

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