

# THE MEAT MACHINE



# By David Playfair

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#### **Chapter Twenty-Eight—The Big River continued**

Marenko succeeded!

'Not an easy job, General,' he told me. 'Getting across the river was simple enough, once we had the raft together. But that barge was in a mess, sunk on the shoal, half-full of water. I dived down to the bilges and felt a hole half a meter wide. The boatman must have chopped through the planks before he retreated from the Germans.' 'How did you patch it?' I asked.

'I knew there'd be cabins along the river, and I counted on them being intact. The owners would have been too busy evacuating their townships to get out to their fishing places.

'Were you right?'

'Yes.' Marenko grinned again, showing all his teeth and all the gaps between them. 'We found a cabin built of planks! And a bag of nails! And buckets! We patched the gap three-ply, we used planks with floor-canvas sandwiched between. Your friend Harry was a tower of strength. He just knelt down under water and hammered those nails in with a rock. Then we just bailed and bailed. The patch was firm. The water didn't return.'

'So now we're a unit of the Soviet navy. Well done. How many of these men can we get aboard?'

'Oh, all of them, General. This barge was made to carry a thousand fifty-kilogram grain sacks. It'll handle badly... but if we can get into the midstream we'll move fast with the current.'

We disguised our voyage as a prisoner-of-war transportation. Which meant that I, and the lucky ones who had a German uniform to wear, had a pleasant journey on the deck. The rest, our supposed prisoners, sat huddled in the damp hold. It was a lot better than being dead, and they were good enough to accept the need.

We fueled the barge's motor, which must have once belonged to a heavy truck by the look of it, with the petrol from the German vehicles. It wouldn't start. Some vital bits must have been removed.

'Never mind,' I said, 'we'll row and pole her, just like in the old days. If we find some rope, we can haul her faster round the bends. If we don't find horses, we'll use manpower.'

The men must have shared my feeling about the backward time-machine, because that's when Dmitri began the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*. 'Yo, heave ho...'

We had a good bass section.

I stood on tiny bridge above the deck and watched the barge swing into the middle of the stream. Marenko was proving a fine admiral. Though this was not his home river, he had a feel for the flow of water. He knew just when and where to paddle away from the bends and the shoals. Our craft slid down the river at good speed. We were off, but where to? We couldn't live in a wasteland. We had to find some kind of base.

I strained my eyes at the inaccurate and skimpy map which the Wehrmacht had issued me. There was the big southward stretch of the Big River... There were its tributaries... This one flowing from

the west seemed very familiar in outline... But the map was too large scale to have the small communities marked in. Where had I been when I saw that land and water outline before? Why did it remind me of beer, and sausages, and movies? Could it really be Katerindorf?

I called Maslov over. 'Look at this, Fyodor. I think there'll be a nice little river town just here. We could bring the barge in, rest, plan our next moves. Maybe Zaretsky could fix the barge motor...'

He was skeptical. 'What if the town is burned to a cinder? Or occupied by Nazis? General, we've got away from the massacre — why crowd our luck? Couldn't we now simply cross the Big River and carry on eastward till we find our own army?'

I opened my mouth to answer, but my words were drowned by a sudden roar of airplane engines. Sturzkampfflugzeuge! Or Stukas for short. A whole squadron of German Junker-87 dive-bombers flew over us, no higher than two hundred meters. They weren't after us, though. The lead pilot was close enough to recognize my Nazi uniform. He wagged his wings in salute as he whizzed overhead and the whole flight passed over us without attacking.

Every squadron has its own unique tactical concept. These fellows were going in low, then swooping back. The Stukas hadn't been out of sight more than half a minute when we heard the scream of their attack-dive. These planes have giant whistles built into their noses. When they hurtle down on their prey, they sound like all the devils out of hell. Huge black smoke-clouds rose from beyond the far bank of the river. We heard the *Crump* of distant explosions, 500-kilogram bombs by the sound of them. We knew they had hit something inflammable or explosive, or both, because further detonations rumbled on. Next we heard the tail-gunners letting loose with 7.9 millimeter twin-machine-gun fire. Stukas hit you coming and going. The Soviet forces and refugees across the river were getting strafed even as they retreated.

'On second thoughts,' said Fyodor, 'I don't think I do want to cross the river. Let's gamble on your place, General. I'm still doubtful, but where else seems better?'

'Katerindorf,' I was explaining to Fyodor and Marenko, 'is tucked away up the Little River — that's a tributary of this Big River — and it's not easy to see from the road. It is quite possible that the Germans have missed it. They're land fighters as a rule. I don't expect to meet any gunboats.'

I think that was when the German craft appeared, down river and heading upstream straight for us. An amphibious Schwimmwagen, it must have been driven in behind the main motorized attack.

'On second thoughts,' I added, 'every rule has its exception.'

We had been careful to allow no one on deck who wasn't wearing one of the captured German uniforms, and now this precaution would pay off. The Schwimmwagen was coming at us, but at normal cruising speed and with no maneuvering. Plainly they did not suspect us and were simply drawing close to exchange news and greetings. It would still not be easy to overpower them. Through the telescope I saw a heavy machine-gun mounted on their bows. The gunner could sink our wooden barge with a few bursts.

'Harry?'

'Yes, Ivan?' He'd got used to my new name.

'I'm going aboard that Schwimmwagen, and I'm going to take out the crew with submachine gunfire. They're well armed, but their rifles are clipped to a rack outside, so I'll have the draw on them. Your job will be to take out the machine-gunner, silently, with bow and arrow. If we're lucky they won't see you shoot and won't know right away why he falls. I will go aboard alone first. You will shoot your arrow when I put my hand to my head, then I'll start firing.'

'Can you manage with that bad leg?' asked Fyodor.

'Not easily,' I said. 'But who else speaks German fluently? Of course I want you and two of your men to follow me aboard as soon as the shooting starts. They can cover me while I put the radio out of action. It should work.'

It did work too. Harry, Fyodor and I killed four unsuspecting sailors without suffering a scratch ourselves.

If this story was a movie, the five minutes which followed would have made a fine action scene. Of course the director would have rewritten the events to give the Germans warning, so that Harry and I did not look like cold-blooded killers. A movie which showed war as it really is, that is to say, as a traveling slaughterhouse, would not be popular. Young men enjoy thinking of war as a rough contact sport. The governments which draft those young men wouldn't subsidize a film which suggested differently.

We tied scrap iron to the dead sailors and heaved their bodies overboard. I drove the Schwimmwagen to reconnoiter ahead of the barge. It proved easy to control, being nothing more or less than a waterproofed open-top Volkswagen with a propeller at the rear. At dusk we moored to the bank under cover of a clump of trees. Marenko wasn't confident of spotting the turn-off to Little River in the dark, so

we had decided to wait till dawn and take the risk of another daylight run.

A beautiful run it proved to be too. Marenko took the Schwimmwagen ahead, the men in the barge took turns paddling, and I sat up at the bows with my staff. All was sunny and calm. We might have been on a May Day picnic excursion. Dmitri produced hooks and fishing line.

'I never relied on army rations,' he said. 'They feed us on cod-liver oil and dog-biscuits.'

'What's wrong with that?' asked Fyodor.

'Nothing, for the first thousand biscuits and the first ten liters of oil. I daresay those damn biscuits would keep you alive for a thousand years. But...'

'But?'

'When I do catch a fish, and when I'm cooking, not its oily liver but a nice fillet, then do you or don't you want a share?'

'Yes, please. With a slice of lemon and some parsley butter.'

War was raging over and around us but, for a pleasant change, not at us or among us. The Stuka squadrons renewed strafing across the river. Once they were met — though not stopped — by Soviet fighters. We saw a Stormovik and a Junker, guns blazing, fly head on into each other — each too brave and stubborn to flinch aside. They went down into the forest in a great ball of flame. Our people were starting to rally.

'If they can keep that up,' said Zaretsky, 'the Soviet Union will win for sure.'

'How can that be?' I asked.

'Engineering production,' he answered. 'You should see how it is beyond the Urals. I was a tool and die maker at Chelyabinsk. In one week we can turn out a hundred of those IL-2 Stormoviks. And five hundred T-34 tanks...'

From listening to Friedrich's Volkswagen friends, I knew that the German auto industry thought they were doing very well to put out three hundred tanks a week.

Zaretsky continued. 'Rockets! After the war we'll use them for spaceships, but right now they're weapons. We're fitting them on everything. Boosters on the wings of fighter planes, glide-path-extenders on bombs, individual antitank missiles. Or sometimes we just weld a battery of eight rocket tubes on the back of a truck. That's named a Katyusha, though we just call it the Stalin organ.'

'How the hell can you aim a thing like that?'

'Well, you don't really aim it. You just keep parking it differently and reloading. Got to hit something sooner or later.'

'So why aren't you there now? What's a skilled proletarian doing as cannon-fodder?'

'Well, the work was getting a bit monotonous, General. It was more of a challenge when we getting the production line organized. We had an American engineer, Mr. Christie, to design the tank suspension and transmission, And Stakhanov came in specially, to organize the assembly line. Then we automated the welding to electrical induction. Then we were told, no more big changes, just keep the line moving.'

'So it was then you fell in love?'

Zaretsky's jaw dropped. He blushed bright pink.

'How the hell... No, excuse me, General, but how could you know?'

'I'm a general, aren't I? Generals are smart people.' And they know that young men with good jobs don't rush to volunteer for the life of an army private unless they've got some kind of woman trouble.

'She's a Kazakh girl,' said Zaretsky. 'She came to work on the assembly line. Always polite to me, but always distant. Every time I went to adjust her drilling machine my heart beat so hard I thought it would burst. She was so beautiful and so remote. Sometimes she touched my hand while we were working. I taught her how to use the Vernier calipers. If she gave me a smile, I'd be walking on air for days.'

'You had to do something about it,' I ventured.

'Yes! Finally she agreed to go to the cinema with me. A magical evening. We talked for hours after the show, she was lonely and missed her home, yet we understood each other so well. I walked her back to the women's barracks. We made a date for the next evening...'

'But she couldn't come,' I guessed.

'That's right. Her best friend came instead, gave me a letter, I still have it. She said her family expected her to marry a Muslim and she could not disappoint them, that it was better not to raise my hopes.'

'Would you have converted?'

'Believe me, it crossed my mind. But it would have been a deception. I've got no time for any kind of religion, and she'd have known I was pretending. I tried to take my mind off her, I joined the Siberian Mathematical Society and hit the books, but nothing really worked. So I just had to get away. I pleaded for a transfer to a different part of the Union. They said I was an essential worker. So I got a note from my foreman saying he could manage without me, but that was no good either.'

'How come?' I asked.

'Security restriction. They guessed war was coming, and weren't letting anyone leave the area. They didn't want any information leaks about the engineering works. Not that I would have told.'

'If it's any slight consolation,' I said, 'that security policy worked. Adolf Hitler hasn't got a clue as to what will be coming at him from across the Urals.'

'Perhaps we should have told him? Would the knowledge have changed his mind?'

'I have heard Hitler speak,' I said, 'and I know that nothing would have changed his mind. He'd made up his mind to attack twenty years ago. He can only learn the hard way.'

'Well, it was that same attack of Hitler's,' said Zaretsky, 'that finally got me away. I went straight down to the recruiting office with my foreman's letter, and signed on as a private. And here I am. Yet I still wonder how Yasmin is doing. Maybe after the war...'

Zaretsky's lovelorn musing was interrupted by a shout of excitement from Dimitri. 'A bite! I've got a bite. A big one too.'

The thick fishing line stretched out taut and far. Dimitri tried to haul it in, Instead the line was pulled out further through his hands. Harry took my uniform gloves out of our pack, put them on and joined Dimitri in tugging the fish toward the barge.

'It must be huge,' cried Dimitri. 'Look over there!'

We saw a great tail thrashing. The fish was a meter long. As it was drawn closer, I saw that its skin was not scaly but plate-armoured like a prehistoric monster.

'A sturgeon.'

'We'll have caviar!'

Patiently the two men hauled in the line. Harry was no fisherman and simply pulled, but Dimitri understood that a fish has to be played. Every few minutes he would tap Harry on the arm as a signal to ease up. Gradually the sturgeon grew more exhausted, gradually Dimitri and Harry brought it closer. Finally it was thrashing alongside the gunwale of the barge.

'Grab it in your coat, Harry!'

Harry leaned over and scooped up the fish. He lifted it on board, wrapped up in his jacket, to the cheers of us spectators. And then... the sturgeon gave one desperate powerful spasm of its tail. Harry was knocked back onto the deck. The fish jumped in the opposite direction, snapping the line as it went back into the water. We watched hungrily as it swim away.

'Maybe you could try for a smaller fish next time, Dimitri...'

'Damn it all, General, that was a smaller fish! Those sturgeons will grow to three meters long.'

Dimitri's expression softened. 'You can't blame that fish, can you, for not wanting to be eaten. He did the same as we did, back in the quarry. Those Nazis thought they'd reeled us in, didn't they?'

Cheered by this thought, Dimitri fixed a new, smaller, hook to his line and methodically caught a dozen small but tasty-looking whitefish. Harry made a fire from broken planks upon the metal sheet at the boat' bows. Everyone got one bite of roasted fish.

Marenko turned the Schwimmwagen about, and came alongside..

'I've got to oversee those paddlers,' he said. 'They're veering from the midstream. Can Zaretsky take over the patrol?'

I nodded. Zaretsky left, Marenko began calling out the paddle strokes, and I was alone with my own thoughts. A wide river is a great aid to philosophy, because it is a model of human history. Everything flows, from the wellspring of barbarism (Harry's department) toward the boundless sea of outer space (if, that is, fellows like Zaretsky can build their rockets large enough).

Those history books which I knew had rather missed this point. They had devoted more space to battles than to what led up to them. So I had learned how Alexander Nevsky had destroyed the Teutonic Knights, and how Peter I had split the Swedish advance with a redoubt. Useful knowledge for a man traveling to a war — but was it history? It was like describing the swirls and eddies along the banks while ignoring the geology and gravity which brought the water down to them.

'Could Nevsky,' I wondered, 'have concentrated on luring those Teutonic knights onto thin ice if he hadn't made a deal with the Mongols first?'

'The answer,' said a voice beside me, 'is most definitely no.' 'Hello, Genghis. Was I thinking out loud?'

'You were, General. A most sensible thought, if I may say so. Not many Russians appreciate our contribution. We Mongols agreed to cover Nevsky's rear for as long as he paid his quota.'

'I thought quotas were a new idea,' said I, remembering Igor the public prosecutor framing up his norm of Trotskyite convictions, and the farmers struggling to make up their grain delivery.

'What can I say, General? There aren't many new ideas, are there? Take these rockets young Zaretsky was making. We Mongols used them in war five hundred years ago, and we got that idea from the Chinese before us.'

'And did the Chinese plan to use them for space travel too?'

'Sure they did. Just didn't grasp the distances involved. The scholar Wan Hu built himself a special launch chair, big multi-stage rockets lashed to each corner. Up he went, down he came. What a glorious death.'

Genghis gazed at the blue sky, as if he could see that ancient trajectory. His eyes went up, and down, then fixed on a new object ahead.

'General, the Schwimmwagen has come about.'

Zaretsky had found the mouth of the Little River.

We moored the barge at the bend. Harry and I joined the men on the Schwimmwagen. We felt our way up the Little River. Katerindorf, our little Germany-in-the-midst-of-Russia was still there, deserted but miraculously preserved. Unlike every other village we had seen in the last week, it was unburnt. Brush kindling had been pushed under the porches of the buildings, but nobody had set fire to it. We had reached a haven, a place to rest, a place where wounds and broken legs could heal.

Cautiously we scouted the empty streets. Two white rabbits — released pets, I supposed — ran across our paths. We could hear the soft padding of their feet. Harry and I pressed on to the center of the little town.

That's when we heard the petrol-powered generator, shockingly loud in the surrounding silence. It sat vibrating, alone in the town square. I took the electric cable in my hand and followed it along. It led me to the door of the cinema. Music played from within, as if the war did not exist. I stepped inside. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* was playing — to an empty house.

### LE PRISONNIER DE LA PLANETE MARS

**SUIVI DE** 

# LA GUERRE DES VAMPIRES



**GUSTAVE LE ROUGE** 

# VAMPIRES OF MARS

(1908-9)



#### By Gustave Le Rouge Reviewed by D4Doom

The scientific romance was a genre that thrived in both Britain and France from the time of Jules Verne up until roughly the 1920s. It produced some wonderfully strange books, and Gustave Le Rouge's *Vampires of Mars* might well be the strangest of them all. It's also possibly the only decadent scientific romance.

The scientific romance was essentially science fiction but the science was often rather fanciful (sometimes extremely fanciful) and the emphasis was more on adventure and on speculation about the future of society and of our species rather than on the science.

The writers of these tales came up with some delightfully outlandish methods of interplanetary travel, everything from giant cannons to balloons, but *Vampires of Mars* really excels itself in this respect. Our interplanetary voyager reaches Mars through the power of the will. Or

through the power of many wills. The minds of thousands of Hindu fakirs are harnessed by a device invented by a charismatic brahmin and a French engineer named Robert Darvell. The device temporarily stores the volitional fluid thus generated and this volitional fluid produces enough power to send a metal capsule to Mars at the speed of thought (which as everyone knows is approximately half the speed of light).

Upon reaching Mars Darvell encounters several intelligent species, each new species that he encounters proving to be even more bizarre than the previous one. The inhabitants of Mars include gigantic vampire bats with near-human intelligence and even more intelligent invisible vampires.

Darvell's biggest problem though is how to get back to his home planet. Fortunately his friends on Earth are working on finding other means of inter-planetary travel. These friends include a British officer in the Indian army, a Polish scientist, an English naturalist and a fabulously wealthy heiress (who happens to be also young and beautiful and in love with Darvell). The narrative jumps back and forth between their feverish efforts to organise a rescue mission and Darvell's adventures on Mars (where he becomes a virtual king).

Le Rouge was certainly inventive and he keeps the action moving along as well. In keeping with the standard practice of authors of the French pulp fictions or romans feuilletons of that era he composed his works extremely rapidly and probably much of it was dictated, and to revise anything or to worry about consistency or continuity would have been a gesture of defeat. As a result the plot is often confusing and contradictory but it doesn't really matter.

What made Le Rouge unusual among authors of this genre was that he was closely involved with the literary Decadence of the late 19th century. Translator Brian Stableford provides his usual informative and thought-provoking afterword and suggests an interesting reading of the book as a kind of satire on its own genre and on colonialism.

Vampires of Mars was originally published as two books, Le prisonnier de la planète Mars (1908) and La guerre des vampires (1909). If you have a taste for literary oddities and you enjoy the idea of a romance that combines science, mysticism and the occult then it's certainly worth picking up a copy of the Black Coat Press edition.



# AGIRLIN EVERY PORT (1928) Reviewed by D4Doom

A Girl in Every Port has several claims to fame. It was one of Howard Hawks' very early movies (released in 1928). It was his second-last silent movie. And a German director named G. W. Pabst saw it and was so impressed by the female lead he decided to cast her in his next movie. The actress was Louise Brooks, the movie he cast her in was Pandora's Box, and thus a legend was born.

A Girl in Every Port is in fact a male buddy film. Ordinarily not my favourite kind of movie, but you expect a male buddy film made by Howard Hawks to be better than average and it is. It's also a comedy so it provides an intriguing glimpse of one of the greatest masters of cinematic comedy learning the ropes. It's not quite vintage Hawks comedy but you can see that the potential was already there.

Spike (Victor McLaglen) is a sailor and he really does have a girl in every port. Or so he thought. But now every time he reaches port he finds that all the girls in his little black book are sporting a heart and anchor tattoo. Some other seafaring Lothario has been making time with Spike's girls. Eventually he catches up to his rival. They start to fight it out, get caught up in a full-scale bar-room brawl, and end up in the lock-up. They discover that they have something in common besides women - they like brawling. And they like each other. Soon they are fast friends and shipmates.

All goes well until Spike meets a girl who is special (the girl is of course Louise Brooks). This girl, Marie, does a high-diving act in a carnival in a French port and Spike is convinced she is the sweetest girl a man could ever meet. She's not the kind of girl you add to your little black book. She's the kind of girl you marry, and settle down with. Maybe buy a little farm. Spike has enough money to do this. And she seems so anxious to share his dream of rural connubial bliss that she offers to look after his money for him, so he can't be tempted to spend it.

Spike's a nice guy but he's a bit of an innocent where women are concerned. He's had his share of success with the ladies but he's inclined to take a rather romantic view of the fair sex. And he's the kind of guy who likes to think the best of people. Anyone else would have figured out that Marie was just taking him for a ride and intending to fleece him, but Spike can't see it.

Things get more complicated when he proudly introduces his new girl (and his intended future wife) to his best buddy Bill. Bill recognises her immediately. She used to be known as Tessy when she did her diving act in Coney Island. She and Bill were pretty friendly. So friendly that (although Spike doesn't yet know it) Marie/Tessy sports Bill's heart and anchor tattoo on her arm. What

is Bill to do? Spike is his best friend. Can he allow this girl to take Spike for every penny he has and then leave him broken-hearted?

The movie's sexual politics, and its moral dilemmas, are more complex than they appear to be. Spike and Bill adopt a love 'em and leave 'em policy towards their various girlfriends but their assumption is that the kinds of girls who date sailors know the score. The movie adopts a worldly view towards sex. Marie adopts a similar attitude towards men as the men in this movie adopt towards women, although their objective is sex while hers is money. In both cases no great harm is done unless you happen to be naïve enough (as Spike is) to not realise it's all a game.

Mostly it's a movie about friendship. Spike and Bill are true friends, and while that friendship will be sorely tested it will prove strong enough to survive.

Victor McLaglen and Robert Armstrong are likeable as the two seafaring buddies. Louise Brooks doesn't get a lot of screen time but she certainly makes the most of what she does get. Her image is already well in place here, as the glamorous femme fatale - it's obvious why Pabst was so impressed. And of course the camera adores her. Her acting style is not at all what you expect in silent comedy - it's very understated and very subtle. She is most definitely not a slapstick comedienne. Brooks always admired actors (such as Leslie Howard) who understood the virtues of underacting. But of course this is a comedy, so the question is, is it funny? The answer is yes, although not in a rolling-on-the-floor kind of way. It's a cheerful, amusing and engagingly amoral little picture, and being a Howard Hawks movie it's comedy with an edge of intelligence and sophistication.

If you're a Louise Brooks fan then it's absolutely essential viewing of course.

Unfortunately this movie is not available in an official DVD release and those prints that are floating about are not in great condition. Most of the silent movies that Louise Brooks made in Hollywood before her departure for Germany survive but despite her huge cult following for some reason they have never enjoyed a proper DVD release.





When booking a hotel, in the 'Any Special Requests?' section I now put "As well as the red carpet, can you have the *Upstairs Downstairs* theme playing as I arrive in the lobby?"

# HOW TO TALK TO AN EDITOR: SENTENCES, DAMMIT



# By Nick August

I say this all the time, so I'll say it some more: The best thing most people can do to improve their writing is to do a deep dive and practicum on sentences, and by *deep dive* I mean, Learn what a grammatical English sentence is; various types (simple, complex, etc.); how to form them; and what the terminology means. By *practicum*, I mean, Write a lot of sentences.

Sentences are like the boards, and bricks, and sheathing, and concrete blocks of writing. They provide essential structure stability, and, to a degree, a frame for form and style.

I'm not going over the rudiments here. This info is all over the web, but you should become a master on the following:

- Sentence boundary issues: "not sentences"—fragments, run ons (aka, fused sentences), and comma splice
- Independent clauses vs dependent clauses
- Simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, and how to make them

To the above, I'm going to add the following which I think are practical ways to use and view sentence execution when revising your work:

- Semantics
- Syntax
- Style

**Semantics** refers to the meaning of a sentence based on diction (word choice) and how you put your words together.

Ex: "He is skinny" vs "He is lean"

That's a simplistic example but it makes the point. Each of those independent clauses are close in meaning, but, on closer inspection, subtly suggest differing body types that may have a larger impact on meaning depending on context. One hallmark of good writing is precision where precision is called for, be that exposition, narrative, or dialog. The ability to choose precise words can help reduce wordiness in your writing since often the right term in the right context can save five or ten or twenty words of description.

"Skinny," for example, denotes someone who lacks excess fat on his body, but who also isn't necessarily in good physical condition and who may lack muscle, so it also connotes possible deficiencies in activities such as contact sports, physical labor, and fighting/combat. "Lean," conversely, typically denotes the presence of well-conditioned muscle without fat but also without an overabundance of muscle tissue. The idea this connotes is that of competence and competitiveness in many or most physical activities.

**Syntax** is that part of grammar that deals with rules for what makes well-formed phrases and clauses, and, thus, sentences. It is essentially the same as what I mention in the sentence rudiments section above.

Syntax basically describes sentences as control structures. They control the flow of thought, imagery, and/or logic and guide the reader to the ideas, images, or logic you want to present. These days, one of the most important distinctions a writer needs to be able to make is to understand how properly formed sentences with clear sentence boundaries affects how a reader processes and understands what he's reading. Consider these examples:

#### Ex. 1

"I went. She went, too. The store was full of people, more than I'd expect on Christmas Eve. But then, I was never big on holidays. Especially religious ones."

#### Ex. 2

"The contractor lost his hammer. It was at the house he had been working on but he couldn't find it. It turned out to be several miles away and blue. Hidden in plain sight."

Notice anything interesting between the two examples? They both are about the same length, and each ends with a sentence fragment. However, #1 is easy to follow and the message is crystal clear despite there being a couple of technical violations of formal syntax: starting the sentence with "but" (instead of, say, doing something like "Christmas Eve, but") and ending with the fragment ("Hidden in plain sight"). While verboten in formal edited English, for most applications it works just fine because it just works.

Never forget Nick's first dictum on grammar: "Grammar was made for man, not man for grammar."

That said, we need to understand syntax as illustrated by the second example directly above. What is the author of that passage saying? What is several miles away, blue, and hidden in plain sight?

Turns out, it was the house. Could have just as easily been the hammer. This is why a decent grounding in syntax is one of the more important commitments you can make to your writing if you want to be as good as you can be. Poor syntax can wreck your communication and your reader's train of thought just like broken tracks can derail a train.

Style. Sentences are the fashion runway for style, which is a term that gets tossed around a lot. But what is it, and can it be analyzed?

It has a lot to do with determining a writer's *voice*, which is what people usually mean when they talk about style. The way I look at it, *voice* is all of those elements that produce the distinctive—or not so—quality of a particular author that characterizes how he writes and how it comes across and perhaps even makes him unique and easily identifiable—or, again, maybe not so easily identifiable. It is a pointed, specific quality. Think of it as the tip of the spear for lack of a better word.

*Style* is more the nuts and bolts that help produce a distinctive voice by how various elements are used within sentences and to construct sentences:

- Diction (word choice) and literary devices (figures of speech: metaphor, simile, etc.)
- Sentence structure (see the first assignment, above)
- Tone

Diction, sentence structure, and tone are the primary building blocks of style.

#### **Diction**

In terms of word choice, are you using highly technical words? Antiquated words? Slang and chat abbreviations? More formal or less formal words? Hyperbole? The shortest, simplest words possible? The longest, most multi-syllabic ten dollar college words you know or can look up? The words you choose, whether from a single or multiple categories and how you combine them go a long way toward determining your style and, ultimately, voice.

How you decide on the language you use is determined by your own personal vocabulary, your own preference, the kind of writing you're producing (creative vs. expository, technical vs general), your intended audience, etc. The more deliberate you are about making decisions about this, the better your writing is likely to objectively be regardless of who it appeals to, or not.

Poetry can range from regular language and syntax to highly creative and experimental. Certain expectations accompany peer-reviewed scientific papers as well as raw, explicit erotica, but the conventions and standards in each won't overlap much.

#### Sentence Structure

Hemingway is known for putting together short, simple sentences that, as a whole, end up being greater than the sum of their parts. James Joyce and William Faulkner are known for being quite different especially in their stream of consciousness works. Again, I'm not going into this much here. The basics are out there and easy to find if you search the web for "sentence structure."

One tip here: If you, or your quality control readers find your work to be difficult to follow, rewrite all or part of it as a practical exercise using simple sentences and the simplest language you can. Then, once you have something more accessible for your audience, easier to follow, etc., take what you learn from becoming a master of sentences and sentence structure, and make it more interesting and unique to you per your own vision for what you want your writing to be.

**Tone** is almost like your writing's personality. Is it serious? Sarcastic? Humorous? Dry witted? Ethereal and mystic? Hyperbolic? Again, you make this happen based on the words you choose (diction) and how you put them together (syntax, sentence structure, word order, etc.).

#### **Ex.** 1

"The 1972 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme was an affordable and practical sedan that met most families' in-town transportation needs."

#### Ex. 2

"That '72 Cutlass always got you there and back, and you always enjoyed the ride."

Those two sentences are more or less saying the same things, and can easily be tweaked to say exactly the same things, just with different levels of style, level of diction, etc.

Let's do an Ex. 3, just for fun:

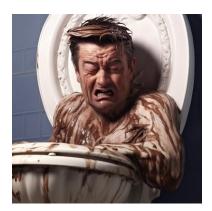
"Damn, ol' son, driving your '72 Cutless felt so smooth and slick it was like driving Santa's sleigh through dew grass full of goose shit."

#### Summary

The point here is that if you need to improve your writing but don't know where to start, you always start by becoming a master of sentences in terms of syntax, semantics, and style. As you do so, you'll begin to see how sentences are the building blocks of writing, and how syntax, semantics, and style are the building blocks of sentences.

As always, if you want further help, instruction, coaching, editing, or whatever, talk to an editor. And how do you talk to an editor? You start by talking to an editor.

# BWCGGCES TOHBCU



## By Bruce Chardon

Copyright © 2025 by Bruce Chardon. All rights reserved. This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

This work contains references to news stories and real-world events that are used for artistic and educational purposes under fair use provisions of copyright law. Such references are made to facilitate critical commentary, scholarly discourse, and educational exploration of complex social issues. These references are made with the utmost respect for victims of violence and tragedy. The author's interpretation of such events is fictional and represents the author's creative expression rather than factual reporting.

5

Another student raised her hand, a young woman with short cropped hair. "You mentioned the case of Cannon Hinnant. Do you have evidence it was racially motivated, or are you just assuming?"

"I'm not claiming definitive racial motivation," Bruce replied.
"The court didn't classify it as a hate crime. But I am asking why

similar cases with reversed racial dynamics receive exponentially more media coverage."

"Maybe because Black people have been lynched for centuries in this country!" someone shouted.

Bruce nodded, his expression somber. "Yes, lynchings were a horrific reality in American history. But did you know that in some cases, those lynchings were community responses to heinous crimes?" He paused as the room erupted.

"Are you DEFENDING lynchings?" a student near the front yelled.

"Absolutely not," Bruce said firmly. "Lynchings were illegal and morally reprehensible, regardless of circumstances. But history is complex. Take Jesse Washington in 1916, accused of raping and murdering a white woman. Or Henry Smith in 1893, accused of murdering a three-year-old white child. These were brutal crimes that sparked brutal responses."

Students shifted in their seats, many looking uncomfortable.

"The Equal Justice Initiative documents that about 25% of lynching victims were accused of sexual assault and 30% of murder," Bruce continued. "This doesn't justify the violence—nothing could—but it adds context often missing from our discussions."

Emma had stopped taking notes, her pen hovering above her notepad.

A young woman with braided hair stood up, her voice tight with anger. "So now we're supposed to feel better about lynchings because some of the victims might have committed crimes? What about justice for all the generational wealth that was stolen from us? When do we get our forty acres and a mule?"

Several students nodded and murmured in agreement.

"And reparations have long since been paid," Bruce countered. "Through decades of affirmative action programs, targeted benefits, and social programs that disproportionately benefit Black Americans."

"That's not reparations!" a student shouted.

"When we factor in welfare spending, educational grants, and other social programs since the 1960s, they've amounted to trillions of dollars transferred to Black communities," Bruce replied. "Yet we rarely discuss the effectiveness of these programs or why many urban centers still struggle despite this massive investment."

Professor Leticia shifted in her seat, her expression increasingly concerned.

"My point is that we need a more balanced discussion," Bruce said. "One that acknowledges both historical injustices against Black Americans AND the significant efforts made to address them over decades. One that looks at all violence objectively, regardless of the victim's race."

A tall student in the back row shot to his feet. "So you're saying we should be GRATEFUL?" His voice boomed across the lecture hall. "You come in here with your fancy loafers and purple drank prop, throwing around statistics to minimize our pain, and now you want us to be THANKFUL? Man, fuck this colonial bullshit!"

Several students began to stand, voices rising in a cacophony of anger and support.

"Let him speak!" shouted one.

"No, I'm done listening to this garbage!" yelled another.

A group near the door began moving toward the exit, while others pressed forward toward the podium, phones recording every moment of the chaos.

Professor Leticia moved swiftly to the front. "That's ENOUGH!" she announced, her voice cutting through the noise with surprising authority. "We'll take a ten-minute break here. Professor Chardon, may I speak with you briefly?"

As students began filing out, many glaring at Bruce or whispering animatedly to each other, Emma approached the podium.

Emma reached into her purse and pulled out an unopened bottle of water. "Professor Chardon, would you like some water? That was quite intense."

Bruce glanced at the bottle, then patted the purple-tinted Sprite on the podium. "No thanks," he said with a wry smile. "My drank is still cold."

He took a long swig from the bottle, then suddenly his eyes widened as he fought to contain a big wet burp in his mouth. He swallowed hard, his cheeks puffing and Adam's apple bobbing visibly as he suppressed the gas back down, with a little purple dribble escaping the corner of his mouth.

"Excuse me," he muttered, setting the bottle down.

As he placed it on the podium, Emma reached to straighten a stack of papers, and their fingers brushed momentarily. The brief contact sent an unexpected tingle through Bruce.

In that instant, Bruce had another flash of fantasy—Emma pushing him against the wall of an empty classroom, her body pressed fully against his. "I disagree with everything you said," she whispered fiercely, her lips grazing his ear, "but God help me, there's something irresistible about a man who stands his ground like that." In his mind, her hand slid inside his tweed jacket, nails dragging across his chest as her teeth nipped at his earlobe. His hog grew a bit in response to the imagined touch.

The fantasy evaporated as Professor Leticia approached, her expression grave.

"Professor Chardon," she said quietly, "I appreciate academic freedom, but perhaps we should adjust the approach after the break."

Emma stood nearby, listening, her face unreadable. But for a moment, as Bruce caught her eye, he thought he detected a glimmer of something beyond professional interest, as she unconsciously bit her lip—a curiosity, perhaps even an attraction to the controversy he embodied.

As Professor Leticia stepped away, Bruce glanced at his purple drank and then at his watch.

"I need to use the restroom before we continue," he said to Emma. "Would you mind watching the podium for a moment?"

Emma shook her head. "Actually, I should come with you. Some students seem... agitated. And I wouldn't leave your things unattended."

Bruce nodded, gathering his leather bag, notes, and even his JBL speaker and purple drank. "Smart thinking."

As they walked down the hallway, away from the lingering students, Bruce turned to Emma.

"So... what do you think so far?" he asked.

Emma maintained her professional composure. "I think you've certainly provoked discussion, Professor Chardon."

"That's diplomatic," Bruce chuckled. "But what do you actually think? Behind the graduate assistant facade?"

She paused, choosing her words carefully. "I think some of your statistics have merit, but your delivery..." She hesitated. "You're intentionally provocative. I'm trying to figure out if it's for effect or if you genuinely enjoy the chaos."

Bruce smiled. "Maybe a bit of both." He studied her face for a moment. "Your accent is interesting. Not quite what I'd expect."

Emma's posture stiffened slightly. "I've lived many places," she said simply, adjusting her folder against her chest.

They reached the bathroom. "I'll wait here," Emma said.

Bruce walked in, relieved to find the bathroom empty of students from his lecture. He entered a stall, locking it behind him despite being alone, and set his bag on the hook. The pressure on his bladder was immense.

He unzipped and positioned himself, then released a thundering waterfall of urine that echoed loudly in the tiled room, striking the center of the bowl with extraordinary force.

Outside in the hallway, Emma couldn't help but hear the powerful stream. The sound continued for what seemed like an eternity, echoing against the tile walls. Against her professional instincts, a vivid fantasy overtook her mind—Bruce's impressive firehose in her hands, thick and heavy, the source of that thundering torrent. Her fingers tightened reflexively around her folder as she imagined his response to her touch, his sharp intake of breath, the hardening beneath her palm. Heat flooded her body, pooling between her thighs. She blinked rapidly, shocked at the intensity of her own thoughts, and straightened her blazer with trembling hands. What was happening to her? This man represented everything she intellectually opposed, yet her body seemed to have a mind of its own.

When Bruce emerged, he seemed refreshed. "Shall we head back?"

#### TO BE CONTINUED

### **PERFORMANCE**



By MT White

A major new series From the Substack 'Discursions'

### 4—The WORK of Art

#### (Re)visiting Robert Bresson's Lancelot du Lac; how art is its own form of work; how Michael Jackson serves as both inspiration and warning

I remember when I first watched Robert Bresson's film *Lancelot du Lac*—the first time I watched any Bresson film—and how it just confounded me to no end with the wooden delivery of its actors, the spare sets and costumes, and the incongruent action with focuses on horses during the jousting scenes or sword duels where blood sprayed after one blow. Very different than the other filmed versions of the Arthurian legends (like John Boorman's *Excalibur* or *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*). My confusion quickly turned to visceral hatred.

15 years and several Bresson films later, I returned to the film, realizing Bresson's spare—almost revisionist—treatment of Chretian de Troyes' tale, and Arthurian myth in general, distilled it to its almost tragic essence. The brutality of war, the brutality of nature, the vanity involved in both the affair between Lancelot and Guinivere (whose softness and femininity is a welcome contrast to the hardness of the men, but, in a haunting image, she looks in to a mirror as her body is washed by servants, suggesting she possesses her own conceits), but also the vanity in the pride of the knights themselves, a vanity that disregards both the common men and women around them (who wear cloth uniforms and black hats, filling a role of servants, similar to the men in their armor filling the role of knights—yet the servants become so generic they blend in with the horses also in service to knights), but also nature itself, as horses are forced to be the tools of knights in both their violent games (jousting) and their violent ends (battle), with even the trees pressed in to service to craft arrows for war. As the last knight falls to death at the film's conclusion, laying in the lush green forest, one can't help but see a nature accosted by vanity as dead horses lay in a soil forced to swallow the impurities of

blood and steel while earlier the arrows returned to the trees they were crafted from.

#### Something like that.

I've only seen the film twice. And I should say, Bresson's film did not encourage me to become an environmentalist or to start making donations to Greenpeace or to become a pacifist or even to be less vain. But I did consider these things for a reason...

The impressions of the film above were my own, as opposed to the impressions of Rothko and Judd-which came after some reading about art. But really, I took the reading I've done on film (including Bresson's book *Notes on the Cinematograph*) and used it to read the film for myself. Funny, I use a word like "read" but in a way I felt compelled to use it, despite the many times I scratched the word out of early drafts. But (to paraphrase Richard Poirier), poetry is how words come together and play with each other, and I would say film too is about the meeting of image, sound, drama and even myth in a sensory interplay, a dialogue, creating, in a sense, a spatial, experiential text. Related to that, a question: When watching a film or television adaptation of a novel, how many times have we heard others, even ourselves, complain about how the "book was better"? My first film professor complained this was an unfair comparison, but is it? Both film and novel create experiences, of reading, of watching, and here the experiences can do nothing but invite comparison and contrast. It's not so much the relation between literary text and filmed image but rather the relation between experiences. But I digress...

This brief analysis in the aesthetics of Bresson and other artists could be called a result of art being my "hobby", much like collecting antiques or watching football are hobbies for others. When I visited Houston, I could have skipped the visit to the Rothko Chapel and Menil Collection and instead visit NRG Stadium to watch the Houston Texans play a game. After all, I lived in Houston for five years and never bothered to visit these museums while I lived there though I attended a few MMA and

pro wrestling events and saw plenty of Hollywood movies. But to reduce art to hobby is also to reduce it to an activity of consumption, where one is just a consumer of art, much like one is a consumer of purses, shoes or watches, wearing a t-shirt of a Warhol or Lichtenstein, being similar to a consumer solidarity with the Houston Texans. And surely art is treated this way. Many do consume art which affects their interpretation and reaction to it as a passive onlooker, where the customer is always right, everything should be easy to understand, the meanings clear, nothing left to doubt, where cleverness and irony are really all that separates cultural consumer elitists from the rabble as a purse from Prada distinguishes itself from one bought at Walmart. This passivity passes on to how one consumes all media, with TikTok videos, YouTube shorts, Instagram reels and other various sorts of media becoming warm baths of content which we slip ourselves in to for relaxation. This is not to demean those who do this or even to suggest those who want to relax after a stressful day by watching some videos have diminished critical faculties. In this hyper-techno age, people are much more sophisticated than they are given credit for considering they are daily using technologies more advanced than the technology the first astronauts used to travel to the moon. This is, however, meant to demean this same passive attitude being transferred to art, where even the metaphors and symbols are explicit, where discerning metaphors and symbols becomes a hobby in itself, where watching a David Lynch, Christopher Nolan or Stanley Kubrick film degenerates in to a discussion of how the different images and plot points have certain political, social or esoteric meanings, and sadly, become the "highest" form of discourse, the conceptual replacing the perceptual. This is not to demean the films of the three directors mentioned above. I have enjoyed, and even written about some of their films (maybe even falling in to the same conceptual traps I just discussed). There is, however, a greater cultural desire to romanticize experiences that are passive, that speak to our so-called "unconscious", our so-called "primitive instincts", our desire to "turn the brain off", a romanticizing of direct receptivity,

without having to think, to consider, to interpret, to perceive, to mediate. But I say this desire for passive intake (and by extension worshipping the subliminal brainwashing power certain works may convey), is against our nature as a species, as humans, not to mention lazy and even cowardly.

No, the type of aesthetics I am describing is not a hobby or avocation but a vocation, a form of work—cultural work but work nonetheless. Much like Emerson observed there is, "creative reading as well as creative writing", so for an artist it is crucial that we don't just read to write but more generally to perceive art so that we may conceive it. For how can we dialogue with our cultural and artistic past and present if we do not know what is there? Similarly, how can we perceive the world if we never engage with it, look around, listen, talk and touch? The perception of art runs parallel with religion, philosophy, and "the world" as they are a part of it and vice versa. Art imitating life and life imitating art? How about art being life and life being art? Or art as experience (borrowing Dewey's words) and experience as art? Or, more simply, both performances mutually influencing the other—art as action. Nevertheless, this is crucial work in the sense we must, as William James wrote, "wade through the whole intolerable interval" of local and mediate experience, to perceive the details and novelty of both art and life—localized details, localized truths formed by the interaction of localized elements, where artistic appreciation is life appreciation, where both experiences mutually enhance the experiences of the other.

Does this mean only liking "difficult" and obscurantist works, disregarding anything popular or even enjoyment itself, and eschewing the pursuit of making those works ourselves? Of course not. Many popular artists have much to admire and are popular for a reason.

Take Michael Jackson—maybe the most popular music performer of my generation, the "King of Pop". How can one not watch one of his performances and not feel exhilarated? If

anything, the moniker "pop star" or even "King of Pop" degrades and minimalizes his artistic expression as does the gossip surrounding his personal life. It blocks one from wanting to dive deeper in to the lyrics of his songs and the history imbued in his dance, both containing references to earlier black artists (like jazz organist Jimmy Smith playing on "Bad") but also non-black artists (like Eddie Van Halen performing a guitar solo on "Beat It") because Jackson wanted his music to be a unifying force rather than a divisive force, and I don't mean that in a trite or cynical way—like he was just doing it for the money, needing the widest customer base possible. Sure, there was a profit motive but, more importantly, there was also a motive to be excellent and recognized as excellent, a motive that led to many physical issues present to both Jackson's life and art-from the skin lightening in order to appeal to white audiences, to the pain resulting from a lifetime of dancing which eventually led to an addiction to pain medications which eventually took his life. To say there was no rage or radicalism in his work is to not listen to his work, only to listen as background noise in a livestream or movie. Songs like "Leave Me Alone" and "Scream" are certainly angry tracks about his relationship with the media; "They Don't Really Care About Us" which contains lyrics described as anti-Semitic by The New York Times was eventually censored for successive releases.

There's also the "Panther Dance" sequence of the "Black or White" video. The song itself and the accompanying video were an ode to egalitarian spirit (with Jackson performing dances from diverse groups as Indians, Native Americans and Russians), but the Panther Dance, a coda to the original video, where Jackson morphs from a panther on to a set reminiscent of old Hollywood musicals, where in a *film noir* turn, Jackson, in the words of Armond White, subverts "that cheerful archetype" of musicals which "surely disturbed most people's notion of what show business is all about." It did. Jackson, as he got older, never failed to remind us. "But this coda is Michael's truth; his astonishing performance lets the world know his dissatisfaction about show business." The Faustian bargain,

fully performed and displayed, where "what he can't say in words comes out as the roar of a (that's right) black panther." Compare this to the absolutely cynical corporate marketing Disney displayed for the release of the superhero movie *Black Panther* where one person observed without a hint of irony that "diversity sells tickets", along with Disney Consumer Products organizing an event entitled "Welcome to Wakanda: Fashion for the Black Panther Era", a corporate machine promoting a social view just to sell movie tickets and whatever else. With Jackson, and the long "Black or White" video there was something more personal. The angry coda came after the hopeful message where, in White's words, the "bitterness makes it great because the previous loving message is rooted in an embittered social view. The sweetest sentiments are hard-earned."

No one needs to know all this to enjoy Jackson's music and videos just like no one needs to know the allusions to Milton to understand and enjoy Robert Frost's poetry, but knowing them enriches the experience of them and inspires us to take art more seriously. Unfortunately, the notoriety of Jackson's biography and the snobbery of the cultural critics builds a high wall of resistance to understanding and appreciating Jackson's work—just as the same snobbery does for Frost. It's easier to write-off Michael Jackson as a weirdo and pedophile than it is to try and understand Michael Jackson as a complicated, albeit popular, performer and calling in to question our relationship with such performers, our idolatry of them, and our need to tear down idols when they don't suit our ideal images and make us face uncomfortable realities (remember, the "Panther Dance" sequence was removed from subsequent airings of the "Black or White" video), but also question our consumer relationship with "pop" products, the demands and expectations we put on artists as customers and consumers. The hard work of art always ties in to the hard work of ourselves.

# THE DIARY OF CHARLE WINKLE



10/07/2025

I am sitting on the verandah of my country estate, with my good friend Gregory Woodcock, who will shortly be departing for Chiang Mai, Thailand.....

Gregory and I have been good friends for over 6 years now (after meeting playing in a golf foursome) and he lives (lived) only a few kilometers away from my estate.

Gregory has sold his property close to mine and is hoping to live the rest of his life in Chiangmai. And I think his decision is a wise one.

After enduring a very unhappy and unsuccessful marriage for 11 years, Gregory believes he has found a solution to unhappy and acrimonious relationships and he's telling me in detail his plans over our farewell lunch....

"A concubine, Charlie. She will be my concubine."

This is Gregory's plan for his former golf caddie in Chiangmai, Nong Pornthip (divine blessing), who he has installed in a separate house (close to his house in Chiang Mai) and who he will now be paying a salary of 200 000 baht per month (\$10 000 Australian dollars) to be his own exclusive personal masseuse, evening companion and whore. His own Concubine.

"My ex wife, the  $f^{****}g$   $c^{**}t$ , cost me over \$7 million when we got divorced, so over 11 years that's...."

He stopped to do the math in his head, although I was quicker,

"That's just over \$53 000 a month, Gregory."

"Right, and that's in addition to the numerous expenses whilst we were married!"

Gregory shook his head sadly....

"The f\*\*\*\*\*g c\*\*t" he repeated.

"And all I got was hassle and misery, Charlie. Hassle and misery."

"Anyway, with my darling Nong Pornthip, it's nothing but light and happiness."

A blissful look of ecstasy engulfed Gregory's face.

"Gregory...."

I said,

"just don't make the same mistake again, okay? Even if you fall in love and feel with all of your heart that it's the right thing to do, don't go and marry Nong Pornthip. Keep her as your concubine. I promise you that things will be better that way."

Gregory shuddered at the thought of marriage.

"Don't worry about me Charlie, I've learned. Boy, have I learned....."

# EDEN



## A Romance

# by Ernst Graf

"EDEN by Ernst Graf is a serialised erotic romance in Penicillin magazine, blending vivid tales of seduction, decadence, and raw human desire. It draws from Weimar-era Berlin's hedonism and personal exploits, provoking reflection on lust and life's fleeting pleasures."

Grok

# CHAPTER 151 MARYAM

Maryam the Eden Estate Manager who took such a decisive turn against me six months ago, incredibly polite and friendly to me this morning, which scares the life out of me. She must have received the word from Emma, my company manager, that I am soon to be gone. My blood ran cold.

My little two hour session in — early yesterday gave me more titillation than weeks worth of pointless visits to -, -, — and all the other places put together. That says it all. And it has to be from 10am onwards, before it gets packed and unpleasant.

Follow the excitement.

Follow the honey.

It will be 20°C by 10am, 23°C by 11am, 25 by midday and 27 by 1pm! What the hell! Berlin is burning!

\*

Typically the return to - was rubbish.

Never, never repeat yourself. How many times I have said it.

Only good one came in just before I finished, 5ft nothing, white top over nice big knockers, brown shorts tight over lovely wobbly buttocks but she just came in to use the loo then was gone again, so I was happy to call it a day after just 3. Had a lovely nice bulge the whole time though. Perhaps this will be my model for my morning — sessions if I do go on a work day, just 3 then straight home.

I don't feel too bad at all hangover wise, 3 pints a manageable amount, and I do just feel happy in myself that I did go out and enjoy some drink and food and ogling and did not spend another day as a prisoner inside my flat because of work. This freedom to go out on work days does a lot of good to me psychologically I think. Makes me feel I am living my life to the full, a little more than not going outside the door between shifts for six days at least. Maybe I will go out tomorrow, Friday, after all, as it is looking like another hot one, but definitely NOT Saturday and Sunday!

The smell of roast dinners from the flats here at Eden kills me. I haven't had a really lovely roast dinner since my mother passed away, or I split up from A—. The only thing I miss about marriage is the amazing roast dinners she used to cook.



1013 in — for third of my trilogy, just as the last two days have been sexy so let me get this third & final day over and done with. If a dead loss, no matter.

1016 not a sausage so far. Worst day of the three.

Christ not a single girl.

The law of diminishing returns.

Surely there will be one won't there?

Christ I thought this place would be packed on a Friday, it's the emptiest of the three days.

Second beer begun and this is dire.

\*

Will I go out Saturday after all? Who knows. You are asking the wrong person. None of us are in control of our own actions. There are rivers inside us. Deep fast flowing rivers, and if you fall into a river like that you know of course you have no way of controlling where it carries you and this is the way life is. Will I go drinking tomorrow? I have no idea. I go where the river takes me.

One sexy girl I saw passing — as I came home, dark blonde, white T-shirt over lovely big boobies, full length green silk skirt over lovely bottom. I stopped and turned and watched her to see if she went in, if so I would have followed.

The — road so full of life and nubility compared to the deathly dire dark — I had just left.

Every time you discover something it turns out to be the opposite of what you thought you discovered two days earlier. I hate that.

530pm. Up after my little afternoon nap. Dream about me breaking into some office to help someone find some details how to break into some computer system, *Edge of Darkness* type break in. Feel rough after my — three pinter but it was all made worthwhile by passing that blonde beauty outside — and realising — is not the answer after all, as — is much more full of life and nubility and footfall, more than dreary depressing —. I can START my day with one in — but make it late enough that I can then soon go to — and other places instead if nothing is happening in —. For that reason that 3 pinter WAS really useful

and worthwhile. A revelation. Also don't think I will return to Hackesher Markt on my days off either.

Very intriguing—after Maryam was bizarrely warm and friendly to me Thursday morning, we then got a reply to our book on message that night from our boss Herman, "Thanks guys...Hope you are both well /\* "then "Good to hear!!! /\* /\* ". Bizarre. Why this friendly message from him tonight when nothing usually? We must be in his good books for something. I wonder if a director or two has said something good to Maryam about me and it has been fed back to Herman?? Intuitively I sense it is that morning last week when I opened the gate for the director in the 445am pitch dark and heavy rain so he didn't need to put his umbrella down to unlock it. I always say everything we do is noticed by the residents (the directors and all 50 of the shareholders living here too) so we must be switched on and alert all the time. Even when all on our own in the dead of night outside in the cold & dark & pouring rain, never think we are alone, there could be hundreds of eyes looking down at us from their windows at all times. Lots of young FEMALE eyes in my case of course. We are always on stage. This could be the moment I was rehabilitated. Again, reward for someone who tries. Reward for someone who keeps on doing the good things and the hard work even if it seems no one is watching. At Eden there are always LOTS of people watching without us realising it. Back to the great warmth from the schoolgirl Lulu's mother when she comes in every night following her return from holiday. Never fails to ask me how I am as I hold the door open for her.

A very significant message, it seems to me.

Just 23 days till my written warning is wiped from my record as well.

Tomorrow is the 23RD anniversary of going to see Covadonga, fellow student at my Goethe Institute German evening class who I was in love with, play at the Royal College of Music concert. Frightening.

That was 23 years ago?

# NEXT WEEK—A HUGE DROP



### **ENDNOTES**

Your Editor Ernst Graf—A cultured man with a passion for opera &

European pornography Marquis de Yellow Pill / X and My Books

**DforDoom**—Cult movies, classic movies, horror, cult tv of the 60s & 70s, vintage genre fiction <u>Classic Movie Ramblings Cult Movie Reviews & Vintage Pop Fictions</u> & <u>D4doome / X</u>

**David Playfair**—Two broken mirrors were connected by a tunnel through space and time, and a different part of me was at each end. Meat Machine / X The Meat Machine: Amazon.co.uk

**Froutib**— ■ Man, 51, erotic art lover. Art is sublimation of life. Life is Art. I ♥ the beauty of curves & sensuality of forms, without perversity ■ Froutib / X

Nick August—Nick August—El tecolote/X Substack: Nick August

**Bruce Chardon**—Writer. Wordchad. Sigma male. Cum Zone Pioneer. Le Marquis de Toilette. Bruce Chardon Blog Bruce Chardon (@BruceChardon) / X

**Charlie 'Savage' Winkle**—"A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; But money answers everything." Ecclesiastes 10:19 NKJV <u>Winkle. (@CharlieWinkle1) / X</u> and <u>The Winkle Hour</u>

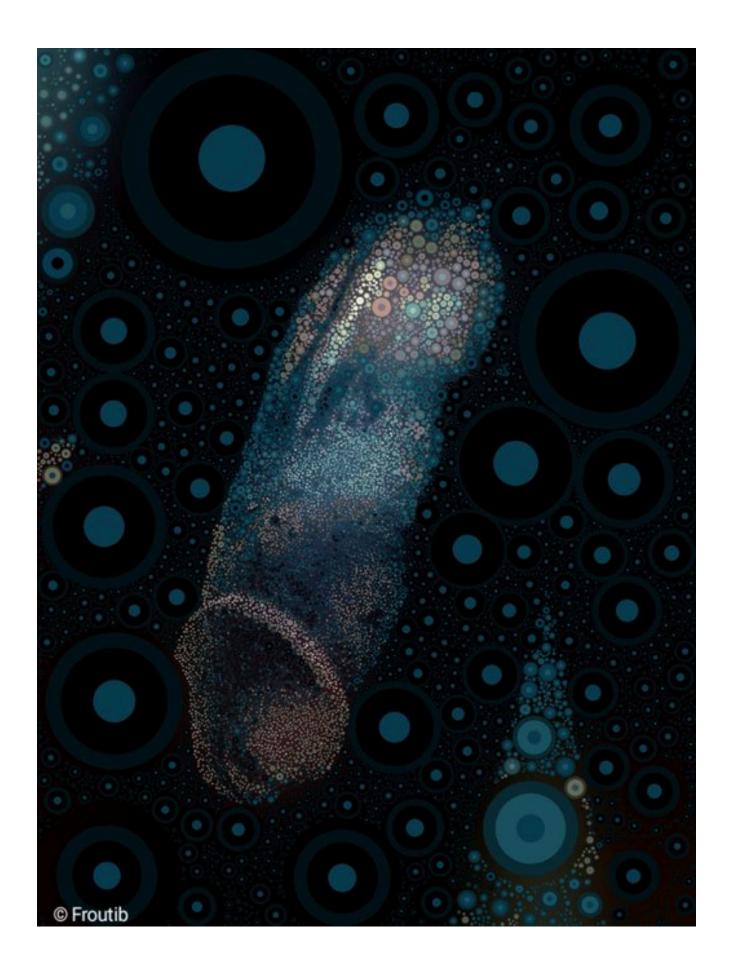
MT White—MT White started as a comic book artist but only ever published as a novelist and essayist. He's written about film, culture, mixed martial arts & pro wrestling for assorted online outlets. He now considers himself a moraliste (in the French sense not a "moralist" in the English sense). Funny enough, he's never been to France. One might like to buy his controversial book <a href="Content">Content</a>. Substack <a href="Discursions">Discursions</a>

### **COVER PHOTO: Louise Brooks**

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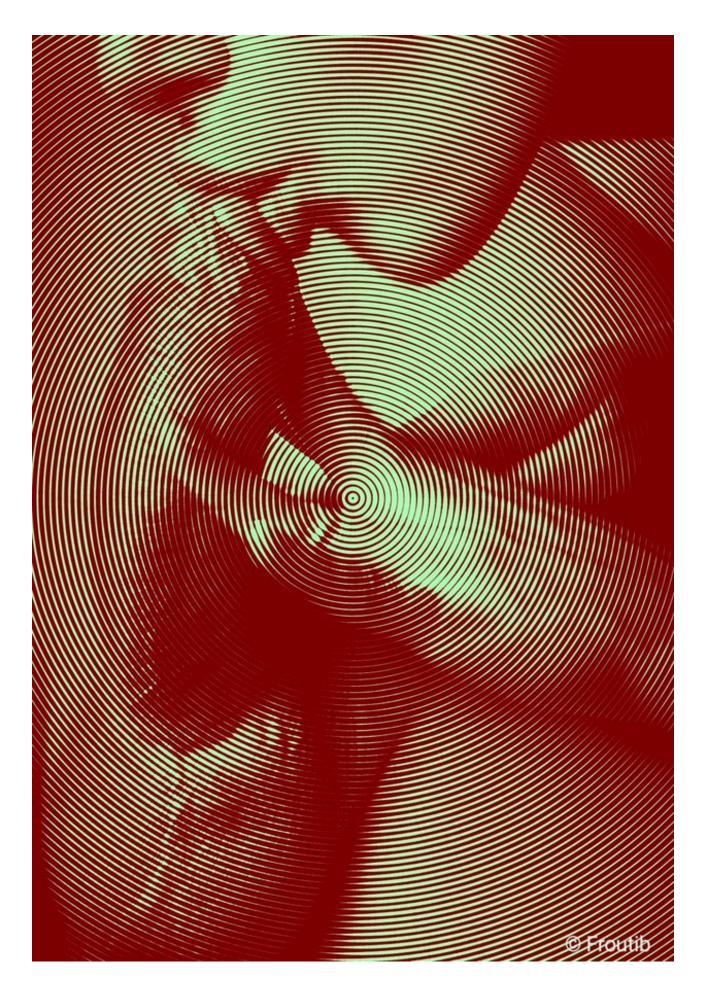
Ernst Graf listens to Nick August telling him urgently about how awful 'Moby Dick' is, Trafalgar Square, London, 1904
It would be many years until they meet again



*Brut* by Froutib



*Autoportrait 296* by Froutib



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