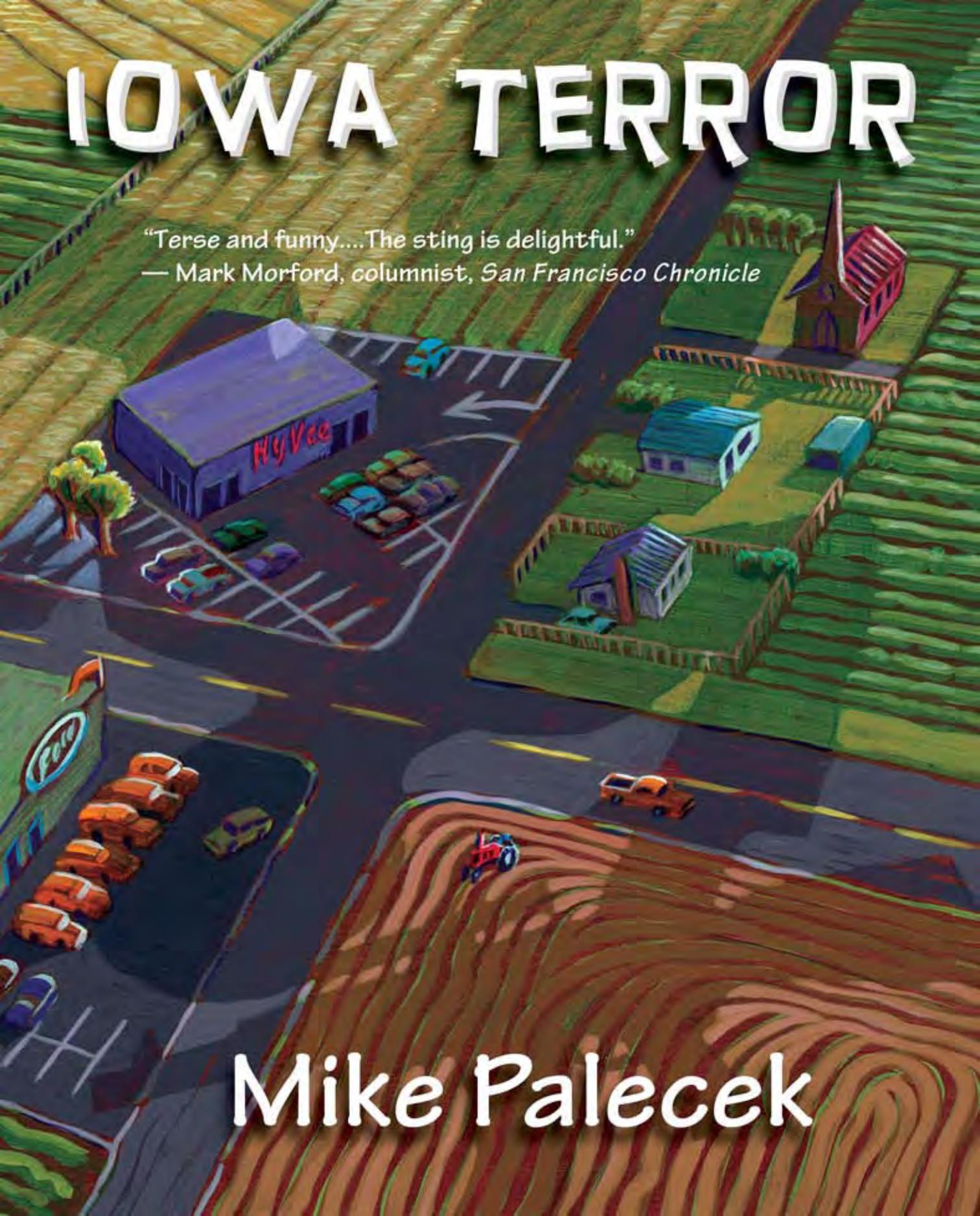


IOWA TERROR

An aerial, stylized illustration of a rural Iowa town. The scene is viewed from a high angle, looking down on a road that runs diagonally from the top right towards the bottom center. To the left of the road, there is a gas station with a sign that says "Folio" and a parking lot filled with several cars. Further up the road, there is a large, single-story building with a sign that says "HyVee". To the right of the road, there is a farm with a white house, a blue barn, and a red church with a steeple. The surrounding landscape is filled with green fields and a brown tractor is visible in the bottom right corner, plowing a field.

"Terse and funny....The sting is delightful."

— Mark Morford, columnist, *San Francisco Chronicle*

Mike Palecek

IOWA TERROR, a novel like no other ...

“Terse and funny and dry as a dead Iowa corn snake baking in the sun. Palecek delivers a quick, deadpan slap to reactionary, mindless post-9/11 America. The sting is delightful.”

— Mark Morford, columnist, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“These are hard times for political fiction writers. How to compete with the weirdness of the daily news? Any reader who thinks that Mike Palecek’s imagination puts him ‘over the top’ will be challenged by the reality check quotes through out his book from former Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld and made to wonder whose view of reality can be more trusted. Certainly, Palecek’s is the better vision for the future of America.”

— Brian Terrell, Executive Director, Catholic Peace Ministry, Des Moines, Iowa

“The greatest gift a novelist can offer is provocation. To read Iowa Terror is to be provoked, to have foundation beliefs rocked. The witty, powerful, and unique voice of Mike Palecek challenges readers to reject passivity and to embrace the subversive pleasure of critical, independent thought.”

— Mickey Z. author of six books, most recently *CPR for Dummies* (Raw Dog Screaming Press)

“... a gripping and disturbing tale of small town America in the post September 11th world. Palecek skillfully weaves elements of the official lie of 9-11 into a dark story of murder, mystery, propaganda, and the American “homeland”. *Iowa Terror* is both entertaining and thought provoking; a must read. You won’t be able to put it down!”

— Michael Wolsey, host, Visibility 9-11

“*Iowa Terror* is the antidote to watching the evening news, listening to yet another rightwing radio talk show host, or suffering through a mindless political debate. Required reading for those that do want to wake up.”

— Loren Coleman, author, *The Copycat Effect: How the Media and Popular Culture Trigger the Mayhem in Tomorrow’s Headlines* (Simon and Schuster, 2004)

“Mike Palecek, in addition to being a talented and gifted story storyteller, has an uncanny ability to survey the political and emotional landscape of this country. In doing so, he tells a tale rich in irony, dry humor, intolerance, conformity, and reaction. The sad thing about this tale is that, while it’s certainly fictional, the premise is not at all out of the realm of possibility. Imagine what might happen if Steven King’s *The Stand* discovered 9.11 and moved to Iowa, and you’ll have a good idea of where this story will transport you.”

— Jack Cluth, The People’s Republic of Seabrook <http://intellectualize.org/index.html>

“A mirror held to the future. A chilling commentary of things to come. A modern day 1984. A powerful, shocking and compelling read.”

— Binu Mathew, *Countercurrents Magazine*

“Mike Palecek’s Iowa Terror depicts in clear, breezy language that the seeds of revolution are sown among average American citizens who are astute, pissed off, and aware that the capitalist system is doing them in.”

— Kim Petersen, *Dissident Voice*

“So, what’s the difference between Mike Palecek, Weldon Kees and Ambrose Bierce? Bierce isn’t from Nebraska and Palecek still has hope.”

— Richard Flamer, Chiapas, Mexico

“*Iowa Terror* is a truly extraordinary book! Although it deals with such heavy subjects as war and peace, terrorism, democracy and freedom, it’s highly entertaining and fun to read.”

— Ray Korona, Activist Songwriter & Musician

“Great stuff. Great irony and subtle humor. Lot like Garrison Keillor.”

— Bob Maegerlein, Southeast Minnesota Peace Alliance

“The narrator and the people of Orange County sound just like my Iowa neighbors, most who seem oblivious to events that happen in the larger world. Thanks, for saving us from the terrorists.”

— Judy Plank, Remsen, Iowa

“A deeply personal stream-of-consciousness tour through the new nihilism descending upon our troubled nation.”

— Michael Rivero, What Really Happened, www.whatreallyhappened.com

“A fierce prose-poem from the heart of America’s Orange Revolution — orange for our alert status; orange for jumpsuits and vests and orange ‘Terror Tinfoil hats’; orange water towers, manned by terrified orange terrorists; orange against immigrants and Indians; orange illuminated by the sunset glow of lyricized Rumsfeld texts. Palecek reporting here — to protect and serve.”

— Marc Estrin, author of *The Lamentations of Julius Marantz*

“It keeps pulling me along, so much I can hardly stop to laugh.”

— Phil Hey, Briar Cliff (Iowa) University

“Mike Palecek weaves the pressing issues of our day into an enchanting narrative with verve and wit. In haunting snippets from the mind of Donald Rumsfeld and in the well-informed ravings of the ‘terrorist’ about the spinelessness of the Democrats, the reader gets tantalizing glimpses of the new American reality behind the propagandistic sheen of post-9/11 Iowa. A highly enjoyable read.”

— Christopher Pille, founder, WeAreCHANGE Maryland

IOWA TERROR

by

Mike Palecek

Illustrations by

Russell Brutsche
Allison M. Healy
Benjamin Heine
Ian Ward



Also by Mike Palecek

Killing George Bush [KGB]

Joe Coffee's Revolution

Twins

The Truth

The Last Liberal Outlaw

Looking For Bigfoot

Terror Nation

The American Dream

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidences are either a product of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual organizations and persons, living or deceased, is entirely coincidental.

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“Go back to bed, America, your government has figured out how it all transpired. Go back to bed America, your government is in control. Here, here’s American Gladiators. Watch this, shut up, go back to bed America, here is fifty-six channels of it! Watch these pituitary retards bang their fucking skulls together and congratulate you on living in the land of freedom. Here you go America — you are free to do what we tell you! You are free to do what we tell you!”

— Bill Hicks



ONE

A Good Democrat

As we know,
there are known knowns.
There are things we know we know.
We also know
there are known unknowns.
That is to say
we know there are some things
we do not know.
But there are also unknown unknowns,
the ones we don't know
we don't know.

— Donald Rumsfeld, *United States Secretary of Defense, Feb. 12, 2002,*
Department of Defense news briefing

Someone was killing the Democrats of Orange County, Iowa.

I wouldn't have cared, but that I was a Democrat.

I did not much care to have my throat slit as I pulled into the garage, or have my brakes fail and plow

headlong into the concrete culvert out on the bypass around the curve by the new Taco John's, and have my head split like a good watermelon, or have a fifty-pound sack of sugar fall on my neck from the top shelf as I bent down to try to read the label on the All-Bran with my tri-focals.

The prime suspect was Jesus Iowa, the terrorist.

Jesus lived here in Orange County, somewhere, on the back streets or soft dirt roads, or in the cornfields, who knows.

Who cares?

I might have seen him once, in a blur, in the very early morning, out the front window of my auto parts store.

Who cares?

Maybe the Democrats.

Maybe me.

You can buy a list of all the registered Democrats from the secretary of state in Des Moines. I did that once.

I used it to get signatures to get on the ballot.

Suppose you could also use it for selling All-Bran, or mass murder.

To me, I wouldn't go to the trouble.

The Democrats are dying anyway.

You don't have to get up even, just sit on the porch and drink Pina Cicadas, that's my new invention.

And watch them drop.

Am I kidding?

Ask my wife if I ever kid.

Ask my kids if I ever kid.

Orange County Iowa used to be Gay County.

It was that for maybe a hundred years or so, I don't know.

There's a Gayville, South Dakota, and probably a hundred others around, but it's not a name you like to have these days on your county dump trucks and county sheriff vehicles, or on T-shirts in the parents section when your team goes to the state wrestling tournament in Des Moines.

So it didn't take that long after a group marched into the county commissioners' meeting on the second Tuesday morning in either February or March and suggested that the name of the county be changed to reflect the post-911 world.

There were nine guys from the fire department, National Guard, and the hunt and fish club, all dressed in orange, orange caps, vests, coveralls, gloves.

They just filed in and sat down.

They were on the agenda and all, but it was still quite a show.

Vernon spoke for the group. He said the county would be doing its part for homeland security by reflecting the orange alert status of the nation in its generations-long fight against terror.

Vern had clipboards with petitions and signatures and numbers and a calculator.

He said they had it figured out that over the course of ten years, which was just a drop in the bucket from what those who have given the ultimate sacrifice have given ... umm, the twelve municipal water towers in the county and the two rural water district towers could be painted blaze orange.

The First Reformed Church had offered to be a sponsor if they could get a mention somewhere on the towers.

Vern and "Citizens of Orange County Kare" also suggested that orange be declared the official color of the county, which could be reflected in numerous ways: law enforcement vehicles, city and county maintenance vehicles (*the state trucks all already orange, see*), school colors, crosswalk guards, personalized license plates.

He said that an idea being tossed around was to sell orange buttons as a fundraiser for an annual scholarship for an outstanding student in the county.

Well, the commissioners sent a representative, along with Vern and three or four of the guys from "COCK" down to Des Moines.

They stayed in the Motel Six at county expense and testified in front of the committee and got on Radio Iowa and Vern was asked to come down to the KTVW studios and get patched through to the Fox network to talk about it all.

There weren't many state senators who wanted to stand up in front of the whole state and nation and say he was for keeping the county Gay, as opposed to being on the front line against terror.

The vote went through on the last day of the session and the work began on the county stationery, doors to the auditors and license offices, vehicles, highway signs.

It was a big job.

And the First Reformed Church got their water tower.

The first one was painted right here over the summer.

It was a crew from out of town.

Their van had Tennessee plates is what I heard.

Lots of folks went over there every day for a while, standing right under the tower, looking up at a white, skinny guy with a beard and a ponytail and three Mexicans hanging on the side with ropes and pulleys and scaffold.

Staring straight up, getting orange paint in their eyes and mouth, waiting to catch a screwdriver with their forehead.

It was like having the circus in town for a month.

Jesus Iowa got his name when his family was driving up from Oaxaca.

His father and mother were illegal. He was illegal too. Illegal people.

His mother was pregnant, in labor. They needed to find a hospital right away.

They passed a woman mowing the front yard of a farm home on a green riding mower, not wearing a top.

She had long blonde hair and wore only jean shorts, no shoes, bright red toenail polish.

The father got all the detail because they were going forty-five on the highway, not wanting to have anything to do with the county deputies.

The woman went over some bumps in the lawn, held on, looked right at the father and smiled and waved.

He recalled that at that particular moment her hair rose from her shoulders, suspended in mid-air, with waves, like on the American commercials they had seen from home, perhaps just what he had dreamed of when he thought of America, perhaps miraculous, though he kept that suspicion to himself.

When the father saw the blonde woman he proclaimed, "*Dios, Mio!* Iowa!"

And when a boy was born in the county hospital twenty minutes later, the father wanted to memorialize the vision he had been given.

The mother argued they could not name the son My God, so the father agreed on Jesus, and tacked on Iowa as a middle name, because that was truly how it had occurred.

And they wanted it to sound as if the young boy was from around here.

The father and mother and the nurses had bickered about the comma. Mr. and Mrs. having spent many recent weeks studying English and having the fervor of the nouveau literate, and for two days the name of the young boy was Jesus, Iowa Hernandez.

On the third day the comma was dropped.

The mother and father opened a restaurant, worked all day, every day, and bought a home on the west side.

Jesus grew strong and happy and played shortstop and quarterback.

He was famous, known around town as Jesus Iowa!

As the Des Moines Register headline on the Sunday sports page after Jesus was named the high school athlete of the year in only his junior year.

He planned to attend the University of Iowa and study architecture, build tall buildings in Des Moines and San Francisco and Mexico City, and be the first Hispanic quarterback ever, and the first Hispanic Iowan elected to the United States House of Representatives.

His room was packed with the biography of Frank Lloyd Wright and other great American designers: Thomas U. Walter and the U.S. Capitol Building, James Hoban's White House, Henry Bacon and the Lincoln Memorial, Robert Mills and the Washington Memorial, and Russell Pope's Jefferson Memorial.

In the family's photo album he saw pictures of the modest hovels of Oaxaca and compared them to the homes he saw in America.

His father and mother were able to move the family to a house on Madison Street and Jesus spent hours sitting out on the front porch watching people go past and waving and smiling, though they often did not respond positively.

What he really wanted to do was to make houses like those in America for his relatives in Mexico, or bring those relatives up here to live in nice places, or maybe play shortstop for the New York Yankees.

Each day his dreams and plans were different, bigger, larger, more grand and beautiful.

The high school did not offer architecture classes, but Mr. Molini, the shop teacher, gave Jesus books on construction – brick laying, carpentry, steel beam structures, the building of the Hoover Dam and the World Trade Center, Yankee Stadium, the St. Louis arch.

Jesus Iowa stopped going to classes after the first week of his senior year.

Mrs. Lankford, the history teacher, pulled a television into the room on Sept. 11, 2001 so her classes could watch the continuing coverage.

Jesus sat in the front desk of the second row from the door and watched CNN all morning.

He watched through his class and skipped Biology and Geometry II to watch more.

He got up when Lankford locked her room for lunch.

Jesus got his jacket from his locker, walked through the cafeteria without talking to anyone, went out the front door with the rest of the privileged open campus seniors, and never came back.

He sent a letter to the editor to the paper from somewhere and the editor wouldn't print it, is what I heard.

Said it didn't have a local address.



TWO

Orange Alert

“It’s always funny until someone gets hurt. Then it’s just hilarious.”
— Bill Hicks

Well, I guess the orange thing is okay with me.

It’s going to have to be, right?

The same as I don’t have much control over the price of gas, or what movies they stock at Movie Gallery, or how big are the hamburgers at A&W.

Or the war, really. Or taxes or the cost of a speeding fine or whether the kids start school before or after Labor Day, or whether the commissioners raises taxes to build a new supermax county jail.

The paper says they are talking about having all-year school. I’m sure they won’t ask me, and I’m not sure what I would say if they did.

We get the paper. Mostly to see who died and who got arrested.

I tell the wife to check to see if I’m in there yet. If not, I’ll take pancakes and coffee.

There have been a lot of Democrats dying though, I’ll tell you that. And there aren’t that many around here to begin with.

Dennis isn’t at coffee anymore, or Walter, and the wife says Mary Thomas hasn’t been at Lady’s Club for two months and that’s not like her at all.

Yeah, why there would be a terror plot to kill Democrats, I don't know.

Mostly terrorists would want to kill Republicans, I would think. That's what the wife said and I had to agree that sounded about right.

Although, you know, the anthrax back then went to Democrats, too. And so the terrorists must a been wanting to send a message to Democrats.

Something.

Definitely something.

And people talk. They always talk.

Some remember Jesus Iowa and the Hail Mary pass on fourth down that beat Plumb Valley in the play-offs.

So having him just drop off the edge of the earth like that gives people something to talk about, to do, some energy.

They never had a write-up about how he died, so I think he's alive. His folks still have the restaurant.

We went there once, gave us both gas. Sure, I'd try it again, but not the sauce so much.

People lock their doors now, on the houses, cars, put locks on their lawn mower sheds. You never know. The town has changed. Lots of Mexicans around.

If there's a fire, or a fight, or something worse, it's always, was it Mexicans? And then they give the names, Rodreegez or Hooleo or Pablo and then nobody listens to the rest.

If they kill each other, what's it to us?

And so some of the more intellectual coffee klatches, at the Hy-Vee deli or the card players in the back of the barber shop, older guys who aren't there to sell shoes or insurance, who've got more time to really get into a subject — well, they've been wondering about the connection between Jesus Iowa and the Democrats.

And it kind of grows on you, gives a guy some oomph. You talk about it and then you want to go home and hash it over with the missus.

Maybe you get your neighbor to turn off his mower for a minute so you can come over and bend his ear.

Dean's wife keeps all the old papers in the hall closet. He brought down an armload to Samson's, that's the barber.

It's really Sam-Sons, like Sam & Sons barbers. It's a long story. You don't wanna know.

But Dean had the whole back seat of the red '71 Olds Cutlass he's so in love with filled with stacks of papers tied with string.

And we just went through them, putting things together, figuring things, while some guys played cards.

Sam still works there.

The sons live in Ames, Cedar Falls.

Don't ask.

He uses all the old stuff, clippers, butchwax, big mirrors, old-time calendars.

I don't get my hair cut there. My wife does it, always has.
I think Sam's kind of crazy, ever since, oh, well.

And now we've got all this orange around town.

Mike Clark, the Ford dealer on the highway south of town, he's got ten brand new orange SUVs parked in a line right out front. Of course, he's president of the Chamber this year. Maybe he had to.

Lots of people are wearing those orange buttons. Chrysanthemums are making a comeback in places I see. Some people are wearing orange hunting caps, some to church even.

The teachers have orange tie day at the high school, and the elementary teachers wear orange dresses on Fridays, except for Mr. Boner, that's what the kids call him.

His real name is Kroner. He teaches band. He wears an orange shirt, long-sleeved, I guess, on orange dress Fridays.

The mayor wears a full, blaze orange hunting outfit to work every day. Not the same one every time, I don't think.

Well, I hope he washes it, that's what I told the wife.

The welcome sign on the highway says "New Bremerhagen, Population 3,809, Welcome! Look Out!"

So we're kind of wondering about this Jesus Iowa, because that's kind of what we are, aren't we?

We are on the front line of terror, securing the homeland, huddled masses yearning to be free, trying to hurry inside, get these wet socks off and get into something warm and maybe watch some TV, huh?



THREE

Decaf Candidates

Things will not be necessarily continuous.

The fact that they are something other than perfectly continuous ought not to be characterized as a pause.

There will be some things that people will see.

There will be some things that people won't see.

And life goes on.

— Donald Rumsfeld, *Oct. 12, 2001, Department of Defense news briefing*

Well.

I'm sitting here in the Hampshire Hideout Cafe in the uninhabited regions of Iowa.

I'm in a booth against the wall, green vinyl.

I'm sitting alone, hand on my white coffee cup, turned toward the wooden door facing Main Street.

The ceiling fan in the middle of the room is on low.

Mostly all it does is remind us, "it's hot, it's hot."

Local legend says that if you turn it to high speed it says, "McKinley's dead."

As well as apparently being the beachhead for global warming, Iowa is for some reason a political hot spot and graveyard.

This is where candidates go to either catch fire or die.

They walk along these deserted main streets and dirt roads, smiling, thumbs tucked inside their pointer fingers, ready to speak. They scour the houses and alleys for eyes in the dark, hoping to be able to dash over to shake hands, smile, nod, lie.

We are the ones who got to pick John Kerry and not Howard Dean.

I heard it was T.J. and Twyla and Carl who decided.

Pretty cool, huh?

Well, I'm sitting here in the near dark on a hot morning.

I'm waiting for a candidate to walk through that door and shake my Iowa hand and say he's going to investigate 911.

He is going to put George Bush, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, Donald Rumsfeld on trial for lying and then soldiers dying, stealing oil, torture, stealing elections, spying on us.

He is going to take the lies out of the high school history textbooks.

I'm on my fourth cup of coffee.

I'm watching out the front window. I've seen a few white hairs pass and some grey hairs, but no candidates.

You know this guy who used to be in government has just said he thinks we will be in a dictatorship by this time next year rather than in the middle of an election, if we don't impeach Bush.

He's not some old guy my age living across the street here in an apartment without air conditioning above the Colostomy Clinic.

He was in the Reagan administration and he says this stuff.

You believe that?

The radio just said that we are in danger of terror attacks. They even play some terror music to go along with the news. Do-do, do-do, do-do.

You believe that?

Ol' Don said he woke up the other morning ... he was in his yellow lawn chair under the tree in his backyard ... and, get this ... all he saw was eyes and a mouth wide open, and a finger pointing at the shed where the mower sits.

He couldn't hear because he had wet toilet paper stuck into his ears so he could nap with the neighbor kids close-by playin' kickball in the church parking lot.

This huge hand, could have been red, wet, from doing dishes. But anyway, it splattered water on his nose and in his eyes, and then it knocked him out of the chair onto his grass.

And before he passed out, he saw what looked like ol' Lucille's backside headin' back into the house.

He mows every day now. I guess when you're scared you do crazy things.

I haven't seen any terrorists 'round here. I went for a walk last night. You sure can hear the locusts. You can't see them either. I wonder if it's one making all that racket or if there's a bunch of them up there.

I really like it when the train comes through and the engineer just blows that whistle.

Makes you think things are really happening. The train doesn't stop. Headed somewhere else, maybe somewhere important.

Not here.

Margie comes over and holds up the glass pot to ask if I want more.

I put my hand over my cup and shake my head a hundred times.

No, no. I'll have to pee all day if I do.

But what I might do is walk on up to that bench outside the new Taco John's on the highway.

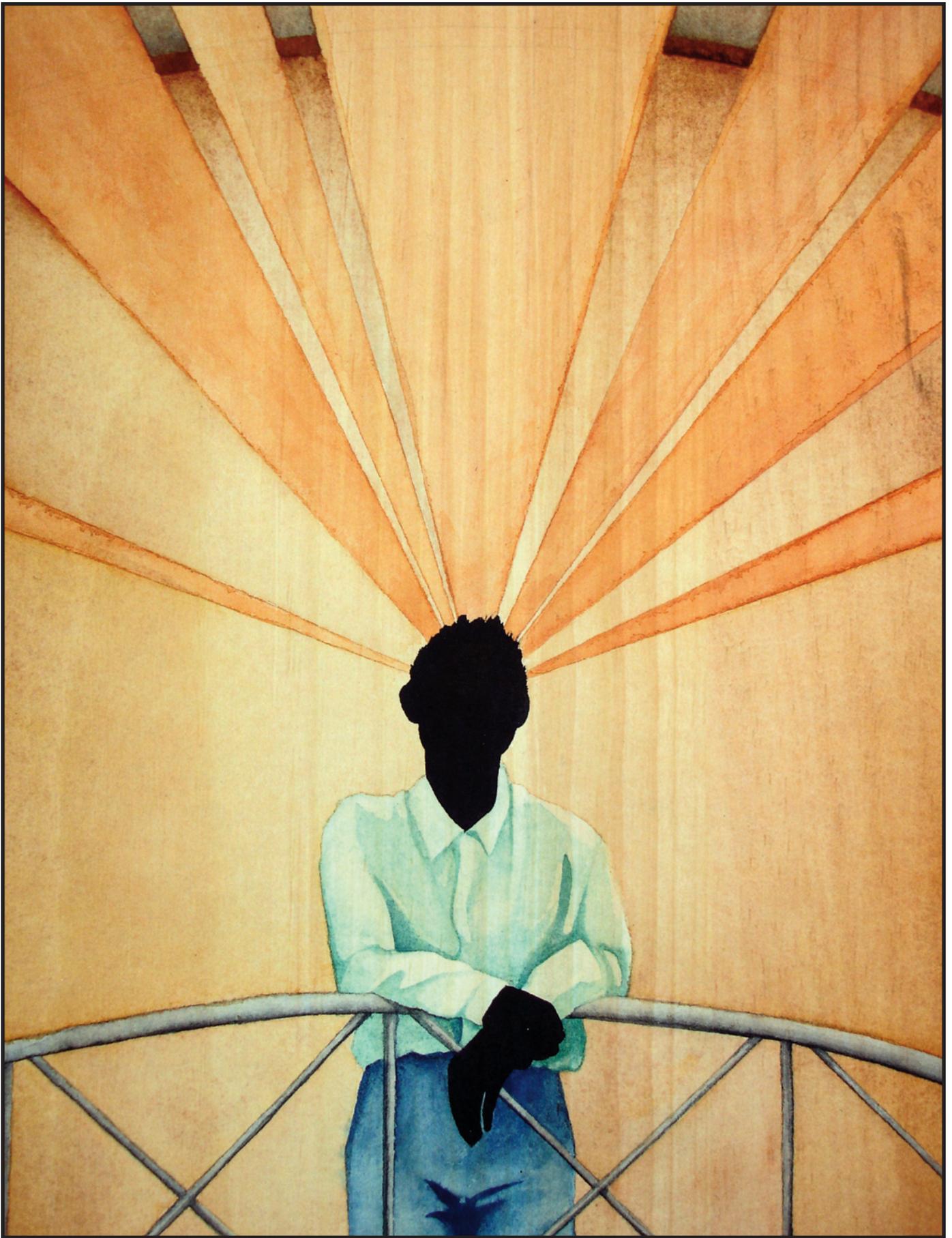
I think I'll sit there for a while.

There's lots of traffic on about lunch time.

Some guys in here'll tell you the United States government is not the real terrorist. Those are the same folks who have been telling us for the past ten years there is no such thing as global warming.

Well, I better go if I'm going.

I just hope I can get up the hill before I sweat to death.



FOUR

Securing The Perimeter

“I don’t mean to sound bitter, cold, or cruel, but I am, so that’s how it comes out.”

— Bill Hicks

Is this heaven?

Well.

From up here it kinda does, maybe seem like that.

I am waaay up here.

Up here.

On the water tower!

Not *on* the water tower, on that walkway that goes around.

We’ve got one of those silver, pointed ones, not so big, not like the big, round white ones they have in Des Moines and Cedar Falls.

Ours depicts, at various times, the town name, the current graduating class, the current mayor’s current girlfriend, and the current state of the local educational system via spelling acumen.

Well, I have been stationed here by the local city council to look for terrorists, for Jesus Iowa, maybe his gang. He might have a gang, that’s some of the reports we’ve been getting.

I am scanning the perimeter.

Looking for The Iowa Terrorist, Jesus Iowa.

As well as any other terror types.

Hey, they gave me this cool pith helmet with netting, and a beeper. I get a beeper. I've tried it. It beeps.

And I've got this assistant, Jordan. He's going to be in fifth grade in the fall. He sends me up extra water on this pulley system he fixed up ...

Anyway ...

Maybe I'm facing the wrong way, but what I see is Mrs. Van der VanDreesen pulling into the Hy Vee lot. She's been pulling in for most of the morning. There's a special on iceberg lettuce.

And I see Jarrod van de Boom. He's driving around in the cruiser, mostly watching me.

There's most of the city council coming out of coffee at Family Table. They're not really supposed to get together like that, makes people think they're planning, making decisions outside of meetings.

They're pointing up at me. Hey, guys.

There's the spire of Saint Judy's Catholic Church over in CreameryVille, on the other side of the corn and soybeans and the river and the dump and the national guard armory.

There's the lights on the ball field, the construction site for the new middle school next to the high school, the kids arranging the lawn chair sale display in the Pamida parking lot.

Some of our teams went to state last year.

The one-act play group got a gold medal in Ames. They always do. It's a tradition.

I can see apple pies cooling and blueberries ripening and I hear cardinals.

The noon whistle of the white picket fence factory is more of a toot.

And I can see how Jesus Iowa would want to ruin it all.

Fucker.

It's rumored that he hates us for our hand-sized bluegills and the smell of wood smoke and lawn leaves and he steals leaves.

As any good terrorist knows, the way to really stick it to freedom is to demolish icons.

Well, I'll keep my eyes peeled.

Is this a great country?

Or what?

That is the question.

Looking for the truth about America. It's become a cottage industry these days.

Most of us are in the habit of believing things — especially when they come from mainstream sources. We believe things mostly because we see them on TV, or because a "respected" expert or leader assures us they are true.

Geezuz, don't do that.

That's where we are, where we're heading, to the place where nobody believes anything coming out of Washington, D.C., printed in our major newspapers, seen on TV, heard on the radio, because we know it's all lies — the way the folks leaning on the bar in the Rusty Sickle in downtown Moscow must have

felt about each pronouncement that came from the Kremlin, Tass, Pravda.

Just shaking their heads, saying, what a lying bunch of sons of midgets and musk ox.

Show me the difference.

The only difference is that it is us, and it's now, and it's here — and we can't believe this is happening to us. And we will deny it is happening to us for the rest of our lives.

Remember those press conferences on TV where the director of Homeland Security stands up there with the director of the FBI?

They are sporting spanking new “Look The Fuck Out” terror-orange hardhats and T-shirts and padded vests, with hip waders, and camo, waterproof hunting boots cut to the calf.

Duck calls sticking out of their back pockets.

That was leading up to the last presidential election.

They don't have those anymore. I wonder why.

We're getting ready to blow the fuck out of the Iranians — who are each and everyone born terrorists of course — and so now we have to have terrorists in a New York City airport.

Well ... to show that it makes perfect sense to kill the Iranians.

Time to re-Duct Tape your windows, dude.

We forget too easily.

Remember.

Remember how George W. Bush came to power.

A coup d'etat.

He stole The Presidential Election.

Twice.

Abetted by The Supreme Court and The Free Press.

We, some of us — I, suspect he and his junta engineered 911, murdered Paul Wellstone, lied about WMD.

The fuckers have secret prisons in Poland and Romania and Disneyland and they torture people.

All this for power.

Don't worry about a thing.

The perimeter is secure.

I'll let you know if I see anything.

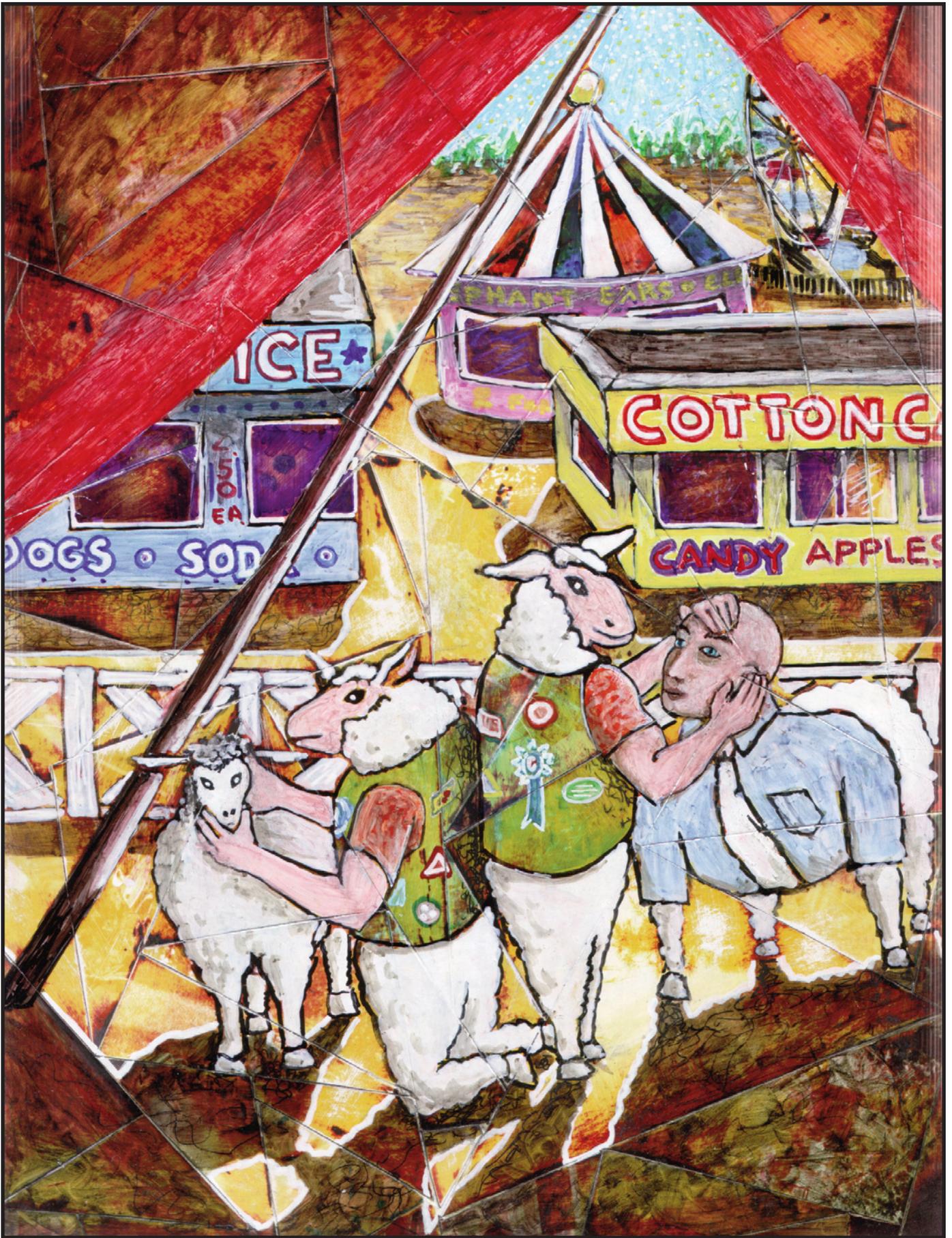
Hasta los tacos.

And there is Lula Vander Zwaag.

I could see a lot more if I had some *binos*.

Hey!

Heeey, Jordaaan!



FIVE

Undercover Sheep Judge

Missing Trillions

**Rumsfeld Buries Admission of Missing 2-plus Trillion Dollars in Sept. 10, 2001
Press Conference**

On September 10, 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld held a press conference to disclose that over \$2,000,000,000,000 in Pentagon funds could not be accounted for. Rumsfeld stated: "According to some estimates we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions." According to a report by the Inspector General, the Pentagon cannot account for 25 percent of what it spends.

Such a disclosure normally might have sparked a huge scandal. However, the commencement of the attack on New York City and Washington in the morning would assure that the story remained buried.

To the trillions already missing from the coffers, an obedient Congress terrorized by anthrax attacks would add billions more in appropriations to fight the "War on Terror."

— 911.Research.com/CBS Evening News

Hey, c'mere, c'mere.

Hey.

Shhh. I have to whisper.

I am here amid the market lambs and the Myers Family, shhhh.

I wish you could see me, but I'm incognito.

I have managed to slip inside the infrastructure of the Orange County Fair.

The sun is shining bright. It is hot. It is very early, but the little bleachers in the sheep judging arena are already packed hip to butt to brisket.

Over here.

I am the understudy judge ... my public persona.

Actually, I am here under the not-quite-official auspices of the United States Department of Homeland Security, although I understand that if I am captured they will deny any knowledge of me whatsoever. I'm used to that, my parents said the same thing.

I get to wear this green vest with a big button with a photo of a sheep, and there are about a hundred other badges on this vest, all for starting fires. I'm wondering if it might have belonged to an insane Girl Scout at one time.

And I've got a straw hat that kind of hangs in my eyes, black-rimmed glasses, yellow judging shorts. The real deal.

I'll be here all week.

My goal is to get over to the Iowa Sweet Corn Dipped in Butter And Then Chocolate booth and back without losing my spot.

Baaa! Oops. That just came out.

For some reason, I'm finding out I have a certain affinity with sheep.

But I am not taking my eye off the target, not for a moment.

I have my eyes on the prize. There isn't anything or anybody in this arena that will escape my extreme scrutiny.

Go about your day. I got this.

I actually think the guy in the brand new coveralls in the third row from the bottom would fry up real well. And his wife has good muscling and a nice rump.

They both have good thickness through the leg, with natural thickness, as well, over the top, definition is apparent, with good straightness of lines.

Baaa! Sorry, ma'am, undercover.

Hey, while there is a break here I want to tell you about something.

I recently received an email from the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee and it got me remembering. Something about sheep and human beings and how to tell the difference.

It's about terrorists and whatever, too, at least I think it is.

About a friend I had when I was younger, in college, just out of college, I think it was.

He told me about something he was involved in, in his first reporter job.
That's probably how I got on the Peltier mailing list.

My friend was involved in a lot of stuff in his day, and as a reporter he interviewed Leonard Peltier in Leavenworth Prison and then he talked to Randy Ricks, the head of the Minneapolis FBI division.

Ricks had been involved in the Peltier case for years.

My friend wanted to know the truth about the thing, because he thought it was important.

He went out to talk to some people at the Jumping Bull Compound at Oglala and visited the graves of Anna Mae and Joe Stuntz and the memorial at Wounded Knee, and he read the book by Peter Matthiessen.

I remember thinking what my friend was doing was important, but maybe not enough to go to all that trouble ... as he was. I still think it's important. I just haven't thought about it for a while.

Maybe it's the sheep, the Myers Family.

Well, he wrote to the FBI and asked them to put him in touch with the families of the dead FBI agents.

An agent from Minneapolis, Shirley Stanley, sent my friend a letter that included a response from Coler's widow.

He wrote his story and said that he was not sure who was lying, but surely someone was.

Awhile later he decided who was lying.

He sent a letter to Ricks to tell him.

He wrote my friend back.

This is a strange place to start thinking about dead men and their lonely families and a man who has been in prison for thirty years, here with the sheep and the kids and the proud moms and dads, looking for terrorists.

Who is the terrorist? Is it me, or is it you?

Is it Leonard Peltier, or Randy Ricks?

And if we know the truth, what are we doing here?

Who are we to judge sheep?

Is there anything they are not capable of?

They ignore global warming and are likely contemplating the use of first-strike nuclear weapons.

George W. Bush and his group threaten the very existence of civilization.

G.W., Genghis Khan, Marquis de Sade, Machiavelli, George Steinbrenner.

Who else ya got?

Baaa!

Reporting from America ... undercover sheep judge ... in Orange County Iowa ... back to you, Jason.

Letter to Randy Ricks:

Dec. 1, 2000

Hello:

I was working in the early '90s as a journalist in Minnesota. If you recall, I came to your Minneapolis office to discuss the Leonard Peltier case.

I had also been to Leavenworth to meet with Mr. Peltier. In my research I also spoke to Don Dudley in the Rochester FBI office and spoke to Mr. Brewer, one of the former "goons" on the Pine Ridge reservation. And later I was able to obtain a statement from Mr. Coler's widow.

This was around the time of Peltier's appeal in St. Paul federal court. I went to all this work because I think that getting to the truth in the Peltier case is integral to finding out who we are as Americans. Just as someone might research their family history in order to determine who they are. I think many see this case as basic information that is needed for us to know who we are as a people.

At the time I could not decide who was not telling me the truth.

Since then, I have come to the determination that you were not telling the truth.

I think you lied to me about the ballistics evidence we discussed in your office. And I offer to you a recent article in the Toronto Globe & Mail, which details how Myrtle Poor Bear was coerced and tortured in order to give false testimony to convict Peltier.

I think I understand why any FBI agent would feel strongly about this case. You want someone to pay. But to murder Anna Mae Aquash and to instigate the reign of terror on the Pine Ridge reservation prior to the incident at Oglala is wrong.

I feel we [U.S. via FBI] used the goon method on the reservation for whatever reason, just as we used the goon method with the death squads in El Salvador in the 1980s.

I do not respect the office of the FBI.

I know there are men and women who serve time in those offices for good cause, and are respectable. But to think that we have a secret police in this country that will kill and lie and cover-up in order to get the outcome it wants makes us little better than the Soviet Union.

There is little I can do about this. As a journalist I will continue to seek the truth.

Thank you for your time.

Reply from Randy Ricks

12-5-00

Dear [],

This letter doesn't sound like the young man I met many years ago in Mpls. But it does sound like the young protester who hid in the Lincoln church to make a statement.

I'm sorry you have reverted to your old self as I believed the young man in Mpls. had promise.

w/regards

Randy Ricks



SIX

I'm A Terror Watcher

“It’s just a ride and we can change it any time we want. It’s only a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings and money, a choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your door, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love instead see all of us as one.”

— Bill Hicks

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! *God Bless America*.

Hey.

Ohmygod.

Howya doin’? Let me catch my breath.

I’m deployed with the guys on one of the silver metal benches outside the city swimming pool.

We’re watching.

For terrorists.

Dude.

They can’t swim.

Dead-dog giveaway.

It is also late in the summer, and I suppose the moms have those el primo tans, as well as the life-

guards in their one-piece red suits and those whistles that dangle like necklaces.

Anywho.

We – that would be myself, Don, Milt, Al, Fred – we are the newly formed municipal special forces team: Total Information Terror Surveillance.

We have been duly organized and chartered and deputized I think, by the city council, to guard against terrorists, beginning this month and running through the school year, is how I understand it.

Don came up with this idea to come here. The pool's open up to Labor Day.

He says "why do you think they call them wetbacks?"

And the rest of us had to admit it made perfect sense.

And then of course everybody knows, Arab-types will often position towels on their heads.

Lots of towels around here today.

Al's got four in his lap, won't give any out to anybody, "without good reason," he says.

It's hot today, big crowd, lots to watch, keep track of, monitor, observe.

Sometimes we get soaked. We're pretty close to the action. We act like we like it that way.

Al's got the beeper in case we need to call for backup towels. His wife's home most of the day. Tomorrow she's got shit to do.

By now the lifeguards don't wear that white stuff on their noses, everything au naturel.

We've got sunglasses from the Ben Franklin store, orange terror vests and shorts, and special "Homeland" orange hardhats. That was Al's idea. They came from the state highway maintenance shed from the big patch job they had last summer out by the Go-Kart track. If it gets too hot ... well, Don's going to ask a councilman who's his neighbor if we can take them off while the pool has rest break, get some breeze.

Some ladies get up quick when they are napping on their stomachs and they get splashed, and maybe they have that one string not tied ... Milt had to go home early yesterday. It gets to a guy ... this work is not for everyone.

And we've each got a terror whistle on a string around our necks.

Fred blew his, loud, for about a minute straight just a few minutes ago when Mrs. de Champlain walked past on her way to the water fountain. I don't think he even knew he was doing it.

Some days it's about all a guy can do not to blow the damn thing all day long.

Don keeps his in his mouth all the time, like a referee. Does not move, scratch, nothing. He loves freedom that darn much. He is so dedicated, an inspiration to us all.

It's what we need at times like these.

We need guys with things in their mouths – hamburgers, beer bottles, spoons, straw.

Girls too.

Girls and guys and dogs and cats with stuff stuck in their mouths staring.

Looking blankly over the prairie, into space, across the living room, the kitchen table – keeping an eye out – if we are truly to be free.

Free of knowing, caring.

About anyone but ourselves.

Of the true nature of our government or the history of our country.

Free. Free. Free!

Thank God Almighty.

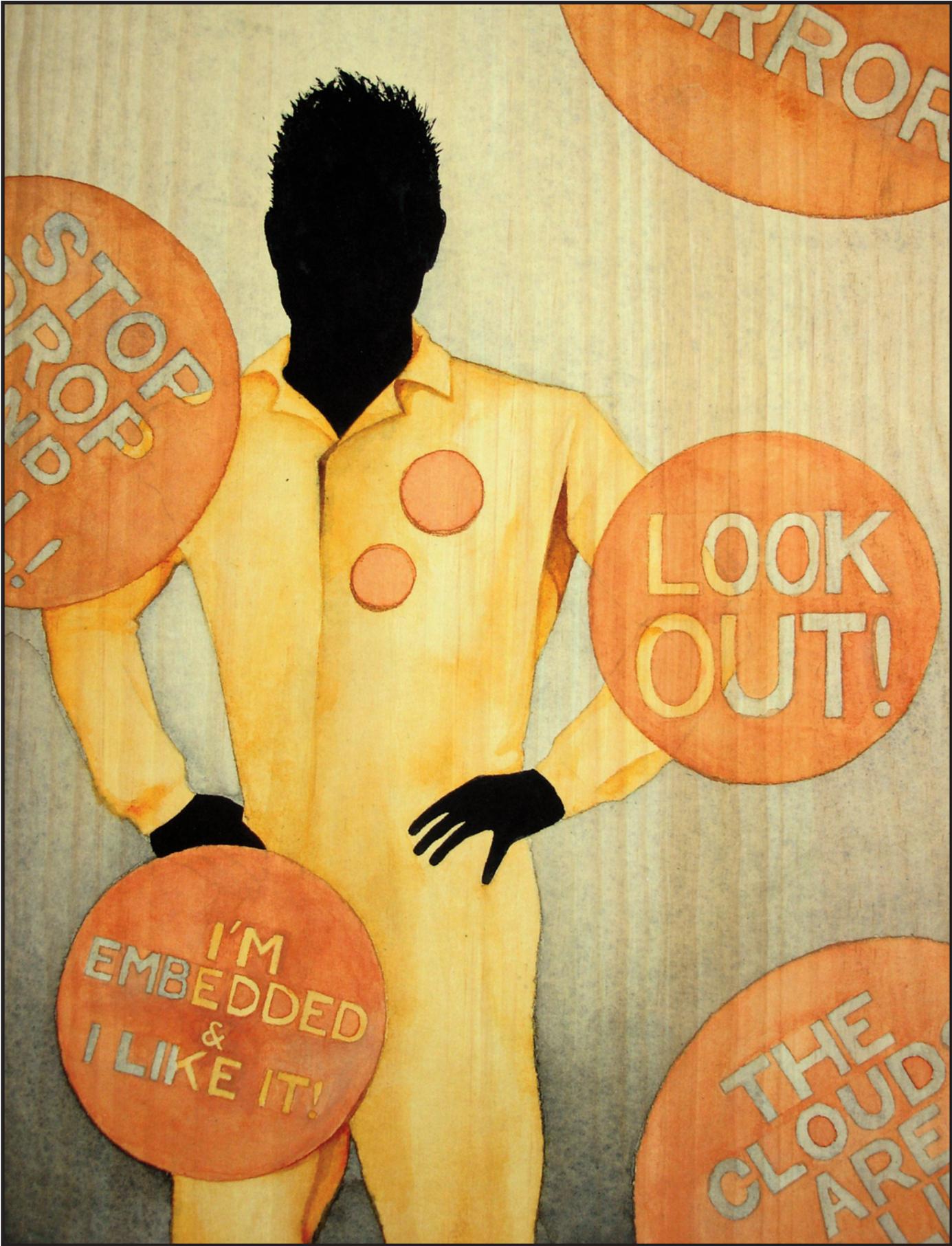
Free.

Okay, well, nothing happening here at the moment.

Look out ... *cannonball*. God Bless the USA.

Go about your day.

I got this.



STOP!

TERROR

LOOK OUT!

I'M EMBEDDED & I LIKE IT!

THE CLOUDS ARE...

SEVEN

“Live At Five-OH!-Five”

You're going to be told lots of things.
You get told things every day that don't happen.

It doesn't seem to bother people, they don't —
It's printed in the press.
The world thinks all these things happen.
They never happened.

Everyone's so eager to get the story
before in fact the story's there
that the world is constantly being fed
things that haven't happened.

All I can tell you is,
it hasn't happened.
It's going to happen.

— Donald Rumsfeld, *Feb. 28, 2003, Department of Defense briefing*

Is this heaven?

It is when you're a big star!

"Channel Nine Live at Five-OH!-Five! — coming to you ... NOW!"

It's me, dude.

Right in front of you.

On ... the ... TeeVee. Move your foot.

Hey.

How's it going?

What I love is how as a member of the Homeland Terror Squad, I get to wear all these hats: Water Tower Spotter, Undercover Sheep Judge.

And now I get to be a member of the local news team.

My mother, Yahweh bless her dark, little terroristic soul, would not have believed this, had she survived the interrogation.

I am on-air talent.

And so I get to wear this terror orange suit, of course, and all these nifty buttons:

"Look Out!"

"The Clouds Are Falling!"

"Stop Drop And Roll!"

"Just Say No To Terror"

"Journalistic Army Of One"

"I'm Embedded & I Like It"

"If it lasts longer than four hours, please consult a physician, veterinarian, or your local Shrine Circus representative."

Okay, I'm back.

Commercial now, we've got some time.

Today we got a visit in the studio, some big shots from the Homeland Broadcasting Company, Herr Brokaw, Herr Rather, and someone carrying along a big color cardboard photo of Herr Jennings, on the tour.

They walked through, shook some hands, handed out buttons, toothbrushes. Those guys have the whitest teeth. I am really going to start brushing from now on.

Just a minute.

"Are your children at risk from terror, from Al Queda? From Mexicans? Any Salvadorans you don't know about on your school board? Well, you might need a deck of Good Ol' Boy Sports Trivia Cards. Whip out

one of these and pop the question to the suspected terror-type.

Who the fuck was Bobby Richardson!

Who the fuck was Tom Tresh!

Who the fuck was Clete Boyer!

“If they don’t know right quick, then they are not from around here, are they? Blow your orange terror whistle and have that sumbitch hauled off to the county concentration camp.

“You can never be too safe, have too much money, or be too happy.

“We’re Good Ol’ Boy. New ‘70s Disco Edition Now Available.”

Okay. I just have to do the news, now they’ll run another commercial.

Anyway, you wouldn’t think much would go on at one of these local stations, but there’s plenty.

We are on the front lines of terror. There are signs all over the hallways and in the dressing rooms that remind us. They’re like those old Uncle Sam recruiting posters.

“Okay, we’re back. Thank you, Jennifer, for that on-site weather update.

You’re kind of sweating. Take paradise, put up a parking lot. Just kidding. Little global warming humor. Jennie?

“Well, we seem to have lost our live remote for now.

“On the local scene.

“What you need is an orange Terror Tinfoil Hat. Get one at your local newspaper or radio station. If you stop by during Terror Month, you might get one autographed by Matt Lauer, Katie Couric, or one of your local television anchors.”

Hey, I get a break now until the ten o’clock show, but it won’t be much of one. I catch a burger on the run, then it’s down to shoot footage of the “Pit Bulls & Rotweillers vs. The 9/11 Truthers and Evolutionists” in The Coliseum.

It might lead if I get some good bite shots.

Well, that’s about it.

That’s what we do.

We’re Channel 9 News. We keep an eye on the world.

So ... you don’t have to.

Go about your day.

I got this.



EIGHT

Bridge To Nowhere

“The world is full of boring, identical and mindless people. They vote for the mayors, the governors, the congressmen, the president, in their likeness – that’s why there’s no leadership, no hope, no juice, no life, no understanding.”

– Charles Bukowski

Hello!

I mean, ahoy!

It’s me!

Out here in the water, in the rowboat.

Me and Carl.

We’ve got this one oar in the water. We dropped the other one. One should do it.

Homeland Bridge Inspectors, reporting for duty, sir!

At your service.

What we see here, and our report will show this when we find the pen, is that this bridge failed after a truckload of money headed for the military caused it to collapse.

Wait just a moment, please.

It’s my beeper.

“Yes, yes, uh-huh. I don’t know. Dropped it. Not me, Carl. Yes. Yes-sir. No-sir. Yes ma’am. Okay, fine, then. You smell good today, sir-ma’am. Of course, not through the phone, impossible, yes-ma’am. Buh-bye.”

Okay, I’m back.

Seems we now have reports of the same types of trucks running into schools in Cleveland and Detroit and Oakland as well. And similar bridges in New York and Charlotte and Denver have also apparently crashed and burned.

Oh, boy, reports are now coming in about sub-standard housing in every major city in the United States, mostly black neighborhoods it seems, that have somehow been run straight through by large trucks full of cash in large denominations, headed for military operations all over the country as well as overseas.

I guess they go to Stratcom in Omaha so we can have missiles in space. Cool. God knows we need that.

And control the world for Warren Buffett.

Ma-an, lucky for us he was there at Offutt that day to meet with George Bush.

Whew.

And to Fort Benning in Georgia and Vanderberg in California and Leonard Wood in Missouri.

Lots of insurgent types in California and Missouri.

I guess we need all those because we are so free.

And we need lots of bases and soldiers and money in Germany and Phillipines and Columbia and Japan — and Uzbekhistan and Kadzikastan and Dakotastan and Nevadastan.

And we just cannot afford to buy everything.

Our parents knew that.

You have to make choices.

We cannot have strong bridges in Minneapolis, smooth streets in Cleveland, warm schools in Detroit, and still be able to change the tires on our tanks in Turkey.

We need to pay our taxes for that every year because that is what we have always done.

And we are more than smart enough to decide which is which.

I’m sure we are.

Somebody is.

Thinking about that.

Well, what we are going to do here is to keep rowing, see what we can see, report back, monitor the beeper.

That’s kind of what we do.

And we get these orange terror vests.

It’s all pretty cool.

It’s amazing how our president and vice-president have this whole thing under control, the different

ins and outs, scenarios, plans, all those beepers.

Hey, you have a good day, you ol' American you.

Just got another beeper call. Just wait ...

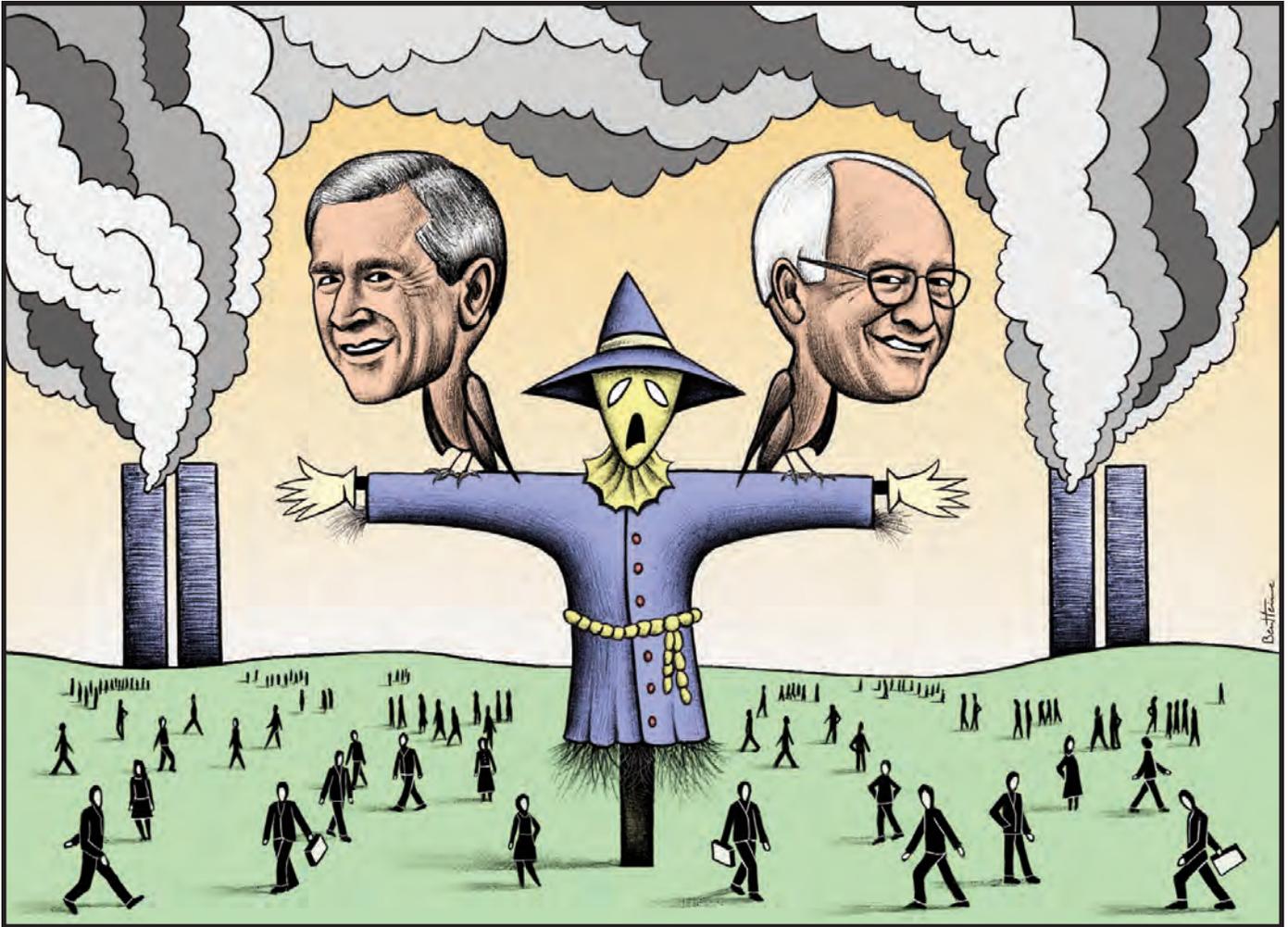
... Seems that we're going to be dragging for our other oar. ... Then either me or Carl will need to put on the wet suit and goggles and deploy to the bottom.

Carl's shaking his head.

Don't you worry about a thing.

Go about your day.

I got this.



NINE

Hood On The Scarecrow

The Digital Revolution
Oh my goodness gracious!
What you can buy off the Internet
in terms of overhead photography!

A trained ape can know an awful lot
of what is going on in this world,
just by punching on his mouse
for a relatively modest cost!

— Donald Rumsfeld, *June 9, 2001, following European trip*

Psssttt!

PSSSTTTT!

Over here!

Hey. How's it goin'?

Yes. I am the scarecrow. You didn't see me? Really?

Cool.

I am on Double Secret Terrorist Duty. Securing the Homeland.

Actually to secure my homeland I would have to split myself into fourths and go back to Europe.

I think this is somebody else's homeland. Oh, well, always willing to chip in and do my part. I'm also a member of Sertoma, Kiwanis and Noon Rotary. I love meetings. I'm a people person.

Anywho ... hot enough for ya?

Well, what do you think?

Is this the end of our American Fascism Period — or just the beginning?

You think we will have elections in 2008? You think Bush and Cheney will walk out voluntarily?

Or do you think like Wingnut Willie or Wacko Wanda, that they might do another 911 and put us on Super Secret Double Probation for our own good?

That's the question of the day, the week, the year, right?

I don't know.

I am just here to do my duty. To protect and to serve and to eat pizza. That would be my motto, I have decided, if anyone ever asks what my motto is. I swear that's what it is.

I was in the post office yesterday.

Rush Limbaugh is always on in there, loud.

I wonder if anyone listens, or if it's just on for noise, like having Paul Harvey on over noon in the cafe so nobody has to really talk to each other.

I heard though.

Limbaugh was talking about illegals. How they were dangerous and they were terror-type individuals.

That's why I'm wearing this white hood and sheet out here in the garden.

I want us to be free.

I want it so bad. My dreams are all about baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet. I swear they are.

I want our kids to be free to grow up and join the National Guard and go kill who needs to be killed and then have the freedom to come back and worship in the church of their choice and work at Pizza World.

I'll stand here all day, or until my arms get pretty tired, to make sure that happens.

I love the ol' Fatherland, Motherland, Disneyland, I really do.

I was born in the USA.

I know all about the Santa Monica Freeway, the Ventura Highway, the Hotel California. Please come to Denver with the snowfall.

The New York State Thruway is closed, man!

Love Boat, all that.

I may not have ever been there, but I've read about it, heard someone mention something about it once. Maybe on TV.

It's mine. I have ownership, in the self-help book, booga-booga sense.

And now it's all changing.

We don't really like that.

My grandparents or somebody way back came over here for some reason — and that is sacred — and they did things we don't discuss to make sure their kids and wives weren't mad at them and got the stuff they wanted. And that tradition continues to this very day.

Shhh. Here comes those g.d. aliens.

They just stare. That bugs me. I think they know it does.

They've got a round ship and blinking lights and I think I've seen 'em around here before. They all look about the same to me.

Shoo! Shoo! Go on scat!

Git! Git!

Okay, well. I might be here awhile. They don't seem to speak English. Like I'm surprised.

Go about your day.

I got this.



OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE
CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR

TEN

Happiness is Orange County in My Rearview Mirror

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita,
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria.
You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane,
all they will call you will be "deportees."

We died in your hills and we died in your deserts,
we died in your valleys, we died in your plains.
We died 'neath your trees and we died 'neath your bushes,
both sides of the river we died just the same.

— Woody Guthrie

Jesus Iowa had left that classroom on 911 and walked across the front yard and parking lot to the baseball field to sit in the visitor's dugout.

That's what I learned later.

I heard that's when he wrote that letter to the editor that the old editor refused to print.

He left his books in the dugout and he walked across town. He walked into the "Oaxaca Cafe" and sat at one of the tables like a regular customer.

His mother came out to ask why he wasn't at school. He nodded at the TV high in the corner behind the front counter, at the images replayed of the towers coming down.

"Controlled demolition," he said dejectedly.

His mother brought him a chicken enchilada and rice with a cherry Coke in his special glass.

Maria sat with her son and silently watched him eat and look up at the television.

They stared deep into each other's eyes knowing their world had changed forever.

The mother knew because she had never seen her son quite like this before. Jesus Iowa knew because he had never understood before.

He talked with his parents late at night, around the tables after the customers had gone home, with colorful blankets covering the front window, which the town cop could not see through unless he were to park his car and get out, which he would not do in one million years.

The parents tried to get Jesus to go back to school, to "finish his education."

Jesus knew he had already learned too much.

He had taken all his architecture textbooks and biographies and set them by the front door of the restaurant for Mr. Molini to find when he came for lunch on a Saturday.

Jesus thought of people in town he could talk to. He watched the TV and listened to the news reporters prepare the people for war. He saw the yellow ribbons and stickers on the vehicles around town.

The family did not answer the phone calls from the school. They hid Jesus like a dissident when the principal, Mrs. Sample, came to the restaurant to ask about Jesus.

Jesus spent his days thinking and watching CNN and eating too many Ho-Ho's.

His father would hide him in the backseat of the car and take Jesus and his dog, Gypsy, out to the county park in the country so that Jesus could get out of the house and walk and be away from the TV.

One day Jesus came downstairs for breakfast and said he was going to hold a sign downtown.

"I am going to do it," he said.

"For God. For Country. For Honor. Just like on TV. I am going to fight for my country. Die if I must, like a dirty dog in the street, with my tongue and guts hanging out."

"No! *Mijo!*" his mother shrieked and put both her hands to her mouth.

His father smirked and then became serious.

"You cannot stop what is happening, what is going to happen," said the father.

Jesus gritted his teeth and became angry in an instant.

His father put up a hand. Jesus sat down.

"Go away," said the father, trying not to cry. "You must go away."

He put up his hand again to stop the mother's protests.

"Go to Mexico City, Oaxaca, Chiapas. See your people, see where you came from. That is where you were conceived, *mijo*. This is not your country. We were wrong to bring you here. We thought it would be better."

He put his chin to his chest and sobbed.

* * *

Jesus sat in silence as his parents prepared for bed.

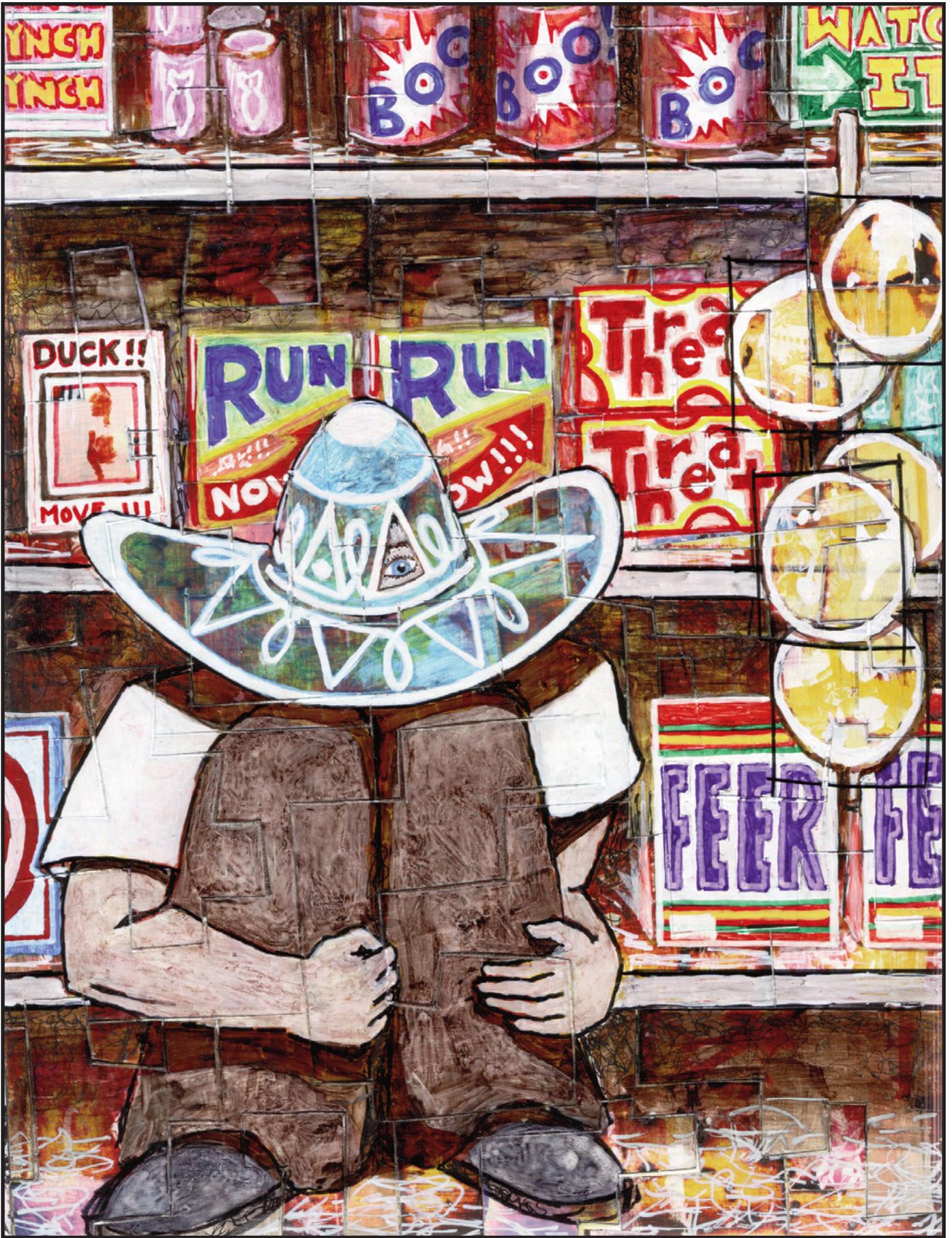
He sat out on the porch, thinking, ready to leap the railing if a police car came down Madison Street.

The next morning when his parents slumped out for coffee Jesus had a Yankees gym bag by the door.

His parents helped him with a list of relatives and a map, then hid him in the backseat for the drive to the bus depot in New Mannheim.

They had coffee and split a sweet roll in a booth at Casey's before he left.

Never to return.



ELEVEN

Pinche Puta Store Detective

“I’m gonna share with you a vision that I had, cause I love you. And you feel it. You know all that money we spend on nuclear weapons and defense each year, trillions of dollars, correct? Instead — just play with this — if we spent that money feeding and clothing the poor of the world — and it would pay for it many times over, not one human being excluded — we can explore space together, both inner and outer, forever in peace. Thank you very much. You’ve been great, I hope you enjoyed it.”

— Bill Hicks

Que paso?

I am sitting here in Gregg’s Hometown Foods.

Store Detective, looking for terrorists, securing the homeland on the front lines.

As always, just trying to do my part to ensure the freedom of my fellow Americans.

I am looking for Mexicans who might be illegally alive, who do not have the proper stamp on the papers in their pocket, and thus deserve to be separated from their weeping children and sent to wherever we

want to send them in a hot, crowded white INS van piloted by highly trained, intelligent professionals with their uniformed butts smearing Ho-Ho's into the vinyl seats, who could have been anything in life, really, but made the conscious decision to drive around in the desert sucking down dust for breakfast.

The whole thing is planned by licensed Christians in churches, in chambers, in Congress, to keep poor people and their children from having Frosted Flakes in the morning.

Because ... their crawling from zero to one might conceivably hamper us from getting from ten to eleven.

If you can see me from where you are seated you know that I am also sitting, on the floor, in the corner between the white milk and the tortillas, at the far end of the Mexican Foods Aisle.

It is my charge to find any Islamiscists, Hispanunists, or other terror-type individuals.

I am also to tackle anyone I suspect of being from Nebraska. Gregg says.

This is where I will find my insurgents.

And though I do not understand their language, I know enough to know when they are hiding something, or planning to meet with Jesus Iowa to topple the towers, collapse Casey's, dump the Dairy Queen, pillage Pizza Hut.

That jabber-jabber is all about planning with other foreign types to seek out sales on box cutters, steal leaves.

These they get here have dust and weird stickers on their shoes from walking all the way up through El Paso and shit, and Agua Prieta, Douglas, all those off-brand towns.

And they have to leave their home towns behind or maybe, probably grandma and their new puppy.

Whatever. My grandparents probably did the same thing.

I can almost taste the salsa in the jars across the aisle.

I like Mexican food. Everybody does.

I've never had any other terror-type food, except Fred claims the sandwich came from Iraq.

That sounds like bullcrap, but I wonder if I would like Afghan pizza ... or Nebraska corn.

I am undercover, as per usual.

I am wearing a big, wide sombrero.

My head is drooping to my knees.

But I am not sleeping. Sometimes I am sleeping. Sometimes snoring. I get a beeper.

I am wearing a new, white T-shirt with blood-red letters: Pinche Puta Store Detective.

Pretty cool.

Go about your day.

I got this.

TWELVE

I Must Protest

“People get disturbed about civil disobedience. That’s exactly the purpose of civil disobedience, to disturb people.”

— Howard Zinn, *1971 speech at Boston Commons*

Well, the newspaper got a new editor. I thought I saw somebody downtown, a young girl, blonde, pretty.

That must be her.

They say she was raised on a little farm outside of town, on the highway.

The old editor is now the old publisher and he and the wife moved to Okoboji, bought a cabin. The cabins there are not like you think of cabins, more like you think of two-hundred-and three-hundred-thousand-dollar lake homes.

The new editor printed a letter to the editor from Jesus Iowa.

No address. Maybe they don’t have to have an address. I’ve never seen them print addresses. I’m not sure I ever checked.

He must have a job, then. I wonder what his parents think.

He might not have an address. He still could be living on the streets of town, hiding in the alleys.

Lots of people say they’ve seen him looking in their windows for something to eat. He’s got long hair

and a beard and big, wild eyes, and fingernails that are more like claws.

The Tichners used to have a 'possum living in their garage, for years. The other night it was missing. It didn't come out to eat the bread and milk and sugar Berl puts out for it.

They say Jesus Iowa killed the 'possum and ate it.

Here's the letter that the new blonde editor with blue eyes and red dress and yellow backpack ran the other day.

I'm not sure if she's going to jail or will lose her job now or what.

March 27

Internal Revenue Service
Kansas City, MO 64999-002

Hello,

Enclosed is a crossed-out tax form.

I will not cooperate with the murderous regime of George W. Bush.

President Bush and his administration planned and carried out the attacks on the United States on 9-11-01, in order to attack Iraq and steal their oil.

In the eyes of Bush and Cheney and Rove, the war is going according to plan. They and their friends are making millions, billions, from the oil, from the defense industry, while the poor go without, while social services are cut in order to pay for more war and killing.

As a Christian, I cannot go along with this.

I must protest.

Sincerely,

Jesus Iowa

THIRTEEN

Killing the Democrats

I think what you'll find,
I think what you'll find is,
whatever it is we do substantively,
there will be near-perfect clarity
as to what it is.

And it will be known,
and it will be known to the Congress,
and it will be known to you,
probably before we decide it,
but it will be known.

— Donald Rumsfeld, *Feb. 28, 2003, Department of Defense briefing*

Some people are going down to talk to this new blonde newspaper girl editor.

She ran another terror letter from Jesus Iowa.

They say this one had an address on it, but she didn't put it in.

It was from the state prison, Fort Madison. They say Jesus Iowa is serving ten years for drugs and how can he write letters to the editor if he's in jail?

To the editor,

If I were to run for Congress, this is how I would do it.

Ten-point Plan.

1A) Of course, U.S. out of Iraq, yesterday. We should not have been there. The killing and dying has all been in vain.

1) Cut military spending and pay for things like alternative energy research, global warming research, inner city housing, infrastructure [bridges], schools, social services. The military budget is huge. I really think we could pay for all these things by taking out what we don't need in the military, which is most of it. When the Soviet Union folded, there was no "peace dividend", no switch from military programs to others — because those who were making money on the defense industry scrambled and made sure they did not lose money.

And the Democrats were like, oh, okay. It's not OK.

2) Investigate 911. We don't have the answers yet. Ever wonder why the Bush government did not want an investigation? I do too. This is big, this is huge. We need answers.

3) We need Democrats who are willing to push to prosecute Bush for war crimes, things like torture and lying to start a war and people dying because of that. How about stolen elections and anthrax and a dead Senator? We do not need to get past this until it's time to get past this.

4) Repeal the Patriot Act. Or at least read the damn Patriot Act and see if there is anything there we need. We just accepted it and said, oh, okay. It's not OK.

5) Decriminalize immigration. Where did you come from? Yeah, me, too. Or, perhaps put Native Americans in charge of the INS and go from there. We are Christians, some of us, right? We should help poor people, not throw them in jail. Lots of our Iowa towns lost population during the '80s farm crisis. Here are people who actually want to live in Early and Lone Rock and Spencer — and we don't want them? What's up with that?

6) Universal health care. Should have happened long ago. Go see "SICKO." Go sit in an emergency room, see what their first question is. It ain't "what can we do to help you?"

7) Pardon non-violent drug offenders. Let them go home to their families, watch their children grow up, have lives. The drug war was just another ruse, something for politicians to shout in a crowded theater to get themselves elected. It got more prisons built and more schools crumbling down, but it was wrong. Democrats are like, oh, OK.

8) Marijuana. What are we going to do about it? We need to think about it. What are our children supposed to think when we put people in federal prison for twenty years for marijuana and have "this Bud's for you" on the TV every day?

9) End the death penalty. It's simple. Don't kill.

10) End the requirement for young people to register for the draft. Don't kill.

* And how about something about unions and the minimum wage and a dozen other things that we don't even consider but would make perfect sense to consider.

I just think Democrats could say so much more.

People are pulling their hair out waiting for the Democrats to say more, say something.

The whole world is waiting for the Democratic Party to not be afraid.

FOURTEEN

Democratic Hummer

Once in a while,
I'm standing here, doing something.
And I think,
"What in the world am I doing here?"
It's a big surprise.

— Donald Rumsfeld, *May 16, 2001, interview with the New York Times*

Dude.
It's me.
The Terrorist, Jesus Iowa.
I know what they say about me.
I know who you've been talking to.
I'm sitting outside Democratic Headquarters, Iowa Division, Corn Battalion, in the Humvee out on the street guarding the place.
Nobody around. My feet were tired. I needed something to write on.
And what I have here is something I think you should have too.
It's a flyer, a handout I'm working on. Maybe I could get the volunteers inside to print them up and

send them out to about a million people. Or maybe the newspaper would print it as a letter to the editor, or the radio station would say it, or the TV news anchors.

I call it My Flyer.

My Flyer

Any candidate who does not talk about these while seated on the bale of hay with a piece of new straw behind each ear and an orange hunting cap pulled tight over his or her head is lying to you.

They don't care about you.

They are smiling in your face, eating your chili, your Ho-Ho's, getting spit on your nose, and they are lying to you.

Like any insurance salesman stinking up your sofa.

You would be better off going fishing or getting drunk, preferably both, than listening to his or her horse shit.

* The pre-planning of this whole scenario: Bush elected, 911, anthrax, war, profits from war.

There's more, lots more. This is enough. He or she won't want to hear even this and — he or she should be bringing it up, not you.

If you bring it up, they will run away, tie and or skirt flying, while grabbing straw from ears and tossing it away.

* Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, kidnapping people and taking them to secret prisons and torturing them for years.

* Stolen elections, 2000, 2004.

* The deaths of Paul Wellstone, Pat Tillman, the phony rescue story of Jessica Lynch.

* The profits made by the vice-president's old company during the war.

* The lies that got us into war.

* The sham of an investigation into 911

If these candidates act like, yeah, the sum total of the discussion is whether and when our troops leave Iraq, they are phony bastards and should have the straw ripped from their phony hands.

If he or she does not talk about these things, that means they are not important to him or her — which means they are stupid, or they are lying, phony bastards.

Dude, not one of these candidates is stupid.



FIFTEEN

Shot In The Dark

“If there is a good fight you are fighting it.

Yes, it looks like this country is in for another one. The idiot concepts of our leaders are endless. It all makes me sick straight on through.

Nothing has been learned from the past. Just new bodies, new waste, new hell.

Always a new excuse for a new war.

And the family structure, religion and the daily newspapers leading us on in.

Yes, I am sick with it all. It sits in my gut churning, and they go on ahead.

You ... keep going.”

— Charles Bukowski

Jesus Iowa killed the Democrats of Orange County, Iowa.

They are no more.

The people say if that's what the Democrats are about, then I'm not having anything to do with them.

There are those who might have had leanings toward the Democrats, who might have voted with them, and now will not, and there are those — almost all of the people — who were Republican anyway.

And there are the Democrats who are dying, dead, embalmed, rouged, lipsticked, suited-up, casketed, memorialized, buried, drunk to, and forgotten.

The terrorists in the Jesus Iowa Gang got another one Saturday morning.

Dick Hardwick grabbed his chest with both hands and passed out while mowing his front lawn.

He fell face-first onto the Lawn Boy and lay there sizzling for ten minutes before his wife found him, his nose and left cheek barbecued, medium-well some say.

Monday they had a big funeral at Saint Lucy's.

Fueled by Father MacAnulty's sermon, a lot of anger spilled out the front door and down the brick steps after that.

Dick was somebody's brother.

I can sympathize.

I'm not from Iowa. I'm from Nebraska. I have today off from work and I think I'll drive over to Scribner this afternoon to visit two sisters who still live there, Lola and Lyla.

Another sister, Layla, lives in Greeley.

We had a brother, Anthony, who died at birth in Canton, South Dakota. We drive through Canton when we go to Sioux Falls.

The cemetery is up on a hill on the west edge of town. Dad and Mom couldn't afford a grave. When I heard I had a brother I was a senior in high school. I drove right there from Scribner, with my dog.

We walked all over that effing cemetery in the hot, hot sun. Couldn't find it. Then mom says when I get home, there probably wasn't one. It was a shoebox and a hole, like you might bury a puppy.

Well, it was the best they could do.

Mom said it was because of bad roads and not so great shock absorbers on the Ford, or maybe Model T, I forget what she said. It's sad. I try not to think about it so much.

John and Jones, Dick's brothers, ran down those steps, stripping their ties, screaming they were going to kill Jesus Iowa.

Lots of guys walked home right then, some ran, left their families at the church, some shoved the families into the SUVs and squealed the tires to get home.

They all met back at the Legion parking lot, firing shotguns into the sky, divided into groups, jumped and scrambled and fell into pickups and SUVs and fire engines and police cruisers, to find the terrorist Jesus Iowa.

Everyone wore orange.

Orange caps, hats, vests, coats, jackets, gloves, pants, chaps, boots, sunglasses, socks, long johns, briefs, lighters.

A red Ford pickup full of men sped off for the old hobo camp from the '30s by the railroad tracks south of the water tower, on East Avenue. Some guys in a camo Blazer spun around the post office corner and

headed for the alley behind Furniture Twins.

A loud, lime Cougar puffed blue-grey smoke and squealed and smoked the tires and swerved down Main through the red light straight to the old wooden bridge over Broad Bottom Creek.

I walked into Hy Vee and found Jesus Iowa placing boxes of All-Bran into plastic bags for Mrs. Zylstra. They laughed together as Jesus put one box in upside-down.

I walked up to Jesus and asked him how it was going.

“You back in town, then?”

“Yeah.”

He wore that blaze red Hy Vee uniform shirt and tan nameplate: Jesus.

I stood next to him and he was tall. And handsome. And his stone black hair was combed straight back, wet looking.

“So.”

“I was in Mexico,” he smiled, putting in Mrs. Zylstra’s All-Wine box and her All-Spice and her All-Haddock.

“People there are so poor. I stayed with my uncle. I walked to Chiapas, over the border, on my own.

“A small girl with a paper doll told me how to find someone who told me where to go, up the mountain, to find Commandante Marcos.”

I walked with Jesus as he pushed Mrs. Zylstra’s cart to the parking lot.

She wanted to talk about whether or not Jesus should have his tie hanging loose or pulled tight. I moved in between her and Jesus and the grocery cart, making her go way ‘round the white van and the parking lot light to finally find us again, if she ever did.

“I stayed with them, in the mountains,” said Jesus.

“In the jungle. Mexicans. My people. Intellectual revolutionaries, taking up arms against injustice, making a difference.

“On the edge. Pushing the envelope. Writing for international publications, invited to speak in universities around the world, in between living in a tent, sleeping on hard-packed ground, being eaten alive by mosquitoes the size of a child’s hand, eating beans and more beans, killing and willing to be killed in order that poor people might live a better life.

“Fighting the same rich people who are everywhere, same as here, who attacked their own country, same as the rich people do everywhere.”

He looked at me as if I should know what comes next, then gave me the answer.

“What else could there be in life?”

Jesus stopped his cart. We stood in the middle of the dark Hy Vee parking lot, away from the one light, with Mrs. Zylstra looking for us.

He stared at me as if I should know the answer.

Well, of course not.

Still, I did not know what he wants me to understand.

I knew who the Hawkeyes played next week, and how long my lawn was, and to whom I must talk to in order to get my mail delivery restarted after vacation.

Of Chiapas and ... beans ... and ... a child's hand ... I knew not.

I knew that Jesus Iowa was talking to me in a parking lot and he was not shooting an AK-47 in Chiapas. I asked him why he was here then.

"Marcos told me to go back. To Iowa. To my parents. He told me to get an education, get acne, get my heart broken.

"He said, then come to me or write to me.

"For now, don't worry about it.

"I got this."

Jesus smiled big and hoisted Mrs. Zylstra into the toddler's seat in the grocery cart and pushed her to her car, which we couldn't find for a while.

Quite awhile.

We all laughed.

Mrs. Zylstra kicked her feet and put her head back and smiled like her face might explode from being happy.

I suppose that could happen. I've never seen it.

Anyway, Jesus told me as he stood by my car while I found my keys that he was going to community college, and he hoped he might be able to open a branch restaurant in a town nearby and work with his parents.

I said, "cool, dude," because I thought I needed to say something other than, you are the most incredible person I have ever met and walking around this grocery store parking lot in the dark has been the epiphany of my life, more profound perhaps than the birth of my children or the death of my tarantula.

We shook hands. He walked back and I pulled out, watching inside the store as Jesus smiled and joked and helped the next customer put crap into a bag to take home.

I smiled because Jesus Iowa was going to be young for a while yet. He was perhaps not going to be robbed of a future by bandits.

Not today.

I moved slowly onto the highway, passed the "Support Our Troops" sign on the pharmacy, turned left in front of a Schwan's truck and piddled along home, slowly, thinking about Jesus Iowa and I guess lots of stuff.

I needed to lose ten pounds, maybe fifteen, and maybe we were overdrawn, maybe not, and I'd like to have a quart of beer, but then maybe that would be pretty alcoholic of me.

I don't know.

Just as I came to the stop sign at Seventh Street the radio blared out the nine o'clock news music.

The announcer said that several men were dead tonight near New Bremerhagen, Iowa.

"They had been walking a soybean field in the dark in search of ... terrorists."

I drove slowly down my street, barely bouncing over the big bump in the intersection at Jefferson Avenue.

"They had circled a suspect and closed in on it. A man who later turned out to be one of their own group."

I pulled slowly into our driveway. The wife had left on the big yard light to remind me.

We had a 'possum in the garage, of course I remembered, I never-ever forgot.

I hated the big yard light. I thought it might make it easier for the 'possum to attack, drop on my head as I pulled into the garage, put its paws over my eyes, I can't see and run into something.

"Shots flashed in the night, all around the circle."

I pulled into the garage, shut off the engine, but left the key turned to accessory.

I listened, partially, while keeping an eye open for ninja 'possum asshole.

"Minutes later, eight men lay dead.

"Dead in the soybeans ... five dollars, sixty-seven a bushel.

"Many of them Democrats.

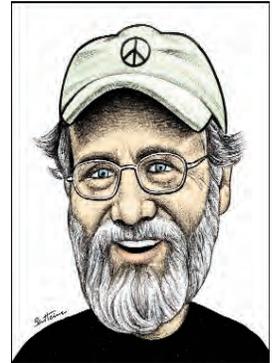
"From Orange County, Iowa, this is Melissa Montoya.

"Back to you, Dave."

Author and Illustrators

Mike Palecek

Mike is a writer living in northwest Iowa. He has written several novels. He is a former federal prisoner for peace, small-town newspaper reporter, and Iowa congressional candidate. Visit www.mikepalecek.com to learn more about Mike and his books.



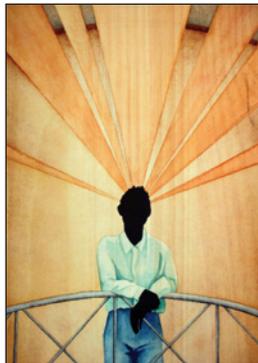
Russell Brutsche



Russell has been painting since early childhood. He attended San Jose State University, studying under Eric Oback, Robert Freimark (student of Henri Matisse) and Sam Richardson, graduating with scholarship honors in 1968. Since then he has been in numerous one-person and group shows throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, and in Colorado, Arizona and Japan. In 2001 he had a one-person exhibit at the Museum of Northeast Nevada, as featured in VIA magazine. Russell currently participates each October in Santa Cruz Open Studios, and other shows throughout the year. His work can be seen at www.russellbrutsche.com.

shows throughout the year. His work can be seen at www.russellbrutsche.com.

Allison M. Healy



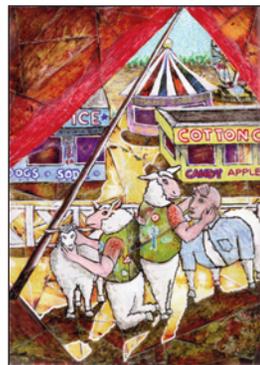
Allison was born in St. Claire, Michigan and raised in the Northwoods of Minnesota. She studied illustration at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and University of Brighton, England. Currently, she is living in Boston, Massachusetts. To see more of Allison's work visit www.ah-creative.com.

Benjamin Heine



Ben is a Belgian political cartoonist, caricaturist and painter born in June 12, 1983, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. He studied art and journalism and currently produces political art relating to day to day international political issues. Ben is known for his anti-war activism. Visit his website www.benheine.com for more information.

Ian Ward



Ian is a self-developing artist living and working out of North Carolina. Ian enjoys working with a variety of media and subject matter and has been evolving his work toward a more radical, agit-prop, commentary. Much of his recent poster work roams free on the Internet p2p networks. View more artwork at sabotsabot.deviantart.com or contact Ian at zxzxzii@hotmail.com for more information.

Terror warnings on TV. Terror music on the radio.
Kate Smith singing. God Bless America!
We must really be in trouble. Right?

"Mike Palecek writes in novel form about the fear and insanity created in the USA since the lies of 9/11/01."

— Meria Heller, producer/host,
The Meria Show www.meria.net

"Mike Palecek is the most dangerous writer alive, or at least the most dangerous at large in Iowa."

— Dana Larsen, editor, *Storm Lake (Iowa) Pilot-Tribune*

"Michael Palecek makes me proud to be an Iowan!"

— Holly Hart, secretary, Iowa Green Party

"Palecek is one of the most original storytellers I've read in a long, long time ... he's what I'd be if I just had the balls."

— Ron Franscell, author of *The Darkest Night*



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