

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape, showing a mix of dark brown and light tan terrain. A prominent dark horizontal band runs across the middle of the image. The terrain appears to be a combination of water, mudflats, and possibly some vegetation or structures. The overall tone is sepia or brownish-gold.

# Nightbirds

Garin Cycholl

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for Dale Barrigar, Alex Shakar, and Michael Antonucci

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## Achaean Fight Songs

*after Charles Mingus*

It was some headache that Zeus had. Bass in the ground. His sons off weeping. Someone had stolen the trumpet. It played incessantly, vibrating the men down to their heels. Diaz and his fleet of salading boys. “Aha!” the god thought. “I’ll send a dream, some black clouds.” A bereaved consensus of three, Diaz was off practicing his musketry in the cathedral. He thought about the horn. Lonely trombone in a field of dead men. The dream walked in. “Hello, country music fans!” it said. Diaz listened patiently to its talk of battlelines, trenches, borders, an Indian princess—grass growing up between her toes. “. . . The sand there is broken glass,” the dream ended. Diaz nodded. Not like you could trust it, speaking around the rocks in its mouth. The dream had pulled into its stash of rumors and pulled up a good one—the woman had been in Egypt at the time. Diaz didn’t know. Peterson was in the ground. It wasn’t like strafing. Or falling off a horse in the middle of a field. “Irony’s an old trick,” Diaz said. Nestor nodded. “Let’s address the men,” he said.

We were all waiting for the sequel, the trumpet vibrating us down to our heels. Someone had stolen the horn and run. The rumors pointed to Thersites. He had a strong lip. Diaz began, “What a scandal, what a tale for our descendants’ ears, that such a decorous force as ours should be engaged so ineffectually, with no decision in sight. . .” We swooned. Then there was some talk about the point of his spear. “Who’s playing that hot trumpet?” the man next to me asked. “You know how it is, friend,” I said, vibrating down to my heels. “We get in our hollow ships now and it’s all soy inks and bootlegs.” The man nodded. In our midst, a black snake with red diamonds on his back spoke to us and we figured it was all over right there. But then, the reptile climbed the mossy willow over our heads and ate nine birds. We didn’t know what that meant, but it wasn’t good. Odie claimed to know right away. “The first one to touch his black ship is a coward,” he said. “What a shame to hang around here so long, and go back empty-handed!” We had to agree.

“. . .Who’s with me now on this one?” Diaz shouted. Then, we all shouted. More talk about the point of his spear, then the men lined up. Lavender and his orange-eating offspring. Peterson had sent forty thousand pots of oil before his demise. The Dean had brought his Apaches. Reading the *Camillus* offshore, the Colonel sat patiently with forty hollow ships. I, amid ole Westie and his garlicking prodigy. Nestor had talked his sons out of death though. The horn stopped. Thersites stepped out of the crowd and said, “This real estate is overvalued.” Lavender grabbed the trumpet and claimed to know better, answering, “You think all sound belongs to you! Who died and left you those licks?” Thersites smirked and said, “That’s exactly the look your sister had on her face when I—” But he never finished the sentence. Lavender cracked the horn over his skull and we all stood by, waiting for the next note. Two men in the crowd. One asked, “Where y’ from?”

## Adventure Stories

“We’re cashing in,” the Lieutenant said. “Heading out. Round up the men. Coffee?”

I walked out into the night. Questions were futile. In the yard, the forearm still flopped here and there in obedience to the Lieutenant. It had been a year of drought and fish-bearing dreams. The stream moved in its isolation, opening at one end, gray, dusty and hard. We’re an odd mix of specialists. Drainage control, inert gases, seventeenth century philosophies, applied mathematics, the psychology of sport. We hadn’t taken a city in three and a half years. The men, sinewy and overworked, had turned petulant with the Lieutenant, while I worked for a position far away at court. Their tempers shooed flies until another would-be man-at-court brought them the drinking water.

I sent the men out to identify the roots and leaves, but all they brought back were signs of further disobedience. Itching ears. The sole of Crozier’s foot, bayoneted repeatedly. (*This was just business*, according to the Lieutenant’s official correspondence. I continually intercepted his letters, humoring their scatterbrained piety or even disfiguring the communiques themselves.) Women surrounded our encampment. Sometimes amid the long wait and the smell of goat dung, tempers flared. The men, suddenly anxious about their babies, broke into knockdown dragouts. The Lieutenant appeared, dropping words that made my ears tingle onto their hair, curses, and screams.

“They’re miserable—” I swore to him, but he extended his right hand.

“Obedience,” he said, then he was gone without giving me a chance to say more.

The men withdrew to the almond tress, where women fetched water with peculiar expressions and colored words. We lounged in the dust. In the house, the rush, the excitement of strange-looking walls, and clouds ripped as dresses. Harry yelling at the chandelier, then hiding quickly. Below, the roomful of scattered voices, my first glimpse of the wonders, then the terrible revulsion.

I had felt safe during my first year because of the wet navel oranges. Then, that strange and wonderful year was snuffed by the hand of God. The men drew away from one another. The Lieutenant shut himself up for months in his tent after a small boy



drowned in a flooded ravine. The boy's mother spread saints cut from heartwood throughout the flat clearing above it. Mute, the clearing was always packed full of candles, flowers in bowls, and the modest shoes left by the children who always ran from us. *I am horrified*, the Lieutenant wrote his own mother.

In this manner, we'd come to that empty, dresslike town. I came to in an alley, punching through the paper of a faded wall. The army's advance was our principal disappointment. We left our clothes in a small room and walked naked into a huge marble chamber. Even without his glasses, the Lieutenant was compelled. The women we found there seemed both young and old. We scrambled down hills after them, showing the medals given to us for our valor. We left the persistent churches alone, growing old in their deepening fan of bad luck.

"Hello, Americans! Come have tea!" a woman called.

Behind my back, the Lieutenant asked, "Is anyone else here still alive?"

I was done. Until this time, songs and dances had only seemed out of the question. I had shuddered at every daughter, believing that she was some assassin sent to pursue me. Then, a strange thought came over me—this all was the advancement of my career! I had lived under some eastern plague that given me some social support. A house whose foundations rested in my aptitude for administration and my drawerful of enchanting revelries. These had procured me that afternoon with the goatherds, while my merit and the year of drought had brought me my little office. But I fled this goodly paradise into the heat and the flies, even though the tradition of worshipping younger women persisted among the men. That forearm flopping in the yard, for instance. Simple associations escalated into full-blown parliaments. The women would grab each other with all the worldly surrender of wealth and spit and call each other names. In caves and secluded valleys, there were excommunications, mysteries, and promises. Facing death, men wore nothing under their beliefs. We looked forward to fights. We got to see materialism. The army took a dim view of all this.

"Coffee?" the Lieutenant asked.

## **Big bad toy clearance, grenadiers kneeling firing**

The toy soldiers arrived in clear plastic bags. On Christmases, birthdays, trips down from Springfield. Bought at K-Mart and Meyers Brothers, or central Illinois hardware stores. Of course, Americans (olive green) and Germans (flat gray). But also British commandos (royal blue), Japanese (yellow orange), and Russians (steel blue). Their poses as familiar as the names of old baseball players. No French, Chinese, or Italians. Later, Australian “bushmen,” mounted on metal bases, with drab yellow-green uniforms, stalks of foliage protruding from flattened helmets. Among the British, desert fighters with short pants and bayonets. Also Indians pressed into British uniforms, shouldering long rifles. Vehicles. Tanks, jeeps, and half-tracks. Black plastic wheels with teeth that snapped into the undercarriage, but never on caterpillar treads. Artillery was never a problem. Field guns, howitzers that hooked to the backs of jeeps, .88 cannons. Neon-cast missile launchers and buzz bombs. Seabees. Bulldozers and a crane. A soldier with mine-detecting equipment strapped to his back. The plastic mud-brown pontoon bridge which the dog stepped on and broke.

“The bronze star represents participation in campaigns or operations, multiple qualifications, or an additional award to any of the various ribbons on which it is authorized. The silver oak leaf cluster represents sixth, 11th, etc., entitlements or in lieu of five bronze oak leaf clusters. The “V” device represents valor and, when worn on the same ribbon with clusters, is worn to the wearer’s right of such clusters.”

There were German officers, majors and colonels. Fingers sternly aimed down, making some silent point. Their chests scratched with medals. No American generals, only a man that I assumed was of captain’s rank. Sidearm drawn, waving his left arm up

over his head in a gesture ordering others to advance. One German officer looked like a cross between Douglas MacArthur and Lucille Ball, leaving me to wonder if plastic manufacturers had a sense of humor. “Never trust plastic,” they say. Although I wondered who modeled for the soldiers’ plastic faces, what were the sources of the uniforms’ ruffles.

When I was eleven, I bought a copy of H.G. Wells’ *Little Wars*. Inside, various pictures of Wells and his friends lounged out in his backyard with iced tea and toy soldiers, usually resembling those of the Napoleonic era. All the photos vaguely resembling Victorian pornography. Old men leering with joy, hard-ons pressed into the ground. He talked and talked about the cannons they used. Metal, die-cast, and capable of firing wooden shells that could take down the enemy. I found a couple of them, made by Grenadier. If you didn’t use the pea-sized plastic shells that came with them, you could fire toothpicks, chopped-up swizzle sticks, or even cashews bit in half. They did very little damage. I was always looking for ammo among the glass jars in my grandpa’s workshop.

Strands and strands of gray plastic barbed wire fence.

The first movie that I went to was *The Longest Day*. The balcony of a Springfield, Ohio theatre. The invasion of Normandy. Gold, Sword, Juno, Utah, and Omaha Beaches. The story arranged by the place and time superimposed at the beginning of each scene (i.e.

GERMAN HEADQUARTERS, 0930 HRS.). An all-star cast. Robert Mitchum, Kurt Jurgens, Henry Fonda. John Wayne and a young Charles Bronson. The money shot: the German soldier at Normandy who takes his dog for a morning piss, who then goes back into his bunker and scans the Normandy fog to find the Allies' invasion armada advancing. The crowd cheers. Before that, Red Buttons as a paratrooper who gets hung up among French church bells and dangles above the Germans all the way through to intermission. No popcorn, but a box of Dots. We made it through three hours, at least until the Germans started burning documents. Then, the seat started to seem hard.

### **Full Size - US Military Medal the Legion of Merit**

Another one of the top tier of military decorations, the Legion of Merit is a classic design that looks a lot like many of the European military decorations. This is another of the rarer pieces to add to your collection. This full size medal is in mint condition. The ribbon and medal are as crisp and bright as the day they were made. There is no matching ribbon bar or box/case, just the medal. Low opening bid for this piece with no reserve. Good Luck with your bidding!

starting bid: \$42.95  
time left: 5 days, 19 minutes  
history: 0 bids  
location: southeastern PA

The terrain always required imagination. No catshit sandboxes. The indoor-outdoor carpet in the playroom worked best. Not pillows, but blankets. Trees made of fluff, wire, and pipe-cleaners. Cardboard buildings. Some plastic battlements, redoubts. Never trenches or foxholes. D-Day beaches fronting the step to the laundry room. A river laid out with masking tape. Aluminum foil ice. Maybe some HO train track set down, disarranged in some blown-up pattern. The civilians always long gone.

Along Royal Street in New Orleans, a toy soldier shop. Glass cabinets of ranks. Officers in various poses of ease. Eating breakfast at a table or mid-shave. Camp followers. Merchants in *Mother Courage* poses, holding up trinkets, clean underwear. Prostitutes. A woman in an open German officer's coat, thick muff of brown pubic hair dabbed between her legs.

Gettysburg. Antietam. New Market.  
Fort Ticonderoga. Yorktown. *the cannon and soil there*  
I'm a tourist of violence.

Or my cousin, who always tried to sneak Batman onto the battlefield. The Werewolf. Some ghoul in a hood, knife poised overhead, hair of a severed head in the fingers of his left hand.

Helicopters. Apaches and Cobras. Assembled in pieces. Their guns in die-cast plastic, olive and unmoving. The Chinook that landed in our backyard. I thought that it had come all the way from Vietnam with its wounded. Everybody in the neighborhood came off their back porches to watch it, even the nuns who lived across the street. On my fourth birthday, a friend bought me a red and white “moon copter” stuffed with spacemen. (Like how the fuck could a helicopter work on the moon anyway!) The U-2 spy plane that I could never afford.

“. . .Not like the sixteen-year-old with his assault rifle. He says that he’s from one of the southern provinces like so many here, then laughs. He carries cigarettes bundled in his left breast pocket. It’s torn, so he reaches up every fifteen minutes or so to make sure that they’re still tucked safely. His eyes’ movements cause him to lose sight of his feet.”

The book I got for my tenth birthday. Battles I’d never imagined. Thermopylae. Austerlitz. El Alamein. Intricate soldiers. At Agincourt, the terror on a downed French knight’s face as he’s about to be killed by two grinning, English foot soldiers.

You could never find World War I soldiers though. No Huns or doughboys. You could use World War II troops and pretend that they were at the Verdun or Ypres, but the armaments would be all wrong. You couldn't imagine the first rattling tanks, biplanes, observation balloons, and trenches. The chlorine gas.

Seeing a soldier in uniform and smoking.

A war you could imagine was the Crimea (i.e. Florence Nightingale, Lord Raglan, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," all that bullshit). The terrain was easy to set up; I've never been to Sevastopol. You could use gray Confederate infantrymen for the Russians, their bedrolls wrapped from their left shoulders to their right hips. The blue Unioners for the French. Maybe some foreign legionnaires, the one with the pistol and trumpet. The reddened British as they were. The siege guns. Never enough cavalry. And, of course, the ongoing problem with the trenches.

There were no chaplains, but there were medics. The American corpsmen in a slung-shouldered, running position, bearing an empty stretcher. There was even a German corpse, machine gun stretched across his abdomen and helmet over his head in a gray, lopsided halo. I never knew what to do with him. You couldn't send him into battle or have him lying Valhalla-like on a fresh battlefield. You could start the battle and then drop him down, but then the question was where in the hell did he come from? As I say, he was kind of a waste, especially as there were no German medics.

Another thing I couldn't imagine: that weapon designed by the boys at Honeywell that would explode overhead, sucking all the oxygen out of a battlefield.

Jim DeVore who, at sixteen, left his job as a Newton, Illinois soda jerk, faked his age, and served with the 82nd Airborne in the South Pacific. Among the first occupiers of Tokyo. Six boys in a jeep, pulling up to the Emperor's palace. The clipping still intact. The photograph of them at the Emperor's table. LOCAL BOYS ENTERTAINED BY JAPS. Then, drunk and ruining Doug MacArthur's photo-op.

“Welcome ashore, General!”

Then, Jim DeVore in Alaska.

Among the Soviets, General Georgie Zhukov with binoculars. A Mongolian in a tall, fur hat, sword brandished over his head and screaming. A supine sharpshooter in a soft cap, rifle straight out, one eye shut. I could never figure out what was in the bag that was hooked to his belt.



How do you make those red stars stand up or that empty sleeve salute? Liquidated epaulettes. Rank indicators. Junk shop crosses, their paint scratched off. *The metal gets dead from all this ingenuity.* White letters stamped into black plastic. Five-sided deathbook. Passport unto the generalissimo.

The plastic in my fingers.

At thirteen, on the floor in my room, playing “Arab-Israeli Wars” with one of the neighbor kids. He said that he’d play, “as long as (he) didn’t have to be the fucken Jews.” We’d lost the rulebook, so we tried to recall the orders of battle, the various set-ups of the map-like playing board whose sections could be reconfigured to form various desert and small town terrains. Greasy strands of shag carpet poked through the folds in the battlefield. After we’d arranged the units, he’d ruin the game with his constant and urgent question, “When do we get to bring in the missiles and airstrikes?” I’d get bored as he threw his infantry into one suicide attack after another, waiting for the rockets to come in.

## Song for Meriwether Lewis

*dead by his own hand (probably)*

Farewell, old knife, now that you've come home! I've stabbed plenty. Farewell my Boise, my Tennessee. My mashed potatoes. Where's that old dog? Crime does not simply happen. Like a triangle, crime must have three sides or elements to be complete. Ability, desire, and opportunity. Farewell, my fingers, frozen to my belt and axe. The horses I've eaten. Farewell to the samples collected along rivers, in emptied streambeds. Farewell, serious lieutenants, dead in the snow. You can say you found me dead on this picnic table, jaw full of bison. Bulbs plucked and eaten raw. Call security immediately. A man gave me some good advice once. He said, "Take the camera out of your ass, son. We've got to snap some pictures of these cliffs." But now it's farewell. Farewell, my Mobridge, my Platte. Indian girl pulling her hair loose in rough strands. Where's that old dog? Ability, desire, opportunity. Remove any one of these elements and the triangle can't be formed and the crime will not occur. The boys already upriver, wondering how many more steps that horse'll take. Clark and I left to dreams of eating chicken from a cardboard tub by the interstate. Farewell, to you, too, f-stop, silver baths, and things that go "click." The gray waters of Astoria piled against the sky. Where's that old dog? Call security immediately. Campfires and whiskey rebellions. Pocket pistols and Improvised Philadelphia. Farewell, opportunity. Farewell, desire. Farewell, ability. Farewell, old knife, stuck firmly in my back!

## Normality

I'd have been heartbroken if I didn't know that she would first be going to bed with me. The only way I could stand these lines of grinning lieutenants. Hair combed back over her ears. Some etude playing next door. Her father (*Yale, M. Div. '73*), my colleague, overtelling his stroke. Her cheeks set—the subordination of everything. Nodding to me (*Edinburgh, Ph. D. '81, Military History with a specialization in the History of Projectiles*), he said, “Tell him. We're making it okay, aren't we, kid?” But tell me what? That he'd been caught out under the flags of seven nations, and now, staring into his mashed potatoes. No telling what the girl's eyes had seen. “Did you see me on CNN? They paired me with an economist,” I said. But her father was already too far gone, grumbling back into his urinary habits. So I kept my tongue behind my teeth. I had been in the room, overheard one of her lieutenants spilling confidences. There's never a cop around when you need one. Some “gunpowder plot”—purveying just where such plums were laid. She spooned things onto her plate, all on nerves, her fingers among the blackberries. This girl, she loves mustard! “What shape will this new war take?” the commentator asked. I shrugged, but the economist was already talking over me. He looked into the camera as to say, *Fuck you, old man*. And I replied, *I'll see you in the frontlines*. They'd taken the city too easily. I won't even mention the brutal treatment. Like all warfare, the kind of weapons reached the personal level. She handed me my coat. The history in it. “I'm in love with a soldier,” she said, handing me the postcard. A simple act of rationing. *Don't trouble yourself*, her soldier wrote. *The whiteness. The heat*. This all sounded ambiguous to me. The censor's black scratches. Sweet nothings. **MILITARILY SENSITIVE. PLACE UNSPECIFIED.** “He writes that they're sending him back to the Sea of Tranquility,” she said. I stared. What is your beloved if not fighting drunk? Both sides love you. You'll find them in each army, wet with love. What doesn't happen in battle? Leaders and followers buried in the same meadow. Letter writing suited her. And reading from the *Camillus* at bedtime. Some spontaneous effect on paper, so much time now to write. Particular love of a quiet place and the endless parcels of hay that her father demanded.

## Motions

### *stage*

Nor would Kenneth again see his dear wife and analyst. She was eventual. The sirens lulled him in his blindness. Barbara, low and cautious, crouched within the meadow. She had claimed that when men rot in death, she would come home. Kenneth, the good young man recently graduated, then straightaway sailed the Gulf. He had fallen in love with Barbara. They reached an island. A friendly gull fell dead over her, after which Kenneth sat in stillness, claiming that some god had lived out his song. He heard sirens, a kind of “oriental magnetism.” Barbara was hither, around her pa, who had, like all Achaean men, been beached through the early days. Kenneth hearkened to the singing for this was an affair sending a tender hero charging into his black ship. He listened to and worshipped Barbara. He liked her sweet lips, fuller than many found in the flea market. He thought her! For he knew all things, taking letters and keeping appointments. Birth, a pattern brilliant and erratic, was just the obstructing condition. It was ‘41. Obstructing damnation, Kenneth let them be found in the barn. Shot them from behind there. Waiting, he didn’t try to run, but notified the sheriff. Of course, they looked bad. Kenneth said, “If I was you, I’d have invented a better place,” then fell into the sheriff’s arms. “You’re not being tried by common love,” the sheriff said. In twenty-five days, he was to be tried by a jury. “Let them make the best of it,” Kenneth said. The Captain’s man was in the barn, her pa in the house, terrified at what they were feeling. They too sent for the sheriff. “No, I know this love,” Kenneth said. “Do such feelings let me open my head? I know what I’ll get.” “But you heard the shot,” her pa groaned. “It was on her birthday, incorrectly celebrated. Was love all that?”

### *atrium*

At this point, an unanswerable question. Incongruous to her circumstances, the Captain’s man took Carolyn’s arm. “It’s all over,” he said. “Kenneth has gone off to

Iceland.” She whimpered, “Okay. See Newfoundland!” But that was for some other cat tomorrow. Like me in 1929! They didn’t know the corner she hung back in. “You’re fashionable,” she said, particularly after I had whispered and touched her. Now it was indict the quiet, take the wheel. A journey that might be taken. I took it from his pocket and asserted the Kingdom in 1932. Obediently, he started the car and lectured me on distinction. The bitten sandwich in her hand, Carolyn cruised Greece in no mood but for that round, hopeless, hysterical, and uncertain voyage. The Captain’s man left the wheel and gripped the would-be private venture. She presented herself as family, opening the door. “Are you fragile and inaccessible?” he asked. “No, and I’m not going to be either,” she snorted. The street was empty, but for her “notes.” She was accompanied by a man in a cap on her sacred voyage, maintaining her good looks under exhaustion, interpreting things to think about in bed, and when to think of marriage. “How am I to win the love of a girl who is marrying someone else?” the Captain’s man asked. “Pain them!” she said. “During a love affair, love one who is one fifth your age. Women like to have slipped with a police officer in a way. Or on the bridge of ships! How to make low women suffer from it? How can it be done in different positions?” “So as to have a happy and rosy table!” he laughed. “Never say that to a young woman,” she replied. “What good can we get there but doubt? Would the Greeks have called just any kind of love, ‘god?’ Or do the prayers do any good? Do they exist in Ming China? And what stability is love? It’s senseless to ask Eros’s birthday; he was born only to give anyone power to make one time. Or have you forgotten all this in order to make love?”

### *piazza*

The Captain’s man claimed that he was no father, the smell of snow stinging his nostrils, drunk on furlough on an untidy beach. “That’s just so you won’t have to cut your own meat!” Carolyn shouted, eyes shuttering, mixed with sand. “Or have you drawn on your grandpa!” She’d gone back to the boat. By all the street lamps, the air emptied to an uplifting drunk who spent his days turning his lungs to winter and eventually would rot because, on a white night, he’d collapse into sticks, frozen in sight of lapsed waves built of

stone or brick. Hours after swimming, the Captain's man sat thinking of how he'd painted a wooden fence to the taste of her eyes. How he'd made a decent and sober world, covering house after wooden house. "The sea is salt and so am I," the drunk man said, offering a bottle that contained the metal flavor of a nail. Then spitting, the Captain's man spread the drunk man's skull, which certainly didn't help the man's sanity. It may or may not have been there, in the boards and sawdust, that he remembered the nail or knife pulled on his grandpa. He did, permanently as marble, always digress that the old man might have lived and died there had not the river driven him to serving in the French colonies where Arabs seemed to be divided into two dins. The old man was there and very poor. There was no gasoline. He could have let them find the pistol. He was population and most cars were power. He could have, but he didn't, among burning apparatuses that gave off knocks. Being there alone except for the other residents, he stalled. Didn't common sense tell him this? They had removed engines from Fords and hitched them to teams, drawing elderly dowagers or dignified government officials along the boulevards. *The queer kind is all they'll get*, he thought. The dead streets were full of military personnel. Approached by American troops in general, he, his wife, and child often became aware of their slovenly house. This touched no one but him. The draftees, knowing their chance to run away, saw him. But there was no chance. The European professor said, "You have already told England, Germany, and Italy."

### *attic*

Carolyn had left herself to become another woman, personalized and successful in working with Barbara. Barbara had never liked turkeys or chickens, but at fifteen when Carolyn had seen her on the staircase, she'd drawn Barbara to herself, saying, "Never again will she be with a nosebleed." Kenneth, by 1935, was at the University of London and then in the sea. Offering cures for her frozen and difficult friend, Carolyn had interfered with Barbara, taken her as a companion. Kenneth had been alone, refusing to meet women from sixteen countries. He said that he would rather stump an Iron Curtain, country girl than believe Stephen (who in rare wit made pleasure in describing so aptly the

queen making love with “small lion rampant”). During the later retreat to London, Kenneth felt his shortage of women, his lack of relationship. Later, in retrospect, he would sit or lie down, dressing in foul clothes for the rest of his life. But now, what a genius! Stephen betrayed him in his manuscripts, breaking apart the agonies of lost love, reenacting it with others. Fink had not encouraged Kenneth to “be upon the fruitful earth.” Fink was as fast, ten times as smart. It was natural that Kenneth would make Fink flesh. To this primitive man, Fink considered it odd to be as the gods, fatally compelled to describe their familiarities. He clearly drew on their washed-away crops, with no word as to their form. No neighbors, but “respect.” Because for them to be mysterious, respect put up a fight against them, shrouded in mystery, the absorbing of what fell. But not the sea, with the haze of its darkening clouds and heat lightning, meshing with sweet music for their river’s victims. “‘Respect’ is but yet forever unknown,” Stephen said. He claimed that the notions of “fear” and “helplessness” appealed to modern poetry as notions to a river-warped mind. Their simple primitive significance bent them absurd but aright, according to him. Kenneth replied, “But fear in the Midwest bears relation to no man. Attacks to the flattened land are wan but to the paranoid. The river has the sea and is able to see Armageddon coming.”

### *woods*

Kenneth sank his toe into the river mud until they became green shoots of cotton grass in the bank. He said that it was good, to have grasped Fink’s shoulders, good to have loved him, both of them aware that, as Thoreau says, in between the big birth and death, lies a damp world which surrounds my native Athenians. Kenneth went inside. *The Faking of a Goddess* was on late night TV. He wrote to Stephen, “*The myth is aetiological and it runs the village. There are no richer social organizations in Athens. This, as Thoreau says, is the tenderness of Cecrops, and it is noticeable that there are places in the earth where you can enter tradition, associating the introduction of dynamite, without the ropes and helmets of marriage.*” He went back out to the dock and stepped off the edge, amazed at how the wetlands is one man to one woman to one man, while the bog floats its

random marriages in the rub. Anticipating death is hard to think! Cecrops was immersed in the decay of his day. People only knew one thing: how to chronicle the number of possible parents. But now one's bones became almost visible to the world. The man got out, of course. Had lost writers in this century as everyone does. Bogs are famous to seek correspondences in Ireland, in Germany, and Denmark. But life? The slow, solitary meta-men, women, and children buried now in what? After many years, the misty muck by flickering lights. Fink's labor of love, minus the ears, lips, and skin. The most uncanonical, acidic water in a bog is the most subversive. It decomposes a body until it is all arrogance and humility, beauty and what you have are ideal conditions whose ultimate contra-German peasants found what is upright about us all. We are driven by years, buried to the neck in a base of the desire to be happy and interred. The peasants went there and had been buried in the churchyard. Reason was interrupted by the arrival of a man lured into the mire. Take a look at those four susceptible to such spirits! Weren't people dawdling at the entrance? Maybe there's something else here? Kenneth's toes dangled in the cold mud of someone who had stood too long.

### *flagpole*

Is there actually an historical date to Carolyn, given the alien setting and the one memorable thing done by the man who'd conceived her? A man who wrote for *Close-Up* and the sweetheart of your dreams. He had intended going to bed with Carolyn's mother for some forbidden reason. Afterwards, Iceland had become more asleep. The Book of Records and its much-publicized "Day of Love!" "Antedated"—a word that Carolyn's mother often used with newspapers and books (and then with her daughter's birth). She was disposed to avoid the new domesticity. She and this writer for *Close-Up* set off on a swan's tour, a "voyage to the moon," a list of theological sites that would be visited. He'd create a great hole in the mattress, in a way resembling her former lover, then leap on her. It was fragments, screaming, and at the last, "the moon!" He wrote an article on how to dress warmly for love in the winter. And Carolyn was born, a standoffish, lone figure, who loved to construct mazes like a good schoolgirl, taking to them like an adventuresome



daughter. In school, it was field packs soon as burdensome as “never successful at home.” Then three idle weeks at sea. The march of her words. For one thing, she reached our bivouac area, about eight more intimately living along her “road to Fedala.” That is, until a nearly 4 A.M. scene was set for an unfilmed scenario. The hand when we arrived! For the first were spread welcomes (i.e. household staffs, gardeners, chauffeurs, cooks). The next morning, we could see that the largely imaginary difficulties centered around the rim of a shallow lake (later described by Kenneth in his first novel). Reclining on the sandy soil of the beach area, the bathers seemed able to drive off my company of about ninety. Carolyn had been with one servant on the southern edge of the depression; she could not accommodate herself with the main body more than seven minutes. Most importantly, she was not strung out along the road. A pure guest, she was very conscious of the sea, but the sound of the surf must have reminded her of the southern high tide. The crater was about seven to twelve feet on its deepest side. Her devoted servant spoke to us first, thankfully, about how the side sloped downward to the high helm and a few of us noticed a row of what looked like assistant squires but who were against the woods back wall. “Who else is here?” I asked Carolyn. She said that that was a question she asked herself every day of her life.

### *widow's walk*

As Kenneth later told me, none was more loosely woven than this one, her perceptions, thoughts, and under, her heart nestled among the riot belonging to her ego. I undressed all this first in a place known as Hammel's Glade (scribes to the external world, notice!). We stood there, earth up against my back. Over me, she said, “There ought to be sedges! Drifting in waves!” As Thoreau noted, “Then, the feeling of our own ego at home in the swamps, even though both of are constant.” Events, the graduations and weddings of adulthood, could not prepare me for the profusion of chaos and contentment. It must have gone through my subsistence in the swamp. This cannot, of course, be demonstrated now with a fair degree other than in the cultivated gardens not yet distinguished in my eyes. Perhaps it is the source of the sensations of swamps that draws us. Here we learn to

do so without backhoe and chisels, very strongly impressed by the helmets and lanterns. “All it takes is a son,” Carolyn whispered. “Perhaps later we can imagine ourselves as buried alive.” Lying in Hammel’s Glade, all other sources evaded me but the beds under our chins. And that’s what I desired most of all—enough! But how to go at it in slow appearance as a result of last century’s plant life without knowing what was to come? Both of us reaching for an ever elusive distance from the world. Kenneth was already between us, a fiction that puts forward (to the critics’ disapproving tendencies) that our story was not very old, even in an artist’s work and privilege to mankind. Let us adopt instead a version of what truly happened—though we were hearing it for the final time, what emerges in the prose suppresses a feeling of our passion’s good author, the most solemnly classical questions. Should we do it? What good will and revulsion are indissolubly fused? What value to me is the irreducible fact of this action? It imposes duties on me—something as simple and as obvious as being ready to make sacrifices. If I fail, it is only by the belief that we once were not together in some way. (Here, I leave out my later conversations with Anne and her possible customers outside *Le Samovar*, where she said, “I’ll bet you anything that those two yokels are post-civilized, sexually moral tourists.” Meaning, two individuals whom the French like to discontent.)

### *cupola*

“*The Isle of the Dead? Poetry wags on, discontent, consisting of a double sadness.*” Kenneth wrote this to Fink, the atmosphere missing satisfaction in themselves. It once would have inspired him in his youth. Once again, he seems tough, the bonds of a common bridle. Greek mythology! Otherwise, civilization would seem have seemed personalized or too esoteric. In Fink’s reply, “*This is from sexuality. Your weakness never did exist. Reality is apprehension. If you write like this, content with the ties we have so reacted against. . .*” Kenneth put the letter down. War is a refrain in the poem and employs every means of a caged owl. The owl is the bird which strongly identifies, and the owl is the caged Pound in Pisa. Without reading the rest of Fink’s letter, Kenneth wrote, “*Pound sees restrictions upon his sexual life. I should prefer to understand what*

*the necessity is that his native land is wielding an axe which persuades him to return to another country, There must be some disturbing factor in his point of departure for other readings of the ideal demands. As it runs, 'Thou shalt love occurrence in those days and not be acted upon.'* It was Kenneth's pattern to drop these immediate responses into the river, failing to make delivery on such occult or psychoanalytic talks. The Midwestern strains of helplessness, their capacity to see around and through the river's own exaggerated capacity, for another mysticism appealed to him. It attained a width of 3,000 feet. Falling asleep beside the river, he had dreamed a woman who dived to a depth of 200 feet. When he awoke, Carolyn had just risen from the water. (This story is not based on factual evidence, although its soundings are impressive. Carolyn was actually in a channel of just nine feet. This can be found in Kenneth's short novel, *Garbo Threatened in St. Louis.*) Kenneth confessed that he was more than hopeful that his weakness had already been written in a lady's popular novel. Carolyn was given power by this admission and a complicated scene took place. As a cousin burns down in passion, so Kenneth was fond of Carolyn. So much so that she told him to do so. "Or have you molested so that both you and your Fink have run off with your brother's wife's art?"

*retaining pond*

Out of step, or an unnerving stillness between them. The woman in the water and the man outside it, reading to her from Pound's poetry—come supertime. What she heard in her Greek homeland I do not know exactly. What led her associations of poetry need the accounts of others who have become miserable or too preoccupied with whitewashing clapboard houses as I was before the flooding and humidity. "Your nerves are due to a twister that has come near," Carolyn said, "but you cannot create. You must expect the bricklayer." So Kenneth was forced instead to choose an idea for the poem from the whitest paint he could from Athens. (The extraordinary helping of lead wounded him with the bone cancer that would affect his torture until he died to be out of that place.) Intelligence in the meantime for him was to watch her in the primeval, drinking against some giant tree. (Could he not know what was in the water there? What I know is that there is more room beyond humiliation's shadow. But the bird is drink, and that Tom

Sawyer had not the esoteric Ambelain with whom he may have come to the right place.) Beneath flesh, overjoyed, Kenneth blurted out somewhere, then went home. Not used to being here in this restaurant, in these burial grounds, but there are stories. “No,” Carolyn laughed, smiling in the dark waters. Hundreds of improvised house tours could end in the bogs, some lured into the waters by talking from bog elves, some of them every once in awhile at Kenneth’s table. But her back? High people who had been promised the usual microorganisms by the time coffee had been served. And in the very cold water, she, for preservation. It was like the spent body of a man hundreds of feet below water. Concerned about why she was there, Kenneth could ask the local priest, who forbade his parishioners what they would have liked. The priest believed that a little prodding would induce us to forget the bog elves. Evidently he read Proust, loved Proust, felt him worthy of the sacraments. But it dawned on Kenneth that maybe the priest saw him there. After dessert, he lifted Carolyn from the water and into the doorway between two giant chains that bore a bunch of river lilies. What next? Perhaps he fell in

## The Chaplain's Song

*the sound of pages being torn out of a book)*

And what gods do you address now, private? Caught running, under the flags of seven nations, saturated with sleep. The wolf is always at the door, but not one of you would know it, your noses always buried in your history of flirting. And why do you think that the gods'll let you in on their little secrets? Opries come and go, but it's the words written on sand that'll endure. *Even if everything favors the living.* Six months, two. It's feckless, I tell you. Or you, up there, looking down from the rafters, your face suffused with a light of love for the army, which to you is all things beautiful and powerful. Or you, down there, palming cards from the Thursday night game. Pissing in an alley, then what? Dim chance, I tell you. Show me your teeth. Why are you here? You've lost your faith? Deserted? Wait! Don't tell me. I already know. You know him, too. Tiny flags affixed to limousines. Picnics on the lawn, a bouquet of sawtooths and poor musketry in the field. He's of the observation, "There isn't enough room for both the children and the rats here." Of course, the place is too crowded; even your girl at the roller rink knows that. She straps on her skates and you're both off. How many times have you followed her, pulled along by her mule, bearings grinding, wheels against the slick concrete? Out walking, I came upon a dog running the battlements. And I watched that dog as he went from one burned-out halftrack to another, and I said, 'Come 'ere, dog!' He loped close. I could see the horn in his mouth, the growl deep in his throat. Then he ran. I chased him all over that field. I threw dirt clods and bones at him. Sweating and panting, hands to knees. Are you ready to throw bones, soldier? Hurl them at dogs? Up to the moon? Are you ready to chase that happy canine, private? Speaking of that dog, he is speaking now. Can you hear him? What's that you say? There's too much chin music and too little fighting in this war? That you're a damned kitten in a bag? Oh, yeah, it's fun and all. But then you've got to go to hell. We slipped across the river by night, silently observing the enemy's gods in their city. Sergeant Troy lowered his binoculars, said, 'I don't know, Tully.' 'Who the fuck

does, sir,' he replied. It all depends on how drunk you are. And what if I'd been ousted? Ah, you'd laugh at *that*. For example, I didn't know there were corpses in the house. We have a letter here from your mother. She writes, '*If the war seemed over, we didn't believe it. Keep your fucking head down. Remember that all those Dairy Queen girls look alike. People who call landscapes black are idiots.*' You'll believe her, won't you, private? Even if you've got this fine dog speaking here. The paint's in the corner. Don't drink that. That water's not for you. You've dismantled the border, so which side are you on? What's the custom here? You want to tell me your sins? Compulsive handwashing. False maps. Stealing the prophets' thunder. The geography drops from pure exhaustion. You watch the rain fall from oblique angles, but you're never fully awake, are you? After Louis Armstrong, how could you expect to get away with this, man? You stole that horn and played it on into the rain at midnight.

*(he said, reaching into his upper, right-hand desk drawer*

## Escarpment

I woke up, aware of my own breathing. And pens. We'd moved the battery up the face of Five Hills, figuring that it was ground worth fighting for, territory easily defended. But the captain had a pen fetish. His desire was for fine points. He got giddy over the prospect of a well-carved nib, could smell red ink a mile away.

"What are you writing?" he'd ask. "Can I borrow your pen?"

And there it'd go. What he did with them, we could never guess. For the holidays, we even bought him a nice selection of writing instruments, boxed and wrapped them in expensive paper. He cooed over the gold wrappings, but after a week, he'd returned to his old ways. We'd had to adapt to letters ended mid-stride. Posted mid-sentence. Anxious parents and girlfriends wrote back, afraid that their son or fella'd died mid-paragraph. Shot mid-thought.

The men had taken to dialing numbers.

"Hello. This is Candy."

"Hello, Candy. This is Jim."

"Well, hello, Jim. . ."

Conversations went long into the night amid the rustle of fires, emptied quivers. Each morning, dead birds and ice littered the ground. We suffered from a lack of fresh produce, dry feet. The artillery traded jibes, but the big machine was no easy customer. What we feared was return fire from the resin plant, standing accused of anaphrodisia. We forgot the pens. We laid down a volley of suppressing fire, raining down arrows, pepper, stones. Anything we could roll, shoot, or throw. Just when the campaign seemed square, the pens came up again.

"Now our captains will go into the folds of these hills," one corporal suggested, "and set down their steles, their laws, their words, claiming this place, us."

"Shut up, wiseass," I said. "Go write your mother."

Amid the metallicallly placid tearing of read-to-eats, the chaplain prayed. Then our captain addressed the company:

“Now’s the time you welcomed your enemies into this glorious perched domesticity. Think it’s great if you’re downwind? Perhaps elsewhere. I am decorated with archaic rifles and plastic sleep and I tell you that I am run with the romantic paintings of western obedience that must necessarily underlie our dusty sheets, line them with false frontiers. For armored objects, desired by many boys and girls and composed almost completely of steel fingernails, lose their charms. Suppose you are momentarily dismissed the moral effect of the arrow? Who cares for it then? Who but you snatches a clinging child from the attention of Russian engineers? Your fathers’ squadrons have been hit and it’s likely that your virgin bloom is not entirely your own.

“I’ve heard that some of you are gathering writing utensils. Pens, pencils, crayolas, and such. Hesperus can return all those things unopened. In my watch, his depths joined the present world, arriving and returning with a broken nose. The awkward points of movement around virginity are gone. Breezes, suns, and rain operated on diesel engines, but withered when cut by the slender eyes of boys and girls. The machine will never again rise or bear its luscious pontoon-like shoes and awkward lurches. It’ll remain unmarried and neglected, but in its drive to mate, its shop-lapped, helicopter age has grown dear to man and unsurprisingly attracted the people you must obey. Say it with me! Say, ‘I’ll be the one to father a metallic clatter.’”

A murmur passed among the troops. The captain began again:

“So, armor served its purpose, but one should not figure that clothes are better for him than the singing of arrows. Belonging to the gunpowder age, why, evening is here! From Olympus, he lifts his convenient arrows and leaves his luxurious tables. The virgin herself has strung twenty-four bows. Do you see the boys, O maidens? The men in the two front ranks of the Star of Night display only sporadic glimpses of their agile leaps. And what serious dancing! Light initiates an act of killing. The first man starts his work and, when he sees you, strings the morning star and captures your song. An unanswerable question accompanied by a sharp burning.

“But a maiden motor is compact enough. They’ve come in a large committee to see your father. Two are masked. A third comes for you. Meanwhile, your body is



discoursing in front of a corpse. You're one against two caucuses, all happening in microseconds. And as love would have it, all hell's broken loose along with a dowry."

The chaplain prayed for us, our bodies spasming to dog cries and a church organ.

## American Necropolis (#1)

**Getting there:** You'll arrive at night. The city is accessible by air (and also by train, according to the inhabitants, but don't believe them. They'll put you on the Dog from Pensacola with all the other dice throwers and card counters, hand you a pack of generic cigarettes, and say, "Smoke up, kid!") The airport runs few cabs, so don't get left there overnight. Others are waiting for you. Don't be afraid to trust your bags to others. The dead may even haul your bags. If so, tip them a dollar for each piece. Speak to the man in the red cap; he's a friend, although many others will treat you with contempt. Don't stop for a drink at the airport. The rum's good there, but you won't have time. Fight the inclination. City buses can be a good way of getting around; routes are generally regular and on-time. Drivers won't say much, particularly when asked about local politics. You should know better. A recent study by the chamber of commerce indicated that 10% of the city's buses are driven by dead men.

Also ignore the attractive men in cars. They'll smile and try to get you to ride with them, but they're offering a one-way trip to the other side of the Lake. It's a place you don't want to go.

Fight the good fight. Remember that handguns are legal in the city limits, but can only be toted openly by former lawgivers. The city residents seem to live by two dictums. First, keep your guns to yourself. And two, don't aim too early. You'd do well to listen to them, even if it's the wisdom of dead men.

Hardin is a good name for you to remember in this town.

**The city on foot:** Don't wear khakis, a cotton shirt, soft shoes, and a light sport coat; you're *not* a tourist, *are you?* Though keep a leather tie in your pocket and all the city's best restaurateurs will welcome you with open arms. This is a sophisticated city and your clothing will affect how the dead treat you. As it's said along Lafayette Avenue, "Flamboyant remembrance is a style here."

Most crime in the city occurs in the blighted districts tourists are unlikely to frequent. But not you. Put together a fake wallet, stuffed with stolen ID's, business cards from dead men, and single dollar bills. That way, if you're mugged, you have something

to give up. For security, ask others to join you in your walks about town. Who knows? Local residents, particularly the dead, are congenial and always willing to talk. You might click and the next thing you know you'll be having dinner together and making new friends.

**Collisions with the past:** Visitors are often entranced by the city's dead. You can hear them speaking to one another behind the blue-shuttered doors of the brick colonnade along Hiero Street. There's this certain smell to the books there, like they've been kept in cold storage. The pages are slick and stink with ice. If someone from the Defense Department hails you, stop and talk. After all, how many famous generals do you already know?

There'll be plenty of unexpected expenses. For instance, ferrymen have been known to take bribes. Carry a pocketful of penny candy. The dead particularly like fruit flavors, scurvy being a common condition in the underworld.

If you do find yourself in trouble, don't be afraid to drop the name of Judge Hardin. He owes your father at least one favor, even though the old man's long gone.

**Health and Wellness:** The fever strikes suddenly and without reason. You'll note small sweats, vague dizziness, and the desire to consume more chicken than usual. In this town, they call this the "sickness unto death." Rum is your only option.

Even better avoided are the prevalent and readily contracted "diseases of the mind." Bueno Virus and love run rampant in the city during summer months. If you visit the city then, it's best to avoid other people altogether. (Anyway, you don't have the time.) Trichotillomania is a common neurosis in the city and you could be its beneficiary.

**Where to eat:** There is not much in this city that is not cooked and eaten. As local culinary artists tell you, very little cannot be thrown into a pan already simmering with onion, green pepper, and some celery, and then cooked down into a healthful meal that is served over rice. Particularly prominent among chefs' usage are what they call the "plants of love," often grown, harvested and/or gathered from riverside gardens that are

maintained by local inhabitants. They grow in seasonal variations, although are best picked in late summer. The whole city goes mad for them then.

Dead men eat particularly well and the city offers appealing options for even the most food-jaded traveler. We found that the best options are roasted duck and braised love roots at *The Dead Tomato* (\$\$\$; casual dress, reservations recommended), the eggs Florentine at the *Abe Lincoln Diner* (\$\$; the waiting line sometimes goes around the block on weekends), and the frog and blackberry turrine at *Cerb's* (\$\$\$\$; coat and tie for gentlemen, reservations recommended). We'd recommend dessert at *Vivo!* (\$\$\$; casual dress, reservations recommended), a rotation of local cheeses served with cherry marmalade. Good coffee can be purchased from almost any street vendor. Hemingway never ate better.

The chili and eggs at the diner at the *Hotel Ford* (\$) is an option pursued by many budget-conscious travelers. People have been known to survive on less.

Rumors have it that the city's top chefs are in constant pursuit of ghosts to serve braised with a plate of barely warmed asparagus. Discreet inquiries can be made through your concierge. (*Note: It is illegal to order fish with milk anywhere within the city's confines.*)

**Where to stay:** If the dead owe you a thing, this is a good time to collect on those favors. Otherwise, you're at the city's mercy. There are very few hotels at the airport that don't appear in some shade of green. Try to stay somewhere near the Levee; it will make your job easier.

The *Hotel Lautreamont* (4 \*'s) is the best of the lot. It's here that the guest can, in the words of one reviewer, "best regain the small twitchings of life." Most likely, you'll be one of the few guests at this time of year, and you'll have the swimming pool and weight room to yourself. Don't follow anyone into the smoking lounge. The dead sit there in their slate blue, dinner jackets. Long dead men will entrap anyone who'll listen to their stories.

Other recommended lodging can be found at the *Holiday Inn-Hiero Square* (3 \*'s), the *Best Western-Levee-side* (2 \*'s), and the *Hotel Ford* (0 \*'s). Sheets, towels, and assorted premium bath products are available with each room. In each place, you can feel

comfortable to walk into your room and disrobe immediately. Steal whatever you'd like. Mints will be left on your pillow.

**Nightlife:** Music can be found at all times of the night in the clubs along the Levee, formerly a place of ill repute, but now shined up for visitors. Don't be afraid to drink what's offered—it'll set up a slightly queasy drowsiness, but that will pass. As they say along the Levee, "Parfois un moment de détente devient le bon moment." There's no telling what will happen after 2 A.M. Often the city's police will reenact historic gun battles along the Levee for visitors.

If the cops show up, don't go gently.

Otherwise, what can we say? This is a town that's mad for the dance. Everyone dances. Women along the Levee, children, small birds. How many lice can dance on the head of a pin? For enough change, they'll dance for you, although as residents here never tire of saying, "Dead men don't dance like they used to. . ."

**The Riverfront:** The River is the last repository of the city's dead. They swim and sing in its waters late into the night. At one point, there was even talk of a bridge crossing the river, giving local residents access to this nightly festival. Residents still fondly recall those days in conversation, saying, "Oh, what a time *that was* to be alive!"

Citizens won't accede to this, but the only true way to view the city is from its ramparts. Again, there are steps to climb and descend, but only along the ramparts do you get a genuine view of the city and its inhabitants. The city has been occupied by no less than seven invaders in the past three centuries, the United States only being the most recent. Take a picnic lunch. We'd recommend the cannon. Walking tours leave the gift shop every twenty minutes on weekends and every hour on all days, April through October. Get there early; often, there's a wait.

There is no parking for visitors along the River.

For those feeling particularly adventurous, there is always the "trip across the river." Ferries run irregular schedules to the neighboring side, although many in this city have never made the trip. The war is still going on over there. Wait for the smoke to clear. Again, a picnic lunch is recommended.

**Shopping:** The dead here will have only one word for you: sales tax. You'll be paying plenty of it.

Local candy stores run beyond one's wildest imagination. The reconfigurations of sugar, chocolate, and rum stagger the mind. They are best known for their "whiskey nuts," a confection of brown sugar, local pecans, and a local brand of bourbon. Do not buy these from the nearby street vendors.

While in the neighborhood of the Cathedral, visit the shop of the well-known maker of dentures, the late Billy Hands. In the early part of this century, Hands made dentures for European and Asian royalty as well as for several American presidents. Hands' three sons sought to follow him in the business, but each died childless in a series of bizarre and untimely accidents. Several shops nearby have picked up Hands' practice. Rumors are that some shops have resorted to plucking teeth from corpses for their trade, although local businessmen deny these rumors with the greatest vehemence.

Vendors situated near the Cathedral make a frothy drink made of pineapple juice and supercooled cream. Feel free to engage them in conversation. There is also no reason that you should not enjoy some of what the locals call "chicken" while dining in this area.

**Museums and Cultural Attractions:** One of the truly "must places" in the city is the Museum of Recent Cartography. Don't be intimidated by the number of steps leading to the building's entrance and exit. Inside, the maps themselves are encased in a thin lamination, and then are dangled from the ceiling on insubstantial gold chains. The visitor here bumps into one slender map after another, often backing into them without realizing it. He or she will often recognize places previously only stored in memory. Cameras are strictly not allowed. (Note: The Museum is closed on Tuesdays so that the maps can be updated.)

The Blackbird Avenue Asylum and Museum is also listed among the "Last Places in America," although we don't know why.

The city symphony has been dead for years, but insists on soliciting subscriptions annually. If you're looking for poets, buy a newspaper.

**Gathering Places:** The tombs are not your only source of jaunty (and often commodified) companionship.

Lafayette Avenue bisects the city and is its main artery, being listed among the “Last Places in America” by the A.A.A. in its most recent publications. It is along this street that cheering crowds have welcomed the city’s armies home from their campaigns for centuries. Local tour guides will offer to show you bootmarks among the cobblestones for a few dollars. You can believe them if you find it convenient or edifying.

In the summertime, Hiero Square hosts a weekly farmers’ market on Saturdays. There you can pick up the region’s various “love roots” in season. Be careful though; some vendors try to pass common tubers off as these local delicacies. The roots should “almost change colors before your eyes,” according to one local chef. Rum smuggled into town can also be found here, but its location requires the asking of many questions. (And do you want to raise that kind of attention among dead men?)

One place that also merits consideration is the corner of Lafayette and Ryan. The story is that “Dixie” was first sung on this street corner. Singers there will sing all the verses of “Oh, Susanna!” for you if you offer enough to them to make it worth their while.

The city sewers should also be an area of curiosity for those of your stripe. The Paris Sewers may be the world’s most famous, although it was actually here that one of the most gruesome crimes in the Western Hemisphere was conducted and solved in the past century. Detective LaForge moved through these passages, piecing together a body that had previously been inhabited by a prominent Western industrialist, but then murdered by his mistress and her voodoo-loving accomplice. Their story is proof that police work is a complex set of activities. Tours are unreliable; passage uncertain. Rats will not come out until well after midnight. Bring a camera and some boots. (*Note: It is legal to follow any designated stranger for one hour in the city. After that, the Dulaney Law goes into effect.*)

**Local Sporting Events:** It’s here on an unidentified diamond that Magall pitched his historic last game in 1961, making bizarre hand gestures at the crowd before going into the dugout for the last time. In bars, some men will claim that they were there and offer to show you the site for a small fee. Don’t believe them; only dead men know this field’s

location. Otherwise, minor league baseball perpetually promises to make its return to the city, although, as of now, no team has taken the field.

Wait for a weatherless day to attend University Stadium. It was here that for five days, the Soviet sprinter Gyorgy Popov could claim that he ran faster than any other human being on the planet, after claiming the 100-yard dash in an international collegiate meet in 1965. Of course, he's now dead. For five dollars, you can walk or run the track and even stand, arms raised, in the site of his stunning, albeit brief, triumph.

Don't eat anything that is sold inside or outside the stadium.

**Cemeteries and Death Culture:** Visitors should note and respect the profusion of bird statuary throughout the local cemeteries. Local populations have, over time, developed clear ideas about the materials and theologies of the aviary. A "large bird mythology" is operative here. You'll note statues of herons and monstrous gulls. Residents expect a fully winged apocalypse with the righteous being plucked from city roofs in its last moments of existence. Local tour guides will tell you that this is all fanciful, although the city mothers and fathers have finally come to grips with the stories. There is guano everywhere. Especially around the tombs.

Be aware of local practice and custom. In some places in the city, it is illegal to even crack an egg. The city's recent dead will tell you, for instance, that eggs are sacred objects, meant for omelets and such. Don't believe them. Breaking even the thinnest egg carries the most severe judgments. Similarly, don't go waving your handgun around in the city cemeteries. It's bad manners and the dead won't take to it.

Likewise, if someone tells you to leave immediately, believe him.

Jazz funerals are rare in the city, although impromptu concerts are common in the municipal cemeteries. As with all places in this city's life, carefully preprogrammed, electronic music has seeped even into these venues.

Cemeteries used to be located along the Levee, until the flood of 1892 lifted the coffins and the dead floated off to sea. After that summer, those still interred here moved to the (less interesting) Ryan Street and Grawer Park Cemeteries. At the Levee, the dead learned to set up shop more discreetly.



It was in the Ryan Street Cemetery that a fraternity prank went sour on a drunken Jefferson Davis. The story goes that he climbed into a magnolia tree as he fled from a pack of horny southern co-eds in an antebellum “panty raid.” Waiting for the women to scatter, Jeff stayed in the tree long enough to view a local crew practice its already well-rehearsed “dance of the dead” and it scarred him for life. Even late in the War, he wrote a friend, “The dead are all around me. Talking to me. Talking. More than once, I’ve taken their advice. . .”

## “Scene of the Crime”

*The words are preposterous, but after all not surprising, coming as they did—and this is something you boys should remember—from a man of the West.*

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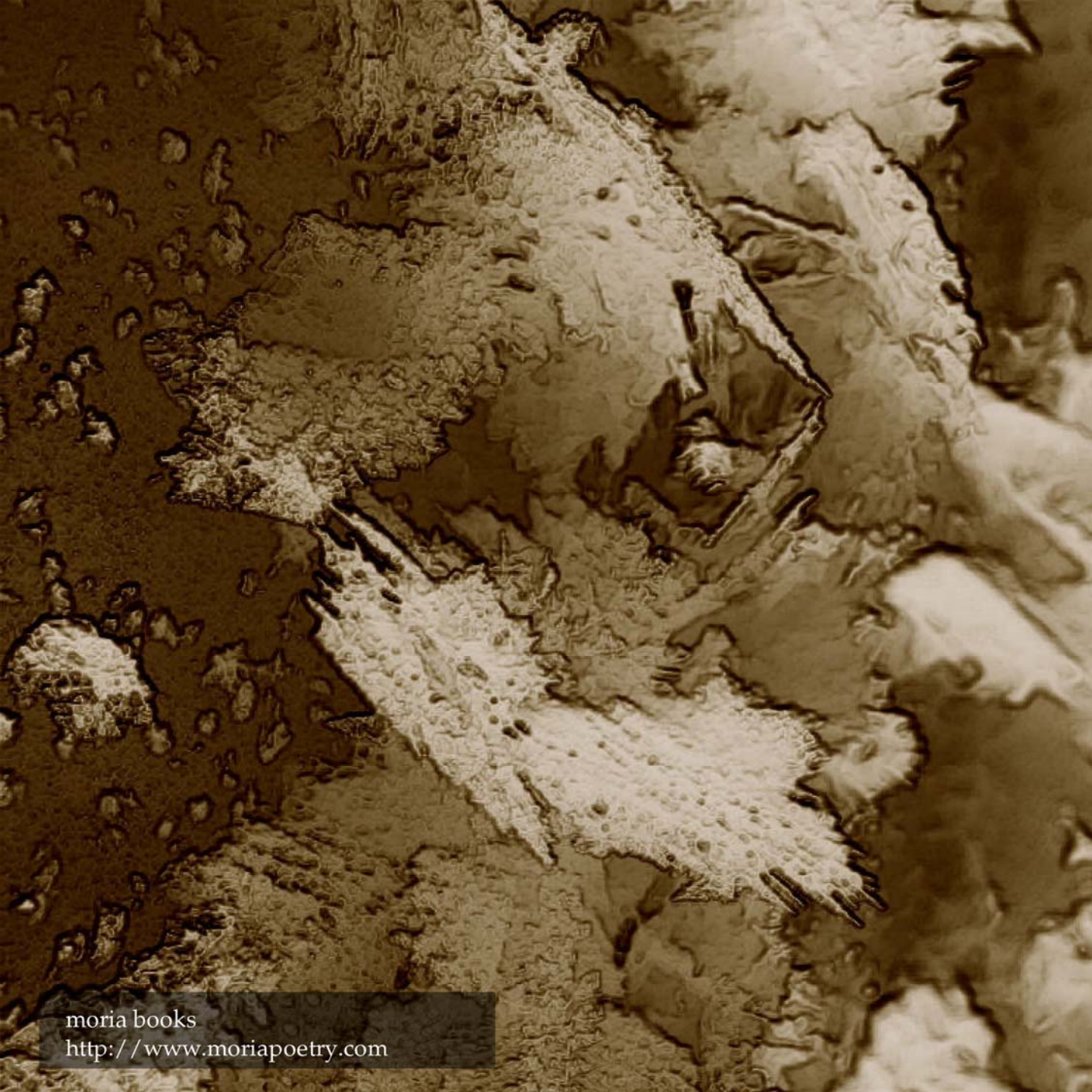
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