Splattery (Part 2)

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Special Edition for Twitter/X

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, names, incidents, organizations, and dialogue in this novel are either the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

acrobat	A talented criminal.
The Big Grift	White collar crime.
black hat	Homicidal.
blue hat	Physically violent.
blue plums	Bullets.
Blue ruin	Gin.
(The) broad arrow	Prison uniform.
Buzz Town	A rival city.
The Card	Death.
The Cellar	City Hall.
crawlers	Predatory criminals.
crushers	The police.
The dixies	Police detectives.
float	To beat someone unconscious.
gouda	Cash; currency.
The hat factory	State penitentiary.
The Jeebies	The Feds.
The lottery	The criminal justice system.
Neptuned	Cremated.
outhouse	The morgue.
plungers	Syringes.
prancers	Horses.
rhino	Money.
rozzers	The police.
sacks	Homeless men; transients.
screws	Prison guards.
smashed	High on heroin.
Spill City	A polluted city on the coast.
spiritual	Dead.
spoil	Murder.
spoil rotten:	Commit a brutal murder.
sponge bath	Electric chair.
ten-over-six	Crazy.
thumper(s)	Gang member(s).
toad skins	Paper money.
The Trop	The big city featured in this story.
urchins	Runaways.
white house	Hospital.
the wolves	Prison gangs.

Chapter 14 **Splattery**

We're gonna explore The Big Score. In just one second. But I reckoned we'd stray and play a little more. Coz this next item beckoned. First and foremost. Your host has a soft spot you know. Not all of me, has gone to rot—not yet, at least. This Tom, would often take his kitty. Out for a hot time. In the city.

Ah yes. Those were the days. On the oddly occasional odd occasion. With a little purring. Alongside the persuasion. My babe. My beau. *Lisette*. My lovely little honey-bunny. My swagtime gal. Would convince me to flee. Out of The East. And go up to The North for a look-see.

The North. Where I get stares. From wary eyes. From the big-wigged pigs. Peering over the doors of their sties. But as long as I slam The Big Words. My gouda is as green, on the Northern scene. Just as much as the next guy's.

And a wunna…and a two-a…and away we go! Off to the big show. I put on my best *chapeau*. Tally-Ho! Damning, those damned torpedoes—dressed, for excess. With my *beau morceau.* My adorable doe. As we dally forth. Hand-in-hand. Romantically entangled. Dancing cheekily. Beak-to-beak. With a wad of dough. Which does not grow on trees you know. But then again, it's courtesy of you—and you. And you-and-you-and-you. All you marks. And your hardly earned salaries.

Please. Take none of it personally. And don't get hysterical. I'm sticky. I'm a klepto. Ensign Mawdy. Sailing the seas. Ahoy! Maties! Shivering timberishly. On the *HMS Flirtacious.* Taking liberties. Getting frisky. Skirt chasious. Locking lips in between champagne sips. And cavalier dreams. With his mistress.

The world. Is my oyster. On the half-shell. And it's not half-bad. Half-assed. Nor half-baked. It is indeed cracked up. To what it's supposed to be. Acting like a swell. Fishing, in your wishing well. In The North. Where paper also plays. Amongst the skyscrapers and apartments with bidets—*Chez*, the first name, of every place. Hat check Coat check—a hostess, with the moistest. *Bien venue.* Tassels, on the menu. *Escargot*... which is French, for you don't need know.

Would you care, *Monsieur Vulgaire*. For some fresh ground pepper? My how green do the Caesar, spinach, and garden salads glow. Amidst all of the other venerated vegetation. Whose names I may not know. Outside of cabbage, onions, pickles, and potatoes.

Palettes cleansed. Chilled forks, and sorbets. Ready, to do some damage. Halibut, scallops, swordfish, and salmon. And ducks that are braised. Pineapple on ham, that's honey-glazed. Flutes raised. Dee-Lish! *Delizioso!* Praising, the fish of the day—whilst nobody among the Godless…bothers…to say grace.

Shish. Ke. Bob. Lobster. Wellingtons of beef. Salmon filets. Cabernets. Courvoisier. Dessert trays. *Apéritifs*. All so very-very *trés* t*rés magnifique!!*

Crème bru laits. Alaskas. Baked. Demitasses. Slaked. Thinking about the coals, that are being raked. More gouda, for the gratuity. Than one night of perpetuity, in The Boards, fer chrissakes.

Dropping ducats, doubloons, and toad skins. The attentively attentive wash room attendants. Holding sway, amongst the haze. Emanating. From the foulest ends of

decadence. But that's The Life. A day-by-day existence. And my complements, to the chef.

Lisette: The Eve, to my Adam. Giving me the looks. In a Northern café. *Au lait*. Then back for a *soirée.* The beast, with two backs. Me, and *Lisette...ma maîtresse.* Denting the mattress. Back at my villa. The only way, to get away. From The Life. Even for just one second. Of one day.

Sentimental. Thanks a lot. What am I gonna do. With the score of you? The score…hmm…Speak, of the Devil. The Big Score. We'll talk later. About The North. The Big Score—the wild horse, that tore me apart. At the seams. Brought my dreams, of little dreams. And picket fences. To an end. Courtesy, of The Skeeve.

The Skeeve was the antithesis, of squeaky clean. My polar opposite. But he met the prerequisite. As B-and-E. Was also his deal. The Skeeve. A fellow sticky lad. A fool, of the trade. One bad competitive comrade. Who liked to get paid. There we were. Early on. In my tip-toeing kleptoing career. In this initial chapter, of my *Iliad*.

The Iliad. A book most dear. Homer and Ulysses. Both brought a tear. To this fresh fish, on the second tier. Mawdy. Alongside. Sailing the uncharted seas. Conquering his fears. I once tried to tell Yansey about the Cyclops. In between the dropping raindrops. And the thunderous thunder. In The Yard. He wondered. As we stood in a puddle. Why I was reading about dinosaurs.

Doler had introduced me to *The Odyssey*. A fantasy. Perchance a reality. Put down by a blind Ionian. To ease the misery. Doler. The oldest bloke, in the hat factory. Venerably magnanimous. In his generosity. Introduced me to Ulysses. This antiquity was given to me. Through the bars. During my first week. Of my second stretch. Up the creek. Courtesy, of the wretch known as The Skeeve.

To err is human
To forgive is divine
A credible credo
For this bandito
As long as I've got mine

The Big Score. Your one way ticket. To The Joint. I should have known better. But my ears were a lot wetter back then. The Big Score—two foxes, in the hen house. Enough swag, to fill up the *Reichstag*. According to this one hot tipper. The Skeeve. On a hand to God swear. Time to tear it up. So said this sticky pup. So bring your biggest bag. And saddle up.

The *Reichstag*. Not from a Big Book. But from a story told to me. Personally. By Doler. Who served his country proudly. And swerved gallantly. Pinching swag, and tushy. Especially in Italy. He had had a ball, after the fall. All the swag, Doler stuffed into his bag. From Normandy to Germany.

This is my rifle. This is my gun. War is Hell. So go tell everyone. Doler. Fought like a Rottweiler. Knocked the snot, out of the enemy. This G-I death-defier. So we could be free. To be sticky. Only to be sent, to the penitentiary. Without parole. With a hole, in his soul. Purgatorially. So much for Tipperary—or Tripoli. Irony, to say the very least.

Doler. Got life. For being the desecrated driver. In an armed robbery. Coz his craven partner. Decided to harm somebody. Doler's personal story. An allegorical forewarning. Regarding The Skeeve. And his horrid crime scene routine.

The Skeeve. Needed a wingman. Yours truly. Dutifully. Un-Wit-Tingly. Fittingly flying in formation. Alongside for this raid. A mission of commission. Into Swagistan. That was the plan. In and out. Expeditiously. I had trepidations. Sinking sensations. Regarding recriminations. Prem-O-Nitions. Of incarceration.

The Skeeve. Pled his case. C'mon mate. This estate is for real—ours, for the taking. You'd be making a mistake. It's a downright museum. Just trust me. Low-hanging fruit. Fish in a barrel. Easy security. With your eyes closed. Mawdy. PUH-lease! So said The Skeeve. Quote Un Quotably.

Bob, was our uncle. As all went initially well. On this job. Accordingly. Swimmingly. Brimmingly. Our plans were aligned. Planetarilly. There was indeed enough swag. As far as the eye could see. Yesiree. Until The Skeeve. Good grief. Decided to up the ante. And sought some relief. A snag in our swaggery. To say the very least.

Oh no he didn't. Oh yes HE DID—The Skeeve. Left his calling card. Behind. Which literally slid. Out of his behind. A most appalling display. Of horse play. That would gag a maggot. On a hot garbage day. Un-Hos-Pi-Table. This chump. Bared his rump. And got downright excremental.

Well, all I have to say. Was that this job looked good on paper. Anyway. Now I once heard. About this sorcerous bit. Of unsanitary. Ass. Tro. Nomical. Scatology. From this mutt. And that mutt. On more than one occasion. Strange. But one of the risks, of this vocation.

What the hell, did you eat? Christ almighty. Somebody. Light a match. Salutations, to the mark. From out of The Skeeve's arse. W-T-F. Mucking up their carpets. Ker-plunk. Leave one steaming somewhere. Un-Be-Knownst. Bunker-busting bunco funk. This most disgusting. Ungodly bodily function.

Theories? Anybody? Adrenaline, perhaps. Nerves, perchance. Butterflies, in the gut. A bold stroke, or just an old joke—either way, old feelings die hard. Sometimes they even grow stronger. As the years get longer. The Skeeve's trademark dog-in-the-park play. Made things darker than dark. Deep. Down. Inside my crown.

My late, not-so-great Oinkle. A primary source, of my self-hating hatred. Also liked to do number two. The deuce. In front of you-know-who—yours truly. Oinkle would empty his guts. Full of rotgut, blue ruin, and beef stew. In a drunken state of fugue. Whenever he was too ruined, to get to the loo. Dung-tied. Too messed up, to even go outside.

And just take a wild guess. Who had to clean it up? I'll give you three guesses: Me, *moi,* and Mawdy. Just another day in paradise. Swatting the flies. While mopping up Oinkle's chamber pottery. The bomb stoolery. All over the upholstery.

Anger…rage... fury, Fury, FURY—perchance, fueling my future knack. For spirituality. That old black hattery. That seems to come over me. Whenever somebody acts Dis-Re-Spect-Fully.

The Big Score
Careful now, what you wish for

Swag from here to eternity
Candy, from a big fat baby
The crushers, pounding on your door

The Big Score
The scam du jour
This mammoth, the hunters demand
But watch where you stand
As that beast falls to the floor

I lost it. In a downright *grand mal.* Malicious. Epithetic. Hyper. Kinetic. Ten-over-six lunatic binge. This sticky bastard—sick, in the mind. Jacked out The Skeeve. I cracked the whip. Upside and across his beak. Easing the tension of history. Repeating itself. Ever so repetitiously. Re-Writ-Ten. Most reprehensively.

My nerves were raw. A candelabra in my paw—off the shelf, and across his jaw. This pauper. Floated him proper. A top ten hit. A chart-topper. The Skeeve. Outlookingly bleak. Went down for the blood count. A downright spouting fountain. Everywhere, and then some. Crimsoniously.

Welcome, to my world. Not like the one glamorized. For your protection. In the movies. Right kiddies? The bloody Skeeve. Bleeding. Profusely. Bled, and tread on me. As well as a settee, and an ottoman. And we landed up busting, one of them vozzes. From the Bling Dynasty.

We got it together. Barely. The Skeeve was worthlessly worrisome. And worse for wear. But faring better. He wiped up his tailfeathers. With a cushion, from a rare chair. And we hightailed it. To The Park. Where the honeymoon—and the money, soon ended.

Just when you think. You know somebody. The Skeeve. Errantly daring and do-derring. Or was it derring-do? In his erring ways. Got a grip, on a blunt force traumatic instrument. Unbeknownst, to yours truly.

The Skeeve. Rudely. Exudingly. Showed his gratitude. And sent this sticky jay. Day-tripping. *Gravitasly*. With no remorse. And sent me floating. Out to the horse latitudes.

Rude things, come to those you hate. The Skeeve. My worst mate. On this foolish ship. Gets flippery, when he's wet. In the presence, of a lottery ticket. The crushers had a downright haz-matic attack. At the scene, of this rancid ransacking.

The rozzers followed their schnozzes…All the way—without delay, to The Skeeve's abode. A submitted s*ubpoena.* Was then properly served. Which made The Skeeve squeal and deal—with zeal—with the word. That was heard. Over his size ten. Poo-sprayed shoes. He then flipped. The two-headed doubloon. Heads I lose—and heads, I lose. The Life. Baby. What I've been telling you.

"I" before "E," except after "C". Thieving is believing. And crooks, are always deceiving. The Skeeve…that mother-blanking. Mother. Blanker. Was now leaving. Everything. To the crushers' imagination. The fibs, and the B-S. Were flying alongside. As The Skeeve hedged his bet. The Skeeve. Embelloquently. Sold me out. Stone cold. Pled it down, and sent me up.

He laid blame. On yours truly: Lil' ol' Mawdy. Whose lives on So-and-So Street. Thataways. I was the go-to guy—cross his heart, and hope not to die. For this white-hot

white lie. Testified testamentally. In an *affidavit*. That I, Mawdius. Was going to move it, or lose it—pop, the swag. Un-Dis-Closedly. Everybody. Say howdy to Mawdy. The patsy. On his merry way, to the penitentiary.

If it's your druthers
To betray your brothers
With each and every breath

Please remember the lonely mothers
Whose sons sung to the crushers
And then met the Angel of Death

The Cheese. The thug of choice. For this enemy, of one of his boys. In regards. To this future dead duck, The Skeeve. *Mort*. 86'd. This wart. Burned off of the ass, of the cosmos.

The Great Cheestini. Said abra-cadaver. And pulled that rabbit, out of his black hat. Reciprocity, kills the rat. Depth-chargedly—splattery, twenty thousand leagues. Under a barnacle. Under a reef. With a gob full of seaweed. Crushed. Under Poseidon's feet.

Hard coral. This morality case. That's ice-cold. Downright polar. Without a trace. The Skeeve. The rude dude is fish food. So that's why I roll solo. *Nolo contendre*. Spirit o' Saint Louisly.

The Cheese. The pastor of disaster. The Harbor master. I miss that fat bastard. Like a father. Walks on water. The black-hatted fatso. Passed on to me. Everything I know. All my streetwise Street Smarts Know How and knowledgability.

Chapter 15

Sometimes the dogs will have fleas
And the cats can have rabies
But the rats
Are just plain filthy

Now that reminds me. Of another revelatory revelation. That stars Yansey and yours truly. But firstly I must reveal to thee. On the odd occasion. As a young lad. When I had the gouda. For the train station. I would see my Poppa. At the hat factory. Unbeknownst to Momma.

Visitation rights. And reality bites. Poppa: My biological effigy. A fright to behold. Swollen glands and withered hands—white, as a sheet. Feverishly wheezy. Reedy, from the liquid feeding. My Poppa. In a downward spiral, from the viral beating.

Our hands. Touching the glass. Whilst my gasping Poppa, could still stand. To understand. And pay attention. During our class, that was in session.

Dementia. His sanity, in absentia. Alongside the pneumonia. We would gather together. To ask the Lord's blessing. And he was worried. About those messing. And trespassing against. His first begotten.

My Poppa did his best. To warn this young sprat. About all that lurks out there. Outside. And whereabouts. The usual milieu. About who's who, and what's what. Who's bought. Who's paid for. Corruptors. And all others rotten. To the core.

Alongside the crawlers. There was one rotten lot. That always got Poppa hot and bothered…
…Chiselers. Grifters. Confidence men. Heartless card-bending hucksters. Scamming bamboozlers, and snake oil salesmen. Getting you to drool. To bend your rules. And pool your gouda. All of the above. Was always the main topic. Of my Poppa's topical acumen. Of paternal love.

He gave me the down-low. On these lowdown dirty hounds. Who would step over their own dying mothers. To take the last pound. Out of the clammy hand, of their dead brother. Lying on the ground. So always remember son: Fool me once. Shame on you. And if it's too good to be true. Someone's gonna be turning blue. And more than likely, it's going to be you. Mister-Ruse-You-Lose.

Yansey just so happened. To happen upon. One of these vagabonds. And they went over the river, and through the woods. To Yansey's grandmother's house. This bold bolderdasher told Yansey's grandma. That he could wave his magic wand. And deliver the goods. But he needed a partner. A rather large municipal bond. It was stellar. As he had the right seller.

This player. In search of a team. Said to Yansey. Please dare to dream. As we only need to skim the cream off the top—of a drop, in a bucket. So don't be such a square. Twenty-five LARGE. And you're in heavenly largesse. You want to talk to your friends? I don't care. The more the scarier. As we all breathe, the same rarified air.

Scam artistry. Flim. Flammery. A tapestry of all of man's predilections. Tailor-made. This arcade, in the shade. Getting paid, and getting laid. Greed and lust. Boom and bust.

The same rewards. And you always come back for more. In this masquerade. That's how they get you to go. From a man that's rich, to one that's poor.

This native sized up, the sizeable sizeability. Of this carpetbagging scalawaggish scumbag. He was definitely not a yokelly local Tropinjay. His accent, was slightly bent, towards Buzz Town—initially, as that's what he wanted us to think.

It was his distinguishable. Spit-filled wheezy hack. A sign, of past asthmatic attacks. And a lack, of a Tropical knack. During his lip service. Which tipped us off. As pure and unadulterated. As a one hundred percent. Con-Cen-Trated. Straight-up Spill City denizen.

My eyes were closed. As I remained comfortably distanced—calm, and composed. During this escalating charade of an escapade. My Poppa taught me this golden moldy. I told the guys. That our new best friend. This swellish skel, of a swindler. This gouda-mongering mongrel. Without fail. Would come back, to sit in our laps. While wagging his tail. While providing, not too many further details. Trust me…the rubber check's in the mail.

Conditioning. Positioning. Reverse-psycho-engineering. That's how they get you. Repeat after me, Yansey. There's no "I" in team. But there's big, fat capital "G" in "Greedy."

You buy the rings. Pay for the catering. The hall, the cake, and the big band that swings. The invites. The everything! Never faltering—or altering your course. As you ride this horse, through this fault, of your own. And then they leave you standing. Dumb. Founded. At the altar. Surrounded by all those close, closer and closest. Who told you so.

Everything, was coming up posies, tulips, and daffodils. Downright ambrosial. Right on schedule. The fool, and our money doubled back. Double-speaking. With his forked-tongue hanging out, the side of his mouth. Prop-O-Sitioning. Positioning us. With another transparent proposition—triple or nothing, and then we all walk away.

Our new best rent-a-friend—our king, for a day. In a behind-the-back pass of a play. Said Yansey's *grand mère* was on board. Rather untoward. Below board. Low class, wouldn't you say? He said did her this favor. Since she tipped him to Yansey. Who was now chewing on his pen. That was mightier, than any sword.

So I said. We're in business. But let me be witness, to the fiscally fiscal fitness. Of this fraudevillian dance routine. Show me the gouda. The money drippings. Our winnings—the underpinnings, of our next extraction. The rhino. Just so I know. This town, you won't blow.

He began…to let us see him fret. And sweat. From his brow. Downright flustered. As he mustered. He said he only had my cut, and Yansey's end. But, but, but the rest was safe—in a safe, at his residence. The Hotel Fraudulence. As he presented. That The Scrape, Yansey's gran, and Souser. Would not be present. At The Bustard.

Souser? Not show his face? At The Bustard? He came with the place. It is his home—the home, that he is away from, when he's at his home. Away from home! With this velodromatic. Circular and cyclical. Poetic poem in locomotion. Things were set in motion. You should have seen the change in emotion. Flim-Jim. Knew I was on to him.

That, and ten cents. Will get you a cup, of coffee. I showed you mine. Now you show me yours. Drop your drawers. And give me forty thou. As I know how. Ka-pow! How do ya like me now?

Now listen to me good. I put to him. Cough up our proper due. And then some. Alongside a few surcharges. Let's add on some add-ons. And mark it up with mark-ups.

A surtax, a poll tax, an extra tuppance—plus an additional sum. Perhaps. Perchance. A two-drink minimum. And nobody gets hurt. Or it's a nap in the dirt. As your other marks may be stupid. But I'm not dumb.

When you play with fire. With a fiery firefly. Like Yansey. After dark. Someone just might get spiritual. That's what I realized. As we escorted this shark across town. To his cross-town car park.

One small step for Yanse. One giant leap, for his mind. I could smell, the sawdust burning. Hear, the wheels turning. Inside Yansey's idea pot—a firetrap, under his thinking cap. Yansey. Counting his thoughts. In regards. To this no-named no-account.

So Yansey said. Amongst the silence, that now was dead. That I was just thinking. Me. Thinks. Way too much. Much too much. A touch overdone with the soft touch. I was being a bit…by-the-bookish. Overlookish. A conflicted confluence of nuance. With this bum. Who should be visiting us…only…in a séance.

So with that. Yansey. My mindfully absent-minded accessory. Dipped his pale, into comparison. Grabbed our guest, by the vest. At no one's behest. And launched him. Off of that bridge. And onto the rails. Just in the nick of time. For the nine o' clock express.

What a mess. That's going to leave a mark. This playmaker, sprayed to rest. Clickety Clack Splickety Splack Spattered. Splattered. All over the tracks.

Alas Poor Yansey. The disaster mind. Yansey. A single-celled organism. Of bipartisanship. Yansey, my old cellie. A winner in the lottery. Yansey. The hardened Yard bird. Introduced this grifter. To the judge, and the jury. Of cell blockery—COD, believe you me. For every action. There's an expected overreaction. Meant for respect. I stood corrected. But reconnected. Like never before. To my fellow disaffected. Man O' War.

Yansey. A family man. Given to simplicity. Got the best of me. Why let this deck-cutting mutt—this bee, in our soda can. Have his druthers, with someone else's grandmother? Shiz…it doesn't take a whiz. To figure that one out. So Yansey threw in the towel. And made it his last bout.

That's show biz. Even the dancing bear gets his. Every now and then. Simple Simon, got one over. On this sticky pieman. But now…pie man says: Yansey, since you think you're so funny. Go on down there. And get the rest of the bloodied blood money. Before the next train, makes a further stain. Of our capital gain. And before the bulls say ello, Ello, ELLO. What's all this then? Alongside the buzzards, and the seagulls. That will descend, on the entrails. Of this now spiritual. Former pain, in our rear ends.

Chapter 16

Before you cast that first stone
And slice me down to the bone
What would you do
If nobody wanted you
And you were scared, and all alone?

I can stop. If I wanted to. Just say whoa. *Vrais, ou faux?* We all have it in us, you know. Eros and Thanatos. Instinctively. At the core of our humanity.

To those preachy panacea-seeking peachy-keeners. Who think I'm lower. Than most of the lowest life forms. Who want me to practice what they preach. To reach out, and turn over, a new leaf…

Heretics. Hypocrites. Bearing down, and baiting me. To straight-up. Flat-out. Quit The Life—or even eat crow, and die, Die, DIE. Coz you're all petrified. Horrified. That this just might be a glorified Ro-Man-Ti-Cized Desensitizing. De-Sen-Si-Tized Glorification of violence.

Ladies and gentlemen. Of the jury. A funny thing happened, to happen to me. Incidentally. On my way to purgatory. Before you decisively decide. If I'm primitively primeval, or just evil personified. If you want me out of your sight. Coz I'm out of my mind. You must kindly stride, in my shoes—look, at the clues. What would you do? If only the crime lords, gave a damn. About you?

Do you think this is fun? Living on the edge. Of a cliff. On the outer rim of a precipice? And maybe. Just maybe. Perchance. I'm just like you. And I just can't get out of the pit. That I fell into.

Let's review, shall we? How-do-you-do. I'm Mawdy. I've no high school degree. I was out on the street, with nothing to eat. As a young teen. Then soon went into the hat factory—felony, first degree, at age eighteen. Interstate trafficking. Then a parolee. At one-and-twenty.

The Cheese set me up. I knew it. Right after I blew out my last candle. On my eighteenth birthday. Framed. With a sprat, on the way. Then at twenty-four. Into the cooler. Through the revolving door. I went once more. War. Means. War. This second tour for bagging swag. Alongside ag-assault. All involving The Skeeve. I was released after two years, three months, four days, and fifty two minutes—but who's counting. When you're amounting to nothing.

The Cheese did indeed save my life. I-Ronically. With a strangely endangering life-changing experience. In-Doc-Tri-Nation. Adoption, and adaptation—The Life, where every hand played, is the last. All in: Watches, rings, pink slips, and kitchen sinks. Mawdy. His wings clipped. On a one-way trip. To Stockholm. Psycho. Logically. Into The Life. Of uncertain uncertainty. The hat factory. Its production always booming, and looming largely.

The Cheese: The Lord, of the pies. Heard my cries. I will have reverence. For my provenance. Till the day that I die. Regardless. If I live, or fry. The Cheese. Providence, acting providential. Misguidingly misdirected my destiny. He gave me food, gouda, and

shelter. Kept my mind dreaming. My mouth eating. My countenance beaming. And never. Ever. Gave me a swift kicking. Or a beating.

So three, out of infinity. Ain't so bad. And I ain't too mad. Coz he did not drag me. Kicking and screaming. Nor did he have a gun. To my head. Like I've said repeatedly: I'm Mawdy. I'm bawdy. Naughty. And The Cheese. Kinda. Sorta. Bought me. I'm sticky. I semi-somewhat like to steal things—at least, that's what I keep telling myself. Unconvincingly.

The Cheese. The pay master, of social securities. With that dirty deed. Put the freeze. On any other career opportunities. Frame. Work. Ever so ingeniously. But what can I say? I never knew. The new day. That's every day. So I consequently. Played the lottery. Yesiree. Indubitably. A dubious moment of ruthlessness. And downright crummy. But deception, is reality. From conception. To finality.

I ain't no stupid dummy. Like Yansey. The bird brain. Who once drained his brain. By complaining. To a pet shop shopkeeper. Who refused to take his order. For an early bird. This sarky clerk. On a lark. Then asked Yansey. Who was never lost in thought. If he would like the cost. Of the proper care. And feeding. Perhaps. Perchance. Even the breeding. Of a griffon, a unicorn, or a phoenix in a pear tree?

Yansey. My right-hand man. From The Slammer. Who I once sent. Into a hardware store. For a left-handed hammer. Well, ol' Yanse. Had no sense of humor. That afternoon. And he jerked that clerk. By the shirt. And offered. Would he prefer to sleep, in the dirt?

Yansey. Whom I once convinced. That general vicinity. Was the leader, of the Italian Army. Yansey. He's a friend, to nature. A semi-somewhat greenie. Walked out of there. *Au contraire.* Just like that. With a tip. Of his tattered hat. With a free turtle, a chirping canary, bird seed, as well as a fancy rat. Ever so complementary.

The Cheese. Even named me Mawdy. Christened me. In a baptism. Of ire. Rightfully rightwise. Knighted. Right on the money. Mawdy. In reference, and deference. To Old World poetry. Changed my identity. New beginnings. And the past. Was history.

I remember that day. Vividly. When The Cheese. First had seen me. And decided I must be heard. But now let's get back to working. Out the words. About work, Work, WORK. Which some may think. That I think. Is a deplorable, four-letter word.

Now just for fun let's say
I decided to fly the right way
But those that do the hiring
Will never accept this re-wiring
And they'll tell me to have a nice day

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I thought about it. In a fit of voluminous rueful rumination. Assuming a position of transition—giving back, to this great nation. Deliverance. Putting my own self. To good use. At a variety. Of precarious vocations.

I could dig a ditch. Shovel dirt. Wheel a wheelbarrow. Push a broom. Clean bathrooms. Manual. Menial. Janitorial. Laborious. A man o' the soil—breaking his back, in back-breaking toil.

That sounds great, and all. But I'm behind the eight-ball. As I had a great fall. And I'll never be back. Together again. You can see the cracks. The missing bits of shell. I'm burning, in personnel Hell. Un. Touch. Able. I'm radioactive, with a touch of leprosy.

Trying to survive. In my diving bell. I'm a hard sell, to any and all Human Resource swells.

And let me tell you. It's no fun. To sweep out a flue. Or scrub a dunny. When there's no big picture. And nary a flickering candle or two. Just barely lit. At the end, of the tunnel. As my pot o' gold. Was sold out. From under me. At the ripe old age of eighteen.

Questions. Questions. Questions. Frequently asked. Amidst the answers, and suggestions. Even though their minds are made up. But they still go through the motions…Mister Mawdy, em, uh, what did you like about your last job? Your last boss? What would you do. In this situation? Your biggest success? Your biggest frustration? Are you agreeable. To a drug test? Re-Lo-Cation? Are you okay, with a workstation? Can you explain the gaps and time lapses. On your application? Have you ever been incarcerated? When can you start? Any other contractual obligations?

Can we contact, your present employer? Don't call us. We'll call you. *Sacré bleu!* The whole stroll. Rig-A-Ma-Role. A grueling grilling. Like I killed somebody. Put to yours truly.

Insincerity. I can taste it, in the coffee. Sorry Mawdy. We liked what we saw. There was no lack of alacrity. It's a pity. As you brought a lot to the table. No doubt. You're capably able-bodied. We were in awe. Of your *joie de vivre*. Before. During. And after. All the interviewing.

Mawdy. You're a team player. Meat, and potaters. Synergistic. Dynamic. You met, our skill set. You seem to work well, with others. You want to surround yourself with winners. You're helpful with beginners. A few might wince. As you mince. Your sinfully sinful syntax. And the way. You get down to brass tacks. But we could have worked around that.

Mister Mawdy. Sir. But your background check. That's another story. Personnel has perused your personal inventory. What. The. Hell? Jail? Wow. Holy cow. Time to call a time out, and figure this out. The hat factory. Factual. Un-Sat-Is-Fac-Tory. To our regulatory rules committee—unbeknownst, up until this point. Now Mawdy. Or whoever the hell you may be. Do we really need. To go over all the gory details? Or call the police?

Chapter 17

Thumpers: Aspiring squires, and sluggers. Up-and-comers. Downright conspiring, these feisty buggers. Thuggish muggers. Of swells, sacks, and stray chug-a-luggers. Leg humpers, to their masters. Who have them on a short leash. Gang. Bangers. Out to mash anything for moolah, loot, and tribute. For the four bosses. Who'll put the boot to anyone of them. Who double-crisses, or double-crosses. Who doesn't shoot straight. Or who just can't hold it in. And control their hate.

Thumpers. Chest pumpers. Fence jumpers. Feral. Out to make a name for themselves—understudies, to the bloody Hell. That is The Life.

Thumpers. Madolescents with crescent wrenches. Chains. And fists. Smiths. And Wessons. Rabbitous rabbits, on their rapidly rabid ascent. Shaking down tourists, and inebriates. Running wild. In denial. They're frequently delinquent and servile.

Thumpers. Indentured servants. *Les terrible enfantry*. Soldiering. Trying to please and maintain. Collecting fees. On the predilectorate. For The Cheese. As well as his colleagues. The Rake, The Doon, and The Cane.

Any mutt, swell, skel, or fellow pup. In their way. Will feel the hot-blooded bloodstained pain. A splatirical refrain. Of a bicycle chain. A lead pipe. A nice warning slice, of a blade. Perhaps. Per chance. A chalk outline. And some yellow crusher tape. Across the landscape. Of your last day In a world Gone In Sane.

But there is an asterisk* to this nasty risk. As The Cheese always knew. How it could always grow…into a movement. Thumpers. At-risk. Rung-jumpers. Everything you can do, I can do better. Blow by blow. Faster Blacker Bluer Louder and redder.

Thumpers of the world U-Knighted! In an uprising. Getting downright regimental. At the drop, of a splat. The minority. Always ready. To disfigure their authority figures. Solidarity. Lost to vanity. One of the deadliest, of the seven deadlies.

The Cheese. The big gun. One step ahead. Over these ill-bred. Flame and fortune seeking. Van-Da-Lous Visigothic moths. The Cheese. At an assembly. Talked at length, about the strength in numbers. And so it was written. For these young rumblers—a writ, that needed to be read. The thumpers. No boisterous names. Just semi-somewhat. Something with numbers. Like they do it, in The Joint. And at West Point. Roll call. Pro-To-Col. Cattle call. Straight-up Government Issue.

But that lasted never and a day. Youth is wasted, on the young. All their leaders. Malicious and mean. Elder. States. Men. Coz they made it, into their twenties. Made the list, of the dean. By getting suspiciously—yet predictably collectively seditious. And they called themselves, by a new name: The Severants.

The Severants. Huh? Wha? Wot? That's what I said, when I first heard—rest assured, it's not a real word. As I researched it. In a Big Book. But we're dealing with thumpers here. Perchance a third, or fourth grade education. Before they first entered, the general population.

The Severants. No real world experience. Discontented. Re-Sent-Ful Mal-Con-Tents—apparatchiks, acting sectarily. Handed the bosses a package that was

ticking. A broad-sided salvo, shot across the bow. Mutinous musketry. Bound to mount, a return volley.

The Severants. Old enough to drink. But they couldn't think. With intelligence. The Severants. Heretical. Sacrilegious. Blasphemous. In. Sur. Gents. Dressed, and addressed as gents. In full scale revolt. Showing no reverence. With their wet fingers, in the breeze. Overstepping their boundaries. Underestimating… The Cheese.

The Severants. Their engines revving. Whinging. To gorge themselves. On more bread that's leavened. They got wind. That The Cheese, was circling the drain. In constant pain. Short of breath. The main man. Arcane. Close to death. But that's the problem. When you get the news. Second. Hand. From a second-rate friend of a friend.

The Cheese. No doubt about it. Was losing clout. While dealing with the repercussions. Of being stout. But that didn't mean. That he didn't have a few concussions. Left in him. But first, as always: A discussion. He called a meeting. Most prim and properly. Ice-breakers. One-liners. Un. Certain. Terms. Banterous shop talk. Trop squawk. With the leader, of these leap-frogging pollywogs.

The Cheese. Kindly reminded these blinded mice. To see how its run. As The East was not for sale. Amongst this prevalence of insolence that prevailed. As sure as The Cheese was sitting here. There. And everywhere. As long as he had the wherewithal. The rules, were not for the breaking. Unless they were aching. For taking a trip. To the land of the dead. Into the River Styx. You little pricks. Am I making myself pistol clear?

But the criminals today. They just don't listen. Got a mind of their own. Pissing their vinegar, into the wind. The Severants were tone and stone deaf. Didn't hear one treble clef. In this command performance. Performed exclusively for them. By Maestro Cheesinsky.

All of us. In The Life know. The truth, and the consequences. Consider this. There's a consensus. That it's not wise, to be hard-headed. Nor hard-of-hearing. As one should always, be fearing The Card.

One more try, with the big guy. The Cheese. Over an open bar. At The Bustard. He tried to be nice. Enticed them with a larger slice, at no extra price—a few more rewards, for thumping in The Boards.

They told The Cheese. That they'd think about it. Sequester a spell. Sleep on it. Which didn't sit too well. Especially after we saw the liquor bill.

The Cheese. Appalled. Called in The Scrape… The Scrape: The clean-up hitter. A straight-up head splitter. *Scrapus nasticus.* The genus, of this menace. A fiercely fearsome species. A slugger emeritus. With a PhD, in GBH. A does-what-it-takeser. Who would slug for The Cheese. And The Rake.

The Scrape. A real spoiler. A toiler. An oiler. Alongside all of us mutts. With no compunction. But plenty of gumption. This weaponized weapon, of mass destruction. A spiritualist. If the case should arise. He did the bidding of The Cheese. And marked a careless pair of Severants. Clandestinely. Un. Be. Knownst. And pulled on his blue hat tightly.

The Scrape. The not-so-nice floatation device. Had a face. That could stop a clock twice. This knuckle-dragging pug, in dire need of a double-bagging. Downright Cro-Magnon. Lagging behind, the rest of the human race. With his face, made for radio. A road map to the scars—ugly, to the bone. He could turn Medusa into stone.

So you two Severants. This floating, is brought to you. Free of charge. On the house. A complementary. All-you-can-eat-beat-down. With free re-fills—courtesy, of The Scrape. Acting as *le visage* of *Le Fromage*: The Cheese. A message, in a throttle. In pyrotechnicolor.

The Scrape. One hard bloke. Who spoke in sign language. Broke their English. Put it in fighting—it was over, before it started. But he had forgotten. What The Cheese had imparted. He'd just wanted some Severants smartened up. But instead the two Severants. Almost became members, of the dearly departed.

When you tap the hive. The bees might sting back. The Severants went on the attack. They tracked The Crab. With no back-up, or flak jacket. Kept tabs. Marked this marked man. De-Mar-Cation without hesitation. And these heathens cracked The Crab's shell. Gave him a few more, after he fell. Stomp and circumstance. The music set. To this dance of the dead.

The Crab. Ambulanced. First to the white house. Which got him stable. But the poor crustacean died on the table. The Holy Spirit. Amongst a whole host of heavenly hosts. Coming for the collection. Most apparitionally. No divine intervention, for this henchman. Straight to the outhouse. Stretched out. Tagged. And bagged.

We all saw The Crab, on the slab—lying, in his refrigerated state. The Cheese was none too pleased. Was asked to contemplate. The Cheese. In a seething crescendo. Said The Severants would soon know. What The Life was all about.

Chapter 18

Crueler heads. Tried to prevail. As the two sides met again. Bargaining. Maneuvering. To no avail. In this Come-to-Cheesus meeting. Two ships, crashing in the blight. The captains. Talking about future plans. The Severants' leader was a loose cannon. He showed no fear. Alongside his foolishly duelish pride. Too stupid to realize. He was in front. Of the tip. Of the spear.

This particular leader wanted to be installed. As the shot-caller, of the East. And these meetings. Were actually impeachment proceedings. He told The Cheese, in no uncertain ease that he looked like he needed a priest—a bishop, and a vicar, at the very least. The sounds and sights. Of Last Rites. Then it's six feet underground. After this fixed fight.

Give us Severants a bigger bite. Mister pants-too-tight. Fifty percent, of the net—after expenses—then seventy-five, of your lion's share. That sounds fair. And just about rightwise.

The Cheese. Began to choke. On this secondhand smoke. Being blown, up his arse. This little troll was passing gas. From the wrong hole.

The Cheese, the wise old owl. High up in the trees. Mephistopheles, Solomon, and Socrates. All rolled up into three. Said the deal was done. Placation. With just enough protestation Con-Dem-Nation And trepidation. Alongside some maximum maxillopoker-faced glaciation.

Hail Cheesar. The plebes pleaser. The Severants were no match. For someone whom The Life was a career—a boss, that even old Scratch would fear. The Cheese, with his eyes closed. Told the sarky and snotty snot-nosed punks. What they wanted to hear.

The Cheese. Shot the breeze. Exchanged unpleasant pleasantries. Said The Severants were right. Hand-to-God, with a knowing nod. That his bum ticker, indeed had him getting sicker. With each tick, of the clock. His doctors were on speed dial. He was becoming a sight, for poor eyes—getting close, to the light. Almost dying himself to sleep. Every night.

The Cheese. Was now The Wheeze. Said he just needed to run it. By the three other peas. In The Trop's pod. As he strained to remain, above the sod. Give him a couple of weeks. To get it sorted. He said to The Severants. That they would be wetting their beaks. Deep down, and deeper. All their fish, would be keepers. They were gonna need a street sweeper. For all the manna from heaven. That's gonna fall on their heads.

Un-Knowingly. Unbeknownst. To The Severants. Something else was coming. Un-In-Viting—the writing, on the wall. In black-and-white. The Cheese wrote it all. In invisible ink. With crossed fingers. Most lexidysly A-Po-Ca-Cryptically. Alphabet soup. To this group of rinky-dink. Rat-finky malingerous stinkers. Did they really think The Cheese. The man who parts. The Eastern seas. Would sink, into the drink. Instead of swim? Really? You have got to be kidding me.

The Cheese just needed the me-time. To think. You just can't assemble the kitchen sink. With just the blink, of an evil eye. Just like that. The Severants. The squeaky wheels. Were going to get spoiled. But first the big snake. Had to coil. Oil, the gears, in

the machinery. Spuh-lattery—not battery, Mack. But straight-up Un-Di-Luted Jack. Booted. Black hattery. Brim reality. Was the only option left, in this sickening city.

Disrespect
The rooster getting pecked
By the littlest peeps in the yard
The Cheese, let out of the barn
Gonna deal The Severants
The Card

The Severants had made a date. With a wolf, in Cheese's clothing. The Cheese. The Falstaffian ruffian. Was gonna get Darwinian. No other opinions. Nor math needed.

We were risking, a switch-flipping. A sponge bath. AKA: The Chair. Old Sparky *mon frère*. A downright brown-out. But it was time to cut a swath. For the crown. War path. God's wrath. Forward march. *Begorra*. Hell hath no fury, like The Cheese. And his disciples. Acting seismically. Including yours truly, Yansey, and The Scrape. Alongside a talented mutt or two. From The Rake's western crew.

Souser was back at The Blue Bustard. And spent this blustery evening. On the house. Under house arrest. Ready to attest. To our where-and-thereabouts. *Le Souse.* Ca-Rousing Dowsing himself with whiskey. Getting downright viscous. Alongside the hard-scrabbled Bustardry.

Souser. Our about right air-tight alibi. The ali-biblical scholar. In his armor. Ready to testify. On our behalf. Laughing in the faces, of the crushers. The sled dog, whipping the mushers. Souser never remembers, but never forgets. To be forgetful, and forget. The wrong sequential sequence of events.

Malice. In plunderland. Internecine avarice, the matter at hand. The big black hatter. Had all the splatter laid out. Medicinally. The *Marquis de Cheesebury*. He burned the rule book. As this incendiary situation. Was now turned up, to the nth degree.

The Rake. Acting on behalf. Told The Severants. With a secret shake, of his under hand. That The Cheese had wanted to meet at The Plant…The Plant. Our darkest-hour *abattoir*. At a very late, or a very early hour. Down by the Harbor.

Listen up. You secular Severants. So said The Rake. Dead, as well as panned. You want to buy it. You gotta break it. If you want to hold sway. After this play. You have to use, your own damn black hand. Feather your own nest. And spoil The Cheese. Decisively. Stick this bellwether, in your cap. Jack. And call it whack-a-roni.

All was quiet. On the Cheestern Front. That particular Monday. The Severants had no clue. What. So. Ever. There's all sorts o' clever in The Life. That only age can reveal to you.

Blue flu. Ripped through The Boards. Not a crusher or a dixie in view. Coz plenty of gouda flew from the boss quite round. Who turned The Boards, into a ghost town. The hatches were battened down. As an envelope or two. Perchance three. Made many a civil servant flee. They all skipped. Skipped. Skipped and toodle-looed. To be with their faraway darlings.

Splattery gets you everywhere
When you're not so debonaire

Less words means less minces
So let's settle our differences
Coz I'm plumb out of savoir-faire

The Severants. O-Blivious Mis-Chievous thievish thieves. Reached for a brass ring. That was way out of reach. And beyond their years. You just can't teach them this lethal lesson. In selfless self-preservation. With all that water, behind their ears.

Here come's the freight train. Of imminently eminent. Eminent domain. *Pope Cheesonence* The U-Biquituous, and his clergy. Got downright ecumenical. Liturgical. For this surgical strike. Tons of bricks. Grand pianos. Guns and blammo. Seven Severants were most unlucky. Went to Heaven, in a funeral pyre. These poor and dirty whacked birds. Baked together, in a hellish Hellfire.

Before the gunplay. The Cheese made one more play. The Cheese. His silhouette framed, by the incinerator's flames. Amongst an aroma of creosote, grease, diesel, and cinders. Said perchance…they should reconsider. A parlay. The Severants should walk away. If you know what's good for you. The Cheese. Ever so diplomatically. Would give them the rhino. To stake another claim Some Where Else There A Bouts That-a-ways.

For the record. Mind you. The Severants' leader drew first—and he missed. Trying to grate The Cheese. The Severant crew should have worn "I'm With Stupid" shirts. More blue plums flew. The Cheese then broke out his .44, and then his .32. Then our crew. You do, what you have to do. Rose from behind the oil drums. And got ten-over-six. With our automatics. This much, was true.

There was no tomb to spare. And we aired the Severants out. Through, and. through—gullets, full of bullets. Blue plums and misery. Looking for company. As we gave these rebels their due.

With the smoke and dust retreating. The Cheese kept reading. The final act, to our play. We threw away our throwaways. Into the incinerator. Fry cleaning. No receipts. No starch. No pleats. Our black hand-me-downs. Trousers, shirts, socks, boots, and shooters. Right down to our birthday suits.

It sure beats the broad arrow. So shake that residue. Off of your lilies. We looked rather silly. But we've been there. And done that. Kindly removing our hats. To get deloused. In The Big House. And when you do the math. It's sure as hell. Better than a sponge bath. After this aftermath. A dead on head-wetter. For sure. In Stir. With no call, from the governor.

The Severants. First spoiled and splattered. In their tattered attire. Then their remains, were scattered. Across The Harbor. Ashes-to-ashes—the tears, the splashes. Cry if you must. But they had too much lust for The Life.

Two notches on my belt. From what I could tell. In the hail. Amongst the hell. Us or them or me. Pyrrhic victory. Nothing to be proud of. Believe you me. Taking care of business. AKA, TCB. In the first, second, and third degree. For The Cheese. Ah heck what's a few more felonies? As I'm going there already.

You watch through the broken glass
Observing each transgression pass
From your safe perch on high

Considering not the reasons why
I'm driving through Hell, low on gas

The Cheese. Before this fatalistic *fait accompli*. Had put the word out. On the street. To all the other Severants. Under the age of twenty. That they should drift away. Vacate. In graceful disgrace. Without a trace. With Spill City, being the closest place. To hide their two-sided faces.

Spill City? No man's land. In the bad lands. For celeritous, yet wastefully hazardous anonymous anonymity. Washing your hands. Brushing your teeth. In water with brownishly green clarity. Spill City: A former shell, of a rundown hellhole. Dystopian, this toxic rust bowl. The streets are paved with mold. The river that runs through it. Is polluted with sewage, debris, and the Big C.

Spill City: A dim beacon, of gun runnery. Where everyone's, a secondhand smoker. With all that toxically toxic Geigerous goo. Flowing through. These impurities Un-In-Tentionally Acting as built-in security. Against The Jeebies.

The Jeebies—no joke—treat Spill City, as if it were a nunnery. The hands-off approach. Verboten. For-Bid-Den. Beware of smog, and God knows, what else. As even the roaches choke. In its vile air. The Spill City Zoo. Is down to three ducks. Who don't quack. A yak, with a two-pack-a-day hack. And an old gray, glowing bear. Who growls, in between coughing attacks.

Spill City. Not the best place. To start a family. Due to its chemical descendency. In-Fer-Tility. Sterility. Pruning your family tree. But it sure beats the alternative. Which is spirituality. Believe. You. Me.

The Cheese. Closed it out, by laying down. The foundation. Of any future best laid plans. Reprimanding The Severants. Made their eyes wide. And round. If any—I said any, one of you clowns. He growled. Nice, and loud. Are thinking about clowning around in Buzz Town. You all know what happens. If any of you palookas rebuke. The kooky evildoer that runs that town. He will skewer and chew up you sewer rats. Then puke you out.

And they all. Answered the call. As it's a large world after all. The leftover Severants first went down. With heads held low. To The Pool Hall. For their traveling goodwill rhino. Then they hauled ass. Arses and elbows. Heel. To. Toe. Over the wall, and into the grass. That was tall.

Buzz Town. Hard to rhyme. For this sticky. Subliminally sublime. Lifer of crime. But it is. What it is. Same as it ever was. Buzz Town. That's the name, don't wear it out. It's down the road A-Piece from The Trop. A downright livestockish beehive. Hence, the nickname. From whence Daddy Long-Legs O-Riginally came.

Buzz Town. This hive is organized. Just like old times. A labor intensive Co-De-Pen-Dent Relationship. Of crime and labor. Buzz Town: Union busters, nowheres to be found—except sweating, in the ground.

You must shop. At the company store. Trains, rockers, bobbers, and hoppers. *Galore*. Turning around. And 'round. In roundhouses. Oil drums. Lumber mills humming. Tanneries. Tanning. Canneries. Canning. Factories. Granaries. Processing plants.

Buzz Town. No hobnobbing snobs, swells, cads, fancy lads, and dandies. Allowed. In this bubbling cauldron. O' stockmen, switchmen, guards, and gandies. Grease and steel monkeys. Hardhats, and hellcats. Shooting a shot, and a beer. With the alderman. On the

ombudsman's tab. Goons. Peeling off any scab. Swing-shifting. Grave-yarding. Jar-lifting stevedores. Sorters. And assorted heavy lifters. Paying monthly dues. From their daily wages. For slaving in hubs, and gravel pits.

The changing times. Are a' changin'. You just can't spoil someone, like you used to…They get downright forensic nowadays. C.S.I. Mi-Cro-Sco-Pic. Biological. De-Oxy-Ri-Bo-Nucleic. Detectivry. These swatch dogs. Picking and sticking anything. Into their little plastic bags.

Keeping it tight. Blacklighting the scene. Walking on neoprene. The Cheese knew how to be heard, but never be seen. He subscribed to all the dixie and Jeebie How-to videos and magazines. The Cheese. A cut above. One step ahead. On the cutting edge. The Cheese. Absolute power. Ab-So-Lutely.

I nicked some of my lady's meds. To get me through this one. That we will never mention again. It. Stays. Here…are we clear? I'm sticky. I steal personal properties. Not commit atrocious atrocities. I'm a man of the arts, and the humanities. Tarts, and depravities.

But I woulda done anything—or anybody—acrobatically. For that matter. For the big. Bad. Bad-ass. Black-and-blue hatter. The Cheese. Who learned one thing, from the greenies. Something that's not debatable. As all of us mutts, are biodegradable—subject, to the ides, of arch enemies. In our Gardens of Gethsemane. Besides, in all honesty. The Severants would have deep-sixed yours truly. Viciously. Expediently. Fixed my wagon. Eventually. Spiritual—them, or me. Repeat after me. Again and again and again.

I needed, to be excused. Ever so recusedly. To be goofily distant, and aloof. As I let it rip. With the one-hundred proof. In those slipped mickeys. Mezcal, with a back of tequila please…bourbon neat, with a splash of whiskey…151 rum, with a chaser of Everclear. Beaned up. With a belly full, of happy beans. Anything. To obliterate. The short-term memories. In this abode of notorious notoriety. Sticking a straw, in all of the seven seas. As I'm speaking, with a mouthful of bees. All at The Bustard. It sure beats thinking. Even before I begin to start drinking…and sinking…into oblivion.

Yansey. Handed in his car keys, and got walloped—dolloped, was the cream, on our Irish coffees. Betwixt and between. Paying no mind to the dolled up. No chasing of tail. As we braced ourselves. With drugs, and alcohol. Speaking Welsh. Our hands and chins, on the wood. Two no-goods. Nauseatingly nauseous. Driving, the porcelain bus. Watching the ant races—our grins, wiped off our faces. Counting our sins. Us two footnotes. Drowning the frog, in our throats.

The Severants. Afterthoughts. Long forgotten. But not the thoughts, of rotting in jail. On our soggy noggins. The crushers, with swabs and scopes. Isotopes. Johnny Law's only hopes. A-Pro-Pos. To nail us misanthropes. Punchily drunk. On the ropes. Is there anything else, you dopes need to know. About The Life?

Success in The Life of crime
Is knowing it can turn on a dime
As you master the art
Of stopping your heart
While living and dying at the same time

Chapter 19

Spoiler alert…I've got some news. Hot off the press. Front page, above the fold. Truth be told. I confess. I spoiled The Wheeler. Rotten. Tag, you're split. On a whim—with vim, and vigor. With my hair trigger. *Rigor mortis*. A *prima facial*. For The Wheeler. Control. Alt. Delete. The wild hare, spoiled the tortoise. To smithereens. This hate machine got mean. And then some. Splattery. Verbatim. In the first degree.

The Wheeler. Had it coming. Asking for it. In my slightly biased. Opinionated. O. Pinion. After what he did. In that sordid affair. Involving. Re-Vol-Ving. Around The Cheese. The Wheeler. Disrespect, on a global scale. Causing the alpha whale's heart. To seize like that.

The Wheeler. Acting on behalf of The Doon. And his pet baboon, The Mayor. Pushing The Cheese around. With his new found power. Amateur hour. During the attempted buyout. Assisted by two particular goons—The Mule, and The Lump. A fool, and a hump. Getting that jackal's back. For extra impact. The Wheeler lacked tact. Smacking The Cheese around. Knocking off his hat. Stressing him out. Messing, with his meds. Which inevitably led. To The Cheese's deadly heart attack.

Un-Be-Lievable. In-Con-Ceivable. What I saw, with dropped jaw. My countenance was agape. After I found, the videotape. Of the encounter. As The Cheese's security system was in place. That night, when the man, with the round face. Got erased. An awful electric eyeful. Of camera obscura. Solved the case.

Mister Wheeler. You didn't know about that. Bit of acrobatical hattery. Now did ya? The Cheese. Watching the seas, from high above. Like a hawk, in the crow's nest. Tailing those with no love. What. So. Ever. Just pop in the tape, and pull the lever.

Splattery. On the mean, Meaner, and MEANEST. Should be just a misdemeanor. If you ask me. Extreme. Prejudice. Malicious. Doing the business. At hand. Not a pretty sight. Clean-up, on aisle five. Knocked the cover off. Grand slam. And the fans go wild. An upper decker. Standing-O. A curtain call, for that dome-wrecker.

What's this world coming to? Gone to Hell. In a hand basket. My dander was up. Way up. Say your prayers slowly. Dinner is deservedly served. And it's ice cold. Manslaughter. From this sticky marauder. All of this, and then some. All of me. History repeating. Coming through that monkey wrench. King Mawdy, and his scepter. Giving you the thumbs-down Mister Wheeler. A downright divining rod. The big job. Chalk outline, for the swine. Sent him to God. Sign your name on the dotted line. No remorse. From this horse, of the Apocalypse.

State. Your. Business. Now wait. I had originally gone there. At an hour, most late. Through the back gate…to negotiate. A conversation. Arbitration. For some dirt, as well as data. Cur. Rent. Up. Dates. On The Mayor, and his Cellar-mates. But the Wheeler instead. Said I was in, over my head. Ar-Gu-Men-Ta-Tive. Pejoratives. Give me that incriminating tape, Jackanapes. Or you're dead. You piss stain. You're now on our list. With The Cane. Who's next to go. To a Valhallic plane.

Next to go? Whoa. Hold the phone. Zero discretion. That's not cricket. Way too much info. From this host most insane. Proposing to me, such a zero-sum gain. And you know the rest…

…Survivability. Got the best of me. I cleaned out the pantry, the fridge, and all the food storage. Every last trace. Filled two pillow cases. From this cold mother's cupboard. Food and gouda. Numbers one and two. On an urchin's breaking and entering list.

I put it on an urchin. Yet, to be determined. TBD. A selfish scheme. But not as sinister, as it might seem. As a sickly urchin might not resist. This open opportunity. To play the lottery. Get put on trial. Tried. Wide. Eyed. As an adult. But achieving cult status. The little mouse that splattered the cat. As all of us in-the-know. Know full well. That The Mayor. With the help of The Wheeler. Left all the urchins in the lurch. Condemned. To a life of Hell.

All those in favor. Say die…DIE! This world, is a fishbowl. For those with no soul. So I thought I'd sweeten the pot. With another thought, for the rozzers. It was no big secret. That the urchins were hurt yet again. After The Mayor, killed new legislation. That would have curtailed as well as derailed their exploitation. In favor of a new Northern train station. And the leftover ducats. That could have gone for warm coats. Went for the gold shovel. The champagne. And other fancy libations. At the dedication.

The boys in blue drew conclusions. From the contusions. That The Wheeler was spoiled by an urchin. Not by you-know-who. But an urchin, with an axe to grind. Literally. So said the blind guy. As he let this rumor fly. Alongside all the evidence. They could not find. Not everyone. Can be saved from the street. Life's a bitch, and then you die. Which is approximately two urchins per month. In the street. At least. Death. Toll. Swallowed whole. As the crow flies.

Deceased, and desist. Cease to exist. Disease or famine. Especially in the dead of winter. Urchins. Sickly little Tropsicles. Feel the chill, of the butcher's bill. Consumed by consumption. In this wintry done-for-land. And the tally increases. With one good Nor'easter. So if you can't thaw out, and are ready to die. Spoil a crawler. Or in this case, The Wheeler. Before you find the white light. An earnestly urchinous. Charitably palatable Con-Tri-Bution To society. Before you fly high up, Up, UP, and away into the sky.

This will stick. In nobody's mind. For a few days. Max. A blink of a stink-eye. The Mayor's always got bigger fish to fry. Places to forego, and cronies to no-show. This organ grinder's monkey. Mucking about. With his cup out. The Mayor. Clown about town. BMOC: Bad Mayor On Campus—letter jacket, in all four sports. The jester, in all four courts.

The Wheeler? The Mayor could care less. The Wheeler may as well had fallen. Off of the face of the earth. As far as he was concerned. Out of sight. Out of mind. The Wheeler met his maker. From a life-taker. Whatever. That's how it goes. Now it's off, to The Casino.

Clear a path, for Hizzonor. Sound the alarms. *Tout de suite*. Mini-bar, hard eights, four bars, and box cars. Let's party like rock stars—straight across—all courtesy, of The Cane. With a smile, on his poker face. The status quo. The highest highs. And the higher lows. High-lo. Roll 'em if you bought 'em. Leaving rock bottom. For all the other schleps, schmucks, and average schmoes.

You want tickets. To the big fight? Sweetheart, I'm The Mayor—ringside, is my middle name. And The Trop is my claim to shame. I can even get you a seat. At the weigh-in. Consider it done. A fun time in the city. All right. The big fight. I'll be dressed to the nines. So wear a snappy number, that's skin tight.

My wife? The Mayoress? I could care less. She's somewhere There A Bouts That A Ways or another—and truthfully, it's my druthers. We stay together coz she's the mother, of our daughter. But don't tell anybody. Now the fight's in The Boards. Not a place. For a nice girl like you. But here's what we'll do. Bring a friend, and a friendly girlfriend or two. And I'll swing it. If you hold up your end.

What was that cupcake? You want to meet The Rake? At the big fight? I suppose. He usually sits, in the back rows. But I think he's indisposed—on a long weekend, with some doe. So for now. Lose those buttons and bows. And let's curl our toes. Alongside Eros. So come ever so closer. Next to this Emperor, with no clothes.

Chapter 20

So, by now you should know. That I'm sticky. I lead a life, of what's right in front of me. Which makes me, my own worst enemy. I steal, nick, pilfer, and purloin. I read The Big Books, in The Joint. With Doler. Behind bars. Two times. Standing on my head. Born and bred. To stay in good stead. With a full line. Of streetwise street cred.

But the law also knows. My indiscreet In-Dis-Cri-Mi-Nate Indiscretions. The dixies, along for the ride. Riding shotgun, with my road map—my rap sheet, in their laps. Tailing me surveillishly En-Trap-Mental On poor ol' Mawdy. They know what I'm all about. Not all, but just enough. To rough me up. At the house of crusher. Over The Wheeler. Play a little bad cop-mad cop. Mutt and Jeffily. Gog, and Magog. The whole dog, alongside the pony.

The dixies. Said they saw me. Somewheres. Thereabouts. Approximately. When The Wheeler got spoiled. Yeah, sure your night owls spotted me. I was courteously courting *Lisette.* In The North. All lovey-dovey. She must have been…ahem…in the please excuse me. The little ladies lavatory. Lost in the crowd. Powdering her nose. And lining her eye. For this sticky guy. So nice try Your Slyness. With the sorcery. It's gonna take a little more. To get me down, to the Old Bailey.

Bless me reader. For I have spinned. Open. Sesame. The door swinging. Hope springing internally. My original Northern *amourish*. Adventurous sojourns. Were meant to cover my tracks—CYA, as The Cheese would say. Not at all altruistic. But sometimes deception, carries the day.

Premeditated perpetration. I planned ahead. Pre. Emp. Tively. With the lovely lust, of my love life: *Lisette*. To prepare. For this eventually eventual. Ritualistic. Terribly terrorizing interrogation. At the police station. An act of disgrace. A displace of trust—but ya gotta do, what ya gotta do. To remain on the outside. So everything else. That pales in comparison. In-Sig-Ni-Fi-Gance. Falls by the wayside.

Cupid is, as Cupid does. Something unexpectedly expected. Resurrected. During this deceivingly deceptive deception. A divine intervention. A transformational passion play. Of Bibliclesiastical contortions.

Push, came to love. Into the tunnel. The funnel cloud o' love. An incontrovertible *contretemps*. Murphy's Law, turned upside down. Read my lips: After a few trips to The North. *Avec ma maîtresse*. We put the "R" into romance. Our hearts, were beating hard. As our love, rose far above our pants.

They were the perfect couple. I subsequently broke up with *Beauté*. It's not you. It's me. Please don't toss my junk into the street. You don't complete me. But let's be friendly. We're different musically. Here's the extra key. And you can keep, all my DVDs. I will now leave you. To go in peace.

Was it something I said? Did I take up, too much of the bed? I pulled the plug. On my lovely lust bug. *Beauté.* In-Com-Pa-Ti-Bi-Lity. The cap, off the toothpaste. Toilet seat, up. Or down? Aloha means bye-bye. Beautiful *Beauté*. We should have taken—Us—More seriously. As nobody's perfectly pristine. But now it's in the past. And believe you me. It was certainly good, while it was nasty.

If you think you dialed the wrong number. Please try again. Sorry *Beauté*. The signal, will always be busy. You can't drunk-dial me. For a call of booty. As I don't have a phone. Yesiree. No records. No receipts. No traceable traceability—perhaps, perchance, I'm off to sea. As a merchant marine. With a precious cargo of tea. Or was I to be submerged, on a submarine? A tramp steamer? Damn *Beauté*, this is getting silly. You think this is easy? What can I say? I'm in love, with instability. And someone, who doesn't understand me.

When we last left our anti-hero…Yeah, I told the dixies. That I rolled in The North. You. Betcha. With *Lisette*. That one mischievous evening. Of destruction. For The Wheeler. I stuck to the far-fetched hatched plan at hand. I kept telling them that it's okay. I understand. It happens to everybody. Every now and then. But I'm not your man.

Then they trotted out Golden Boy. Golden Boy? The Real McCoy. A real joy. One. Tough. Nut. Semi-somewhat sadistic. He thought he knew, what made me tick. Inside and out. He's old school—nobody's fool, except mine.

I ain't never squealed. To the shield. I ain't no fraidy-rat, nor a scaredy-cat. So bring on the assault. And battery. Mister Golden Boy. Alongside your futile brutish tonality. Not the first time, and not the last. Jack. That I'll be under the lamp. So let's make this painfully ominous—yet hilarious—occasion. Meant for hilarity. Fast and furious. As I have a train to track, a plane to catch—and a plan, to hatch. Just so I'm home for Christmas.

Golden Boy. This Q-and-A-hole. Just doing his job. Nine ways to Sunday. And I'm doing mine. A popinjay popping off. With the patience of Job. Countering each jab, with jibber-jabber. And counterfeit chitter-chatter. Forfeiting nothing. Spitting horse feathers. Alongside the white lying, as they apply the pressure. These blame-gaming *Quid pro quomo*-phobes Getting in my face. Giving me goose flesh, on their wild goose chase.

April showers
May bring flowers
But I'll never sing
After each and every swing
Coz I've got magical powers

Awright Mawdy, where were you that night? At ten-past-six? Huh? What night? Let me see, there's been so many Yes No May Be So Doe Ray Me "B" and "C" only "A" and "D" Circle just one—or "E," for all of the above Fah So La Tee Um…ah…or was it none? Nighttime? It happens to me, at least once a day. Until I die. So I said nicely, icily, and slow. As I told him where, and exactly he could go.

Objection, your honor. Did it ever occur to you. That you have the wrong guy? Mawdy. *Monsieur-wrong-dez-vous.* Stirring, with his big, wooden spoon. Golden Boy. Miffed. His eyebrows, began to lift. His countenance shifting. C'mon wise guy, the night we found the stiff—The Wheeler. We're not buying, the urchin version. Let's chill, on that rumor mill. Now stop blowing sunshine. Stop your whining. Cough it up, and start writing.

But watch it now—not too loud. Keep the peace. You have to do a little kow-towing. With your head bowed. As The Cheese would say. Or Captain Blighter. Will dangle you, by yer shoes. Off of the bow, of his tight ship, The *HMS Brutality*.

The North Side? Are you high? I replied. You know where I reside. The North's for swells. And fat cats. And I ain't neither. So take a breather. And show some restraint.

Lisette, ma maîtresse. Likes The North. *Ma maîtresse?* That's French. For none of your business. Privacy. MYOB. As I added insult, to perjury. So give it a rest, Mister ham-fisted jurisprudence. Please excuse, my French. As I use it, as a litmus test. For you gorillas with too much hair, on your chest.

No more. Mister nice guy. Golden Boy. Now annoyed. Deep in perspiration. Exasperation. He then accelerated, the intimidation. He attacked and smacked me. A-Round and upside. Applied the pressure. Getting his kicks—the sticks, alongside the stones. Played the xylophone, on my bones. But not as hard, or stone cold…as Oinkle.

Oinkle. Alongside his wailing, and loveless dovetailing. Of destructively critical, dimwittedly cynical spitticisms. Would never fail, without fail. To put on his blue hat. And use the cat o' nine tails. In between the hammering, and the whaling. So I bent, to put on a show. But I did not break. From Golden Boy. And his patronizingly pathetically pathetic game. Of pat-a-cake.

Frustration. Consternation. All over his beet-red countenance. As I was calm throughout. As my Momma. The queen diva O' Hell-O-Drama. Had him beat, by a country mile. Ten times as much talent and bile. And when you've been raised in Hell. It's all slaughter under the bridge. That was burning. When I was first learning. All about The Life.

Golden Boy. Rolled down his sleeves. And began to sheepishly redress. His grievances. A panderous scheme. If I ever saw one. He started using some big words. The nerve. Alongside his deleterious looks. Oblivious. To my penitentiary memory retention. Learned from Doler. Getting downright tutorial. So I gave him my undecidedly contrite. Inattentive inattention.

Look Mawdy. I'm one of the good guys. I'm on your side. I'll put in a good word for you. Yeah. Right. Yesiree. I will get that check, in the mail. Posthumously. After they throw the dirt. Over what's left of me.

Nice ploy, Golden Boy. Where do I not sign? You should have stuck. To your goon routine. I breathed a sigh of relief. As he kept trying to get a tune. Out of this sticky violin. With a bouquet of violas. And violets. Golden Boy's white noise. Was Muzak, to my ears. As it dawned on me. That the boys in blue. Had no clue. And could not prove…Who. Dun. It.

Chapter 21

Garçon. *Pardon moi*. Check please. And keep the change. As I am so out of here. I am sick, of the thick of things—the arrows, and the slings. Time to get free and clear. Of the present danger. This saddle-sore warrior. Has got to rove. And range. Make arrangements. Change of scenery. Catch me if you can. Policeman.

I decided not to wait around. To hear the gavel pound. While a court was in session. For the third. And the last time in my life. E-Vacuation, my last battle station. Of the cross, that I've bore. In this war. So I'll take a rain check for my crucifixion. As the world has gone nonfiction. A Tropical depression. A category war system. Gaining strength. Not seen since Daddy Long-Legs. As a Tropa Lolla Pa Looza was inclemently brewing.

The Boards. Closed for repairs, and renovations. I detect insurrection. In many directions. Perhaps, the whole damn city. Anticipation. Chaos. Betrayal. Anarchy. Double-edged swords. As well as ploughshares. Would be the bearers, of this brunt. And I'm done with the grunt work. I'm gonna punt this one. Out of bounds. As I've set my track record. Proving everything. To no one. But myself.

I better quit, whilst I'm not dead. There were too many piranhas. For this *persona non grata.* Treading. Dreading. In this emerging deep sea of divergence. The dixies were working hard. Or hardly working. Either way, they were still lurking. On The Wheeler. All the feelers. Keeping tabs—smack dab, on the crime scene. With too keen of an eye. For the *corpus*, alongside the *delicti*.

Look Ma, I'm on top of the hit list. Public enemy number three. Suspectfully. Behind The Doon and The Mayor. And three's a crowd. Especially when you don't have the power. That was vested in The Cheese.

So I took flight. All by me onesy. On my tippies. I towed that line. Exodus, and exile. Slipping. Sliding. Gliding quietly. All the while. Tipping my hats in style. To The Cheese. And all the other fond and ponderous memories. Unbeknownst to the crushers. And all the other long and strong *gendarmes* of the law.

I'm armed. With some lucky charms. A pocket full of ice. Diamonds. These little miracles. Sparklers. Under my belt. Ready to melt. Under the heat of distantly distant suns. The ice, you say? Oh, I musta forgot this one little itty-bitty infernal kernel of disinformation. That's going to pay. For this bit o' business.

When I rolled with The Cheese. I was in a constant state of ingratiation. Subjugation. A downright tributary of tribute. His office, a grand essential way station.

This contributor, had kept a souvenir. From The Big Score. But of course, you remember, The Big Score? With The Skeeve, who is now no more.

'Twas a cat statue. The leftover residue. From that gruesome poo-stained *rendezvous.* I hid it. Out of view. When the crushers busted You. Know. Who.

La chat, in decent condition. Egyptian. Cryptically hieroglyphic. From me, to The Cheese. Just for you. I wrapped it myself. I gushed excitedly Quote Un Quotably Presenting this prezzie. To The Cheese.

This is for you. For all that you do. This anciently painted feline. From The Nile. With a semi-somewhat Chesirous smile. Plus, it's hollow inside. Just Like Us. A great place to hide diamonds, emeralds, and rare ducats.

Mawdy. Dog. Gone. It. You shouldn't have. Wheezed The Cheese. Taken aback. Ever so graciously. He kept that clay cat. Centered. Front and center. On his entertainment center. Hiding, in plain sight—from you, but not I. And when The Cheese floated up, into the sky. It was bequeathed to yours truly. Unofficially. Un-E-Qui-Vo-cably. My inherent inheritance. AKA, what was coming to me.

And that little kitty. Who lost its mummy. Is still sitting pretty. *Tutankhamenly* calm. With a tummy, that's slightly empty. Okay, you got me. No need to be silly. It's totally empty. Now filled with candy. What can I say? Diamonds. Are a purloiner's best friend. Yeah, I wear the hat—yesiree, and all of that. But I'm first, and foremostly sticky. You silly sprats. Cat burglary. Is part and parcel, of my acrobattery.

Now the hard part—the heavy lifting, of my hardened heart. There were those nearest and dearest. That I would miss dearly. Sincerely. And one or two. Who were there, from the start…*Lisette*. Be still, my beaten heart. Pounding in my chest. *Au revoir Sayonara* My belle, of the boudoir.

Damn, I'll miss Yansey. And even Souser. The Scrape? I might have an extra page of stationary. For this emissary of devastation.

Yansey. Not on Yale's or Oxford's mailing list. But he knows how to resist. And coexist. When the sinking ship begins to list. Souser has his own niche. He will stick his finger. Into the mist. And through the haze. Point his soap box, and pitch his fits. Thataways. During the up and coming days. Of survival, of the fittest.

I'm gonna muse. Somewheres. Thereabouts. After a long hot shower. To scour away, the grime of my times. Where they won't stare. And won't care. No screws, crushers, rozzers, or sacks. Anywhere. Where the azure is blue and high. So it's so long suckers. Bye-bye. I'm walking away, with my walking papers. So knock yourselves out.

Greener, pastoral pastures. New masters. For this caster of diversions. On the fly-by-nightmare. And if I dare say. As we are gathered here today. I may have dodged the knife. And The Card. But I will always be hardened and hard. Scarred. For. Life.

Clackety clack
Hear that train
Chew up the track
I'm the one who's got my back
Who can't wait to unpack
At stations, in destinations
Unbeknownst

No fretting, or sweating. Over a trail of crumbs. Left for the crushers. Soon to be afar. No car. No phone. No credit. No records—to be found, on this acrobatical boot-scooting sticky superstar. No plastic. No receipts. No dixies. These feats learned. Walking between the feet of the Cheese. The King of Panache. Who taught me. To always flash the cash. On the barrel. To remain to stay, and play. In the parallel universe. Free from extraneously extraordinary Ad-Ver-Sity.

Sure I've got paperwork. Up the yin, and the yang. Passports. Social security. All sorts handed to me. Under the table. Confidentially. At Rotwang's. The Trop's unofficial currency exchange, DMV, and American Embassy. All rolled up into three. The whole shebang. Tucked under my hat. That's obscured from view. My new hue—my blue one, and my black one. Nowhere to be seen. I tossed them out. Somewhere in between The Trop, and a sight unforeseen.

Lisette. *Ma sauvage fleur*. She was headed toward the burbs. Family leave. To help her mother, for a week of peace. With her sister's new bundle of joy—a niece, which gave this sticky boy. The opportunity to flee. This wanker, pulling anchor. But we did, have one splendid last foy *royale*. In The North.

Our last night together. Unbeknownst. To my little rose, in the heather. We knocked boots. In our birthday suits. All night. Not cool, playing her for a fool. I would agree. And yet another casualty. Left on my scorched-earth insurance policy.

Yeah, I heard you. It was indeed a dirty deed. Of immense insensitivity. But I had to make it all look right. Believe you me. Un-De-Niably. Not one of my finer moments. Please forgive me.

She left for The Sticks. On a Friday. I left on the Sunday. On the lam. Am-scray. Before the clean getaway. First I scurried hurriedly into her flop. On the Saturday. In between. And left her a good-bye note. *Auf Wiedersehen*. Yet again. Distant, but not too remote.

And some swag. Parting gifts. With the hope, of lifting her spirits. Re-Com-Pen-Sively. Second floor—Women's Apparel! A few pairs, of those pointy shoes. That all the hot *tamales.* Show off to the lookie-losers. These days. Alongside a watch, and a necklace—but nothing too reckless. All from the middle shelf. Not the bottom. Nor from the top. I did not want it to get out that I was bailing. With a huge slice of The Trop. Somebody might try to find my sticky ass. If they ever knew that my swag. Would cover the cost, of all of their gas.

Chapter 22

The wind. Is at my back. As I walk away from the blue. And the black. The rack, and the ruin. So long suckers. I'm taking my shovel and pail. And leaving the sandbox. This duck is going to fly. Across the pond. And revel in some *pax Romana.* On a one-way roaming holiday. Wanderlusting. *Tuilieriously.* In a place. Where the people call the world *Le Monde*. The land of *Voltaire, Molière,* and *savoir-faire—mon frère*. Where only Old Roger may care.

You've noticed my predilection. For hard to detect dialect. From foreign shores. Inflected inflections, infecting my reflections. The directive, of this documented narrative. Living. And dying. With The Big Books. Alongside. From you-know-who. In you-know-where. The pensioner, in the penitentiary. But there were those other books. In my iron-barred monastery.

Lexicons. Available to us cons. In the library. Periodicals. Rags and mags. Inspiring this stagnant stag. With dreams of diabolical acrobatical sabbaticals. To become a son, downright prodigal. *Autobahns Le Mans Notre Dame Champs Élysées* Tuscany Burgundy—if it's Monday, it must be *aujourd'hui*. That always comes to me. Grand Prix. Europa. Utopian U-To-Pia For this sticky globetrotter. Galloping. Gallivanting. Frolicking Gaulically. From here to eternal anonymity.

This beastly *Angleterrier*. Pushing against The Pillars of Hercules. Belize you me. Majorca I-Biza The Leaning Tower of Pisa. My heart beating. My feet greeting medieval streets.

A pilgrimage. Of plunderous pillaging. Getting betwixt and between the sheets. With Swiss misses Re-Mem-Be-Ring While forgetting my childhood. Of no pots, for the pisses. Wandering aim, shame, and namelessly. Wondering if I took a ferry. Around the Ring of Kerry. With Souser alongside. Out to sea. With a few pints of Vitamin G in our bellies. Sitting and spinning. Spitting out ditties, into the Atlantic Sea breeze—now, that reminds me. Of another story, in my sordid history…Four crooks walk into a bar…have you heard it?

Four crooks walk into a bar…There was another dive. In The Boards. It catered to the foreign hordes. Brian O'Brians. Oh my Lord. Quite the den, of Irish lions. A cadre of Emeraldry. A registry of Ryans, O'Douls, and Murphys. Rising ever so stoutly. Loudly and proudly. To the occasion. Getting downright Hibernian. With the Erin-Go-Brawlers.

Souser. Coarsely, and hoarsely. Once held court, in this public house—actually, it was one particular Saint Paddy's Day. As I recollect. When we all give thanks, and show our respect. The correct way. Getting stinko. Alongside the lads. Nattily clad. Traditionally. In their greenery. Souser. For all to see. Offered up this little piece. Of hilariously Ob-Se-Quious Obscenery.

Oh, Paul went a' courtin'
Just the other day
Claimed he was goin' fer ale

But that's what he always says

Now Paul came back with a smile so wide
And with a lively gait
With a beer in his hand he says to us
It's a sin to masturbate

Now Paul went a courtin'
Earlier this day
Gone to find a proper wife
Coz it's the old-fashioned way

Then he gathered us around
And said he never felt more aliver
He confessed about this nice cat house
That only charges a fiver

Now…WE'RE ALL goin' a courtin'
Thanks to dear ol' Paul
It sure as hell beats workin'
Fixin' an old stone wall!

MC Souser. The emcee, of vulgarity. Now had the inhabitants of Guinnesstan. In the palm, of his shaking hand. The boys were roaring. At this wild Irish prose. Courtesy. Of the red-nosed rainmaker. The drinks were pouring. Souser: The Bacchus Laureate. In all his glory hallelujah.

Then the smart alecky. Wisecracking. Wise. Acre. Busted out this following roof shaker. A bone breaker—a most unruly boozy doozy. A *delirium tremenstration.* Unbeknownst to yours truly. And The Scrape.

But Yansey…This ten-over-sixer. Bound with elixir. Was foolishly drooling. Alongside Souser. Suffering a sympathetic. Psy-Cho-So-Matic. Problematic. Case of Slurrette's Syndrome. Yansey then announced with glee. That he was the co-author and the co-hort. Of this ghastly disastrous. Ghost-written. Unauthorized. Un-Com-Pro-Mising. Miserable piece of catastrophically flimsy cataclysmic whimsy:

Yer sister went down to the barn
Like she does ev'ry day
To feed the horses their daily lot
Of oats and barley and hay

Yer sister ain't the prettiest lass
What the hell can I possibly say
I believe she got her big fat arse
By eating those oats and barley and hay

There were not too many men about

As sure as her teeth were green
She was full of desire that's no doubt
With thoughts that were quite obscene

Now yer sister —

—Wham! Bam! I'll be damned. And that's, where it all ended. This horrendous rendition. Awww Souser, look what ya gone and done now. You're a goner. One gone pecan. The baby, alongside the bath water.

Maybe, we should have previewed. Your convoluted tune. This bottom burp. That you carried, out of your bucket. Got the crickets chirping. It sucked the air, right out of the room. Off-putting. Un-Settling. It went down, like a lead balloon.

The sing-a-long. This disconcerting concerto. Was oh-so wrong. An interminable In-Ter-National Irrational incident. Was no coincidence. Which coincidentally inspired Brian O'Brian's servers to stop serving us—permanently. Life without. This penalty. A sentence o' temperance most deserving.

Armageddon. End of days. Bet on black, and floral bouquets. At our funeral. During this sterling inconsiderate alliteration. The sons of James, Erin, and Hennessey. These captains of distillery got shirty. Shot dirty looks. While staring menacingly.

Every shellacked Mick, Mack, and Paddy wanted to whack us. Spiritually. With a shillelagh. Souser and Yansey. The daily-double of our troubles. Started a talent contest. Glasses were hurled. Patrons were churlish. Whirliest and Dervish. Lasses, no longer girlish. Class is canceled. Until further notice.

Yansey and Souser—a hellion, and a rapscallion. Started a whiskey rebellion. And it got chillier. As there were some killers, amongst the Bushmillers. Ready to get us harpish. Angelic. Oh boy, Yansey-boy. The pipes were calling. O-Bituarilly.

Now then, who just who just happened to save our collectively invective arses? Who kept the daisies away? The Cheese. Apparitionally. Long ago. *Autrefois*. He had fostered, an alliance. He had co-signed the lease. Alongside the somewhat semi-compliant Brian O'Brian.

It's all about Who. You. Know. Brian O'Brian, Esquire. No cowardly scion. Who refused to buy one. And give two free. With half the tip jar. Extortion, you see. To The Doon. The high as a kite. High. Way. Man. Of Northern highway robbery.

Bribery. Im-Pro-Priety. Bullying. All part of the handbook. But don't ever take Brian for a schnook. The Cheese. Took on the task, if one should ask. And helped Brian O'Brian move over to The East. And lift his first cask.

The Cheese was Brian's silent, yet violent partner. The lessor, and the lessee. Agreeing to agree. He assistedly helped Brian bask. In the glow o'er The Trop. Until Brian got on his feet. The Cheese never got greedy. Only squeezed a few drops. From a few of Brian's mops. Maybe wiped his sleeve once or twice. On the counter top. That's why our heads. After Souser's stellar dope opera. Did not get lopped off.

Souser, and his comedic relief Yansey. In the taxi. Fleeing and speeding. Breathing and bleeding heavily—back, to The Blue Bustard. Retreating in defeatist retreat. *Dopezart* and *TchaiSousky*. Quote Un Quotably. Said don't look at us. We cleaned up this stagnant opus. Which was originally a ditty. About one's Mumsy.

You heard write. Their original druthers. For this dare-devilish. Unchivalrous revelry. Was to ham it up. With a slam. About one's mother. Genius. A guaranteed. Grievous. Bodily. Beating. That would have led. To a lifetime, of intravenous feeding.

One last one. About Souser. To even it out. Souser: The menace, to sobriety. Is not always the down-and-out spouting Old Rogerish lager lout.

It was a cold, Dark, RAINY night. Once upon a time. And Souser—soused, as usual—yes, hence the nickname. Wandered too far out of his thereabouts. And got tossed into The Tank. After vomiting into the box, containing the mail. To be quite frank.

Souser. This mumbo-jumboing dumbo. Plumb out o' rhino. Said hell if I know. He could not make the bail. Always without fail. On that account. It took me a while, to get the message. No phone. No records—right, no crushers. So Souser sat, and he sat. Going crazy, like a slaughterhouse rat.

Souser. In The Tank. For over two days of shake, rattle, and roll. Cold turkey. Im-Bro-Glio. Sweating out the 90 proof. Bourbonic Plague. Jitterbugging. In this unintentional intervention. This drying saucer. The lost weekender—my brother, that is weaker. Fiending. Con-Vening, with the little green men. Hallucinations. In this five alarm. Un-I-Maginable. Flammable transpiration.

But the fool looked strong and cool. When I sprung him. All hung out, and dried. Sober as a judge. The wool, out of his eyes. After this ripple effect. His one-on, now untied. And his breath breathalyzed. And his distilled thoughts…crystallized.

When we parted amicably. Something fell out of his pocket—a cocktail napkin, with some poetry. Not the usual eye-watering, universally despicable and despised. Risibly irascible recital of devilry. But a downright jewel of a pearl. So I'll share it with you. As long as you don't plagiarize. I'm trusting you. And you. Now just imagine what Souser could do. Working with a mind. Not full of Mulligan stew. Here's what he left me—accidentally, perhaps purposefully on purpose. Now it's for you:

Anger turned inside out
Is still anger, no doubt
And you'll find
That it's the worst kind
Coz it's you that you're angry about

Chapter 23

The Life
Grab everything you can
And then some more
Then come back
And pull up the floor
J'adore
La Vie

Now back…to my incredulous journey. I'm a downright encyclopedic. Manically Germanic. Bacchanalian Brittanican. A randy McNallian. A trekking, *Bibliothèqnoing* Mediterranean. A rampaging Star Gazing Aegean seaman—so cry me a river, in the Crimean Sea. This colonist. Looking for companions. Poolside. To rule Britannia. And rule the sea.

This top cabana going bananas. In España—then it's off, to Italia…Lasagna. Ricotta. Rigatoni. Ravioli. Spaghetti Bolognese. *Ab. Bon. Danza!* This enthusiastic Tazzmaniac. Walking the Casbah—chewing the fat, shooting the breeze—doing, what he puh-leases. In the Pyrenees.

This ex-pat, from *Les États-Unis*. In full, bull-dodging Pamplonacy. Waltzing with the Viennese. Running free. Look at me. Would ya. Top o' the world. Each *Lundi*—every *journée* of the week. No. Body. No. One. Not a soul. Can pin a tail. On this Don Quixote.

There's no place like Rome. There's no place. Like Rome. I'm gonna row, Row, ROW my boat. Gently down the Seine. And toss my hat's that blue. Merrily. Into the Danube.

Did I ever tell you. That The Cheese. Once took this rube overseas? A *bon voyage, avec Le Grand Fromage*. The Cheese took yours truly to France. Slow and low profile. We used a sundial. Flew coach, coz we're not greedy. A subject, previously broached.

It was just the *deux* of us. *Rouge*-blooded hooligans. In a *Moulonic déluge*. Of chicanerous can-cannery. *Viva la rive gauchery.* Two Toulousish Gooses. Getting loosy-goosy. Getting their gander up. Philandering. Vicariously. Minding their business. Indulging their peccadilloes. Male bonding. *Absinthe*, making their hearts pound harder. For the blondes, now looking blonder.

I was rolling in style. With the fatso Fran-Co-Phile. A reward. After the board paroled this canary. After my first stretch, in the hat factory. I was silent. And healthy. In this ironclad aviary. With a gold mind of information.

The Cheese. Was most pleased. With my gumption. As I never bent. Not for one dead cent. As it was never meant, for inhuman consumption. And who needs new boots. Made of cement?

In between connections. The security inspections. The duty-free selections. This sticky evacuee. Asked The Cheese. In-Qui-Si-Tively. About which Trop qualities. Keeps all the king's horses. And all the king's men. Indentured, and on their knees.

Panache. Is. King. The thing. The Cheese said while smilishly gleaming. You should never swing from the trees. Always add a dash of panache. To your flash. At every party you crash. Alongside your *noblesse oblige.*

Panache. The key to all matters of hattery. Re-Spec-Ta-Bi-Lity. You won't find it in the haberdashery. Dare to flair. Even The Mayor. Would tip his hat, to this fat acrobat. Instilling fear. While sporting a *boutonnière*. Long-Leggishly.

Panache. Flashing the cash. While still taking out the trash. Acting royal. And still remaining a man, o' the soil. Spoiling some fool rotten. Whilst minding your manners. In one hundred percent wool and cotton. Saying please, and thank you. To some mutt. That just might want to shank you. Etiquette: the predicate, to all subjects and objects. In your black hand.

I can do a few decades. Of decadent escapades. Standing on my head. This chameleon. Living abroad. On the Continent. Continuously contiguous. Pro-Longing my longevity. Then maybe eventually it would be time. To get sentimental. Mawdy. A homing pigeon. Up, for some home-cooking. Looking to speak English. For the final finish. A senior stickizen. Convalescence, the essence of my goal. Get back to the red, white, and blue. Tippecanoe, and Tyler Too. Crew-up, with a new crew. That won't ask too many q's.

When this trooper. Eventually gets coopered. He'll take what's left of the war chest. Gouda left over after Budapest, Trieste, and Hungary—straight to serenity, alongside civility. Exit strategy. Driving the first tee, in a gated community. Golf carts, bypassed hearts, lawn darts, and motorized carts.

Cataracts. Catheters. Glucose meters. Artificial hips and knees. Lip-reading. Scrips after scrips. Pre-Scrip-Tively. Sensible shoes. Early bird specials. The allure of a life most irregular. Bingo every Thursday, potluck dinner every Sunday—right after church, and the soul search. Shuffleboard. Canasta. Mah-Jong. Pinochle. Where I belong. Until my knees buckle.

A natural death…a rarity, for a mutt like me. Spirituality. With nitty-gritty Oc-To-Ge-Neric dignity. Breathing with difficulty—please, no pity. As the bell tolls for Mawdy. Now putty, in the hands of the man. In charge of eternity. May he—or she, as it's still, all just a mystery. Have mercy over me. Forgiveness. The ultimate act of divinity.

We've all dreamt of leisure
Living off treasure
Indulging in pleasure
On the sand, by the sea

But it's just the same old sames
Only with new names
Playing the usual games
On the sand, by the sea

You may think this is mad hattery
But just you wait and see
When it's your turn to go crazy

On the sand, by the sea

And The Life. Goes on. Without Mawdy. I had three days to steer clear. Kick, up my heels. Spin, my wheels. Before I disappeared. Via aeroplane. On the tarmac. Never looking back, with my seat back. Snacking on salted snacks. I had time. To kill some time. To sort out the gory details. At a resort in the hills. Search and leisure. A pit stop. To wipe the gravel off. Put on some flip-flops. Cash in some of that stash. Of cash crops.

I got my fill, of top shelf swill. Snifter after snifter. To the gills. Taking baths in hot water. That never stopped. In my sweet suite. At least three times the size, of my Tropical flop. With a bidet, and a hot tub. Having my tootsies rubbed. My belly grubbed. A most pleasant stay. Alongside a delicious seafood buffet. Croquet. And course play. Replacing my divots. Searching the privets. For my doggone doglegged golf shot. Alongside some Northern snots.

But at night, I was all alone. With my thoughts. With my feet propped. In a suite so quiet. I heard a mouse fart. As he picked up the pin, that he dropped. Yeah, I got the big bucks. For this luxurious life o' lux. But the jury is giving me these funny looks.

Something occurred. My vision blurred. As the word thundered from on high. From a little bird in my ear. Near, and dear. A knot. Stuck, in my rotten craw. Solar. Plexused. Something. Must have come over me. In regards to *Lisette*.

During our Northern flights of fancy. Me and my girlie. Behaving stupidly. A most tympanic stereophonic cacophonous symphony. Mine eyes, have seen the glory. Of the evidence, to the conspiracy.

Love struck me. And I was lovestruck. Sub. Se. Quently. Out of the darkness. Love. Stark raving. Salivating. Per-Me-Ating. Love—love it, and receive it. But you better believe in it. It's one of the biggest words. In The Big Books. Powerful. In-Dom-It-Able. So warned Doler. With a teary wink, of his bleary eye. Probably as he remembered lost loves. Lost. To days gone by.

Love: The fiercest and furriest. Of the four-letter words. In the phonetic forest. Makes you blind. Cooks your mind. Charbroiled. Seared. Scorched. If you're under the influence, of this heart-boiled sorcery.

So this is how it feels. To be head-over-heels. Rapturously ravenous—cavernous, my soul. *Lisette*, and her six white horses. Staying within me. Indigenously. Time to return to sender. For this repeat offender. And zip back, to the mothership. To renew, my membership.

The Rake: The something, which was gaining on me. Was at the train station. Lying in wait. Impatiently. He knew I was no skylark. But he still had me tailed. Marked. And bar-coded for posterity. Courtesy, of a new mutt who was rather punchy. Strutting his stuff. A gutter-born tough named Wrenchy.

Wrenchy had followed me. Tenaciously. Wrenchy. A young and acrobatical chap. Running roughshod. Ready to scrap. Make his mark, on the map. Alongside, The Rake.

Wrenchy. This on-the-job trainee—the new breed, but not really. As you've seen one thumper. You've seen them all. Just this year's model. From the unlicensed puppy mill. Ill-bred, and pedigreed. But still built for speed. Everything old, is new again. Into the fold, as the old saying goes. But welcome, to the welcome wagon anyway. And don't say. I told you so.

We made our acquaintance. Respectfully. Wrenchy, an ex-urchin. Full of greasy, grimy, gopher guts. A fellow gung-ho sticky sicko. Sworn to sin, and predilection. In full acceptance. Of the omnipresent gallows. A pursuant truant—fluent, in his speech. Chomping at the bit. With vinegarous spit. Ready to represent. De-Fi-Ni-Tively.

Wrenchy reminded me…of me. That rings of familiarity. *Déjà vuly.* Wrenchy was ready to carry some water. Tempted. By the attemptingly murderous world. Of splattery.

Then The Rake pulled me off, to the side. For an aside. A downright shanghai. You can run Mawdy, but you can't hide. From The Life. I told him, I was out. *Adios muchachos*. Conscientious Objectively.

Allow me, to explain. I was one fingerprint away. One probable drop o' DNA. To be sent away. I was way past my warranty—my batteries, operating corrosively. Running on fumes. I didn't want to go up in plumes. Neptunishly. The Trop was haunted. Way too spooky, for this sticky parolee. Out of rabbit's feet. Listening to his ESP—his extra sensitivity, to the penitentiary.

No more broad arrows. Or stripes. Or God forbid…the gallows. This was a top priority for me. Due to my priors, it would be serious hard time—seriously, times three. The third degree. E-Ternity. I had no designs to recline six-by-ninely. Or nine-by-sixly, according to Yansey. With only The Yard for activity. Perhaps The Card. Or a sponge bath. Zaps of electricity. Amperically fricasseed. No more Mawdy. No more me.

The Rake invoked the age old adage. Of old time's sake. He stated I made a mistake. I was a Ye, of little faith. I was wrong to thumb it. But he understood. As there was no need, to dumb it down.

The Cane and The Rake. Got downright *avant-garde*. Darker than *noire*. Cardwork. They had called a secret assembly. Just us three. In regards to the clown about town: The Mayor. And his conniving and complicit *consigliere*: The Doon.

The Cane had always taken notice. That The Doon. Always had looked undercooked. Absolutely smashing. Repulsively ashen. Wince-inducing. And could barely mince convincingly. At the latest gathering.

The Doon: The crash, of the titan. So The Cane sprung into action—and marked, The Doon's heroin dealer. After each and every transaction. Now for The Cane. For every action. There is a nuclear reaction.

Home. Is where The Card is. Business is business. Is business as usual. And it's never personal. The Rake and The Cane. Wanted to maintain the balance. With no pistol dueling. They both knew I had spoiled The Wheeler. Doornailed and dead. Which gave me plenty of cred. And then came the unspeakable, as well as the unsaid.

The Cheese. Father Superior, with motives ulterior. As his end loomed large and nearer. Had been grooming yours truly. To succeed his monarchy. This heir apparent. Apparently. To the throne. Bonnie Prince Mawdy. The beneficiary, ever so valiantly.

This successor. During every transgression. With the exception, of The Skeeve. Had been successfully crossing every "I," and dotting every "T." To take over the Eastern principality. A sea change. Upwardly upward mobility. Unbeknownst. Except to the two precepts of predilection, The Rake, and The Cane. Who were now waving me, into the passing lane.

The Rake. Upped the stakes. Let's see if you have what it takes. As well as makes. The Rake said he'd recommend. That I start off, in the shallow end. Before I get handed, the keys to the kingdom. To go fee-fie-fo-fumming around. A dress rehearsal. Before the role reversal. Mawdy. A loyalist. Soon to be crowned.

Sure. I'd mind the Eastern store. I concurred. Gave them my word. Most behoovedly. My first move, with an invisible wink. Which made The Rake think. That he talked me into it. Everything, that he needed to know. To get his confidence to grow. As the show, must always go onward. For us crimson soldiers.

There were a few mandatory moves to make. On my part. Trivial matters. Before this war-torn warhorse. Got in front of the cart. Before forward progress would start. Issues to redress. With no time. What. So. Ever. To second guess.

I excused myself to the lavatory. To pore it over. Like never before. In solitary consignment. Tore up my plane tickets. And flushed them out to sea. On a sedimental journey. My dream holiday getaway. Was now a fantasy. But that's The Life. And don't feel sorry for me.

I then decided the ice. Would be funds slushed. My mouth hushed. Recusedly. Nobody needs to know. Well, except you. On a pinky swear. Alongside a triple-dog-dare. The hot rocks, into thin air. The diamonds. Back into the rough. Into the cigar box. In my lair.

I asked The Rake. Before I regained my footing. For the proof. The whole proof. And nothing but the proof. About the proof, in the pudding: The Cane. Word had it, that The Cane. A green-eyed monster. Mean with envy. Cut. A. Deal. Pegged the Long-Legged Daddy. Jeebishly into jail. Daddy. Grabbed and nabbed. Via and *vis-à-vis*. A back-stabbing. Jack. In Stir. Where there is no future. That was the tale. That I overheard. Somewheres. Probably in The Blue Bustard.

The Rake. Begged to differ. Said he didn't have the foagiest. About that old wive's tale. The Doon. Actually liked to whistle that tune. A ruinous rune. A put-on. Put on. By this dragoonish goon. You're smarter than that Mawdy. It's not like you. To get misconstrued.

What about Golden Boy—and his noise? The raw deal, with The Wheeler. The Rake. Asserted most assuagingly. And said indeed. A certain urchin. Unbeknownst. Tired of their life, of barely surviving. Dumpster-diving. And scavenging for leavings. Got up the nerve, to jump on the learning curve. And into the tangled web. That you Mawdy, had been weaving.

Volunteer work. Makes the world, a better place. An urchin took the bait. And walked through the gate—to take one, for the team. And get off the balance beam. A boy, now being raised by the big, bad wolves. In the ultimate irony. Of someone who is owed so much. Having to pay a debt, to society.

No need to worry Mawdy. This poster child. Is a ready-made case made for charity. Telethons, cakewalks, and walk-a-thons. The body politic. The feel-gooders of The West. And the activists, in The East. Will be dutifully civic. And anti-establishmental. Believe you me. This urchin will soon be out, of the gladiator academy. With a minor degree. To run free. And go straight to work…for me.

Now. More than ever…the crawlers. And all the other woodsy predilectors. To close out the talks. I asked The Rake. If we could take out this garbage. At the next Assembly.

The Cheese often instructed. His personal crushers. On his payroll. To dole it out. Unmercifully. Under the cover, of civic duty. The Cheese, the genteel giant. Had sympathy and he saved me. Coincidentally. But I had an extra helping. Of emphatic empathy. Empirical affinity. You just can't beat personal experience. From being a delirious urchin. Which deepened my enmity. Utter Hatred. Alongside my hostility. Wanting their blood-red blood. To run red. In the gutters.

The Rake agreed to agree. To these druthers. Loud and claret. Right after we turned The Mayor, and The Doon. Into blood brothers. The Rake said he'd give it a nudge. At this first assemblage. Aye, second the motion. Most affirmatively.

Look. At. Me. Still sticky. But strengthening politically. The whole world, can get a load of me. Right after that declarative decree. I did a flat out Mad Cap Mad Dash And steamed back, to my lady's flat. Reappearing, to actively disappear. The Dear Jane masterpiece. This hopeless, *magnum dopus*. Written. Ever so regretfully. On her stationary.

I'm back in action
Time to print the retraction
I've paid my dues
For an offer I couldn't refuse
Now let's get some satisfaction

The Life is cradle to grave
From sprat to urchin to knave
I will never break my stride
Even if Jesus wants to decide
If it's me he wants to save

There will be a feast. In The East. After we slay the beasts. We were to take Dragonious measures. And roll out, the dead carpet. For The Mayor, and The Doon. Wiped off the ledgers. The Mayor—Icarus, in a most precarious position. His feathers were starting to singe, from the binge. Of The Big Grift. As he flies higher. The Mayor would not be breathing. The same air. As *moi.* This grand pooh-bah of blah, Blah, BLAH. Was going to find out. What a *coup d'état*, was all about.

Chapter 24

Square one. Has just begun. *Ipso facto*. Ab-So-Lutely. The *factotum* poll results are in. We can now declare. That The Mayor, has got to go. *Adios*. The status quo has spoken. Time to redeem, this token of depreciation. The overnight infestation. No contemplation. For this Mag-Nanimous. Calamitous. U-Nanimous decision.

No remote chance—none whatsoever, of a float. For this captain, of a most leaky boat. It's a spiritual conversion. This version, all the way. All three judges scored it the same. Even the Russian one. With the "*ov",* at the end of his name. The last nail, in the coffin. Of the duck, who's now lame.

The Mayor. The big blowhard. The walking canard. His lot cast. His past, present, and future. Much too tense. No chance for penance. Not even the Pope is choked up. The Mayor's gonna be croaked. His license revoked. He's broken both sides of the fence. That he's been sitting on. For much too long.

In retrospection. To these two Tropical diseases, and their spreading infections. Were subject to detection…from The Jeebies. This was according to The Cane. Who was one hundred percent sure. They wanted all of The Trop. In their name. The Cane was the homicidal brainiac. Who was the eye, of this converging hurricane.

Not all of The Jeebies. Stay in The North. Some of these doomsday devices. Have their own vices. A few of these drips slip away, to the Casino. And after a few vinos. They spilled the beanos, about these two *amigos*: The Doon and The Mayor. The Northern *banditos*. To The Cane. In exchange. For a *mélange* of strange fascinations. There was no charge, for these *d'affaires*. With no harm done. All on the arm. Of Prince Smarming, The Cane.

The Cane. In control of the pleasure, alongside the gain. Always ready. At his insistence. With the champagne. Co-Caine. Mary Jane. Or any other brain-damaging bane of resistance. In-Vest-Ments meant for these Jeebies. Knee-deep in it. Looking for the freebies. Comps. Perks. Free. Crap. Capitalism schmapitalism. Supply the pie, and demand the sky.

The Mayor and The Doon
Trying to go it alone
Hope they made out their will
Coz it's time to finally kill
These two turds with one stone

Retribution. In the name. Of all the little Lilliputians, urchins, and minutiaens. The victims, of Hizzonor's cost-cutting solutions. Words cannot express this anger. The curds, and the whey. All having a say. In this matter of splatter. In the mind of this soon-to-be. All-in-black black hatter.

The urchins. Whose lives were disabled. After The Mayor's budget cuts were enabled. Urchins. Un-Ex-Pec-Tedly. Shortened. Exponentially. Never getting the chance, to learn the proper parlance. To read about adventurous adventure. International ventures. Larger-than-life characters. Mis-Ad-Ven-Ture and romance. Like I did, in Stir.

The Mayor. The Doon. Time to take a broom. To these two elephants, in the living room. The meet was set. At Rotwang's. Where no crushers hang. A situation—which needed to be under, as well as covered. First, second, third, and home base. Time to designate the hitters. Of the big bastard, and his first mate.

The Scrape, along with yours truly. Who didn't mind the wind-up, and the pitch. On this hitch in our plans. Now the umpires. Need to be kept deaf, dumb, and blind. As can be. Like bats in a bag, at the bottom of the sea. During this whirling whirlwind. Of splattery.

A notable footnote. In regard, to what I just wrote. I didn't read about baseball. In The Big Books. That's why I never mentioned Doler. Who, as you know. Handed them out. In The Joint. The Pen—oops—there I go again.

The Cheese would take me. Yours truly. To The Stadium. Two bleacherous creatures. The teacher, and the underling. Drinking fizzy drinks. Flinging peanut shells. Under our boots. On a midsummer's night daydream. My countenance beaming. I can still smell the hot dogs, and sausages steaming. I'm just here, for the good cheer. And the root beer—rootin' and tootin', for our own team.

It all seems like yesterday. What can I say? At this point. I later found out. In The Joint. While watching the fall leaves fall. That The Cheese. The Bard o' lard. Did not like baseball at all. He just did it remittedly. And committedly for me. Unselfishly. De-Vel-Op-Men-Tally. For every ray. For every drop of golden sun. And each home run. Let me give thanks. And you can fill in _____ _____ the rest of the blanks.

Why spoil The Doon? Good question. The Doon. Alongside his intravenous recreation. Was also in on The Big Grift. And like I said previous. It's the graveyard shift. For any boss. In The Trop.

If it's disclosed. They've got both hands. On the stove. With their tongues, on the broiler. Then it's time. To call in the spoilers. Unbeknownst. Blue plums all around. For this plunging bum. Along with his chum, The Mayor.

My new recruit. Wrenchy. A too much-too soonish. Psychotic tempest. Most teapotic. One rude dude. But has the right splattitude. A true patriot. Ten-over-six. A downright riotician. Sharing the vision. Ready to fight. Through this rite of passage. Going to share the stage. Earn his varsity letter. With us veterans, of The Cage.

So how do you get. Two Northern scoundrels. To drop down to The Boards. For a social call? Gouda. Rhino. Moolah. The root of all evil. Makes any deceiver. A true believer. Their pointed ears were ringing. To the siren singing. This good news. They were bringing.

The Mayor. The Tropical cancer. Lost The Doon's gouda. On the prancers. At The Track. The loot, mind you. That was supposed to be remuneration, for The Cheese. Greenbacks. Toad skins. For their future together. The Mayor. Then poured more, into The Casino. The Cane. Refraining and restrained. Did not doth, nor protest. And the rest of Dizzonor's war chest. Went for rings on his wife's fingers. And bells. On all of his squeeze's toes.

The Doon. Subjectively susceptible. To injective whims. Spending more than he was earning. Shooting the moon. Up his arm. Burning holes in his pockets. And his limbs. This disastronaut, liked the rocket ride. But now feared. Re-entering the atmosphere—and crashing, in front of his peers. So he was always looking smashing. From ear to ear. Endlessly cashing. Trashing his credit. By bouncing checks and dalliances.

And need I remind. That you have to get by. In a world most unkind. With a little Hell. From your fair weather friend. Enter The Mule. This old school power tool. Remembered The Whirlers. Loyalistically. This iron-fisted. Slightly twisted fusilier. Remembered with a tear. When his teeth were cut. Under the guidance of *Le Fromage*: The Cheese. Who also saved The Mule. As an urchin. Whose end was also near. Just. Like. Me. The Mule. Still reacting radioactively. To the Mayor's censure. Of the gluttonous Glutonium exactor.

It made The Mule queasy. To nauseously see The Wheeler. With rented bravado, and bravery. Mercilessly. Shamelessly. This chicken. Picking. On the infirmious Cheese. In his vestibule. With The Lump. Another muscular mercenary. Alongside, for the festivities.

And when The Cheese died. And nobody cried. All The Mule could do. Was swallow his pride. Until the next opportunity. The Mule: No fool, and virtuous. Knew to patiently bide his time—proper, yet sinister. Just like his prime minister. The most Reverend Cheese.

Gang. Way. Gone tomorrow. Here today. The Tropsie Twins. Arrived right on schedule. Behind Rotwang's. For the *zugzwang*. A supposed dope deal. With my gruesomely ruinous gang.

For so long I prayed. For a day like today. This particular day, that The Lord has made. Let us rejoice, and be mad. *Cheeson's Greetings*. Were given. On my command. Using my upper hand. Then Mister gnawed-off, more than he could chew—Hizzonor, got a sawed-off snootful. From you-know-who. Yours truly. Courtesy. Of my outrageously engaging. Twelve-gauged bringer of harbinging destiny.

That old braying Mayor. Ain't what he used to be—Mawdy, on the flying trapeze. A. Cro. Batically. Performed this splatirical. Frontal lobotomy. Introducing The Mayor. To spirituality.

The Mule. Got tactically automatic. On The Doon. This dead honcho. Who was soon strewn. Like wedding rice, at the end of June. The Mayor, and The Doon. The two newly deads. Joined together. In holy splatrimony.

What I did to The Mayor. Will last a lifetime. But it was not enough to repair. All of the despair. Of all the urchins. And all the others concerned. Vic-Ti-Mized victims. Of victimless crimes. But I'll take, what I can get. As this dead cat bounced. From my dramatically anticlimactic. Vetted out. Indifference. With a megaton. Of prevention.

The Lump. Did not want to go quietly. Into the night. As I took a plum, from this bum. Right in the thigh.

Wrenchy. Young and foolish. Under the influence, of too many movies. Got greedy. He was supposed to lie low. And keep our car speedy. Wrenchy. Seeking his graduate degree. In Splattery. Entered the melee. This young leopard, looking for his spots. Taking his pots, alongside his shots. Sub. Se. Quently. He got peppered and sprayed. The full RIP treatment from The Lump.

The Lump pumped Wrenchy. Dreadfully full. Of unfriendly fire. Before he himself crumpled ferously. From the furious fury. Of our twenty-one gun. Blue-plummed salute. That blew his plumage, to Timbuktu. Ruined his suit. A barrage. Our homicidal homage—a montage, of barking irony from The Mule and Yansey. Who was also there. To stamp the seal of removal. Comeuppance. On these two cancerous malignancies.

The sword, works in mysterious ways. Instinct. Self-preservation. With no reservations. This sorcery. Grabbed a firm hold. Of this sticky. Soon-to-be legendary legionary. Leading his barmy army, into infamous infamy. The Mule said yes sir, yes sir. And he tossed the three bags full of smack. Into the breeze. And I aired that heroin out. All over the scene.

Annie Oakley. Would have been consumed with jealousy. Envious. As I went three-for-three. And then I had Yansey. Collect their gouda, and their personal effects, you see… I'm still a klepto. Yesiree. My DNA, eternally cursing me. I prefer to heist, pilfer, and purloin. Re-Lent-Lessly. Survival instinct. Never wavering. Well—OK…just a little. Even with a bullet in me. Always weak, for the sneak.
Twenty-four-seven-eight-days-a-week.

And God. So loved the world. As for the mercurial Wrenchy. And his career-ending injury. Cosplateral damage. A red-and-dead badge earned courageously. Let's leave it be. An honorable internment. In a cemetery.

Me and Yansey. Did the deed. Picking and shoveling. Double-dutifully. Wrenchy. Interred, with a few good words. Via a burning lantern. Buried. Under a full moon. Surrounded by us two hounds. And the sound of the mercifully merciless sea. Actually, in all ironic honesty. It was almost…a thing of beauty.

Midnight sadness. This unceremonious ceremony. Grave jobbery. On a slippery steep hill, over the sea. On the back slope—reserved, for the ever so alone and lonely. Hopeless souls. With just enough shillings, to pay for the tilling. To lay themselves down to sleep. Praying their hole's deep. And the hard soil. Let's their embroiled soul seep out. If they're lucky. Through the rocks, the muck, and the weeds.

This potter's field was peaceful. Tranquility. No visitors. Nor inquisitors. We stepped over the picked apart rickety picket fence. And disturbed the peace. Very few, of the general public will view. The brick, with an epic epitaph. That we jammed into the dirt above him…"*Wrenchy…Fourevur in our memmerries Requiescat in pace Vene Vidi Vici"* Well, it was a big brick. With the first bit chiseled by Yansey. With the latter, in Latin. Done by yours truly.

What this side of the boneyard lacked in style, and dignitaries. It made up with stubborn pride. Shouted proudly. Amongst the wilted lilies, lilacs—and the cracks, in the headstone masonry. That someone out there still cared. Wrenchy. Even in death. Remains on the other side, of the tracks. Somebody. Please hit me. Ever so last respectfully.

My stiff upper lip. Almost gave out on me. During my eulogy. As I looked down at the dirt…at me. Wrenchy. *In dulce decorum est.* Another victim of The Trop's unrest. Heading west. Laid to rest. Amongst the best. Just a hop, skip, and a jump from my Momma. Dressed in her Sunday finest. She was just over the crest, and two rows to the left. May The Lord. Have mercy on us all. The buried. And those remaining. Who are still bearing the pall.

The Life
It weighs a ton
And a half
So get in your fun
Before the last laugh

Chapter 25

Extra! Extra! Read all about the news. That's pitiful to print. Time to play connect the swots. Papers splashed. Reputations trashed. Editorials distorting, the corruptively grafted. Disproportionately libelous. Absolutely tabulous scandal sheets. Hit the streets. In a PR *blitzkrieg.* Courtesy, of the *Troparazzi*.

Back up the dumptruck. Into the public consumption. You better beleaguer the bejesus. Out of these two sleazes. No remorse. So said The Cane, and The Rake—reliable sources, to all their journalists on the take. You better earn your keep—reap, what we sow. Or get the big sleep. We will close the curtains, on your show.

The fourth-estaters. Editors and reporters. On a crash course In-Or-Di-Nately Reporting Dis-Gorging—letting loose, with mutinous immunity. While still burning a candle, for The Cheese. Taking turns. Turning phrases. Making everything A-Okay. Oll Korrectly. In a mad dash, in this sadvantagious campaign.

News-gathering news hounds. Nighthawks. Pounding away. While Jane, and John Doe. That's you, you know. Suh-leep. Tightly. Deep-sea typing. Deadliners. Ribbons blazing and razing The Mayor. His ticks had fleas. And The Doon, and his two monkeys on his back. The Doon liked to get smashed. Alongside all sorts of skeletal unpleasantries.

Hizzonor. Was given an inch. And he took a pile driver. To The Trop. Gambling debts, beak wets, bid-rigging, and off-track bets. Heavens to Betsy. The man was as bad as it gets.

I did get my wish. To be a flying fish. On a *trompe le monde.* In order to get back on track. A bit of post-op floppery. In The Trop's cooperative Witness Prevention Program. Re-Cog-Ni-Zance. A mending spree. Insisted upon insistently. From the other two bosses, of the new Big Three: The Cane, and The Rake—and eventually, me.

I was told, to take a break. As a Jeebie, just might see the wounded Mawdy. Gimping limpily, around the city. Flapping on my one wing. Perhaps attracting a shoulder-tapping. Alongside a scruff-grabbing. And then a cuff-slapping, from Old Bill. After catching me napping.

So this acrobat left his black-and-blue hat. To get chewed on. By *Lisette*'s new cat. Did I say that? Whoops—sorry—*our* new cat, in our flat. Domesticohabitation. Shacked up. Living in sin-carceration. And yes we named him Razz—a razzmatazzler, of a cat. Our furry felinious sprat. He spoils the mice, and splatters the rats. If he could fly, he'd go after bats!

This sticky graylag. *Sans* his swag. Brown-bagging it. On a winter retreat. Getting downright migratory in gray Paris. Watching French television. While the incisions healed. No big books, to keep me company. Or a lovely luvvah to be my cup of tea. Mo-No-Ga-Mous. Mo-No-Gamy. Intergalactic celibacy.

But television. Does not do it for me. Watched miles, and miles of it. In the penitentiary. Especially after Doler, pulled the chain. Died, did he. A real head's up. Leaving me. With my cup. That was still half empty. Consistency. Coincidence. Yet

again, left to fend and defend. Independently. They're all out to get me. The consistent theme.

The telly, as well as the TV. Televised Euthanizing Hypnotizing Mo Ronic Cata Tonic. Banality. An estuary of mediocrity, that induces stupidity.

Please, hold your applause. Coz this is not, the end of the story. Not by any plausible stretch. Of the pagination. Taking out The Mayor. Was childish child's play. A red herring. Compared. To what was staring ahead. Un Be Knownst. Oh boy, what the future, held in store. As I was soon too busy. Caring about what I had wished for… but it's time, for a short break.

Intermission. Listen to the organ…or stretch your legs. Have a cigarette, then get more licorice.…little chocolate mints, are what I like best. Hint. Hint. Whilst we rest. Through this test. Of the emergency broadcast system…

So relax. And enjoy the rest. Of the high-volume. Demagogic. Grog-fueled. Demolition derby. I'm Mawdy. You see. Yesiree. And I adorn my speech. With the ease. From my heart. Right from the start. With The Big Words. Shorn and torn and b r o k e n a p a r t.

I'm gonna continue to grip it, and rip it. As we go the distance. This repeat offender. Venting. Cir. Cum. Venting—I'm circular, on a never-ending word bender. I'll give it. The ol' *collage* try. A *camouflaged mirage.* An artfully decorative decoupage. An unforgivable barrage. Of acerbically absurd. Corrosively verbosive verbiage. Ain't life grand. And give yourselves a hand. And follow my command, of the English language.

I'm taking requests. At the behest. Of the studio audience. Always have reverence. For those admirable adherents. As well as the converts. Even the casual observers. Amongst. Amidst. And along for the long ride. Climbing the mountain. Alongside. As we find our way home. In this untraditional contritional atoning tome. After this two minute warning. Before this phantom of Europa. Sets rail, on *le train fantôme.*

Chapter 26

A thumper on the loose
Or a swell, dining on goose
Well it don't mean squat
Coz they'll both get shot
If they don't keep paying their dues

Street gang or country club
There are always shoulders to rub
Heads to be rolled
Rhino to be doled
And don't ever lose your ticket stub

The Mayoress…The Mayor's wife—the dove, of our life. Flew into The Cellar. A perfect landing. Right on the perch. That her hubby besmirched. No need to church it up. A downright tactical. Nepotismal. Power play. But with each day, a new dawn. As the show must go on. As the bosses. Now including yours truly. Wouldn't have had it. Any. Other. Way.

The Mayoress. Our governmentally lovely governess. Her Majesty. Me Ladyship. Whom I worship. Stepped up to the plate. Un-Op-Posed. By all the other imposters, poseurs, and politicos—coz they know, what's good for them. As they curtsied. Bowed. And held their heads low. In the front row. At the coronation. For this new sensation. Who got a standing ovation. From Gangster Nation.

The heiress. The Mayoress. The fairest of them all. Walking the halls. Gracing the mirror-mirrors, on the walls. During this splendiferous *annus mirabilis.* One year, and a day. Of feather-bedded bliss. Man, we just couldn't miss, with her in office.

Snappy days. Were here again. The gray skies cleared up. And we found our happy place. The Mayoress. Knows a little, and a lot about The Life. The Mayoress, gave her address. In a perfect pitch—not a stitch, out of place. Displaying grace. Under fire. Intelligent. As well as debutantish. With no inhibitions. Quite the tactician. Matriarchal. In this farcical situation.

The envelope please…and The Oscar goes to: The Mayoress! Our *cause célèbre*. She said all the right syrupy words. To the wondering herds. In this media circus. At her late mate's funeral.

Then we cracked the bubbly. At The Bustard. Unbeknownst. As she despondently responded. To the corroborating. Cor-Ro-Spon-Dents. At the press conference. Displaying passion and reverence with a dash of panache, amongst the flash bulbs.

Now then. That which seems. To be too good to be true. Just might happen to you. Swag-to-riches. Bragging rights. Too big, for my breeches. Mission accomplished—I've got a slice, of the price of admission. I got a new flop. New digs. A tip-Trop cooperative co-op. I was still in The Boards. But a Grade-A upgrade. With a fat mortgage to be paid.

Moi: *Monsieur Je Ne Sais Quois. Un ma maîtresse*. Getting downright apartmental. In glass-doored. Tiled floored. Four bedroom ecstasy. This former poor man, now had a doorman. I was lapsing, into a trance. *Je suis très chic.* In this lap of deluxe luxury.

Congrats Mawdy. You've been bumped up. To the first class carriage. In this deranged marriage. Your enemies nixed. Your wagon fixed. Your martinis—mixed, with elixicious, blue-ribboned. High. Fa. Lu. Tin. Blue ruin.

I'm still Mawdy. Just so's ya know. Humility. When I sit at the big table. At The Assembly. To friends and family—yes, still sticky, but fancy-pantsy. Still friends with Souser and Yansey. Running the show. Sowing, and hoeing. Making the gouda garden explode. In The East. The rhino seemed to be growing. On the trees. Amongst the May flowers. Even in the weeds, around the ivory towers.

Rewards. This ex-urchin, who minded his manners. Was now the Lord, of the manor. Into it, born. Hoarding the big war bucks—all of my ducks, in a row. Closing escrow. Providing all the amenities. Accoutrementally. Mod-cons and conveniences. That come with modernity. For thoroughly modern Mawdy.

Third floor—Menswear! My pipe dream, was now alive. Doing it right, and in style. Bye. Bye. To the meat pies and tripe. Saying hello to blazers and stripey ties. In my new majestic domicile. Sophistigold-plated. All the way. Disposable incoming income. Wake me up, when it's over. But until then. Can somebody help me program my camcorder, HDTV, and RAM'd up PC?

Gimme. Gimmee. Gimmeeeeeee. In all my narcissistic ecstasy. An espresso machine. An automatic pot, for my coffee—and a separate one, cozied for tea. I propose a toast. In honor of The Cheese. A slice of French toast. With a cup o' French roast. I'm not a boaster. But now, I own a toaster. With four slots. A walk-in closet. To deposit. My new business suits. Alongside my hot-to-trot. *Haute couturish* boots. But still no phone—still no sound, of the ringing ringtone. You got it. No records. No trail. No crushers.

Call now. To get the new Splat-O-Matic. It's fantastic! Be the first on your street. To have one. I gotta get me, one of those. Just take a look, at this schnook. Reading his book. In his breakfast nook.

Mawdy, who no longer scrubs. His stinky socks. Or brushes his busted teeth. At the kitchen sink. Never again will I drink. Like a dog. From the leaky faucet. Get in line, for the water closet. No more collecting bottles. For the deposit.

I'm posh. I wash my wash. In the washer. Then dry it in the dryer. Garlic presses, pasta machines. Blenders, mixers, griddles, and grinders. Just the right mix of light fixtures. Stainless steel cutlery. I was up to my eye sockets. In all sorts of successful accessories.

Yansey. My wingman. Second in demand. Secretary of the inferior. Yansey. Who once cheered the pace car. For being in first place. But he's the only face. I'd rather see. When looking in the mirror. Yansey. Trustworthy. This yogurt-brained yogi of simplicity. Complementing. My compulsive yet fragile fragmentality.

Me and my lady. For special occasions. Still lay low. Pay through the nose. In The North. The North: We've already done the nickel tour—but an encore, once more. A curtain call. The crowd standing tall. So let's drop another load. On The North. Coz I said so.

The North. *Depeche mode* is the code, in this part of The Trop. Shop til you cop. A feel. Of that real chinchilla. Chin-chilla Chin Chin Cruelty.

Drop goes the weasel. Ermine. Sable. Fancy labels. But it's all vermin to me. Courtesy of your sugar daddy. That decrepitly decrepit fetid retiree. With all that old, Old, OLD money—the bees, and the honey.

The sheep. Bleating. For Louis Vuitton. Pra Da La Dee Da Dolce Gab Ba Na Gaberdine. Sah-weet baby. Sooey-sooey! Piggy-pigs. Get your fill, cruel, and de villainously. Maybacchanalians. Swag queens. Careening. Preening. Giving the Devil his due. Accruing. Cash. La. Rue. Up the wazoo. Looking for custom boots. Or whatever toots their horn—Born, with a silver spoon, up their arse. Parsimony. Nowhere near to be found.

The North: Where it all went. And still gets sent. Monies lent, to be spent. Until the next vent is opened wide. From The Big Grift. Then the lifted faces will lift. The swells will get spiffed. And the workers will get riffed. R-I-F. Which stands for Reduction In Force—or shown the door. Once more, just like the last time. That never again was supposed to happen. So said the directors. Sure. We're. Sure. As they shook the worn hands. Of the shift managers. During their plant tour.

The Cheese. Ten times bigger. Than Big Ben. Hated The Big Grift. More than ever. It made his own father pull the lever. Severed his family ties. Jumped off of a building. After being robbed, by the clobber barons. Topped himself. Despite the tries and cries. Of the onlookers, rozzers, and passersby.

Suicide. Goobye cruel world. You can't undo it. A permanent solution. To a short-term situation. A fate for those, who lost their strength. To swim the rip currents. Negotiate the undertow, in a rising tide. Only God can decide. Amongst the why-oh-why'd—The Cheese, and his father. Now perchance alongside. Absolutionally. Rejoicing in glorious. Re-U-Ni-Fi-Cation. The Cheese. Sometimes I can hear his voice. In the breeze. Whistling through the trees. Reaching and preaching to me. About The Life:

Always keep your knees bent
And don't get behind on the rent
Never give anyone a reason
To have a good reason
And you'll know when it's time to repent

Your honor. May I approach the bench? In short. The first short-ordered order of business for The Mayoress—The Woods, as promised. A most luminous occurrence. If I do say so. Exhibit A-Mend to that. Introduced, into evidence. By yours truly. Determined. At The Assembly. There were talks. In regards. To the crawlers, the stalkers, and the transgressors. The Mayoress. Decided not to mess around. And gave it her blessing.

The Mayoress. This eternally maternal friend. Of the urchins. Was now explicitly expressing her general concerns. For search and rescue. Her new administration. Was now earmarking funds. For separate shelters. Recreational centers. Health care, and a new reformatory. All for her little dears. Nothing would be too good. She said. As she barely held back the tears. After she got a good look for herself. From the outside. Looking in. At The Woods.

Sorry for the short notice. But we were in the area. Is this a bad time? Late one night, the crushers. Per The Mayoress. Locked the locks. Clocked, the surrounding sidewalks. In and around The Park.

Come out. Come out. Wherever you are. The crushers were shoulder-to-shoulder. Hats and bats. Scorching the earth. In The Woods. Uncharacteristally ten-over-six. Exterminating. These eventually E-Ventual extinct species. Spuh-lattery, from the high ground. With moral authority.

There was one rule, for the war party. Nobody gets The Card. When the justice is served. Just the juice. Hold the pulp. Leave no DBs for the clean-up crew. Don't get greedy. As even just one done-for John Doe. With no sheet, and an otherwise clean nose. Might attract The Jeebies. Who would put on a show. To pay for their salaries.

But just enough. Cruel and unusual police brutality. To keep them floating. In their own bloody pool. When they recuperate. These crawlers, mad sacks, and assorted maniacs. Will get processed. To the max, in the lottery.

Un-For-Tu-Nately. A few took their civil service. A little too seriously. And a couple of crawlers. With a long, sordid history. Found their way to spirituality. A real tearjerker—somebody, hand me a handkerchief. Ever so sarcastically.

And the word got out. From Buzz Town. Throughout The Sticks. Down to Spill City. That The Trop. Was now a city. With open hostility. For deviantly despicable. Predatorially. Re. Pre. Hensible. Deviantly miscreantic attackers. And all other low-down. Out-of-towners. En. Action. New laws. New policies. For the crawlers. Per The Mayoress. The new shot-caller. Now standing. Taller, and TALLER. From her new found raw power.

Back. To. Business: The Track, The Dump, The Docks, The Harbor, and The Stadium. We smoked 'em, coz we got 'em. Mad rhino. *Ad infinitum.* You get the picture. All of it. Three-way-splitfully, and then some. Which can ultimately. Make you a little deaf, dumb, and numb. From the strain, of The Life—The Life: Keep clear the drain. From the clogs. Of the cats and the dogs. As the rain. Can still come down. In the summertime.

Nothing to do. But sing the old songs. *Sans* the swans. That we wanted to sing. As we got too much, of this good thing. I had it all. I could not lose. I was given the keys, to The Blue Bustard. My constitutional. In The Cheese's customized custom stall. At The Pool Hall. But when you're ten feet tall. And the little people, look real small. Get ready…for the fall.

The Mayoress. Was still doing time. Mainlining. With her beau, The Rake. She always feared the insinuating innuendo. About where she got *flagranted*. As well as *delictoed*. So she got herself a beard. A financier. One of The Cane's peers. Who owned a yacht, at The Pier. A Trop-tiered semi-somewhat dandy. Coming in handy, to keep up appearances.

The Mayoress. Fooling we the people. By going to the church, and to the steeple. Well, except for those, who were schooled in The Life. Most notably the boss of Buzz Town. And the young guns of Spill City. Who took noticeably noticeable notes. Of all she wrote. Alongside her three-dollar Bill. The shill, who was getting his fill…of The Mayor's last will, and the rest of it.

Chapter 27

You learn something cruel. Every day. If it looks like a Rake. Acts like a Rake. And quacks like a Rake—then it's a Rake. But what difference does it make? When you're the talk o' the town. You're always one step away. From being taken down. The Life is pure nonfiction. It's a poisonous snake, in constant constriction.

The Rake. Allow me to elaborate. The Rake. The turd, in the punchbowl. The hole in the sole, of my shoe. Had been working in rabid collaboration. With the enemies, of our damnnation-state. In a spate. Of what have you done for me lately. The Rake fell prey. Gave way. To his incurable Un-Sa-Tis-Fiable Insatiability. AKA, he got greedy.

The Rake. This behind-the-scenes stealer. Sealed my fate. Check. Mate. Smelt and dealt me. Alongside Yansey, and The Scrape. We were turned about, and fair-played. To The Jeebies. What was I thinking? The Rake. Taking me. To the brink of brinksmanship.

But I was too busy. Drinking the champagne. Living the charade. To notice…that I was getting played.

The Rake: Instant antagonist. Add water, and mix. He went straight to work. Right after our convoking consultative Con-Sul-Tation, otherwise known as the con job, at the train station. I should have followed my unconscience. The Rake had me. In the cross hairs. I got greedy. Alongside my affairs, of my heart. Specifically…*Lisette, ma maîtresse*.

The Rake. He of the black, and the blue hat. More tricks, than you could shake a stick at. It's a slick world out there, *mon frère*. Always a game, of musical chairs. In this fickle and sick Troptical illusion. Never get delusional. Coz you're damned if you do. And you're damned…if you do.

We spoiled The Mayor. The Doon went down. The Severants, are no longer around. And The Rake gets to wear in his welcome. On the whole damned town. Wow. Brilliant. Well done. If I dare say so myself.

Where there is darkness. There is no light. The Cane. Didn't want to fight the gouda fight. Dodging a hodge-podge. Of blue plums. Switching lodgings. Under the cover, of the night. The Cane. Did not want to see. The sight of Old Roger. If he was deprived, of his living daylights.

Now boarding, at Gate 86: First-class passengers. Senior citizens. Adults with small children. And runaway gangsters. The Cane was dealt a dose of vertigo. But he's a know-it-all. In the know. Knowing. That one walks on top, of the walls of Jericho.

Vertigo—a curse, or a blessing. Bestowed upon those. Of the high, Higher, and HIGHEST heights. Fore. Sight. Intuition. To pull up the high stakes. Learn from your mistakes. And tip-toe quietly. Past the polite flight attendants. Onto the first flight.

The Rake. Now the power player. Infiltraitor. The betrayer, of The Mayor. Dialed a wake-up call. To The Cane. Wrote it with a paint sprayer. The Cane knew when to walk away. From the table. As too many times, he had seen the whales. At The Casino. Morph, into minnows.

Just like I said earlier. In reference, to Souser. It's better to leave two days early. Than one minute too late. Purgation. Ex-Tra-Cation. From one's underwordly possessions. You can't take it with you. Anyway. The Cane. Done a runner. On a redeye, or a midnight train. To anywhere but The Trop. Tis better to go out on top. Than wait for The Card to drop.

Policia! Polizei! That's the rozzers, *italicized.* They're always alongside. Til the day I die—the crushers, dixies, and a few Jeebies. Blew down my door. In a daybreak raid. What will the neighbors say? And faster than you can say Sweet FA. They slapped the bracelets, on this aghastly Ex-As-Per-Ated Perp-shocked Tazer-placated Dazed and shaking jay. Whoopsie. Daisy. Getting a faceful of mace. Paraded. Publicly humiliated. And I was just, getting the feel. Of this place.

Will the defendant. Please rise. Com-Pro-Mised. Un-Der-Mined. Served up. On a plate. With a side of lies. But I was not really surprised. The Life. Eye-openers, that open your eyes. Mirandized. Right in front of *Lisette*. Embarrassing. Mawdy: an enemy of the state. Arrested. Alongside Yansey, and The Scrape. For tossing that shape-shifting. Jack. A. Napes. That wallet-lifting grifter. Onto the railway. In that crime, of spiteful hate.

Yansey's extemporaneous spontaneous combustion. Ensuring, our Mutually Assured Destruction. It was inevitable. So Yansey, I forgive thee. Because I'm held accountable, to my accountability. I should have read the tea leaves. As strike one. And strike two. Always leads to strike three.

The Scrape. Almost got arrested. But instead. Got it in his head. To contest the results, of the grand jury. The Scrape was allergic, to the hat factory. And so decided to test the crushers' metal. And stand his ground. Sub-Se-Quently. He went down. Unrepentant. In a blaze of gory hallelujah. Blue plums. Hot lead. The Scrape. Bang! Bang! Ka- Pow! Deader than dead.

The Scrape was sweating bullets. Literally. In this deadly game, of crusher roulette. Crime doesn't pay. You don't say? The Scrape. The strong-arming strongman. Not good with firearms. Got treated, like the side of a barn. The Life. Nobody gives a darn. Oh… they'll spin a few yarns in the bar. In yer honor. But behind closed doors, when they're sober. They'll mock you, for not being smarter.

The Scrape. My fondest memory. Of this legendary. Ultra. Violent. Mercenary. One time. Not so long ago. I had been drowning, my sorrowful sorrows. About my Momma's no more tomorrows. They had found her. If memory serves. With blood pouring. Out of her gob, and her nose. Tragically hemorrhagic. As I read it, in *Les Grands Livres*.

Momma. My scaregiver. Liver-diseased. Ulcerative. Pancreatical. Gas-Tro-In-Tes-Tinal. Cause and predilective. A living testimonial. Her insides affected, effected, and wrecked. But what can you say. When one is washing down two quarts of rotgut. And all-sorts. Rotting your guts. *Per diem*. AKA per day.

God helps those. Who hate themselves. There I sat, in a vat. In an agitated state. At The Bustard. Drunker than Souser. After hours upon hours in Unhappy Hour—separated, from the herd. Who all had heard. This word, about my Momma.

Momma. Partially. Marginally. Markedly to blame. For my self-hatred, and self-hating shame. And my life in The Life. In the black-and-blue game. The Scrape. Did not read the unwelcome mat. And sat alongside this mutt. Who was beside himself. And his despisingly divisive. Sinner child inside.

The Scrape, cut through the red tape. He just sighed. Then whispered to me. Quote Un Quotably. That he himself, had sadly cried. When his own mother had died. Then he winked, and smiled wide. And left me, to my drink. And the demons I hide.

Life without. Zero eligibility. Staring at yours truly. My-oh-my. Dearie me. Another entry, for my dear diary. Poor *Lisette*. Whom I first told boldly. When we first met. Before she knew the truth. That I moonlit, for a detective agency. Believe you me. I wish, and what I would give. If I had made the split-second indecision. To earn a living. Digging a ditch, or washing dishes. Irony—ain't it a bitch? As sure as I sit. I'm deep down in a pit. Dead. To rights. The Life: The semi-somewhat shortened form. For the sporting life. It is. What it is. And that's show biz.

Let me tell you about The Fort. Where we were court-ordered to report. The Fort: A big piece, of Tropical history. In-Penetrably. In-Penetrable. On the tip, of the peninsula. In The Harbor. The highest point—and now, The Joint. For the lowest and hardest. Of the hard men. With a lottery ticket. With nowhere to go, but down. We're in The Fort, coz The Big House is too far away. For the taxpayers to pay. For a daily motorcade. That just might get sprayed.

The Fort. Old and cold. Allegorically. Meta. Phorically. Meteorologically. The Fort's Yard was on the rocks. Surrounded by water, on three sides. A peninsula. Just like I read it. Almost an island, where they hula. Yours truly, and Yansey. Cellies. *Déjà vuly*. Together again. Watching the cold snow take hold. In The Yard. Just like we did, in The Pen.

The Fort. A garrison. Long before the Lord took William Henry Harrison. The Fort. Somewhere betwixt min and max. Staved off many attacks. Save, from The Inside. Its Yard has the best view, of The Trop. A downright postcard. The walls, thickly-bricked. And yay-high. With rocky shores, on its outside.

Looking down. One would have to fly. Icarusly by. To get to the tide. The rocks lie forty-five feet or so below. Give or take a few meters. Quite a feat, to say the least. To avoid being meat. Baking, in the heat. A tasty treat. Your gray matter. Splattered. For the crabs and the seagulls to eat.

Fort Old-Dead-White-Guy. The scene, of many a battle cry. One if by land, and two if by splattery. In a ten-over-six tea party. Undue anxiety. Caused by the unruly revolutionaries.

The Fort. No AC, nor central heat. And it seems. They still serve the leftover hard tack. For the yard birds to eat. But I was an urchin. On the street. Eating anything. That was barely edible. So it's gonna take a little more. Than this culinary inconvenience. To beat this incredible. *Incroyable*. Indefatigable. Un-De-Feat-Able. Acrobat. Who knows all the mean feats.

No one can stop you
Not a mutt, a crusher, or a screw
Coz you will find
If you use your mind
You'll leave them all behind you

Without freedom. I will melt, and sicken. My blood will boil. And thicken. I could spoil myself. Which scares the dickens. And the living hell. Out of this sticky

ne'er-do-well. As I rewind, all the axioms. That I would grind, but never listened. Triple jeopardy. In triplicate.

Give me liberty. Or give me death. I won't breathe, my last breath. In maximum security. State property. Spirituality, revealing its sting. On this soon-to-be spiritual being. With a sharply fashioned. Shivering piece of plastic. Or a sharpened bedspring. Sticking, in an artery. Courtesy, of a rogue wolf. On the take. From The Rake. In perpetuity. Con-Ti-Nuity. Ever so continually.

If you got something to say. Then say it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I hear ya. What did I expect? As I rolled the dice. It's my life, in hindsight—rife, with retrospection.

If I did not suffer incarceration. I would not have acquired an education. Go ahead. Roll your eyes. Sigh those sighs. About Doler. But don't feel sorry for me. No sympathy. Please. Nosiree. I've made my own bed. Now please let me sleep.

But didn't you ever want to be something different. Than you are currently? A surgeon, a band leader, or a firefighter. Am I right? Didn't you. At one time. Or another. Have another hand—a firebrand—coerce your druthers. In your own career trajectory? Much like my overseer. My stepfather figure, the Cheese?

Maybe. Just maybe. You wanted go on safari. Lead a life. As far as your mind's eye could see. Then you found yourself. In a foundry, a bakery, or the electric company. Not that there's anything wrong with it. Not at all. Stability. Tran-Qui-Lity. Nuclear family. Cool as an unemcumbered cucumber. Could ever be. Mowing your lawn, and pulling your weeds. A suburban legend—a pillar, of society. In your trance. Watering your plants. Permanent press pants. Tupperware parties. Paid holidays. The PTA. Block parents. On the path, to middle class regality.

You know it, man. Believe you me. I see it clearly. But some of my best friends. Are none of these. Could you see Yansey, on a line of assembly? Recall City. Batteries, might be included. If you're lucky. Dis. Assembly. Required—Yansey, please come with me. And bring your things. Coz you're fired.

As for me. Six hundred sixty-six degrees. Of degradation. Two felonies, and now three. I've got big issues. With authority. Mister Personality. No worries. About shirking in my workstation. As I'd be shown the door, during employee orientation. Irony. As structure, and routine. Are all that there is, and all that will ever be. Ever so rigidly. In the hat factory.

Me. The jury. Find Mawdy guilty. On all counts, of naïve *naïveté*. If I'm frying, I'm dying. Which will happen after my conviction. And eventual funeral procession. Just another day. Not like all the others. My life sentence. Will last a second. And a day. As I anticipate the cessation. Of my heart rate. Either by a sponge bath. Or a wolf. Full of rented hate.

There's a bull's-eye. On this sticky guy. As The Rake breathes, a relieved sigh. As a wolf pays my dues. As the screws can't save, all my numbered days. This sticky jay. Who was King for a day. Will be lucky to spend one birthday In Stir. Left to decipher. All the unanswered Un-Answer-Able answers.

Misguided loyalty. Was my infirmity. Lamp. Lighting. Providence providing. The X-factoring. Almost perishing, as an urchin. I was sent an urgent message. To live in the now. To live The Life. Right in front of me. From The Cheese. The charismatic and calculating cultivator. Of the cult of personality.

Im-Print. I-Dentify. Assimilate. Emulate. The unapologetic fickle finger of fatalistic fate. Trick, or trait—too much, too soon. Too little. Too late. A president, of a conglomerate could have rescued me. Then this monkey. Could have been in the middle. Of it all. Middle. Manage. Mental—living up—to my full-fledged Un-Ful-Filled potential. Collared shirts. Water. Cooler. Commuter lane. My own stapler, calculator, and ruler. Nine-to-five, or six-to-three. Then a gold timepiece. Before saying hello, to the assisted-living facility.

Time's a wastin'. On the brink. Time to think. Co-Vertly. Jack. Out of the box. Betwixt the lines—as the clock ticks, and tocks. Leaving us wicked no rest. Nor any room for error. No one cares. So we must do, what it takes. So straight to Hell with The Rake. That cake-eating. Under. Handed. Mendacious fake. There's a play to make. A downright high stakes. Foot off the brakes jailbreak.

Chapter 28

There's no such thing as being free
Just varying levels of misery
But give me some hope
And a strong ladder of rope
And I'll finish my days to the nth degree

After some Yardwise R-and-D. Yansey, our cockeyed rocket scientist. After shaking the rocks, in Pandora's Box. Was surprisingly cocksure. Occam's razor burned. As he offered, a burnt offering.

This is the same Yansey. For whom thinking is a repetitive stress injury. Yansey. Usually jibber-jabbering. Higgledy Piggledy Gibberish. Squawking and talking in cockamamie jabberwocky. Yansey. A walking debacle. With a wok chock-a-block chock-full of moo goo gai pan. And chop suey. His mind, stir-fried. For eternity.

Yansey. Fancily dressed, in his smarty-pants. Our alphanumerical Alpha man with the plan—of not only A, but B, C, D, and even an E. Definitively. To. The. Tee. Parted the sea. *Mucho grande.* Grandiose grandiosity. Blackstone, Houdini, and Leonardo Da Vinci. Did not have squat. On Yansey's prodigious magical escapist artistry.

Go big. Or go home…and we were fixin' to do both. It's a sad old flag, it's a high dying flag. The Somewherican flag that flew over The Fort. Old Glory was as old, as the mold. On Edgar Allan Poe's cold and moldy tombstone. This holy relic, in pathetically indelicate condition. You could see the tear, from the rocket's red glare. And the spot. Where Davy Crockett. Blew his nose in it.

But most importantly. And noticeably. Old Glory was high, High, HIGH Up on a pole. Overlooking the sea. From within hitting distance, of the walls. Get the picture? More to come, but mum's the word. That you never heard.

The flagpole. Long, and strong. High, and mighty. Inside, the unfriendly confines. Of our hopefully. Soon-to-be. We're just here, for a cup of coffee. Tem-Po-Rary. Penitentiary.

The enemy, of my enemy. Is still my enemy. But just maybe my enemy's enemy. Could also be my enemy. Which of course makes me...the enemy, as well. That's how you spell diplomacy. With a capital "D." So off we were, with the worst things first: Conscripting. Petitioning. Co Con Spirators. Mercenaries. For this mission of Mercury.

Fortuitous good fortune. Found us in The Fort. Which produced, a multitude of recruits. At our disposal. Whole Sale. We brought our focus. Alongside the hocus, and some pocus. On three particular Spillies.

Three Spill City local boys were at the ready. To go steady, as she goes. These three were also headed to the hat factory. Where Spillies, were the minority. Quarry. With no possibilities. At even being trustees.

These Spillies were looking. At hard time. For a crime. They did not commit. And if you believe that prattle. My little sprats. I've got an ocean front flat. In Switzerland. That I'd like you to look at.

The first Spillie. Was on the small side. The second Spillie was cancerously cancerfied—as four, out of five experts agree. That one out of three Spillies. Statistically. Won't see the age of fifty. But the last Spillie…was just right. Lots of marks and lots of spite. But all of them were ready to fight.

The flagpole. Was planted in The Yard. Territorial. Wolf packs, relaxing. In their patch of dirt. Putting the hurt on anyone. Who's disrespectful or curt.

All the world's a cage. And we are merely the ragers. The stage, was set. Debts were settled. While we set forth the Fourth of July. As our dreaded deadline. In the sand.

The Fourth. A four-day holiday. Thusly reducing the screws to a skeleton crew. Moreover, red rover. There would be slews, upon slews. Of boating and booze-cruising yahoos. Wa-hooing and Ya-hooing. Sluicing, while juicing it up, in The Harbor.

Acquisitions, holdings, and real estate
Don't mean squat when you die
Success is simply a simple state
Of the ability to look one's self in the eye

One good burn. Deserves another. Remember. Way back when. When I mentioned the unmentionable. In regards to The Rake's. Death-defying predilection?

The Mayor's daughter…if I recollect…I said…Quote Un Quotably. If some mutt played that card the wrong way? Well, here I am. Rocking and rolling, with this opportunity knocking—jockeying, for imposition. As The Life. Is all about difficult decisions. Slicing and dicing. Ex-cising, with delicate incisions.

There's no escaping the pain. From the hot pavement, of memory lane. This Trop dog knows the Tropology. The terrain. Where in each life, a little pain must fall. The peaks, and the valleys. Boutiques, and alleys. What speaks for itself. The rhythm of the city. The wheels and cogs, of the metronomic flow. The metropolitical politicos. The crescendo, of the innuendo. With no apologies. Surgery, *sans* the anesthesiology. Take no prisoners, and let Old Roger sort it out.

The Rake. Gave me a treasonous reason. To have a reason. To reach out to The Mayoress. Stick some bees, in her bonnet. This little songbird. Sang. Quite the sonnet. Like a caffeinated canary. All's well. That sends him to Hell. Crushing the eggshells. Straight through, the thin ice—I hit, all the right notes. Rocking the mike. I put the icing, on The Rake. Falsetto, tenor, and baritone. Full-blown orchestration. Implied implications. Returning fire. In a communication takedown.

Never get your money. Where you get your honey. A hex, on The Rake. The future ex-communicant. The founding member, in this nebulous May-and-September relationship. Getting hot and bothered. With the daughter. All the while, while messing around. Doubling-down. Heresy, with her mother.

The Mayoress. Un-Glued. Im-Bued. Infuriated. Trembling, tremulous, and speechless. Mawdy beseeching. Top Secretly Drop Ping it. The bits, and the pieces. Sitting, in the catbird seat. The dirt. Hitting her, where it hurt.

I pitted the lying scandalous. Scan-Da-Lizing scoundrel. Against the mother. Pulling no punches. Like no other. Burn. Rakey. Burn. While demanding something in return.

The Mayoress. Over. Wrought. Over. Come. Over. Whelmed. Agitated. Hu-Miliated. Vividly livid. Over. It. It was quite a blow. But she still knows the *quid*, the *pro*, and the

quo. So, at my disposal, she proposed, a modest proposal. Right after telling The Rake. Where he could go.

The Mayoress. Sub-Se-Quently. Released a pressing and prescient. Press. Re. Lease. A prepared statement. Unleashing her patriotic frustrations. With the haggardly tattered ragged and raggedy flag. That flapped in The Fort. On the hill. Overlooking The Harbor.

A new flag. Stronger and longer. Steal a feel. Of the steel grommets. Em. Bedded. In the red, white, and blue. Embossed. Half-inch thick nylon. Filamentally. Criss Crossed. Cross Stitched Canvassing. So taught and stiff. You could use it to scoop up Moby Dick. Not even Kahoutek, could zoom through it. Watch it swat the clouds with a few knots of wind in it.

I could not avoid, the *schadenfreude*. The Rake became paranoid. He had had his cake, and was soon to be eaten. The Rake. Mister Missus Behavior. Who brought the vapors, to many a flavor. Made available, in The Life. Wondering. If he should tuck in his shirt. And do a runner. Whether Or When Abouts Per Chance gun-toting Buzz Town gunners. Were gonna be gunning. To send him up, to the seraphim.

The upside down Rake. Not one. To hold his breathless breath. Thought maybe, it was just about time to scram. Perhaps work on his tan. His golf game. Under a new name. So, The Rake. Sub-Se-Quently. Pulled up stakes. And made a break for it.

So far. So rude. So what? Daddy Long-Legs. The Cheese. And the rest. Of the long list of casualties. The Doon. The Mayor. The Crab. The Scrape. Several Severants. And Wrenchy. Just a few, of my dead friends. And frenemies. In the heavens—or heavens to Betsy, they lost the bet. And are swimming, in a sea of red. With Old Roger. Pushing down on their head.

Show me your friends. And I will tell you. Who. You. Are. The Rake, The Cane, Yansey, Souser, and yours truly. Our miserably miserable lives. In desperately irreparable disrepair. Don't. Go. There. As this has been. For all you readers to see clearly. And beware.

The Life. What I've been yapping. And yackety-yacking about—backwards, and forwards. The whole darn time. The Life, Jack. A first class cabin. Right next to the captain. Of the international fleet. All these vessels led by the piratical triumvirate. Of the *HMS Arrogance*, the *USS Deathwish*, and the battleship *Fatality*. The world is flat. Yesiree. When you wear the blue and black hat. As you head out, at full speed. Toward the bone orchard. Or the hat factory.

Déjà vu. Repeatedly repeating. This warning. From you-know-who. Yours truly. To those yearning, to exit the exits early. From this fleeting existence. The Life. Try it on, if you dare. And don't scare too easy. Step over the third rail. Scale. That mountainous mountain. That is the body count. As you amount. To a hill of beans. As the means always leads to your end.

So many devils, on so many levels. Waiting for you. To trip, or hiccup. So get up, and go for it. Step right up, and don't be shy. Grab that mallet and give it a good smack. Ring that bell. What the hell. So did I. Just like the last guy. And the one before him. Who also said not me. Not I. Not this guy. I won't go, through those motions. You have what it takes, kid. You're a lock and you're not all talk. So…which one of you drops, in the ocean is next. On the Tropping block?

Chapter 29

I wish I could fly
Far across the sea
But my wings are clipped
And the scales are tipped.
By what's right in front of me

Bad things, come in threes. We had three choices: The hard way, the harder way, or the hardest way. Even a two-bit half-wit. Could figure that bit out. The Fourth of July held sway for our D-Day. I'll never forget how sky-blue. The blue Harbor sky. Was that day.

The brass bands playing. The brackish bay spraying. The sailing ships displaying. And the revelers Hip-Hip Hooraying. It was time to get down and *dénouemental.* Amidst this maritime merriment—meant, just for that day.

We were clear for take-off. No guts. No glory. The victors, and the vanquished. And may the best man vanish.

It's a dirty job, but somebody's gotta do it. My whole donnybrooking commonly crooked crew. Stewing the stew. Brewing up, a wicked brew o' Brou Ha Ha. Getting downright epithetical in The Yard. Dis-Cord. Dis-Quiet. Dissatisfaction. Nuclear fission. We commissioned a prison riot. Instigation. There's no cute way, to describe it. Nobody plays nice. And somebody…usually loses an eye.

Most of the wolves, were in on the Yardwork—as gouda talks, and empty pockets walk. One of the golden rules. In the school, of hard knocks.

Previously, I had *Lisette* conjugally mouth-kiss me. Ever so Frenchily. Some of those hot rocks. Whilst Yansey stood watch. Chatterboxing the screws, with talkative moxie. Regarding yesterday's news. And all the polite goings-on in low society.

Lisette, ma maîtresse. My gal. My bonny lass. After our last pass. Headed south. Amicably. To an undetermined locale. With the balance, of the opulent jewelry. And some pawned memories.

Another settlement, another ex for Mawdy. Exactamundo. You bet your bippy. I'm two for two, in this category—and three-for-three, for the hat factory. I stink, at this game. Quite frankly. Shame. On. Me. And especially, The Cheese.

And they're off! Into the first turn they go. *Tout de suite*. In this rigged shindiggable mutinous hootenanny. Anarchy, staged dramatically—the screws, were screwed, as this malicious melee ensued. A good old-fashioned. Impassionately dispassionate furious feud. Splattery Park. Day of reckoning. The Second Coming—boys, will be atta-boys. Noise annoys. The Splatfields, and the McCoys. Having a go, with their dangerous toys.

Man Versus Man. As well as himself. Santa's elves. With nothing left. But filled shelves. Turning their unexpended energy. On themselves.

Berserk. And we got to work. Our undershirts were secured. Around our countenances. Goggles, from the workshop, on our snouts. As the cans of tear gas bounced about. In this cloudy redoubt. As we dug out the flagpole. Like a bunch of coked-up moles. God bless us, one and all. For whom this hell…tolls.

Yansey, me, and the three Spillies. In full *reveille*. We rolled that pole. To the crest, of the hill. Notably, The Fort's walls during sometime or another. Had been restructured. With thick-as-a-brick bricks, rebar, and mortar. Fortified, for its fortification.

But they kept the cannon holes in The Fort's walls. Advantageous. Em-Bra-Sures. Brace yourselves. As I read it, rest assuredly. In The Big Books. Ever so historically. Embrasures: Four-by-four openings. Quadrilaterally. But with iron bars inserted. By the escaped con-conscious constituency—extra security, even with the rocks below. And the swirling sea.

Something pickled, this way comes: Souser. The cup-shot bottoms-upper. Who drinks, for his supper. Souser, the cavalry. The muscatelling hellhound. With a blood alcohol content. Meant, for an elephant. This man of action. Hell-bent. In a thug boat. Metallicized. Mo-To-Rized. For our extraction.

Admiral Von Souserburg. Admirably bobbing, and weaving. Riding the waves. Raiding. Light Brigading. Permeating—aiding, and abetting. Through the jubilance. In his mission, of reconnaissance. In the nick of time, that was of the essence.

Souser. Speed-boater *extraordinaire*. A seeker, and a destroyer. Splitting his lungs. With blustering blood and thunder. Souser—an effigy, of his formerly former self. On the attack. Getting our backs. Packing an RPG—rocket-propelled grenadiery. Courtesy, of the Spillies.

10, 9, 8…prepare…7, 6… to launch…5, 4…Souser. Pointed that sucker. At the corner embrasure. At the tip, of the peninsula. And let 'er rip. General Souser. Earning his stars. Exercising his inalienable right. To blow stuff up. The national blast time. This liegeman, laying siege.

Gadzooks! The first bazooka round. Went a tad, out of bounds. Egads! Right into the water tower. Giving those below, a cold shower. Number two flew and flew. Over The Fort. Over the peninsula. Due north. Sinking into the wild blue yonder.

The third shot? Close, but no cigar. Right through the embrasure's bars. Into the cafeteria. Hysteria. Py. Ro. Mania—via Souser, Mister Fixit. It severed the gas main. Arranging for The Fort's first hot meal since steamboats wheeled. While also killing the salmonella. And the other botulistic belly-swelling bacteria.

The fourth time, was a charm. With so much harm done. Souser. Acrocombatically armed to bear. Coordinating his ordnance. Getting his bearings. Steadied his arm, as he beared arms. Bom Bard Mental. Yowza! Darned if he didn't. Blow out those bars. Ka Pow! Victory! Debris! Endless possibilities.

The screws looked confused. At this bag o' tricks—let loose, into the mix. Souser was stoked, with thoughts provoked. About the days of old. When knights were bold. Sir Souser. Now growing accustomed. Smoked it out and then went four-for-four. With four more smoke grenades. Cascading. Right through that hole. And into The Yard.

Heave ho. All systems…go! Go! GO! We toted that pole. Through the smoke. Amidst, the evil upheaval. Through the pea soup. While the screws tried to regroup. Recoup, their bosses. Most of whom, were lost to barbecues—or snoozing on sloops, out on The Harbor.

You couldn't pay me enough. To do their job. Before the stupified screws. Truly earning, their holiday due. Even knew what to do. I was through the wall. Eureka! Scaling that pole, like a utility worker.

As I dangled, from that banner. Grasping it, with both hands. In a star-spangled manner. I met the sky, and the sky met me. As I swung to-and-fro. High-and-dry. Ever so effortlessly!

Look at me. With my legs kicking. Aero-Dy-Namically. Mawdy. Acrobatically building speed. Gs upon Gs. The screws can't shoot at me. Coz of all the lookie-loos, at the jubilee—fire, most unfriendly, you see.

Yansey. Our strategic strategerist. Knew the screws, had to resist the target practice. Non. Com. Bat. Ants. A possible potential collaterally damaging tragedy. And fuh-get-about the lawsuits. Filed downright litigiously.

Momentum. A full-on full stop pendulum. Carrying me. My field of vision. A kaleidoscopic, Pan-O-Ramic apocalyptic fresco. Providing presence of mind. Colliding, with my sight lines.

I see the city—then the rocks, the sky, and the sea. As I swing high and low. Soon I will know. Will I be splattered, in the shallows. Or will I splash safely and swim free? With Poseiden, alongside Calypso. Towing me far, Far AWAY. Into oblivion. Ever so oceanically.

How did I get this far? For flying so low, under God's radar? When I was languishing. And famished. I once wished upon a star. And all I got were scars. *Méchant memoires*. And incarcerated behind bars. I thought I was chosen. A super-duper superstar. But I might as well, had been on Mars…coz…I was just that far.

What a surge—a scourge, of anger. This reminiscence would usually bring. But inexplicably, with each swing. And each sting. Of the salty sea air. I heard the angels sing. Heralding. This reconciliatory renaissance, of reconciliation—purgation, as first demonstrated. By The Cane.

Closure. Closing those doors. As I bared, my barren, Saharan soul. Shedding, my dead skin. Acceptance. I let go. Nice and slow. Of the hate. Catapulting. Me. Straight out of limbo. And into the stratus. *Au revoir*, to the melancholy. The tumultuously amoral amorality. It doesn't matter now, what happens to my body. As my soul is cleansed, clean, and free.

I know, that you know. That God loves you. But I'm saying hello, to that glow. You know. That God…loves me…unconditionally. A done deal. Ethereality. Right here, in chapter nine and twenty.

Let us rejoice. Brothers and sisters. The Cheese was never the voice. Whistling, through the trees—and maybe, juuuust maybe. My subconscious was guiding me. That fright-filled night. When The Cheese gave up the fight.

Yeah, I knew CPR. Like I said. Quote Un Quotably. In the first few paragraphs of this story. But perhaps…perchance…um…ah…I took my sweet time. To get started. Before, during, or after. I forget which, come to think of it.

Honestly. I dialed emergency—eventually, if not further. Was it a one first? Or a nine? Nine-one-one. Or nine…one…nine? Now that I think about it. I think the line. Got disconnected. It was so hectic. Which was to be expected. So I left the bluish Cheese blue—to age, like a fine wine.

I simply let nature, run its course. Naturally, *au naturel*. On the big thoroughbred. Being put down. Dancing, the dance. Of the dead.

For your considerable consideration. If it so, pleases the jury. A trip to the past. About my past history. Regarding my reservations, regarding my reserved resuscitation of The

Cheese. Perhaps, a desperate Mawdy. Who was still seventeen. Had visited, a military recruiting facility.

Private Mawdy. Drop down, and give me twenty! Patriotic Mawdy. Picked up, an application. Induction. Re Intro Duction. Before the birth, of my first sprat. Coz I had wanted to pay. Legitimately. For my family's sustainability. The. Right. Way. So help me God. Mawdy: a young man, trying to understand. His grand design. His future uncertain. And I was determined. To sign *semper fidelis*, on the dotted line.

The world. Loves a man. In a uniform. Form, was following function. But rude news, about my intestinal fortitude. Had traveled fast…

…Knock-knock. Who's there? The Cheese. The Cheese who? The everlasting Eastern King. Of *savoir-faire*. Speaking, in silence. That was deafening. He released the hounds. Knocked. Me. Out. In the first round. Sergeant Mawdy. Dishonorably discharged. Red-carded. Before it even started.

Mawdy, you'll never be. In the army now. The Cheese. With that trafficking rap. Handed me a new map. That led to the hat factory. For my future life. Of living crappily ever after. In The Life, of indentured slavery. And that bloody mess. With The Severants. Is still causing fright-filled nightmares. And night sweats. Alongside. All the other stress. The Life: Knavery, or jest. Slavery is the term, that I like best. Mess with the best—and fry like the rest.

Ambivalence. Indifference. Yet again. Could be the reason. I did the CPR. But I didn't push down so hard. Whilst awaiting the ambulance.

And one more time. For posterity. Clarity. And my own damned serenity. Need I remind you. To remember. Ever so nostalgically. That The Cheese. Was dead. In a repose. Of spiritual spirituality. Not very warm, mind you. Floating. When I first arrived. On the scene. *Vaya con Diosed*. Holy-Ghosted. Right from the get-go. Remember? The introductory intro, of this story.

Now back. To our regularly scheduled programming… Three cheers. For the dead, the fight, and the blue. As I let go, of my Old Glorious hold. And said bye-bye. Nighty-night. On my long, dazed journey. Away from the screws. I've paid my dues—my debts, to society.

My name's Mawdy. And never bet against me. As I'm as American. As America gets. A trifecta. A triple-threat. *Acrobatus Americanus Ex Libris Ex Convictus Librettist Emeritus*. Tenured. Arts, and all twenty-six letters.

The water was freezing. That's what Yansey. And Souser told me. In between their sneezing. Adrenaline. Renally running. Sensory deprivation—sensations, throughout my body. But I do remember. How beautifully green. The sea appeared to me. As it greeted me. Gorgeous hues, and colorful color schemes. The full maritime spectrum. Of aquamarine. Rebirth. Worth its weight, in Uranium. Titanium. And any other element, of high density.

Pandemonium. Delirious delirium. *Jubileum*…and soft pornography. From the applauding onlookers. Who were screaming. Encouraging. En. Courage. Meant, for me. Hurry! Hurry! Before the rozzers. And the TV networks. Wreck it, for everybody.

I hit the drink. Feet first. Successfully—I'd say, an eight-point-three. Olympically. Looky-looky. Praise the almighty—T, and A. Brazenly. On display. Naughty. Sun. Burnt. Birds. Raising their shirts, losing their bikinis. Exhibitionists. Yesiree. Boy Howdy. Golly. Gee. Willikers. Knickers, in my face. God shedding his grace. On thee. What a country.

Then Yansey—all aglow, from the intensity. Of the churning sea. As well as the girlie show. Was next to go. He gave the people, what they wanted. Ker-splash! Nailed it. Head first. Legs together—*Panache*. The crowd, got their gouda's worth. A perfect ten. Giving me, the silver.

Then the two Spillies. Hit the water. Awkwardly. Ouch. Pulled one out. Knocked out. Then the last Spillie. Got cold feet. Frigidity. Rigidity. Timidity. We said see ya. You sitting, pitiful duck. On the pole. Right above Old Glory.

Souser. Our spirituous spirit guide. Hit the gas. Amongst the critical mass. Of masses. Amassing *en masse*. Souser. Balls-out. Hauling arse. Zig-zagging. Lead-footing. Dodging the dreadnoughts. And the blue-ruined picaroons. In their yachts. And show-awful. Show. Boating. Schooners.

Going. Going. Gone…To The Docks. Buoy, that was close! Souser. Negotiating. Navigating. The pile-driven piles, posts, and pier supports. Supporting. A whole host. Of shade-seeking seadogs and sea lions. Remarkably barking. As if in conspiratous complicity. Drowning the sound, of our engine. Com. Pletely. On our lark. Before parking. Disembarking. Up through, the trap door. Of Fencie's hot parlor.

Tempus fugit. We were happy, and we knew it. So we slapped our hands. High-fives. For getting out. Alive. Then it was time. To disband. Our band o' bandits—crime flies, and then you're done.

The Spillies. Filled with glee. Were going to flee. To Spill City. Right after a brief detour. To The Boonies. With the Rake's address. Provided by me. Reciprocity. Yesiree—splattery, from the Spillies. Acting as proxy. For Mawdy. Honoring their agreement. For agreeing. To be the "I" in mine, and Yansey's team.

The Cane. The unofficial sponsor, of this event. Left a present. For yours truly. Responsorial. Flowery flowers, for any powerful occasion. Simple pimpernels. Symbolically saying. Anticipating the day. When we could meet again. Whenever. Or wherever again.

The Cane. More than likely. On the lam. On the coast of Spain. Or somewheres. There. Abouts. That-a-ways. Amsterdam—Siam, perhaps? But who cares, for now.

The Cane. Keeping in line. With his mystical *mystique*. Left me a cryptic note. To get past Fencie. Which told me. To peek inside the vase. For a plastic bag of gouda. That brought a smile, to my face. The Cane. Knew how to run the rat race. Left me enough loot. For a few frugal years. And for all the great pains. Just in case.

Here I am. For all to see. A stowaway. A bandit, without a country. Under. Ground. Looking out, below the surface. Sure as ever. I'm more than sure. I'm being searched for. Internationally. APB. Interpolastically. Same with Yansey. My kindredly spirituous Kin-Ship-Mate.

Yansey. A run-a-gating renegade. Whom I believe. Fugitively. Took the name Roy G. Bivouac. For this maiden voyage. Yansey. The word-jumbling mug. Hugged me. And shouted *bomb voyagie!* Yansey. Attempting French. To the best, of his inability.

Yansey. Free. To flee. And live forever, in anxiety. He exercised his right to flight. And took a hard right. Through the elephant graveyard. Then hopped on a boxcar. Skipped across a sandbar. Jumped. Onto a shooting star. Over the bad lands. Then took a U-Turn, through a few pumpkin patches…understand?

Yansey. Still gutting it out. In Somewherica. Circa. Nowadays. So take a good, hard, look-see. At that newly-hired hiree. Or hired hand. Deck. Hand. Ranch. Hand. Wild.

Catter. Roust. A. Bout. Car mechanic, roughneck, or handyman. Which is about all. You're gonna get out of me. In regards, to good Sir Yanselot—no sense, in both of us getting caught. And one thing's for certain. Yansey. With his allergy to clowns. Did not join the circus.

Yansey. My old cellie. Who'd never sell me out. Now in a cloud of dust. May the road rise. To meet his feet. Yansey. Who once told me. A burrito, was a baby donkey. Wait—somebody punch me, ever so shamefully. He was right. On that account. Yansey. Another victory. TKO, on a technicality.

Souser's whereabouts. Is somewhere south. Equatorially. In the South Seas. Souser. He of the addictively split shit-faced personality. Was always fixated. On exotically hypnotic. Tiki-torching. Wiki. Wiki. Sun-scorched Polynesian follies. And imagery.

Souser. Would school us fools. With lu-lus. About hog-wild Hawaiian luaus. In Honolulu. Wai Ki Ki with hula girls, leis and ukeleles. Souser. He himself. With perhaps a job in Tahiti. Selling sea shells. Perhaps as a missionary, feeding the needy. Or working in the little umbrella factory—those alcoholic parasols, for our drinky-drinkies. They come from somewhere, you know.

Souser. This landlubber. Amongst the coconut, and rubber trees. His coat and tie. Into the rubbish can. Mai tai, in hand. Toes, in the sand. In the lands of lava, Java, Bora-Bora, Guam, and guava.

Lisette. I confess. Once again, I've made a mess. But at least, I'm consistent. All of our love lost. Laboriously. My kiddies—even Exie...all…a distant memory. Empty-nested. Emptiness times three. My soul. Hollowed out. My wallet. Rhino'd out. Tapped. Skinned. Strapped. After drowning, in The Cheese's footsteps. All the frivolity. In my new Euro pursuits. Won't mean anything to me. I might as well be a zombie. The Life. Ain't it sexy? Who's next? To get in the dirt, and take after me?

So's I want all of you. To listen to Mawdy: School, is now in session. For this indelible impression. Repeat after me: *Répéter,* s*'il vous plaît*: The Life. The semi-somewhat shortened. Short form. For the sporting life. No. Mean. Feat. A contact sport. Like I've recited. Time, after rhymable time. On and on. *Ad nauseum*. There's no way to leave it gracefully. Neptuned. Marooned. Or hooked up, to life-supporting machinery. Am I getting through to you? And you? All you wanna-be dirty deeders? This truth, shall set you free. That's why, it always hurts.

Bonjour, I must be going. Coz I've got me a new gig. And new digs… I'm an illegal Parisian employee. Un-Doc-U-Mental. Bending the rules. What. It. Takes. Re-In-Car-Nation. This hard man. Hard at work. Working hard. Constructively. Hard-hattery. Hauling bricks, and cement. For the French brickies.

Back to square one. What's done, is done. This old dog. Down to his last trick. Brick. By. Brick. Staying away. Not playing, the French lottery. This drudgery. Ain't nothing compared, to the hat factory.

It's not the size. Of the mutt. In the fight. It's the size of the bite. In the mutt. I will never surrender. I will fight on forever. It's time to put my gouda where my gob is. Dear readers. I've got many good years. Of honest, odd-jobbing ahead of me. The odds are stacked. But I'm still standing. And I'm glad to be back. To being a rookie. Keeping my chinny chin-chin up. Blackjack—dealt, one-and-twenty. Mind. Fully. Taking each day In-Cre-Men-Tally. Just like I should have, in the first place.

You've got to live a little. Literally. There are still millions upon zillions. Of brilliant sunsets. To be seen. And in the meantime. I have to say. I wouldn't have wanted it. Any Other Way. I'm here on earth to stay. God's plan, for all of us. As Lazurus and me. Would have ourselves a good laugh. Over a spot of tea. Would somebody up there. With the wherewithal. And the gall. Please punch Jesus for me. On the arm, ever so thankfully.

Chapter 30 **Splattery**

Ally. Ally. All come free. Standing room only. For the grandstanding *grand finale*. My dearly beloved readers. Whether you're a Jill, or a Jack. You stood back. Re-Spect-Fully. And let this sticky hack Pro-Nun-E-Nunciate as well as articulate, most faithfully. And for that. I am most grateful. Downright congratulatory. As together, we slogged through the black, and the blue—the sad, but true. The whatnot, and what not to do. The hoopla and ballyhoo. While looping through, the hullabaloo.

You've withstood the volleys. The strafing, of the shrapnel. From this consonantal soldier. With a bag o' swag, over his shoulder. This charmer, in the dell. With a tale to tell. Un-Stop-Pable. This beholder, of secrets… deep, from within the vowels. Of The Trop.

The trails. A. Mazingly blazed. All the ways to Sunday. Coarse discourse regarding crooks. From the words, I learnedly learned. In The Big Books. You, and me. Alongside. Us Blue-Bustarding. Dead drunk drunkards and bastards. Hunkered down. Hunky-dorially. In our bunker. You, the reader. The spelunker. Into the depths of my stolen soul. Your role. In this incandescent relentless descent. An omniciently proficient stream of raunchiness. A rant—a cant, by a sticky man. Who just could not quit The Life. Addicted. When it gets down to it.

Then there's The Rake, The Doon, and The Mayor—whom we now hope are all burning. Down there. With Old Roger's pitchfork. Up their *derrières*.

I think we're square, *mon frère. Ou ma soeur.* Coz we all got what we were looking for. Our needs were met. You got a story, not to pass down. A tale of lust, greed, envy and splattery. Annals upon annals. Of the worst, of the best. And I got something off my chest: Momma. May she peacefully rest.

Momma. I'm not sore. Any more. After this exorcism. About all of your *post partum* transgressions. And I now feel horrible. I find myself guilty. About how poorly I portrayed. This indelibly distressed discordant woman: Momma. Momma-Mia. Mumsy. *Madre*. Ma. Ma. *Mütter*. It is now apparent, my unplanned parent. That you made me. Who. I am. Today. I am a child, like no other.

Momma
You were madder than the baddest hatter
But that doesn't matter
Coz you gave me the strength
To run length after length
Through all the black and the blue splatter

The Cheese—I'm done, with the soliloquies. In regards to the be-all. And end-all Be-He-Moth. Enough's been said. The accolades. Just short of a parade. For this juggernautical supernaturalist. The Cheese: The King of The East. A ruling mammoth. In the pantheon. Now the don, of the great beyond. The masterful mastodon. Gone, but not forgotten. As long as I don't get spoiled rotten. The Cheese. For he's a jolly good fellow. Than nobody can belie.

To get the full brunt. Of this free-for-all. I'll pick up the last call. For alcohol. Alongside. Some more sodium pentothal. When they ring the bell. It's the least that I can do. For all the boo, and the hoo. After I opened the flue. Letting all the smoke, sparks, and ash hit you. All presented, in the semi-somewhat *parlez-vous.*

Tous ensemble! As this dialectition gambols. While rambling. Getting downright Am-Bu-La-Tory. As I perambulate, through this preamble. Of all the predilections. And the delectable diatribal dialections—Splatterized, *italicized,* for your protection.

You listened and learned. As I stirred the scoop d*u jour.* This fox. Breaking down the door. Once more. To the coop. Ripping away at the cages. Pages. Turning. Shoulders. Shuddering. Ashes. Smoldering. Guns. Holstering. You, the reader. In paginating fascination, discerning the burning embers. Fluttering, up into the sky. This salty seadog. Keeping the dog-eared doggerel. In check. During this memorable night. That you'll never forget.

On my mark. Get set. And let's go. While the lights, are still low. I'm Mawdy. I'm a klepto. A downright sticky mutt. Always looking for a quickie. And the short cuts. A kleptomaniac. As I read it. In The Big You-Know-Whats. From Doler. From gouda to nuts. I'm always in the black. Jack. I'll yank the boxcar, right off its track. And my pal Yansey. That dodo. Who once took a photo. Coz I told him it would last longer. Has my back. And everywhere that Mawdy went. Souser was sure to go.

I've been there. And done that. Or was it was there—and did that? I've got a right mind. I'm the king of sting. Buzzing this, that, and the other thing. From bling-bling. To diamonds sparkling. Flying off my perch. To burgle. To snatch your merch. I'll even palm, your pet turtle's palm tree. Maybe. Okay, not that. But I'll never leave you in the lurch. Because I ain't greedy. Yesiree. I'm not gonna give you a reason. To have a reason. To search for me.

In the dead of winter. Or the melt, of the spring. The swag's the thing. Tucked under my broken wing. As we sing the old songs. In a sing-a-long. That we used to sing. When the nights were short. And the days were long. Is this the end? Could be. Could be. But never get greedy. Let's just be grateful, we had *Splattery*.

Here endeth the lesson. My breathless mantra. To the contraband. This *conquistador*. Sneaking out the back door. The viscount, of the five-finger discount. A trouble-making troubadour. Taking what he could get. With his deft hand, in your cookie jar.

Let's move it along. The show's over folks. Nothing to see here. But before I disappear. I've saved the best for last. As the best things in life, are always free. There's three…repeat after me: Freedom. Freedom. Family. And friends. That's four, actually. First and foremostly. Then secondary. Perhaps. Perchance. Camaraderie. Yo Ho Hoery Oh so merry-go-roundly. This life right in front of me. As we all breathe. A sigh of relief. Leaving behind the rest of our enemies.

Now get out of here. Boys and girls. Live. Give. Love. And lose. Make some NOISE. Rise above. Stick with it, whilst tickling your fancies. Dance, in your underwear. Wake up the neighbors. Run through some sprinklers. Look, for buried treasure. And endure the pain. Because there's too much pleasure.

Your friends are waiting…in the driveway...with the engine running. You run along now. Coz that's it for me. *Fin. Finis.* Daughters and sons. *Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines! Din.* Damned. Done. This signed, and sealed overnight delivery.

I declare victory. Enough of this paladin's sin. For the world to see. No more ifs, ands, or buts. *Arriva derci,* and C-U L8ter. From this alley-catting allocator. Of allegory. It's time to retire, this wicked splatire. My gift, that swiftly kicks the dickens, or the rickets. Off of any cold and stiff East-Ending denizens. I'll meet you in the lobby. To say farewell. Buh-bye. After I sweep out the stables, fold up the tables, and roll up the cables. Oh so capably. On my grim, yet fabulously fab *fabuloso* fables.

Splattery, Splattery, Splattery,
From here to the Seventh Sea
The thematical theme
Of this strange little dream
Sailing straight into insanity

Splattery, Splattery, Splattery
Now that's the title times three
Words from the heart
Ripped into parts
In torn apart harmony

Splattery, Splattery, Splattery
The fiercest form of flattery
For all of you
From you-know-who
As I fade into obscurity

Splattery, Splattery, Splattery
Mawdy, Souser, and Yansey
We gave it our best
In a world second-guessed
Battling with our destiny

Splattery, Splattery, Splattery
Ag-assault and battery
This most righteous decree
Believe you me
Of crookedly crooked debauchery!

The Cheese is dead.

Long live The Cheese.

Huzzah!
Mawdy

Thank you again for taking the time out of your life to read my work. If you liked this story, please give me follow on my Twitter/X pages. If you feel so inclined, you can purchase the hardcover, paperback, or Kindle version at Amazon.com. Please keep in mind the book/Kindle version is slightly different in terms of structure as this Twitter/X version is the final edit.

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Stephen T. Savage