that I'd bumped shoulders with on the way south—but this was better. This filled in all the blanks. The Chinaman kicked the shit out to the black guy. He had all his karate tricks to throw at him, and the black guy wasn't nearly violent enough.

I always figured karate was a way of letting your body do what it wanted to do. We always screw it up by headworking our way around it—spoiling the mood for blood and sport and worrying about getting kicked in the nuts.

Or other people do... I have no problem getting natural, and even as I watched the guy I felt my muscles begin to twitch and jump as I think how I

would react, just boom, boom, boom—sayonara!

Soon, anyway, I hear one of the black guy's legs snap wet and sappy as a green tree branch, and one of his arms hangs crooked. So the crowd on the film goes wild when the Chinaman comes in for the knockout and then, while the crowds howling like dogs for his blood, doesn't the black guy get a lucky swing with his good arm and knock the Chinaman down.

The crowd just shrieks at that point, as the black guy drags himself over and with many heavy smacks of his steel knuckles, the Chinaman's head is a red puddle. And I'm watching and I can't believe it. They went right for it, no holding back, killed him. I even think I

got a bit of wood I was so excited.

The film ended quickly without credits or anything. I just remember the look on the black guy's face as he staggered to his feet and raised his arm in victory. I turned to the Mexican and asked him where the hell that fight took place, because I had this nagging suspicion that it would not wash with the black-skirted ministers of fate in the US of A.

He tells me Argentina, and then damned if he doesn't give me an address and telephone number. An Argentine phone number, that is.

Anyway, I couldn't let an opportunity like that slip by.

I got the cash together quickly in a

way that I will not yet divulge and traveled on down to Argentina in an airplane that had a wonky engine on its left wing that kept cutting in out like some old guy snoring. It got me really choppy inside when it started sawing logs as we went whizzing over some of those Andes Mountains.

There's nothing walking or creeping on the planet that scares me, but I cogged that gravity would win in a toe to toe death match, especially him swinging at me with granite peaks and valleys.

Anyway, I get there, and call the number then arrange to meet this guy. This puny greased-back Argentinean that spoke good English, looks me over and says if I'd like, I could fight that very

weekend. The prize is a thousand American dollars, he tells me. Great! I said, almost kind of laughing inside cause this guy was going to let me compete and he didn't even know if I was a good fighter or not.

I guess he had nothing to lose.

I pause and look out the window of the penthouse, then snap off the little cassette recorder I have been yawping my life's story into. The clock on the wall shows me in no uncertain terms that I am out of time for the leisurely rosy ruminations of the way I was, and that I am due at the Metrodome.

The limousine will be outside, I am sure, with some scotch-assed monkey shining up the hubcaps and sneaking

quick drinks out of the bar in back. I can see his precious little face already, headworked into existence, on the temporal movie screen in my skull. He has dainty white hands, and lily petal cheeks.

I growl incomprehensibly, but make my point with three sharp nasty smacks of fist against palm. I have to go to the Metrodome. I pitch the cassette recorder on the couch where the writer-type individual can do his thing with it.

Animan was about seven, seven and a half feet tall, and his body was made of great tangles of chromium tubing. It was kind of pretty the way the light glittered off him. Then I chuckle like cause all he needs is a fat guy blowing on one of his arms and he looks like a tuba.

Anyway, he's—I call him a 'he' cause it feels better for me—I don't mean he had a little brass spigot between his legs or a faucet, but I'll feel better knocking the living shit out of him if I see him as a *him*. I mean, I still could go real violent on a woman, real angry boy stuff like you're not my mother, but that always

leaves a sour taste in my mouth, and I prefer my violent moments with women in bed.

So, he's ugly when you look past the gleam, Animan, which might be another reason I call him a him. He's got this big steam iron head, just a big chunk of smooth iron with a pair of beady bloodshot eyes glaring out. I guess they were lights, but they had the look of real eyes the way the face was shaped. That's why the hair on yours truly's thick scalp prickled just a little bit.

Anyway Animan just stands there where he stopped after climbing onto the stage like his batteries had gone quits on him. I'm across from him on a wooden stool that's got my backside screaming



for some kind action. I figure I'd like to scrap with him there and then, just to get my blood flowing again.

I had other problems though, and maybe that's why I don't walk over and start pounding. My brains were all awash around headwork since I saw that guy before the show. He was one of the pressed suit daisies with skin like milk and nuts the size of buttonholes. He's got big lips and wide staring eyes, anyway.

Doesn't he come up and say he knows me. I kind of go all chin-dropped and saggy, but manage to maintain my poise: all self-confident and carnivorous. He says he worked for Gemco and then he says some stuff about my past that only someone who knows me could know. I

can't place his face, being one of any in a puddle of pasty mugs, but he seems to know me.

I just about let him have it right there since I had the sudden feeling he was a United Nations man or something and that he was wanting to bust yours truly and throw away the key like. Anyway he says nothing more than congratulations on the films, says he's seen them, and I've proven a few of his theories.

Again, I'm tempted to bust him up like a chair, but hold back. He kind of smiles then says it would be worth my while to beat Animan when it came time to do all the violence and machine taking apart.

So he suddenly sounds like he doesn't

know me because I can't imagine me letting anyone but me win. Then he says he's looking forward to the fight, and he leaves the room. My brain must have been smoking like old wires because I should have lifted him out of his shoes, but I let him walk—while I cogged over that one.

That's an hour past say, and now I'm sitting, anyway, with my brain all frazzled by the headwork, and kind of putting together some big story like Mechano, and he's gone before any good questions come leaking out.

So I'm sitting there with my head full, and I shake it kind of, so I can get a few real good focused glares at my opponent. The robot-thing just stands there staring.

A couple of whitecoats go buzzing around him with tiny blinking gadgets in their little bee-wing hands.

I get a kick when they look at me, and I give them a face like you wouldn't believe and I think they shit their pants. They turn all pale and sweaty anyway.

I look at Animan and he just stands there staring back, but I figure to call him a fuckface would be like doing the same thing to a can opener or a laptop computer and I cog that I'm above that, so I look into the crowd and start making goo-goo eyes at this tall blonde with mighty tits and a short skirt that's letting me see her sheer silk panties—kind of dark in the middle, you know, the way we like it: snip, snip, trim, trim, yum,

yum.

I mouth something else about fucking, then mug a little letting the bravado of a killer work for me. I give the Animan the finger and kind of wink at the blonde.

The Animan doesn't blink an eye. What an asshole.

Soon a guy comes up on stage. He's a seedy little Italian bastard with a nose like a fishhook that I know as the fight promoter: Juan Matisse. I try to stay clear of him since any snuff fights he arranges are usually like against my grandfather or something. The blood flows fast, but it isn't fierce. Easy money, but I'm past that point in my career.

Where Matisse got the Animan, I

don't know, but it sure doesn't conjure up any pretty picture, and it inspires no confidence in me. I think for a minute that this fight might be like me wrestling a refrigerator or something, but the idea sort of fades away like gas. There's something about Animan that looks legit.

Matisse smiles with his golden teeth all around at the press, and they respond by wasting gigabytes of memory cards on him. He tap-taps the mike then starts on with his banjo voice heavily accented.

“Gracias, Gracias,” he says though with more of an accent. “I am Juan Matisse. As you know after years of wrangling and months of deal making, I personally have arranged to bring to you

the match of the century. Animán, mountain of steel and technology versus Nuke, Thirteen Time World Champion Snuff Fighter.”

I growl at the little porkpie son of a bitch for my second billing. The hackles around my ears stand up. That fuck! He goes on and on then, as much as I would have liked to end it with so many bone-crunching whacks.

“The kind builders of Animán, Gemco—a division of Specific Electric, have brought their tremendous creation to Santa Rosa for what is being billed the battle of the twenty-first century. It is hoped that Animán will lead a vanguard of advances in robotics and electronics. Specific Electric sees this rumble on the

pampas as the final test for their creation. In just four nights this terrifying creation of the digital world will undergo its final option.

“Animan will battle Nuke, world champion snuff fighter. Santa Rosa will be the grounds for the world’s greatest battle, where man will combat technology. Is it possible for a mere machine to overcome its creators? Is it possible for a weak creature of flesh and blood to overpower five hundred pounds of circuits, steel and hydraulics? Is this the end for mankind?”

I get kind of pissed off at this point. I figure he’s going at my reputation a bit here, what with the lie about me being one of Animan’s creators, and the crack



about weak flesh and blood. I stand up quick and smash my stool into little pieces. I throw what's left of it at the press and make my way to the mike. Juan Matisse beat a hasty and lily-livered retreat.

“I’ll push that frying pan he calls a face into the last century!” I kind of get crowded now, all the press moving in like a bunch of oiled faggots. But I get kind of carried away. “I’ll make him wish he’d been made into hubcaps, or bathroom fixtures!”

Now, the crowd starts moving around and kind of oohing a lot about something, and not taking any more pictures or listening to me or anything. I see a couple of Matisse’s bodyguards giving

me the cruel eye and the pouty lips and iron chins. I reach out and tear an ear off one of them. That bastard goes into his coat for a big heavy gun. I easily take the gun and bust his cheekbones with it.

Well, the whole show goes wild at this point. I keep punching and punching and punching. Always it felt good, the hard fist cracks on the jaws and the warm putty punches in the bellies. I guess I'm a real showman at heart, because soon the cameras are on me again. I fold a bodyguard in two and pitch him onto the howling horde of media fuckers and they go back as a mass into a plate glass window. It's one of those big heavy convention center jobs so it goes *BANG* and comes down

in a bloodthirsty curtain.

Well, before you know it a platoon of soldiers comes in, and after about an hour of real violence and a half hour at the police station, I'm walking home to my penthouse having just paid my bail to the sergeant. There's blood all over me at this point.

My jacket's been torn to smithereens and my ass is hanging out of my jeans. I feel a tender spot on my skull and my eyes jump wince-like with the skin around them wrinkling like prunes. Someone has knocked a patch of fur off my head with a table leg but I think I put him in a coma for his trouble.

As I'm walking and kind of reliving the whole violent episode in my head, I

remember that when the fight was going strong, I started looking around for that Animan to see if I can spar a little. Seems he chickenshit disappeared just after the fight started which gives me a pleasing squirt in the guts because I figured he didn't have the belly for the close work.

Anyway, I walk into the lobby of my apartment building and ask the sleepy little gook bastard behind the counter for any mail. There was a postcard from Warren McVickers, an Irish cop I met from New York City. He paid big money to meet me and have a little spar. I even broke his forearm for him. The postcard was from a whorehouse in Singapore, so I guessed he made good on his promise

to go to the Vatican.

He's my buddy now—like I need a buddy.

Just then someone taps me light on the shoulder. I come around quick with a fist cocked being still full of the swinging hot blood. It's the blonde I saw at the press conference. Her tits are parked under my pecks as I give here eyes the once-over. Nice and bright and blue, like morning sky through a dewdrop.

“I hope you don't mind, Mr. Nuke.” She smiled with tall white cocksucking teeth. “I asked around and one of the promoters gave me your address.” Then she gave me a little Bambi frown, looking at my wounded hide. “Oh, dear, you're hurt.”

“Shit no, this is nothing, baby—er, what will I call you?” I’m figuring from her eyes that she won’t let me go on calling her ‘baby.’

“Veronica,” she said and smiled again. “Veronica Ramsey.”

I just go quiet a minute listening to the pretty sound the name made inside my head. “Veronica...” I listen to it again.

“That’s pretty.” I hear myself saying, like I’m Don Juan or Johnny Depp or some shit.

“Thank you, Mr. Nuke. Do you have a first name?” Her eyes batted long lashes at me.

“Nuke’s fine.” I smile now, starting to get a major nose full of this broad’s hormones. “Nuke.” I look down and

notice she has a hand out like she wants me to shake it. I grab it as gently as I can and she only winces a little.

“Pleased to meet you, Nuke.”

“Pleased to meet you, Veroncia.” I smile again, and really feel like action. “How about fucking, Veronica. Do you like it or what?”

Well, doesn't she just haul off and smack me. I almost decked her, being still somewhat full of heat from the battle, and now a little horny. She turns away and walks out of the hotel. I watch her round ass go. It's one of those ones that was big without being flabby—a dancer's ass, like liquid steel. I almost fetched her back and gave her a spanking, but my arrows of vengeance

misfire and something inside tells me no.

Maybe it was her name that kept me back. *Veronica*.

I was all lit up now though, so instead of going right to my room I decided to pop into a bar and pick up a whore or something. That slap had made me a little too angry for any more Noel Coward dialogue. I wanted to dip the wick and I wasn't going to be picky—so long as I could be very rough.



So my right fist goes crunch up under his ribs and out comes a great big woof of air like he's blowing out birthday candles. Then, I'm kind of enjoying that and I nearly miss his hatchet hand that happens to be whistling toward my bristly skull.

As it was, I feel this slight shadow afterimage on my scalp, kind of like a memory you want to forget but can't. Like he almost got me there. A left from him, I block; like it's thrown at me by a baby, it has no power, and then I shove him back with a real twist and pull on his hatchet hand.

I feel a faraway chicken bone kind of *crack*. I think he broke a finger—maybe a wrist bone—hard to say. Anyway, he goes curling away like a spinning top and smashes into the iron turnbuckle with a *clang*. I'm still scanning the roof out of the corner of an eye, since I saw the referee starting to drop there.

So, if you haven't seen one, the referees are these big iron robot type jobs, about eight feet tall with legs like spiders. They dangle over the ring on cables, and pretty much do nothing else—just big dangerous chandeliers, unless there's a clinch. They watch for that, fighters tangling it up—getting in close for a breather or some nasty flesh work. He started to drop the second we

grappled there, and so you have to move fast. The referee's only job is to break up clinches and none too gently. I've seen them do it.

They move fast, and they can pull the arm off a man like a wing off a paper airplane. Anyway, I learned just watching what they could do. Close fighting is discouraged by the network bosses on account of the cameras being unable to pick up the action, and close up wrestling fights don't sell. They learned that a long time ago when Judo masters took over the old days Ultimate Fighting and turned it into a yawn and snore and chokeholds and who fucking cares.

They changed the rules back then,

before the referees were installed, and said you couldn't clinch for more than ten seconds—so that's the end of those popping weasel little wrestlers with their glass jaws and double-jointed spines—just bang, bang, bang and down they go.

And that's changed even more now because another incentive against the chin-to-chin, nipple to nipple scrapping is the backers will pay extra for real photogenic deathblows. And I've been known to pick up bonuses from time to time. They like the real crazy stuff, muscles pumped for action, head back screaming like an Indian. You see, in this game you just can't pay a man enough to take a fall.

So this mug comes off the cables doubled over, as fast as he can come with a couple of broken ribs. He's about six-six, weighs in at two hundred fifty in his scanties, and with his hatchet outreaches me by maybe a foot. I kind of see the spotlight gleam along the hatchet blade. He's got it back and really cocked for a stump splitter. His other mitt's out to mess up my defense.

A normal man would die just about then, being indisposed with the hand and the hatchet and being all shaky in the knees from having perused this monster's bio—spent his teenage years in an American pen for killing his mommy and daddy with a kitchen knife—but not yours truly. I fake a charge at

him, and then stop just out of his chopping range. I can do it faster than anybody in the ring today. I've got good eyes, and legs like steel pistons right? So he takes the bait and swings at the place I *should* be, and I watch a second then leap in and jam my shoulder up under his arm.

I catch him by the wrist and really put the squeeze on like I'm going to loosen the skin and peel it. I bend his elbow over my shoulder and pump it down with all my strength. It snaps loud and proud. A big red bolt of blood shoots out, because I've pulled so hard the bones have snapped into slivers and cut through the muscle and skin—really wild stuff!

He shrieks in my ear, which I hadn't accounted for, but can live with, and the crowd goes through the roof. He screeches a little more as I keep hold of the wrist and I kind of spin away from him like we're waltzing. The big bastard's tough though, because he gives me a hard punch in the mouth. I was off guard, and being the showman again. I'm suddenly dropping to a knee the same moment the hatchet's dropping out of his useless hand.

I'm a little dazed—not really hurt, but dazed because I didn't expect the package—you let a two-hundred-and-fifty-pound man punch you in the mouth when you don't expect it and we'll trade notes.

Small price to pay, but I kind of curse myself for letting it happen. He deserved to get that lick in, I give him that, but my instincts are on red alert now, having had a brush with overconfidence. I let my reflexes take over and I wrap my legs through his and drop to the mat. He goes down like a Sequoia. He's on the floor and spewing blood, and I'm looking right at his hatchet blade just lying there useless.

I smile kind of devious-like, smelling victory, and never knowing when the cameras have a tight shot on me. I snap it up, grinning like a clown and look at my opponent. I've got him pinned in a scissor hold, like they used to in the flashy asshole days of wrestling—with



guys in swimming trunks and go-go boots.

I quick like a bunny give him the blade of the hatchet over the eyes. There's a loud wooden *thunk* sound, and the crowd just about pees itself. I've done my job though and the blade only dropped a quarter inch—just enough to draw some blood. I pull it free and the blood jumps out. I let him go, but he's down and dazed and eyes full of blood and all. His face is one big bloody smear and it peers around like a sleepy old man's.

The crowd's chanting my name now, and I'm up with the hatchet over my head. I'm giving them the big chest and shoulder muscle routine, and I try to grin

like a demon, and I let some blood drool out of my mouth like I've had a hard go of it and I'm going to enjoy letting some air into this guy's head.

“Nuke! Nuke! Nuke!” The crowd keeps chanting, and I take it all in like a star and for a bit of show allow my left leg a bit of a shake, like I'm tired or something. They scream even more, because they'd hate to see me pass out now, before I've carved this boy up into fish sticks. I see my opponent; he's looking for his corner, crawling across the hard concrete pouring blood.

The crowd's going into a real frenzy as I stalk over—yeah, I stalk over like a great big rabid wolf. For a second I'm embarrassed and angry because I see the

bastard's crying like a baby—so I think to go right for it, no more glory. Just a quick hit—*kabang*—before he shits himself.

I look into the white-enamel eyes of the crowd. They smile like savages, and their mouths are so many evil round yawps into hell. I look down at him—this man, this crybaby, this mommy's boy—he's bleeding and sniveling at my feet. I'm hoping he doesn't beg or anything because that will get my blood pressure up and that usually makes me go wild and I lose all my artistic poise and purpose.

I hear the big black mouths scream my name. I heft the hatchet and split his skull neat and true from front to back.

His brains spill out on the floor like a big creamy wave or like old oatmeal, then the blood and all. I smile for us both then. Why not, he would have loved to do the same to me. Damn it, the feeling was great. I swing the hatchet around over my head causing a drooling curtain of blood all around.

I bow real low, and the band starts to play. I bow again, and climb out of the ring, feeling real excellent like I could dance all evening, or do sexy gymnastics with that special someone till the sun comes up and the lubricants run out.

“Anyway, I pause for reflection, it being part of the last week of my ordinary life, before I go into the annals of what would be called civilized history. I’ve got to say that life as a snuff fighter is not what you would refer to as easy, or in terms that could be found in a thesaurus beside the word *cakewalk*.

“No. A fellow has to know what’s going on his own head before he tries it. Not to say there’s a lot of headwork, because there isn’t. But, I’m referring to the non-difficult type thinking that one would acquaint with moments of headwork if that individual were in a

job where that were required. It being not so much headwork, as *soulwork*. That's more like it. That's what I mean: soulwork. Forget that other part."

I pause here and look at this pasty little novelist type chap that would look at home in a whitecoat. He sits quietly like a good little bird. He's still sporting the shiner I gave him when I became upset about a crack he made directed at my syntax.

True, he caught me off guard, because I was not all together sure at the time what my syntax was; but I figured he was not being paid to criticize yours truly. The only reason I'm talking to the scribe is because some book company paid four million dollars for the privilege.

I'm tempted at times to just punch the shit out of this guy and run him through his scanner, stuff him into his computer and email him home.

But, I have been good. Besides he wasn't really a bad guy, just too busy with the headwork for his own good. Fucking writer.

"I'm beginning to understand you, Mr. Nuke." His voice comes out like a sugar cube. "You have felt your career was a natural calling—a spiritual duty."

"Yeah!" I tell him, trying to sound confident. He knows shit about me, it's obvious, but I hate being shown up by these little birds full of headwork because I get mad and injure most of them. "Yeah, it is something that could

be called natural to my instinctive nature. Or in other words, it is me, and I have to be it.”

“It’s almost a karmic thing, a divine calling...” He takes a noisy slurp from his whisky. That’s because I snapped off his front tooth when trying to explain my feelings about my mother, or father for that matter, neither which I actually knew, but who I know had to be somewhere, but for some reason forgot to get in touch with yours truly for the past years of his life.

I’m not really upset about it. I just don’t like these tiny men with glasses and pens and paper, and the big questions and the probing stares digging for dangerous feelings about it.



“Yes,” I say, seeing an opportunity to show off my own acquaintance with the headwork business. “A divine right, a notion of those kings in what would once be called the empire of Britain, which if you think about it is incorrect since the king in charge of an empire is an *emperor* by rights. You ask any Chinaman.”

This little tidbit I picked up about a year before from Premiere Dong, a Chinaman wrestler and former Asian porn star that I knew. We had a bit of a chat at a big fighter’s meet and sure enough he starts yakking it up about the emperor of China, like I cared, but I must have done a little headwork about it because I managed to do the two and

two with the facts.

Mind you, he did go on and on about it, almost until my ears started to bleed. I just remembered that chat and kept it in mind when I was set to fight him about a month later. Premiere Dong died horribly.

Anyway, this writer looks at me again, and his eyes go all sheepdog and drippy. “Perhaps if we were to concentrate upon your early days. If we could focus on how you felt in the cinderblock house that you called home.”

Okay, well, I almost warn him then not to start any chinwag about how I felt back then. At least I want to tell him to put on his football pads because I might

try to kick a field goal with his private parts once I start pouring out the little angry bits of the start of my life's calling. I guess I just shrugged instead, and kind of chuckled thinking about the way he looked last time he regained consciousness—stupid, like some chimpanzee with a gut full of moonshine.

“Sure,” I say, and start talking.

There was this nurse there, Lois, who used to show me her pussy. I don't know how she managed—there usually being a big digital gigabyte camera on or up my ass most of the whole time, but somehow she found a way to give me a peek.

I guess you could say that Lois was my first love that being my first in the early romantic days when I still believed in love. I was six or seven at the time, and when I wasn't boxing or reading and thinking about boxing, I was sleeping and dreaming about boxing or dreaming about reading about it—type of thing.

Well, in she walked one night,

clickety-clack on the high heels—different from the other gum-soled nightingales who whispered around the linoleum like Cinderella's mice, but Lois walks over and up goes the skirt—boom-boom there it is. All lovely and brown and pink in the nightlight, the labia folded away like butterfly wings.

I took a real deep ponderous look at it, almost approaching headwork—since it was new to me at a lad my age, then reached out an inquisitive paw having been somewhat schooled in the art of hard knocking up by a feisty old janitor who pushed his smelly equipment cart up and down the halls of the cinderblock house.

“They like it hard and fast,” he used

to say, and me being but a young fellow with little headwork in the noggin; well, I believed him. “If they don’t scream, you aren’t doing your job.” He’d glib over a spitball of tobacco—his teeth as yellow as pee.

Anyway, out goes my mitt all stiff muscle fingers, and Lois slaps it.

Now, I ball up a fist, and I’m about to go at her for this infraction when she says “*Look*, don’t touch.”

Well, I guess I was still naive about love at the time and being big on the first experiences decided to compromise and do a close inspection with the eyeballs.

I still get this monstrous desire to do like the janitor said, and take her down on the bed and lift the skirt and do the

dirty deed—slithering in there like some vicious anaconda getting out of the rain and me weighing in already at about one-fifty, and what with having all the working equipment and so forth—but, I go softy and just look and take it all in.

It never went any further, even though I tried from time to time. But she was always quick with that tricky hard little hand, and being still a boy, I was open to influences like mommy-types of pain. So I gawked whenever she came in. Just took it in.

Seems to me I could draw her pussy from memory, I stared at it so many times.

So it went on for about two years, her coming late at night sometimes, and

showing me the wonderland cat smiling toothlessly under her skirt. She'd stand there for about ten, fifteen minutes then drop her skirt hem back over her thighs and away she goes—clickety-clack.

Now, I'd be left there with this great throbbing dingleangle between my legs with no place to go, but to do a little five-finger discount at the sperm bank, basically caramelizing my bedding, comforter and all—things looking sometimes like I spilled a can of shellac.

Sad but unconquered, yours truly stuck literally in a gooey toss and turn for the night.

Then, one day she stopped coming around all together, and I didn't see either of her smiles for a month.



So I asked the janitor who was like a guru to me, and he said she ran off with the director's son. I only knew directors back then as the guys who called "Roll 'em!" just before the sea comes flashing in and kills the Romans or the gangsters go bang, bang, bang with their big black guns.

When I heard that Lois had spirited herself away. I imagined her in a movie one day, maybe one about her nights with a young fellow like myself, but I realized that I had a deep weepy feeling in me that I could not shake no matter how hard I hit the punching bag; so I started sparring with the coach, and the lovely *whuff* sounds he'd make took all thoughts of Lois and the tribulations of

love from my head.

Despite this, I managed to hold onto my romantic notions.

Then I fell in love with my war teacher. I always called her my war teacher, because the history she talked about was really just a record of what bunch of mean motherfuckers won that time. She always tried to confuse me with long talkabouts on the political this and that of it, but I saw that was like a bunch of meetings between fight promoters and managers.

My favorite stuff was about the Romans because they knew all about what it was to be a man with a flare for violence. The Romans knocked down the old world and kicked until its brains

were out. I had to hand it to them.

My favorite guy was Hannibal who was as tough as they come, and the only reason I liked him so much is that the odds favored the Romans in a head to head smack-down. And Hannibal ran them right to the bell, pissed as he was about all the raping they did to Africa.

Anyway, I would always picture myself as this guy Hannibal, tougher than tough, roaring into battle on the thick gray back of an elephant with a long axe in each hand just smacking and whacking the Romans out of my way like stalks of garlic. I was fond of the Europeans too, because they were no strangers to the slash and spew and sever, especially in the early days when there were lots of

angry guys claiming to be king.

They seemed to keep kicking ass for the whole time they were around, but they got kind of dirty in the end with knife-in-the-back work and the odd bit of hemlock in the tea.

Oh, that reminds me of Socrates, who seemed like a real boring bit of headwork and the father of whitecoats until you read and read, and hoping on all hope you finally find a bit about him fighting in war and killing and stuff for Greece, which when I did find it, increased my respect for the man and his yawping enormously.

So, one day I tell this war teacher, Mrs. Sonadhi, she was East Indian or something prone to headscarves and

silky hip-to-hip wraparounds, if she could tell me more about this guy Cromwell, a round-headed bastard that kicked the shit out of a king.

She says sure, tomorrow, but I give her the long dogface and say I want to hear some more now please. She tells me she has to get a textbook from her office, and would it be okay if she showed it to me there, and I told her seeing it there would be just fine too.

As we walked down the hall I just kept looking at her long dress thing, all kind of covered in flowers and shapes as it shimmered over the round and curvy parts of her without giving up any of the contours of the camel toe or swollen pouty vents. Her face is really pretty too,

with big dark almond eyes—and I'm getting wood, like *bad*.

Into the office we go, and she says to have a seat. I shut the door and lock it and she says I don't have to lock it, then looks really terrified sort of like something in my face is giving away the secret that's raging between my legs.

So anyway I jumped her quick with as much speed as I had in my big body—which has always been a lot.

I tear a big chunk off her dress thing and stuff it in her mouth because I can tell she's a little upset and so she won't distract me with any talking about doing the right thing and dating first; and then I unwrap her body and bend it over the desk. She had a great frame, really

wonderful tits with super dark nipples and this bush between her legs that was black and a little scary—real haunted forest kind of thing.

But I get over it quick and fuck her on the desk, her the whole time going *Ugh*, and *Uff*, being unable to make any of the screams that the janitor told me about, but giving clues that I was doing a good job of it just the same. So, I give it to her quick and hard, and soon I just pull up my pantaloons and leave her there kind of draped over her desk winded and crumpled like her dress.

I was locked in my room for the next five weeks, and I never saw my war teacher again even though I loved her. I guessed that she must have gone

somewhere to have a baby or something as some of the books and movies foretold, and so I figured that this was the way of love, just thrusting feelings and nothing more.

If I were to writer-like put that interlude into a novel of my life, I would do so under the title: “Bereft from Birth.” Meaning that I am not stupid and can therefore, after the fact, understand the suffering of my war teacher, the understanding of which does not take away the incident, nor does it undermine the exhilarating feeling yours truly gets when cogging it up out of the wheels and chains that could be referred to as my brain and going over it again in all its sweaty, salty glory.



Whew! I know that in the eternal scheme of the university reality that we all inhabit, this would be a good versus evil issue. I could bring all sorts of evidence to bear for my good nature or the fact that the intent of the act was anything but nasty, but I will not insult the judges with such a plea.

A good reason does not undo it, and I am certain that everyone concerned has learned something from this unsavory little incident, yours truly being among the happy pupils.

Anyway, the headline could read: *Love Conquers Everything but Nuke*. I was never one of those petunia sniffing little dandy boys about love, penning the drooling bits of rosary for my

sweetheart's kiss.

I have always taken the janitor's good advice on the matter. Fuck them fast and hard, the message and lesson for me being: make sure they like it fast and hard first, and this being primary among my reasons for throwing a question of such directness in Veronica Ramsey's lap.

Anyway, after all of that ugly love business, yours truly got down to more reasonable attempts of the wooing and kissing and lovebird stuff. I found that, once I got myself on the great outdoor side of life, I could with a few dollars, find the women who enjoyed my sometimes overburdening and often deleterious administrations.

I was never the type to get too hung up about the close confidant and advisor sort of relations because I can get extremely violent talking about what makes Nuke tick and that can have nasty side effects upon anyone else in the room—especially if that individual is of the fairer sex and wanting to hang onto her good looks and all.

Not that a male would be any safer in the fat chewing department, having done my share of nose jobs on whitecoated fellows with notebooks and questions, but that would be ridiculous when applied to relationships because with a man-type individual based on gender alone, I would not have such whispered confidence.

So, no one ever learns much about me, and I just find out about tensile strength and flexibility and friction burns. It fits much better in my hard-knocking life than the drooly bits of love leer and permanent erectile soul.

Furthermore, I am bored by ideas like love and pretty pansy-time, real-type joke-shows with someone out working the day long and thinking the cozy headwork about sweetie at home with the sniveling brats when in fact said sweetie has packed the kids off babysitter-like and is presently doing the love gobble on some happy postman's unwomanhood.

Then the poor savant comes home with the roses and the pretty dress in

beribboned package and finds his lovely bride playing the sodomist's doggy with jolly milkman. So and so poor worker boy then guns down everyone in the room and himself, not to mention a neighbor who's looking over the fence.

Love conquers all. But it doesn't conquer Nuke.

So I'm reading this in the evening, and the little writer fellow sits across from me on the edge of one of my comfy chairs ready to jackrabbit out of the room, really digging his toes into the carpet like.

I yawp a primitive growl from time to time, crowning him with a tiara of sweaty pearls when he sees the bristles stand up on my head.

I liked the book so far really, all the busy wordwork, though I couldn't help but add something headwork of my own like about me punching out old Lois for not letting me scratch and sniff, and all

that, and for good measure since she did give old Nukie a smack.

I'm thinking maybe I should rewrite that part with me looking more victorious and streetwise. Or maybe with a scene of me parading around with forearms soaked in her blood, and I mention this to my writer buddy.

He kind of drops down and hunkered in like a sprinter in the blocks and I can imagine him sprying out of the room because he knows this to be one of my loaded questions.

I'm in a good mood though, and not too forceful just then, and I can take criticism like a hit with a hammer. I'm all iron and steel sort of thing since I seem so conscientious and brave and

wise and bold in the book so far.

But I decide to give him a scare anyway, so I snag his little Kentucky Fried arm between my first finger and bratwurst thumb and just roll his flesh a little, like I'm going to do the big crush.

“What do you think, should I change it?” Even as I'm saying it, I've really forgotten the reason for change, and the exact changes as a matter of fact; but his face is priceless.

He sits there doing his poker best to give me the idea I can take his arm off and he won't mind. And I'm just chuckling to myself, hoping he's brought a change of scanties.

“I think you can do what you want with your book, but I would suggest you



leave it as close to the reality as possible. As I understand it, you want the world to know who you really are.” He was sweating fifty caliber bullets. I could hear them rattle on the floor. “You want to clear the air...”

“I think you’re right, Mr. Writer-type individual,” I say this with much easy nonchalance and Ryan Seacrest grace. “Besides, there are plenty of crazy bits of me left to show...Is ne pas? The homme behind the hombre.”

The writer guy gives me two dishpan eyes when I work the French lingo, and then he nods.

“Besides,” I say, “I’m a little tired of all this headwork and mental violence, and I have a match in an hour or so. Why

not open up the talkerbox a little later, *after* would be better, I can give you a punch by punch.”

I don't even wait for an answer, just troop off in my great powerful lumbering way to the bathroom where I powder and puff with all my super-science gorilla aversion odors and then slip into my metal crotch piece. I figure I've got about twenty minutes until my car will come for me, so I lean back in front of the mirror and stare blankly into my own eyes thinking about Lois.

What a bitch.

So I'm in my corner of the ring at the Metrodome—ring's not right really, since it's a square but nobody gives a shit. The Metrodome echoes all around it, a giant oval steel and cinderblock barn with seats for eighty thousand on a good night—and tonight's a good night.

High on the wall on each of its narrow ends is a two-story paper-thin video screen for the close up viewing that the fans enjoy, and high overhead there are large flat screens looking out flush with all four sides of the ring—it's a square okay, I'm not going to say it again.

Anyway, I'm looking at these two guys in the far corner—my opponents. They bill themselves as the Daring Darling Duo. Two nasty little homicides with flat faces and very un-darling features let me tell you.

I see then, as they parade like prissy peacock queens, that it is their manner that is supposed to be darling, not their looks which begin to degrade the moment they take off their sequined jackets and fly around in their little silver G-strings. They prance and mince like southpaw pansies, and I'm already thinking about taking them apart when the announcer climbs into this pulpit over the ring and pipes up:

“Ladies and Gentlemen of the world.

Tonight, Santa Rosa Metrodome is pleased to present the brave challengers to the World Snuff Fighting Championship. In this corner, the Daring Darling Duo! Identical twins that have cut quite a mean streak on their way to this championship match against the one, the only...Nuke!" The announcer looks like a Mexican or one of the local Spanish Indian-types, but his English pours out like Earl Grey Tea.

The official language of the satellite audience and most of what gets yawped on the Intermesh now—or translated into old Chinese—is standard English through and through. It didn't matter anyway, since the Gates and Google laid down the law years ago.

Of course, English after all those years in cyberspace didn't look or sound much like the stuff that drooled out of Charles Dickens' inkjet—but it was English.

I kind of jump out of my corner swinging my fists in some rapid-fire combinations and do the odd bit of 'step on it and crush' leg movements. The crowd goes wild.

I lean back against the turnbuckle and let go one of my bloodcurdling screams. As I do it, I tense up the six-pack and make it roll like an escalator.

I look back at the Darling Twins.

They have watched the whole posturing moment with open yawps. I smile at them and make skull-pulverizing

motions with my hands. Their faces go blank. I begin to wonder what they have up their sleeves, even though they're shirtless and therefore sleeveless.

The announcer yaks and yaks where he's perched over the ring.

“Nuke, the Magnificent, has graciously agreed to meet two opponents at once in an unprecedented show of championship daring. The purse for the match is ten million dollars so far, so all of you out there in the wide world on Satellite and Net, place your bets and share in the purse—the starting bell will sound in sixty seconds!”

He says that part with a pretty smile for the whirring digitals with flashing lenses that flutter around the ring on

wires and hover-blades. “The World Champion has graciously agreed to this match only three nights before his historic sold out engagement with the Animan.”

The announcer does a quirky half-bow in his pulpit and then the whole cherry-picking gimmick gets noodled away—slurping over ringside like spaghetti.

Now I see what has got the Darlings so cocky.

They have been handed a pair of power-saws. Blue oily smoke razzes from each.

I’ve got to chuckle since I know the major flaw of any man with a machine is he will trust the machine.



The bell rings. Razz, razz, and razz they come running at me. One goes to the left, the other to my right. I figure they'll try to do the old 'get his attention and gut him' routine.

Anyway, I kind of do a flip and roll forward, like one of those gymnasts would, and come up about thirty feet away from where I started. The ring's about forty feet square, so I know I could do this trick for hours and basically never see the boys.

But would yours truly run from a fight?

Fuck you I would! I just used the dodge to give me a second to plan.

Now my first impulse is to get in close with one of them, and put the

maximum squeeze on his codpiece, do the old bust the seeds out of the grape routine—but I quick headwork back to an incident when I tried that and did a major sew and stitch gash on my hand from fine filament blades woven into the material of another fighter's groin—who soon after came to a grisly end.

So, I abandon the plan and duck quick as one of the Darlings swings his razzing saw at me. I come up with a nice piece of pugnacity, popping him hard on the back of his right elbow.

I see his saw sag, and his face go gray. He switches quick to the other hand, but not before I've spotted old Darling Two's reflection in his eye.

I flash around fast, and then vault up

and over that Darling's blade. He was charging in for a kidney chop.

Anyway, I'm out of the way, and he's suddenly running his blade along the ropes awfully close to his brother's head, sparks flying. They tangle a minute, trying to get their feet and I sort of spot a little robot arm action from above.

I headwork around the conclusion that the referee will see any clinch as a clinch that is to be broken, and this pops an even better idea into my head, than the one I had clogged around about maybe just getting in close with the boys and cutting them up with their own saws.

I figure it's times like that I've got an excellent grip on the headwork—or

maybe it's the showman in me. Anyway, I see an opportunity for some great art and video feeds.

I see the boys are back on their feet, and they circle around a little. I see the Darling I popped, the elbow of whom is hanging to the side, a tiny bit of hesitation in his face. The other brother comes running at me, and I wait until the saw's almost chewing into me before I drop, and roll like a dervish under his legs. Down he goes.

I take a moment to bite through his Achilles; then I snap to my feet and go at the other. He swings the saw at me like I'm a tree or something blowing towards him in a hurricane. I can see he's terrified, which I consider great.

I come in fast and hard, take him by his wounded arm and pull it up over his collarbone, he screams bloody murder and drops the chain saw, which I headworking quickly snap up and gun razz, razz, razz. The other brother comes running, power-saw doing the angry bumblebee overhead.

I smile seeing the plan coming to the right shape.

At the last second, I turn the saw on the brother in my grip. I rev the motor high and push it straight through him where his appendix would be. The other side would nail the aorta and then he'd bleed a lot, but die fast. I wanted artwork—gore not guts.

Anyway, this Darling screams and

thrashes around as I pull the chain saw out with bits of kidney attached—yum! Now out of the top of my eye, I see the referee coming down on its iron cable and I know I've got to move fast.

I push the Darling in my arms toward the Darling approaching and throw the chain saw to the side.

The boys are brothers and my hunch pays off that they don't want to kill each other. The other brother turns his blade to the side to catch him and I make my move, stepping in fast and snapping the healthy one's wrist—knocking the chain saw away and down it goes.

I lay in a number of combinations on the un-sawed brother, just boom, boom, boom like putty and his face kind of

bursts like a balloon full of ketchup. I take his arm and in what I consider to be a work of genius, thrust it through the hole I made in his brother.

Once through, I bust the arm at right angles mid forearm and again mid upper arm. Kind of make a question mark out of the fucking thing. It had to hurt. Both of these Darling brothers are screaming and crying out.

The crowd goes wild, just thousands of wailing, screaming yawps.

I roll out of the way, just in the nick as we say, as this referee comes crashing down on them, the big dumb robot starts to break these guys out of a clinch the hard way. As luck would have it, the beastie grabs the Darling's broken arm

and tries to pull him through, the wrong way.

Anyway, there's this horrible tearing and ripping moment, with lots of broken ribs snapping like pickets in a fence, like so many fingers fracturing loud, and the brothers scream and scream and suddenly an arm comes off and then the Darling with the hole in him, is kind of torn from navel to backbone, and he drops spouting blood. I'm watching all this waiting for my moment to step in for the Coup de Ville.

The referee drops these two screeching, bleeding forms when they're separated and then climbs up its little wire.

Well, yours truly steps in and does



some magnificent fist work on these boys. First I smashed the ribs and snapped the neck of the one-armed Darling, and then I did a series of war crushes on the other severed one.

Pretty easy kills at that point—they're dead in seconds, and there I am again, in my familiar place with this hard metal belt over my head pumping it and my legs up and down. There's blood everywhere, and my arms and muscles gleam scarlet like a demon's.

The announcer steps out—almost falling down in the slippery abattoir business—then comes over to me. He grabs my thick wrist in an 'ooh, icky' kind of way and holds it over my head.

“The winner and still champion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thirteen Time World Champion Snuff Fighter, Nuke!”

Well, again there I am, all ‘aw shucks’ and doing my best to seem non-boasting in the self-esteem department. I see a number of women in the front row all coiled up and oily from the headwork ‘I wish I was there’ experience.

One even drops her shirt and shows off a pair of lovely big and rounds. I take it all in, thinking for a minute it might be nice to take one or two of them fast and hard, but I abandon it, when I feel a strange and weepy pang for the brothers whose mangled bodies are being hauled away to be deposited in the flesh wagon waiting patiently beside the ring.

The second Darling, the one I had not

skewered, had showed a strange look on his face when he watched me cut a hole in his brother. That look was odd, and I had not seen it before. I didn't care about them, like I wish they were alive, because they know the business and I won fair and square. But there was something in that look that took the fire of the win out of yours truly's heart, and put in its place a cold kind of wind—something numb and achy like a deep bruise.

I shook it off quickly on my way out of the Metrodome, but I decided to do none of the fast and hard with those lovelies. I just went home to bed.

I'm all kind of a tingle, full of the vodka and the late night and not yet completely undermined by age. Oh I've heard about that age thing, with the old white hair and the baggy bits of luggage under the eyes, and the yellow lacquered nails and Maserati sports cars instead of pussy and blowjobs and semen spraying around the place. I've heard about it.

All the bits of gravity twirls that happen when you're on the one you love and you bend over and smile and all your face falls forward like a curtain, only its not lucky enough to be made out of a material that you can go down to the

store and get changed.

I've heard about the snipping snip type doctor, tuck it here and sew it there, but that's so much unreal stitch and tack that it sets yours truly's heart to stone.

Oh, I've heard about age: the osteoporosis and the hardening liver, the crackling arteries and the eyes that no longer see the world in the same sharp clear, 'can you see that daddy' kind of way. I've heard about the time of life when your gut sticks out farther than your cock.

Yes, I've heard about it. But it isn't here yet for yours truly, me being still full of the urgent violent needs of a dying creature, all hard and erectile before bed.

The blood is gone from under my nails, and the color has returned to my face. I lie in bed and sip a Greyhound, all secret clear vodka and the tangy grapefruit. Nuke is nonplussed and wonders why. Yours truly has lost his clarity, in the headwork department. Soon the sleepy stuff comes all wrapped in angel's wings and singing.

So the world hasn't changed much by morning, just piss-proud and grumpy in the bowels. My ears go all off and on like some little imp dingus from the unseen world pushes and pulls a cork in and out of them to piss yours truly off—so it's feeling like I'm going up and down on an elevator.

I drive a big hard eye-scraping finger into the left, and fuck it in and out till my sinuses start to drain and my eyes jump. I snort and cough up bits of hard and glossy bitters from the smoky air that hovers over the ring during combat. I let this glob go plop into a sink of water I

have poured.

The eyes looking back out of the mirror have a hard edge to them, like chips of steel, or the hard points of spears. I squint them up like an oldster and grumble and shuffle my legs a bit. My quads are tight and full of old vodka so I grab my feet a heel at a time and pull them up behind my back feeling the muscles stretch and slide like snakes.

I look at my face again and then look down. In front of me on the marble counter is an envelope from my writer friend. I figure he has dropped off a manuscript at my penthouse in the hopes that yours truly would find some joy perusing it in the early morning hours—like an unexpected Easter egg, it's there.



I'm staring at it, and trying my best to cog up what it could be about. I have given him many hours of the yak and yak, and I cannot place it.

I curl up on the throne and tear open my epistle of good wishes. Inside is a ruffling handful of paper—the ink already fading. On the first one is the title: “Life with Coach.” I then headwork out this little bit of news and I remember giving a bit of a nose bleeder to the writer during this one. I almost jam the paper into the toilet and shit on it, but decide instead to give it the once-over while I do the Gouda gouge.

So, I'm this kid in it, about nine, nine and a half years of age. I've got these big pumped up muscles like chunks of roast

beef only hard and active and they're like, like something urgent or hard like a club.

Anyway I go to the gym everyday and I have this great talk and walk with Coach about exercise and keeping the gluts firm and the mind focused. I listen and listen to him and find it kind of nice in a way—soft like terrycloth.

Now, I'm still hurting at this time twisted up inside over the exciting Lois and still unwedded with Mrs. Sonadhi, so I'm moving around the gym like an angry cat that swallowed a fish hook or something as unappetizing. I'm walking and taking swings and stuff at anything that doesn't get out of the way.

But the coach, he knows me well

enough having the odd time already gone “*Uff!*” over one of my ridge-backed hands. He keeps his distance and stays on his toes because he didn’t get that old looking pretty!

“Well, Nuke,” he says, keeping his dark eyes on me. “You seem to be in a nasty mood today. What has disturbed you?”

I’m looking at his face and thinking that it is awfully red and that his nose is too big and needs a trimming or something.

But, I guess he caught me at a reflective moment because I replied in rather headworking fashion, “Well, Coach. I am not what you would say happy, in a non-sad way. You could find

a picture of me in a book titled: *Saddest-type Individuals in the Universe*. My picture would be on the cover, and I would not be smiling.”

“Oh,” says the coach who ducks fast out of the way of a fist I *haymake* at his forehead. He has crept in with concern and momentarily let his guard down.

“That is too bad,” he says, some distance from me now. “Would you like to talk about it?”

I kind of think that I would rather hit and draw blood about it, but then still full of headwork I hear myself yakking all the sudden.

“I am concerned sometimes,” I say, “about where it is that my parents have gone to—parents that I am sure I must

have, since I listen somewhat in biology class, taking joy out of the words as much as the cutting up of the little rodents and house cats. It seems customary among people here on earth who have children—that they keep in touch with them from time to time, if not to do the whole jolly ho-ho at Christmas and the so forth and the happy birthday Sweetiekins my dear!”

I have stopped in place now and feel adrenaline rushing angrily through my veins.

“Dear me,” says the coach, who if he ever spent time in front of the mirror could not feel that way for long. “I suppose that must be very difficult for you.”

I would love to show him how difficult that would be for me in the form of a number of rabbit punches and maybe a nasty blood boil pinch on the scrotum; but, he has wisely hidden on the far side of a pommel horse thing that I sometimes climbed up on and let my arms twirl me around and around.

I punch it a couple of times anyway, letting the adrenaline flow, and feel a little better for it.

He looks at me, and his battered old face seems to soften somewhat. You see, he was not like the whitecoats that I have dealt with before who were at that very second watching me and Coach do the dangerous one-on-one from behind a number of unbreakable mirrors on the

walls—and through blue-toothed video cameras that were hidden around the place.

The coach said he was a navy man, which meant he traveled in the old days on ships and got drunk a lot, and caught exotic diseases between the legs of distant women. He used to tell me stories of his days at sea, but some whitecoats must have told him to ‘zip the yap’ about it because he stopped and would not start again when I asked.

Anyway, he is a big bastard with plenty of meat across a yard and a half of shoulder bones. He’s old though with streaks of the cloudy white in his stiff hair. It is short, and fashioned much like my own.

“Would you like to talk about it?” he says, and I give him a look that makes him stand back a little. He is certain in plain violence what I would like to do about it.

But, still warmed somewhat to him and being unable to move fast enough to catch the slippery old seadog, I settle down on my haunches and yawp out my story of woe.

“I cannot remember my mother, Coach. And this would be considered rude in some areas of life, where other good sons always kept a certain closeness, if not a picture, a view of their womb so to speak.” I then cited an example of a queer old English bird, Mr. Lawrence, who talked a long streak in a



book about a son and his mother.

That boy had been in constantly repetitious contact with his mommy, and even protected her from a big coal miner father from time to time since the old fucker enjoyed getting a few hard ales into him then going nasty and violent at his family.

I tell the coach about this tale, taking great care to leave out my suspicion that the boy, the sick son, wanted to do the hard and fast, kind of juicy Lois thing with his mommy. That wasn't what I wanted and I did not want to distract Coach who I had learned could be distracted by the simplest of things.

“Well,” says Coach, being sure to keep his distance and sort of eyeing me

up like maybe this is just a trick to get him in close enough for a punch to chip a tooth or twist a nose.

To be honest, I had headworked it as a possible moment for the hammer throw, but talking about that Lawrence boy had loosened me up a little and for a moment I didn't feel so much like breaking and twisting and snapping, as I did want to blather the words in and out.

“It is true, boy,” he says in a simple kind of way. His voice is softer now like uncooked meat. “That a young fellow such as yourself should know of his mommy. In most cases, but in yours, well...” He stammered then, and I see his eyes go cloudy a minute. “Things are different for you, young man.”

“And did you know your mother?” I ask, being not unable to form the question of gentility.

“Oh, yes.” The coach smiled sweetly, and his eyes looked far away. “She was a beauty, she was. But a spitfire and hellion! *That* went with the red hair of course, and oh, boy she had a temper! Sweet young Irish lass that came over in a boat, just as a wee girl of five years, at the end of the second world war—way back when. She was too young though. Too young. And, she died young.”

I could see the coach’s eyes go moist and unsettled, pink in the white, and glassy.

“That is a sad tale,” I tell him. Sad because I always imagined my mother

somewhere doing a nasty bit of business on foreign pirates or spies.

She'd be some kind of extra-violent Mata Hari type woman with guns in her bra. Her friends the bloody James Bond and MI5 keeping her so busy she could not visit her young boy. Sad also, because I had cogged about the possibility that she was dead already, but I had imagined that scene to be supremely violent, with her doing a dangerous firefight against foreign communist terror-agents and strange men with bionic appendages.

She would go down, only after a bloody confrontation with entrails flying and the good side winning, even with her dying breath leaking out of a bullet

wound in some faraway night in a warehouse among enemies, and on the breath the words: “Nukie—my son.”

I often pictured the scene late at night. Sometimes I would imagine her to look like Lois, minus all the under the skirt peek and giggle I’ve mentioned.

“Well, it’s sad. Yes, sometimes that’s all parents are—a sad story,” the coach says this with a half-witted smile. I suspect it is because he has said something wise and he is not used to the sensation.

“And your father?” I ask him, deciding to keep beating my way in. “He was a coach and a navy man?”

“No.” The coach’s face gets as hard and imposing as a coral reef without any

of the beauty. “The bastard was a truck driver. He abandoned my mother and five kids. When my mother died, we had to spend the next years being shuttled around from foster home to foster home. If I ever see him again, I’ll kill him.”

That heats up my interest a lot, because I have felt the same way about my own pop, wherever he had rudely skulked off to. That was strange in a way because I knew, to be fair, I should want to kick the living shit out of my mother too, but for some reason I hated my father outright. I cogged that one in a speculative way, it being the responsibility of any father to do his utter most to fight his way into hell itself to get his kid.

I start to talk anyway. “And you always thought that like you were Watson, and he was Sherlock Holmes. He would come and get you out of there. Like he would do the hell or high water, and ride in with a bunch of renegade Apache Indians and destroy half of the world to see that his sonny boy was safe and sound...”

The coach just smiled again in a smirky kind of inside way. “Yeah, I guess you could say that.”

“I headworked that, the same,” I said, and the coach kind of frowns at my dialect. I always imagined my father to be some double agent or spy who must have raped my mother or something and she killed him or worse.

I could not imagine any other way for dads to forget about their kids. And nobody inside the cinderblock walls would tell yours truly about his family history.

“Well, come on kid. It’s not that bad. You’ve got plenty of attention.” He sweeps his broad hand around the gym. I take it to include the rest of the cinderblock house. “There’s all kinds of people here to pay you attention and care for you.”

“And I got you too, eh Coach? I got you to yak it with.” The coach gets mistier and stuff, and I see his big mouth twist a bit.

“That’s fine, boy. That’s fine...” he says this and reaches out a big hand to



stroke my shoulder.

I take the opportunity and step inside his reach to give him a one, two, three combination of left and right uppercuts that pretty much rubs the smile off his cheeks—and pushes his weepy tears back into his old eye sockets

“You’re getting soft, Coach.” I chuckle as I look down at him. He is lying on the floor drooling a bit of blood and shaking his head. I felt much better for it though and decide against celebrating by putting the boots to him.

I can already hear my handlers running anyway—they’d have the Tasers and the nets...

So I look up from the manuscript. The pages are all crumpled where I’ve

thrown them on the floor. I've got an itchy feeling in my shoulders and my fingers just keep curling up like claws. Part of me wants to tear the writer apart and another part wants to go back to bed and strangle my pectorals like murder.

I opt instead to clean myself up with a shower then prowl out to the kitchen for a breakfast of twelve eggs, toast and hash browns from the robot-stove. I eat up, wondering where my day planner is, and catch a flashing light on my answering machine.

I push it softly, and out comes a voice: "Hello, Mr. Nuke. I'm Veroncia Ramsey, and I'd like to apologize for my behavior the other night." She paused. Three hot breaths skipped across the

wires on moist feet. “I’d like to talk to you, if I could. My number is...”

And I listen to these numbers, sketching them out on the table in the stringy egg whites. I had thought about Veronica a lot since we had our last conversation. I smiled. The anticipation was already giving me wood.

So I walk out into the street. I've got my big detective tent-canvas overcoat on collar up, with the belt tied tight and the hat low. Over my eyes I've wedged a nasty little pair of black and white points-down triangular ultra-shaded pince-nez—the ones with the GPS display that flickers up at the twitch of an eyebrow.

They don't do much for the cover up—with cancerous ultraviolet sneaking in the way round, but they give me this terrifying killer cyborg look when married to my big six-and-a-half-foot frame and yard-wide shoulders.

I pull my hat down this time because I don't want any of the press boys, the media gabbers, the blogmuckers, the pimperazzi and note scribblers for the daily ad-rags and spider-sites getting wise to me.

No, I won't have them on this trip out, looking for a shot up my skirt hoping for commando action—or snapping their digital phones into the back of a Rolls while I do it hard and nasty with a lady fan. There's no money in any of that, no way.

And once they photograph your naked package, it's all down hill from there. Unless, that's your whole thing, your entire reason for fifteen minutes of fame: if you're a pole-dancer or a cocksucker,

and that's your gig—humiliating yourself for dough and laughing all the way.

But, I gave up playing with these fence-talkers long ago—being it just got my blood boiling and brought up lots of whitecoat commentators ripping me on the video in a way they'd never do in person.

I didn't want to have to do the killer tomahawk on any of these weak-wristed scribe-types, since that usually made for the spurting red stuff and the messing and un-pressing of yours truly's expensive suit—which I should point out because it cost so much, is of the finest video-skin from Sony all baggy around the legs and shoulders, so I don't feel the tight and unfriendly when I move.

And with a couple well-connected buttons on my cell I can display video on the fucking thing, nice real nice and an eye-catcher for the girls cause they like to look at themselves with me.

I've freshly shaved all my nooks and crannies, manscaped the ape out of myself in preparation for the fast and loose with my luncheon date. I did the deed with a fist full of atom-thin blades in the newest disposable, that guarantees to give you smooth, smooth, skin—with a minimum of scrotum nicks—and I've been liberal with my after shave, the Sunset over Santa Rosa, that has become my trademark, and which by the way I make over a million a year endorsing.

I don't mind the stuff too much—if it

is a touch medicinal. You can't help but feel clean in it and I think it's mostly hydrogen peroxide.

So I walk out to the sidewalk, and sure enough, a tiny man with a telephone camera appears, already a couple of gigs into a video for YouTube. He thinks he's using all his stealth warfare tactics and is just popping up over the trashcans by a bus stand like for no reason and that's normal; but I already spotted him a mile off creeping around, so I'm ready. I've got an old silver dollar cocked into the meaty part of my right hand.

Well up he comes, sudden, out of the corner of my eye, and yells, "Mr. Nuke!"

Yours truly's reaction is priceless and fast, faster than any coffee yawping,



smoke belching pot-bellied digital fotog, and I let him have the silver dollar. I just give it away *zing* through the air, faster than I can see, just a quick lightning stroke of silver and smack it goes right into his eye.

There's his scream, and I see the poor bastard drop with a pale limp hand over his socket. Blood and stuff leaks out all around. He tries to get up and knocks over a trashcan—then he's rolling in the garbage, beautiful!

I'm feeling all full of excitement and start to think about maybe going over and doing unspeakable things to make him into a corpse, I had used a whole silver dollar after all, but dropped the idea when I saw a crowd gathering, and

noticed the flickering camera flashes.

So I took a quick peek at my watch, which read eleven-thirty. My lawyers would hear about all this, and they'd tell me about it next year with little smirky smiles as I handed them their paychecks. Then all the fotog had to do was get me extradited to the U.S.A. to hear the charges—*fat chance!*

Still, it would have been fun doing an impromptu show on the sidewalk there, blood and guts flying, cameras and criminal charges be-damned, but I have decided in this case that pussy is the greater part of valor. Somewhat disappointed and low in spirits I hail a cab, and then climb in its green door.

“Hotel Minao,” I say, with my best

Mexican accent. Oh, the dollar is just a thing I have for antiques like that—since everything else is plastic or wireless—I cogged sometimes that the air around me was jazzing with electric dollars and lightning bolted text messages to banks. And the silver dollars are showy you have to admit.

I like to use American money—it's the only way I'll be paid—and I'm never given any arguments about it. I just give them my 'spinal fluid sucking' face and they shut their yawps, and exchange their fucking pesos or their yen or their euros for money—real money. I don't use much of the folding or jingling stuff having instead the convenience of technology—I pay for mostly everything

with my phone when I haven't smashed it to pieces because the traitorous thing can't get a signal.

This cabbie doesn't recognize me through his thick cloud of cigar smoke, and I think for a minute that he's being rude. Then, I see my fists clench up, and I headwork that I am just getting myself mad, so I turn my thoughts away from that and on to other more interesting things since I am going out to lunch with the beautiful Veronica Ramsey with the tits out to here, and she might not appreciate it if I showed up all ugly with blood and viscera stains.

Few women do.

I don't go out to lunch very often, seldom you might say because I am not

trained in the minute fairy arts of the table dance and the napkin semaphore—although I can still do it—and to pass some time I did my best to cog out the last occasion I was dining out with friends. It was with my agent and manager, Morris Beckert.

Morris is a little German guy who I think is a former Nazi or is a neo-Nazi or something since he has a quirky little goose-step way of walking and a real loud voice with all the rolling *r*'s. First time I met him, I almost killed him because he came up all goose-steppy and straight-backed, and he started to talk away with this strong accent that irritated about the same as it was difficult to understand.

Anyway, the last time I was out to lunch was with Morris Beckert, my agent.

He has been a fight promoter since the Pueblo Commission okayed the snuff fight video sales the world over on Blu-ray and as download, because it was freedom after all and there was a demand for it, which is only a capitalist response to the unknown. And anyway with the Intermesh and satellites it was impossible to track and everybody that killed each other in the ring signed a waiver so who the hell's getting hurt, right?

So Morris introduced himself one day, when things became fairly legal in some countries, and said he could make

me a millionaire, and I said okay, since up to that time I had been kind of abused by the slippery type element that hangs out around fight halls. Of course, they only abused me once, right?

Anyway, that time I was thinking about, when we went out to lunch, Morris had wanted me to talk to this tiny chap with a long white beard and a pair of low-slung spectacles. He was a publisher, Morris said, and he wanted to do my story. I told him to fuck himself first, since I didn't immediately like the looks of him, but warmed up a little with the Rusty Nails he fed me.

By the end of lunch, I had my arm around him, and he was a fairly decent old fellow, with my own best interests at

heart. He snuggled right into my armpit like a bar of Speed Stick and I squeezed him like a bear—minus the killing him and ripping him to pieces part. He tells me we'll be millionaires, and I told him I already was, so he says I'll be even richer, and that can't be bad. I just smiled and ordered us another drink.

So, that dinner ended kind of violently with me making an honest comment about this old lady's body being too old to be worth fucking. Her husband, some stuffed-shirt in a cummerbund who must have been blind or hopped up on testosterone injections gets all irate and says would I please apologize to the lady. Now, he obviously doesn't know yours truly, or he wouldn't



be so quick to criticize, but I have had a number of drinks by then, and feel a little hazy and sweet.

I'm also thinking that I'm with Morris, who is always telling me to go easy on the violence outside the ring—that I shouldn't give it away like a whore—and he's all ready making eyes kind of nervously at the publisher who seems to be nodding off to sleep.

I cog it out that this would be a bad time to pulverize the upset husband. I, Nuke, have a big heart, and can be like what you would call almost a saintly Samaritan in the social department so I nod to the old fellow, then turn to his wife, who really is getting on in years and by the shape of her nose was never

anything to get worked up about. I smile sweetly at her face all wrinkled and upset like I had a bowl full of shit under her nose.

“I am sorry my dear lady, that I said you were too old to be worth fucking. It might be true, but yawping it in polite company could be considered rude...” Well this is all I get out, because the old guy hits me with a chair and I get mad and lose it and start putting people in the hospital, especially the men, because they look really stupid with their bleeding yawps pouring into their starched shirts.

I do remember ripping up the odd skirt for the study of lacy panties and the odd pouting puss. I mean, you're there

right? You're going to look. But I got locked up for a while that time, having gone a little far with the peeking under skirts and all—and the bypassing of some undergarments, but I was soon out on the streets again.

Now I think back on that tale and again feel my fists balling up, feeling still a little anger at the injustice and unhappy returns. I drop it and concentrate on nothing, which sometimes comes very easy to me.

The cab drops me off. I got my table and waited for three hours amongst the potted palms and the mincing waiters and angry maitre de, all culminating, of course, in the inevitable drinking and the violent moment that yours truly knew

would come sooner or later. Veronica Ramsey stood me up!

So I'm out in the street and kind of feeling all hot around the face, smothering in a sense, in a strange hot weighty fog that isn't there. I've already done my, 'I'm sorry and I promise I won'ts' with the local heavy-handed constabulary. It was the usual rough stuff with the cops coming in, and me roaring as the odd oak baton rapped across yours truly's head and shoulders.

Nothing out of the ordinary, so I'm wondering why my face is so hot and feeling muffled with quilts, it usually being kind of tingly with released inside chemical stuff and the violence and the

blood. Today things are different. I got this stuffy hot feeling that I can't shake and a deep weepy sinking in my chest as though I'm bleeding bad, from a deep spear wound or some such.

Anyway, I'm out on the street and feeling this and waiting for old Morris to slide by and pick me up in the car and what have you—giving the most horrible of my faces to all passers-by who recognize me regardless of age, sex, religion, color or standing in any national fucking poll.

My sharkskin suit is just a memory being little more than rags that have collected at my joints, kind of wedged in and stuck like seaweed around the bulging guns on the peer. I cog at the

idea of more violence to release this smothering weight, kind of wash it off in screams and blood.

Then I headwork this whole story of a sudden, about me running rampage and going berserker on the whole country of Argentina—like Godzilla in a steel g-string. There's this picture in my head of me running down the street crushing all these screaming Aztecs under my shoes that have suddenly grown to the size of cars and they roar, too, tongues flapping, like I do just yelling and blowing angry air.

This causes me to laugh all of a sudden, which is something that I do not do often when out of the ring. Then I check myself and hope no hidden

perilous fuckarrazi snapped a little digital picture movie of me standing in rented gala uniform giggling to myself while a tiny stream of blood leaks down my left cheek as a tear might if I were so afflicted—only to have it pop up on the world wide web with lots of people blogging their bored little hearts out about it.

That wouldn't do, as I've got this enormous monster image to keep suitably frightful. If people get used to seeing me smiling, then it might come back at me in the ring, like people will come to think of me as a pasty fuck who cuts out pictures of Britney Spears and hangs them over his bed, or over his mirror and then dresses up like her in



Egyptian schoolgirl gear or so on like from one of her movies.

This is something that I do not want leaking into the violence.

Just headworking about it begins to undermine my old self-confidence. It is a violent world, and it is only fun so long as my opponents know I'm into the work, not cleaving their skulls thinking about leek soup or cogging that I can't wait to get home and leaf through a few glamour mags over a latte with a pink phone stuck under my ear.

This causes me to laugh again, which in turn pulls at the weighty spot inside. This causes me to double up a little, more hunch up—it's not a real pain I'm feeling, just a kind of knotty discomfort.

Then it hits me; I know what it is. I know what will clear up the bit of uneasy feeling stuff that I'm feeling.

I headwork but a moment to realize that I have not done anything fast and furious with a woman-type individual for a long time, almost two nights, and it is usually a part of my ritual of blood to do my murder stuff in the ring and then follow it up with some violent sexy moves on a willing and durable tumblermate who likes it whether she likes it or not.

Morris drives up. He smiles gently to me, kind of ushers me into the seat next to him all concern and gentle mother touches. He knows who is boss. It's not one of these Colonel Parker "do as I say

Elvis” kinds of back-hugging boys with some moneygrubber in a cheap suit pulling the strings of a mush-minded star. No sir, Morris knows he wouldn’t live more than the time it would take for me to rip his head off.

He only pissed me off once, did Morris, when he pulled a gun on me, well he didn’t pull it on me, or so on, but in our early days, we were yakking around a bit about the whole idea of snuff fighting and asking the questions like why do we do it, what makes people like swiping credit cards for this stuff and the so forth, when he asks me about a raise, all the sudden in the car when we have just been so brotherly and dear to each other, so intense, so Oprah

Winfrey about the whole thing.

Well, I say something what the fuck, I thought we were above that and he says generally yes, but he has the frau and the Nazi fucking youth back home to worry about. At the same time as he allows this filth to drool out of his yakker, he also just happens to be playing with a gun that he had out at an early part of our conversation to prove a point.

So he's there playing with this gun and asking me for a raise, and I think it was very generous of me not to do a casket shopper blitz even then. All I did was very diplomatically reach out, take the gun hand and bend it back until there was this deep nasty crack and wet crunch and grind. Morris-the-pussy

screams anyway, and I hear a roar and feel this slap.

I look at my left shoulder and see blood. The gun has gone off and blown a sort of hole in me. Now, I'm really mad, not being used to body excavations of this type, and I'm just about to climb down the little Nazi's throat feet first, when I feel this warm feeling and then this tingling that washes over the shoulder and down the arm.

I look down and see the bleeding has stopped as simple as that. It so amazes me, this has never happened before to a renovation of that caliber and the hole is such a good one, that I quite forget about smashing Morris to smithereens.

It is true, the cuts and abrasions

received from snuff fighting poor unfortunates, rarely followed yours truly out of the ring—and I remembered that battle lusty kind of tingle—but I'm looking at this big hole now, and watching it kind of seal itself up, and Morris is crying and screeching like a baby.

He's pawing at his twisted arm and blubbering in German, "Wah, wah, Mutter, Mutter!"

I looked at him as a pitiful sort of wretch at that moment, and figure that he has learned two valuable lessons that I do not want to teach a new agent: 1. Nuke will hurt you if you try to cheat him, and: 2. You can shoot Nuke with a gun, and it does not hurt him much. So, I

figure to let him off easy. On impulse, I reach out and grab his question-mark arm, then jerk it quickly straight.

He shrieks at my kind attentions of bone setting and I feel a spray of tears and spit hit my face. He drove us to the hospital, where he had his arm attended to, and I had a doctor take a look at my shoulder. His eyes went round as dinner plates and he kind of opens his mouth and breathes out this great oniony bit of old coffee yawp.

“Wow!” old sawbones said pretty much summing up the medical profession’s diagnostic abilities for things that don’t involve hatchets in the head, or flames curling off the fleshy parts.

I left him then, anyway, and now, as Morris helps me into the car after my failed dinner date with Veronica Ramsey and yet another brush with the law, he is nothing but concern and care.

“Dear, dear, Mein Herr...” I always got a kick out of the ‘mein herr’ bit. “Dis is terrible, what haz happent!” I keep waiting for him to say: “Nacht der Leiber!” like the comic German agents on TV, but the little fucker never does.

I just say, shush-shush there boy, and then tell him to drive me down to the fiery red hot section of town where the girls are, and where they don’t mind someone of my caliber stomping around. About fifty hookers come to mind, forty-nine of whom I have had until they wept



for their daddies.

The fiftieth, Maria, she had more than enough tolerance for my administrations and could on a good day go past my own recommended levels of appreciation and safety. She was crazy, basically, and I did not like to go to her unless there was nothing else for it—when there was an urgent violent need that could only be met by an urgent violent woman.

I'm headworking oddly at this moment, having fallen into the uncomfortable realm of a need for something a little less than violent. The heat in my face and chest does not make me cog out of it a need for hard blows and hot.

Instead, warm comes to mind: a

saucy, drippy kind of sweet honeydew melon feeling. Something that would remind the average Joseph of grandma I would conjecture and cog.

I yell something, anyway, that almost sets Morris to tears; he always tears up when I yell around him, ever since that night I twisted his arm back.

So, I tell him to take me to a strip club where I am bound to fill my achy gullet with potent liverburners, and powerful liqueurs that can flay the hair from my angry spleen and tame my violent needs.

I figure an afternoon of sipping liquid death and staring but not touching the peelers will get my blood hot enough to burn away the uncomfortable sensations.

I yell again. Morris blubbers. I look at him with the closest thing I have to pity, which is an inch away from euthanasia.

“Morris, I want to fight tonight.”

He looks at me like some starved frog in my headlights or something, his Adam’s apple leaping up and down. “But Mein Herr, your big fight with Animan... der grosse kampf!”

“That’s a couple of nights away, goddamn it,” I snarl and then I get gentle again. “That being wise of you though, in a headworking way, *if contrary*, my good Nazi. I would like to fight anyway. Why don’t I do as the rock and roll groups of old...oh, I see by your wandering full moon eyes and gagging

big mouth that you do not cog the gist of my words.

“You see in elder days when the violence was confined to the television and the family dinner table, the little children did their headbanging at the local pubs and listened to the screeching words of half-witted poet pansy bosses with more style than manhood—all to the discordant cords of electrical instruments that were turned up far too loud. Much in the guise and shape of the screaming iPod-dancers and fuck faces we see today.

“These poet-types would reach a level of stardom where they no longer needed the easy comfort of the local pubs and turned to big arenas and sports

stadiums not at all unlike the type that yours truly frequents for his moments of profitable bloodletting.

“These fellows, these thespians of manhood would ‘playdown’ occasionally, in an attempt to recapture and bring to heart the original reasons for doing their thing by going back to their local pub or bar to play their poems and songs again in the old atmosphere for the old reasons. A simple thing, really. I suggest that Nuke needs such a sensation today, tonight, just before I go marching off at the end of the week and become too big to ever return to such a place. And it might be fun.” Morris nodded his head and drove.

“So please, mein friend, please set up

before mentioned battle while I stoke my fires over the sulfurous fumes of Mons Venus.”

Morris drove and drove until we got to the fiery red-hot district.

It is at this point that I again pause for reflection staring like Narcissus into the reflective surface of my life. I have read now this version of the above text and find it lacking in its explanation of yours truly.

The facts are true so far as the nuts and bolts reality of it all, but there is a hazy quality to the headwork internal cogging stuff that I am not sure my writer-type ghost individual is getting across properly and may in fact be a factor in his later poor health, if not demise.

But, I do not want to get lost in a

joyous round of threatening—on the contrary I only have this inner hard spot that must be worked around. The story is taking a sad kind of swing to it with Nuke doing all the weepy soul search all of a sudden losing the momentary joy of the battle and the happy drops of blood and vaginal juice.

I did not get so far into my selfness with my writer and it is fairly obvious like an axe in the nape that he is taking what I have heard to be a wee bit of artistic license as dangerous as that can be when yours truly is the licensing bureau.

But, I continue the reading stuff anyway and feel this prickly closeness between my shoulder blades.



So I'm at this bar and sort of wrapped around a thick piece of fancy pressboard that trims the edge of the dancing ramp; overhead, a young strumpet-type individual is grinding all her woman's parts over some unseen cock some eight inches from yours truly's face.

I'm all awash with a growing sense of urgency, and feeling all gorged and loaded from the grinding girl parts and the Rusty Nails I have been drinking. There is a moment when I almost reach out a paw and claw this woman into my lap where I think she would fit perfectly

painfully; but I resist the urge and let the power grow into violent proportions.

Morris has been gone about an hour having been sent on a mission to scare up a battle for this evening. I am hoping he will find someone with a little more to give to a fight, so it does not have to be an abattoir—just put your head up and let me drag the knife over the windpipe.

It is fun at times to do such lethal work, but it is not what could be referred to as challenging or anything approaching a situation in which one was forced to use anything close to his full potential.

Anyway, I'm watching this young piece of woman, all oriental eyes and

black silky hair and naked flesh and I'm picturing her trussed up like some ancient Mongol war bride, and I'm like the Genghis himself coming home from a days pillage and rape and fisticuffs and she's there with her woman's parts grinding the air and I don't even take time to get the armor off opting instead to open a little iron hatch in my suit to allow out the dingle-dangle now battle ready and doing the 'plough the field thing' when I hear a voice on my left.

I look around and there is that little bastard again who said he knew who I was and all that stuff about the cinderblock house that I last saw moments before he disappeared in a cloud of mystery. I go to reach out and

snatch him off his stool, but he raises both hands. I see that they're covered in wires and sharp little electrode stuff.

“Don’t!” he says, opening his coat to reveal to me a crisscross of power cords. “This Tasersuit can deliver enough volts to short out your nervous system.”

He smiles, and I almost cold cock him anyway, but the hardware looks real and has a lethal gleam to it.

“I would like to know then, mysterious man-type individual what it is you come to talk to yours truly for. If it is just to gape and yawp at me—and rub salt in my dangerous wounds, be gone about your business, for I have little to offer that you cannot get on a Blu-ray of

Nuke's Greatest Hits." I slurp down half of my Rusty Nail, and I notice that this electric man is staring eyes wide at me.

"What is that like, do you get drunk?"

I give him the rolling 'what an asshole' eyes and say, "I would say then that in a dictionary they might have a subsection under the word 'shit' where which one might find a picture of you electric man-type individual where it would say: 'man seen in picture uses it for brains.' "

And I smile then because I know that I have given him a wordy rabbit punch and that can sometimes be close to the feeling of the knuckles going bang on an occipital bone.

He smirks then in womanesque

fashion and I almost expect him to giggle.

“Of course, of course...” He looks away supposedly in control of this situation. “I was just curious whether you share its deleterious effects, that is all.”

“There are many things you may wonder about, most mysterious chap, but there is much you will never know.” I look up at this girl again, and she is dancing about four inches from my nose. “You may find me a book that is closed or like this pussy here, mysterious and shut to all but the most persevering and most violent.”

I’m kind of cogging around this image a bit while the electric man sits there

smirking. “You are not ready for the stories behind the winking enigma of her anus.”

“Aren’t you curious?” he says finally like he knew that was what I wanted him to say. “Aren’t you curious in the least what it all means?”

“I am completely curious,” I say to the electric man-type individual. “I am always curious. If they had living metaphors in dictionaries they would have my picture beside the word.”

I smiled again, and made gnashing teeth motions at the woman’s flapping parts that are now some three inches from and almost wrapped around yours truly’s face.

“But aren’t you curious about what

you are? Where you came from?" He had to search for my gaze; me being hid somewhat by the young Asian lady's thighs.

"Indeed..." My muffled and sincere affirmative came to him via crotch. "I am curious about this and other things but fear not, I have already cogged that you have some news that would light up my sometimes dark and hazy past, and that you will sell me the keys to the cinderblock house."

I'm having a hard time concentrating now, since this oriental lass is slowing down a little bit, and meeting me with the knowing eye to eye 'come back stage after the show' kind of face work. And I've already been rewarded with a silent



salty kiss.

“You carry on like a brute, but I must say you don’t think like one.” He rubbed his chin talking to himself: “Interesting study. The data was stored without an operating system. You had to sort it out yourself.”

I make a try for him, partly over that ‘brute’ crack and partly because I have listened to him long enough and he has to either start to talking and telling or he has to die for his sins in a particularly violent way.

He is fast becoming a circular and frustrating labyrinth that is just teasing me, when I have such a delicious view before my eyes, and potential good times that I could be enjoying having no

frustration or some such, it all being pretty much a done deal, this latter part murmured by my friendly pouting cat close at hand, little subterranean lips like a ventriloquist's dummy's.

Anyway, yours truly gets his hand out, but the electric man-type individual is faster or he just gets his hand in the way by accident which is more to what I think. I reach out with hooked claws and I'm suddenly out cold. All I could remember was this reaching out thing, then this snapping sound and a hard thud going through me and the smell of hot music.

So I wake up pretty quick but still cloudy and dark not being used to the KO and the twittering birds going peep-peep-peep around yours truly's head. Whoa! He is somewhat nonplussed in a mental kind of way about the whole experience and is anxious to hit someone.

I kind of spring to my feet glaring all around me looking for putty faces to poke and jab and make a nasty mess of. I see no one, or everyone sees me, whatever—lucky for the patrons of the bar, none have ventured over to see how it is that I am doing after the shock

buzzer and the flying onto the floorboards and all, likely because of my somewhat lethal reputation that precedes me most constantly.

Anyway, I walk quick to the bar and order a pitcher of Rusty Nails. As I stare at the nervous back of flabby bartender, I think of vicious punishments to visit upon the said electric man-type individual who gave me the uppity party favor razz.

I intend to make life difficult for him, having thought first of the old bone shatter and marrow suck, but even that seems too good for the likes of him. Then, I cogged about my body and see that there is no residual effect from the stunner, it is only like the lights have

been put out and then flicked back on again.

I grab the pitcher of Rusty Nails then walk over to the ramp of dancers where I see the sex kitten from the Orient still crouching and watching yours truly. I stalk up to her, take a big dog-drowning-sized swallow, and stare her down a second before one of my meat hooks flicks out and pulls her in close by the neck.

“And where is the little fellow with the kilowatt problem most voluptuous maiden of the East—please tell me quickly, as I am irate and likely to hurt many people.” Well, her thin eyes slide closed even thinner and give me the stare down too. Her face contorts and

her mouth droops at the corner in a ‘you bad boy’ type frown.

“Forgive me, Madame Butterfly...it was not with any personal to personal violence that I have addressed you in such an unsavory fashion. It is my lack of restraint and social distaste at the idea of being pitched at the floor like a gob of spit.” I let go of her neck. “Would you please inform me of what has transpired?”

She steams at me kind of hurt and angry. So I kept a peeled eye upon her lovely hands that now fluttered about her sides like wounded cranes full of buckshot. I have heard of these Eastern sirens packing nasty gunfire and the sharp razor devices just for

reprimanding such ungentlemanly behavior that we have witnessed, precipitated by yours truly.

But, I headwork that she is naked and any attempt to procure a weapon from her handy orifices will meet with my immediate attention. And in all fairness, I've already been snuffling all the usual suspects with my competitive verve and utility.

I smile, and reach into my tattered pocket for some cash cogging that this always worked in the Vietnam movies, but I find only a piece of plastic.

I shrug.

“He went outside, big nasty man,” she said this with her hands fondling the nail marks on her throat. “He went out after

you fell down. He walked out, about ten minutes ago.”

“Thank you again, most gracious geisha of the orient public twat. I hope you will forgive me for my lack of good judgment only moments ago. I assure you the violence I hoped to precipitate upon your lovely form is of the most pleasurable kind. Do we have a deal yet, my beauty, or have I put the proverbial brass monkey wrench into the works?”

At this point, I am just forgetting about the electric man-type individual deciding that it would be beneath the dignity of yours truly to chase around the streets in a fit of rage seeking out this perpetrator, and I deem it truly dangerous to the populous or any other



said innocent stander by who might get in the way of blind wrath and justice.

The Asian dancer looks at me a minute again, just staring.

“You are that *Nuke* man. You are very famous.”

“Yes, most charming of life’s pleasures. Would you like to go dangerous with me, and enter into the history books as yet one of the many consorts of Nuke, the World’s Greatest Gladiator and Thirteen Time Champion of Snuff Fighters?” I really lay it on in a kind of glamour-time way, with a need only for the big top and the spotlights.

I am still angry about lunch date lost with Veronica Ramsey, and I have this new lack of pleasure to deal with in the

form of a megashock from the electric man-type individual, and I have been sizing up and sniffing the butt on before mentioned oriental dancer and judging it small and tight enough to be worth the old ouch and grind.

“You come with me...Mr. Nuke,” she says this then walks to the side of the stage and down a set of steps. All this in only high heels has me beginning to think like a dingedangle with little more IQ and I start to go at her like a dog before she’s through the curtain.

Still somewhat in control, I tame down my lusty affections and she leads me to a room at the back of the bar where we find a credit card swipe, bed and fairly clean sheets. Well, I’m soon

walking out again, being sated to the nth degree and having given Madame Butterfly a run for her money in the sodomy department of the mall of life.

I jab another Rusty Nail into my face, then glare around the bar. No one dares look back being too filled with my reputation and dread at my potential humiliation and retort to the world by way of upending my manhood again and redeeming myself in the eyes of God by killing everyone in the place like Hercules might have done or something like that.

Anyway the Oriental girl limps out and plops painfully onto a chair around a table with the other girls. I smile over at them and begin to cog up the idea of

maybe taking a couple more of the girls  
to the brink of pleasure, but opt instead  
like a good grown up to sit and drown  
my sorrows awhile headworking about  
the cinderblock house.

Where was Morris?

So I'm in this dusty kind of ring, all sand and cigarette ash ringed in by chain link fence and sturdy plywood in the deep basement of a warehouse in an ugly section of Santa Rosa. I've stripped down to my scanties happy and proud in what would be my Santa Rosa specials, kind of a hard nylon woven cup and butt crotch piece and I do the lean and stretch, lean and stretch against an old oil drum—I'm sure working up every faggot for fifty miles!

The place reeks of fish and oil and I'm headworking an idea that Morris has netted me some kind of an ancient Fish-

man of the deep to do the horrible battle with, someone from sunken Atlantis who has slithered ashore to claim the belt away from the dry-landers.

I kind of chuckle at this cogging and then think a moment that instead I will have to carve up some poor Indian fisherman named Juan who's taking the night off from driving his cab to feed a family of fifteen. But I try to keep my spirits up, as I have not seen my challenger yet, by headworking the scene where I slide a big stainless steel blade through the sternum of before mentioned man of the deep thus filleting him into yesterday's news.

The ring itself is just a big section of sand on concrete that is edged around

with hay bales and hard and knotty lengths of pine. Morris has already oiled me down from a tub of the Vaseline he keeps in the car for such purposes.

That is only a trick I learned and use to make sure I would always slip quickly from the clinch, thus promoting glorious Blu-ray bursts of overhand violence, and keeping yours truly from the clutches of the referee that we met earlier.

There is no referee here though, being a very uncivilized set, just floor and boards for dog fighting I think, and a few seats in a loft looking down, all walled in with chicken wire behind which will sit the many happy, yet frustrated farmers who will pay pesos or Bolivars or what

have you, to watch one man kill another man to death.

They are already here, a good many of them, and I get a chuckling thrill out of their 'kids at Christmas' faces when they peek over and see yours truly doing his stretches with his maximum muscle, and then I go into my signature and patent-pending eye-tearing hand motions, and skull-crusher foot stomping.

They all begin to scream my name after the appropriate series and numbers of double takes. I'm feeling all right at home and full of exuberance about this most excellent of positions. Already I am having the French daydreams and the elephant type headwork. Images flick by like a movie trailer and the ideas start to



give me wood.

They actually do. Wood!

“NUKE REMEMBERS THE LITTLE PEOPLE HE PASSED ON THE WAY UP TO THE TOP WHERE HE ENJOYS THE FRUITS OF HIS VIOLENT LABORS, BUT DOES NOT FORGET HIS ROOTS SO STOPS BY TO MURDER LOCAL UP-AND-COMING FOR OLD TIME’S SAKE!”

The headline sort of streams across my mind in flickering lights and then disappears like an old dream. I hear the farmers and local nobodies start a series of screams going, that at first I mistake as rooster crows.

They go on and on, for some minutes, and I begin to think I have taken a wrong

turn into Old McDonald's booby hatch as these old and young great unwashed do this morning chicken thing. Suddenly, out walks my opponent and I understand what all the egg-yoke is about.

I almost wet my codpiece with good humor and catching the cosmic joke and all, while looking at this jag that comes in. He is small and wiry like many of the local natives with which he shares a genetic heritage, although he has a healthy hard rubber bounce to his meaty chest and fetlocks that gives me a sense that maybe he has used the sex-ape hormones to spruce up a bit.

That is fine, since there are no rules on drugs in professional sport anymore, and this makes for a free environment for

record-breaking, aneurisms and scientific expression. It is easy to tell the sprinters I have seen who have thighs like pumpkins and heads the size of hockey pucks.

These drugs no longer matter to the world that watches since most of them are drooling with white stuff in the corners of their mouths, being hopped up on performance enhancement drugs for the day-day-living, be it for depression or I can't get my kids to school on time or the twitchy leg syndrome or I was a caesarian section—the world has been glassy-eyed on anti-psychotic drugs since the millennium changed, and thank God for it.

Anyway, this guy comes in with all

this crowing going on overhead and I see why they crow. He has his hair shaved and brushed and shellacked up into a tall red neon comb, much like the type you would see on a rooster from Rhode Island, though said Foghorn's would be of flesh.

He is wearing a red skin-tight suit of some kind of steel and plastic material, and he sports a strange set of ankle bracelets. Then it is another time for yours truly to giggle for on each ankle he has strapped a hard steel barb or hook much as I have seen on the real roosters at local fight rallies of the cock variety or the telephone pole-jockey pirates ripping off Intermesh connections.

I am headworking the defense

strategy for the legwork I should expect, when this crazy yapper looks at me, face all twisted around some drug and gives me the big cock's crow like he's really a rooster and not at all some dumb jerk that is dressed in a farmer's Halloween costume.

I give him my silent stare, the type I read in a book once about a family of Canadians who were big on the violence and the fisticuffs.

The Black Donnellys they were called and were feared from Bona Vista to Nova Scotia. I ate up a book about them once, and read this Donnelly stare was a stare in which he who was being stared at could 'hear his own grave being dug.'

You got to like that! Ever since I had tried to turn it into the Nuke stare, though it did not sound as glamorous and historical as before mentioned staring—but it was effective nonetheless.

I gave it to him anyway, this face without feeling, these metal cheeks as sharp as a butcher's knife that I'd like to cut him up with. Then, I do a motion with my hands that in high pantomime mimicked the nasty dinner making motion of twisting the head off a chicken. This gets him, because it is obvious he is used to having his strange rooster gear taken a little more seriously and perhaps with a little fear.

Then I know he's really on a drug because he just crows again and lashes

out with his feet and cruel ankle hooks. I decide to be all business, of the sudden, because I am slowed somewhat by the Rusty Nails I have consumed earlier, and because I know that death can come at any time, and I was not about to be injured or hurt in any small time type ring fight and cockbarb exchange with some Mexican Fried Chicken.

This old fuck with a bad limp that had a dirty cigarette stapled to his bottom lip walks into the center of this ring that is fashioned somewhat circular. He is wearing an old bull fighter's costume of tarnished silver spangles and a low flat hat that looks like it has been eaten up and shit out, by said bull to be fought with mentioned above.

Anyway, he starts jabbering away like a wild Spanish monkey and pointing rat-tat-tat at the rooster man-type individual who I have sworn will soon have to hang up his fighting hooks for good. This fact alone tells me that the old bastard must have been bribed fiercely by the rooster's manager, and I make a mental note to give Morris proper shit for this slip in business etiquette, what with my billing here being someone skewed toward the bottom.

My violence flared when I was introduced *after* the rooster as *el Nuke*. The crowd goes wild at mention of my name—who can blame them? But I have cogged two and two that they screamed



as loud for the local boy a.k.a. Señor Rooster Fuckface.

I decide to make the rooster pay for that breech of what I suddenly call vanity etiquette. Especially since they all know who I am, and understand what I can do...to them all, if I chose; but, then a wise old voice came creeping back under yours truly's thick scalp. It was that of the janitor at the cinderblock house.

“Watch the Mexicans, boy; they always pack heaters and pig stickers.”

From perusing detective books afterwards I understood his lingo about the firepower—though I was not certain of the use or application of said *pig stickers*—and from perusing the odd

atlas, I knew these were not Mexicans in the seats overhead—in the truest sense of the word—but they looked enough like Mexicans to possibly act like them.

I would be cautious if things moved to the *gratuitous-violence-on-the-audience* phase.

A bell rings. The old bastard scampers as best he can with the limp. He high heels it out of the ring, and I come prowling out like a tiger doing a couple of nasty clawing motions in the air with my hands.

The rooster ran to my left, picking up speed as he went, then quite impresses me by taking the wall, climbing to about twelve feet as he passed partly with speed and partly with his ankle hook powers which I hear go thunk, thunk, thunk in the wall boards.

I make a mental note, and kind of cog that into the grinding gears of my plan. I

spin on my heel and see him running fast, then dropping and rolling off some hay bales, and then come spinning toward me like a runaway saw blade. At the last moment, I do my own gymnastic spin and clutch away from the rooster and I hear his spurs go chop into the boards where I was standing.

I do a couple of flips and land, hardly panting, some twenty feet away from the rooster. My muscles are just starting to warm up and swell a little with work. The rooster looks at me and crows, I take it, in frustration, though it is difficult to cog what he means by the screeching and it being something that I am growing tired of anyway.

But on he comes again, spinning and

flipping like so much of a red blur with the silver of his rooster hooks flashing in there. I do a run at him then spin and flip off to the right, missing the evil rooster by a hair's width. I come close enough so he can smell my Sunset over Santa Rosa cologne, and I hear the tiniest of frustrated monkey grunts from him.

By this time, I can see that he is not so straight and true when he stops his high stepping flip kind of technique, and I headwork that he has grown tired over the last two passes and is kind of used to finishing his work by now, after pinning some poor bastard to the floorboards with his hooks.

Still, I will wait a minute before administering to him, because he is

something to watch. And since he will not be continuing his career after this evening, I will perhaps inherit some of the more exciting bits being always a showman first and looking for the new thing to throw into the act—although, I find the rooster man-type individual to be a little too glitzy even for me.

He would look more at home on the runway at a fashion show for the homicidal, but I gave him top marks in presentation and would speak well of that over his grave if his family invited me to the funeral.

So, he's coming in for another pass, and I'm thinking to pull a close call by just standing there until the last second—to drag a big gulp out of the crowd—

then dodging quick from the way; when I suddenly hear my name in a voice I recognize.

I have excellent hearing and conjure a face.

Somewhat unwisely, I peek up at the loft and sure enough I see Veronica Ramsey staring down and waving. That is just enough of an advantage for the rooster to press, and I feel this nasty biting kind of deep pain in my thigh where his spur has sunk in.

I snarl, but immediately tense the muscle around the spur to hold it in place. I see the rooster is cocking his right leg to stab at my throat so I do two things.

First, I grip the ankle driving the spur

in my leg.

Second I lift up with everything I've got. And the rooster goes skyward, his leg kick having missed my head and throat by mere fractions. He is off balance and lands strange, but flips and turns again like a good gymnast until he's facing me. I look quick at the loft and see a blonde head disappearing.

*FUCK!* Then I glance at my leg, see the muscle tight and purple around an ugly red hole. Blood has spurted out and sprayed the floor at my feet, but it is fast slowing to a trickle.

The rooster crows again and comes spinning, but I am only anger now, and cannot keep my mind upon the battle. I can only think of Veronica Ramsey's



face looking down through the chicken wire.

The rooster is airborne coming at me. I take two steps, limbo under him, and come up behind, catching him around the waist as he takes off for another tumble run.

I hold tight, and try to get a leg around him. We come down hard, off balance, and the rooster's right ankle crumbles. *Snap!*

He crows now, but without the old excitement. He tries to straighten up, but I have him in a clinch. My old instincts move fast though, and I do my infighting real speedy, snatching his left wrist and pulling it up behind his back until I hear a *crack*, and another crow, of course.

Then I push him down.

I jump back and watch him climb to his feet. His right ankle wobbles a bit, and I expect a scream from him, but he must be on major painkillers as well, because he simply shrugs his broken arm and it dangles at his side, and then he puts weight on the ankle that should be sending him into convulsions.

I am still thinking about Veronica as I run up to the rooster, and let him have it fast and easy. First of all, because Veronica has awakened up the tight and weepy feeling in my chest, and secondly, because he has drawn Nuke's blood and that is a crime bearing capital punishment.

I fly in with a series of tight

roundhouses that leave his head rattling. Then I put two into his breadbasket deep, like sinking wells, and he goes over coughing blood.

I snatch both his ears and pound his face into my knee until I feel his nose breaks and his lips explode.

He takes a wild swing at me as I stand him up, but there is not much in it, and I let it strike off my pecks like a girl hit me or something.

I smile and start punching his face until his head is a red blur, my knuckles making tough *thwocking* sounds on his forehead and temples, and jaws. I begin to cog that maybe the death and destruction is too intense for the rooster since he was good at the violence and

unique, but I remember he has drawn the blood of yours truly, and no one must do that and live.

So I pound and kick him until he is this great wobbling wonder, and I am sure now he has been huffing neural stimulants and painkillers. I step back then give him a powerful roundhouse kick across the legs. He drops like a collapsing building, broken at the knees.

He crumples onto his face. I walk around him, somewhat pissed off by his lack of emotion about the whole proceedings. I see money changing hands in the crowd, and I raise my bloody fists and roar. I look down at my foe. He is muttering in Spanish or Incan or something, and I headwork that I am

going to be frustrated if he does not suffer at all.

So I grab his twisted legs by the ankles and lift him skyward upside down. I shake him a moment, and blood drools from his mouth. Then I drop him clunk on his head, still holding him by the spurs, and then on a whim of genius, turn his ankles in and drive the sharp points of the hooks into his groin until he is screaming, and his crotch is a tangle of torn flesh and material.

Blood soaks down his chest. His eyes glaze. I lift him over my head, blood draining down my arms, and smash him onto the floor with all my strength. He bounces like a bag of meat and lies still. His skull is cracked and flattening out

like it's made of clay or something.

The crowd goes wild as I parade around the ring, arms raised in victory. I shake them at the spectators and occasionally walk over for a stomp on the body. The little old fuck in the bull fighting costume comes over and holds up my hand and begins to shriek in Spanish.

I shake off his hand, and then stalk over to the door by which I entered. Morris is there, looking frightened with me so close and terrible in blood and smelling of vomit and sweat.

“Excellent fight, Mein Herr!” he says eyes afraid of mine.

“It sucked, manager and agent-type individual.” I looked out into the ring.

“He drew the blood of Nuke, though in defense I could say that I was somewhat distracted by the reappearance of foiled luncheon date, that I have mentioned to you, I believe—though my memory is awash with anger and violence. I must set these things to rights now. Many more must die for this.” I look at him and see him tremble.

I am not going to run around the warehouse looking for Veronica Ramsey, since I am fairly certain I saw her disappearing in a way that introduced a period of not appearing for a while. I would wait, and talk to the young lady at some other time, when we could chat over a cup of some liquid or somesuch or cyanide.

I noticed Morris watching me with much hesitation.

“What is it, noble Nazi squire, that has your Adam’s apple tremulous and uncertain?”

He almost squeaks, not too sure as he is, about yours truly’s mood.

“I’ve got the purse, Mr. Nuke. Five thousand dollars.” He held it out like a kindergarten child with his first picture.

“Good work, Morris,” I say this, having now begun to towel off the oil and blood from my body. “I will have you drive me home where I can wash and spritz and dress, at which point we will go out and blow said wad of money.”

I smile, but make a mental note to try



to phone Veronica Ramsey using the number that I know is on my answering machine. Then, I discard the headwork as being the action of a weak man, not of Nuke.

So I get home at around 4:00 a.m. full of steak and liquor, but bored of my good agent, Morris', company. He is too fearful and terrified of his boss to offer up any type topic for interesting conversant dialogue in the event such good sportsmanship might prove lethal to himself or any other in the room.

We ate at an all night diner, just the simple peasant fair of some peppery steak and loads of rice and these thin bits of bread wrapped around the local veggies that I ate too many of.

I still burp up these fiery demon burps and hope the whole boiling

mixture does not take the opportunity to fly out on its steaming wings and scald any bystanders, or now that I am home, any of my furniture. But it burns away quickly as I pace around my room.

I have been at the extra-strength Greyhounds again. They have added a sour element to my gut and mood, but I pace them off with the need to explode. I go to the bookshelf and peruse the many titles I have purchased and ordered by satellite and fiber optic cables over my years in Argentina, being an English reader and never having spent the time to learn the local lingo other than the simple bar and whore phrases that are often interchangeable, although I remember the pleasure I cogged one

evening when I leveled my eyes at a small skinny bartender, pointed at my glass and barked, “Eat it, all” in his language.

I had intended to command a simple refill in the primitive language, but this skinker takes it literally and does his able best to swallow the glass, sharp shivery bits and all. I can remember laughing many moments about this before mentioned incident as he choked and choked on his way to the ambulance.

My bone crushing fingers gently stroked the spines of my collection. I have perused many a piece of literature over the years, and much that would be considered the garbage-type fiction that fills disposable sandwiches of paper but

which is often more entertaining.

Yours truly has headworked the conclusion, having read both, that the noble name “literature” is bestowed with as much wit and consistency as your average attack of athlete’s foot. It seems to strike any kind of foot or in this case book and there doesn’t seem to be any honest reason for rewarding it.

And from Intermesh I have gathered, having viewed a few of these shows with whitecoat-types in cardigans talking like they come from Britain, and with the pipe or the groovy outdated chunk of face whisker, or the podcasting bull dykes in leather and the hard round black glasses and bowties and the blogging beatniks and the *awesomes* and

the downloadable media sound bytes firing off snotty critical remarks all the way from Paris or giving out the oily hand jobs and finger fucks for gender-swapping stories—and having witnessed this ego-fest yours truly would find the title of “Literature” as uncomfortable and itchy to his person as abovementioned foot fungus.

What is meant is; who would care what these individuals thought of a book, since in his humble opinion, Nuke headworks time is the judge of art and literature, not a parade of mincing social climber has-been-type individuals that can't get laid and whom time will forget.

So I peer into my bookshelf with noggin all cogging around these ideas of

fair play and the like. Curious Nuke looks down the shelf from A-Z though they have not been alphabetically arranged.

There is a treasury of Sherlock Holmes that fascinates the world champion snuff fighter, but leaves him dry in the end there being headwork aplenty, but too little violence for a re-read. Just talk about it, and with this skinny Sherlock chap so handy with a blade and Watson-boy 'can I help you sir,' always packing a heater, but pointing it more than blasting holes in bad guy-type individuals.

Then, I stumble over a title that fits perfectly with the mood I find myself in at this point in time, all jilted and feeling

sore in the chest. Yours truly then snatches a play from his shelf with a hand that has broken many a neck.

Dropping into a chair much like the relaxing bachelor at home—all I need is a doggy to bring me my slippers and pipe—I crack the cover knowing the specific scene I am looking for.

I remember this from a digital movie version from the old country, that being the former empire of England. It's about a big black fighter-type individual who is the general for Venice in the old days when countries fought openly if they were pissed off before Bush Cruise Missile strikes, suicide airplanes and exploding retards got so popular, kind of thing, but here's this real nasty violent



General Othello, and he has been tricked into believing his wife is a slut who has gone dangerous and slippery with his right hand man, Cassio.

“It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.”

It starts out, and I’m soon reading this scene and imagining that it is yours truly, and not before mentioned black war commander, and the wife is really Veronica Ramsey.

As I read, I hear this violence inside me headworking over the weepy surges I felt, because she has chosen to play with Nuke’s feelings and her life.

I’m of course a little pissed that Othello has chosen to snuff her without bloodshed, not being fond of the close

work myself, but the image of me wrestling on a bed with my fingers locked around Veronica Ramsey's throat has me panting, and my dingleangle not a little perturbed and up set. That's right, I got wood.

Then, something happens to the cog and the gears on the inside of the hard head of Nuke. As Othello yawps about her being a rose, and then when he starts to take a few of the discounted kisses from her while she's sleeping, instead of the old fire growing inside, I start to feel the weepy swell again.

I shake my head, and read on, anxious to put the flesh raking claws to Miss Ramsey's throat.

He talks to her, which is always kind

of a difficult part for me, and she does sound like a fairly decent wife-type individual and having read the entire play, yours truly can see the way things have been tricked about by the Iago cocksucker who reminds me of a number of fight promoters I have known.

But then the wife talks about his rolling eyes, and I know what that means, the battle lust is upon him and he's soon going to go for the kill, talk or no talk. It is depressing, this talk, only because it takes the fun out of the potential violence that has been built in the play. And I'm starting to lose wood. I'm losing it!

By the time Othello smothers her, I can no longer cog up the dream image of

Veronica Ramsey on the bed dying and turning blue while I force a pillow down her throat and my dingleangle into her whatsit. For some reason, all I feel is the weepy pull, and a strange sense of isolation that has an accompanying feeling of sadness and other types of unhappy parts of life.

I see in my headwork, me—not tearing any larynx out—but snugly kind of woozling around the nape, and baby talking googly lovely words, and Veronica is giggling. I throw the play across the room and break a lamp in the process.

Yours truly is suddenly filled with a great drowning sense of dread and something that I have only seen in the

eyes of others, those whom I have been victorious over.

There is this pulling kind of shriveling thing in the chest of Nuke, of a sudden, that even a few hard punches in the sternum would not cure. I cog a moment about there being poison in the rooster's barbed footwear, but figure it would be a lethal kind not a 'slow-acting only kind of increasing a sad void or causing a cloud to grow around the heart' type of poison which would be silly.

I walk to my bar and uncap a bottle of whisky and pour the bottle down till it is half full. I set it on the counter and go to bed, all the while plagued with a hesitation in my step and slight incline of

my head.

I pause for reflection at this point having read yet another tract of my unfolded life. My mood is strange, and as yet devoid of killing violence, though my writer ghost-type individual is across from me fiercely plugging his nose to close the faucet of blood I have opened.

His glasses are on the floor, and I am tempted to smash them beneath my hard rubber sandals. I am dressed in casual wear, just a short smock, having agreed long ago to a breakfast with my scribbling associate.

Things have not gone well, so far,

having read a bit about the “the weepy pull” and all that, and none too happy about the way the book leads. It is the morning of the day that will see me fighting Animan, my arch-nemesis and soon to be unhappy guest to this planet, or part of it, that being Santa Rosa.

I am not irate as yet in the murderous category of life, and might be willing to let the writer-chap away with a bad concussion. He has taken license yet again, with yours truly’s inner world and the cogging machine that I refer to now as a brain.

Too much license for a horrible and vicious snuff fighter who is willing to open up his private prison walls to the world, but who must also climb into a



ring with opponents who are not known for their bouts of decency and caring, who would only see a weepy pull as something that they would like to sink their teeth into and yank out of yours truly through his navel.

So, I have given this writer ghost-type individual a bit of a flick on the nose. Not enough to smash the cartilage, as my reason dictated, but just enough to set the blood flowing.

Nuke has learned how delicate most of the world is in comparison to his own brawny self, and therefore has to take care when bullying up and reprimanding his writer.

So this brainy chap without conscience stands up on wobbly legs,

and starts to gather up together his notes and so forth, apparently daring Nuke to do the bodybag on him, or at best give him the coma to settle him down.

He has a hard time opening his briefcase-type bag because his nose just spews on it raggedly and makes the whole set up slippery like the common tuna fish.

I see by his actions that he is not going to take my reprimand in the proper gentle manner in which it was intended, so yours truly sees he must stand down just slightly on the violent death threat and so forth, or he will have to find himself another writer ghost-type individual, who might or might not give a better account of the life of Nuke,

perhaps some obstinate mule boy whom I would have to kill before we finish the job interview.

“Please,” says Nuke, myself uncertain about the proper pleasantries, and halfway hoping no eavesdroppers will hear yours truly, in a sense, asking politely if his writer ghost will stay on for a while. “You misunderstand my gesture, old friend.”

I use the friendly stuff to work on his heart, having a certain knowledge about these fellows, like artist-type individuals who cog with their inside heart-type workings, and fall all weepy when someone tries *really* hard.

“It was foolish, of yours truly to precipitate such a slight touch of

violence upon your humble person like so much unhappy rain. I would offer my apologies and medical aid in this case. It is obvious that I have reacted over and above what is necessary. This was not to be a criticism of your scribbling style, but the content, which is not to your employer's likes. Yours truly enjoys the book, but he does not like all the weepy stuff that has been added..."

"You said it that way. I just wrote it down like you said it." I could see the writer-fellow's eyes all shiny with the sad wet stuff, and I know I have averted disaster.

"But, it was assumed around the board room, that I am the chairman of and after much cogging and table-

banging inside my head where the office is, that you would not include any of the stuff that could be looked at as ‘less than frightening,’ when one takes into account the violent nature of my profession, one can see the reasoning for said cautious censorship.”

I stood up now and paced over to the bar where I set about making a pair of lovely scotch and sodas, the type that would be considered the favorite of this before-mentioned scribbler.

I am also feeling a whiplash inside from all the nice stuff, with the pleasant smile and the knowing look being answered by a great headwork of violence where I am jumping on the writer-type individual’s skull bone and

basically making a gory mess of the fucking scene, with me gleefully slithering through his marrow.

I see the face of the scribbler turn soft and punchable.

“I guess this bothers you more than you let on,” he said and paused thinking, breathing through his mouth. I look at the dry blood specks in the corners and smile as he continued: “You always look angry and angrier.”

He says this in a truly boring ‘public access’ kind of way, like as though all the sudden the writers who make up the scripts for his internal show have gone on strike of a sudden and wildcat like, and have left others in charge of writing his show, like his kidneys, or his bowel

or his asshole.

He smiles, and pulls a long handkerchief out of his overcoat with which he wipes at before-mentioned nose. Then, the greedy little liver on legs snatches at the drink yours truly offers him.

“I am unhappy with this arrangement,” he says then with a self-satisfied tilt of his head, like some bad actress, a second before the director sticks it to her from behind.

“And how, then, could Nuke make up to said writer-type individual for his recent breaches in conduct as much worse as they could have been but will not be named.”

I added the last bit like a lawyer

might, in a try to soften the blow against yours truly's record.

“First of all, you have to quit hitting me. If you would rather, and can't restrain yourself, we could have our meetings at the gym, where you could have access to any number of heavy things to hit.” He sips noisily from his glass, and takes a seat away from the now soaked in blood cushions.

I nod—smiling like a canyon—suddenly feeling like Mr. Ramada on retirement day handing out gold watches, and still wrestling inside an urge to stomp the writer.

“Second, and finally, I would like to hear the story of what happened to your ‘real’ name.” He must see my face go



black and apocalyptic, because he suddenly shrinks down a little like a turtle might, if he had been yanked out of his shell, and given a cheap corduroy jacket to wear.

I think a minute, and at that point realize that it is infinitely likely that I can stop publication of the said story if it turns out as bad as yours truly thinks it will.

But, feeling all like great grandpa all the sudden, I nod my head, then lean back to tell my story. “You might title this one: *A Nuke by any other name would hit as hard.*”

So I'm like five, and I'm watching a lot of the satellite tube-yawping, Intermesh downloadable movies and Blu-ray whenever I get the chance, and I have already kind of cogged that I'm not getting the real thing because there is not the smothering tide of commercial adware that my janitor-type friend has told yours truly would fry his brains.

I have already assumed that the whitecoats have been funneling the junk in and making another 'weights and measures' experiment of it. The shows were not what I would call children's programming by a long shot.

There is what I cog the headwork stuff with views of earth from Google space, and the little brainy talks with whitecoats taking the world apart with the miniature jackhammers, and looking at all the disemboweled pieces under the magnifying glass and instrument-type machines.

Mixed in with that type of sometimes coggable, but extremely nonviolent programming were the odd type art appreciation and book lover stuff with whitecoats again, masquerading in the disguise of artists looking at the beautiful tit shot paintings of the old type masters, and the cubists and other type fractionalizing life viewers.

Yours truly always enjoyed the art

stuff with the lovely big thick women on the sofas with the inconvenient hands and the big battle scene pictures with corpses stuck full of spears and the Romans running in and carrying off a bunch of Sabine women without bras on. But the girls then, they weren't the spindly fashion fucks we have today, no those Roman girls were built to take it.

That always impressed baby Nuke. There were other shows too, stuff that yours truly would say was a directed attack upon his learning centers in the form of silly talking puppets that would ask the same slow questions over and over, and over, until I was itching to pick the giant flat screen up and do the whitecoat on it, breaking it down into

smaller and smaller pieces.

I would content myself by headworking me being asked this question by the milky cow or the cosmic cat, and then me giving the nasty punch-up in answer, and then just biting and kicking the puppets until there was nothing left but cloth and blood.

And all that while wires ran from computers all around, clickety click, and plugged in here and there to yours truly's cogger. And it seemed like things were flowing in, and words and words piled up behind my eyes but I didn't know what the fuck that was about.

These shows only impressed the little Nuke until he was about three years old, by which time he was reading and

demanding to see some of the digital movie adaptations of his favorite books. One of these was black Othello the war general who did the nasty violent choke on his wife.

I could remember watching before mentioned play so many times that my eyes spat tears of discomfort like the Arabian trees their gumdrops.

On and on stuff, like the Battle of Britain with this great shot in it of a desperate British flyboy getting a big brass bullet in the eyes, there's just this breaking glass sound and then his goggles are covered in bright red poster paint, down and down he went, down and down into infamy and some dear sweet British lass with silky skin and

auburn hair would paste his picture in a scrapbook and put his love letters dripping tears into a shoe box under her bed, and she'd fall asleep weeping and stroking her wet panties.

War pictures were great! The battle scenes always got Nuke's blood boiling and his hair on end. As I'd sit on the floor in front of the television, my chubby hands would curl into dangerous little fists and I'd lay into Mr. Cotton, this big stuffed blue elephant who was my constant companion and punching bag that I got one day for no reason at all, and I always suspected him of collaborating with the whitecoats for that reason and I never trusted him, and so was quite generous with the pent-up

violence I would deal out.

He was covered and crisscrossed with oodles of sewing gear sutures. So I would tussle with Mr. Cotton on the hard gray indoor-outdoor carpet that was my recreation area. I would watch these movies though and look for signs of my mother and father.

I thought at one point that if they were being kept away from me by force, they might try to send a message by slipping into the acting profession long enough to spill a line of some consequence and meaning into a popular movie.

Never did yours truly find before mentioned message, but he did see acting-type individuals that reminded him of what he hoped his mom or dad



looked like. Before Nuke began the ‘hate father’ view of the world, he hoped pappy would be like Clint Eastwood, ride like him, shoot like him, and all around murder whole bars full of rangy cowboys like him.

And for a mother figure, Nuke imagined her being like Paris Hilton, only with the brains of a rocket scientist and with a look that would make her foes hear their graves being dug instead of their cocks being sucked.

In terms of the nonviolence-type movie and that sort of shows that could not be termed ‘good for the headworking,’ yours truly enjoyed the Three Stooges, who were these bastards who knew how to communicate. Many

hours would little Nuke watch the Stooges poke eyes and smack noses, all with the playful and non-threatening pretend violence that did not bring out the blood like poster paint.

I was a devil though to get away from the set and would often fight and scratch for an hour doing great and enjoyable damage to my handlers who were big men with thick arms and giant round heads set right on their shoulders without time-wasting necks.

So, one day I'm viewing a show with a sort of tear pulling weep to it about a boy who lived a long time before yours truly was a six-year-old watching the story of his life, and he was an unhappy chap called the Elephant Man. He had

this head that looked like a bag full of walnuts and his body was crippled up broken and bent like a mangled metal chair.

Anyway, there was this little Nuke watching the story of this lonely chap getting chased and laughed at and viewed and having the great scorn heaped upon him, and somewhere there is a connection made.

At about the time he is chased into a subway station and unmasked for the ugly freak that he was, and he hollered, "I am not an animal, I am a human being," and anyway this moment just leaps past little six-year-old Nuke's shield and swinging chubby fists and the bulwark of Mr. Cotton, and stabs right

into his heart where he lets no one go and the child begins to cry and cry and cry.

And in come the handlers, and I see that they look at me the same way that the people looked at the Elephant Man, and I jump up tearing at the wires in my head and I start to scream the same message that the poor fellow hollered in a subway station so many years before, about being a human being, and I jump back and throw the big flat screen at my handlers like it is made of Popsicle sticks and it leaves a deep ugly wound on one of their heads.

He goes down, and I kind of grin inside and send a distant thought transmission through time and space to

my freak friend and I headwork him chalking one up for us. Anyway, the head whitecoat comes in. He is the one I call Mastersergeant Shultz because he reminded me of an evil Nazi prison guard I saw in a movie once.

He is a big man all in white, with short-cropped hair and a thick round belly like a beer barrel. He yells at me this time, which is weird because he usually only spoke to me in this deep hypnosis-type go-to-sleep voice.

Anyway, he yells: “Six, you stop this instant!”

His fists are hard rocks at his sides. But, I have him on one count of ‘unfair request’ because only the gods above could stop this instant. I bellow my war

cry again, about being human and I see Mastersergeant Shultz turn as white as his hair.

“Six! Sit down.” He points at the floor, and his tone is so forceful that I almost do. Instead I yell back at him.

“That’s not me!” I upend a couch and let it sail at the window. “That’s not a name!”

I had at this point cogged that “Six” was some sort of codename the whitecoats had dreamed up to keep me guessing and small.

“That is not a name!” I yell again, and realize that the Elephant Man had a real name, but people called him by his freak name, and I considered Six to be a freak name—my freak name and quickly, I see

that I do not have a name given to me by a mother and father or any other human being, and an idea then glows in me like a cell phone screen.

I would name myself, then and there, like any human being could. I would take the balls by the horns. I think quickly, throwing tables and the like, but most of my violence draining away into the headworking and cogging of the internal gears.

I imagine my parents then giving me a name, and it would be one that would not conjure up the freak show picture; it would be a name that would protect me. I wanted one with power, and I suddenly felt the chains and gears fall into place. There was one type of power that

everybody respected and that inspired awe in or murdered anyone who did not pay it homage.

Nuclear power!

I had seen the video news of the old Russian reactor spraying death on the populace for generations, and the more recent Canadian reactor that had dropped to China after wiping out a good number of decent bilinguals. I'd seen what it did to Godzilla and what he did to the Japanese.

I would be called Nuke. I would be a warhead. I would be power for those who respected me, and I would be death for all who dared to question.

Anyway, I yell at Mastersergeant Shultz.



“I am Nuke, little man Mastersergeant-type individual!” I dropped my guard and allowed myself to be captured by my handlers, the one of whom would sport a nasty crescent scar on his bloody face until his death by my hands some years later. They carried me over to the Mastersergeant Shultz. His big sweaty face comes close to mine.

“Beware,” I say, in a cold fighter’s voice. “Beware Nuke—the son of science and father of death.”

They locked me up for a month after that.

So, I've about taken the piano apart by this time, having done as the writer ghost-type individual requested and opened the bars to the prison. He has written down and recorded what I have said from where he's barricaded himself behind the sofa and I immediately want to bundle it all up and jam it into his orifices and send it all screaming out the window to the street below.

But, the scribbler was correct in having me do something with my violence during the opening of the weepy gates of the past, because having thrown the piano around as much as I did

during the telling, a lot of the immediate violence is worn off if it *has* ended the career of a Steinway.

That is fine, since yours truly does not play, and only kept the musical device on hand to impress the women willing to come up to the penthouse moments before they are licked from stem to stern and sodomized.

I see that the piano is a ruin, the air is still full of a distant echo of breaking strings; a memory of the piano death still plays in the form of one deep sonorous note. I look again at the writer-type individual and see him brush a hand under his glasses and his eye. My face goes ugly rock hard and I glare my killing glare at him.

“Dear scribbler, if you are shedding tears there, it had better be because you are the music lover-type who is somewhat shocked and outraged by my treatment of this fine instrument. That better be for the requiem music I have played. Because if said tears are for the Nuke, prepare to die, prepare to have those women’s water drops pushed back into your eyes with brain squashing force.” I see the scribbler straighten and smile.

No more tears.

“Indeed, Mr. Nuke. I have a cold, and the air in here has thickened with your exertions.” He smiles.

I smile.

“I see your tape recording-type

device whirring and clicking on yonder table, Mr. Scribbler. Do not allow any to hear its contents. I would most joyfully do a Steinway on you, and spread your inner strings on the apartment floor... Should such a breach in security occur.” I snarl, and walk over to the bar. The clock on the wall says that I must go down to the coliseum to see how preparations for the fight are going.

“I must go,” I say, slurping down a quick Greyhound. “You may write here, or where you please, author of my biography... But I insist we have a peek at your rough draft in the morning, minus all the writer crippling violence as we have agreed.”

I try to smile, but it falls off the

minute I have tacked it on. I must shower away the strange feeling that wrinkles me. I must boil it out with water before I can leave the penthouse, before I can go out and meet the challenge of the Animan.

There's a feeling yours truly gets on the day of a big fight. Oh, I let it pass off in my usually nonchalant way as yet another lackluster day in the life of a friendly neighborhood snuff fighter, and in fact there are a great many fights that are so easy to win that one gets jaded about its appeal.

But, this battle with Animan is the big showstopper in a life that is punctuated with much excitement and fun and may prove to be the first real fight of his life there being to date but few challenges for Nuke to record in the 'sweat working up' department, and many of those only

because of his lack of experience in the early days.

But, here he was, Nuke, about to take on the machine. Yours truly has read enough books in the science fiction section of the library to see that there is a really heavy fear of the machine that rattles around the back of the average simian consciousness. The type of thing that made old time cigarette chomping, sweaty arm-pitted reporters hang on to the hard and wiry mechanical typewriters long into the days when the computers were taking the ideas right off the ends of the fingers like some space age synaptic junction.

It was the same fear that made up the nasty cuss word “newfangled” and the



other jibes and snipes of a populace in mortal terror of the new world that industry wanted to offer the huddled masses.

“Do hickey,” comes to mind for no other reason than it does, in an attempt to explain or delegate a *nomer* to anything that the viewer has no name for and less understanding.

Anyway, Nuke does not fear the machine. He shaves with one, he cooks up his little processed meat sandwiches by the thousands using the strange and otherworld microwaves to heat and baste. Nuke enjoys the smart-car rides and the smart-airplanes, and the smart-escalating stairs and sidewalks. They’re a part of the package. They make this

new great age the smart thing it is. Who has time to think about driving, or flying or walking when hardware can do it?

I saunter down to the main floor of the coliseum and waltz around the ring. It always looks a little bigger from the ground and when it's empty, and the hard steel cables that rope the fighters in look thicker than they actually are and feel when they score a deep groove in your back.

Anyway, I walk around taking in the splendor of the fresh air, and electric noise that fills the coliseum like the gods of the battle have already sent ahead their seraphim agents to reserve their seats and keep them warm. The fight plays in yours truly's head like a movie,

but every time it screens, with the flying fists and the tearing metal, Nuke stands victorious, arms soaked in oil, rather than the blood he so enjoys.

Above, I see the hanging scaffolding where the techno whitecoats do their maintenance on the referee, which has been winched out of its holding pen and hangs there like some gigantic dead B-movie spider. On the side of the ring opposite, there is a big shiny steel trailer like the Airstreams of old, just so much polished aluminum and the odd wired-in portal.

I walk over to it, thinking perhaps it is a gift for me from one of my many admirers, for yours truly to change into his fighting duds. But when I draw

nearer, I spot a little whitecoat come shuffling out, all owl eyes, and he does a quick 'oh my gosh' look and then dives back into the trailer slamming the door.

I walk over all headworking a conspiracy, having immediately ruled out a surprise party. When I get closer, I see that it is not only a trailer, but is a camper so to speak that would not need the humble workhorse to pull; for inside I saw a driving console and wheel moments before aluminum blinds dropped across the windows.

I climbed the wooden ramp that sat in front of it, and walked to the door and rapped loudly, curious about the whitecoat and his unusual behavior, or especially unusual, because the

whitecoats would not be found in a book called *The Things Nuke Understands*.

It would be a thick book, but there are even things that the well-known snuff fighter does not understand though he works at it. I rap anyway, and no one answers my civility. I begin to pound then, because I am immediately annoyed by this whitecoat's rudeness, and I am already picturing him on the floor bleeding from an ugly wound.

No answer. All I do get is a strange hum from the whole camper. I put a big eye-pulping hand against its polished metal ribs and there it is met by a vibration of the lowest intensity that might be about a 'one' on your personal vibrator setting.

I pound again, and then quite angrily leave, there being no real motive for my wanting to get inside, other than to be the angel bearing good manners for that one whitecoat, and in the name and for the sake of curiosity.

I did make a mental note to have one of these metal camper-type devices constructed for the use of yours truly as it would be impressive to the women, moments before they are ridden hard and sent home wet from within its walls.

I am also somewhat late for an appointment in my dressing room so decide to pay the trailer another visit when I am through.

I am amazed and somewhat oddly tickled when I see a little symbol over

the door that is a piece of metal shaped like a globe with the longitude and latitude lines in gold, and over it in letters of the same precious metal look is the word: GEMCO. My mind does a funny bit of flexing then, sort of headworking an idea up to the chin, but unable to jerk it up arms straight from the shoulders.

There is something tickling yours truly's cogs and wheels as he scratches his noggin on the way to his dressing room.

So I walk down the thin cinderblock hallway that reminds yours truly of home. It takes a quick jog to the right, and I find there the golden star etched into the polished mahogany of my door, the door to my dressing room.

I shoulder the thing aside, being generally unimpressed by the many perks I am awarded for bringing such prosperity to Santa Rosa, and being more interested in the method of bringing it, that being the face rakes and eye claws, and the shuddering bodies and the probing blades.

The door swings back and I see



Morris, my agent and manager, giving the 'look see' to a strange contrivance that stands on a rack in my dressing room. Across from him, I see Danny Coleman, the armament salesman.

He is his usually overdressed self, committed to ugly bad taste right down to the golden buckles on his shoes. He is dressed in a bright red and orange plaid leisure suit of the retro-Seventy variety, and I see from my vantage point that some leaning forward action has almost flipped his thick black toupee leaving it just slightly askew.

I waltz up to them, exuding confidence and self-assurance; they, being short of both, unconsciously kind of sponge-like begin to soak it up, and

this slurping action brings them both around grinning and smiling.

Morris is his usual Nazi self, though bearing a layer of especially oily sweat in anticipation.

Danny Coleman is all smiling dental work and eye makeup. I can just detect where the tape held the folds of skin back from his eyes. Danny is happy because he has finally made a sale. He has been a bothersome son-of-a-bitch over the years, taking incredible chances with his life by often coming close to demanding that I look at his armaments and toys.

I have always fought barebacked and bare-knuckled and just took any weapon I need from my many opponents.

Danny would show up with his catalogues and pamphlets, and more often than not I would send him away with his toupee rammed violently into his ear. But, he finally made a sale and what was drooping over the rack was the product of that financial dealing.

Neither Morris nor Danny uttered a word as I gave my exoskeleton the once-over. It was really quite beautiful in the spotlight—so much burnished metal. Yours truly ordered the exoskeleton, not out of fear, but out of practicality since the battle with Animan would be a test of strength and not what you would call a battle of the ripping flesh, and so forth.

Since Animan had no flesh to rip, it would be an unfair advantage. I

wouldn't begrudge him an arm, if he could tear it off, but I would not have him flay from me what I could not get in return.

So, anyway, I was chatting with Morris one day and Danny came in with another proposal for weapons in light of the opponent I was up against, and I had already decided to be my traditional self-type snuff fighter. But we had already talked about the skin thing and I had headworked the troubles I would have.

So, I scribbled the kind of design I wanted for my exoskeleton, me being the originator of the idea, and the fight king and all, and handed the picture to Danny and asked him could he reproduce it.

“Yes,” he said, and here it was in front of me, like the knights of old, in a sense, being an articulated overcoat, made of steel and iron and springs, that would do to reinforce the outer shell of yours truly. It looked most like those Samurai type warrior suits with the big helmet with cheek protecting wings and this broad pair of shoulder pads and one piece arm and forearm protectors.

There was the crotch and butt protection I requested and even a hard metal skirt that covered the outside of each thigh to just above the knee. The whole thing was welded and wired to a stout piece of steel that would run up my back.

I had decided against a full body suit,

as it would undermine Nuke's ability to leap and run and flip in battle spirit, if the situation should call for it. I could always just slap a pair of hockey pads on my shins and knees, and of course I'd wear my trademark fibersteel boots.

“I must say, manufacturer of said weapon of defense. It is indeed a beautiful piece of work that you have precipitated, and momentarily I regret the many bruises I have given you over the years. I must ask you though if you have given before mentioned defensive weapon the proper battery of tests, the ring being an awful and unfortunate time to carry out such experiments,” I said all this as I picked up the exoskeleton and hefted it in my sinewy hands.

It is about forty pounds, as I had hoped it would be. I immediately began to slip it on, being excited and somewhat agitated by the prospect—a cross between the feeling yours truly gets moments before his latest concubine is given the fast and dangerous road trip, and the feeling Nuke gets when viewing a sunset that soaks a long time blood red, like the sun has blasted, bang, into the earth like a musket ball.

“Oh, it has, it has, Mr. Nuke.” Danny comes forward hesitantly to aid me into the before mentioned device, knowing the perils of perceived homosexual advances on your truly. “We have tested and re-tested the metals in the exoskeleton, and the exoskeleton itself.

We have tested it.”

I slipped into it, and I did my rapid shuffle and shadow box at the wall. The exoskeleton added some small fraction of resistance to my motions, but I quickly compensated for it, being always wanting to give a fraction more to my aggressive actions anyway. I jumped around, and boxed the air—the suit performing soundlessly, just the *swish*, *swish*, *swish* of the steel fists.

The arm and hand protection is sort of a hollow mitt made of battleship steel, and I found it comfortable to wrap the old fingers around the graphite hand grip, and blast away at the air.

I glance at Morris from under my heavy helmet and advanced a little, until



I see tears burst from him.

I swung back at Danny.

“It would be time then, said protective environment manufacturer, to talk about the price of armored garments.” I walk to the wall. It is covered in thick mahogany sheets that I know cover a cinderblock wall.

“The project has been paid for, by your agent, Mr. Nuke...as per your request.” I hear Danny breathing noisily.

I let a flurry of punches go at the wall, and soon batter my way through the wood and into the cinderblocks. I turn to them then, and raise my arms as though I have just killed the coliseum. My features are covered in a gray dust. I feel like a fabled juggernaut.

“That is fine then, Coleman, master of armor, I will thank you then and be done with you for the day, as nice as your company can be to others.”

Danny looks at me with big round eyes, and then exits after a slight and hurried bow.

I turn to Morris. He still eyes me suspiciously.

I took the suit off with his help and then crossed to a big desk that crawls along one wall. A piece of mail was on it. I opened the envelope with a fingernail that has slashed veins, and pulled out a little three by three card. I looked at it. It read:

*“Mr. Nuke, we must talk before the fight. Important. Veronica Ramsey.”*

“Did this wayward epistle come from the usual place, via the mail that would be considered government run, dear Morris, or did someone drop it off?”

Morris shook his head like a maraca. “Mein Herr, this is the first that I have seen the envelope.”

“Talk to the security-type individuals then, the buzzers and Tasermen,” I mumbled this as I read further down. I saw there the name of an exit.

Nearby is the Happy Taco stand at the North end of the building. I was to meet her there at seven-thirty. The fight was at eight.

Yours truly was still curious about said Veronica woman, and her rather naughty behavior. He has long thought

about perpetrating some form of non-lubricated sexual punishment, but he finds himself headworking that he would settle for a date with said benefactress of pain.

So I'm in my dressing room about thirty minutes before I'm to meet Ramsey, and about an hour before the big step into the history books. As a way of easing into the horrible violence of the battle to come, I kind of cog and reminisce with yours truly, in the chains and gears of the mind over all the other moments of violence that have made up my life.

Some might try to write off the Nuke, because he is just a monster of flashing fists grinning in a spray of blood, that not being what I am not, and being generally a true depiction of me, and one which

could go in the dictionary beside my name, but there are always the subsections and the amendments, and in one of these you would find a listing: *The Human Moment of Nuke*.

It was in my twenty-first year and the night in which I was about to take on my first real opponent, so long and far away from Mr. Cotton the big blue elephant and the cinderblock walls of home.

I was nervous though, being as yet unseasoned, and bland in the knowledge of the snuff fight, and as yet, not certain I would always be undefeated. I would sit in my dressing room. In those days I had not the stable quarters in which I now reside, and would have to make do with whatever filthy vomit hole I was given,

blood-spattered and be-spittled as they were—but, then like now, I would spend a moment just perusing the sprockets for any disturbingly pleasant thought that would begin my battle blood to boil, as yet being young and unused to the ways of the snuff fight.

On this one occasion, I remember with clarity, the hesitant knock-a-knock, on my dressing room door, which was unusual because though I was new to the world of snuff fight, I was still Nuke, and had impressed all with my capabilities in the ‘leave me alone before the fight you fuckers’ retributive violence, and had one time publicly pole-axed a towel boy into submission with his own laundry cart when he forgot

that simple rule.

So, the door is knocked at and red images howl across my mind. I lunge at the door and rip it open—and there I am met with a sight both wondrous and strange. At the door is a huge warrior of a man whom I knew to be fighting that night, but whom I hardly expected to meet, neither whom I would have expected to knock at the door of any domicile having the reputation of a bloodbather and general door unhinger.

Anyway, there he is, big as life, the big one, and great and strong. His beard was most noticeable it being of the wire variety but was black at the time and speckled with hard white quills. His eyes were like two vacuums sucking all



the contents of the room into their central singularity of spiritual emptiness.

It was a world famous snuff fighter, and in fact, the champion who that night was going to fight his final battle in a wild winner-take-all war with a dark African champ.

This heavy-boned man before me was none other than seven feet of Rip Smitten, Undefeated World Champion Snuff Fighter of the day. He had been with Snuff Fighting since its prehistoric times when it was a wandering minstrel band of violent men, being chased by the laws of the U.S.A. under the banner of Ultimate Fighting.

Those were the days just after wrestling was exposed as the sham it

was, and the howling crowds wept for real blood. He traveled with the Ultimate Fighters then, as a steel-booted kick boxer. These entertainers were finally chased to the sunny south where even fewer laws governed the free expressions of all, fighters and promoter types alike.

“You cocksucker!” he said, yours truly remembering the words like a dream. “What the fuck are you doing in my dressing room?”

I was all of a sudden a silent-type individual, taken in by the enormity of the fighter class that was before me. He glared at me, and I saw the great buffalo hump fists at his sides curl into bony maces.

“You deaf, motherfucker?” he snarled in a voice like a rasp. I glared and could feel the tiny soft mistwash of spit falling down-like. Still lost in the awe inspiration, I did not as yet reply, taking in instead, the heavy iron and steel jump suit that was his trademark armor. In dismay I lingered a moment on his enormous steel codpiece that was scratched and dented and about the size of a large zucchini squash.

“Cocksucker!” he grumbled and then pushed past me, him being the only one in yours truly’s life to ever get away with said misappropriation of good manners. He lumbered into the dressing room on enormous furry legs and walked over to the laundry hamper full of

bloody towels and sheets from the previous fighters of the evening—the younger guys who did not always do it to the death. The quitters and the momma's boys being groomed for the bigger and uglier picture.

There was a click and his codpiece dropped open at which time he sprayed the contents of the laundry hamper in a smoking faucet of piss. He chuckled as he sprayed and sprayed, showing many crooked yellow teeth.

Myself, not being of the gay boy persuasion but yet, descended from curious monkey stock, did glance down at the champion's fire hose—an alpha dog moment I cog it now—which was easily as long as yours truly's forearm,

and at least as scarred. Smitten turned then, after a couple of groans, still handling said anaconda of love smiling wildly and pinching the old serpent like bread dough.

“That felt good,” he said, still kneading the pasta. “Are you by any chance queer?”

And he looked yours truly up and down in a very discomfoting way, and almost provoking an attempt by me at the championship belt right then and there, being insulted and embarrassed by the inference as I was. He seemed to sense this, frowned, shook his head and then coiled his python away out of sight. He gazed around the room, obliterating more of it; the lockers now were sucked

into his void-like stare.

“I remember this room,” he said in a voice that was torn from many battle cries. He dropped his big body on the bench beside me. “It was here I waited for my first snuff fight...” His eyes gleamed momentarily, and then were dark. “I killed Moxy Jim McDuggin that night. Cut his throat with his own axe. Silly fuck always dressed like a lumberjack... In those days we all had some shtick. I remember that bastard bled like a pig—just kept coming. So I got wise to it and soaked my beard in the blood that foamed and foamed from his throat. The crowd loved it. I caught Hepatitis from it, but what the fuck eh? That’s showbiz.”

Smitten looked me up and down again, I balled my fists.

“I guess you can’t go back...” He looked at me quizzically. “You’re that Nuke cocksucker...aren’t you?”

“Oh champion,” I said, giving my death-dealing stare. “It is I, Nuke, but one that is not associated with certain fellated praise only moments gone and echoed in this room. I must assure you that I am not above avenging such slights having always been a stickler for manners.” I smile, then and he smiles back.

“So you’re not a cocksucker. You’re still a mean one. I’ve seen you fighting.” He tilted his head as he talked, made meat hooks of his hands. “You’re a little

too haphazardous to be invulnerable, but you're the best I've seen in a long time—other than this big Zulu bastard I'm killing tonight.”

He jammed a finger into his nose, then wiped something thick and bloody off on the bench.

“And you, champion, are you truly, shall we say, ending your career tonight, in either the body bag, or take the last walk with the belt? There are many of us snuff fighters who would consider retirement a living hell, having nothing but dreams of our many wins, and only the ghosts of the vanquished for company.”

“Ghosts, don't matter... Seems to me I fucked one once: Napoleon, I believe. I



remember yanking down his tight white pants and—but those were other days, my crazy Soho days...” He gazed around the room and a puzzled look crossed his face. “I took the wrong turn, Nuke, I was heading to my dressing room. I took a wrong turn.” His eyes met mine. “If I don’t retire then there is never a reward for me, for all the butchering, all the worms I’ve fed. It’s just the flesh wagon if I stay too long. Boy, we serve the Mars God, the rewards are great but he’ll get you sooner or later. I aim to get me some happiness, before I’m slashed open and some stinking dog rolls in my guts.

“If I win tonight, I get the Zulu’s money on top of the purse—we’re

betting personal fortunes too. Why not eh? One of us won't have a use for it. Then I'll go off maybe open a grocery store, nightclub or something, sit around in a tuxedo fucking the local boys and girls, and having a good time talking about the death blows in my life—if I lose, then the Zulu gets my stuff and the dirty bastard will tear my liver out and eat it in front of the crowd. But I won't lose, you just remember to watch that fight. I have a real nasty show stopper planned for this bastard...hell, it's my last fight and all, and I want to be remembered.”

I won my fight that night. It was against Juan Escobar, an escaped Cuban serial killer. He tried to choke me to

death with panty hose. I turned his head around twice and flattened his rib cage.

Smitten won his fight too. It being a long and violent affair with Smitten using a heavy steel sword and the Zulu armed with iron spear and shield. It was from that great and enormous champion that yours truly learned his love of showmanship, as the big bastard finally striped the belly of the Zulu with a pair of deep red cuts, letting the sausage stuffing spill, and then the showman up ends the body and pretends to hump it from behind while the cameras whirled and the flashes flashed.

All the time I was waiting for his big finish, and when it came, it came with as much violence as killing an old woman

or backing over a litter of pups in a van full of kids.

The sound of the groan from the audience made it plain that they would never forget Smitten's final fight, that from then on in a dictionary beside the word fight they would have his name burned in their minds.

After pretending to sodomize his opponent, Smitten ripped off the Zulu's animal-hair and bone crotch protection, and tore off the bastard's testicles with his teeth. He walked around the ring with his arms in the air dripping blood while his lips foamed darkly with shiny slime and gore and he chewed and chewed.

The crowd even fell silent a moment,

before shifting to a terrified cheer when he swallowed, myself even giving in with the odd hoot of happiness. I never saw Smitten again.

Anyway, I looked up now and saw the clock on the wall. I was sure that I could make it to the doorway by the Happy Taco stand to meet Veronica Ramsey. If I hurried I would be able to choke down a couple with extra hot sauce before the fight.

So, I'm in the ring, all covered in the exoskeleton and fuming in the head and full of hot Tabasco and taco and rotten meat and anger. Ramsey did not show, or she did, but she did not stay.

I had hurried up to the Happy Taco stand and ordered four from the owner's boy Pedro who was all twinkling eyes seeing a big warrior like myself suited up and angry for battle. He smiled and smiled anyway, and handed me my food.

I gulped these down and waited, but even as I ate the first one I smelled a perfume that I did not completely recognize, but one that I noticed enough

to pull me a little by the memory lobes.

Now, about ten minutes trickled by with me chewing and burping and wondering about the best beverage that yours truly could purchase that could alleviate the growing belly burn what with a fight coming and not wanting any physical distractions to pull or twist my attentions from the Animan's whizzing fists.

Anyway, along comes Martinez, the boy's father and before mentioned owner of the Happy Taco. We go way back so it is obvious to me that he has something to say to me. He walks up looking fat and round, and dark-skinned, with a long thin moustache scrolled over a gold tooth looking every inch a sleepy Latin South

American stereotype; but his eyes are big round balls over the chronic black bags under them.

He comes running.

“Señor. Señor, I was looking for you...” His big body suddenly realizes it has been exerting a month’s worth of energy, so he shudders, and slurps in a long strand of air.

“Be at ease, Señor Happy Taco-type individual what normally goes by the name of Martinez. Catch the breath that alludes you fleet of foot, before unfolding the tidbit of information your agitation tries to express for you...” I swallowed the remains of another taco. My guts flamed.

“A lady, she come to see you here,



Señor...but, she could not stay... Señor, she look plenty scared...”

“Now, Martinez, this lady had tits out to here!” I gestured. “And hair that was gold, like shall we say for argument, like gold.”

“Sí Señor. Like gold...” He started stuffing his fat hands in his pockets. “Señor, she gave me this...” And he handed me a little crumpled piece of notepaper. I take it, and then look around. Nuke loitering in his battle gear in a hallway eating tacos was beginning to draw a crowd, so I caught the frantic taco salesman’s attention once more.

“That’s all?” I stare at him. “Just this note and she left?”

“Sí,” Martinez said this with fear in

his eyes. My expression had frightened him.

“Gracias,” I said then in the language of the Mayans. I slipped him a sweaty bill from under my armor and tromped back to my room having only a few moments before the fight of my lifetime. The notepaper had but one conundrum of a word on it that might have meant anything depending on the circumstances, but considering my profession and life, in general meant very little to me.

It said: “*Danger!*”

So, I’m in the ring. Across from me is Animan, his little red eyes glow at me over his big steel grill of a face. He’s all chrome steel, so quite spectacular in the

spotlights and lasers. His head moves around like the illusive python, being on a bit of mechanism that is supported on a pair of spring-loaded arms attached to the top of his shoulders.

This bolted on over his fighting arms with the fists and the long reach. His fists are big engine blocks of steel, both being about the size of my helmet. They whiz and whirr in the air on these arms that I realize have two elbows apiece, which I begin to try to headwork into my fight plan.

His reach could vary then I cog, allowing him to fight well in the clinch or let him fire off a monstrous haymaker about six feet at the top of the arc.

I am suddenly thrilled that I am

wearing my exoskeleton since such a haymaker would be striking yours truly at a considerable number of miles per hour.

He has a big tube steel ribcage that hangs out about five feet, and I see that his head can retract behind it, sort of him standing about seven feet when unextended. I see that his hips and waist are a series of gizmos and springs and gimbals that can raise and lower him too, so I begin to headwork that in, an opponent who can shrink to about six feet then, flare up to about nine. I would simply have to vary my firing pattern and watch for those haymakers.

In all, he must have weighed in at about five hundred pounds, and that

against little old me at about two-eighty with my exoskeleton on. Around Animan, there hovered about six whitecoats, all with little dials and wires and the like.

They are a flurry of white around the robot's waist. I don't spot the inhospitable whitecoat from the trailer in the crowd, but they look so much the same, who can tell? They run in and out of the shiny trailer though, so that much of my guesses are right and it was a headquarters for the science buffs.

He, Animan, just stares at me the whole time, while I give him a look up and down, then let him have my insolent half-sneer smile. He does not react.

Anyway, I shrug and sit quietly in my

corner looking at him, and counting the moments. Morris is behind me saying nothing, ready with towels and water, because I do not need his advice at a time like this. Did I ever?

Then out of the ceiling comes the microphone slithering down on its cord. Over the iron ropes climbs the master of ceremonies and fight promoter Juan Matisse, with a beautiful redhead in her birthday suit. I smile and wink at her shaved muff for good luck and then I recognize her.

She was that chick waitress, what's her name, who blew a guy on camera on a reality show and was in talks to have her own sitcom now. Anyway, I can see by the liquid way she moves and looks

back, that she would like to have the attentions of yours truly, fast and hard, maybe after the fight—a great promotion for us both, especially if we can arrange a blowjob and a camera.

Juan grabs the microphone. I give a glare back to Morris, hoping he has bribed the local officials to guarantee me top billing. Anyway, Juan lets go a machine gun burst of information:

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome once again to the Santa Rosa Metrodome where we are proud to announce record attendance for a snuff fight championship. Eighty thousand people have come from all corners of the earth, and to all corners of the earth is the fight broadcast where it will be

watched by more than fifty million viewers. We welcome you all to the Santa Rosa Metrodome.”

He falls kind of silent being a showman himself, and he sort of looks around with his beady eyes.

“Tonight the future of the human race will be played out before your very eyes. Since the great mechanization of the 1900s man has struggled with the concept of machines doing the work of man. Ladies and gentlemen, he has long enjoyed their service as their master. But tonight, the Santa Rosa Metrodome is proud to bring you the battle of the century. A battle that will shape the next millennium. For tonight, man will do battle against machine. Tonight, a man



will do single combat with a powerful weapon of war and destruction.”

The little shit jerks upright then.

“In this corner, weighing in at two hundred and thirty pounds is Nuke, undefeated thirteen time World Champion snuff fighter.”

The crowd goes wild—the excitement just becomes this big wave of sound that leaps up and splashes down over the ring. I mean my nipples are hard; I’m almost getting wood here.

I stand up and do my arms in the air tribute to violence, and then do my skull crushing hand motions, and my body pulping leg kicks. The crowd goes wilder.

“And in this corner, weighing in at

five hundred pounds the as-yet undefeated Animán, brought to you by the kind sponsors and designers at Gemco!”

To this the crowd boos heartily, being unhappy with the mere prospect of a machine doing the death and destruction on yours truly, even though it is possible that some might have the secret desire to see a new world champion, but I am sure they do not want a machine for that job. I mean, that’s just feeding people to a meat grinder, right? Fun for the first hundred, but after that it would get stale.

Juan continues: “As both fighters understand, this is a no-holds-barred battle to the death. For the sake of convenience and in agreement with our

sponsors, the war will be divided into three-minute rounds with four-minute breaks. The only rule is that when the bell sounds the fight must stop and can only resume when the bell sounds again. Now, if the fighters are ready, at the sound of the bell: GET READY TO RUMBLE!”

The crowd goes wild. Juan Matisse and the naked woman sprint and then vault over the top rope, me watching the big round ass of the woman and looking forward to the old hey ho! I can feel the battle lust in me, and it grows up until I can think of nothing, nothing, not even whatever danger Ramsey was talking about. My shoulders itch; my fists tighten up like iron.

The bell rings, and I'm up moving in fast, of course, so is Animán who moves much more quickly on those big flat feet than I imagined. He is all spring-loaded hell, and inside I hear the hissing of hydraulics and the whine and thrill of gears.

We close, and I see two steel fists flying in at my head, both angles. I drop, hear the report as they clang together like cymbals, and then I'm up, arms hooked under Animán's ribcage. He totters back, but somehow manages to keep upright, though I am sure I hear something grind inside him.

I catch a jab on the shoulder and it sends me tumbling into the ropes like I'm hit by a truck. It was on my right, and

that is numbed slightly, even in the exoskeleton.

Animan comes running now, his head far up, snaking in and out at me.

I'm up, and step in quick for a heavy blow on his cheek, but his head retracts, and then suddenly twists up out of my reach.

From there he directs two blows at my head. I catch one of them on my right forearm, and take the other in the left shoulder. Again I tumble, but this time Animán comes hovering over me raining blows down—they strike the concrete floor with loud clangs—and I barely manage a gymnastic twist out of his way.

I come up landing a good combination on his head with a loud

*clang, clang, clang.* But, he's moving again, and dropping down a bit for some jabs. I get in close, and try to hook my arms under his ribcage again. I heave, and expect a blow, but nothing comes. Then I smell a weird smell, half hot oil and half something else.

Anyway, I don't have time to think about it as I tumble aside.

A big fist smashes into my back. The force throws me into the ropes, but I come up fast looking for Animan. Suddenly, my vision jumps, there is this weird twist to everything, and the roar of the crowd suddenly sounds hollow and distant to me.

Animan charges, and I can't get my legs to move, so I ship my fists up to

guard me. The Animan nails me a good one on the top of my head that I feel all the way down to my toenails. I try to spin out of the clinch, but I cannot get my legs to work.

The Animan drops three jabs into my face. I feel my lips pulp and my nose start to flood, but I'm squinting into it, trying to keep my head down to catch them on top. I drop to a knee, try to stand, but again, my legs won't respond.

The last thing I remember is the Animan sort of sizing me up with his big automobile head twisting left and right, then I see his arm go back for a haymaker. I think I got one arm up, and it was over. The lights went out.

# THE SAINT

## Book Two

### *6 - Portrait of a 21st Century Snuff Fighter*

G. Wells Taylor

“I gazed down at the bathing beauty. She was older than was generally accepted for bathing beauties—for her to fit the stereotype—but she had kept herself in shape and the term sprang to mind. She was a mother too.

“The brat whining close at hand attested to that. I know that sounds awful, but when I was there watching, all I could do was resent the child. Nevertheless, the mother was lucky, and



had the flat tight tummy of a swimmer—there was none of the prolapsed bagginess that can sometimes mar the pregnant.

“I watched from my vantage point, hidden by a makeshift hunter’s blind of tall twitch grass that grew atop a sandy dune that sloped up to my grandmother’s cottage.

“The day was clear and crisp, the sun bright. The beauty stretched out on her colorful towel, another matching was draped modestly across her legs. Her long white toes made delicate motions in the air. I felt an electric wave thrill through me when it, the towel, slipped ever so slightly down her thighs away from her ivory knee caps. Her suit was

one piece, and baby blue.

“Perfect for those voyeuristic moments I had enjoyed as she frolicked with her greedy child in the surf. I could still see the damp dark presence of her sculpted pubic hair in my mind’s eye.

“Dry now, the Mons Venus flowed creamily into the body of the suit and softly curled away between her legs in the subtle shadow there, beneath the towel. I watched her shift her position and angle herself to follow the lower line of my sand dune.

“She wore a hat that hid her breasts from me, so elevated was my position. But she lay back, and in the action her suit loosened at the shoulders allowing that momentary ripple to appear, the cool

white pear-shape of her breast. As she rested on her elbows and forearms, her breasts lolled over her rib cage momentarily.

“She coughed. A jelly motion rippled through the soft masses. Those, too, had given up their secrets when wet. The fabric had pulled tight over them, her nipples hard and dark jutted forward. They dripped bright water as she towed her hair. As her child screamed for attention.

“As I thought of her pulling herself free of the foam and surf, I felt the dragon that curled at the base of my spine lift its head. A smooth heaviness began to pulse in my groin. I crossed and uncrossed my legs, reveling in the

tightness of the skin, and the heat that grew there.

“I casually ran a stiff finger over the inside of my left arm. My breath drew in as a gasp. An electric pulse ran from my anus, up my spine then ruffled my hair forward to my brows. I growled quietly, imagining the bathing beauty, sans child, casually looking up at me. I pictured her smiling as she absently stroked her chest. Her nipples hardened in my mind.

“I tensed as the bathing beauty turned over on her towel. Her offspring was busy digging a hole in the shade of a young silver poplar. The bathing beauty moved awkwardly over the towel on her elbows and knees. Evidently her skin was covered in soft slippery tanning

lotion that she ventured to keep free of sand and grit.

“I sniffed at the breeze eager for the smell of coconut. My breath caught, for as she turned—angled her shoulders forward into the sun—her suit rode up, slid on that very tanning solution, up over the smooth skin of her buttocks, over the soft hard globes and into the salty tangy cleft that lay between.

“She laid her head on her arms, facing away from me now—unaware of the view she had given me, unaware of the exposed white skin that lay above the tan-line.

“Again I imagined. I could see myself leaping down the sandy bank, tugging mightily at my belt, ignoring the

frightened squawk of the child. I could smell her, the sweet salty musk of her womanhood that lay so close at hand, barely protected beneath the moist fold of fabric. I pictured those buttocks up close.

“I would drop behind her; her legs had spread apart as she relaxed. I would kneel, my manhood hard and dangerous in front of me. So easily, I slip a finger into the cleft of her buttocks and quickly pull the fabric away. As she gasps, I can feel her wet softness envelope me. I slide in, all the way, and feel my testis slap against her pubis.

“I can feel the tense pull and push in my groin. I grow in length and begin to pump involuntarily. She gasps again. It is

obvious that she has entertained thoughts like these herself for she is wet, lubricated by lust. I push and push, feeling the hesitant pull of her labia as I withdraw...”

I fell silent, looked over at my doctor and smiled. “Then the whole thing drops from my mind, because somewhere inside me a voice has spoken, a deep voice of authority. Quite understandably, I see that the fantasy is wrong. It’s evil. It’s rape! Even though, moments before, I was physically, emotionally charged with it, wrong or not. Even re-telling it, I suppose it might be because you’re a woman, but even as I re-told it, I felt aroused...but, at the same time—ashamed.”

My psychiatrist cleared her throat and rearranged herself on her chair: electronic notebook and stylus just so. One hand went up to her auburn hair and dropped back into her lap. She smiled with large white teeth and full lips.

Her eyes were of a blue that was approaching fluorescent. “I can understand your fear, William. We are conditioned from a very early age to associate negative feelings with situations that are perceived socially and culturally as wrong. While that may be an important factor in constructing our social fabric, and in the administering of civil law, it unfortunately transfers through into our dream and fantasy life, where normal rules do not have to



apply.”

“Exactly,” I said, sitting up on the couch, setting my feet on the floor by my shoes. “As we discovered when I told you that I wake up during my dreams—every time I become sexual in them. *Every* time! Even if it is with my wife, or if it is obvious that there is consent. And I wake up feeling ashamed.”

“That’s just your conditioning. Now, so far as this fantasy is concerned, it sounds as though you are angry with this woman’s child. And regarding the woman, your terminology was predatory.” The doctor crossed her legs—the nylons whispered.

“But, I don’t even know them. I was just sitting out at the cottage, writing an

entry in my journal—the one you told me to keep—and this woman walks out of the water. I think they were renting the cottage next door. But I didn't even know her. We never spoke.” I raised my hands. “And I had no interactions with the child.”

“Then I would say that you have some generalized anger issue to deal with. The woman is just a target for it.” She jotted something in her book.

“But why? That's what I can't figure out. Why would I feel anger toward women? I've got my wife, she's always been supportive, in fact she encouraged me to come here; then, I've got my mother and grandmother, or had since both are dead. But what I can remember

of them, well, I can't remember being angry with them. They always treated me so well..." My voice trailed off.

"It is possible that you are still angry with them for dying. It really isn't fair when people die, and those who are left behind have to bear up, continue on, without explanation. The anger one could feel would be valid, if misplaced.

"This might explain your feelings about the child in the fantasy. It could be that you're jealous of the attention it's getting. You called the child 'greedy.'" The doctor glanced at her watch. I could tell time was slipping away. "Perhaps the setting for this fantasy has more import than the content. It was your grandmother's cottage..."

“But it was so long ago that they died. Before my accident...” I reflexively lifted a hand to my head. “Do you think it might be something to do with that? Maybe something got broken in there.”

“I find it very interesting William that each time we meet, you try to attribute any of the negative experiences or feelings you have to your accident. It is true you suffered extreme trauma to the brain that affected memory, and accounts for the gaps you experience, but we have gone through the process of physical examination.

“If it would make you feel better, I can order another series of tests for you, but they are expensive, and frankly, I think we would be fooling ourselves. We

both know that the physical damage you received in the accident is responsible for the memory impairment that you suffer, but it is not likely the sole cause of the emotional turmoil you're experiencing, other than that directly related to the injury, and the anxiety provoked when trying to recall some missing piece of information." A serious look crossed her face.

"No, I believe that we are following the right path by looking *into you*. I think this is a case of William, not a case of William's body. If these dreams are keeping you from sleep, I can prescribe something. And if the fantasies provoke anxiety, I can prescribe something for that too." She uncrossed her legs—again

the whisper of nylon.

She sat forward and set a hand on the backs of my own.

“Undoubtedly, you will feel anxiety as we explore this part of yourself. I think that the closer we get to the truth, the more anxious you will become. Try to remember that the intensity of that anxiety can increase when you hold back. As you travel toward the truth, you will instinctively try to protect yourself. You will pull away. You will create defenses. Perhaps the intensity with which you are experiencing these dreams and fantasies is an indicator that we are on the right road.” She smiled again. “Now, should I order more tests?”

“No. No,” I said, feeling a little silly.

“I guess I just got frightened. It’s not easy, and my wife, well, I think she gets a little upset by these dreams, and stuff.”

“Is she still seeing her therapist?”

“Yes, it appears she was abused as a child. Someone neglected her—at some point.” I started to put my shoes on.

“She’s making progress, and as long as I respect her space, and she respects mine.”

“I see,” said my psychiatrist. “You’re putting your shoes on?”

“I noticed you glanced at your watch, and I’m kind of drained.”

“Well, we are just about out of time and we can continue this next Tuesday.” She got out of her chair and walked to her desk.

She was a curvy, strongly built woman, with powerful legs. She also wore peach-colored panties. I had noticed them when she crossed and uncrossed her legs. I imagined lace on them.

She turned.

“You are still taking the medication prescribed by the neurosurgeon? And you’ll tell your father about any—discomfort? I’m sorry if that sounds like an obvious question, but I should ask.” A soft hand smoothed her skirt.

“Of course. They make me a little sleepy though—which is ironic, considering.” I rose, patted down my trousers. “And I can’t even drink wine, but that’s okay, I don’t know enough



about wine for my wife's friends anyway."

"Keep working, keep exploring." She reached out and squeezed my hand. "The day will come, you will be able to look at all of this and smile." I shook her hand, but paused before the door. She smiled again. Then I smiled.

"I always pause a moment, to put my armor on again."

"Armor is necessary out in the big world. You can't go unprotected. The problem is to learn the appropriate time for armor."

I smiled again and turned, sliding into my overcoat as I went. She always said that, or something like that. Each time I left her though, my armor felt less

effective.

I walked through a connecting doorway, then across the waiting room, involuntarily hunching my shoulders against the looks I received from a couple who held hands on a long black couch.

I paused by the receptionist, still cringing against their probing eyes. The woman smiled. She was black, and wore a trendy tribal-design carved into her green hair.

“Next week again, Mr. Legume?”

“Yes, that would be fine...” I suddenly blurted out—a flash of anxiety—and then hurried from the office. I walked to the elevator, pushed the button and waited. The carpet beneath my feet

was a dizzying mixture of purple and yellow flecks.

I steadied myself by drinking in dry puffs of recycled air. The elevator chimed. The door slid back. I walked in, punched the button for the ground floor, and then leaned against the rear of the compartment.

A short blonde woman got on at the thirtieth floor, and I spent the rest of the trip to the lobby imagining her climbing up my thick legs and tearing away her panties, then impaling herself on me. I imagined her screams. I could smell the sweat mixed with the distant floral scent of her perfume.

I left her in the lobby, semen sliding down her thighs as she trotted off to her

coffee break. I was glad for the protection of my overcoat, yet guilty in my thoughts, hiding my erection beneath the canvas like the grim and diseased muzzle of a sexual assault rifle.

I made for the parking lot, and my smart-car. I had to get to the office. There was a desk full of tax returns I had to finish up before dinner.

My wife was having her friends over.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

G. WELLS TAYLOR was born in

Oakville, Ontario, Canada in 1962, but spent most of his early life north of there in Owen Sound where he went on to study Design Arts at a local college. He later traveled to North Bay, Ontario to complete Canadore College's Journalism program before receiving a degree in English from Nipissing University. Taylor worked as a freelance writer for small market newspapers and later wrote, designed and edited for several Canadian niche magazines.

He joined the digital publishing revolution early with an eBook version of his first novel *When Graveyards Yawn* that has been available online since 2000. Taylor published and edited

the Wildclown Chronicle e-zine from 2001-2003 that showcased his novels, book trailer animations and illustrations, short story writing and book reviews alongside titles from other up-and-coming horror, fantasy and science fiction writers.

Still based in Canada, Taylor continues with his publishing plans that include additions to his Vampires of the Kind books, the Wildclown Mysteries, and sequels to the popular Variant Effect series.