

Then he said, "Sure, I smoke a cigarette every couple of years or so."

— Rafael Zepeda

Long Beach CA

#### MORE EFFECTS OF UNCLE GEORGE'S TRUNK

Photograph dated September 10, 1910

Two men stand, each with an arm over the other's shoulder, beside a dead elk. Though they are cheerful, they smile at the camera with some little embarrassment; it is as though the lens, in the twilight before an illuminating flash, had seen these two men kissing. One is Uncle George and the other is his best friend Franz.

Mountains rise behind them, and because this is a black-and-white photograph, one might say that these are blood-dark mountains or mountains as dark as Uncle George's hair. It could be somewhere in the Absaroka Range of Wyoming; or it could be in the magnificently staged studio of one Erwin J. Petersen, Photographer, of Grand Island, Nebraska. No one can say: The men look real, the elk seems sufficiently dead, the mountains appear to be steep and wooded.

The moment itself can be photographed but cannot be seen. The moment itself is as real as Whitman's wired butterfly, an instant in which the feelings of two men for each other broke forth and appeared in beauty and grace, alit on their linked shoulders for a moment of wonder, and then disappeared into a sky that is never the same.

#### DISENFRANCHISEMENT

An acquaintance, who is both a clown hater and a food snob, dreams of assassinating Ronald McDonald. He will follow the clown everywhere, never letting the oversized shoes out of his sight. At the opportune moment he will ambush the corporate symbol with frozen hamburger patties and hope that the effects will be lethal. Or he will challenge Herr McDonald to a duel: Chicken McNuggets at ten paces. Seconds will hold three sauces at the ready.

His friends try to steer him toward nonviolent alternatives. Open up a competing business, they tell him, it's the American way. Thus far, it has come to naught. His plans for McDuck fell through. The bank loan officer expressed some interest, but denied the application on the absurd grounds that Canard a l'Orange would not fit through a take-out window. In hopes of compromise, the would-be entrepreneur promised to offer pressed duck as well. Surely, he thought, in this age of sophisticated cuisine, there is ample room at the table for haut fast food. But, alas, his plans came to not one avail. Failure also attended his dreams for McBoar, Squab King and Venison Hut.

So now he broods over a bowl of mercilessly unstrained bitter herbs. He envisions a world free of clowns, who have assumed for him the sinister import of freemasons. Why, he asks, does one never see only one clown? Why is it that they frighten and allure at the same time? What weapons do they conceal under their clothes? He sees clowns slipping in their own blood, their fright wigs for once a true barometer of feeling. It is an American way.

#### PETS

He beats his life until it cringes or attacks. He refuses to clean up after it.

He teaches his disappointment to whistle. Each night he lowers a cloth over its cage and uncovers it in the morning: it mimics each note of his song.

He would like to teach his anxiety to roll over and play dead.

He walks his brain in public: how carefully it is groomed, each hair in its place, perfumed, obedient.

Late at night he strokes his loneliness. It sits in his lap, eyes closed, demanding his attention. The more he strokes, the louder it purrs.

With both hands he carries his death, whose head looks over his shoulder. He found it at the door and couldn't turn it away.

— S. C. Hahn

Lincoln NE