

THIS
IS ALSO
FOR
READERS
BUT
IT DOES NOT
CONTAIN ANY
MUSIC. IT IS
NOT ENHANCED.
HOWEVER, IT IS READABLE
ON NON-APPLE DEVICES.

THE WAX AND THE WANE OF CHARLES BOBUCK
CHARLES BOBUCK

FORWARD



Mary had been looking for a husband all her life. Despite always being a bit more pleasant than the people around her, Mary could not land that commitment she so wanted.

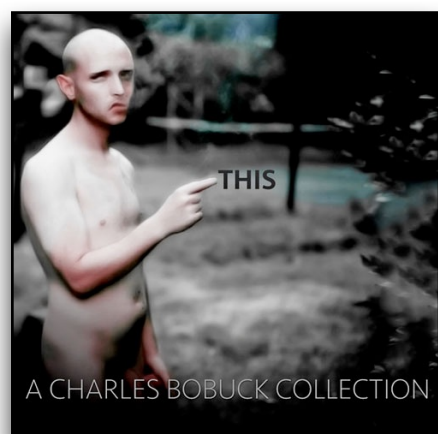
I always suspected that a possible problem was her tattoos. The “hot” Virgin Mary on her upper arm could lead one to think that she might make bad life choices. Even worse, while I never saw them, I have been told that she has two less obviously placed tattoos. The underside of each breast displays a very small swastika. She said it was an old Hindu symbol for good luck. Maybe it was, as eventually, she showed up with a husband. Her new spouse has a swastika tattooed on his forehead. For good luck, I hope.

Mary and her story are familiar. The swastikas are a personal touch, but we all have something that is a bit off. While we put forth the required good face for living in society, our ability to connect with another human contains a hidden puzzle. Mary's breasts would offer the challenge, and a true connection would supply the answer. They would both know it is right.

For me it was my music. I can smile along with the rest of the world, but my music is a divider. Most say a simple "no thanks." It is the swastika under my breast. Others answer the challenge with a response that opens my inner door.

Thank you for that.

Charles Bobuck
Composer for The Residents



MERRY MARY TRACK 1

A free version of this book which includes music, is available for Mac, iPad, iPhone [here](#).

THE WAX AND THE WANE OF CHARLES BOBUCK

+ FORWARD

+ BEFORE BOBUCK WAS INVENTED

+ (INVISIBLE) BOBUCK

+ CHARLES BOBUCK

+ WHAT WAS LEFT OF GRANDPA

+ BACKWARD

This is a work of fiction, so any resemblance to actual events, locale, or persons, living or dead, is merely coincidental, except for The Residents, who, as we all know, are totally real.

- Charles Bobuck

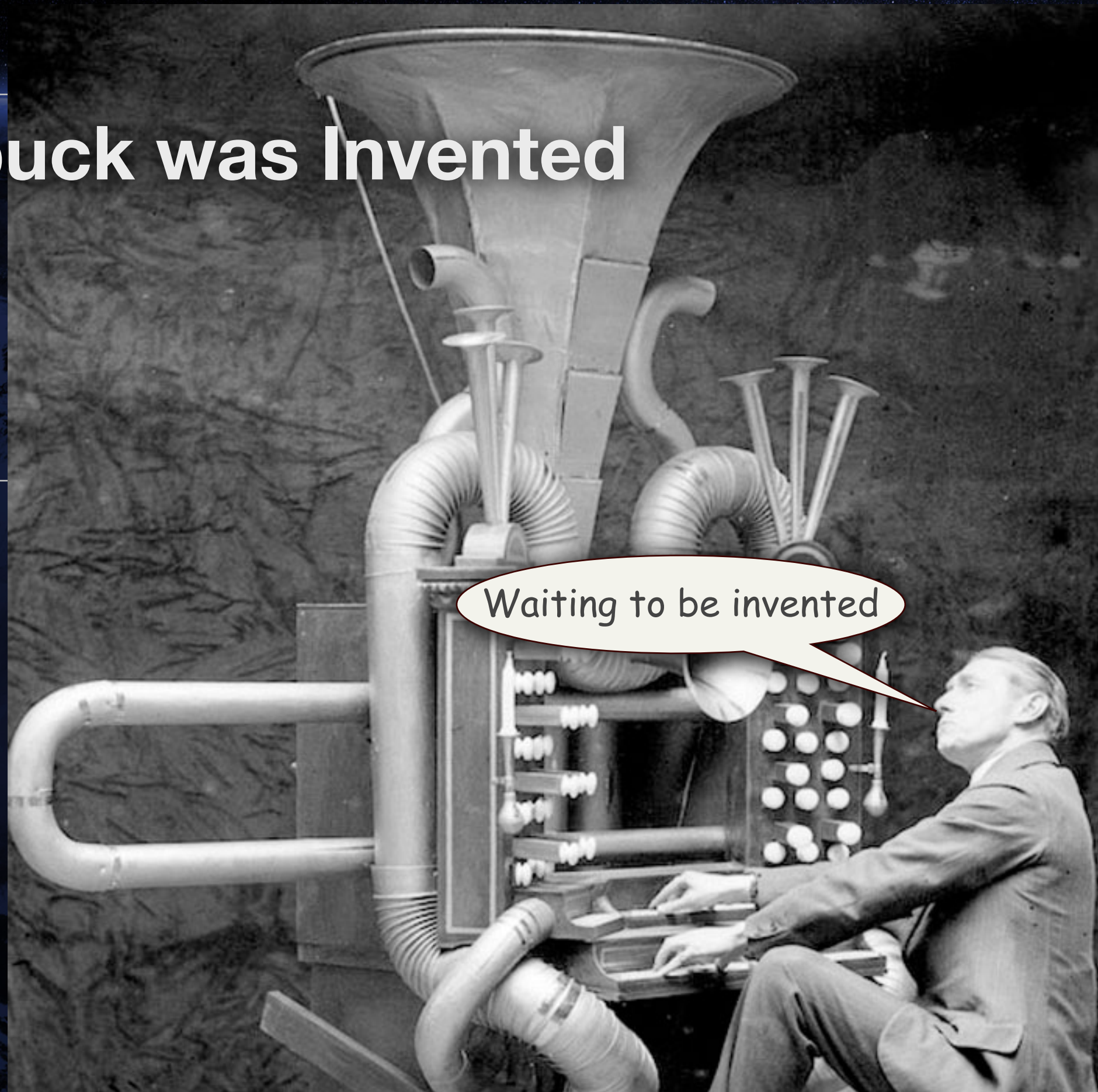
NOT YET
INVENTED

BEFORE WAXING

Chapter 1

Before Bobuck was Invented

99.9% of The Residents projects have been group involvements. However, my role in the music aspect did, on occasion, create oddities that were deemed as “not Residents” by the group. So, for those recordings I would have to invent “performers” to explain their existence. Like Combo de Mecanico or The Beatles.



CHARLES BOBUCK PLAYING THE GARBLETRON



BEFORE BOBUCK WAS INVENTED

BEFORE BOBUCK WAS INVENTED

1. The Beatles Play The Residents
2. Pollex Christi
3. High Horses

WHY I LIKE MUSIC

I was getting a blow job while watching the Pope roll by. He waved at me... I waved back. He was only on the TV briefly, his "holiness" was in town promoting a book or something. I felt sorry for him. His job was miserable and my job kept me in heaven.

What made my job so special was that I wrote music, and my musical ideas mostly appeared while having an orgasm. There was an explanation for this.

As a child I would always describe my nightmares to my mother by banging on the piano and talking in strange voices.

Once I reached puberty I was able to make the connection that intense emotional states had a strange aural effect on me. That meant orgasms would set me off. I did not originally understand that masturbation was different for other boys. My best friend slept over a lot and we tended to masturbate each other most of those times. He is the one who told me that his orgasms did not have an auditory aspect.

After explaining this unusual response to my parents, I was hospitalized to see if I had a brain tumor. I didn't. I had a mild form of epilepsy resulting in paracusia, auditory hallucinations. I suppose I do not write music so much as have controlled seizures.

I didn't have an orgasm when the Pope passed. I came a bit later, closing my eyes and leaning against the wall. A beautiful brass quartet filled my mind.

My description is only relevant because I have the role of writing music and arrangements with The Residents. I've always been rather quiet about what I do. It is not a topic of conversation that regularly comes up.

But things change. Randy's wife persuaded him to move to Los Angeles to pursue a career in Hollywood. That really changed the dynamics. All four of us scattered to explore our passions.

I had decided some time ago that cities were no place to grow old and I could have orgasms anywhere. I did the civil thing. I bought a farm and became a chicken lord.

Beware of chickens.

BANANA FANNA

Anyone who has a nickname knows one thing about it: someone else sticks it on you. I got stuck with "Chuck" way back in college thanks to Randy's obsession with the song, "The Name Game." He latched onto the fact that my last name was Bobuck. Of course my name predated the existence of that song by many years. My parents did not have the sense of humor to have named me Chuck Bobuck anyway. But it played right into Randy's sense of the absurd. When we met, it was like he had gotten a wonderful new toy to play with. A "Bobuck."

For a while, no one was spared Randy's name game. Randy wouldn't be Randy if he didn't overdo things. Few people referred to me that way until the *Talking Light* tour. Randy introduced me to the world as "Chuck" because to Randy that is who I will always be. Chuck Chuck Bobuck.

THE MOON

I was noticing that my bell bottom pants were getting nicely frayed around the cuffs when the telephone rang. It was Randy. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Recording a song about lasers." He said, "Wanna go to the moon?"

I knew what he meant. When Randy got bored it always meant that it was time to go crazy, and nothing in 1969 had been as crazy as going to the moon. I never knew what he might be thinking and I always hoped it would not end up with us in jail again. That had happened twice. Once in New Orleans for disorderly conduct, and once in San Mateo on suspicion of robbery. The police let us go both times because we were just bored kids. Even police knew what that was like. They became policemen because they hated boredom.

Thirty minutes later I heard a honk and looked out to see Randy in a pile of junk. He had bought another car for \$75. Randy bought junkers and abandoned them when they stopped working. He didn't register them so he never seemed to get in trouble. It was true that the cars were not worth fixing or paying tickets. Randy always had a system to beat the system.

Today the plan was to drive to Psilocybin Beach, drop some mushrooms, and run around naked, screaming at the top of our lungs. We did that every month or so. I was relieved because I really didn't want to commit more than the day to this adventure. A year earlier Randy had decided he wanted to buy a switchblade, which meant we had to drive one of his junkers to Tijuana, Mexico, almost 1000 miles away. The short version is that the car broke down somewhere around San Diego and we had to hitchhike back in the rain. We were out for five days mostly stuck in Seal Beach, CA and got deathly ill. Also, no switchblade.

But that would not be today's plan. Just the normal day at the beach.

When Randy dropped me back at my house he asked if he could hear the song about lasers so I played the tape as it currently existed. It had no lyrics, just an instrumental, so he asked if I had only been thinking about lasers. I said, "Yeah." I desperately wanted a laser.

Randy said it was a terrible idea for a song, but he had written a poem about a moon man which would fit nicely with the music. I said, "Moon Man is good."

THE GREAT SEAL

Año Nuevo State Park on the San Mateo County coast is the site of the largest mainland breeding colony in the world for the northern elephant seal. Randy and I decided that taking acid and going to see the seals was the perfect way to waste the afternoon on a sunny day in 1969. People aren't really allowed to get very close to them, which is smart, because these elephant seals are true monsters. Since it was mating season, the bull seals were in constant battles for the pretty seal chicks. Messy, violent stuff.

Randy was fairly bullish about his pretty chicks too. I often wondered if he was trying to date a woman of every racial type in the world. He liked women to be exotic and mysterious, but once he adjusted to them, they became ordinary. That was problem one. Randy's endearing qualities could also turn irritating after a while and that was problem two. Things would rarely get to problem three.

Randy and I never had to fight over women. Not only were we attracted to a very different type of woman, but I often preferred the company of men. I found men to be dreamers about what they hoped their life would be. Women were only starting to become liberated, and many still seemed more motivated to find a husband than anything else. Marriage and children seemed like a curse to me. Instead of spending my day with musical orgasms, I would have to work somewhere just to keep the children from starving.

I knew what a real job was like. I had briefly worked for a bank in my mid-twenties when I needed some money. The Chartered Bank of London. I was in charge of safety deposit boxes. I would take the customers into the vault and use my key with their key to unlock a box. It took two to tango. Only one customer was allowed in the vault at a time. Lucinda was a woman who needed me to open her box more often than one would expect. She was plain in style and unfocused in attitude. Her safety deposit box only contained "magic sticks" that looked remarkably like the unmagical variety. She would always insist I admire her sticks and as I stood next to her she would grope me through my pants. I implied permission by not resisting. There was something surreal about the rows of stainless steel safety deposit boxes that lined both sides of the room, and the general coolness of the vault that made me instantly hard.

Only once did she unzip my pants and introduce my penis to the cool air. She held it gently in her warm damp hand and mumbled that she was reading the Tibetan Book of the Dead, only she called it the "Tie-baa-ton" Book of the Dead. She stopped coming to the bank after that day. I don't know what became of her magic sticks.

**All relationships live and die
based on their own, often
unspoken, rules.**

**All relationships are precious
and honor who we are as
individuals.**



STICK IN A BOX

1977

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES PLAY THE RESIDENTS AND THE RESIDENTS PLAY THE BEATLES

The performer of this piece is none other than The Beatles themselves. It is an audio collage built entirely of Beatles. Constructed long before digital sampling, this is a tape loop creation. It even appeared on a widely distributed Beatles bootleg album.

We released it in 1977 as a 45rpm single having The Beatles perform on one side and The Residents on the other.

Hand screened cover, Pore Know Graphics, limited edition of 500 copies. Very cool.



THE BEATLES PLAY THE RESIDENTS

1997

N. SENADA

POLLEX CHRISTI

With its random disregard for some great German composers, I admit this is a tribute piece. I love all the music I mess up. It is my amusement park.



THE RESIDENTS PERFORM N. SENADA

2001

COMBO DE MECANICO

HIGH HORSES

You know how it is. You've been there. A warm Sunday afternoon in 1970. San Francisco's Golden Gate Park lures with its rich green eucalyptus trees. Over there, the children's playground. Slides. Swings. Monkey bars. A little further away a merry-go-round is spinning. Its magnificent sound, a madman's mechanical Gamelan, tells you there is only one thing to do.

Ride this ancient carousel. Anyway, the acid really hasn't kicked in yet, so why not?



THE RESIDENTS' COMBO DE MECANICO

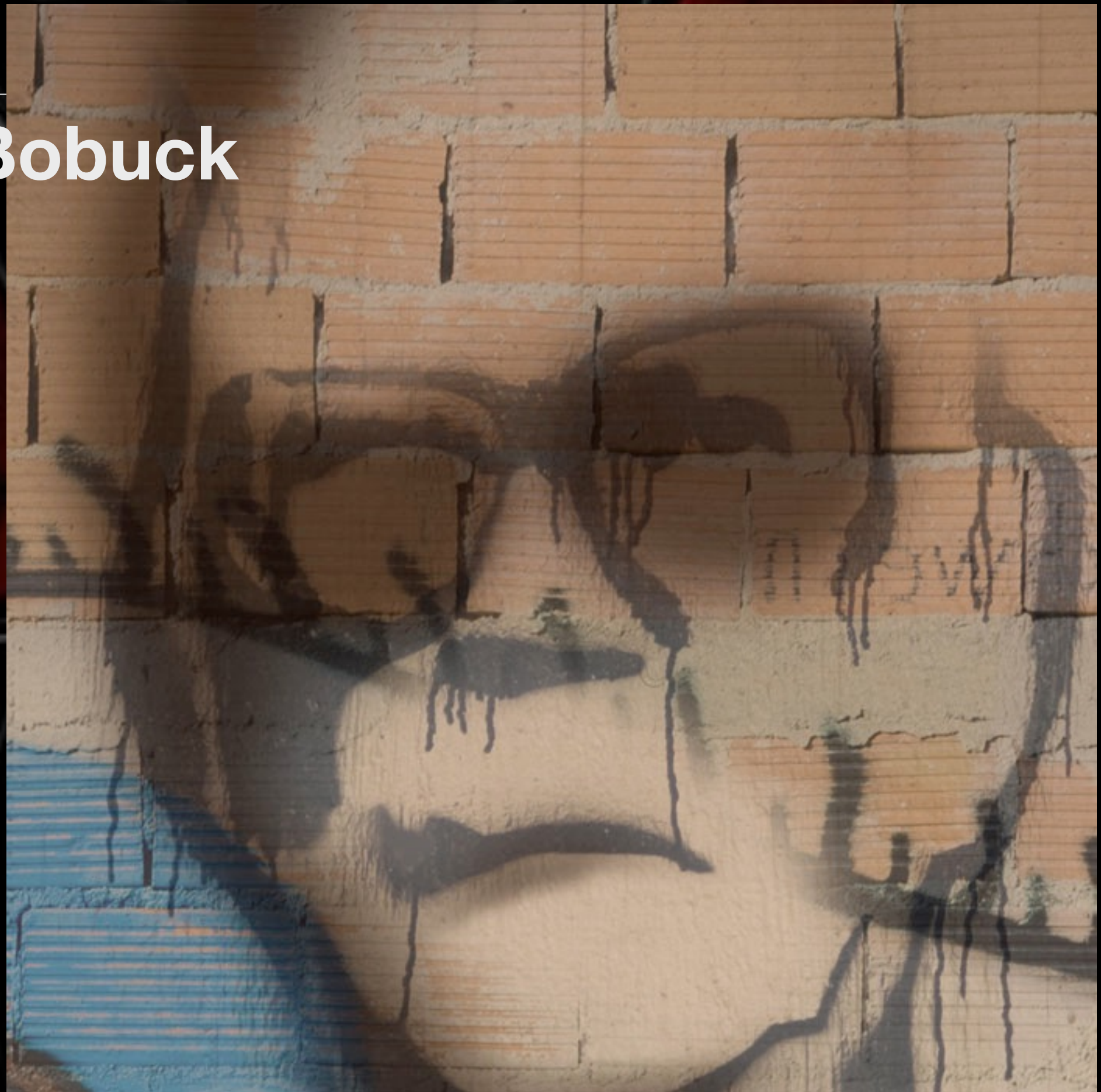
INVISIBLE

THE WAX

Chapter 2

(Invisible) Bobuck

The public's interest in buying albums, and in particular, concept albums, started fading somewhere around the mid-2000s. The Residents were forced to pack a suitcase and accept what I saw as the role of monkeys with tin cups. My job was to turn the organ crank on stage. I still preferred to make albums, so I started recording on my own, though continuing to credit music to The Residents since I was invisible.



WRITING ON THE WALL

The Residents is not a band. But for the sake of touring, a band has proven to be a very handy form to assume. For The Residents, forming a “Residents cover band” was easier, so The Residents, instead of becoming a band, formed a cover band made up of Randy, Chuck, and Bob, none of which are real people.

I liked being a part of The Residents. I like ensemble work. I like participating without the need for attention. For over 40 years The Residents idea was satisfying. Therefore, my initial reaction to being outed by fake Randy Rose as “Chuck” in front of an audience was a shock. Sure, “Charles Bobuck” was a fake name, but names are not people, they are symbols for people. The name my parents gave me is no more my “real” name than the Social Security number assigned by the government. The mere idea of having a reference means I am unique, I have personality and abilities that describe my inner core. Before that night, attending a Residents show was more like going to church, a bunch of people doing weird things. Now, audience members could point at me and say, “There’s Chuck wiggling his butt.”

There is no telling people to unhear what they just heard. Charles Bobuck was a name and it went with a person sitting on a stage. Later Randy expounded, again in a touring show, that Chuck was gay, lived on a farm, and was the composer of The Residents music. Since these things were all vaguely true I only became more and more certain that I was this person and not a member of some anonymous music ensemble. The two were not compatible. It was a small death.

I was okay with the idea once I adjusted. It was the start of the end. Or maybe it was the end, and therefore a start. A start of a new expression of independence. I had to stop touring since it no longer worked for me, but I was not yet ready to be placed in the proverbial pasture. The Touring Residents went on their usual circuits without me. I stayed on the farm writing music that was not needed by the Touring Residents.

After 2008, I made personal albums disguised as The Residents, as Sonidos de la Noche, as Chuck, and eventually as Charles Bobuck. I liked making them.



NOSTALGIA



Life is a series of events that lead to one another. One can step backwards to see how the current reality became the current reality.

I am stepping back to 2010, *Talking Light* show and tour.

The Residents had been around for almost 40 years and felt that their performance ideas had reached a pinnacle with *Demons Dance Alone* in 2002. That show was a perfect realization of that particular way of thinking. The Residents thought to go forward, they needed to go backwards to a much earlier landmark in their performance design process, *The 13th Anniversary Show* from 1985.

Talking Light was built on a concept that each person on stage stood for a different aspect of the performance. No person would be on stage that did not cover an aspect. Therefore, the human who played the part of “Bob” was in charge of musicianship and realtime detailing. 100% in charge. No other person with command of a musical instrument was allowed. The character of “Randy” was totally in charge of stage presence and use of voice. He had to communicate with the audience. I was the remaining guy. I

became referred to as “Chuck.” My studio background and work as writer and arranger meant that I, on the simplest level, operated a studio on the stage. We were three people doing three entirely different jobs.

My set-up was computer based. I had programmed what I imaginatively called my “space machine.” I had prerecorded hundreds of two-minute loops and had instantaneous access to them by punching buttons and twiddling knobs. I ran a local area network from an Apple Airport hidden under my table that gave me wireless access to a shitload of noise.

The *TL* tour began with my genuine concern on whether the audience would accept this new, more abstract, sound. But as it traveled, night after night, I gradually conquered my possibilities and started presenting a controlled and predicable result from the millions of random possibilities. Bob and I discovered a simpatico in our noises, often surprising ourselves.

“Chuck” evolved into “Charles Bobuck” and the space machine evolved into a new composing technique for Charles Bobuck.

Even *Talking Light* evolved, becoming *The Wonder of Weird*. The later show, though hatched from the philosophy of *Talking Light*, cemented into a more traditional band attitude. *The Wonder of Weird* proved popular with audiences. Perhaps they secretly longed for a traditional band/concert experience. By the time *The Wonder of Weird* gave way to a new show, *Shadowland*, the band form was ingrained. Improvising was no longer a part of the show. *Shadowland* was even more popular.

Being popular is a sure sign that we were doing something right. Also, a sure sign that we were doing something wrong. The Residents had become Randy, Chuck & Bob, a cover-band demonstrating their love and admiration for a no longer existing entity, The Residents. We had smothered our own baby.



The old Residents compared to Randy, Chuck & Bob.



RANDY, CHUCK & BOB



INVISIBLE BOBUCK

(INVISIBLE) BOBUCK

1. Postcards from Patmos
2. The Rivers of Hades
3. Dolor Generar
4. Coochie Brake
5. Lying Horse Rock

Coming out of the closet was difficult. Not the gay closet. That was simple. Though previously married to Nessie Lessons, once I met Roman there was no need to come out of that closet. Life started making sense.

The difficult closet was The Residents' one. The idea of working on music without being bothered by people was utopian. Even close friends and neighbors didn't know what I did for a living. The brief explanation, that I scored gay porn films, usually kept people from wanting to know more.

A couple of years ago when Randy decided (after suggestions from his wife) to go to Hollywood to be a star, my reaction was along the lines of, "Why would you ever want to leave this fantastic situation?"

Writing music was a form that suited hermits and thrived in privacy. But Randy was a performer and performers need applause from strangers to make what they do feel complete. The moving truck had taken everything away. Randy would be next. The three of us stood in his empty living room: me, Randy and Peter. Peter was a large stuffed bunny. Peter was Randy's best friend when he was a child and deserved to make the trip to LA in the air-conditioned car rather than a cardboard box. The late afternoon sun lit the floor at an angle and I could see where the rug had been. A darker stain in the middle made me think of red wine I spilled on that rug years ago. There was safety and security within The Residents and Roman made me happier than a person had a right to be. Why would I want anything to change?

Randy said, "It already changed, you just didn't notice." A flash of anger rolled up my spine, then was gone. He was my family and he was leaving. He jokingly added that some people were starting to credit him with being the composer

because he was the only person anyone could point out. I said I didn't care, that I wasn't on that kind of ego trip.

The only problem was that it did bother me. Randy put his arm around me and said, "You are so full of shit." I said, "Yeah, I know. I don't want you getting all the credit."

He added with a chuckle, "And I don't want the credit because your music sucks."

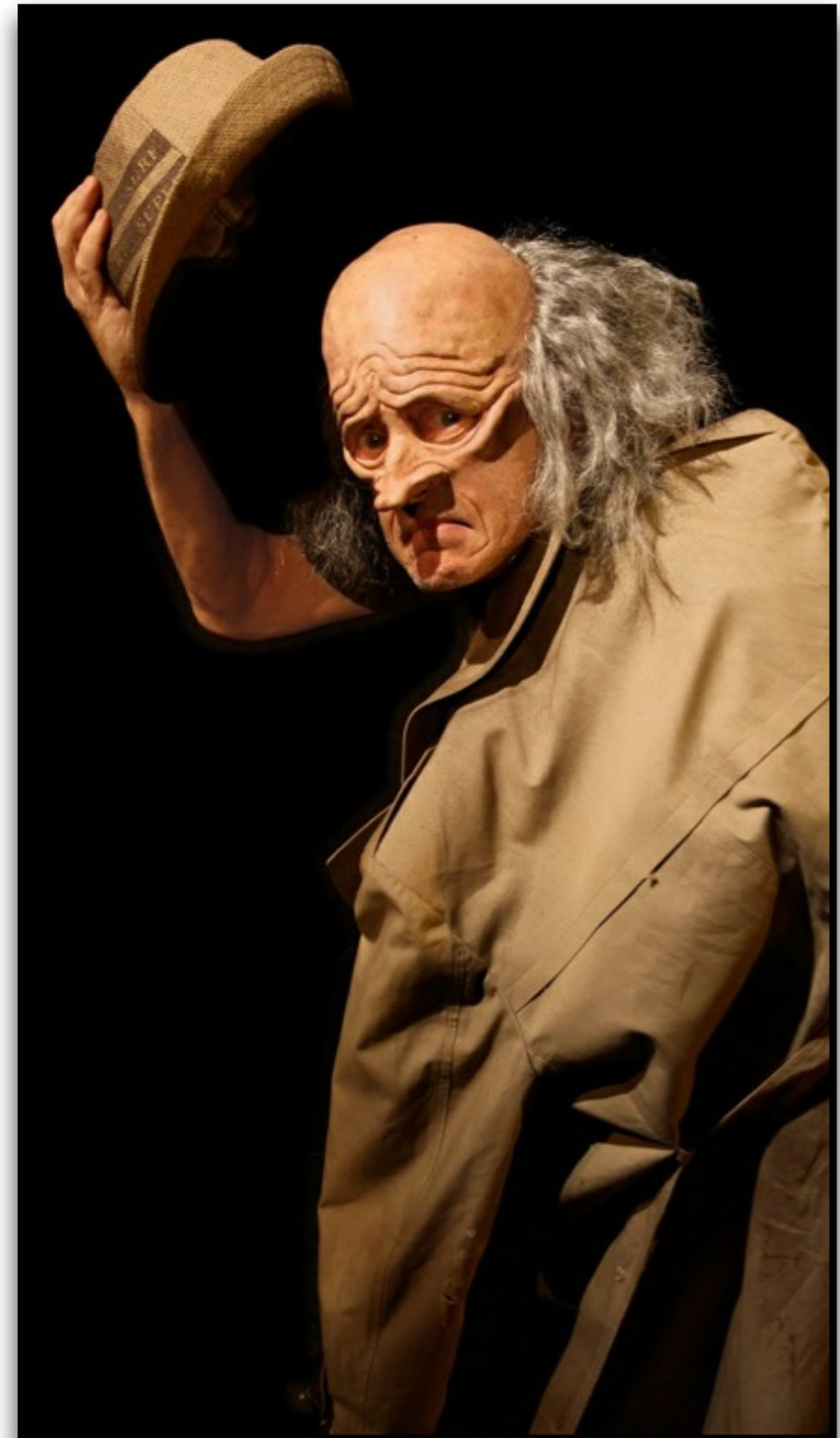
Randy shoved me out the front door, pointed at me and shouted, "Chuck!" The few people walking on the sidewalk ignored him. In San Francisco, crazy people shouting was nothing special.

"Chuck is not my name," I sighed back to him.

He looked at me with a taunting grin and whispered back in his creepiest voice, "Chuck Chuck Bobuck."

I waved as he pulled from the curb honking his horn. A startled baby passing in a stroller cried.

I went home to Roman and the chickens feeling an odd sense of relief.



RANDY HEADS TO HOLLYWOOD

2008

POSTCARDS FROM PATMOS

THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM THE VIDEO INTERNET SERIES: THE BUNNY BOY

Randy wanted to do a video series that starred him as a crazy guy. *The Bunny Boy*. I was writing music for a new Residents album that had no lyrical content. We did a trade. Randy wrote some lyrics for my music that related to *The Bunny Boy* project he was doing, and, in turn, I wrote music for his video series. I assembled an album from the better parts of the noise-fest soundtrack and called it *Postcards from Patmos*. Later it also played as background music as the audience arrived for our *Bunny Boy* show. That gave me the idea of using the “walk-in” for shows as an excuse to record more experimental and abstract albums. Counting this one, I recorded four or five albums as “walk-in” music including *Dolor Generar*, *Life is...My Only Sunshine*, and *The Highway*.

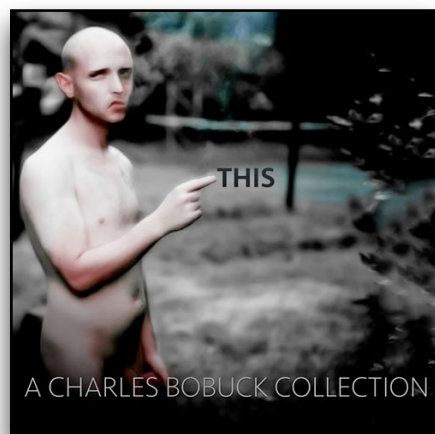


THE RESIDENTS PRESENT

The Residents entered the world of electronic synthesis in the 1970s during a time of legendary exploration and growth. When pioneers like Robert Moog and Don Buchla were building analog synthesizers that were finally affordable for the masses, The Residents eagerly became one of the earliest groups to embrace the new technology.

While recording the *Bunny Boy* album, The Residents employed an arsenal of digital synthesis equipment. However, when the time came to score the Internet series, the mood of the series seemed to call for the older analog synthesis that they had not used in decades. Enthusiastically unwrapping their older instruments, the group soon discovered that, other than the occasional and humorous oscillator drift, the instruments all worked perfectly.

To supplement their own collection, composer Charles Bobuck turned to friend, Kevin Ink, who had also kept his original analog devices. Bobuck quickly sculpted these soundscapes to support the darkly humorous images found in *The Bunny Boy* videos.



ORANGE TOES
TRACK 8



HOHNER AMONG THIEVES

THE BUNNY BOY INTERNET SERIES

The story centers on an eccentric character, the Bunny Boy, whose search for his missing brother compels him to post videos on the Internet as a "cry for help." As the story evolves, it opens up to interaction between the Bunny Boy and his audience, causing the narrative to twist and turn in odd and unpredictable ways. Spanning a gap between insanity and self realization, the loony but affable Bunny Boy soon finds himself pursuing a goal no less vital than saving the world from Armageddon.



2008

THE RIVERS OF HADES

CHAOS IS NOT JUST A THEORY

The Rivers of Hades was part of an aural art piece to accompany the release of The Residents action figures designed by Steve Cerio.

The original music was conceived to utilize two DVD players that were programmed to randomly play abstract bits of music.

The project (which required 12 speakers placed in a circle around the gallery) was entitled *Chaos Is Not Just a Theory*.

As these kinds of things go, it never quite worked out.

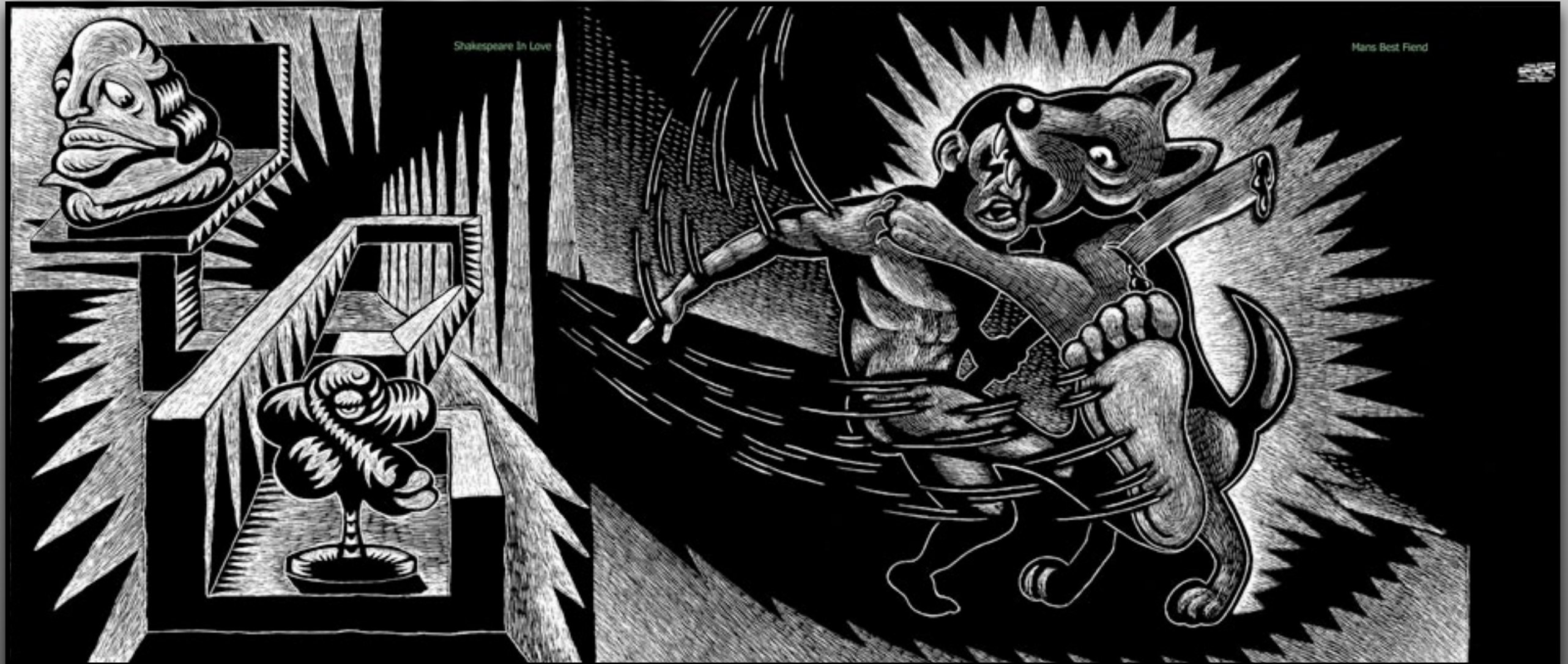
Disappointed that my concept piece was not included, I edited the noise down to *The Rivers of Hades* CD. In Greek mythology, Hades was a child of Chaos.

The drawings here are by Homer Flynn and were included in the show.



THE RESIDENTS

THE RIVERS OF HADES



SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

MAN'S BEST FIEND



2011

DOLOR GENERAR

WALK-IN MUSIC FOR TALKING LIGHT SHOW

Talking Light was my favorite tour. Previously tours often had a desperate sense of needing to overcome The Residents lack of abilities with spectacle. *Talking Light* was clean, simple and real. It also was the tour of my Residents days that played the most cities in the world. It is also the show that took me from being part of an anonymous art ensemble wearing eyeballs to being a guy named Chuck who played keyboards in a rock band. I don't play keyboard, I press plastic slivers rhythmically, often resulting in rude noises.



THE RESIDENTS' TALKING LIGHT PRESENTS

UNA NOCHE LOST EN VAN HORN, TEXAS



DOLLAR GENERAL

I didn't mean to get drunk. Though even saying that already makes me feel like I am on the verge of making excuses. I won't do that. All I can tell you is that I went to Van Horn for a legitimate reason. Carlos had walked out on The Residents about six months ago and I believed I deserved to know why. My name is Charles. I play piano.

Carlos had gone to the Southwest to take a job near Van Horn, Texas. I wasn't certain what he did there but Carlos was always the smartest of us all.

We agreed to meet in the parking lot of the abandoned Dollar General store on the main drag. We exchanged the usual pleasantries and then took off for dinner despite that I had been driving all day and felt more like going to sleep. The nearby restaurant, Chuy's, seemed to be obsessed with John Madden. It also had a vaguely unsettling mural painted on the wall. Jesus watching over the town. We drank a lot of cheap beer.

Carlos dumped a small amount of red powder in my beer saying it would help my exhaustion. I immediately had a radical change in attitude. The powder seemed to encourage me to become more friendly with the locals.

Unfortunately I can't tell you much more. I don't remember. At some point I was laughing with a couple of Mexicans who insisted on taking us to a "more colorful" bar, the Dollhouse, on the edge of town. I think I got in an argument with a biker who made fun of my shoes. I remember the waitress handing Carlos a small box wrapped in newspaper. It looked like it had rocks inside. The box made Carlos uncomfortable and he excused himself.

Later two guys in blue jackets showed up looking for Carlos but he was gone. They seemed upset about something and asked me questions in broken English but the questions made no sense. I threw up. They took the box that had been left on the table.

It was almost daylight when I walked back to my car at the Dollar General. Three Mexican guys were sitting in the doorway of the store drinking beer and laughing. Someone had spray painted "faggot" on the side of my car.



CHUY'S



UNA NOCHE LOST
TRACK 4

NOMAN

“How's it goin’?”

- Noman

Roman and I used to house sit for a friend. She lived in an old farmhouse near a river a couple of hours north of San Francisco. When we visited we felt a connection with nature that was surprising, having been city boys for so long. When the day came that she announced she was moving away, Roman and I jumped at the chance to buy the property.

It was a bit spontaneous, but since Randy was moving to LA, there wasn't anything binding me to San Francisco. Roman was ready for the simple life. Chickens. We would raise chickens.

Chickens were on the verge of being a “thing to do” and even city dwellers were raising the smelly beasts in their backyards.

Country people are curious, even nosey, so meeting people and making friends was surprisingly simple. The family that lived nearest to us had a young son named Noman.

He had just finished high school so now he was trying to figure out what to do with himself. His father had told him I was a rock and roll star and toured the world so he has taken to hanging around the farm. Roman has hired him to do some stuff in the garden. Weeding, mostly. He avoids looking at me.

A few days ago Roman asked him to bring me a package that UPS had delivered. Noman had not been in the studio before. In his best casual style he said, "How's it goin'?" I provided the proper cliché response. He asked if he could hear what I was working on. I would normally toss a person out for

such a question, but it seemed a good opportunity to smash some fantasies about who and what I was.

The computer screen flickered and the speakers cried in agony. I gave him a 30-second dose that no 18-year-old should be able to comfortably stomach.

Feeling a bit cocky and proud of myself, I looked back at him for a response. He said, "Why do you want to do that?" It wasn't the response I expected.

He explained his question. The only reason he could think for doing music was that you could be popular, make lots of money, and have girls want to have sex with you. He saw no possibility for any of that happening with what he had just heard, so it seemed to be a huge waste of time.

He is absolutely correct. When you get down to the simplest explanation, living things exist for only one reason: to make more living things. Music's biggest value is seduction.

I am older, past the age of reproducing, and my music is no longer about seduction. It is about possibilities that can only be called out once sharing an orgasm is no longer the fixation.

18-year-olds don't understand that, nor should they.

All I could explain was that my music had not made me popular, but it had made me notorious. It had not made me wealthy, but I did own a farm. The girls had not lined up to be impregnated, but I had shared orgasms with an adequate number of humans.

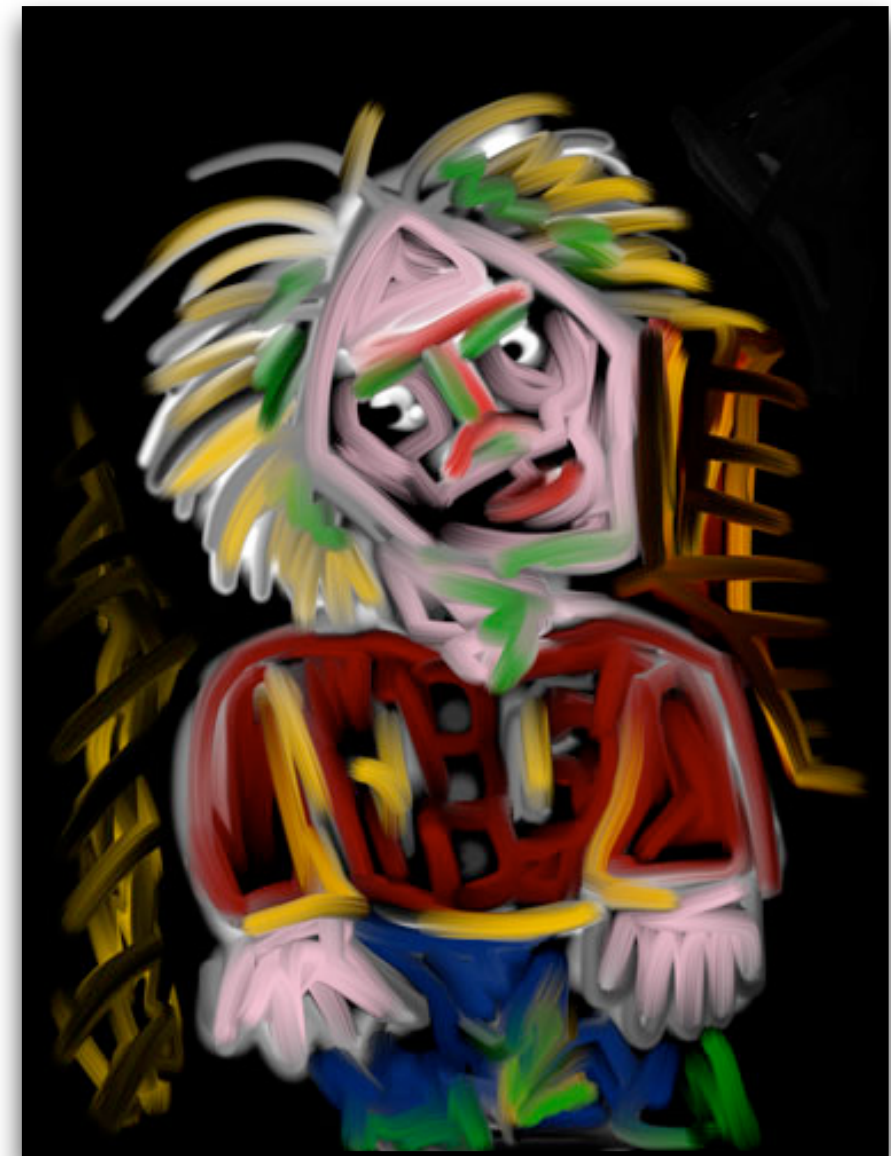
"I may waste my time, but I have to fill the same 24 hours just like everyone else. Gotta do something."

(My mind briefly wondered if I should do some volunteer work in town instead of making rude noises all day.)

I asked if I could paint him.

He looked at me suspiciously. "Do I have to take my clothes off?"

"Only that stupid hat," I said.



NOMAN



LION

Later, I was feeling uninspired. Noman had posed some legitimate questions on my philosophic stance. Sure, some people seemed to like my music, but far more didn't. If I ignore the people who don't like my music, what basis do I have for giving credence to anyone who does like it? Only about 500 people hear anything I do of value, while several billion are blasé or outright hostile. I must live in a hole. Noman is looking over the edge and making faces.

I asked Roman if he would pose. Drawing calms me. He agreed. The result was bad. Instead of Roman, some horrible lion appeared on the page. That was not what I wanted to see. I think I might have drawn an older, angry Noman.



GLASS

Roman, always the sane one, went to a cabinet, fumbled around for a moment, and pulled out a glass tree ornament. "Draw this," he said, tossing the fragile bauble across the room.

I slept soundly last night.

2011

COOCHIE BRAKE

SONIDOS DE LA NOCHE

A million years ago a big rock fell out of the sky and landed right in the middle of Louisiana.

Well, it wasn't Louisiana at that time. But it fell, and it hit hard making a giant dent. It gradually filled in, but no matter what, it still left a dent.

And that dent held just enough water that it became a primeval swamp known as Coochie Brake.

Now this was not one of those swamps down on the coast. Those made sense. This one was two hundred miles from the Gulf. It just sat there being a misfit to its surroundings. The locals avoided it. Always did. They said strange things go on in that swamp. Things that should not go on.

This music is full of memories of that swamp. Memories of misty fog, dark shapes and the unexplained night sounds of Coochie Brake.



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT SONIDOS DE LA NOCHE

THEATER OF SHADOWS

Coochie Brake wasn't the only odd thing out there. Just a bit north of Coochie Brake was the Winnfield dome. Salt. Carey Salt started a mining operation in 1927. I remember, as a kid, taking the claustrophobic elevator down the 800 foot deep shaft. The air was thick, hot and smelled like sweat.

In 1965 the mine started leaking water and soon the entire mine was submerged.

I sometimes try to imagine what it is like now in those massive caves, black as black, salty as salt, wet as water.



COOCHIE BRAKE

GOTTA BELIEVE

Coochie Brake, the swamp, has long been considered an anomaly and anomalies always mean magic in Louisiana.

The album features an abundance of percussion and ritual singing, common to rituals performed in the backwoods and bayous to appease the spirits.

Faith is greater than reality. Without belief, there is no structure. Without structure there is no belief. Without belief there is no Charles Bobuck.



GOTTA
BELIEVE
TRACK 7



BELIEVER

2011

LYING HORSE

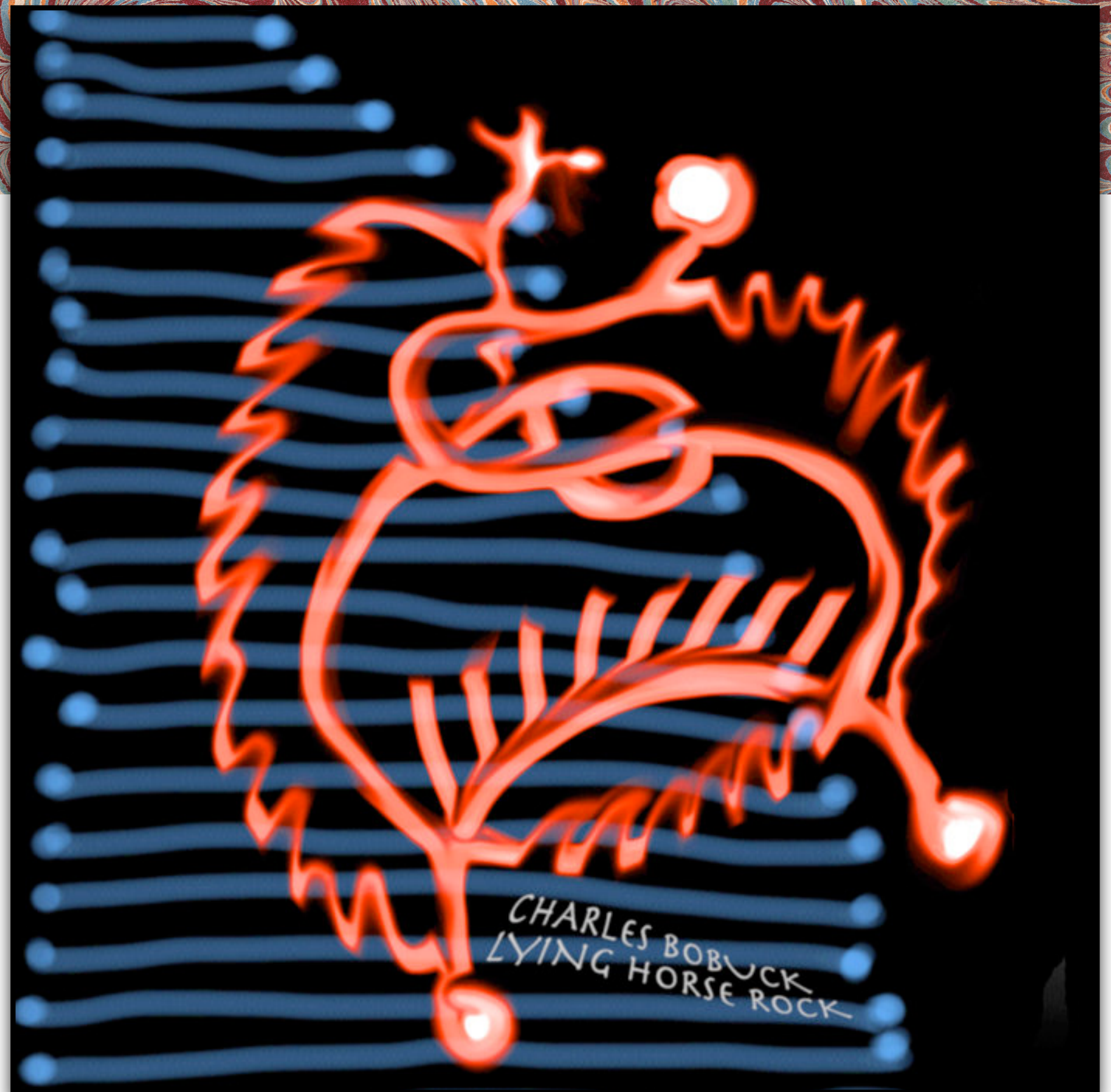
LYING HORSE ROCK

“There's a place in Winn Parish called Coochie Brake. It was a hideout for the West-Kimbrell Clan. There is a rock there called Lying Horse Rock that's shaped like a horse lying on its side.

Apparently, Lying Horse Rock is voodooed, whereby anyone who goes near it, something bad happens to them.

We've had some to say that old so-and-so died because he got too close to Lying Horse Rock. I don't put much faith in all that superstition, but apparently it was voodooed or had a hex put on it.”

- Swapping Stories, Folktales from Louisiana



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT

THE WEST-KIMBRELL CLAN

In 1850, the crossroads town of Wheeling in Winn Parish, Louisiana was in the middle of the so-called "Neutral Strip." This area came into being when the United States signed the Louisiana Purchase agreement in 1803 without first having clearly defined its western boundary. Neither Spain nor the United States were allowed to enter or control the triangle of land, so lawlessness was rampant.

That all seemed fairly normal to Elbert Weston. He was a good looking, charismatic kid who never missed church. Folks always said that he would make a fine preacher one day. He joined the Confederate army when the Civil War broke out in 1861, hoping law would return to the Neutral Strip once that conflict was settled.

However, after the war, life just got more difficult. Winn Parish had always been poor, but now it was defeated, overrun with carpetbaggers and even poorer. A volunteer organization was established to act as a police force. Two of the leaders of this clan were Elbert Weston, now calling himself John West, and his friend Lawson "Laws" Kimbrell. John and Laws were inseparable and spent their free time hunting in the nearby swamp, Coochie Brake.

One hunting trip was different. The two young men decided to rest on a rock formation shaped like a side-lying horse. A dark mood came over them as they talked into the night. At daylight they realized they had been on that rock all night. The men who had entered the Brake full of spirit left feeling victimized by all of the events outside their control -- the poverty, the war, and the chaos -- and were determined to take back the life that was owed to them. Coochie Brake had changed the men forever.

The very next night they took their first step towards power. A young man who had fought for the Confederacy was walking from Mississippi to Texas in hopes of a fresh start. Laws Kimbrell invited him to take a rest at his house just down the road. The man never made it to Texas.

John and Laws had crossed a line together and their connection to each other intensified. While it was true that the people trying to escape the war's aftermath often carried gold, it was not money that turned them into ruthless thieves and killers. They felt like gods in their secret world and shared passions that reached dizzying heights.

West and Kimbrell formed the inner circle of the home guard clan. The outer circle was made up of community leaders: ministers, businessmen and politicians, unaware that the two founders at the core were committing hideous crimes. West became a deputy sheriff and Sunday Bible School superintendent in Atlanta, Louisiana, a few miles from Coochie Brake. Kimbrell behaved as a pillar of the community as well. The West-Kimbrell Clan appeared to be a law-keeping organization. No one suspected that the inner circle was robbing and murdering travelers as they passed down the El Camino Real. The gold that was taken was hidden in Coochie Brake.



LYING HORSE ROCK
TRACK 14

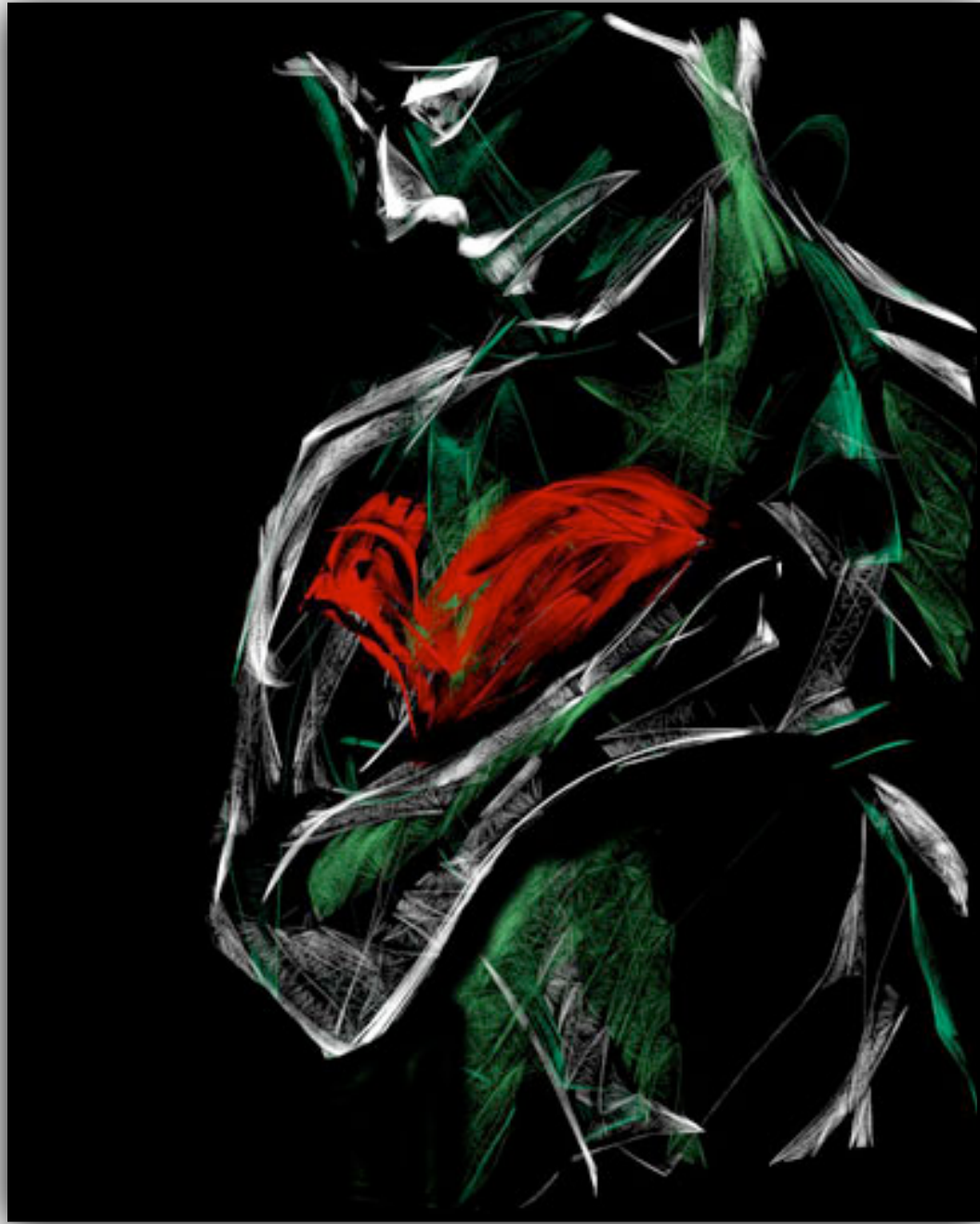
Although it is unknown how many men, women, children and infants John West and Lawson Kimbrell murdered, there is general agreement among historians that they were the deadliest serial killers the United States has ever known.

After 15 years of terrorizing the Parish, Laws and John were feeling uninspired. Kimbrell had an idea. He had fought in the Civil War with a ruthless soldier named Dan Dean and suggested bringing Dean into the inner circle. West opposed the idea but reluctantly agreed. Dean was their man, but while he seemed to relish both the atrocity and the passion, it was not enough to win John West over. John was tortured by the feeling that he was losing Laws to Dan.

John's solution was the same as for any problem: murder. Defying John's plan, Laws helped Dan to escape. Not knowing how to protect himself, Dan Dean decided he had to expose the West-Kimbrell Clan for what it was. Traveling to the Louisiana governor's office, he explained the situation and was given open pardons for himself and any citizen involved in killing gang members. In the meantime, the outer circle also began to realize that West and Kimbrell were not the good citizens they pretended to be. They organized a vigilante group.

When West came to Atlanta to kill Dean, he was greeted with gunfire instead. A shotgun blast to the neck severed John West's head. The head landed on a post, grinning at all who passed for several years. No one would touch it because it was cursed. Lawson Kimbrell, aided by Dan Dean, escaped and was never seen again. John West's headless body was buried in an unmarked grave in Atlanta. The location of his head is unknown, as is their vast treasure somewhere in Coochie Brake.

PECKING ORDER



ROMAN AND THE RED HEN

I was sitting at the keyboard as Roman came into the studio. He looked unhappy. He was holding a red chicken against his bare chest. Chickens have a highly organized social system that includes the unfortunate concept of the "pecking order." Some chicken is going to be at the bottom of the pecking order and is going to become injured or even killed by the other chickens.

Being a committed couple of the same gender, we both tend to be sensitive to the idea of bullying even within the social order of chickens.

Roman had just seen this unfortunate red hen getting pecked by the other chickens and rushed in and swooped her up, the champion of the lady in distress. He was at a loss as to what to do next so he was walking around with her in his arms.

We could not put her back with the other chickens so I suggested we eat her. Wrong thing to say. I was cast into the role of being another chicken pecking at the pretty red hen. Roman's anguish and the red feathers against his dark skin were causing my pulse to pick up just a bit. Everyone has a good part, and for Roman it was his navel. It was currently at eye level and I stared at it just below his crooked arm which held the young hen.

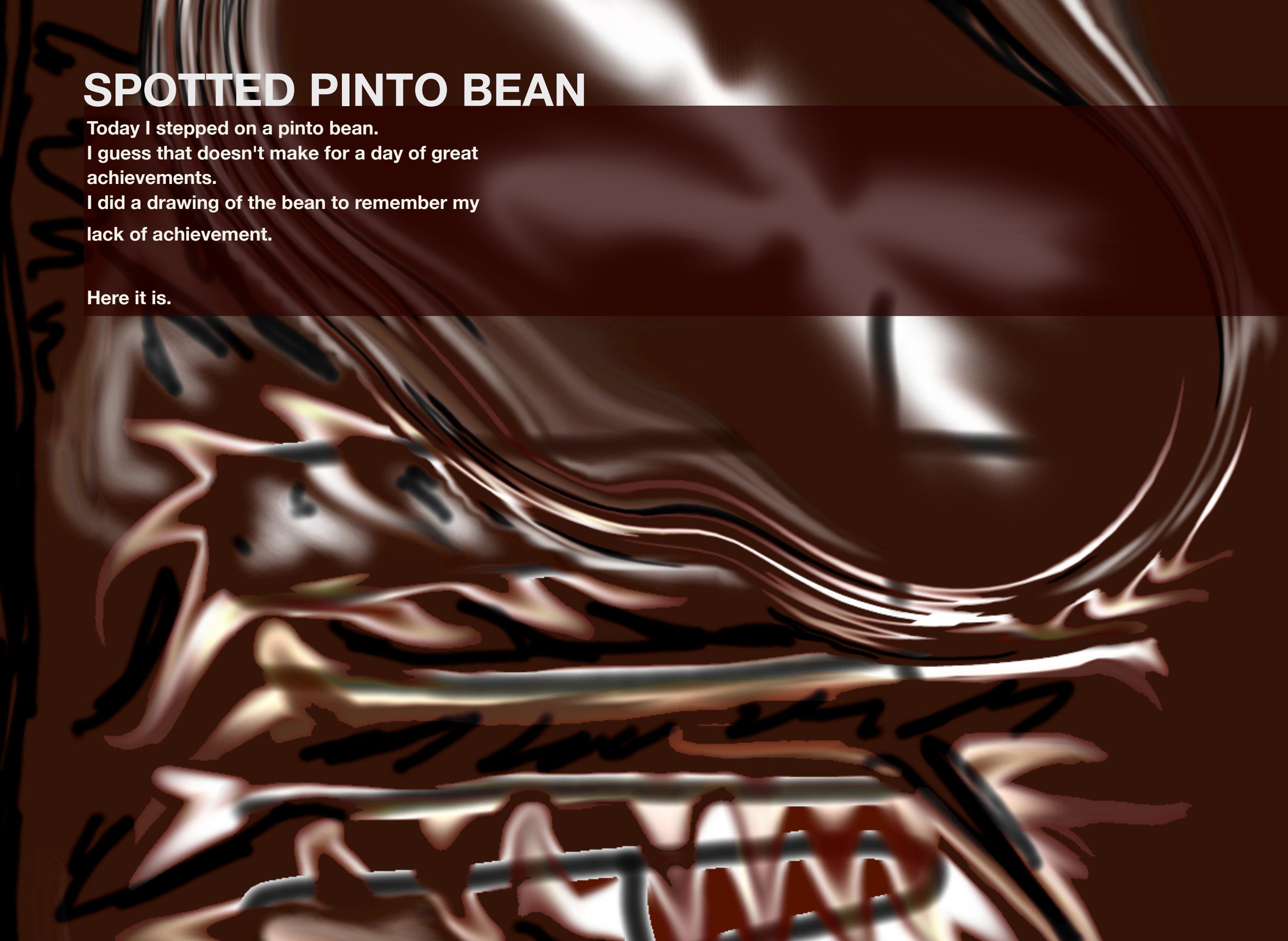
I said, "There is a small cage in the barn. The hen can live here in the studio for a couple of days. Hens have very short memories."

That hen has now become a pet and it is difficult to imagine not living with the lovely red hen as well as her handsome hero.

SPOTTED PINTO BEAN

Today I stepped on a pinto bean.
I guess that doesn't make for a day of great
achievements.
I did a drawing of the bean to remember my
lack of achievement.

Here it is.



BOBUCK

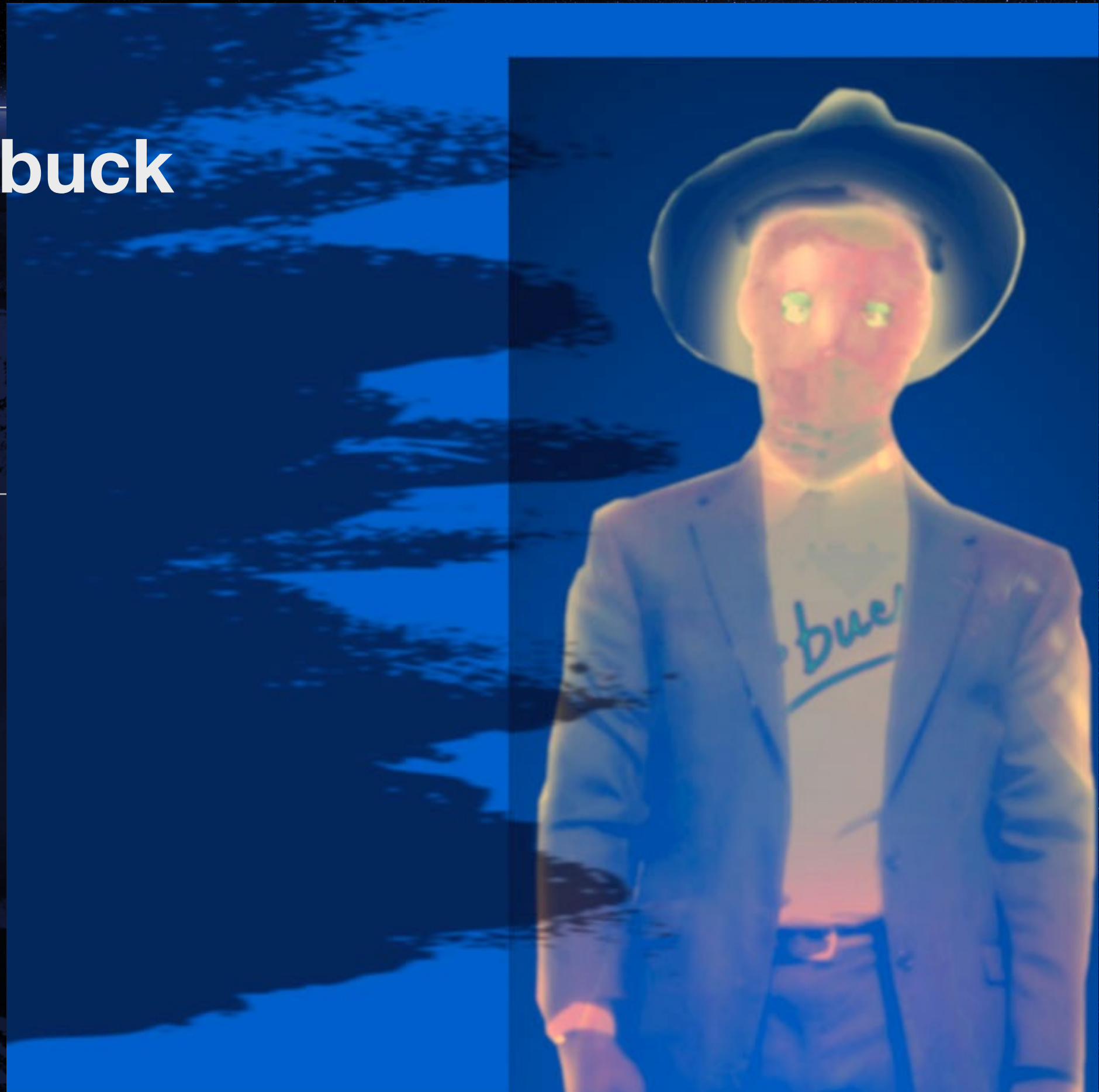
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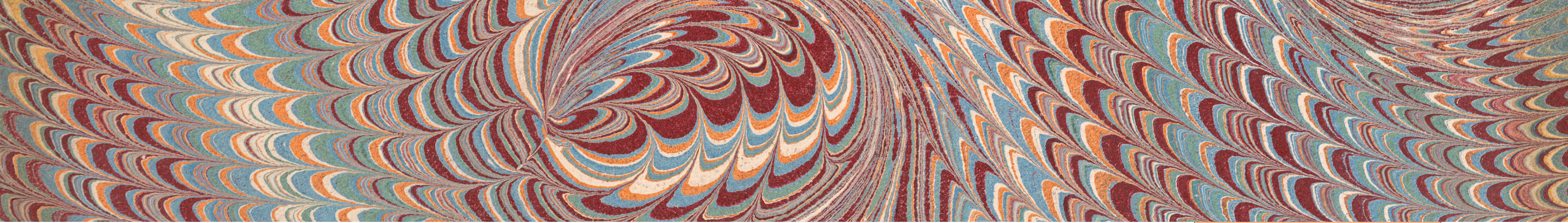
Chapter 3

Charles Bobuck

“Charles Bobuck.” I’m getting used to those words. I’m getting comfortable with him being the person who writes music for The Residents with Randy, as well as independently.

But I don’t compose. I am a builder. I construct music from things both found and played. Music pieces are contraptions. Music is a well-told lie.





CHARLES BOBUCK

- 1. Codgers on the Moon**
- 2. Chuck's Ghost Music**
- 3. GOD-O**
- 4. Life Is... My Only Sunshine**
- 5. Mush-Room**
- 6. The Highway**
- 7. Roman de la Rose**

Continuing with the same format as *Talking Light*, The Residents resurrected the guise of Randy, Chuck & Bob. The subject of the song selection shifted from death to sex.

The show was officially considered to be the 40th anniversary observation, but the overall Randy, Chuck & Bob idea was solidifying into an observance of the earlier incarnations of The Residents.

On a personal level, this tour was when various medical problems started appearing. Arthritis had invaded my joints and even surgery had not helped very much. I knew my time for playing and touring was nearing the end.

THE WONDER OF WEIRD TOUR 2013



CHICKEN FARM

I asked Noman why he was named Noman. I asked if his parents were fans of John Donne. He said, "Who?"

He said he is named after his great-grandfather. Apparently his great-grandfather's parents intended to name his great-grandfather "Norman," but made a mistake on the birth certificate. Left out the "r."

Noman said his parents finally fixed the naming mistake by making it intentional. They wanted to name him after his great-grandfather so he still had to be named "Noman," but they gave him the middle initial of "R" which doesn't stand for anything. It is just the missing "R."

Noman had already expressed how he was not moved by my musical compositions, but still managed to find inspiration in the fact that I am not an angst-ridden old man. Now he was inspired to be a musician.

He and a couple of other guys his age wanted to form a band. Certainly one of the less original ideas I have heard recently. Kids still think it is an easy way to get rich without working. The modern American Dream. He told me the band was named "Noman Island" and thanked me for telling him about John Donne. I agreed the name was pretty good. He corrected me by saying the name was "awesome."

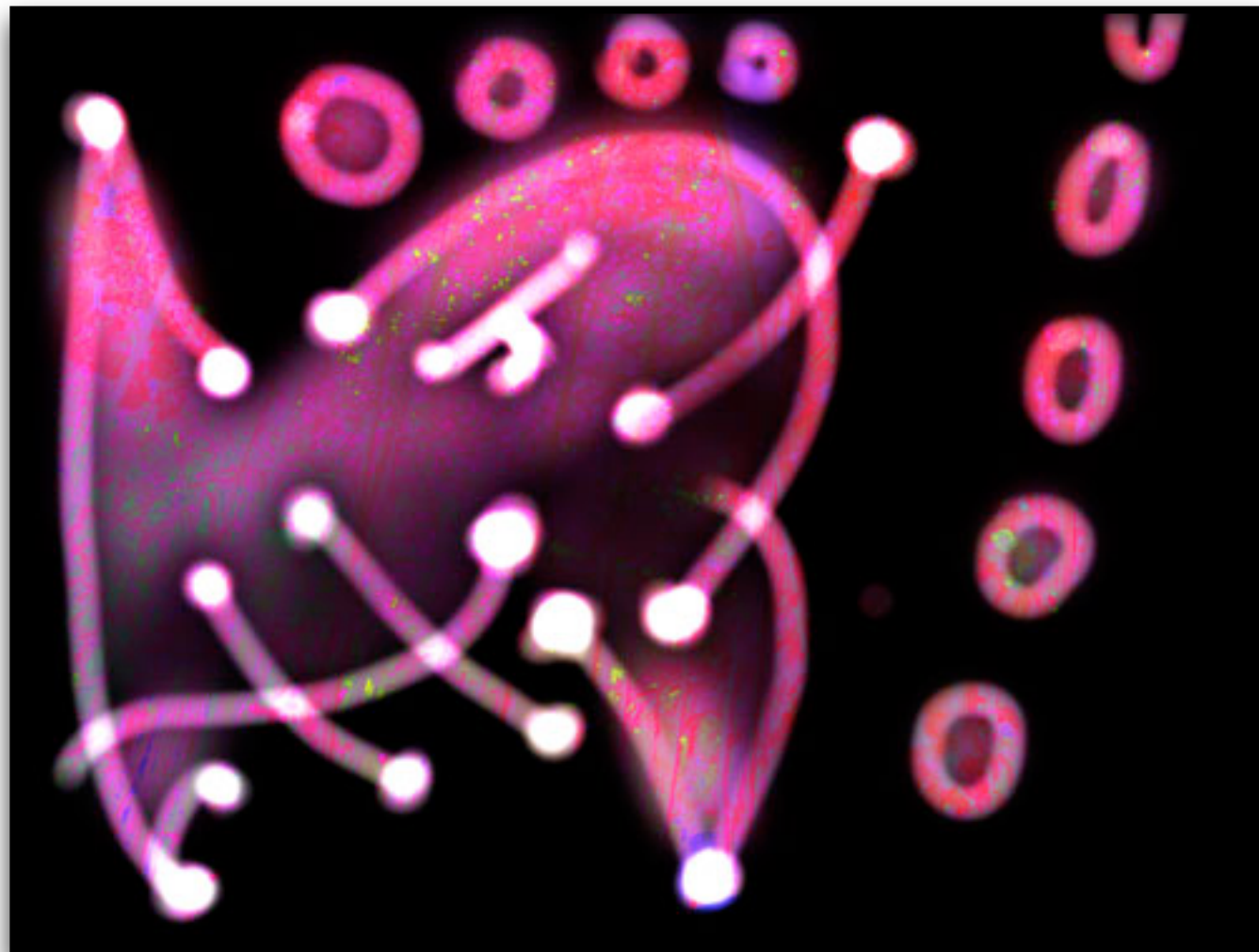
Noman doesn't drop by to visit. He always wants something. He wanted to know if the band could use my studio for rehearsal. All the parents had understandably forbidden rehearsing at their houses. Since I am used to hearing noisy music, meaning my own, he thought I would be less disturbed.

I was completely horrified but managed to not show it on my face. The idea of my creative sanctuary being filled with humans tottering between children and adults was beyond my comprehension.

I told him I was working there. He said that I didn't work all the time, which was true. Finally I suggested he ask Roman if it would be okay if they used

the barn for a few hours once a week. So what if it was cold in the barn, they needed to pay some dues if music was an important thing to do.

I knew Roman was a pushover. They are going to start next week. I must admit that, while repulsed on one side, I am curious about what they are up to.



PINK FISH

PINK

I had finished a couple of glasses of wine and thought I should try to see a pink elephant. When I was a kid, drunks seeing pink elephants was a standard cliché. I had no idea where this image came from so I went online and found this passage written 100 years ago by Jack London:

There is a man whom we all know, stupid, unimaginative, whose brain is bitten numbly by numb maggots; who walks generously with wide-spread, tentative legs, falls frequently in the gutter, and who sees, in the extremity of his ecstasy, blue mice and pink elephants.

Elephants being in short supply I decided to stare at my goldfish and turn it pink.

The fish did not turn pink. Instead, I felt an empathy for the fish swimming in circles in a bowl, living only for the next sprinkle of fish food.

I did a drawing of the fish and, appropriately, colored it pink. But that did not make me happy. Today I got a bigger tank and three more fish. I even found one that had a flash of pink when the light hit it a certain way.

I can't make the world a better place for everything but, at least for today, I did not only swim in a circle waiting for my next sprinkle of food.

All very well. But the fish didn't really seem to care one way or the other. I had made it all about me and my misplaced sense of altruism. That realization made me laugh, and laughing made today a good day.

RANDY

There was a knock on the door. I didn't hear it at first because I was wearing headphones. I often work on music wearing headphones because the music drives Roman crazy. I answered the door, and surprisingly enough, there stood Randy. I had no idea he was coming. Apparently he is shooting some video thing for The Residents on Thursday. You would think someone would tell me, but I'm used to Cryptic working in their own mysterious way. Besides I have a deadline. They don't need me for videos. Just Randy. He is colorful.

He had brought his bunny suit from LA. I asked if he was doing the bunny bit in the video and he said no, he just likes to have it with him, "because you never know." Love him.

Nobody really knows this, but that bunny suit is the stinkiest thing I have ever smelled, next to Randy himself. I asked if he would put it on so I could draw him. He agreed.

He said that my drawing made him look like an Eskimo.



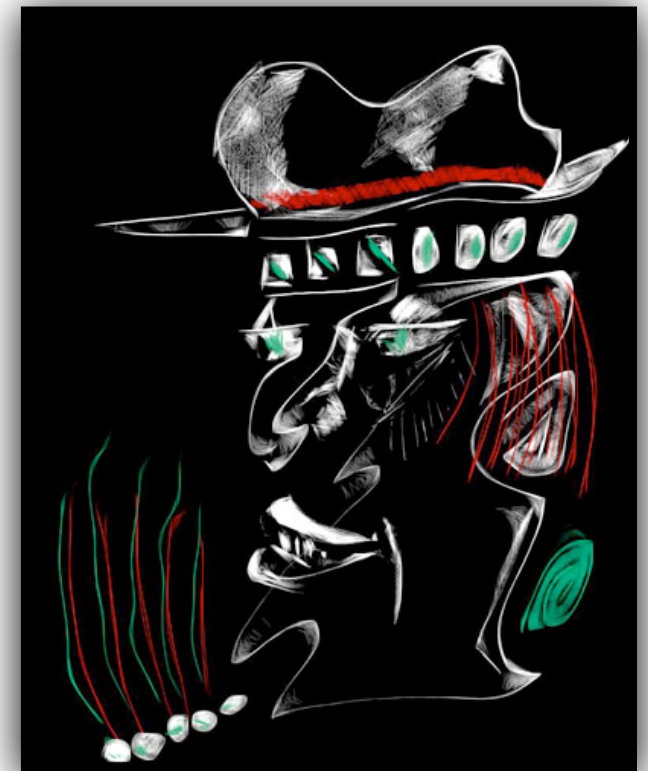
RANDY AS AN ESKIMO BUNNY

Roman cooked dinner and Randy entertained us with stories of life in LA. At one point we were laughing so hard that I choked, curiously enough, on an artichoke. Randy modeled a turquoise head band he had bought on Olvera Street. I had to draw a quick sketch. He was much funnier than the sketch. After dinner I played some of the newest Residents music I had written. He seemed to really like it, but maybe he was being nice.

I said, "Randy, why don't we put a trailer or a Jim Walter out by the barn for you?"

He got quiet and smiled back. He said he had to go. San Francisco was a long drive and he had a lunch appointment with the publicist the next day. And he left.

The night was warm and the frogs were partying over at the pond. I could hear Roman doing something in the kitchen. I felt a tinge of loss as Randy drove away. He is not me and I am not him. I stepped off the porch and removed my shoes and socks. I wiggled my feet as deeply as I could into the dirt and looked up at the incredibly sharp stars. I quietly told them, "Hi, this is me. Where my feet are right now is where I am."



RANDY MODELS HIS HEAD BAND

NOMAN ISLAND

This afternoon was the first rehearsal of my neighbor's band, Noman Island. I hung around outside the barn to listen. It sounded like a trio: loud singing, loud drums and an occasional quiet flute. Obviously Noman had grabbed the vocal position. The flute seemed to actually be playing a melody. The drummer was terrible. He seemed to have the impression that drumming was simply hitting the drum with a stick. Drums are actually one of the more complicated and sensitive instruments requiring a great deal of finesse and skill.

Hearing them brought back memories of me and Randy before we decided to invent The Residents. We were certainly much worse than Noman Island. I had a funny feeling of pride that the barn was giving birth to new music.

REHEARSAL TWO

Over the weekend I met the other band members. Lars the Flautist and Danny the Drummer. They were their instruments. Danny, exaggerated in all ways, and Lars, timid with big sad eyes. Noman then introduced me to a fourth band member, Hudson, who I had never seen around before. Hudson was the guitar player and a looker. He exuded the confidence of the popular kid in high school. He smiled and shook my hand with firm manliness. I immediately didn't trust him.

I was surprised to hear him play guitar. He did know his way around the frets. Compared to the others he was practically a maestro. The band was immediately richer and fuller with a broader tone pallet. Lars' flute was getting lost though.

Hudson also smoked pot. I'm no stickler about such things, but a barn is not a good place to smoke anything. I suggested we step outside.

I mentioned that I had not seen him at the other rehearsals, and that the band needed the added musical range of a guitar. He explained that he had a tricky family life. His girlfriend was pregnant and they were living with his grandparents. He had been arrested for pot when he was 16 and his parents kicked him out of the house. He did six months in juvie then moved in with his mother's parents. "But you are still smoking pot," I noted. He said he had started again recently because he was feeling stressed.

Later I mentioned to Noman that I had talked with Hudson. He said, "I hope he didn't tell you that bullshit story about his girlfriend being pregnant."

I didn't know what to say.

TWO MONTHS LATER

Noman told me that the band was becoming a lot more work than he had anticipated. Hudson rarely made it to rehearsal, which came as no surprise, and even the other guys were getting restless as the "play-in-a-band" novelty wore off.

Noman asked if I would come to rehearsal and then give them some advice.

I was filled with mixed feelings. These young guys were getting together for the joy of communication through noise making. Now they were starting to think about what they could do, not to make it more fun, but to make it more "career-oriented." Making it

career-oriented is truly the end of the fun and the beginning of the work. I know all too well. I don't want to see that innocence lost.

I agreed, but with sadness. Like parents sending their child off into the world. The child will never come home. It will be a new person that they will have to get to know all over again.

Inside I thought, "Noman, I wish I could just keep you the irritating kid down the road."

I went to Noman Island's rehearsal, which again sadly lacked Hudson's guitar. Roman went with me as he had become curious too. Roman loved it, or at least he said he did. I'm certain it was not the music he loved, just the energy and the joy of seeing his buddy Noman up there making a fool of himself. Watching Roman's smile reinforced every good thing I have ever thought about him.

Afterwards, I stood up. Their eyes all turned to me hoping to hear words of praise and encouragement. I felt it would be cruel to tell them they were good because they weren't, professionally speaking. Making music is so personal that to step out in the word and have anyone else hear it is kind of embarrassing. I did know what NOT to say to them. Don't tell them to "have fun" and don't tell them to "make it your own." The best advice would be to give up. Anyone who would take my advice doesn't deserve to be in the music business.

"Okay guys, Hudson is a problem," I said with a serious tone. "You need to have a group that is equally committed. Not only is he not coming to rehearsals, but you can't trust him. Trust is more important for having a successful group than how well a person can play his instrument. Also coming to rehearsals is important." My brain mumbled inside that it was too bad he was the talented one.

As Roman and I left, I felt that I had made them all depressed. I knew it would go this way. I should have told them to have fun and make it their own. I didn't sleep very well that night.

HUDSON

Today I was in town picking up some strings for my altered guitar, the Resitar. I didn't know Hudson worked at the music store. He said that he had been fired from the band and the guys said that I told them to do it.

I admitted, confident that my logic was unchallengeable, that I had suggested they only work with people who came to rehearsals.

He asked me if the real reason I was against him was that I knew he had lied to me. I said nothing. He looked embarrassed and for a moment I caught the first glimpse of the insecure guy hiding back in there. He said it was true that his girlfriend wasn't pregnant. He said he was too ashamed to tell people the truth, so he had made up a cover story.

"You weren't in Juvenile Hall either, I suppose?"

He said he wasn't, but had taken off six months from school when he was 16. Juve was a better cover than the truth.

"This is hard. Please don't tell anyone." Tears were welling up in his deep movie star perfect eyes. He went on to hesitantly explain that he had gotten his sister pregnant when he was 16. He said sex wasn't his idea. That he wasn't sure what was even happening at the time.

"She and the kid are living with our grandparents. No one knows about it being mine except her. Between work and taking care of my kid I have had a difficult time holding any personal life together.

He said that playing his guitar was the only thing that gave him peace. He asked me to talk to Noman. He said he would not miss any more rehearsals.

I thought, "Good lord, only 19 and all that having happened to you." Then I remembered who was telling the story. "Shit shit shit shit. I wonder if he actually has a sister."

I was sworn to secrecy so the information tumbled in my head with no way to escape. Later when I was alone with Noman I casually asked if Hudson had a sister. He said that he thought he had one who was three or four years older than him. Part of me felt better. Maybe he was telling the truth. Then that part turned sour as it might mean he was raped by his sister. Noman was curious why I asked. I fumbled not having prepared to be challenged. I said that I had seen a woman in town who looked like him.

He said, "Oh. Did she have a little kid with her? That wasn't his sister, that was his mother. I don't think his sister lives around here. Mom's pretty hot, huh."

THREE MONTHS LATER

When the usual rehearsal time for Noman Island came around this week, only Noman showed up. He told me the band had broken up. It seemed the drummer and the flautist had decided to get out of the sticks and look for work in San Francisco. I asked

about Hudson. He told me that Hudson had had a bit of luck. A talent scout was in the music store and talked Hudson into going to New York to prep for a modeling career. I looked blankly at Noman. Noman shook his head from side to side saying he had no idea if it was true.

"What about you?" I asked.

He looked down at his feet like a little boy and my heart kind of broke for him. He said he was going back to school in the fall. Until then, Roman had asked him to help at the farm while I was on tour.

"Noman," I said. "When I first met you I thought you were a brat, but now you have become a good friend. Whatever you decide to do with your life I hope you will always feel like you have friends here on the chicken farm."

It sounded like a platitude, but I meant it. How do you tell a post teen who's life is just starting that at the end of it all, when you look back, your friends are the only thing that mattered?

Noman was upset the band dream had disappeared. I saw the flash of an old man's face as he turned to walk back home.

I found myself calling to him. "Noman, maybe you would like to join The Residents, just for this tour. Maybe get to see if this is even something you really want to do."

He looked at me and considered it for a moment. "Mr. Bobuck, no offense intended, but I don't like your music."

Yes, there it was. I had invented my own version of Noman as a tragic figure with dashed dreams. Music was not his passion. He was looking for something to momentarily take him out of reality. It was a shallow fantasy, and not a very original one at that.

I walked back to my studio to finish arrangements for The Residents tour coming up in January. I slid into my seat wondering how any teen could possibly turn down an offer to spend several weeks stuck on a bus with a bunch of smelly old people who played music that repulsed them. Unthinkable.

The next morning I got an email from Hudson. He asked if he could get on the guest list for The Residents' New York show. I was a bit surprised that he actually was in New York. I am kind of curious to see what stories he weaves, even if I will not believe a word.



2012

CODGERS ON THE MOON

Randy whipped out his switchblade and screamed that he was going to cut someone if he didn't get out of this box.

Carlos, our existentialist, said, "You aren't in a box. We together are the box."

I said, "Randy is right. If he sees us in a box then we are in a box. Your 'being the box' concept only holds up if everyone believes that we are the box. And Randy is proof that not everyone believes that."

Carlos replied that he was the box with or without Randy.

Randy spun around angrily, screamed, "You are one sick mother!" and slashed the side of the box with the switchblade. The box disappeared right along with Carlos.

"Oh my god," whispered Randy, "he actually was the box."

Randy skipped down the narrow dirt road that lead to the box singing old Broadway tunes. It was then that I realized that Bob and I were left alone sitting side by side on a park bench in a pool of suspicious



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

theatrical lighting. I turned to him and introduced myself.

"Hi, I'm Charles," I said.

He replied, "Lionel. Like the trains."

We shook hands and I noticed that his fingers were all broken. I asked him about it and he said, "Yeah, broken." I told him that I did musical seizures, hoping he would feel better about his fingers.

He nodded.

I asked what happened to Carlos. Lionel replied that he remembered something about a sick mother.

I told him that I didn't mind the box. Lionel shrugged.

"I guess I'll keep writing music as long as my libido stays intact, box or no box," I finally declared with a forced smile.

So Randy escaped the box. Bob can be found around playing the guitar, but he vibrates on a different frequency and can be difficult to see, and I recorded albums.

Carlos. Well, Carlos remained the box. A black black-box.



SINKING SOLO

When I first moved to San Francisco, lured by the promise of a new beginning and lovely flower children, one of the first things I encountered was the encouragement to step outside the boundaries that had been set for me by my parents, teachers and social leaders back in Texas. The distinction was very clear: one was either hip or one was a straight. Straight people did as they were taught and did not question. The hip people questioned everything and made a big deal of doing so. To be hip meant that you must go outside your safety zone.

This is a story about safety zones.

Randy and I went to a very hip party that was strange in that, for over an hour, no one talked and no music played. Everyone sat on the floor in a circle and passed a few joints around. All we did was stare at each other, but in a friendly and interested way. Later in the evening it turned into a more traditional party, but people who had checked each other out in the circle now freely chatted, already having gotten past awkward social mores. Randy connected with a young soul sister who was a cross between Angela Davis and Carmen Miranda. Randy preferred an exotic woman. He always talked about how wonderful they smelled.

A nice-looking guy with shoulder length hair who was sitting near me came over. We talked for a bit, and he asked if I had ever done films. I wasn't certain what he meant, but he explained that he meant erotic films. He thought my clean, innocent look might be perfect as a "solo" for his porn company. Jerking off. The money was surprisingly good. I said I would think about it. When I told Randy, he said he would do it if I didn't.



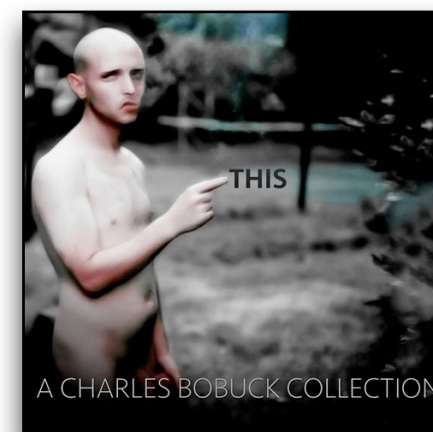
NIPPLE

I did agree and I was very uncomfortable at first, getting undressed, trying to find a position among the paisley pillows. Apparently "uncomfortable" was exactly what they wanted. I was fresh and unspoiled. Getting erect was not easy and they finally resorted to a guy whose job it was to help with issues like that.

Once I got into the mood, I found a surprising aspect in myself. I became bolder, and an exhibitionist side popped out which I had not previously encouraged. The camera and the people melted away, and it was just me doing what I had spent ten years perfecting.

I got applause at the end and they asked me back for another solo. They didn't know that, in my head, the most wonderful bebop trio started playing as I came. I did return for a second film, but that session did not go so well. I am not an actor, so trying to recreate the natural reactions from before was a disaster. They did not ask me for a third. I had sold one of my many virginities and I would never get it back.

However, it was nicely documented, and many years later I happened upon a copy of the film which I purchased with delight. I love that film so much. I wish I could have that in my high school yearbook instead of the picture that is there.



SINKING SOLO
TRACK 15

HITTING THINGS

Part of my childhood was spent in the Philippines. My dad was very briefly a missionary and he did a stint in the Southern Philippines before he lost his religion. It was there that I heard my first gamelan music and I never outgrew my love for tuned percussion. Then we moved to Texas where I had to resort to banging on trash cans. While this sounds like I may be making a statement about the Texas culture vs. the one I had just been a part of, the truth is that banging on trash cans is really not that different if you put a little planning into it. When I left Texas for California looking for "flower children," one of my first purchases for my new home was a few trash cans to bang on. My upstairs neighbors were not pleased.

A few years later, Snakefinger and the first incarnation of the Vestal Virgins played a show in San Francisco. The Vestal Virgins accompanied Snakefinger by beating on garbage cans with toilet plungers for drumsticks. Those were my garbage cans. I felt so proud.



SNAKEFINGER AND MY CANS

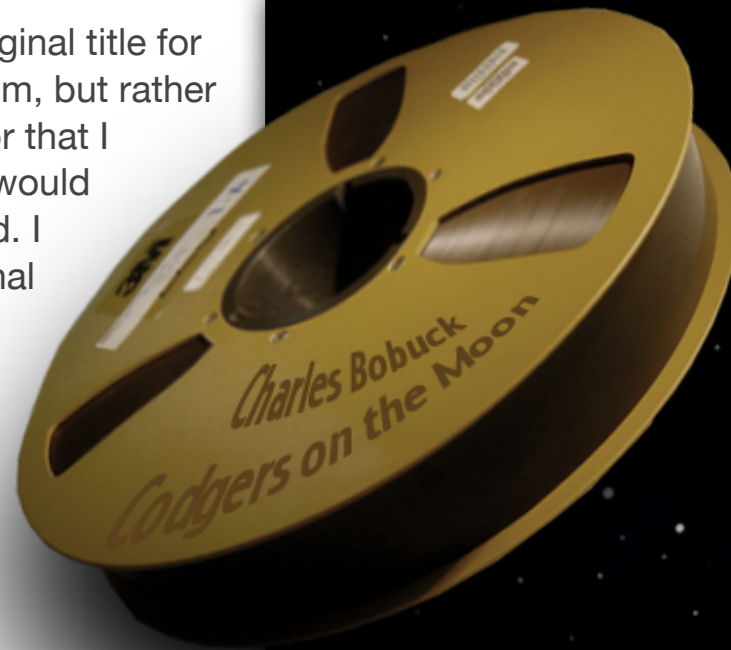


CHARLES AND RANDY ON THE GRAND OLE OPERY

MONTHS ARE LIKE MOTHS

“Months are like Moths” was the original title for this album. Not actually for this album, but rather for an album of a very different flavor that I had started with the thought that it would be the album that would be released. I had it planned as another dreary tonal piece like I have done before, for instance on *Dolor Generar*. Making music that is layered and atonal is something I truly love, but while I was working out the arrangements, I really felt there should be ways of being layered and atonal without being so dreary.

I kept the name for this track primarily to remind me there is always another way to think. The romanticized image of moths flying into a flame is really not the only thing they do. They also eat holes in my clothes. When I see one, I do a wild dance trying to kill it, but I am rarely successful. I purchased a type of battery powered “tennis racket,” and if I ever do hit one I can fry that moth-er very quickly. It isn't quite the same as being drawn into a flame, but it does suit the nature of the new project much better.



CODGERS ON THE MOON

END OF THE BEGINNING

So the USA tour of *The Wonder of Weird* ended with me being a bit older and a bit tired. Normal. Roman drove down to Santa Cruz to pick me up. Everybody was staying at a motel on the beach. When he pulled into the parking lot, I realized how much being on a tour bus for several weeks had screwed up my head. I almost didn't recognize him. He seemed too skinny. Roman marched across the parking lot and grabbed my head and kissed me on the lips. It was not a romantic "happy to see you" kiss. It was aggressive and angry.

He told me to never leave him for that long again. I knew that I had to leave again in mid April for a European tour of equal length. I knew I would leave him very soon. I chose not to mention this fact.

He knew the tour had been difficult on me. I had ended up in the emergency room in Phoenix early on and fought an infection for weeks. I have been stubborn about the idea that I was going to finish the 40th anniversary even if it meant doing it in a wheelchair. So it goes.

Once Roman settled down he told me that his pet hen, Ginger, had died. The red one that he had rescued from the other chickens. Ginger was an old hen when Roman swooped her up from the pecking. The other hens were probably just following the rules of chicken-dom and eliminating the old and weak. Roman had made the leap from Ginger being old and dead to me being out on the road growing old. Potentially the younger touring people would push me out into the snow because I was no longer a viral youth.

Roman was angry because I would die. Every tour had become symbolic of that inevitable day when he would wake up alone. I wanted to tell him I would never leave him again, but if there is a thing I don't do, it is lie to Roman.

HUDSON ON THE NEW YORK

I saw my neighbor, Noman, today. First thing he asked was if I had seen Hudson in New York. You may recall that Hudson had requested being on the guest list for the New York show.

I had, in fact, seen Hudson.

During the previous Xmas holidays Hudson had suddenly taken off to New York, supposedly to become a model. However, Hudson was not big buddies with the truth. When I saw him at the show in New York I was informed that he was now studying to become an actor. Hudson was already considered to be an excellent "actor" by anyone who knew him. Maybe he had found his true calling.

The added complexity was that Hudson had changed his name and was now "Clark." Apparently there were too many "Hudsons" trying to be actors.

"Clark," I said. "Like Superman." Hudson looked at me quizzically. I realized that Superman's secret identity was a better kept secret than I thought.

Hudson, er... Clark, was at the show with two of his friends from NYU. They were documentary film makers who wanted to meet with me. It seemed they were making a film about music people who had decided to escape the urban life and continue their careers in a country environment.

I could easily see that I would be a perfect candidate for such a film, sitting on my porch, iPad in my lap, surveying the farm from my rocking chair. Unlikely.

But that was not the deal. Hudson was aware that Les Claypool was an acquaintance. The film makers had tried to contact Les

for the film but had gotten no response. For those who may not know, Les now operates a winery, Claypool Cellars, in addition to heading up Primus. They hoped I would give him a call and persuade him to consider being in the film. Hudson had talked his way into a role if it got funding. To get funding it needed celebrities. My job was to help land a celebrity. Hudson's request for guest list inclusion suddenly made more sense.

I had to remind them that moving to the country was not a promo stunt. Artists who lived in the country cherished privacy. People don't want to be asked to explain why they prefer not to explain things.

Truthfully, I don't know Les well enough to call him anyway. Now if they had asked me to contact Thomas Pynchon, that would have been different.

ROMAN HOLIDAY

Roman and I went on a trip. Upon returning I opened my front door and there was Noman, my young neighbor from down the road. He had shaved his head. Noman had been feeding the chickens while Roman and I spent some time away following what has largely been half a year of me touring. We took what I refer to as a "Roman Holiday." No, it doesn't mean we go to Rome. We do whatever Roman wants to do. My job is to always agree and to always enjoy myself far more than I might have otherwise anticipated.

I got quite ill on tour. Twice. This is the kind of thing that drives Roman crazy. He is a natural mother and worrier. So he had decided that I was to take the cure, even if it killed me. That meant enzyme baths, which is basically snoozing in very hot

fermenting cedar chips; mud baths, which is exactly what it sounds like; and a refreshing stay at Harbin Hot Springs in Northern California.

Harbin is in a geothermic region so it has some amazing natural hot springs to sooth a tattered soul. Since it is clothing optional, I spent my days lounging naked among the lovely trees, regularly being slathered in sun screen lotion by Roman. Roman is no stranger to Harbin. He had gone to massage school there many years ago. In fact he still knew a few people who worked at the school even though so much time had passed since he was there.

Now we were home. Back on the farm. Noman greeted us with genuine excitement and affection. He has changed so much since getting out of high school only a year ago. He started working with his dad and that has been so good for him. When his father asked if he would like to join the family business, he did it in a remarkable way. He wrote Noman a letter requesting a meeting at his office. A letter. Stamp and everything. When Noman went to the meeting his dad treated him very professionally and presented him with a formal business plan that not only offered him a job in the company, but a plan of slow transition that would have him owning the company in about 15 years.

In short, Noman's father offered him respect on a man-to-man basis, proving such a level of trust and faith in his offspring that, when Noman shared the story, I was a bit shocked. My father's generation had a tendency to always treat kids like they were useless fuck-ups. My own father thought I would turn out worthless. That I would run off to California and become a hippie. That I would be in a band that made awful music. That I would end up married to another man and live on a chicken farm that

raised chickens for fun. That I would spend days lounging naked among lovely trees while being slathered in sun screen lotion.

Thanks, Dad.

TIME, NOT A GOOD WAITER

Roman threw me a surprise birthday party. We called it a surprise party but it was never a secret. They rented the local VFW Hall. Veterans of Foreign Wars. There were pictures of old men on the walls. I now look like them.

A lot of local friends came, many are closer friends with Roman as he is far more sociable than I am. Marta was there. Marta is my friend from Guanajuato, Mexico. She is the wisest person I have ever met. She brought me a small black box that was beautifully wrapped and made me promise that no matter what happened in my life that I would never open it. Noman and his family showed up. The Cryptics, Hardy and Homer. Don, Bart and Margo had driven up from LA and brought Randy and Maurice. Maurice was sick from the drive. Bob had called me a week ago. He couldn't remember the date. Hein Skyped from Holland. Lots of email from friends and family.

Someone had assembled some embarrassing film footage of me from my hippie days. We all laughed. Now my friends know what I look like naked, at least back then. I was kinda hot. I would have done me.

Randy had written me a poem which he read very seriously with great drama. I laughed, finally convulsing into tears. I will never know another person as well as I know Randy.

I finally had to step out into the colder night, a bit too drunk, a bit too full of memories. Roman soon found me. He is like a watch dog. We sat on a bench. He asked if this was good. "This is very good," I said. "Very very good."

WISDOM OF THE AGED

I had not seen or heard from Noman in a while. Not since he started working for his father. We met for lunch. The teenage awkwardness had pretty much fallen away. Even his hair was nearly combed. He wore coveralls and looked like a mechanic though he actually now worked for his father's insulation company.

I asked how he was.

That meaningless question is always a glib and slightly uncomfortable way to start a conversation. When the phone rings and someone asks me how I am doing, I hang up.

Anyway, Noman replied, "fine." That being the glib and slightly uncomfortable answer to my question.

He had a good job, a nice house, a car and a girlfriend, but was decidedly grumpy about it. I reacted with a bit of surprise as the last time I had seen him he had none of that.

"So what's the problem?" I asked.

"This," he said pointing to the name on the coveralls. I chuckled. The name on the garment was spelled "Norman," Noman with an "R" in the middle. Noman was named for his great-grandfather, Noman, who had a misprinted birth certificate.

He said "NoRman" was taking over his life. More and more people called him "Norman" since he had started the job.

"Get new name tags," I snarkily suggested.

He ignored me and told me how his father had given him a good job, his aunt had left him to house/car sit while she was in a kibbutz, and that he had been matched with a girl by an online dating site.

He tightly pressed his lips together.

"It is all so normal, so Norman. I am only 20 years old and have made no decisions about what I want. Here I am. A preordained life set up just waiting to be lived out."

I saw a slight shudder roll through his body.

All any of us want to know is if we are valid. Some of us beg for others to tell us we are, though the opinions of people are no better than our own.

I would love to have a god so there is some rock-solid unshakable thing that can judge our existence with truth and objectivity. Not likely.

So I looked at him and said to take the rest of the day off. "Go down to the river bank and sit for a while and watch for the solution to come floating by you. If no one is around, masturbate. That will release good chemicals into your brain and make you more receptive.

"Tomorrow, send me an email and tell me what happened."

I was bullshitting him. Well... largely bullshitting him. I was telling him to relax and that is always step one toward any solution. I have no idea what he will see, if anything. I have no idea how his mind will make connections out of coincidences that aren't really there. At worst it would be a bit of an unplanned adventure. It is always good to break routines. Telling him to masturbate was a freebie just because I am a nice guy. I could already see that he prefers to let things come to him; that is how he got into this non-critical mess. Being that kind of guy, sitting down and waiting for a solution to float by is as good a move as any.

It became a bit of adventure for me as well. I looked forward to hearing if there was an epiphany or just a relaxing afternoon at the river. Either would be a vicarious experience for me. I hoped for an email early the next day.

—

No email came. I felt a little disappointed. A week later I heard from him. I asked if he saw anything at the river after our lunch. He said he didn't go to the river. He went back to work. But he said I had really helped him with my suggestion. I asked what suggestion he meant. He said, "I got a new name tag with 'Noman' spelled correctly."

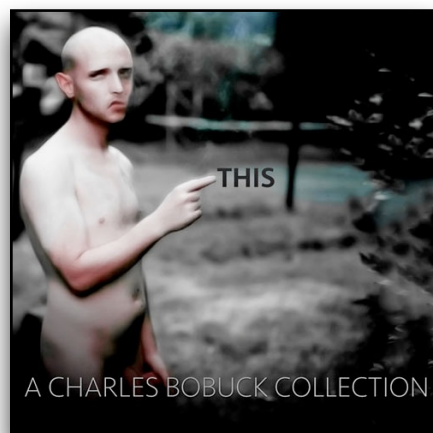
2012

CHUCK'S GHOST MUSIC

PERCHANCE TO DREAM

The soundtrack album for *Randy's Ghost Stories*.

This was a spin-off from the *Talking Light* show. The show was written to include video segments. Ghost Stories. The music for these was improvised each night of the tour. *Randy's Ghost Stories* DVD collected these video segments and I selected live improvised recordings and enhanced them to go with the stories. Those recordings were then processed and edited into a soundtrack album aptly named, *Chuck's Ghost Music*.



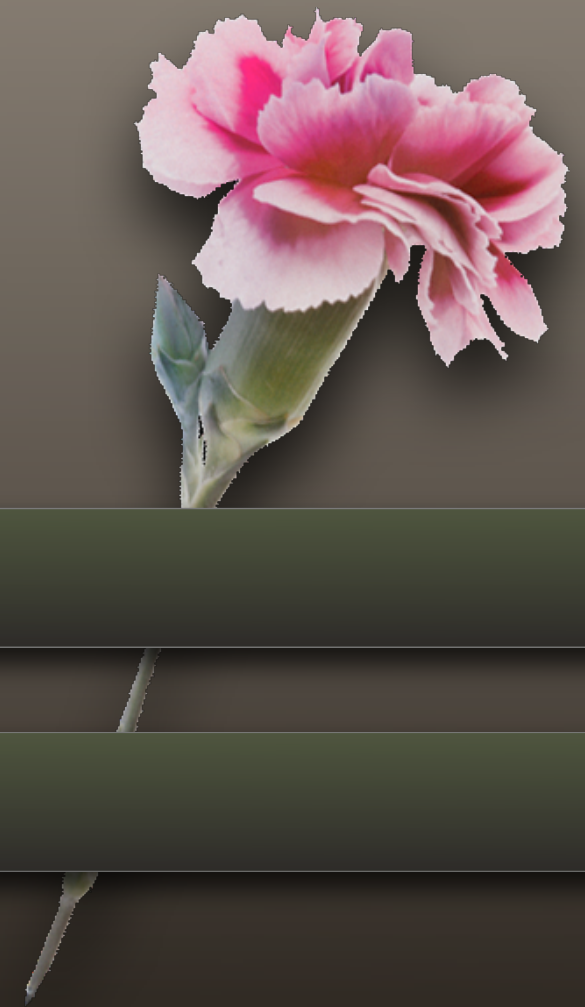
PERCHANCE
TO DREAM
TRACK 11



THE RESIDENTS' TALKING LIGHT PRESENTS



SELF PORTRAIT



2012

GOD-O: MUSIC FOR A GALLERY OPENING

GODDAMN CHICKENS

An ode to the concept of raising chickens and how it becomes a bit of a hassle. The realization is that the odd-looking relatives of dinosaurs are not very entertaining and have smelly poop.



GODDAMN
CHICKENS
TRACK 13



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT CHARLES BOBUCK

GOD-O: MUSIC FOR A GALLERY OPENING



The Residents present: A Charles Bobuck Contraption

GOD O: Music for a Gallery Opening

VERY WHITE

I am a happy man. Today I am moving. Moving back home.

Toward the end of summer I was stricken with a respiratory ailment. Research revealed that our home was growing some kind of mold that was not so good for me. Almost instantly all our belongings were being packed into a large container in the driveway called a POD. The chickens were all relocated to our friend's vineyard. Contractors swarmed, tearing out walls and ceilings. Hazmat suited men waited in the wings for a dramatic entrance.

Roman and I were whisked away by the insurance company to an extended stay hotel some 20 miles away. We now had a small one-bedroom apartment-hotel room with an indoor pool, breakfast and cleaning service. Roman was not all that pleased with it and spent his days at the deconstruction / reconstruction site that we used to call home. I stayed away due to my lung condition.

We talked about selling the farm. The sadness of our home being destroyed encouraged that kind of thinking. We both loved the farm too much to give it up. Even though we no longer had chickens it would always be our chicken farm.

I battled boredom by adopting a new look and personality. I pretended I was on a cruise and took to dressing in white as though I worked on *The Love Boat*. For the early part of the stay I was still on oxygen and had a bottle strapped to my back like a scuba tank. I thought it made me appear exotic but Roman assured that "exotic" was not the correct word. He refused to elaborate.

I spent my days at the pool with the children of the other extended stay guests. It was rare that adults came to the pool. I'm not certain why. Grown-ups didn't talk to me, maybe it was the oxygen tank. I told the kids my name was Barry White. They misunderstood and called me "Very White." It was

true my skin was colorless, my hair was white and my *Love Boat* attire did make “Very White” a suitable name.

The oxygen tank and plastic tube in my nose brought the most questions. I explained that, unlike them, my ears were in my nose and this was my iPod. They just laughed. Kids are not so gullible.

After four months we were finally leaving the hotel. I no longer wore the oxygen tank. I no longer dressed in white.

The night manager called to me as I passed through the lobby. She was holding out a piece of mail. It was a sales letter offering a deal on a hearing aid addressed to “Very White.” I thought a hearing aid would look very funny in my nose.

VISITING CHICKENS

Roman and I visited our chickens. We were invited to dinner by Lou and Susan, our winemaker buddies. They had taken over the chickens when we were forced to give them up. Now the feathered freaks chased bugs in the vineyard. The chickens, not Lou and Susan.

Lou is a retired architect and she had designed an impressive home for the creatures. In fact, it had an unfinished kitchen and a spacious bathroom. Later she told me that the hen coop started out as a guest house and that was why it was a bit too human for poultry.

I didn’t feel any deep emotional tug toward our former birds. They seemed familiar, but I was happy not to look at them everyday. Roman carried on a bit, but I think it was a show for Lou and Susan. They smiled like they had beat us out of something

valuable, perhaps a Picasso we had accidentally put out with the garbage.

Even though we were happily no longer chicken farmers, we were both a tiny bit surprised when dinner turned out to be fried chicken.

2013

LIFE IS... MY ONLY SUNSHINE

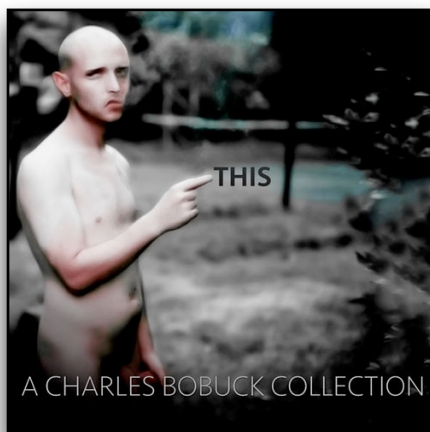
WALK-IN MUSIC FOR THE WONDER OF WEIRD SHOW

MY ONLY SUNSHINE (EXCERPT)

Walk-in music for *THE WONDER OF WEIRD* (40th ANNIVERSARY TOUR).

By the time *The Wonder of Weird* tour came along, I understood that preparing music to play while people entered the theater was a fantastic excuse to use audio experiments that I could never get away with under the expectations of The Residents. I have an innate sense of what Residents music was supposed to sound like. Walk-in music did not have to conform to that. I easily confess that creating these noise projects is likely far more enjoyable than listening to the finished result. As walk-in music the audio doesn't have to be listenable, it

only has to support a mood.



SUNSHINE
TRACK 6



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

DREAM LIFE IS...

I had a performance anxiety dream last night. Even though I am no longer on stage for The Residents' shows, my psyche is permanently scarred. My dream was not about The Residents.

In my dream I am performing a solo improvised electronic music thing. The venue is a hotel ballroom, a symposium for electronic music aficionados and my contribution is highly anticipated. I'm feeling a bit of pressure.

The first thing I realize as I step onto the platform is that my instrument, which I have never seen before, is made of paper. Not any paper but the back side of discarded business letters, the kind of thing one might offer a child to draw houses with black smoke curling from chimneys. The controls are cutout flaps sloppily attached using off-brand transparent tape. Others are merely drawings of knobs to make the device look more complicated. I have about twenty pages, some are torn from a yellow pad and have pale blue lines.

I wiggle flaps and shuffle pages but the sounds are thin and lack imagination. Improvisation gains power based on the idea that it can horribly fail. Maybe this is one of those times.

Then I notice the promoter of the symposium making his way to the platform to rescue me from embarrassment. I suddenly produce a handful of greeting cards still in envelopes. I don't know why I have them. I open one and as I pull it free, the card image flashes across the room and sound erupts filling the space with frightening but humorous sounds. As I reveal the card's dull and bland message, the dull and bland attendees burst to life, no longer the dull and bland people they seemed only a moment ago. I watch color rise in their faces, a rash appears here and there. Their breathing becomes syncopated, deep and slow. I see the promoter stop, a smile growing on his far too young face, believing I have deviously faked everyone with my satirical "paper electronic instrument."

Truthfully I have no idea what is going on and I certainly have nothing to do with it. I am like a possessed magician. Every envelope I open ups the aesthetics of the combination of humorous and sophisticated sounds rippling through the room. After the fifth card I decide that I have taken my luck as far as I dare. The audience does not applaud, and for a moment I consider that they are dead. I stuff the remaining cards into my pocket and leave the stage. I leave the building.

The night air is warm and presses me to the wall. It kisses me. It says, "Good Morning." I opened my eyes and drowsily mumbled, "I just had the strangest dream."

2013

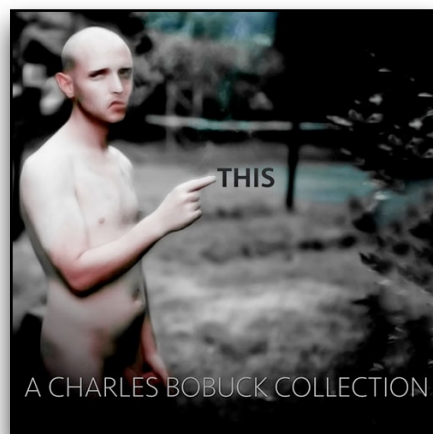
MUSH-ROOM

ROOM FOR ONE MORE MUSH

MUSH-ROOM was a Residents commission by Grace Ellen Barkey and Needcompany for a touring modern dance performance.

The company is based in Brussels, so I was able to meet with Grace and see her sketches and diagrams before starting work. I isolated myself in a small town in the French Rhone and recorded music sketches using two connected iPads. One iPad was the instrument, the other acted as the multi-track recorder.

This arrangement worked okay, but not as well as I had hoped, so most of the pieces were rerecorded in my studio in California in the fall of 2012.



MUSHROOM
TRACK 2



THE RESIDENTS / A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

MUSH-ROOM

A performance by Grace Ellen Barkey &
Needcompany

• Choreography •

Grace Ellen Barkey

With

Sung-Im Her, Yumiko Funaya, Benoît
Gob, Maarten Seghers, Julien Faure,
Catherine Travelletti, Mohamed
Toukabri, Romy Louise Lauwers

• Visual concept •

Lemm & Barkey

Photos by Phile Deprez

Music by The Residents

A Charles Bobuck Contraption





MUSH-ROOM





Shadowland was conceived to be the final performance as part of the 40th anniversary trilogy. The plan was for it to be only one performance in Nantes, France. Several shows were arranged as warm-up dates, with the big show being the official end of Randy, Chuck & Bob. That also meant the elimination of Charles Bobuck.

The idea was that *Shadowland* was to have the subject of “birth/rebirth” and as such would present a radically new sound that would shock the audience as The Residents are reborn on stage. We would move into a new album and perhaps even a new show which I would still write the arrangements, though not play the tour.

That didn’t happen, none of it. *Shadowland* was produced from the same mold as the two previous shows. Were I to make an excuse, it would be that

creating a whole new radical show for only one appearance was too demanding. But there is an aspect that the experimental design I did design for the show, while radical, was almost impossible to perform without extensive rehearsals, and at that point I could not guarantee that it would be “good.” Going with the past was easiest, and a sure way to please the audience.

The album idea was dumped in favor of continuing to tour *Shadowland*. I had told Roman that I had to follow through with the trilogy and play the one final show in Nantes, then my touring days would be satisfied and behind me. Being nearly true to my promise, I withdrew from later *Shadowland* shows after SXSW.

As I write this in 2016, *Shadowland* is still touring. Randy and Bob are still on stage so it ends up that Charles Bobuck also continues to exist. I am a ghost trapped by the spirits of the living. As a result, I am reborn, true to Roman as well as The Residents.

SHADOWLAND TOUR 2014

2014

THE HIGHWAY

WALK-IN MUSIC FOR SHADOWLAND SHOW



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

When I was young, 25 or 26, hitchhiking was an important way of traveling. Most of us had left behind our middle class parents and their suburban ways to start a life that was not based on consuming. Mostly we could go where we wanted by walking or hopping public transportation. Occasionally we wanted to go to the nude beaches south of Half-Moon Bay. That meant sticking out a thumb.

The best ride would be if some long-haired surfers came by in their surfing van. Surfing vans were bachelor pads on wheels. Guys spent a lot of time and money making vans spectacular refuges for resting, smoking a doobie with fellow surfers, or maybe even hooking up with a bikini-clad beauty.

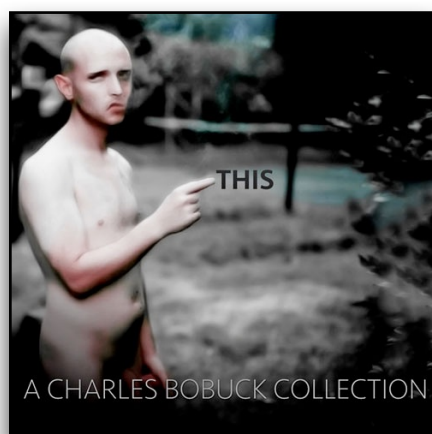
The worst ride was two greasy middle-aged guys who acted like they were on the run from having their car repossessed. And that was the ride we got. We had waited a long time already so it didn't seem like a good idea to be picky.

The guy in the passenger seat lit a joint and passed it back to Randy and me. We could see he had herpes. When a guy like that passes you a joint, you accept it. Saying "no thanks" would be unfriendly and possibly set off an edgy guy, but it didn't mean we were stupid enough to actually smoke it. Unlike the surfer dudes, these guys could be passing us PCP, or something worse. There is no reason to go into potential implications of that.

We faked smoking while watching for any indication that could point to them turning into PCP driven madmen. They seemed okay, though the driver hinted that they were horny in case we were interested in helping them out in exchange for giving us a ride and free dope.

When we arrived at our stopping place, the car pulled over. The driver turned back to us and said we should be careful hitching, that there were bad people in the world and hitchhiking could be dangerous. The passenger side guy exploded into laughter and, grinning back at us, repeated what the driver had said about bad people being dangerous. It was perfectly clear that they were the dangerous people and we were saved only because they had eaten the previous hikers, and therefore were not currently hungry.

After a relaxing day at the beach, we went back to the highway and stuck out our thumbs looking for a ride back home.

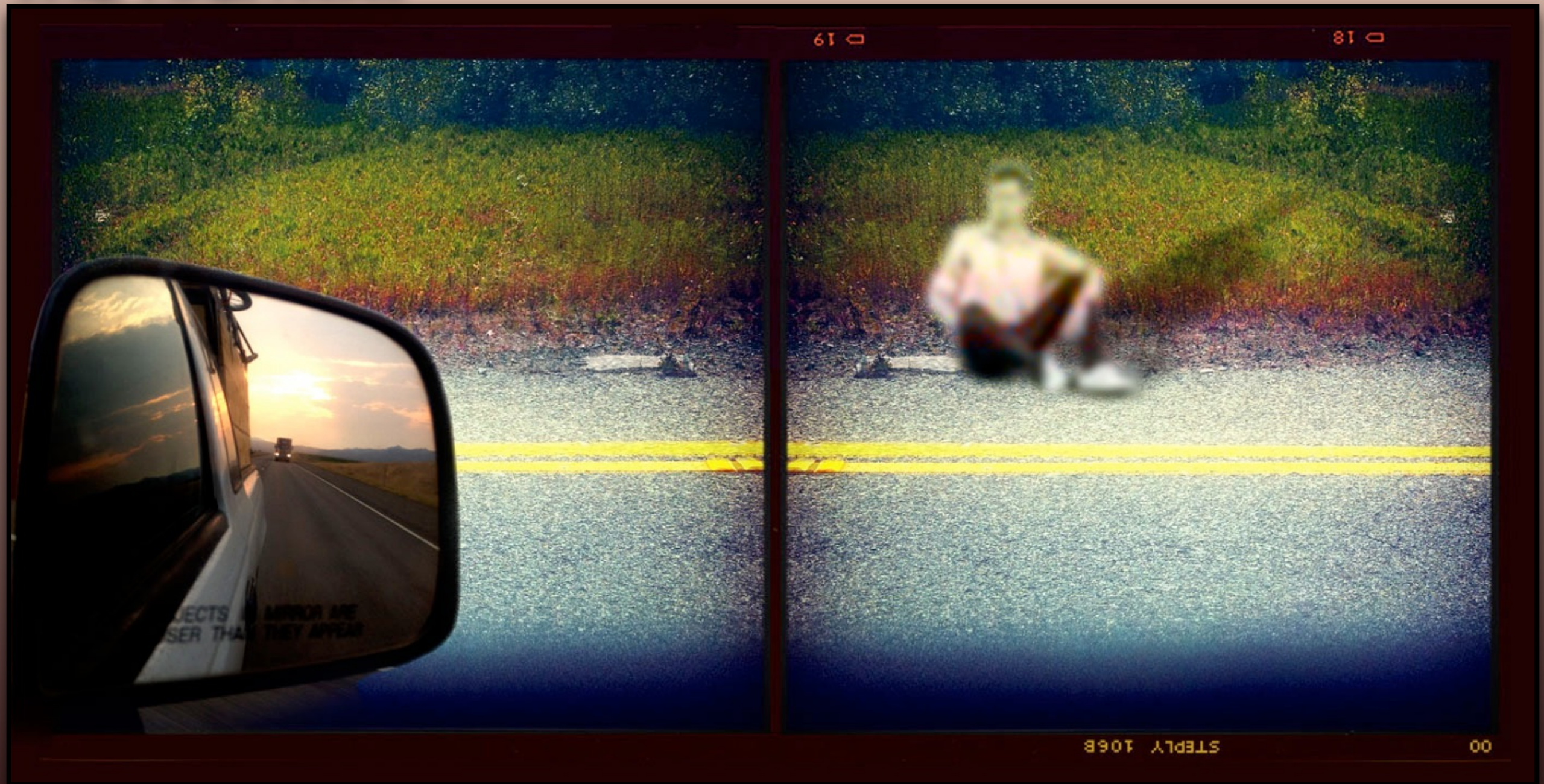


THE HIGHWAY
TRACK 17



CHARLES NEEDING A RIDE

THE HIGHWAY



THE REPLACEMENTS

“Anyone can dance around with an eyeball over his head.”

-Noman

I ran into Noman at the grocery store the other day. Searching for a line of communication, he asked if I had any shows coming up and I told him about the two, The Rio in Santa Cruz and SXSW. He feigned interest until I mentioned that they were going to be my last two on-stage participations. He looked at me quizzically. I explained that I was not personally performing shows anymore after those two. My doctors suggested I stop dragging my carcass around on a tour bus. I would stay busy doing what I did best, composing. I told him that I was planning to hold auditions at the VFW hall this summer to find a replacement. I suddenly had his full attention.

“So,” he asked, “someone else is going to pretend to be you on stage?”

“Maybe, or they may pretend to be themselves.”

He gave me a quick glance. “Can I try out?” Noman had not gotten over his cliché dream of being a rock star even though his band, Noman Island, had fallen apart rather quickly years ago.

“Well sure,” I said dubiously, “but you have aspirations to be a singer.” He then revealed his scheme was to get in The Residents and when the singing guy retired he could take over as the Residents’ singer.

“Noman,” I moaned, “that is not exactly the attribute I had hoped for in a replacement. Anyway you don’t like The Residents. I don’t think this is a good plan.” He brushed me off saying, “Anyone can dance around with an eyeball over his head.”

I’m not all that clear on what happened next, but I flushed red and hit him over the head with the frozen pizza I was holding. I didn’t hit him that hard

but he was definitely not expecting it and fell backward into a display of DVDs. It was an awkward moment. I sincerely apologized as we picked up DVDs.

He mumbled something as he walked away leaving me holding a copy of the Cameron Diaz comedy, *Bad Teacher*.

I felt guilty. I still had issues to work out over this new life change. His characterization of The Residents was completely wrong. I have never danced around with an eyeball over my head. I never did that. I could have done that and I didn't. Another item to add to the list of things I didn't do when I had a chance. The list is getting too long.

THOUGHTS ON FLYING

After my announcement at the Austin show that I would be retiring from live performance, I came home feeling like an odd bird. Roman asked if I would consider selling the house and moving to France. I thought it would be okay to check with a real estate agent.

I got a call from Cryptic telling me that they had booked The Residents for a festival so I needed to find my performer replacement or plan to fly to Europe. I didn't want to fly to Europe. Cryptic arranged a temporary Airbnb in San Francisco to have a place to work while I did pitches to my potential musicians. The Airbnb was in a flat owned by an older married couple. Their home had two bedrooms which had belonged to their now grown children. They rented them to strangers because, like me, they no longer had chickens. I say, "older couple," but I am certainly older than either of them. They just had that aura. They reeked of being

"adults" and I treated them respectfully as distant Aunts and Uncles.

The other room contained a British tourist. He was in his twenties and charming. My "Aunt and Uncle" seemed to think their child had come home. They kept saying he looked like somebody and I thought quietly to myself that the person he looked like was Jeffrey Dahmer. Seriously he did. But I had a mission and couldn't stick around for dinner.

My first appointment was with one of my favorite people. He was a busy producer and I didn't expect him to be available to replace me but he would have workable suggestions. As it turned out he did have time this summer for rehearsals and a quick run to Europe. I had my replacement and it was quite a score. He would have been my first choice.

Throughout Residents history, members of the public who paid lesser attention to the music world often confused our little group with the band The Replacements. And now we were one step closer to being them, at least in action if not in name.

I called Roman to tell him. He had his own report. Selling our land would be easy. A big tobacco company was wanting to buy farmland in the area. They would remove the structures to open the land for a state of the art marijuana farm. It made sense. California was on the verge of legalizing recreational usage and who better than tobacco companies to utilize their infrastructure to market the stuff. I crinkled up my nose at the idea. That was not my fantasy. Perhaps even worse they would clear the forest all the way to the river. I wondered what would happen to the big blue heron who lived there.

I stood in the shallow water on one foot. My other leg bent under my body. I was waiting, as I always do for a fish to swim too close. I blinked slowly and caught a glimpse of Roman on the shore. He gently watched me though I knew he only saw my blue feathers, not his lover. I wished I could waddle over and sit silently next to him on the rocky beach. I knew then. While I could leave the stage, I could not leave the river. I could not leave Roman nor the fish that swims too close.



CHARLIE IMITATES A BLUE HERON

2014

ROMAN DE LA ROSE

MUSIC OF NOSTALGIA AND ROMANCE

I am a married man. I married a guy named Roman a really long time ago. Roman has never been a fan of my music. That has not been a problem, but I thought I would enjoy trying to write something for Roman, something that is both personal and public.

I generally do not believe in public displays of affection once one is over the age of 16. But here it is: the gesture of an old man appreciating his life.

I must acknowledge a famous French poem, *Roman de la Rose*, as my inspiration.



Music of Nostalgia and Romance

THE RESIDENTS PRESENT A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

THE DREAM

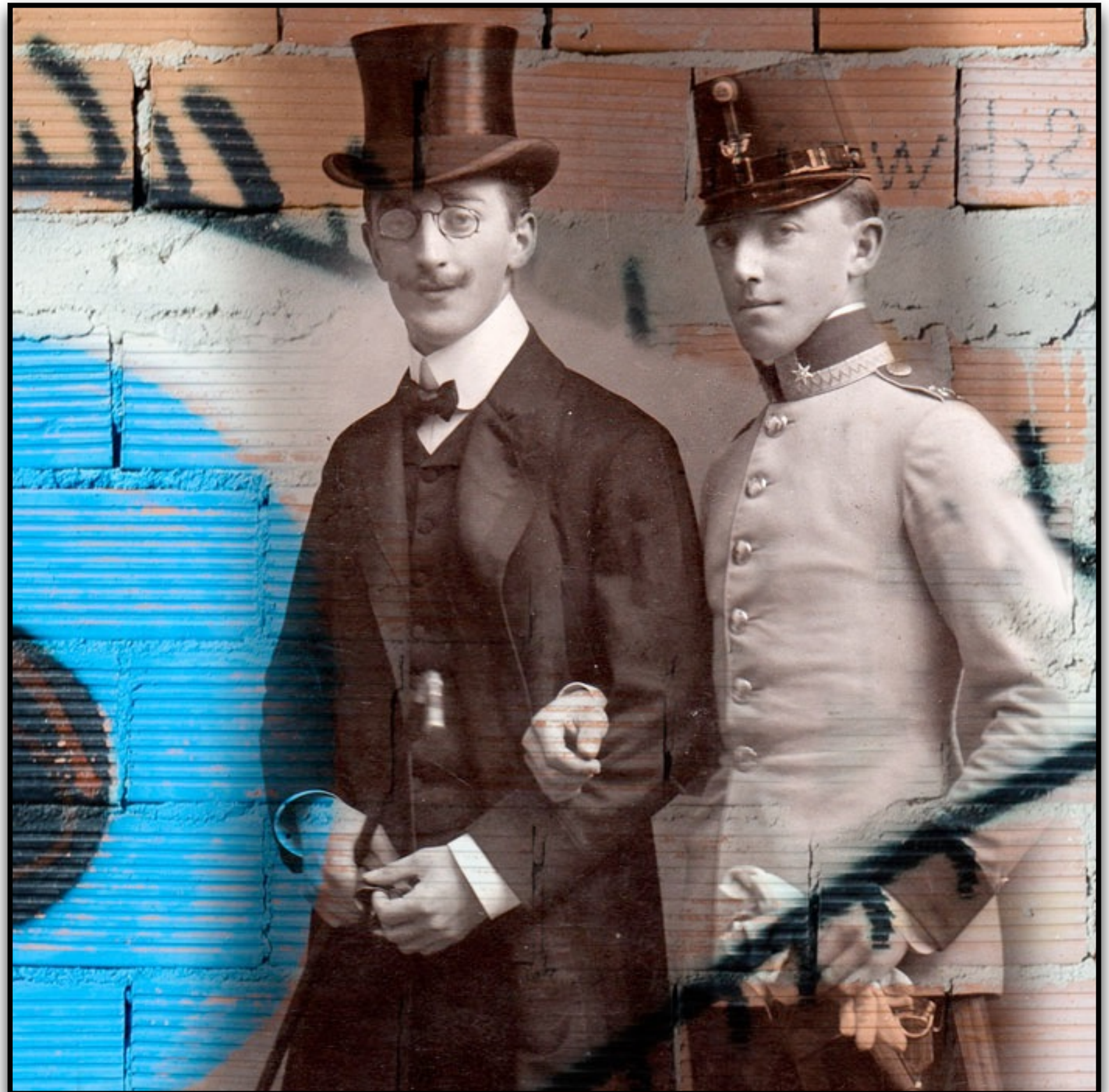
I first saw him in a café near the beach in Cassis. I inquired in French if I could join him. He smiled in English. The next day we hired a small boat to a calanque and drank white wine. In time we married and grew old together.

SEA SHARP AND BEE FLAT (overture)

Here we are. Roman and I do not vibrate on the same frequency. Know that our C# and Bb resolves somewhere around F#, that is what makes it work.



EYES TO
SEA
TRACK 12



CHARLES AND ROMAN IN EUROPE

Nature, love, and the song of chickens

ADMITTING THE PAST

I admit to admitting the past into my mind for I am a sentimental fool. Everything I see, I also see what it was and what it will be, at least the fantasy of each moment as a point in the continuum of constant change and evolution. Never content to only see, I also have to fiddle, change things, be a force in that evolution. Roman says I should not try to control things, that art is inferior to nature. Roman takes me to the river and points out a stick floating by, and then another stick that is caught on the bank. He asks which one is me. I am the one on the shore that has been captured. That is the kind of conversation romantics have. I like this kind of talk. In my mind I see the stick was part of a tree. I see that high water will wash everything into the Pacific Ocean where it will be consumed by barnacles.

LIFE SAT IN A CHAIR

Roman has a chair. He had it as a child and it has been to college, relocated to various cities and now lives with us. I do mean it only lives with us as it long ago rejected the notion of anyone sitting. I have even thought of getting the chair a chair. Roman clings to that chair as the one piece of continuity that carries him from one event in his life to another. When all other solid reality has disappeared, the chair is still there. At this point it has become like a tiny silent grandmother. She is often in the way but I know that if she were gone I would feel the void. So the chair-shaped object lives with us, a roommate more than furniture. Yesterday's clothes hang indifferently from her back. I worry what will become of her when we are dead.

EYES TO SEA

Roman and I went to the river and challenged each other to find the smallest rock. Roman won though I accused him of showing a large grain of sand. We brought our tiny finding home and added it to a collection in an old ring box on the kitchen window sill. The ring box belonged to his mother who died while he was still a child.

LUBRICATED

Pretending that no flags were being flown on our staffs would be silly. The innate pleasurable force that drives two people to assume intertwined positions is, at best, strange even to the people participating. Nature has determined its course and we can only be tossed about by its demands with gaping awe.

NO FEAR AND NO CHANCE

While this is a music project that is based around a very personal situation, I don't wish to go too far. It is not interesting to have insight into someone's private life. I feel similarly when forced to attend a wedding. They are embarrassing exhibitions. That is the reason these notes are not printed on the CD package. There is no reason a listener need know more about our connection than this: Roman and I agreed to share experiences without fear of the unavoidable losses that are, in time, inevitable.

DRUM ROLE

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of living with a same-gendered person is that it comes with no instructions. Your own parents and all the families you see in the movies and TV tend to be either different-gendered or kind of fucked up people, or both. So plain ordinary same-gendered life is a complete mystery even to the people living that way. In a traditional relationship the wife often gets stuck with the work. We don't have one of those. It is rather useless to have two people taking out the garbage and doing the barbecuing. One of my self-assigned roles is to play the drum. I'm not certain who gets the role of drummer in the different-gender household.

CYMBALS RING

Roman never asked me to marry him. He made a symbolic gesture of removing a ring from his finger and sliding it onto my finger. We had only known each other a month. I would have given him a ring too, but I didn't have one. However, ten years later I gave him one at a street fair. The ring had nine metal layers. It made a poor symbol for a ten year anniversary, but I kissed him in public for the first time. It took ten years because we are same-gendered and sensitive to our surroundings, unlike different-gendered couples. A kiss like that is a kiss that different-gendered people never get to know, it is an act of rebellion driven by passions from a decade of oppression.

LAYING OF THE GOLDEN BANDS

Roman and I, at one time, were children playing next to widely separated rivers but still collecting sticks and rocks. In time we will be carried by different rivers to the ocean and devoured by

barnacles. But for now, somewhere and somehow in-between we quietly watch chickens repeat our lives in miniature. I find chickens odd looking creatures but Roman is a giver and has to take care of things, though chickens would never agree to take care of us like we do them. The chicken crop is growing and now we band them with yellow leg rings to know how old they are. Roman and I also banded each other with matching golden rings. The golden bands mirror the love, reflecting the Rose for all to see.

The dream ended.

I woke to the realization I was not asleep.



THE PHALLUS OF CASSIS

IT'S PERSONAL THIS TIME

DIAMONDA

Over the weekend Roman and I went to our tiny town Gay Pride party at the VFW hall. The small gathering was a colorless event attended mostly by white people in their 50s and 60s. Youth doesn't understand the celebration. They can't imagine that the USA, land of the free, used to put people in jail for being gay. I'm glad that they don't have to deal with that absurdity.

Roman and I were standing around enjoying a beer talking about how almost everyone was a bit overweight, myself included, when I was enthusiastically approached by a middle-aged woman.

"Charles," she said, smiling. I could not hide the fact that I did not recognize her.

She turned to Roman and introduced herself as Diamonda. I did not recognize the name either, though something was seeming familiar.

She turned back to me and said, "It's Richard... I used to be Richard."

I thought OMG. It was Richard. Long before Roman came into my life I had been very close to Richard and his wife Beth. We had co-paneled a seminar at the University. It was the late sixties, so of course we had experimented with the then fashionable ménage à trois.

I stammered, "Good lord Richard, what happened with Beth?"

She laughed, "Let me grab Beth."

A moment later Richard showed back up with Beth. She was Beth, I recognized her immediately. She had aged gracefully.

I smiled at them and said, "Okay, explain." They both exploded into delighted laughter.

The short version was that Richard was transgendered. Richard was not gay so Diamonda had continued to have a loving marriage with Beth, who totally supported the evolution. I asked if this change meant they were lesbians now. Diamonda winked at me with a knowing smile. I wasn't sure what that meant. Beth said they were kinda lesbians, only with an organic dildo. I paused to picture that. Technically, their relationship was still husband and wife, still one man and one woman, a delight to Conservatives everywhere. Instead of divorcing, they reprogrammed their brains to create a new relationship based on reality. That was so 'Richard and Beth.' Amazing people.

Finding happiness in life is a primary, if constantly shifting, goal, so of course I was sincerely happy for them, but Diamonda was going to take some reprogramming of my brain as well. I continued to see someone I did not know.

Roman was taken aback by the fact that I had been intimate with them even though free love was the norm back then and to share love was an honor.

What Roman saw was two old ladies. But forty years ago, they were a handsome hippie couple. She trended toward folk singer chic and he, the dark poet. Beth was the one that originally brought me to their bed, but Richard was the one that kept me there. I developed my first boy crush on Richard, though his heart belonged only to Beth.

Now I realize my first boy crush was actually on a woman named Diamonda who had an organic dildo. I'm not going to think about that.

CULTURAL CLUBBING

As a gay guy I have been fairly aware of the Internet building some kind of case of Christians against gays. It seemed odd because churches around here were flying more rainbow flags than anybody.

When I attended my small town's Gay Pride party I noticed the local priest was there shaking hands and enjoying himself. I didn't know him but I was curious what he thought about the seemingly fictional clash.

When I asked, he rolled his eyes in a manner that let me know this was not the first time he had heard this question. His answer was still surprising. He explained that in his mind there are the Jesus Christians who believe love is the basis of Christianity. And there are the other ones who seek reasons in the Old Testament to condemn decent folks. It sounded a bit rehearsed, but I got the point.

He added, "No sane person in 2015 could live following the beliefs of the Old Testament."

He continued, "Remember, Jesus was not a Christian. He believed the books we call the Old Testament were out of step with modern times. Even Jesus thought the old book missed the basic point of being kind to each other."

There was a protracted pause. Then he swallowed deeply. He said there was something else that he would be sorry not to have said.

He blushed, "I'm a bit of a Residents fan." Then I blushed too. I felt awkward.

I said, "Thank you, that is very kind." I sounded totally insincere, even a bit demeaning, though that was not my intent. I didn't have a good response for people saying something intended as flattering. Somehow complimenting a musician who writes music is as weird as complimenting a priest on listening to confessions. It's just the job. As a way of promoting sounding nice, I asked if I could buy him a beer. He said, "I'd rather have a joint."

Oh dear lord, he thought I was a stoner because of The Residents music. It got awkward again. I told him I didn't smoke. Not since the '70s. He winked at me and I wasn't certain if that meant he was only playing with me, trying to be shocking. Maybe he was serious. The room did smell like skunks in heat.

PIE

Out of the blue, the priest I had spoken with at the Gay Pride party called me up. This priest was on a judging panel for Best Apple Pie at a local apple festival. One of the other judges had become ill and they were desperate for a local citizen of stature to take her place.

Yes, you heard right. Somehow I had become one of the fancy citizens, worthy of judging apple pies. Even if people had never heard of The Residents, word was out that I had traveled all over the world, presumably tasting apple pie wherever I went. Surprisingly enough, I did like apples so that perception was not entirely wrong. I ate apples almost every day. Around here, roadside stands sold them in front of the orchards they came from. Delicious, no pun intended.

The event was great country folk fun. The pies? They were the best I have ever eaten. There were three judges. A priest, a rabbi,

and a Bobuck. I asked if they wanted to go to a bar after the judging, but no one laughed.

Comedy has fallen to such a sad state.

PETER THE PRIEST

Since judging apple pies together, Peter the Priest and I have started hanging out more often. Peter the Priest. That's what I call him. Maybe one would think it is because of St. Peter guarding the Heaven's golden arches, but it's not.

Peter the Priest said to me, "I saw The Residents are in South America. Doesn't that make you feel a bit strange?"

I said, "You are in the same boat, you are here and the Pope is in Rome."

"And I feel a bit strange," he added.

Peter the Priest did feel a bit strange. The Pope was coming to the USA and even if his Popemobile never pulled up to Peter the Priest's church, somehow everything needed to be fixed and cleaned. I volunteered to help out. That is what friends do.

We were polishing the silver when Peter started small talk, first explaining that he had two mothers. I stopped polishing for a moment, then went back to work without comment. He explained that he was reared by his mother and his mother's twin sister after his father died in Vietnam. He liked the idea of having two mothers, especially since they looked the same.

The problem was that he was taught differently than other boys. Like he was taught to pee sitting down. He said his sex education

was quite stunted since he decided to become a priest at an early age and his moms were seriously Catholic.

Then he told me that he had always been attracted to the Bible passages concerning Jesus washing people's feet.

I suggested that having a foot fetish was fairly common and not in any way dangerous to society. That if Jesus had a foot fetish then Christians in general should regard people with foot appreciation as marked for greatness.

Peter wondered if asking to wash people's feet would raise eyebrows.

"Yes," I told him. "Yes it would. People are very selective about what parts of the Bible they want to apply to modern life. You could point out Jesus washing feet all you want, but Jesus might have sported a chubby under those robes and that would be a Christian turn-off."

Personally I totally think getting a chubby is normal and healthy. Even babies get them.

He looked up and asked, "Can I wash your feet?"

I asked, "Are you going to get a chubby?"

Ignoring me, he said that I was the only person he knew he could ask. An awkward compliment.

I had already made a positive statement about foot appreciation. I wasn't certain if it meant I was cheating on Roman, but I said I would accept a foot washing. That is what friends do.

So Peter washed my feet. He did so delicately and with propriety.

Afterward, there was a moment of intimate awkwardness as he put his foot washing materials away.

I wiggled my clean toes in the air. I had gained a new appreciation of the Bible.



GOSH DARN CHICKENS

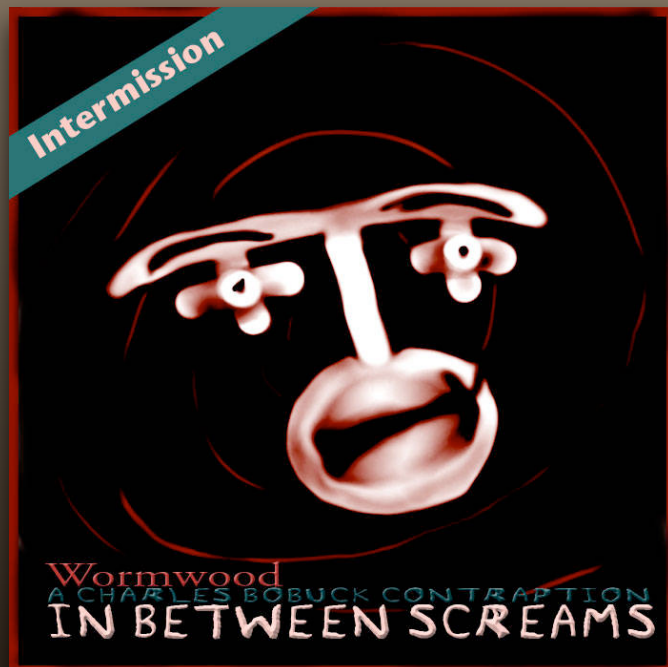


CB SUITE



AS A CHILD I SOLD THE NEWS

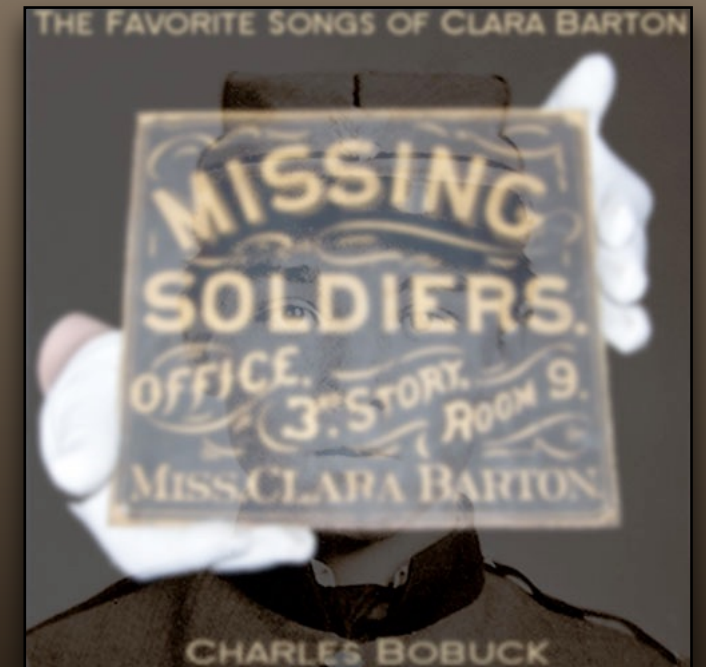
IN BETWEEN SCREAMS



MAXINE



MISSING SOLDIERS



THE GRANDPRA PROJECT

THE WANE

2015

WHAT WAS LEFT OF GRANDPA

GRANDPA

I grew up in the age of album liner notes. All records had copious writing on the back to give the listener more insight into the music.

That trend has fallen out of favor, but I chose to continue the tradition by developing a web site for my liner notes. Earlier in this book, I reprint liner notes from *Codgers on the Moon* and *Roman de la Rose*.

For the Grandpa Charles album I wanted to do more. I wanted to make a digital album of the music and liner notes together. The idea inspired this THIS book so I incorporated the *What Was Left of Grandpa* project into it intact.



THE RESIDENTS PRESENT A CHARLES BOBUCK CONTRAPTION

Just as humans grow old, their skin losing elasticity so they seem in a continuous state of melting, so do artists lose their art. But before anyone thinks of that as being sad, consider the reason people do art.

Art is a compensation, art is a search. Once a person becomes complete, once what was searched for is found, art ceases to have purpose for the artist.

THE GRANDPA PROJECT

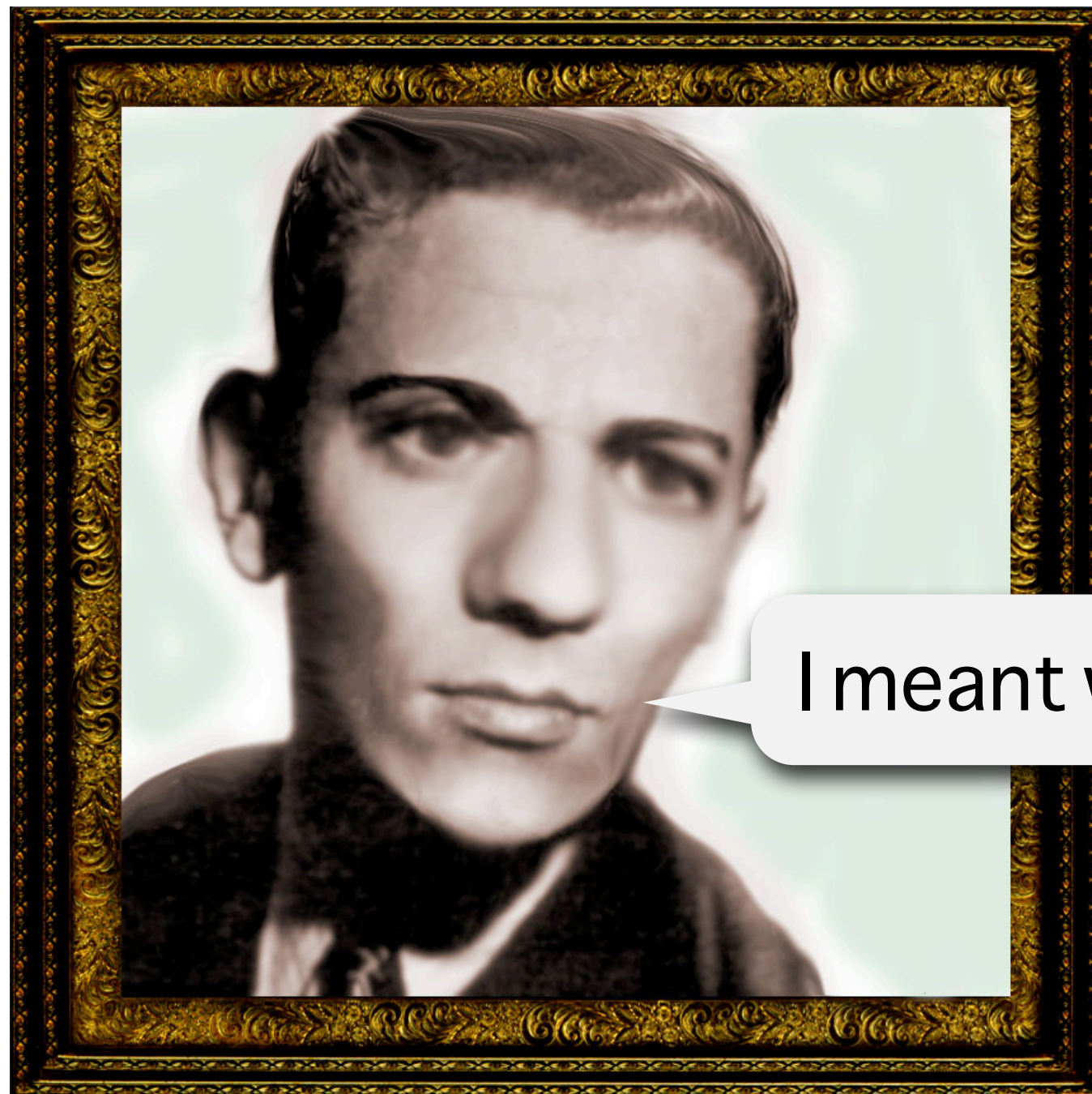
The “wane” for Charles Bobuck is the sure sign of his success at turning his art into his completion. Whatever drove him to do something to begin with has been satisfied. Art stops realizing personal need. Art becomes personal amusement.



WHAT WAS LEFT OF GRANDPA

He meant well

CHARLES BOBUCK



Dedicated to the memory of
the original
CHARLES BOBUCK

GRANDPA CHARLES

A very long time ago, Aristotle got in an argument with Plato about chickens and eggs. Which came first. That kind of thing.

Neither paused to consider roosters. Roosters and the vast majority of male animals have always been regarded primarily as accessories to the process of the continuation of the species. I have no problem with that. Women producing daughters with the ultimate purpose of those daughters making more daughters seems like a sensible system which allows for a beautiful tradition of photographs with four or five generations of mothers and daughters.

Men were not overlooked. It's just that nature never intended them to be in the photos to start with. Especially affected were the older men, the grandfathers, the great-grandfathers. They tended to become primarily decorative additions to overstuffed chairs.

This was true for my grandfather. And in time, so it will be with me.

When my mom was young, my grandfather provided for her and the rest of the family in the manner that was expected of men during the Great Depression. He had his personal interests: his work, music, reading, smoking cigars. But satisfaction came from providing for the family. Once mother married, replacing him with a husband, his center became blurred. She was the final chick leaving the coop and he suddenly found himself with little distraction other than a wife he had not noticed in many years.

While my mother was the last to leave home, she was not the youngest child. She had a younger brother, Tommy, who had suffered a difficult birth. I don't know what went wrong, medicine was not very sophisticated in small towns in Arkansas a hundred years ago. The

younger uncle had the mind of a child. He was kept at home, never going to school, church, or anywhere that might cause embarrassment or require explanations. When I was young and visited the grandparents, Tommy and I played together. We both loved to draw. While I would copy characters from comic books, he mainly copied cigarette advertisements from magazines. He liked to draw women smoking. I thought he was a terrible artist back then. I might have a different opinion now.

Grandpa's favorite private time activity was caring for his collection of jazz 78s. Grandpa would pull me away from playing with Tommy to hear a record he had recently bought. Even though only a kid, I seemed to be the only other human in the family interested in listening to the records. Tommy stayed close by and watched us with no sense of curiosity. I committed to music because of Grandpa. He was my inspiration.

Additionally, Grandpa could count on me to listen to his adventures as a youth. His best story was how he survived the Great Storm of 1900. Grandpa was nine years old and living near Galveston, Texas when a hurricane totally submerged the island, causing thousands of people to drown. I have since read about the storm and it was horrific. I asked Grandpa how he managed to survive. In 1900 there was no way of knowing a hurricane was bearing down on the small island. When the lightning started, he and his buddies walked to the beach where they could better see the sky. A beach is not the best place to be in a hurricane or a lighting storm as far as that goes. Once the waves became huge, rolling onto the land, they ran to a nearby lighthouse. He said that a number of people were in the lighthouse and all of them survived. They were lucky. Eight thousand other island dwellers did not.

I became so enamored with this tale that, as an adult, Roman and I made a kind of pilgrimage to Galveston to see the island I had imagined so many times. I hoped to find the lighthouse. After all, had Grandpa died in the storm, neither my mom nor I would exist. As it turned out there was only one lighthouse in 1900 and it was still standing though closed to the public. I stood near it imagining Grandpa and the other kids laughing as they ran to safety, not realizing how deadly the storm would turn out to be.

Grandpa survived the hurricane, but Grandpa could not survive life.

The old man died of cancer at 84. Cigars. He was allowed to die at home. My mother and I walked to the side of his bed to say goodbye. An odor of sickness almost made me gag. He was yellow and sweat rolled from his forehead. He looked at me with eyes that seemed too small for his head. Grandpa touched me with his bony hand and mumbled something that I could not hear. From watching movies I knew I should lean over to grasp his final words. But I didn't do that. Grandpa and I developed angry differences as adults and I thought the words could be hurtful. So instead I patted his shoulder gently like I might a dog and whispered, "I love you too."

My mind was conflicted over refusing to hear what he actually had to say. Death is so permanent yet it cleanses with its finality. I was still mulling my relationship with the man when Tommy came in. I had not seen him in years but his face was unchanged, appearing youthful and vacant. He looked to Grandma and asked what was wrong with Grandpa. She looked back and told him that Grandpa was preparing to take a long trip to Heaven. Tommy grinned in the direction of Grandma seeking confirmation that going to Heaven was a good thing. A very tired Grandma told him it was a good thing, a very good thing. While everyone in the room other than me believed that going to Heaven was a good thing, Tommy was the only one to practice what the others preached. He burst into a happy laugh. Tommy never laughed. Tommy clapped his hands and started to bob a little as he had seen others do on preaching TV shows. A few of us snickered at first but soon others were joining Tommy, clapping and bouncing. Even

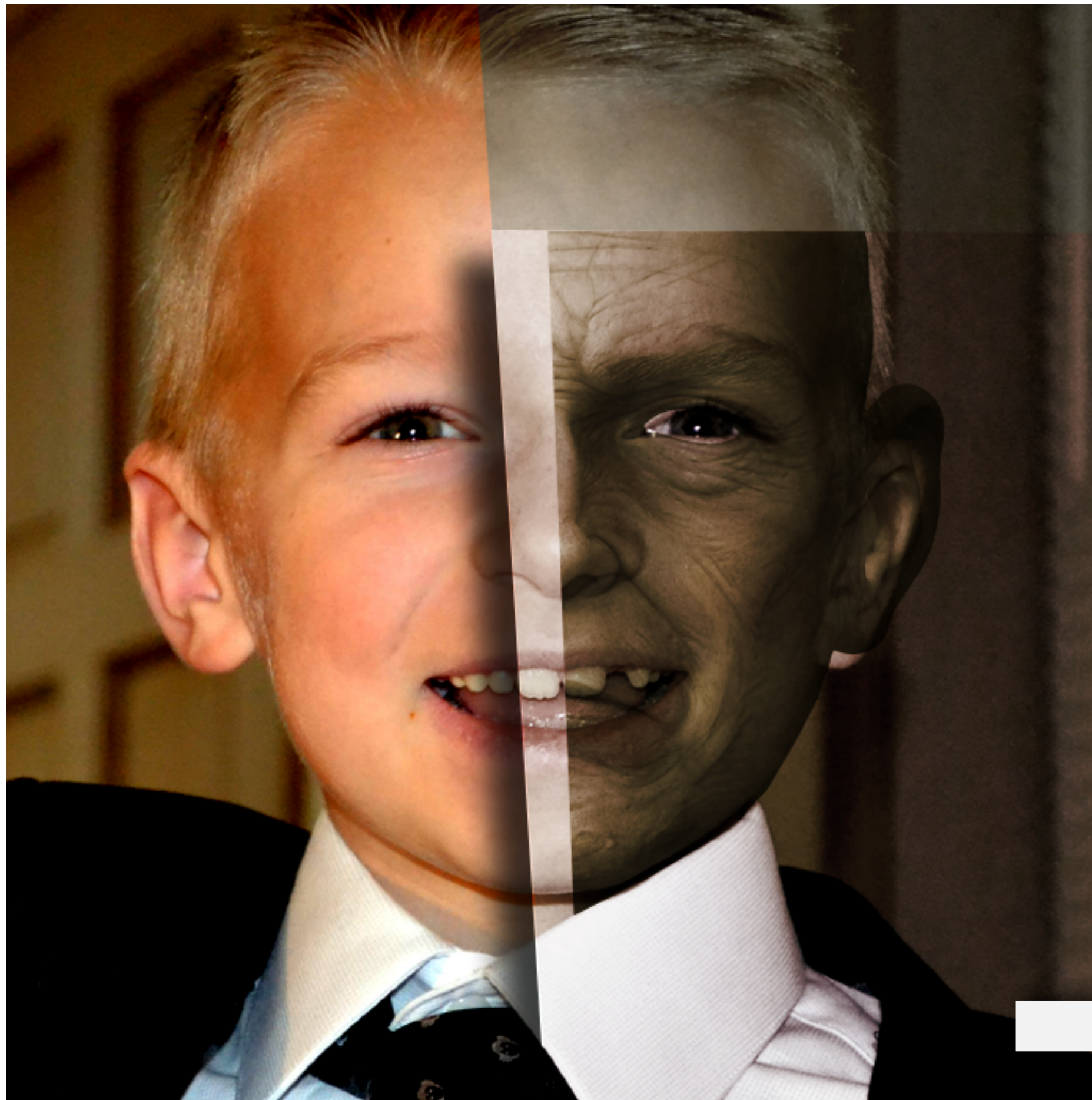
cynical me jumped in upon feeling that innocent joy overwhelm any sadness.

I suppose Tommy's entire life built to that moment. His existence suddenly had purpose as he became our leader showing us the way back to being alive. Tommy had won acceptance as a full-fledged member of the human race for the first time in his life, if only for a moment. We took turns embracing him. It never occurred to me that he had the capacity for being happy.

Grandpa gave up the fight. We gathered around to watch life drip from him. The question of the chicken or the egg never occurred to Grandpa. He was egocentric enough to believe that he came first, and his wife and daughters were less important than the men. The women did not cry from the loss, they cried because it was finally over. The men did not cry at all. The women understand that they will have to stand next to more than one man dying. It is what they do. Someone mumbled that he was a good man. He wasn't a good man, he was a perfectly adequate man. He did what was needed, deposited his sperm, then got out of the way.

After the burial, I never saw Tommy again. He joined Grandpa in Heaven a year later. Mother said he had dropsy.

Grandma, on the other hand, lived many more years. She saw daughters give birth to daughters who gave birth to yet more daughters. At 90 she married a man she met in the old folks home. He was fat and couldn't reach his feet so she had to trim his toenails.



NOW I LAY

I had never seen a pair of headphones until I was about 6. My parents didn't even own a record player. However my Grandpa had played saxophone in a jazz band when young and had never lost his love of all things audio.

It was he who plopped headphones over my ears and said, "Listen to this!" as he dropped the needle on a recording of Stan Kenton playing "Artistry in Tango."

He said, "Do you hear how Kenton is laying back, undermining the rhythm?"

I said that I did, but truthfully, I had no idea what he was talking about. His enthusiasm lit the room. He played air saxophone.

Therry Duplas

Was a deal maker and a deal breaker. Ran the hardware store. Eventually found himself in small town politics. Therry became a grandfather.



BOND, JAMES BOND

In the bottom of Grandpa's wardrobe was a small box. Some washed out photos of people I did not recognize. A letter from someone I did not know.

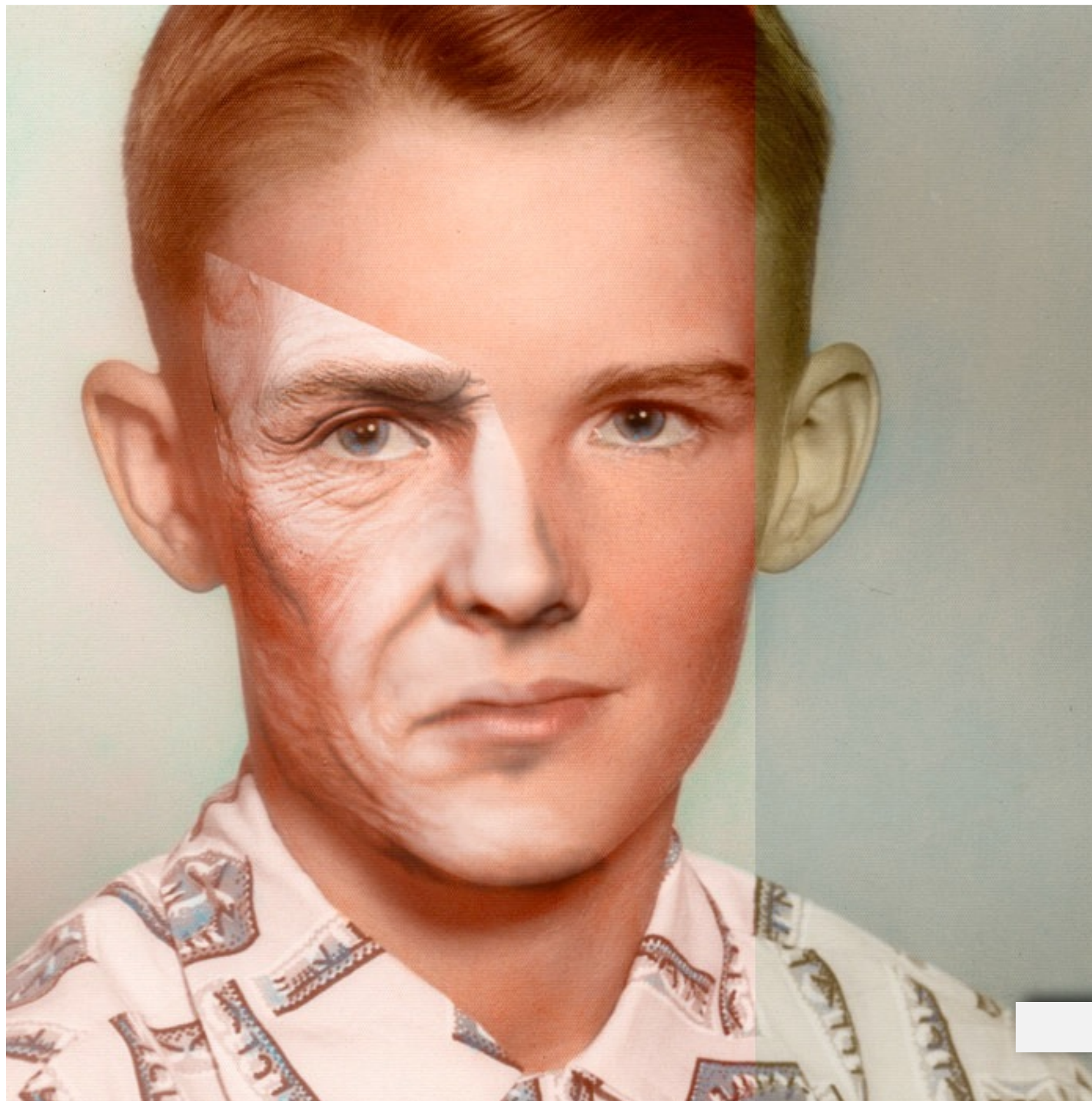
Water had gotten on the letter and the ink had bled. It was a love letter. What else is worth saving? Perhaps there could have been a different Grandma. My mother would not exist, nor would I.

In the bottom was an old James Bond badge. I gave it to him when only a small child. I thought it was a picture of him.

He wore it when I visited, then I stopped visiting.

Michael Milton

Popular and self-assured, Michael always had plenty of girlfriends. Ultimately he preferred himself over anyone he met. Michael was never a grandfather.



CHEVROLET

Grandpa always drove a Chevrolet. He not only drove one but was all but an evangelist for the car. He would be openly critical to anyone who drove a Ford.

His favorite Chevy was the 1959 model. He believed it was the only car ever made that understood jazz.

If you drove a more expensive car he wouldn't say anything, even if it was made by Ford. Grandpa knew his place. in the world. He was a 1959 Chevrolet.



Peter Katori

Joined the priesthood at an early age. Never shared his physical self with another human. Only loved Jesus. Peter did not become a grandfather.



THE CURSE OF BEAUTY

Grandpa had died jaundiced in the bed where he had implanted the seed that became my mother.

He was a puddle with some bones sticking out. A pair of wire-rimmed glasses.

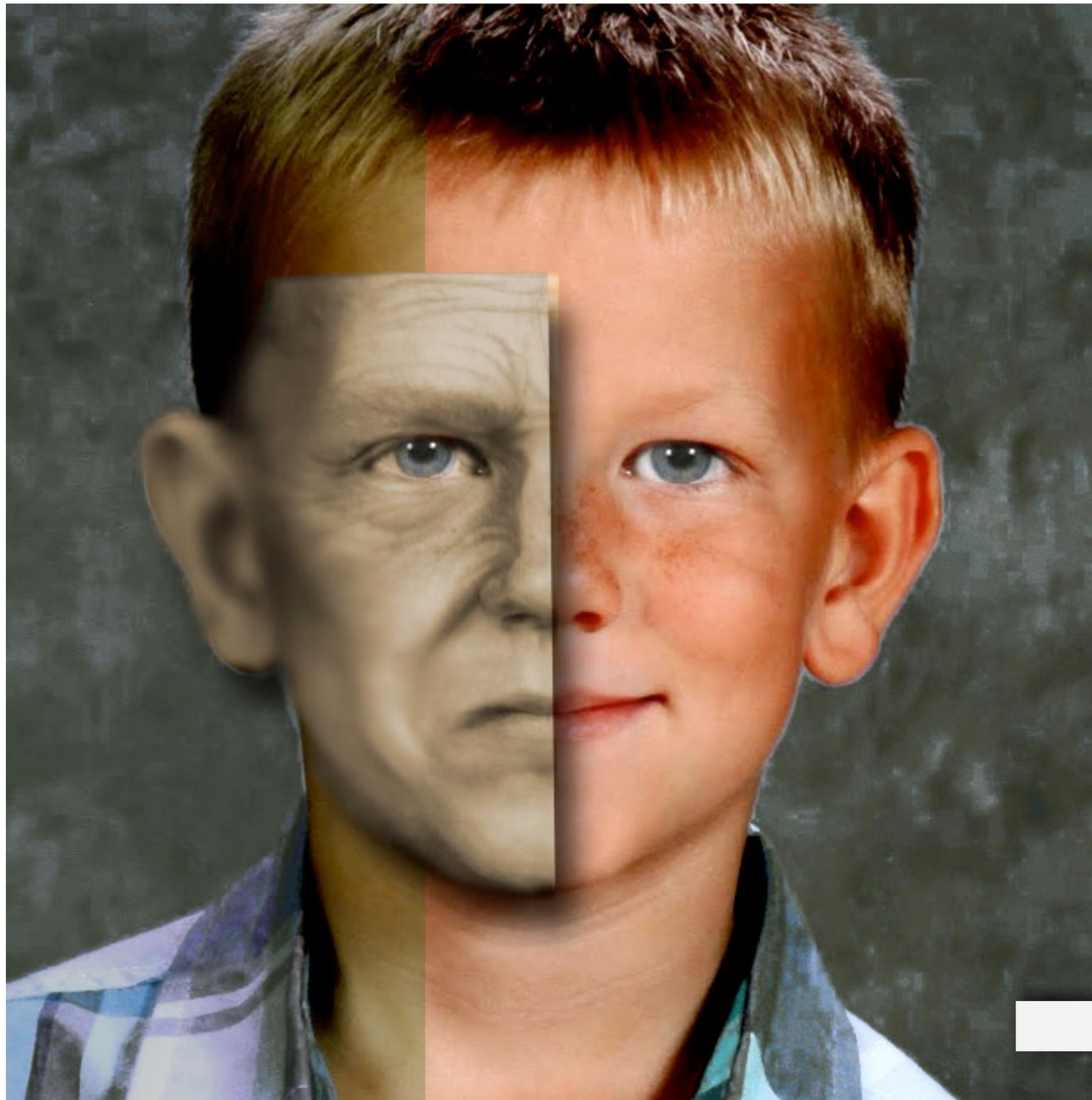
When I was six he told me beauty doesn't exist and those who believe it does are cursed.

Once gathering flowers with my mother, she held one up to me and said, "Isn't it beautiful?"

I knew it was a trick question. She was testing me to see if I was cursed.

Robert Sanvetti

Battled testicular cancer and won.
Adopted three children whom
he loved more than his wife.
She left him to find happiness.
Bob was a grandfather.



A FEW FEET FROM THE CAGES

One of the best stories that Grandpa Charles ever told me was the time he was in a restaurant and happened to be sitting very close to Nicolas Cage and his wife.

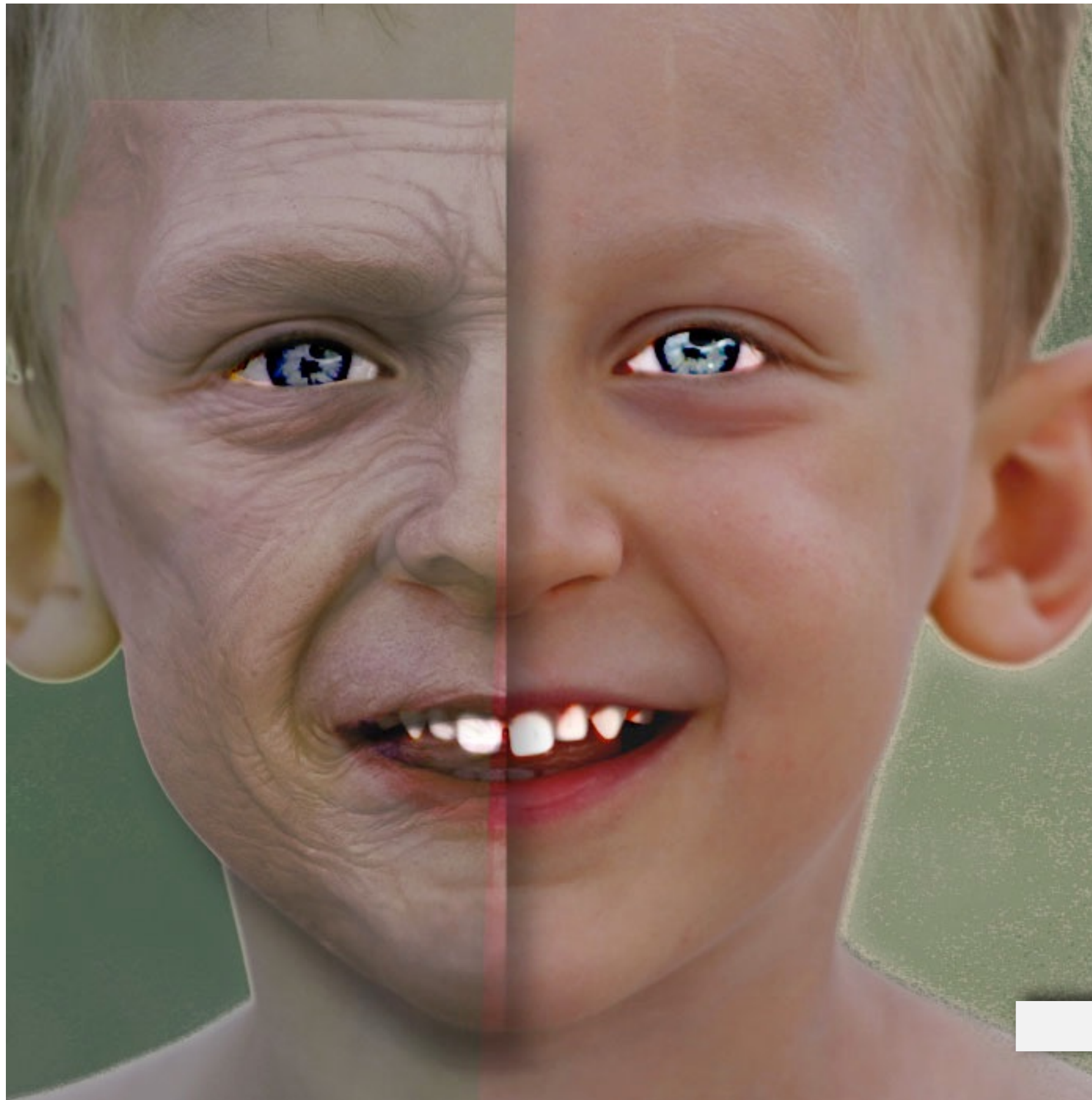
He seemed to feel that he gained celebrity status from that almost friendship.

But then, I still talk about the time I attended the Grammy Awards and shared a table with Donna Summer at the after party. I had a bit of a crush on the singer at the time so of course I never spoke to her.

She spoke to me, though. She asked if I would pass her a napkin.

Channon Misrat

Career military man. Good with his hands. Fell in love at a young age and had many children. Channon became a grandfather.



DRUNKEN DREK

Grandpa Charles liked his wine. I saw him a bit inebriated a few times as a child but never as much as his drinking buddy, Derek, which Grandpa pronounced as “Drek.” Probably intentionally.

Once when about 11 or 12, I was at a family gathering and Derek was hitting the beer all afternoon. He was advising me in the ways of the world when he suddenly stopped talking. Staring deeply into my eyes, he quietly inquired, “Charlie,” he paused, “do you think my nose is too big?”

I blushed but said nothing at all.

He whispered, “I wish I was your age. We would hitchhike to California and fuck movie stars.”

Prince Dalius

Always had a theatrical flair. Became a male model and actor. Eventually settled down and worked as a lighting designer. Prince became a grandfather.



MY TONGUE IS SLEEPING

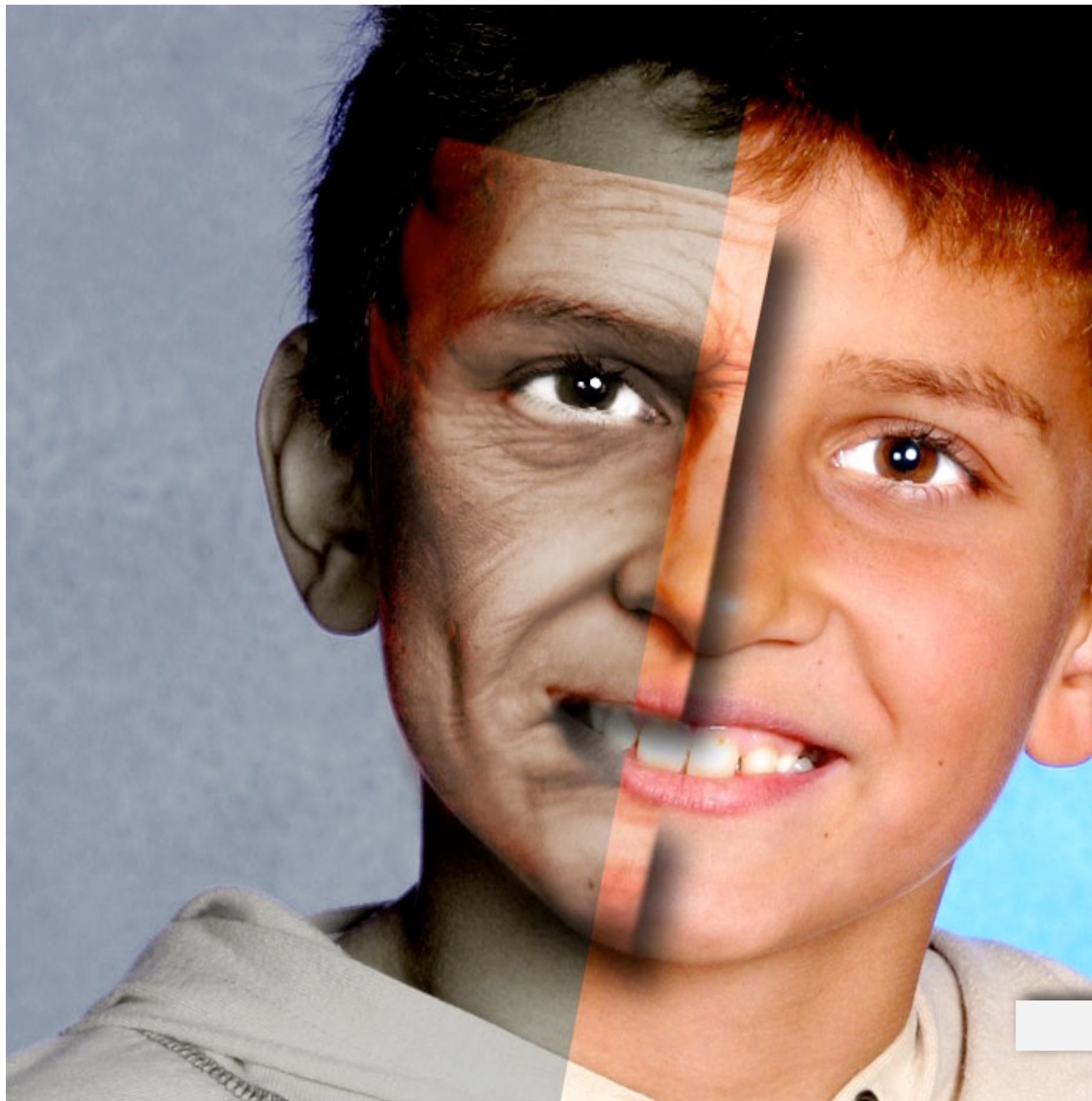
Grandma complained that Grandpa Charles never talked to her anymore.

Grandpa would tell her that his tongue was asleep and he didn't want to wake it.

Grandma laughed as she remembered something and whispered to me that Grandpa had a talented tongue when it was awake. She laughed again.

Thomas Gordon

A freelance inventor, Tom made a fortune when he improved a valve for the oil industry. His wife died in childbirth, but Tom still became a grandfather.



I AIN'T GOT NO TIME

Clocks. Grandpa not only collected clocks, he also took them apart and put them back together. His workshop was full of clocks and clock pieces.

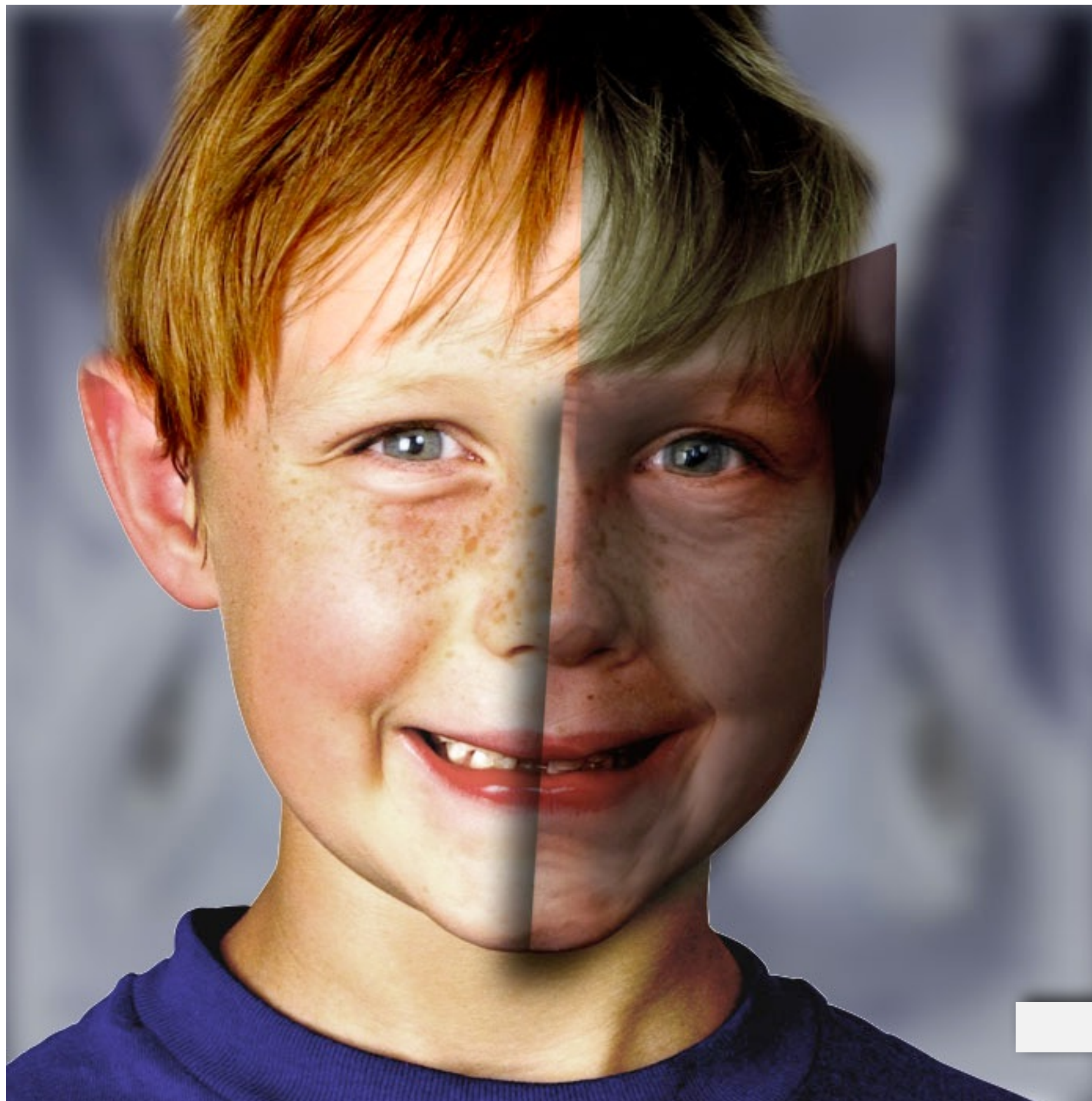
None of the clocks were set to the same time. He told me it was to confuse the Grim Reaper.

Grandma told me it was because "it is always 5 o'clock somewhere."

As an adult I learned the truth. He took clocks apart so he could rebuild them using different size gears. The clocks could not keep time. It was his odd anarchist conceptual art.

Samuel Kigor

Was a risk taker. Did not fall in love until later in life. Wanted children but he had waited too long. Sammy never became a grandfather.



ISRAEL

Israel Bissell was Grandpa's hero. While Paul Revere is revered as a great patriot, Israel Bissell left at the same time as buddy Paul, but rode 345 miles to warn of the British invasion. Grandpa resented Paul Revere getting so much attention.

Israel did get a poem, though. Marie Rockwood wrote one, "Ride, Israel, Ride."

Israel wasn't Grandpa's only hero though. He was an admirer of Sacagawea, the Native American woman who was a guide with Lewis and Clark on their expedition.

Grandpa had an affinity with the overlooked.

Gerald Lockport

Didn't know what he wanted to be when he grew up. So he didn't grow up. In and out of rehab, Jerry never became a grandfather.



MR. WHITE

When Grandpa died my inheritance was his first generation iPod. He called it Mr. White.

It doesn't work. Probably hasn't in years. No one noticed because he kept the headphones jammed deeply into his ears. Everyone assumed he was listening to music. Grandpa was probably deaf.

I guess he just wanted to be left alone.

That worked.

Spenser McCloud

A much in demand carpenter. Joined a cult religion in his early 30s. No one knows what happened to him after that. Grandfather status unknown.



DEATH
BY JAZZ
TRACK 10

DEATH BY JAZZ

When I was still a kid, Grandpa played me his 78s.

He played me Jimmie Lunceford.

He played me the Dorsey Brothers.

He played me Stan Kenton.

He told me big bands will be back.

I told him rock and roll will never die.

I was no smarter than him.

Reginald Boxster

Liked to party and created a child at a young age. An accident claimed Reggie's life before the child was born. But still, in time, Reggie became a grandfather.



BLACK TIE AND STRAIGHT-JACKET

He said that to me. “Black tie and a straightjacket.” He told me that was life. I didn’t know what he meant so I asked my mother.

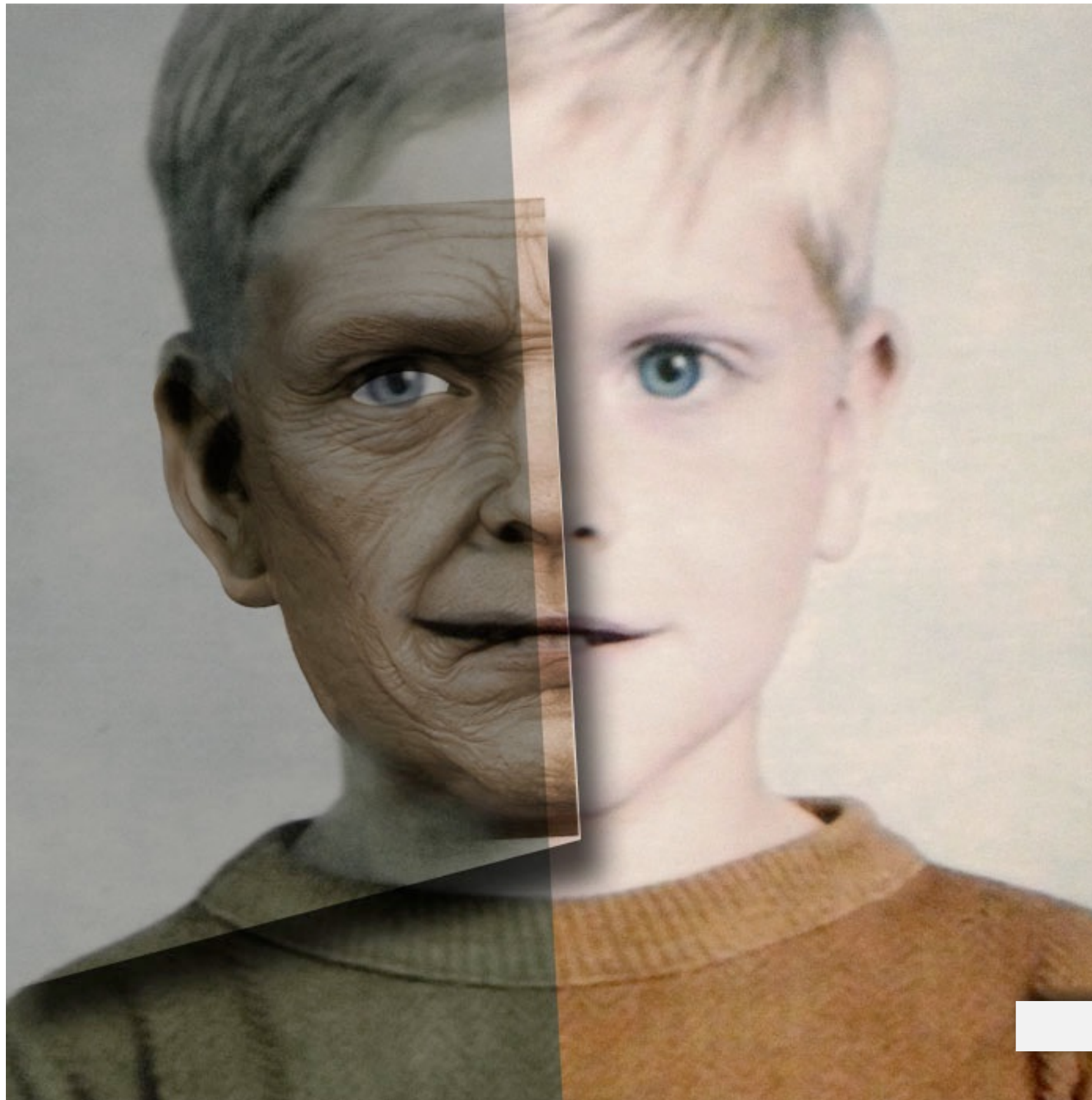
She told me that he meant that life was neat and clean. That shoe laces must be tightly tied so we don’t trip and fall.

I didn’t believe her because Grandpa Charles never tied his shoes. He was not a picture of neatness, and often had an unpleasant odor about him.

I asked my mother about that too. She told me that it was normal for old people to smell different. I wanted to buy him one of those tree deodorizers you hang in cars, but mother said that would be rude.

Karl Renport

Always considered an outsider, Karl moved to Australia where he ran a plumbing business. Karl became a grandfather and a great-grandfather.



THE FINAL CONFLICT

Grandpa Charles wasn't always easy to get along with. I knew he liked me as a child, I was less certain he liked me once I grew up.

When I was young he had control of my fantasies. He was magical, talented, intelligent-- all the things I wanted to be when I grew up.

I was named for him. Charles.

The idea that I was gay did not sit well with him, though he was always civil.

I lost respect for him over that issue and stopped visiting.

Cancer took him. I had already mourned losing him many years earlier so dying was just a thing that happened. The friction won.

Charles Bobuck

Wanted a life as an artist. Wrote strange music and did other assorted things. In love with another man, Charlie never became a grandfather.

THE UNINVITED GUEST

Over the weekend I got back to work on my house. I have been bothered for years by an illogically placed concrete patio on the side of the house. Normally a patio is a good thing, but this one is just a slab of nonprofessionally poured concrete. Its one charm was that someone had taken the time to half-sink a collection of children's marbles into the wet goo one at a time. The patio is not at all useful so I decided to get a sledge hammer and break it up. I could plant a tree and the world would be a better place.

Since the pour was an amateur one to begin with, destroying the useless object took no time at all. I called a hauling guy to carry off the chunks. In the meantime I started trying to break the compacted clay that had been under the concrete slab for god knows how long. It was dead soil. It was harder to dig than the concrete was to break. Then about six inches below the surface I hit metal. After digging for another hour I had uncovered two edges of a single sheet of steel that was the size of the concrete pad. Of course I wanted to get it out, I couldn't plant a tree in six inches of soil even if I was able to break through the hard clay.

The hauling guy showed up. He was a young guy covered in tattoos with a genuine throwback mullet. He rolled his own cigarettes. We didn't have much in common so to encourage a friendly tone I showed him the metal edges I had uncovered.

He got big eyed and stepped back. He said no one would bury a sheet of metal in the ground, cover it with clay and then pour concrete over it unless they really didn't want anyone to know what was under there. Then I showed him a piece with the half sunken marbles. He had a visible shiver. I looked at him and said, "You are thinking there is a dead body under there aren't you?"

He turned around and started loading the concrete. The metal plate didn't get mentioned again.

Today I had a dump truck come and rebury the whole thing again with a fresh pile of topsoil. I didn't do more digging. I planted some petunias instead of a tree, and jabbed a small cross into the ground at the end just in case it was a Christian.

—

Roman and I invited our friends Marta and Pete over for pizza a few days ago. During the meal I was telling the story about the metal plate that I had found buried in the ground near the house. Marta was immediately intrigued.

She approached the now freshly planted area cautiously releasing her full psychic attention. She turned to me and said, "I don't think there is anyone dead here." That was fine with me other than ruining the punch line to an otherwise decent story.

Then she said, "Your problem is worse, it's alive." My mind leapt to visions of a creature trapped under the metal plate, clawing at it with dulled fingernails.

She pointed toward the edge of my new petunia patch. There were three footprints skirting the far edge. I could read Adidas in the soft soil. There was no question, they did not belong to anyone here. This could only mean the presence of a dreaded "uninvited guest."

I have largely presented a picture of my bucolic life here in the trees, but there is a disturbing phenomenon which the locals refer to as an uninvited guest.

These are people who exist just over the line of civilization. Transients who were, at best, down on their luck and at worst, a bit nuts. They sleep in the forest and will creep around houses at night looking for anything they can use. They aren't actual

thieves, they won't break into your house. They pilfer. In that respect they are much like having a Bigfoot family for neighbors.

I was immediately in a bind. In truth I wished the uninvited guests would go away but also I felt a responsibility to offer them food and water. Roman said that feeding them would only make them stay and probably attract more. I told him that I understood that reasoning when talking about raccoons or zombies but these were our own species.

Last night, unknown to Roman, I sat two cans of beans by the clothesline. When I checked this morning I saw that they were undisturbed but a circle of sticks had been placed around them. My expectation was that I would be patting myself on the back for having helped someone, but instead I felt a tinge of discomfort. I realized that, while formerly the relationship was like ghosts in the dark, by acknowledging their existence they now had permission to acknowledge me.

It was time to tell Roman. Roman looked at me blankly. He said that we never bought canned beans. Roman accompanied me to the clothesline but nothing was there. Not a hint of the cans or the sticks I had seen earlier.

Suddenly a thought rose to the surface. Had I imagined the entire thing? I walked to the planting bed to see if the Adidas shoe prints would be there.

I saw this plot on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and if the television was right, the footprints would be gone. The plan would have been for Roman to convince me I was going crazy so he could have me committed and get my fortune and marry his secretary.

However, the prints were unquestionably still there. I almost regretted seeing them. The Hitchcock version allowed a good

clean explanation. Instead I still had many questions, like what I had put out if not beans. I hoped it wasn't motor oil.

—

I was working in my studio. I needed to alter some arrangements for a Residents show coming up at the end of summer and to be honest, it wasn't going so smoothly. I had taken a break to shake my fist at the cruel world when Roman popped his head in and said, "In case you are curious, I think you put two cans of stewed tomatoes out for our, um, visitor. Tomatoes are missing from the pantry."

In all the stories I had ever read, in all the movies I had ever seen, transients and cowboys ate beans. I felt like I had betrayed centuries of American culture by giving out tomatoes, stewed tomatoes at that.

Underlying not getting the beans right was a feeling I was losing control in general.

It takes a lot of, perhaps unjustified, ego to foist art and music on others. A normal person would be satisfied with the act of producing art. Demanding that others purchase and listen to it requires a sense of self-importance that bordered on me being as nutty as the guest running around in the yard at night.

But I did it, all the time. As I pulled back from performing, part of me wanted to be a puppeteer continuing to control what goes on in front of the audience even though I elected to not even be present. So here I am trying to alter arrangements that originally included me so they work without me being on stage. I can't seem to let go.

Sometimes I don't even feel like I am in The Residents anymore. I'm the ghost writer for their music, hidden away in a studio on a chicken farm that has no chickens. And if that isn't enough I have an uninvited guest.

I wasn't afraid of this entity, it was that I couldn't control the unknown. I lay awake at night listening for the sound of him out there, maybe sitting in the same chair on the porch I napped in earlier in the day. Though I tried to focus on writing the musical arrangements, my fantasies kept jumping to electric fences and filling pits with sharpened stakes.

—

Kate, the mail-lady, would not drive up our half-mile long driveway to deliver what little mail we got. So every few days I took a walk to the main road and picked up whatever was left in the mailbox. Most of the time it was empty.

Walking back I heard singing and as I turned the bend I almost ran right into, obviously, our uninvited guest. I knew it was him. The Adidas gave him away. They seemed like very nice Adidas.

Having lived in San Francisco I was used to the transient population living under the overpasses. They tended to be in the style of *The Grapes of Wrath*. But here was something else. Mid-twenties, sun-damaged hair, good looking in a country way, he approached me with a confident swagger singing all the louder at the sight of me. He was clad only in rolled up jeans and he appeared to be a healthy, fit young man. Not at all what I had imagined stalking the yard.

I stopped walking and, as he passed, he turned his head, looked into my eyes and sang as loudly and as passionately as he could.

His eyes revealed far too much experience for his age. I figured the singing must keep his demons calm.

Due to my long experience with Randy singing loudly and passionately into my face I suppose I did not react as he anticipated. So, instead of continuing to walk on, he paused and then walked backward toward me, continuing his song but with a new quieter questioning tone. I thought maybe he would kill me.

Though he didn't seem threatening I was very uncomfortable. I didn't know what to do other than throw open my mouth and belt out my own song. I sang "Constantinople" to him. He stopped singing so I stopped also. He smiled and walked away starting a new gentle song. I yelled out to him, "NICE SHOES."

—

I happened to run into Noman. There wasn't much to talk about so I told him I had an uninvited guest. He was interested, around here "uninvited guests" were a good conversation subject.

When I described my guest he said, "Oh, that's Mark. Everyone knows Mark. Burned out his brain with drugs. We went to school together." Noman explained that he was not an "uninvited guest," he was a local kid who had family here. His parents remodeled their garage into a special needs home for him. He wasn't the vagrant sleeping in the woods I had imagined. I guess there is much of his brain that is still old Mark, like a hard drive that has lost the directory but still held the data. That explained why he looked clean and healthy; he still had people who cared. It also explained those Adidas.

"Mark's aunt, Mrs. Broghammer, used to own your farm until she died so it is not surprising he shows up there. We used to sing

'Can't Touch This' to her even though she was always nice enough."

I thought, "Yes, Broghammer. I had seen the name on the title insurance."

In a way Roman and I were the uninvited guest in his life. I was overwhelmed with empathy for a kid who gambled and lost. I did plenty of experimentation in my youth and survived other than for the occasional need to put an eyeball over my head.

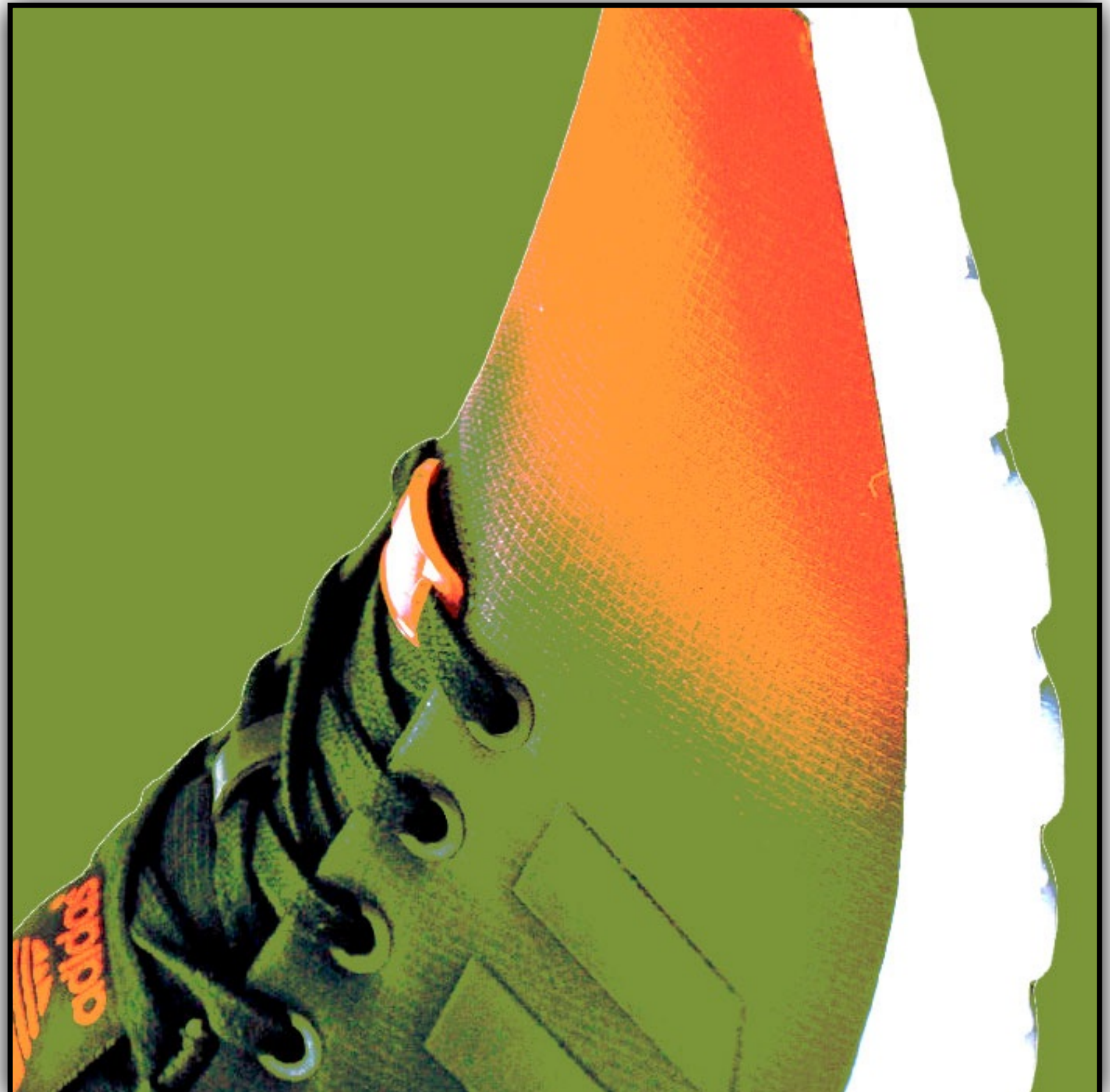
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The next time I saw Mark was at the river. He was squatting on the water's edge stacking small rocks as you might expect with a six-year-old. He softly sang to himself. I walked along the water and when I was in calling distance I shouted, "Good afternoon, Mark. Isn't it a beautiful day?" He looked up and smiled while continuing to quietly sing. That was actual communication and it felt good.

—

I sometimes see Mark around the property. Roman installed a mailbox by the clothesline and we occasionally put things like apples or homemade cookies in it, raising the red flag so he knows to investigate. Mark added a ring of sticks around the base. One day I was taking a bowl of cherries to the mailbox and I noticed Mark was standing at the edge of the woods watching me. When I opened the box there was something in it. It was a can of stewed tomatoes. I heard Mark laugh as he ran into the woods. I had been pranked. Now I knew he understood humor, perhaps even sarcasm.

Though much smarter than a chicken, Mark is filling a void in our family that chickens had once satisfied. Roman and I accept that he belongs here and have added ourselves to the list of Mark's people who care. I learned a lot from our chickens and I'm excited to learn from my newest teacher, the now invited guest.



ADIDAS

BACKWARD

Roman made one of his infamous dental trips to the city to spend a few days getting a dose of culture so I was on my own. I tried to stay out of trouble.

I had strolled to the main road to pick up mail when I noticed Mark, our drug-burned-out acquaintance, down the road a few hundred feet. He was shouting and stomping around angrily. Unusual behavior. Also he appeared to be surprisingly dirty. He made me nervous as he was becoming aggressive at an invisible entity. I was slapped with the truth that he really was mentally ill. I chose to slip away without catching his eye.

After making a couple of calls, I learned that Mark had been hanging around some of the vacation rental houses down at the river. The renters didn't know Mark, of course they only see a crazy guy. Apparently one renter had a teenage daughter and Mark seemed to, maybe, be attracted to her, and, maybe, fondled himself. Maybe.

Anyway, they called the sheriff who took Mark away. The sheriff didn't have any choice since it was a legitimate complaint, but he knew Mark and drove him home rather than to jail. Mark can't be more than 23 so he is bound to get wood around girls, and any guy knows that can be uncomfortable if it springs in a wrong position. Guys occasionally have to do the crotch grab and the hip grind. Blame it on clothes.

There will always be renters, there will always be young girls. There will always be erections. Mark will always scare people. That made me sad. I figured he was jerking it like any guy but sexual pressures could be difficult for a mentally challenged person.

We all give Mark far more latitude than we do other people because children don't know better and Mark's mind is that of an eternal child. However, Mark's body will age and a forty-year-old man adjusting an erection in his pants is going to be a tough sell.

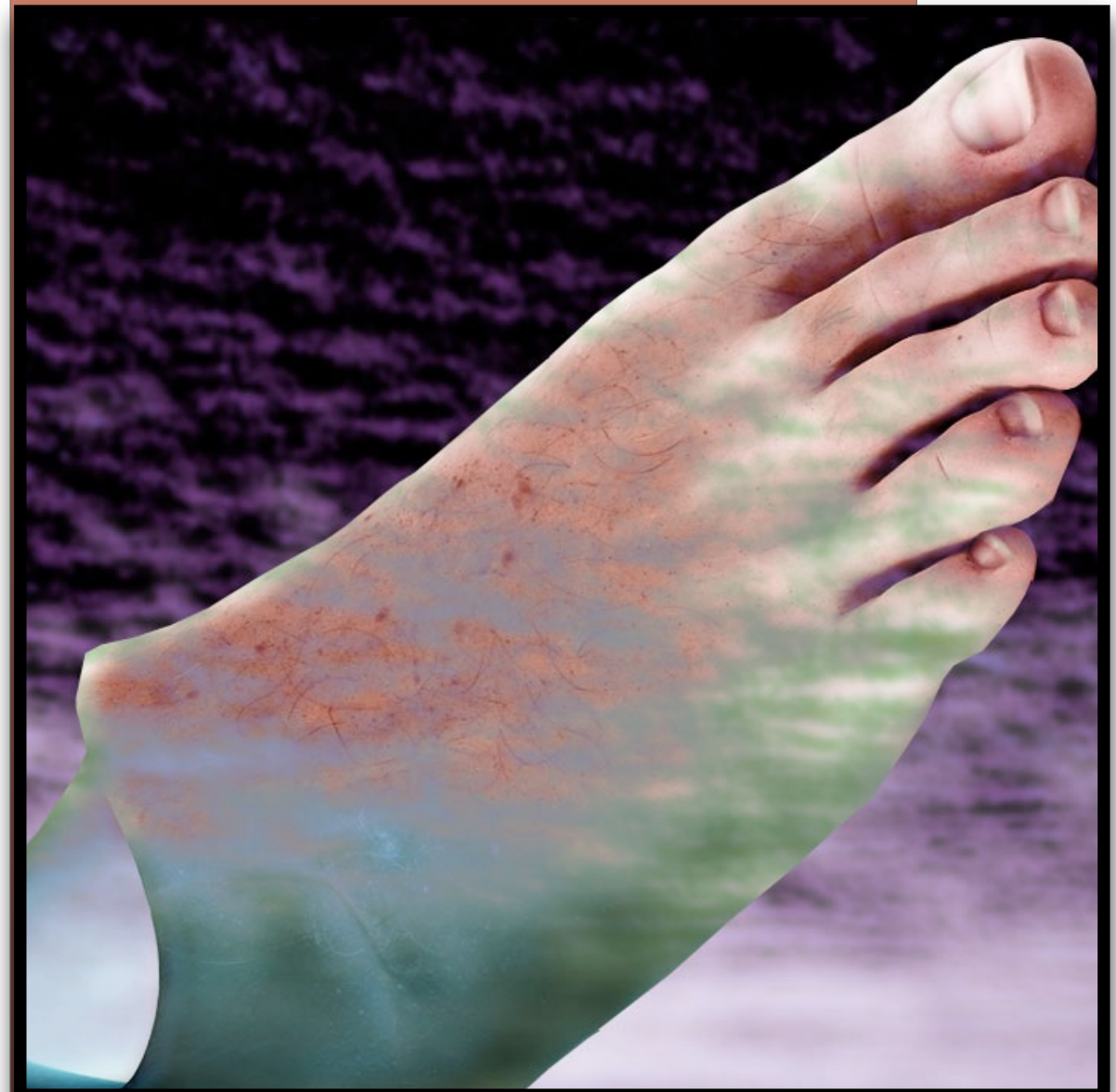
When his parents can no longer care for him, I suppose he will be taken to a facility.

Realistically, none of us can expect to be eternally cared for by parents, or loved ones. We all end up in a facility at some point. We will all be drugged to prevent us from making problems for the staff.

That is why I decided to completely suspend my current workings with The Residents. I have a few things to do that are outside of the realm of Residents-mania before reporting to my facility. I still have stories to tell.

After all, stories do not end, we only stop telling them. Remember Merry Mary and her husband? When they married, the groom put a flesh colored Band-Aid™ over the symbol on his head. It was meant to hide it, but more than that, he no longer needed it. Love heals. He had it lasered soon after. The poor guy was drafted and had to leave behind a pregnant Mary. Sadly, he never returned from Vietnam. Mary's sister helped raise their son, Peter. Peter grew up to become a priest in a small town in Northern California. And my friend.

Peter still washes my feet. The awkwardness has long vanished for both of us. I now pay more attention to my foot health. I have mostly stopped wearing shoes. My feet were photographed by a noted photographer and may soon be in her new coffee table book. That has lead to my getting offers to do foot modeling work for a line of senior support products. My new agent says I have a bright future in the...



NEVER KNOWN
QUESTIONS
TRACK 18

CREDITS

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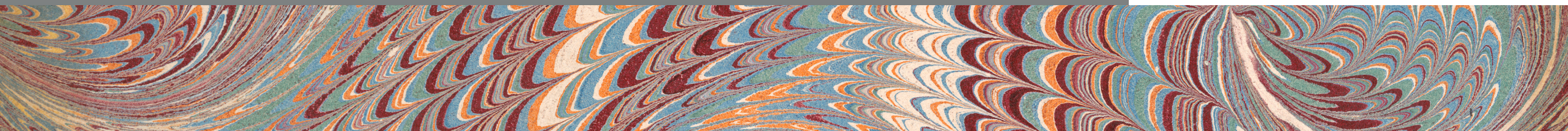
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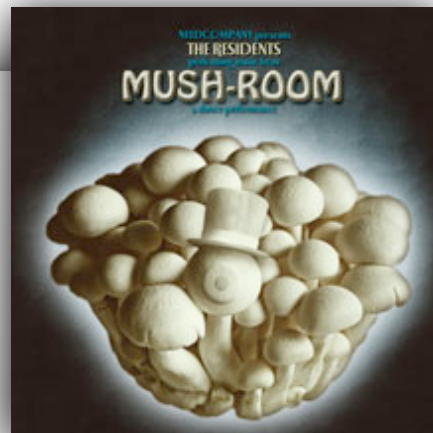


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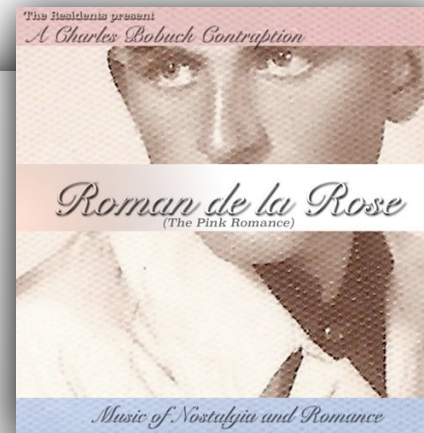
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MUSH-ROOM



ROMAN DE LA ROSE



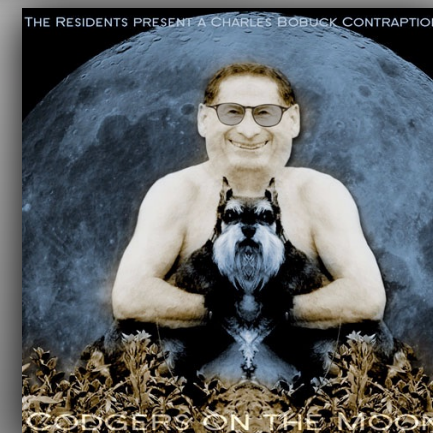
COOCHIE BRAKE



WHAT WAS LEFT OF GRANDPA

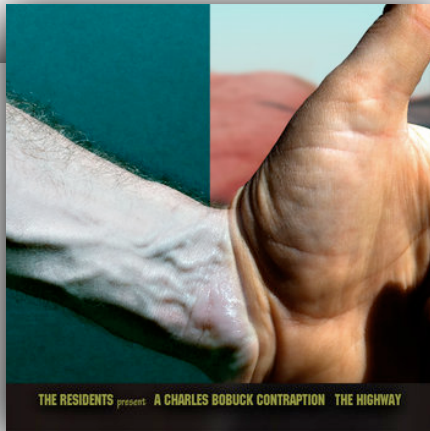


THE RIVERS OF HADES

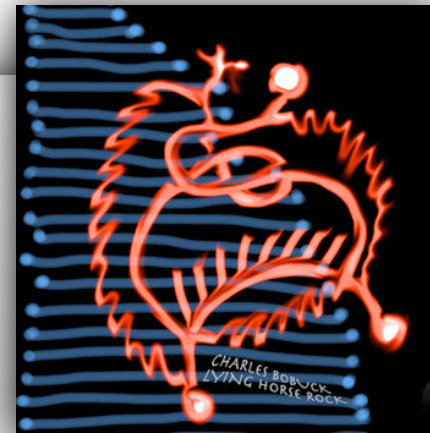


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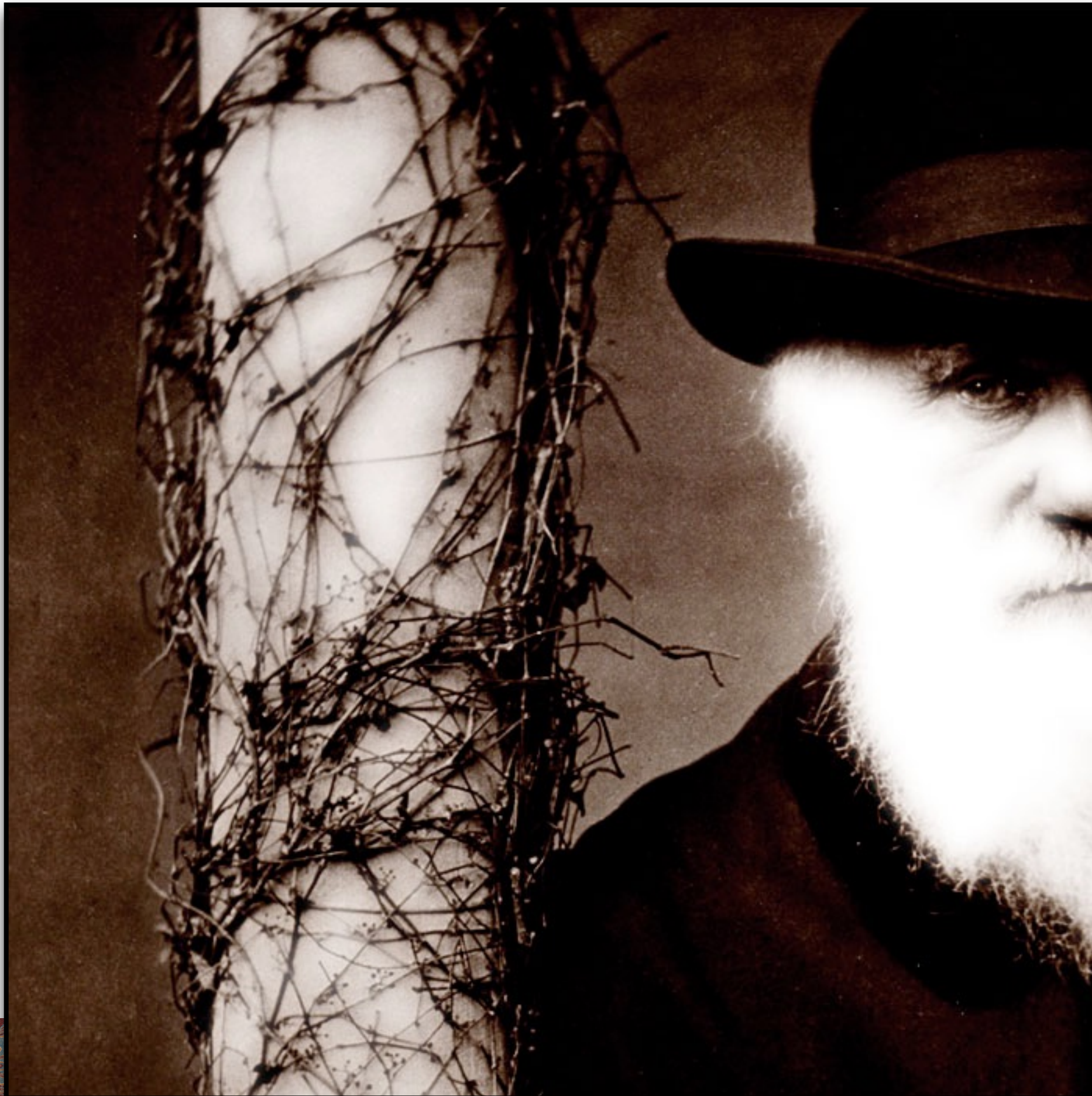
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CHARLES BOBUCK
2016

AFTER THE WANE

Though at the peak of his craft in 2014, Charles Bobuck was forgotten by 2018. Now, decades later, he is the last living member of the original Residents. The band, due to its revolving members, is still as active as ever, but Mr. Bobuck's skills have long been replaced by composing AIs. All the popular music these days comes from AIs that can spit out pop tunes like waffles. In 2016 Charlie went home for good, joining other professionals who had skills that society no longer needed.

Many years had passed since I last visited his home. I found him sitting naked in his wheelchair. He didn't greet me but did point a quivering bony finger in my direction. I asked Roman if he was okay. Roman thought about it and felt comfortable phrasing the answer as, "He still has good days."

On a small table next to the chair was a stack of scrapbooks. They were filled with clippings and photographs of his old days with The Residents. His finger reached over and touched a photograph of a man with an eyeball for a head. The print was worn thin in that spot from having been touched so many times. I spoke loudly, "That's you, Charlie, isn't that you?" He gave me a vaguely confused look and again jabbed the photo, only harder.

I didn't stay long, even though I didn't expect I would ever see him again. He wasn't the man I remembered from before the war.

As I was leaving, Roman mentioned that the photo of the man wearing the eyeball was not Charlie as I had assumed. He retrieved the photo. I had not noticed before but Charlie is clearly standing in the background talking with another person.

I asked, "Who is wearing the mask and why does it agitate him?" Roman said that Charlie had never said. He hoped I would know the story.

The black and white print was made on a heavy grade of matte photo paper. I flipped it over and on the back was penciled a tiny "E.B.F." I looked to Roman, "Wasn't that a song?"

Inspecting the photo, I noted that the perspectives and shadows seemed inconsistent. I made a copy so I could examine it with a magnifier at home.

- Rebecca Rothers, March 2044