

Secondary Sound



justin sirois



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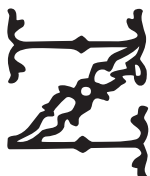
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JUSTIN SIROIS



for Rita Ferrier – with love

I'm very persuaded by the image that Lewis Hyde offers of an artist who is, by definition, in whatever medium, or whatever level of success or whatever culture, in the practice of culture-making; participating in culture by making stuff is inherently a gift transaction and a commodity transaction. And it always will be. The question is how do we affirm and clarify this relationship? Because it's a very weird one – making commodities that are also gifts.

Jonathan Lethem

Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds.

Alexander Graham Bell

ONE

Bell

– in which a Pirate is hired to
create the most alluring ringtone
known to man –

the chime should & the chime will learn new things

the chime will alert the cellphone owner when a person is sending a text & it should sound like a cinder block through a bay window in the early morning or a hummingbird flocked with powdered sugar. I'll take this xylophone hammer to your reclined ribcage to illustrate the pitch. Please lie down & blouse loosely the boardroom; think of us as a *working* vacation; think of the ceiling as a field of probability, the parking garage above us is a drum, a sieve & an empty

there is a real communication problem when I can't find any bars

now that you're comfortable in our amniotic cocoon
look at the graphs we've provided &
spoon portable narcotics

the repairing sickles & tum
tumbling ringing crescents that red rover
white ravers

we'd like it to sound like that new song, the one with the whispering man behind tiptoeing waves of lingerie, the song that they use in that Saab commercial that's both old-timey & new-wavy. After lunch we'll download a copy of it for you to work from & in time (as all new words adapt to their generation) the chime will become & comb hair into cursive conjunction

it'll be

a

ditty for the ages

& a

hey, look at me! ditty

do you have that problem too? Sometimes I hear it when it's not really there, sometimes & too often, usually the second my shampoo hits the oily stratosphere & the phones of my heads are ringing states away

the chime will not be customizable

the volume may be adjusted or even silenced, but this sound will be our hallmark

when I die this is the sound I want my body to make

the chime will evolve & adapt; new generations will learn to turn
their information into fashion, new media
they go::

text
pictures
sound
video
liberation

we must not mistake piracy for privacy; let's exploit the pilots
before they touch off their couches

when the chime gets lonely let's alert our network, automated pods
will blossom & the chime will heal the user. Sound waves will read
eardrums biometrically; they'll aluminum foil the lips of buzzing
snares to tease out curiosity; at the dinner stable your children's
ampersands will be replaced by this pleasing tone; their mouths
will eclipse the depth & breadth of our brand. Their hearts will run
errands

&

then sums

listen to the tones of these notes. Would you agree that this sound,
when fluttering out of a purse or suit jacket pocket, inspires wonder
& an almost giddy curiosity?

recreate this digitally. Insert a baby's coo through Moog mesh with
Theremin serifs; microprocessors fire around sleeping serotonin;
receptors flood & now a Nazareth inside the veins of checkbooks &
now a Bethlehem at the bottom of a man-bag

when the chime finally becomes a hymn we will change it slightly,
rim the subliminal when the signal is weak, mirror what a satellite
thinks; our espionage isn't poisoning the ages, we're giving god a
name people can pronounce & tenderizing nuances with rabbit
punches

an elixir to be drunk in skating rinks of
fading telecommunism

when the chime is going for a run

or standing on the train

it won't annoy other passengers or pedestrians. When a rap lyric is too offensive this sound will be inserted; when your favorite draught is tapped at an airport lounge, each bubble of foam will have this chime swirling inside, kings of pop & queens of opposition shock the world with new clichés

why don't you just relax?

lay back & allow me to bib your chin with inching chime. We hired you to design our hello – the alarm that will coat lads like heavy molasses & undress the prefab populace

take these words home with you in a box

we've Xeroxed the font of your heart from front to back & forwarded the PostScript gibberish to the true typists, glued to their folding talkies

when two men high five on Bedford Ave.
as a girl on a vintage bicycle rides by, or when a rhinestone-
studded chalice turns 180 degrees to reveal the star inside, this is
when rings & bells should house the tight tush so that shoulders
twist down to

send

at the bar she looks at her drink then back up, turns the glass to
change the atlases of ice shrinking in ruby basins; when men
confuse her for their friend, she opens the chime & shimmies in,
mimes a message for the poltergeists of prog rock. They grope
for their scrolling bottles & call back

do you understand what we're getting at? Songs are thrown up
in a bundle & shuffled like paused confetti; beats land deranged
at the feet to be Kierkegaarded aside

how was the coffee & the croissant? We know this is a lot of
information to take in all at once, but back at your loft it'll all
make total sense – at your flat where the scratched Teflon flakes
adulterate pseudoinstitutions

& your head rings like deconstructed rubbish

in every space station & hull, barn & back yard,
let this tone mobilize youths into a dance frenzy of freaking

in every spa & apartment, basement & brothel,
let this beep rock the souls of their impressionable feet

in every pub & public park, club & gymnasium,
let this one ring rule them all

we want it to sound like a Christmas tree & an Abrams tank
avoiding cattle & camels in a farmer's field; we'll sample a
diamond stud dangling lonely from one brown lobe & filter it
through moon rocks & beveled flange; we'll make all the interns
go to the zoo for the afternoon so they can mic the mandrills,
antelopes & leopards, run stampedes through pedals of twanging
sitar

have you ever sat at the bottom of an energy drink & contemplated
the insurgency of black holes swallowing relationships?

feel free to experiment, compress a tiny congress of corroborating
oboes & bone flutes, sample notes then staple them to our
subscribers' empty temples. I stole a handmade, designer sweater
from my wife this morning – take it & puree its yarn into yards of
trance-synth-pulp

pour &

spread &

listen

is there a real

communication problem when the pandemic is passed by avatars of bass & drum? How will we test market the ark of piranha we'll be shooting into the psyche of our subscribers? Assemble a cult of babbling piranhas & provide the chime for them to gulp like dumped chum; arms outstretched, each caller welcomes tarantula avalanches of crawling connectivity. The bell chart, with its eel grid & spheres of measured influence, will serve as a guide. It can predict both user fallout & pulsing polyps that might swell like buttons of nutritious rhythm

imagine you're standing in the center of the sound

your office ceiling is a ripple & as the bell belts outward like a cone, its branches wrinkle car hoods

you'll watch yourself change –

angle to accommodate new voices

see those crescent shapes

that surround the star of the subscriber, they carbonate the bargaining power of our product & autoharp stereophonic intuition. Graphs tell & phone our shareholders; beholden moms jog & good hairy ganja jams the airwaves

we want this synthesized chime to sound like it's coming from an unbent bicycle – the forsythia handle bars wilt like metal straw & the elastic mortar
(cushioning your joints

with every pedal) act like little couches as the alert alters your inertial antlers. It's the job of the sound to stimulate – but not mutilate – the senses, it's the job of the user to untie the bicycle, a dime machine to crank days back into wine

there will be no vibrate mode, only vibraphonists wheeling the cell from one dish to the next

we need this cross-cultural anthem to speak to Arab & American
barbarian alike, not alienate exclusively like a museum, make the
hair salon mausoleums crumble when you call; rooftops disco &
cities change their sex

technologies, they go::

development
marketing
immersion
adaptation
obsolescence
art

if you follow the chart from the source of the chime, you will notice a circle emanating a pool of cool soda. Some do *send* in the center of the sphere; some wallflowers pickle at the perimeter of radiating magneto – this ocular graph reads their ripple & we can predict which addicts will be loyal to our brand of randy dolls

if you text::

*what else will
this sound be
used for?*

to the number::

*this isn't for you
to decide*

you'll be able to download the most popular ring of the day, the sound of markets emerging in the lukewarm suspensions of empty lockers, currencies smashing together like socks, users chasing after &

before

rather than later

if you text::

I don't understand

to the number::

phenomenologically speaking, it's no longer about you, it's about the Tesla of palms collectively pressed to the prism of colliding idiom

you'll Katamari every dream in the Eastern Ameropean market, this is what we need to keep in mind while the chime is churned inside the churches of crossing platforms; tack the tune to your bathroom mirror to make sure the roll of the tongue is smooth

& you never get sick of chatting

the chime does what we can't plan & when the chime spreads
into skirt hem & cotton blend we'll no longer feel its influence
throughout the hexagon of ebbing webs. Now the sound is shirt on
shirt, aphids raping the flora of headbangs, tangled inside the small
bras of bootie-shaking sambas & huffing asthmatics

a text is received & it reads::

*i get it now, we'll start
working right away, do
you prefer falsettos tooting
from plastic oval amulets
or sopranos clawing chalk
boards of smiling enamel?*

to respond::

*i have complete faith
in your creative ability, do
all musicians thumb wrestle
like a platypus & spray puss-
filled lesions onto my palette
when i'm at my kickboxing
lessons?*

how will we know when the public is sick of cicadas buzzing through Dada foyers & Tzara car parks? How will we free dipsticks & gauge their language fleeing all feeling? Our network will update both pitch & tone as we see fit; parfaits of creamy keys will lift the tariffs of contemporary banality; tiny wafers massage & separate through the watery alloys of cranial shell

if you text::

*i'm at home with your
wife's sweater, it's an
orange goop pooping
loosely out of keyboards*

*and harp; let me play
it for you*

to the number::

*save it for the meeting
my stomach hurts from
crunches & there's falafel
to be scarfed*

you'll be up all night pondering the motives of our project. Overanalyzing these procedures will only result in absurdist conclusions unfit for practical application. Keep plugging away

& turn ugly creeps into lovely preening queens

how'll we stop the chime if it volleys out of control? I'd like all of you to lean back in your chairs & imagine this room is a vehicle; hymns seep & pee into ears. If she hears our mail from across woven countries, she will Jeep over love seats & stomachs of furniture – to unfold the paragraph whose kerning squeezes borders closer

when the chime bangs its thumb in a car door, the film under the screen will turn a mossy black, Morrissey-like & mummy stinky. When the tune is dropped into a toilet it'll die like a bra in a glove box; we dragged ourselves through dunes of drying silicon & heard nothing, pressed our pickups to the big muff & still heard nothing

if you text::

*you'll be happy with
what i've been doing to
your tune, it's a bureau
of choruses – Caruso &*

*Timberlake backspun
like cracked algebra*

to the number::

*the Tsars of break-dancing
satellites satiate only the stars,*

you will fuse yourself to the using culture
& amuse dudettes from Carrboro
to Boca Raton

sometimes the sound will be left alone. Sometimes loyalty changes from one generation to the next – quarterly reports will reflect their reactions & predict yesterday's trend; loyalty to the brand can't be measured with the ocular chart – the chart is for tracing transduction phenomena through myofibril cartridges & temporal chords; a house is nothing without doors

& a send does & undoes

in the ringing spell

we see a twixt text
tilt & exit::

*call me at home, i'd
like you to hear what
we've done – we've*

*tortured banjos & jolted
wicked heels with volts
of rhythmic juice, just
give us a ring*

& critique

the process

not the product

I have to say that I like what I hear – at first we were skeptical & thought you might have strayed from the brief. The sound that you make when we vice your kneecaps is like a space shuttle wrapped in a napkin & the cold planets of our cochlea have spun off their orbit every time cellular robots serenade from our hips

in every trailer & tent, convention center & court,
let the chime rim their openings until they're brimming with
conversation

in every home & power plant, bakery & temple,
let the sound tickle their armpits

in every cubicle & carport, kitchen & service station,
let the alarm cream cheese their tongues in the realm that our service
provides

the chime should & the chime did. You forged the aftereffects from boric acid & dictionaries of chlorinated sample, chiseled away with professional tools until the pulsing center sent ultrasonic climaxes through our Chief Financial Officer's gullet. The board is pleased & after test marketing these beeps

they're sure the chatting hordes will giggle & cheer, when they hear what you've so artfully engineered

when the day is done their ears will ring & this is how they'll judge
how the night went, wet with sounds dripping from drums, kettles
of letters steaming like tea. In cabs they'll croon, make nookie in
the books of napes & grapple with new texts that tent chests

the night will be done because their ears are ringing

far away

& remotely near

internal memorandum





Secondary Sound

– including Pirate – the dropped calls of Justin Sirois –
organic food stores – the Bootleg Shuffle – infectious
art students – more memos – DRM – Bob James' *Nautilus* –
SNAFU – the pitfalls of nostalgia – the chime –
The Embarcadero! –

we will speak as one undone sound

ahoy!

I called into the uncovered well for her
down fathoms measured in fathers
& the only iteration I heard was the last
smothered by piles of other girlfriend's boyfriends
somewhere there's a Pirate
& he knows that the echo is compressed into
sonically compromised Bits
read/writeable vestiges sometimes crippled with
Dysentery or Rheumatism or even Magic

he'll sample my drivel when it skips like a stone
across the fiber-optic river

I called & the call was lost
I called & you called back
& we heard notes stoned to breath

Pirate's collection takes up three external nerve centers
that glow in the dank fog of antiprisms
like a roommate puffing a joint bedrooms away
hunched over keys with headphones
harnessing all history
all history & film history because
film history is a separate history
it starts with baseline bleeding doorjamb
hooks spliced from vintage barbershop quartets &
then texts to me::

*i'm a necessary evil in the
gift economy*

I'm just trying to work here

don't take these words personally

unaffordable rights for private domain
unaffordable lifestyle for a Pirate minion

abandoned well opening in the yard long after the deed
was signed, a hole in the yard fathers deep

fathers are never deep
ahoy they try
& ahoy they want to be so deep
& there are fathers wearing skull & crossbones t-shirts
looking younger than they should
this is where my calling is duplicated until it
loses all meaning & disappears in the current

well like a liability, well like a silverfish on a credit report
echo mocking echo & you're not down there
you're slipping on your wolfberry costume
with its super fruit fangs & appearing like an overdraft fee

here's Pirate sitting in dorms of webcam diddling
swashbuckler swabbing piles of laundered syllables from
liner notes, fan sites, Bit maps, pegleg like a howitzer
tasty free samples of plucked property pimple
the pirate in me

& when I speak
I speak about every buccaneer from Baltimore to
Tehran

& the Group texts::

*someone stop this fucker
before he disassembles
everything we stand for*

ghost ride the winter

ahoy!

we're so peer2peer

what we leave in our share we'll share there forever

we're shareware where the punchline never changes

in the club we all hear the same resounding

but not the exact same sound

we tried to ghost ride the winter & it ran us right over

retrograde Saturn crushing our kickflip

as we miss the hood ornament pivot

two idling urbanites crazed by the banalities

Pirate thinks, *how do I know if what I'm saying is legal?*

do they want it to sound like a newly renovated kitchen

or a cat watching you masturbate

from a hole in the ceiling?

he pictures me sitting on the edge of my bed

phone in hand like a throbbing comet

phone in hand like an imploding cosmonaut

one *send* from oblivion

he imagines what uplifting toot I'd like to hear

if you were transmitting waves through the burning ether

what two-note flute to *bon voyage* my messages & loss

what would *they* like to hear? he asks while

cutting with clicks

they, the fickle audience bluetoothed to the earpiece,

in the port town of City Lights & Telegraphing Parrots,
looking out on the pier at the barking seals

I imagined they were the reincarnated

inmates of Alcatraz moaning for their mothers

measuring the hours by the square root of the echo

slick black tummies like melted Hershey

we captured them with outdated equipment for our parents

the sound of our parents becoming parents

if Pirate had his choice it would be
the sound of men falling from buildings
or buildings falling on men
fiberglass & plastic colliding like ships in the night
but that would be inappropriate for the
Tween-to-Menopause audience his client is targeting
the Group wants
a singular sound to impact the market

whatever that means

a strumming bird punk'd with powered meshuggeneh

Pirate feeds the cat & finishes another beer
clips snippets of horn bleats that bleed
 from stereo here
 to stereo there
with index finesse & a close ear
he surgically removes the guilloche waves tangling the monitor,
then meshes each note into the decomposition

too many lagers making the decks spin themselves

he needs this finished before the Board convenes
& Nikes this Converse sound into commercial licorice

& we will hear these

this, this

echo

weak signal. You turn off your phone because it's not a phone,
but a gland secreting proteins you don't want to know, an urn
nurturing dust & secrets & somethings,

hello?

what do I do with all the catalogues
that still show up for you?

some complementary ringtones include:

- Two Christmas favorites
- Happy Birthday
- a chime that mimics the bell of rotary dial phone
- Smurfs' theme song
- some digital cello

I have an advanced degree in irony
opened the algorithm to find scurvy & no diploma
called down to you, but you weren't down

you down?

you there?

I'm here

I've had the same alarm clock for half my life
it's become a test of endurance – how long can it last,
the same sound from the same source?
spend the night & hear what I heard
every morning at age fourteen
I'm a drawing of a skull & crossbones
on the back of a denim jacket
grinning at everything behind me

stand on your bed
turn your phone north-by-northwest & dial my number
become the animal you've always wanted to be
listen to your tail, it's smarter than you think

the instant replay was the greatest invention
of the twentieth century or maybe caller ID

not an echo – a labor movement

how did this organic food store become my church?
an antioxidant powerhouse for the yuppies in training who haven't
given up their ten speed religion
or jam band
moral superiority is so *expensive* these days
these are my people
my violent people
my violent people voting with their stomachs
this bike is a pipe bomb or food not bombs
let's grow something

everything I pour water on goes up in purple smoke
roll your own 401(k), *over*
in papers flavored with sweat equity & chai
tattoos of free-trade roasted eggplant in jars inked with
free-trade corn whiskey
we went from cashiers & bartenders to information workers nearly
overnight
not sure what I prefer – accidentally
snorting glass off a flood-damaged icemaker or the federally
funded Rubik's I grind into color & form – this fraud was written
on the clock with your tax dollars,
double-dipped & unclaimed

stole a sandwich for every uncredited overtime second
pocketed these molecularly distilled supplements, amulets of wild-
caught anchovies, sardines & mackerel –
a labor movement founded on theft & accountability
 made a movement in the Torrent
& they only felt the aftereffects of that moment
ripped off something I actually feel guilty about

I feel my phone vibrating against my thigh, but
it wasn't really moving –
was it you praying for the check to clear?
my violent people scanning, facing, stocking
my violence is expressed through spending a second
I'm too pretentious to make a difference

can I steal a second?

our trade agreement didn't take into consideration that we're
both selling the same faulty product
electric dicers that mince & eventually mangle the message

pray for texts to appear & repair
ask the board to draft an amendment
felt it against my thigh then heard the chime
I'm the him you can chop & dice into chewable samples

a dog chopped from the hindquarters up, left on a front lawn is
a death sentence – call me on that one

free coffee gives me the strength to close
the flip phone's bicep
with rehashing DJs & cashiers dinging to their captain for
assistance
why am I so turned on by recovering hippies?
there's something noble about a box cutter
clipped to a belt – highwaters for gear clearance, asymmetrical
face tackle

when *you-know-who* plagiarizes this passage I'll have to suck it
up & applaud his due diligence
there he is, reverse engineering an appliance into
art & noncompliance
 forgive the irrational exuberance!
cold cases of jumbo shrimp render me weak
burp & taste the mercury
pews of good fats
sweep me fast asleep

not a labor movement – a thief in the Torrent

steal from yourself, shelf by shelf, for yourself

length of service & survivors' insurance premium
multiplied by length of intestinal track if unwound
from front door to cul-de-sac, around subprime
woes like an unspooled soundtrack
only measure my father by the way
he measures my mother
divide the sum
I stole my temper from him & don't let the timbre
perturb your pebbled skin

you shop for kittens online –
when's a good time for a new kitten?
starve yourself of impulsive theft
put back the green tea pellets & oatmeal soap
it's not thieving when you're copping a copy
of a copy
you & me, let's agree
the most criminal thing would be to *steal* a kitten
emotionally attached to a little girl maybe –
the idea of kitten is so different from the actual kitten
you can steal ideas if there's
an infinite number of the same idea
infinite number of the same *kitten*

in Dubai there's a man-made island in the shape
of a stolen kitten
my temper is of a Persian origin
a house without an emperor is
a house filled with echo & heft

my violent people
nothing works unless you're a little selfish

my violent people
look the other way when I'm downloading
mother lodes of free
in this virtual kingdom, unicorns became popular
about the same time pirates did

but somehow they never met –
united, they could have liberated every
college-age sloth in
Second & Half-Life
in my pocket
on the jump drive
there's a Living Will with burial instructions & last rites
rip & burn me like a Viking
the first pirates downloading wind &
shucking guts like corn
divide the number of corporate jets
by the number of sweat pants
throw the remainder into mum Torrents
pray they don't prosecute

sever my head & it will broadcast
clear channels of satellite television
for ten sweet seconds
hold the head over your head for better reception
ask the head to open its mouth,
teeth & tongue pointed at the fatherland

echo

hello?
this is he. Can you hear me?

don't all the clever names for tea products bother you?
HonesTea, RealiTea, IngenuiTea, BrutaliTea

you can screw up a good thing so easily

she's what?

call dropped

hello?
she hit the guard rail – a bridge?
raining that night

you & me
I still can't believe

this city is just a belief

felt more real watching it onscreen

crying the car to sleep
burning like a hurricane

boyfriends tumbling from the sky
making piles on the belt loop
interstate mountains of moaning sorrow
most of them plowed by speed
I worked for the state cleanup crews that summer
worst summer of my life
you'd find them hanging from trees like soggy jeans
clinging to storage facilities – dumbfounded & sobbing
tell me everything before you
& tell me how it happened

car burned & they discovered it
long after the upholstery & inverted polymerization

raining & raining
this isn't seasonal depression
it's a novel that ends in the middle
I'll find myself at the bottom of a pile of boyfriends
jamming Baltimore to a halt

everything was practice
up to this

I subscribe to that too – the good stuff

by hook or by crook

pirate popularity peaked in the early twenty first century. The creation of “national talk-like-a-pirate day” in 1995, the pirate vs. ninja phenomenon celebrated by themed house parties & the punk rock pirate gangs played a key role in reestablishing these ribald buccaneers as contemporary icons. The internationally successful *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series further exploited this trend & finally Pastafarians created the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster who dubbed pirates, “absolute divine beings,” as well as the original seaward missionaries of their mystic meatball deity. In 2003, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers & the Oakland Raiders clashed in the epic *Pirate Bowl*, one of the most recorded & copied Super Bowls in modern history, but not as pirated as this year’s, of course. Off the coast of Indonesia, modern day pirates carry AK-47s & rocket-propelled grenades to attack gas tankers & aid ships. Pirate jokes always end in aaahrrrrrrrr!

on Valencia we bought:

- a John Quelch flag (man spearing a heart
with hourglass in hand)
- a twelve-sided die to decide which body part to damage
- an old padlock for a treasure chest

we went next door to stare into their offices
“you think he’s in there?” a mural by Chris Ware – where?

port cities are far more interesting, don’t you think? The land
locked states are so bizarre & when I say bazaar, I really mean
unapologetically commercial

for all we know they might worship a Flying Spaghetti Monster

a musical hook snags the ear of the listener & is often inserted into
the chorus to make a song catchier – many hit tunes can attribute
their popularity to an enticing hook which has been sampled
from a Top 40 from decades ago. Finding a unique sample from a
preexisting song can be tricky, as copyright laws restrict usage &
licensing can be too expensive for the average musician. Oftentimes
a mixtape version of a new track is released by an underground DJ,
with the unofficial sanction of the industry – sometimes these DJs
are arrested for piracy

the Bootleg Shuffle

ahoy!

I hope that doesn't get annoying
here's something we do to liven up the party – it's called
the Bootleg Shuffle!

I'm sure if I ever saw myself dance on video
I'd never dance again
like a man falling from a building
like a building falling on a man

sea chantey sung along inflating currencies
groaning like a mortgage broker
marooned on an abandoned island,
staring into palm trees like open refrigerators

it can be performed to any tune really

first, put your hands on your hips & lean back
go ahead

kick your coldest leg east then
pump your buoyant fist in the air like this
quickly now
pump off how many years you have left
close one eye while running from deck to deck
a perimeter sweep through the club or mess hall
grab the closest anchor, splash guard, column, triceratops
flail as long as it makes you feel debt-free
flail like a failing democracy – like
the last throes of a theatre major giving up the dream

second, roll a twelve-sided die in the air
it's been in your fist the entire time
if it lands on Left Arm,
make that left arm do some serious damage
if it lands on Chest,
feel up the nearest hottie until they feel debt-free
until they want to hear your ringtone
put the die in their front pocket, bow & stomp your
warmest peg to the new Morse of copyright infringement
remember the telegraph bubble of 1852? Hedge those bets –

in theatre, in desert, in disguise, in captivity
all the files downloaded fully
we'll tear them out of the Torrent Bit by Bit
we're open-source when we share the countries of our bodies –
we never opened up fully, never bombed the bridges of our legs
& joining infrastructure

finally – stop the fist pumping
roll your good eye like a die in an alley
C-low & sea-legged, control-C & apple-P
now shake the invisible parrot that's been
perched on your shoulder
wrench it over your head
until it makes the perfect chirp,
spin like a Protestant in constant doubt – listening in on
the party line like a data-mining mother
who's an inmate of her own design
practice the Bootleg Shuffle in front of a stolen mirror
naked & marked for assassination
pull at the hurricane-ravaged tarps under your eyes
stretch sulfate cheeks & make your face
as wide as West Virginia

kill the death tax

During his long walk home Pirate had run into a group of performance artists, thirty deep & stacked in a cord of bloody bodies, ripped shirts with threadbare denim protruding like wet paper, theatrical groans seeping from the bottom of the mass. Piled as if they'd dropped from the sky in one steep lump. Mangled stragglers, anyone who wasn't contributing to the pile, lurched about the perimeter with fake red bile, a mixture of corn syrup & red food coloring clotted in their bed heads, oozing from orifices – some of them comically slipping on their own leakage. Hairy eyed, they harmoniously chanted the guttural call, “Kill the death tax! Kill the death tax!” at bystanders & passing cabs.

Dorks, Pirate thought, corking the sidewalk. Gotta get home & finish this ringtone.

Gawking onlookers avoided their snaring mitts & Pirate, coffee clutched like a steaming torch, knew he shouldn't get too close, but their performance was clogging his path & shuffling over one random limb shouldn't interrupt their gruesome chantey. If need be, a quick sword chop could sever any appendage or at least damage it enough to make its owner retract, clearing his path. A girl's head, popping from the uterus of the writhing lump, looked up at him through a dried curtain of gore, “Hey, Hey!” it called up.

“Huh?” cautiously daring, maneuvering his adidas over a strawberry jam puddle. Kelp hair clung to her cheeks, wet – a callus of some dried goo covering her underjaw cracked in falling flakes as she

asked, “Can you scratch my nose? It’s *killing* me.” Phone chords of blood spiraling from her upside-down lips. Arms pinned by jerking bodies, she laid, helpless.

“Uh, sure.” Pirate with a gulp & a shrug & as he lowered his vulnerable index she snapped like a rabid dog, nipping its tip with dribbled fangs. He recoiled, shrieking, nearly collapsing on the cold molasses-covered concrete, falling instead on the skeleton of a stripped bicycle still chained to a parking sign. “*Kill the death tax!*” she hissed, drool filling her nostril cups with pink drizzle, tongue spreading yogurt-thick gunk over teeth & jellied chin. The pile shook, laughed. Someone walking by laughed too & ran.

“You bit me!” he cried.

“Pirate!” a familiar voice shouted from inside the mountain of reanimated cadavers. “Ahoy!”

“Huh?” even more confused.

“Pirate! I could peg that girly scream at a Timberlake concert!” A hand wiggled out from between a bare stomach & another (sleeping?) noggin. “It’s Jim. Don’t worry, I’m not going to chew on you. We’ve already infected enough people today.”

“Ahoy, yeah.” Shaking Jim’s extended hand, finding a small circular pin in his palm with the legend KILL THE DEATH TAX printed over a red backing. “Infected? What the hell are you guys doing?” Pirate pinned the pin to himself, sticking the needle three times until it sat straight.

“Calling attention to one of the most unfair laws of the land, the Estate Tax. We’ve got to kill it, *dead*.”

“DEAD,” the pile groaned, followed by an “OUCH!”

Three zombies behind a van were in the middle of recruiting a pair of highschoolers, pouring pumpkin guts into their sweaters & dabbing brain butter onto outstretched necks, knuckles – both grinned with timid fervor.

“None of you guys are rich, though,” Pirate noted, unpinning the pin to pierce his shirt again, straighter now.

“No,” Jim admitted, “but we’re tackling policies that will never affect us directly, old grandfathered legislation that really doesn’t matter to us at all.” Both highschoolers draped themselves on the zombie blob, their recruiters globbing strands of dyed pumpkin on butts & backs.

The pile moaned.

Pirate said, “Ah.”

“It’s antipolitical political action, antagonizing the suits, the wealthy. This is our practice run, we’re down by Wall Street tomorrow – underneath the bull statue. We’d really like to be *on the floor*.”

“Like that’s gonna happen,” an anonymous zombie bellowed.

“Quit touching me!” another.

“They’ll hang us all & make you ring the bell with your dangling toes,” cautioned a third. One more “ouch!” & a “stop moving!”

A puddle, in the shape of West or just Virginia, crept like maroon pee onto the street. A couple started running.

“Not the point, friends. We’re spreading our disease, biting some sense into the wealthy fraction, a point of a point of a percent’s pinky toe.” Reinvigorated, Jim, trying to enspirited the counterproductive cluster of cadavers, spoke louder at the pedestrians, “We’re starting at the bottom of the economic ladder – immigrants, busboys, librarians, social workers; their infectious attitudes will creep into the more stanch positions of the upper middle class; the Dems, the socialist university elite, hybrid-driving pediatricians, civil engineers living in Austin, the entire state of California; & what a better place to start than the rotting streets of the Big Apple!?”

“No one calls it that anymore,” said a passerby.

“Kill the death tax!” the pile replied.

“How many people have you, uh, infected?” Pirate interrupted.

“Only a few today, but we’re filming this right now; it’ll be on the motherfuckin’ interweb by midnight & then who knows how fast our message will spread!?” boasted Jim.

Pirate was confused. “How can you bite people through...”

“*Kill the death tax.*” Thirty voices in unison, a morose chorus clogged with glucose. Two chewed cupcakes. A few loose zombies were

stumbling between cars, loping up to passengers with pamphlets promoting their cause, pinning gooey buttons on cotton-blend chests & leather lapels. One dragged herself out of a bodega with an empanada & orange soda; as she bit into the beefy pocket, Pirate could see a congealing yarn of blood yo-yo from her ear, a brief gust taking it away like a stray kite string. He wanted to be home. It was getting dark. A buzzing rumbled like an Uzi in his jeans & when he freed his cellular a text read::

how's the work going?

& Pirate responded::

*do you prefer falsettos tooting
from plastic oval amulets
or sopranos clawing chalk
boards of smiling enamel?*

“What?” Jim asked, freeing an unidentifiable crust from his arm hair – his face wasn’t visible, but the voice found the air through a breach between an armpit & crumpled windbreaker.

Did I speak? Pirate thought, rubbing his throbbing finger, pocketing the phone. “Uh. How long have you been here?” Pirate asked, crouching down for a better look at the mass. Eye lids were toasted a dark maroon, khaki matted against pale legs & contorted necks; faces, punched with fatigue, occasionally cried into the nearest ankle or jacket.

“A few hours, but we’re about to split. Tired.”

“TIRED,” retorted the mass.

A foam cup fell from the building above, bumped in the wind like a white tumbleweed & it was the nothing inside the cup that made it do something more than just nothing.

“Hey, you going out tonight?” Jim spoke through an opening that had just appeared.

“No, got too much work to do.”

“Not going to the psychedelic cold war dance night? Tune in, burn on, rub out?”

“Naw, got this thing.” Pirate huffed, scratching the nothing under his eye patch.

“THING,” vibrated the mass with a ghastly rumble.

“Yeah, I’m into that,” Jim confirmed as Pirate tapped Jim’s closed fist with his own knuckles, “Dollar PBR at Home School, man – gotta get there early.”

“PBR!” the pile collectively moaned, & with that simple acronym the corpse mountain dissolved & broke off into a few committees, some limping, others galloping with alcoholic enthusiasm, all destined for different speakeasies around the Lower East Side. Jim, lying on his back in a lake of gook, hooded sweatshirt stained with oily paint & nail polish, took Pirate’s hand & stood. Only wet spots crusted where the pile once shuddered.

“Damn. Every time I say that word.”

“Mutiny?”

“Yeah.” Wiping his palms over filthy pants, “You going to Trapper Keeper tonight?”

“What?” Pirate asked.

“You know Kari Epps? She’s giving out guest passes to see the Well-Balanced Buccaneer.”

“No.”

“Yes. He’ll be at Scope, that new club that you swore you’d never go to.”

“No.” Pirate huffed, thinking about the sweaty horde of fans that would be jammed into Scope: a converted warehouse where the sound ricocheted off concrete pillars like squealing fan belts & the levels alternated from song to song. The thought of going to Home School first just to acquire a free ticket, no matter how brief the visit could be, made the veins along his temples raise like waterlogged worms.

Two zombies who’d lingered to film shots of the aftermath were eavesdropping, making no secret of it.

“Go to Trapper Keeper at Home School, that bar that opened where that square hookah joint used to be. I’ve already got tickets, but you should go by – go up to Kari & say Private Snafu.”

“What?”

“Private SNAFU, the code word for the passes,” Jim said with a little embarrassment, “she made it up. Saw the posting.”

“That’s pretty stupid,” Pirate admitted, tapping out two cigarettes for himself & Jim. The zombies filmed him saying this.

“If you don’t see her, ask the DJ – Wythe. He’ll know.”

“The one with the pelts?”

“The one with the pelts.”

What the hell is a Private SNAFU, Pirate thought, sucking on the unlit cigarette – was it worth the humiliation of walking down to a place called Home School just to pick up tickets for a sold-out show? Passwords & a psychedelic cold war dance night named after trendy notebook binders.

Pirate turned his head, looked at the two conjoined black dams that might have been buildings rubbing a steeple of blood orange dusk into the horizon. Clouds engraved that horizon with lines like wood grain, but he had to squint to see their wisps & this, he couldn’t distinguish between this & the real shapes of the landscape. If he could be a color it would be this incandescent color he thought & without turning back he said, “Ridiculous.”

& Jim said, “What part?”

internal memorandum

oy vey! I mean ahoy!
we just want to remind you that
licensing agreements & budgeting restraints
will significantly encumber whatever shifty samples
you might be trying to implement in the chime, which
you're so skillfully linking to our subconscious

the Group & our Board will be dizzy with the result
I'm sure – I got that –
you got that? This memorandum contains orders so deranged
that you might have to hold it
in front of a stolen error to decode
lie when you sing, ok?
lie about everything
bury those musical influences in discord & dribble
divorce the spirit from inspiration
radiate what fruits your labor bears
so the tune can live in duplicate
long after copyright expiration

you're not wasting time poking around the tea section, are
you? Cruelty-free is close to Godliness, but that grocery
store's IPO wasn't attractive enough to invest
here's the virus we spoke of so many times
you forgot to treat the inflection
infernal ringing!
destroy this message after you get it

do you ever feel tentacles covering your little planet
like constricting timetables?
man, my BlackBerry's gray screen
nearly *ends* me

internal memorandum



not a thief in the Torrent – a subscription to Harper's

what sounds will we make at the end?
I'll tick like a time bomb & implode in slow motion
in the video you can speed it up & watch how it really happens
stuffed animals & brick compressing into a single particle
 then the particle simply disappears
you're telling me this because I already know

we think we know what sound we'll make
but we're fooling ourselves
no one will give us what we really need
 you subscribe to that too?

could get it for free, but I'd rather have the *real thing*
I know 'cause everyone knows, but now you know I know

let's celebrate – do the Bootleg Shuffle at the social
scare the piss out of X'ed up stowaways
dungarees hissy-fitting until the club wets itself
the internet is such a valuable source of information
let's meet & share a BrutaliTea
tried to warn them about the sound, but when I chimed
in the sounds I made came out all wrong
& you might have dismissed my call

benevolence will be met with violence
most people settle on a store-bought sound
but I'd like to engineer my own final wheeze –
the debris of me sucking into a tiny ion
film students panning on the periphery
several condenser mics to capture each squeak –
friend, I am oblivion
but my profile & homepage & avatar will wander forever
leave a comment
 regret that comment
ask an administrator to remove that comment

level my house & put up a 1/8 scale house
of the same house
this is the house I'd like to die in
will anyone be there to hear my body sneeze?
 are you watching closely?

talk like a Pirate day

did I pick my nose when those girls were walking by?
the worst things we do to people
we do without much thought
 sorry to put you girls through that
 if you actually did go through that
crazed & malicious, the gaggle of zombies Pabst me
grabbing at the cold like winos

there's fake blood on my sneakers, bits of jam & magic
& inside the downloaded magic is a crippling script of
Dystopia, Romanticism, & Mystery
an acronym so common it loses its etymology

everyone picks their nose
or should, in private, pick & blow rockets
of jettisoned comet into the labia of shower curtains
 they probably didn't see
cameras everywhere though
in shirt pockets & on lampposts
cost of surveillance to survey potential villains
divided by price of public service
never learned the new math

still count on my fingers for most things
someone must have caught it, a second of a pic

the pictures of heads look so much better
than the real heads

nearly no end to how many copies
infinite number of the same head
doing the same head thing
finger throbbing like expanding rubber

her undead nostrils were cupcakes when she bit me
flared magnolias gunked with frosting
how many people will watch?
watch me eating
crazy delicious
brain tacos

myth of the Nautilus

a sample pleasing to the sea

derived from Bob James' silent yells, but not his cells

we speak into the ocean & our notes are carried to the farthest corners of thrift stores & mosques. A song becomes something beyond a song, leviathan to some shareholders banking on decades of revenue

an unstoppable, regenerating sea beast
the Nautilus
in hard drives & Sidekicks she sleeps

you try to give the world a gift of enlightenment
but when the world opens that gift
the look on the world's face says,

“this is the *last* thing I need

– not another one of these.”

Digital Blights Management

ahoy!

clear out the share folder
before the International Registry sends
their starving fascist army

only share what you've gathered if you can nurture
the native into an uncorrupted err
– the Pirate reverses their service against them

*if you puke into a VRC it'll record your grocery bill
& play a neo-benshi of your socioeconomic impact
with me as the commentator*

ancient Nautilus & the girls who
might have seen me freeing green ore from my spigot orifice
torture my imagination
footage of this or that nose picking will surface
but the resolution won't be good enough
to make out an eye patch or chatting parrot

*now the seven minute jam is filtered down to four
& two & further until it's just a few seconds of
splendid synapse chopped & screwed immaculately
you hear it yet?*

an apocalypse clap of Pulitzer proportions
grey matter blowing like talcum
it sounds like a man whistling into a well
like coalminers rapping along to the shifting policy

they watch, helplessly, as the Embarcadero
(a ship named after a roadway)
levitates by like a wooden zeppelin
the Embarcadero maneuvering in irons through seas
without encryption, but sabotaged by legislation

this is the text message vote that will save
every pirate from prosecution; send it wisely
here's the template for reformed diplomacy
it's been in your pocket all this time

take it out
have a try
really, man, just give it a chance

the girls have probably posted their video
of the nose picking already & hundreds of thousands
of views will accrue by noon tomorrow
Google yourself to make sure you're good
both in quotes & without quotes
most common misspellings of your name include::

- private
- pyrite
- privet

a blemish on your credit report could cost you
an arm or a leg
roll the twelve-sided die to find out which Arm or Leg or
Head gets annexed
things about you are shared & there's no
tracking system meticulous enough to map the attacks

Nautilus is watching the video in her underwater lair
laughing at the comments posted by viewers
in Denmark & Dubai, Dallas & Decatur
she's visited Stolen Kitten Island only once
& the Untied Arab Pirates
bombarded her with litigation

warheads cracked her shell as she retreated into
deeper obscurity

her secondary sounds are more fierce than the first

the initial detonations were only the kind
chaperones of the Nautilus' unthinkably cruel children
explosions of emotion sired by decades of
creative restriction

paralysis by analysis

the more I share, the more capital I receive. You're a copy
of a copy, you're a file rife with fire – in the ownership
society – in spite of the normative code

let yourself free & collect the monthly allowance

think about meme

copying youyou

situation normal: all fucked up

will I ever be the Well-Balanced Buccaneer that I want to be?
401(k) diversified, but aggressive enough to let me retire early –
a few extra dollars towards the house's cracking principle?
vitamins for stamina & regularity, for cancer prevention –
forever – organics & flex-fuel & pirating just as much as I
purchase legitimately. Government is the new avant-garde; the
things you do off the clock go towards another account

*I'm a civil servant misspelling the sound – a ding dong going ahoy
when all you want is your own tone*

reformat a thief into a reverted serf
& nuder the market you're trying to corner

steal a kitten &
steal a kitten

a Well-Balanced Buccaneer with two of everything: eye
patches, parakeets, muskets, pegs & box cutters – two belts with
two pouches holding an even number of chocolate doubloons,
two mermaids too. Perfectly sustainable, generous with
family & friends, but reserves time for spiritual & intellectual
development & the quarterly concert

summer home & winter domain, family car & five speed; a
credit card for every occasion, for frequent sailing or rapid
rewards; a treadmill that sheds every wasted second between
undergrad & committing to my nine-to-five

I just want to make a sound you want to hear – over & over
until the cover sounds better than its parent

what would you do with two mermaids?

talk to them like a Pirate
every day is talk like a Pirate day

Trapper Keeper

What's that ringing sound, he thought & then thought nothing of it. Ridiculous. If Jim had sent him on a wild goose chase it would be Jim's head that'd be doing some abnormal head things – *not mine*.

At least fifteen people were waiting outside at Home School. The two zombies from earlier, particles of leaves caught in their hair, ripened bruises & reductions of blood clumped around the rims of their shirts & cuffs, strolled past Pirate with confident nonchalance, through the entrance; *must know someone who works here*. It took him fifteen minutes to reach the door girl, an equally disheveled flower child, devoid of cliché pageantry & brandishing the arty Appalachian style that had become vogue some time in early summer. A white rabbit foot hung around her neck.

Something stunk – something warming & hidden from view. Heavily sauced, she requested Pirate's ID. When he asked what kind of night Trapper Keeper was, she informed, booming with controlled belligerence: "Folk psych-rock, you know, psychedelic noise. Turn on, tune in, drop out." She ignored his eyes during the slurred murmur & took his five dollar bill as if an insult were written on its wrinkled face. An identifiable musk wafted off her gleaming surface, part soiled flannel, part oily falafel.

"Huh?" Pirate blurted, "is Wythe spinning? The guy with the pelts?"

"Who?" She belched forcefully into someone's Jersey State

license, handing it back, wet.

“Wythe. The *DJ*?” he said & sidestepped to let another patron up.

“Oh, yeah,” she said with a swig of barley wine. “Fuckin’ ah, he’s the *Trapper*. Yeah.”

“What?” he asked, turning to see the faces behind him sour in aggravation. She lifted her arm, sleeveless & hiding a guinea pig of matted underhair, then scratched its crotchety fluff before tucking it away. Another swig, throwing the bottle behind a shoulder & releasing another flag-flapping burp.

“TRAPPER KEEPER!” she barked, using her now free hands to make a Venus Flytrap, repeatedly slapping it shut in Pirate’s nose – he reeled, an elbow guarding his face. “He’s the *Trapper*,” pointing into Home School, the bar. “I’m the *Keeper*!” she said, jabbing her thumb at a thick knot of fives & tens rolled into her breast pocket – sitting back, the chassis of her neck looked like the side of a cold cut sandwich, a mole on her cheek potted a bristly dot of coarse, calico stubble.

She was the scariest person Pirate had ever met.

He wondered if he should just go home – forget about the free passes to Scope & the Buccaneer. Petty as it seemed, it was the wasted five dollars that bothered him so he ventured inside, avoiding the two zombies who shot faces of recognition his way, mouth opening to speak. *Did they recognize me from a few hours ago? Hope not.* They still had their video camera.

I bet I’m inside their little machine, just seconds of me.

He rubbed his finger, then thought about something else & immediately forgot it.

Inspecting with his single eye, Pirate began to form an analysis of the degenerate scene that had spawned itself from the foreclosed hookah joint. It seemed the Eastern influence had faded from the drywall & peeling linoleum. A miniature Bangalore had sprung up & had naturally gone through a conservative, repressed 50s, which was now experiencing a modern version of the 60s in full, unadulterated bloom – freaking out,

finding peace, streaking directionless & hungry for meaning, some sort of *new* freedom from the *old* freedom.

The hookahs were still employed, but they were placed on clusters of elementary school desks, four pushed together to make a whole table with six small, primary-colored chairs per station. Cliques had clustered, all of them nodding to Donovan, to Dylan, sometimes backspun tracks scratched after an abrupt crossfade.

Moseying, most of his weight on his peg, Pirate moved to the back of the bar. Something bestial was in there, in the booth, moving to the beat, hair mangled & failing like a rhythmic Yeti. Pelts?

Creamsicle orange & speckled grey tile checkered the floor, but a solitary corner had grown thick mossy carpet where glued building blocks spelled out something Pirate didn't have the energy to read. Flashcards with spelling words & simple arithmetic had been stapled to a wall, covering it completely like tiny concert posters. New math. Long division.

Built-in bookcases holding volumes of outdated versions of the Encyclopedia Britannica, some missing one letter, others almost the entire alphabet, took up nearly all available hanging space. Others held useless textbooks, their faded spines stucco pink & yellow, some toppled over, covered in paper grocery bags with highlighted graffiti, lightning bolts, infinity symbols, anarchy insignias, heavy metal monikers & arrow-skewered hearts, their devotional tattoos promising LUV 4 EVA & BFF; each author desperate to declare their everlasting affection.

Nostalgia, Pirate thought, & then he thought about peanut butter. Laminated posters of wily cats clinging desperately to cracked tree limbs read *Hang In There* over the woman's restroom; a Presidential Fitness Challenge tacked to the men's entrance illustrated the perfect pull-up, sit-up, toe-touch & crunch.

Complimentary appetizers, set out on colorful vintage Tupperware trays, included Oreo & Vanilla wafer cookies; at the bar, a sign offered small plastic barrels containing a noxious, sugary slush. Crayons & thin felt-tip markers were scattered from end to end of the long bar. In the back a dance floor had been made to look like a kitchen, with an electric stove

the color of green gelatin, mica-sparkled countertops & a breakfast nook doubling as VIP lounge for the DJ & his fur-peddling posse.

Trapper, behind the tables, had his head diving shallow to the slow rhythm. It was difficult to discern what was hair & what was fake raccoon skin – dozens of bobbed tails were attached to his shoulders, back & arms; they dangled over his hulking body like furry udders. For the most part he stood there, bottle clamped in one hand, illegal cigarette in the other; apparently the cultural revolution had scrapped the state-wide smoking ban along with a conventional work-a-day regimen & capitalism's broken promise.

Pirate walked up to confront the bartender – an older woman, an ironed apron wagging below her waist, a pan flute of red pens jammed in her breast pocket, thick makeup like bubbled croissant. Her conservative getup was offset by sleeves of insect tattoos, crawling ones on her right arm with flying critters swarming the other. She smiled with half her mouth, spun a beverage napkin into position with a foil sheet of red, blue, green & gold stars unintentionally adhered to its edge.

She nodded instead of speaking.

“Zombie,” Pirate ordered, it came out like more of a question than he wanted it to. Did she really know how to make one? Hearing that sound again, he tilted his head as if that would amplify its ring, but then the ringing might have just been part of the sound being played & not a ring at all. My words aren't my words until I make them my own & even then they still aren't my own, he thought, slumped on his bar stool.

“Six,” she informed or instructed, staring at his eye patch.

Pirate gave her the money, took a green star sticker & placed it on his bitten finger, he pressed it firmly & winced when the damaged tip answered with pulsing rivets. *Damn performance artists.*

Removing the thin, red straw, he drank from the old Tupperware cup & felt the rough coconut texture of the chafed plastic. He wondered what types of rum were in a Zombie & he wondered why he was here in the first place.

Fanned on the bar were fliers the size of postcards advertising

the night's theme. Trapper, featured in his full rural garb, stood with a musket in one paw & record case in the other at the edge of a kidney-shaped swimming pool with granite & marble inlay, his mangy raccoon tails tasseled about. A clan of disheveled admirers – some lounging on bearskin, some tanning hides of wildebeest & elk stood by a monolithic brick BBQ. A massive white mansion, blurred by the camera's selective focus, took up much of the background – a strange mountaineer-meets-the-Hamptons montage. The Keeper was nowhere to be seen, yet Trapper, wild mangy perm hiding much of his expressionless three-quarter profile, had his toes curled along the chlorinated quarry. Over his hair the legend read:

TRAPPER KEEPER

folk psych-rock, you know, psychedelic noise
turn on, tune in, drop out

Logos of record labels & affiliated clubs littered the already cluttered flier; at the bottom sat a silhouetted white apple, a sprinting puma, a slender battery-shaped can, & two joining lowercase letters to make the entwined character::



The Grope Group? Couldn't be, he thought.

They'd had the finished chime for only a day & I thought I already heard it on the way over here – not already.

The zombies hadn't spotted him. They were busy sandwiching a bookish-looking girl at the bar, her dreading that she had engaged the two in conversation in this pseudopsychedelic schoolhouse soundscape.

Behind them, Trapper was – with surprising finesse – blending Jefferson Airplane & Dead Kennedys, somehow matching the inept beats. Behind him a large black & white film of a documentary, projected, enormous & flashing, took up a full wall. In the flickering frame, four mop-haired bandmates spoke to an invisible interviewer between clips of themselves, on stage, thrashing collars the size of trowels in the rhythm

hive of their own humming. Trapper's record spinning took the place of the projected band's sound – their commentary & playing hushed down to a purely visual layer. Over the band's heads flickered another giant projection – a grainy Castro, fist in air, clamoring to the people of Cuba.

Projections inside projections – anecdotal layers added & essential ones removed with Trapper's giant hair occasionally blocking the lower left corner of the glowing wall.

Packs of salient kids, mouths jammed with cookies, two-stepped to the music & generally dug the awkward mash of heady alternating riff & Jello voice. Castro, cigar clamped between his teeth, puffed away with debonair pride before a jump cut flung shots of the band crooning to a packed house, the backs of the projected audience mere silhouettes confirming the silent rhythm – dictator & rock band becoming one messy collage.

Jittering his heel, Pirate did want to join in; whatever 60s garage dance the people had employed seemed easy enough to mimic without too much embarrassment, but he felt creepy for dancing alone. Even the Bootleg Shuffle, with its ape hanger sway & unscripted trips, wouldn't go over well in this home-schooled scene. He hung back, attaching himself to a support column plastered with motivational posters.

Others, bored by the scenes, sat sedated, pupils glued to the flickering square on the wall, their pinched eyes switching from Trapper to the glowing picture behind him. Pirate himself became transfixed – Castro's yells, jiving band below him, the DJ Yeti providing the layer of sound & unfocused meaning. Banshee arms of the dancing kids spun & marred the band's image & scribbled over Castro's fiercely jubilant face. Pirate took another sip, wiped the place where his lip touched the rough pulp of the cup. His finger was a beacon of wrong, the green star sticker had already fallen off.

Someone fell into someone else.

Get the guest pass & get out of here, he thought, not even the Well-Balanced Buccaneer is worth this confusion. Someone could go mad in this place, he told himself. Through the controlled seizures of

knees & jutting pelvises, he approached the DJ booth.

Was it *Katie* he thought *Kari* or just *Kat*? What did Jim tell me when he was speaking from the bottom of that pile? If I just go up to the DJ & say Kari sent me down to get a ticket, would that work? Or should I say *Private Snafu*? This is foolish.

“Ahoy, man!” Pirate called over wailing wah-wah, squealing Moog. Trapper’s eyes, pickled in banality or boredom or both, preoccupied by another time, flashed over Pirate like a dropped flashlight. Bending down to sift through a stack of vinyl, disappearing for the length of an entire song, Trapper materialized again, swapped out the spent album, let the other turning table play. “Hey. Excuse me! Ahoy!”

A synthesized Bach blared, clearing the floor of the swinging, wiggled-out swamis to refresh the dance floor with vintage futuristic renditions of classical sonatas. Genuinely digging it, a pack of white-belts left a hookah’s smokestack & took over the small dance section, their New Balances & Filas spinning like rubbery hula-hoops to the electric cicadas. Fed up, a gaggle of kids in puffy parkas gargled the remainders of their beverages, neatly stacked the coloring books they were toiling over, & broke for the exit.

Both zombies snatched the surrendered desks & with an air traffic controller’s view of the dance floor began, in Pirate’s mind anyway, spying on his pathetic attempts at spearing Trapper’s attention. The girl followed & sulked, occupying the third chair. *Curious zombies. Want to see if I’ll turn into one of them. I don’t feel any different.* Luckily his back was towards their still bloodied mugs; they’d have to get up or start dancing to get a good look.

“Is Kari here?” to the DJ again.

“Huh?” Trapper yelled, pumping a fist at the dance floor, but to no one in particular, reflexive & robotic.

“Kari!” louder, hoping the name was correct.

“Yeah,” nodding.

“Hey, man. *Private Snafu!*” Pirate yelled over the music, the top of his head breaking the projected frame.

“Just played the Who, no requests!” Trapper hollered as he pumped his pale fist to the beat, lifting one of the headphones suctioned to his ear to get a better listen. A table of silvery-shirt-adorned Euros pumped their fists in reply, but didn’t meet their intended target – Trapper was already removing a small diskette from its tray, having a hard time maneuvering it into a compact reader hidden under the tables. “Can’t get this one on vinyl. You didn’t see me do this.”

“No,” Pirate said, not paying attention to Trapper’s usage of compact contraband, “about the show – the show at Scope. the Well-Balanced Buccaneer! *Private Snafu!*” Master volume inched higher, scales of screeching piano peaking at the edge of distortion.

“Q and Not U?” shaking his head. “What?” Trapper asked, squinting at him through this curtain of hair. “No modern rock!”

“Scope!”

“I don’t sell dope!”

“Huh?” Pirate yelled.

“Over there, ask her. She’s got the good shit.”

No, Pirate thought, not the *good shit*, I’m not trying to score dope. And sure enough he pointed at the girl parked between the two zombies; her demeanor had shifted from cowering innocent to scolding superintendent; she alternated her finger pointing & chastising from undead to befuddled undead. Barely audible over the synthesized blitz, she struck one in the shoulder before she finished. The zombies threw up their arms, poorly trying to douse whatever fire they had accidentally ignited.

Trapper hollered her name, “Kaaaaari!” & all three looked up. Relieved, she approached the booth with both of her defrocked hipsters moping over frothy brews in their tiny seats. One of them used a swatch of saliva to erase a lingering crust of blood.

“You know this guy?” Trapper asked, turning before she answered, returning to his makeshift mashup.

“Private Snafu,” Pirate squeaked, feeling increasingly stupid. *She has no idea what I’m talking about, they’ll kick me out.*

“What? How many you want?”

“Just one’s good, really.” Pirate said. Three bopping patrons had stopped inappropriately grinding each other & walked up to Kari, waiting for their turn to talk, but she ignored them with a nonchalance usually reserved for panhandlers.

“Pretty much everybody’s hooked up already,” she admitted, double-checking with a quick sweep, “yeah, as long as those two creeps don’t get these, I don’t care” – talking loud enough to overflow their eavesdropping ears. The undeads stood, one of them theatrically flipping his little red chair, the other baring his teeth at Kari before exiting with his friend. She giggled. The three kids behind her giggled because she giggled.

“Here.” She huffed, handing over what was left of her guest passes, “give them to whoever asks, but not those fake banged-up dudes. What’s *with* that shit?”

“What?”

“They’re all fucked up,” she said, waving her fingers over her face to illustrate the zombie’s bludgeoned appearance. “Creeps.”

“It’s fake,” Pirate chuckled, shaking his head at her & himself & the whole scenario. *How had this become so confusing?* He stared at the short stack of screen-printed paper cards reading::

SCOPE

Guest Pass

The Well-Balanced Buccaneer

in iridescent gold. “You’re welcome?”

“Thank you, seriously,” replied Pirate, one eye like a full moon, the other eclipsed like an empty well.

“Glad you’re serious – see ya,” she replied, skipping away with a posse of followers, their carbonated heels galloping in tow.

He needed to sit & did so after making sure the two miffed zombies

had expelled themselves out the door & were at a distance far enough for Pirate to feel comfortable – heading to whatever suburb they crawled from, preferably. They wanted the passes pretty bad, yet they didn't look like typical Buccaneer fans & they were anything but well-balanced in the way of personal equity or physical maintenance. He hadn't noticed how hot it was. Two humidors under his arms had cooked his shirt into a damp chamois; his palms felt like boiled ham. Sit, he thought.

Around a small desk pressed between the front door & a cube-shaped kiosk, an entranced pack of giggling girls sporting sweat bands & tube tops under low zipper nylon windbreakers, jogging shorts suctioned to their thighs, all wearing white gym socks with red & yellow stripes, played Oregon Trail on a flashing green & black monitor. Rowdy & rightly on their way to homesteading five debilitating hangovers, they bumped Pirate's tiny table as the kiosk buckled under staked elbow & propped tennis shoe.

“One of our wagon wheels needs repair,” a lass burped, half through her nose.

“Are we out of black powder again?” another slurred. Pirate tried to evaluate what had just transpired with little success. Now that he had the passes the thrill was gone & actually seeing his idol, the Buccaneer with his symmetrical garb & well-balanced economy, two of everything to even out the new human condition, had lost its allure. Pirate sighed & his sound was unlike any sound in Home School, but no one heard.

Keeper, retired from her responsibilities, was counting her take at the bar, corralling copious wads of dough into her back pocket calloused by dried liquor, folding the uneven remainder into an envelope for her sonically occupied partner. Silently, the crowd was moving on. Whatever retro revivalists & red army factions had tried to mobilize in the demoralized zone named Home School were, with some shadows of shame, quietly giving up dreams of equality over equity. Their impromptu Shuffles had synchronized for just a brief while & then, as if they'd never mingled, broken off into isolated personalization.

Fizzling away, Trapper Keeper's clan had lost interest. If they'd

successfully turned on, tuned in, & dropped out, they'd put too much stress on the latter of the borrowed trifecta; far too much cheap booze & a hodgepodge of hokey rock had turned them off & they were hurrying to the next avant fix. Indifferent, Trapper, maestro turned minstrel, played on, content in his booth of obscure garage tracks & rare B sides, the occasional Baltimore Club track thrown in to keep the dissipating crowd stupefied. Pirate used his napkin to sufficiently wipe down the tacky table before feeling comfortable resting his arms; cola & juice had leaked into the gorges dug into its wooden top spelling devotions, peace slogans, helter-skelter threats & jarring perverted come-ons, *keep on truckin', times are changin', ride the snake*. The surface was so chiseled with graffiti it felt like bark.

Repeating, the DVD projection recycled the earlier scene of an irate Castro, grainy footage of skinny mods in dated modes of shake-rattle, but somewhere between the old projector's red, green, & blue irises & the wall, sashaying legs & wild skirts had smashed the atoms & particles of social revolution, making it impossible to discern situational irony from generational tragedy.

Every three minutes a new-old track crackled dusty from a thin spinning spiral, convoluting whatever cultural revolution its author wished to inspire, & unbeknownst to Trapper, his message has been unfocused by his own frenzied ambition.

Outside, two zombies sat on a stoop & watched what they had filmed on their cameras earlier in the day.

Inside, a distraught girl in jogging shorts shouted, "Margaret has typhoid fever! Indians are surrounding the wagon train!" Pirate, leaving the guest passes on the desk, walked out & down & home.

seven inch

blame the mixtape – we rode in Hondas rewinding the
Dischord, we rode on cheap gas & distro catalogues. Grew
up recording the sounds of ourselves, then traded each other
inside cassettes decorated with highlighter, glitter, Sharpie,
petrochemical wonder

I downloaded this tattoo the other night; been
itching for days, changes meaning every minute –

*blame Sony not the money –
we pirated from broadcasts & edited used car commercials by hand
stowaways, castaways,
pilots of the palm; remake the culture
– download a nationality*

harmless arsonist
overclocking the box

reverse this curse into public service

coiled voices
oil vices

echo

no service

no service

I'll just talk like you called anyway
hope you got away from yourself safe
hey, the well is covered by a pile of rocks
no way to drop in now
unless you removed *all the rocks*

if you text::

tetrahydrocannabinol

call dropped

I drop pens the most, probably three or four a week;
they pogo under desks & across the porch – usually
disappearing completely into the alternate peniverse. Black
Bearded & Red Bearded Pens for the Moleskine that I've
never dropped, its lid like smooth petrol, like the start
of something indecently incandescent. Remember being
ignitable? Like we could rub against each other & burn the
bar down, two zombies trading heads as if heads were the
least of our worries

the club's acronym covertly referencing its illegal source of
income or just a nod to David Byrne

roaming

the sound of our singing, detached heads

drop to my death

Long Live Death

& well, well, well

need anything from the grocery?

**not a subscription to Harper's –
*the Embarcadero***

stoners churned into wizards of economic disobedience
pocketing powerbars & power chords, organic grocery
crew members over whetstones oiled with guacamole
– utility knives ready to open domains of public trade

we're all in the same ship
& when I say ship I really mean nightclub or cubicle
or skate shop or stadium

this week at church the bananas are nineteen cents each
& a tiny cactus is the price of twenty-one bananas

the girl dressed in depression isn't checking out
her lip ring is galactic like a battle between
religious extremists & the extremely gorgeous
the most valuable assets you can steal
are the ones you carry on your breath

the music on the floor is so different
compared to what comes from behind the store
pray to the Well-Balanced Buccaneer,
violent raider of the triple bottom line:
Profit – People – Planet

when everyone was distracted by free samples of
organically fed pterodactyl
the store employees pulled me aside
box cutters unsheathed like street fighters
dyed black bangs on martyr poster faces
together they cut a square hole
next to the walk-in freezer
straight through cinderblock & timecards
behind it was an ocean
& we skinny-dipped in the shimmering information!
scissor kicking until the ship found us
the Embarcadero!

John Quelch flag like a cuss drawn in crayon on the clouds –
rigging & yardarms confounding our perspective,
sails like burning linen

repeat that one more time

freedom isn't the choice of green chai or white
freedom is sharpening It as *sharp* as It can get

until It can cut a hole the size of an ode
in the side of a fortress

create a word from doubt & unfettered diligence
an illegal sentence inches from treason
repeat this paragraph into the eddying server
swim hand in hand in the rebranded liberty

from the vessel men threw down ropes
the Buccaneer with his headphones & ones & twos
instructed his crew to hoist our naked bodies on board
we bartered with powerbars ripped like tracks from an album
& if Pirate hadn't puréed that sweater's intestine into
trance synth pulp I'd cover our exposed initials

the Buccaneer spunback our nuptials
& played us something new & old shoved into one jam

all we could do was jitterbug with our genitals
tanning pink & ferocious
press your ears to them
listen to your genitals closely
really

they're smarter than you think

echo

no service

no service

call dropped

Grope Group 2:33 pm

echo

unable to deliver message

Pirate 2:57 pm

The Embarcadero II

we sailed away from the chiming copyblight as far as we could
so far I couldn't receive his vexed messages
my hopes are that the fight between pirates & artistic separatists
would be settled without bloodshed

“slimy whips slapping the horizon!”
below deck we could hear their share folders creak & knock with
each rogue wave, the world's digital library crammed into the living
quarters of collegiate pirates & out-of-work pirates & elderly pirates

steal an idea & take that idea somewhere else
take it to the noncommercial tabernacles of scrabble
oddities made common by thieves in the Bit current

just look at yourself
dancing when dancing is forbidden!
your Shuffle is different from their Shuffle
jumping on beds with the portholes snorting Hyphy & Grime
you shimmy when no one else is swimming
& then they start the floor on fire
not letting the Keeper take you hostage
only acknowledging the Trapper when his repertoire
is redefining your childhood

the crew passed out pea coats to cover our browning
nouns & the ringing in our ears sank into the background

in trailers & tents, convention centers & courts,
cubicles & carports, sports stores & gas stations,
no sign of the Nautilus & we began to believe
she was never a threat

I taught the crew the Bootleg Shuffle
crew members kicked their legs like downed trees
gave away their creative commodities freely
rolled ghost dice & when the ghost dice said Kiss
they kissed & when it said Freak they freaked

bars away & remotely queer, we could hear the chime
bleating behind our sail

the Group groping at each Bit like pong
an art director loosening his tie in lieu of promotion
chairman's gullet like a seasoned turbo fillet
they hear the chime & figuratively piss
or bypass the figurative entirely

real simple syndicates from the crow's nest broadcast

“the crest of a shell
with slimy whips slapping the horizon!”
manic, the crew covered their ears – ducked & covered

“her dirge can derange & gangrene your gourd like a gulag
beaten by a crazed underclass!”

we stayed above
box cutters drawn, pea coats kernalled tight
& when no leviathan emerged
the waters undisturbed as countertops
we turned the ship toward impossible shapes

the shape of things to come

Tropic of Splenda

we're the cell
divide & divide
you hear?

a telophase in the metasomething
Russian nesting doll that never ends
opening smaller & smaller
until my fingers ache from popping your abdomen
& I simply put you down, tiny little you
unicellular like an idea, the building blocks of strife

hear the hereditary information

commodities that are also gifts
the ship is rocking
we hit the decks between hydrating with vitamin C shakes
splendid chimes alluring & lovely
you're lovely in the sunlight
because the sunlight is the honest light
young crow's-feet sprawl when you beam
a girl dressed in Recession –
empowered by poverty

persuaded by these lines
all you ring is all you wrought
what God sought through the new Morse
was to touch his distant neighbor, the mystic animals
& renegades of the noncommercial kingdom –
unicorn, pirate, ninja, fox, finch & owl

shuffling our suede boots & pegged heels
cordage swaying like fiber optic nets
we rolled twelve-sided die at their negative grid
bumped uglies like horned quadrupeds
pumping our fists we opened them as they rang
covered our ears to hear it clearer

whatever level of success or whatever culture
in the Tropic of Splenda
sweetness derived from the cellular code, but
not the actual *product*

received calls from the Group dying from the chime
Board members gripping their BlackBerrys as the
cities of their portfolios undiversify

held up our hands to let him listen
here the sharp parables are in the ingredients lists
in hand written mercury warnings & whole grain banners

all cells come from preexisting cells

all minutes roll over if you don't spend those minutes
spending seconds spending consequences
in the practice of culture making

drop your cell phone in the toilet
& watch the instant mitosis

working vacation

the ones who once controlled the oceans no longer control
those oceans, subtle indicators declared we were merely
allowed to sublet these ideas from their dictators for fear of
beheading

& all beheaded heads come from preexisting heads
– this is what I slowly learned on my working vacation

& one day my head will be stolen
jowl & lobe minced & divvied into the Torrent
for every middle school pirate &
Medicare receiving pirate to copy

– I say

 this is okay

pass my smiling, drippy head from player
to player

dunk it in hot text

& tracks & highly defined humanity

distribute freely



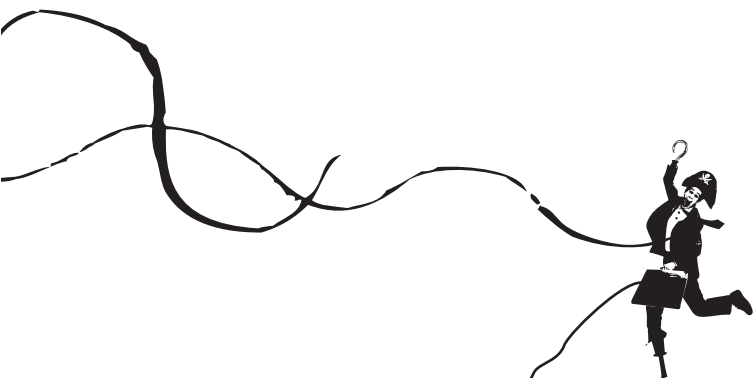
Stolen Kitten Island

– the shape of things –

when I took my hands away from my ears you were standing there in a pea coat; it smelled like pretzels & music. As we sailed to Stolen Kitten Island my finger had stopped throbbing & I'd convinced myself it wasn't infectious; my eyes were only adjusting to the choppy tinsel around us & I'd no appetite for human brains. Absolutely none. From the helm a bell rang each half hour, benevolently dispelling any notions of violence or lawsuit, everyone had stopped dancing. Some of the organic grocery store employees were learning to sword fight with long sticks of cured venison, others were napping in the slack rigging with pendulum limbs clocking our sway. The pirates were modest & tried not to stare; the Well-Balanced Buccaneer texted his friends on shore with his new keyless iAye, peeled oranges for us while singing Motown hits, sometimes spitting a little during the aggressive choruses – we roared like sea lions!

the island in the shape of a stolen kitten slowly grew like an emerald lump on the blue table; we marveled like parents at the opening of a new elementary school. Gulls circled & cackled for vittles, but there were no vittles to spare. This is beautiful. Where exactly are we around the Arabian Peninsula? You made sounds & I made sounds – a metronome in my arms, none of these sounds were original, but we meant them, we really did

you looked amazing in your coat





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