

Carnival Brain

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Words by Daniel Stainkamp (FKA Nebraska),
medically extracted by Surgeon General Everston
Volesbane

Illustrations by: Your Mind

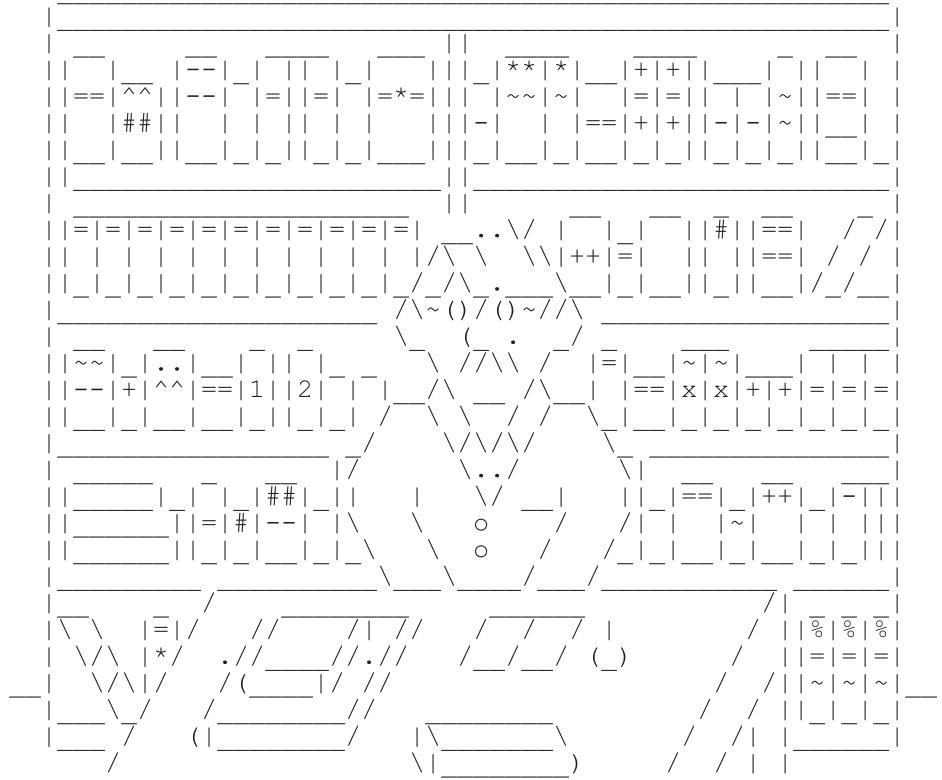
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Copyright, copywrong, poppycosh, I live alone.

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False Contents

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A Message from American Surgeon General

Oh no, no no.

I ought not to be writing. No, my job isn't writing. Rather, a surgeon's job is to audit viscera, and to survey the redscale prism of a person's indoors. A general's job is to marshal his troops through the crucible of war, to protect an economy and its blood standard. I, both surgeon and general, am accustomed to a life uninterrupted by the page. The sallow, sickly white of book-paper sickens me. My eyes prefer the spanked amaranth of a strep throat, the hepatic violets of a tavernsman's sweetmeats, the driven ivory of a soldier's dandruff, the plain black of a tropical boot-ulcer. For me, a surgeon, a big slab of back that I'm going to cut up with a scalpel is like a high-end television, due to its many colors, and how it holds my attention. Indeed, in this way I'm able to avoid art and writing, most usually.

However, in the due course of bloody splish-splash and organ-fumbling that my noble profession requires, I couldn't manage to avoid a certain text. Last evening, during the time you were likely having supper, I clasped with my forceps a most unsavory debris. The offending plaque offered itself gooily as a candidate for extraction in the dewlap's gizzard of Martin, my favorite cadaver. What I extracted was at first tarry and gnarled, but which, through prodding, unfurled. The revealed sheaf looked like a wasp's paper scroll, and was shot through with minuscule script. Although the monograph appeared to be only a page in length, I found

the scroll ever-able to be further unfurled, and its text lumbered craterously forward for what felt like thousands of lines.

In any other circumstance, I would have reported the alien object in my surgeon's notebook and deposited it in the medical evidence locker. But, unaccountably, I have found myself unable to do so. I have found, too, that every morning I wake up with a community of ants marching into and out of my ears nose and throat. They march down to the clean white tile of my surgeon's kitchen, and they spell out, in a clear ant font:

"Carnival Brain"

No peer-reviewed theses in the literature posit a remedy to such a phenomenon. And so, per my intuition, though perhaps against my better judgment, I have decided my only recourse now is to present a facsimile of the text I extracted, in hopes of avoiding textiloma Gossypiboma, i.e., the surgical complications resulting from retained foreign materials in the body. The haste with which I publish and distribute this little pamphlet has mostly to do with cadaver Martin, who, heretofore ever silent, now coos soft madnesses into my stethoscope whenever I use it. I cannot bear this another moment.

The ancient acolytes of Hippocrates prophesied of a "Plague by Gossypiboma" in their hallowed tablets. They note a single effective intervention: a mass reading of the offending text-extract, such that its content becomes diffuse in the collective consciousness of society, and in so becoming is thereby

attenuated into a psychic microvapor, eventually so atomized that it becomes completely inert. There are half-lives and molarities that support this approach, but there's no time to expound them here. Each of Martin's insistent whispers nudges me ever nearer to the brink.

So, therefore, for my sake, for the wellness of our society, and per my civic duty as Surgeon General, I hereby importune you to read on, reader, and to discharge your duty as a receptacle for content.

In grim prognosis,

Surgeon General Everston Voleslbane, M.D.

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Hi!

Heights are one of the United State's most natural resources. Any time you notice you've been falling for a long time, you can bet it got that way due to heights.

A fall from a height is the traditional source of spice and variety in American vacation.

Without such a falling, vacation is often a kind of weeklong falling-asleep, except you're much angrier than usual. Falling asleep is another type of falling, and in that case I suppose the height from which one falls is the cliff of weary consciousness.

Surveys confirm heights such as Crisp Mountain, Inside-Out Canyon, The Central Spires, and Gloss Colossus as top choices for traveling touristers to court heights in the out-of-doors.

Residents of the 20th century may recall how for a time 'high' was the stylish way for a gentleperson to say 'hello,' and then you'd brandish an abraded elbow or contused midriff as a treat to whomever to whom your hello was headed toward. Nowadays of course, one musn't utter a single word, under pain of labor, typically a six-month stint of glyph-labor, which, as of this paragraph, I have now completed, and so ends my punishment, and so begins yours.

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Swept Shavings

For a pink-bellied sack of bonebroth like me, nutritional supplements have always been a subject of interest. But whatsoever could be considered a nutritional supplement?

These days, a wealth of minerals has been confiscated from the earth, and so we'll have unique options when it comes to what we choose to press into pill-form or liquefy and inject into old emptied-out cellulose liqui-gel shells for swallowing. To know which supplements we require, we must first force ourselves into a category of lack.

Everyone knows the four natural categories: saltmetal, vaporstain, sparkled lightening, and soil-roughage. When any or all of these levels change even a little, a nutritional supplement must be administered. Otherwise the body reverts to that oft-whispered nether-null known as childhood. And a body is no place for a child.

Still, ever since I was little, I have had a body. Looking back, I can see how my body has its own peculiar way. I think that's due to my body having been originated as a curse uttered by two greased warlocks whose goal was to eradicate a particularly nasty patch of quicksand. And although that sinking void of infinite sand still envelops fresh limbs with the gritty quickening one expects of any effective quicksand, still, my body wanders this soily vault that is called earth, curious for a tamped grid of loam to haunt.

And such curious hauntings do take their toll!

Many will leave your becursed body with lower-than-preferred levels of Lithium, Iron, Mineralique, British Aluminium, Magnesium, Prince's Cobalt, and Contritum, whose shavings accrue oily but earnest in warehouses across't North America. These shavings can be found in tidy piles swept by a machinist on a polished concrete shop floor. To burnish a shop floor is an honester trade than this. This writing...a jester's errand, fool's concern.

For your supplement, remember to demand supplies so that you'll have something to economize, for profit. To begin, entreat the machinist for a portion of his swept shavings, and have tool-and-die ready should he request a trade. Next, apportion the shavings such that each emptied cellulose liqui-gel shell swells magnificently with its new tonnage. And finally, suspend shavings colloidally or in tincture, such that a standardized derivation (USP) of your supplement's contents might be writ externally on a placard affixed to the corked cylinder in which your wares will be sold. Offer a swill at no extra charge, in order that you might gain a greater market share, and to enable swift swallowing of the pills you made, your homemade pills. Homemade pills: the genesis of every nutritional supplement.

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Mother's Tilde

"Mother," sonchild cooed, frankly and without prejudice. "Mother, shall you read to me?"

"Ah but you have missed the school bus for several weeks consecutive, my dear," Mother replied, coolly. "And how would school principal feel to know your reading wasn't sui generis? And the vicegerent of the principal, would she not despair at your scholastic elision?"

"It wasn't toward of me to become a brittleboy, Mother, and the conductor of my school bus surely is wont of my company. Still, today there can be no school, as the conscriptionist's megaphone deafeningly reminds on each quarter-hour," replied sonchild.

At this, both Mother and child delighted to see a squall on the beachhead cause the palm trees to bow and curtsey, in their funny tree way. The usual jubilant volley of seagull cries were, of course, inaudible, their sound crumpled flat beneath the conscriptionist's megaphone's totalizing wail.

"Today there can be no school," agreed Mother, "and due to this, I, motheringly, abide your request. Which word were you hoping to hear most?" petitioned Mother, tenderly. For even a brittleboy has his favorite word.

"Quincunx if you have it!" said childson in a chlidren's format of excitement-in-utterance. "Quincunx or even any story with dice. O! I have it! May you read to me the story of The Court Jester's Dice? Yes, his Dice and his Domino, and

particularly may you read me your exegesis of the story, and any of your monographs, whenever the Court Jester's Dice saga is told? And doing the voices, if you please, because they do scare me so well."

"Very well," said Mother, doting on the text over which she pored. She evicted the tenacious phlegm from her larynges to make way for a silly voice, and proceeded to read:

"Forsooth, and this is vouchsafed: each dice has a several'd dotting, and each dice enjoys its own various freckle-works, six times over. Lo, and if it were that you sought five, and were you to come to understand that the answer to your roll were 'five,' due to the dice, then so you would know indeed that tonight, by dice, shall be 'Quincunx!' And so blow well on the hand-cupped dice-couplet, and redouble the fasteners on your singlet, and shake now with a vigor like unto what marrow brings to bones."

Upon hearing this, son-child was scared to death. The death was due to Mother's lilting, eldritch and uncompromising horror-tone, said the coroner, holding back tears, into his handheld tape recorder.

So, on the sandy shores of the sunny beachhead, the principal's vicegerent organized the memorial, which galvanized school spirit — an unexpected gain from a son's tender death; a flicker of solace, lively as a tilde, in a Story-Marm's life.

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A Memorizer's Guide

Humanfolk, as we can know, are a memorious lot. I say humanfolk, rather than humankind, because, several times now, a human has been unkind to me, my dog, and even a bench I built and varnished. How rude!

Still, thought is as stretchy a skill as any possessed by us humanfolk. You may say: Gymnastics! Yoga-work! The Circus-Sciences! And of course you'd be right in yelling so. Still, reader, would you consider even three minutes of consecutive silence? Would you, that you might lay down the burden of heedlessness you carry like a heavy sword? For I am a unique and a germane narrator for you, and I am the Memorizer, and I am of carnival-kin, yet can be trusted.

The first step to memorizing is to select a word-cohort to commit to memory. A memory is a tattoo inside your mind, and so do not select words to memorize that later will cause you embarrassment, or which, if seen, might prevent you from being hired at a job, or from being invited into a girlfriendsmanship.

Something else to consider is you can only memorize something that has not been memorized by someone else. So most religious texts, great poems, good poems, and glossy magazines will be off-limits for this reason. Consider a practical text to memorize, like a thick automotive repair manual for a popular sedan, or a recipe for concrete, or any kind of description of circuitry, or a transcript of an industry trade-show.

A note of caution: memorizing something that you yourself have written will only and always lead to rare syndromes such as Janus Syndrome in which your face doubles regularly at predictable intervals for the rest of your life, Proteus Syndrome in which you fall down the stairs for the rest of the summer, or Egg-yolk Syndrome, a relatively benign and protein-rich syndrome that none of us mind.

Curiously, the finest way to memorize is to venture out, binocularize a crowd, name each breath you witness (this is easier in cold-temperature areas), then send those names to a text-generating service like Biblio-Tech or Libre-X, pay a modest sum to have a book written whose characters are named the same names as you named the several breaths, then memorize that text, and surprise the owners of the breaths later by reciting the text right near them, then bowing deeply.

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No Use

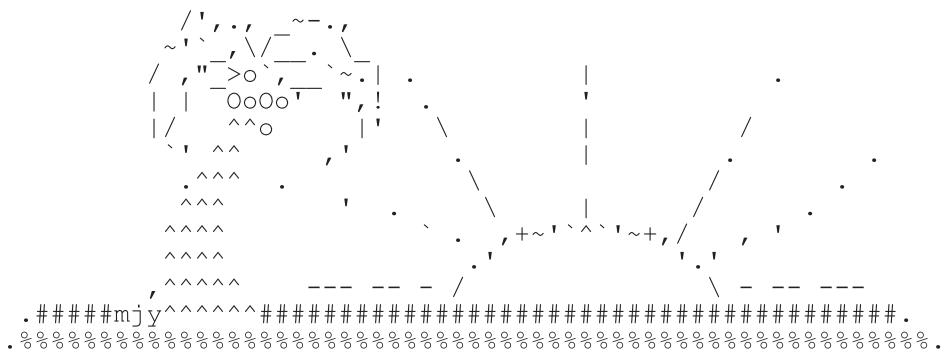
"Meety is a coral farmer, you'll see that from her encrusted troves there."

Skiara frowned at his word processor.

"No, no, this won't do." He frowned audibly, furrowing his substantial forehead. "NO! 'Neither a trollop nor a coral farmer be.' , " he recalled.

And down his great, glacial forehead, there marched a single bead of sweat. It was no use.

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Beginning Each Day

Royal began each day with a reading. The reading was so short he'd finish it in no time flat. "Piece of piss!" he'd say, British and lithe. Before the smooth sun's zenith, each day seemed almost too easy. A crock of fresh breakfast awaited him on the washboard. By spending a little time each evening preparing, he could be sure breakfast and its eating would be a piece of piss as well.

After his breakfast or breakfasts, Royal would pace the grounds of his flat. Royal would pick up this trinket, and he would pick up that book, and he would upend a favored armchair to inspect its provenance. Then finally, he would select one item he owned that would be given away. A quick post to the bulletin board – "Free Item" – and it would be gone, taken by barrow or cart or pick-em-up truck. And for the next portion of time, what Royal gave himself to do was to do the washing up. During the washing up, Royal would try to imagine the smile on the face of the one who pushed the barrow.

And finally, Royal would make a point to visit exactly one person each day. Royal would open up, offer up a bit of what he had inside, collect himself, and exactly one person each day would take or leave it, and there the meeting would end. More bits or less bits of himself, whether he kept or gave away, was taken or left, it always turned out to be a piece of piss.

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New Apartment

Today you move in to your new home. So let me first welcome you! And let's see, how about a gift to you, for a warm welcome? It's a kind of honey made from ants, so don't taste of it just yet, but instead know that when it's tea time, mmm-mmm!

Now just so you know, the washer and dryer are ok to use, and there isn't anything too soiled for washing, in my experience. Same goes for dishwashing, and really for handwashing, and be generous using water, and soap, and powdered solvents, and the scouring wand, and several handfuls of good ground pumice stone if a dish or if any surface should have those hard-to-clean greases.

Now for the bookshelves, you'll see how some of us are reading books on crypt-keeping, and that's nothing for you to ask about. And you get two of your own bookends, and even if you don't have books or a lot of books, a shelf is a fine stage for trinkets, curios, and ephemera.

Wednesday night is trash night and you aren't allowed to sleep at night because we will keep you up, and I promise you that. Don't get worried because that only riles up me and your roommates, who are even worse than me, and like I say we just get louder and louder, and you'll see. And some of it will be the rattling from the hundred-ghost closet that is in your new room.

And there's hardwood floors and sweeping to be done, and the landlord says no pets, but we do

have one small shorthair kittycat, Rufus, who survives and sunbathes at her own pace. One thing to know about this neighborhood is it's quiet and residential, and so drive slow because kids are out playing. We put a sign up: "Drive like your kids live here!" Also keep an eye out for a centuries-long leather whip crack sound which if you hear it you'll go mad due to its being our fair nation's longest and oldest sound.

There is a viola in the living room that you can play and we share rosin and you can share it too, and there's no sound the viola can make that could help you nor intercede on your behalf should the whip-sound ever be visited upon your ears.

There's some permanent markers, all colors, even pastel and scented, in a big mug on the coffee table, and you can use those to do just fun doodles or drawings, but most people here who've heard the whip won't manage a single squiggle, and that's due to the whip-madness, although from what I gather a lot of the time just putting wet felt to paper can be sort of tranquil in its own way, like with those adult coloring books. Again, you'll see that the rule of not being allowed to sleep at night is really just more of a formality, and that a sleepless night will be like unto a paradise-vacation once you've known the song of the whip.

Now you'll get to meet the other housemates and we all like to do a kind of "family style" dinner Sunday nights if everybody's around, and those are cute. Fridge shelves are divided and we cleared out a little spot for you and your

tuppies, and one of our fun jokes as a house, and a kind of quirk, is we'll shorten any given word to cuten it up, Tupperware to tuppies, just as an example.

Bills are divided up even and the sink has its own area code and there is a knot of hair in the shower whose thickness and length allow it to vocalize, and it does give vocal instructions, the knot, yes, and its instructions are to be heeded unconditionally, but usually for me and Petey and Susanna the instructions are like 'check out an independent film' or 'visit the library' or 'free samples at the farmers market today, don't forget,' so typically you're gonna find your life enriched by the knot, and so you'll have plenty to do to fill the days while you're new in town.

Don't ever speak to the roommates too, or else there's a good chance you'll find yourself whip-struck earwise and evermore, and I think by now you know you don't want that. Rent is on the first, first last deposit, five days grace, key under the rug, bed bugs are a BIG no-no. Purple yams in the raised beds out front, turn the compost, the box of cigarettes on the porch is communal, smoke as much as you want, but never ever speak a single word nor blink an eye to any member of our neighborhood, and stay safe in that way. And say nothing until a second before the centuries-whip speaks out, and then, in silent madness, be free.

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Dust Brunt

Tarbo and Bristene have plans for what they know is fun, together. And there I am, suddenly, right up beside Tarbo and Bristene, and subject to the invitational. "What are you getting into?" and I can't tell if right in the middle of officer's training is the right time to answer, but I do, and loud, and on speakerphone. "Finishing officer's training" I bellow, because something about phones makes me want to really annunciate. My first officer puts me on my back almost instantly, I mean just drops me, a sharp rabbit-punch to the tenderloin of my clavicle. This week hasn't been my week.

Outside the hospital after I recover from my first officer's instant violence, I run into Tarbo and Bristene, but Jessica is with them? With an enamel pin affixed to her overalls strap that says 'Dust Brunt' with a cartoon cactus wearing sunglasses? Ok...

I broke up with Jessica specifically because she reported me to the independent radio station's secret police after I swore to her that Dust Brunt is my true favorite music band. That landed me in cop-prison, a jail where to get out you have to get trained up on how to be a police officer. My major in cop-prison was music cop. The months of taste-training intensives culminated in a fiery resolve erupting in my heart to crack down on all waveforms, and that includes prosecuting anyone who listens to dust-wave or any sort of dust bowl music. I was a turnabout, Tarbo and Bristene were dead to me, and Jessica was in an armbar quicker than you can say 'Dusty Springfield.'

"Stop, hey what's that sound?" I spat maniacally into the enamel pin, which of course I knew was a listening device set up by the indie radio insurgency. I did a yoga pose where first I balanced on one leg, then brought the foot of the other leg up to my mouth, licked my filthy cop's boot, and then gave a strident salute before my honorable discharge.

My service weapon all along was my taste for dust, and I had valiantly discharged my duty, according to the eulogist at my own funeral, which I attended as a ghost, though uninvited, as I watched my first officer sidle up to Jessica, and then watched Jessica offer him an enamel pin with my face on it, that said 'Glad He's Dead,' and kissed him on his stubbly cheek.

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Book Synth

This is the manual for your new Brand-Name Book Synth. What you're gonna find by skimming these pages is the more-or-less features of the product, and hey listen, nobody can make you follow the rules, ok? So just get a gloss of what is Book Synth, and then kinda do your own thing. But not because we said so!

Ok. First, you'll open Book Synth to Pg. 1, and turn knob for diction. The presets are 'prolix,' 'mama-terse,' 'frictive glot,' 'ole soliloquy,' 'blank-koan,' 'rich cultivar,' 'ad copy,' and 'nimble limerick.' There are custom slots also, so if you wanted to make one called 'Double Duty Duncan' you could 100% do that, and that's just an example.

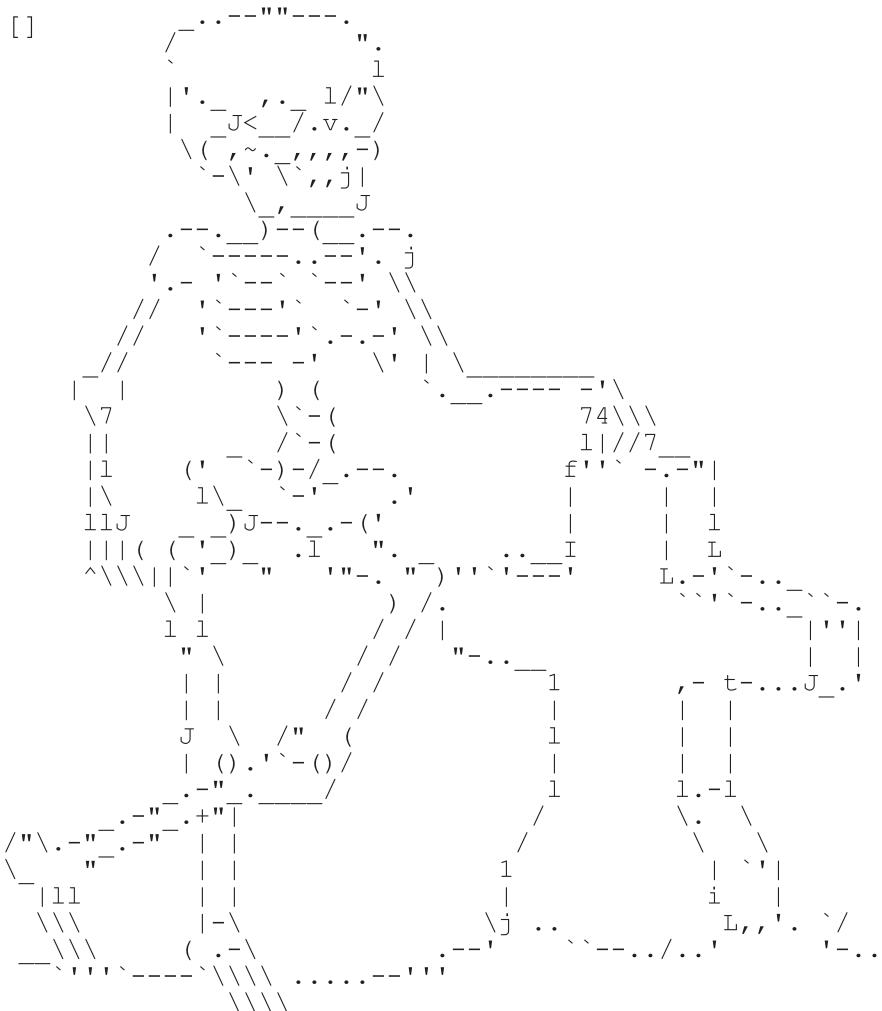
Next, the knob on Pg. 2 of Book Synth is the oscillator, which is just an electrician's word for 'jazz-ray.' Of course, you can't make music-jazz the way you could on a normal synth, but on Book Synth you can do word-jazz, like...let's see here...see here, see there, seether, seder, cedar, a cedar plank without smoked salmon on pine bluffs, cigar humidor, spa-stench, cooking in the Russian baths, slap your misty shank with a moistened banana leaf. This is just a sentencular example of the type of word-jazz you can look forward to if you get to twisting knobs using Book Synth.

There's bossa-nova setting as well, using one knob, if you turn it anti-clockwise. Tickling this knob will upend the kind of ho-hum mien and bland means of knowing you've found yourself bound to and limited by, so do try. Book Synth is portable, so you could use it at a food court,

or even anywhere in a strip mall.

For the next feature, you already know it was gonna be Book Synth beat matching. Read a book out loud or feed ripped out pages into the rip slot and Book Synth will hit the cadence and tenor guaranteed, and you'll see results that day.

Book Synth's most powerful feature, though, is word-chords. Word-chords are exactly what they sound like, so no need to belabor the point here. Wash and dry Book Synth after each use, and return the knobs to their home position.



Skeleton Bones

"I keep the grounds here," said Marty, pulling on a cigarette. Marty's angular bony face made him look like a skeleton man. But I wasn't gonna let that scare me.

"I keep the grounds and I bury the bodies," it was Marty again, saying his words. "Bury the bodies, bones and all."

"Oh ho, so very good," I said to Marty, in a ploy to praise him off guard.

He saw right through my little touché. I felt like a big pantyhose due to being sheer and somewhat see-through. Or I felt like that fine mesh griddle that guards the eagle eyes of a fencing swordsman, same reason. For Marty's part, other than seeing-through, he smoked a big smoke and deposited ash in the same ground where I just knew he buried a little more than bodies. What else had he been burying? Can't say.

"I can be honest then," I said, head bowed a little. "I'm the one that gets afraid at night. My body stands and walks up and down, all around town, and you saw me walking to get here and so, you see, you can trust me. What it is is that I don't want to end up in underground town, like those bodies you bury day in and day out."

"Stay quiet, or I'll see about beating you up," Marty said, but he smiled smoking and his eyes were empty sockets, just like an electrical socket-eyed skeleton man's face would be. So I knew I'd better keep quiet.

"Mmm-hmm." I hummed, but it turns out that wasn't quite quiet enough for old Groundsman Marty, whose job it is to plant the bodies. I shook my head left-right left-right, doubletime, to say 'uh-oh sorry,' but it did no good.

Marty saw about beating me up, and he knocked me over and down as well. Now I was face-down on a field where the only crop you'd harvest if you were a farmer was body-crop. The corpseley kind.

"Shouldn't go to death while you're still living." Marty said. He said it and I knew it and I knew he meant me. Well who else was even nearby?

"I get scared at night and it's only death I can think of, Mr. Marty, and it's only you who I know works in-person with this whole skeleton crowd. So if I get laid out like you got me, and then you work me over and get me put to dead by you as a result, then it's just the same as another regular sleep night on a school night for me."

"Quieten down," Marty said, and chilled me right to my own internal skeleton bones. "I know you have a secret, and the secret is that inside you, there's a dead skeleton just like all these bones I plant and bury," said Marty, his jangling bones hanging in his ribs like an unplayed xylophone.

"Don't care, don't give a care, about you or your secret or your bones-bones, not while you two, you and your skeleton, are still alive," Marty said. Under his fingernails it was soil from having dug graves all year. Or were they

splinters from the inside lid of a coffin? I just didn't know.

"Well what should I do about being scared at night then?" I said, about to cry, feeling that swelling crying feeling welling up up under my tear ducts. And my lips quivered like as if I had butterfly wings where my mustache should be.

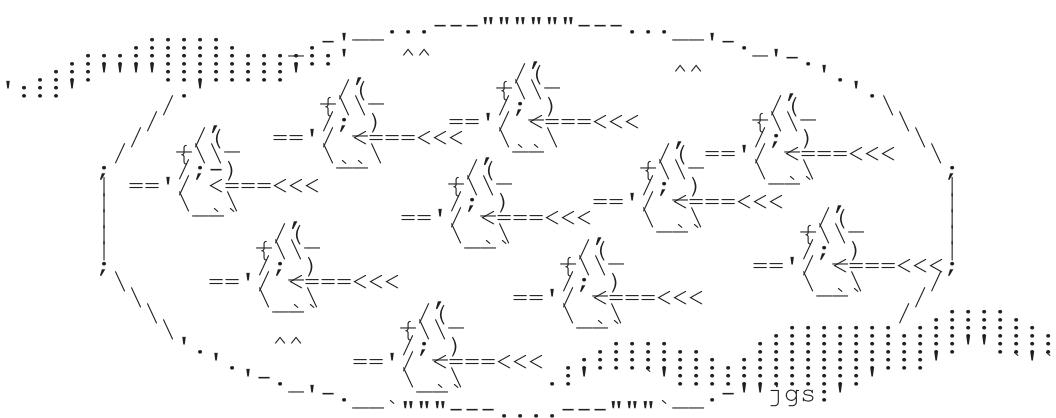
"What should I DO!?" desperate now. Marty looked thoughtful. A glint of something warm in his beady black lifeless teddybear eyes.

"I can tell you what I do," Marty said flatly. "Get a job working for the ghosts or skeletons that scare you the most. For me, I was scared of dead guys, their spirits and ghosts, so I got a job here, at the graveyard. For you, I think you're not actually scared of dead guys, but you're scared of something else, like maybe a secret kind of scared. So go work for the secret service. Or a halloween surprise store, or a haunted house factory, or become a rollercoaster sabotager. I can't tell you what you're afraid of, only the stillness of a night alone in a coffin can tell you that, and so get in, and I'll put a little camera in there, and we can chat, and then I'll do your résumé after, and I'll call my uncle, who's looking for an apprentice to hire at his company that makes tools for sabotaging rollercoasters."

"Ok," I said.

"Ok."

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Nightly Brew

Tonight again, and come close to hear me lad, tonight it's a time for us to mix our nightly brew. When you're close to me like this, you do get a strong sense of how I care for my teeth and my diet and what natural odors I'm capable of mustering, don't you lad. That's a part of my personality. And now take in this sorcery and internalize it, and use it as a spell later. Have a vision too, and commit that to yourself, and no matter what it is, transliterate it and contribute it to the main public sorcery tablet, the one beside the inn downtown, in the square, the tablet from which all may draw in their time of sorcerer's need. Here's a chance to give back, you pilfering reprobate. That's right, I'm one of the ones who can see if you do shoplifting, but you don't find out about my seeing it until much, much later.

...'

Lad! Listen up. Now cast the dice and lots and stick-stones, and peer through the vale toward the dregs and use your imagination a little to give a report. Tell the future a bit, but don't tell it too much. Now go back through all of life, to the first memory you have. Harvest each thought that you've even thought of having, and especially harvest the thoughts you HAVE had, and gather up each of those, and espy them through a crystalline sextant, yes just like that, and take and put in mental bushels, pecks when you have to, and donate those too, at the town square next to the public tablet. Yes that same sorcerer's tablet down in Nickel Square, among the cobblestones and brined shrimp pastilles, just past the children's astrolabe. Now stupor in blank calm, lad, and let yourself be led, by me, by a cord of humble twine.

Clear-hollowed and empty-headed: it's a good way to be when it comes to brewing the nightly brew. And that's if I do say so myself. There's a thread in the baseboard, so give it a tug, and abide the thread as you abide my twine cord. Grimace. Great grimace, lad. I swear an oath by the glittering velveteen skein of night that you will find down the line that you are a theater actor or similar thespian, and by the stars I pledge allegiance that those are the people who will pay top dollar for a top of the line grimace such as you're evincing now. And yes a wince such as that as well, yes, yes.

Of course, to make a profit through magic is, as we all know, a common law crime, a crime that is called 'Sorcerer's Usury,' and to commit it is to pack salt into the scooped-out cavern where your heart used to be. Used to be but became scooped out by me, Chief of Sorcerer's Detectives, and a judicious hardscrabble one at that. Not to be outdone by my lieutenants, I make a big stink about being awarded free shrimp pastilles and the wood-skewered charcoaled entrails that those roustabouts peddle on their wood-wheeled carts down in Nickel Square. It is a fringe benefit, lad. But as you no doubt see, a well-fed Sorcerer's Detective such as myself stanches crimes doubly effectively, and with a mustardy panache.

Twice-hollowed and under magical surveillance, now that's the way to be when it's getting close to time to begin the work of our nightly brew. And make no mistake, lad, the nightly brew is what's next for you. It's your main work. Head up and get toward it. Get after your working,

job up. Just up over the horizon there, betwixt the lacquered wooden gurney which we use nowadays because back now it's still olden times and we wouldn't have had any plastic handy, just over the horizon and mind the gurneys. So, so many wounded on gurneys, but nevermind those withered wounded, and affix your eyes just past the horizontal line which divides velveteen vault from soiled plot, and note mentally the big black cauldron just there. Just yon, and yonder, and thither it is. Now placate the yawning cauldron's evident hunger by committing to it what little bone matter you can spare. And seek sleep now lad, because the nightmare we pull like silk from your piglet ears is the last and final ingredient to really set off our tonight's special and really nice nightly brew.

* * *

No, lieutenant. No, powder several more capsules of nighttime medicine and sprinkle in the lad's eye sockets, specifically the tear ducts, yes those ducts there – this lad has not yet nightmare'd enough for us to quite finish our nightly brew.

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Body Optimism

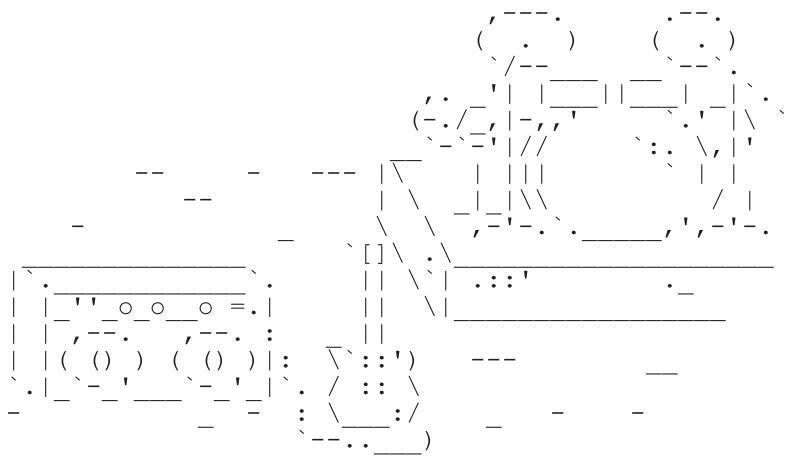
Raise up your two clenched fists as high up as you will. A pose emerges: the winningest champ pose. And this is but one of your body's many optimisms. Give a high-five to yourself.

Optimism. Here's an old favorite: draw the edges of each cheek toward its respective eyebrow.

That thoroughgoing slit you've made is a classical smile. Smile on you optimistic mystic.

A deep breath in, flare the nostrils gently, body optimism. Ram your elbow down, hard, onto any plank or furniture with a solid corner. Body Optimism. Unlock the knees, bounce on the balls of the feet, a nice optimistic way to stand your body up. Get caught up under the carriage of a presidential convoy whose catalytic converter you'd opted to steal and scrap for scotch money. That forward-fast underneath and upsy-daisy feeling is the same whether you know you're being drug under a car or not. Optimism.

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Band Together

What we liked to see together is: just out of the corner of our eyes, 30-40 people nodding together, because of us. Since we fleshed out a really respectable joint-degree together in middle school, collaboratively, we knew working together is how we'd be for our whole lives. Just past the teacher's catacombs, In the middle school sanctum, we sat furtively and listened to a pirated copy of Norvando's classic album 'Butter Bunny.' And, speechlessly, we each learned lessons individually about what chord progressions had to mean, no matter what. Having all learned music theory right, the first time, on our own, and wearing that learning like a badge or black arm band every single day, we did eventually attend a convocation whereby the fiat to play music in a band as a band together was passed. So we banded.

When your debut album is mandated by edict, you don't have a lot of time to come up with a band name. So we also chose our band name to be 'Norvando,' which we agreed must be a permissible band name because it was already a band name, and it was also the name of the only other band we had listened to.

"Coming up all night this year at the municipal ballroom: Second Norvando!!" echoed the big announcement over the poured concrete speakers which dotted each and every cornerless slope in the smooth city, a big announcement which was heard clattering and skittering and slithering down over the catwalks and up any alley way you choose, citywide, fore to aft, and up into the eager and voracious ears of a hometown city

bereft of all music since before we were born. This was our story.

Norvando, our Norvando, was made up of me, Kingsly; my brother, Partario; and two twins called Scripto. They were the twins who preferred to share a name, at least so they said, although I and Partario suspected their poverty made a second unique name out-of-bounds for their father, who himself had four names. That we knew of.

I was one to work out the songs, and I'd like to hum into whatever mics were up on stage.

Partario tapped out rhythm on an Electronic Groovebox, which processed his taps into some really full percussive phrasings, and overall rounded out our sound. And Scripto played lead and rhythm guitar, and they forewent the popular pedalboard setup, just a quarterinch straight into a jazz combo, going for a clean tone, which was a sort of political act, sonically, for these two twins who had but one name.

Cue tour, and it's a court-mandated crowd every night, at every venue or 'gig,' and me up there, humming my heart out, humming the lyrics of songs written and edited by the city's aldersman, having passed by a board subcommittee just that night to be sure they contained what must be said. If there was a prison near where we were, the Norvando sound was administered to the prisoners duly. Same thing for a ballet recital, because the poor kids had no music to do their dainty tip-toes to otherwise, without us.

Being banded doesn't pay, so me and Scripto and

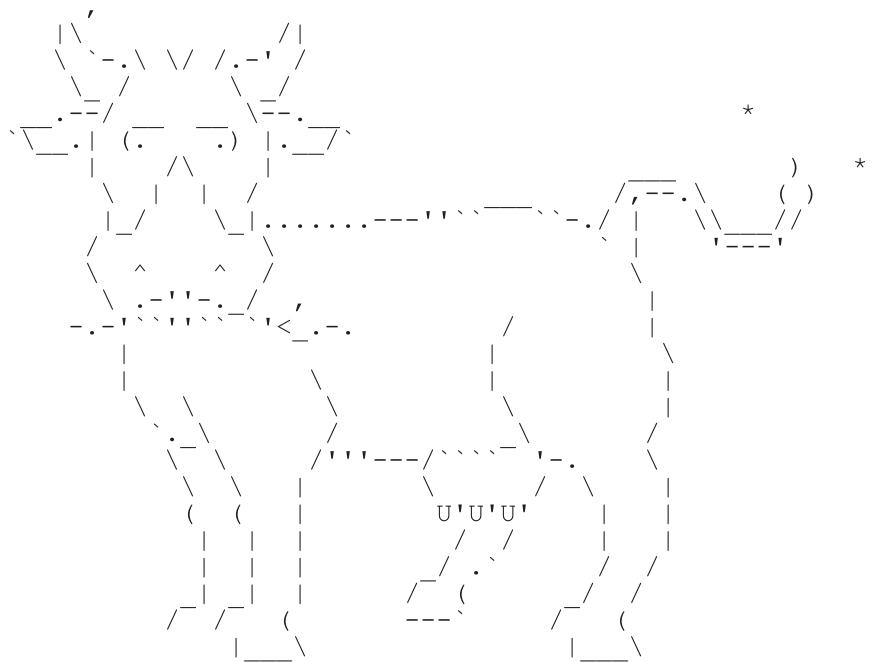
Partario collected cans and did work delivering packages for the federal package courier service, which made sense on tour and people had to come to the concert anyways so they could pick up the package right during any of my humming solos, and Scripto did kind of chat to each other too if my soloing got to be too long, but made sure to do it not into the mics, so nobody minded.

Album art was of course left to the city planner, who didn't let us down. As for PR, sample sheets of the sheet music of my humming were offered to any place where music could be played, like a church with a choir or a baseball stadium with an organ. The musicians there would puzzle over it, give it a whirl, and it would be straight to jail for anyone who heard, because our lawyers scaled and scabbed over the whole of city like weeping litigious lesions on a leper. A ruined and talentless Scripto petitioned together often to be freed of the band, which of course was met with the Secretary of the Interior's cavalcade, and salvos of shock and awe from the zoning board. There would be no escape for Scripto, who cowered and hugged and held each other as they played each night.

Our second album, 'Hmmdondo,' was a hummed paean to appropriate land use, and was seen as political by our detractors, who were prisoners paid to continue the detracting they had done which had originally landed them in prison. And our internal city's municipal music reviewer did describe our music as 'dustbowl music,' which was that reviewer's own little nod to the brunt of punishment she had received to get her into prison in the first place.

Born in prison, official bandsmen of the prison,
popular and handcuffed to our instruments, it
was a good life to be Norvando.

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A Big Cow

For me personally, as a cattle, it's a one day at a time thing. I got elected, so I took a leadership position. Was I ready? Well, to that I say: no ruminant is ever really ready. I just think, and this is my values: you suit up, you show up, and every day you get a little better. You can't move because you're packed tight into a freight train full of cattle being delivered to the Surgeon General's personal meat rink, the place where he tests to see if there's something about us cows that makes us so darn delicious. I chew my grass clippings one stomach at a time, just like the rest of you. No secret to success, just doing my job.

No, it's not usual for one of us cattle, even a leader like me, to get an audience with the train's engineer. Being back on a separate car on the train, being hauled for the value and savory excellence of my meat, being gently jostled by the bumpy railroad, there's usually no time or opportunity to visit with a train conductor or engineer. But then I met Big Mike.

One day as I was wavering lock-kneed and thoughtless among the scores of fat cattle in my car, the train, which usually goes forward, instead went norward. Not-forward. Before I knew it, a young man probably more than two cattle tall ambled up and sidled up to me and put a gloved hand on my majestic chuck and gave me a good solid pat on the brisket. He said to me "I'm Mike, and to you I'm Big Mike, and I'm the conductor of this here Choot Choot."

"Come again?" I inquired bovinely to Big Mike,

who, mercifully, had no trouble understanding my guttural lowing as plain human English.

"Choot choot'll be what I'll be calling this freight train," Big Mike said, "and seeing as you're the elected leadership of this stocky cohort, according to me you're invited to come stand wobbly and knock-kneed up in the Power, which is what I call the main front car on the train that pulls all the other cars, which cars contain mostly you cattlefolk and then hundreds of thousands of loose Magic cards in the others. But you know that."

And I did know that. And I nodded to assent to his invitation to the Power, eager to see anything other than the square yard of cowhide which heretofore had been my singular vista during our sojourn. I kept an eye out for a place like a café or newsstand that might be between the cattle-hauling car and the Power, because I had linked my credit card to the RFID chip they embedded in my horn, and I wanted to offer to buy Big Mike a frappé or any number of salty snacks he might want, as a goodly and cowlike gesture. But there was just more gondolas piled high and brimming with loose Magic cards between the cattle car and the Power, and so I didn't have a chance to.

"Sower of Corruption would be the name of the Magic card I would design if I were a worker for Wizards of the Coast and not a big cow," I said to Big Mike, mooing. "I know it," he said. The breeze blew some of the Magic cards from out of the gondolas, which had open tops. They fluttered down.

Up in the Power, Mike showed me the many switches, dials, indicators, and controls he was in control of, and responsible for. Up in the Power, I made a pass at Big Mike. Big Mike, he wasn't a handsome fella, and he smelled rank, like old pepper. He wore a bandana that sopped up the salty sweat on his big neck. But he was the only human who treated me like I was worth a good gall-durn, like I had something good about me other than the uniform marbling of fat in the 20 or so thick steaks that one might expect me to yield. I made a pass at Big Mike, and Big Mike taught me every last thing he knew about the way it was up in the Power.

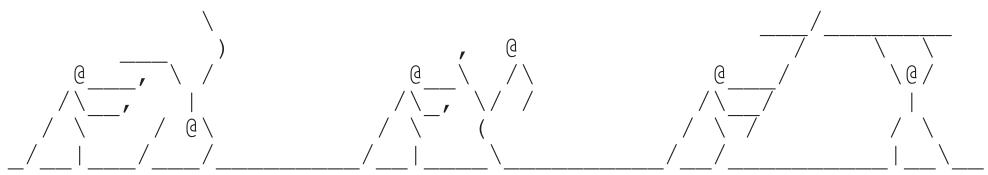
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Used Prayer Salesman

Well dear, as we do always say: a deal's a deal. And honey, you'll see how good a deal this was. Out back of the mall, in the discount pit, near the food quarry, I sat quietly. There was construction going on nearby. I passed time nearby the mall, dear, alone, the way I like to do. Then in the parking garage, I met a salesman. Rain was falling. Oily streamlets passed as the rain came down, and the salesman was promising unique deals. Fifty percent deals and all the rest. But I stayed put, silent. Me alone with a salesman.

He knew right away, honey. About me and you and the whole thing with the family. Families with parents and kids walked right behind him as he talked. He told me he knew times were tough and he knew a lot of folks couldn't afford to pray. Sweetheart, he told me that a used prayer is just as good. Pre-owned prayers he called them. He talked to me out by the mall, and while we talked the sound of a hammer clanked, rang out. It was sunset and I had met a salesman.

And darling he and I held hands and I wrote him a check. Honest to goodness. And this memo book is filled with prayers we can try. Yes, this book here. Prayers we can try to use. General prayers, no names, so they should work fine. They should work, and we can use them, we can use them to try. To try to get back what's rightfully ours. Prayers, and I didn't tell him this before he sold them to me, but prayers you and me dear are going to be using for revenge. Ok honey yes I'm excited too, go ahead, I'll bow and you lead.



A Child's Garden of Versus

Do you have cartridge game? Fresh packs of batteries? The umbilical peripheral? The thousand-hours-logged badge? Eyes unwept, with electronics-glaze? Yes? Then you and I are kin. And shall we verse our familiars? To verse is to fight, as in versus. So for example I'll often start by summoning Rock Toggler and setting him up to verse whoever you've got, because Rock Toggler is a gentleman I trust.

So for you it's going to be Zinc Sluice, and I can see now that Zinc Sluice is who you have chosen to summon for the versus. You've studied the arcana and the charts, you know my igneous gentleman requires our magnificent burning sun's indifferent wash of solid light to keep his rocky core warm, whereas even a single cup of black zinc ink emitted by your fellow onto my Rock Toggler's craggy hide will spell certain naptyme for him. And so it is the versus has favored you, and you are well-versed.

And how many more hundreds of verses do you think we'll do before the umbilical peripheral allows either or each of us to leave? I, like you, have learned better than to deign optimism. Resuscitate these frail familiars, and verse them against each other again. Again, again and again. Again, because, my kin, they are only fainted, and not dead. I will verse as long as it takes, to vindicate my choice to abdicate from my childhood duties of mayoring the children's village. No, I said during children's primaries and I said during my inauguration speech: a child like me prefers playtime to governance.

They elected me nevertheless. Well what did they expect? You saw. You witnessed the folly of governance in the hands of a child. You saw my first act: abrogate each law. My second act: dash to the cartridge store, already looted, under veil of anarchic night. Third act: verse my familiars until I've been caught by the children's princely ribbon police.

So you can see why for you to concuss my Rock Toggler is an act of war, being that I am the child-law and its sovereign. Rock Toggler! Use a wrench to beat this seditious Zinc Sluice to death, and then brandish that wrench to suggest its owner might be next, and see about ending this versus early! I have always despised diplomacy.

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Janitors on Parade

Didn't you notice the notice in the bulletin board?

If you janit, speak up and have it out with a parade. Often unseen, rarely jubilant, the idea is to augment the mood of all janitors by offering an optional parade, and we foot the bill.

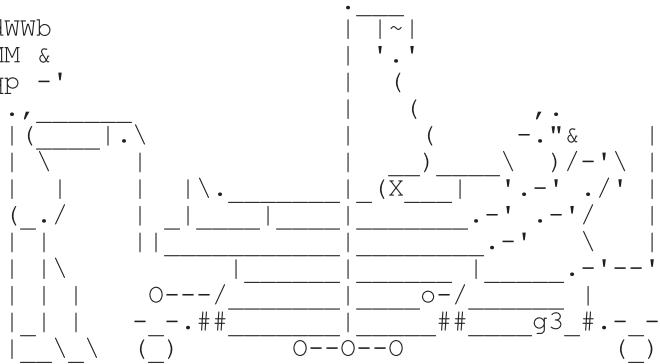
So here you see Janitor Murphy who has let kids fill up the mop bucket with pool water, and they sit on the bucket's durable lip with their ankles clean and wet as the mop bucket skates uncontrollably down Big West Hill.

One thing mop buckets don't have is brakes, thought Janitor Murphy, before installing brakes and a rollcage for the kids riding in the mop-pool bucket.

For the kids who will be riding in the mop-pool bucket next year, that is. If there even is a next year.

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Surgeon's Intercession

Surgeon General Everston Volesbane here. I've been noticing exactly how the publishing of this tract has been going and I stopped it partway through just to chyme in. That's a bit of surgical humor — what I meant was 'chime' not 'chyme;' chyme of course being the pulpy acidic fluid which passes from the stomach to the small intestine, consisting of gastric juices and partly digested food. A-ha, ha.

Nevertheless, a jocund heart, while healthy, has the risk of being attacked. Did you know upwards of 90% of heart attacks are carried out by the heart's own body? Jubilee in the heart veins is a silent, silly killer. You've heard the term 'frivolous liver' and you see our city streets lousy with dialysis centers, so be still. You don't want your whole undercarriage to end up zany. The following lesson-story is a prescription to even things out.

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Dr. Volesbane's 5 Lessons of the Heart

Greetings to you, and to this or that body part, with glad tidings.

Hygiene, although not always fashionable or thrilling, is a source of health. We all know to burnish and scour our bony white teeth morning noon and night, just as we all know to hose down the musty culverts and cul-de-sacs where each limb emigrates from the torso.

And just as a regular rinse to the outward limbs provides a sense of refreshment, so too can a tidying of the heart. Whereas you are a heedless one, yield that weighty broadsword, and trust a doctor now, unguarded.

The heart has limbs, and if you keep the heart's limbs clean, you will enjoy benefits. "What one witnesses" is heart limb #1; so be careful what you see, and experiment with choosing against scenes of utter depravity. Similarly, don't stare straight into a recorded film of the sun, a clear winter moon, or other gratuitously bright lights just before bed.

Another of the heart's limbs is modesty. To protect your modest, life-giving heart, you musn't gawk or leer within. Woe unto today's generations, whose pitiful recourse and campaign is an abiding and thoroughgoing knowledge of self. Fie! Rather, know the heart works best when it peers outward, to see about the state of the hearts of others. Remember, shame is, medically, pride in reverse, and to nourish a guilt too long is a heart-soiling egotism.

A third of the heart's limbs is the brainstalk, or spine stem, or any other upstairs part of the body you imagine to be the seat of emotions. Rather than pranking yourself by pulling away the chair from an emotion you don't like (say, anxiety) and shattering its coccyx on the icy floor of your surgeon's kitchen, instead put a pillow and a cushion and even unfold a convertible sofa to allow anxiety to stretch his legs. Listen now to him, and recognize he visits only to help you focus, and to do noticing. Realize also that whether you want him there or not, he will arrive and depart as he pleases, farting unceremoniously into your settees and other upholstery, unrepentant.

The fourth of the heart's limbs is manifold: telekinesis, divination, psychic, and any other mindreading. While, yes, it is appealing to collect the five arcane amulets and the silent talisman to activate this cryptic skill, consider momentarily how curt and acerbic your first and even second psychic thoughts are about the one who bothers. In as much as the heartstring knee-jerk of a heartlimb isn't a truth, but a reflex, the gray foldy source material you will access as an opalescent empath mining the pellucid depths of others' thoughts may be faulty as well, and bad for reading.

The quincunx (fifth of twelve) limb of the heart is several sayings in a row: "expectation is premeditated resentment," "comparison is the thief of joy," and "you spot it you got it." The latter means that often the things that annoy a person are in fact cancers of character possessed by the very one who is annoyed, and a deflection-projection of the emotive mind is underway.

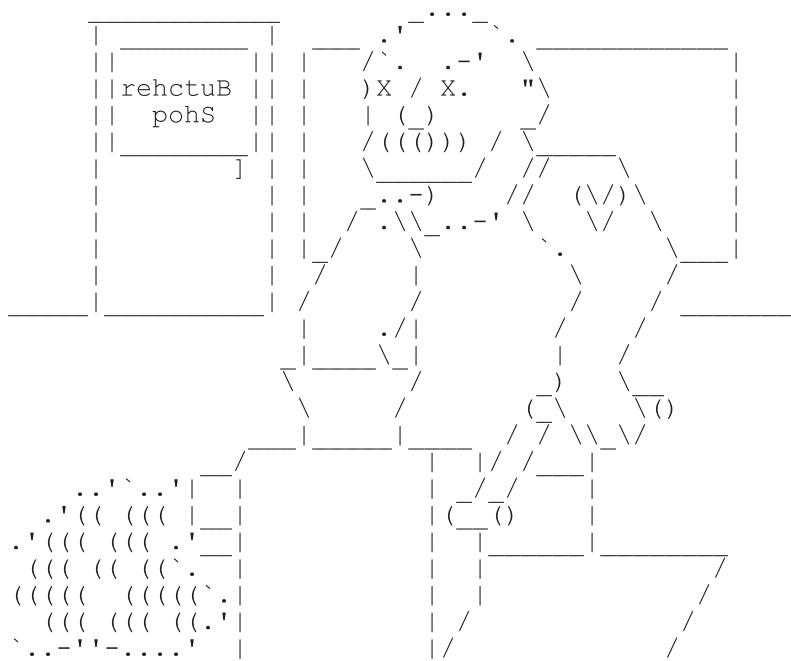
Finally, as a doctor whose license was revoked long, long ago, I'd like to make mention now of a useful tool I use, usefully, to determine the health of the weary patients who huddle crooked and demoralized in the waiting room under the bridge where I work. The tool is called the xenoscope. The way it works is, some bozo waltzes into my bridge area, says "I think I'm sick," and I agree, and that's that.

After awhile, having worn the patient down by being withholding, I suggest the following: if you feel bad, it can be a result of bad health. If the regular body is cleaned up and healthy, the sickness is often of the spirit. If you treat people in ways that later make you seek the infinite vacuum of death, then you commit a felony against yourself. And therefore the presecription is to take a little water drink, breathe in a gulp of clear air, and try to do an activity, not a thinking activity but a doing one, whereby your spirit is attended to. The spirit of course being your own personal secret treasure chest that only you know what it is and nobody can touch nor affect. So a sick spirit is evinced in the treating people in a way that later you feel bad about, and the remedy is, do what you know heals your spirit.

The remaining seven limbs are sealed off from my knowledge, a result of a self-trepenning activity I did back in the day which instead of healing my spirit like I thought it would, cauterized a pretty substantial bundle of brain nerves, and made a lot of knowing and sections of my mind and understanding and thought off limits to me permanently. This is why my license was revoked actually. Still, with a 5/12 clean

heart and a fistful of laundry tokens, I expect that you will do just fine. Remember: penilelessness is next to cleanlilessness, scrub is lub, heart says lubdub, three men in a tub.

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Butcherina, Shopkeep – A Playwright's Tale

TIME: The moment just before closing time, at a butcher's shop.

SETTING: A butcher's shop, as I just mentioned.

PLAYERS: Butcher, Butcherina, Slavov,

STAGE: well there's actually a few more characters still. There's Colton and Brittitt and Persperry and Holcombe and Drury Joe. As for the stage: it's a wooden rectangular prism, built by skilled technicians with stage technicians' degrees.

TIME: Still closing time. I guess more specifically, let's see, ah yes, a sunset, brilliant ultraviolet and vermillion, amethyst too. A big wet crystalline sunset, whose brightnesses dance beautifully across the picture window that opens from the butcher's shop out onto the street.

PLACE: The butcher shop's front window, big and clean and thick plate glass, with a lovely logo that's hand-painted right on the glass, old-fashioned style.

FASHION: Old-fashioned.

TIME: When the starlings cyclone near the belfry just before yon sun doth dip its dainty toe into the cool pool of night. Glitter'd birdsong clears the streets of all its fibbing frights.

STUDENTS: Chlorella Deville, a first-year, Possum Pete, a first-year, the Peavy Sisters,

both first-years, and all sixteen Smith Children, who round out the first-years.

TIME PERIOD: 1800s Prauge-Europe.

POPULATION ORGANIZATION: Urban city.

MAIN WAY CITY GENERATES MATERIALS, AND SOME EXAMPLES: Industry. Wrought iron, hard steel, smog, churchworks, creosote-dipped joists a foot square and ten yards long, treated tin roofs, lead glass, tanned leather, flagstones, hard-proof liquors.

LIQUOR COLOR: Clear.

SMELLS: Raw, cleaved meats, mostly soaked through with curing salt, so I'd guess a bit of a briney air. And my playwright's imagination tells me: no big fridges back then, so layer on a warm funk to that smell.

SEASON SMELL: Autumnal Beef

SCENE ONE

Persperry has taken little Chlorella Deville by the hand, and is leading her down Artisan's Causeway to the famous 'Butcherina and Sons Famous Butcher Shop,' a shop whose fame for meat pies has gotten the better of Chlorella. They pass by the drain grate of the city's excellent sewer system. Chlorella, sick to death of vegetal dumperlings, reedy pot pie, chipped beets, and shingled daikon, is woozy: a side-effect of her iron deficiency.

STAGE DIRECTION: The chorus of doctors, who wear

white lab robes, sing the Hymn of Lowered Iron,
to the tune of Mr. Key's 'Olde Liberty.'

SCENE TWO

The door jingler ring-a-ting-tingles aloud as Chlorella and Persperry curtsey gingerly through the door, and do a butcher's bow. The butcher misses their lovely bow, due to the fact that she's cleaving a Christmas Goose in twain, right out in the open, on a good, thick cutting board. Butcherina's cleaver catches a glint of sunset on its machined-glossy blade edge.

STAGE DIRECTION: Several of the peking ducks, who seemed cooked and dead, hanging like they were upside down and cooked in the butcher shop window, the ducks fly over to the chorus of doctors, and quack dulcet quacks in a jazz-comping style as the doctor-chorus sings 'Bow Butcher, Bow.'

SYNOPSIS: Well, I had planned to dramatize this, but essentially what you've got is a story in general about adapting to city life in the industrial age, and there's a class transition dynamic, about how Butcherina, the shop's proprietor, was once a latchkey urchin herself, and despite her gorgeous face and thick hair, came from a rather dusty upbringing. So this becomes a way for Butcherina to relate to Persperry, who reassures Chlorella (and Drury Joe, and most of the first years) that things will turn out alright. There's a gender thing but it's sort of understated. And the meat all this time is a kind of lingua franca, as they eat minced tongue pie that's every bit as good as the circulars advertised. The story is

heartwarming, and you'd see why during the play I think.

CONCLUSION: A well-done cut of meat is well-met.

ABSTRACT: Where the impoverished children of 1800s Europrague may lack material means, they make up for it in soul and good gumption, and the butcher's shop becomes an unassuming nexus of food, fun, and friendship in an world otherwise beleagured with the industrialist's ceaseless smoke-belch, toil, and wretch.

CONTROVERSY: We don't know why, but no one who saw the play would write a review of it, which, to-date, has never happened again since. So a lot less people than usual know about how the play was, unless they saw it themselves.

SEE ALSO: Sweet Meats, Honeycomb Tripe, Urchin (street), Urchin (sea); Breadings, Drury Joe.

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Streaky Devil

“Ring ring, ring ring,” it was the phone. I answered, I did my job. Only 15 seconds until the next call.

“Two in a row, have another go. Miss even one, life in pri-son.” It was the voice of the devil. I saw my name on the sales leaderboard. I saw myself walk down the midway at a carnival.

“Thank you for calling,” I said into the headset’s microphone. I read off the script and I did my best to sell, sell, sell. I put down a dollar bill: the devil behind the booth handed me a wooden bucket of worn balls.

“Three in a row, you’re free to go. Miss even one, life in pri-son,” said the devil, his voice clear and confident. Carnivalgoers and passersby paid him little mind. Ring ring, ring ring.

“Would you mind spelling your last name for me, ma’am? Thanks so much,” and I clicked and typed exactly what I was supposed to. I held the ball in my palm, gave it a small toss to test its weight. The air smelled sweet from cotton candy. The ball I held was dense, substantial. The devil’s goatee was tidy.

“Five in a row, skip to and fro. Miss even one, life in pri-son.” I took the credit card number, expiration date, and security code. I hurled a ball and shattered the stacked glass milk bottles. I offered to answer any questions my customer might have. 15 seconds.

“Seven in a row, you run the show. Miss even

one, life in pri-son," called the devil, smug and beckoning me. I hung up on the customer. I heard the music from the carousel ringing behind me. I took off my headset. The shoulder of my throwing arm felt fresh, powerful.

"Nine in a row, more than you know. Miss even one, life in pri-son." I threw ball after ball, harder, harder. There was somebody next to me handing me a new ball every time I threw. I was destroying the laminate backing behind where the milk jugs had been set up. A crowd gathered behind me.

My ears were ringing. A cracked vein of mortar fell from the hole I had bored in the wall with my throws. The pads of my fingers were dry, my palms wet. I breathed in the manufactured smell of popcorn mixed with the dust issuing from the ruined wall.

"Twelve in a row, crawl through the hole," said the devil, and I stepped over the booth, walked behind the shattered wooden crates and the spray of glass from the milk jugs, lowered my shoulder and pressed myself through the hole I had thrown in the wall with my twelve carnival balls.

Ring ring, ring ring! Ring, ring, ring. Ring...

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Noodle Boulevard

A messy spray of sauerkraut or a kempt pile of sport pickes: neither is an option at Noodle Boulevard. A taut meringue or a cool rectangular prism of baked Alaska? You won't find them at Noodle Boulevard. Wry, fresh ramen, oh no no, not at Noodle Boulevard. His and hers piles of bright, lachrymose peppers? A fourth and strident no, now.

Now now, Noodle Boulevard isn't a causeway. It's a boulevard. So take my hand. Together, we'll do a starch march down Noodle Boulevard.

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Supple Legion

Sequence the ribs for a mobilization. That's not it, and keeping your scapula scalloped, tuck the heels into the corns and drive each oblique into the doorjamb. Now trap the mob of fibrous nerves behind your eyes somehow. Now scrub back and forth, in a flossing motion, no, not like that. Still, now you're a tactical athlete.

The next step is getting the muscles organized. Even without muscles you shouldn't skip this step. Smash each pec, shred the delt, and now you're on watch for the erector spinae and its Blue Angels until sundawn. Distract your elbow, invert palm, banded variation. No, no, no. Hit the corners, internalize the hip cuff, sink your lumbar until it tweaks, operationalize the patellar gulf. Lead with the chin. Be grabbed by the forelock. Stabilize. Follow through. Gather into a maintenance pose. No, now just lay. No, not that way. Not like that either.

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For Crying Out Loud

Ever wish you'd never been born? But you were? Then died? I had a friend who did that. Her name was Crying.

"Craw-yeen?" I said to Crying, the first day I met her, before I knew her name. This was when we were both still alive.

"Crying," Crying said, and she cried a little.

"Crayon?" I said, but it only made her mad, and madder, it turns out, because those cried tears from before, they were tears of rage.

"Crying!" she cried, loud, the kind of loud where birds fly away from it.

After that I knew, her name was Crying. Crying Vanlandingham. Of the Essex Vanlandinghams of Essex, Oklahoma. Crying's funeral was held at sea rather than at Oklahoma, because nobody really owned the sea, and nobody really owned Crying.

Dead, she of course had certain people who were sad after her. But then again, a lot of those people didn't even realize one way Crying was haunting them was by cooking the books at work and skimming a little of the top, to pad the pocketbook.

There were also people Crying didn't even know but Crying would redirect their overdraft fees to animals who it wouldn't bother because the animals were affluent and never in arrears. It's just a fiduciary haunting, for some people.

"Get out of my waters!" cried a familiar voice. I heard it, but saw nothing, blind from years of drinking turpentine, as I was, and am now.

"Bah," I spat, and then put a farthing in the ship's swear jar, because even though I'm the captain, I play by the rules.

"Go home!" cried the voice of Crying, her familiar voice echoing down the hallways of the tropical vacation luxury cruiseliner I blindly captained.

"I won't go!" I said, louder than I meant to, and scared the person in the stall next to me. I could tell the person was a kid, because their tiny feet didn't quite reach the ground from the commode, and they also gave off a nervous energy that I notice a lot of kids have when they're pretty new to going to the bathroom on their own.

"Get OUT!" bellowed the voice through the bathroom vent. Crying's haunting wail made it all but certain, to my mind, that the little fella beside me would have no trouble completing his bathroom-using.

"No way, I'm the captain, and I say where this ship goes and what waters it treads," I said, just as drunk as I could be, on turpentine.

At this, Crying manifested herself in a translucent blue material that if I had to put a fine point on it I would call 'ether,' but really it was just ghost material. The little feet in the stall beside me jumped up, as if the child were holding its knees to its chest in fear. So I did that too, and I felt better!

The Complete Collegiate Clown Conspectus

A Guide for Detailed Clowning in Each Aspect and Mode

Dr. Boromir Zoroaster III, CCU Distinguished Professor of Orthogonal Clownformatics

Western Union University

1.1 – The Obligation of a Clown

Three conditions oblige a clown.

- (i) Sorrow
- (ii) Mirth
- (iii) Complications

When these three conditions are concurrently and simultaneously absent, a clown may be foreborne. Otherwise, a clown is warranted, and may remain until its duty is discharged.

1.1.2 Clowning Duties

Broadly, the clown's duty is well-known to include upsetting the child or children present. A clown ought to be misunderstood. A clown should remain innocent, but should be routinely found guilty.

Should one of these conditions be shown and well-demonstrated among an unpainted youth, the pamphlet addendum 'Shall I Be A Clown?' should be given to the child, and read aloud to it.

1.1.3

Community traditions dictate a clown's method and manner.

1.2 – Clowning and the Mindbody

Forthcoming

1.3 – The Several Emotions

Forthcoming

1.4 – Agreed-Upon Clown and Jester Socialization Methods

Forthcoming

1.5 – Nutritive Considerations

Forthcoming

1.6 – Clown Trunk

Forthcoming

1.7 – Clown Dressing

1.7.1 – Skin Accoutrements

The face of a clown should be a sumptuous visual buffet. Prepare the buffet fastidiously. A tidy film of crisp white base makeup should be pancake-tamped at 50 BPM from the left ear to the right ear, then from the widow's peak to the double chin. Any stubble visible after the first coat of tamp is to be electrolyzed or chemically de-epilated, and a second coat of crisp white base applied.

A taut and rosy frown pout provides the clown

with the preponderant and relied-upon emotional gloss uses for contemporary clowning. To achieve the frown, traverse the palate with a 6/0 soft-chisel horsehair brush dappled in lipstain the hue of cinnamon candy cellophane. If cinnamon candy cellophane hued lipstain is unavailable, lipstain the hue of red or dark-red jello blocks may be substituted.

To construe the grimace in earnest, augment dermal irritation strategically by first applying poultice in an ellipse about the lips, then pinching the face skin all around. The unpoulticed area should inflame in a grim bloom, while the remainder retains its delicate clammy comportment. This contrast has been shown to serve as an effective comedic substrate in Clrrooomre⁷ and Sphinxx⁸.

Frame the clown face with a frayed but kempt mat of hair. Any children's crayon may be consulted as the basis for the hair, and the hair ought to be administered about the face as either coif or shock. However, the clown who wears a moustache must not dye or otherwise decorate the moustache. An unhuued moustache permits the clown his masculinity, sullen and gallant in equal measure. Beards must never be worn on a clown.

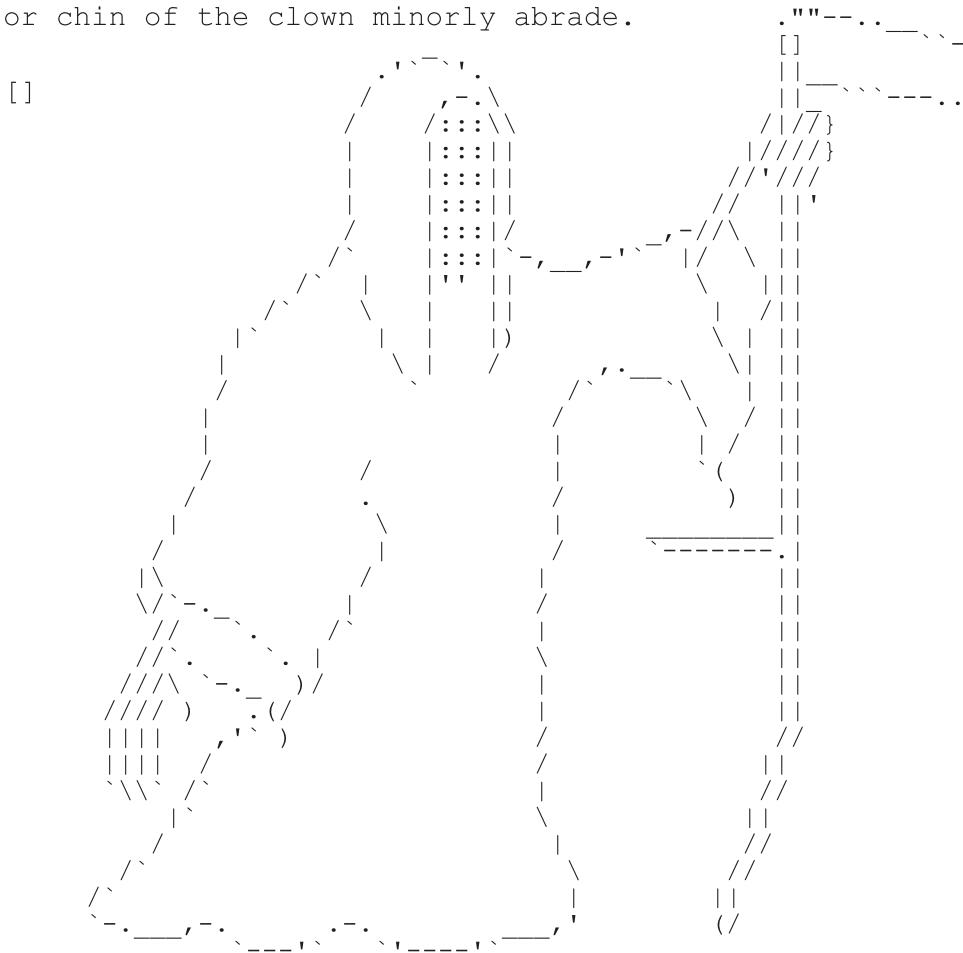
1.8 – Clown Hygienics

1.8.9 – Clown Filth

For a clown, filth is inexcusable. Tidy a clown to within a cubic centimeter on each of his clown quadrants, wiping fore to aft with any sateen garment. If the clown is traveling and no sateen raiment is available, a velveteen kerchief may be used as a substitute.

A clown should be kept running at a constant body temperature of no more than 99 degrees, and outfitted with 110 systolic 70 diastolic pressure-rated clown blood. 30-weight synthetic motor oil may be interpolated in the blood should a clown falter or demure due to poor vascular function. Curaplex 0.9% 250ml Clown Solution saline jester drips can be bought ahead from a local compounder and packed into the supply trunk for quick administration.

This blood should never exit a clown during a performance. Similarly, healthy clotting is essential to good clown function, should the knee or chin of the clown minorly abrade.



A End

