



MICHAEL deWAIDE, FRONT & BACK COVER ART FOR AXIS, WINTER 1974*

THE TIGER IS DRUNK TONIGHT

two fragments for Arthur Honeyman — poet, spastic, etc.

Spittle and carnage,
Red Death in your beard.
The confined, coughing laughter
and always unnatural movement.
The jagged arm, clawing hand
pointing at all-in random

Note, in guilt, their eyes seek
even mirrors for relief.
The world is not safe
from the moon-bitten fool.

—from *Translations From The Gibberish*

Why is it that love and sadness so often seem to exist simultaneously? Seldom, but sometimes a woman's name would pass Marsh's lips and I could sense something...maybe sadness. I never got the details of this...lost or somehow impossible love or whatever it was he seemed to carry. I never asked; my own lovelife at the time was scrawled on women's bathroom walls. My hands were full, in that regard at least — but I could still empathize with what I suspected to be deep pain. He never complained, however, preferring to point out in terse sentences an endless stream of acid revelations and pronouncements upon one or another of the preposterous absurdities of life in 20th century America. Perhaps his wit and art were part of his defense against a sea of sorrows in a fool's tale, as is often true of many of us.

This is not a belated eulogy; it is an introduction to an extraordinary person.

Though through the ensuing years after Reuben's 5 we had little contact, little was necessary. We had differences, but there was mutual respect and recognition. I thought of him as a friend and my life is richer for having known him.

What follows is an American folktale. I wasn't present when it took place, but I've spoken with some of the original

* Published by Michael Marsh under his corporate business title THE INCENSE SALESMAN. Marsh was literary warlord, as he called himself, of several small poetry and prose magazines and newspapers. Artist deWaide's work was often featured. Living the past 25 years in Astoria, deWaide illustrated both of John Paul Barrett's *Sea Stories* books.

** Marsh himself reconstructed several versions.

participants. I think of it as a portrait of Michael Marsh at his finest. I've pondered for some time the question of whether or not I'm really qualified to tell it, but since I feel it should be written down, and since to my knowledge no one has done so yet, I will assume responsibility because the story is too rich not to be told:**

One afternoon Michael Marsh and a half-dozen other Reuben's 5 regulars were sitting at a table, drinking, telling tales and laughing. One of the group was Marsh's close friend the writer and poet Arthur Honeyman, who has (along with a brilliant mind) cerebral palsy, which causes his body to spasm and makes his speech practical only after editing and only after some exposure and patience on the part of the listener.

All at the table knew one another well; except one, a somewhat drunken fellow who had apparently sat uninvited at

FACT OR FICTION

I read an article in the North Coast Times Eagle that greatly annoyed me. This article, titled *UFOs Are Us* by the 99th Monkey (Marpil 1994), in the first paragraph brought together the CIA, the Third Reich and UFOs. It presented the theory that UFOs are U.S. creations using a Top Secret device that creates its own gravity. The author's explanation of how gravity and inertia work went against everything I learned in my physics class. He also provided no formulas or experimental data to back his conclusions. I was grievously upset that a newspaper I respected so much would print an article I felt belonged in the National Enquirer. I was bound and determined to talk with Michael McCusker, the editor of the NCTE and voice my objections.

A couple of weeks later, while I was working at the Community Store, I heard someone greet McCusker. My adrenaline flowed and I readied myself to attack him with my intellectual prowess. I stood erect, approached him and said something like, "Excuse me Michael, but I was really annoyed by one of your articles. He replied calmly, "Oh, really, which one?" I said "The 99th Monkey. I really thought it would have suited the Enquirer just fine." I stood firm waiting for his defense. "So did I," he said. Bang, I was shot down. The conversation continued shortly and I saw the error of my ways. I had opened the Times Eagle expecting whatever was printed in it to be factual. When I found something I knew was wrong, I was upset at the editor when I should have been upset at myself. Fact and fiction are not that different, except within our minds. Coming to a more objective opinion is a difficulty and lengthy process, which involves first and foremost questioning the information put before you. I had not expected to do any questioning or thinking about my own thinking. I expected someone else to have done it for me already and simply read the article and retain its general parameters.

What is the real nature of inertia? What is the real nature of gravity? What are UFOs. What larger generalizations can be drawn from my opinions? How accurate have I portrayed my experience? Is up to you think about, not this writer, or is it?

--SASHA

the table and was a bit obnoxious, though apparently tolerable in a tavern context — to a point.

Art was attempting to get a few words out, when the undesirable visitor interrupted Art by turning to Marsh and saying, "What's wrong with him?"

At this point in my mind's eye I can clearly picture Marsh's thick eyebrows narrowing. The man's rudeness and downright stupidity in not directing his question to Art himself was clearly unforgivable.

I see Marsh leaning back in his chair, taking a major slug of red (death) wine, adjusting his large dark beard, and then beginning the epic tale of how the soldier of fortune Arthur Honeyman had sustained and miraculously survived an endless litany of grave wounds and injuries while serving as a combat operative, mostly with the Egyptian Mercenary Army.

Marsh told about Art's Special Forces training with the Rangers; how he had been a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol LURP, a Green beret, and a member of the Underwater Demolition Team (Frogman, SEAL, etc.). He related in great detail the saga of how Art had been blown apart by a grenade and run over by a tank in the desert during a brief stint with the French Foreign Legion, as well as how Art the Assassin had also been shot, tortured and tossed from an airplane, all in the mercenary service of the Egyptians, mostly...and on and on and on and on Marsh spun the tale, like Rumpelstiltskin spinning gold — for all but one, the Rube, now stunned and reeling, overwhelmed.

The others were dying as they choked to hold back laughter while Marsh unreeled the never-ending story, straight-faced, possessed with the intensity of a fanatic, a warrior in the heat of battle.

And further yet the epic narrative juggernaut rumbled. I imagine Marsh's diabolically grinning face red with bloodlust and his eyes wide.

Art was spasticating more than ever from the laughter. The Rube must have thought he was having some kind of fit — which he was, as uncontrollable tears of laughter and saliva rolled down his ecstatic face.

I've often imagined how it must have felt to have been Art under those circumstances, how I might have felt about Michael Marsh as I listened to him telling some fool a preposterous and hilarious story of how I came to be the way I am.

The story ended when the boneheaded interloper got up and wandered mumbling out the door, numbed into senseless submission by Marsh's flamethrower onslaught of sheer spontaneous storytelling ability to create a story which survives him.

So he died a few years ago, leaving some of us (and we are legion) infected like vampires; moon-bitten fools, from which the world will never be safe.

John Paul Barrett is the author of *Sea Stories I & II (Of Dolphins & Dead Sailors: Sungods & Sundogs)* and his most recent, *To Make A Book*. He is owner and operator of Gaff Press in Astoria, which publishes his books.

(Arthur Honeyman, the Egyptian Mercenary, also publishes his own books through Wheel Press in Portland, co-owned by him and his wife Jo Ann Kelly-Griffen Honeyman, aka *Tundra Rose*. He is author of *The Claws & The Horns, Portrait in Poetry, The Follies of Sexism in the Civilized World*, and *Sam & His Cart*, which was made into a movie.)

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