



BEAT THE DUST

July 2008

Tim Wells' ten tunes



A couple of times I've been called a punk in poetry interviews and reviews. I've always taken it as an insult. True, I'm of the age to remember the Art Schools explode with awful guitar riffs and, then as now, dire fashions. As for me, I was a Suedehead; a clean, well tailored, brogues and Ben Sherman Suedehead.

Beat The Dust asked me for a bit of info about myself and so I said I'd dip my hand into the 'All Killer, No Filler' record box and talk about the first ten tunes I pulled...

Nothing Can Stop Me – Gene Chandler



A real floor filler from Gene Chandler 'the woman handler'. A quintessential Northern Soul classic written by Curtis Mayfield from opening fanfare to solid beat, as with so many working class classics; a song about overcoming. I had a skinhead girlfriend who was a mad soulie, she used to change into hot pants and loafers halfway through an all-nighter and this was just the sort of tune that would have her gliding majestically across the dance floor. More please...

Shame, Shame, Shame – Jimmy Reed



London always had a bit more R&B to its selections than the Northerners. This is typically Jimmy Reed; lazy, loping and insistent. Jimmy Reed was an outstanding alcoholic, he even sounds drunk when he sings, but also an epileptic and illiterate. Like so many of us, taking that pain out on the dance floor...

Love Is All Right – Cliff Nobles

This is the vocal cut to its better known flip, 'The Horse'. Earl Young really makes this record with a blistering break. I picked this up, along with a pile of other belters, on a recent poetry and records foray to Noo Yawk City.

The Monkey Time – Major Lance

My dad is a great Major Lance fan. What's not to love? A dapper ex-boxer who cut a fantastic run of Curtis Mayfield penned tunes on the Okeh label. Not only that, he could dance. Major Lance was loved by the Mods from the 60s and later on, often played live at Northern Soul nights. I remember a superb profile of Major Lance in 'Hard As Nails,' probably the best skinhead magazine ever.

The Magic Touch – Melba Moore

This was recorded in '66 but didn't get a release 'til the 80s. When it did it swept through the dance floors like a dose of pox through an Arvon course. What a killer!

Baby Workout – Jackie Wilson

This '63 belter is from another ex-boxer and the best mover in the game. Both Elvis and James Brown learnt tricks from 'Mr Excitement'. It's been said that that on this record Jackie sounds as though he's shadowboxing with the musical backing.

Let's Stick Together – Wilbert Harrison

This is another early '62 tune, a personal fave that I have on the fantastic Sue label. There's a gentle rolling beat to this, one that's for the early hours.

The Camel Walk – The Ikettes

The Ikettes had some of the wildest dance tunes. I remember this storming the Town & Country, the 100 Club, the Sols Arms, the Dublin Castle... in fact anywhere soul was blasting and girls were dancing.

Look At Me Now – Terry Callier



Another personal fave, a record from the superb Chess stable. This '63 record is what the Northern Soul scene is all about. An obscure American not given his due at home but a cult act here in Blighty. It always delights me when soul singing legends step out onto a stage to sing at a soul night. They can't believe how popular and how loved they are here in Britain. Magical.

You Really Got A Hold On Me – The Miracles

I couldn't really wrap this up without a slice of Motown, and what a slice! This 1962 classic was written after Smokey Robinson had heard Sam Cooke's 'Bring It On Home To Me' on the radio. There's so much great Motown; the Contours, Marvin Gaye, the 4 Tops... I'm back in the realms of talcum powdered dance floors, blue sta-prest, red socks and penny loafers as the record arm's about to drop...

keep the faith by Tim Wells

This smile on my face
Ain't from steering a desk
All workday long.

No, not a 'I'mhappytobehereIlikeatwat' smile.
It's knowing that come Saturday night -
Saturday night *a//* night,

I'll be with the people America forgot,
Where the fashionable don't go
Hallelujah!

The bosses' stuffed shirt, cufflinks,
Comedy tie and ethical ethics
Won't mean a thing.

They'll all winnow
As Bettye Swann
Starts to sing.

The thump thump thump
Up front back beat
Reducing all to the swagger of generations.

The 4/4 stomp of the week;
Seven Days Too Long.
Curtis, Major Lance, Sugar Pie,

In my tenement this poor boy is a king.
The rush of the flush
'Til I come crashing down.

9 to 5 drudgery,
Pain and heartbreak
Pounded out on a powdered killing floor.

Fighting isn't about hitting
It's about being hit.
This joy in my heart is the best revenge I have.

Make Me Yours – Bettye Swann
Seven Days Too Long – Chuck Wood
It's All Right – the Impressions
You'll Want Me Back – Major Lance
Down in the Basement – Sugar Pie Desanto & Etta James
In My Tenement – Roosevelt Grier

"lady, you shot me!" by Tim Wells

for Todd Moore

Sam Cooke's birthday
and everyone is
bringing it on home:
the place swinging
and folks singing.

Skirts haven't been so short
and sayin' so much
since Ike Turner
first kitted out

the Ikettes in St Louis.

At a wink,
a gal dressed as a flapper
camel walks
to a table,
laden with cake.

Ol' Sam snatches up
a handful, rubs it
over her charms,
pushes his grinning face
right on in there:

'Mmmm ... THAT'S
the icing on the cake.'
Just then the boys
set the champagne
bottles poppin',

corks ricocheting
off the walls.
Sam blanches,
his attention
on a smear

of heavy strawberry jam
between the girl's
breasts.
Suddenly he feels
cold and alone.

The Wu Tang Clan interviews Mark Colbourne



Method Man: "Wu-Tang Clan comin' at ya."

Mark C: "Right you are then, chaps. Who wants to kick off with a question?"

GZA: "First of all, who's your A&R? A mountain climber who plays an electric guitar?"

Mark C: "No, it's a lovely old fellow called Derek, and what he can't do with a lamb chop isn't, quite frankly, worth doing."

RZA: "Do you think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat me?"

Mark C: "Probably not, if I'm honest. I'm looking at it now and it's withering a little beneath the lights."

Inspectah Deck: "But I'm still depressed and I ask what it's worth?"

Mark C: "Stumped if I know, old boy. Still – chin up. No point moping."

ODB: "Watch your step, Kid."

Mark C: "Will most certainly do, Mr Bastard. All the best!"

the art of donald mcgill by Mark Colbourne

My world is colour-washed and ink-outlined. Conversation blurts in snippets. A flash of brisk retort. The baker's daughter offers me her hot cross buns. She claims they're plump and warm. I run. I flee. Shouts from the outside appear in my dreams. They warn that I'm obscene. They campaign that I withdraw.

The red-faced man, rich in middle age and ale. His eyes as wide as the ample bosom of the voluptuous blonde towards whom he looms atop the garden hedge. Her rose buds are peeking out today, he notes with a smile. I must take my leave, the condescension persists and protests. I really must desist. I run to the beach. To the sea, to the shore, to my sanctuary of sand. A lady rides in a donkey derby. A married man admires the ass. The wife at his side consumed by fluster. Once upon a time I was considered a patriot. Now, I am an industry. Perhaps, just perhaps, I am part of your past, a strain of tradition. Perhaps I am part of you all.

The village vicar preaches temperance to a tramp who falls down inebriated. He claims in response he has not a temper; he is in the finest spirits any chap has ever experienced. I dash past while this tramp assesses the clergyman. He sees in double, in triple. He is faced with a clerical army of infinite resource. Can't you all stop talking at once, he begs and pleads. Newlyweds snigger in the distance, no longer burdened by inexperience, by the greatest of mysteries. Their grins are painted a mixture of sinister and simple.

I wonder how I came to be here. How I came to arrive. I can see people on the outside. Hectoring around the vendors' displays. Reviewing the boards or spinning the stands. Peering in whilst strolling the promenade, teetering towards the pull of the pier's illumination. Some with smiles and some with fear. Those with laughter and those with threat, with anachronistic legislation, with the wish to see me recalled. But back on the street before me a policewoman informs a drunk that anything he says will be taken down. Your knickers, he suggests. I hurry on my way. Past this scene. Away from these characters. Something will soon arrive to bring this to an end. I can feel it coming. I can sense it in the post. I will finish with nothing.

These encounters are unstoppable. They are everywhere I turn. Hundred upon hundred. Thousand upon thousand. Snippets and snatches. Slips and slops. I can't stop them. I'm unable to stem the flow. I wouldn't even try. And so I report. So I document and log. I am compelled. I am possessed. In the shops the wives stoop and gossip. They scowl and storm. Meanwhile, young women parade the beaches in polka dot bikinis. The circling men leer and charm. They plot and allude. They prowl and suggest. There's a girl outside the brass shop. The owner smiles and nods. What a wonderful set of knockers. *It*. This world is singularly about *it*. *It* is the foundation upon which all else is built. *It* is behind every sentence spoken. The cause of all glances cast. The suggestion inherent within any word uttered. *It* is our very essence.

From the High Street, I enter the courtroom. Take to the gallery. In the dock, a spiv shuffles in a demob suit and shiny, greased-down hair. A girl presents her witness. The judge enquires if she slept with the defendant on the night in question. Of course not, your honour, she replies. I didn't sleep a wink. The judge looks up. Quite suddenly and with a distinct, unsettling purpose. A spotlight engulfs me. It comes from nowhere. The remainder of the room dulls to black. Everything slips away. He looks in my direction. I will be here for real soon enough. I know this in my bones.

My world is fading, colour-washed with curled up corners and cracked covering. The censors are tearing it apart. Attacking from every angle.

My world crashes like a cymbal.

It shatters like a heart.

Michael Blackburn interviews himself



Q) What is the most disgusting thing you're ever done?

A) A 'pokey'. I worked in a hospital between school and university. I won't explain, but it involved surgical gloves.

Q) What's the cleverest thing you think you've ever said?

A) 'Sacrifice your pride on the altar of expedience.'

Q) Why do you (still) write poetry?

A) Because it's pointless and has no financial value. And it's short.

Q) Why are you not writing a novel?

A) Because novels are obvious. And long. And life is short.

the seventh of july by Michael Blackburn

'Their clamor for a millennium is shot through with a hatred for all that exists, and a craving for the end of the world.' "The True Believer", Eric Hoffer.

The names are those of the people murdered in the London bombings of 7th July 2005. The text is taken from an Al-Qaeda Manual.

it is forbidden to remove this from the house
James Adams, Samantha Badham

in the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate
Lee Harris, Phil Beer

the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination,
Anna Brandt, Ciaran Cassidy

the diplomacy of the cannon and machine gun
Elizabeth Daplyn, Arthur Edlin Frederick

make them desire death and hate appointments and prestige
Karolina Gluck, Gamze Gunoral

slaughter them like lambs and let rivers flow with their blood
Ojara Ikeagwu, Emily Jenkins

physicians, engineers, businessmen, politicians
Adrian Johnson, Helen Jones

unbelief is still the same
Susan Levy, Shelley Mather

the confrontation does not know Socratic debates, Platonic ideals
Michael Matsushita, James Mayes

blasting and destroying the places of amusement
Behnaz Mozakka, Mihaela Otto

blasting and destroying bridges
Atique Sharifi, Ihab Slimane

commitment frees members from conceptual problems
Christian 'Njoya' Small, Monika Suchocka

we cannot resist this state of ignorance
Mala Trivedi, Rachele Chung For Yuen

bases may be in cities, they may be in mountains
Michael Stanley Brewster, Jonathan Downey

by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth
David Foulkes, Colin Morley

make their women widows and their children orphans
Jenny Nicholson, Laura Webb

the deceiver will never be guided
Lee Baisden, Benedetta Ciaccia

atrocities were inflicted on the innocent
Richard Ellery, Richard Gray

abused by the human dogs
Anne Moffat, Fiona Stevenson

blasting and destroying the embassies
Carrie Taylor, Anthony Fatayi-Williams

removal of these personalities that block the path
Jamie Gordon, Giles Hart

civilian intellectuals and thinkers for the state
Marie Hartley, Miriam Hyman

righteous law for all places and all times
Shahara Akther Islam, Neetu Jain

Lions and Rotary clubs, and foreign schools
Sam Ly, Shyanuja Parathasangary

the bitter situation that the nation has reached
Anat Rosenberg, Philip Russell

is a result of its childrens' love for the world
William Wise, Gladys Wundowa

Freddy N interviews Steve Ely



Freddy N: Why are you so wise?

Steve Ely: Thank you, Freddy. That would be a by-product of a lifetime of full-on geektensity, enabling me to run the gamut in both breadth and depth.

Freddy N: Why are you so clever?

Steve Ely: Thank you, Freddy. I fence daily, both sabre and foil. The cut and thrust prepares one most adequately for the ... well, the cut and thrust.

Freddy N: Why do you write such excellent books?

Steve Ely: Thank you, Freddy. I eschew the conventional virtues and cleave to the violence of love.

Freddy N: Why are you a destiny?

Steve Ely: Thank you, Freddy. Because every day is a good day to die.

Freddy N: Thank you, Herr Stephanus. Alles das ist.

Steve Ely: Freddy, may I now ask you a question?

Freddy N: *Zweifell* - certainly.

Steve Ely: Who poked you up, the Genoese rent boy or the Swabian whore?

Freddy N: First one, then t'other. But the one I really loved was that Clydesdale in the piazza Carlos Alberto.

Steve Ely: Nay lad!

Freddy H: Ecce Homo.

pc by Steve Ely

so its hot in class and jones this broke down peckawood hippy ass english teacher shrugs off his corduroy sports coat and hangs it over a chair motherfuckas in short sleeves like captain dobie sissy tattoo round his skinny white bicep tribal band he says i say tribal band college the fuck you with im dcdp you dig my ink pulled open my shirt brotha in a ski mask packin an m16 nf banger name loco garcia ripped off his sweat top says yeah vato how ju like this 100% farmero right across his shoulders now thas ju call tattoo jones smilin and shakin his head like you couldnt make it up says ok fellas lets get back to moby dick damn fish had to be a white whale but this honky cocksucker name virgil ray opens his big fat honky mouth says tribal band jones that it you down with that samoan fuck queequeeg motherfuckers down there got ink all over but they aint shit compared with the master race check out my tribal brand pulled his shirt wide open shamrock three sixes that eight inch slash where his homeboys claw hammer ripped down to the breastbone but i aint takin that shit from no peckawood i jumped up said master race my ass git yo white ass over here ill serve you up like ali served quarry garcias hollerin in my corner ju show im homes fuck that white bread punk peckawood asshole flips his table says you want it come get it snitch bitches get up slink back agin the walls and jones is screamin and hittin the panic

alarm cops pile in with riot clubs bing bang boom you rat motherfuckers quit sellin wolf tickets and read your faggot books you better remember you aint nobdy in here no more

I, Darrell Standing

for Tommy Silverstein

I, Darrell Standing weighing eighty six pounds ribcage crushed and hipbones broken kidneys bruised and liver swollen coughing bile pissing blood lying naked in pools of my own excrescence gnawed at by rats and crawling roaches owning nothing missed by no one endungeoned for decades on account of a stoolies lie am once again offered three months recuperation in the hospital a cell in population an appointment with the board of parole if only ill tell i spit in their faces and tell them go to hell they tell me im there already i say you call this hell bring your doctors with forceps to pluck out my eyes your dentists with pliers to snap out my teeth your nurses with scalpels to flay off my skin you hoosier bastards the jacket this cell is this the worst you can do

I, Darrell Standing a being of pure spirit am free of the flesh its desire and mortifications i cannot be broken one time after twenty consecutive days in the jacket they beat me dead with nightsticks sent me floating to the light but a screws voice dimly *i tole you he aint so tough shitbird caint take but an itty bitty beatin* sent me zooming right back i sat up my body and butted him square on the bridge of the nose no screw can ever hurt me im better than they stronger wittier more intelligent harder more loyal more decent more true I, Darrell Standing am justified invulnerable and they are powerless before me they sent me to death row

I, Darrell Standing having parlayed a five year bit for robbery into twenty three years in solitary and a sentence of death am planning to kill the snitch that put me in the hole twenty three years ago i have cut through the bars of my death row cell with the wire from my eyeglass case sawing five minutes every night for seven months one week and six days and tonight i will wait until the fat screw is asleep slip out of my cell garrotte him take his keys and get down to cellblock c tier three cell ten and shut winwoods squealing mouth forever I, Darrell Standing swore this twenty three years ago and now fate has returned him to me i will make good my promise for my word is better than their words and my heart is stronger than their hearts the governor and the warden and the whole finshing guard I, Darrell Standing

I, Darrell Standing am offered whiskey and a padre and a chance to show contrition before they take me down to death they think in henids for the thousandth time i spit in their faces there is nothing they could give me that i would take not life not death not freedom i am a being of pure spirit i have lived a thousand lives i will live a thousand more my prospect is the cosmos this carcass they slay is not I, Darrell Standing but his current fleshly vehicle but say i am mistaken and death indeed brings oblivion or even hell then bring it on ill go out just the same laughing and kicking and gouging and biting damn them their god their goddamn snitches and when they strap me to the gurney and ask if ive something to say i will tell them if i could choose my next life i would choose this one over and live every single second exactly the same way the jacketings solitary the beatings death row because i love what you do to me you see how im smiling you tried to break me but you could not you think you are killing me but you are not i am better than you stronger wittier more intelligent harder more loyal more decent more true I, Darrell Standing

Conflicted vigilante, Hammer interviews Darren R Scothern



H: Why did you do it?

D: I didn't. It wasn't me. Don't hurt me.

H: Don't lie to me. I'm gonna give you one chance to tell me what's going on.

D: Okay, I admit it. I wrote some stuff. Oww... please... that hurts.

H: What kinda stuff?

D: Stories mainly. And some poems. I didn't mean to hurt anybody.

H: Didn't you? So what did you think you were trying to do, moron? Entertain?

D: Owwwch! No, no, nothing like that. I just wanted to... make a difference.

H: C'mere. I'm gonna make a difference to you...

D: No... no! Help...

welcome to gehenna by Darren R Scothern

Eddie staggered down the alley, ignoring the rain. He navigated the upturned dustbins and piles of dog shit by instinct and didn't flinch at all when a rat squirmed over his soaking wet foot.

Eddie didn't mind the wet too much, or the cold, or the taste in his mouth right now. But he didn't want to think about the blind man with the sign. No Gehenna here. He had all the ingredients for a mighty fine speedball in his pocket, thanks to Fatboy's weekly visit. He was heading back to base and the only thing on his mind was a needle-point party for one.

Under the bridge stanchion, sheltered from the worst of the downpour, Eddie had his little cardboard-and-polythene villa. The blanket he'd stolen hadn't even started to stink that much yet. As always, his front door was unlocked; open and inviting. No fucker locked his door in cardboard city.

He took a length of rubber tubing, and immediately started strapping up his arm, trying not to look at the flaky scars around the vein. It'd hold out a little longer. He was sure of it.

He's coming home in a cool state of high. He doesn't give a fuck and doesn't care who knows, but he can still function. He can feel a greasy smile slit his face from jaw-knuckle to jaw-knuckle. His pockets are so light, so liberated of all that heavy cash that he might just float on the breeze that's knocking apple blossoms down the street, sweeping and swirling like pink sand-storms.

No, no, happy-time.

He stops at the bottom of his path and sees the gate is open. Creaking on its hinges. Swinging between the two grey posts expanding before his eyes; two monolithic steel columns that blot out the sun. Beneath them, the simple rectangular mat:

WELCOME

The front door is open too, beckoning, screaming the echo of its final slam.

He's holding Fatboy's sweaty hand because Fatboy likes to hold hands. They arrive at Fatboy's Lexus, in the lay-by, starring in its own yellow spotlight under the swaying willows. Keeping hold of Eddie's hand, Fatboy opens the rear passenger door, turns, smiles, beckons.

For a moment, Eddie wants to kill Fatboy. He could do it. Knock the fuck out of him, take his wallet, take his gear, get shit-faced. But that would be killing the golden goose. Eddie licks his lips and gets in the car, his ears full of the deafening clatter of Fatboy's zip. Going down.

Eddie's ears are bleeding from the force of the explosion. The ancient mosque disintegrates, leaving two fractured pillars where the entrance used to be. Someone has spray-painted:

WELCOME TO GEHENNA

The migraine-blue sky is quaking open with black contrails. From behind the hills, American M1 Abrams are shelling like fuck, just where they're not supposed to. It's Tuesday, 26th February, 1991, 73 Easting and Eddie knows he's going to die. But he still grabs little Stevie,

slings him over his back, picks up the poor little bastard's severed arm and carries them to the ditch they're going to pretend is shelter. He drops Stevie into the hole in the sand and turns. Oblivion closes in on him, shrieking, as the sky cracks wide open.

Eddie stops near the alley and feels his stomach implode. There's a blind man with a sign; black marker on cardboard:

WELCOME TO GEHENNA
GIVE JENERASLY

Eddie yells at him, 'Do I know you? Did you die?'

He leaves it at that. He's still got the taste of Fatboy's cum on his lips. Fatboy likes to get sucked off by the war hero.

They're standing on the path just inside the gate, laughing at the paving they'll have to get replaced. The agents still haven't taken down the SOLD sign. Michelle's turning to him, holding him, apple blossoms drifting all around her. She's kissing him.

Strawberry lipsalve.

He's getting a hard-on just from kissing her and holding hands. He opens his eyes. The SOLD sign cracks; a jagged black rent splitting it diagonally.

That didn't happen. That never happened.

After a few attempts, Eddie found a bit of vein among the scar tissue that wasn't completely pulped. He shot both barrels of the speedball along the synaptic roller coaster that made everything hunky dory then silence sat beside him like a mute widow. He felt warm and dry. Bits of his arm that used to be skin and vein flapped, the wound massive and gaping...

Brandi Wells interviews Sean Ruane



BW: What do you wear while you're writing?

SR: I wear Berlin wool work slippers and a silk robe, raffishly tied about the waist. When it is drafty in my writing quarters I wear a smoking cap. The cap is handcrafted using the latest advances in Victorian needlework. It is embroidered with red dragons and is particularly fearsome. I like opium.

BW: Who hasn't influenced your writing?

SR: Arthur Stanley Eddington has had very little influence on my writing.

BW: Have you ever eaten squid ink?

SR: I neither eat nor drink squid ink. At times, however, I do take mouthfuls and spit it at people. This usually occurs when I'm pretending to be a squid. I wave my arms quickly to give the impression that I have more than two of them. Afterwards, I yell 'hooka-hooka' and climb back into the tree.

BW: If you were a girl, would you 'do' Yeats?

SR: I wouldn't even do Yeats with your vagina!

BW: If Yeats came over for dinner, what would you serve him?

SR: Steakum sandwiches would be in play. There would also be opium and iced tea and tomatoes and pie. Yeats likes pie.

BW: Do you pick your nose when no one is watching?

SR: Yes, and for this I use either a crab's claw or the severed and embalmed gorilla's finger sent to me by my Congolese friend, Paul, in celebration of my birthday.

On william butler yeats by Sean Ruane

1. Yeats walks into a room backwards and turns slowly.
2. Yeats likes the suspense of the thing.
3. Upon turning, Yeats will say, "Hi, fuckers!" and you will wave. You always wave.
4. Yeats, upon doing it with a woman for the first time, insists that she thereafter call him "Butters."
5. At various intervals throughout the day Yeats smells like peaches, tarragon, and/or a pre-Suez canal era clipper ship.
6. A woman once yelled at Butters for leaving the toilet seat up.
7. Yeats ripped the seat from its hinges and resurrected the old Victorian pastime of throwing toilet seats at whores.
8. If you remove Yeats' suit you will find an identical suit underneath, a slightly sweatier suit, the original suit he was wearing to the haberdashers before he stole the suit that you just took off of him.
9. Yeats will tell you that you look pretty. He will say it with words that leave his face like sunbeams. Your stomach will feel warm.
10. If you put on Yeats' suit, the one you removed, you shouldn't expect much but you can guarantee that there will be jaw-breakers in his pockets.
11. Yeats blows Yeats-sized bubbles and steps inside them and then goes swimming; fish approach and get stuck on the Yeats bubble. Fish for dinner, fuckers.
12. Yeats kicked a vicar in the balls on a Sunday after church in County Mayo after a dram and a dream and a smile.
13. Yeats' penis has an elbow but don't worry about it.
14. Yeats likes creamed corn. If you are in the cafeteria and you are eating creamed corn and Yeats sees you, then Yeats will pull up along side you and take your creamed corn and then eat it.
15. Don't still be sitting there when he's finished.
16. Yeats has $2n+1$ nipples. His internist refers to them as egregious.
17. Yeats sometimes gets heat rash from wearing a lot of suits. Sometimes a real nice nest of pimples visits...

18. There is some dry ejaculate on Yeats' cuff that is more eloquent and articulate than you are. But he is Yeats.
19. It is kinda like your arm's elbow only smoother, Yeats' penis elbow.
20. Yeats got your grammy hooked on meth and jazz.
21. Now your grammy invites jazz greats to all her cookouts. Yeats flips burgers, man. Yeats flips good burgers; the supple wrist of the poet.
22. Your grammy asked Yeats did he know Ricardo "Three Dicks" Peters, the zoot trombonist from down Piedmont way.
23. Yeats replied, "Sure as shit; he is two dicks better than Pussy "Christopher" Waller on the plug accolade and flips mad twitter on the cupped zoot."
24. What?
25. Your grammy nodded and Yeats flipped her a burger and then your grammy threw punches at Fat Gus "Broke William" Tomasino who knocked her on her ass.
26. You should have seen the look Yeats gave Fat Gus.
27. Yeats has the stigmata and it bleeds sunshine and makes your sheets gleam like butter. You remember him smelling of peaches and clipper ship. Oh, the buttery sheen of Yeats!
28. Yeats has a beard but it only appears in photographs; this discomfits private investigators and angry husbands.
29. That warmth in your belly? Yeats. You can call him "Butters" now.
30. Yes.
31. The windshear from Yeats' profligacy will beat down the walls of your tenement sand castle, that place where your chastity hides.
32. Your grammy has shown up at the jazz club where Yeats tends bar, tweaked out of her panties on meth.
33. Yeats tells her to take a flying shit at a rolling toilet.
34. He sees you waving from your car. You're just there dropping off your grammy. Other people are dropping off their grammies as well. Some are black grammies. Do you see the Navajo grammy?
35. Yeats is watching you, mouthing words you can't hear or understand; he waves back.
36. Hi fucker!
37. "Pimples, pimples, balls, balls," shouts your grammy. Other shouts are drowned out by what Fat Gus "Broke William" Tomasino, the undisputed King of West Coast Jazz, is ejaculating into the air.
38. You drive away and a jazz club gets real small.
39. You hear trumpet.
40. A sweet sound whose echoes make a patchwork of manic intention.

Alan K interviews himself



Alan K: How are you?
 Alan K: Reasonably ok, you?
 Alan K: I'm asking the questions.
 Alan K: Sorry, I forgot.
 Alan K: I must say you look nice, why don't you treat yourself to some ice-cream?
 Alan K: Perhaps I will.
 Alan K: Good.
 Alan K: Anymore questions?
 Alan K: You've aged quite badly, what skin products do you use?
 Alan K: Just a bar of mottled soap.
 Alan K: Ugh.
 Alan K: Yeah.

one's elf by Alan K

I wonder if it's just a mark of our youth that everything changes in the blink of an eye and then changes back again before you open them...

He could break his life up in small bits, without beginnings or ends. Men would arrive and leave; a constant string of unattachments. He would hold his arse in the air on his dirty mattress in his basement flat and rest his head on his hands, watching naked prisoners on silver screens while a bear spat and heaved behind him. Afterwards he would shower in the bathroom he shared with six other people he'd never seen and run his fingers over the scribbles on the wall.

When he reads, he feels something approaching happiness. So he would sit on the floor in the cold yellow light, absorbed, ignoring his hunger. He once left his flat and walked down Portobello Bridge, stopping to watch a water hen, two filthy swans, some noisy ducks. On the other side of the canal he saw a boy sitting alone on a bench. He was a gauche youth in a curiously grey old fashioned suit. He walked over the bridge, stopped to get a better glimpse and was startled by who he saw. The boy looked exactly like him. He turned on his heel and fled back to the flat.

He took off his clothes and got into bed and soon a dream pulled him under. *He dreamt that he was on the ledge of an unfinished high-rise building. He can't get down – he shouted, he cried out for himself to come – he did –* When he woke up his phone was ringing.

"Hello"

"Hello David, this is Matthew, I'm calling from Eircom. Your brother said that it is urgent that you take a call from him" He doesn't have a brother.

Confused he said, "I don't have a brother."

"The caller is somewhat distressed David. I think it advisable that you take the call" Matthew replied, matter-of-factly.

Puzzled David asked, "what does he sound like?"

"Sound like, well David he sounds a lot like you." At a loss to understand what was happening David accepted the call.

"Hello David"

"Who is this?" David asked.

"David I am stuck..." the caller replied and was about to say something more when David slammed the phone down.

David got dressed and went to the bus stop. He opened the paper he had with him. Bored after five minutes he tossed it in a bin and boarded the bus. Relieved that the bus was practically empty he went upstairs and sat at the front. The only other passenger there was a young man who sat opposite him. The city changed as the bus moved through it, a series of jump-cut montages. David glanced at the boy sitting on the other seat. An older man had got on. Strange, the bus hadn't even stopped. David looked at them. Something, what was it? The two men didn't seem to notice each other and they both wore grey. On closer inspection David could see that both men had identical profiles, one young, the other old. David fled down the stairs and pressed the stop button, getting off the bus before the doors had fully opened.

David looked at the sky. Alone on the street, he felt like he was contemplating the universe from a shallow grave. He stood there watching night with stars in her hair.

Walking the rest of the way into the city David noticed a second-hand bookshop, open so decided to go in and cope about for something interesting to read. A curmudgeon stacking dusty old tomes looked David up and down. A smile appeared.

"That book you wanted is here," the curmudgeon said to him.

"What book?" David was confused again. The man ducked behind the counter, resurfacing with a small yellow book. He handed it to David; *One's Elf* was the title.

"I didn't order this," said David turning the book over in his hands. He opened it and read a few lines on *Changelings*. There were other chapters on Time, a foreword about Goethe and some metaphysical jargon David couldn't digest. David bought the book and left the shop.

David unlocked his door and went into his flat. He read the better part of the book sitting on the edge of his bed. The television flickered on. On the screen a boy sat on the edge of a bed in a small basement flat he shared with six strangers reading a book he didn't remember ordering from a second-hand bookshop. *A prisoner on a silver screen*. The David on the television turned round. He was wearing a hideous grin and began to wave. David ripped the plug from the wall, killing the television.

David dreamt that night he was back at the unfinished building site, but this time he was looking up. Someone was calling out for him and he went to him.

David woke up early. Dawn was approaching. It was so still he could almost feel the first stirrings in the last hours. He dressed in grey slacks and a blazer then made his way down to Portobello Bridge where he sat on a bench and looked at the water. He sat there a long time. Then he felt someone watching him. On the bridge a boy stood by himself, a frightened look on his face. David tried to call out to him but he ran away. When David tried to move he realised he was stuck.

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Puma Perl interviews herself



Left Brain: How did you get the name Puma?

Right Brain: I had a Puma knife. It's a long story.

Left Brain: Why do you write?

Right Brain: It beats the alternative.

Left Brain: Where will you be in five years?

Right Brain: Ooh, look, you can see the moon, it's a crescent.

Left Brain: What would you do if you won the lottery?

Right Brain: God, it's fucking hot in here.

Left Brain: Anything else you want to say?

Right Brain: Buy my book. When I write it.

billy pray by Puma Perl

Billy Pray was a tough guy
 He woke one morning at five
 His tooth hurt more than a memory
 He pulled it out with a set of pliers
 Later he realized it was the wrong tooth
 He drank another six pack and got it right
 His brothers couldn't stop laughing
 "If he could do that to himself," said Kevin
 "can you imagine what he'd do to you?"

He died clutching a corner of the white hospital sheet
 His brothers and his girlfriend went out to smoke
 They'd talked about where to send him
 Long term care, hospice, Ward's Island
 No place for a tough guy like Billy Pray
 He tried to wrap the sheet around his neck
 Failing, he clutched the sheet and held his breath
 He died thinking about beer and pussy
 His brothers kissed him on the forehead
 His girlfriend hugged Kevin a little too hard
 Billy Pray's death rattle filled the room
 "He did it to himself," said Kevin
 Looking at the girlfriend
 "Can you imagine what he'd do to you?"

ask me: surveying the one-armed stripper by Puma Perl

I always liked the backstories

surveys are like backstories
 random quirks
 people I'll never meet
 willingly reveal:

the last kiss
 the favorite movie
 the favorite friend
 the last text message

curious
 I read every word
 I never answer

if you want to know me
 ask me
 ask me why I chose my name
 (for Ruby, the best one-armed stripper
 in brooklyn)
 my favorite new york street
 (Garnet Street, where she lived)
 ask me why my daughter's
 named for a racehorse
 why my son's middle name is
 jesse and his father's was jon
 ask me where
 their fathers are

I'll tell you
 4 AM phone calls
 limousines a gunshot
 next to the railroad
 an east new york overdose
 in somebody's bathroom
 a little boy waited
 little girls touched
 chapped cold lips

are you sure you want to hear?

don't ask me to count my tattoos
 ask me about my arms
 ask me when the train ran off the tracks
 (5/19/87)
 ask how long it took to stop
 wanting wanting wanting
 (2 years, 5 months)

don't ask me which
chocolate vanilla
coke pepsi
ask which hurts more
words or silence
which is louder
the phone not ringing
or the message unanswered

ask me a multiple choice question
My Last Relationship:

- a) real
- b) illusion
- c) psychotic break

don't ask for a song title
with a color or a number
ask me why
I play the sidewinder
in the morning
cornbread at night
ask me about the night
billie broke through the doo-wop
commanding my 14 year old heart
to hear

don't ask me the last book
I read
ask me the first
(Madeline, age 3
they still called me
stupid)
don't ask me the last thing
I ate watched wore drank
I won't remember

don't ask me the color
of my eyes
change has no name

don't ask me
5 weird things
33 facts
ask me for stories
november memories
morning adventures
ask me for a poem
ask me to dance
ask me for a moment
straight out of the soul
ask me only
if you want to know

Jereme Dean interviews himself



You: I'm going to ask a series of questions.
 Me: OK.
 You: Toilet paper; folded or crumpled?
 Me: Folded.
 You: Happiness or euphoria?
 Me: Euphoria.
 You: Obsessive or compulsive?
 Me: Compulsive.
 You: Gin or vodka?
 Me: Gin. Vodka is good if you like to drink gasoline.
 You: Do you have a blog?
 Me: Yes, <http://weak-signal.blogspot.com>.

aquarium by Jereme Dean

I have always felt alien and outside from my fellow human beings. Like a guy watching a guy watching brightly colored fish swimming in a pet store aquarium on a grey winter day. Today is no different. I find myself standing in the doorway of a condemned house talking to this beast of a guy.

"You know Billy?"

"Yeah, we went to grade school together."

He tilts his head up slightly and stares me in the eyes. He is performing some litmus test of my character. A black swastika tattoo can be seen illuminated in the sunlight on the underside of his chin.

He turns around and walks back into his living room. The screen door slams shut. I remain on the porch staring at the darkness behind the screen.

"Asshole, are you coming in?"

The darkness behind the screen door feels threatening. Billy warned me before I left. He warned me that these were "proper" skin heads. "They're pissed off with nothing to lose. Keep your mouth shut, look at your dick and get the fuck out."

I open the screen and walk into the unknown.

"Sit!"

A gnarled, dirty finger points me at a raggedy brown couch. I plop down and survey the room. Trash and racial graffiti are rife throughout. There's the couch I'm sitting on, several lawn chairs and a makeshift table constructed from a clothes dryer cylinder and a wooden pallet placed on top. Light is spilling through the boarded up windows.

I glance from window to window to window and notice that the huge skin head is staring at me suspiciously. I look down at my feet trying to defuse any aggressive body language I might be subconsciously emitting.

"What did you say your name was?"

"Charlie."

"What is your last name?"

"Hayes. Charlie Hayes."

I glance up and meet his gaze.

"My name is John," he says.

He doesn't bother to stick out a hand to shake. I'm starting to sweat profusely, either from dope sickness or terror.

"We only sell in large quantities. You know that right?"

"Yeah, that's what Billy told me."

"What and how much?"

"Oxy blues, four grand worth."

He picks up a white phone off the floor, dials and whispers something into the receiver, staring at me the entire time. He slams the phone down.

"The shit will be here in 15 minutes. Someone's bringing it over."

John is pacing, occasionally peaking out through the small openings of a boarded up window. Then he drops down and starts doing pushups rapidly. I realize that I am not armed with any weapons. I'm going to be helpless if this guy and his Nazi buddies decide to take the 4 grand in my pocket and call it a day. Normally I carry a knife or pipe or some other menacing object when I pick up drugs but the dope sickness has my thinking clouded.

John is still pumping away after 80 or 90 reps. I lost count around 35. He is staring at me as he goes up, down, up, down, never taking his eyes off of me. I'm about to get up and run when the screen door flies open.

Five skin head guys dressed in Doc Marten boots, green flight jackets, checkered suspenders and tight-fitting black pants come marching in, loud and brash. My mind is screaming get out but my addiction keeps me from bolting.

The screen door opens again and this time a blond girl enters the living room. The sides of her head are shaved with long, blond bangs flowing down the side of her face. She is petite with

small, firm tits and a flat stomach. Her beauty catches me off guard. I've never seen an attractive skin head girl before.

She strides over and sits down next to me on the couch. A fragile hand with pink nail polish is thrust out at me.

"Hi, I'm Collette."

I shake her hand and tell her my name. Her demeanor is surprisingly feminine.

The other skin heads sit down in the lawn chairs surrounding the apparatus that's supposed to be a table. I pull out the money from my pocket and hand it over to John. He carefully counts and recounts the money for what seems like 10 minutes.

Collette is very close to me on the couch; I can feel her warm little breaths. John tells a skin he calls "Corn Dog" to go and get my pills. Corn Dog disappears into the kitchen. The remaining skin heads have suddenly forgotten that I am sitting in their living room and are telling stories and jokes to each other. A skin head with a huge scar starting above his left eye and ending under his right, lower lip is making weird grunts and twitching.

I turn slightly to Collette and whisper "What is wrong with that guy?"

She turns her body, places a hand on my inner thigh and leans into me.

"That's Wally. He does a lot of PCP. You'll get used it."

She is close enough so I can see the patterns in her blue eyes and the tiny wrinkles in her pink lips. Her hand is still on my thigh but the dope sickness keeps me from getting hard, thank god.

Corn Dog drops a paper bag filled with plastic pill bottles into my lap. Collette leans and whispers, "I am so wet. Let's get out of here and party."

She stands up and walks over to John. I can see her telling him something but it's inaudible above the chatter of the other skins. John walks out of my view and into the kitchen.

I am ready to get out but Collette is standing in front of me, making it hard to get up from the couch. I can see the shape of her hips and the indentation where her thighs meet the hip, the gap between her thighs where her pussy is. I can see it all.

THWACK

I feel a hot, exploding pain on the side of my head. The force from a surprise blow sends me sprawling on to the dirty floor. I try to gather my senses but Big John's above me, wielding a shotgun at my head and screaming unintelligible words.

The butt of the shotgun is brought up above his shoulder and down violently against my forehead.

THUD.

Again.

THUD.

And again.

THUD.

And again.

THUD.

Big John finally stops beating me and quickly starts walking towards a box of shotgun shells lying on the living room floor. My instincts kick in and I scramble for the door. I see Collette laughing as I run through the screen out onto the streets of Portland.

I do not stop running. I run and run and run until I come to a freeway overpass a few miles away. To my surprise, the bloodied bag of pill bottles is still clutched in my hand. I open one of the pill bottles. Inside, glorious blue tablets of opiates.

Later Billy told me that Collette was Big John's wife. I thanked him for letting me know this before hand.

That wasn't the last time I almost got murdered for a pair of hips.