

ME, HIM, HER & YOU

BY BILL BERTIN

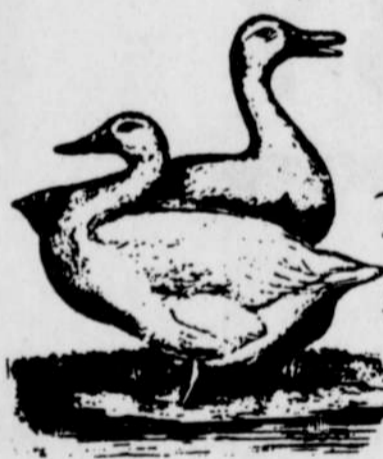
Me: So — did you hear the news about the further expanding hole in the ozone?
Him: Yeah — but it always sounds to me like they're talking about a hole in a balloon.
Me: It's a serious problem.
Him: Yeah — well, if it was a balloon, it would be down around our ears wouldn't it?
Me: Really, the environment is a serious problem, not something to joke about.
Her: Dinner will be ready soon.
Him: Get me a beer, will you?
Me: Do you have any idea what's being done by people in this city and all the other places where they're fouling the world's air, the oceans, the life of this planet?
Him: Man, give me a break, will you? Every time we see you lately, you're on about this garbage. I work all day hauling bags of money, coins and checks from one bank to another and that's all the environment I need. I can't do any more about it than you or anybody else.
Me: But that's wrong, with everyone. No one wants to think about it — do anything, so the world's going all to hell while people sit around refusing to take responsibility.
Him: Look, sport — we live in a crowded world where everyone is hustling to get somewhere, to live a decent life, get enough to eat, enough to live on. We ain't in the dark ages where people sat around a fire getting their food with bows and arrows. The Industrial Revolution was just that — a change in how people lived, from pastoral to big city, big industry. Business is in the business of making junk for people to consume. So smoke gets in the air, chemicals get in the rivers, what can you expect? With so many people — who's going to stop them from tossing their leftovers across your fence or into a stream?
Her: Dinner is almost ready.
Him: Get me another beer, will you?
Me: I don't disagree — but we can't just ignore what's going on environmentally or there won't be anything left that's not fouled or rotten or lost forever because we just let it happen, just let our world go all to hell. People have got to stand up and tell the polluters of the world, *Enough!* We've got to save it for the generations to come.
Him: Yeah. You want a beer, man?
Me: No. Thanks.
Him: Look, sport — I got the word for you. The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth — when it becomes a bare rock! There's really nobody in charge anymore. It's got out of hand, too much going on. Nothing works. Like the UN — it's useless. The time for a world organization that would guide nations to do the right thing, especially stop the killing and blowing things all to hell, is long past. It's every dog for himself. And in this country of ours it works the same way. Everybody is out for his and to hell with the other guy and anything that stands in the way, including your environment.
Me: Oh man, that's such a hopeless attitude.
Him: Look — with five billion people in the world, how you going to get any group, let alone nations, to agree on anything?



PEDRO PALMA (LISBON, PORTUGAL)

Me: But we've got to! We've got to start, make a beginning!
Him: Like with most problems — you start at the end. When things get bad enough, people will do something, the government will step in, like a nation-at-war situation. Nobody's going to pay attention till their drowning in it, till it's up to their eyebrows.
Her: Anyone hungry? We can go in and eat soon. Oh, let me get you an ashtray.
Me: Thanks. Do you have any matches?

Bill Bertin has spent much of his long life on the world's oceans as a merchant seaman. He lives in Portland and writes poetry (NCTE, OctoNovo '94).



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THE ROSE

*I had a little ferret named Mimi.
 She was musky and I loved her.
 But she got sick and died.
 I cried.*

*We bought a small rosebush,
 and planted it above her.
 Last winter's freeze nearly killed it, but it survived.*

*Now I have this fantasy, this dream,
 in which I lean forward,
 to smell the first rose when it has bloomed.
 ...Aaaahhhh....Mimi!*

~J. PAUL BARRETT



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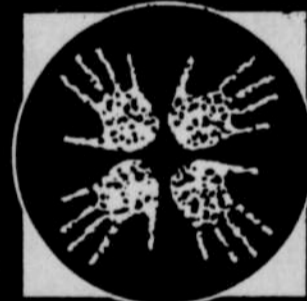
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