

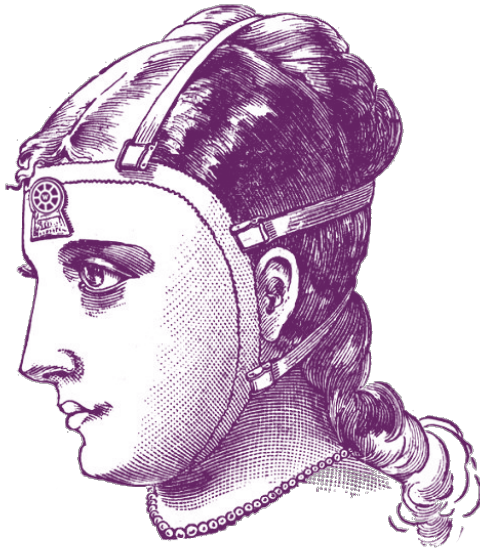
THE WAGON

ASTONISHING TALES OF THE EVERYDAY WORLD

Vol.1

April, 2016

No.2



PUBLISHED BY WAGONS OF SIN PRESS, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Containing works of fiction in serial form, the odd short story, and just about anything else we feel like throwing in. Eddie Mulnix: publisher and contributing author.

THE WAGON

April, 2016

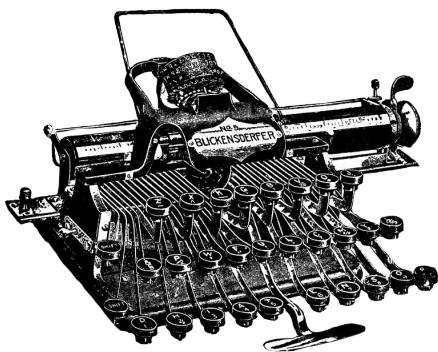
Highway 126, Part Two

(from Smog City Magazine #2)

3

Water

30



A Wagons of Sin Press Publication

“Highway 126”

Part Two

The dog had died whimpering and writhing in the dirt. Now it was a mass of meat and fur and blood, drying and stiffening in the late afternoon sun, one brown eye staring out sightlessly into the empty blue sky. Billy felt tired—very tired. He sat on the steps of the front porch as Freddie eyed the dog and shook his head and lit up another Camel.

~Ganley did this?

~ He’s coming out here tonight. With Luis.

~Guess he wants to show you he’s serious.

~ I got the idea, Freddie—crystal clear.

~That thing at the mall—that’s a lot of heat. Too much. Probably makes Ganley nervous as hell, eager to get them out of here. They’re going to take the shit and move it quick and run to Mexico. That’s what I would do. These dudes are squirrely, Billy. They could do anything.

~He didn't have to kill my dog.

~ No. But he made his point, though, didn't he?

~So what do we do.

Freddie sat there and looked out at the foothills, at the orange trees. He took a drag and let it out and took off his baseball cap and ran his hands through his hair with his eyes closed. Then he sat down on the porch next to Billy.

~We can't do nothing. We gotta give them what they want. Unless you wanna go to the cops.

~ Like that's a comment meant to be taken seriously.

~So we give them what we got. We're out of the business. I've had about enough of dealing with Ganley and his shit anyways.

~ And do what for a living? If it wasn't for you I'd be knee-deep in rotten oranges.

~Your dad didn't know nothing about oranges either, to be honest with you, but that don't matter if you got somebody to run it. It's a legitimate business, at least. Maybe not as glamorous as being the Cocaine King of Hollywood. Okay. But better than being dead.

~So that's it? We're just gonna let them rob us blind?

~ You wanna shoot it out with them? We can do that too. That can get ugly. And then you got Ganley to deal with, and all the pigs he knows.

~So we give them all of it. End of discussion.

Freddie stood up and slapped the dust off his jeans.

~Why don't you dig a hole for that dog. I'm gonna go check on Shane one more time. And send his girl home.

Freddie walked into the old frame house that he'd known for so many years—since the old days out on the porch drinking Schlitz with Bob Dolan, the two of them staring out into the day and not saying much, getting plastered on cheap headache beer and cogitating on grainy half-remembered scenes of their youth, looking out over the trees and the Mexicans in multicolored thrift store clothes, the people picking fruit under the noonday sun, the chirring heat of the day, Susan Dolan bringing them fresh beers every now and again...he felt a sentimental pang to think of those days. Now Bob was dead, and Susan was dead, and it was just Freddie and the boys and what had become of the business. And if it was cocaine instead of oranges all that meant was different times. Freddie had a nice two-story villa on a road off the highway; he drove a new truck; he owned Center Street Liquor.

He was doing all right.

Freddie and Bob Dolan had returned from Vietnam with plenty of rage and bad chemicals and bad juju; the war had skewed their youthful priorities and morals in much the way a tree's roots will hit a sheet of solid rock and shoot off at an odd angle. They picked up where they'd left off: Bob was the scion of an orange grove that went back to the days of the Rancheros, and Freddie worked the soil. But they'd gotten to see the other side of life, and things weren't quite the same. Now it was marijuana, pills, and connections: vets like them who were all fucked up in one way or another, who needed to numb out: a wasteland of young people looking to get high, kids with money, burnout hippie cocksuckers who Freddie wouldn't piss on if they were on fire: a ready-made market for someone with a touch of ambition and a few connections.

So Bob Dolan hooked up with a guy he knew in L. A. and got a bale of marijuana and started a little side business selling generous baggies of green to anybody, everybody.

The venture was never a big money-maker, and Susan Dolan wasn't crazy about it, but it kept the family in clover whenever there was an early freeze in the valley and the oranges died on the branches.

Years passed. Bob had sons and when they got old enough they started selling too, but by then things had changed and the money had changed and Freddie was running operations on the side, moving methamphetamines and cocaine and eventually even heroin. And Bob Dolan might have known it or might not have, but then he died of cancer, making it all a moot point.

Of course, before he died he told Freddie about Shane, and about the death of Susan Dolan.

That is, what *really* happened.

Freddie opened the door to the basement and walked down into the darkness.

The bed was set up in a corner of the basement. The room was bare—concrete walls and concrete floors. There had once been a window but it had been filled in with concrete a decade earlier. A single light fixture dangled from the ceiling. The room was dank and cool and dim. Debbie was holding Shane's hand and smoothing his hair and Freddie stood there and watched her as she spoke without looking up.

~He's getting worse.

~ He'll be all right. He just needs time. Time will take care of this.

~ You say that, but I still don't know why we don't take him to a hospital when he looks this bad.

~I don't need to tell you to keep this to yourself, right? You don't bring nobody else into our business.

~I know that, Freddie.

~ You're a part of this family now, so you gotta treat us the way we treat you. I known you since you was a kid, so don't tell me you can't trust that I know what's right for Shane.

~I don't tell anyone anything. I don't even talk to anyone but Shane.

Freddie walked over and touched her on her shoulder. He looked at his watch.

~We gotta leave him alone now.

Debbie pulled the sheet up to Shane's chin. He didn't move. He looked like a body in the morgue. Freddie could smell the stink of the kid's sweat; the sheets were damp with it.

They walked up the creaking wooden stairs to the hallway and Freddie shut the door behind them.

~There are deadbolts on the outside of the door. Why are there deadbolts on the *outside* of the door?

Freddie shot both of the deadbolts closed.

~No one opens this door until I say so. No matter what you hear, no matter what Shane says. You leave this door locked until I tell you to open it. Understand?

~But why?

Freddie walked past her and she followed him into the small and

brightly lit kitchen where Freddie imagined he could still see Susan Dolan, washing dishes and looking out the window over the orange grove. And what had happened to Susan...well, he didn't want to think about that anymore.

He walked to the refrigerator, got out a Schlitz, cracked it, took a long swallow, and belched.

~Shane's sick, and he's gotta stay in that room until he gets better. That's all you need to know.

Ganley sat on the toilet and took the little cotton ball and used it to soak up the liquid in the spoon. Then he drew the liquid up through the cotton into the rig, his stomach hot and queasy with excitement. He liked the ritual a *lot*. It was like knowing you were about to get laid, but better—than anything and everything.

Except the flash itself, of course.

He had one of his son's leather belts. It was just the right size. He tied off at the elbow and put the needle to the vein and shot it in. *The flash—oh fuck, the flash—SO FUCKING GOOD...just hold it a little bit longer...* He eased the plunger down, letting a little bit more in, a little bit more....

Finally the needle was empty. He sat there and leaned back on the toilet, sat there in the dark and shuddered as euphoria roared through his body.

After a while Ganley got up and walked out on to the back patio and lit a Marlboro. He felt enormous, expansive. He could move mountains, do anything. Then, after a couple of minutes, the bad feelings started to come back, crawling like spiders all around

the edges. He immediately wanted another shot, but told himself no. Postponing that next shot was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do. He used it as a benchmark of his discipline, much more so than any workout goal he'd ever reached. If you could resist that next shot of coke for more than an hour, you could do ANYTHING.

He looked at his watch: almost time to leave. He threw the cigarette into the yard and walked back inside and into the kitchen.

By the time he got to the kitchen the elevator had plummeted all the way back down and feelings of paranoia were scurrying up through the shaft like rats escaping from a fire. Ugliness. His wife: just looking at her got on his nerves. The lines on her face, the mousy hair. She hadn't been any real looker to begin with, but if you sort of squinted your eyes in a dark room you could pretend she was a short-haired exotic French woman, and not the dowdy hausfrau she'd turned out to be. Still and all he felt like he'd got a raw deal. Two kids had spread her hips, turned her hair frizzy, left her breasts sagging like a couple of half-filled water balloons. It pissed him off, when he thought about it—about all the time he'd spent in the gym, trying to look good, and now his wife looked the way he remembered his *mother* looking. And don't even ask about the kids: the three-year old girl sleeping in the other room, a screeching little thing that lived only to eat and shit and cry; and the effeminate thing that apparently was his son, sitting at the table, making silly sounds and faces, pushing a green bean around in a pool of marinara with the edge of his fork. They wanted to do him in, they wanted to suck him dry, they'd ruined his *life*—

~You need to stop staring at that food and start eating it.

~I don't wanna eat it.

~I don't give two shits what you *wanna* do. In this house you do what I *tell* you to do.

The kid said nothing, just grimaced and stared into the marinara with a sullen and petulant look on his face. Ganley had seen thousands of times—it stared back at him from the mirror every morning. He noticed again how good-looking the boy was, how soft and white the skin of his face, how blue the eyes. Something about that bothered Ganley, shook him, made the cocaine paranoia and rage that much worse.

~You think you're just gonna get it one day? You think you're just gonna wake up?

The wife got up and took her plate and Ganley's plate and put them in the sink. She looked out the window into the darkness of the night beyond, the quiet street. She plugged the sink and turned on the faucet and squirted radioactive green Palmolive into the tepid grayish water, then picked up the bottle of wine on the counter and poured a couple of inches into a jelly glass.

~I asked you a question. You think you're just gonna wake up one day?

~Yes.

~The answer is no.

~No.

~Life is not a matter of *waking up*. Life is working and striving and getting it every minute of every day. You understand?

~Yes.

~Now eat your food, dummy.

Ganley was shaky. The effects of the shot were now completely gone. He could feel himself trembling. He held up his fingers,

though, and they were steady. *Handle it*, he said to himself. *Fucking handle it.*

He looked back at the boy. The boy wasn't pushing the green bean around anymore. He looked into the plate, his bottom lip quivering. He slowly pushed the tines of the fork into the green bean, looked at it distastefully, then brought it to his lips. He hesitated, and when he did, Ganley slapped him hard enough to nearly knock him out of his chair. He stayed up, though, and he didn't start crying, not out loud, anyway: Ganley had to give him that. That showed at least a little toughness. He had to give the kid that. The kid put the green bean into his mouth and chewed, tears running down his face, swallowing each bite with much effort, hair mussed on the side where he'd been slapped.

He knew better than to start crying. He knew he'd better start eating or it would get a lot worse. Ganley felt a wave of anger and affection and pity wash over him. He felt sick with something that went beyond the cocaine sickness, something rooted deeper than his jangling, screaming nerves.

~You could've eaten it the first time I told you.

The kid had something. He'd be something someday, and not a faggot soap opera actor, either. The kid didn't know half of what it meant to be raised hard. He hadn't seen the bad side of life. If he did, someday, these little swats would serve him well. *I am a man raising a man, an unformed thing, a human being shot straight down into the gray dissolute nothing humiliation of a taskmaster world shaved eyebrows and sweat be damned, for these things I put the dishes into the sink and swallow my feelings of pity, for him and for myself fuck fuck fuck I need a shot I need another hit the flash the*

fucking flash...

He got up and put his plate on the counter.

~Gotta go take care of something. A little thing. I'll be back before too late.

The wife said nothing and picked up the glass of Rossi and took a big hit of it and washed the dishes and looked out into the dark and then at the reflection of her son sitting at the kitchen table, pushing the green bean around again in the pool of marinara. A minute later she heard the car door slam and then watched the familiar glow of the headlamps flare up in the driveway and drop away into the night—like a bathyscaphe descending into the deepest reaches of the ocean.

He tooted the SUV at top speed up Highway 126, an admixture of greed and excitement and nervousness settling between his genitals and stomach, that electric anticipation again, but enhanced by knowing he was about to do crime. He wondered sometimes why he'd gotten into law enforcement at all, when ripping people off was such a pleasure. Then again, he had the best of both worlds: Respectability and security and electric kicks to stave off suicide—the saving grace of violence screaming through his blood, making him one with the night and the things he'd seen. He had the flash and when he had the flash everything was *his*—the dark purple mountains above Piru, the empty and forlorn canyons. All his.

And then he thought uneasily about the product.

Luis was going to take it and run.

All of it.

Ganley felt a panicked flutter in his belly as he suddenly realized that he was going to have to save some for himself. No way would he shoot up with street-corner, evidence-room shit—he couldn't do that. Not only was it risky, but he'd grown used to shooting up with the good stuff, the uncut pharmaceutical grade stuff, and it wasn't just that the high was better, was it? Somehow, using the pure powder made Ganley feel he was still somehow a cut above the trailer-trash addicts and strung-out losers he dealt with on a daily basis.

He thought again about a shot.

Discipline dropped away from his hunger like an old whore shedding a dirty nightgown.

He pulled off onto a side road and cut the engine and lights and sat there for a moment in the moonlit dark. Then he pulled the works out from underneath the passenger seat, looking around to make sure he was alone. He drew up the liquid and tied off and shot it into the vein. The night was ablaze, the light from the moon illuminating the purple foothills, the silver fields. Magic. Power. Everything screamed, everything was alive.

He sat and waited and before long Luis Huerta's Impala pulled up behind him. Headlights flashed twice. Ganley started the SUV and pulled around back onto Highway 126, Huerta following close behind, and they drove to the Dolan grove.

Freddie stood on the front porch, watching them walk up to the fence, pump-action 12-gauge shotgun in his hands.

~We don't want trouble. We got the shit. But we want a fair price for it at least.

~Fair price? For what, something that ain't yours?

~ We put up plenty of money for it.

Luis leaned back on the hood of the Impala and smiled and looked over at Ganley.

~What you think is a fair price, *jefe*?

Ganley shrugged.

~Shit, how about zero dollars and zero cents?

~ That sounds about right, *jefe*.

~ I was hoping we could come here and pick the stuff up with no hassle. I'm not in a mood for bullshit Freddie.

No one said anything. Then Freddie shook his head and shrugged.

~I guess there ain't no percentage in us trying to play games. Go get it for him, Billy.

Billy frowned, hesitated. Then he walked into the house and came out with a large, heavy suitcase. He half-walked, half-drag it down the steps and out into the dirt where Luis and Ganley stood.

Ganley bent down on one knee and unzipped the suitcase and lifted the lid and there they were, dozens of glassine plastic bags full of white powder. Luis and Ganley looked at each other and Ganley shook his head.

~This is a lot, sure. But I know what kind of business they've been running. The scope of it. There's more in the house.

~You're wrong. That's everything we got.

Luis nodded at Freddie.

~We're gonna take a look around the place and just make sure. So go easy with them *cuestas*.

~You gonna do what you gonna do. We keep our guns, you go through the house. Then you leave and we don't do business no more. Done.

Luis whistled. From the shadows of the orange grove came Ruben with a Glock fixed on Freddie. Luis whistled again and then, from the other side of the house, Gabriel emerged holding an Uzi. Freddie laughed.

~An Uzi, huh? You seen too many bad 80s movies, *Sapo*.

~We don't get nothing out of killing you, so don't shit your pants over this. I just wanna make sure you ain't holding nothing back.

Freddie raised his eyebrows and looked at Billy and nodded and held out his hand for Billy's revolver.

Ganley zipped up the suitcase and picked it up and walked over to the SUV. He opened the cargo door and hefted the suitcase up into the back, watching the others as they walked into the house. He was sweating now. He wanted it bad, so bad, but he'd have to wait.

Luis would take all of it, every last gram of it. Split town. Leave Ganley high and dry. Well, forget that. No way he was going to let that happen.

Ganley opened the passenger side door and pulled a roll of duct tape out of the glove compartment. Then he walked quickly to the rear of the SUV and, keeping one eye on the house, on the shadows moving gauzily behind the living room curtains, he took off his patrolman's jacket off and pulled his shirt out and unbuttoned the

bottom five or six buttons. He was thin and the packets of powder were nearly flat. He took four of them and duct taped them to his stomach and tucked the shirt back in and put his jacket back on. It took all of a minute. There was no sign he was carrying anything at all.

As Ganley walked back towards the house, he sighed with relief: there was enough to last him weeks, last him until he could somehow scare up another connection.

Freddie watched them tear the place apart. First they went through the upstairs rooms, through the dark and musty bedroom where Bob and Susan Dolan had slept for so many years. Ruben and Gabriel pulled old moth-eaten clothes out of drawers and closets and threw them in a pile on the dusty wooden floor and found nothing. As the night wore on they tore through the rest of the house with waning interest—a few desultory pokes underneath beds and into bare kitchen cupboards.

Luis was about to call off the search when they found the door in the hallway.

~So what's down there, Freddie?

~A basement.

~A basement. Since when do you put deadbolts on the *outside* of a basement door?

~Shane's down there. He's sick.

Luis and Ganley looked at each other.

~What do you mean, he's *sick*?

Ganley walked slowly down the stairs, taking them one at a time, stopping every once in awhile to listen. Nothing from down below. Behind him were the sounds of Luis breathing and the creaking steps of Gabriel bringing up the rear. He kept walking, keeping the beam of his maglight on the steps. He stopped abruptly and realized he'd run out of steps, was standing on concrete. The air here was cooler, moister. He followed the wall to his right, training the maglight's beam along the spatters of drywall crumbling away from the sheet metal below. The sound of his footsteps on the grit of the concrete floor was oddly flat, two-dimensional. The basement was larger than he'd thought it would be.

~They said Shane was down here. I don't see Shane.

~What's that smell? You smell that shit, Ganley?

He *did* smell it. It was a rank smell, an animal smell. Some part of him had noticed it the second they'd started down the stairs, and now the smell was stronger.

And then he could hear something breathing. Something crouched in the corner.

~It can't be the dog. I *killed* the fucking dog.

~What do you mean, you killed the dog? What dog?

Ganley was about to reply when the door at the top of the stairs slammed shut.

And the deadbolts closed.

Ruben sat on the couch and he was counting like crazy—and with good reason. He was in big trouble. He'd been standing there, keeping them both in front of him. They'd stared at him and he'd mad-dogged them back and he'd been ready to

shoot someone if he had to, but then something happened that was not good. He'd started counting, and he hadn't been paying attention, so when the girl put the muzzle of a rifle behind his ear, whispering with a rush of cotton candy perfume and cigarette breath to put down the gun, he'd been taken completely by surprise.

Now she was sitting on the couch across from him and had the rifle pointed at him and he was counting again, counting even faster, because Freddie had locked the basement door and the others were trapped down there and it was his fault and even if Luis got them out of this he'd probably get a beating like the last time, the time that he'd caught Luis in a bad mood and said the wrong shit and got his jaw broken. He tapped the back of his wrist: two and four and six and eight, then divide each number by two, multiply by three, tap again in the new sequence...

Freddie sat in Bob Dolan's old leather La-Z-Boy across from Ruben, shotgun in his lap. Billy stood next to the basement door with his head against the wall and the .38 in his hand.

~We've got them locked up. Now what?

Freddie looked over at Debbie and shook his head.

~You shouldn't have come back here.

~ Me just saving your ass? You're welcome.

~ I wasn't worried about the homie here. Those boys are not getting out of that basement alive. If I hadn't gotten that door locked we would be dead too.

Billy looked over from where he stood in front of the door. His tanned face was drawn and haggard-looking in the dim yellow light of the hallway. When he spoke there was a panicked, broken quality to his voice, like he was on the verge of tears.

~ Jesus Christ, Freddie. When they made you open the door I almost shit myself.

~ What are you all talking about? Who is in that basement besides Shane?

Freddie leaned back in the armchair and winked at Ruben.

~How you hanging there, homie? You probably wishing you didn't roll with the real hardcore guys now, huh?

Ruben looked up, woeful eyes and a thin mustache and stick-thin arms beneath a baggy shirt. Freddie almost felt sorry for the kid.

~Ain't you got a daddy? Didn't he tell you to stay away from Luis? To stay away from all this drug-slinging bullshit?

~He didn't tell me nothing. I never listened to him anyways.

Freddie grunted and leaned back in the recliner.

~Fathers and sons. That's what it's always been about. It goes back to the beginning, back to Abraham holding a knife to Isaac's throat.

Debbie stood up.

~What's going on in that basement, Freddie?

~I'll tell you. When I say it's about fathers and sons, that's what I mean.

~I don't get it.

He took another drag.

~Shane's father knew about Shane. He knew that Shane killed his mother, and a lot of other people too. And, God help me, I have also known the truth.

When Luis was seventeen years old and in his fourth month in the Lancaster Youth Authority, he was assigned a job cleaning up in the kitchen after the mid-day meal. It was a cush job, as far as work duties went. After the day's lunch had been served he took his little broom and dustpan and walked around sweeping up bits of trash and food. He found the work relaxing—it was cool and dark and quiet in the kitchen, a temporary refuge from the nonstop cursing banter in the dormitory. There was even a small bathroom with one toilet off near the dishwashing station, and he'd made a ritual of sitting there and smoking a cigarette and taking a shit. It was about the only place he'd found in the Juvenile Detention Center where he could be alone...the only place besides his bunk, that is, and he didn't particularly like laying there, feeling time slow down.

The first week he was in he'd had a problem with a big subnormal black named Marcus. Marcus said something stupid about Mexican women having big asses and Luis had a problem with that—so he'd got in Marcus' face, threatened him, backed him down in front of everybody.

It was the kind of thing Luis stopped worrying about after a certain amount of time had passed. At first he'd been afraid, had kept looking over his shoulder, but after a year had gone by he figured the thing was forgotten.

Then one day in that kitchen bathroom when he was squeezing out the daily deuce and working on a Marlboro, he'd felt something—a twinge of fear, an awareness of someone nearby, and he'd stood up with his shorts around his ankles and the door had banged open and there was Marcus with a blade, eyes wide, fear pouring out of

his pores. With genitals dangling and pants around his ankles Luis launched himself off the toilet as the blade flashed down and cut into his arms, laid open his left cheek. He had no room to maneuver and Marcus was big, too big. Luis' blood was everywhere, spattered all over the yellowish nicotine-stained walls, too much blood, and he'd felt fear like he never felt before in his life. Finally he caught Marcus in the jaw with an elbow shot, hit him hard, and they fell out of the bathroom in a heap, the guards arriving just as Marcus began to scream, just as Luis was about to slit his throat...

What Luis remembered about that day was the way the air had almost seemed to change, the way he'd sensed death reaching out for him in the dark. He'd been in a lot of fights and he'd learned to control his fear, but the time with Marcus he'd realized the chances were very good he was going to die sitting there with his pants around his ankles—and the absurdity of it had shaken him. But what stayed with him since that day was that he'd *known*; he'd known something was not right, And though he'd joke later that he'd smelled Marcus coming from a mile away, he knew that was not true: he'd *sensed* Marcus on the other side of the bathroom door, knew he was there, on some deeper and instinctive level.

Now, in the basement, he felt the same way. There was something in the room; he could smell it; no, he could *sense* it—

~ Ganley, what the fuck is that?

Ganley moved the maglight's beam slowly across the room: across the concrete walls and the solitary mattress sitting there in the middle of the floor, a mattress without sheets or anyone in it.

~Nothing in here but four concrete walls, no windows, nothing. I think we oughta—

~Oh SHIT—

The beam of light had caught an eye, an amber eye staring back at them, depthless and empty like the eye of a rattlesnake, and below the eye was the unmistakable snout and snarl of a wolf—but Luis had never seen a wolf like this one: with skin that was moist and dripping and hairless and pink. It looked and smelled like a skinned animal, a rotting animal, it was crouched in the corner of the room, it was *huge*—

—and then they were shooting at it and it was on Ganley and in the milliseconds of muzzle flashes they could see the thing ripping Ganley apart, shaking its head back and forth like a dog with a toy as Ganley screamed, a squishy spray from his midsection drenching Luis and Gabriel in blood and chunks of grayish intestine. *It's like the stuff in mom's menudo* thought Luis and he laughed crazily and as the maglight fell from one of Ganley's flailing hands Luis could see for a moment the thing in its horrifying entirety—a giant hairless beast with suppurating skin, at least seven feet tall, hunched over, snarls coming from its throat as it eviscerated Ganley, tore him apart, heat and stench and the reek of Ganley's blood coming off the thing in waves so intense Luis gagged and thought he might actually vomit—and then Gabriel screamed in his ear, snapped him out of it.

~Shoot it man, what the hell are you *DOING*—

The guns exploded, the acrid stench of spent rounds mixing in the air with the hot copper smell of blood. Ganley was still alive, screaming, trying to fight the thing off, his entrails dangling out from the gore-sodden shreds of his policemen's uniform, his blood spraying out all over the walls and the floor and everything. Then a stray bullet sheared off the back of Ganley's head and his screams

abruptly ceased and the thing grunted and dropped Ganley's body to the floor and went after his innards like a dog slurping up a bowl of Gravy Train. Luis and Gabriel kept firing, bullets ricocheting off of the concrete walls and kicking up clouds of drywall and slamming into the pinkish flesh of the thing with no apparent effect, save dribbles of viscous brown fluid that oozed sluggishly from the entry wounds.

The Glock in Luis' hand was red-hot to the touch. The clip was empty. He reached into his pocket for another clip, waiting for the thing to come at him, his asshole clenching so tight he screamed at the pain...

The thing stopped. It dropped what was left of Ganley to the floor and sat back on its haunches.

It sneezed.

Luis picked the maglight up from where it had rolled over to his left. Gabriel mumbled and babbled and sobbed. He was praying. Luis trained the light on the thing's face and stared at it in shock and wonder.

The beast had white powder all over its face, white mixed in with the sticky dark mixture of intestines and sinew and blood.

It sneezed again. Blood and whitish globs erupted in a spray.

Luis realized in a flash what had happened: Ganley had hidden a sack of cocaine on him, must have had it taped to his stomach—well, he didn't have much of a stomach any more, now did he?—and the thing had snorted it up.

Whatever the thing was, it had ingested enough cocaine to kill a fucking elephant.

Despite everything, Luis began to laugh. He laughed and laughed until thick acidic bile erupted from his mouth and onto the front of

his flannel shirt. Then he stopped laughing and got the clip loaded into the Glock and flipped the slide-stop lever and raised it up to fire again at the creature.

It lunged at him.

When the screaming and the gunshots ceased Freddie lit up another cigarette and sat there and smoked, shotgun cradled in one arm, as he looked at his watch.

~Six more hours to sunup. All we can do is wait.

Debbie's eyes were fixed on the basement door. Freddie tapped her on the knee and she jumped.

~You think we're crazy, don't you?

~You just told me Shane's a werewolf. What's crazy about that?

~A werewolf's the closest thing I know of to explain what he is. He don't change at the full moon. We don't know when it's going to happen, really. I keep hoping something in him will change—that he'll outgrow it. Well...

~How long have you known about this?

~ Since he was a kid. Whatever this thing is—this disease, if you wanna call it that—it runs on Bob's side of the family. It's one of them things that skips a generation. Like I told you: fathers and sons. Shane's grandfather was the last one. Back then this was still cattle country—maybe the ranchers figured it was coyotes killing their livestock. Back then you could be one of these things and get away with it. Between the time when people believed in things like that and when they didn't.

~How did Shane's parents find out he was—

~They knew from when he was just a baby. The first time he changed was in the crib. Can you imagine? Bob always told everyone he'd lost his index finger in a farming machinery accident. That was bullshit. He's lucky he didn't lose his whole hand. Bob wanted to kill Shane when he found out. He thought the disease had died with his father. Susan wouldn't have it, though. She convinced Bob they could just lock the boy up in the basement when he started to show the signs. But Susan was always a little crazy, and she got the idea in her head when Shane was about fifteen that she could reason with—it.

~And what happened?

~You remember what happened ten years ago—that thing with the Lake Piru Killer?

~ Of course I remember. I was scared to go out at night for years.

~That was the one time he got loose. The time his mother decided she'd go down into that basement and sit at the bedside when he changed. Me and Bob were out of town on business. No one was here to stop her. Except Billy, and he was just a kid.

~Billy, this isn't true, right? This is a joke.

~ No. I was here. I ran away, I hid in the grove.

~ And Billy, you know as well as I do that you couldn't have helped your mom. Or all those other people who got killed that night.

~The police never had any idea what really happened?

~They never told the truth: that it looked like an animal killed all those people. Saying so would have made them look pretty foolish, huh? They're just glad it's never happened again. And there's a reason for that. One reason.

~The deadbolts.

~You'd better believe it.

~This is insane, this is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard—

~Ridiculous, sure. All that screaming was real ridiculous. Now they're dead and the thing is *feeding*. How's that for ridiculous?

Ruben's eyes looked like rats running back and forth in a cardboard box. He stood up.

~You motherfuckers are crazy. I'm getting out of here, man—

Freddie lifted the shotgun and stuck the muzzle in Ruben's face.

~Sit your shit ass down.

Ruben stood there, trying to look defiant, the wispy mustache on his upper lip trembling. Then he sat back down on the couch and watched the basement door nervously.

THUD.

Something hit the other side of the door, hit it hard. Billy stood back from the wall, holding the revolver in both hands.

~He never hit the door like that, Freddie. *Never*.

~It'll hold. It's always held before. Those deadbolts are as big around as your wrist and he's tried them before and he ain't never gotten through yet.

THUD.

The thing hit the door again, hit it so hard the framed pictures in the hallway flew off the walls, glass shattering on the pockmarked wooden floor. Debbie began to cry.

THUD.

The thing hit the door again and this time there was the unmistakable crunching sound of wood splintering inside the door frame.

~ No, Freddie. This isn't the same. How'd he get this strong?

Freddie took one last drag of his cigarette and threw the butt on the floor. He'd been in Nam, and even there he'd never panicked. He wasn't going to panic now. Hell, he half *wanted* to see the thing. Wanted to see if Shane looked out from the eyes, if Shane was somewhere inside of there.

And then he would kill the thing and end all of it.

~He gets out of that basement he's going to tear apart half this town before the sun comes up. Give me the gun, Billy.

Freddie walked over and took the revolver. He opened the chamber and spun it and grunted with satisfaction and snapped the chamber closed and held up the pistol and smiled grimly.

~Silver bullets. Don't know if they work or not. Guess we're about to find out, huh?

THUD.

The door was ajar now. They could smell the thing in there, could smell the miasma of gore and blood emanating from the depths of the basement, could hear the beast breathing through the inch-wide gap between the door and the frame.

Debbie screamed and Ruben jumped off of the couch and bolted out the front door as Freddie lifted the gun and yelled out over the beast's inhuman growls.

~You'd all better get out of here as fast as you—

The thing hit the door again.

This time, the deadbolts didn't hold.

Ruben ran between the rows of orange trees, crashing through the low-hanging branches, his face scratched and ripped and bleeding. For once his mind wasn't on counting. The highway: something in him felt that if he could get out of the orange grove and to the highway he would be safe. He looked over his shoulder and could see the dim yellow lights of the house's windows behind him, could hear Freddie yelling and gunshots and the girl's voice pleading, sobbing. Then the screaming began. At first he thought he could tell which were the girl's screams and which weren't but then he couldn't and he didn't want to hear anymore anyway. The highway, he had to get to the highway...

The oranges were everywhere, all around his feet, thousands of them. He slipped on the oranges and fell to the ground and lay there for a moment, entranced by the fecund rich scent of the earth, the bitter smell of orange rind. He could hide in the dark of the grove and whatever was going on back there would go away...

And then the thing bolted out of the open front door and into the trees, running on four legs, snarling, closing fast only a few dozen yards from where Ruben lay. He got to his feet and ran blindly, oranges scattering like marbles underfoot. He stumbled through the brambles and dead grass along the edge of the property and in the culvert along the highway and then suddenly he was on asphalt. There was no one anywhere, the highway trailing off into the distance, miles of empty road unfolding out to the horizon under the white light of the moon...

“Water”

They ran every Saturday early in the morning before the central California sun really started to broil. The landscape around the UC Davis campus was brown and flat and perfect for running if you didn't mind the heat.

Shannon was lean and stringy and tanned from years of running. At 38 years old she was in the best shape of her life. Matt was in pretty good shape too, with his well-muscled physique and lantern jaw. They rarely spoke during the Saturday morning run. Sometimes she wished they could run all day, every day, since that was the only time they ever seemed to get along.

On this day the run was going well. The sun was just gathering strength, a burning coin in the gray sky. Shannon's body was humming with the energy that comes from a good hard run. By the time they reached the campus and slowed to a fast walk Shannon had that tired and relaxed feeling that was not far from the way she

felt after Matt gave her a good railing. That was the other time they didn't fight, come to think of it. And they couldn't do that 24 hours a day, either.

She became aware, quite suddenly, that she was thirsty.

“Is there a water fountain at the Ag building?”

Matt grunted, his usual response that meant “I don't know.” But they both walked toward the building.

As they looked for a water fountain Shannon was aware that she wasn't just thirsty. She was absolutely parched. Shannon didn't think she'd felt this kind of thirst in a long time—she was an admitted health nut who followed all the rules: keep your carbs low, your protein high. Get lots of fibrous veggies in with each meal. And water: drink at least 8 glasses a day. She was almost fanatical about her water drinking. So how'd she get so damned dehydrated all of a sudden?

When they found the water fountain she felt a rush of relief. The water that came out was tepid and tasted of old steel but she drank it in big gasping gulps.

“Good lord, Shanny. You thirsty or what?” said Matt.

She kept drinking. She could feel her stomach filling up like a balloon. Then, abruptly, a tipping point was reached, and she couldn't drink any more. She stood there at the fountain, breathing heavy, feeling a little sick.

Matt bent to the water fountain and took a sip, giving her a quizzical look as he drank.

And that's when it happened. The feeling was as familiar as waking up or falling sleep. Everything became hazy around the edges and a little off-kilter. Aside from that there was a sort of warm

glow inside of her, a Christmasy feeling, and the day's light seemed imbued with energy and vibration. She walked around a bit on unsteady legs, shielding her eyes from the sun with her right hand.

"Bright," she said. "'s too bright..."

"What the hell?" said Matt. "What's the matter with you?"

She walked a few paces around the big open plaza in front of the Ag building. She tried to walk in a straight line and couldn't help but keel in one direction or the other, like a listing ship. A dim sense of alarm: *something is very wrong with me*. It seemed to be someone else thinking that, someone locked away in a soundproof room in the back of her brain.

And then the realization came to her. She knew exactly what was happening. She looked at Matt and slurred,

"I doan believe this...I'm drunk, I'm fugging DRUNK!"

"What the hell are you talking about?" said Matt. "Drunk how?"

"I drang from th' water fountain, now I'm drunk," she said. "I don't know how..."

"I drank the water too, Shanny. It's just water. It's not booze."

Shannon groaned and ran towards a copse of bushes that lined the plaza. She didn't quite make it. About halfway there she stopped, bent forward, and vomited. Everything came out of her in a rush, splattering all over the hot white concrete. It came and came and when it was finished she hitched and trembled.

Matt walked up and bent forward to examine the stuff that had come out of her.

It was brackish, dark-colored. The smell was unmistakable.

“Jesus Christ,” he said. He looked at Shannon. “This is whiskey.”
“You need to take me to a hospital,” said Shannon.

They drove along in silence in Matt’s Subaru. Every once in a while he would give her a glance. She was leaned against the passenger window, mouth hanging open. She opened her bleary, bloodshot eyes and looked at Matt.

“You’re completely fucked up,” he said.

They drove another few minutes in silence. Then Matt said,
“Shanny? I know you’re sick, k, but we have to talk about this. When did you drink all that whiskey?”

“What?” she gave him an incredulous look. “I barely drink, Matt. That Nor-Cal margarita I had at the tailgate was the last time I drank anything. A month ago.”

“Oh really? I just saw you puke out about a gallon of rye, Shanny. I coulda smelled it from a mile away. So what happened? You go out last night, and not tell me? You said you were going to bed early, so what the fuck really happened?”

“I didn’t go anywhere! I watched Netflix and was asleep by 10:30.”

“And polished off a fifth while watching Netflix?”

“You know what Matt? You know what? FUCK YOU.”

“See? You don’t usually talk to me that way. You’re shitfaced! Unbelievable.”

They pulled up to the hospital. Matt was dumbfounded. She’d never said “fuck you” to him before except for one time, when they went out for dinner at an Italian restaurant and got into a fight over

dessert.

Come to think of it, she'd been drunk then too.

The doctor looked like Tom Bosley, but with moles all over his neck. He seemed mildly amused by the story they'd told him. He and Matt kept exchanging glances, as if Shannon didn't notice them doing that.

"Bloodwork looks normal," he said. "Your protein levels are high, but nothing drastic."

"Protein levels are always high when you've been drinking," said Matt, looking at Shannon. "I did a piss test for a job once after a night out with the bros and they crap-canned the results because my kidneys were making too much protein. Went and drank about a gallon of water, came back...passed it. Bang-o."

The doctor flashed a perfunctory, condescending smile. "I can't see anything wrong here. If you want my advice, here it is." He turned to Shannon. "Have you considered counseling?"

"Counseling for what?"

"How many drinks a week would you say you consume?"

Shannon shook her head.

"I'm a moderate drinker. Matt knows that. How long have we been dating, Matt? Do you ever remember seeing me drunk?"

Matt remembered the Italian restaurant. "Maybe once or twice, but not often," he admitted.

"One of the signs of problem drinking is hiding the behavior," said the doctor. "If your long run hadn't caused you to throw up, no one would have ever known about the little binge you had last night.

Am I right about that?”

Shannon felt a sudden wave of loathing for the two of them, with their bogus Looks of Concern. In that moment she realized she hated Matt, had probably hated him for some time, but never gotten around to admitting it to herself. Once you got past the ripped torso and the chiseled good looks what was left behind was a patronizing, arrogant dickhead, a scrim of self-confidence stuck on a hollow man. He wasn't on her side, had never been on her side. What they had was good sex and little else. Fundamentally, she disliked him.

Shannon decided she needed to leave. Her clothes were hanging on a bag on the door and as she walked out in her paper examination gown she had the strangest feeling that Matt and the doctor were staring at her ass with lascivious, reptilian eyes. Maybe moving their hands furtively over one another's hard-ons. Getting ready to do whatever it took to get rid of that disgusting stuff in their balls, whether that meant raping her or merely jerking each other off.

She looked around the room and saw a long forceps, cold and silver on a piece of wax paper. If they reached for her she'd take that forceps and jam it right into the eye of whomever was closest.

But then she looked back to see the doctor filling out paperwork and Matt digging around on the edge of his nostril with his thumb.

“I'm going to get dressed,” she said, and left the room, thinking as she walked out that she might be going crazy.

She walked around downtown Davis for the rest of the afternoon, feeling that nausea and headache that comes when you start to sober up. Pre-hangover. All around were the college kids going to and fro

on a Saturday, stupid and energetic youth. She felt compelled to follow them, and walked into a sports bar with the ineluctable dread of a dream.

As she walked through the door she felt again that intense thirst. Dolph Lundgren was running a dirty white towel over the surface of the bar and pouring drinks and when she found a stool at the bar he flashed his big white teeth as if for an inspection. She ordered a beer. Dolph reached into a freezer and pulled out a mug that emerged from a cloud of frosty condensation. Her thirst was almost unbearable. He put the frosty mug down on the bar and poured the beer into it and she watched the sides of the mug go cloudy as the beer hit the cold glass. Dolph walked away and she downed the beer in three long guzzles. Then she put it down on the bar and wiped the back of her mouth and belched. Someone across the room clapped and whistled.

“It tastes like water,” Shannon said, staring into the empty glass with a feeling of wonder.

“I’ll bet it does,” said Dolph. “You wanna open a tab?”

“Sure,” said Shannon. “And keep them coming.”

She pulled a credit card from her handbag, set it on the counter, and when Dolph brought the second beer she drank it down. God, it was good. Crystal-clear spring water. She felt the sickness and hangover grog dissipate. She felt much, much better.

Dolph winked, took her credit card, and set it on a little shelf over the cash register.

She stayed there the rest of the afternoon, drinking beer and watching the TV over the bar. She felt normal again, the way she usually felt. She had no explanation for what had happened and

wasn't thinking too hard about finding one. She just knew she didn't want to see Matt any more. The thought made her feel good. He'd texted her, called her. She'd put the phone on silent mode and resolved not to answer it for at least the rest of the day. Later on she would tell him it was over.

8 beers later, the urge to pee hit her. She told Dolph to pour her another one. Dolph raised his eyebrows, thinking to himself he hadn't seen many women who could put them down this fast, but went ahead and poured another.

The restroom was clean and quiet and she was alone. She went into one of the booths, sat on the toilet, and let loose the flood. The relief was intense. She thought about what had happened that day and wondered if the whole thing had been some anomaly of perception, a shared delusion between herself and Matt. Maybe, when they were running, they'd run through some sort of chemical cloud. Maybe they'd eaten something strange.

Wait. That had to be it!

They'd had breakfast at that hippie place. Omelettes. MUSHROOM omelettes. Maybe the mushrooms had gotten mixed up with, well, another type of mushroom. It wasn't the craziest idea ever, considering the trustafarian staffers who made and served the food.

She realized that it was an absurd theory, but was so relieved by having an explanation, any explanation, that she didn't care.

Two women came in to use the restroom. One sat down in the stall next to Shannon and the other checked her makeup in the mirror. They were in the middle of a conversation, the girl in the stall adding emphasis to the story with shitgrunts.

“So I told the lady look: we don’t have your fucking (uhhhh) bag, right? So she threatened to call the store manager. So, (uhhhh) I told her you’ve already REACHED the store manager, and I wanted to call her a cunt too, but I didn’t.”

“Oh my God,” said the girl at the mirror. “For real?”

“For realzies,” said the grunting girl. Then there was silence for a half-minute while she concentrated on finishing her business; meanwhile, Shannon let loose with another flood.

“Errrgggg.....ahhh...did you bring a fucking bottle of whiskey in here?”

“Noooo,” said the girl at the mirror. Then: “I smell it too, really strong. EWWW.”

It took a moment for Shannon to realize she was the source of the smell.

There was an uncomfortable silence which meant, Shannon knew, the two bitches were telepathically communicating about whoever it was in the other stall. How fucked up would you have to be to take a drink into the toilet with you, they were wondering.

Finally the grunting girl flushed and opened the stall. As the two of them walked out she could hear them whispering and giggling. Then she was alone. She finished, stood up, and looked into the toilet.

It was amber-colored. The spicy smell was unmistakable.

Rye Whiskey.

She sat at the bar, walking around the thing in her mind, careful not to prod it. She thought if she did she might start bawling, at

which time Dolph would finally decide she was drunk and kick her out, and she didn't want to be alone. As it was he'd already told her to "slow it down" after beer #15 and a shot of rye; that too had been as tasteless and odorless as water.

Now the bar was filling up with the nighttime college party crowd, all in their going-out clothes, and here she was, a good 15 years older than most of them, still wearing her running outfit from that morning. She was just starting on beer #16 when a beefy kid with bushy black eyebrows sidled up to the bar and said "Hi there."

He was a good-looking kid, for sure—probably about 22, square-jawed but not too pretty which, at the moment, held an appeal for Shannon. She thought for a fleeting moment about picking him up...he probably had a permanent hard-on, a purple little stabby-stick. The thought made her giggle; the kid's big eyebrows bunched together.

"I'm sorry," said Shannon. "You caught me at a bad time. I thought of something funny right before you sat down."

"No problemo," said the kid. "I'm Brad."

She started to giggle again. She wasn't sure why, maybe just because it was the most generic, shitty name in the world. This time a dull, stupid look of anger crossed the kid's face. That turned her on just a bit—to jerk him around like that with a couple words. Then the dumb confident sneer came back. The look of Brad. All this alcohol and she was still sober. Too sober to have random sex with a little college boy? Would she feel anything during sex? Maybe she should try some hard drugs and see if *that* had any effect. Sure, she thought: maybe she'd do cocaine, and shit out baby powder.

The giggles came back.

"Okay," said Brad. "I get it. See you later..."

“No! wait! I’m sorry. I’m a little tipsy,” she said. “Don’t go.”

Brad’s face lit up like the tacky Christmas lights behind the bar. She figured she’d ride this kid’s face for all it was worth and sort out her new, strange reality in the morning. Hell, maybe a good hard railing would sort everything out.

“Wanna go back to your place?” she said. Brad’s mouth hung open and then widened into a grin.

Brad’s place was depressing. Depressing because it more than anything reflected how young he really was and the fact that he still lived with his “bros.” There were bean bags and video games and pizza boxes strewn about. Between the TV and the couch was a coffee table littered with bodybuilding magazines, diet coke cans, and a sculpture of Darth Vader holding a pink lightsaber aloft in some sort of a samurai pose. Despite the trash everywhere the place felt curiously vacant, as if the personalities of the young men who lived there were not substantial enough to leave any impression. It had the look and feel of a weekend hotel room in Vegas, and it made Shannon aware of her age, because this was the kind of place she would’ve spent time in 15 years ago, trying to impress idiots like “Brad.”

“You wanna drink? I’m gonna make a gin and tonic,” he said.

“Sure,” she said. She had to pee yet again. “Can I use your bathroom?”

“Of course,” said Brad, a flirtatious lilt in his voice—like there was something sexy about going to the bathroom. What the hell? “It’s the first door on your left down the hallway.”

The bathroom was a guy's bathroom. One towel hanging on a hook that she could smell from across the room. Shaving products, razors. She let loose another torrent of whiskeypiss, flushed, and went back to the living room.

"Here you go," said Brad. He handed her a watery, flat-looking G&T. "Wanna watch some TV?" he said. Without waiting for an answer he walked to the living room and sat on the couch in front of the coffee table with the pizza boxes and the Darth Vader sculpture and patted the spot next to him. Watching him as he turned his attention to the television, she wondered idly if there was any chance she'd come within spitting distance of an orgasm tonight. She took a swallow of the gin and tonic.

She almost gagged. The taste was overpowering, a bitterness that was not the tonic.

As she watched him flipping through the channels with that little smirk on his face, she realized what it was. In any other circumstance, the alcohol would have masked the taste. How many girls had he done this to?

Before he could look over, she poured half the drink down the kitchen sink.

You should leave, she told herself. Now.

But she couldn't. She felt like she might collapse. She sat on the couch with wobbly legs. Even the small bit of the drug she'd ingested made her feel strange. Brad turned toward her. His head turned slowly, slowly, the leering smile growing wide to show his big perfect teeth, then slowly the head turned back again, and she could hear the tendons in his neck creak.

She was drowsy. Unbelievably drowsy. Like the night after she'd

run the LA Marathon and eaten two large pizzas. The feeling right before she'd passed out that night had been like floating on an ocean of warm milk and light. Which was how she felt now, except down in her guts was that cold fear and...

...Christ, she'd passed out. She was looking at the ceiling. A hand ran greedily over her breasts. Thumb and forefinger ran furtively over her left nipple then squeezed and stopped. He was checking to see if she was awake. She kept her breathing even. She looked down without moving her head. He was leaning over her, head on her belly, with his right hand reaching under her sports bra. His pants were down to his knees, bunched up on the floor, left hand flogging furiously at his penis. When he was sure the nipple-pinch hadn't roused her he pinched it again, hard, then moved his hand down into her pants.

“Mother fucker!” she screamed.

She reached over and grabbed the Darth Vader statue and swung it back and towards his head. The long pink lightsaber plunged into his left ear and when she pulled it back out it made a wet sucking sound. Brad's body went rigid, his head jerked up in a silent scream, his mouth stretched wide open, his eyes staring at the ceiling as if the roof had suddenly flown off and revealed the skies of Jupiter. And then he began to convulse. Shannon had never seen anything so awful. She got out from under him somehow and ran out as he fell to the floor and lay on the carpet twitching and jerking.

In the alleyway next to the apartment building she threw up. It all came out of her in a flood, all the beer and the liquor from the day, it wouldn't stop coming. And suddenly she felt as ossified drunk as any 5 foot 7 woman would after 16 beers, two gin and

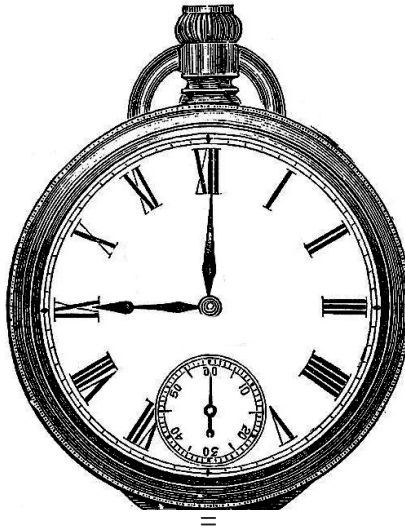
tonics, and a dose of rohypnol.

She blacked out on her feet. Somehow she must have found her way home because suddenly she was on the couch in her living room, petting the cat. The clock on the wall said 2:38 AM.

She had to pee again. She stood up unsteadily, still drunk, and worked her way slowly to the bathroom.

When she was finished she looked down to see pale yellow in the toilet. She burst into tears and put herself to bed.

DON'T WASTE TIME



Thanks for reading *The Wagon*. If you'd like to be notified via e-mail when a new issue becomes available, please follow the link below. We will update you when new issues become available.

Sign up for e-mail notification



OUR PUBLICATIONS

We are WAGONS OF SIN PRESS: purveyors of pulp, masters of alliteration, and all around good guys. Here's your chance to stock your library with our extensive and affordable library of world-renowned shit lit.

BORAX HILL COLLECTION

This collection of four short stories tells the tale of desperate exurban youth lost in a high desert hell. Sometimes funny, sometimes moving, always perverse. This is a limited edition with letterpress-printed covers and once they're gone, you'll cry knowing you've been assed-out yet again.

SMOG CITY NUMBER ONE

The first issue of this our magazine appeared in 2009. Sure, the writing can be embarrassing, but you have to realize that when this one came out we were living in a different time, a time in which we were still at least two years away from time travel. Things are different now. *Limited quantities available.*

SMOG CITY NUMBER TWO

You'll get your money's worth with this. The central piece, "Highway 126", is pretty much a novella. Think about that kind of value. "The Night Snacker" continues; also, Dick Wegmans (author of the *The Cleft*) offers up a few pages from his "Smog City Diaries." Highbrow graphics come along with tales from the low life. Worth a read, motherfuckers.

SMOG CITY NUMBER THREE

What can we say about this that hasn't been said before? This shit is totally fucking awesome. Period. This issue features part three of "The Night Snacker", "The Continuing Adventures of Fozz Pinkes, Punk Rock Paralegal", and "Malady". Fun, games, violence. Isn't life awful? Yes, but not when you've got SMOG CITY in your gubby little hands.



SMOG CITY NUMBER FOUR

We take a break from our usual glut of short stories to bring you a foray into non-fiction: *History of the Eichelbaum Studios, Part One*. Don't you hang up on me, what are you doing in my house? I'm having something to eat. So, he calls me a turd huh? Call him back. What do you want? What do you mean?

THE CLEFT

This book, now generally recognized as an underground classic, is the tale of a man on the razor's edge of the ultimate forbidden fruit: female as fuck. After meeting up with a fellow reprobate named Arcadia Slim, a cross-country "huffing" spree takes place that truly sends our heroes into the hard of darkness. One well known website even listed this as "recommended reading" while snubbing JG Ballard and Graham Greene. We're serious. *Limited quantities available*

STRIP MALL

Mulnix's second novel is a real doozy. It's *Planet of the Apes* meets *Flowers for Algernon* meets *Death Wish* meets *Journeys to the End of the Night* meets *Deliverance* meets *Paul Blart, Mall Cop 3*. Sound nuts? It is. *Available Fall 2016*

MY LIFE IN RADIO

By Dusty Klugman

Long thought to be out of print, a stack of Mr. Klugman's autobiography was found in a box at Four Points Swap Meet in Palmdale, California. Detailing his youth as a hungry young disk jockey, and culminating in his ascension to the top of the late-night conservative talk radio market, this truly is a Horatio Alger story of perseverance—yet tinged, too, with tragedy. Recommended. 100 pages, paper-back. Extremely rare. *Limited quantities available*

All prices include shipping and handling to the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
Inquire for prices to the rest of the so-called "world"

WAGONS OF SIN PRESS



- Please send the books or zines I've checked, at the prices above.
 Enclosed is cash or money order. Is this a joke? I'll order on your website.

Name
 Address
 City

CHECK THE BOOKS YOU WANT AND MAIL

TO ORDER, PLEASE VISIT WAGONSOF SINPRESS.COM