

Issue 001

The Absurdist

- Fiction Mag -

FREE

September 2017

The Absurdist

Issue 001

September 2017

- Featuring -

Mark Brazaitis

Monk Davidson

Gherk

Ximena Gutiérrez

Kate LaDew

EM Lindsay

Craig Loomis

Jenean McBrearty

Jon Strode

- Staff -

Connor P. Lucey
editor in chief

River Wyatt-Marsh
editor

WORLD'S FASTEST

Mark Brazaitis

Morgantown, WV

Joe Smith liked the title "World's Fastest Human," so he began using it.

Whenever he met a stranger, he said, "I'm Joe Smith, World's Fastest Human."

Some strangers laughed. Some strangers gave him funny looks. Some strangers nodded, although they probably hadn't heard him. No one asked him to clarify, probably because they thought it was obvious that he wasn't, in fact, the world's fastest human.

Before her twenty-fifth high school reunion, his girlfriend said, "Could you quit the joke?" "What joke?" he asked. "The world's-fastest-human joke. It was funny the first few times, okay?" "It was?" "No, actually, it wasn't," she said. "It wasn't supposed to be," he said. "It wasn't?" "No."

"So why are you telling people you're the world's fastest human?" "Because it's true."

She smiled, thinking he was joking, thinking their conversation was over. At the reunion, he introduced himself as the world's fastest human. At the dance at the end of the evening, the DJ said, "Here's a fast song for the world's fastest couple."

But Joe's girlfriend wasn't there to dance the song with him. She'd run off with her high school boyfriend.

At the end of the evening, Joe stood by the front door of the hall where the reunion had been held and asked everyone who passed by if they could give him a ride back to his hotel. His girlfriend hadn't only run off with her former boyfriend - she'd run off with their rental car.

Anthony "Big Tony" Antonucci, who'd had too much to drink, said, "If you're the world's fastest human, why don't you run back to your hotel?"

"I'd prefer a ride," Joe said. Big Tony said, "Fuck you, Flash Gordon." Two and a half minutes later, he drove into a tree.

In the end, the World's Fastest Human walked back to his hotel. His girlfriend was in their room, penitent. "He broke up with me," she explained, her cheeks tear-stained. Joe got the story: her old, new, and now old again boyfriend and she had had the same argument that had broken them up twenty-five years before. It was about a girl (now a woman) named Trixie.

"I'm sorry," said Joe's once-again girlfriend. She offered Joe make-up sex and he accepted.

They made love for a long time.

"Thank God," she said, smiling, when it was over, "that you aren't the world's fastest human in bed."

She fell asleep. Joe stayed awake, ruminating on how no one had ever asked him what he was the world's fastest human in. He could never know for sure, of course - the world was a crowded place - but he would have been willing to bet fifty bucks it was true. ■

THE BERLIN ZOO

Craig Loomis

Kuwait City, Kuwait

Across the street, along the tree-lined avenue in front of the Berlin zoo, he hesitates long enough to give the bus stop garbage can a solid kick - a small hollow boom that turn heads; that done, he turns to scream at no one, at anyone. Suddenly, out of nowhere, like a kind of magic, a beer bottle is in his hand and he throws it into the street, it bounces, refusing to shatter. He yells at the unbroken bottle, stumbles and yells some more. Those lined up at the main gate to the zoo turn to watch him, but quickly lose interest and go back to waiting for the zoo to open. Meanwhile he prowls the street, screaming louder, growing redder. As the gate opens they pretend that he is probably harmless, this loud man on the other side of the street, and file in. By now he has found his unbroken bottle that has rolled to the gutter and smashes it properly. This deserves a rant; and although it is impossible to understand what he is saying, most certainly it is about immigrants go home, pollution is killing

the planet, the rich care nothing about you or me, love is not the answer, Scheisskopf, etc.

Now that the zoo is open, the chimpanzees hurry to drag their slabs of dirty cardboard close to the fence. Once properly arranged, the chimps will lounge on the cardboard to watch the watchers as they file by their cage, to point, laugh, take photographs, thinking how clever monkeys are. *Cardboard beds? Who would have thought?*

Three padlocks behind the chimps, the elephants, lions and panthers are busy walking forty steps that way, sixty the other, forty steps that way, sixty the other - their days an endless routine of walking a dusty rectangular path full of

trees and assorted bushes. The children, along with a good many adults, will scream at them to do something: growl, roar, bellow, attack one another, anything that is all about teeth and anger. "Daddy, what's wrong with them? Why aren't they doing what they're supposed to?"

The loud man hasn't stopped yelling, and as he returns to the bus-stop garbage to look for something more to throw, to break, he sees two policemen coming his way. His screaming all done for the time being, he hops the fence and disappears into the thick green shrubbery that is the Berlin zoo. ■

MY DEAREST GWENDOLYN

Jenean McBrearty

Danville, KY

I hope you're enjoying Brighton with the children and Pablo - tell him I've found someone to clean the pool. Yesterday began dimly. I lost my wallet in Piccadilly Square (it must have fallen out of my pocket) but I ran into our American friend, Hough Belmont, and we had a pint at a pub called the Ram's Head. It's an odd place. Not a woman to be seen, but they were certainly heard. So much gossip about Oscar and Bosie Douglas, who are long since dead. One young man wore an interesting plaid fedora. Hough spent most of the afternoon talking to him about it.

I left around sixish, and took the Clapham Omnibus home. And that's when it happened! I fell in love with Daisy, a pert little tart atop the head of a plump woman in a blue dress. (Taffeta, I think it was.) Neat as you please, with a bow of white and yellow polka dots. I knew I must have her.

The bus stopped at 32nd Street, and I followed the woman three tedious blocks because she walked so slowly, and finally up the stairs to her flat. Dash it all, Gwendolyn, I had to rescue Daisy from that bovine! I was filled with the yearnings of youth, felt like a stag after a doe, relentlessly pursuing the object of my desire as I once pursued your pearl-embellished cloche.

The woman let me in, as it turned out she was an old whore and quite used to being followed. She said I could have my Daisy for two pounds tuppence. After a minor disagreement in which her head collided with an axe I found hanging next to the fire box in the hallway, she brought the price down considerably. Kismet, I call it as I had no idea how I was going to carry off my love, who rested on a small table next to the sofa.

I confess, so overcome with lust for her was I, I had my way with her right there in front of the telly watching a rerun of Masterpiece Theater. How sweet to caress her straw brim and fondle her polka dot bow; I was giddy and goose-



Sundae Shave • Jon Strode • Portland, OR

pimply. Yesterday's beret can't compare to Daisy, and that beige boater on the closet shelf is, as they say, old hat.

I paid the woman, too, for her services, of course. Without their yammering tongues, women can be reasonable. The woman's head fit perfectly in Daisy's box, with room for my sweetheart, but the torso was too big for a trash bag. I went home and returned with the bomb Rashid made before he was arrested. After making love to Daisy again - you know what a romantic I am - I dispatched the torso. Do you remember our favorite Dave Clark Five song, *Bits and Pieces*? Well, the whole of Charington Lane was humming the melody.

Kiss the children for me and tell Pablo I'll keep my promise not to woo his sombrero until he returns.

Love,

Sinclair ■

THE MANY NAKED MEN ARE HERE

EM Lindsay
Portland, OR

Karelin was laid out on her stomach, in the grass near the playground, when she spotted the first naked man. She had looked up from her book and found the bare, older man standing beside the playground fence with his arms hanging loosely at his side, his paunch extended, and his eyes pointed vaguely in the direction of the swing set. He must have just arrived.

Karelin immediately got up from her beach towel to warn the children's parents. As she rounded the playground toward the parents' benches on the other side, she looked through the jungle gym with its swarming knot of children at the man still standing in the same position, with the same distant expression on his face.

Something was off, Karelin thought. She had never seen an act like this before, at least not so brazen a one, but she had had this idea that perverts who liked kids would, if placed before them, actively watch them. And that was the thing. The naked man stood there behind the fence,

definitely naked and definitely next to a playground, but by the languid posture and the vacancy in his eyes, he seemed to Karelin to be completely disinterested in the children. And, well, everything else. And that's when she spotted the second naked man. She had turned away from the first, toward the benches where the parents sat oblivious, and noticed a pair of bare feet hanging down from the tree above them. A couple steps later, she was looking up at the man, sitting bare-assed on a branch with the same tired posture and the same distant, lukewarm expression. Karelin gave a cry and pointed up at the man for the parents to see. This naked man was facing away from the playground and seemed to have less interest in the parents' children than the first, but still, she felt it important to notify someone.

The parents followed Karelin's gaze, and gave startled cries of their own.

"What the hell?" yelled one mother.

"Julia!" shouted a father, which was quickly followed by the rest of the parents yelling out their child's name.

Karelin called out again and pointed at the first naked man, who still hadn't budged beside the playground fence. This elevated the terror among the parents, who now dashed madly into the wood chipped area to find their offspring, and made Karelin think she should call the police. She dug into her pockets for her phone, but in vain, because her phone was where she had left it on the beach towel.

Walking back quickly around the playground fence, she noticed a third naked man standing lazily in the parking lot beside the park, and then a fourth who had apparently just fallen out of

another tree on the far side of the grassy area. Karelin put her head down and walked faster, afraid to trust her eyes and unwilling to test them further.

She was almost back to where she had been reading and finally looked up, to find another naked man sprawled casually on her beach towel with her book under his head and her phone hidden, presumably, under some other part of his flesh. Karelin only had a moment's glance at that same fish-eyed stare into space and half-smile on the man's face before panic set in, and she took off in a dead sprint for the park entrance.

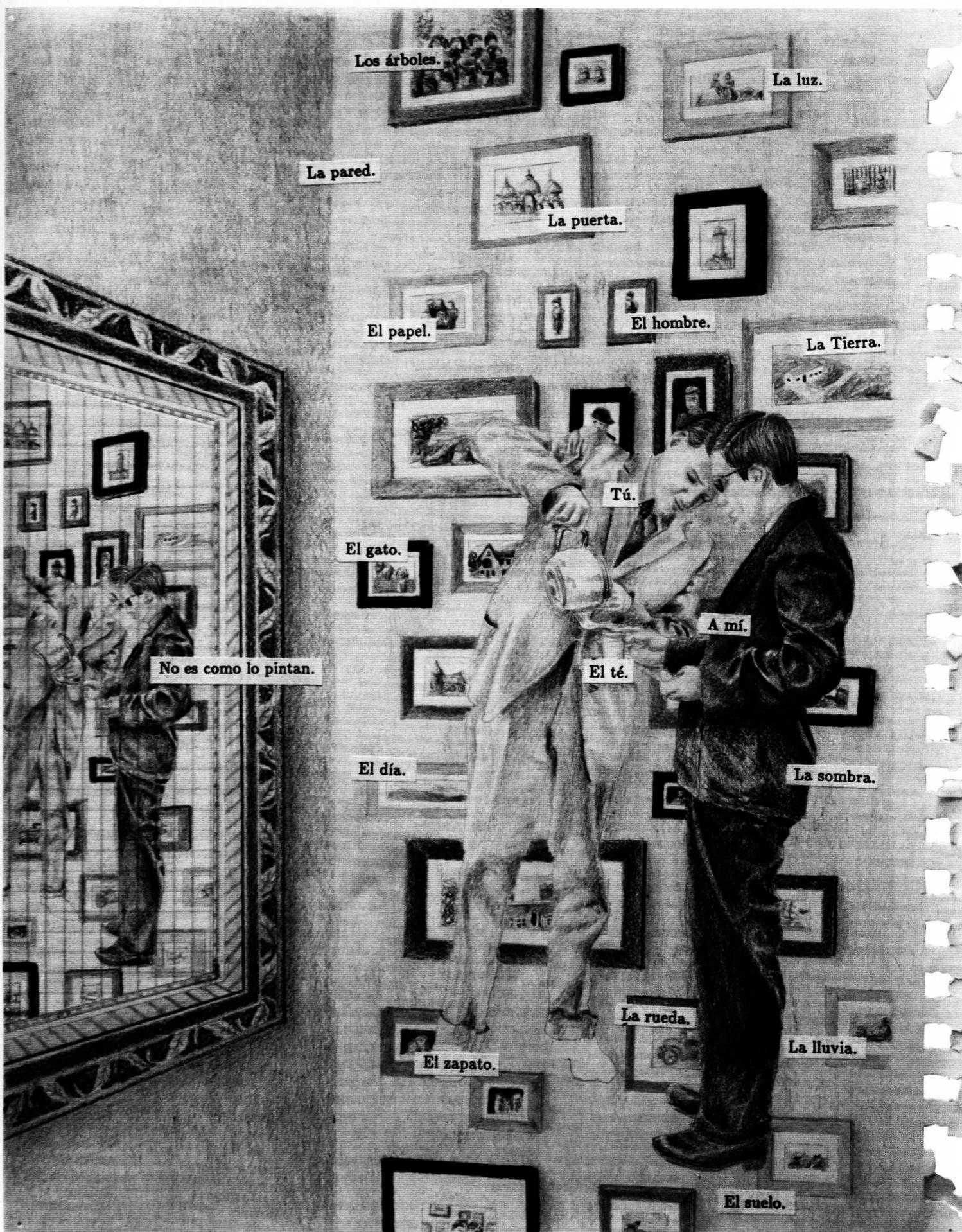
Another naked man straddled the stone gateway pillar as she ran through the opening and into the street, turning left with the idea of running to Maria's apartment just a couple blocks away. Karelin wasn't much of a runner, and could feel already the chronic asthma constricting her breathing, but instinct told her that to stop would be an enormous mistake. So she continued.

It seemed the naked men were not limited to the park. Karelin passed one standing with shoulders slouched on the hood of a parked car, then another sitting atop the roof of a stoop, then another still who looked to have climbed halfway out a manhole. There was no organization to the naked men that Karelin could see. They were facing in every direction, seemingly oblivious to each other, to their environment, to their condition of attire. None made any attempts to change their positions, but stared off absently with their arms hanging and their guts protruding.

Karelin wheezed around one corner and then another, all the while juking the

Tea Time
Ximena Gutiérrez
Bogotá, Colombia

Person A and Person B exchange words
As if they were trying to communicate.
Who said that having a conversation
Would be an easily accomplished feat?



increasing number of naked men, who, with all the less conspicuous and more creative perches taken, had resorted to stagnantly milling about in the middle of the roads and sidewalks. She turned another corner and, finally, was within sight of Maria's apartment building.

Upon reaching the front steps, above which two naked men hung casually from the fire escape, Karelina smashed the buzzer with her finger before doubling over to breathe. A crashing sound from the trash cans beside her told her one of the hanging naked men had fallen. She punched the buzzer, again and harder.

Where was Maria? she thought. She should have been home now. Karelina tried to keep down the resurgence of panic in her stomach, tried to ignore the pulse throbbing in her throat. She turned around to survey the street around her. In all directions, as far as her eyes could see, naked men stood and sat and lay benignly in every available space - the trees and telephone poles hung heavy with them, the asphalt blinked with them, the building roofs and fire escapes sagged and moaned with them. Thousands of naked men, all listless and pitiable, all incredibly unwelcome.

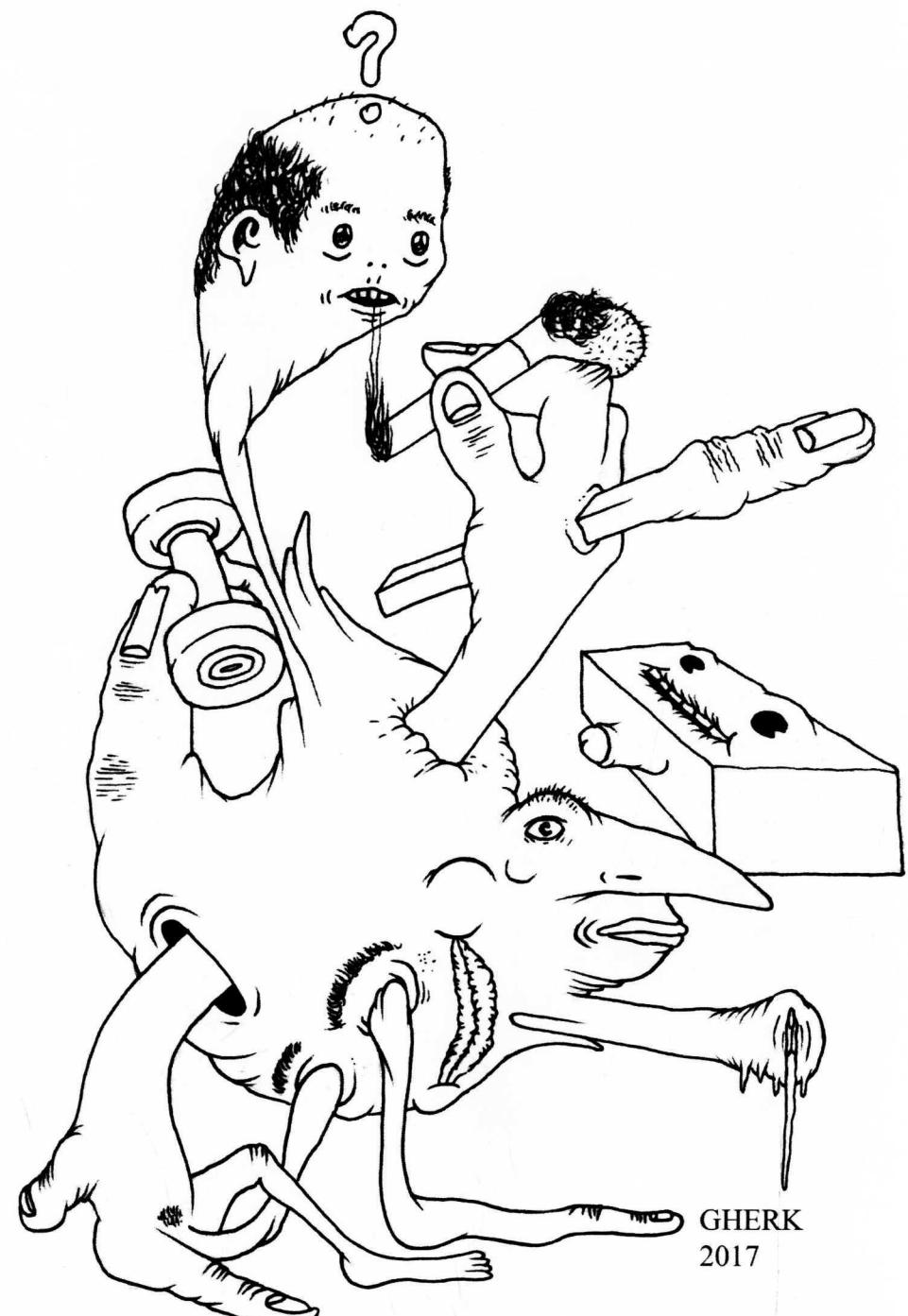
Karelina tried the buzzer a third time. She tried it a fourth. Plan B was already, regretfully, forming in the back of her mind, when the buzzer speaker crackled into life.

"Hello?"

"Maria! It's Karelina, open the door."

The buzzer sounded, and in seconds Karelina was slamming the front door shut behind her, sliding down onto the floor, catching her breath. Her eyes squeezed shut, she slowly counted to ten. One naked man, two naked men, three... ■

Shakeweight • Gherk • Oceanside, CA



Think your work belongs in The Absurdist?

Submit!

Visit our website for submission guidelines.

absurdistmag.com/submit

THE SHOPPING CART MUSEUM

Kate LaDew

Graham, NC

The shopping cart museum was interesting, to say the most. Percival wasn't sure why he'd ever started it. Just because his dad had specified the money was to be spent on shopping carts, didn't mean it had to be spent on shopping carts. Percival knew his dad was crazy. Everyone knew Percival's dad was crazy. But you were supposed to listen to dad, right? Wasn't that what you were supposed to do? He'd read that somewhere. So here he was, surrounded by shopping carts, trying to make a buck so he could somehow offset the ridiculous amount of money he spent on a shopping cart museum. Who knew? Who knew shopping carts were expensive? Who knew shopping carts cost anything at all? Someone had to make them, yeah. They didn't just pop out of the sky fully formed. Someone had to weld all their little parts together. Percival felt sorry for that someone.

He felt sorry for that someone but not as sorry as he felt for himself. That someone got to leave the shopping carts behind. Percival got to look at them everyday, just sitting there being metal and doing nothing. The only interesting thing he'd ever heard about a shopping cart was that the first one had been made out of rocks. Just a pile of rocks. Percival's dad told him that. Percival's dad was crazy. Just before he died, he had taken Percival out to the backyard and shown him a pile of rocks. "That's the first shopping cart," his dad said.

"That pile of rocks?"

"Yeah."

Cavemen had used shopping carts.

That's what Percival's dad said. "Cavemen used shopping carts."

"For what?"

"For putting things in."

"What?"

"Stuff they had."

"Where did they get the stuff?"

"Nowhere at first."

"Nowhere?"

"Until they had stores."

"Cavemen had stores?"

"Cavemen always did things the wrong way around."

"Always?"

"Yeah."

So Percival had moved the pile of rocks and put them in the corner of the museum near the historical section next to cardboard cutouts of cavemen. "What's that pile of rocks over there?" Some kid asked.

"That's the first shopping cart," Percival said.

"Looks like a pile of rocks."

"Well, it's the first shopping cart."

"Well, it looks like a pile of rocks."

"Why don't you get the hell out of here," Percival said. ■

IN HARBOR TOWN

Monk Davidson

Location unknown

In Harbor Town, on the Main Street,
Where in the taverns sailors meet,

The lager's so strong,
And afternoons long,

It's not strange to lose half one's fleet.

The first mates will look down the alleys,
And ask all the Bridgets and Sallys,

But to their dismay,
With pleasure they'll say,

They've gone back to vom in their
galleys.

In Harbor Town, cultures collide;
The tongues, they wash in with the tide.

A clashing of words

Like you've never heard,
But, drinking, good faith is implied.

The locals don't mind sailors' dress
Or religions or tongues, they confess.

Why locals hate seamen,
What gets their blood steamin':
Their shanties all suck, more or less.

In Harbor Town, when there's a breeze,
The locals uncover old cheese,

And out on the bay,

The sailors all say,

"Tie me to the anchor, God, please!"

The airing of dairy is done,
When, in part thanks to the sun,

The air is so foul,

The sailors all howl,

And townspeople cheer, "Oh, what
fun!" ■



Copyright © 2017, The Absurdist

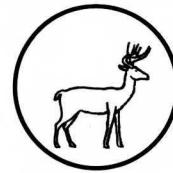
Printed by New Lyme Press in Portland, OR

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any way without written permission from the publisher, writer, or artist, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

The Absurdist

absurdistmag.com

Printed by



New Lyme Press