

Terrence Reid / NOT A VENUS FLYTRAP  
Antipodean Summer, 1990

**On this day of Christmas my true love gave to me, flies in a pear tree.**

Its 12:37 a.m. *Finally*, I can't stand it anymore. The sharp stench of peels of oranges sitting on the cutting board for days. Whistling up your nose when the kitchen door opens. Twisting as they dry and mould. Cockroaches enjoying what remains of the juice as much as I in summer.

Fruit flies floating close to motionless, suspended animation in orb, but remain in orb rather than follow to their grave in a plastic garbage bag where I place the corpses of oranges. Not usual flies, these.

Where do they come from? Fruit flies are never seen elsewhere. They are never seen travelling to fruit. Are they the offspring of fruit? Sprung from juicy loins for this final inheritance?

Not usual flies, these. Not greedy like the sticky black flies. The mocking black flies that came close to making me insane that spring when they emerged from winter and the cool winter sun in the back-blocks of Sunraysia to discover me in their midst. In this hinterland the blackfly is supreme. Nourished by and bred in the cowshit and sheepshit that is shat by the stock that has built and made this nation prosperous for flies.

They drink from the corners of your eyes. They share your sandwiches. Don't mind mustard. Cannot be bullseyed. Though you slap yourself into unconsciousness, they fearlessly return to the very place on your face you have just bruised with the killing intent of your hand.

The flies fly faster than I run. No use running. The 4-wheel outdistances them at legal speeds on paved roads. But we were not being paid to escape the blackfly horde on open road. We were being paid to search and destroy plaguing rabbits between

vineyards in bush corridors. also home to the blackfly who propagates in dung, searches for me.

Flies, flies, continually in your face, in your eyes. Chinese Water Torture, Australian Fly Torture.

I put the rubbish bag out. Wash the handjuicer.

*Ker-rash!* A noise on the street. Sounds like a window being punched in. What? Why, it's cute Karen Baronenko-next-door's cosy new boyfriend.

I ask, "How's the balls of your feet?"

Not a cosy mood but he hasn't got any blood on his hand so I let him come in to roll a cigarette, which he smokes, talks, rolls another, smokes, talks, rolls, smokes for quite some time.

He's pissed. Opens the game awkward. Then abruptly moves his Queen forward, complaining about love. "We're *too* involved and very aggressive with each other, y'know. I dunno, she's got bald spots from me pulling her hair out, you know, and I've got'm too. She goes wild. She broke my \$1,000 bass *and* broke my acoustic over my back."

He shakes curly rock and roll locks. Heavymetal twiggling with sincere sex appeal . . . Hey, Kylie, this is Randy. (Can a kid from here be named that? Rex or Lance, maybe. But never Randy.) Hey, Kylie, meet Randy. And! HE MEANS IT! Mean Thrash Music that you and Michele are going to learn to adore.

I'm exaggerating. This is not actually exactly true. That it's Thrash. Or at least not anymore anyway. Although I couldn't have guessed by the name of his band, Gore Hounds. Could just as well be Spectre's Revenge. Or Purple Throbbing Graveyard Gristle. Or anything else Grunge that you or I may want to add.

Despite the name of the band, I'm told, "Well, we've given up Thrash. We're getting into serious stuff. Sensible, you know. Solid music. Sort of fluid. But the rest are all a lot younger. 21. I'm 25. It makes a big difference. They're too serious. Loses the fun."

I say, "Yeah. Having fun is half the fun. Or, at least Guru Adrian said so. And he was only 9 when he said it."

"It's rough," he says, "being broke. I'm down to 14 hundred in the bank and only get 120 on the fuckin' dole after getting paid 420 in the hand every week. 14 hundred will only last me 3 fuckin'

... , no, 2 fuckin' weeks. NOT MUCH TO PISS UP THE WALL on is it!?

"Gee," I say, "420 a week's OK. What didja do for that?"

"Typesetting," he says. "But I quit before Christmas. No, actually I got canned. I went out on my morning break for cigs and ran into a friend I hadn't seen for years, so, what do ya do? We went to the pub for a beer and 3 hours later I got a girl in the bar to phone up and say I was hit by a car.

"The bad part was, I took Karen up to the Taxi Club for drinks that night, and who comes into that scrunge-hole but one of the Co-Directors. He's a faggot and comes in with his boyfriend. Then he sees me. Can't see any dents. Then he says, 'You're BUSTED.'"

I tell him I reckon Karen Baronenko loves Randy. I pretend I'm sleeping.

And out he goes into the night in the same direction the rubbish went.

Whisper:

J.D. Says, "if you have to write, well, write. But if you don't have to, don't."  
When I quote him, J.D. says, "I never said that!"

I re-read what I've written. Check the punctuation. I like lots of punctuation, and am not entirely satisfied there is enough.

Step out the front door; there are no front yards in Shoebox Lane, into the street to consider the matter under the stars and dim flickering of the streetlamp.

The plump black garbage bag lurks in the darkness. It's 3:30 a.m.

Up the street comes, not Randy The Jerk, coming back, but Andrew the Pretender, Karen Baronenko's live-in ex-boyfriend, returning from the graveyard shift of Dee Jayng at the, which club was it tonight, Andrew? The Freezer? Or was it the Site? Oh, you were doing the Train to Skaville show on 2SER.

Andrew is a Reggae historian who, sometimes with a posse, toasts the music of Jamaica. His pretense has therefore been

earned in the realm of Reggae; Antipodean Colony. In this Jamaican system of entitlement he is permitted, nay, encouraged to be and to call himself Prince Andrew. And so he is known in the white Australian world of Black West Indian music. White knight with a lance in the nether world of night clubs. (The other Prince Andrew is another rose by the same name.)

"Howdy doo Prince Andrew? What do ya think of a cup of tea and read what I've written about flies and your ex's new boyfriend?"

"Naw, can't. Really have to get some sleep. You can give me a read tomorrow night. Gotta go. Gotta get up at 6."

Night Owl Prince Andrew will soon be slaving away at his day job in the sleeping-bag factory.

I am not fabricating this. This is fact.

It is 5:30 a.m. If I don't find cockroaches sipping on my teabag I'll squeeze another cup out before sleeping.

I did not start writing this until past midnight so morning now brings *the same* day of Christmas my true love gave to me . . .

. . . At 6 a.m. I reflect on the joy of victory that the flies endless in their numbers, could not rout me from this land.

Whisper:

*Not A Venus Flytrap* is

also *Not A True Romance*.

At 6 a.m. my shoes are off. Toes still dirty from an afternoon in blown-out sneakers. Sun just up. Birds whistling *their* national anthem. Sounds like Reveille, not Dixie. I close both doors to cool night air and welcome summer dreams of Shakespeare.

end, 1st part

Radio Ozone  
Sydney, Australia

1990

## SOUND BITES

*(alternate between  
confidential voice  
and public address  
voice)*

America is building 6 more White Houses. One is to be in Germany. The Chinese are building another as a Friendship Venture. With 8 White Houses and uncountable golf-carts, there will be little hope of a direct attack against the President proceeding with success.

But more White Houses are ultimately only more dams for those damned free-trading carpet-bagging beavers.

(Scene from Dances With Beavers)

From The Coca-Cola Kills, with George Mannix.

Radio Ozone  
May 1992

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*(personal message  
voice/surprised excitement)*

GAZZ get this message to John Owens

There's an amnesty on for polygamists. If you turn yourself in before the end of next month, you get to keep your extra spouses. Maybe Graeme Smythe should get his ass to Canada.

Radio Ozone  
June 1992

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(from personal to  
declarative voice)

## GAZZ

. . . gone through the adjustments to what I barely recall to be readjustments to all life's mundane details: Quarters, Nickels and Dimes. A Quarter is what would have been a 20 cent piece so the count has been often out, reminded only when I notice this 20 cent piece has antlers. *Then* you know this is Canada. No pouch on this Moose.

Pennies, as 1 cent pieces are called here and in the States, most often offer Maple Leaves, but here and there Lincoln solemnly stares. Flipside protector of the land of milk and maple syrup.

The closest thing that Canada has to the Platypus (20 cent signifier, if I remember right, for the numerically illiterate) is Beavers inhabiting Nickels. Canadians should have taken the Duckbilled Platypus for their own. A perfect cross of Beaver and Canada Goose that includes a change purse.

So what is Monticello doing here in the palm of my hand on the back of a Nickel? No immediate sign of life. No face peers out a window on this memorial coin of Washington.

But hark! Great truths reside in small things, for lo, as these coins shift and jingle in my hand, Beavers and Cariboo are inching slipping out of a forest of copper maple leaves and into a silver Liberty Hall. Next, they say, the White House.

Radio Ozone

May 1992

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*(recorded message  
voice)*

Select artists' secrets, i.e.; is a secret, acts as or is like a secret, refers to secrets or requests them, masquerades as or masks a secret.

Radio Ozone  
March 1992

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*(declarative voice)*

## VANCOUVER OLD PORT EXTRA DOUX

*(personal voice)*

I have gotten over the completeness of my fascination with collaging small bits of daily jetsam that describe the sameness and difference here onto postcards bound for Australia: Young city port scene postcard of here with fragments attached from an Old Port cigarillos box, traités au rhum et au vin.

The reference here is to me; drunk with seeing again for the first time through the distance of decades to here and now height of high mountains plunging into harbour depths.

My drunken salute. Salute of drinking within these recent buildings in recent city that fails to obliterate the land from overwhelming view. Postcards provide so inadequately scenic a rendering, as close as can be sent of what is here to be seen, but no window nor my eyes at all.

I salute folly in my attempt. I salute drunkenness. I salute my folly in drunkenness.

I salute sitting

I stand and I salute.

And I folly.

*(declarative voice)*

Ce produit peut causer le cancer Extra Mild.

Radio Ozone

May 1992

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AMERICA'S 10 MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN. Fuck off!

*(informative voice,  
building passion)*

Tokyo is the financial centre of the U.S.A. The broad expanse of America is Tokyo's economic suburb. Canada has only provided the lumber for the suburb that Jack built. What's left is stumps. Just enough for the bottoms of Totem Poles.

After millions of years of uncannily returning, the salmon are seeking new homes while Jack builds his Dream House.

"America's 10 most beautiful women," the magazine cover tells me without hesitation. They have cast my vote again. That's politics. 8 are from a gene pool of bleach, 2 Spanish green eyes, 1 Black but paling. Zero for China. Minus zero for Japan in a House of Illusions.

Canada?

*(2 voice part)*

Al Capone and Tom Stylianos Thomas chorus, "Canada? What street's it on?"

*(pause, thoughtful voice)*

Brenn Robertson replies, "Canada? It's on Sesame Street."

Radio Ozone  
June 1992

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*(recorded message voice)*

Secrets are everywhere: Social Science unmasks restraints,  
Journalists blow the whistle, Insiders leak to the press, Investigators . . . .

Radio Ozone

March 1992

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## ROSE V

Tell Gazz. A rumour is as good as a fact. Best sent by phone.

Gazz, how can you say an Adelaide Festival crowd is redneck? Bourgeois maybe. Pretentious possibly. Good in bed, no chance.

Was planning on getting this message on Gazz's answering machine but here I am putting it on yours. Tell Gazz about the middle-aged guy busking on Robson Street, Vancouver's little Golden Mile, heart of the Souvenir District.

Guy middle-aged and gray-haired. Whomping out Blue Suede Shoes as I go into the Drugstore to post a letter to Maggie in Oz.

Coming back past the blonde mystic with the dove and the cockatoo, Unique Spiritual Readings for \$1 a minute, whose geese have disappeared (one into a coyote's belly and the survivor into the Animal Hospital), 5 motorcycles spill away from the curb, drowning out the Jug Boys.

The funny one with the normal hair calls out to the crowd, "Replay on the motorcycle!" Then adds, "Arrest that smell!" The kids from Iceland watch with heads of hair in coming Spring of '92 still frozen, as the cockatoo is permed, in high coloured crests.

Boom cars pass. Powerful sound systems with gut-punch on wheels. They move slowly, showily down the street, punching and punctuating the air regular with a one-one beat.

King Anderson was at Paul Howl's studio for a downtown video party. Last night the studio was full of guests and beer. It is also full of paintings of 6 foot high creatures. Some are mythical, the others live with him in the studio.

The Amazon parrot. Giant soft-shelled turtles. Large black and gold goldfish. (The small ones are raised for the turtles to eat.)

One parrot with clipped wings fell off its perch and broke its neck. Immortalized in death and decay in paint.

The 3-foot iguana escaped from its cage into the walls of the building and hasn't been seen since. Fewer insects as well.

Well, they were drinking beer and yakking up a storm and looking at the fish tank and the box hooked up to the big stereo speakers so they had Tron and Robocop right there in the room

yakking with them.

That barfly, Faye Dunaway, got to the party late; drunk.

*(pause)*

King got back to The Street after Faye had her say. Me here, 5 stories above with Cindy Lee and the 4 cats in the castle.

Didn't notice the quiet with the sound of words shifting around in my mind, but it was quiet enough to hear Cindy's p.c. burp with indigestion; Cindy there, working it into the 11th hour, mouse in hand, 2 cats in lap.

Enter King. The p.c. stops.

*(pause)*

"The police shut down The Street. Just blocked it off end to end, and the action went elsewhere. The urban primitives moved out for the night," he says.

He's right. It's very, very, very quiet.

*(seconds silence)*

At times like these, King Anderson calls a sneeze a nasal orgasm.

Radio Ozone

February, March 1992

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CAFFEINE DRIVEN OMNIBUS  
on the Bondi Beach run to J.D.'s

1. At the bus stop, Taylor Square

Lo. Guy passes with skull tattooed on neck. Surrounded by flourishes. A burning skull?

Difficult to tell without staring. Without rudely riveting my eyes on his neck.

A burning skull. As if to say, Be warned! I am an agent of the Angel of Death.

I looked at his face. His profile.

● only of despair.

I think I remember, this short time after, a dot tattooed on his face. A jail dot tattoo.

An icon for a deep-felt nostalgia for blackheads.

*(pause)*

Poophead. The poor poophead. No pity for the poor poophead. My crime is the crime of right.

*(long pause,  
low voice)*

Neither he nor I pause to vomit.

## 2. On bus, en route

Two very elderly women look alike like sisters of an age. Both trim. Fine features.

Something less than chauffeur affluence in this crowded bus. One beside me. The other facing in the one reverse seat so that I am able to count the hairs in her eyebrows.

It's easy. The eyebrows are single thin lines of paint, and the thin line of her lip bends awkwardly on one side to stretch around some internal foreign growth.

The lips, despite this small abnormality looming large, are lipsticked normal.

Kissable youth. Red for desire.

I hike myself up on the monkey bars of the bus, over the woman beside me, into the dense crowd, forced by the density to catch one of her knees with my leg as I swing awkwardly past, so that for a moment her knees are parted.

Radio Ozone

1991

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*(declarative voice)*

Secrets waver between concealment and revelation, are probed and shielded, yield equally to moral concern and ethical goose-chases or resist both with obedience, blind or otherwise. Secrets are the stuff of State and Mind, from A for Autobiography to Z for Zealot.

Radio Ozone

March 1992

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The rubbing of crotches. She brushes past the drinks holding males at this gathering, hand gliding casually across crotches. It sounds almost as if she says, "Oh, excuse me," with a slight intonation of surprise and apology with each incident. But no. It sounds right, but something's wrong. What was it she said? What can it mean? Did I hear that right? It sounded like, "Oh, the blue rhino club."

None of the touched are particularly aware, or if aware, concerned that others have also been touched. With a kind of nonchalance they casually drift toward her. She has magnetized almost every sly-dick in the room. And there they are, surrounding her in growing numbers, vying for her attention in witty smart ways.

She is listening, smiling, eventually stops their conversation with a question, asked quietly with quizzical eyes, "You do know who I am?"

A curious attentive silence. She reaches into her handbag, their eyes affixed, and calmly lifts out a small folded leather wallet. She flips it open like Dick Tracy. And there it is in their eyeballs. Her badge. Her fuckin' badge, Roger! No eagle on this badge. This one's got a bull rhino. The badge of the Blue Rhino Club.

She folds and replaces the wallet, slipping out of the circle which remains empty and baffled for moments.

Now, in some unspeakable way, they know.

Radio Ozone

May 1992

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