STAR TREK & SUCH

BY

GERALD LOCKLIN
akbar

if his tutor told him once
he told him twice that
even in the omforsaken orient
it was the age of gutenberg and
nobody not even mogul kings
were going anywhere without
they learned to read and write ...

he never mastered palmer
method or dynamic reading skills,
preferred to ride and box
and listen to the old men
late at night unleash their
duo-worldly word hordes;

in spite of which the
sages write that at an
early age he quite humanely
ruled an empire, outfoxed
the jesuits, tripped out on
acid at his leisure, razed
the arrogant with one karate
chop and, with his left hand,
soothed the anguish of the humble.

the prince

do you like frogs?
neither do i.
i bet that we have
sexual compatibility.

because i don't like
ogres either, and i can tell
a handsome-prince-girl
when i see one.

of course i may not seem
an enchanted prince, but
you have not yet kissed
the place the gray

witch of the northeast
cast a spell on. sure,
go ahead, whatcha got
to lose?
my life began in 1964, when the beatles saw her standing there, yeah yeah yeah ...

i was standing in the shower, playing with myself as usual (and comfortably lubricated with an iridescent soap)

and then i saw her standing there, impeccably cockney in the boots of innocence and, only seventeen, the rictus of experience ... 

i knew my long-suffering wife was in the other room, rehearsing for the christmas pageant. i knew my kids were in the other room, rehearsing a dirge for their father's phallus (they planned to send it, lavishly beribboned, out to sea upon a laurelled barge)

and what i wondered was — what am i doing here???

and so i walked quite naked as a cauliflower from the shower and into the london of elizabethan extravagances,

wore my heart upon my sleeve and found it taken as the badge of a true beefeater, picked up shills in piccadilly just to pinch my lily ass until the day that i was finally convinced i was again alive; when once my name was slatternly impugned by liz's premier courtier i ran the upstart through and had his beaver head impaled upon the royal t.v. antenna.

shortly thereafter i became the queen's lover. to everyone's amaze i demanded exclusive rights, to which she readily acquiesced.

i served her well in love and war; am best remembered for a sequence of outrageously conceited sonnets.
they say that you can learn from adversity. you can. what i learned is that there is a god, and that he is malignant. i learned it on a trip to the supermarket in my miserable clunker. to drive two miles in that atrocity of withering valves and shameless misalignment is an ever-renewable rite de passage. picture then my wrath upon arriving there with neither money nor a checkbook. consider my dismay back on the road as steam begins to seep from its benighted nostrils. make it to the service station just to scald my hand. i curse, of course, and getting in the car i rip my pants my only pair, because the springs are coming through the seat. and god has both forseen and probably ordained the whole of it. ah, about suffering they were never wrong, the old comedians. they knew it happens in a taxi or a bakery or cleaning a chimney. and what is worse they knew it will defeat us: the kingdom lost for a horse; the poem for a ball-point pen; love, for a contraceptive.

sunset fats

one of my neighbors at the beach has been pester ing me for weeks to write a poem about him.

his name is joe god's truth but because he's the only guy at the beach with a bigger beergut than mine they call him sunset fats.

he wouldn't be a bad guy except for always saying stupid things like telling girls he wants to make that their hair is ratty as a coon's which might work in the mouth of a brando or a cagney but which doesn't get joe anything but shit on.
tries to play pool but scratches on the eight
to play volleyball and always lands on his
gut to woo an ugly rich girl and she
marries a queer.

so here is my poem:

joe you are a bore
joe you eat shit
joe you are a loser and i don't feel compassion
joe when you move next week it will leave
absolutely no ellipsis in my life
joe the only good thing i can say about you is
that you once introduced me to a girl with
truly himalayan tits.

christmas at sunset beach: a sequel

starved for seasonal pyrotechnics, the young
assassins (who would have preferred to detonate
a berkeley or a white house) have blown the oil
refinery to kingdom will not come.

the sky hangs black above the chanukah bush.
a weather satellite caroms in its obscure
orbit towards el bethlehem, where, in an
aluminum kibbutz, a child is born with one eye.

nobody raises an eye from the ed sullivan show.
the mormon tabernacle choir is chanting
god save the king. and i, i am getting
it through my thick skull that jazz is dead

with coltrane, religion with pope john,
contemplation with the mahareshi, the
corrida with arruza, america with
malcolm x, and maternity with the mothers

of invention. love died last week at
a love-in, baseball with mickey mantle,
poetry the early morning that i polished up
my elegy for coltrane and the girl with braces

that i didn't want to bang. my friends and i are
clever as devils and write a lot of poems --
ornamental, bright, symmetrical as christmas
trees -- but poetry is dead.

-19-
we go through the paces now, hoping
it is just a temporary imbalance of the
endocrines and that a year from now we'll
be embarrassed by these meanderings.

meanwhile, it should be a great year for nostalgia.
(who, for instance, wrote the lone ranger???)

Star Trek

She must in early adolescence have had
bad skin because her face is slightly scarred.
Otherwise she is a flower, a bruised
and unforgetting flower, apprehensive

of being plucked, and scared to death
of withering on the vine. Tonight she is
no flower, she is a bird without a song,
a bird whose song civilization has muted.

This afternoon she thought she was
a courtesan at Akbar's palace, learned
in the arts, esteemed alike by warriors
and wives and poets. At any rate

she'd like to be a whore of some degree
but vestiges of pedigree have kept
her a virgin. Tomorrow morning she will
put on blinders and a college sweatshirt.

This once the prudes are right -- deflowering
will be the death of her, anti-climax
of twenty years of preliminary play,
a sofa agony, Star Trek on the telly.

# 37

it is the third movement of my second
piano concerto (the only one that i
have yet begun) and in it acquiesces
the fleugelhorns of the ghetto and

a white boy in a sailboat doing no one
harm. in development i take
the keys to the kingdom, the key
to the city, and the ring of the nibelung
and melt them down to rather dull 
molecules. with the vanishing 
of the applause a single sitar introduces 
the lament of the ten wise urchins for their 
incense. by this time the audience has passed out. 
i wake them with a mauve glissando victory 
march. cheering follows. a movie screen 
informs the audience that i am deaf.

Beer 
--- for Ron Koertge

It takes a lot to get you there, but it won't kill 
you either.

Kids like it. The foam makes a fine mustache. When 
they go to sleep they dream of goofy pink dragons 
and slippery little smiling fish.

To the adolescent it is the first taste of the earth's 
bitterness. He has to pretend it gets him high. 
He is afraid it will give him zits, and maybe it 
will. He gives it to his girl and thinks it is 
because of it she gives herself to him.

She doesn't like the taste of it and never will. She 
doesn't have the thirst for it. She is afraid 
it will give her a gut, and maybe it will. 
Eventually she'll be a little insulted when it's 
offered her. And probably should be.

But the best of friendships are formed over it. It 
helps men to speak to each other, a difficult 
thing these days. It lets men sing without 
embarrassment of auld lang syne and of the sheep 
that went astray somewhere along the line. It 
goes excellently with pool and pickled eggs, 
beef jerky and baseball games. Contrary to 
popular opinion, it is good for the kidneys, 
affords them exercise. It is good for all the 
appетites.

We all go beyond it; we always come back to it. It 
is the friend who eases us through our phylog-
enous ontogeny. It is the friend we talk to 
about our women, the one who agrees with us 
that they are not all that important. It
restores our courage in the face of cowardly sobrieties. It laughs with us at our most serious sonnets, weeps at our pratfalls. It remembers us; it takes us back.

Finally, this blessed beer, it eases us towards sleep.

A Traveller

He got off the freeway at the nearest ramp. Fumbling in his pocket for change he asked the porcelain attendant, "How much you getting for a gallon these days?" "A dollar-ten a pint," the other replied, never once cracking a smile. "My God!" the man exclaimed, only then remembering that there was no longer any God, or even, for that matter, any California. He drove wildly from the station, the standard man still grinning horribly in the rear-view mirror. Back on the freeway he pressed it to the floor and searched the billboards for a familiar sign. Why had he failed to notice it before -- every single phosphorescent square read: "You Are Already There!" except the last which grinned "Ha Ha."

And why were there no other cars on the road? How long had he been on the road? Had he ever been to California? Why was the gas gauge rising to full?

-- Gerald Locklin

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