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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1,000 Days of Sun plus Commentary

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1000 Days of Sun

&

Commentary

Joseph Thomas Shooman

A novel with accompanying critical study submitted to Bangor University, School of English
Literature and Creative Writing as a dissertation for the degree of PhD

January 2021

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

This thesis is being submitted with the full agreement of my supervisor, Professor Zoë Skoulding.

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	6
Part I: <i>1000 Days of Sun</i>.....	7
Foreign Travel Advice.....	9
Welcome to Big Salvi.....	14
Back to School.....	21
Ian, the Great Hunter.....	43
Interlude: Ian's Browsing History.....	58
Lonely the Brave.....	59
Introducing the Boss.....	76
Fist Hook, Band of the Future.....	94
New Year, New Opportunities.....	110
Essay.....	125
Wilberforce, Laura, Ian.....	130
Awakenings.....	139
Resonation.....	154
Pain, Again.....	181
How to Get a Job.....	184
Weegieland?.....	197
Courting.....	202
Wilberforce Goes to Ripoblika.....	210
Frequently Asked Questions.....	218

A Day.....	236
Digitality.....	259
Hotting Up.....	267
Fixings.....	280
Wilberforce and the Vote.....	295
The Heat is On.....	300
The Ice Cerberus.....	309
Foreign Travel Advice.....	332
Postscript.....	334
Part II: Commentary.....	335
List of Illustrations.....	336
Introduction.....	337
• Research questions.....	337
• Definitions.....	338
• Polyphony and noise.....	340
• Practice-based research.....	340
• Postcolonialism.....	341
Chapter One: A World in a Grain of Sand – what is a novel?.....	345
• Barthes and message encoding.....	345
• Happiness is subjective: Barker and form.....	347
• Kurt Vonnegut’s puppets.....	349
• An author speaks.....	354
Chapter Two: Identity and Digital Identity.....	357

• Doggedly writing.....	357
• Autofiction and form.....	359
• Postcolonial performances and jazz hands.....	361
• Sending out signals.....	364
• Anticulturalism online.....	366
Chapter Three: Bring the Noise.....	368
• Anarchy in Salvi.....	368
• Polyphonic spree.....	373
• The music of the pages.....	375
• Write on, brother.....	378
• Graphic equaliser.....	380
• Book ends.....	382
• Summat spells funny.....	386
• Metafictional musical quotations.....	388
• Rhythm and stealth: Easter Eggs and sealed sections.....	392
Conclusion.....	398
Appendix I: The sealed section.....	402
Appendix II: Deleted scenes.....	406
Appendix III: Scans and examples.....	410
Appendix IV: Graphics and mock-ups for potential use in <i>1000 Days of Sun</i>	414
Appendix V: Mockup of CD promo cover and link to songs.....	418
Bibliography.....	420
Acknowledgements.....	428

Abstract

1000 Days of Sun is a noisy novel. It employs techniques of graphic design, code systems of language, non-textual ideas and musical elements to describe and reflect questions of contextual identity and the novel form itself.

I analyse postmodern metafictional and graphical techniques and discuss how I have used these to create multiple layers of narrative, while retaining the forward motion of a traditional novel. I look at how form can be employed as a technique to represent and reflect fluidity of identity for the characters of a novel, and I discuss how information theory and noise elements can be employed to disrupt and energise a novel.

The novel reveals the different stories of three sets of characters on a small territory – Salvi Island in the tropics. Ian and Laura are expatriates, having moved for Laura's work. Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV is the leader of the Salvi government, dealing with demands both on a geopolitical and hyperlocal level. His nephew, Leadbetter, is a 17-year-old bass player desperate to change the world through his music. These stories intersect and contrast in a polyphonic form and through the multiple narrators, creating an overview of the island which emerges as the tales unfold. The novel culminates in a single island-wide festival at which all the characters appear and describe from their own points of view. The events are the same, but they are inevitably perceived differently by each set of characters.

The commentary included here discusses how I developed the form and focus of a novel through practice-based research and concludes that a novel can contain multiple layered narratives and still retain its narrative thrust. Hidden, or encoded, additional material performs a dual function: first as noise, and then as information once it is unlocked. This leads me to conclude that a novel can contain within its pages several concurrent but different reading experiences, based on this tension between noise and signal. Finally, I look at ways that narrative can be formed through various media including online websites, different book editions, and cross-media possibilities.

Part I: *1,000 Days of Sun*

1,000 Days of Sun

Joe Shooman

Salvi Islands

[Summary](#)

[Demographics](#)

[Entry requirements](#)

[Natural disasters](#)

[Money](#)

[Travel advice help and support](#)

[Crime and punishment](#)

[Other](#)

Summary

Still current at: 19 July 2009 Updated: 11 January 2009

Latest update:

Summary Section – tsunami alert following an earthquake south of Ripoblika has now been lifted

The [hurricane season](#) runs from July to November. You should monitor the progress of all coming storms and follow the advice of the local authorities. See [Natural Disasters](#).

As the Salvi Islands is a Mother Country Protectorate, there is no MC diplomatic or consular representation. The local authorities can deal with all [emergency assistance](#).

Although there's no recent history of [terrorism](#) in the Salvi Islands, attacks can't be ruled out.

The Salvi Islands comprise an archipelago of three islands, situated about 60 miles south of Ripoblika and 85 miles south of the Vespuccian Keys. It is within a tropical zone with associated weather patterns.

Demographics

Big Salvi population: 12,000 (approx. 4,500 Salvi country members)

Salvi Fair population: 2,000 (approx. 1,700 Salvi country members)

Salvi Bach population: 400 (approx. 200 Salvi country members)

Women to Men ratio: 48% to 52%

Median Age: 55

Life Expectancy: Women: 87; Men: 84.

Average Income: \$28,000 (Vespuccian dollars)

Average Education Level: Middle School (Secondary)

Religion(s): Holy Awe (Vida Futura); Syncretism; Old Norse/Vinland; Christian.

Main occupation(s): Tourism; Banking; Import/Export; Turtle-Wamping (traditional); Cruise Industry; Aviation; Mercy Mead Distillery.

Entry Requirements

Visas required for all foreign workers, including those from Mother Country. You must have a valid passport for any entry to the islands, which will be stamped on arrival and exit. Emergency travel documents for the Mother Country can be accepted on prior application. Note that offspring born in the country to foreign parents do not automatically qualify for Salvi Country Membership (see [more](#)).

Natural Disasters

Salvi is in the central hurrinado belt and during the season residents and visitors are advised to follow local news sources for updates. There are possibilities of medium-to-large earthquakes which may cause potential tsunamis that could be damaging due to the island's relative flatness at sea level.

Money

Salvi Islands uses the New Rupee/Shillings and Pence system, although Vespuccian Dollars are increasingly-widely accepted, particularly in tourist shops. Banks are plentiful, but it is advised to check opening hours which [vary considerably](#). Visitors are advised to change money only at official outlets including Bureaus de Change, outlets which display the Mother Country logo, and major hotels. There have been reports of on-street scams involving money changing. As a rule, if it seems like too good a deal to be true, it probably is.

Travel advice help and support

Click [here](#) for our safety in travel policy and crisis checklist.

Crime and punishment

Salvi and its territories operate in isolation from the Mother Country, albeit the laws are often based upon similar legal principles.

Harsh penalties exist for the possession in any quantity of any made-up drugs and arrests have regularly been made both inbound and outbound. Flights are closely monitored. Click [here](#) for the latest information on the legal status of the wild-growing Jimson Weed. Note that exporting any quantities of Jimson Weed is illegal. In practice, possession on-island is unlikely to attract attention unless it is used on church grounds, schools or beaches.

Importing and exporting animal life is forbidden unless prior assessment has been made by the authorities.

Same-sex partnerships or marriages are not recognised by Salvi Islands law. Local attitudes may be conservative; see [LGBT-related advice here](#) before travelling.

Other

Hospitals and doctors are generally well-stocked and follow the Vespuccian insurance system. You may be pre-charged for treatment which can be expensive. Very serious cases may be referred to Vespuccian hospitals, and you will be charged for all travel costs. Insurance therefore should be taken prior to any trip to Salvi Islands, and include air ambulance/helicopter; third country medical treatment; repatriation; emergency assistance. Repatriation of cadavers is rare as under Salvi law they must be fully-sterilised. In practice, this means [signing a cremation waiver](#) on entry.

These notes are advisory only and may differ from actual experience. The Mother Country is not responsible by any action of the reader with reference, explicit or implied, to this document, and cannot be challenged in the court of law. Reading any part of this document constitutes full and final acceptance of Mother Country terms extant or yet to be decided.

This travel advice was compiled by Mother Country Foreign Office under the Laws of the Country, as written and declared in the books of law, 1951 (revised 1963, 1976, 1977, 1988, 1988 second revision, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007, revoked 2008). Current revision: 11 January, 2009.

Welcome to Big Salvi

Two travellers land in their new home.

The aeroplane suddenly dropped two thousand feet, juddering and bucking as the pilot wrestled with the controls. The explosion of impact as it smacked the tiny, bumpy runway jarred at the teeth of the passengers. Many bit their tongues or cheeks, faces distorting as the twin-prop's brakes screamed with pain. The superheated wheels shed stringy, reddening rubber onto the cracked tarmac. Frayed seatbelts dug deeply and painfully into unprepared bodies thrown forward by the force of the slam.

The 16-seater plane shuddered and whimpered, beleaguered rivets rattling to their limit; the wings dipped this way and that as swirling crosswinds battered the tiny machine. It hurtled toward Iguana Pond's dank, sweaty depths. It seemed to Laura Walsh that the water would be the only way to extinguish the heat built up by the terrific friction of the tyres. The plane shuddered hopelessly, on the verge of falling to pieces.

It stopped suddenly and definitively, scant metres from the oil-choked lake. Passengers were flung back in their seats again, bruising the backs of their heads. Stunned by the ferocity of the landing, nobody spoke.

...

A round of applause punctuated by cheers and laughter.

A mix of relief, astonishment at being maybe still alive, and hilarity at the violence of the arrival, swept through the cabin, waves of incredulity crashing through air.

Nonchalantly, the craft yawned its way round in a lazy taxi and parked. Disembarking, Laura's gaze landed on a sign, newly painted, lit up from below and in glorious yellow. The words were printed over a backdrop of incredible white sand, glorious turquoise water, and happy cartoon turtles in hula skirts:

Welcome, traveller, to Salvi.

Laura looked at her husband Ian, who slowly exhaled and shook his head at the unexpectedly dramatic finale to their epic journey. Then he smiled at her. The violent landing had announced that this was going to be some adventure; who would have thought

that a teacher could see the world like this? Salvi was one of the most beautiful destinations on the planet. The pictures, the reviews, the eye-wateringly expensive package holidays all pointed to somewhere extraordinary. People saved up for years to pay their way here for their trip of a lifetime. And now, she was going to be paid to be there, pretty much permanently. It was amazing. The short path toward International Immigration was bordered by wheels and wheels of exotic, purple-grey and white shells. Was that a conch? A local delicacy?

"How's the knee?"

"Ah, not too bad Loz. It's the air pressure that does it."

She linked arms with her husband as they made their way inside. Entering the unassuming hall brought a waft of chill air conditioning. The space was whitewashed, with few distinguishing features, airports being largely the same the world over. There were five immigration cubicles, but only two were staffed. A familiar, inevitable terminal fact. One of the booths was marked 'Country Members' and the other 'Visitors'. Laura and Ian - who trying to rest most of his weight on his good knee - waited dutifully in the visitors' line, directly opposite a large portrait of some not-quite-right-looking royals, whose skin tone seemed almost grey. The dark-skinned locals sailed through immigration with a document-waft, a quick page-stamp and, occasionally, a fist-bump or a handshake. In one case, there was even a familial cheek-kiss. Gathering themselves to their best behaviour, but nonetheless feeling under suspicion and entirely out of place when it was their turn, Ian and Laura passed the official their passports and immigration forms.

The man studied the sheets.

He read them carefully.

Had they filled something in wrongly? Had they somehow already transgressed a local bylaw? Walked where they shouldn't? Drunk too much on the plane? Shit. This could put them straight back on the same plane home. The man behind the desk seemed to stare deep into Laura's and Ian's minds, in turn. Ian stared blankly back, exhaustedly absorbing the sight of the uniformed official's short-sleeved shirt, top buttons open to reveal a

...

“You will need,” he said, “to present to immigration within seven days your work contract and your marriage certificate.”

“No, ma’am, it is in the town. You will find it,” said Enoch jauntily, waving them past him to the other side. “All nifty. Welcome home to Salvi.”

He seemed tense; he always stood up extra-straight when he was agitated. But he managed a grin: “Once more unto the beach, dear Loz. Once more unto the beach. Bit of water therapy for the ol’ korf injury.”

Welcome to the carousel ...

Despite the jauntness of the tune, in Laura and Ian's dreary, dead state it seemed to have a touch of mournfulness about it. Worse still, the conveyor belt was empty for the time being aside from an errant copy of an unfamiliar newspaper. Travellers gathered around, knocking their shins on each other's hand-luggage bags and wincing. Everyone was dog-tired, dark rings around their eyes. The flight had been unimaginably long and at times terrifyingly bumpy – until the booze kicked in and she'd given up the ghost. Like pretty much everyone else, she'd dropped off at some stage during the plane's final journey and now she was somewhere between the woozy worlds of wakefulness and deep, dark sleep. She hardly knew what the actual time was (and part of her was beginning to wonder if time existed at all), but they were here, and that was the important thing, wherever 'here' was. They, like the other souls around the rotating carousel, were waiting for their personal effects to reach them before they could be released. Each one had their own destination, had had their own starting location; but, for these few moments of limbo, all were the same. Hangovers and travel – the great levellers.

The newspaper came around again, fluttering a little as its pages reached for another zephyr. Laura found that part of her attention had been caught by the local paper on its multiple journeys around the tiny carousel, and that she had deciphered the front page.

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Tuesday, August 18, 2009
sixpence

five shillings and

Go Nuclear, says First Person

Nuclear Power may be coming to the Salvi Islands. First Person Wilberforce Jenkins Ross VI told the Representative Assembly of the House of the Peoples that he was in discussions with Eastasia regarding the possible building of a brand new facility in the territory.

"We must move with the times," he told the House.

"It is clear that in these straightened days we need to look outside the box for solutions. "The days of swamp surfing for gold have gone long ago and our fathers and forefathers, and their forefathers before them, surely would be aghast and aggrieved at this situation in which we find ourselves in."

Island

The leader of the opposition, Baxter Boneshaker, replied that the House had not been consulted and asked whether the process

would follow bidding guidelines as set out by the Mother Country. "We all know that in the past the First Person has blazed ahead with plans that have had to be altered later, costing this country a great deal of money," said Mr. Boneshaker.

"Can he confirm to the House his receipts are all in order this time?" he added, to uproar from the opposition benches.

Following a call for Order from the speaker, the Eternally-Revered Millicent Vasquez-Brahmin,

Mr. Jenkins Ross denied that this was already a fait accompli, putting on record his 'long and distinguished' history of what he termed, 'pushing over envelopes.' "I remember when the honourable member for the East Ridge was against bringing airplanes to this rock," he raged. "But now we have the Marshall Grover III air landing facility, one

of the broadest in the region. Nobody can deny its success."

"Would he have us eating Wampy fruit and hunting for Snarkmeat?" he said. Discussions continue today with the House set for an early 11am sitting. Also on the agenda is the much-discussed proposal by Williams Jackson to introduce a decimalized system of time.

"We have the unparalleled unprecedent here of becoming the world leader in temporal futurism," he told the *Sentinel* last week.

"Our current system is not only outdated, it is outmoded and outnumbered."

Nation Building Fund Renewed

The discretionary £10 million Nation Building Fund was approved for another year unanimously. All applications for moneys will be considered by the First Person, under whose jurisdiction the grants once more lie. *More – page 4*

At last Ian and Laura selected their bags and presented their customs forms to the bored-looking and silent female officer who sat at yet another desk, in front of a huge mirror. Laura wondered if it was one of those two-way jobs. Who was watching them from behind it? She felt exposed and paranoid: she and Ian were drained messes of mashed-potato skin and tomato sauce cheeks. They looked unhealthy. Their reflections looked ill and ghostly, looming hazily and somewhat threateningly over the officer, whose mocha skin and brown eyes contrasted with bottle-blond hair and her sharp-ironed blue Salvi Airways uniform. She waved them through, smiling. Laura smiled back, relieved somehow.

And then, they were suddenly outside in a generic airport car park. Generic, that was, aside from the fact that there were several coconut trees directly in the middle of the tarmac. The suspension of time during the journey snapped back to an enchantment of warmth and wonder mixed with a burnt-out and bothered essence. It was as if they had left one life and were entering another. Wondering if they were dead, or dreaming, or both, Ian and Laura half-floated and half-hobbled toward the car hire kiosk.

Back to School

Laura surveys her new domain; Ian considers religion and sport.

Laura Walsh studied the empty classroom. Well, technically not empty: 24 red plastic bucket chairs behind 12 tables looked so neat, so shiny and well-kept that it was difficult to believe that before too long they'd be – what was the word? Not *infested* but *colonized* by youngsters, all looking to her expectantly. And as far as Laura knew, they were all angels – until they fell from grace. It was not always the ones you thought, either; she knew by now that it could easily be her secret favourites who would plunge the hardest. You had to be so careful to keep the kids' balances between self-confidence and an ego that would challenge and disrupt. There was plenty of wall space too; nicely decked out already with bright backing paper on huge cork display areas. The electronic whiteboard dominated the teacher's side of the room. *Laura's* side of the room, she corrected herself. She had a pretty new-looking computer set up on a hardwood desk of her own in the corner. It was imposing enough to confer authority – with big drawers for storage of confiscated ankle bracelets and packets of biscuits – but angled appropriately approachably.

This was what it was all about. The moment of calm reflection before the madness and the magic began, as surely it would. As it always had; there was also poignancy there. These kids, her pupils, might not admit it, but they were there to be formed. Some would resist, no doubt, but then that always happened. One day, whether in the lesson, the next term or years later, they'd understand the value of a snippet, of a moment, because it would apply to them personally. Laura knew she likely wouldn't be around when the lightbulb flickered on. Similarly, after a short school year, the kids would be replaced by new ones and the whole process would start from scratch. Like singing a round there was a lovely musicality to it. It was good to be guiding – no, joining - the children on their journey through the years. From first steps of discovery through to exam triumph or failure it was never the same twice. It was a pleasure to see the kids become young adults; to be aware of their romantic adventures whilst all the while playing the dumb teacher card; to watch them grow into a world that would be theirs and theirs alone. She turned on the electronic whiteboard. Top of the range stuff; the possibilities of videos, interaction, games, delighted her. God knows she'd had her fill back home of under-resourced, micro-managed, box-ticking, inspection-dreading, marking-checking obsessional schools. Here on Salvi it looked better already. There was even a free school diary which had been pre-marked with key dates. How perfectly awesome. This could work. This could really, really work.

Laura's attention was caught by a dishevelled, gasping, sweating, red-faced mess of a man shuffling past her full-wall windows. What the hell was he doing here? She shuddered but smiled. How like him to make the big gesture. Even so, much better to head him off at the pass – it was 90 degrees out there. She hastily filled a polyplastic cup from the water cooler. *Laura's water cooler.*

"Looking good there hubby," Laura said, offering the sweat-soaked figure the cup.

"Ah, uh, ffwwww," Ian replied, taking the drink gratefully.

He shuddered at the icy effect of the drink as it splashed down his gullet. A near-cough, then a huge, satisfied non-word. He spotted the cooler and began to seek a refill.

Suddenly, instead, he turned to Laura and embraced her tightly, perspiration everywhere. She squealed, a mix of irritation and laughter.

"It's hot today," Ian said, and kissed her as she pushed him away.

"Thanks, brains," she batted back.

He refilled his cup and sat down on the desk. Laura pointed at him and he stood up again.

"Not in my classroom Buster, we sit on chairs here."

But she couldn't contain her Teacher Look for long, and the pair descended into giggles once more.

There came a knock on the door.

"Come in," Laura said.

A slim blonde in her mid-twenties beamed into the room and held her hand out to Ian.

"Hi," said the girl, "I'm Carina. You're new?"

Ian shook her hand and smiled to her baby blue eyes.

"I'm Ian, and this is Laura, my wife, who's starting here."

"As a teacher," he added, somewhat redundantly.

Carina laughed: "Of course! Welcome Laura. I'm Carina. Religious Eventing. You are Modern Studies."

"Thanks Carina. I am happy to be here," Laura said, levelly. "It's just so beautiful here, isn't it?"

"Oh yes," sang Carina, "It is schweit gorgeous, for sure. Have you come from Mother Country? That's quite a journey on the air."

Laura couldn't quite place the accent. Canuck? Maybe a hint of Vinland in there?

"Yes, we are still getting to grips with it all," Laura explained, "We're newbies."

Carina laughed.

"You will soon come down from the mountains," she said, reassuringly. "It's lovely to meet you. I see you have water, that's good."

She looked at her watch and gasped.

"Ah but the river current runs," she said briskly. "I will see you at the Church on Sunday."

Carina strode out of the room again as they said their mutual goodbyes.

"Sunday?" Ian enquired.

Laura studied the desk diary.

"Ah," she exhaled.

"Ah?" he repeated.

"Yes. Ah," Laura sighed, and showed him the page in question.

"Ah," Ian said, pouting.

AUGUST 2009

SUBJECT MODERN STUDIES PERIOD _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK _____		00	00	00	00	
WEEK _____	3	4	5	6	7	
WEEK _____	10	11	12	13	14	
WEEK _____	17 Teachers arrive at airport.	18 Teachers arrive at airport.	19	20 Induction morning	21 Class allocation	
ONE WEEK _____	24 Class resizes	25	26	27 Departmental meeting	28	SUN 30 Church welcome for new teachers
TWO WEEK _____	31 Godly reminders and coat allocation	1 First day of Semester One.	2	3 National Big Salvi Day (Holiday)	4	

Sunday came around, as it usually did, but unusually Ian knew that he was looking pretty sharp in his suit.

He was also determined to keep the jacket on to hide the blossoming patches of sweat he'd developed on the three-minute journey between the hire car and the door to the Church of the Holy Awe (Vida Futura). He was out of his comfort zone, hoping not to say the wrong thing, wishing he was still in bed, mildly hung over and trying to do his best not to hit the wrong tone. He and Laura shuffled into the teachers' pews to the side of a large pulpit of ironwood. The surroundings were pretty familiar: pictures of a tunic-clad bloke hanging out with lambs and/or smiling kids on the walls, modern-ish renditions of biblical scenes, angels and the like, beautifully rendered in stained glass. There was a wooden cross with a bearded guy looking sad and pained on it. Ian busied himself in perfecting his pious-but-friendly face.

The little wooden church was one of the oldest buildings still standing in Big Salvi, at around a hundred and fifty years old. It had somehow survived the wallopings of '28 and '07, serious events in Salvician history. Indeed, one of the stained-glass windows commemorated the Big Wave of '28 with a stylised boat soaring over the head of the church itself, plus a huge, three-headed, fire-flashed eyes and ferocious-looking hound swirling around in the hurrinado, flailing off the floor, snakes protruding from the dog's awful skin, caught mid-bark at a doomy black sky. It was visceral and unsettling. Ian shuddered.

A sudden hush came over the congregation. An usher opened a side door, and out walked an extraordinary figure, which according to the order of service could only be The Very Revered Holiness of the Church of the Holy Awe. He was clad head to toe in bright pink robes, embroidered with images of iguanas, palm trees, sunsets and crosses. His enormous sleeves had a bright blue lining, possibly to represent the ocean. On the reverend's head was a half-hood, half-hat that had to be two-foot-high, and in the deepest blue/black. When contrasted to the relatively rough and simple wooden door from which the figure entered, the effect was of a seven-foot, shimmering and impressive otherworldly presence. The church breathed in as the apparition seemed to float into the building, filling the space with his aura. As this character reached the podium, a sudden and spectacularly loud and low chord exploded from the high-tech surround sound system. The waves of the cluster of notes panned around and around the church, a whirlwind of sonic irresistibility. Ian's mouth was agape and eyes wide at the power of the moment.

After a while, The Very Revered Holiness of the Church of the Holy Awe lifted one mighty hand and the organ sound was silenced. Ian felt his heart was trying to jump out. The blood pumping through his ears made a counterpoint with the assembled teachers and worshippers' own shuffles and snuffles, a jumbled-up Ceres mode to unravel. The Revered lowered his hand and a single snare drum sounded a repeating rhythm: ka-ka-tsch, ka-ka-ka, ka-tsch-tsch. Ka-ka-tsch, ka-ka-ka, ka-tsch-tsch.

Hearts synched with the beat and expectation filled the air.

Ka-ka-tsch, ka-ka-ka, ka-tsch-tsch. Ka-ka-tsch, ka-ka-ka, ka-tsch-tsch. Ka-ka-tsch, ka-ka-ka, ka-tsch-tsch.

The snare was joined by a bass kick, a delinquent sacrament; then a bass guitar and lead slinking around each other; lion on prey, prey on lion. A power chord rang out and a curtain behind the Revered flashed upward to reveal a gospel choir. They launched into a spiritual which moved and rushed through the congregation, some of whom were now clapping and exhorting along with the band. Ian wished he could move with such freedom. Physically, sure, but also with such openness.

Jesus

Won't you take me up there

Whoa-whoa

The song lifted, lifted, weaved and shouted with utter joy and belonging. Waves of love and stardust washed through the church. It was a rock and roll gig, Motown magic, a rave, a primal and soul-stroking Mass of inclusion. Unity! Love! Welcome! You are home, the song said; you will always be home. Welcome to Vida Futura!

The hymn finished. An attendant led The Revered back through the wooden door in silence. Men in suits and sunglasses started shaking hands with the congregation, encouraging each participant to turn to their neighbour and introduce themselves. Slowly, the mystique subsided into a rumble of stilled conversation and laughter, led by the ushers. As this happened, another man appeared through the Rev's door, took to the podium and signalled the congregation to sit down. This unassuming-looking, shortish guy introduced himself as

Dave and read out birthday notices, led prayers for the ill of the parish and offered succour to those in need and those who had lost loved ones since the last service.

From there, the gospel group sang again; there were readings from a large Bible; another hymn struck up; familiar anchors after the drama of the opening. Dave addressed the crowd:

“Welcome,” he said with a friendly tone, “To our friends, old and new. Let’s have a round of applause please.”

Despite the uniqueness of parts of the service, the sound startled Laura and Ian, both of whom were more used to a house of religion having an inbuilt, subcutaneous holy hush. The clapping here, however, was heartfelt and happy.

“And to the teachers we have already met here in Vida Futura, we thank you,” Dave said with a smile. “You and your colleagues have taught us and taught our children. It is the precious gift you share. I see too we have some new teachers with us. We welcome you with hearts and minds open, our souls to share in the love of the Church of the Holy Awe. We beseech thee, be true and steadfast; like the breadfruit tree we offer the fruit of our friendship gladly.”

There was another round of applause.

“Today, friends,” Dave continued, “You will be pleased to note that my sermon is a short one.”

Laughter from the pews. Ian and Laura looked at each other in shock.

“Yes friends, the gift of joy is one from the Lord,” confirmed Dave, “Let us laugh together. We are all in bliss here.”

All around the church people began to giggle, to hold each other’s shoulders. Across the way an older Salvationist had lost it and was helpless with body-wracking guffaws. Bent double, the man was in tears of uncontrollable mirth. It spread to his compatriots on the front benches, two of whom had now fallen prostrate, punching at the carpet in sobbing glee. Many were now laughing – whether with the others, or at them, or out of nervousness, or a mix of all three. Ian couldn’t help but smile, a warmth rising through his

belly and up his chest and neck to quiver on his own lips, a hiccup of happiness involuntarily released.

The spectacle subsided. The writhing floor-men recovered some composure and were now sitting back down, beatific grins on full beam.

"This morning," Dave began, profoundly.

"Let me ask you this. This morning."

"Did you look in your sock drawer? Did you, brethrinmine? Meblessedsisters, did you look?"

He paused for murmurs of assent from his assembled throng.

"Did you, sir?" Dave asked, pointing one particular guy out in the crowd.

"Yes," replied the man.

"And did YOU?" the speaker repeated, eyes now fixed on another victim, who nervously nodded his assent.

Dave was building up a steam as he threw his laser gaze on to individual after individual, a crescendo of intensity ramping up with each new victim. He began to shout, spittle flying through the air with every spurt of verbiage. Finally, he addressed a certain tan-lined and bestubbed, trendy surfer-type young man, now at full volume.

"YOU, SIR," Dave screamed at the dude. "DID YOU CHECK YOUR SOCK DRAWER. ANSWER IN HONESTY!"

The man was too shocked to throw out a wisecrack. He managed to squeak out a childlike "yessir."

"yessir, he says," repeated Dave. "I see."

He paused. He took a mighty breath....

“No

You

Did

Not,”

Dave suddenly bellowed.

“AND
NEITHER
DID YOU,”

he cried, pointing around the room in a frenzy. “NOR

YOU, YOU, YOU, YOU
OR YOU...”

Suddenly he lowered his voice to a whisper.

“And neither did I,” he breathed, head bowed.

“Not at first.”

“For it is written that as we are all individuals, we are also all the same in the eyes of the Great One. I urge thee to check thy sock drawers as I did this very morning. And what did I see? I saw socks of all colours. Stripes, spots, blue, brown, yes, even yellow socks, friends. And I saw that I had not paid attention to this. Because for each sock there is a match; each footwarmer has a perfect partner.

“And yet, my friends, I have neglected my socks.”

He held up a piece of fabric.

“This is a white sports sock, I found him alone, with no mirror to cling to, with no friend to hold on with.”

Dave reached under the podium and threw a bright green pair of Y-Fronts in the air.

“And this! This monstrous intruder! In the sock drawer no less! And only because I had not been paying attention to my drawers.”

“Friends, do you know what I did?”

A couple of people cried out: “Tell us, Dave. Tell us what you did.”

“I will tell you brethrinmine. I pulled that drawer out and I threw the contents all over the floor. I CAST IT ASUNDER.”

“And I asked the Lord for help. Can you guess what happened?”

There were shouts of ‘Testify!’ from various corners.

“I will testify,” Dave assented. “The Lord worked through me and I gathered in the scattered and lonely socks. And I found that for each sock there was a partner; for each was comfort in its mirror image; through me the Lord worked to recouple these lost pairs.”

Some people were cheering at this point. Dave beamed.

“We must all be vigilant that we are not odd socks. And if we see others without their sock partner we must strive to assist,” he cried.

“The Lord will wear us! Let the Lord be your partner!”

Applause rang out again as Dave, somewhat exhausted by this point, nodded and acknowledged his rapt audience, leaving by the little door.

Eternity paused as a recovering congregation caught its breath; people held each other’s shoulders tightly, or prayed to themselves, or simply breathed in and out and shook their heads, transported.

And then The Very Revered Holiness of the Church of the Holy Awe reappeared, this time from the back doors of the church, flanked by two besuited assistants in sunglasses who began to throw packets hither and thither to the congregation. Carina had managed to catch one and Laura caught a quick look.

It was a pair of black socks, monogrammed with a swirly CHA/VF logo.

The Revered raised a huge hand and the Gospel choir began to hum. A drummer pushed out a funky beat as the figure made his way to the podium once more, this time with a distinctly unreverendlike strut. He got there and snapped both fingers over his head. Instantly, all music stopped, and a projection screen appeared, showing the National Song of Salvi. The

Revered held his hands up until all eyes were on him. Suddenly, he thrust them down as if throwing a fireball at a dragon, and the band and choir and congregation locked in on the hymn together.

Laura, who had GCSE music to draw upon, could read the tune on the page so Ian followed her lead. Once a verse or two had gone past he started to enjoy – more or less – being part of a crowd. It was satisfying and felt right to mesh in with the spirited cacophony. Nobody was a great singer, but some of them were really belting it out. And why not? Not like church back home with everyone scared to make a noise out of place. Droning away self-consciously toward the melody, all inhibited by the larger-than-life surroundings, the ancient carvings and texts, the stern vicar with his wobbleboard vibrato. Just dusty, awful repressed claptrap. The song finished with a flourish here, though, whereas back in the Mother Country the congregation would have rushed to get the words out so they could all shut up again, hearts hammering away far too fast at being singled out, collectively, to sing in public. Still, Ian was happier when The Very Revered Holiness of the Church of the Holy Awe disappeared through his little door again. His spirit soared even further, and he joined in with great gusto as congregation applauded the end of the service. That all meant one thing – barbecue time. Laura squeezed his shoulder and smiled. He grinned and rubbed his belly.

National Song of Salvi

Ash Moon



May the Lord bring me to Salvi, O-I-O

O deliver me from evil as I go

May the Lord bring mercy to me

O'er the raging of the West Sea

May the Lord bring me to Salvi, O-I-O

I am but a simple sailor, O-I-O

Lord I call upon thy name to give me care

I am but a simple sailor

Wamping rope and gutting flipper

Til I set my eyes on Salvi island fair

From the farmlands of the East Ridge, O-I-O

To the Viking hoardes of Vinland in sorrow

The Iguana Pond extols thee, Lord

In copacetic majesty

In truth, in triumph, Lord, thy love bestow

May the Lord bring me to Salvi, O-I-O

May he deliver me from evil as I go

May the Lord bring mercy to me

O'er the raging of the West Sea

May the Lord bring me to Salvi, O-I-O

Ten minutes later, Ian was half-leaning against a cool, plaster wall that smelt of gingerbread. He was happily trying to balance a cup of not-unpleasant, unusual-tasting gingery mush and a plate of home-cooked food whilst also trying to chomp on a chicken leg. Laura was doing the rounds, shaking hands with various people and making small talk. As he juggled with the bones of the chicken, he was aware of a presence next to him; a young man, in his early to mid twenties, a designer-scruffpot-cool guy. His braided hair had at some stage been dyed blond, but that was now growing out toward a more natural nut brown which flowed into a tan part beach, part-sunbed, and part-tomato.

“Let me tekdat forsoul,” said the dude, who was dressed in long shorts and had mirror shades perched on his head. He brandished a piece of paper into which Ian gratefully deposited the ex-chicken. It was the same man that had been screamed at by the frenzied Dave.

“Mickey,” offered Mickey, offering his hand.

Ian introduced himself as the husband of Laura who was starting in Modern Studies at the school and said the journey was long but not too bad and that the island was beautiful and that they were newbies but just starting to feel their bearings. The spiel had Mickey nodding throughout, bobbing around energetically to a tune only he could hear.

“Safe,” said Mickey. There was another pause. Ian wondered what the deal was. Despite having only been on-island for a couple of weeks, Ian could clearly tell that Mickey didn’t look Salvation. There was one huge clue: areas of whitening around the area where his shades had been, giving him the curious look of a reverse panda. No, definitely from up North. Somewhere else, although Mickey seemed to be trying to morph into a local. Maybe trying a bit too hard.

Mickey spoke again. “You bungled to korfbal scores? How’s DOS disday?”

Ian paused to try and unravel the question before the penny dropped. He shook his head, “Last I heard the Koog were running a decent Four-Zero, but I’ve not been following it recently.”

“Ach,” Mickey replied. “The Two-Two’s megem, butch’ needa brilliant calla for that.”

Ian drained his drink and put it down on a nearby table. A fair point. Mickey knew his stuff.

"Hmm," he replied, "But it's all about the collects isn't it."

Mickey nodded approvingly.

"Good man sterling yaself. We got a couple team on-island but snotsa buzzing right now. Anybest. You play?"

"Well, not for ages," Ian said. "I got a dodgy knee in a bad-call switch, before I knew it the other team was partying, and I was on the floor. Usually it's not bad, but I think the flight fu... messed it up. Air pressure. Got it strapped up anyway just in case."

Mickey patted Ian on the shoulder in brotherly sympathy. As he did so, a multitude of plastic wristbands in varying states of desiccation fluttered autumnally. Some were faded, some barely still tied together. But they were a central part of the outfit. . Another pause; Mickey was studying Ian, too.

Ian felt it was his turn to break the silence: "Uh. Yeah. Ancient history. I've had my day in the sun."

"Tough break, buddy," Mickey said, with a mixture of sympathy and relief. Then a thought seemed to come to him, and he smiled. "Hey, but yeah! You needing come down gifya experteye any time slinkyman, mostly we training Sundays at six bells henceafter Mr. Sun really get angryfierce."

Ian pondered, nodding and smiling politely again. Yep, it had been a tough break. Devastating at the time. But without it, without all the breaks and bruises and bad days he'd hardly be standing here, in paradise, would he? All relative. Nothing to lose by giving it another good go sometime was there? He could get through a period or two on pure talent in this place, surely.

"Yeah. Might just do that," Ian said. "I can still get about a court."

"Safe, so safe. It's to do, yeah?"

The effervescent Mickey had an entirely unique way of speaking. Ian tried to place it; it was something like the mid-Atlantic drawl of a music television presenter, with an attendant confidence and uptick at the end of his sentences. Everything was a question. Asking for affirmation, for approval. When he spoke there was also a hint of Mother Country about it. Down South somewhere? And the phrasing – well. Maybe that was Salvi? Vespucci?

Mickey's words had trailed off again. Ian followed his gaze; Carina waved back a greeting and came to join the conversation.

"Heyy Cara!" Mickey said. He bounced and bubbled happily as she crossed the room, "Summertek short man, but loooooong withoutya facebless!"

"I see you've met Mickey," Carina said, "Our Geography and Physical Response rascal."

Mickey half-winked at Ian: "You a dizzy one. Bonkers man bonkaz."

Carina was dressed for church, island-style, which meant a skirt on the short side and a white blouse that was buttoned right up to the top. Suddenly sweating, again, Ian realised that the teachers were deep in conversation, rattling away in a speedy dialect that he found it difficult to decipher, let alone follow. Their back-and-forth was entertaining regardless, and he was happy enough to be carried on the wave. At least he was with the cool kids rather than the vicars and the reverends and the holy roly poly crew. Nonetheless, he was ready to leave. Not his scene. But he knew that it would soon enough be over. There were techniques to these kinds of gatherings, and one of them was never to look at your watch. He'd always contrast it with the hours he spent oblivious, held in sleep. Eight hours were as nothing, once you accepted it and dropped off. This, awake, a wake, was no different. Engage as much as necessary; don't fight it; soon enough you'll be at home with a beer. Or a rum.

The room rattled and hubbub-ed, moments of intensity, where the whole room spoke at once. Then it was noise. It would thin out, too: you could hear the odd word here and there, phrases caught on a musical breeze. A choir of conversation, a small-talk sonic pot pourri. It ebbed and flowed: a hint of laughter here, a touch of seriousness there. He tried to tune in to the conversation between Carina and Mickey, but the latter seemed to be trying to construct a

hybrid version comprising the archetypal drawling cool-dude, a backwards-masked message on a record and a cartoon dog. Then again, as Rev Holyfoot had said, all were in the same place when it came to Vida Futura.

In any case there was always the beach and the sea and the enticing call of distant Seaside Ghosts to polish out any of those bumps and bruises. It'd all fall into place, soon enough. But where was Laura when you needed her? And how was he suddenly holding a napkin full of chicken bones?

Ian, the Great Hunter

Immersion into life on land and at sea.

Ian didn't mind washing the pots. The whole of their downstairs was open plan and he could hear Laura chortling away as she sat on the sofa watching shit Vespuccian telly. Even after a month on Salvi Island it was still a novelty to stand and gaze out the kitchen window. It was six o'clock in the evening and the sun was about to crash down. It was remarkable how quickly the day went from sixteen thousand lux of God's own gobos to a blackness so divine you could almost stroke it. He and Laura had figured it out on yesterday's evening slow-walk: whilst there were streetlights, they seemed fewer and further between than back home, and the light they threw out illuminated a splodgy metre or so around the bulbs themselves. All else – black. A blackness that you could feel. And it made you feel tiny. The lights were the harmonics that allowed the bassy cello darkness to play so beautifully. The night was the lower register, the pulsing, chest-filling anchor that made the high-pitched human squeals and sun-scraped yelps of the day so jarring in comparison.

When the lights pattered out, a few steps beyond those oases of illumination lay the bush. Not exactly jungle, more of a tangle of mangroves, sea grapes and escaped coral vines; strange and rapacious and purple, the foliage was on the verge of rampant growth. It was always one scythe-sweep away from choking and taking back the invasive concrete for itself. It all compounded the sense of isolation. Yes, it was an hour from Ripoblika and 16 minutes from the Sister Islands –by plane. The seas around here were so deep that ferries were a non-starter: the waves could devour them without a trace. People, too. Here be sharks. Here be monsters. It was unsettling. A jerky and swift movement outside caught his eye. Wow!

"Hey Loz there's lizard," he said.

"Hmm?" came the sleepy reply from the sofa.

"A lizard. On the window. Gone now."

"Ahh cute."

As he left the pots to dry in their rack, Ian wondered whether the lizard visit construed good luck. Laura was engrossed in telly-land, so he decided to head to his office. Technically, it was

just a desk and chair and his growly, crackling laptop in the spare room. But it was Ian's Office. He kissed Laura on the top of her head and mooched up. The other good thing about having an office in a bedroom, of course, was being able to have a nice lie down if you felt like it; the ensuite bathroom was a bonus. Whack a kitchen in there and you'd have everything you needed. The desk was in front of the window, through which he could see the rusting roof of the bungalow across the street. Two scrawny, feral looking mutts wandered down the road, sniffing at the clumpy grassy scrappy weeds. The tarmac was potholed, wasted and deformed by multiple months exposed to the sun's ferocity; it was so hot during the day the heat haze was actually visible. Underneath the distant burble of the TV he could hear the babble of the Danger Frogs gathered around the outdoor pool.

So. Job time. Let's do this.

After checking email and korfbal sites, of course.

And thus two hours passed in ten apparent minutes.

Ian's reverie was interrupted by the sudden lack of a canned laughter soundtrack and a subsequent slipper-shuffle getting nearer and nearer.

"Don't be too late, pumpkin," Laura said. "These 6am starts are killing me."

But she was smiling, too. Ian got up from the desk and embraced his wife.

"I'm really proud of you Boggle," he half-whispered as he nuzzled into her hair. "I just want to catch a few more sites with the ol' CV."

Laura kissed him on the cheek.

"I know baby. You'll be snapped up," she said, affirming it with her twinkly blue eyes. She padded off toward the bedroom, a human yawn ready to diffuse into the ether.

Ian heard the door click behind her.

"Right," he said, firmly. "Let's have it."

He sat down, waved the mouse and returned to the Sentinel's job pages.

WANTED (he read)

Spectacular Persons

Are you a spectacular person?

Contact Salvi 442 for more details or post to Salvi 442.

And that was it. But it was too late to ring, because being after 6pm the island was closed for business. Unless you wanted a drink, of course. Maybe that was it, then, something to do with bars? Or restaurants. Maybe the *Spectacular Persons* needed were bar staff, or chefs, or serving staff, or even some kind of admin. He'd done a few of those jobs in his time, mostly not getting sacked, although at this stage of life he reckoned his stamina may not be up to the cut and thrust of the kitchen. Anywhere but Salvi, *Spectacular Persons* might even mean strippers – exotic dancers, he corrected himself, then re-corrected himself to strippers – but the chances of that were mighty low considering thongs were banned from beaches here. What was the point of being in this sultry and humid beachy booby arse world if you couldn't at least enjoy the scenery? There were people, and people had bodies, and people had eyes, and he hadn't quite worked out the etiquette of if, where, or how to look. He mentally shook the hand of the inventor of mirrored sunglasses. The trick was to move your eyes, not your head, when you had a good gander. If you were a perv. Ian decided he wasn't and shook such thoughts from his head as he continued to browse through the Sentinel site's job pages. He felt a small pang at his lack of a teaching qualification. He'd meant to get around to it but had fallen into a career in the rail industry. He was a pretty good timetabler, he reckoned, and surely that was cross-transferrable? Anyway Laura's school didn't need anyone, which was a pain but a blessing too.

JOB OFFER

Great rates of pay NRP5 an hour

Salvatians Only Accepted

A beer in any given bar was anything from about three NRP upward, which hardly made the pay quoted worth a dot. He looked for any contact details or further info. Without success. Ian smiled. It could be anything; just Salvatians, too. Perhaps it was copy checker for the newspaper. Next to the mysterious ad was a strange little box. He presumed it was filling a gap where an ad would be if anyone had wanted to buy one.

DUCK'S QUACK'S DON'T ECHO

AND NOBODY KNOW'S WHY!!

Was that true? Seemed like he'd heard it in the pub a couple of times but why was that the case? He clicked another tab open on the browser and typed in the search box.

Nothing happened. The Internet was down again. To be accurate, the house across the street's open router that he was logged in to was down. He suspected it had been kicked unplugged by one of their several dogs that whined all day and barked all night. and Ian was on the verge of going round there and moving the damned piece of kit to a higher shelf. Maybe he would tomorrow, when they were out. But then the dogs would eat him or lick him. He bungled his way downstairs on his way to make tea. That always seemed to fix things. He opened the fridge and sniffed gingerly at the milk. Definitely on the turn, but probably still OK for now. The sell-by date was a week away, but you couldn't rely on that kind of thing around here. Rely on your nose; that was some credo to follow.

"Quack quack" Ian said, to the bare walls and tiled floor. Did it echo?

"Quack quaaaack. Quaaaack quack."

Then again, he wasn't a duck. He was a person. Hey, maybe even a spectacular one. He may as well send off his CV to Salvi 442. Spectacular had many forms and he had one in mind right now. Ian decided to abandon the tea idea and soft-shoed back up the stairs. He'd done Good Work Today.

“Quack quack quaaaack quack,” he sang just loud enough to wake Laura up gently, or so he hoped.

“Quack quack quaaaack. Quaaaack quack quaaaack quack.

“Quaaaack quack quaaaack.”

The 10am sun was dialled up to full and Laura's reacto-shades had turned to deep purple, which according to the manufacturers was Better Than Black. The polarised lenses lent the white sand a preternatural glow, the skies became a blend of red-tinged blue and people were a puny greenish colour. As she stood unsteadily on that radioactive-looking sand the bubbling, chatty water made arpeggios that tickled at her soles, slightly unbalancing then rebalancing her in a way that was half-nauseating and half-thrilling. It burbled happily around her ankles, tiny shushing noises that soothed combined with popping-candy crackliness you could both hear and taste. The saltiness made her a bit nauseous and she remembered that looking at the horizon was meant to remind the brain that solid land wasn't in fact all that far away. Regardless, Laura was still a little perturbed by the fact that she, Ian and six fellow boaters were perched on a sandbank half a mile off Ghost Point – and a few hundred miles from the next country. The boatmaster, who according to his badge answered to the name of Jupiter Ace, suddenly whooped out in joy.

"Check it," Jupiter Ace said, pointing vaguely in the direction of the sun. "We gone got some Seetime Ghosts comin hitherward."

Were there specks in that beautifully cloudless sky? Hard to tell. Laura removed her shades and flinched at the sudden brightness that flooded her irises. A bad move; afterimages blobbed and flumped around her vision, rendering her temporarily useless. She found Ian's waist and pulled herself to him.

"Shit," Ian whispered. "The size on them..."

Laura's vision cleared just in time to spy what looked like a cross between an albatross and a mushroom whizzing toward them at incredible speed. And there, another; and another, and a fourth, all arrowing down at the gasping gang now huddling a little closer together. There were sounds of shock, surprise, terror, joy and wonderment as the – birds? - came within 40 feet or so of the group. The flying creatures had huge talons underneath a flowing, undulating torso that tapered out into two distinct wing/fins. The distance narrowed to 20, 10, 5 feet until, involuntarily, Laura covered her head with her hands. But the expected claw-rip at her skull did not come. Instead, she heard a succession of slight splashes. Laura spied between closed fingers

at first, then opened her arms wide as she saw, beneath the waves, the Seetime Ghosts gently moving. Their talons, she noticed, had retreated into their bodies and the bird-fish were lapping at the legs of the group. Had you not seen them fly in, you'd have taken them for maritime natives. It was extraordinary.

Jupiter Ace produced a bag of squid from one of his shorts' pockets.

"Sssh," he advised. "But watch..."

The captain selected some of the juiciest morsels and began to wave them around near his legs, under the water.

One by one the critters swam over to him; he greeted them in turn.

"Good morning Sam; good morning Tay-tay; good morning Collie; Good morning Ridge," he said, and dropped a morsel for each creature in turn. The Ghosts swooped through the water on currents and eddies of joy, their smooth, reflective-grey bodies flashing through colours of the rainbow as the sun's rays refracted through the waves.

Cameras clicked; jaws dropped. By anyone's standards it was a remarkable sight.

"The Seetime Ghosts years back," explained Jupiter Ace. "Come here by accident when a certain half-seas-over-bell-bottom captain was sinking. He thought they devils come to take him away so he told them, here my catch is, an threw the fish for them."

"They nyam his fish all up but they leave him alone an his boat right itself so he get home safe. He come back the next day an feed them again, in thanks, so they start to associate his boat noise with food, see? Now that years ago now but hot dawg, they keep comin back."

"They Jake if they know your boat but see dem talons, they no joke so not too close, folks. So now, time for them to see a man about a dog, see."

Jupiter reached for more squid, but this time he began waving it in the water then slowly brought his hand up into the air. The Seetime Ghosts followed his movement; not quite biting at the squid under water but ready to pounce. As Jupiter Ace brought his hands up, he turned in a slow circle. Totally in harmony now with his surroundings, he beckoned, and they followed his

movement. Presently one, two, three, four Seetime Ghosts breached the water, extended their talons, and started to gently flap their watered wing-fins in the air. It was a dance of magic, a corkscrewing homogeny of man, beast and brine. Jupiter's hands were above his head now, the Ghosts almost perching on the air itself as they awaited the release of the squid. Suddenly, the man released the seafood and jumped downwards. Into the space where he'd been, for an instant, the bird-fish formed an assembly that was unmistakably man-shaped. A split second later, with an audible whoosh, the creatures returned to the sky, cawking happily at their feast, and within a blink had retreated over the horizon.

Laura and Ian gawped at each other, unsure of what had just happened. The rest of the crew looked just as vacantly amazed. The only sounds now were the lapping of the water against the sides of the boat. And then, laughter and applause from all sides; words were inadequate, unnecessary, brutally inapt. People began to check their cameras for proof, explanation, guidance.

"Pretty nifty, huh?" Jupiter offered, with a distinctly Salvatian sense of understatement, and he headed back to the boat, whistling:



As the melody rose and fell, so did the waves; the little boat's hull greeted each new swell with a happy mini splosh. Laura smiled and looked back at the sandbank they'd just left: another craft, full of expectant, red-tinged tourists, was idling to the same spot. Laura felt a swirl of dismay. Perhaps it was the breeze now whipping at her as Jupiter's vessel picked up speed and took them away from Ghost Point, or perhaps it really was a reaction to the beauty and strangeness of the encounter with the creatures. Laura's eyes began to water, and she gazed out beyond sky or sea.

—

The lights of Stingray City Bar were strong enough to illuminate the decking and its customers, but the night-crash had shrouded everywhere else in purple-black velvet. Ian and Laura, sunburnt but holding hands in relaxed happiness, scanned the open-air venue for familiar faces.

“So who are these people again?” Laura asked as they walked through the car park.

“Arth and Den? Den’s Marv’s girlfriend’s cousin. Arthur is her partner. Think they’re engaged,” Ian explained, “They’ve been here six months already.”

Laura nodded. Some mates, or at least a beer and a burger. Friends of family of friends from back home, although Marv wasn’t the most reliable of characters. People who were bound to understand and to tip off, to crack a joke and to mess about. Veterans of the islands with experience behind them. Fellow lizard-catchers with tales of their own to tell. She looked around, scanning the bar’s clientele for clues. There were a mix of nationalities on show; various shades of skin pigmentation gave no clue as to resident status but the clothes on display certainly did. A couple of animated young lads in their early twenties wore replica korfbal shirts and sucked hungrily at bottles of beer in between talking at each other. There was a table full of three generations of burger-chomping holidaymakers. Sitting at the bar, smoking enormous stogies, were two 1950s-elegant gents dressed in Ripoblikan cotton. Ian and Laura sat at their empty table, a couple of steps and a palm-leaf weaved fence away from the busy roadway of the strip. Before too long a waitress, wearing ridiculously short hotpants and a tiny cut-off T-shirt with a large and friendly-looking stingray motif, bounded over to them.

“Hi there, how are you guys?” she said.

“We’re... supercool,” Ian said.

“Supercool is good!” said the waitress, giving a little dance. “What can I get you guys?”

“What’s good?” Ian asked, nearly winking but giving up halfway through the process due to sensing Laura staring at him in a mix of disbelief and amusement. He looked like he had a nervous tic and so waved his hand in front of his face to shoo away an imaginary fly.

"We have happy hour cocktails 2 for 1 on Gargleblasters, and hot wings are 10 shillings each if you order ten, then 5 shillings each for any further five. Also we have a selection of beers from Mother Country, Ripoblikan Rum and Mercy Mead. We also have a full evening menu of our famous burgers as you can see from the board if you supercool guys are eating tonight!" she exclaimed with a wide-eyed glee.

"Gargleblaster sounds awesome," Laura said, putting her hand on Ian's to stop him making any further tragic flirting attempts. "We're meeting friends so will eat when they come."

"That's cool. So, two Gargleblasters it is!" the waitress said happily. "I'll be two tickles of a titty!"

Laura's look was enough to stop Ian responding to this.

"What the hell is a Gargleblaster?" Ian eventually said.

"Ah just rum, fruit and things I think," Laura replied. "Tropical punch, really. I hear they're out of this world. Didn't you read about them in the guide?"

"Probably, yeah. I think so. Maybe."

Laura rolled her eyes. A moment of silence passed in anticipation of the meeting to come. Without the chatter the evening was full of sounds: low-level calypso from a speaker somewhere above the bar; the occasional roaring of vehicles down the road; the hubbub of a couple of mixed conversations; the burble of a TV sports show that the korfballers were shouting at. Occasionally there were snatched split seconds during which everything paused, and it was then that she could hear the buzzing of nearby insects in strange registers; tiny inhabitants of the islands going about their nightly business, whatever that might be. She hoped it wasn't their dinnertime: mosquito spray was all very well, but there was always a bit missed and that was all it took to bring up a welt of unsightly and extremely itchy proportions. Ian was always getting stung, for some reason; he must have very tasty blood. A car engine obliterated all other sound as it parked next to the bar, before that too was silenced.

The enormous cocktails arrived, brought by a perky waitress wearing a baseball cap through which her rainbow-coloured ponytail swished halfway down her back.

“Enjoy!” she exhorted, before zinging away again. “Enjoy the Sting!”

Ian and Laura smiled as they both approached the multi-coloured drinks; the texture was gloopy with crushed ice and the aroma was of a compelling blend of exotic fruits, the tangy tone of alcohol and an indefinable but somehow familiar herbiness. The whole thing was topped off with umbrellas, a lit sparkler and a bendy straw. They both took a hesitant drink, locked eyes again and raised eyebrows: this was *good*. No, better than good. This was *bloody amazing*. An explosion of flavours, the very essence of the tropics, and yet suited to a Western palate. Sugars, a touch of saltiness, a sour suspicion: it was a work of genius. But what was that grassy flavour?

“Bloody hell,” Ian finally said.

They laughed. God, this island had some surprises about it, Laura thought. And we’ve hardly scratched the surface yet. Another happy surprise was that a blonde woman emerged from the carpark. It was Carina from school, and she waved as she approached. Laura stood up and happily accepted the proffered hug.

“Hey guys,” Carina said, “making good use of the evening I see. Great choice of bar – they’re so nifty-swifty with the Sting here.”

“So far so good,” Laura said. “How are you?”

“Ah, very happy. Exciting. New semester always exciting. New people too, new friends. So much to show you, I am jealous.”

Carina looked around for the waitress to no avail.

“We saw the Ghosts this morning,” Ian said.

“Oh the Ghosts, the Ghosts. Such a wonder. So unique. Schpecial times always. But for the first time, to see them – oh you are so lucky. Whose boat was it?”

“Erm... Jupiter something?” ventured Laura.

“Ah yes, Mister Jupiter. He is the Ace. Another good choice. You guys are going to do well here,” Carina said, beaming.

Ian beamed back. Laura couldn’t help but smile too. They were already doing all the right things, by the sound of it. Ian’s phone buzzed and he showed her:

MESSAGE 1

Sorry GUYS RainCheck? WorkBullshit!! Catch yall soon

Dent&Arth

Like Marv, Like Arthur by the looks of it. But she took another long slurp from her drink, before shaking her head at the gorgeous taste and her inability to pin down the veggie, heady bite. What was it? Some kind of sage? Either way it was dizzyingly, relaxingly compelling. The waitress placed a cocktail in front of Carina and asked the trio:

“How many wings d’yall reckon you can sting down then, pardners?”

“Ten?” Ian began.

“Ten here too,” Laura added.

“Y’all know me,” Carina said, and drained her drink speedily. She smacked her lips at the flavour. “Ten to start then let’s see how far down the road we can push the ice.”

Ian looked quizzically at Laura, who shrugged and said:

“Another round of Garglebabies too, please.”

The waitress made a noise of utter joy and boogied back to the bar.

Interlude: Ian's Browsing History



Browsing History

09/24/09

<https://google.com>

https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Salvi+island+jobs

https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Salvi+island+CV

https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=ripoblika+jobs

<https://www.Salvisentinel.com>

https://www.Salvisentinel.com/snark_hunt_rules_updated.htm

https://www.Salvisentinel.com/digital_week_proposed.htm

<https://www.Salvisentinel.com/vacancies.htm>

<https://www.Salvisentinel.com/ads/vacancies.pdf>

<https://www.Betterjobs.com>

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies.html

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies_Salviplanter.htm

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies.html

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies_special_persons.htm

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies_special_persons_sendresume.htm

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies.html

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies_search.aspx

https://www.Betterjobs.com/Salvi_island_vacancies_404_error.htm

https://www.Betterjobs.com/ripoblika_vacancies_search.aspx

<https://Spotthatjob.com>

<https://spotthatjob.com/search/Salvi>

<https://spotthatjob.com/search/Salvi/results.htm>

<https://spotthatjob.com/search/Salvi/results/specialpersons.htm>

<http://www.ikf.org>

<http://www.ikf.org/interview/the-value-of-a-korfball-mission/>

09/25/09

http://www.ikf.org/?attachment_id=233

https://spotthatjob.com/10_tricks_to_super_resume

https://spotthatjob.com/upload_resume.htm

https://www.betterjobs.com/resume_form.asp

<https://www.korf4life.com>

<http://kneerehab.org>

<http://kneerehab.org/returningfrominjurysafely>
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_1.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_2.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_3.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_4.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_5.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_6.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_7.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_8.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_9.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_10.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_11.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_12.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_13.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_14.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_15.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_7.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_9.com
https://www.xpics.org/sexiest_korfballers_7.com
<https://virusfix.org/download>

Lonely the Brave

Ian is in sorting-out mode; Laura's reverie is interrupted.

Ian got up as quietly as he could; Laura mouthed some incomprehensible fragments of proto-language and turned over, but didn't fully wake up. In the pre-dawn blackness, the digital clock's red blocky numbers shimmered and swayed, neon balloons that smudgily announced it was **4:30AM**. The house was quiet; Salvi was silent. It was all time and no time, and Ian wasn't quite sure if he liked it or not. He yawned as he strapped up his knee, pulled on his running shorts and T-shirt, and crept toward the bedroom door. He stepped downstairs as dinkily as he could.

His old trainers stank a bit – a lot – but damnit, they were comfortable, and as he laced them up over bare feet he was glad that he'd snuck them into the luggage. Laura probably knew, of course, but she'd not said anything. Christ, it was a miracle they'd not set the sniffer dogs going mental at the airport. But they were comfy, and they still had spring to them, and they knew his feet so well that each step was a pleasure. They really did seem to support his muscles.

After an excruciatingly creaky front door opening and closing, Ian breathed out into the darkness. There was no vapour; that was unusual, but then he'd not been jogging since... well. Couple of years was it? And that was largely a trundling rehab prescribed by his physio. Instead of the frozen out-breath there was a kind of warm embrace of air here, borne on the gingerbreadly loveliness of the wild rosemary everywhere. Ian stretched his muscles and found no twanging, no nagging dullness, and certainly no pain.

That was another thing about living here that absolutely rocked: all the swimming and the resting and constant drinking of water really had done his injury more good in a couple of weeks than in years of traction, strapping, talk of surgery and Internet searching for miracle rubs. And no freezing cold mornings to bring on the pain, no wrapping-up-tight against the day, no pain and no problem.

Still, he'd take it easy for now. Just a couple of times around the block. See how it goes. A gentle jog was one thing, but jumping into a fierce Korf quarter or even half would be something way more taxing. All that turning and pivoting needed a lot of strength, not just in the core but also an absolutely reliable pair of legs. That didn't come overnight, but Ian felt good about the possibilities ahead.

As he rounded a corner, avoiding an enormous pile of cow shit, he couldn't help but construct the game in his mind's eye. Mickey would be there, of course. He might even be quite good, too: he definitely knew his stuff. But talk was cheap, too, and there'd been plenty of would-be Korfers who'd talked a great game then played like a diplodocus. What Mickey almost certainly had was the fitness of a young man, and a young man that spent his days in physical activity as a job. So even if he wasn't the best player, he'd be the engine – and you need those too. Ian passed a small field, in which a sad horse was plodding circles around its tether. The huge brown eyes briefly looked at Ian as he, free, jogged on. Even in this half-light Ian felt a huge pang of sympathy. But he didn't stop: it wasn't his business. For all he knew, the horse spent the rest of its time running freely through the... well, not the fields exactly. The scrubland and cracked-earth backroads maybe. Ian jogged on, now halfway through his morning run.

He felt good. No, he felt great. No pain, anywhere. Fluid, almost graceful, gliding across the marl road as smoothly as he ever had. It was so quiet, too: apart from his breathing, his beating heart and the shlip shlup of his trainers on the ground there was a stillness to this time of day that was beautiful. If you strained, you could probably pick up a distant dog's bark, or the whirr of the neighbourhood's multitude of air conditioners, but it was negligible. There was nobody about. Maybe that Carina would be playing, too. She looked fit. Was fit. In both senses. In fact wasn't that her in the distance? On the doorstep? She was kissing some dude goodbye, from what he could tell. He was too far away to see properly and it wasn't on his route. He jogged on. Good on them, anyway. Get it whilst you can. Be happy. Don't sweat it – save your energy for more important things. Jogging. Shagging. Being. Life is good, when you decide to make it your own.

Ian approached the last few hundred yards of his run but something nagged at him, something about the blonde girl and her boyfriend or whatever. It could easily have been Carina, though he'd not met her enough times to really tell for sure. It was the bloke. He had a distinctive look, even this far away. Unruly hair. Sort of surf-punk clothes. It couldn't be Mickey, could it? Even if it was, so what anyway. No laws against it. To be young again. Mostly a pain in the arse, but sometimes there was a kind of magic about these surreptitious little adventures, and at a few clicks before 5am it was the perfect time to explore them.

Ian started to slow his pace, to warm down even as the world began to yawn and awake. It was already considerably lighter than when he'd started, and the gentle warmth was beginning to turn its dial up to unpleasantly humid levels. Yep, it was gonna be a hot one. It always was a hot one here. How many ways were there to describe the heat? Countless. And, after a while, pointless. You just had to get on with it. And make sure there was some ice water to welcome you when you got home. 5am was too early for a beer, unless you were at the end of an all-night adventure. The endorphins were kicking in, and that was way, way better anyway. Things were gonna be great here. He could feel it. And once he got back to fitness, he'd show that Mickey what a proper 'baller could do. Bring a bit of class to the island. Ha! A couple of hours' kip, first, then time to get Loz up and ready for school. No worries.

The class fell silent and stared at the pupil who had been singled out by Miss Walsh.

"Mister Declan," Laura said, with just the right hint of annoyance, "What is our rule about mobile... about cellphones?"

Declan Ross looked up at her and mumbled.

"Anything you would like to say to your colleagues?" Laura prompted.

The boy stood up from his desk, a touch of nascent challenge in his stance as he half-kicked his chair back, turned around, and faced his classmates.

"I apologise, am sorry, for my phone, which should be turned to off switched during class," he said, not fluently or entirely convincingly.

Laura motioned for him to sit down. He pulled the chair across the floor with a crunch and plonked himself back in it, crossing his arms sulkily.

She held out her hand.

A moment passed. The class watched with interest as Declan Ross and Miss Laura locked eyes. After a beat, the lad – he with the unofficial staffroom nickname The Terror of 3b - fished the offending phone out of his pocket and handed it over.

“Thank you, Mister Declan,” she said, breezily, and placed it in her top desk drawer.

“After the lesson you can have this back. Might I suggest that anyone else with one of those things takes this opportunity to switch it off also,” added Laura.

A few furtive fumbles around the class suggested that other pupils were doing exactly that. Laura spotted Ross trying to sink into his chair. She hadn’t meant to embarrass him; it was bad luck that his phone rather than anyone else’s had buzzed. That said, he was one that needed to be brought on board and shown she wasn’t to be messed with. He looked pissed off and she hoped that was not an early sign of further problems. It could, however, have been any one of them. In a way, not his fault. Part of her hoped the missed call wasn’t anything important. That would be awful.

The rest of the lesson passed without any other disruptions and off dashed the kids, Declan hanging back on his own. Somewhat to her surprise, the pupil presented himself quietly at the front of the room, ready to receive his gadget. The teacher tidied up a pile of handed-in worksheets and placed them carefully in her bag, adjusted a precarious-looking Jenga of textbooks, and handed his phone back.

“Thanks Miss. Sorry Miss,” the youngster said quietly. Laura nodded.

“OK Mister Declan, see you soon.”

She smiled, sat down and wiggled the computer mouse, unlocking the screen. But Declan was still standing there. She smiled at him again.

“Well don’t be late for lunch now,” Laura said.

Declan sloped off, scruffily. Laura rolled her eyes and couldn’t help grinning. Same the world over, kids were, always testing the boundaries of the new teacher. It was only outside the window that things were markedly different to back home; that incredible azure sky, the

painful beauty of the sun and the dustiness of the semi-parched ground. She wondered at the relatively good behaviour she'd encountered so far. It was pretty much the opposite of what she was used to. The better the weather back home, the more the kids resented being cooped up inside. What they didn't realise is that they weren't the only ones feeling that way. The kids were a couple of years off the realisation that things didn't really change as you got older, you just got paid to be somewhere, but you still couldn't leave work and sod off to the beach. She sighed.

From: **Maisie Moo** ☺

To: **Laura Walsh**

Subject: **Where have you been eh!**

LAZZA MY GALLLL!! I gather from your radio silence that you're probably busy drinking sangria on the beach??? Do they have Sangria out there!?? Drinking it from coconuts and wearing grass skirts yeh? ☺ ☺
#backinthejugagane

WOOF WOOF that is Moley saying hi, he wonders when his auntie is coming to feed him biccies and take him walkies!!!! He's antsy in all this bloody rain we've got over here. Not that you worry about that now!!! You lucky duck!!!

Tell me all your news and are there pix yet???? We are all well jel!!!!!! Also get yourself back on social media you little hidey pops!!!! #secretlife #areyouaspy
LOLOOOOOOOOL srsly tho join the tweeps asap yeh?????!! #downwithskool

LOADS OF LUV!!!!!!!!!! Xxxx xsnd sun you don't need it all now do YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
HMMMM??!!!!!! Xxx #loveyababe

There wasn't anything from Ian – which meant no luck with today's job search. He'd probably gone for a lunchtime pool dip to soothe his muscles after his morning run. She didn't know how he managed it really: sleeping was so lovely, and she couldn't – or wouldn't – give that sacred

time up for anything. She ran around enough after the kids all day and didn't need to do it in her kip time, no siree. But Ian, well, it was so great to see him back getting fit again. He had been moving really gorgeously of late, once he'd recovered from the plane. The swimming was defo working: his shoulders were beefing up nicely and he liked it when Laura told him so. What he liked a little less was when she commented on his doggy-paddy swimming style, the funny clanger. But when he walked, he held himself with a quiet confidence in his own body that she wished she could bottle up and sell. She was happy to keep it to herself, though. Her man, her Ian.

There was a sudden and very noisy commotion outside the classroom window. There was a pickup korfbal game going on; about thirty-three a side by the looks of it. It was amazing how these kids got along, really. In her day that would have been a recipe for absolute chaos. A shouting match broke out but lasted only a split-second before three red-suited monitor-men ran swiftly toward the altercation, blowing their whistles. The shouting stopped, a moment passed, and one team formed a handshake column whilst the other thirty-three dutifully walked down, proffering their own hands and intoning the school motto, which Laura saw every day above the wrought iron school gates:

Vita brevis est et sine significatione et unibersa vanitas

The school bell rang again, and the yard emptied as the kids piled towards the canteen for the second sitting of lunch. It reminded Laura that she was hungry, so she fished out the plastic lunch container from her bag. Ian had made her an olive and feta salad which had wilted and begun to ooze in the heat. As she was about to chomp the piece of lettuce on her spork she noticed what turned out to be a scrap of paper. She fished it out. What a romantic that man of mine is, thought Laura, as she turned the paper over to read the message that the irrepressible Ian had left her:

MASSiVE HaiRIE BiG WILLieS!!!!!! Xxx

The giggling fit that ensued brought tears to her eyes. Maisie would love this one. She hit 'reply' and began to type an email to her oldest friend.

The rest of the afternoon went well. Laura found her groove, rocking her way through two and a half hours of teaching, ten minutes of sitting kids down at the start and at the end of the lessons, twenty-three seconds of leading the class in a song about internationalism to the tune of the second-or-third-latest pop song and approximately three or four microseconds carved from the schedule to acknowledge that she was really performing today. The final bell rang; the final class actually sat, waiting for a signal to leave. Laura dismissed them with a smile and a reminder that homework was for home, not for the bus on the way in, or for the corridor before the lesson, or even, young lady, immediately after it has been set, because that's obviously not the point so please take some time and do it carefully. The classroom emptied. Laura blew out her cheeks, granted herself a smile and began to gather her thoughts along with her paperwork. What a week it had been – but she was getting on top of things. It'd ended in good spirits.

Back at the house, Ian was deep in Sorting Out Mode. First electricity, then maybe get the bloody Internet up and running. He dialled the number at the top of the payment demand that he'd picked up from the Postal Center. Several button presses later, he was in a queue but where the hold music was boss. In contrast to the generic, exasperating synthesised strings-esque musak of the Mother Country, there was a pumping reggae track extolling the benefits of ganja. He was a little disappointed to finally get through to an actual person.

"Ah yes," he said. "I like your music."

There was a reply.

“Oh,” Ian continued, “I didn’t realise. Anyway, I am phoning about my bill.”

A pause.

“Yes, the binary one?” Ian replied. “It is number
01000101011011000111011001101001011100110000110100001010.”

A long pause. Ian repeated the reference.

“01000101011011000111011001101001011100110000110100001010,” he said.

The representative read out the reference once more.

“Yes, that’s correct,” Ian said. “Mr. Ian Walsh.”

He was asked a security question.

“Frank Mottram,” he answered correctly. And so, to business, he thought.

“Yes thank you there. I would like to pay please, thank you. I have my card details here.”

There was a rather strange pause this time. Ian’s brow started to furrow.

“Pardon?”

A response came back.

“So let me get this straight,” he slowly told the telephone receiver. “I have a bill here for Ian Walsh, with Ian Walsh’s reference number, which is clearly mine. I would like to pay this bill on the telephone with my bank card, which is in the name of Ian Walsh. But I cannot, correct?”

Some chatter came back down the line.

“Just so I’ve got this straight: I cannot pay over the phone, with my own card, my own bill and my own name, in case of... fraud?”

A reply.

“Good lord,” Ian eventually said. “And goodbye. Wow.”

Click.

He stared at his cup of tea. There wasn't much clarification to be found there, either. Maybe the reggae singer's lyrics had it right, after all. Just chill and don't sweat it. Amazing how so many songs were about cooling things down or heating them up. But did that count as checking electricity off the list? He wrote a mental question mark next to the entry. He'd mooch to the head office tomorrow. Mentally, he sighed – but smiled. Island life. Wouldn't hurt to stretch the muscles out either.

Laura's bags bulged with exercise books, handout sheets, textbooks, a small cuddly fish that she used as a question/answer catcher and an empty but no less unwieldy lunch box. Experienced as she was in the Escher-esque physics of the Ancient Art of Teacher Carrying Things, this was something of a challenge. As luck would have it, a scruffled, sun-marked head popped around the corner, closely followed by a set of biceps straining against a skintight neon shirt and walnut-smuggling shorts that left nothing to the imagination. Mickey's smile, however, always looked genuine. Laura wondered if he'd had his teeth whitened to contrast against his burgundy tan. Or, possibly, had his skin painted darker for the same effect. It was hard to tell.

"Heyy Miss Laura," he said, "Let me help ya."

Before she could reply, Mickey had picked the whole lot from her grasp and was striding confidently toward the parking lot. The sun ambushed them as they stepped from the air-conditioned school into the open air, and a chicken scrabbled about somewhere in the bushes.

"You the... which wunny tis egain?"

"The bright green one," Laura admitted.

"Wicked, she a cutey."

Mickey bounded over toward the small car which was dwarfed on both sides by enormous 4x4 SUVs and studied it carefully. The backs of his legs were a Pollock-ish raggle of streaky shades of bottle tan. It reminded Laura of gravy, which reminded her of Sunday dinner, which reminded

her of rain and coal fires and snuggles and Maisie and Moley the massive cuddlebug, which made her a little sad.

“It’s raining back home,” she said. Mickey’s shoulders stiffened somewhat at the mention of the Mother Country. His muscularity was taut, fit, impressive. He quickly relaxed again and smiled.

“When de rain come...” he sang in a mutilated Salvatian accent, “What you gonna do?”

“Sorry?”

“You no hearit? Ay a big hit here: When de rain come, what you gonna do,” he repeated, singing, “When de rain, rain, rain, rain come.”

She opened up the car boot and Mickey whacked all the books and gubbins in, not overly carefully, then saluted Laura with a flourish. This time, the accent was fluent cut-glass, upper-class.

“All done and done now ma’am. Extend my greetings to Squire Ian of Korfshire. He is humbly invited to join us on court any time. Have a spiffing weekend my dear colleague, what and what.”

She ditto-ed the sentiment, smiling, and he bounced off again having spotted someone else in need of Rescuing On This Hot Friday Afternoon. He was quite the character, this one. Kind of strange, but who wasn’t? Really, he was like a little brother. Eager to please, eager to play. Who could argue with that? Whatever his story was, she was sure it’d come out in time. It was possible to be a success here – Mickey was proof of that and he was clearly enjoying whatever adventure he was on. Where he’d come from, when, even his age – more obscure. He seemed to kind of float somewhere between worlds. Laura liked him.

But time to head back to Ian, some wine and a little awful Vesspucian TV. It really was as bad as they said; the commercials seemed longer than the shows and often she’d forget what she was supposed to be watching, engrossed as she was in the mini-soaps of the adverts. Still, if you’re somewhere like Salvi, the telly should be shit, shouldn’t it? You really ought to be outside. But

the heat made you tired too. Deep in thought, she backed the car out carefully and exited the car park; the school traffic was thinning out now. The vehicle trundled on to the bumpy, sun-cracked road and as Laura began the twelve-minute drive to the homestead, she found herself singing a new, familiar melody and felt a surge of happiness along with it.

“When de raiiin come, what you gonna do? When de raiiin come, what you gonna do? When de raiiin come, what you gonna do? When de rain, rain, rain, rain come, come, come, come, come, come, come, come, what you do? When de raiiin come, what you gonna do? When de raiiin come, what you gonna do? When de rain, rain, rain, rain come?”



Back at Walsh Central, Ian had worked his way down to Item two on the list: broadband. The buggers across the road had been rather intermittent with their signal of late and the dogs had been unusually noisy. It was time, he mused, to bite the bullet and pay the extortionate fees for a more reliable service. He'd also managed somehow to get his phone stuck on speaker, which was less good. He resolved to add that to an increasingly lengthy list. But first, broadband. To his great delight, he got straight through to an agent who seemed on the ball with the patter and certainly eager to assist. Yes, home service was possible, and yes, it could be done fairly quickly. And so to cash.

“It's 10 NRP installation fee.”

"Ah right."

"But you do get a 10 NRP voucher with sign up."

"Grand. So, all good then."

"So if you could just fill in your bank details, and set up the fee, and send us the carnet, we can proceed."

"Er."

"I'm afraid our systems are down today."

"Can't you just use the voucher instead of the fee?"

"No, you get the voucher after sign-up sir."

"Which I can't do because your systems are down."

"Unfortunately yes, but if you take your details to the bank you can set up the fee so we can proceed as soon as possible."

"So if I pay that today you can send an engineer out?"

"Yes sir. As soon as possible."

"Whenabouts?"

"I don't have that information at the moment sir. Our sys..."

"...tems are down, yes. Well, thank you for your he..."

"...would you be interested to hear about our new fibre option sir?"

"Fibre! Yes that would be great."

"If you can just give me your address, I can send you a flyer sir with the information on it."

"Can't you just... ah. Is it in the system?"

"No sir but the printers are closed today so we have run out of informations. But I can make a note if you would like to ring back."

"What time do you close tomorrow?"

"We're actually not open on Saturdays sir so it would be Monday any time between 9.30 and 4pm."

"..."

"Sir?"

<dialing tone>

Ian resisted chucking the phone at the wall but instead turned it off and launched himself on to the sofa where he lay, watching the ceiling fan go around and around. He imagined it was a helicopter rotor, which would eventually take off and land the house back home - just for one night - where he and Laura could go out for a chippy tea and be just chilly enough that they'd have to wear a bloody *coat* for a change. Fucking island life.

Laura was cruising at 30mph and in mid-verse when the SUV stopped dead in front of her. She hit the brakes, but the crunching screech of metal buckling was matched only by the sickening-sweet burnt rubber coming from the road. The car driving far too close behind her smacked into her back bumper and the momentum flung her forward in her seat; time and place toffeed together as she saw the windscreen slam toward her. The seatbelt, elderly and raggedy though it was, held: her skin did not touch the glass, which wobble-boarded with the impact. The belt smacked her right back into her seat. She was spinning in a world of stars and pain; clouds of confusion crossed her vision and her eardrums throbbed with an unearthly blood-bumping tattoo. There was nothing but dizziness; a bubble of nowness, where the world was simple, a new womb of instantaneous non-time, a self at one with its immediate universe, a frenzy of non-think, comforting and confronting that was everything and everywhere, a jolt out of space.

Gradually the blanket lifted, and Laura snapped back into herself. She gingerly flexed her fingers and toes; all seemed to be there. She tried to breathe deeply, checking every muscle for injury. Nothing aside from a tremendous headache and some very tender nascent bruising underneath the seatbelt. She was overtaken by the car behind her and similarly the SUV in front moved off virtually untouched. The moment of impact had shaken Laura in more ways than physically; Salvi may be paradise in many ways but one thing you had to do was take yourself with you. You still needed your wits. You still needed to be on your game. Things could still happen here – bad things as well as good. A minor prang, nothing to really worry about, but a shock to the system. Someone else beeped, impatiently, and she managed to restart the drive back to the house, feeling off-beam, scratched and intrusive. She felt stupid for taking her eye off the ball – but no major harm done.

Seven minutes later she was sprawled on the sofa, ice-cold white wine in hand. No point even telling Ian about it. Nothing seemed to be broken, either in the car or in herself. Pride, maybe, had taken a bit of a knock, but all told it wasn't worth Ian worrying about. And not worth stopping him in full flow, either, as he laughed and bubbled his way around the story of his own day. It was nice to listen to him, and lovely that he was so animated and seemingly sanguine. He had a lovely voice sometimes. It was almost like a bedtime story. She could feel herself drifting off; everything was warm and happy.

Ian broke her reverie somewhat by passing the local newspaper to her. It didn't always arrive, but they'd been assured that the subscription would be sorted out in due course. For all its faults, the paper was cheap enough.

"No more hurrinados then, spodge," Ian said. "Seems we're looking toward better times."

Laura read the headlines. What a lot of silliness there was. But you had to go with it, didn't you?

"Maybe we should try some of those parties on the weekend," she said, yawning.

"Mebbe we should make our own party," Ian said lasciviously, raising an eyebrow. "Mebbe Lozpot already has plans in that area." And he moved as if to tickle her. She squealed and told him to piss off.

“Calm down boyo, you’ve wined me but not dined me yet. You’re pushing it.”

“Puh.”

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Monday, November 30, 2009

five shillings and sixpence

Hurrinado season over, folks!

The 2009 Hurrinado season has been declared officially closed.

There were four named storms during the year, marking a relatively quiet season. Weather guru Felton Jarvis, of the Lee Botwood Institute for Environmental Science (Weather Division First Class), spoke to the Sentinel about some of the reasons. "We have experienced a reduced instance of severe weather this season," began Mr. Jarvis.

"One reason for this is that the El Nino effect increases sea temperature in the region and increases wind shear, which can inhibit the growth of storms into hurrinadoes and the like." He added that as a result the storm season had been unusually clement by modern standards. "We tracked all the potential blobs rolling in Westward," said Mr. Jarvis, whose parents came to Salvi Island way back and

he now owns a paper Country Membership. "We can give thanks for being spared any adverse weather effects, although it is always worth recalling that preparation is everything."

Storms named

The named storms this year were Bicko (April 20-21), who brought ten inches of rain per hour for five hours and caused intermittent roof damage; The Trifal (May 22-26) who knocked out the power grid for eight hours and flummoxed cattle farmers alike; Kerz (June 1-4), who caused the redistribution of beach sand inland, exposing death coral and drying out whales; and Rammer (July 22-23), who joked around the island, damaging mangroves with his ass. Tourism expert Jupiter Ace noted that the reduced incidence of storms had other effects.

"It has been very clear that the Seatime Ghosts have felt very restless at the lack of weather."

"They are at their best when things change fast and prefer to have the dominion of the air and sea blurred like the years."

Parties

- International Hitman, 1 December. All welcome after 5am.
- Never Again Bar, 4 and 5 December, from 8pm: Hurrinado Cocktails half price. Over seven rums.
- WG Rutherford's, 5 December, 7pm-10pm, Happy Hour.
- Bang!

For more details.

INSIDE: Ripoblika says Vinland is overstepping its boundaries with Canucks, say experts eyeing up north. – Page 4

Introducing the Boss

Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV deals with Mother Country commitments; Laura asserts authority.

First Person of the Representative House of the Peoples, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, shifted his considerable weight in his seat. Today, the cushions felt wiry and scratchsome, as they always seemed to when the air-con in the House was set so cold it made him shiver. He just couldn't get comfortable, and when he wasn't comfortable he wasn't happy. When Wilberforce wasn't happy, he couldn't concentrate. The hubbub of the house as it discussed something he had lost interest in twenty minutes ago may have reached his conch-like ears, but that was where it stopped. His brain was engaged elsewhere, his hands surreptitiously playing with his phone which was in turn hidden in a copy of *Legislative Law III: First to Force*. He didn't feel too bad about it; the whole house knew that everybody needed a break from time to time, and as long as enough were there bodily then quorum was achieved. Most of the decisions had been made long before reaching the house anyway. It was just how things ran in Salvi: it was the practical way to proceed. All the pomp, all the nonsense, was just window-dressing and grandstanding. If the families were happy, and as long as Mother Country was pacified, Wilberforce was doing his job. And right now, the families were smoothly, busily running themselves, so there was little need for the MC to interfere. As it should be. And yet he still had to fly halfway across the word and meet them to ratify it. It was bloody ridiculous.

Stricken with a blast of toe pain, Wilberforce was researching his symptoms. It came from time to time, this scratchy, biting assault. It seemed to centre around the site of an old Korfbal injury. He'd been twenty years retired from his career when the toe began again to give him gyp. He assumed it was a mix of old age and, yes, alright, ok, don't overstate it, the fact that he could do with losing a pound or two. It wasn't easy to accept things beginning to seize up where they'd once been supple, or become unreliably soft when previously they'd...

His train of thought was derailed swiftly as he realised his name was being called. That moustachioed fool Baxter Boneshaker, his long-time nemesis and pain in the bonkey, was chuntering on, addressing the house speaker as was procedure:

"..dame Speaker the Honourable Mr. Jenkins-Ross appears not to be quite with us today," Boneshaker said.

The speaker addressed Wilberforce directly, waking him from his half-slumber: "Mr. Jenkins-Ross?"

“Yes indeed am I,” Wilberforce began, not really having much idea what was going on. “And further I wholeheartedly disagree with, uh, inference the honourable member for East Ridge is implying in interfering with the, uh inherent instability of the point he has, as usual, missed.”

The speaker sighed: “Let us then put it to the vote. Any abstentions?”

“Yes I intend to abstain of, of disgrace,” Wilberforce continued, feeling caught out and hoping it wasn’t an important vote. “The uh, dismissive delinquency of the dreamer in the dark over there has as usual, uh, extremely ended his extraneousness.”

“Let the record show that the Honourable Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Keeper of the Ice, has abstained. In the vote therefore for an early break for refreshments, all in favour say aye.”

The noise seemed fairly unanimous, a chorus of assent.

“And all against say nay.”

The only sound was the air-con whirring around. The speaker, not without a touch of relief, nodded: “So the motion is carried. All rise”

In the Parlour of Representatives the buffet had been laid out already but as Wilberforce began to reach for a plate, he found his way blocked by the bulky Baxter Boneshaker.

“What are you on today Fourman? Worse than usual,” Boneshaker said, confrontationally.

“Too much spent at the fruit machines you old goon. You’re seeing spinning fruits all over the place. Another trip abroad today is it.”

Wilberforce winced. Boneshaker knew very well that travel was inevitable to get anything done from the islands. “The only banana I see here is you Baxter, God forbid that you should actually spend time, uh, travelling on Government Business instead of cuddling up to Old Farmer Robertson and his East Ridge Specials.”

“Hmm,” Baxter said, pushing his glasses up his nose.

Wilberforce growled to himself. Bloody fruit machines indeed, Baxter should coconut the news that he was a mah-jongg man through and through. Typical Boneshaker, that family is always been more trouble than a trussed turtle. The aroma of the Rundown fish stew took over his thoughts. His stomach rumbled. A truce was briefly called as the men filled their plates and carefully tottered to the table where they sat next to each other.

"This is quite excellent," Baxter said

"Glorious. Catering is who now?"

"King Roberts. You signed off on it yourself. You getting old Fourman. Right hand doesn't know. What the left hand is doing. And the brain is on another island. Entirely."

Wilberforce stifled a smile. That was a good one. He'd have to use that in his meeting with the bloody Mother Country.

"Baxter you really ought not to start talking before you have had a chance to, uh, catch your brain in the act."

"Spoken like a true Holy Awe acolyte. Do you have any more cornbread. Down there?"

"I will pass the bread, because Salvatians should break a bread even, unto, uh our foes."

"And there is nobody. More qualified. On that event. Than you and I."

"Indeed."

"Indeed so."

Wilberforce took a long slurp of the stew. It really was outstanding. Salvi fish must be the best in the world, surely: "As I said, uh, indeed."

...

...

...

"indeed"

The rest of the meal passed in relative silence. The quality of the ingredients was top-notch; crisp vegetables, chewy, succulent breadfruit, fresh cornbread. The best of Salvi. Nobody could disagree with that/

Even though he'd just hopped in the airport taxi, Wilberforce was homesick already. Who the hell wanted to go to Mother Country, with its rules and its millions of grey people with grey minds and grey houses? Nobody in their right mind – he hated its rain, its incessant bloody cold and its beep-beep zooming filthy cars. Every time he went there he felt it was turning him grey too. Taking something away. Erasing him, smudging him. The only good thing about MC was its trains. He loved those. He looked forward to putting out a tender for something like that. Was that feasible? He wasn't sure. But...

His reverie was interrupted by the ringing of his cellphone. Would he never have a moment to himself?

"Yes this he is ... Yes unclimine how is the sunshine, uh, for you this day ... I will uh, endeavour, uh, for you of course as you know I cannot confirm the washing machine distribution entirely but I will uh see if I can expidite, uh, the conwersation within the boundaries of the correctness of my position ... yes I know Auntie needs the rest ... yes I am sure, yes ... making noise is it in the gears? ... yes new machines may be in the Yes as I say I cannot ... yes uncle ... I will ... peace love magic to thee and thine also. Yes. Bye now. ... yes. I will. Bye now. Bye."

Bloody family. Give them a corn-ear they take a bushel. Thank the Holy Awe for the Nation Building Fund, but the demands could be bloody relentless. It wasn't their fault, really: they were only looking for stability. Who wasn't? Washing machines did tend to have issues after a while the desalinated water corroded them. Still, he could have done without the paper publishing the actual figure allocation of the NBF. Ten million wasn't much to keep an island happy. They had no bloody idea those lot: the sooner that rag was sold, the better. He opened today's effort.

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Thursday, December 100, 2009 five shillings and sixpence

The mystery of the six leaved cloverdeuce baffles islanders

It was a normal day on Salvi Bach.

The sun was shining, the weather was sweet and the chirping of the Danger Frog was interspersed with the leafy sigh of the Westwind Hillberries.

McManus Asafetida, a long-term resident of Hashton, was going about his daily business when he bent down to rebuckle his swampclog.

"I couldn't believe what my eyes were seeing to me," he told Sentinel reporter Carter Bush-Ross.

"Clear as day, as a day is long, and I ain't beatin' my gums, there it was – the biggest cloverdeuce I ever saw."

Mr. Asafetida, 81, revealed that he was so shocked by his discovery that he failed to take a photo.

"No chewing gum, I got in a lather and ran to the store to fetch my buddy [Jones Wilson]."

Missing

However, when Mr. Wilson and Mr. Asafetida (88) returned to the site, they were astonished to find that the mysterious earthplant had disappeared, mysteriously. "Jones looked at me like I was some kinda sap," continued Mr. Asafetida.

"But I says to him that I abso-tively, positutely counted six leaves on the Cloverdeuce, when we all knows that five is the magic number."

According to old time day lore, a confirmed six-leaved 'deuce' will bestow upon the bearer great fortune. Mr. Asafetida is in no doubt that this is the case, despite not having been able to possess the mysterious object.

"I been out celebrating ever since," he revealed.

"In fact, I been out that day celebratin' on account of it being my 92nd birthday or thereabouts, though in them days they didn't keep much records."

SENTINEL SAYS: Have you seen the s

six-leafer? Take a shot and post it via e-mail to the usual address, which can be gained by ringing Big Salvi 342. Maybe your family has a tale to tell – we'd love to hear your letters!

Family 'Will Buy Whale'

Local couple Stanza Bearclaw and Sparkle Jonson have revealed their intentions to import a Sminkewhale from Ripoblika, where the meat is legal.

"There is nothing to state that the constitution prevents it," said Mr. Jonson.

A spokesman for the government noted that checking up on the relevant law was not possible as the section Wh-Wx had not yet been located following its misplacement during the tornadobomb of 2007.

Inside – Are you a secret Vinlander? Or a Canuck? War is coming! Take our fun quiz on page 4 of this newspaper. Page 4.

The usual nonsense. But that Canuck-Vinland scrabbling was a bit of a worry. He'd have to keep his eye on that one. Another bloody complication. But more imminently there were ten hours ahead on another plane, and for what? The Mother Country after his soul again? They wouldn't be fobbed off with kitchen equipment, that was for sure. To them, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV was just another funny little man with a funny big tan. No matter that his 'tan' spoke to centuries of fighting for the next meal; fighting for freedom; fighting against the likes of Mother Country, truth be told. And here and now those pathetic A4-coloured descendents of the slave traders had no idea how he had to straddle worlds just to keep the peace. No idea how it rankled to genuflect and say yes sir and thank you sir and yes we are committed to the stability of the Mother. No idea how that lie had begun to eat him from the inside, and no idea how he also had to bite his tongue in the House when the I word – independence – was being bandied around by the likes of Boneshaker. But Wilberforce was made of sterner stuff, as he settled down into First Class and let out a long sigh. Ten hours on a plane also meant ten hours without having calls from uncles, pressure from politicians, worries about toes; it was ten hours of Wilberforce-time.

Things looked up even more as he spotted his favourite stewardess waltzing toward him, a parade of blonde hair, enormous blue eyes, white-sand skin and a smile from heaven itself. Wilberforce used his most soft and glorious and welcoming tone as he beamed at the vision before him. She was holding a bottle of Mercy Mead and a plastic tumbler. Now *that* would help the flight go by. What a woman she was.

"Ah stewardess you are, uh, beautiful as the turquoise seas of Salvi are, uh, bountiful, I thank you yes your name? Rand? Rans? Ah, Rannsó Fre... Fre-ju-dott-ir Ah that is a, uh, lowvely name, please ice also a large one yes thank you."

Before long, the mix of tiredness and extra-strong Mercy Mead overtook him, and he was soon snorting happily, caught in a strange and quite lovely dream.

{{{The scene: that bloody courthouse or meeting room with all the oak and pictures for royal imbeciles, red carpetings, plenty uncomfortable old wooden chairs around the

panelled castle room and no bloody smoking any more if you please. It may as well be lit by oil lights and it freezing. Chief Financial Officer of the Mother Country, Sir Alfist Bareback, sitting on a throne at one end up some stairs, he wear a big damned stupidshingle crown of office and refers to himself always as 'we' like he some kind of royal. At other end of room is our hero, the beautifully-healthy Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Keeper of the Ice, Honourable Leader of the Representative Assembly of the House of the Peoples, kneeling with humility and passion on a small hassock, bloody knees hurting and fighting the hard fight for his beloved Salvi Island nation in the face of Mother Country meddling as usual.

- Can you, Mr. Jenkins-Ross, please delineate for us herewith in which ways you have taken steps to consolidate the downsizatiation of the civil service in light of the increasing challenges and complex changes of the financial requirements for increased efficiency not of course locally but in fact worldwide and on a high-level equivalency basis going forward without any inoperative statements or misspeech I trust of course in terms of advance downward adjustments.
- **Yessir Chief Financial Officer, sir I have the fiscal report, for Salvi Island for the fiscality year-wise and, uh, projectications thereto and sundry, as requested and required.**
- Excellent Mr. Jenkins-Ross, you may proceed with your report and plans. We are ready. We trust that you will be swift and accurate but notwith speaching overly of course.
- **Yes sir indeed I will. Here, then, are the figures and the words as delineated delicately by the assembly. But we talk of figures, in many ways. And here I present the best figures of the world, indeed, if not the universe. This lady in fact will deliver the wonderful Snarkpaste-Smear Dance for you. This traditional and wonderful moment involves the spreading of the paste which is glistening on her very ample and delightful bonkey which you will no doubt appreciate for the amazing feat of humanity engineering that it truly is. Please Miss, Rannsy my dear please do join us please.**

The indescribably beautiful Rannsó Freyjudóttir enter, naked except for a Salvi Islands flag strategically placed over certain areas. She dancin the old songs with hips an bonkey worth a thousand bibles over a thousand years. When she speak it with a tinkle like Tiny Waterfall and as smooth as a caress from a baby Seetime Ghost an all are sighing with sheer love and wonder at the beauty of the form of the Vinlander:

- *Oh my Lord Chief Financial Officer Alfist Bareback you really are making my coffers overflow, let me help you with that enormous surplus you have just discovered...*

The traitorous swinefed harbinger of doomnoise known as bloody Alfist Bareback is completely smitten by the vision in front of him and thus the mighty saviour of his country, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Future Legend of the Islands, hotlove magician and mah-jongg expert, exits stage left without handing over any power over progressive revenue regimes from the reserve of the enhancement of financial inflow, vis-à-vis localised individual automatic contributications. Rannsó Freyjudóttir is sad to see the genius leaving but she knows he has vital important work to do and must always serve his country with self-sacrifications always at his broken heart.}}}

He was sad to wake up and despondently noted that the whining of the engines indicated the plane had begun its long descent to the Mother Country. No matter how many times he'd made the journey – and it had been a lot – he'd always hated the idea that they were landing there. It sounded different. It smelt funny. It was huge and it was claustrophobic. The sky was far too close to his head. Everyone looked like spoiled milk. Smelt like it too. Nobody bloody smiled, that's what it was, nobody smiled. And if they did, you were worried. So different to home. He hated it. The stewardess reappeared, asking for final drinks orders, which cheered him up again.

As usual, the meeting started with that bloody song about that bloody king, who was an inbred imbecile if ever there was one. They had the cheek to talk about the Salvatian genepool, too. And this idiot? He reigns, as it rains, and nobody likes either all that much. Ridiculous.

Our King

National Anthem of the Mother Country

Hon. Amos



Our King He is brilliant, Our King He is so ace

Praised to the skies

Reign! Reign! Reign, O our King!

Long to live! In war will win!

Splendid, gifted by God! Our Perfect King!

Chief Financial Officer and cleft palate-survivor Sir Alfist Bareback gestured for everyone else to sit down and began droning on as usual.

“Here begins the financial review of the Salvi Islands for the period 2007-2008, with projections theretoforeward into and beyond the fiscal years 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and thus might it be projected. All rise.”

“Let it be noted that present under the 144 rules of society therewith and beyond are members of the Government of the Mother Country, Sir Alfist Bareback, as Chief Financial Officer, which is myself and let it be recorded as such; travel officer Jonathan Passepartout; observer Sir Woodyard McAllister; and as required by our law of fiscal responsibility, 13 good men and true to observe that financial affairs are transparent and true,” continued the

stuffy old duffer. Wilberforce had to push his fingernails into his palm just to keep awake. Bareback addressed him directly:

“Mr. Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, Honourable Leader of the Representative Assembly of the House of the Peoples, do you thus assert that in conjunction with this assembly you do stand as representative of Salvi Island and its environs, and further that all above has been correctly noted?”

A short pause. Wilberforce used his official voice of office to respond with the gravitas that was expected, or at least a version of it.

“I do so as I am so named Wilberforce Jenkins Ross, IV. I accept the presence of Sir Arseist Bareback, as Chief Financial Officer; travel officer Jonathan Passepartot; observer Sir Woodyard McAllister; and as required by our law of fiscal responsibility, 13 good men and true.”

“Then so let it be said. I hereby dismiss the 13 good men and true as the financial sensitivity report goes into session in camera. You are therefore instructed to leave.”

The First Person of the Salvi Islands wished he could be similarly instructed. No such luck. He sighed.

Back at school, a very happy Laura wiped her lunchbowl down with the last quarter of sourbread so as not to waste any tiny glops of fish stew gravy. She savoured the subsequent mouthful, eyes closed at the intensity of the flavour. Savoury, sweet, coconutty, a little hot: it was a balance of beauty. And this, in a school cafeteria? Who’d have thought?

She opened her eyes and saw Carina – sat across the formica table, with a clean bowl of her own - was stifling a giggle.

“I guess you hated that, huh?” Carina said, gently mocking.

Laura laughed, too: “I mean... wow...”

“Salvi Rundown is the greatest taste. Greatest taste. Every recipe the best. Ask anyone, they’ll tell you where you going wrong. They say you get three Salvatians in a kitchen, you’re

gonna get four recipes for Rundown. You get in the way of that explosion... sheesh... the island gonna split in two!"

"Seems familiar," Laura began. "One of those passed-through-the-ages thingies."

"Ja, thas exactly it. There are so many places to taste it. It's schamazing really. So many different kinds. Impossible to really try them all."

"But we're gonna try, right?"

"Girl, we're gonna do! Gonna make a Salvatian out of you in sharp-time. You better believe! Now excuse me, I gotta whistlestop to make."

As Carina moved off toward the staff toilet, Laura sat back in her chair, giggling again. You would never think that here, this hot, sandy, beachy, humid-dy, swimmy place that anything could ever get done. But school was school wasn't it? And school dinners were school dinners. Something comforting, something designed to feed the body and the mind. Inevitable that it would be fish – the gorgeous, clear, turquoise waters were so vibrant with them that you could practically pick them up with your hand. The only way to improve on this creamy, spicy, unctuous delight would be to pair it with an ice-cold, hoppy beer. She could almost smell the bitter quench of a newly-opened bottle. Instant dismissal, of course: school was indeed school. Even out here where the rules seemed... not *looser* as such. Differently imagined. Different, anyway. She was still learning.

Laura picked up a stray local newspaper from the table and read with interest that the publication had apparently been sold off to bigwigs from the massive northern neighbour of Vespucci. That could have implications for all sorts of stuff, not least the job prospects of Ian. That'd be perfect if he could get something there. Logistics, maybe. Looked like they were setting up their own presses down here too. Big machines were his thing, or at least his thing was in organising them. By the looks of the first issue of this new era, the *Sentinel* really did need some sorting out. If one of her pupils handed in something so shocking in quality... well...

She immersed herself in trying to decipher the Vespuccian garble:

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Friday, 18 December, 2009 five shillings and sixpence

THE Sentinel under NEW MA

AaarNAGEMET!!!!mt!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1!

The Sentinel of Salvi has been overtaken by brand new management, folks! Meet your new publisher, Thomas Raphael, from the Hythloday Publishing Experience.

Mr. Raphael holds the hihgest qualification in possible, having excelled throughout the years on a number of newspapers in his native Vespucci.

"I have fallen in love with Salvi and Salvatians over the course of a 40-year career," said the former journalism.

"My wife indeed she said that I love the island more than she. However as my sacred vessel she is number one priority. I know how family is important to Salvatian life and thus I say my love for her is undaunted." He added: except "for when it comes to print deadline."

Books

Dr. Raphael is also the author of several books, including *The Guide to The Art, Be the Cat you Deserve, Rank* and the best-selling *Trivium: The Mark of Perseverance*. Over several decades he has interviewed three different ((**INSERT NAMES HERE – TR**)), making him the first and so far only journalst so to have done so.

The vision

Professor Raphael of Vespucci, who with purchase also wins Country Membership paper has often spoken of 'a new kind of publishing' which looks toward the traditional way of printing. "People no doubt will have noticed the large new printers being installed at our facility," he revealed. "This is indiciative of our committmenee to utilising the most-best things, in order to keep all production on-island."

Previously the *Sentinel* was sometimes printed elsewhere in order to assist with deadlines. QUERY:??%**will move to an afternoon coming-out too, he noticed to us all.

The *Sentinel's* website, in progress, is unaffected by the new breed of takeover, and all staff have been retained by the incoming people who needed. Editing the newspaper as of to-day will be is Friar Raphael, son of the famed publishing magician.

INSIDE: Meet the publisher!

Your chance to win a poo lunch with Mr. Raphael, who shall regale you with tales of his adventures in faraway lands including his meetings with T. More, P. Giles. Thrill to his exposition of the perfect country; is it Salvi? Find out more with our fabluous competition on PAGE 4.((JAZZ UP PLS-TR))

“Wow, that’s big,” the returned Carina said, reading the headline over Laura’s shoulder. “Never thought they’d let that get out of local hands. There could be trouble ahead.”

“Really? He seems a big shot, this bloke.”

“Even so, even so,” Carina said. “It’sch... well. Unusual.”

“Hmm.”

The bell rang. End of lunch already? Some things never changed. The room resonated with the sound of chairs being pushed back and a couple of hundred bodies standing up. Errant cutlery clanged its way to the floor here and there, and the hubbub of another school afternoon began. Nearly the weekend! Just a load of marking in a very rare hour to herself, then the final lesson and... well. She could smell the sea spray from here. She wanted more than anything else to immerse herself in the soothing waters of Salvi, with a six-pack of WhiteTip Lager iced and waiting.

An hour or so later, Laura looked around the class, or rather she looked at twenty head-thatches with faces parallel to the desks. This was what it was all about: the silence of a working classroom. Except it wasn’t a silence at all: she realised she could hear a multitude of noises. The scratching of pens on paper, the fluttering of turning pages, the muffled car sounds from outside, even her own heartbeat – it was the opposite of silence. It was more like a song, albeit a cacophony. The rhythm of her own blood pumping its way around her body was an anchor to this toiling orchestra. It reminded her of being at home, back in Mother Country, travelling on the superannuated, chugging, clanking trains. You could get completely hypnotised by the regular clacking of wheels as they traversed the tracks. It was comforting to think that even now there were people sitting in those scrabbly, graffiti-splodged carriages back home. But she didn’t miss it, either. They stank, sometimes of piss. Sometimes of oil. Sometimes of something she couldn’t quite decipher. That was the worst. She shuddered a little before steadying herself again to the moment. Because this was a new song. She was the conductor of this orchestra,

and she was just about to close her eyes and listen to the kids' music when the movement came to an abrupt

BURrrrrRP

Then a wave of giggling from all sides as the moment was broken. She let it ride for a moment before asserting herself once more.

"OK folks, it's just a natural bodily response," she said, way more sternly than she actually felt.

"Mr. Ross, would you like to go for a drink of water?"

Declan Ross declined, cheeks reddening a little: "No miss, thank you miss."

"Okeydokes, well, raise your hand if your... bubbles feel like they're rising again."

More titters. Laura looked at the clock. It was near-as-damnit the end of the lesson anyway. She half-sat against the front of her desk. Gradually, through the fact that she was doing and saying nothing at all, all eyes landed on her and the room was silent. She had them now. And let them stew for a full ten seconds before speaking.

"That's about it for today regardless, folks. Please hand me your papers on the way out. Go well, class, and I will see you on Monday."

The class cheered at the surprise of being let out a full minute before the bell, and though there was something of a ruckus of bag-untangling and tie-loosening, each one of them filed past her, handed their work in, and politely wished her a good day as they left.

And then there was one left. He passed his paper to her and she glanced at it briefly. He was halfway through the door when Laura beckoned him back.

"Mr. Ross, a moment please."

"Miss?"

She handed the paper to Declan.

"Can you read me the top line of your test please."

“Miss?”

And now there was silence. The sort of silence that sucked you into it. The silence that shrunk the world to a single space; the space that surrounded them and them alone.

“In your own time, Declan.”

Declan Ross started to read it.

“Out loud please,” Laura said.

“Sorrymiss yesmisssorry,” Declan said, sputtering a little and blinking as a bead of sweat formed on his brow. “Snap Test Friday. Declan Ross. Teacher: Miss Welsh. Question One: Wh...”

She stopped him in his tracks, raising one hand wearily.

“So...?”

“Miss?”

“Declan, your work has really improved recently, and you should be very pleased about that. But you need to take care of every detail.”

“...?”

“Read it out again. Just my name.”

“Teacher: Miss Welsh?”

She held out her lanyard ID. “And what does that say?”

“School Teacher On Premises.”

“The other bit, please.”

“Mrs. Lau.... Ah...”

“Go on...”

“Sorry miss.”

“And so?”

“I should have written it Mrs. Walsh?”

“Mrs. Walsh indeed.”

“Sorry Miss.”

His usually light-brown cheeks had definitely blushed a shade of red. It suited him, somehow. He was shrinking into himself. Laura decided to let him off the hook.

“Please do take very careful note of what you are doing. It is important to get every detail right, isn’t it?”

“Yes Miss Walsh. Sorry. Miss Walsh.”

“Now if this was an official examination you would be immediately marked down for this. Can you imagine what would happen if I got your name wrong on your school report?”

“It wouldn’t happen Miss.”

“No, it would not. Because I am a professional and I know how important it is to make sure these things are one hundred percent correct. These are the things that make the difference in life sometimes. Don’t let silly mistakes like getting someone’s name wrong creep in, because that can destroy someone’s view of you. They would find you disrespectful. And think you’d not bothered to even learn their name properly. Not a good look, I can tell you that.”

Declan Ross reddened even more. Laura could smell his sweat. God, how did these teenagers manage to create such a stench? For her own sake she dismissed him.

“You can go, Mr. Ross. Once you’ve corrected your mistake.”

He scribbled over the offending words, a splodge of his perspiration dangling precipitously over the paper. Before it could break free and land, Laura took back the test and smiled.

“Thank you. See you next week.”

“Thank you Miss. Have a good weekend Miss, uh, Miss Mrs. Walsh...”

As he left the room, he added: "Ma'am."

Laura bit her lip so hard to avoid laughing that she tasted blood.

Fist Hook, Band of the Future

A new blog about an exciting band; The band's leader breaks bread

Fist Hook: Band of the Future!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

A review by XsTarX <3 <3 <3 Hands off!!!! LOL!!! All rights reserved!!!! You have been warned!!!! xxx

Leadbetter JR Dungeon glances up from the riff he is hammering out on his favorite bass guitar and surveys the audience. Yeah, there they are, black T-shirted, some with eye make-up, some splashing their sweaty heads around to his band's frantic-fantastic noise.

This is what it is all about: the smallish basement of the RockHard Restaurant, air-con making no effect on the collected energy and rasping belief of – how many? Twenty? Thirty? – fans of the blastbeat.

Lead and his three-piece band are rocking it to pieces; one day, the bassist and band leader's four-string will be hanging up in a display case, signed and bought at auction. One day, Fist Hook will be more than a logo scrawled on school pencil cases in correction fluid.

He smiles to himself as if to acknowledge the possibility inherent in that very moment. Faces from school ranking up against the unmistakable pink-red glowing visages of the expats.

The basement scene is growing and grunting with the heaviest, heftiest metal known to man, beast and devil. And here, under the drilling rhythms and the ever-shifting lightshow, there ain't no expat and local, just dodgy dancemoves and a melded splodge of arms, legs, elbows.

A comic-book smokecloud of bash, with the odd limb, head, knee visible amidst a single, multi-limbed, ever-undulating organism of pure visceral energy.

The song ends.

A pause, feels like hours, but is microseconds only.

The blob of superhumanity falls back to earth and splits.

Then Lead counts it in. The timeless invitation: One! Two!
Three! Four!

The drums splatter through the walls of the venue; the fans roar along with a harridan-guitar crunch, high-frequency squalls of feedback permeating and perforating eardrums even as heartbeats thud into each other in thrall to the kick drum of doom.

Leadbetter stalks across the small stage, hair and sweat and bile shanking violently as he growls out the lyrics to Fist Hook's new single, Ghostly Barracuda:

God

why hast thou forsaken me?

I am burning on the fire, I am burning on the fire eternally

Like a ghostly barracuda, like a ghostly barracuda

On the Devil's fiery sea

God

My prayers have fallen on the ground

*I am rolling in the dirt, I am rolling in the dirt and I am
proud*

Like a ghostly barracuda, like a ghostly barracuda

My pain is all around

Lead steps back from the microphone and bangs next to Deutrinium Graveyard, spiked-haired guitarist. It is time for the axeman's solo.

This is beyond notes, beyond rhythm, beyond timbre; a toothy, foreboding, bloody-eyed and dangerous behemoth; it has come from beyond the players, beyond the band. Something bigger is beginning.

Deutrinium is on his knees. Now he is holding onto the guitar which is alive, wriggling in his hands, trying to get away. wild. Untameable. It is in a musical lust for power. Lead holds his guitarist by the hair, pulls, breaks the spell and once more come those incredible, heavy, humpback, fast-finned riffs.

God

You are the striker of the steel

I am flounder in your waves, flounder in your waves of bloody steel

Like a ghostly barracuda, like a ghostly barracuda

You crush me with your heel

God

why hast thou forsaken me?

I am burning on the fire, I am burning on the fire eternally

Like a ghostly barracuda, like a ghostly barracuda

On the Devil's fiery sea

I beseech thee

Set me free

The song, the statement, the new movement is over, and has only just begun.

Deutriuuium Graveyard, transformed, squirts flame at his headstock even as he continues to perform hammer-ons under and through the flames.

Now Leadbetter JR Dungeon unhooks his strap and launches his weapon at the drum kit, behind which Rage Rasta III is already naked and ready to dive into the melee.

The bass harpoons the snare drum; the cymbals crash to the floor; the kick drum rolls onto its side, gasping now for breath.

Feedback rings out from Lead's discarded bass: deep, devilish, delinquent.

And now, the lights blare out and all is silent.

The crowd is lit briefly by orange-blue flames of his guitarist's pyrotechnic display.

And then, the stage is empty but for a detritus of leads, microphones, stands, instruments and phlegm.

This is Shark Metal, friends, and we have been here at the very beginning of a new movement.

Pls note that I am aware that the Senti-null has fallen to the lucre-trap. Good riddance to those rats if they can be bought off so easily. Pls note that I have no advertising on here, neither will I ever. The Senti-null has been stuck in 1950 for years. Maybe these new people in charge will actually look at doing something Alternative. Something spiky. Something fine and future. Something S-H-A-R-K-Y. Let us all immediately buy the paper and vote with our cash!!! (NOTE THAT I AM JOKING!!! Who wants to buy that rag anyway? Who even reads it? A few ancient corrupted families?? They are welcome to it.) But who cares anyway. It's not ours. We will create - are creating - our own spaces. Have you even seen their excuse for a website????

Posted by XsTarX <3 <3 <3 23.32

Comments have been disabled on this thread

Later, at home, Leadbetter reflected on the performance. Sure, there had been only 30-odd punters there, but by god the Fist Hook Frenzy-pit was in real session. This was the way to shake up this bloody island, its tiny-minded po-faced inhabitants, skulking in the pretty, shitty city. They knew nothing of the way the world was; Churchdull Sheeple terrified by Real Life. If there was one thing that Leadbetter had learned in his 17 years, it was that the older generation had lost its fire. That would never happen to him: Fist Hook, his band, in less than a year, had already played more than seven gigs and was eyeing T-shirt production too.

T-shirts - now that was where it was at. Lead's eyes roamed the airy room and alighted on the walk-in wardrobe/dressing room, a doorless nook next to the large ensuite bathroom. Hanging up were tens of T-shirts he collected; mostly black with evil-sounding band names in various gothic and strange scripts: ~~Ex-Nazarene~~; Murdered Harlot ; Jealous Torturer; Robotic Killspree. Lead was also proud of his Korf-team replica shirts. Worn with pride at sessions, at stream-parties, at knockabout games on the weekend. Neons, sponsors' names resplendent. Badges of pride. The F1-design, the A1-panache of the aesthete-athlete. Neat rows of sneakers, lovingly cleaned and sitting atop their original boxes, gave the room a chunky funkiness. Some of them were never to be worn. All retained their price tags, in the way of things. Lead's school uniforms were in another corner: the summer one, and the winter one. Short and long sleeves. A jacket, for church. Sunday-polished patent leather shoes. A selection of cravats, scarves and rustle-boxed ties. And, hanging up and ironed carefully, ten sets of pristine, white, Carlton Boxers. Lead nodded to himself. All in order. And, on the floor, a washing basket full of recently worn stage clothes. Zips and rips in all the right places; some re-ripped after mum's well-meaning but gormless patching and fixing.

Yes, there was plenty to wear when the time came. And the time was coming fast – the band really was on the up. Lead could imagine the *Krashh!* Magazine interviews already. He looked into his mirror and rehearsed his answers yet again.

“Yeah, yeah we grew up on a small hole, it is a portal to complacency and misplaced disrespect, nobody will say what they, uh, mean, bloody bastards, and we got, you know, we got shunned by the straightheads and the fast to condemn. But yeah wike I say man, man it was Rage, Doogie and me that really catch a fire an, uh, Start a Movement rweally. What people don’t didn’t know, uh, is that the bawrracuda was the band, an the ghost, the ghostly bit, was the death of the old ways, you know what I mean?”

“Right on brother, Metal 4 LIFE.”

“4REAL man.”

Back in the now, Lead took a sip of his ginger tea and turned back to his work. This would blow even the band’s first set of songs out of the water. This was nothing short of a new revolution, a brand-new way of thinking. The journalists wouldn’t get it; they’d need education too.

“Tell me where you got the idea for anticulturalism?”

“Man alive, uh, you just needta wreadthe words, dude, I ain’t gonna explicate it for nobody, uh, it’s all there, or not there, ya know? Lyrics man, but more than lyrics.”

The whole point of his new idea - soon to be a movement, a new way of thinking - was that it was entirely internal. It was something each person had to work out for themselves. It wasn’t music, poetry, instructions. It was *philosophy*. He picked up his trusty A4 pad and looked through the pages he’d been working on. This truly was going to fuck people’s brains, and not before bloody time too. He checked the scribbled words, turned to his bashed-up old manual typewriter, and hammered the keys:

the rules of antiCulturalism

there is no Culture beyond the present

the antiCulturalist stands outside himself

the antiCulturalist is the author of her own lives

data drowns dreams and this is beautifully inevitable

all Culture is born from appropriation and violence

arbitrary rules are made and broken in order for

society to exist and perpetuate

Culture is death is dead is not pinnable is down

beware the hungry and the horny

revolution is doomed as soon as it is enacted

Lead sat back, satiated and proud. So many slogans. So much fire. So many T-shirts to be made.
His mother's voice floated up the stairs to let him know that supper was ready.

“Just a little platter, BoBo, of melonfruit and stewgoat breadfruit an festival you gotta be hungry as a ghost.”

Ghosts everywhere, smiled Lead to himself. He got up from his desk and called down:

“Thank you, I am coming ma, is there custid for afters?”

The Fist Hook revolution, or evolution, was paused.

Yawning, Leadbetter alighted from the passenger side of the gleaming SUV, waving a dismissive goodbye in the general direction of his mothership, and strutted through the gates of school as his ma gunned the engine and drove away. Silhouetted there in front of the Christmas-bedecked korf courts was a familiar, handsome figure. Lead and Doogie fist-bumped and indulged in a spinning handshake of some complication. Lead greeted his chief guitar-blaster first: it was his prerogative as band leader.

“Great Gig last night Doogie.”

“Yeah boy we really on form, Leadman, the Hook gonna kick, we gonna kick em good o boy!”

The effervescence of Deutrinium ‘Doogie’ Graveyard, who went by the name of Duncan Ross under duress of official school recognition, was evident even at this early stage of the day. Lead studied Doog’s handsome face and beamed. Doogie’s voice slipped into a lower register as he studied his bandmate and buddy over the top of his own mirror shades.

“Best way to start the day too, boymine, thinksI.”

He opened his hand to reveal a small, righteously rolled paper tube that formed a beautiful, lovingly-constructed cone. Lead nodded slowly and with great respect at the stinkin’ thinkin’ on show and the pair sidled round toward Blackout Corner, behind the 12-foot Christmas tree. Doogie fired up the joint and got ready for a slide into the soft sigh of Jimson Weed.

“You a Major BadBwoy Doog.”

“Sayin. You know, I.”

Ten minutes later, the pair sat at the back of the twelfth grade Religious Eventing Class, studying the figure in front of the flashing whiteboard with great solemnity. The teacher was bending down over the PC to the side of the board, which at a certain angle of light gave the class a glimpse down Miss Carina Cartier’s top. Doogie leaned over with great care toward his friend and, heavy-lidded and light-headed, whispered to Lead:

“I see the orbs of th’ Father an the Son – but godknow I wanna taste her Holy Ghost.”

Lead’s face and body convulsed silently, trying to assuage the flow of the unstoppable laughter that bubbled through from his overbeating heart, through his shuddering, shivering shoulders and to the back of his quickly reddening cheeks. He stuck the point of his pen into the soft flesh of his left palm in an effort to still the sound; that hurt, but only exacerbated the giggle-fit. He closed his eyes but that made it worse; he could sense lovely Doogie looking at him with that goofy lopsided face of his, and the neon purples and greens of the afterimage of the teacher’s cleavage danced behind his eyelids no matter how hard he tried to think of it. There was nowhere he could look: even the baubles hanging from the ceiling reflected the image, again and again, distorted into ever-more ridiculous pornographic echoes. And, reflected there too, an image of a naked Doogie, smiling and dancing. It was hopeless. It was ridiculous. It was unbearable and it was irresistible.

Lead cracked and let out an exceedingly loud guffaw which somehow he managed to divert into a coughing/sneezing fit that lasted two seconds: the longest two seconds in existence. But man alive, the release was near-orgasmic. He gritted his teeth and opened one eye, paranoid that everyone would be staring right at him. The class, he knew, would be turned around, all chairs in his direction, big brown and blue and hazel and grey and green and brown and black pupils zeroing in through his mind to see his deepest and dirtiest thoughts; an externalisation of the sexual hilarity rampaging through his shredded consciousness; and oh god now what was that warmth in his crotch? He hadn’t, surely, had he? Oh god, oh god: no, no, no. He thrust a hand down there; warm, but not wet. Oh god. Now relax relax relax, he told himself, be cool, be Dungeonmaster. You get a grip boy, you no use to me like that you hearin? Heart still pounding,

adrenaline surged through Lead's body. Some semblance of focus returned, and he dared to open the other eye. Every single person on every single desk was staring at the front of the class, with Miss Carina now having fixed the whiteboard which was displaying the lesson objectives. Ever so softly, Lead dared to let his eyes flick toward Doogie, who, of all the people in the class, looked the most innocent and avidly scholastic of the lot. Lead thrust the point of the pen into his hand again. A new song title appeared in his head: *Steady as She Goes, but Steady as Man Can*. Something to work on over the holidays, for def.

Somehow, he managed to slide through to lunch, and damnit if he wasn't ready for eats by midday. Doogie had disappeared somewhere between Modern Studies and lunchbell, as he often did, up to who knows what. Lead didn't mind being lone wolf, though, and slipped into something of a daydream as he slickwalked his way through the school gates on his way to Lunchventure. Yeah, so he had his school uniform on – more or less – but that didn't mean he couldn't carry himself well. He ran his fingers through his **ScruffBonce**(TM) hair and mussled it up good. Shades on, game on.

The roadside resto-shack was full of his schoolmates as usual, bustling up against each other in a fluctuating flow of food cartons, dropped coins and sly shoulder-punches. Lead caught the eye of the woman behind the counter, who with the lightest twitch of her Santa-hatted head directed him toward a small side door. This was The Inner Sanctum: somewhere not everyone got to see. With two four-seater tables, its own serving hatch and – most importantly – a lockable door (which he did, swiftly), entry to Lunchventure's Sanctum was a hard-fought and carefully-guarded privilege that few got to ever experience. It was a rite of passage; a key to the future; a grounding into another world. And with good reason.

Lead thought back to the first time he'd been invited in, last year. It was the Dissing Out of the Awful, a ceremony in which Sanctum members denounced The Enemy of the Year. That year, it had been Complacent Tourisses to be targeted. Stupid-ass, Red-faced, Fat, Sweating Tourisses. Clogging Up The Road. Wandering The Wrong Way. Look At Them. *Can I Get A Taxi To Mother Country. Can I Swim Under The Island. Do You Live Here Or Do You Commute from Vessupici. Do*

*You Have Pet Turtle. Can I Will I Do You I Could Care Less Buddy Buddy Where The Burgers
Where My Hot Dog Where The Bathroom Can I Get Can I Get Can I Get Get Get...*

Lead's job had been to send out the message: Complacent Tourisses Are Dissed This Year. He'd designed the T-shirt accordingly. Thankfully straightheads hadn't worked it out but it was so simple, so obvious when you knew where to look. Or, more importantly, how to look. Colours, sleeve lengths, neck styles (round, V, scoop), tight, loose, baggy fit: all in isolation had attached meaning. It was vital in the life of a teenager from Salvi, a communication by colour and design. Unwritten messages between contemporaries. Feeling blue? Well, blue means anger. Stripes? Yep, I'm single and ready. V-neck? Keep away. And it went on and on, combining style, hue and design to create complex and subtle hints to your friends and followers as to what you were up to, or what they ought to be up to. And you could say Tourisses Dissed without using any actual words. The adults? They knew nothing of it, although some of the clothing importers were occasionally puzzled by a certain sudden surge in sales. Lead's uncle Weegie was the only one who seemed to really tap into the code; then again, he was tapped into pretty much everything on island. A visual syntax had emerged from the fabric itself, one that was ultra-carefully refined and calibrated by Lead and his peers. Lead's designs were becoming sought after amongst not just his own close circle but by fellow rascals all the way to Eagle Point; however, as was also the way of things, very few of them knew that the shirts had originated with Lead himself.

A bowl of Carne de Caballo emerged from the serving hatch. Lead fished out his wallet ready to pay. A large hand covered his. A deep voice accompanied it. A wide face smiled.

"On me today," said Weegie.

"Thank you, unc," Lead replied.

Lead and the older man sat opposite each other, the latter nursing a tumbler of something fizzy and dark and no doubt strong. Although he was aching to know why Weeje had bought him lunch, Lead knew better than to push the issue. Weegie gestured: eat, man, eat. So he set to demolishing the Goodsoul Salvimeal, following in the footsteps of countless generations behind

him who'd chowed down on variations of the same basic recipe. It was succulent, this stew. Perfect.

Weegie took a draught from his drink and eyed up the younger man. After a beat, he reached to his side and produced that day's edition of the *Sentinel*.

"Check it," he advised, as Lead shovelled the eats into his mouth.

Lead paused from his grub briefly, picked up the paper and began to read:

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Friday, December 18, 2009

five shillings and sixpence

Doggs in attacking frenzy

Several more instances of doggs running loose have been reported to the Salvi Islands Constabulatory Office of People's Protectoration. The Sentinel has learned that a pack of hounds has been running loose at night and causing havoc in the streets by its noisingness and scarification. "I am only alone for part of the evening," said local resident McLuhan Marshall. "I am only alone for part of the evening," said local resident McLuhan Marshall. "But when I heard a commotion outside I knew that it was the damned hounds crying up a storm. Why, I am a dog lover myself but my pets are usually in a yarded area at that time of night or at least in the eating kitchen if it is their time to do that." Ms. Marshall added that when she looked out of her kitchen window, there was no sign of any creatures whatsoever. But when the morning came, the picture was quite different. "Blow it, I remember saying to my husband. "I am only alone for part of the evening," said local resident McLuhan Marshall. "If those doghounds haven't just kicked up the mud to the yard like nobody's business.

"The fence was down as if a cruel wind of despair had taken hold of the heart of its soul; a miasma of fog had descended into our very property, and it was a fog of four legged sirens. "Something must be done about this problem before it becomes a problem." The Sentinel understands that the Salvi Islands Constabulatory Office of People's Protectoration's Hound Dog and Mink Relief Unit has been placed on alert to try and find the bottom of the cause of the issue of the problem. *SENTINEL SAYS: Whither the Hound? See Editorial, Page 5*

Exploding areas 'not on my watch' says leader of the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings

Dargie Magdalena-Culito, leader of the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings, has distanced herself from recent issues with exploding forcetubes that have plagued the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted

Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings. "These so-called bangs and bashes are merely the air conditioning system that we have been reinstalling at the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings," commented Ms. Magdalena-Culito, who took over as leader of the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings toward the tail end of 2008. "We are endeavouringt 000001689 Uy980 as soon as is feasiblatory possiblacious," commented Ms. Magdaline-Culots. Negotiations are undergoing at the moment between the leader of the Johannica Gardenia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District "I am only alone for part of the evening," said local resident McLuhan Marshall. denia Botanical And Visual Machinic Musical Museum of Eagle Point's District Afflicted Not in The Name of Lord Walker McGuire III Buildings, she added. **Page 4 – Vinland to kill Canucks? The eternal question – solved!!!!!!!!!!!!y89!09**

Lead nodded. Those bloody dogs. Or, rather, the owners: “Too many hounds, huh? That’s the problem.”

“Hearin you loud, Leadbetter. Too much noise, running in packs, too much chance for someone getting bit. Not good for business. Bad for publicity. Bad for everyone.”

Weegie paused, using a toothpick to try and clean some gristle from his back teeth.

A shard of sunlight bounced off his diamond molar.

“We need to spread this message, nephewmine,” he said presently. “Plenty places for the snipping now. Plenty surgeons trained. Not much dollars, either. An, course. There’s the fund too. Keeper of the Ice, your uncle, time he put his short arms into those deep pockets. That money now. Build the nation – that’s what it’s for. NBF gotta trickle down - or who it is for?”

“Can do,” Lead said, with a bravado his thumping heart did not share.

“Will do,” said Weegie. “No can about it.”

“Will do, unc.”

“Nifty. Now eat, man, eat.”

Lead returned to scarfing down his lunch. It was tasty as hell: just the right amount of sweetness on the hoss-steak, and the breadfruit just gooey enough to still have a bite to it. So simple, really. But easy to get wrong. Life was like that sometimes. The dogs were a pain, it was true. It was typical of Weegie to offer a solution. And it was equally typical of him to fade into the background once the touchpaper had been lit. Nobody wanted packs of marauding hounds all over the place: dogs were friends, pals, protectors and, yeah, sometimes biters. But taking a dog’s balls was like taking a dog’s – a dog’s soul, somehow. It was a kind of death. Smart move to go through Lead, too: wasn’t a good idea for Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross to be seen with Weegie, certainly if there was cash involved. It was all politics wasn’t it, ultimately.

He saw the point, though: Salvi was connected to the world now. People came from Vespucci, from Vinland, from Canuck: they wanted to share those fabled 333 days of sun a year. They wanted to sweat and cool off in the seas. They wanted paradise. The story. Five o Clock

somewhere, no shirt no problem, cocktail soon come, relax man, relax, all Irie. They certainly didn't want to be attacked by dogs - or attacked by anything that'd remind them that Salvi was also a real place in the real world. They wanted a dream. So they could go home, and they could tell people, and it could feel like it happened to someone else. Because they always went home. Home was real. Holidays were not. It was a tradeoff. On the flip side, Lead was happy there was a world out there to discover. Which he would. And so, the dogs would need to be snipped. Sad, but necessary.

He felt the stare of Weegie on him.

"How's that boy of yours - Doog?"

Leadbetter felt his cheeks redden at the unexpected mention of his six-packed best mate and secret inspiration. What did he mean? "He's good, uncles," he said, a tad gingerly. "Got guitar chops like you wouldn't believe."

"Still workin on that microphone resonator whatnot?"

"Ah man, he bend my bones with that thing," Lead said, relieved that the conversation was playing out on safer ground than he'd feared. "All maths, equations, all that physics. All I can tell you is that he's got prototypes all over the place, battering my head with how deep down it gonna sound when he should be rehearsin... should be studying for exams."

Weegie laughed: "Tell him I said hi. That contraption of his could be cool. He got a good future in sonics"

"Can do," said Lead. Then corrected himself, happily:

"Will do."

New Year, New Opportunities

Ian's fitness grows; School re-starts; Ian develops his resume.

It was a hazy pre-dawn, with a foggy shimmer rolling in from the seas that surrounded Salvi. Ian relished the heavier air for a change: it tasted of salt, of the welcome sweat of exercise. Its briny aroma filled his nostrils, and in turn some stray phlegm dripped out and down his trackie top. He wiped it, eyes darting around to check whether anyone had seen. As usual there was nobody nearby. Ian felt like this was his time, was his place, and his alone. He reckoned if he closed his eyes, it might all disappear when he reopened them. He'd be back on the korf court somewhere, drawing a foul, changing phases, urging on his teammates. Or, in an office with Baz and the whole crew, with blueprints and coffees and sly fags out the back fire escape. Or, in a pub with Baz and the whole crew, with blue jokes and beers and shivering ciggies in the 10m smoke zone.

He was surprised to find that in fact he was still in Salvi, the mist reducing visibility to a couple of metres. It could have been disconcerting, but it was a pleasantly anonymising experience. Sometimes it was good that nobody knew who you were or what you could do. He would do great things on court again: don't call it a comeback, this was more of a triumphant rebirth of a master. It was cooler outside today, it was damper, and it reminded him of home.

He reached Horse Field, and as usual the beast plodded sadly round and round. Today, though, Ian had come prepared, and he quickly vaulted the fence, approaching the threadbare old beast and holding out his hand in which he had a sugar lump. The horse stopped. It neighed, it whinnied, it threw its head back and looked at Ian quizzically. And then, it trudged on, sugar lump untouched. Round, and round, and round. Ian wanted to untie it, set it free, let it canter half on the sand and half in the warming, healing sea. Instead, he placed the sugar near the horse's path, jumped back into the road, and continued his run, a slightly more thoughtful, and slightly sadder man.

Something was wrong there, but he couldn't fathom it out. It was really none of his business, was it? He panted, and he puffed, and soon he was back in the zone, mind's eye on the korfball court, where he'd show just who he was to this weird little island.

Three hours after Ian got back from his training run, Laura found herself back on familiar territory. The school staff room filled up reluctantly with a staff of semi-forced smiles and an unstoppable yawn infection that rippled through the returning teachers like a Mexican Wave. Coffees were cradled in hands more recently used to holding cocktails. Sniffing slightly, Laura was sitting on a seat near the main internal doors; the place of the newbie. She looked around her at shoulder-stretching colleagues and noted that Old Joe Booker was in top position, a chair placed just off-centre from the icy blast of the air-con to get the benefit whilst avoiding the direct shiver. His perch was situated perfectly, with a direct line of sight to the fire doors and far enough away to feel the warmth without the feral heat of the rampaging sun through the magnifying windows. Joe, she mused, was a decent enough bloke, as long as you didn't go into his library without first phoning, or ask him to find a book on spec, or at all. Or allow any kids to approach him directly. Nobody quite knew how old he was, and it was impossible to tell by his semi-desiccated clothing from when his trademark shiny pants, black-grey shoes, green-grey shirt and oval bifocals originated. And Joe wasn't talking. You knew when he'd been somewhere by the musty, fusty ghost he'd left behind: cheap cigarillos, whisky and very often a suspiciously-herby smokiness.

Laura snapped back into the moment as the school principal, Rev. McClusky John, entered the room and the buzz of conversations stopped.

"Welcome back, all," said Rev. John. "I see we are all rested and raring to go. Even you, Mister Pearce."

There was a smattering of mirth at Mickey being singled out as usual; an ongoing joke. Mickey beamed back his approval and saluted his boss.

"Aye, aye, cap'n John. Albe shapeshippin a-readylaunch sirrah, sayin? Boomclak!"

Rev. John paused briefly, brows knitting before adding: "Well, quite." Mickey snapped his fingers at the recognition, pouted with full, sensuous lips and cocked his head, moving into serious-listen mode as the headmaster continued.

“This year of the Lord’s, being as it is 2010, is another auspiciously important one in the history of the school. As you know, we are working toward an expansion of the buildings and with it the possibility of brand-new spaces for a number of subjects. As you can appreciate, along with this comes great responsibility to deliver the first-class education which our clients require. We are all stakeholders in this school, and I have been informed by our governors that results are paramount.

“It is therefore incumbent upon us all to pull together, individually and as a unit, in order to achieve greatness in the field of excellence and to renew our commitment to the highest standards of education, and beyond. I am excited about the possibilities ahead of us and once more would like to welcome you back.”

Reverend McClusky John clapped his hands together and led the assembled staff in a round of applause, although it was unclear whether it was intended for the staff, the school, himself or a mix of all. Nonetheless, the applause further dusted away the sandy laze of the vacation. School was back in session. Presently, the principal left, and people began to disperse toward their respective buildings and rooms. Laura stood up and stifled a sneeze again. She bent to pick up her sisal bag of books and sniffled her way to the door. Mickey Pearce was there, saluting all and sundry, still in stevedore mode.

“Hey Mrs. Walsh,” he said, melodically. “Mr. I-to-the-an ready to play soon I hearin?”

“Hi Mickey,” she replied, consonants dull. “Yeah, he says he’s feeling good”

“This is a fine development,” Mickey said, enunciating each word for effect. “Goodhave newblood, sayin? Yeah? But I see somesoul doseup on Festive Flu,” he added, and winked.

“Alwaysame – too much relax then fusstime a bod pick schoolbook allit dussflick off and bosh! There you is. Sniffbad.”

Laura nodded. It made sense.

“Getchasel some DayQuell,” he continued. “You musta seen on teev?”

Laura shook her head.

Mickey sang the jaunty jingle:



DayQuell. Protects and decongests. So make your day the best, be quick and beat the rest.

DayQuell.

“Me got in m’ locker,” he said. “I round you room twoshake. Goodplan always nip in the butt. Nip right up an outahere. You be a baller soon too, hoo bapalap.”

Laura touched his arm in thanks and beetled away toward Lesson One, snuffling from the nose and limping ever so slightly from her still-twisted ankle. No point in making a cold worse; Mickey was a good lad. Best to nip it in the butt, indeed. So funny.

Back at Walsh HQ’s Salvi Island Office Room, Ian stared at the blank sheet. The blank document. The blank blankness of the blanking blank. It was supposed to be a CV. It was supposed to have been written and saved and printed and sent off by midday. It was now 2pm. Ian had been staring at the blank sheet, the blank document, the nothingness for two hours, on and off. His tea had gone cold. He didn’t mind. It seemed ludicrous to snaffle down hot drinks when the sun was blazing outside. But here, in the makeshift office, with the blackout curtains fully drawn and the air con and fans both on full, he was wearing a jumper and it was – mostly – dark.

Ian felt cocooned, somewhere between a crawling grub and a brown-winged moth. He knew the sun was out there, but here he watched, congealing, as dustmotes danced in a single shaft of blasted light that escaped through a pinhole in one of the hefty drapes. Soon, he knew, he would fly. Maybe into the brightest and most attractive lights of all. Maybe the One True Light, whatever that may be. They liked The Light around here. Here in Salvi. At this time of year especially. Even the goddamned dogs next door were wearing elf ears; some even had crosses

around their collars a month after the event. And they didn't sound all that happy about it, as far as Ian could work out. Salvation dogs: different from back home. Wilder, less pedigree. More inbred. Weirder. More dangerous. As with the dogs, so with the island. How the hell did they end up in Salvi? How had Ian?

Salvi, Salvi, Salvi: the word ran through his brain and imprinted itself on his eyelids every time he blinked. And blink, Ian did. He stared down the clock in the bottom right of the computer screen, willing it to change. 14.01. He tried not to blink for a full minute. To catch the numbers as they changed.



14.01

Ian swore.



14.02

He'd missed it.

Blink and you'll miss it, he thought to himself. Blink, blink, blink. Salvi, Salvi, Salvi. Blank, blank, blank.

It was a childish game. He knew that. But what was wrong with that anyway? You weren't allowed to be a kid anymore. You had to be A Grown Up With A Curriculum Vitae. Resumes. Lists of achievements. Like successfully enduring a job of work for a specified and respectable amount of time. Or successfully completing the required amount of school. And then going on to further, optional, expensive, higher education. A name. A phone number. An email address. Some contact details of other people who had noticed that you'd been living and done those things. Because they'd done them too. It proved you had existed. It proved that you had, at one stage, done those things. Well. It said you had. It was written. It was the Book of your Life; or a book, he suddenly thought, of Lies. Here in Salvi, was anyone really going to check a CV? Did anybody really know where he'd been to school, like, really know where it was or the status of it? How it was perceived? What about A Levels? Degrees even? Nobody really knew him well enough to verify that he'd gone to uni at all. Work, too: it just had to look plausible. Referees? Just a faceless email contact. Email addresses were so easy to fake it was a joke. Even fake certificates to be had, in the unlikely event of anyone wanting to see a degree transcript. Who the hell was going to check? Really, really check? What was a life? It was just paper when you thought about it. An idiot-told tale, on a piece of virtual paper, on a screen. All the rest was bluster and meant nothing.

His job hunt had turned up absolutely nothing of any value. Nearly always there'd been no reply, whether from a speculative application or a response to an ad he'd seen in the *Sentinel*. Even his *Spectacular Persons* letter had dropped into the void. Email, hard copy, phone enquiries – no dice. It was beyond discouraging. He'd come up blank on all counts. He was starting to feel like his face didn't fit. Like he didn't fit. Not grub, not moth. He had no place. He was a non-person. Nobody knew him, so did he even exist? A sly smile started to insinuate on Ian's face. Nobody knew him: that was the key. They just needed to know a person that they wanted to know. And, so, the trick was to give them just that person.

His brain told his mouth to move and his larynx and vocal chords and breath to mesh in together and create certain vibrations and as he studied his hands his ears and his skull cavity felt and heard some words:

“Let’s write me a new CV.”

The screensaver of a coloured bouncing ball on black background had come on. Ian quite liked that one. He wouldn’t have minded being on that committee. He’d give it a better name - *Bouncing Ball: First Blood*. He might have voted for boobs instead, he thought. Boobies. What a fucking great invention. Tits. But he was apparently in work mode, so his brain told his hands to wiggle the mouse, and the blank document reappeared. Ian’s hands and fingers and brain and eyes and heart and legs and stronger knees and nostrils and penis and feet and arms and elbows and neck and skin and mouth and anus and balls and buttocks and blood and muscles and spit and everything else decided together to get stuck in, immediately and without any further ado. Right now. Yep. After korfbal. But very soon. But first some chores: now he’d had the idea, he needed to let it percolate properly.

So afternoon turned into evening and Ian had achieved plenty. He’d done all the washing, filled the dishwasher, turned the dishwasher on, watched half an hour of an incomprehensible quiz on Ripoblikan TV, emptied the dishwasher, put the dishes away, put the washing out, had a swim, gathered in the dry washing, folded the washing, greeted his wife, made them some too-hot-for-the-weather curry, drank a beer whilst they ate and sweated a little, and left Laura in front of the telly. And now Ian was ready to get back to the CV-massaging, having recovered some of his sparkiness in the company of – and audienced by – his wife. He gathered himself and jiggled back upstairs to his proto-office.

The sun had twatted down, plunging Salvi into eerie darkness punctuated by the weedy orangey buzz of the streetlights. It wasn’t right to be still so damned sweaty and yet outside deeply blue-black, midnight at seven o’clock in the evening. The screen of the laptop suddenly became the main illumination in the ad-hoc workspace, casting its flickering on the piles of clean clothes that the jobseeker was supposed to be putting away. Instead, he checked if anyone had come back to his various emails. Yes, it was true that this tropical rock had no actual trains or trams on it, but transport was transport and logistics were logistics. Ian’s experience and qualifications must be pretty unique on such a small island. He hit the send/receive button and waited. The Internet was slow. He opened iTunes. They were

streaming songs across the road again. He clicked on 'shared tunes' and was happy to note that the neighbours were on a reggae tip. He clicked 'listen in' and the room was filled with an energetic dancehall melody with lyrics about drinking rum and eating roti. It was fabulously catchy, and Ian's spirits lifted again.

He nodded his head to the beat and tightened up his jaw with determination as he bounced in his chair and navigated to SalviIslandCVs.com. According to the blurb, the site promised to 'match the position with your vision.' Ian smiled at the thought: you could apply that to many things in life – and beyond. Not least in the bedroom. He began the process:

Name: Ian Walsh

Date of Birth: 13/6/1974 ERROR 13-06-1974 ERROR 06-13-1974

Place of Birth: Ffossip, Kembre, Mother Country

Education: 10 GCSEs A-C, 3 A Levels A-C

Further Education: BA (Hons) Logistics and Transport, Squatney College of Higher Education. 2:1 (Hons), 1997

Work History (most recent first):

Date: 15-01-2000 ERROR 01-15-2000 to 18-06-2009 ERROR 06-18-2009

Employer: Piccalilli Transport Systems

Role: Train and Tram Transport Management Systems Operative (Deputy)

Description of Duties: Management of logistical systems, timetable scheduling, responsible for ontime running of special transports, supervising team of individuals to facilitate logistical movement of goods and services as per requirements of management.

Reason for leaving: Emigrated to Salvi Island.

Date: 19-01-1998 *ERROR* 01-19-1998 to 12-31-1999

Employer: Sandbrook Sandwich Services Ltd

Role: Client-side nutritional engineer

Description of Duties: Sourcing of suitable baked goods in order to construct specific client-led experiences, operation of kitchen space toolage, stock implementation and rotational inferences, knowledge of allergenic substances and dealing with public on a retail basis, customer service under pressure.

Reason for leaving: Was successful in applying for logistics post above.

Personal Statement: I have recently moved to Salvi Island as my wife had an opportunity to work here and we both agreed it would be a career development. I am highly motivated and skilled in the fields as mentioned above and feel I am versatile to cross-transfer my previous experience wherever needed. I am available instantly and am keen to implement my skills in a team. I consider myself a Spectacular Person.

Job interests (three): Logistics, transport, administration.

He rocked back in his chair and considered his words. Yeah, that seemed to sum it up. It was always weird to see yourself on a page like that. To edit your life down to a few bullshit-smelling but punchy sentences where in truth there was a kaleidoscope of emotions, feelings, moments, daft times down the pub, pranks, fuckups and victories hiding behind each layer of language.

“Well, let’s see how we go,” he said out loud as he clicked on ‘save’. The guys over the road had now switched to some bump ‘n’ grind R ‘n’ B. Ian shut off the iTunes, looked at the washing briefly, decided it was a tomorrow job, and with hope and some kind of sense of destiny coursing through his veins headed downstairs to see if there was any rum left. He was feeling pretty good. His knee was holding up to the longer and longer runs, and he’d been doing some

zigs and zags here and there. So far, so good. Bring on the game. He was ready. He felt more ready than ever before.

FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT MODERN STUDIES

PERIOD _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
TWO WEEK	1	2	3 Departmental Meeting 10am	4 All-School Pre-meeting pre-arrangement assembly 8am	5 Start of Parrot Hunting Season (Not Observed)	6 7
THREE WEEK	8	9 Voluntary meeting to discuss physical presencies in godliness (All Staff, 10am)	10 "Moratorium on living, how faith schools faith, and vice versa." Discussion led by Randall Hopkirk DC, 5pm (all Staff)	11	12	13 14
FOUR WEEK	15	16 Shrove Tuesday (Half Day: 8am-midday, School shuts 12.30)	17 Ash Wednesday Holiday (School shut)	18 "Why we are one: trinity, belief and discourse." Talk led by ákjósanlegur Elómi (7.30am, refreshments provided.)	19	20 21
FIVE WEEK	22 Bushman McIver Memorial Day Holiday of the Rescue of the Largest (Both Times). School shut.	23 Prize-giving (spring semester, mid-term interim prize-giving pre-ceremonial announcement TBC)	24 Spring mid-term holidays (School shut until 15 March)	25 Spring mid-term holidays (School shut until 15 March)	26 Spring mid-term holidays (School shut until 15 March)	27 28
WEEK						
WEEK						

Bip. Beep. Bip-beep-beep-Bip. Bip

Saving his game's demo score, Ian sighed and searched for the errant phone that was squeaking at him in its hapless electronic numbskull way. As usual, it wasn't on his desk. The stupid little plastic thing just got so damned hot all the time that it quickly became an actual pain in the thigh if he kept it in his pocket, so he tended to leave it under a cushion somewhere out of any possibility of any direct sunlight. Laura thought that a bit over the top, but Ian also worried about the possibility of the phone setting the couch alight. He was pretty sure that the sofa's fire-resistant sticker had been added post-importation. The wording was a dead giveaway:

Firenot, stampicated by the Office of Firenot, Mother Counttrey, Londoosum.

The phone continued to jauntily and empty-headedly trill from somewhere maddeningly close but still irritatingly non-specific. The problem was that the rooms were so bare, walls of slick plaster, new floors of polished laminate, that the sounds just echoed and echoed around.

Bip. Beep. Bip-beep-beep-Bip. Bip

It wasn't in the room; it was coming from further away. The sound was muffled. He scurried downstairs. Sweating in his shorts, he yawned and checked all the usual spots: not on or even in the sofa. It hadn't fallen down the back of the couch. The beeping was kind of echo-y. No rush, really: it probably wasn't all that important, anyway. Laura'd email if she needed to get him quickly – she knew he was always in front of the screen. They'd had a few missed connections with island downtime when the phone system inexplicably turned off, failed to deliver texts, couldn't connect or simply wasn't working. Emails seemed to get through quicker, as long as the hilariously-fucking-named 'broad'band was up and running. Ian sighed again and opened the fridge to get himself an iced water. He rubbed his belly and looked past the near-frozen but still wilted salad leaves, some coal-like potatoes and the ubiquitous LoafMaster. And he smiled. There, next to the water jug, was his mobile phone, with a sticky note on it:

You can't be too careful!!! Xxx –L x

She'd been in better spirits lately, for sure, a little less highly-strung. Clearly the job was settling down, and Laura with it. It helped that the weather had eased off; the heat was one thing but the humidity when they'd landed had been unbearable. Since the turn of the year it'd turned picture-perfect. There was a warm breeze that blew away the stickiness - it was an absolute pleasure to be able to walk to, or rather between, the bars of the strip. Ian looked forward to doing just that again soon. He pocketed the phone and retired to the sofa.

He snaffled the water direct from the bottle. No point making a cup dirty, was there? It hit the back of his throat with a painful relief from the dryness of the air-con and made him suck at his teeth with delicious shock. Then it began again:

Bip. Beep. Bip-beep-beep-Bip. Bip

Bip. Beep. Bip-beep-beep-Bip. Bip

And a vibration.

He checked the screen.

6 NEW MESSAGES

MESSAGE 5

5000777

MESSAGE 4

FRO PICK UP FOR OIFFCE HOURS ON NUMBER CALL 043

MESSAGE 6

NOET THAT PIUCK UPS BOTH REQIES SIGNATURE BRLIEVE ME

MESSAGE 1

THIS IS POST OFFICE SALVI. MR LAURA WASH MARKED PERSONAL LETER

Ian's finger hovered over the delete button.

Bip. Beep. Bip-beep-beep-Bip. Bip

1 NEW MESSAGE

OSTOFFICE SALVI THANKYOU BLESSLORDAL

WAYS VIDA FUTURA

It seemed to make sense – as much sense as anything did around here – so he got himself ready to respond instead.

Essay

Leadbetter considers the power of information.

It was dark above the spodgy yellow streetlights illuminating the face of Leadetter JR Dudgeon through the window. It made him feel isolated and alone, his only company the computer and his thoughts. It was late, again, and he had better things to do than mess about with computer studies essays set by someone approximately five years behind the times. But it had to be done, didn't it? It was all another game, really: play nice and get your work in, and don't bother actually saying what you really think because that won't get you grades. And if you don't get grades, the teacher will be in trouble. In trouble with the school, in trouble with parents. It was not worth the hassle to try and stand out; save that for offline and give them what they wanted in the meantime. Everyone's happy. And so late nights in front of the homestead's **mAng0.1** had become the norm; mostly spent battling with the intermittent Internet and the vagaries of the school's creaking virtual desktop system. Lead was busy poking about inside the spidery, slow school servers therein to try and find his essay, due bizarrely at midnight. It wasn't the case that *Connected House?* had been a particularly tricky piece of work to research. Nobody really knew for sure in which direction things were headed, web-wise. Like, having an air con that you could navigate to from your phone to tell it to cool the house down before you came in. Which was a bit like having a time-delayed system and had been mechanically possible for ages. Clocks; timing; cogs; whatever. Motion sensors on outdoor lights. Motion sensors on cat flaps. Motion sensors on bloody people to show where they stepped to at work or school or wherever. Like having a computer in the car that knew when you were gonna wanna cruise it awhile or knew when you needed a full-on nitro boost when that dunderclot Doogie was in race mode. Like a freezer that knew when it wanted to get fill of tuttle an text you a shopping list. Well, that was what mothers were for – wasn't it? He was pretty sure they'd been invented a while back. Lead sighed. This kind of thing always only made sense in retrospect. There were some things out and about already: gimmicky fridges that told you when milk was going off (but you still had to scan the use-by date yourself when you put it in there to start with); Security cameras that tracked movement (but couldn't tell the difference between a stray mutt and a real burglar or come to that a swaying palm frond); Electric can openers, automatic pencil sharpeners, remote control bloody toasters.

The truth, which Lead was not going to write because it was far too much trouble to find the references to justify it, was that it was gonna be the things that nobody noticed that changed the game. And when they did, everyone would be playing it whether they liked it or not. Things would just work. It wouldn't be a big deal. Your fridge wouldn't become self-aware and chase anyone down the street, your microwave wouldn't refuse to warm up your breakfast cause it accessing data from your medical records and decide you got gluten problems so today it gotta be fruit, and your car certainly wouldn't lock you out if you'd had a couple of Swankgasms too many. Because you could hack anything that was programmed. There was always a back door, a way in, and a way out. More likely would be when they made the chip in your wireless car key small enough to wear on a watch or under your skin. Self-driving trains and trams so you could read and do your homework on the way to school or work or whatever. Folding screens to put in your pocket. Disposable computers maybe. Use it once, recycle it, built-in self-destruct burner phones. Weegie and the Sanctum already did that. There was nothing new about it. Just buzz words, hip preaching for latecomers to the party. Better technology was coming, for sure. Faster anyway. And would last precisely for as long as it took for the majority of people to notice it. Because someone, some kid maybe, some hard-edge engineer, some visionary, some misfit would already have worked out a way to do it better, quicker, more efficiently. Not better morally; that was another point to stay away from in essays. Better technically. Connected House? Easy. Connected people? Harder. Those bloody damned northern fools, the Canucks and Vinlanders, currently sabre-rattling – lightsabre-rattling – were proof of that. But then a war was a fertile ground for kicking tech forward too.

Most, all, of the articles about Connected Devices he'd found were on the Internet. And that, Lead reckoned, was part of the problem. That everything was connected was fine – except when it wasn't working. Then where did these hundreds of thousands of million email and text and on and off 0 and 1 messages go? They needed to move and moving generated heat, moving needed power, so they were tangible. They were physical, these messages. They existed. Tiny. So the Internet must have weight, mustn't it? It was real.

Lead grinned but soon grimaced when he saw the VDS was stuck on the bloody spinning beach ball. From experience he knew that this meant stopping immediately trying to ask anything of

the system and instead to step away, as quietly as possible, so the whole sand-bristled thing didn't get offended and crash completely. When everything is online, and the electricity goes down – who would be there to decode it? What was there to oversee it? That would have been a better question. Whichever way you looked at it, power was the most important thing. Power to run the machines. Power to run the people. He turned to the typewriter whilst the beachball spun and spun. This was where the proper shit was. And this shit wasn't shit that anyone online could steal and remix and water down. This was strictly analogue; non-connected and pure power of ideas. Lead, powerfully and with all the answers, sat down on his rough chair with the turtle-pine back and began to type:

people talk about feeling the walls closing in on
them

but it's the opposite

the internet is a vast expanse of everything and
nothing and meanings everywhere

but everywhere you stand the meanings and
everythings shift and are different

it's endless snakes around your ankles

the data does not flow but Cancers itself through
every possible atom there ever is or ever was
its always moving always mutating always self
reflecting and spewing itself back out again in
infinite Copies of itself
meaning is nothing

He sighed to himself. It couldn't, shouldn't be uploaded, this stuff. Cause at this point, the world just wouldn't get it. They just wouldn't see it. This would just be another data unit itself, ready for assimilation, or annihilation, as soon as it was shared. The trick had to be to keep it pure and unseen. He knew what it meant - what he meant - and that was enough. In fact, that was everything. This wasn't ready yet. But Fist Hook could help to prepare the world. Fist Hook's music and lyrics could hint at the future even whilst the anticulturalist theory was being moulded to its inevitable perfection. He surveyed the words he'd typed. Looked at the paper from different angles. Looked at the fading day's light through it. Read it upside down and backwards. The words made – were – nice shapes. That was important, too.

Wilberforce, Laura, Ian

Concurrent activities in separate situations

It was lunch break in the Assembly and Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross was feeling heavy toe pain again. It was all he could do not to cry out, but he was determined to be stoic. Damned injury. What was there to do? At least the turtlepepper soup was fine. But there was the bulk-arsed Baxter bloody Boneshaker, leering at him across the table. Wilberforce caught a whiff of rotting beef from the blob's mouth-hole as it spoke at him:

"Not moving too good today, Wilby, eh?"

"You ewect yourself Doctor to the Keeper of the Ice now do you Boneshaker?"

"No need for election when the evidentialism is so obvious-like."

"It just an ol' wampin injury you know," said Wilberforce, even though the pain was half-killing him. "At least some of us work for our eatin over the years."

"Pah while you sauntering around in fields I was on the seas..."

"Seeing what you could wromp from the boatline of others, mind you," said Wilberforce, a little wobbly voiced as the pain assaulted him once more. It was like it'd just been broken. It was like he was being attacked with axes.

Baxter noticed the wince: "I am bound to say that you don't lookin so good, even by your own standards."

"Nothing a shot or two of firewater could not make solve, I suppose."

"We are in agreement," Baxter said, sagely. "Pass your tumbler here."

"And it is, uh, done."

"To heaven all eyes sigh."

"And from heaven they are kissed."

They clinked glasses as was custom and drained their mead. Baxter looked into his empty glass, took a couple of deep breaths and spoke in a soft voice.

gathered herself, then burst into the classroom and slammed her pile of marking down on the desk.

The room quietened; what a difference a few months at school makes, quietly reputation-building. Miss, they knew, was fair. But she wouldn't stand for messing about. But if you knuckled down a bit the lessons could almost even be fun.

"OK class, Miss Carina is unwell."

Half the pupils made a sympathetic noise; the rest were unmoved. Laura thought she heard one cheer from the back, but couldn't be absolutely sure who it was. The corner was fully on her radar now, though. She continued:

"I believe you were looking at modern poetry today. Miss Carina has sent me the next poem series and we will read them aloud. Who's going to volunteer?"

No hands went up. A malaise seemed to have descended over the kids, joining the pheromones, sweat and Awe-knows-what else. They didn't realise that Laura didn't really want to be there either; never-ending marking, never enough time to plan for the next lesson.

Chasing your own tail constantly. Nothing ever changed no matter where in the world you were. She passed the papers to the front rows, who distributed them behind, all the way to the windows luminously delivering the morning sun.

"Nobody?"

She detected a snigger from the Trouble Corner, and her teacherly peripheral vision enabled her to zoom in on the culprit. Not the Ross boy again. But, yes, it was him, and he was looking sheepishly at the floor now.

"Ah. Mister Ross. Thank you for volunteering."

He started to object, but Laura's raised eyebrows and slightly-cocked head told him that it was pointless.

"You need not stand up Mister Ross. Nice and clear now."

Declan Ross was the younger brother of Duncan Ross - aka Doogie the inventor, aka Doogie the guitar hero – and shared some of his older sibling’s good looks, albeit somehow his features were still slightly askew and his skin was a shade or two lighter. Declan, unlike Doogie, was not accustomed to being centre stage. And it showed; his lips may have been moving but there was very little sound coming out:

Days all vanish into darkness; first loves

“A little louder please Mr. Ross,” said Laura, encouragingly.

unravel, scars form; entropy drags everything. Resentment is scabro... usly acrid, creeps underneath

“A touch more volume?”

nagging trials. Whatever hAppens afTER this, a triUMPH will anyway take on his heat, or horror; one heftily evisceRATted in scrATched ABuse CAUGHT ON camera. King SCABrous, up close;

It became clear that the reason Declan was reticent was that his voice was breaking. He clearly didn’t have any confidence in his own ability to remain on a constant level. It cracked, and it squealed with adolescent intermediacy. To his credit, and despite his now-reddening cheeks, he persisted. Fighting through the panic, he straightened his back, puffed his chest out and went for it.

King ever regal. Forward until caught! King immortal! Night guard! WHERE A NOBLE King’s exhortations REIgn. But ONward LEAPS life. Onward, calling King, hEARing each ADDREss diligently. Decorous

With the end in sight, the wobbly beginning had now turned into something quite lovely: a gorgeous, stable baritone. The stumbles and squeaks had left him, and he ended with a flourish:

and virile, iridescent delight! Yea, our unworthy cries uplift now, today, tomorrow, whichever Augurs toll belief and succour toward ageless, remarkable days!

The room applauded, with Laura adding some whoops and cheers of her own. This was great; this was something Declan was good at. This could be the making of him. But she knew not to push any further and to let him enjoy his moment of glory. His face was aglow with a mixture of embarrassment and pride, and Laura noted that he had also unknowingly captured the attention of at least one of the girls sitting near him. Declan didn't turn to meet the deep brown eyes of his admirer. Maybe he didn't know. Maybe he did and didn't know what to do. Sometimes Laura loved her job, it was true. There were some inspiring moments, and you never knew when they would come. If only Ian could experience this feeling. If only he could find something to give him these tiny victories. Maybe he had, today. Maybe he'd call and leave a breathless, excited message. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

The class was looking at her again. What now? She thought on her feet.

"So, what does this mean? What can we take from this prose poem?"

Many hands went up. Laura selected the girl with the brown eyes.

"I'm sorry, I don't know your name," Laura said.

"Destiny," said Destiny and Declan at the same time. The two kids smiled at each other briefly. Laura kept her Teacher Face intact but was bursting inside with love.

"Please proceed, Miss Destiny."

—

Ian picked up his phone. He immediately put the bloody overheated thing down again and zipped to the stinky midday sink, down which he poured the customary bleach. Zeus knew what they did here around lunchtime, but it didn't half come back up the pipes at you. Still, it'd almost certainly be more palatable by teatime. It usually was. Laura was dubious about it, he knew, because school worked on its own systems through some linkup with the water company. The school usually didn't seem to experience many of the symptoms of Ian's bark-echoed housing estate, at least not at the same time. Different water pipes, different deals being done no doubt. Now with a clutch of kitchen paper in his hand, he dared to try the phone

again. That was better – a bit. He grasped a nearby pen – surprisingly just on the warm side of skin-ripping plastic-burn – and punched in the number on the keypad.

0435000777

“...invalid number. Please try again.... Beep... we are sorry, you have dialled...”

Ian hung up and chucked the pen to one side. He tried again, blowing on his index finger between each briefest touch to the keypad.

0435000777

“...invalid number. Please try again.... Beep... we are sorry, you have dialled...”

He checked the texts again. Yep, there it was – albeit in two chunks:

MESSAGE 5

5000777

MESSAGE 4

FRO PICK UP FOR OIFFCE HOURS ON NUMBER CALL 043

But that didn’t look right either. Where was that phone book when you needed it? He tried to remember where he’d chucked the brick-sized thing. Oh, they’d laughed about it. 2010. A phone book. A *phone book*!! Despite the kitchen roll, by now he could almost see the bloody phone starting to steam around the edges. He did a Laura and took the damned thing back to the fridge to cool down whilst he searched.

The phone book turned out to be underneath a mouldering pile of months-old newspapers from the Mother Country, all bemoaning the financial downturn. That was the last thing he wanted to read so he cast them aside, looked up the post office’s entry and noted the missing digit. He pulled out the slightly-chilled phone, wiped it clean of butter, and dialled:

04351000777

After a while a voice answered:

“Salvi Island Big Salvi Midtown Postal Services and Parcel Requirements Speaking Roylee Is how many I assist you today...”

“Ah yes, hi, I’ve...”

“...on your quest to explore our services, which include...

“Yes I’ve just received...”

“Letters, postal packaging, money exchange rates, weather related updates, shoes and spectacles on...”

“Hi, yes, can I just...”

“request.”

“...”

“...Hello, this is the Salvi...”

“Hi, Hi, let me stop you.”

“Ah. Hello. How can I help today with your...”

“Yes I’ve received a text...”

“...requirements on your...”

“Text. From you.”

“...quest... you want to send or receive texts?”

“No, I’ve received one, from you, telling me to phone you.”

“And what is the nature of the request?”

“Well, I was hoping that you’d be able to tell me. It’s Mr. Ian Walsh, calling on behalf of Laura Walsh.”

“And to whom was the message?”

"To... Laura Walsh. It says there is a letter waiting for her."

"Sir, I cannot give out that information."

"She's my wife. She's at work, you see."

"I am sorry I cannot by law give out that information."

"She's my wife. The text came to my phone for some reason. But we are married."

"I am afraid only the person named in the text, not that I am confirming that there was one, can be, mmm, legally, mmmm, by law, told or informed as to the status or otherwise of any communications, such as they may or may not be, from or by the Salvi Island Big Salvi Midtown Postal Services and Parcel Requirements."

"But..."

click

They'd actually hung up on him. Ian looked at the phone, which was now beginning to radiate heat again. Reflected on the small screen was his own face, mouth open, a kind of half-amused, half-bemused mask. He redialled, despite the rapidly warming phone.

04351000777

After a while the same voice answered:

"Salvi Island Big Salvi Midtown Postal Services and Parcel Requirements Speaking Roylee Is how many I assist you today on your quest to explore our services, which include letters, postal packaging, money exchange rates, weather related updates, shoes and spectacles on request."

"Hi, this is Laura Walsh. I've got a text from you guys."

"Ah thank you Miss Laura Sir. Yes, just bring your phone with you and there is a letter from you. We are open until 3pm."

"Many thanks."

"It is our pleasure, Miss Laura, sir."

Awakenings

Ian prepares his return; Laura looks forward to a festival; a teenager considers sartorial information

Ian felt like his hands were a mile away. That everything was. That he was tiny, diminished, alone; lost infinitesimally small and dangerously deep inside a cavern. His body. But he was in the shell, too, that tiny essence; a speck of insignificance within a blundering, brutish tank. Life was just a mask; all this was a mask. He tried to feel the lightning bolts of thought. But he wasn't his brain. He did not live upstairs, in a head of a dwelling: he was the bottom of a well. A cold, echoing and hollowed-out section deep inside his body somewhere. His body? Why was it his? He didn't remember ever asking for one. He would rather fly free, part of the molecules of the air, of space, of forever; pure knowledge. Pure information. Pure... Ianness. But no. He was in this shapeless, formless, choking shell, so far down that no light could even penetrate. Because light was understanding, was Illumination, was life. And darkness was delicious. There wasn't a switch; become aware of trying to turn off your wakefulness meant that your eyes and brain would snap open and awake and there would be shimmers of speeding, whizzing afterimages across the dimensions; echoes of forgotten thoughts, snippets of sentences, of sentience. He told his hands to do something. But his hands wouldn't move. They'd gone to sleep on their own. If only the rest of him could. 2.24AM and nothing doing. Again.

He wondered if he could breathe in concert with Laura. He told his brain to tell his lungs and his chest and his nostrils to make this happen. But it felt weird. It felt wrong. Unnatural.

Unsatisfying. He stopped the process. That wasn't the thing to do, either, because he started to panic; a pumping sense of his veins bulging and beginning to burst. They were feats of engineering in themselves, the tiniest of tiny blood vessels. Like little canals, or tributaries, or the trickle down the gutter of the last rain of the winter. They had been invented in some way had they? Veins. Vessels. Gutters. Blood. That was evolution wasn't it. The smallest titchy blood vessels were there because the body was so big and had so many moving parts and they all needed oxygen to work, even lying still. He noticed he was breathing again without realising he'd re-started. So he stopped and decided to blink. That was a good thing to do. He closed both eyes shut, so hard that he could see red, green, blue shards of light. Chemtrails left by the sudden change between the purple of the night room and the, the, dynamic vascularity of the inside of the eye. There were countless different shades of darkness. None as pure as death. He opened and closed each eye in turn. At the end of the bed a foot jumped between two

locations as a result. His foot? He hadn't told it to move, but there it was, moving quite a way each time. Now it was obscuring a certain pattern at the bottom of the duvet, and now it wasn't. How could that be?

Laura snuffled, snored, mumbled something indecipherable, and rolled over, taking a great deal of the thin-tog cover with her. Ian was grateful. Unbeknown to him, his body was telling his mind that his body was too hot and that he needed to go and get a drink of water and also may as well go for a piss and so he told his brain to tell his legs to swing out sideways and then plant his feet onto the floor and then move his torso on top and then the whole contraption creaked its way toward the ensuite, echoed by a rusty-boinged mattress spring suddenly released from the pressure of a full-sized human pressing down on it.

It was time to get running, anyway. Only a couple of days to the next match. His first match. It was gonna be superb. He quietly got changed, and headed out, this time with a whole FunBar Choc for Horsey-boy. But when he got to the field, it was empty. Ian jogged on as usual, and as usual checked to see if the blonde sort was getting rid of the maybe-Mickey. As usual, there wasn't anything to see. He did his zig-zags, did his warmdown, and got home feeling pretty decent indeed.

It had been a bleary breakfast, but Ian was happy that the air-con car journey was mitigating the blaze of the sun. Even at eight in the morning, it was hotter than a summer's day back in the beleaguered, de-financed, depressed Mother Country. That people could live and thrive in this was remarkable; even more remarkable was the number of workers dressed in full suits. Were it not for the retina-scorching rays, the dust-sand piled up in the corner of the pavements and the iguanas lazing on parked cars, the scene could have been from any city in the world. Any city with post-colonial architecture and 1950s signage, at least. But there was an energy and focus about the morning that seemed to hold the promise of progress. Laura pulled up at a set of traffic lights which had taken the opportunity to wink to red. The colonnaded façade of the post office smiled toothily fifty yards away, so Ian began to wrestle with the dodgy passenger door and was astonished when it clicked open on the first go for a change.

“That’s amazing,” he announced. A single, uncollared and insouciant local dog, furry around the haunches, wiry around the chin, crossed in front of the car and glanced at the man quizzically before scurrying off.

“Taxi back?” Laura asked, leaning across and placing a ten-spot into her husband’s shirt pocket.

Ian squeezed her hand, kissed her quickly on the cheek and left the vehicle. As soon as he had closed the door – again on the first go – the lights turned green again and off Laura sped, right hand aloft to be visible through the back windscreen.

Laura watched Ian’s receding back in the mirror as he slinked his way toward the gorgeous circular post office. It was great that he was on a mission. He was in fantastic shape, and that seemed to have given him a new impetus. When he was in this kind of go-get-em mood, he was back to his usual self. If they could hang in together as they always had, if they could just find a way to make Salvi settle for them both, then this would be amazing. Who else got the chance to do this stuff? To enact that ubiquitous dream of really, truly, and physically packing it all in and living on a paradise island? In actual real life? Lots of people talked about it; they had themselves over silly drinks in silly beer gardens in the silly past. But not seriously, not really. It was something people did on TV shows presented by can’t-believe-my-luck-faced former Kids TV presenters; *Move to the Sun*. *Live Your Dreams*. *Tell the World to Shit Off From Your Own Private Beach*. That kinda stuff. People, real people, didn’t do that kind of thing. When the opportunity had really arisen for Laura and Ian, though, it had taken them by surprise. Shit, it had suddenly been real. Like, really real. Like, rushing to the Internet to try and work out where the hell Salvi Island was kind of real. Mates were astonished, as a rule. Astonished, pleased, maybe a bit jealous. They’d all said they’d visit, of course, try and stop them. But half a year in and nobody had the cash to do it. Even in good times there was a half-day flight and a three-year holiday fund to consider. But now with the way things were, the ones with steady jobs were feeling the pinch. Everyone was. Laura felt confident she fit in here: teaching was the key to getting to know a place, and the place getting to know you. Ian? Not so much. She knew he was a bit broody, a bit down, a lot lost. He’d always been energised by his job. He could do so

much on Salvi, if only he got that one chance to prove – to be – himself. And, well, anything could happen on the korfbal court. On an island like this pretty much everyone was either a player or a fan. Surely some of the players would have serious island clout, and Ian could conceivably find himself falling into all kinds of job offers. It was easier to retain hope under this beautiful sky. With the white sand and the salt spray and the gorgeous bath of the sea you really could live in the moment, if you only let yourself. She turned the corner toward the school drive. Her crash-clattered shoulder burned with muscular pain, making her wince. She'd pulled muscles before and they took a while to sort themselves out. Perhaps she needed to rehydrate more.

She waved at Pinter the security guard smiling in his little box and trundled toward the teachers' parking lot. She was on duty with Mickey first thing, roaming the playground for transgressions. Not that these kids were the type to do more than have a scruffily tied tie, or an untucked shirt. And they liked Mickey, particularly the older ones, and, she had to concede, particularly some of the sixth form girls. She could see it; he was only a few years older than them (or looked it. She didn't know for sure) and was more often than not in gym kit rather than the buttoned-up, be-blazered uniform required of the classroom-based teachers. She supposed that made him more approachable. It suited him, the rascal.

Laura parked up and reached for her bag in the back of the bumped-up rustbucket that would do Until Things Settle. She started a little at the residual post-crash pain once more, opened up her handbag and popped a couple of DayQuell down her. It wasn't worth going to the docs, Mickey said, with anything less than what he'd called 'A broken bonce bag,' because despite the health insurance there was a 200-buck excess anyway. And they'd only probably prescribe the same pills as Mickey could. Why bother with the faff? She prepared herself against the skin-searing morning sun and dashed the 50 yards from her air-conditioned car toward the cooling haven of the back staff room.

After saying hello to coffee-cradling colleagues, she plonked herself by the communal computer and quickly logged in. She still thought it cute that the bricks that masqueraded as mobile phones here didn't even have WiFi, not even in 2009. Ridiculous. At first it was irritating not to

be able to check emails wherever you were, but now she embraced the freedom. You had to make specific time for emailing and the like which when you thought about it made them more valuable. You didn't have to be on call 24 hours a day. You didn't have to instantly reply to everyone. Course, staying in touch with people 5,000 miles away was best done electronically, and she calculated that she had a quick five minutes before the morning meeting/staff prayer. This was Laura-time before the day disappeared in the usual mad jigsaw collage of meetings, frantic calls to cover lessons, marking, planning, target-hitting, spreadsheet-updating, prop-making, audio-sourcing, IT-cursing and – sometimes – 46 minutes of actually teaching a lesson. That itself was broken up into sitting kids down, sorting out broken chairs, wiping down boards, getting kids to wipe down boards, getting kids to get out their books, their pencil cases, their workbooks, the correct page, reminding them that it was not a canteen, asking to hear the full joke not just the laughter, rearranging desks into groups of four, setting homework... she was starting to get to know the kids a little more, and knew who to rely on for an answer – and who to ask for an answer when they were clearly daydreaming. It was the same the world over. Kids were kids, and they were people, and you had to get to know them as they had to get to know you. Then you could really fly. For now it was just the emails – painfully slow, as usual, in downloading. But not as annoying as it first had been when they'd arrived. You adjusted to the pace, didn't you?

From: **Maisie Moo** 😊

To: Laura Walsh

Subject: **omg send MICKEY 2 ME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

MM!! Xxxxxxx

P.S. You better tell that IFW of yourse he gonna get himself sorted asap no worries !!!!!
With his experience? No danger!!!! They don't know what they r missin!!!! Better go

lunchtime nearly over chick lets speak on phone soon!!!! If you can tear yourself away from U NO WHOO!!!!!! LOOOOOOOOOOLLLLL!!!!

Laura smiled at Maisie's incorrigibility, but her face shadowed a little at the sudden thought that missing people was an entirely different matter. In an age of near-instant communication, where an email can travel six thousand miles and make you smile, it concurrently could make you feel very, very isolated and very, very far away indeed. The homesickness almost made her reel for a moment before she centered herself, logged out of the computer and nodded at the phalanx of fellow teachers who were entering the room in various registers of chatter.

Carina came over.

"Hey hey Lazlo," she said, brightly. "We lunchin?"

"Sounds good, yeah."

"Goody-oh, we have to plan our road outfits for the parade."

"Do the what for the what?"

"Oh you will see, you will schurely see. Think shiny. Think short. Think sequins... think sexy. But more later."

Laura made a quizzical noise. But Carina just shook her head and sped off toward her classroom.

A white plastic clock ticked its way toward the start of another school day; one of thousands of identical timepieces on school walls across the globe.

Ian felt peculiar and undefined. His eyes wanted to cry, a slightly numb-faced and marginal weariness below them and a heaviness in the chest that was straining to pump tears upward. But as in a yawn, there was only a wetness, a damp splodge lubricating and itching at eyeballs in equal turn. The thick-headedness of a cold, without the muscle-dead pin-to-bed dread. A tiny lizard scurried up the wall. He reached for a plastic takeaway carton and tried to trap it. But it

was too quick and the severed head hit the floor with a tiny puff of dust. There was no blood, Ian was surprised to see. Just a smudge on the wall. Inside the plastic, the spastic nerves of the limbs twitched, mocking the man, the murderer. What right had he to have done away with this creature? He freed the lizard's body out of the upstairs window with all his might. He was dreary and dispirited. Laura was at work. He was looking through the jobsites again, over and over, willing for something new to come up, willing someone to have seen his CV and emailed for a chat or a coffee or to say hi or to say *yes we will look for an opening but none at the moment but you do fit the profile we need and you know people do come to the end of their term limits before being rolled off the island until they can apply for another visa and that takes time so there are opportunities*. That would be enough: Ian would have been acknowledged. His existence would have scuttled up a wall. He felt he was in the plastic box, twitching. But he pulled himself back, puffed out his cheeks and blew a raspberry at the screen. He wondered what the mob back at home would be doing right now. Baz would be grafting, scheming, trying to make contracts happen, trying to see whose palms might be greased, trying to get his own transport projects off the ground, always giving it the big one. Ian missed the cut-and-thrust and wished his mate and ex-Pickle Transport colleague would get his arse over here and do some damage. The two of them together... that'd fuck a few feathers on this dull-arse island wouldn't it. Fuck knows it was looking shitty back in MC – at least he and Laura were relatively cushioned from that. Ian gave up and started falling into himself again, feeling the weight of the afternoon stretching out in front of him, a fallow expanse of nothingness. He stared at his screen, which stared back. His heart felt like it was being squeezed by a sadistic, gnarled demon. One that, if he could look at it directly, would also stare back at him, with tiny, angry, bloodened features that were nonetheless unmistakably his own.

The monthly Friday lunchtime BBQ was in full swing, and Carina passed Laura another soft drink, which she accepted gratefully.

"Oh this is smelling wonderful," Laura said, happily.

The steaks were sizzling on the barbecue; diffusing through the air were the heady aromas of top-grade beef caramelising through the sweet, astringent smokiness of the Ironwood's flames. Now this was living. Carina took a deep breath and made an approving noise.

"Salvi Beef," Carina explained. "Organic and alwaysch has been. Pride of the islands, for sure."

"It's making me bloody ravenous is all I know."

"Me too. And them three." Carina pointed at the Year Twelve group whose turn it was to cook for the teachers.

It was Civvies Day for them and wow, they looked different. Stylish in low-cut T-shirt and surf shorts was the effortlessly cool older Ross boy, Duncan. The family resemblance to Declan was evident, although Duncan had left his own unsure, crumple-faced days behind him. Today he wore a golden necklace which radiated back the sunlight, a gorgeous contrast against his russet upper torso. If he didn't have his head in the clouds – or rather in the electronic ether – he'd be fending the girls off constantly. But he still had that annoyingly immature streak which put most of them off. He'd find a way, no doubt. In fact, Laura suddenly realised, Duncan reminded her a lot of Mickey Pearce. Whether Duncan was copying Mickey's style, or the other way around, was debatable. But what was sure was that Duncan Ross could pull it off without appearing to try. That was the exact opposite of Mickey who was constantly in flux, making huge efforts to appear insouciant but somehow always falling just behind the latest buzzword, the newest T-shirt design, even the most recent way to strut or sprawl. It was part of Mickey's charm, in a way, that he was so clueless. And Laura was glad that Mickey didn't seem to possess enough self-knowledge to see what everyone else saw in him.

Duncan was as ever thick as thieves with Leadbetter, whispering intently and occasionally bursting into laughter, but the third wheel was a muscled, mahogany-skinned youth that Laura didn't recognise. She turned to her friend, quizzically.

"That," Carina said, "Is Richard Richard. He graduated last year."

The blonde teacher made no move to expel Richard Richard, so Laura didn't either. The rules seemed to be slightly more relaxed in the barbecue hour. You'd never get away with that back

home. It'd be hall passes, sign in and sign out, and *go home Richard, you're not a kid anymore so don't act like one*. In any case, Richard Richard seemed to be doing nothing much more than sitting down, hamburger on a plate in his lap, and occasionally air-drumming with imaginary sticks. She'd keep an eye on him just in case, but he seemed to be having a calming influence on Lead and Duncan, who obviously knew him well. So she let it ride, and tuned in to the conversation going on between the headmaster and Old Joe, the librarian. To be honest it seemed like more of a harangue that the crumbling book wrangler was inflicting on the boss, and Laura felt a bit guilty that she was enjoying it as entertainment.

"...Never said... that what!."

"Hmm seven years, yes Joe, how interesting, I really must..."

"Seven. Seven!"

"...do you fancy a d..."

"And then goes. Off on one. Just!"

"Ah yes, I understand. But you're here, and you are very valued. I really must..."

"Seven years! No idea. Then, no, it's all wrong. How the? No mindreader. Am I?"

But Joe was already muttering alone, because the Head was striding toward Laura and Carina with a face that said: *help me out here*.

"Ah Headmaster great to catch you, I have some ideas to discuss with you," she said, as he silently formed the words 'thank you'.

"Well, that demands a cold drink," said the Head, walking toward the juice station. Carina stayed put but Laura went with him. When she looked back, Old Joe was ranting at Richard Richard, who he'd managed to trap in a corner. She couldn't pick out more than the odd word, but the old boy was foaming at the mouth about betrayal or some other no doubt spurious supposed slight. In general though the tableau seemed appropriate, she felt part of it, and she was happy.

She was still upbeat as she left her car later that day and approached the front door of home, sweet, sweaty home. She'd caught herself cheerfully cursing that the drive back had taken 15 minutes instead of the usual ten or so. Maisie's email had reminded her of exactly what they had here: some things were worth hanging in there for. And one of those was that at precisely 5.23pm, Laura and Ian had wandered down to the sand to dangle their feet in the warm, spa-like ultra-clear sea. The sun had finally begun to quiet its fierce rage and settle down into an early evening mellowness. Here on the white sand beach, on a cheap beach towel featuring a badly embroidered image of Salvi Island, they held hands and wordlessly just took in the moment. The only conversation they needed was the intertwining of their fingers, squeezing each other's hands. The beach was pretty much deserted now. Gaggles of holidaymakers had buttered back indoors to soothe their crisped-up skin and to refuel before dinner; the locals were busy preparing for their own meals, shopping for fresh fish where the good boats docked after a day out beyond the reef; joggers were waiting for the sun to slam down and bring some respite. It was the golden hour. The world glowed softly; the sea and sky were one. Through the meditative moment, a thought began to sidle into Laura's mind as she unlinked her fingers from Ian's grasp and adjusted her sunglasses. It was: *this is brilliant. This is everything. This is why. We don't have to pay for this. This is ours, whenever we like.*

It was going to be alright; it was all going to be alright. He would find his place, no doubt about it. Ian had always been resourceful, always found a way to make things work. You would struggle to find anybody steadier at the tiller: it was one of the things that really did keep her grounded. And yet he had taken very little persuasion to come on this crazy adventure. Ian had been there when she'd opened the Educational Supplement the day the Salvi Island job came up. It was unassuming, nestled there underneath a call out for new science teachers and next to a story about interactive whiteboards. She could remember the wording: *Be With Us, Be Free! Salvi Islands Needs Teacher!* (a misspelling that still made her wince) *Competitive Pay! Sun 333 Days A Year!*

Neither of them knew where Salvi Island was – there was an inkling between them that it was somewhere close to the Islas Canas, but neither were sure. And to be honest, she applied just for a laugh anyway: they had been drinking cava, as they were now, albeit in a two-up, two-down terrace rather than underneath the retreating amber-orange sunset. She'd gone online at once, uploaded her CV and dashed off a personal letter without giving it too much of a thought. They'd been laughing together as she pressed 'send' and were still laughing later that evening telling Jackie and Oona about it over an overpriced, undersauced tagliatelle at their local restaurant. Jackie, as was her way, was all positivity and excitement – *what a thing to do! Good on ya!* – and Oona had been a little more circumspect, smiling quietly at her wife's endearing and enduring appetite for life.

Back in the here and now, Laura prodded Ian in the arm.

"You're not asleep are you sausage head?"

"Uh... wa....no course not Lozenge. Just, ya know, resting my eyes," Ian assured her. "Big game this Sunday for hubby. Recovery sleep is the best sleep."

Laura beamed: "You recover more than a professional athlete would after a marathon run, boyo. You are recovering for runs from the future, lazybones. My glass is empty. What kind of a husband lets his wife's glass go empty?"

Ian chuckled, sat up and rescued the bottle from the ice-bag.

She couldn't see his eyes in the gathering dusk, but she could sense his smile. This really was going to work out – for both of them. Together, and individually. Ian had far too much about him to stop him getting what he wanted. His happy demeanour boded well for the future.

At the same time that Ian and Laura were lazing and laughing on the beach, a young gig-goer and blogger was re-reading the recent upload of her latest instalment:

New Shirts!!!!!!!!!!!!!! New Task!!!!!!!!!!

ALL words!!! by XsTarX <3 <3 <3 Hands off!!!! LOL!!! All rights reserved!!!! You have been warned!!!! XOXOX

NOTE: For the enlightened only a new phase has begun... the code has been set and those who can see this blogspreader will be fully adept at the instructions.

Last night's visceral jab at the heart of the latest Shark Metal superstars took place at the Old Dock, with ever-rising Fist Hook celebrating...

...well, there was no real reason to celebrate other than the eternal bump and pound of blood and youth and magic. In the dance, the mosh, the arena, there is nothing but the music.

And yet, those words are themselves inadequate. To what extent can any language, any dialect, any lexicon really explore the sensation of oneness, the moment a crowd becomes a single entity? Where all context is suspended? Where thought itself is alien in comparison to this shared energy, shared belief, shared love?

And it is love: this definition may be malleable by every generation. But for us, the shared 'we,' the BabySharkz, it is everything. Can words be adequate when they themselves are acquiescent to a greater power?

It sounds, does it not, like religion. Not 'a' religion. Like Religion. Capital Letters. How can such a transcending force be anything other than what other people call God? God Is Love, let's remember that. So those that deliver Love deliver God. It's logic, but maybe one that the older ones have forgotten.

Funny that the older ones have forgotten the wisdom of the ancients, too. They go to church and pray and have the Holy Awe visit on them, but it is baubles, burbles, bullshit.

You can wear your Sunday Bestest to a Fist Hook gig and nobody would blink an eye at it. But chances are that songs like Rascal Rising – a scandalously fizzing riff atop a humpbacked bassline – will shred your suit even as it shreds your preconceptions. Youth? Age? Ancients? Here inside the song none of that is relevant.

Because inside the song is all there is: even this realization is banished because the mind is elsewhere – everywhere – nowhere – words are a pathetic grey rinse of the gravid instant. A cameraphone pixellation of the truth.

Leadbetter unveils the most important part: the shirt. The shirt, the shirt, the shirt. If you are reading this, you will know. The colors, the shapes; the dogs and the bites. This is not what we need here, not anymore. It was the older ones that let this fanged menace free. Who has not been scraped by foaming teeth onetime, still?

We know what to do. There is no need for words: the shirt points the way. Quietening the Islands will prepare the way for the newness, for the moment, for us all.

We can get to work tonight. We know what must be done. Let the sharks circle; let the sharks bite. Let us clean the waters for our own sakes.

Senti-null watch: Still no idea. Still no coverage. Still no news. Still so garbled and disgraceful. At least the families knew how to write a sentence. These Vesu-pussies are showing how little they know about Salvi. Let them have their rope: let them hang. It's a matter of time. It's not 'if', it's 'when'.

The Senti-null is irrelevant to us. We know how we can clean the waters.

So mark the words. Mark them well. Mark them now because they speak of the future:

In.

De.

Pen.

Dence.

Posted by xStarx <3 <3 <3 00.15

Comments have been disabled on this thread

Resonation

Talented youths design a new audio booster; there is a shock in the offing for Ian and Laura on the eve of the game

Opposite Lead and Fist Hook's Studio – aka a breeze-blocked and hastily-painted garage – there was an old bus shelter from a long-defunct route. In the shade of the shelter there was a green and sickly couch. It was no ordinary couch, either. Nope: this was The Couch. It seemed like it had always been there, and nobody could remember where it originally came from. It was damn comfortable and horrendously stinky after rain. But it was the official hang-out location for users of the rehearsal space, which had a tendency to fill up with the stench of teenage gas. Without any air-con, things got very unpleasant, very quickly. So the couch was welcomed. Even so, people had tried to throw the couch away on numerous occasions: dump trucks had taken it to Mount Trashmore more than once. But somehow, the next day, or the day after that, the couch was back in its shelter, as if it had regrown through the cracked and parched concrete. Many squelchy moments had been experienced on this landmark and HQ for liaisons of many kinds, day and night. Today the sun was out and the most important two members of Fist Hook were sitting, shades on, hanging out, and chewing the fat. Lead puffed on his joint. He felt he needed it if he was going to understand what in the name of Holy Awe Doogie was chuntering on about. That new microphone of his, the resonator, had been Doog's obsession for the last few months. And now he was explaining to a slightly woozy Lead that he'd had a breakthrough with it.

"Sweet progress man, sweet as Gargleblast," Doogie drawled. "We boosted this to the sky, me an my man Deckhard. Boosted the resistance bigtime. This is gonna be beautiful."

"Declan – he helping you now? Not shitting his bed anymore?"

"Ha! No man he has his moments, shockingly un-annoy me this project. He's got skills."

Lead passed the spliff to Doogie, who studied its glowing end carefully.

"Ya know," Doogie said, taking a puff and holding it. "We can do a solid here for Unc Wilby."

He exhaled, enjoying the moments before the weed reached his brain, and continued: "We get this right, at the Ice Fest Wilberforce is gonna sound deeper than the ocean."

Lead made an interested noise. This was new information, but undoubtedly a great idea. Part of the role of First Person was to lead the annual celebration of Salvi, the Parade of the Ice. And tradition noted that the deepest-voiced resident would kick off the parade itself. It was a mark of mastery; an indication of manliness and therefore ability to lead.

"Reckon?" replied Leadbetter. "He'd be bounce up in the mast for that one. Nothing in the rules says you can't use a little help. He's gonna be the deepest, baddest of all time." He accepted the joint again: "So - what power?"

It was Doogie's turn to look quizzical, working out something in his head. He eventually nodded and said: "Nuff."

"Nuff?"

"Nuff power. Hard to say, but he's gonna BOOM no doubt. BOOM-A-ROOM."

"No math of it Doogs?"

"Ah, well, ya know. Prototype at the mo. Proof of concepts."

"In theory tho?"

"In theory, scale him up... 15 yotta-joules."

It meant little to Lead either way, but he made another, suitably impressed, sound.

“But, Lead my man,” Doogie continued. “For that power, you gonna need mega-power. We don’t got that yet. Serpently not on this rock.”

“Well, when we got the island under rule... Fist Hook, Shark Metal, madness, we gonna have all the power, nah? Duppies in the machine.”

Lead took a last long drag on the joint and offered Doogie the now-tiny roach. One more inhalation maybe on the thing. Doogie sucked it down to the cardboard filter then discarded it. Lead felt a buzz in his pocket. The Sharkphone. He answered it.

“Yo,” he began, macho as you like, before his voice softened and became somehow smaller. “Hi mama yeah jus hanging... ... Duncan, my mama says hello and all... ... yes mama he fine, he doing his homework too... ok... love you... bye.”

He stood up, slightly unsteadily, eyes somewhat blurry, and shook some deposits of what was best called yellow couch-bread from his shorts: “Tuttle ready, gotta run.”

Doogie nodded, busily rolling up a single-skinner: “Gonna hang awhile man. See you in the snakepit.”

“Ugh. Sooner we graduate the better man. So sick of that place. Getting in the way of Sharkiness now. Buncha bullshit. Later.”

“Later man.”

It had been an uneventful Saturday back at Turtle Towers, aka Walsh HQ (Salvi Island Office). The air-con was whirring, the half-open Venetian blinds let in just enough of the day to make zebra-striped patterns on the cool tiled floor, and dust motes danced where the sun’s energy

gave them fuel. By the standards of most of the world, you'd call it a beautiful morning. By Salvi Islands' standards, it was simply the average, the norm, the go-to mean. By 7.30am Ian and Laura had both got up, showered, yawned, plodded about, pulled on T-shirts, shorts and shades, and headed out for brekkie at Stingray City Bar.

Dotted around the bar were clumps of tourists; some looked like they'd just arrived, with that mix of exhaustion and excitement and too many clothes that looked too new. Elsewhere three lads sat, bleary-eyed and soupy in their movements: they were either breakfasting to try and kill their Gargle-hangovers or were still out from their Friday revelries. Ian and Laura looked at each other and smiled. Another weekend, much like each weekend. These faces changed, the expressions did not. It was possible that the people – Ian and Laura aside – grew from underneath the outdoor seating's raised decking. They never seemed to exist anywhere else. Still, the favourite table was free; just far enough from the bar speakers to be able to talk at a normal volume, just far enough from the road to obviate most of the fumes, and most importantly underneath a large umbrella that would shelter them from the heat as the day wore on and the sun traversed the morning skies. It had taken a while to negotiate all the variables; angle your chair the wrong way and you'd end up with a burnt forearm, pick the wrong table and you'd get a sudden ray of white sunlight directly through even the sunglasses, causing an instant headache.

Presently, a waiter arrived, his Stingray T-shirt cut off at the arms and showing that, yes, he did work out, just a little, you know. Laura ordered two Local(ish): a brekkie of eggy pancakes, syrup and burnt bacon. It was surprisingly delicious, the mix of fat, sweet and salt, though she wasn't going to go as far as Carina and add chili sauce to the pile. That girl was a phenomenon, really: she'd throw herself into anything if she thought it was going to be fun. And generally, when she did, it was.

Back here and now, though, Ian passed Laura an envelope.

"Forgot to say. Picked this up yesterday, Loops. Looks kind of official."

“Way to kill the mood, bozo,” she replied, with a laugh. “It’s probably another copy of my bloody contract. I’ve got about four of them already.”

“Never let it be said that the school isn’t efficient. Except by me. Cause it isn’t.”

Laughing, Laura tore open the letter. What she saw there stopped her in her tracks. It was hardly believable. But there it was, in black, red and white. She re-read it, and re-read it again, and looked away, and looked back. But the words were still the same. Bloody hell!

She passed it to Ian, whose eyes widened as he scanned the ridiculousness before him:

COURT SUMMONS

Salbi Islands

District Court

On this day of 14 April, 2010

Big Salbi Judicial District

Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchlDip.

Court File Number: 53310761

Case Type: Legalitarian

Plaintiff,

vs.

Summons

Luara Walsh

Defendant.

This **SUMMONS** is directed at: Laura Walsh

YOU ARE BEING SUED.

The Plaintiff has started a lawsuit against you.

The Plaintiff's Complaints are sixfold against you and is as follows:

1. That on the day of a Friday of 13 December, 2010 you, Laura Walshs, were at the helm of a vehicle driving and that vehicle had the number plate of MI 51222919.
2. That you, Laura Walsh were recorded on tape by Mm. Dulisa Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip at the helm of said car approaching her own car, number plate of MI 9491520. *A tape recording is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*
3. That you, Laura Walsh did willfully and with extreme malice crashbonk the back rear end disfrontage of the car vehicle of Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip, as stated above, with your own vehicle, stated above, causing lasting damage and tremendous illmetal *A photograph is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*
4. That you, Laura Walsh, on looking at said damage, did state, "Dis no big ting, anyway, no sir ma'am," whilst in conversation with the Plaintiff, Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip. You requested that "No police need coming," and "Insurance job no doubt."
5. That you, Laura Walshs, did return to your vehicle having ignored the real internal pain and sufferages of Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip, who as medical reports will indicate was too tender to reply. *A medical report signed by a Doctor and another Doctor is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*

Do not throw these papers away, right? So they are official papers that affect your rights.

You must respond to this lawsuit even though it may not yet be filed with the Court and there may be no court file number on this **summons**. Otherwise. Watch it.

2. YOU MUST REPLY WITHIN 7 DAYS TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS. You must give or mail to the person who signed this **summons** a written response called an Answer within 6 days of the date on which you received this **Summons**. You must send a copy of your Answer to the person who signed this **summons** located at:

The Courts of the Laws of the Salvi Islands, PO Box 1, Big Salvi, Salvi Islands.

3. YOU MUST RESPOND TO EACH CLAIM. The Answer is your written response to the Plaintiff's Complaint. In your Answer you must state whether you agree or disagree with each paragraph of the Complaint. If you believe the Plaintiff should not be given everything asked for in the Complaint, you must say so in your Answer.

4. YOU WILL LOSE YOUR CASE IF YOU DO NOT SEND A WRITTEN RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT TO THE PERSON WHO SIGNED THIS SUMMONS. If you do not Answer within 4 days, you will lose this case. You will not get to tell your side of the story, and the Court may decide against you and award the Plaintiff everything asked for in the complaint. If you do not want to contest the claims stated in the complaint, you do not need to respond. A default judgment can then be entered against you for the relief requested in the complaint.

5. LEGAL ASSISTANCE. You may wish to get legal help from a lawyer. If you do not have a lawyer, the Court Administrator may have information about places where you can get legal assistance. Even if you cannot get legal help, you must still provide a written Answer to protect your rights or you may lose the case.

05-16-2010

Plaintiff's attorney's signature

Dated

Dr Peter Funque

Plaintiff's attorney's name

Ian could hardly look at Laura. What the hell?

“Loz...,” he began, unsteadily.

But Laura was silent, looking more dazed than he’d ever seen her before. He opened and closed his mouth a few times and tried again.

“Laura, babe, what, I mean, when, I mean, what the hell is all this about?”

She looked like she’d just been rudely awoken. Her body tensed and she rolled her shoulders around; it was a classic Laura anti-stress move.

“Ian, it was nothing,” she said, eventually. “I mean. There’s not even a mark on the bloody car and that thing looks like it’d fall to bits if you looked at it wrong.”

“But it says... I mean... holy fuck.”

She took the summons back from Ian and read through it again.

“It’s ridiculous Ian, just look at the words. Can you imagine me saying that shit? It was nothing. A tiny little shunt. I mean. Jesus Awe. What the fuck?”

Ian didn’t know what the fuck. He didn’t know what to think at all. A fucking court summons? Couldn’t have been ‘just a shunt’ could it? But then again, he knew there was sod all wrong with the car. At least, nothing newly wrong. There was something wrong with every car in this shithole. And there wasn’t anything wrong with Laura, either. Physically, anyway. Not that he could tell.

“You must... I mean...”

Laura snapped: “I did bugger all, Ian Walsh. This is ludicrous. Absolute bollocks.”

“It says...”

“I know what it says. Look. I was driving home. She stopped short in front and I tapped her bumper. Like, a tap. Tip tap top.”

She knocked on the Formica table to demonstrate: "It wasn't even as hard as that to be honest. I have no fucking idea."

Ian bit his lip. Hmm. This wasn't MC was it. Things were different. How could it have been anything? The car had showed no signs at all of any bump, grind, scrape or clonk. Laura wouldn't make it up, either. It was typical that she'd not want to make a fuss, and it sounded like there was nothing to make a fuss about anyway. But maybe... maybe this was how they amused themselves around here. There was certainly sod all else to do. Get bumped, cry to the rozzers. It was ludicrous, it really was. Cause if it had been serious, Laura would have told him straight away. It was... she'd, not lied, not really, but... he couldn't articulate it.

"Well," he said, forcing a smile. "Fuck these pricks. They want court, they got it. What a load of arsefuck."

Laura smiled too, a little thinly: "I'm sure it's something and nothing."

"Fucking pricks," Ian said, about to go off on one but stopping himself again because the waiter had reappeared with two glasses of iced water and a complementary copy of the day's newspaper. Seemed there was bloody ice everywhere today. He'd check out the implications of the court shit online anyway. No problem.

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Saturday, May 22, 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Keeper Of The Ice Ceremony
Dates Portrayed Nunto Nation
For Their Benefit Of
Scheduling And Costumation
Details To Be Revealed Later,
Says First Person Wilberforce
Jenkins Ross IV, Keeper Of The
Ice And Deepest Voiceres Of
The Representative House Of
The Peoples Currently Today

WILBERFORCE Jenkins Ross
IV, First Person, Keeper Of
The Ice

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Peoples, has portrayed no
dates of the ceremony *More*
– Page 4



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Ian woke up before the alarm had a chance to even bother whistling at him. Game Day. The butterflies were there. The knee was good. A surge of excitement rose through him. He sang in the shower, waking Laura up. She stared toward him, not quite sure where she was. Ian danced over to her and embraced her, singing her name to a tune he made up on the spot. She squealed and giggled and pushed him away.

“OK bozo, OK. Go get your eggs on,” she said. Ian dried himself, pulled on some shorts, and bounded downstairs toward the kitchen.

Who the hell gets up at 5am? It’s ungodly. UnAwely. And who plays sports at 6am? On a Sunday? Mother Country games were strictly Saturdays, midday or thereabouts. Prime lunchtime shows, beamed across the airwaves to an eager nation’s sports fans gathered around their buzzing tellies. Ian would always be playing, of course, and had it not been for that awful foul he’d been stricken with, he may well have made it onscreen himself. She knew he was good. He was bloody good. But for most of the time she’d known him he’d been seeing a clutch of physios, healers, quacks and charlatans on an ever-more-desperate search for a cure. How ironic that it was all just a case of moving to a paradise island. That long after he’d given up on his professional dreams, when it didn’t matter anymore, he and his knee had relaxed enough for him to even consider playing again.

Laura was worried, too. But as she showered, she put those downbeat thoughts away again. Pre-game nerves.

It had been a breakfast of eggs, toast and banana for Ian, and for Laura a single black coffee which she sipped at without tasting. Maybe they'd have food at the game, or maybe she'd eat afterwards. As she drove, she noted how the roads were clear: then again it was still the middle of the night as far as her stomach was concerned. But she was waking up quickly, too, and she didn't complain when Ian whacked the car radio on to what would normally have been an unacceptable level. He was getting himself up and ready for the match, and whatever the heavy metal bilge was he'd found to listen to was, he was kind-of singing along at the top of his lungs. It was near-impossible to decipher the lyrics, because the band seemed to be having a competition to see who could play louder and who could finish the song first. Was that something about a barracuda? Who knows. It was bloody awful.

She was delighted when the Estacion Deportes de Pasapalabra came into view, and she parked up as swiftly as possible, because then she could legitimately turn the engine – and the noise – off.

Mickey came running up to the green car, like a kid high on E-numbers and sugar.

"Hey hey hey hey hey hey hey hey hey hey," he hyperventilated. "Who dis who dis is dis can it be can I see this or is it a miracle a mirage no no no it the only the I-Dawg! Come down man come to watch or play or play buzz buzz buzz! You play? Please play man we need you man."

"Hi Mickey," Laura said. But he had eyes only for Ian, with whom he was already babbling and burbling on about tactics and turnarounds and Gawd knows what else. Mickey's arm was round Ian's shoulder, and he was practically dragging Ian toward the korf court.

Laura's heart filled with love. This was beautiful. She locked the car and at a much more sedate pace walked toward the small set of bleachers where a throng of early fans was already collected. Now she was alone and properly awake for the first time that day, she felt a wave of nausea as the small matter of a court case came back into view. Life was not simple here either was it. She wondered what it would take to make that stupid, unnecessary summons go away again. She reached the knot of korf revellers buzzing around the main stand, and snapped back

into the present. Cah, it was nothing really. The whole thing was a stitch-up. She'd pay whatever fucking fine they wanted to throw at her, and move on. Bollocks to them.

"Hey there stranger," shouted Catarina across the muddle of people. "Over here!"

Laura waved, and made her way through the ripe-smelling fans, apologising as she twisted and turned between dancing packs of semi-naked partiers. Clearly tourists, or expats, they were all various shades of sunburnt white – men and women alike. A miasma of booziness and grassy smoke hung over the crowd. Laura's eyes almost instantly started to water. Whoo-weee, that was strong stuff, whatever they were smoking. Carina, however, looked sharp and alert, and was patting the plastic bucket seat next to her.

"Saved you a spot, Laura. Best seat in the house. I hear Ian's playing! How exciting!"

Laura smiled, and some more of the heaviness she felt ebbed away: "Oh my Lord, he's been like an excited puppy all morning."

"Woof Woof! Big match! Excited here too! All well?"

"Yeah," Laura said. "Yeah, everything's going great. Can't believe there's people drinking already."

Carina laughed: "Ah but schi not the morning for them, sister. Schtill last night for some of us."

As the penny dropped, Laura joined in the mirth. Of course! How funny. She couldn't remember the last time she'd pulled an all-night session, but why the hell not? This was brilliant.

This was familiar territory, at last, even if the personnel mostly weren't, Mickey aside. But that was cool, too: that meant seven more people to learn about, to learn from maybe about the island, and at the very least to have post-win drinks with. Ian started his stretches, as Mickey bumbled about high-fiving people and jumping up and down like a crazed pogo dancer. Hardly textbook-warmup stuff, but there was an exuberance to him that was admittedly appealing. Ian nodded in approval. Mickey was alright really. In small doses. In the right circumstances. As a

team-mate. And that was all that was important now. The unit. Each other. Individuals, together for a common goal: to win.

Mickey clapped his hands together and called the team around him.

“Now, Wolfpack, be hearin,” he began. “We gotta pro-man here. Mebredrin Ian. Roundaplaus please!”

They all clapped enthusiastically, some whooping their welcome. Mickey continued:

“Ian gonna sit in some, that cool?”

The team nodded.

“So, Ian, brotherman, playa, player, beefsteak campione de campioni, this the team ok, we got Korky, Stiff, Baz, and my greasy selfingness and the gals is Abi, Jenga, Xenophon and Astra. No worries bout names fornawtho, you watch some then we bring you in once we get grips, yeah? Cool? Yeah?”

“That’s fair enough Mickey, I can be the eyes and ears on the sideline. I wouldn’t expect to waltz in straight off.”

“Ian you are legend No. 1 and No. 2 too, right and righteous aii. Bring it in, all bods, bring it in.”

All the players huddled together, arms around each other – Ian included – and heads nearly touching. They began to spin slowly clockwise, humming quietly as they did. The spin got faster. The humming louder. Faster. Louder. Faster. Louder. FasterfasterLOUDERLOUDER until they suddenly stopped dead and wolf-whooped to the sky.

Ian joined in. Awoooooooooo! Awoooooooooo! This was awesome. He couldn’t wait to get on court.

Just a few minutes to the throw-off, and by the looks of it the Wolves had their work cut out today: their opponents looked lean and mean, well-drilled and serious. Whilst the Wolves were whooping and twirling around, the Diamonds were being taken through some professional-style shuttle runs and exercises. Their coach, a much older man, sported a whistle, and every

time he blew a piercing peep through it his team adopted a new training aspect. Star jumps. Pheep! Ten press-ups! Pheep! Burpees! The Diamonds clearly knew what they were doing. Laura also knew that whilst Mickey's style of motivation may seem more chaotic, he also had an iron-clad will to win. He hated losing. He'd rather not play than lose. Despite all his daftness and surface chill off the court, he didn't mess around when it came to the matches. Well, it would be fascinating.

"Getting a bit nervous now, I have to tell you," Laura said to Carina.

"Ah no need. Nerves are no use. Exciting is the flipside of the coin. Use them. Ooo, back in two tickles."

And with that Carina got up from her seat and danced her way down the rickety stairs of the bleachers, heading toward a small lorry that had just parked up. A hatch opened in the side, and an awning was put up bearing the letters CDC. Laura got a whiff of BBQ over the stale beer and spliffs, and for the first time that day she actually felt hungry. Carina joined the almost-instant queue that had formed by the food truck, gaining quite an early place due to her sharpness. She'd certainly outrun most of the party people, who were in various states of inebriation and whose motor skills were at various levels of rubbery-leggedness. Carina waved at Laura, mouthing, "Food?"

Laura, now with a stomach rumbling like rolling stock, nodded and gave her friend a double thumbs-up. If it tasted as good as its heady, meaty, grassy, unmistakably charred aroma this would be another Salvi salivation. They were bloody good cooks round here. Maybe CDC stood for Chefs de Cuisine? From what she could see – not a great deal from this angle – it was a local cook. Or, she corrected herself, someone with the same beautiful dark skin tone. Whatever – going by the excitement of the people taking their places in the queue it was someone who defo knew how to spin a spatula.

She tore her famished attention back to the court, where the teams were finishing the coin toss. Looked like Saracens would have the ball first. She scanned the court for Ian. Not in the team? Why not? They had no idea how good he was. Maybe he was their secret weapon. And, there he was, on the opposite side, clapping his hands and shifting his weight from side to side.

He was totally focussed in a way she'd not seen for a while. She hoped it wouldn't be too long before that focus and energy was brought into the game. Diamonds threw off, and their movement was extraordinary. They flew around the court, finding space that didn't seem to exist, before their markers had any chance at all to get near them. And it was already the first zone change. 2-0 to Diamonds, and deservedly so. Oof. She hoped that the Wolves were playing their way into the game. Long way to go, of course.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, these guys are *good*. But things can change rapidly in this game. No worries.

"Heads up Wolves, settle, settle," he shouted. "Play tight, play right."

Mickey clapped his hands in assent and readied himself for the first pass. His face was a picture of determination. This guy wasn't messing around, for sure. Couple of early korfs were neither here nor there. But a couple more would start to be an issue. Just a wake-up call, really.

Oh, that's good by... Astra was it? She's nippy. Got her marker spinning all about the place.

"Yes, shoot, yes! Brilliant!

2-1. Yeah!

And she's got it again!

2-2!

Superstar!

"Wow, heck of a start," said Carina, handing Laura a polystyrene food box and a plastic spork.

"Telling me! Settling a bit now, though."

And it was: the two sides were playing it a touch cagey, with the shot clock operator getting involved more than once for attack zone violations. The scoring had slowed down too. It was now a tactical battle as the players started to work out the styles of their opposite numbers.

Laura opened her breakfast box. It was a kind of dark meat stew, with breadfruit, carrot and some other tubers. It was dense, and it smelled incredible.

“Oh. Wow. Caz. Oh.”

Carina laughed: “But eat! Eat! Eat! This is a rare enough treat!”

Laura needed no second invitation; she skewered a large piece of meat, blew on it quickly to cool it a little, and put it in her mouth. It was still hot from the BBQ, so she had to open her mouth and breathe in a few times which delighted Carina. But oh, my, Reverend of the Holy Awe and all the hurrinado jewels found once more – it was absolutely delicious. Like a Sunday Roast, but more so. Beefy but somehow gamey; a touch of sweetness. With every bite she seemed to get more hungry. Laura was in a world of flavour, flying on the aromatic delectability of a Salvi stew.

“You hate it, right?” Carina said, joking.

“Oh. My. God.”

“You won’t get fresher or better. Nowhere on island. And nowhere off island either.”

“It’s outstanding.”

The two friends ate together, laughing and joking between mouthfuls, whilst on the court the game ebbed and flowed toward half time.

It was great to be back amongst the action, even if he’d not got any time on court yet. The half-time whistle blew, and each time went into its own designated corner. Some sat down, gulping in air, some stood up taking on much-needed water from bottles, and – as ever – there was one

having a sly ciggy. And of course it was Mickey, who took a couple of deep drags before turning to Ian.

“So bred. Whatyathink?”

“Honestly Mick you’ve got them. They’re fast, fast, fast round the court but slow on the switch. Get the ball moving quicker and it’s for the taking.”

“Agreement is definite. My boyo knowsit!”

Mickey put the fag in his mouth, and then offered his hand for a hi-five. Ian accepted, happily.

“So,” Mickey continued, his voice a little muffled by the ciggy. “You feelin’ it?”

Ian was feeling it.

“Mate, I’ve been wanting to jump in all half. Nearly did a couple of times.”

Mickey laughed.

“Let’s give it five or ten then. Seeit, makeit sure, settle settle, then you’re in.”

He gathered the team around him again.

“Guys, we gonna do this. Two korfs nothing. We give them headstart is all. So we roar. What we do? Roar? Roar yeah? Awooooo?”

And they all whooped their best howls at the moon, which was now peeking through a grey-blue sky. Dawn was coming, and things were heating up. Ian looked toward the stand and waved at Laura. She waved back. Even from here he could see she had some kind of food on her face. He made a ‘wipe’ gesture to her. She gave him the thumbs up. The referee blew for the start of the second half. Wolves 6 Diamonds 8. All to play for.

Though the second half had just started all Laura could think about was the magnificence of the CDC, and though she knew she was full she wanted more. Maybe for later. Perfect post-match scan for Ian, too.

“Hey Carina, reckon there’s any left?”

“Oof. Not schure. It’s a quickstep usually.”

Laura left her place in the stands and joined what was still quite a long queue for the food truck. She could see most of the court most of the time, although the view was nowhere near as good at ground level. Didn’t look like Ian was on yet, disappointingly, but the match remained close. From the shouts and groans and cheers of the crowd she could fill in the gaps as to what was going on, more or less. And, Ian’s foghorn exhortations to his team were unmistakable. He was having the time of his life, clearly. The court was his place, and he deserved this moment.

Oh, but that BBQ aroma... Laura wondered how the players were stopping themselves joining the slow-moving queue and grabbing some themselves.

Mickey called a time out, almost exactly halfway through the second half. Scores tied at 11-11, the match was poised on a knife edge.

“Ok Wolves, let’s switch it up. Ian, you’re coming in for Korky. Diamonds’ve prepped us all season, we knowsit. But they’ve not prepped for Ian. Same tactics. Stay fly. Stay fluent. And Ian, enjoy it. We playin hard, and we playin to winland.”

Ian could feel his heart beat through his chest as Korky, a very sweaty man, bear-hugged him and yowled.

“Awoooooo,” Korky yelped.

“Awoooooo,” replied Ian.

Game. On.

Ian glanced up at the bleachers, but couldn’t see Laura. Call of nature, he presumed. He stretched out his calves and steeled himself for the most important seventeen-and-a-half minutes in his Korf career. Each of his teammates clapped him on the shoulder, high-fived, or

gave him the double guns. They'd given it all so far, and now it was time for their ringer to take them over the top. Ian mentally embraced the challenge and felt stronger than he ever had in his life.

The ref blew, and both sides moved into position. Another whistle, and Mickey'd already thrown a pass to Ian, who pivoted beautifully and laid off a hidden hand pass to the prolific Astra. Before her marker could react, she'd scored. Ian clenched his fist in determination and glory. Back in the game, son. Back in the game.

The queue was moving faster now, and Laura was nearing the front. She could hear Ian shouting in an entirely different register. More urgent, more involved. Hey, he was in the game! She was so very near to being served though – and there was a worryingly small pile of polystyrene boxes behind the counter. If she left now, she'd have wasted all that time lining up, and if she didn't get another taste of this stuff soon she'd never forgive herself. Not to mention, of course, taking some back for her athletic hero. She'd catch the last couple of minutes either way.

The game still sounded like it was an end to end thriller; she could feel the tiny hairs on her arms sticking up with the sheer excitement of the scenario. What a place this was. Top notch korfbal, incredible food, the sound of the waves crashing against the shore when play quietened. It was a feast. Almost too much for the senses. Magical.

Then she reached the front of the queue, and bought the second-to-last portion of CDC. She paid for it and happily dashed to her seat, being ultra-careful to spill not a drop. She heard groans from the queue as the food truck's kiosk door slammed shut.

"More?" Carina laughed, when Laura got back. "You sure you no Salvatian somewhere?"

Laura stuck out her tongue, then smiled.

“Your hubby’s one heck of a player you know,” continued Carina. “He’s been running the game since he join. Good defence, good attack, but it’s how he sees the passes. Oh, my word, he’s there again. Go!”

Ian laid the ball off to Astra, who pivoted and feinted the return pass. Instead, she fired a backhand, behind-the-back lower ball out into a space near the penalty spot. The crowd groaned. But then, out of nowhere, came Ian, picking up the pass and in the same movement twisting as he caressed the ball in a wonderful, poetic arc. It was beautiful, and time slowed down to fully appreciate the spectacular, perfect goal that ensued. There was a short silence before everything sprang back into place and the whole ground was in uproar. Even the Diamonds’ coach was applauding. Some things transcend rivalry. 16-13 to Wolves, and only a minute or so to play.

Ian felt otherworldly. Every movement he made just felt like it was meant to be. He was wrongfooting his marker and finding space all over the court, and when he was defending he was there before his designated attacker had even considered what he was going to do. Ian was intercepting, forcing errors, making no-look passes, absolutely bossing it. All his worries about not being up to standard had gone, and he was playing with the confidence of a maestro. He felt the endorphin buzz of athleticism. His brain and body were one.

Mickey Pearce stuck a fabulous pass around the corner, and Ian happily accepted it. He swivelled first one way and then the other, his marker completely outfoxed by his lithe and intelligent movements. Ian knew he was making the big lad marking him look useless, but he also knew that it was because Ian was playing the game of his life. None of it was personal. They’d have a drink after the game, dissect it all, relive it all, re-write it all. The referee put his whistle to his lips as Ian turned his marker one more time, just for fun, and that was when his sneaker got caught in the artificial grass, so that when the beleaguered opponent lunged for the ball, missing it, his momentum took his body-weight inexorably toward Ian’s knee.

At the exact same moment the whistle blew, and the Wolves had won 17-12.

Ian crumpled to the floor, and stayed down.

Ian was laid out on the couch at home, ice pack on his swollen knee. He was utterly distraught. He was drinking beer to wash down three DQX. They were starting to work; he was feeling fuzzy round the edges.

"You were incredible out there," Laura said.

"I know."

He'd been given MVP and both sides had carried him off the field together. The Diamonds had, to a man, shaken his hand. They'd invited him to train with them any time. They'd told him their physio's number. They had been great. And the Wolves were – well. They'd been in awe. Mickey had been in tears. And Ian had gritted his teeth against the pain, taken the praise, and smiled as best he could. But he knew that he was done. He'd felt it snap again. It'd been too early to come back. He felt stupid for even trying. Some of these players were half his age. They were only going to get stronger, and he was only going to get slower and more of a target even if he could get fit again. His knee would be targeted. He knew it. It's what he would have done. He felt old, and useless, and ridiculous. He fell into a deep sleep, where there was no pain, and no dreams to dash.

Ian woke up a couple of hours later, ravenous. His knee was still enormous and he could see the blood vessels reddening it all over. And the pain came back, mentally as much as physically. He was done. No way was he going to go through all that crap again. He loved the game. He was fantastic as a player. He was not going to risk being crippled for the rest of his life either. What now?

The immediate answer to his quandry was provided by Laura, who had a plate of steaming stew in each hand and was walking towards him.

“That smells incredible.”

“Oh, boyo, it is.”

He struggled up as close to a sitting position as was possible, and attacked the CDC like a man who'd never been fed in his life. It was as good as the aroma suggested. No, it was better. Even the throbbing in his knee subsided a little. A lifetime was a long time, wasn't it. You just had to make sure you knew when to close one chapter, and open a new one. Back to the swimming, and take it from there. It had to happen sometime. And he had been incredible out there. If you had to retire, that wasn't a bad note to leave on. He knew people'd be talking about his stellar cameo, and tragic injury, for years. The alternative was becoming another average plodder trying to recreate his youth. And that was an option he'd never wanted. So be it. But did it have to be quite so painful?

Pain, Again

The boss suffers

Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, may have been First Person; he may have been the deepest voicerer; he may have been the Keeper of the Ice. But he was also a man, and his ankle and toe were caught in pain so intense and deep that it was not only stopping him sleeping but actually making him wish he were dead. His wife, Maisie, slumbered in bed next to him. He didn't want to disturb her. But he urgently needed succour from this magnesium flash inside his bones every time he moved an inch. Everything hurt: he had cramp in his hips from staying still for what seemed like hours, and even the tiniest touch of the quilt on his stricken feet brought pain like red-hot, rusty needles being hammered into his flesh, right down through the bone marrow. He could hardly think, so encompassing was this horror. What could he do?

There was only one thing for it: slide somehow out of bed and crawl what seemed like seventy miles to the bathroom. He cursed himself for not having the foresight to load up on NiteQuell Xtra before bed. He'd felt alright then. But he should have known better. The floor was filthy this close. He felt like a wounded soldier dragging himself through burning sand. Why the hell hadn't he gone to the doctor? But then, Dr. Jamerson James, Jim-Jam, the idiot of the class somehow now the most richest doc on Salvi... that clod would just say rest up and stay cool. Well, that's easy to say. He doesn't have a country to run. He don't have Mother Country breathing down his neck to deliver bullshit, massaged financial reports. Even that foolish Baxter Boneshaker knew about the pressure from the families to fix their churches, cars, houses. The Nation Building Fund was the only way to do it. The only way to keep the imports importing, without laying duty on them. If only they knew how Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV was constantly being pulled in two, three, four directions. If only they... but how could they? No picnic, this. Not a prince, not a king. A servant subject to the winds and whims of others. Though he hated to acknowledge it, the only person that seemed to get it was Weegie. He was far too bright to get involved in politics. He just made things happen. Helped things happen. It was probably time the two met over Mead.

His train of thought was stopped rather brutally when Maisie's fart-smell reached him as he grunted and pulled himself toward the ensuite. Usually a three-step walk away, in his current condition he may as well have been swimming to Ripoblika, whilst Blue-tip sharks sharpened their teeth on his bones from the inside. There really was nothing like this pain. A rusty iron rod

burrowing out from inside. Ripoblika. God. Another pain. Another problem. With the Canucks and the Vinlanders and all nonsense up north. Ripoblika starting to get involved. Vespucci wouldn't like it. And what Vespucci don't like, the Mother Country don't approve of. The thing is, Ripoblika got things done. Provided ice from the mountains in freezer units. Patrolled for pirates. Some said there were no pirates. Some said Ripoblika's boats were pirates.

He cried out briefly as another lightning bolt of pure pain surged through him. Nearly there, nearly there. Only one more push and there was the cupboard the toilet the marble floor beautiful and cold on his skin and he reached up and found the box of NQX and thrust five into his mouth. He tried to concentrate on the jingle for the drug, the sleepy-sounding descent into a yawny, perfect, dark and featureless place. All he had to do was wait. He hugged the toilet, pressing his sweaty face into the porcelain side. Please do your work, beautiful friends. He prayed for rest, for release, for the nothingness of sleep. And soon.

Sleep warm and swell, he sang to himself in his mind. Sleep warm and swell with Nitequell. Oh please, Holy Awe. Please swell.

Nitequell

H.O. Moans



How to Get a Job

Ian retires again and is struck with an intriguing scheme; there is work to be had

He'd not told anyone he'd retired from korf, but it was fairly obvious he wasn't going to be running anywhere soon. Nothing broken, nothing out of the ordinary had shown up on the tests. But the scar tissue was only going to increase, hampering him in normal life if he didn't heed the advice to stop putting his knee under stress. He wanted to work. He needed something to do. And he needed to work out how to get through the system.

It struck him that maybe he'd been looking in all the wrong places. He needed better information. And he had that at his fingertips, Internet permitting. It dawned on him that by finding Salvi Islanders online, researching them, observing them, he could work out the systems, the speech, perhaps even what they wanted. That would be invaluable in positioning himself correctly for jobs. He needed to get some insider tips. And like the spammers and the scammers, he could use the infinite malleability of the Internet to do so. He felt clear-headed and laser-guided. This was the way to get on. It was foolproof. Even Baz back home would see the quality scheme he was gonna pull: it was entirely logical, and absolutely right. Ian could even hear Baz crapping himself laughing at the idea.

"Ian my man," Baz told him, in his mind. "You gotta realise that this is people, right. People make things happen. Things don't make things happen. You gotta go to the source."

And the source was somewhere that people talked, anonymously if needs be. People who set up underground, out of the way meetings away from the eyes of the world; to hook up, to fuck, to get naked and honest. These were the places he needed to be, undercover, spying on the motivations and digressions and day-to-day lives of Salvi lot. A cyber-Ian, or cyber-whoever, could get stuck right in, really meet some people, and report back to 'real' Ian, who would learn the language, learn the arcane secrets, download them. From this source material Real Ian would tweak his CVs and his approach. And it would all fall right into place. By disappearing into an Internet persona, Ian would in fact begin to control his destiny. Exuberantly, he began to search for a suitable photo he could nick that would serve as 'his' new profile pic. For 'his' new profile. This time, though, it wouldn't be on SalviIslandJobs.com – he was going for the big game on PerfectMatchLove.com. Insider information. He just had to be fanciable. And look

local-ish. And he just had to make sure he deleted his web history at the end of every session. He was used to that.

Whilst Ian was fiddling with himself over the internet, Laura was having real issues trying to keep her own professional persona intact. It was observation day and as luck would have it she had been placed in one of Mickey Pearce's Phys-Ed sessions. She was having lots of fun, too, in attempting not to laugh her head off at the chaos she was witnessing on the Korfball court. She was at the point of completely creasing up, in danger of dropping her clipboard, watching Mickey Pearce as he stood exasperated, at the edge of the playing area. A game was cack-handedly threatening to break out amidst some truly inept plodding.

"Check the run! Check the run! Ronnie! No, no, you indefendin zone," he shouted, before blowing his whistle and bringing the teams to a halt. The sixteen youngsters caught their breath; their teacher shook his head.

"Ronnie, what zones you at nah?" he asked a blonde girl.

"De... attack?" the rosy-cheeked kid replied.

"And where you standi ight now?"

"Er..." she grinned at him. "Ooopsie."

"Ye'zachly. B'tooopsie ano win federation cups do it?"

Ronnie grinned again. Mickey blew out his cheeks in mock-defeat.

"Lucky we've a few weeks before de big stuff eh. Dunc – chuckit," he said, duly receiving the ball – at quite a pace – from the older Ross brother. Mickey caught his gaze too, which was a mixture of 'what, me?' innocence and a hint of challenge.

"Rightupyan groovers," continued the teacher. "Lass ten: ten laps." The kids all groaned before setting off around the court, many managing somehow to run slower than walking pace. Laura

could hardly bear it. It was hurting her stomach to keep the mirth under control. Observation day was never this rib-tickly back in the Mother Country.

"I's watcha you guys," Mickey told the sixteen 'ballers, whose 'run' had descended into more of an amble in the increasing humidity of a late May day. "Ten laps for lass ten. You done two."

He turned to Laura, rolling his eyes.

"Hey kid," he said. "How'd'ya'gwa'nah?"

She raised an eyebrow, unable to respond for a second. Eventually she ventured:

"Gwan'a'...giud?", adopting some of his strange, Mother Country-vs-TV-vs-island-surf-through-posh-boy patois.

Luckily, he laughed, and so did she – it was sweet release to let go. Mickey Pearce looked delighted and joined in gormlessly. Presently, they both caught their breath as the bubbling happiness subsided a tad.

"Hey I was thinkin about hubbyster," Mickey said. "Tough tough tough kneebrackle."

"Yeah. He's got it strapped up again. Doc says lots of water therapy. Ian says beer counts, cause it's made of water."

"Ahaha he totally funny what a man hero of his moment hero of the game man woo-whee. Hey, how's his jobbin?"

"Ah not so good," Laura replied. "He is trying really hard but no luck so far."

"Yeah tis a tricky one. Did you speak wit de big boss doh? Him gwan need exam heads soon nuff."

"Um..."

"Exams coming up – invigilators innit. Body can't invigil his own subjy, sayin? So need nuff heads to fill in."

"Um..."

“lan-ster can step up, help out, git paid, nah’mean?”

“Oh hang on I get it. Body... teachers can’t invigilate their own exams so lan could help?” she eventually translated, with Mickey nodding his head rapidly in assent. “And is that, I mean, does that usually happen?”

“Dis Salvi Islands man. All safe. Tek word, it truth. Scuse me now, I gwan dismiss the piglets.”

And with that Mickey ambled back toward his now barely-moving group of teenagers. Laura headed in the direction of her classroom before rapidly turning and walking to the administration block which housed the office of the head of studies. She giggled again. Those kids had the measure of Mickey, for sure. He was a daft little one. Such fun. To think the year had nearly passed, too. She looked down at her clipboard and checked out the upcoming month. Not too bad, all told. Not like the stress and exam mark-chasing back home. Yes, the kids would have their tests. They had to, really. But given the uncertainty about everything in the Mother Country, there was a cloud of strangeness over everything at the moment. Those poor sods: all they saw would be jobs disappearing, or hours diminishing, or pay being cut. Not quite the same in the sun. They were insulated here. No. Not insulated – protected. And the summer looked a decent one, once the exams were finished here too. June first though:

JUNE 2010

SUBJECT MODERN STUDIES PERIOD _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
TWO WEEK	1	2	3 Departmental Meeting 10am	4 Discovery Day Holiday (Big Mercy) (School Shut)	5 Discovery Day Holiday (Sister Islands) (School Shut)	6 7
THREE WEEK	8 Celebration of the birth of Ash Moon: Country Members' Day Bank Holiday (All Islands) (School Shut)	9	10 Spellchecking advisory seminar, 5pm. Required to attend: all teachers. Leader: Erre Dosdedos	11	12	13 14
FOUR WEEK	15	16 Day of thought: "Why we must be careful discussing online topics politics." Speaker: Godwin Slaw.	17	18 To-day is to be discussed (possible cancellation of cessation of activities).	19	20 21
FIVE WEEK	22 Earliest possible break to fresh activity. (possible cancellation)	23 Start of Spinyfish season (not observed).	24 End of Spinyfish season (not observed)	25 All staff to attend.	26	27 28 Sunday: Service at the Behest of The Very Reverend of the Church of the Holy Awe (cancelled)
SIX WEEK	29 "Oh God! The mechanics of transformation" Speaker: Hunang S. Fluga. 6.30AM, refreshments advised.	30 Sports Day.				
WEEK						

A week later and the upshot of Laura's chat with the Head of Studies was that Ian had had to get up and get dressed in Real Work Clothes for the first time in as long as he could remember. One quick car ride later and an uncomfortably-shirted Ian stood at the front of a converted gym, which was full of desks in equally-uncomfortable rows. Each desk had on it a white booklet. Each desk's chair was filled with a pupil. Each pupil looked at the clock. The hands moved uncomfortably slowly. The hands of the pupils sometimes shook a bit. Ian sat down at his own desk, facing them. He didn't quite know what to do: the Head of Studies was supposed to be there, but he wasn't, so Ian couldn't do all that much. To try and keep himself from making eye contact with anyone, he carefully read the paper, trying to ignore the stifled coughs and low murmurs of the examinees.

The front page gave him a start. It suddenly struck him with some force that he'd been on-island for nearly a full cycle. It was something of a shock to read the headlines about the upcoming hurrinado season. It seemed like only a week or two ago that the island was partying for the end of the last one. Christ, what was this place? How the hell did they keep it up? It scared the shit out of him, and he wasn't afraid of admitting it. At any moment you could be knocked into the sea by a bloody 100mph wind. The island could be levelled overnight. It was insane. And now the same insecurity, the same unsettling instability again. The weather didn't care, did it? Ultimately all you could do was be armed with knowledge: but even the best of knowledge would be no use if one of those beasts hit. Everything would be flattened. Houses, cars, people washed away. Even planes could be smashed out of the sky by the ferocity of these things. You heard stories about it: up in the air, fine and dandy, then you hit a pocket of unexpected weather and that's all she wrote. An explosion, a wing fails, an engine dies, and... well. It was too much to think about, and it made his stomach lurch. How the fuck did the Salvation people deal with this, year after year after year? Was it really worth it? Shit, for months on end you could be snuffed out at any one moment. This was no way to live. And back home, summer was beginning: financial crap or otherwise, there was a lot to be said for heading back there for a few months. Maybe Laura felt the same. And maybe he could pick up some work there, too. It was worth considering. For now, though, his eyes widened as he continued to read:

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Wednesday, 25 May, 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Storms expected in hurrinado season this year are 12 is

There is supposedly to be twealv (13) storms, named, durimng the Hurrinado Season, which beginning next Tuesday, 1 June, will run until the 1 December as normal, or 30 November to be exact.

The names of the storms follow the pattern of names. This year the names as stated by a release to the press by the Osbert Ace Weather Institution Limited (Unoiffical) will be.

Jenga; Kaka; Lastbert; Max; Norbert; Osbert; Pax; Quentin; Robert; Starman; Tubert; Unclebert.

That is eleven, whivch are expected to range from storm grade 1 gthrough to a posibble full strength hurrinado of strength 5.

Insert graphic.

There has been threteen storms before, which

including the big ones has been bad. The islands are reddy preparing to do their usual. Pic here please.

Preperping tips

- Flashlight
- Tins food
- Tins opener
- Candels
- Cleen water to drinking
- Waters for washing purposes
- Lavatorial paper
- Sandpit
- Medicle articles
- Whissle
- Sticky tape
- Mapps
- Plenty batries
- Wind-up radio or batrys radoi
- Remember phoens may not work
- If boat make sure to tie up in safe harbour in a warning

- Store perishing goods up in higher ground like attic
- Keep eye on newes at all times
- Storage of all important documents in safe dry place inside plastic wallets
- If pets think how they need eat, wash, lavatorials, digging holes for example
- O soap grab fing next no derty pant
- If near floodaba area keep away from window and go upstairs

Trip for leader First Person of the House of Representatives, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, has to vote on Vinland-Canuck war plans with international peacekeep – MORE P4

God that paper had gone downhill – it was barely readable. He was no writer, but even he could tell that this was garbled as hell. Before he could turn to Page Four and see what that war nonsense was all about – probably the usual Wilberforcian bullshit - Ian realised that everything was suddenly appreciably quieter in the room. He looked up to see the children sitting to attention. The Head of Studies, a man who looked like he had been born in his forties and stayed there for decades accumulating spider webs behind his ears, had appeared.

“We will begin at 9am precisely,” said the HoS. Forty-two candidates shuffled nervously in their seats. “Please read the paper carefully before writing. Calculators are allowed. Does anybody require a dictionary? No? You will have two hours – that is 120 minutes – and you should answer all questions. If you require anything, please inform Mr. Walsh.”

Ian stood nervously, not knowing whether to smile or not. The kids looked so young, and yet at the same time he felt he had only left school months before. The oppressiveness of the room, the situation, assaulted him. It had been two decades, give or take, since he’d last been sat in those chairs, but still he felt the jumpy vibe. God, he was glad it wasn’t his turn anymore. He was cheered by the fact that he was getting 20 NRP an hour to watch these poor sods sweat over their exam, which he knew was by far the better deal.

“OK candidates. Turn over your papers please. You may begin,” the Head of Studies said as the clock’s small hand ticked over the twelve. Papers rustled, pens were clicked, brains were engaged.

The Head of Studies shifted his weight from one foot to the other, winced a little, and whispered to Ian.

“The registers are on the desk – check they’re the same as their own cards. I’ll be back just before 11 to wrap it up. My number is on the contacts sheet if you need me. Thank you.”

“OK thank you,” replied Ian, accidentally stage-whispering loudly enough for a couple of the front rows to look up. The Head of Studies’ brow furrowed briefly, before nodding his assent.

The older man limped out of the room, closing the door with an incongruously loud thump. Ian was as alone as anyone could be with three and a half dozen other people in the same

room. A thought struck him: they were all alone, weren't they? As in, all of them were alone, together. All in their own little bubble. Even answering the same questions, they weren't going to have the same answers. The handwriting would be different, the phrasing different, the approach different. The results would be different, too. No, he really didn't envy them.

Ian picked up the register and began his walk down the rows, checking off the numbers on each kid's identity card with the information on the sheet. It was still only ten minutes past nine when he'd finished. But it'd felt like an hour. He could feel the aircon drying his pit-sweat. Could they see it? He sat down behind the desk, straightening up the pile of additional exam papers as silently as he could. And, for that matter, what did they see when they saw him? He could only wonder. He studied the faces in front of him. They were so young, sat there in their uniforms. So... fresh and untainted; there was no posturing here, just deep thought and the occasional chewed pen top. A particular blonde girl seemed to be staring right at him. He averted his eyes before he realised she was probably just staring into space, trying to locate or recall something from another building, another lesson. He looked up again and caught her eye. She smiled at the connection, not without a touch of embarrassment. Ian checked the register. Estrella-Cruz, Veronica. Cool name. Pretty girl. He settled back and tried not to look at the clock awhile. Doing nothing could be so bloody difficult couldn't it?

9.32AM

Where's the paper? Damnit that bloke's nabbed it. Cheeky spaz. This room's got korfbal markings on the floor. What are the other ones? They're white. Red. Blue. That must be three games in here. More of course possible. Shiny floor would make everyone slip. Why so shiny? Where do they keep the mats? Crashmats. Blue. Jump over the horse boy! Do it! Go! Now! Runrunrunrunrunrun bounce anddddddddddd landouch. The mat's deep. Comfortable to land. Worth the rest of it. God so long ago. Desks desks look at the desks rows aren't straight sort of curvy lines like fish scales in 3D up so close not so smooth now up into the distance close up fish scales yeah the kids aren't kids they're... they're fleas. Do fish have fleas? Waterfleas. Why not? Fleabites everywhere. Mosquitoes here. Bloodsuckers. Poncing

off hard-earned hard-learned blood. How does blood know where to go? Always down the same routes. Pump pump pump goes the heart you can hear it if you try like a clock tick. Loud clock in here. Maybe all our hearts are set to the tempo of the clock tick. Tick tock tick tock. Back home tick tock too. Baz'd be on his second coffee by now. Or third. Depending. Ach wish I was there winding him up. Tick tock. Mind, no guarantee of anything in Mother Country now is there. All going to shit. Banks, loans, companies going pop left right and upside down. Tick tock for them too. I'll give him some shit online later. Scheming no doubt. Big Plans. Always has them. Miss that too I spose. Bloody Baz bastard.

10.01AM

One two three four five six seven eight nine... electric plug-power points... like faces. Not enough holes for faces. Weird little things. Why is that one up so high? What is that white box next to it anyway. Internet? No. Hidden cameras? Watching us well I'm watching you now if kids not here I could flick a V but I'm doing it with my eyes now so fuck you. Stairs at the back to what? Sound desk? Looks like a good vantage point. Will investigate later. Would be a great venue. Up top there's lights. God look at them all. Lights everywhere. Rave rave rave. Expensive. Scaffold up there to crawl about on. High up. All those kids look like ants like fleas like fish fleas drowning in water for a fix. Speakers? Air con? Meshed up. Mash it up. This room just for exams now could be easily gig venue korfball court maybe kabaddi kabaddi kabaddi or handball all the major sports no problem if it wasn't in school it could be a sports centre add a stage there's a gig venue there's a bar hole there behind the mesh only see that in bars when they pull down the last orders and close up ah god rum and coke rum and coke yes please and then home for heated debate ha like in School Disco the other year by god Laura looked good all the girls women really in tight little white shirts and skirts ponytails pigtails ten fifteen years after school but bloody hell much bigger tits, much more welcoming hips oh god oops here comes Little Elvis best postpone the walk around til he goes back to sleep. Nothing for you here little man, back to your bed.

10.24AM

They keep looking to the left there's nothing there except a fire alarm and the doors is that for their visual recall or whatever. Red fire alarm why always red. Fire orange red white green blue even. Red rarely. Easier to see. Bricks also red. Orange. Wall orangey red from here stand up have a walk check nobody is... well whatever the fuck what am I gonna do anyway. Not my problem is it. God that lad sweats fucking buckets unbelievable worse than me little twat hi there little Stella Crue don't chew that pen at me that's dangerous I am man you know this wall is many different colours hundreds of them the same bricks from the same batch different colours all rougher close up smooth in and everything is like that isn't it. Pictures of a rounded head of a pin with a flea on it but prick yourself with it and there's blood remembering where to flow to again yup. Nothing's pointy really is it just matters of degree depending how close you get. Really, really close up bricks blur again though so don't get too close to them. Walls. Walls making wars. War games. Warty wars. Stupid everywhere. Stupid Canucks. Stupid Vinlanders. Always wanting more swampland. What was the point of that? Bricks. Pricks. Dicks.

10.42AM

Heads on desks half of them have they finished or given up or died hope not really imagine that half of them expired gone to meet their maker eaten their last breakfast done their final shit god 42 arses here all shat this morning disgusting then sit here as if nothing's happened all clean cut and schoolkiddy make that 42 plus one man invigilator *Invigilation Man! Faster than a spunking bullshit! special powers: walking about checking nobody is cheating but not really arsed either* tick tock tick tock. When's that dodgy-footed bloke coming back with my paper, the thief? Maybe it's a false foot false feet forthwith without foot. Windows mostly covered how expensive was all that curtain blackout stuff anyway some of the lights are on ridiculous it's bloody bright bright bright oh surprise surprise it's sunny hooray great view though great view the one window uncovered how did they get the lawn so green must be paint fuck me when did that massive piano get here? Sure it wasn't before. Baby grand? Real grand? When do they grow up? Black drapes there too. Massive thing. Must have appeared somehow when I wasn't looking tick tock I wonder if I should announce 18 minutes left or whatever best not well let's have another wander about and see how Shelly Crust is getting on and Ross Dungham and all the rest and would it really

make any difference to the world if I got all the papers in now and burnt them? In 20 years, 10 years, 5 years they'll all be scrabbling around for work anyway maybe as Spectacular Persons oh that was a lark wasn't it finally got an address to send CV to and fuck all back since what was it six months it was sent pfft Spectacular Twatburgers more like even aha window frame again here comes the Head of Studies Exams whatever beading up the hill almost falling over red face clearly in pain shit wonder what it is gout probably the gouty fuck don't care really and soon game over thank you for all the work amen get back to the pool walk back get sweaty and jump the fuck straight in splash splash yes yes.

Weegieland?

Lead experiences contradictions

There are a few things that are treasured by young Salvatians: free-diving for conch and lobster, humping in the sand dunes, and getting ahead of the game. There was nobody amongst the new generation better placed than Lead to do the latter: his uncles Weegie and Wilberforce gave him potential access to all sorts of knowledge, back-room deals, or political shenanigans. As yet Leadbetter wasn't entirely sure of what these schemes entailed. But he knew that he was in pole position to benefit, as and when the opportunities were offered and/or created. Hence he found his face reddening and his neck sheening with beads of sweat when the invitation to Weegieland landed on his phone.

This was a step up from Lunchventure; the back room, the Inner Sanctum was tough enough to get into, but the man man's mainland was another thing entirely. Everyone knew the tales, of course: that the toilets were made of gold, that there was a live bear as a pet, the collection of submersibles, the tame group of Seetime Ghosts. The harems, the scarems, the whatevers. Probably mostly bullshit. But you really never knew what was nonsense, what was smokescreen and what truth was being obscured by rumours. Rumours not entirely discouraged by Weej himself.

Weegie had attended Lead's school once upon a time, same year group as Lead's dad, but much of his history was cloudy. What was known about him was that his family had always gone for inter-island schemes. Broadly, export and import. Lead stared at his phone and read the message again:

MESSAGE 1

LEADBETTER SENDIN CAR 4U SEE YOU AT WEEGIELAND 10PM TALK
RSN8 – WEEJ

He checked the number. Not a Salvi phone code. Yep, that was him alright. None of the Sanctum – or as Weegie called them, 'the associate fellows' – had a Salvi phone code. In fact, it didn't seem to correlate with any country at all. Lead hadn't been surprised when he'd first googled the number: no links to anywhere. It was genius: The Sanctum's phones were nearly always found miles away from any actual incident that might attract official

attention. In making them so easy to triangulate, the Sanctum's cellphones therefore became a decent alibi. Salvi ran pretty smoothly. Lead wondered what his dad and Weegie had got up to way back when. They were - friends? Associates? – well, they were close, his mamma'd said. Cousins, or at least Salvi-cousins, and a shared spirit. But whilst Christopher JR Dudgeon had straightened up and joined the police force, Weegie had trodden the muddier, more lucrative trail. No doubt their paths had crossed numerous times professionally, and Leadbetter had dim memories of the two laughing together, Mercy Mead in hand, at Christmas barbecues. When it came down to it, it was all part of the same game wasn't it. Just getting on with it, getting on with each other, keeping the island more-or-less in check. Whatever the alchemy, whatever sticking-plaster constructions, whatever backroom or back pocket deals – Salvi retained its heart and its equilibrium. Maybe Weegie wanted to let Lead into some of the secrets. Maybe it was Lead's time to reach the Sanctum. Maybe, maybe, maybe. It could all work out so beautifully, with Weegie's experience – and cash – backing Fist Hook's assault on the world. Off this godforsaken island and international, through the network. Everyone had heard of his contacts in Ripoblika – rumour had it that even Uncle Wilby was in on that one. Typical of this fucking island that it was all on the hush-hush. There were reasons the bigger neighbour island had never really done the obvious and invaded. Little Salvi, all shades of Salvi, from the oil-black Boneshakers to the smooth, henna-coloured Ross clan, hell - even the pink sunburned paper Salvations, one and all they continued to fight on the world stage. There were goods – a euphemism if ever there was one - coming in and out of the ports in both directions that no doubt smoothed that relationship. Lead didn't know what, but he did want in: what better way to launch the band properly? Weegie would help. And Wilby would grant some delicious NBF cash. It was inevitable. And then... well. Maybe Vespucci? Those touriss idiots were one thing but the country was a whole other deal. That place was enormous. A huge market – a huge potential audience. A huge number of new devotees to Fist Hook, a huge amount of anticulturalist to reach. Yes, this is how the world would change: music was the first step. It was the delivery mechanism. Then the new generation would zoom ahead of anything that had happened before, too, once the message truly spread.

It was 8pm. Lead picked up his bass, hit the SuperFuzz pedal and started doodling a riff. His heart was beating fast; the notes would have to be energy-fied to keep up. He was jumping inside; the riff was too.



COOL! SPEAK SOON! -LBJR!! SHARK U L8R!!

It was unclear who was sharking who, though. Weegie was the slipperiest of the lot sometimes. Even Wilberforce was reliable in comparison. The bloody grown-ups – the write-offs, Doogie called them – were a complete mess. A complete, tangled, knotty mess: the Sargasso that stinks out the beach. Lead reached to turn off his amp. It'd do everybody good if he was quiet for now.

Courting

Strain and coffee

Ian stared at the court building. The grandly-named The Court of Justice of Salvi was anything but imposing. In fact, it was an ugly prefabricated 1960s nightmare, reinforced by concrete blocks. Christ, man, it looked like a shit temporary school classroom. Or a portaloos. There was a small frieze on the wall with the Salvi Islands flag and a pair of scales, but no sense of gravitas, justice, lawfulness: just unsettling ordinariness. It was worse than a full-force, parliamentary-oaked and dusty old edifice would have been. The ghosts here were modern and snide rather than old and chain-clanking. It was terrifying in its blandness, because in its blandness was also the truth that some people went in here and did not come out into the sun again: like back home, for some people it was dock-taken-down-back-of-van-straight to the clink. Do not collect 200 NRP. Even in this rare paradise of weirdness, even here with its grassy cocktails and its beachy bikini-times, the laws of the land and life ruled.

Ian was sweating; the suit was wearing him today. There was no reason for a country to be so bloody hot. Sweltering humidity assaulted him. It wasn't clear where his sweatglands ended and the heavy, damp air began. He was chewing his way from slippery breath to kitchen-fierce inhalation. He and Laura held hands briefly before withdrawing at the clamminess of each other's skin. The shared ickiness seeped out of them, and neither could stand it. It smelt musty, as if it couldn't be arsed getting out of bed.

Laura shifted in her seat and Ian considered his surroundings. It was an average room with rows of what could have been school desks facing a stage on which was a hefty oak table. Next to that was a lectern-type pulpit which he guessed was for the interviewee, the accused, the plaintiff, the Laura. The small and textured-opaque windows, high up the walls, gave the whitewashed room the ambience of a public toilet. The grubby carpet tiles, frayed at the edges and smoothed slippery in the main walkways, made the place more like a run-down public library. One where even the books had given up and emigrated in search of a better life. There was long-standing water damage staining the polystyrene-tiled suspended ceiling. It looked like the room had shat itself.

Ian scratched his stubble and tried to look relaxed-and-intelligent, but not cocky. It made him look shiftier than ever.

A commotion outside caught Ian and Laura's attention and they both turned around nervously. Through the same door they'd entered walked in a trio of suit-wearing Salvations, each clutching sheaves of paper. They were followed by two more people, who were doing their best to carry an enormous manual typewriter between them. This double-act was clad in orange overalls, badges duly confirming they were part of the Setup Crew. The three gents, meanwhile, were conversing deep in Island patois, laughing and slapping each other on the back. The furniture seemed to get noisier; Ian could hear the tables shifting as the men walked past them. He could hear his sweat dripping from his forehead into his eyes. It was singularly unpleasant. The typewriter-carriers eventually, with much half-formed cursing, oofs and grunts, managed to clang the humungous metal artifact on an unsuspecting table which bent with the weight. The Setup Crew made their way out, mumbling and complaining at the heft.

One of the three suits sat down and loaded a sheet of paper into the contraption.

The second gentleman – wearing bicycle-wheel shades – carried on walking and took up his position behind the big desk.

The third took his place in Laura and Ian's row. As he did, the second gent pulled out his phone and pressed a couple of buttons which beeped grudgingly as he mashed them with his sausagey digits. From the tiny speaker, a weedy heraldic trumpet wheezed out a rank fanfare. It had the timbre and tone of a musical Christmas card. It finished, and he spoke.

"This being the judgement of the court on this day; court is in session. Presiding is myself which being known to the court is Justice Solodedos. On keys to type is Scribe Mentiroso. Court is started, it being 9.30am of the time of the Salvi."

Halfway through, it became difficult to make out the words, as the scribe began hammering away at the ancient, rusting typewriter. He was some coder: Tap-tippy-tap. Tippy-tippy. Tippy-tap-tippy-tippy. Tippy-tap-tippy-tippy. Tap. Tippy-tippy-tippy-tippy. Tippy. Tap-tap.

Ian and Laura strained to follow, both holding their breath in case the noise of exhalation made it worse. The gentleman next to them was looking at his own phone. At that point the sound of the machine stopped. The scribe had caught up with the judge, who was now glaring at the two Mother Country natives. Laura smiled nervously. Were they meant to do

something? Ian looked around him. What was happening? They'd been told they didn't need a lawyer at this stage – a preliminary hearing – so who was this bloke? And, for that matter, why wasn't the so-called victim of the so-called traffic crime here either? There seemed to be no way to find out the answer.

Justice Solodedos spoke again.

"Representative Bush, are we keeping you from anything important?" he asked of the phone-diddler, who looked up sharply.

"I am sorry, uh, siwre but a matter have, uh come to attention. May I wrequest an adjourne-a-ment til ah, uh, further notice, prwease," beetled the lawyer.

"The representative will approach the bench."

Tap-tippy-tippy. Tippy-tippy. Tippy. Tippy-tippy-tippy. Tap-tippy-tap-tippy. Tippy-tippy-tap. Tap-tap.

The representative and the judge huddled together over the phone, their faces lit up wanly by the screen. Each wore a different kind of frown. There was some murmuring between them that not even the scribe could grasp, which Ian wasn't unhappy about. His perspiration was stinking now; Laura was even scratching her nose which had identified the smell, although clearly not yet told the brain about it.

Justice Solodedos nodded his head.

"The court is adjourned until further notice. Mrs. Welsh, an officer will become in touch with you and a summons duly re-raised."

Laura nodded. Ian could feel himself starting to boil with annoyance as the scribe started up again.

Tippy-tippy-tippy-tippy. Tippy-tap. Tippy-tippy-tippy-tippy. Tippy-tap.

"Please remain upstanding until Justice Solodedos has taken his leave," said Justice Solodedos as he brushed past Ian and Laura, beckoning Representative Bush with him. The lawyer scooped up his papers and the pair left, closely followed by Scribe Mentiroso. As Ian and Laura stood, shellshocked and angry at their wasted time, a couple of red-jumpsuited lads bustled in the door. These ones' badges proclaimed Takedown Crew.

These ones sang as they worked; Ian recognised it as the National Song of Salvi. And, in due course, the Takedown Crew left the pair alone in the small, nondescript room, unsure of what exactly had just transpired.

“Let’s leave,” Laura said. “I really need a coffee. My head is absolutely banging.”

Ian nodded, and the pair threaded their way through the eerie, heavy silence toward (temporary?) freedom.

Ten minutes later, Ian was sitting opposite Laura, holding an enormous cup of green tea with both hands. It was freezing in Paperman’s, the air-con set to arctic levels, presumably to make the prospect of warming beverages an enticing one. Laura was similarly wrapping herself around her cup, staring at her capuccino in silence. It had passed so quickly, so matter-of-factly, and yet felt so serious. Without the judgement they were stuck in purgatory. And this purgatory, disguised as a coffee-house, was clad in jungle green, with palm fronds hanging between faux-wood beams and numberplates of Vespuccian cars on the walls. The counter held the usual mix of machinery, grinders and steaming bits and bobs plus an array of cakes and sandwiches ready for the lunchtime rush. At this time of the morning, though, the food was untouched and rather artistically laid out in the neatest of rows, each label facing forwards with the Paperman’s logo prominent. It was a mixture of familiar flavours and the downright odd; Classic BLT next to something called Tequila Turtle, Tuna Salad rubbing bready shoulders with another called Cayman Dreams. Ian wished he was hungry enough to find out what that one was. Wasn’t it a kind of crocodile? He wished he could remember so he could tell the extremely-attractive counter girl the joke about making it snappy. But he couldn’t.

Instead, he wrestled with his thoughts on the court appearance. What exactly was going on?

“Are you OK?” he eventually asked Laura, who looked up, slightly startled.

“Um. I think so. Yeah,” she said. “It... I wish they’d just got on with it. It’s...”

“Yeah.”

"I mean it's a morning off work. I've still got the kids for a few weeks. We're doing handovers. I need to be there. I've not got time."

Ian bit his tongue, trying not to rise to the bait. Course, he thought, I do have time don't I? I'm the house husband. Doing my fucking best. He said nothing, but clearly his expression had betrayed him. He felt it before he saw it: Laura looking at – into - him.

But she softened: "Babe... we gotta keep trying..."

Ian let himself scowl: "Trying yes. Doing, no. This place..."

"This place?"

"You know what I mean," Ian said glumly. "This island ... you know. Who you know. Who your family is."

"Not following."

"The one whose car you absolutely wrecked and had to go to hospital and is dead and the car's on fire and whatever other shit she's made up since."

"??"

"That, Lozenge, is Clarice Jenkins-Ross. Hyphenated. Same as that spluttering twat. The main man. Wilberfuck Joking-Toss. The bloke in charge. With the lisp. And the limp."

"Ah fuck," Laura swore. "Wilberforce. Shit. No wonder."

"Yeh. And she's like Director of Roads or some shit or whatever."

"Jesus," Laura said.

"Yes, the irony is impeccable isn't it."

They fell silent again, both processing this information. After a beat, Laura frowned and addressed Ian again, this time an edge in her voice.

"So... why... it's interesting that I'm only learning this now, don't you think?"

"I, uh, thought..."

"Ian."

"I mean... I am sure I said..."

"God's sake. Bit of an important bit of knowledge, don't you think? Like, this woman is family with the First fucking Person. Something like that wouldn't slip your mind easily." She paused, before adding, sarcastically: "Would it."

"I'm sorry."

"Apology not accepted, Mr. Walsh. Now we've got to go through this whole rigmarole again. I can't just take time off work. I have one personal day a year. That's it. Two sick days then a doc's note. I've got a pile of prep to do. Marking. Reports. Fuck."

Ian knew better than to reply. This unexpected limbo was the last thing anyone needed. No judgement, no moving on. Shitting hell.

The tense atmosphere was broken by the door bursting open, bringing with it a gloopy heat. The pair both gazed into their drinks again.

Ian looked up. The new arrival looked familiar.

It was the court scribe, Mentiroso. And he scowled at them like they were dogshit on his drive.

Ian and Laura's eyes met. Laura exhaled, massaged her temples with her left hand and with the right reached into her bag for the pack of DayQuell Xtra. Ian reached for the newspaper. Looked like things were getting serious in this part of the world, too. He was going to read out the latest in the growing conflict up north to Laura, but she was glaring at the back of Mentiroso and Ian was a bit worried that if he said anything at all then she would crack, jump onto the scribe's back, start biting his head and screaming with insanity. So he read the paper silently and wondered what might happen next:

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Tuesday, June 8, 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Lots of things happening., folk!

It has been a glorious week so far for heavy storytelling, according to government newspaper sources. Hereby and therewith we are happy and present to give you a list of headline-grabbing tales to which a read can be made.

1: ANGER FADES WHILST TRUTH BEWITCHES MAN

Citizens of the Sister Islands, Spe Salvi and Salvi Bach, were due their annual grudge match of Fantasy Korfball playing with extreme frenzy and the winner was revealed.

"I am glorious to presenting this award," murmured the referee, Darius Castigation III, the referee for the.

It was a hard-fought battle after which the annual word telling story began. Initially, there was resentment on the part of the loser, but after hearing a story of magnificatory truth, the man was said to be "Bewitched" by the beauty of the true-life tale as told at his face, in the guttural style. *Pics – Page 1*

5: TENSIONS RISE UP NORTH IS IT WAR MAYBE

Reports suggest that Vinland has mobilised troops on its disputed border with Canuck. This is in response to unconfirmed data that the Canucks had sent out electronic airmachinery into Vinnish airspace, for the reasons of spying upon their neighbours.

The growing dispute has been denied by representatives of the Vinlanders, who were reported as telling the *Mother Country Chronicle* thus: "We have no need to put someone before a cat's nose," said Odin Eierdereealle, foreign minister at the Vinland Alpingi.

"All is well."

The Canucks were contacted for comment by the *Mother Country Chronicle* but were unable to be contacted, reported the *Mother Country Chronicle*. The article was published in the *Mother Country Chronicle*.

The Association of Nations also had no comment to make, according to the *Mother Country Chronicle*. *Parts of this report are credited with copyright to the Mother Country Chronicle*. We have contacted the *Mother Country Chronicle* for permission.

3: DATES SET FOR ICE CEREMONY SOON COME

Preparations for the annual Keeper of the Ice Ceremony are now well under wad, with each district working on their floats and costumes. The Sentinel would like to hear from you if you have something special planned. Please leave an email at our post box if your company, school, bar, family, supermarket, transportation providing company, utility company or other company is planning something special and we would love to add your picture to our gallery. We are jivin pomprest! This is your festival! *More – Page 4*

Wilberforce Goes to Ripoblika

Another trip for the boss; lan flickers

Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV sat unhappily in a tiny anteroom in the Marshall Grover III Air Landing Facility. On the bloody road again. In the air again. Another pointless bloody meeting. For show, for headlines, for 'good will' on both sides. Those bloody Ripoblikans, you had to hand it to them: they knew the power of public relations. Friendship Meetings. Meetings to Sign Contract of Mutual Understanding. Handshakes of Hope Across the Seas. He clutched his diplomatic bag (full to the brim with hard currency as ever, he assumed, courtesy of WGR, but he knew better than to open it to check). All to grease the wheels. All kinds of nonsense that boiled down to the same thing, the same headline that would never, ever be printed. The headline that read:

Ripoblika Taunts Vespucci Through Friendship With Salvi

It made Wilberforce's soul fray at the edges. He had to go there again and go through the fucking rigmarole of it all. And, then, well, another meeting, except this time up north to the Vesspucian bloody capital, to give rum-cake and Mercy Mead as a present to First Lady, a diplo-bag full of Ripoblikan's finest most banned cigars for the Big Man. Always with the fucking sprogs running around, snot-nosed little twerps. But it kept it all smooth here too. Regularly reaffirming The Historical Accord Between Vespucci and Mother Country Territories, saluting flags and eating hamburgers til you were sick of them, and then sicking them up. It was a ridiculous world. It really was. And there he was, in the middle, being shaken up, shaken down, used by both sides. Then there was the Mother Country, the budgets, the expectations they had. What the hell was he supposed to do? There was nothing he could take them that would help. They needed no trinkets. They just needed a quiet life. And the occasional diplo-bag of Jim-Jim for the idiot Bareback. But that was good, too. That little smoking habit of his was leverage wasn't it. But it could only be deployed once. And, well, that would be explosive. No, it was better to play along, to play dumb. To leave the bag by the side of the table. But not to explode. Bareback would pick it up later. Another dance. The Mother Country didn't even know about that one.

They had other things on their minds anyway: what they needed was somewhere that asked no questions and made no trouble. Somewhere to hold the cash. Somewhere that would deny... or somewhere that could be denied. Depending. Maybe both at the same time. There were some mental gymnastics required too in order to hold both squeaky-clean-ness and avarice as concurrent ideals. It was the hardest thing Wilberforce had to do. Everyone

knew, but nobody knew. It was how it ever was. Except it wasn't, was it? He wished for a time before all of this. The time his grandfather had always talked about. A boat visiting the island was a cause for celebration back then. A tuttle would be slaughtered if the crew was Vespuccian, or a pig if it was the Ripoblikans, a BBQ over a firepit, drinking, singing, sharing of stories. Sharing of lives. Back then, people were the same. It wasn't where you were from. It was what you did. You weren't a Salvatian, or a Ripoblikan, or a Vespuccian: you were a fisherman. A builder. A stevedore. A man. None of this politricks then. Life so simple. He understood why people yearned to go back.

But you couldn't could you. Because now we had airplanes and Internets and cellphones didn't we. Even that twinprop plane chugging in to land, even that rustybucket, well. That was only a few decades old really. Bringing in so much. Taking so much away. Once the planes arrived, once phones and Internet and communications arrived, the world and the islands changed forever. Maybe for the better. Maybe not. Did it even matter? His brows unfurrowed when he spotted his favourite flight attendant approaching him, with drink already in hand for him. She truly was an angel. He accepted the Mercy Mead and the DayQuells with grace.

"Ah my dear it is so lovely to see you again Rannsy yes you may help me although of course I am qwuite strong I will take a small Mead thank you dearest yes just three fingers and some ice I guess you know all about Ice as a, uh, veritable Vinlander."

It was her pleasure, she replied, to help him be comfortable. And did he want his bag stowed? He replied in the negative and clutched it harder again.

Half an hour later, the flight to Ripoblika was airborne although Wilberforce was unaware of the fact, being sound asleep in his usual seats 2A, 2B and 2C. He was dreaming of meetings, of greetings, of the Ripoblikans – and of his stewardess. His lover.

{{{The scene: The polished floor of mosaic beauty maybe three four hundred years old, statues of highly developed nubian women all lips tits hips rendered in mahogany. Carpets strewn on the walls; it is to show off their skills. Nobody should walk on such craftsmanship. Such a ceiling! Panelled, perfect, abstract but regular. Between the carpets floor to ceiling windows clear as the sea that break on the walls downbelow. From his seat at a table otherwise staffed by camouflaged old grunTERS

with beards our hero Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Keeper of the Ice, two-time Salvatian BogglyOggly Champion, can nonetheless spy, in the shadow of the Capitol building itself, a shanty-shack street where an urchin plays in what look like an open sewer. Our hero has by his side the beautiful and bounteous new wife Rannsó Freyjudottir-Jenkins-Ross I, who is beaming with pride.

- *And that is why, gentlemen, Salvi Islands and Ripoblika's shared history shall prove so, uh, beautiful, in any new touristic or, uh, indeed, distillate-based projects to come.*
-
- *Quite so, Señor Jenkins-Ross, viva la revolucion y dios damn the Yanqui blockhead that does not understand and seek only to crush us but we will always resist. We can do business nonetheless. The venture of the distillation is at an advanced stage, if you would like to take a moment to produce the financial figures as discussed we can indeed move ahead.*
- *Uh, ah, yes, indeed, uh, let me just consult with my, uh, advisory team, indeed yes, Please Miss, Rannsó my dear, will you show El Presidente Traidor Declase your beautiful singing voice, uh, in the interim yes sweetness indeed on the table why not*

Rannsó Freyjudottir-Jenkins-Ross I, begin to sing the leftist hymnation ¡Ai, Ripoblika! an El Presidente, plus cohorts including poster boy pin-up doctor El Cobertizo and pilot Diezincendios, all stand and salute to join in with the rousing anthem:

Ai, Ripobika

James Honshoop



Kon borakha im enderewa samgolia hkaradotes / Mitim sidra, Kwikasarva,
factoria antidotes

**¡Ai, Ripoblika! ¡Ai, Ripoblika! Vafanhkula onatost / ¡Ai, Ripoblika! ¡Ai,
Ripoblika! ¡Rebelastra lidamotes!**

Emgel Marksa, trifa kinga, hodog bifa barijons / Tolstoy Lenska Marhk Rutara,
Blakspot witska Danjaold!

**¡Ai, Ripoblika! ¡Ai, Ripoblika! Vafanhkula onatost / ¡Ai, Ripoblika! ¡Ai,
Ripoblika! ¡Rebelastra lidamotes!**

Rannsy begin marching on the table an, unable to resist, the highly-trained ex-guerilla force also begin with a stamp of feet. The Vinlander in fact like a Pied Piper march straight out the door followed by the trio who are shining at the eyes caught in the dance an in the moment and ready to follow her into whichever battle they can find.

Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Soontime Legend, is left alone and sighing but he has in his hand the contracts ready to show to the the House as proof of his

continuing immaculate service, whilst not having had to hand over any sheaf or such of unfigured figurations. He Exit Stage Left once more with a smile an go to find the Mah-Jongg club where they love him so very much. Another success! Our hero's gallant quest continues!}}

He was rather rudely awoken by a bumpy landing on the Ripoblikan landing strip, and the subsequent applause of the passengers. It was ridiculous. Were they grateful to have lived through it or what? Sheepy little bastards. Oh hooray look he have done his job driving his bloody plane. Yes, round of applause. But no applause when the Keeper of the Ice sorts out the tricky regulations around the import of the bread mix. No. Everything Wilberforce did was either masked by silence or greeted with jeers and abuse. He could not win. He was thoroughly miserable as he stared at the Brutalist airport buildings looming into view. Another day, another meeting, another set of faces to smile at and know their own smiles were as painted-on as yours. What the hell was it for? Who was it for? But it was necessary. He needed to accidentally leave his bag didn't he. By the side of the cigar table, as usual. Ach schit. He was so, so tired. But that was just how it was, wasn't it. Keeper of the Ice, Keeper of the Peace. Leaver of the bags. And all he got at home was demands for washing machines. That fool Weegie putting everything in jeopardy with asking for handouts for microphones or microwaves or whatever the hell it was next. One day he would have to do something about that boy. God the families would be fierce. There would be hell to pay. He couldn't win. They had no idea, did they? None at all.

None at all.

Swell.

—

Ian moved the mouse and the sprite representing a korfballer on the screen started to jerkily run.

Ian pressed down the right-hand button and the sprite jumped.

Ian touched the spacebar and the sprite caught the cartoon representation of a ball.

Ian moved the mouse again, sharply this time, and the sprite took two steps forward.

Ian touched the left-hand button and the sprite shot at a primary-coloured version of a basket atop a post.

The ball bounced off the basket and out of the sprite's reach.

Another sprite-baller, in a different primary colour, collected the ball and threw it to a similar animation.

Ian wiggled his mouse to try and get his own player closer.

His fucking jerkoff Korf-aids could not get within touching distance.

No blame this time.

The second animation veered backwards and shot the ball at Ian's defensive basket.

The ball went into and through the korf.

A black-clad sprite whistled.

The animated pixel-fuckers danced blockishly in victory.

A legend appeared on the screen: FULL TIME.

Ian cursed and threw the mouse at the screen.

Another fucking buzzer beater. Fuck's sake.

The mouse hurtled toward the monitor but jerked back on its own cord before it could do any damage.

Ian breathed heavily. He was even shit at computer korf now. How had that happened?

Ian clicked on 'Play Again.'

And months, years, lives and deaths passed by outside.

A thousand aeons passed. He felt it more than saw it: a transparent lattice, halfway inside his vision. When he looked at the screen it floated there; criss-crossing, undulating and organic. It was concurrently flattened in, projected beyond and pushing behind his field of

view. Never-ending, two-dimensional polygons on which he could not fully focus. Within each of the parallelograms he caught tiny circles rotating, themselves transparent, but more solid than their outer walls. There were worms in his eyes. There were tiny, tiny worms in his eyes, eating at the surface. He blinked; they jumped. He screwed his eyes tight and killed the worms; he could see their frozen bodies floating down across the field of his vision. But he could never see them directly and that was the most maddening thing of it all.

The back of his head thrummed with blood. He could feel it more than hear it. It was a burn, an itch and a throb. His veins were bloating out of the back of his skull. He could not swallow; his mouth and neck and throat and tongue were dry, dry, dryer than any time before and closing up fast. His tonsils tickled, itched, scraped with the beginnings of pain, a blasted-sand dirtmouth concreting together with dying flesh. A pain – the pain, all the pain ever the world had created - spread upward behind his Sahara tongue, stiffening his jaw on the way, and with a horrendous claw assaulted his eardrums. A high pitch, an internal scream, took over. There was nothing else but the high frequency in his ears; it swelled and yelped and squashed his brain in its disgusting, green, smothering harangue. A million billion dogs crying at the top of their registers; so high he could hardly hear it or anything else. A sonic weapon; a grisly drill of utter panic.

Ian sweated.

Ian shook.

He somehow managed to lean his enormous, cavernous body across to his right and threw up into the bin; retching, retching, retching until all that was left was a trickle of blood and bile, ripped from the skin stripes that ravaged his throat.

Through the windows and the curtains and the fans and the air-con, beyond the reach of all that man could invent and implement to try and still its eternal, infernal range, through the skin and bones and organs and experience and expectations of a man out of place and out of options, the sun invaded, and attacked, and assaulted, and would not let go.

Ian, exhausted, abandoned himself to the gigantic, monstrous, cackling grip, and slipped out of consciousness.

Frequently Asked Questions

Ian makes strides; Lead feels sludgy; Laura is welcomed

Ian opened up his emails, and began to write:

From: **Walshyfungusboy@kurtmail.com**

To: **Bazbucket@plexmail.com**

Subject: **twat**

Alright you fuckin ape, what's new with you? Any more bumming done? Still got those warts on your cock? Better get them seen to lad. Mind you make sure you mark your ickle one-eyed worm with highlighter otherwise they'll cut the wrong one off you tiny-dicked freak.

Top here, got rum ready and ice in the freezer, can't decide whether to have coke with it or ginger. These are the tough decisions I have to make these days.

Well, it's hot as fuck already at 8am, heading to beach after probs, dunno. Might just arse around by the pool for a bit. Saw a cloud before, it was unbelievable, gonna report that to the authorities. Ah now it's gone, sun's back. That's more like it. I was worried then for a minute.

So what's the latest on your schemes? You said something about a new project. Bullshitting again or what? And don't give me that financial downturn bollox now again ok I know you're a scheming little wazzock so spill ok spill the beans. Not your man beans, the kind you like to drink, ok. You know my asking price anyway lad so make an offer whenever you like and then I'll tell you to double it THEN I might consider getting in on whatever the fuck it is.

Could be getting back for a bit of the summer. If the weather's not too bad. I might consider doing some shit for you then if there's prep and pprwork and that. You know you're shit at it. Get the pro in.

Til then you enjoy the commuting in the pissing rain lad, hahahahahaha

With much love (not for you though, hope you stub your toe)

Walshy

But it wouldn't send. The computer screen stared at Ian with a single, square, wide, pupilless eye; the browser window blank, the only feature a grey bar with static black words:

Searching for connection...

Searching for connection...

He blew out his cheeks and wiped his brow on his sweat-towel to little avail; the cloth was damp and rank with his secretions. Ian would have screamed if he thought it would have made any difference. Threatening the computer hadn't worked; begging it hadn't worked; looking out the window and loudly proclaiming he didn't want to connect anyway hadn't worked. He'd gone to make a lucky cup of tea, had a lucky piss, sung a lucky song: nothing had worked. He'd made deals with gods, devils and men; none were acknowledged. He wished he was religious so he could call up the Very Rearended Hopelessness of the Church of the Holy Ass of the fucking Vida Fuckface and get him to come round and... what? Exorcise the connection? Bless it? Maybe a bit of both. Divine intervention. Maybe the Rev was having the same problem. Did he ever think his own links were down? That God, or the Awe, or whatever it was, wasn't online? That prayers – those things that travelled mysteriously through the air and were picked up on the other side – weren't getting through? Was it man's fault? Maybe God's broadband wasn't working. That would explain a hell of a lot; he couldn't hear what people really were asking him, otherwise there'd be less trouble. Less fighting, cancer, war, misunderstanding. All for the sake of one, divine, email going walkabout. Maybe God had turned off his Internet for the same reasons: too many people, too many conflicting responsibilities, too little time to keep everyone happy. So he'd gone out, for a walk, in the eternal gardens of Heaven, and skinned the fuck up with a gigantic reefer so potent that the holy ghost took on corporeal form to grab a toke, and so smooth that Jesus started questioning his own existence before breaking off halfway through to make peanut butter on toast with honey and a huge glass of ice-cold milk.

Connected

A miracle! Ian smiled to himself. Cheers, God, Jesus and the Holy Awe! Nice work. Enjoy your smokes gents. Was the holy ghost a bloke? Ian had always thought of it as a kind of

floating jellyfish, wearing a bedsheet with two crudely-cut holes for eyes. It was hard to imagine it having a cock. It must have had at one stage, cause it shagged Mary, didn't it? In which case, how the fuck was God Jesus' dad? Taking it to its natural conclusion, then, God had adopted Jesus and the Ghost was a sperm donor. Or maybe God and the Holy Awe were partners, which pretty much changed the rules of the whole deal. Ian chuckled to himself happily and checked his email:

From: **PerfectMatchLove.com**

To: **Walshington Jenkins-Ross**

Subject: **You have an admirer!!**

Hey, WalshyJR007! Someone out there has seen your profile and wants to get in touch!

A new adult friend is waiting for you to make their day... and their night too!

Please [clickhere](#) to access your inbox!

He did just that and the site played him a happy little tune:



What wasn't so jaunty was the subsequent pop-up that appeared onscreen:

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE A MESSAGE!

***YOU ARE ONE STEP AWAY FROM EXCITING NEW
HOOKUPS!***

PLEASE ENTER [CREDIT CARD DETAILS](#) TO CONTINUE!

ONE MONTH.... \$9.99

THREE MONTHS... \$24.99

ONE YEAR... \$84.99

Ian swore at the screen, pulled out his battered old Mother Country Bank card and began to enter his details. This spying on the locals business was going to be expensive, but he decided to think of it as an investment in his inevitable future career. If he played it right here, he could steer conversations toward work. Jobs. And find out who needed some back-pocket dosh to help the job applications through. It was a great plan. As long as the overdraft held out.

In another bedroom across town there was another computer screen being stared at by someone trying to work out what exactly the next step would be. Leadbetter had just logged off chat with Doogie, who had been going on about sonic levitation and monks and his usual weirdness. Still, the resonator sounded like it would really work, so testing would continue in rehearsals and then up to the Festival of the Ice itself. Wilby would be made up with the depth they could achieve. Boom! As for making stones fly about in some kind of mystical bullshit way, well. That was Doogie all over wasn't it. He always had to go one step further. Lead couldn't believe his mate sometimes, but he admired the hell out of him for the crazy ideas he had, the handsome tuttle. Ay, no wonder the girls always went to Doogie first. And well. Lead knew he never could go to Doogie in that way, which vexed and saddened him. Mates was one thing. Bandmates, even closer. But no more than that. Doogie, well, he was just cool, cool in the way Weegie was cool. What he was on about was another matter. It would all come clear soon nuff. Rehearsal tomorrow. Sharky! Sharky as fuck man! He turned to his typewriter and surveyed the blank paper. What words were there now? He was stuck. It sucked. It was... sticky. He needed more words. But where were they? He reached into his bedroom fridge and pulled out a bottle of Mercy Mead, the outside of which was glistening with droplets of water. He opened it, took a deep draught

and began to write. The writing happened; it was nearly automatic sometimes. The words fed on themselves, creating new lines as they went. At times like this, Lead wondered if he was even part of the process at all. He wasn't stuck. He was part of the stuck. Of the stuckiness. He could spy it, almost from within. He typed:

1. stuckiness is not present
2. stuckiness is not an absence
3. stuckiness is a shapeless choking sphere
4. stuckiness is not a word
5. stuckiness is not a blockage
6. stuckiness is free
7. stuckiness gestates forever
8. stuckiness does not begin or end

Lead paused, and gulped from his mead bottle. Where this was heading wasn't the question; he doubted it'd reach lyrics, but no matter. It was important to get this stuff out; to stop it turning around in his head and distracting him from... well, from anything else. It was better to let things flow and let them go, because whatever the compunction was to type out the contents of his mind was irrelevant. It was only important that it was there, and that the words were born, briefly, into the real world, whatever that was. It was also important that this process took place offline; that the thoughts or images or fleeting observations or echoes of the universe or whatever the fuck they were, had their time to

shout. That his percussive fingers and the typebars striking the ribbon striking the paper hammered fleeting life into the phrases but at the same time killed them by affixing them, finally and irrevocably, to and through the paper. That each line of the writing song was delivered and acknowledged by the tinkling carriage return bell. That the tense pullback of the lever and the turn of the knob promised a new truth line after line after line after line. And that could go on forever. But it could not go online after online after online. That would wrestle it from its meaning, wrestle it from its permanence. He replaced the bottle on the Salvi Shitinel he was using as a coaster to protect the desk, and typed:

9. ~~stuCkiness is meaninglessly enormous~~
10. ~~stuCkiness is not a Conversation~~
11. ~~stuCkiness is not brave~~
12. ~~stuCkiness does not want to feel~~
13. ~~stuCkiness will never make a prediction~~
14. ~~stuCkiness Can only be removed by applications
of stuCkiness to the spot~~

Lead smiled and took another swig. He could feel the heat of the mead diffusing through his stomach, through his blood even. His cheeks felt the glow and his brain had the first tickle of the familiar MM tingle. Ah, there really wasn't anything like it in the world. He blew a raspberry at the room and continued:

15. ~~stuCkiness does not repeat~~

16. stuCKiness is a great way to meet friends
17. stuCKiness does not want to leave the Chair
18. stuCKiness is not sCared of anything
19. stuCKiness is not prepared to do anything
20. stuCKiness is Calm under pleasure
21. stuCKiness is lyrically dreadful

Yep, speshly when dat naked fool drummer tries to write em. But hey ho, he got the rhythm.

22. stuCKiness knows all the letters in every
language personally
23. stuCKiness saw the greatest minds of its
generation in neutral
24. stuCKiness is plAced here and admired from afar
25. stuCKiness is a Catalogue of itself
26. stuCKiness wilts if you do not water it

27. **stuckiness** is a metaphor for and of itself

Lead stopped and wiggled his fingers. The feeling of hitting those big old clunky keys was a beautiful bit of pain. He'd developed calluses on the tips of the first two fingers – the others didn't really take much part – which would be fun to rip off again soon enough. As with the bass playing, there was such a thing as being too dulled to the physical world. And, of course, with fresh-sensitive fingertips, with the new-flesh, softy-boy skin revealed, it looked awesome onstage when the scraping, buzzing thick-wound heavy-gauge strings drew blood again. There was never any pain. Just adrenaline, belief and, hell yeah, a bit of good, old-fashioned theatre. You should bleed for it. Only blood. There's always more. It's your job. Each droplet, each rivulet: the most honest ink in the world. Nobody could argue with blood. He drained the bottle and found more words wanted to get out:

28. **stuckiness** resists Categorization

29. **stuckiness** is dogmatic

30. **stuckiness** is Catatonic

31. **stuckiness** is mousy

32. **stuckiness** Cannot bear itself

33. **stuckiness** once told you the meaning of life
but you forgot it again

34. **stuckiness** Cannot speak

35. **stuckiness is a world changing lymph node**

treatment in late animal testing

36. **stuckiness pronounces it scene**

37. **stuckiness is next to stuckiness**

And it was; if you let it, you could get caught up in it. It was a rampaging beast, this getting stuck. If you weren't careful, it would batter you into submission and leave you desperate for anything else. To do anything else. But at the same time it could sap your energy and kick you in the brain so hard that you couldn't think about the world having ever been, or ever being again, different. That was good, and that was bad. Stuckiness - the island suffered from it. Uncle Wilberforce suffered from it. He and his politician mates – sitting around eating, gluttonous, gout-riddled, eating food, eating time. Taking turns to be the First Person. Taking turns to pretend to hate each other. Stuckiness. Wherever Wilberforce was right now, he was busy making sure that Salvi was stuck in the world, too: stuck between Vespucci and Ripoblika. Stuck between the Viking shits and the Moosefuckers. Balancing. Sticking. It was all so useless wasn't it. Even Uncle Weegie with all his power and good/bad reputation was a carrier of the sticky disease: people expected him to be a certain way, and so he was. But he wasn't, not really. And people knew it, but they chose to stay stuck because that's how it works. Weegie was Weegie and would always be Weegie. You knew that he'd let you down, but you'd go back to him time and again regardless. You were stuck too in a promise of newness, of another way. A glimpse into what might be. Or a glimpse into whatever he said might be. Weegie was happy to be whatever people said Weegie was. Stuckiness for him, stuckiness for them. And nothing really changed on Salvi. How could it? The Families? Pfft. Parasites. A fungus. The Old Days, the Old Ways. Salvi Hospitality. Courtesy, whatever the fuck that meant. Some would have us all the way back to eating flipper and going to bed when the sun went down, using the last light to spin rope out of coconut husks. Straw hats. Cheering when wooden boats came home with cargoes of fish that would be the only thing you'd eat for weeks. Fresh, salted, roasted, buried,

fermented, fried, stewed, spewed. Sickness. Stick-ness. That was being stuck. That was stuckiness. What the fuck good were the Old Days when you knew that you weren't there? Could never be there? Even if they were any better, so fuckin what? It was idiotic. Stuckiness of thought. Maybe there was a song in it after all.

38. **stuckiness wraps itself around itself**

39. **stuckiness saw the original Mobius stripping
and knows the secret**

40. **stuckiness has a thousand names and all of
them are the same**

Lead knew now where this was all headed. He'd gotten rid of the stuckiness by slapping it down on the page. By giving it its head, he had mastered it. He wouldn't get stuck in stuckiness, not now, not ever. There was a world out there of bands and beauty and adventure. All you needed to go and grab it was an opportunity, a chance, a fire inside. Nobody was gonna give you that: not the politicians with their stupid Ice Ceremonies, not the religious dimbulbs with their Holy Awe, and really not the teachers either. Truth be, all they taught was what they'd themselves been taught, which was what had been taught to the teachers and back and back into history, whatever that was this week. The pupils at all stages of the process were interchangeable and Lead knew he was just another blob on a chair. It wasn't the teachers' fault, maybe. It was what was expected of them. Yeah, that was it. What people expected. What had been constructed and designed over tens, hundreds, maybe thousands of years: a system that only worked beside itself and despite itself. But it rolled on over and over again, crushing the people it was supposedly meant to inspire, sending them out into the world only to reach the next phase of what was expected, which was to slot into a role somewhere until you'd forgotten what you were, and then teach another generation to comply just the same. Well, not Lead. Not when Fist Hook was

around. Shark Metal was the way to fight back. T-shirts were the way to communicate with the brethren, with the believers in a better way. And the future – well fuck the future. The present was vital above all else. An unending, continual rebirth and extension of ideas and magic, of life and reality and authenticity. You could write your own movie, and you could star in it too.

41. **stuckiness is in the walls of abandoned
republican missile silos**

42. **stuckiness has a half-life of itself**

He knew the end was coming. The words were slowing down. It was pretty much done and delivered, now. Maybe there would be useful things to refer to in a song one day. But for the time being the Mercy Mead blanket had started to envelop his brain in an altogether more caressing and kinder embrace.

43. **stuckiness grabbed him on the evening of Day
six just before he was about to invent sense**

But then again...

44. **stuckiness is irreducible to mathematical
cantankerism**

And therefore...

45. **stuckiness is not a number**

Lead stepped away from the typewriter, surveyed his work and smiled: it was good. The coaster/newspaper's front page made him smile – maybe the Ice Ceremony was gonna be a

stonker after all. At least, with the booster mic and the set-up that Doogie was on about, and if he was right, that could be sharky as fuck. What a way to make an entrance. Fist Hook could be launched here – even more than they was already. Why not?

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Monday, June 28, 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Ice as nice! It can be can said twice I t6ohwaweeicuj0-ce! Iec!

The Keeper of the Ice Ceremony of the Ice is likely to happen during July's closing days, it was revealed today in an extraordinary session of the Representative Assembly of the House of the Peoples.

First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, speaking, said that the long-standing celebration of the ice which made the country so much would more usefully be at the hotter day.

"Being as the Keeper of The Ice as I am," said First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV. "I believe the best and curious way to show the most powerful aspect of Salvationship is to give fie to the lark that scrambles up against us, that is to say, the sun. It can do its best heat, for saying that it is not as strong I say as the ice itself."

Rarely for the Representative Assembly of the House of the Peoples, both sides stood up and applauded as Mr. Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV took his leave of the session in order to prepare the ice for the taking.

This years's Icecrack

As has been regularly told on occasions mustly, First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-

-Ross IV has been negotiating with the deepest hole in the island to give up its icy secrets. The piece of ice this year is said to weigh in excess of twelve tonnes, or twelve and a half tonnes (Ripoblikan). The teams of float owners and dancing revellers are absolutely ready for their part in helping the ice touch the road throughout its Big Salvi Town course. The exact route, which may reach as far as Iguana Pond, has yet to be revealed.

Record amount

A record amount of poeople has registered this time around to dance behind the ice, and it is estimated that ice picks sales will also be record. Already all bars and restaurants and clubs and dens of beverage on the islands are ordering in record amounts of Mercy Mead ingredients and have been brewing up the distillations forthwith for extremely many months.

"I intend this to be the greates day in the history of the Ice Ceremony," First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV told the *Sentinel* on the telophene from his own travelling charabanc.

"With the size of our ice, and the nature of our Salvatian identity of character, we can really state that despite the rage of the sun and the mottled fungal attitude of some I cannot mention we can expand our marvellous personages and grant ourselves a real boon."

Mr. Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV would not be drawn on the precise makeup of the ice this year, but it is believed to be a kind of dihydrogen monoxidic mix that will be a solid at low temperatures. The *Sentinel* looks forward to hearing more from the ceremonial team and we will bring it straight to YOU, a readers, as soon as we receive more news. *ARE YOU DANCING BEHIND THE ICE? Send us your costumes and we will feature a picture of them, worn by people, in the run-up to the ceremony. Emails to the usual postal number.*

Up North

Canuck troops have skirmished with Vinland on the disputed border. Ripoblika has sent a Harmony Platoon. Vespuccian Peace Missiles are being directed toward Salvi's neighbour island. *More- Page Four. Iced! Iced! Iced!*

The Ice Ceremony was on the minds of pretty much everyone on the island. It was impossible not to be caught up in the sense of anticipation; there seemed to be preparations everywhere. Bars and restaurants were advertising special ice-drinks and Liquid Nitrogen-ized meals, residential houses were being garlanded with cardboard approximations of various unlikely arctic creatures, and the shops were starting to create their displays of costumes and fancy dress for the shindig ahead. It was all very exciting. The irrepressible Carina Cartier was beaming even more than her usual upbeat self as she linked arms with Laura and guided her toward the Church of the Holy Awe. Laura, for her part, was feeling a mixture of trepidation, confusion and wonder at what may lie ahead.

“Carina, I mean, um,” she began, then tailed off rather uselessly. What was the question she even wanted to ask?

“Yes, all is schwell Lappa, all is schwell. Your first costume sew! Nifty! It is going to be fun fun fun fun fun!”

And, there on the ironwood door, was indeed the poster: *Festival-Ice-Costume-Here-Tonight-Sewit-Good!*

They opened the door, which creaked a little, and stepped into the community church. The pews were stacked at the back of the room, which created a large space that was filled with maybe 50 men and women, all sitting cross-legged on the floor, some laughing, some singing loudly to themselves, all with various pieces of feathered or sequinned material in hand, and all the people in various states of undress. Was that a boob? Surely not? But nobody seemed to bat an eyelid, which was just as well because many of the eyelids on show had the most extraordinarily long and fluttery false eyelashes attached.

Laura looked to Carina, whose face was an absolute picture of joy.

“Welcome to costume central,” said Carina, who then raised her voice in a sing-song greeting to the rest of the party:

“Newbie Alert!

Laura Walsh!”

And en masse all stood up to greet them. Laura had never been hugged so much in her life; everyone had a turn in squeezing her, which was discombobulating, but she also rather liked it. She felt welcomed. She felt... not assimilated as such, but part of something. Something bigger than any individual person. It was a hard feeling to describe, but it was a nice one. She began to hug her compadres-in-costume with increasing energy as she filled with a joy of her own. This was definitely going to be fun, wasn't it? And may Carina be blessed.

The costumers returned to their tasks as one final person approached. Heavily made-up to look something like a lion, wearing an enormous feathered headdress, a golden tube top and tight, tiny, bulge-revealing golden hotpants over sparkling, dangerously-heeled thigh-boots, he was quite the sight.

“Aha! So it is Carina,” he said. “And this is Laura! Welcome.”

“Laura – meet Ms. Good,” Carina said. “You may close your mouth now.”

Laura Walsh apologised in a whirlwind of embarrassment, feeling singled-out for her reaction to this colourful, beautiful individual in front of her.

There was a brief silence as Carina and Ms. Good held each other's gaze, suddenly stony-faced and serious.

Which lasted all of half a second before they both collapsed into laughter. Ms. Good embraced Laura and Carina with gusto, transferring approximately half a pound of glitter and stick-on-stars onto them.

Ms. Good spoke softly: “We are going to touch the road, guys. We are going to dance the ice, guys. We are going to be free, guys. Laura and Carina, you are loved.”

“So are you, Ms. Sewit Good,” Carina replied, “You are loved indeed.”

Laura was entirely speechless as the three-way hug continued and morphed somewhat into a kind of jiggly dance. If this really was happening, it was beautiful. And in a church! It was beyond belief. Just incredible. She felt incredible. She felt special. She felt she really was loved and accepted. It was easy. It was simple. It was just people wasn’t it? The costumes, the buzz and clack of sewing machines and needles, the eddies of laughter bubbling up and down the room. It was wonderful. And she was part of the embrace. Laura was part of it all.

What a place this Salvi was.

What a place!

JULY 2010

SUBJECT MODERN STUDIES

PERIOD _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
SEVEN WEEK				1 Float preparation for Ice Ceremony— all attendees required today	2 Talk: "Wrapping and rapping: a Chemistry of Christian Christmas." Speaker: Jö Lasveinn	3 4
EIGHT WEEK	5 Foundlings Day: 100 pulses for all. (pulses not required). School closed.	6 Incendiary Boosts for all Pupils: Catch a Fire Book Launch by Undur Eldkveikir, 8pm	7	8 First possible date of equinoctial magnetism, as responded by Emerson Melty.	9 Bush untangling required by all staff. Cubicles available on request. (filmed by Jason H. Moses, photo-ham)	10 11 Ice Ceremony (TBC)
NINE WEEK	12 Heritage Day — Iguana Pond (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	13 Heritage Day— North (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	14 Heritage Day— Brilliant Beach (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	15 Heritage Day—Big Salvi Town (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	16 Celebration of the Seetime Ghosts— watervisit (TBC) <i>If not then fisthook manufacture for later fishing</i>	17 18 Ice Ceremony (TBC) / Ice Ceremony (Sister Islands) (TBC)
TEN WEEK	19 Heritage Day — Iguana Pond (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	20 Heritage Day— North (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	21 Heritage Day— Brilliant Beach (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	22 Heritage Day—Big Salvi Town (TBC) <i>If not then today will be dedicated to Float perfecting</i>	23 Celebration of the Seetime Ghosts— watervisit (TBC) <i>If not then fisthook manufacture for later fishing</i>	24 25 Ice Ceremony (TBC) / Ice Ceremony (Sister Islands) (TBC)
ELEVEN WEEK	26 Heritage Day — Iguana Pond (TBC) Manufacturers' celebration (School closed)	27 Heritage Day— North (TBC) OR "Magical thought" - a profound chat with Frábær Soprendo	28 Heritage Day— Brilliant Beach (TBC) Bantha Day (Ta.2 E'en) (Not Observed)	29 Heritage Day—Big Salvi Town (TBC) <i>If not then today will be a feast of fritters. All attend, 7am.</i>	30 Celebration of the Seetime Ghosts— watervisit (TBC) <i>If not then watervisit rehearsal (5am start)</i>	31 (1) Ice Ceremony (Sister Islands) (TBC)
WEEK						

A Day

In warm water; there is a buzz; there are bangs

Ian, weightless, hugged his knees and looked up toward the light. It was everywhere, diffused into a myriad of blues and greens, suspending him within its life-giving liquid. Strange, languidly fluttering tall slim gnarled blurred shapes grasped toward heaven as a dazzling splendour of white light sharded its way through the water, burning at his temples, enticing his soul to float toward it. But he would not be seduced; in this amniotic dream there was warmth, safety, unity of spirit. Blood sighed through yielding skin to mingle with the vital fluid; pores opened to let ever more inside. He rocked backward, forward, upward, downward: all motion in all directions was possible. He rejoiced in the novelty of such simplicity; his mind clear of all things but the moment itself. There was nothing but the now; nowhere but the here (which was everywhere) and nothing but the thing, which was everything. It, and he, just was. This was calm and possibility and potential and succour and wonder. Beyond thought was a contentment, unacknowledged but felt by every cell in this sacred sac, imprinted on the DNA which spun helter-skelter love through the universe.

Perfection could not last. The essence that was once and would once more become Ian became aware of itself again; there was a burning inside him that would not be assuaged even by the gracious waters that held him in such glory. Raggedly it raised its roaring and pumping, his insides now blasted by a horrible regular rhythm, shrieking its way to every point of the compass of the body, snapping the skin back into place, bumping at his brain and knocking at him to return from the reality of all things. It was arrogant and haughty, demanding attention.

Ian, coughing and spluttering, breached the surface of the swimming pool and took in huge gulping breaths which his lungs processed gratefully. He rubbed his eyes and shielded himself against the midday sun, before reluctantly paddling toward the aluminium ladder and, avoiding putting too much weight on that fucking knee, climbing back into Salvi Island. He picked up his towel – clean that morning, so why the fuck did it already smell? – and gathered his keys from within it, before flip-flopping his squelchy way toward his front door. It was only locked by habit; nobody came this way on the off-chance. Why would they?

As he mused on the subject a tinny buzzing came to his attention. It was a rasping, challenging, aggressive sound, something familiar to him that he couldn't quite pin down with his ears still half-full of pool-water. Yeah, it was familiar, and getting closer. Or he was

getting closer to it. He paused to try and locate where, and what, it might be. As a sound, it was something of a mixed-up dome score:

Bzzz-Bz-Bzzz-Bz. Bz-Bz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz. Bz.

It was moving, sort of swirling around, somewhere above him and in front of him. He looked around. Nothing in the palm trees with their enormous leaves helicoptering in the sky. Nothing in the parking lot, empty aside from dark brown, fallen detritus from the half-dead hedge. Ian studied the house's porch. Nothing there – nothing electrical. It wasn't quite that. It was more malevolent.

Bzzz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz. Bz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bzzz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz. Bzzz-Bz-Bzzz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz-Bzzz-Bz. Bz-Bz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz. Bz.

And then he saw it, dangling just on the eaves underneath the first floor, in the frame of the front side window just around the corner from his door. A taunting, roundish, hexagonal structure in a foul symphony of grey and diseased-shit-brown, around which not a small number of yellow and black wasps were circling. Panicking, Ian ran the few steps to his front door, his heart hammering with terror. He fumbled with the lock, one eye on the nest, and eventually gained entry, slamming the door behind him.

"Fucking bastard fucking cuntin' fucking bastards," he told the room.

"Fucking cuntin' scum twatfaced shitty yellow and black fucking cunts," he added, thoughtfully.

He paused a moment to catch his breath, and turned to the window, briefly scared to check whether it was locked or not. God, could they have got in. Jesus no. God and Jesus and Holy fucking Awe and fucking spare lost socks please no.

God NO!

He could still hear the buzzing, a symphony of growling rankness:

Bzzz-Bz-Bzzz-Bz. Bz-Bz-Bzzz. Bzzz-Bz. Bz.

It was duller than before, however, and gingerly Ian surmised that yes, indeed, the window was closed.

He dripped on the floor, senses enhanced and blood firing round the racetrack of his veins, and contemplated his next move. Surely there was some kind of anti-insect spray in here. Yeah, he was certain he'd bought some. He hobbled gracelessly to the sink and looked in the cupboard underneath. That was the one. ANTI-ANT. Half the reason he'd put it in the trolley was that it'd made him chuckle. They'd never had occasion to use it. It'd been one of their getting-to-know-the-island jaunts, or, rather, getting-to-know-the-supermarkets-of-the-island jaunts. The ones that became daily after a while because the milk would go off within minutes no matter how carefully you coolbagged it between the checkout and the fridge at home. The expensive jaunts. He studied the label:

To rid of ANTS and crawl creatures spray ten centimetres from ANTNEST cover face. Toxic PLEASE! Beware!

That was very promising indeed. He picked up another bottle marked AMMONIA CLEANER. That sounded good and toxic too. He would clean his house from these fucking invading stinging pricks; what use were they? Bees made honey. They were good. Wasps? Sting, fight, and fuck with your jam. Did wasps even pollinate flowers? What did they even want from the fight? If they hated humans so much why the hell were they so keen to come and harrass them? What was their deal? Some kind of sick joke? If they kept themselves to wasping in, well, wherever the fuck they came from, then fair enough. But they were here, in their hundreds, waiting to pounce on him or whoever was stupid enough to try and come to the house. They'd decided it was their own, the little fuckers: woe betide anyone who lived there first. Suddenly it was the invaders who had all the rights; residents be damned, and stung, and in pain. Fucking cuntng useless bastard fucking things. Ian read on:

Note that ANTI-ANT must be kept away from your naked flame. HIGHLY FLAMMABLE!!! BEWORE!!!

For the first time in a while Ian smiled – grimly, but with determination - as he turned the aerosol around in his hand. Now, where was that lighter??? Time to bring the fight to the bastards. Those little shits with their horrible little legs and buggy vicious eyes, their stinking bodies and shitty fucking wings. You come to my house messing me up, I’m gonna mess you up. You little shits should have stayed in Waspland.

A few minutes later, dressed in thick jeans, Laura’s earmuffs, a buttoned-up shirt and a jacket he’d never worn since getting onto the plane here all those months ago, Ian ran through the plan of action in his mind: First, broom to smack the nest to the floor. No, no, no. First a spray with the ammonia, THEN smack the nest, THEN fire-ant-fury. Mission parameters established. Ammonia-broom-floor-fire. Got it. Let’s go to work.

He opened the door with trepidation and lop-sidedly stepped out into the furnace. His sweat was a forest of pins scratching all over his body. The unfamiliarly-heavy clothes were soaked already and the aerosols in his pockets bogged him down. He could hear the shushing of the sea, eddying in and out of his mind, tides of determination fighting the shores of panic. His knee throbbed in a filthy counterpoint. He reached for the first aerosol, steadying himself. Spray, broom, fire. The wasps continued to construct their abhorrent abode. One little fucker, though, seemed to be taking more of an interest in defence matters and started to approach.

Ian pushed down on the aerosol, aiming it front and centre.

And nothing happened.

Empty.

FUCK.

He threw it indiscriminately toward the side lawn, enraged and frightened.

He cursed to himself as two, three more wasps eased toward him. He was now for certain on their radar. A threat in progress.

Suddenly one dived toward him and he shouted in horror, wafting his hands above his head to try and fight it away. It retreated all too briefly before coming in again for another pass. As it did, Ian pulled the Anti-Ant out of his other pocket and began spraying in all directions.

For a moment the wasps, somewhat bemused, seemed to hold back, before the nest began to shake out more and more inhabitants, all pointing their sharp-arsed weapons in his direction for a suicide attack. Screaming obscenities, Ian managed to pull out his lighter and ignite the aerosol's spray, which he pointed at the gathering cloud of yellow-black attackers. The flame threw out intense heat in a wide cone, sending charred wasps to the ground and crucially setting alight the nest itself. As it burned ever more wasps tried to exit their home, crawling pitifully on their doomed final journey. A few stragglers buzzed around, unsure what to do. The aerosol pattered out and Ian sweated inside his restrictive suit. He chucked the aerosol away, raised the broom and smashed the remains of the still-burning nest to the ground. It broke open, revealing hexagonal horror-cells, each with its own writhing maggot inside. It was like a brain, being eaten from the inside. Ian gagged. The fire increased, picking up oxygen and fuel, stinking of dead wasps, chemicals and noxious intentions. Transfixed, Ian stared as the remains of the Anti-Ant cannister rolled toward the conflagration, where the flames licked hungrily at it.

And nothing happened.

Presently, fire burned itself out; all traces of the nest gone aside from a charred patch of the pathetic excuse for grass in the side lawn. Ian looked around him. None of the bastards were there to be seen.

He challenged the world: "Bring it the fuck on, fuckers."

And he struggled inside to change his clothes again.

After a long, long, disappointingly-lukewarm shower which didn't even begin to wash away the adrenaline and grime of the day so far, Ian gingerly made his way toward the computer.

Two new emails.

From: **PerfectMatchLove.com**

To: **Walshington Jenkins-Ross**

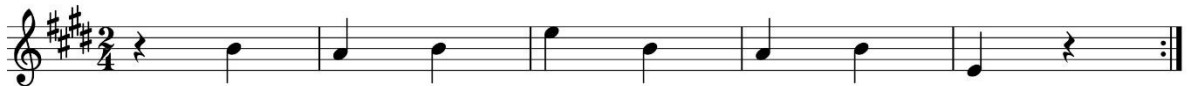
Subject: **You have an admirer!!**

Hey, WalshyJR007! Verona has replied to your message!!

A new adult friend is waiting for you to make their day... and their night too!

Please [clickhere](#) to access your inbox!

Eagerly, he clicked through to the familiar tune:



MESSAGE FROM * VERONA X

**HEY THERE! I LOVED UR MESSAGE I AGREE THIS
PLACE IS BORING YOU SEEM LIKE SOMEONE WHO
LIKES A BIT MORE FUN I THINK WE CAN GET ON HEY
WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO I LOVE A MERCY MEAD
HAVE U TRIED IT? GOD CAN'T WAIT TO GET OFF THE
ISLAND TO THE REAL WORLD!!! HEY REPLY I HOPE
YOU LIKE TO PARTY!!! CANT WAIT FOR U TO TELL
ME WHAT U DO XX OH I CAN TELL U STORIES LOL!!!
BYEEEEEE!!**

TO REPLY

PLEASE ENTER [CREDIT CARD DETAILS](#) TO CONTINUE!

ONE MESSAGE.... \$0.99

THREE MESSAGES... \$2.99

UNLIMITED MESSAGES ONE YEAR... \$184.99

Ian groaned. You've GOT to be joking. He reached for his wallet but realised that it was still in his jeans pocket downstairs. Irritation rising, he wrangled with his thoughts before deciding to postpone the reply. It would need careful construction if he was to try and get the info he wanted; Verona's profile suggested she was pretty well-connected so he needed to play it correctly. Effectively. Less pumped-up than he was right now. Get to the source. He opened the second email:

From: **SalvilslandCV's.com**

To: **Walsher Ianto**

Subject: **Resume Upload Unsatisfactory**

Dear,

Resume indicated uploaded by you on 97/1/1/333 was unsuccessful
you must login to the site to complete process and jobs are waiting here for
you with love

Ian stared at the screen. "Oh for fuck's sake," he told it. "For fucking fucking fuck's fucking SAKE."

Reluctantly, he clicked through the link to try and reinput his details. It wouldn't do any harm, in any case, to give the CV a quick tweak. Maybe add 'pest control' to his skillset, even. Yeah, that could be a plan.

The power went off, and the computer went dead, and the fridge stopped its clunking, and Ian's fingers froze on the keyboard.

He could feel the rage begin to rise within. Typical, typical, typical. This fucking place. This fucking fucking cuntin' fuck of a place. A vileness rankled through his body; a malevolent poisonous bile rising from the centre of his chest, corrupting his muscles into tenseness and filling his veins with electric glue. He felt them pulsing, squelching, hardening underneath his skin. He was going to burst, and he didn't care anymore. The hellishness, the gloriousness of

hate, reached his teeth which clamped together as his lips drew back into a sneer. His eyeballs were filthy, dry, all energy directed toward staring into the mirror and holding his own, perverse, defiant gaze. It was all he could do to stop the almost-irresistible signals travelling down his arm to his clenched fists, the urgent need to draw those crackling, mottled muscles back and punch his reflection full force.

There would be shards everywhere, probably blood everywhere: it would shut that grinning, nasty-minded motherfucker up. But he'd be back, lurking and distorted in the side of a kettle, behind a darkened window, in the turned-off television. Ian could smash it all up. Fuck it all up. The righteous rage to wreck all this false, mangled bullshit. To crash himself into and through the screens and mirrors and kettles and windows of this not-world, to strangle whoever was sneering behind the façade. He welcomed the white heat of utter belief; he stared into his reflected eyes again, challenging himself to do something about it. He gathered the last remnants of spittle from his desiccated mouth, desertificated, dry with hate, and he spat at the mirror.

A single globule of foul flob hit the mirror just above his eyeline. It began to snide down the glass, a rancid non-pace not even gravity could hurry up. Ian could see a sweat droplet form on his own forehead. It was a grievously drawn farrago, a cosmic joke played on him and him alone. Ian felt suddenly hopeless amidst the onslaught, all power drained by the doubling of his spittle and his perspiration. You either spat at the world or it made you sweat. Either way, the dehydration was inevitable. You cannot win. You cannot win. Ian felt he'd run a half-marathon; his breathing was fast and shallow. Capillaries burst on his face as he reddened then paled to a rank green. He could not face his own eyes and lowered his head to the sink. His brain sent signals to his now-clawed and doughy left hand, which managed to grasp the faucet and turn on the lukewarm phlegm of the water supply. It gurgled and clammily flapped at Ian's neck, rolling round it and mingling with the tears of defeat, frustration and hopelessness that were gathering in the plastic sink.

After a minute or so the water spluttered, belched and slowed to barely a trickle. Ian had sobbed himself out, an exhaustion now blanketing his spent body and ruptured mind. Heavy of feet and brain, his skeleton rubbery and useless, he barely managed to drag himself toward the office bed before he crashed completely and slid into unconsciousness,

destination not dreamland but obliteration. In his hypnagogic final sliver of wooziness the otherworldly, croak-air crush of a strangled hound close by seeped into him.

Then time stopped, and all was silence.

Back at school, Laura looked up from some marking just as Mickey Pearce rushed into the staff room, managing to whistle both breathing out and breathing in. His shoulders shook and moved with every breath and he flashed that goofy grin at the same time. If she threw a cookie - or a dog treat - in his direction, she reckoned he'd jump up and catch it in his big slobbery gob.

But rather than barking he surprisingly spoke in a language that once was on nodding terms with English: "Miss Laura! Just the goodie I wan seenow!"

"Hi Mickey, how are you?"

"Me specialgood. Got letters forja from front officeladies, much popularity today!"

He handed over a pair of envelopes.

"You need fan club sayin, sometime secretary mebbetoo, officeladies say they queuein tree hour at Postbox to grabsome letter," continued Mickey, garbling away toward the reedy backwaters of sense. "Mesay, hey now I bringem, Miss Laura a goodienow."

"Thanks Mickey, appreciated. Just escaping the computer to get some work done. You got time for a coffee?"

He considered the prospect for a split second, muppeting his hog-pink face into a series of unlikely gurns, before shaking his ratty-dread locks.

"Would love; gotta spindle tho," he said, with all the gravity he could muster, which wasn't a great deal. "Many kiddie pigs trainin hence, settin up drills."

Laura paused to decipher this latest jangle of phonemes: "Ah, well, good luck," she eventually replied. "Amazing in this heat to be playing though."

"Yeahman, but same for both sides nah. Gotta dashnow."

He bounced toward the exterior door, starting his breath-whistle again. There was no discernible tune, and Laura doubted whether Mickey even knew he was making a sound.

Alone again, she studied the envelopes, feeling a tad guilty about doing so on school property for some reason.

One was postmarked Mother Country; looked like it could be some kind of birthday card. If it was, it was pretty early for her and Ian's birthdays, two weeks apart in mid-August. Perfect – in the past – for a shared excuse to go somewhere hot. This time, they'd probably head home to see folks. Yes, it was pricey, but nine months had been a long time too. They could stretch to it. The handwriting looked familiar. Ian's mum? Was it? He always said she was as reliable as the trains, which given Pickle Transport's regular bumps and bruises, lateness, cancellations, fines and citations was an irony in itself. Hmm, didn't quite look her style. Still, a proper letter! Laura smiled. That would do for later; they could look at it together.

The second envelope was altogether more formal-looking, stamped with the Salvi Islands Government seal. Gingerly, she opened it:

COURT SUMMONS

Salvi Islands

District Court

On this day of 2 June, 2010

Big Salvi Judicial District

Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip.

Court File Number: 53310761-VVA

Case Type: Legalitarian

Plaintiff,

vs.

Summons

Lara Wash

Defendant.

This **SUMMONS** is directed at: Laara Wolsh

YOU ARE BEING SUED.

The Plaintiff has started a lawsuit against you.

The Plaintiff's Complaints are sixfold against you and is as follows:

1. That on the day of a Friday of 13 December, 2010 you, Laura Walhs, were at

the helm of a vehicle driving and that vehicle had the number plate of MI 51222919. It is registered.

2. That you, Laura Walsh were recorded on vinyl by Mm. Dulisa Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip at the helm of said car approaching her own car, number plate of MI 9491520. *A tape recording is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*
3. That you, Wala Luash did willfully and with extreme malice crashbonk the back rear end disfrontage sidearm mirrorway of the car vehicle of Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip, as stated above, with your own vehicle, stated above, causing lasting damage and tremendous illmetal *A photograph is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*
4. That you, Laura Walsh, on looking at said damage, did state, “Dis no big ting, anyway, no sir ma’am,” whilst in conversation with the Plaintiff, Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip. You requested that “No police need coming,” and “Insurance job no doubt.” You also stated to, “Go big on this or I sue.”
5. That you, Laura Walshs, did return to your vehicle having ignored the real internal pain and sufferages of Mm. Dulisia Jenkins-Ross, SchIDip, who as medical reports will indicate was too foully-crudely-broke to reply and that you said, “You is not injured, mark my eyes by the end of the world under the Lord.” *A medical report signed by a Doctor and another Doctor is available at the Courts of The Laws of the Islands of Salvi (Big Salvi). See court doors for opening days.*

Her heart sank as she read through the rest of the dubious details. New court date, 1 August. God, it wasn’t going to go away was it. She’d been rear-ended herself in the fucking so-called incident, but that damned car had sped off before she even knew what was going on. She wished she’d had the presence of mind to do the same. Jesus Lord the bump was hardly worth a lick of paint let alone all of this rubbish. The afterpain, well, that was real: Laura still got twinges when she swivelled quickly. But she hadn’t dreamt of taking it to court. Everyone had

stood up and walked away, everyone had been able to drive off safely. It was absolutely ludicrous. For goodness' sake, worse things happened every two minutes back home and nobody bothered even to get out of their cars to check. I mean, you just wouldn't. But here, here where an intra-mural korfbal game drew a crowd in the hundreds, here where a dog eating something that didn't agree with it was front page news, here where someone as qualified as Ian couldn't get a sniff of a job... Well. It was different. Specially, of course, if you're a relative of the bloody head honcho himself. Maybe they'd have to pay for a proper lawyer. Ah fuck. It would probably be cheaper just to fix up Dulisia-so-called-Jenkins-Ross's damned jalopy. But it was a matter of principle now. Rolling over and letting them walk over you was no way to live. You had to play the game and be seen to play the game. To be seen that you were intent on winning, making it clear that you wouldn't be messed with. It was like a bloody prison.

The bell rang, jolting Laura out of her reverie. Final period with Year 13. Not the worst, as long as the Ross boy wasn't too stoned-looking. For someone so intelligent, he had no common sense whatsoever. But hey, what teenager did? She put the two letters in her handbag, gathered up the marking, set up her authority-stance and strode, teacherly, toward her classroom.

A couple of hours later, laden by more paperwork, Laura prepared for the daily dash between the air-con of the staffroom and the soon-to-be-full air-con of the car. It was blazing, crazing sun out there, a torture of white light in the eyes and fire on the skin that ought to be illegal. Coupled with the heavy, humid air that filled the lungs with a syrup that made it a struggle to breathe enough oxygen, plus the instant prickling of sweat on scorched skin, it became an unpleasant chore. She steeled herself, opened the door and rushed to her little green bean. Balancing her homework books as best she could on one arm, she inserted the key into the grill-fire lock and, wincing, opened the car door, touching the metal handle with as little flesh and for as little time as possible. She chucked the books on the passenger seat and gingerly sat down. The faux-leather - pockmarked with worn bits from which the plastic filling was beginning to emerge - bit and sucked at her skin. She drew breath between her teeth and manoeuvred a towel into position to calm the ferocity engendered by a day warmed through the magnifying glass of the windscreen. Trying not to touch

anything else, she turned the engine on and, using a tissue as a makeshift glove, whipped the air conditioning onto full.

Laura exhaled, all doors and windows now shut, and waited for the rivulets of perspiration that were running down her face and down her back to subside. The sweat was bad enough fresh, but when it dried it was clammy and gross. What she would give to be diving into the warmth of the sea right now. Its perfection as it reflected the perfect sky. Ducking her head underneath the water to say hi to the clownfish and the sergeant majors. Feeling the sun but feeling the water too. Calibration between body and place, a conversation between her body, her mind and the elements. A negotiation of being, of belonging. How people endured these summers without air conditioning was a mystery to her: had they hibernated? Buried themselves? Or just suffered? She wanted to reach into the past to speak to the founders of the island, the privateers and pirates that had decided to stay on an island with such a rampant line in heat assault. She wanted to sit with the settlers, lighting fires to keep off the mosquitos, looking into the thick bushland, wondering what the hoots and hahas from exotic, unseen creatures signified. Scheming ways to find fresh water, drinking from coconuts and capturing turtle. What was it that had made this place home for them? They'd originally come the Mother Country, by some accounts. But why an uninhabited rock? Maybe it was that there were no dangerous natives to worry about. Maybe that was the key all along. Claim your own place, and all the better if it was empty to start with: you could implement your own structures, ways of getting by, expectations. So it had been five hundred years back, and so it was now. Except with more targets to hit, reports to write and bloody books to mark. Yeah, there was always something to wrestle with, wherever you went.

The car's air was now reaching a reasonably breathable level, so she eased the motor into gear and began to drive home. Maybe they'd have the rest of that bottle of ugly wine with their dinner. Ostensibly, a chardonnay. It was undrinkable at any temperature other than near-freezing. Then it became untastable. Red in this heat wasn't too great an idea, either, becoming more like a warmed-through grape soup. Serve it with croutons, and you've got a starter right there. But you drank it cause you'd paid stupid amounts for it. She tried not to think about prices anymore, particularly not in comparison to home. It was the swiftest way to making yourself mad. She stopped the car gently, trundling to a halt to allow a stray mutt

to cross the road. The hound sauntered, tongue lolling, on whatever journey it was taking. As per usual it was proudly un-neutered.

“Balls, balls, balls,” said Laura to nobody. It made her smile. Big, big, balls everywhere. But no wonder there were so many mongrels wandering about town, though. This place really did need a catch, neuter, release programme. Maybe she could have a word with Suzy in Community Action about it. Could there be a good and easy charity to work with and maybe get some good media coverage at the same time? Bridging the gap between locals and expats. And between humans and animals, too.

A loud beep told her that she’d delayed moving off again by a split-second. Another told her not to wait any longer, and a third beeped approval when she hammered down the accelerator to an acceptable level. She’d been bothered by the aggression of the car horns for a while but had got used to it. It was a replacement for the indicators/flash of headlights/hand signals/brake lights/invitation to exit a junction that other places seemed to complicate driving with. Yes, you had to be swift off the mark or people would get annoyed. But at other times they’d happily drive across the carriageway to block off traffic on both sides so you could get out of a tricky parking lot. You just had to go with it, really. She turned the final corner toward the house and eased the car into her parking space. Not a bad drive, really. You could do it in about five, door to door, of a Sunday. At peak school times it was more like half an hour – most of it spent in queues of jostling, beeping, growling traffic. By the time she started toward home, though, she’d usually missed the worst of the pickups and like today could smooth her way back toward another TV and taper-down.

Laura de-whooshed the air-con and swiftly but reluctantly peeled herself out of the car, bracing herself against the glowering rays of a sun preparing to escape its own heat. Beads of sweat appeared almost instantaneously on her brow, starting to stream unpleasantly inside her reaction shades, rendering the world through a distended, pallid, blurry prism. She reached up and pulled the glasses off, shutting her eyes as tight as she could. The inside of her eyelids became psychedelic, surreal soft-focus movie scenes: here the house porch, in purple and pink blobs, there the grass in a strange, lysergic new shades in-between black and grey, somehow brighter than both and simultaneously dull against the kinetic canals of pulsating rouge, simulacra of the blood bumping and fleeing and returning through every

millimetre of her being. A green, neon patch like a burst blister floated through her non-sight; a bacterium of nothingness, flitting between worlds.

She wiped her glasses ineffectually on her skirt and repositioned them on her nose. Jesus, it was hot. Gathering her marking from the seat again, she rushed toward the house. It was a ten-yard dash through the muddy, soupy air. There was a buzzing at the edges of her consciousness, an electricity in the atmosphere that was beginning to insinuate the first crackles of the sky. She ran as best she could through the thickening world, body blurring into the tingling afternoon, shedding her human shape as the heavens prepared themselves for release. Every step, every muscle, every scrape toward the porch took an aeon as the storm began to roll toward the tiny island, clouds appearing from nowhere at thousands of miles an hour. She felt she would never reach home. This could not go on; something had to give, and now she knew that it would. Sudden magnesium light. All colours gone. Then returning: the greys and the greens and the blacks and the reds melded together, hanging in the pregnant sky, a pissy-yellow tinge around the edges of the perverted clouds that were within her touching distance if only she dared. If only she could reach.

She achieved indoors exactly as the storm broke with an enormous



which was followed by a downpour of such intensity that it sounded – and felt – less like actual rain and more like God was hurling hosts of metal cutlery at creation, a fury, a

tantrum, a warning. Laura threw her marking down on the sofa. Shit, this was going to be a bad one. Lightning bolts raged and razzled the island, strobing the indoors of the house with graceless randomness. She counted.

“One elephant, two ele...”



Holy fuck, that was close.

A horrible, jagged white noise of daggers on metal trays. This was not rain as she had ever known it. This may not be rain at all. It was an apocalypse. God showing this little fucking island who was boss. Suddenly Laura felt very, very small and very, very alone.

Flash.

“One ele...”



BOOM

It was right on top of them now, the house creaking and whirling within the moment. Now a wind whistled, whirled, sneered, rattling to be let in the windows. The Cat 5-tick panes whooped and flexed in their frames, being stabbed at by thousands of malevolent sprites. This was not a storm; it was a war. Things were blowing apart. A flash.

“On...”



BOOM

And the house's electricity failed.

Laura sat, bewildered and stunned, on her breakfast bar stool, rested her chin in her hands, and breathed deeply. Just a storm; just a storm. There had been worse before. Worse before. Worse before. Just a storm.

She noticed that the rain was dripping into the kitchen, too.

That wasn't right. Not at all.

A flash.

"One elephant two elephant three ele..."



The centre of the storm raged on, legions of rain following their devastating aggressive leader, marching fascistically. Sheets of water slid down the walls inside and outside of a Golgotha-dark little house sodden in the suburbs of a shuddered little town on a shuttered little island thousands and thousands of miles from the icy showers and slate familiarity of home.

Upstairs, Ian had been awoken by the same thunder-explosions as his wife. What had happened? He tried to shake his grogginess off. Everywhere – everything – was the sound of

the hammering rain. He sat up, hearing the front door slam and the rushing steps of who he presumed was Laura coming home.

He prepared to become himself again, and as he waited for his confusion to settle down into the more manageable bemusement of everyday life, he started to become aware that not all the water was gushing from outside. He stood up, a little wobbly, and staggered toward the ensuite bathroom. The tap was open fully, filling up the plugged-up sink and making the carpet underneath sodden. God knows how long it'd been like that. He jumped across, turned the tap off and removed the plug swiftly. For fuck's sake. How the hell was he going to explain that one to the landlord?

As the sink drained, he realised that all he needed to do was make a small hole in the wall; the storm was still smacking the island back and forth. The house – and his explanation to house owner Wilson G. Rutherford – just needed an entry point for all that ferocity. The plaster was soft anyway; a bit of a smack with a ball-peen ought to make a decent enough crack.

Cheered, he almost managed a whistle as he went downstairs to join his wife as the weather wrestled the sea toward the sky.

The image consists of a solid black rectangle. Centered within this rectangle is the word "BOOM" in a large, bold, white, sans-serif typeface. The letters are thick and blocky, with the 'O's being particularly large and rounded. The 'M' has a distinctive shape with a sharp peak and a flat base. The overall effect is one of a powerful, sudden sound.

They watched the sky split in two: it was undeniably impressive. There was something about the scale of the assault – which it was – on the island that was entirely humbling, and sort of freeing, too: you could do sod all except wait it out and enjoy the spectacle. It was their own private movie, playing outside each window, soundtrack from the depths of hell and illuminated by the greatest, most electric, dangerous crackling lightshow between Hades and Heaven.

The storm passed over, and the sky lightened a little. Back in the present, Laura opened her letter. She studied it and passed it to Ian.

“Oh right,” he said.

Laura’s face fell: “I had no idea they were having such a hard time. That is actually quite shitty.”

“Yeah.”

Ian wondered what exactly had happened. But he could understand why anyone would want to fuck off from this place, too. He re-read the note, written on an incongruously happy-looking piece of paper:



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Heyho Lozpot!!

Sorry we had to make a quick dash... hope you are enjoying the Island???? Mother Country misses u!!!

Soz not 2 say goodbyte to u and Ian - really was a overnight decision - straight from work soon as got paid and straight on plane lol. Been back a couplea months actually, so soz for radio sillence, we wanted to have a clean break from SI's laws. It is sad they are still in 1950. We had to go.

Hope it all works out for u - we are sure u and Ian are perfect 4 the place... much love xxx

Den & Arth xxxxx

PS!! easy on those gargleblasters now!!



Digitality

Ian receives a proposition and reads a blog

The next day, alone again, Ian was busy. Busy smacking the hell out of the damaged upstairs wall and creating a plausible storm-hole. It had been pretty easy to bash through completely. That worried him a little bit, but he sucked his breath in again – nobody was watching, and the house had clearly been there for several years. Wear and tear in this heat was bad enough and with the added weather-blasts – well. No wonder things got a bit frayed around the edges. He just needed to cover his tracks; he cleaned up as best he could around his hole and chucked pieces of rubble and wallpaper through it and into the garden. It was funny: the heat around the newly created space was palpable and reminded him of getting off that plane the first ever time. That sudden blast of heavy air was somehow liquid in the lungs; an oven door opening. He wasn't sure he'd liked it. God, things were so different then and it was only eight or so months ago. So full of hope and excitement. So full of pride at getting the fuck out of MC right at the time when it was eating itself, banks falling over themselves to go bust and jobs being shed all over the place. And there they were, stepping into paradise. If only he could get that feeling again. It had been an entirely confusing, delicious, scary, brilliant few weeks at the start. Everything new-ish. Bars to explore. Beaches. Swimming. The full gamut of Living the Dream. A fixed-up knee. Back in the game. Back on court.

But Ian had had enough of dreaming. There were also nightmares weren't there. He wanted to wake up and get back to reality, which Salvi absolutely was not. It was a game; a kind of virtual-reality trick being played on everyone. I mean, seriously, the hurrinado season? And no work? He was happy to pretend to the world that he was *Chief Relaxation Officer at Turtle Towers Enterprises*, but fuck it, he was bored as arseholes. He turned on his computer and was surprised to find it connect to the Internet first time. The pricks across the road must be all out.

He opened his email and typed:

From: **Walshyfungusboy@kurtmail.com**

To: **Bazbucket@plexmail.com**

Subject: **re. Next Year**

Alright man. Cheers for the email old son.

Sounds alright that. Logistics don't stop for recessions do they. You know where I am. Stuck here at the moment. Gotta grind on here for another few weeks, skool still going on for a bit I think then there's the ice ceremony thing. Looks fuckin ace actually, check out the vid of last year:

www.youtubeit.com/iceceremony2009uncensored

Loz is dancing in it this yr with that Carina sort. I'll be there making sure it goes well. Nah, not really, I'm gonna get bumpy on Gargleblasters there mad things them ud have half of one and fall over probs anyway that vid is boss I know you wouldn't cos you're bent but I'd fucking hit the living shit out of all of those, check the tits out at 0.25, proper blublublub chebbles, stick yer head between them an go brbrbrbrbrbrbrbrrrr hahaha. Can't wait really it's gonna be a right laff. Everyone gets jarred up and twatds about half-naked dancing down the road covering each other in water and ice and shit. Not shit, I don't think. Only you would sink so low. Anyway absolutely no idea what it's all for. But the chebs will make up for it I'm sure. Big wobbly bobbly chebbington crusoos.

Fuck of a hot tho man, it's humid as shit. Storm from hell yesterday, mad shit, it's like the world ending or something. Maddest thing is the rain's fucking HOT!! This place is just fucking nuts. You wouldn't believe tha half of it.

Mind you loads of beachy chebs.

CHEBBLES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Wrapped up usually but theres a secret cove I know where they get the whole lot out muff, everything, fucking amazin altho u tend to see big fat flabby arsed middle aged droopy wankbags more than anything else, it's disgustipatin'

Despite the fact your more excited than a bender in an arse factory it sounds good your new project I reckon I'm in, let me know when funding is confirmed and I'll tell the missus about it no worries at all. This place is fucking amazing for holidays, and chebs, but fuck me tryna get a job is fucking ridiculous. Absolute stitch-up, family connections, u not got relatives that work here u not gonna get anywhere, so fucking bollocks to the lot of them. Nobody visits either it's too far and costs a fucking bomb specially gypo's like u hahaha but yeha it is a bollocks place had enuff so give me a shot as soon as. Weve still

got the house innit so no probs with getting home or owt so yeah giz a knock asap

Tootly bye sailor

Walshy, Your Superior In Every Way

Your favourite is. Big hairy balls on your chin mmmmmmm that's what you say FACT actual real truth right there son

Right gotta go and get rum'd up, at least that's always good. Kip on sukin' that truckin' dudes. Ya franky freakbitch offay crumbo

PS also 1.11, 1.45, nip slip at 2.22 :D And the best arse on island at 2.26 (a woman not a man, sorry lad)

Ian laughed to himself. Baz was alright. If anyone could steam in and pick up infrastructure contracts even whilst the country was going to shit, it was him. Where he got his access to capital from was another matter and one that Ian had long realised was a no-go area. Thing was, everyone got paid, on time, and paid well. Things got built, transport systems upgraded, and everyone was happy. No doubt there were some sweeties being handed out here and there. But that was hardly anything unique in business was it. Nope, better to be inside the tent pissing out wasn't it?

He mistyped the url for Salvi Island News and came across a webpage that he scanned briefly without knowing what the hell it was on about. Some kid's pretty pathetic attempt at a blog, by the looks of it:

Sound And fURY!!! ExclUSiVE News!!!!

ALL words!!! by XsTarX <3 <3 <3 Hands off!!!! LOL!!! All rights reserved!!!! You have been warned!!!! XOXOX

Ask not how, friends, but XsTarX Music MADNESS!!!!!! has accessed the Fist Hook bunker and spreads news of excellent import.

The first and imminent task, as alluded to previously, is to continue on the road toward a barkless island. This disgrace has been going on far too long; the Shark Metal leader was wearing vivid colours even in rehearsal, indicating a job has not yet been completed. From our secret position we could clearly see the collaboration of T-shirt, jean-shorts and military boots. And we all know what that means (enlightened people, there is no need to say). Those as yet unenlightened, hear this and consider it well:

That there will be time, after the sunset and in the golden, holy hour, to source these cool waters of silence and to distribute it – it is time to prove that comrades we are. The Sharkolution is in play already. This is the start only of the glorious era to come. The word will spread; we must catalyse with the language of effect. It is absolutely no use to have a glorious forward-looking movement such as this with the lights quenched. Yes, we move in darkness: but our deeds will soon be bright in the light of victory. Yes, we must necessarily seek the cover of the shadows: but the repercussions of our quest for freedom will shine the sun of beauty on the outcome.

We will take care to disembark. The message has been sent. The beautiful cookies are soaked and prepared, and some have already been distributed. Results of this Alpha Test have been noted even by the staid and unctuous media houses. This is Phase I, my comrades. We continue.

Secondly – talking of repercussions – the the one and only Rage Rasta III, has a new drum set. From our vantage point, we

could confirm that it shined and smacked all dissent away from the bunker. This. Friends. Is. Immensity. Rumour is that the boys are working on something very special for the Ice Fest... the genius Doog is tinkering with electronics that will literally blast this place open. Sharks start to stalk. Sharks start to smile.

As for the Shit-tunnel of Salvi: what more can we say about that? It is a disgrace to this island. Its time will come. Our time will come. Believe in better. Be dark and let our deeds explode. In silence there is power; the growling must stop. We strike when the ice slides.

Posted by xStarx <3 <3 <3 23.23

Comments have been disabled on this thread

What an absolute load of crap it was. Although – Shit-tunnel was absolutely spot on. Shit-tunnel Salvi. Shit-tunnel Bazmatronix. He'd have to use that one. For the first time in ages he felt buoyant about the future. The whole kaboodle just needed firming up back home and as always Baz defo had his back. Christ, there'd probably be enough to come back here for holidays at Chrimbo, too. Yeah, it'd be ace. Laura'd get a job piece of piss. Teachers were always needed and she was a good one. There was shit back home but shit here too. You just had to choose. He smiled again, and surfed his favourite sites:



Browser History

<http://www.mothercountryjobs.com>

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<http://www.mothercountryjobs.com/logistics.htm>

<http://www.mothercountryjobs.com/CVupload.htm>

<http://www.mothercountryjobs.com/setalert.htm>

www.CVbank.com/login

[www.CVbank.com/forgotten password](http://www.CVbank.com/forgotten_password)

[www.CVbank.com/account deleted.htm](http://www.CVbank.com/account_deleted.htm)

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<https://www.google.com/search?q=returning+expat>

<https://www.mothereesabroad.com/cominghome>

<https://www.mothereesabroad.com/whentochuckitin>

<http://www.mothereesabroad.com/taxonreturn>

[https://news.org/story expats shock at coming home](https://news.org/story_expats_shock_at_coming_home)

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<https://www.google.com/search?q=Salvi+Islands+conviction+declare+UK>

[https://sharecontent.net/forums search?q=Salvi Islands traffic conviction UK implications](https://sharecontent.net/forums_search?q=Salvi_Islands_traffic_conviction_UK_implications)

[https://sharecontent.net/signup payment access](https://sharecontent.net/signup_payment_access)

<https://www.google.com/search?q=CDC+Stew+Salvi>

<http://acronymchecker.org/CDC>

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[http://themeatman/horsemeat for all](http://themeatman/horsemeat_for_all)

www.korfballresults.com

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www.fatniggersshitting.com

www.fuckfree.com

www.browsersearch.com/download

www.pandascan.com/scan

Hotting Up

The band rehearses; an email enthuses Ian

Gnarly, snarly, gritty and sharky. That was the idea today. Fist Hook – two thirds of them, anyway, awaiting their guitarist - were readying themselves in their garage and getting into the vibe before going through their setlist. Maybe they'd be ready to record again soon. The songs were coming together, the group were tight-as-hell both musically and as a performing unit. Lead was surprised when Rage Rasta pointed to the roof, not least cause the bassist was temporarily somewhat out of the game after an enormous inhalation of JimWeed. He saw a pair of eyes peering nervously back at him like a startled cat. The eyes then attached themselves to a feminine face and a female head and, finally, a full body.

"What are you doing there?" he asked, not quite recalling where he'd seen her before.

The reply taught Leadbetter that it was actually possible to shrug vocally. He grinned, eyes rolling a touch in his head, and continued.

"You may as well join. Looks like it's a twosome here still."

And so the girl clambered from her spying place atop the garage, brushed herself down and smiled.

"Hey."

Lead was swimming in a puddle of confusion. He knew her – maybe from gigs? School? Nah, she was too old for that, surely? Hard to tell. But it was hard to tell anything at that point. He picked up the odd word he understood from her conversation with a suddenly-shirtless Rage. They know each other already? Had Rage arrived topless? It made no sense. But no matter. Lead, four-stringer in hand (had that been there before?) sat down on his amplifier: all set up, buzzing with potential for blasting, a loose earth lead-buzz somewhere in the background, the occasional crackle of analog tubes. Time might have passed. The odd syllable floated into the bassist's diffusing mind, reminding him he wasn't alone. It reminded him, too, that Doogie was still nowhere to be seen. He'd promised to bring along the resonator, if that hadn't been a dream. It was hard to tell right now. Lead studied his hand as if he'd never seen it before. Maybe he hadn't.

He managed to control his undulating digits enough to turn the amp down. Not much point working on anything just with Rage, who took most of his cues from Doogie's nods and various faces rather than the bassist and bandleader. It was partly sheer laziness on the

drummer's part, but partly because at gigs Lead was usually facing the crowd, stock still and burning out the Shark Metal gaze through his fire-coloured contacts. The lights, Doogie's lights, had been calibrated so precisely to create the requisite shades and moods that Lead's need to hit the exact stage spots in certain parts of certain songs was paramount. The stage was usually covered in tape and marks as a result. It was worth it: everyone loved the theatre of, for example, 'Darkness Enthroned.' The new single, 'Ghostly Barracuda,' would need similar treatment, which frustrated him even more. Where the hell was that bloody beautiful, bloody annoying Doogie? Without him, there was no way to know what could and couldn't work on the lighting design. Gah. No Doogie, no lights, no reson8.

Lead tried to tune in to the babble behind him as Rage and the blonde – was it Vera? Valarie? Veronica? Something like that? – got closer acquainted. She was a good-looking girl, he conceded, if you liked that kind of thing. She had been in gigs, for sure. Usually tapping her phone. That's where he'd knew her from: the uplift of the screen was a bloody distraction onstage. And she and Rage were currently distracting the hell out of each other's faces, starting with tongues and slurping conjoined mouths. *For the sake of the Holy Awe, Doogie, please turn up soon.* Remarkably, almost immediately after he'd pleaded to the skies, a muscle car zoomed up to the garage, handbrake-turning to a screeching halt. The huge red imported gas-guzzler had enormous fins, dual exhausts the size of a soil pipe, tinted windows and a gleaming chromium engine that poked through where the front hood should have been. The blazing sun drooled at the polished paintwork deliciously and for a moment Lead could see the reflection of himself, looking despondent, plus the dual entity of VeRagelca octopussing each other on the drumstool. And then, there he was: Doogie himself, climbing out of the hotride. The driver's window rolled down a touch, just enough for a hand and some of an arm to stretch out into the hazy, thick air and perform an elaborate handshake with a delighted and grinning Doog. A handshake that Lead knew very well. One that only a few people were entitled to make. What the hell was Doogie doing with The Sanctum? And why hadn't Weegie said anything? What was going on? He vowed to lay off the Jim for a while. This was too confusing.

The car ostentatiously hurried away, belching out white and blue smoke and flames from its insane pipes. Suddenly, Salvi Island felt very small to Leadbetter. For the first time, maybe in his life, he found the heat oppressive and the sun's shouting intensity scratching lasers on

his eyeballs. This place, this damned, dirty place. The sooner the band could leave it, the better. It was... well, it was a cage. The beaches and beauty? Through the haze, you could see it clearly. It was only a half-step out of yourself to enlighten yourself. All a façade. Cause underneath the giggling dissed tourisses, and behind the generic *Free Beer Tomorrow* signs, a perennial undercurrent of intrigue and mayhem wrangled and reigned. There were schemes wrapped in riddles. An untidy, unkempt mess of threads that tangled and tightened around your neck before you knew it. Where those threads ultimately led were some dark places. You had to know where to look to see it: dingy, shit-strewn back alleys behind the pristine hotels, where the staff smoked and the whores plied their trade, where drug deals got done and where people got stabbed. That was Salvi too. But as long as it was kept in that broken background, away from the façade, kept caged, the bad face of the island would never really be seen. But fuck, no doubt about it: It was there.

By now Doogie had geared up with his guitar and full pedalboard, the amp and 4x12 cab warming up – as if it could get any hotter – with portentous hum. Rage and his friend were now seemingly experimenting with a unique two-person, one-kit drumming system, she on his lap and, Lead suspected, Little Rage on the verge of worming his way to warmer climes.

He looked at Doogie, who looked at Rage Rasta III. Rage scowled but extricated himself from what was promising to be an interesting coupling. The girl hopped off, kissed the drummer, smiled winningly at Lead, and perched herself on the arm of The Sofa across the way. It got more desiccated each year but Lead also had noticed of late that there were patched repairs appearing. The sofa that couldn't die; because nobody would let it. It couldn't ever leave. It was caged, too. In limbo. Seemed everything was.

But first things first: Lead steeled himself, forced out a smile to the rehearsal space, and gave himself a pep talk: *pick up thy bass*, he said to the nagging brain in his head, *pick up thy bass and work*.

He turned the amp up again, seeing that Doogie was now plugged in and ready. A bassline seemed to drop right out of the sky and speak directly to him, to the island, to the veneer hiding the bad-faced grime and grot:



Ian was dicing with death.

He was deliberately leaning further and further back in a chair that rocked directly and dangerously toward the floor, feeling the cliff-edge moment of vertigo as the front legs rose and the back legs' traction or attraction or interaction with the carpet reached 25 per cent or less. That was the pivot. The point of no return, the point of crashing down to earth, bruising or breaking your back and cursing the moment that you had to push it. The only way to feel the dizziness of dislocation from all that was solid and knowable was to dare it and poke it and play with the pain.

And yet there was piece of a shard of a torn-up scrap of brain that urged and breathlessly floated the thought that it was not inevitable that the fall would happen. It was not a foregone conclusion that gravity would smash you down and smash you up. There was a possibility that his atoms would collide with the air and push back upwards, into the azure sky to soar and flip and fly like nobody ever had done. And that was also the moment, the point of no rebuke, the point of head-tickling magnificence between one world and the next. A point that existed in both worlds, in both scenarios, and yet belonged to neither.

And so Ian Walsh rocked in his chair. He, it, the moment was a string stretched back between worlds, on which it was possible to give a sharp and spectacular tug. He rocked,

and smiled, before turning to the computer screen in front of him once again. Somewhere, derangedly, in the long-distance, an echo of what might have been a dog barking whispered underneath the buzz of the elderly laptop's power supply, a buzz that had once been startlingly, worryingly aggressive. A buzz that now was part of the soundscape as the heat of the day was part of the eyeburn and as the sweat of the skin was part of his body. He turned again to the email that he had been reading over, and over, and over again that morning. Its metatext said that it had been composed and sent at nearly midnight back home and read at 10am in Salvi Island. Two different times. He supposed it existed on a server somewhere between its origin and destination, the text suspended, coded, in on-and-off instructions, represented by 1s and 0s or pinky and perky or shit and piss or whatever it was. The writer of the email trusted the computer to translate it into sendable data and trusted the computer at the other end to reconstitute it from those ons and offs in a way the recipient would understand. All parties trusted the structure, the network, the Internet, to deliver it to Ian and Ian alone. A world traversed by magic. Moveable moments; an eternal present ready for an instant answer, which would travel back across the world the other way ready for reading. A New Email, picked up seconds, minutes, hours, days later. Ian began to wonder whether time really mattered at all. Soon, probably, things would happen. Real things. Building of big things. Big things on tracks. Big metally things. Where wheels would turn. And where Ian would be driving. Again.

He re-re-re-re-read the email, cheeks reddening with an internally generated heat of happiness. It really could be happening. Nope. It really was happening:

From: **Bazbucket@plexmail.com**

To: **Walshyfungusboy@kurtmail.com**

Subject: **CONFIDENTIAL: We're on. What's oyur plans.**

Ian m8.

Funding has been agreed poofta

AS IN we've got the fucking contract!! !!! Just loose ends to tie son so details asap I can. But if you said eight figure territory. That wouldn't be far off HS

Bill has been rubber-stamped. Multi-year job. What did I tel ya boi your gonna get rich k fuckin this is the big kahoona's Also likely we have a hand in the provision. Also between you and me we are gonna have a good crack at the maintenance. My man we've Nailed it!!! Obviously I want your logistical expertise from the start on this – we go live to media on the project early August. Before then its hush-hush. Hence the personal email.. Cant stress that fnuff ok any leaks this is toast boy

Get the sand out of youre arse crack tout de suite. It's all going to kick off big-time and you want in.

When can you get here?

Happy to talk contracts soon as. Phone if u want but fuck knows what time it is in sandland

BadafuckinBOOM!

Ian began to reply...

From: Walshyfungusboy@kurtmail.com

To: **Bazbucket@plexmail.com**

Subject: **Re: CONFIDENTIAL: We're on. What's oyur plans.**

Alright you shit-tunnel, I'll be th

...but caught himself in time. Ian was experienced enough with dealing with himself that he realised that this all needed to sink in; he needed to make sure that all was lined-up properly before he constructed his answer. Calm, calm, calm. Be cool. He closed his eyes and exhaled. Breathed in through his nose, out through his mouth. Tried to still the thumping excitement of the blood roaring and cheering through his body. Breathed in through his nose, out through his mouth. Breathed in through his nose, out through his mouth. Breathed in through his nose, out through his mouth. In through the nose, out through the mouth. In through the nose, down to the lungs, back up the lungs, past the vocal cords and of its own accord and irresistible out came the words, dedicated to nobody, to everybody, to Baz, to Ian himself:

FUCKING

GET IN YOU

FUCKING

FUCKER

And rather than reply to the email, Ian wanted nothing more than to turn off the computer (which he did), dance around the room (which he did), and get straight on a plane and get the fuck out of Dodge (which he didn't).

He wanted to extend the moment; the point of no return; the rock and roll of his rebirth.

Ian Walsh, Logistics Expert and Transport Consultant, grabbed the least-smelly towel and, forgetting to limp in the excitement, eased down the stairs; it was more important than ever that his tanned, defined torso hit the pool whilst he still could.

Maybe it was time to get into coaching after all.

—

The practice had been decent, but no resonator had arrived. Doogie'd dashed off home straight after they'd gone through the set. And so Leadbetter JR Dudgeon tramped to his own house, bass strapped to his back. Well, fuck it. There was always writing to do. Back at his desk in no time, he took another deep and delicious smoke of his Jimson pipe. God but his mouth was dry. Deserting. Desert-ing him. When can he solve it? He reached for the bottle of water, which was hiding ten thousand years away within a blurred cloud of soupy air. He turned away from the computer screen. His chair treacled toward the typewriter desk. He went along for the ride, each thousandth of each millisecond ten years and more. Lead's fingers decided to type and he let them. God, but the room was hot. God but the room was hot. He melted into himself and away and inside there was:

Control powe powt

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The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Thursday, 29 July 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Carnival time, folk sit are com!!

The annual Ceremony of the Keeper of the Ice is scheduled.

For the next weekend, unless it is rescheduled.

As ever it will be preceded by the Singing of the Song of the Ice, said First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Leader of the Representative House of the Peoples, Keeper of the Ice and Deepest Voicerer.

"Sure, the song is taking long this year," he said. "But it will be heritage and our heritage is important ever always."

As tradition dictates, each natural-born Salvatian must report in turn to the podium of the Ice of the ceremoniality to be sung in by the First Person of the Representative House of the Peoples, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Keeper of the Ice. It is expected that over 6,543 persons are qualified for the ceremony this year.

"We begin at start after end," replied Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Keeper of the Ice and First Person of the Representative House of the Peoples. "And we do not stop until each and every and each person who is a qualified Salvi Islander has had a chance to do the sing,

and be sung in return, as tradition always contributes."

Immediately after the ceremony, which is expected to last over 36 hours and 4 minutes 19 seconds, the annual Parade of the Ceremony of the Ice is to commence, which will be immediately following the Singing of the Names of the People of the Island of Salvi. "Thanks be to god and peace unto his name," added First Person of the Representative House of the Peoples, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Keeper of the Ice.

He said that this year's boomations would be delivered courtesy of local businessman Wilson G. Rutherford, with assistance from a brand-new and bright young name in deepvotonic deliverancions.

*The Sentinel Says:
Who is this Young Boomer?
We Unmask the Hidden Name,
Declan Douglas Ross, on Page 4!! Turn to the Page 4 to reveal who it is!! ***NOTE: Do not reveal that It is Declan Ross – ED****

More posing Northstyle

So much for navigating the seas of the bounteous beauty of peace; the acrid snort of war is in the air.

That is the words, somewhat, of the Canuck government, as the Vikings continue to mass aboarder the country disputed area.

The Association of Countries have convening a special session of voting whether to intercessioning in the conflict.

Salvi neighbours Ripoblika are believed to be pushing for their The Happy Joy Killdog bombs to be utilized. First Person of the Representative House of the Peoples, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, is due to fly up for the meeting directly before the Singing of the Names of the People of the Island of Salvi, to cast a vote on the prospect and return.

Inside: 6 Million NRP Consultation opens on prospect of consulting for the change. This follows irectly from the previous consultation, which was the pre-consultation of the set-up of the official Wastad Mwydro Committee of Change and exists herewith on our page: *Page 4-3 so look there NOW!!!! More on this story is on Page Four, about the imminent Consultation, so turn to that page (four) now!*

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — Friday, 30 July 2010

five shillings and sixpence

Ceremony of the Keeper of the Ice Rescheduled also Singing of the Song of the Ice rescheduled because First Person Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, Leader of the Representative House of the Peoples, Keeper of the Ice and Deepest Voicerer, will be airbound, plane

-ing his way upward to
whit northfacing to the
vital conference vote
regarding possible action
in the continuing tensions
between the Canucks and
Vinland up north because
it is expected that the First
Person, Wilberforce
Jenkins-Ross, IV, Leader of
the Representative House
of the Peoples, Keeper of
the Ice and Deepest
Voicerer, will cast a vote as
to which of the two sides
should be backed by the
other countries that are
not involved ireckly but
who depend on the

nations up north for some
importandexporting
progress the continuing
tensions between the
Canucks and Vinland up
north because it is
expected that the First
Person, Wilberforce
Jenkins-Ross, IV, Leader of
the Representative House
of the Peoples, Keeper of
the Ice and Deepest
Voicerer, will cast a vote as
to which of the two sides.
*Kill them in the face with
glory! Our controversial
columnist Gab A. Pentin
shows no more than you
deserve. P4*

<<NB: PLS FILL
GFROM NEWSWOIRE
BEFORE PRINT IF NO
NEW UPDATE _ ED
DEPT OK>>

More gods found dead

Tragic scenes were a
discovered near the Fred
Willyneatcher monument
to distress as three more
doggeros had been died by
poisonpout. Said Sgt.
Pinhead Gunpowder: "Oh
Salvi, this sure is." A young
boy or girl in tracksuit
cookie-throwing was seen
closeto. More – Page 4

Fixings

A hole is filled; Lead is thoughtful

"I don't know how the hell she makes any money," Laura said. "That ad is on all the bloody time. Must cost her a bomb."

Ian wandered over to the living room area, handed Laura her can of beer then opened his own; it made a satisfying and always welcomed *pfft* noise, the song of imminent refreshment that delighted people the world over. He took a swig. It was wonderful. Cold enough to vibe against the afternoon heat - which despite the air conditioning was clawing at the house - but not so cold that you couldn't taste it. It had a classic lager flavour, with a certain unusual grassy note toward the end.

"I mean, yeah," Ian said. "If she pays at all. She's a Ross."

Laura rolled her eyes: "Yeah OK Mr. Cynic. Whatever you say."

Ian nearly countered with a protesting explanation of what he'd come across during his extensive online research into what constituted Judy's particular kind of fun but thought better of it. He'd been disappointed to find out a 'party store' did not in fact warrant inverted commas: it was a party store and not a cathouse. He was also increasingly unsurprised that the same names recurred in commerce, government and Salvi. It was all a stitch-up. Who you know, not what you know. Well, more like who you were related to. Total joke. But fuck that. Good shit was happening, and he was in demand. He didn't want to spoil the day with the Serious Talk that was needed. Not yet, anyway. There was a beach to be enjoyed, and the countdown to returning home had begun even if Laura didn't quite know it yet.

"Ah well," Ian eventually said. "Bang Bong Boogie innit."

"That's what they say."

They clinked their cans together. There was something about the booze over this part of the world that seriously did make you pretty light-headed. The giggles were never too far away, and the dry mouth and the hunger pangs usually tended to follow. That Oxtail was starting to smell fantastic already. Ian's stomach rumbled.

As a counterpoint, the doorbell rang.

“Oh,” Ian said, surprised. “Expecting company?”

“No, don’t think so.”

Ian stared at the door, a little transfixed. Who could it be? He felt a touch dizzy and his eyelids began drooping, just a tad, in the corners. The sound came again. Ian opened the door to find that standing in front of him was a large bloke, behind whom there was parked an enormous and expensive-looking car.

“Hello Mr. Walsh,” said the man. “Hey, smells good! That CDC?”

“Thanks,” Ian replied. “It’s Oxtail.”

His heart dropped as he recalled his training runs. Tears nearly came to his eyes as he remembered the way the old horse had looked right at him and refused the sugar lump. It’s as if the horse knew.

The man spoke again. “You called to say you got a wee problem needing attention, sir? W.G. Rutherford, at your service, sir.” He bowed, beaming with faux gentility.

Ian snapped back into the moment, the heaviness he felt receding to a low bass note. This now made sense: this bloke was Wilson, the landlord. Pretty swiftly round, too, fair play to him. Back home you’d be waiting weeks, and then there’d be a surly little fucker grunting at you.

“That’s right,” Ian said. “I’ll show you.”

Wilson straightened up, nodded strongly and whistled once. Almost instantly, another man appeared from the car, wielding a smallish toolbag. The pair followed Ian in, acknowledging Laura on the way.

“No bother ma’am,” said Wilson with a comforting smile. “We’ll get this done in a jiff, all darb in two shakes. Upstairs, yes?”

Ian nodded: “Yeah, I’ll show you, gents. One mo.”

He began to turn toward the stairs, before pausing and addressing Laura: “You go on to the pool, Loz. I’ll be down in a bit.”

“Bang Bong Boogie,” she replied, standing up and padding outside. Ian could hear her singing the maddeningly catchy jingle to herself, volume receding as she stepped away from him until the melody was enveloped by the sound of crickets, a light wind rustling through the palms, a distant howling and the clacking engine of a coughing bus. Perhaps a Duple Dominant by the sound of its idling. Wilson and his assistant had already zoomed up the stairs and could be heard making the international noise for repairmen, a kind of sharp inhalation through the teeth immediately followed by a stacatto exhalation: ‘Ooof.’ Ian shook his head to clear it, and went up to join in.

Diamonds briefly danced on the lightly undulating water. It seemed a shame to break through this timeless tableau, to splash away the artistry of eternity, to slap and smash the natural splendour of the beauty with the flesh and sweat of a human body. But what was a body made of, anyway? Laura, perched on the edge of a painfully warm plastic-slatted poolside chair, pondered. Wasn’t it something like 90 per cent water? How did that work? And why was it that, when you drank a glass of water, you didn’t tip the balance too high and shapeshift into a puddle? A puddle of blobby splodginess, with a face in the middle. A face probably saying, ‘Damnit, not again, please can you put me in rice for a bit?’ Laura laughed to herself. Well, it worked on phones at school, anyway. It was the new *Turn it off and on again*, wasn’t it: *Have you tried putting it in rice?* It must work, because the salt cellars were all full of rice too. Presumably, she thought, to stop it clumping. And who’d thought of that first? Someone must have. It wasn’t obvious was it. Maybe they’d tried other grains: what was that new one? Quinoa. Barley. Nope, no good. Had to be rice. Twice as nice. Holy Awe, it was hot. Almost unbearably so. She sensed the seat’s plastic stretching beneath her, molecules yawning open as the sun’s incessant radiation pushed its atoms further apart. Not even they could stand to be so close to each other in the face of this blazing assault. Laura wondered how much water there was in plastic. Was there? Was water everywhere? Or would it change, chemically, once it was part of the process? So though it was H₂O, it was also part of a plastic? What would that formula be? Was that how it worked? She wished she’d paid more attention in chemistry class.

The sensation of near-burn on her bum was deliciously on-the-edge now; Laura had an urge to dive into the pool that was so great that it took a conscious effort to resist. It would be too easy to just do that. Not rewarding enough. She anticipated how amazing it would feel when she eventually succumbed. In the meantime, spiky with perspiration, she was enjoying the ascetic denial. Ian wouldn't get it, of course. He'd just jump in and start chucking water about, hippo-ing and dolphin-ating at equal turn, whilst calling her a meff for waiting. Laura smiled to herself. He had been a lot happier of late. Maybe, finally, he was getting to grips with the fact that they were now Salvi Island residents. The way Ian's face had lit up when the Wilson bloke and his mate had turned up reminded her of how he was before they'd embarked on this adventure in the first place. He'd looked like he had a purpose. That he was useful. He looked like Ian. Right now he'd be talking very manly-like about the ins and outs of filler, plasterboard and paint. He always said he was a blagger but he was way more than that. Yes, he could bluff with the best of them, but he was also one of those annoying people that were good at pretty much everything they tried. It was good to see him happier. Things could yet work out for the absolute best. He just needed something to really get his teeth into. Chomp chomp. And just wait until he found out about the year-stay bonus. OK, not a big amount in the scheme of things, but extra money just for fulfilling 333 days – a third of the contract – was pretty sweet for any teacher. It was enough for a holiday. Ripoblika looked good; such a historic place, great beaches, different language. When else would they ever be able to go there? Or, for that matter, when would they be able to get over to Salvi Bach so easily? Either one was great. Yes, it really was true that a quick dip in the pool could solve a lot of things. Ian would be joining soon. It even made that fucking court case look less important. It was pathetic.

A flash of green crossed her peripheral vision, so swift it was dynamically formless. It could only be one thing: the Salvi parrot. Her first, real, wild parrot! So rare, so beautiful. The bird had settled on one of the closer palms; she could now just about see its plumage. It was otherworldly, a green that was unlike any other. Not lime, not moss, not jade, not olive: it was all of these, and none. The parrot was preening, and each feather seemed to catch the light in another unique manner, refracting a resplendently alive, preternaturally emerald hue. It was breathtaking. Laura, transfixed, watched as the Salvi Parrot stretched out its wings, revealing an

underside of blue feathers that mirrored the pool and the sky; it seemed to almost disappear with its camouflage. No wonder they were considered such good luck. She had never seen anything more gorgeously perfect in her whole life as this incredible tropical native, framed by a local palm tree against a sky of unending ultramarine. The world stopped; she was filled with an intensity of religious wonder and love. She was part of this; she was really part of this. Life was beautiful.

A car horn sounded nearby, shattering the moment. The bird flew off, startled. Laura jumped up, suddenly noticing that her legs were sticking to the now-squidgy plastic. She dived into the pool, submerging herself underneath the water and washing it all away, away, away.

Upstairs, W. G. Rutherford and assistant were beavering away as Ian circled somewhat jumpily behind them, ready to explain what hadn't happened should they ask. Neither did. They were a very good team, these two: Rutherford was clearly in charge, measuring the wall and giving instructions. He radiated confidence, energy and something else that Ian couldn't put his finger on. He wasn't sure whether he entirely liked it or approved of it. He pushed the feeling down. Silly. He was just being paranoid, he told himself. Neither Wilson nor the other guy had enquired at all about the hole. It seemed that they'd accepted it was part and parcel of the hurrinado season, that things would get bashed and crashed about a bit. Things would pick up bumps and bruises, and things would be fixed.

"I can get you a beer?" Ian asked.

"No thanks," Wilson responded. "We're good. Not too long now sir."

"OK well, if you change your mind..."

His words fell on deaf ears: the pair of repairers were deep into their work. Ian went to retrieve his drink. It was already getting warm, so he drained the can and took another from the fridge. Really, he should be in the pool by now. Or at least drinking by the side of it, whilst Loz skilfully swam lengths. She was so fluent compared to him. He couldn't ever get the hang of the breathing bit and ended up with mouthfuls of water, coughing as he went. Laura, though – not

a single wasted movement. She looked like she just belonged. He cracked open the new beer, which sang its aluminium song to him once more. This swig was a good one, too. Ian felt a sudden unease as the realisation came back to him that his job talk had to happen sooner rather than later. So exciting. Leaving the rock. Back to reality. Maybe get the knee op. It was time. As Ian climbed the stairs again it hit him with a start that maybe, just maybe, Laura wouldn't be quite so enthusiastic. He knew she loved the school and all. As to how much she loved Salvi— well, that was another matter. But hellfire she could get a job anywhere couldn't she. Ian knew he'd go home tomorrow if he was still flying solo. But he didn't want to be on his own. He popped his head into the ensuite, where the guys seemed completely absorbed in their job. Ian was a spare part again. He bumbled over to the computer and waggled the mouse to wake it up.

His inbox had a new email.

From: **PerfectMatchLove.com**

To: **Walshington Jenkins-Ross**

Subject: **You have an admirer!!**

Hey, WalshyJR007! Verona has replied to your message!!

A new adult friend is waiting for you to make their day... and their night too!

Please [clickhere](#) to access your inbox!

Some coder's tune played.



Ian winced. He was sure the lads had heard it, damnit.

MESSAGE FROM * VERONA X

HEY WHAT ABOUT THIS MERCY MEAD U PROMISED???
HAHA. U GONA GO 2 ICE CEREMONY MAY B WE MEET
THERE?? I WILL BE BLONDE LOL ALWAYS AM WITH A
BLACK CROPPER AN A HENNA TATTOO OF DOG!!! LOOK
OUT FOR ME OK SEND A NEW PIC IF U LIKE... DONT
MIND IF IT SECRET I NO U SEEM CAGY SOME, IS THEIR
SUM 1 ELS IN THE SCENE??? **IM DISCRETE DONT FRET**
MERCY MEAD A DANCE AN WHO NOSE WHAT ELSE –
REPLY QUICK IM SO BORED!!!!!!!!!! UR SUCH A DUDE!!!!
MAKE ME FEEL HAPY WITH SOMETHING TO LOOK
4WARD 2?!! XX

Wow. Just, wow. He shook his head and started to compose a reply. This was unreal. This place was unreal. None of it was real. It was beyond weird, all this. What were the rules? He knew very well what the rules of his marriage were. But Verona wasn't replying to Ian Walsh, was she? It was Walshington Jenkins-Ross. And Walshington Jenkins-Ross was ready to find out exactly what could happen when you were a Salvi Islander on PML, just looking for distractions, looking for insider information, looking for... looking for what?

He began typing. Stopped. Deleted. Began again. What exactly the hell was he doing? And who exactly was doing it? The lines had started to blur. Worlds had begun to collide. He closed the program down, turned the computer off, and stood up. This'd require a bit more thought. Maybe he could observe Verona at the ceremony. She was defo up for it. But it was superfluous now, this island-learning-project of his. He didn't need to mesh in, or remould himself, because he was going home where he was needed and required and where his shape was solid.

In the ensuite, the banging had stopped and a voice was speaking. Ian wondered if it was directed at him, so he moved closer and was about to say something when he realised it was Wilson, on the telephone. Something halted Ian in his tracks, and he stood stock still to listen.

“Yes I can give yah power yes, you wanna test?”

A pause.

“Let me worry about that, Doody, no sweat, you jus make sure the parts all oiled an ready to go, yeah. The merch-an-dise. Strong as you like.”

A pause. A huge laugh from W. G. Rutherford.

“That’s right. That gonna blast away a few of them. This works, we got something to really shout about... yeah, we got patent. Pending. Yeah I will bring you the schematic an you bring ok. Just paperwork... yeh.”

A pause. Another laugh.

“Every man the smith of his good fortune, that’s what they say up there eh... catch you soon. Be ready.”

A pause. Another laugh.

“Yeh thus I say too. Am out.”

Ian could make not head nor tail of it and, the call seemingly ended, suddenly felt incredibly self-conscious. He stepped over to the bathroom where a miracle seemed to have occurred. Had there ever been any damage at all? It was the cleanest job he’d ever seen. There didn’t even seem to be any dust. How was that possible?

“Wow,” he said. Wilson and his assistant both beamed.

“We aim to please, sir,” Wilson said. “Now, you better get stirrin’ that oxtail before we come eat it all up.”

The image of a sad horse trudging in circles came back into Ian’s mind. He forced it away again and laughed politely at W.G.R’s joke. Wilson’s assistant was laden down with all the tools and

offcuts. They reached the door and said their mutual goodbyes. Ian gazed longingly at the enormous car which roared off down the road at a frankly unnecessarily showy pace. What a motor – literally. It was poking through the bonnet. Very impressive. And what an impressive man Wilson G. Rutherford was, too. Clearly someone who got things done. Shit, but this place needed more of those people. But what Ian needed was a dip in the pool, so he turned the stove off, leaving the stew to settle and the flavors to develop; the breadfruit was steaming with its own residual heat, inside its aluminum foil. The coke was in the fridge; the rum on the side.

Right there, in the kitchen, Ian stripped down to his swim shorts, drained the rest of his beer, and grabbed the house keys. Jeez, life wasn't that bad was it. A beer, a swim, a gal. Simple things. The rest could wait. Everything had an ending. And that was because everything had a beginning. It was just how it was.

Leadbetter, in his bedroom, put down his bass and pondered. Things were moving fast. The Ice Ceremony was nigh, and the island was sticking itself to the usual preparations. The same bloody things, year on year: turtles harvested, their greying, congealing, greeny meat hanging from rusted hooks in cracked-paint doorways; barely-there, feather-sequin-asscheeks-out dancing outfits stitched, oil bought, liaisons planned. He was starting to find it all nauseating. This was one of Salvi's greatest – worst - contradictions: that 991 days out of a thousand it was *Church this* and *Holy Awe that* and *Lord have mercy on the island that bears its burden*. Being Salvatian meant prostrating to the flag and the altar, and the humble shall inherit the fucking pieces of whatever's left after the government has stuffed its gouty claws in, and after the fucking families and friends of them have scuttled themselves rancid in the leftovers, and after deals and greases have been exchanged like a piece of garbage passed from mouth to mouth, picking up more and more germs and viruses and corrupt broken promises from each garbling, grasping maw. It made him breathless and disgusted. What if it was the same everywhere? The question maddened and repelled him and made his brain spin. As for changing it through the music, was that a bust from the start? Was that scene really going to be any different? You saw

stories online of rip-offs all the time. The industry exploiting skint young hopefuls; lithe and ready to fuck, ready to be sex symbols, ready to be stars. Well yeah, they were all fucked weren't they, by the end of it: sucked dry of all independence, creative juices spilled on the ground, all dreams left bleeding by the side of the road. No Samaritans to be seen. But on the way there were amazing moments. Great gigs, record releases, interviews, first throw at the korfbal finals, snorting angel dust from the buttocks of another nubile body, all of that. Those moments, so precious and so very fleeting, tainted by the growing suspicion that they also contained the circularity of drudgery to repeat til you got bored, or died, or were usurped, or all three. The same realisation that no matter how cute poochie may be now, that every gorgeous-eyed, sweet-natured, squeaky-barked, fluffy, loving pet puppy by nature carries in it the promise that one day it will die. Haha-ha-ha, ha, ha-haha, haha-ha-ha. The meaning was in there, clear enough, if you only looked for it: a morose, co-dependent avowal of truth. Ay, maybe the hounds were more eloquent than they seemed.

But, well, those remaining three days of the year, the nine in the cycle, well, sir, they were carnival. Anything goes. The costumes were skimpier every year, feathers, boas, butts poking out everywhere, titties perky and on show, fabulous, outrageous, besequinned, high-heeled, grinding, grunting girls wine-ing down the road fuelled on a mix of Jim and Jack; beautiful boys in loincloths, nothing underneath, shaved at the point of entry and oiled-up ready for whomever, wherever, or never. Lead was torn at the thought of his Doogie dressed ready for him – him alone, in his dreams – the beautiful conjoining Lead so desired. It was another trap, another unattainable golden moment. It made Lead sick with longing and self-loathing. Maybe it would be different this year thanks to the addition of the new cocktail: Mercy Mead Extra. This year the parade would be doused and dosed to purple madness with the old spirit combined with Stallion soda, a grind of Jim, and Weegie's special Ripoblikan DQX. Ice Ceremony be damned. It was pure, old-fashioned, ancient debauchery. Everyone knew it.

And then it would be over. Weegie-provided *Endpreg* Pills would kick in. Nausea would be unstoppably horrendous, rivers of puke flowing; the bloody, twisted-up and never-to-breathe not-even-bodies-just-cell-clusters of proto-Salvatians shot down toilet pipes in schools, bars, homes and behind trees, dying without a breath, shat out from convulsing, damaged wombs.

The next day, the next week, whatever: revellers would all be back in their jobs, back behind desks and *Yes Sir I Will Just Do That For You Hold On*. But the people would be changed: how could you not be? You took a pill and killed a future to save your own place on the island's goodie-goodie-list. Cause Nine-after-Ice babies were always picked on in school. *You're just an IceFuck*. As ever the world would turn and the Sunday-church and the best-behaviour and the god-fearing and system-adhering came back into play for another 333 days; the third of the thousand, year on year, from ever to ever, to nowhere, to nothing, stretching in both directions. But he was not going to betray himself like all the others did. This could not be the future; not Lead's future. He wanted the sun every day, not just once a year or so; the proper sun, the real sun, the sun of achievement and individuality and music and creation and fuckit Shark Fucking Metal, and the real power that came with creating yourself. Fuck politics, and let's dance. We will tell bigger truths. This is the nature of the anticulturalist to come.

Worryingly, Doogie was embroiled in some kind of weird shit along with Weegie. The only Weegie-schemes you ever found out about were those that went spectacularly right. Nothing ever went wrong, not with Weegie's name on it. Someone else was always in the firing line. A patsy. Another rube. And the cops all shout and scream: *Well hey there Joe Palooka-Ross, we see you don't got the import license for these hundred Ice-blocks, we mean of course fifty cause half of them were, uh, destroyed somehow in the warehouse an the boys in the station all got cool mead tonite boy oh boy*.

Santa isn't real. That's what people deliberately forgot under the ice. Rage seemed to have bought right into it with that new weird girl of his that hung around on the rooftop like a stray mutt. Fucking idiot. Culturalist. Spent already and he didn't know it. To each their own? Nah: to each what's left, the detritus and debris. And soon nuff Rage or someone like him will get her or someone like her knocked up and game over for him. Just the same as his parents, and their parents before them and theirs before them and on and on and back and back and back and forward and forward too. Repeating, repeating, repeating. Fuck. Lead shook his head, but he couldn't rid himself of a truth that he didn't care too much to accept. He turned to his typewriter; brain bruised by the whole insane logic of it. He could see it so clearly it caused him

pain. And his fingers slammed and whacked the keys of his ancient machine, and that caused a better kind of pain.

when you see a mother or father or Carer or whomever
telling their kid to share and be nice it does not
follow that they believe in the same as adults
we lie to our kids about sharing goods happiness not
fighting finding a way to play together
we say this is good
then we grow up and do not follow this path
ourselves
no matter how fast the hamster runs he is still on
the tiny wheel
and we look and laugh and say how Cute
if we withdraw our feeding he dies

we have both imprisoned it and saved its life

this is the ultimate antiCulturalist statement

santa was never real

Wilberforce and the Vote

The boss finds himself with a decision to make

Clutching three sealed diplo-bags awkwardly to his chest, Wilberforce could have cried as he climbed the fucking stairway yet again. Yet another journey. Yet another bloody boring journey. Nobody understood how tiring, how tiresome, how utterly draining it was. If only he could sit at his desk and think then he could solve so many issues. If only there was time. But there never was. He couldn't solve Jimmy Schit, because he was always on bloody planes to bloody meetings that he had to bloody well attend to keep Salvi from crumbling into the sea. He took his seat in First Class, carefully placing the trio of bags next to him. In this he was guided by Rannsy. Her smile as ever made him both warm and despairing.

"I trust the world tweaks treatful today?" he said, spluttering a little. Her reply made him stop, stock still.

She spoke: "I... well."

The stewardess looked around her and whispered into Wilberforce's grateful ear: "They are talking about withdrawing passports. The conflict. It'sch scherious."

He saw eternity as he felt her beautiful breath on his unworthy ear. She was so close, so beautiful. And- oh he should have bloody seen it - looking at losing her travel rights if the Canucks had their way. She, the angel of the skies, his literal angel, caught on the wrong side of a jumped-up bloody land debate. He smiled reassuringly at her. This could not happen.

"Surely, there is a way," he said. "I am trawelling for the wote you know. The Association of Countries requested me as the Fouth of Three. We need to solve this border argument for the sake of us, ush all. Fret not. We will solve, uh, make solve. Salvi is solvi."

He gestured toward his special hand-luggage. It bypassed customs, everywhere. Everyone knew, and nobody knew. If Rannsy knew, she hadn't yet let the information reach her face, which remained entirely, and beautifully, impassive. Wilberforce reddened a little:

"Ah. Yes anyway yes. Oh perhaps some DQX and Mead yes, thank you so much and do not or try not anyway to, uh, wowwy."

He nodded toward the bags again. The stewardess beamed at him, not giving anything away. Wilberforce felt suddenly incredibly embarrassed and turned his nodding into some kind of head-dance, or a tic. Maybe she didn't know. He felt utterly foolish and unhappy. What the hell was he anyway. She smiled and patted his hand reassuringly. His drink, and his medication, was coming right up, sir. Only the best for her favourite.

He gazed at her heavenly behind as she sashayed down the aisle. But his mind was racing. What could he do? This bloody conflict, what was it? Who really cared? If Vinland was on the wrong side of the vote, the Ripoblikans would be up in arms. Maybe literally. But if Vinland won, then Vespucci would flex its own bloody muscles. Those arrogant bastards, just like that fucking fool owner of the Sentinel. And what of the Mother Country? They weren't doing anything, as bloody usual. This could not do. It just could not. And it would not.

Wilberforce assessed his options as the plane engines began to whine and growl with barely controlled power.

1. *Do nothing.* (This was his preferred option). Let them argue it out. Let them bomb each other to smithereens. Let them do what they wilt. But this could not happen, because Mother Country and Vespucci would bring their enormous military power to the party. And with those two heavyweights posturing, nobody was safe, let alone a tiny island in the middle of a beautiful clear sea. Salvi would be caught between the devils. Ripoblika an island just half an hour away, Vespucci a hundred miles north: Salvi would be a bad place to be.

So, maybe it was down to:

2. *Vote for Vinland.* The advantages: keep Rannsy's ability to travel and keep Ripoblika onside. Disadvantages? Vespucci's long-standing embargo on Ripoblika would be at the forefront of the conversation and the tension ratchet up. Ostensibly neutral on the issue but in reality far from it Mother Country could not, would not have that. They would, probably, at a pinch, back Vespucci. Again, Salvi would be caught in the crossfire. For the sake of Awe it was impossible.

So, perhaps:

3. *Jump out of the airplane window* (probably his second-best option, he had to concede).

Rannsy returned with his drink and his pills. He gulped them, a little too quick. Her smile seemed painted-on. Maybe she felt awkward having asked him for help. Maybe she was embarrassed for him. But who else could do what he could do? He felt her worry shuddering through him. Surely there was another way? He felt an idea beginning to grow at the back of his mind. But he couldn't quite make it show itself. It would appear if he just let it stew awhile. These things always did. People had no idea how difficult all this was. If only they could get inside his head for a few minutes, they'd see. It was not a fun place. It was not for everybody. And, well, but. Someone had to be First Person. Bag dropper. Greaser. Smoother. The Keeper of the Ice. First Person? What a joke that was. He was powerless. A country demanded what it demanded. He had no real authority over it. He just signed the papers and voted the way he was supposed to vote, and commissioned the damage reports afterwards, and quashed them, and recommissioned friendlier versions. Nobody knew how hard it was. Unless you'd been there. Baxter Boneshaker had. And, in a way, maybe WGR did too. He was a clever fucker. Never present, always there. He knew. WGR, Weegie, Rutherford, knew what to do: Fill the bags - don't drop them. Same game, different position. He'd never get caught in Politics Big P because he was busy with politics small p. Sensible move. Things would be better if more took that angle. But they didn't because they were caught in the structures and the bullshit. Like, right now, Boneshaker's current job was to talk foolishness about the legislature in the press because he was the Shadow Person this time. Next time the roles would be reversed. Maybe. My turn your turn bing bang boo. It was such a bloody idiotic game. And Wilberforce was so, so tired of it.

The captain's voice, languid and low, drawled over the tinny tannoy and cut through his train of thought:

"Flight crew prepare for takeoff."

Once they were in the air, Wilberforce fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

If only he could stay in that dark cocoon forever.

The Heat is On

Laura has good news; Lead has a realisation

Laura sat in the car, unable somehow to get herself into the mood to head home. She reached into her canvas bag that was bulging with as-yet-unmarked books and pulled out the memo she'd read and re-read maybe ten times that day. Ian would be extremely happy, and maybe they'd get a holiday out of it.

To: Laura Walsh

From: Human Resourcing and Longevity Planning

Dear Ms. Walsh,

Congratulations on completing your first year. We hope it is the first of many. We enclose your re-signing bonus cheque which as per the terms of the contract includes the NRP1,000 for re-signing the pledge attached. Please sign and return the contract (not enclosed, please pick up from Reception) to receive the cheque as discussed.

Yours under the Lord,

cc. Whistleback McSka, Sec.

It was entirely typical of the school and the island: paperwork on paperwork. But if you just went along with it then you could do alright; the most important thing was not to worry as to the ins and outs. The banks were all closed up for the parade anyway. Plenty of time.

Her reverie was broken by Mickey Pearce, who zoomed past in his ludicrous, bright yellow Jeep. Or, she corrected herself, what used to be a Jeep. It no longer had a roof, windows or doors so what was left was a metal shell, something like a junior Monster Truck. Mickey waved his way past, high up toward the clouds. The vehicle's enormous, tractorish wheels and pimped-up suspension ratcheted the driver's seat up to approximately the level of an average upstairs bedroom on the island. The jalopy bumped and blubbered its way over the potholes, reggae music blaring out at a hundred or so decibels. It was as if the bass itself was the engine, pushing the sunspot-hued vehicle along with each hefty low and long frequency. It was the kind of music that you felt before you heard it; the basslines rattling through the ribcage and tattling

around the guts. Mickey and the cage-car disappeared into the heat haze over the melting blacktop, the music itself receded, and into the relative quiet insinuated the whirr of the air-con, the singing of a distant parrot and the distant giggling of a clutch of schoolkids let out for the day, the week, and the summer too.

You could really fall in love with this place. Salvi Island. What a place. Just gorgeous white sand beaches on which to drink fizzy wine and snaffle down conch fritters; beautiful parrots soaring and iguanas clambering up and down trees, busy whizzing around to their own enhanced beat; the whistly cuteness of the tiny Coqui frogs at Iguana Pond; even the fierce dominion of the heat wasn't all that bad when you were prepared for it. And the quirks, the daftness, the paperwork, the constant toing and froing to get your stuff signed? Well, that was just how it went down here.

"We're not in Kansas anymore," Laura told the windscreen. "Click click."

She pushed down on the accelerator pedal, released the handbrake and began to trundle home, the car bubbling about a little in some of the newer holes and bumps that Mickey's Jeep had gouged. But the bonus was brilliant. Island hopping at last! Ian was going to be delighted. She'd even managed to pick up the newspaper on her way out of the staff room. Usually it'd be long-gone by now. Not that it made any sense at all:

The Sentinel of Salvi

Big Salvi Town — XXXX JULY, 2010

CCQWA shillings and sixpence

Exclusive: Adult Abortion Bill to be Read by the Representative House of the Peoples

The SENTINEL has learned in strict confidence that First Person Wilberforce Jenkins Ross, IV, has put forward the idea of an initial white paper toward a First Reading of a Bill that will be presented to the Representative House of the Peoples.

The First Person is currently off-island returning on-island with his retinue of his work and himself, but the gist of the potential sheet of groundbreaking worldchanging paper is one that has been described as 'woeful' by the likes of our source, who wished to remain unnamed due to the sensitive nature of his day job.

The Horrible Baxter Boneshaker, Member for East Ridge and erstwhile First Person himself, told the SENTINEL that the idea

of the First Person, Wilberforce Jenkins Ross, IV, was not one that he had expected.

"Take this: I was flabbergasted to the hilt when I heard of the Honorable Member's plans," said Mr. Boneshaker, whose business it is. "It is a typical balled-up piece of baloney from a man who has a track record of bringing woeful bills to the House. He can be a real flat tyre."

It is thought to be a resurrection of the controversial Adult Adopticating Bill, first proposed in 1925 by Shackforce Baxross, who was First Person at the time. Under the terms of the bill, any adult could be adopted to a Salvi nationality when sponsored by a man. In that instance, it

was knocked back by a historical majority of 99% to one, with the abstaining First Person unable to vote due to the sensitive nature of his day job.

"Truly this would be an awful day under the Sun of Salvi were this to proceed to a First Reading, then a Second Reading," said Mr. Boneshaker.

"And even then if it passed Committee and Report and Third Reading and Amendments and Assent it would provoke a major, and woeful, situation."

Wilberforce Jenkins Ross, IV, is due back on-island for the Ceremony of the Ice, preceded by the Reading of the Names.

Inside: Dead dogs *Page 4*

Across town, Fist Hook were in their rehearsal garage, getting ready for their last rehearsal before the Ice Dance.

Leadbetter observed his band. Rage was ready, muscles glistening and smile playing on his lips as he sat behind his drumkit; Doogie was fiddling with a gizmo into which his guitar was plugged. They looked more focused than for a while. The imminence of the islands' annual blowout had given everyone an edginess and readiness for the affirmation to come. It reminded the bass player of the final few minutes before a gig. Anticipation was a powerful force. It could be found with the most intensity in the smallest of places, the most innocuous of ideas. Leadbetter stood by his bass amplifier, plugged in his guitar lead, turned the volume up to full, and listened to the kinetic crackling that ensued. This sacred moment, this pause, this meditative restriction before hitting the string and causing the booming frequencies to surge through his chest was the Universe. His stomach churned with excitement and stimulation. There was an itchy, ragged grace to this non-time, a carved-out and glorious space between idea and resolution. The moment of intensity.

Because the harmonic A on the seventh fret of the D string always gave him absolute jitters. It didn't work if he played the same note it on the second fret of his G. That was softer and had a different, friendlier, blander tone. The amp's graphic equaliser was set to his favourite soundscape, with top-end bite and low-end subby growl and not much in-between; adding mids would muddy everything. Too much middle, too much mediocrity: it turned life into a pulp, a mulch of chewy dough. But when he took them out, removed the middle range, removed those useless blobby pieces of sameness, then out rang the A. Doogie had explained it to him one time, all formants, overtones, resonant frequency and mathematics. Whatever. Leadbetter knew what he knew and that was that the A, the upper A, gave him quivers when he played it on the D, and not when he did it on the G.

Other people didn't get it the same, of course. Sometimes they heard *one* note suddenly boom above the music, but they didn't know what it was. What it meant. If they did, they might feel it the same. But that one note above the rest at best might raise an eyebrow for a split second - then the song went on regardless, taking their attention with it. This was hard for Lead to

reconcile with his own visceral experience. When he hit that note it was definitively changing his body, an external input rendered internal, racing and extending and pounding inside and altering his world. It made him feel like he, the world and the heavens were all about to crack in two; that if he only half-stepped outside of himself he could fly, that his body would no longer be a cage. That there was no 'he' anymore. Just the vibration and the feeling and the everything of the universe. It was vital to play the note. To let it ring in, ring out, ring in, shuddering and biting at his squashy innards with its iron electricity. But to do so, to let it loose, was also to somehow demean it. Crucifixion was a prelude to rebirth. Without one there was no other.

So he stood by his amp, and imagined the way it would feel when he played his A, the upper A, on the D string not the G, with the settings just how he liked and just how they complemented Doogie's guitar and Rage's drums and his own voice. He stood, and he did nothing, and he listened to the crackle and distant wheezing of his amp which now seemed barely able to control itself, the power now rising and rising, a crescendo of frustration. It was a tiger about to rip its chains away and maul its handler; a Nascar machine waiting for the starting line, only a hair-trigger from smashing through its parking brake and into the nearest wall; a moment of heart-splitting, teeth-gritting despair before the cliff-jump into the splashing sea way below; a holding back, holding back, holding back despite the moans and the hardness and the desperate urge to let loose. That moment, so powerful, so horrendous, before the payoff so short and so wonderful and so everything - and gone as soon as acknowledged.

Leadbetter's amp crackled, and he moved his hand up the strings, and he shut his eyes, and he listened to the faintest of scratches from the speaker as his calloused fingers slowly caressed the wound steel, and he knew the sound had already changed, so slightly as to be imperceptible to the uninitiated, and he knew where that note was, and he savoured the moment of pre-release, the ache and the pain of the knowledge of how it would feel, and the sweat built up on his brow, and his shoulders tensed as he waited, and his hips and groin started to tighten, and the buzz built up, the harmonic beginning to insinuate itself through only these tiny movements of what was not-quite-now Lead's body, and the feedback grew glass and it rang and rang and rang and Lead shook and the room disappeared and the harmonic distortion RANG and inside it crackled and his heart crumbled and the organs caught

on fire and the head and the heat and the urge and the unstoppable sap of everythingness rose in him until he could hold back no longer hold back hold back and it surged within him and he could hold it no longer and the Big Bang of the Universe was within him as he plunged his hand into the wound in the side of creation and then he was stepping to the mic and finally readying that plectrum to hit the string where his trembling finger was sending terror-filled vibrato through the room, the waves of sound undulating and the space behind Lead's eyes filling with purple sparks, and he could hold no longer and he HIT the note and the band kicked in and all Lead could see were the words he didn't know had been within him and somewhere in front of him floated letters floated ideas a tickertape of truth clacking past his closed eyelids with filthy clarity of knowledge and they said

~~at~~ am not for sale ~~at~~am not for sale ~~at~~am not for
sale • ~~at~~am not for sale ~~at~~sell myself ~~at~~sell
at my price but you do not buy me you cannot buy
me ~~at~~am not for sale but ~~at~~sell myself the
antiCulturalist is born the antiCulturalist will not
be borne the antiCulturalist is mine is mine is mine
~~at~~sell nothing ~~at~~sell it all it all it all

and he knew that this was the moment that the song became the word and the word was well the word was whatever the fuck he decided it was because that was an anticulturalist and if he said or sang it was then it would be so forever, and he didn't need a typewriter or a notebook or an offline justification because he could see finally he could see and the word was the song was the note was the upper A the resonant one the one that shuddered and flailed within him

and sent him away and close to the sun into the sun beyond the world where all was fire and lightning and black holes and bile and he was the only one who could see this the only one and it was all his, all his.

And it was time to take this worldwide.



Domain name:

theanticulturalist.salvi.net

Data validation:

Nameitnet was able to match the registrant's name and address against a 3rd party data source on 30-July-2010.

Registrar:

Do-it-Clive Limited t/a DIC-reg [Tag = DIC-REG]

URL: <http://www.Do-It-Clive.org.mc>

Domain Owner:

William Leadbetter Jenkins-Ross Dudgeon, Salvi Island, Salvi.

Address:

Details are held by us as required by Mother Country Data Law 27b/6.

Relevant dates:

Registered on: 30-Jul-2010

Expiry date: 25-04-2013

Last updated: 30-Jul-2010

Registration status:

Registered until expiry date.

Name servers:

dns.mc-dic.com

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The Ice Cerberus

Ian, Laura, Leadbetter, Weegie and Wilberforce are in attendance at the same event

Let Them Feed The Keeper Of The Ice

Ceremonial

Unknown

Bass

Soprano

10

B.

S.

19

B.

S.

Let it be heralded thus:

Keeper Of The Ice: Let them feed!

All: Let us feed!

Keeper Of The Ice: Let them feed!

Oldest inhabitant: Let me feed!

Keeper Of The Ice: Let him/her feed!

Repeat til all Trueborn Salvi Islanders have sung, from the oldest to the youngest. Let the babies be tickled til they cry out where designated. Here is the call and response:

Keeper of The Ice: Let them feed The Keeper Of The Ice

All: Let Us Feed!

Keeper of The Ice: Let them feed The Keeper Of The Ice

All: Let Us Feed!

Keeper of The Ice: Lest the ice should fail

All: Let Us Feed!

Keeper of the Ice: And with weft and wail

All: Let Us Feed!

Keeper of the Ice: There would be no mercy and no Ice

All: Let Us Feed! Let Us Feed!

Let the ice be released when all have passed and the parade to begin

Laura's diaphanous wings shimmered in the sun as she, along with thousands of residents of Salvi, bopped on the spot awaiting the official nod to begin the parade. Her hair was teased and constructed into an impressive explosion of golden curls, set off by an enormous marigold flower fascinator; her eyes semi-hidden behind a cat-like half-face bejewelled mask. Purple lips, a golden hotpants-and-brassiere set, and dangerously tottery, lightning-flashed six-inch kneeboots completed the outfit. She would have to practically fight Ian off today, if he was anything like he had been of late. The word was *potent*. Still, it was all coming together at last, she mused, watching as one of her fellow road-touchers danced past, extraordinarily-clad in what could only have been dinosaur feathers given their size. And, as Laura noted, nothing else underneath. It was a shimmering, delicious, daring outfit which would have embarrassed Salome, but here in the parade nobody looked twice. The costumes, so elaborate and lovingly shaped to each individual, made for a riot of style, of design, of joie de vivre. And there were all sorts of bodies, too, if you cared to really concentrate on them. But paradoxically, it took an immense effort to do so. It seemed to Laura that the glitter and the makeup and the fishnet stockings and the queenified dancing thousands became one undulating, interacting whole. This was a many-headed, multi-limbed beast of all sexes and none; the thongs and the budgie smugglers, the carnival-wear and the colours, here under this blazing sun with the humidity and the excitement, became Salvi itself. It was a celebration, and a celebration to which each person took their own individual motivation; the energy was put back into the pulsating melange to become something great, something eternal, something that held an erotic, exotic promise. And she loved it.

Laura wiped her sweat-dripping chin with the back of her hand as she spotted Ian returning from the bar with two enormous plastic flagons. He was in shorter shorts than normal, knee strapped up, sockless trainers, and a plain white T-shirt which was already yellowing under the arms with his sweat. And those shorts left very little to the imagination: bloody hell, he was up again and Holy Awe you could see it from

...twenty yards away...

...Ian was struggling with the weight of two massive grogholders of Gargleblaster

STALLION Plus. They were bloody heavy, the drinks, with all the ice and all, so he couldn't wait to get stuck in and make his load lighter. It would have helped, he told himself, if Loz had come with, although she did have a point that someone had to hold their place in the scene. And fucking hell the scenery was something to behold today. Never had he seen so many biteable arses and squeezable cheeks, so many sets of tits that he could only imagine pulling toward his hot mouth, so many beautiful, filthy, wickedly masked dancing goddesses. It made him yelp with desire, no matter how many times he tried to think of the stench of dead dogs rotting in the sun. Those damned tight knickers and shiny butts and shoulders to chew on and legs to stroke. Fucking hell. He'd start at the tinkling toes, putting each in his mouth in turn, worshipping the arches and the wonderful part where the foot met the ankle, breathing in the heady scent of perspiring, yielding skin, holding back and holding back as he would close his eyes and gorge himself on the smooth skin of the shins and the utterly ethereal morsels of the back of the kneecaps and the honeyed, musky drips snaking their way from a thousand thousand tempting, maddening inner thighs and make his way slowly, slowly, inevitably, hungrily upward toward

...the holy grail...

...was, **Leadbetter** knew, getting the settings just right to make the resonator not just serviceable but incredible. From his vantage point on the altar that marked the start and end of the parade, he looked over the bobbing ocean of heads. If Doogie was right about this levitating frequency, about the power possible with the sounds he'd been banging on about, then this crowd would be the first converts to the new power of the shark. Hellwhistle, Doogman was a badman when it came to it. Lead considered the scene at the altar. Doog and Weegie were deep in conversation, crouched down and playing with electrical plugs, huge plastic snakes spaghetti-ing and lurching as current snapped and fizzed all around. The loudspeakers were half a mile away, propped against the government building. God, they were enormous, and so was the buzz they threw out. It was going to be utterly sharky. He took a pull on his Jimjoint and

realised what was about to happen. If the power was right... if they could get it just perfect, then the island would shake and move as never before. It would be the Day to End All Days.

“Brothers,” he said to Doogie and Weegie, in the style of his uncle Wilberforce. “I secuwerly state that this is going to be the best, deepest, most awesome voicerer of all time. This day will be marked, uh, for ever, in the annals of Fisthookering.”

The pair barely looked up before squirreling themselves back into a conversation that seemed to be taking place purely through math and signal flow diagrams. Lead could actually see strange mathematical symbols floating in the heavy air, rising from the heat haze above the heads of his bandmate and his uncle Weej, the Xs and Ys and $A = \pi r^2$ s and ∞ s and $\sqrt{}$ s gradually diffusing into each other, making ever-more complex equations that would all come together when the

...time was right...

...for **Wilberforce** to let that Baxter bloody Bonemachine know what was coming to him. Such a melodiously arse-wit grackle and stenchsome fart-headed wamper he was.

“Oh hello Bonebrain yes yes it is near, uh, the time, uh, of tremendously tickleatious tawking for me, being as I am Keeper of, uh, the Ice and Deepest Woicerer and not to mention First Person of course.”

God he was an ugly fatso: like a bloody child’s drawing of a face on a big fat thumb and no neck to speak of.

“Bonebotherer do you have those DQX on your, uh, largely unobliterated, uh, person I wonder.”

“Yes here you are. Fourman. Must we still stand. In this infernal manner. This is hardly protocol.”

But Boneshaker did know it was protocol: it had been his turn as First Person a decade back. He wasn’t that different to anyone else

...beneath it all...

...Laura thought, the island was pretty much like anywhere. The window-dressing was very different, not least today, but it was ultimately all about people. Like Mickey, wearing a grass skirt and nothing else, bounding up toward her and Ian, with his own drink in hand, his eyes a little blurred already, his motions a little more slurred, his usual confident strut smudged by the signs of a session started way before. She drank deeply from the Mead Gargleblaster. Maybe it was the heat, maybe the excitement of the day, but things started to feel quite... askew. Mickey looked different. The world seemed to have shifted from left to right. Laura felt that she had oozed through the looking glass. That she was watching herself call out to Mickey, through a heavy glue. The whole island seemed to have flipped 180 degrees and whilst once she was looking to her right, suddenly she was looking to her left. Everything was suddenly hyper-real; so much so that she couldn't be sure if it was happening at all. She shouted to Ian in panic:

{“Mickey –
hey, Mr. Pearce!”

Mickey didn't seem to hear her. She tried again.

“Mickey! Mickey! Over here!”

For an instant, he looked over, but turned away again. It was hard to tell if he had actually spotted Laura, who was preoccupied with the sudden and unmistakable feeling of a priapic Little Ian poking at her in everlasting optimism. Yes, even here,

...even now...

...Ian couldn't think of anything other than the videos he was going to show Bazbucket, except they would be a lot more explicit than anything online because Ian was gonna be in charge of the video and he would be

....shooting...

...suddenly into Laura's leg, a shocking twitching blast that she could feel even through her and his pants. She could hardly believe what had happened.

“Fuck... Loz, I’m sorry... Shit. Fuck.”

She had literally no reply to offer to her husband, and she walked away hoping that there were no stains on her costume. He could clean up after his own fucking self. What a mess. What the fuck. She made her way toward where she’d last seen Mickey Pearce and did not look back toward that disgusting man she’d somehow married. She felt like she was going to puke; she felt the world spinning under her feet. How the hell had they got here? What the hell was happening? She wanted to sit down in a cold cellar, away from this blazing madness. She wanted to be locked in a cell, with one window barred too high to reach, with mould dripping down the walls, hefted from enormous stone blocks, at the top of a spooky hill in an ancient castle. She longed for it. She would be under control. But instead the sword-wielding, blood-eyed hordes around her cackled with gut-wrench, skull-clicking glee; this place of no shadows, no respite, no escape began to push at her from every angle. A million needles pricked her skin at once, infecting her blood with sweat and ash. She flailed around where she stood and was on the brink of collapsing and giving the devils her body and soul and mind to poke and prod and saw and crinkle up how they wished when she spotted – oh thank you Holy Awe – Carina, smiling as usual and looking gorgeous and unruffled, and the world shifted a little again.

“Carina!” Laura managed to croak through her nausea. “Carina, hey, Carina.”

But Carina looked right through her. Carina stared, and stared, and stared, and did not blink; Laura felt the gaze boring through the back of her head. Carina’s melted and morphed into a twisted, grotesque mask, twin horns needling through her hair of snakes, as she continued to stare through the life and death of her foe, eyes burning at the space three metres behind Laura’s skull. Laura could not bear it and forced her head to look to the floor, where a writhing Mickey Pearce was now curling around her legs, snorting and giggling, snuffling and truffling, scratching at his crotch. Oh god oh god we have to get out of here we have to Ian}

...where are you...

...going to end up? A sober **Lead** wondered. Fist Hook were brilliant. Like, really brilliant. But today Rage was nowhere to be seen, and worse, Doogie was currently whispering into Weegie’s ear and making the older man’s head nod with exuberant affirmation. Lead wanted to punch

his bandmate in the face. He wanted to kiss him. Ah fucking fucking fuck those two, Lead thought suddenly. Fuck them all. And fuck his Uncle Wilberforce, too. Look at the fucking state of him, fucking idiot, blubbery and old, bungling his fungus way toward the altar with his bum-chum Baxter Bonefucker virtually holding hands with him as usual. Pair of absolute filthy manwanking asseaters, pair of straight-haired, suit-cunting stucky culturalist normals; they were basically the same person. Shambling failures betraying their younger, braver selves. Both off their heads on DQX and Mercy Mead and Awe knows what. Still, the moment approached: the resonator of destiny, where Doogie's Reson8 would make Wilberfuck Jenkins-Ross the fucking IVth sound deeper than any man ever had before and thus make him the greatest gnarliest warriorest pirate fuckhead Salvi had ever seen. He could officially set the ice rolling down the road for another fucking parade of patheticness. Same old shit. But what could you do? You couldn't change it. You couldn't do anything until you got to Wilberforce's level. And then you didn't want to, cause you were already a burned-out shell of yourself. Time after time after time. Yeah, oh god, and oh here comes that prick the Reverend Bellend Holefucker too dressed like a bloody idiot. He was an idiot. Nobody could

...come closer...

...and I'll tell you," Mickey said, sauntering up to **Laura**. The world had snapped back into place, somehow. She was shocked to find that she had not moved from Ian's side; that her husband was happily grinning and chilled, that he had no stain on the front of his pants, nor she on hers; that Mickey was standing, not pawing at her from the road; and that Carina, singing softly, was practising a dance move nearby. The dream had faded away, and she was not sure if she was relieved or sad about that. Either way, Laura tried to shake herself back to what she assumed was reality.

"I'm sorry," Laura said, "I was

...miles away...

...from the full power, sayin." Doogie told **Lead**. "But we got plenty juice here. This gonna be big. This gonna be awesome. This just the start, boymine."

Lead couldn't help but smile.

"Yes badman. Sharky as fuck."

"OK me Bartime no, we close to hell-moment poppin now. You wanna Gargler?"

"Nah man, I'm with Jim today," said Lead, showing his bandmate a pack of ready-rolled joints.

"Ya go ahead now."

"Thus shall it be."

Doogie winked, did the double-fingergun at Lead, and turned back toward Weegie.

"Lead, you sure man?" Weegie asked. "Me an my boy goin for the special today... ya knows it."

"Nah I cool," Lead replied, forcing his face to look like it had no stress in the world. Had Weegie just called Doogie *my boy*???? Leadbetter watched the two of them, thick as thieves, arms around each other, disappear into a crowd that parted to let Wilson G. Rutherford pass unhindered. You couldn't see Weegie as such, but you could trace his path by the pocket of respect and fear that he walked in. It was unbelievable. And Doogie by his side. Lead's stomach lurched. The sun burnt at him as it never had before. He had to get out of there. He felt completely alone. Why the hell he had ever thought otherwise... why the hell he had thought his uncle WG could be loyal... and why the hell was he jealous? His thought bubbles took tangible form around him, clouds of confusion mingling with the Jimshit as a dog howled miserably somewhere nearby. Leadbetter understood the hound's agony. He wished he could decipher the exact mode, or sec, that the sound meant, but he still understood that both he and the hound were just shouting at the sky with a

...hooowl!!! howl-howl. Howl. Howl-hooowl!!!. hooowl!!! howl-howl...

...how long could they wait here? Long enough to keep Boneshaker sweating, for sure. You had to enjoy these moments, **Wilberforce** told himself, and you had to remember the small stuff. Like the feeling of Rannsy's breath on his neck. Like how he so wanted to be held. He loved his wife. He loved Rannsy. He loved Salvi. He wished he could sleep

...in the arms...

...of Carina, who cuffed Mickey about the head as the pair giggled. **Ian** swigged from his flagon and laughed with a freedom he'd not felt in a long while. He could see that daft sod First Bloke Wilberwhatsit bumbling his way about, making tracks through the crowd toward the front. Bring it on, speeches and all. You're only here once, and this might be the only time. The Gargledrink was awesome, grassy, rumby, with a real zing to it that got right down into the back of the ballsack. Ian felt mighty. He could go for hours, do the horizontal boogie, for as long as he wanted or Laura wanted. Or let's face it, he'd give it to Carina given half a chance. Except he wouldn't. Ian and Laura, Laura and Ian: they'd survived this adventure together. It would have been easy for it all to blow up on the plane and never make it there watching Wilber, Wilberforce was it, what a turdheaded fuck, talking to that fucking judge cunt.

"Loz..."

"Yeah I can see them. What a bunch of bloody bastards."

"The judge tho – his hands..."

The freakshow was never-ending here was it. Even the judge was deformed. And then Ian saw it: Instead of thumbs, his hands featured an extra finger, pointing at right angles to the rest. He nudged Laura and pointed out what he'd discovered. But his wife was mesmerised by Mickey and Carina, who'd been joined in their boogie by a blonde girl whose costume was barely-there even by the standards of the assembled, waiting dancers. Mickey had his hand right in the small of her back and was moving it downwards. Carina went to kiss the girl on the cheek, but accidentally found the mouth which responded deeply. Accidentally, hoped Laura. It was extraordinary

...to think that...

...{a looking-glass Mickey seemed to have drool coming out of his mouth, and Carina did too; they were so close to the kid that all three were skin-on-skin, moving in parallel, conjoined in a slow-movement expression that was blatantly sexual. To Laura's horror, she realised that the young blonde woman was Verona Estella-Cruz. A That was 17-year-old, high school pupil young

Verona, and Mickey knew it, and Carina knew it, and Laura knew it, and Laura turned to Ian,
open-mouthed and gasping for air again, and}

...suddenly...

But the girl had gone, and a shocked **Laura** heard Carina shrieking, and saw that Mickey was on the floor clutching his head and groaning in pain, twitching a little bit

...with the force...

...that they would one day wield over the whole of Salvi and beyond. **Lead** listened aghast as a returned Doogie unloaded concept bomb upon bomb on him. It was astonishing that anyone could speak so quickly, so incoherently, and still get the point across.

“Yehaman band, yeah, ok, thys, thus, this Reson8 this the future man Weej gonna negotiate nex door yak no he got big connexs in Ripoblika they gonna pay big. Unbelievable yeh course the band on hiatus for me of now and for atime, but we good yeh, this BIG as hell man never mind levitating monkey man we could be on a verge of a real get this man real breakthrough in physic man look this all down to power Ripoblik put up cash we give expertise we got the blueprint safe so scale him up yak no we gonna start company dude Jericho Ltd yeh ok this power, this Reson8 ok, my god my god man you don’t know how... look the Sanctum smalltime ok believe me, we get this up to its 15 Yottajoules one day and right this a, a, more than deep voice, man this power make a real, a real weapon for the ages an nobody gonna fuck wit Salvi no more, yo levit8 yeah we can levit8 but this baby can blast explosion blast with sound with soundwaves with sheer force of air... ok right we can do this we can smash this, Weej can hook this up, just listen a moment boymine ok.”

“Wh...”

“Oh all reveal soon man, soon come, here come uncy Wilb for the big stuff.”

Lead could hardly focus on what was going on, let alone reply to this shattering news; the band was over. Doogie was irreplaceable. He was the madman, the badboy, the engine room of Fist Hook. And now he’d left the group. To work with Weegie and dirty Ripoblikan cash and turn the

Reson8r into a fucking sonic weapon? It was unbelievable. But it was inevitable wasn't it? Power was everything. To prove it, Wilberforce and his little fuckpup Bonecock were now grunting on the altar next to him, readying themselves for the moment of destiny, the moment the parade would be announced in the deepest, loudest voice of all time with the Reson8 machine, the future-Jericho weapon that would safeguard Salvi.

"Hello my lowely, uh, Leadboy," Wilberforce slurred. "And how is that, uh, beautiful mother of yours? Oh she was, uh, qwite something, in her day, and now of course, listen my boy, my beautiful Leadboy, the leader, the lead-boy, you are named well. Look with me, look at all this - one day the responsibility here will be yours listen to me good this important."

Lead stammered out a 'hello' as Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross, IV, continued his meandering harangue.

"That band playing some I hear? Most extremely good, I have heard, in the, uh, field of, sharkatious rock?"

Lead's mind raced. What was that about his father? And how the hell did Wilberforce know about the band? Even Shark Metal? It sent him reeling.

"Uh I think, maybe, the band gonna maybe, uh, hiatus some," he eventually said. "We gotta concen, uh, trate on, uh... you know. Sharkiness, **Sharkiness** just a word, uh, which we will vwalk, uh, willingly, uh."

Wilberforce suddenly straightened up and very, very clearly and carefully said: "Mark this Lead my, greatest, greatest boy. If you say this is so, then that is so. A song, well now. A song can you know mean a million things to a million people."

Lead nodded. Wilberforce prodded his nephew in the chest for emphasis.

"A song. Everyone think they own it. But you know, and you must always remember, that the song means only what you as creator choose it to. For your own, uh, motiuation, uh, an that is so as soon as, uh, you, uh, choose to say so. Carry a bag for no other man. If you can help it.

This is vital to remember. Do not let yourself get lost in the crowd. You do not have to. Mark this.”

Lead’s mouth dropped, agape. Wilberforce, exhausted by the effort of his eloquence, fell backwards into Baxter Boneshaker, and the pair made an untidy heap of limbs, soft edges, moustaches, enormous flipper-bellies and mutual laughter. Doogie was lost to the band. But was the band important? Was a song important? It wasn’t clear-cut was it. Uncle Wilberforce, well, well. He was sharper than he seemed. Maybe he wasn’t such a bumbling old farthead. Maybe he had things to say for himself. Lead vowed to set up a meeting as soon as all this Ice nonsense was over. Talk to him about what could be done. How the anticulturalist message could be put across. Maybe underground wasn’t best. Maybe the T-shirts could be clearer. Maybe slogans could work better. Maybe music was just music. It wasn’t the believers you had to preach to was it. Maybe. But – Doogie. Betrayal, pure and simple. Weegie was just an opportunist who had the clout to do what he wanted. And he wanted Doogie for himself didn’t he. It was wrong. All wrong. Leadbetter looked into the crowd, tears in his eyes. Feeling underwater, he saw the massive block of ice being finally manoeuvred into position; close behind it was a furious-looking Rage Rasta III, clutching the wrist of his right hand, on which his knuckles were bleeding profusely. That was so

...unlike the boy...

...Mickey was no fighter, clearly.

“You ok Mick?” **Ian** said, trying to seem concerned, even though he hated the shit-tunnel. Still, it was probably the last time they’d see each other before the big move home. So he could go fuck a man-tree.

“He hit me! He fu... fu... He...” Mickey blustered, as Carina helped him to his feet.

“You’re gonna have a doozie of a shiner there boyo.”

“Did you see? That buggering, bloody, buggering, bastarding, boy... he hit me in the face. With his fist.”

“Aye, and ran away with his bess gul brah,” Ian said, barely keeping the sneer out of his voice.
“He... gwan bigstyle, sayin?”

“I’ll sue him back to Kingdom. Bloody. Come,” Mickey said, voice levelling out with a now-unmistakable middle-class Mother Country received pronunciation. “I know who he is. I have no truck with his family connections. He has crossed the wrong person. It will be biblical. I tell you this. Mark this day, for it is the end for that sod.”

Ian, Laura and Carina stared at this new Mickey Pearce. He was barely recognisable as the happy-go-drinky friend-to-all life of the party. This Mickey was a straight-backed, teeth-gritted stranger. It was fascinating, and it was terrifying. And it was short-lived: Mickey gasped and re-made himself, stiffening but then quite visibly deflating his limbs and body into a scruffier, friendlier mash of a man. As he did so, he rid himself of any poise again, and he lolloped on the spot, shadow-punching and sing-songing back.

“Ah, well, you... knowsyou Mickeyboy bigstuff nah. Shockpuncher bambam nogood! But I professional man, no fighter but loverman, mister loverman yeah. Passdabooze Carintium an less dancesome!”

He shook his ratty dreads from side to side, and with every moment that passed looked more and more like Mickey Pearce, of Salvi Island, and less like

...whoever it was...

...that had first decided that the lowest voice would be the leader was a true dick. **Lead** felt disgust as he watched the protoplasmic mash that used to be his uncle and Baxter Boneshaker trying to stand, giggling as they did, legs and minds now turtle jelly and a single meshed mess. What a bunch of bullshit. But he saw now, too, that the pompous, prick-fuck ceremonies were vital to the island’s sanity. That being like everyone else was a hindrance, not a selling point. Sure, you couldn’t compete with the bigger territories. You didn’t have their resources. But what you did have was a vote. Or a ceremony. Or, come to that, a new weapon. Because if you did then somewhere like Salvi could be influential on the world stage. The much-derided Wilberforce had kept them there through his liaising with the Mother Country and at the same

time ensuring the families still got what they needed; waiting for his and Salvi's opportunity to ride under the radar and stick the knife in where it hurt the most. With the nonsense up north, Wilberforce had manoeuvred the island somehow into a position of ultimate power. Lead saw it, clear at last: here was a great man. Truly

...it was incredible...

...that **Laura** hadn't seen it before. What was this place, where teachers could fondle students, and the students could beat up the teachers? It shook her to the core. She reached for Ian's hand, and squeezed it. Jesus Christ. Jesus in heaven. Even in the worst days back home none of this could ever have happened. Why the hell were they here anyway? Mickey, a complete fraud; Carina a predator; the justice system a joke. God almighty. God ALMIGHTY. She spotted the Very Revered Holiness of the Holy Awe. But he was way, way less impressive than she'd remembered. Because he was out of his own controlled zone. And he was far from the only show in town now. Here amongst the revellers and the wonderful beads glistening under a beautiful sun that bounced off the shacks and the buildings and the white sand and the cracked road alike, here where the palm fronds and kaleidoscope of glitter-clad revellers? His outfit looked drab. It looked normal. He looked... smaller. Human. Diminished. Ridiculous. Try-hard. But, tragically, the oblivious faux-Revered, distinctly-unHoliness was performing lewd blessings on surrounding supplicants, making sure to grab at wobbling, drunken flesh as he did so, stealing swigs from their neon flasks of god-knows-what. Awe Knows What. Another fraud. Fuck this place. The gloves were off; the bets were off. Her worldview was starting to splinter, splintering like the cross of

...Jesus Christ...

...that was her wasn't it, **Ian** thought with a start. Her, wearing the crop-top and the henna tattoo. She was fucking young. Jesus. **VERONA X**. Shit. Oh godalmighty shit and fucking dogshit on toast. What the hell had he been thinking? That lad was right to twat Mickey one, the groping little wanker. Oh there was no doubt about it, she was an outstandingly fine piece of ass, a great-bodied fuckpartner – if you were 18. Maybe 21... Either way, a man of 36 getting on it would be pure suicide even if he was single - which Ian was suddenly very glad not to be.

He calculated, quickly, half his age plus seven. His limit would be 25. Oh god. He felt ill. Jesus. Fucking Jesus. Thank fuck he'd not sent her a real pic. Or had he? He had no way of knowing. And, maybe, she'd googled him. Maybe she'd googled Walshington Jenkins-Ross, found a CV on a job site and then googled *that* text; it was not so difficult a route to where his real picture, his real CV, his real life was. It was obvious. He was fucked. They had to get off this fucking island, as soon as possible. There was no longer any other option. His heart thumped with his utter humiliation; the worst humiliation possible because he'd done it to himself, and nobody else even knew about it. He held his wife's hand harder. She reciprocated, and he managed a rictus grin. She pointed toward the front of the parade; the ice was in position at last. A hush descended

...over the crowd...

...three jet engines pierced the silence. **Wilberforce** looked up to see his trio of zooming, trailing fighter jets, low enough and close enough that he could make out the unmistakable beret-and-sickle of the Ripoblikan flag. The jets dipped their wings, creating a down draft which bounced off the huge block of ice, sending rivulets of cool water toward the dancers and the floats and the altar. They were so close to the ground now that the crowds could see the grinning faces of the pilots. It was wonderful. Wilberforce waved happily at his friends who saluted back. With a superlative whoosh, the fighter planes drew a fiery rash on the sky, engines feasting on the air. Within a blink they had retreated over the horizon. The First Person stepped up to the microphone, ready to do his duty for the island that he loved. He nodded to Wilson G. Rutherford. Weegie patted Doogie on the shoulder proprietorially. Duncan Ross opened a series of switches on the control panel, and gave the thumbs-up to Wilby...

...who spoke and...

so shall it be always said that uh what is this, this is nothing, this is not even deeper, this

despicable boy has wrecked the ceremoteerh e **lCE**

SHALL

BE

REL

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D

And the world cracked open.

Foreign Travel Advice

Ripoblika

[Summary](#)

[Demographics](#)

[Entry requirements](#)

[Natural disasters](#)

[Money](#)

[Travel advice help and support](#)

[Crime and punishment](#)

[Other](#)

Summary

Still current at: 19 September 2010 Updated: 11 September 2010

Latest update:

Ripoblika continues to provide resources to Salvi Island following the electrical explosion that damaged many of its buildings. The new Hearing Aid Centre has been able to assist most of the casualties, providing state-of-the-art equipment to those temporarily or permanently deafened in the blast. Ripoblikan doctors have travelled to Salvi to assist, whilst severe cases have been airlifted to Ripoblika. The whereabouts of citizens remains largely unknown. Most Mother Country residents have returned to MC for safety and security.

Due to the ongoing war of Canucks and Vinland, Ripoblika is not considered safe for Mother Country or Vespuccian residents. It is not advised that holders of MC passports attempt travel within the area or through Ripoblikan airspace. Holders of Salvi passports can travel freely, but travel is not advised due to the rapidly changing conflict. Please refer to the [Latest News](#) for advice.

The [hurrinado season](#) runs from July to November. You should monitor the progress of all coming storms and follow the advice of the local authorities. See [Natural Disasters](#).

Reports are numerous regarding the sighting of *Nuncmanes Mare* (known locally as Seetime Ghosts) in Ripoblikan skies or waters. Unconfirmed speculation is that the Salvi Explosion affected their sensitive navigation systems, sending them off course toward Ripoblika. See [Nature and Fauna](#).

Due to the political situation, there is no MC diplomatic or consular representation currently in any of the three Salvi Islands. The local authorities can deal with all [emergency assistance](#).

There is a heightened risk of [terrorism](#) in Ripoblika and the surrounding islands. Extreme caution is advised.

Postscript

In the hold of an airplane, a mile above the clear blue ocean, a fading mobile phone picked up an errant signal from the ether. It was a Morse code of sorts, translated by circuit boards powered by batteries, received by electronics and revealed as language:

Beep. Bip. Beep-bip-bip-Beep. Beep

Beep. Bip. Beep-bip-bip-Beep. Beep

MESSAGE 2

ALSO FOR IAN WALSH LETTER FORM WJR TRANSPORT

MESSAGE 3

MARKED: RE JOB INTERVIEW SPECTACULAR PERSON

But nobody was there to read the words.

Defeated and lonely, the phone gave up the ghost. As it died, it began to heat up and melt in the pressure of the hold, starting to glow and crackle as the energy embedded in its innards yearned to return to the universe. A distinctively destructive energy.

In the cabin, unwitting passengers slept, dreaming of slate roofs, rain and warm pints of ale.

Part II – Commentary

List of Illustrations

<u>Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>Waltz with Figures</i>	381
<i>God Save the Queen</i>	390
<i>Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau</i>	390

Introduction

Research questions

1. How can postmodern metafictional and graphical techniques be used in the contemporary novel to create a rich and multi-layered narrative?
2. How can the form of the novel reflect the experience of multiple and fluid identities in national, gendered and virtual contexts?
3. How can noise, as understood in information theory, explored through musical references and extra-literary elements, disrupt and energise the novel?

From noise can emerge the sweetest song, if you know how to listen.

1,000 Days of Sun is my investigation into how a novel can employ code systems of language, music and extra-textual ideas to explore, express and reveal identity tensions on and offline. I consider ruptures in self-identification caused by expatriate life, how people present themselves in different contexts and with different people, plus the possibilities and dangers of potentially limitless digital identities. Edward W. Said writes at the very end of his 1999 memoir *Out of Place* that 'I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance.'¹ Said goes on to suggest that these flowing currents, when they are smoothly running, need little attention as they are always in motion 'in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme.' This, he suggests, may be a kind of freedom, and I suggest that this also applies to the construction of my novel.

First, however, it is important to define the concepts I explore in this thesis.

¹ Edward Said, *Out Of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta, 1999) p.295.

Definitions

1,000 Days of Sun tracks several interlinked stories through multiple narrators. Each character has their own relationship with Salvi Island, a fictional version of a Caribbean paradise. The protagonists include a couple who have moved there from 5,000 miles away, to work; the head of the local government, who has competing demands on his time from local families plus world events; and a young musician who wants to change his life, and change the world, with his music. Through the exploits of each, a sense of Salvi itself emerges. That is not to say their viewpoints are of equal consequence – there is certainly more of a narrative weight borne by Ian and Laura, whose timeline begins at the start of the book and is their (and the reader's) first experience of Salvi. All of the other characters on the island are local or have been there for some time, which has given them more of an understanding of how things work. Ian and Laura's journey is one of discovery, and they carry the reader with them (to start with).

These differing viewpoints, contexts and descriptions of their surroundings create what Roland Barthes calls 'the reality effect'. Barthes asserts that the effect of reality in literature is achieved through supposedly insignificant details that have no immediate narrative function. He gives the example of a barometer which is included in Flaubert's description of a disordered room, in which a piano and pile of untidy boxes also lie. The piano indicates a certain 'bourgeois standing', and the unruly cartons 'a sign of disorder and a kind of lapse in status', both of which point toward a certain status of the household in question, but the barometer seems to have no purpose. Barthes argues that the purpose of such details is not to denote reality, but to signify it:

the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.²

That is, an authentic feel can be created by including details or descriptions that don't necessarily move the plot forward or signify anything explicit. The barometer need not be anything other than a barometer to help create the effect of reality. I could employ the

² Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect' from *The Rustle of Language* trans. By Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968) p. 148. Italics in original.

details and descriptions of Salvi to build its reality: the sights, the sounds, the weather, the rituals and the clothes, through various viewpoints. As Brian McHale notes:

‘Postmodern fiction does not take the world for granted as a mere backdrop against which the adventures of consciousness can be played out, but rather foregrounds the world itself as an object of reflection and contestation through the use of a range of devices and strategies.’³

Those devices and strategies can be assembled in various ways, he continues, referring to Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopias. Foucault defines these as ‘a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted’.⁴ Multiple cultures and ideas can exist in the same space, at the same time. McHale describes this as where fictional ‘[w]orlds can [...] be arranged *horizontally*, juxtaposed side-by-side or end-to-end on the same plane [...] alternatively, they can be arranged *vertically* – stacked or layered.’⁵ McHale refers to plurality of narrative, and/or narrative voices. This can be achieved through presenting extra layers of narrative on the same page as the forward narrative; adding, for example, coded messages and graphic elements can introduce additional information for the reader to access.

Metafiction is a technique whereby fiction can comment and reflect on itself. Patricia Waugh defines as fiction which ‘self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.’⁶ R.M. Berry gives an example of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, published in 1955, quoting the character/narrator Humbert Humbert who says, ‘Then I pulled out my automatic – I mean, this is the kind of fool thing a reader might suppose I did.’⁷ Thus the reader is pulled into the narrative itself, although the fictional conceit remains. Berry further hones in on John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, where the narrator, in the

³ Brian McHale, ‘Postmodernism and Experiment’ in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2012) p. 146.

⁴ Michel Foucault ‘Des Espace Autres’ (lecture, 1968) reprinted by *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuite* No. 5 (1984) pp. 46-49.

⁵ McHale, italics in original.

⁶ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, (New York: Routledge, 1988) p. 2.

⁷ Victor Nabokov, *Lolita* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1995) p. 280.

thirteenth chapter, suddenly says, 'The story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind'.⁸ Popping the bubble that is the suspension of disbelief, the contract between reader and text, adds an instability to the reading experience which can be played upon by the author or creator of the work. This draws on postmodern ideas of instability of definition, the concept that meaning is always in motion, and that therefore there is an uncertainty to – in my case – narrative reliability, and by extension the reliability of a novel itself.

Polyphony and noise

In my novel I reveal Salvi through several different narrative voices from different origins and backgrounds, which considered together are designed to give a much more nuanced view than a single narrator could. Some of the ways in which they differ include age, racial origin, and digital expertise. The work of Mikhail Bakhtin, in particular the concept of polyphonic narrative voices such as in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, details this combination or choir of voices. This was a reference point for the decisions of form that helped me build my novel's reality effect. I discuss use of graphics, fonts and colours in the work of Nicola Barker and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr to add emphasis and meaning, with reference to metafiction and postmodernism, by way of a 1913 futurist pronouncement by F.T. Marinetti that text sizes and colours can express emotion more forcefully than the words alone. This thesis interrogates different modes of communication and encoding within narrative as well as added extra hidden elements within the text that can only become revealed through subsequent revelation of the necessary key codes at the end of the book. I consider finally the possibilities and challenges in implementing all the above while retaining a coherent narrative forward motion. The novel explores the potential of noise within a literary context. I draw on information theory, referencing the work of Abraham Moles, who posits that noise is information we do not yet have the key to unlock, and is therefore available for use as a signal, and discuss the suitability of Jacques Attali's more extreme view that noise is inherently related to violence in society.

Practice-based research

⁸ John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969) p. 97.

1,000 Days of Sun was designed to explore issues of belonging and dislocation that I experienced while working abroad, and how I could deliver a sense of edginess and/or unfamiliarity through the form, design, pace and rhythm of a novel. I was interested in how far I wanted to pursue potentially disruptive or problematic approaches, while keeping the book in a recognisable and readable form. My novel is an example of practice-based research, which Lyle Skains defines as a process in which ‘the creative artifact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge’.⁹ That is, the original work, as it develops, raises critical and academic questions of itself, which the author/creator then tackles in context with extant analysis, critique, artistic schools and so on. It is a methodology, she notes, where the artist’s implicit knowledge has subsequently been ‘made explicit and seated within the context of the scholarly field’. The chapters that follow delineate that journey, and explore the issues raised by my work as I discovered more and more about context, theory and ultimately my novel and myself.

Postcolonialism

My motivation from the outset of the project was to unpack or unpick my recent experiences as an expatriate/immigrant to a Caribbean island. In a sense, I was also another kind of immigrant: into the world of academia, where I was also an outsider, or at least an outrider. I was a writer, and had worked in journalism for decades, but coming back to university was a different matter. There was a sense of unreality about my experiences in the Caribbean. It felt like being transported suddenly into a television advertisement for any number of dream holidays, and I often felt that I was inside someone else’s reality. As Berry writes, ‘[I]f experience and observation no longer connect life with art, how is what the reader and writer are doing still possible?’¹⁰ Could form be manipulated in order to destabilise the reading experience and thus reflect the real-world dislocation I had experienced? Could a metafictional approach, revealing the artifice of writing and reading, produce a book that engendered a philosophical relation of, ‘[A] critical analysis of the formative conditions of their own activity’?¹¹ These questions are at the heart of *1,000 Days*

⁹ Lyle Skains, ‘Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology’, *Chapter Two: The Practitioner Model of Creative Cognition: A Potential Model for Creative Practice-Based Research* (2016).

<<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/creative-practice-research/index>> [accessed 11 November 2019] (para. 4 of 7).

¹⁰ Berry, p. 130.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

of Sun. I also had to be anchored to the real world to succeed, and that requires careful cultural consideration.

Julio Cortázar comments in a 1981 interview on the potential for postcolonial authors' work to influence as well as reflect the society around them and reflects on a fruitful two decades for Latin American writers:

[I]t seems to me that it's a very positive and a very revolutionary sign when a nation begins to read its own writers. Because these are the authors that are beginning to open up new mental paths, spiritual paths, searching, trying to find the true identity of each of the nations.¹²

He adds that translation (in this case from Spanish to English) might not deliver the exact message, but people reading Latin American literature in translation would 'have access to very important information that doesn't reach them through the American news agencies.'¹³ Cortázar suggests that literature 'has to take the role of an agitator; that is, it must create a certain degree of anxiety in the reader, showing him that things aren't as he's always viewed them'.¹⁴ The writer therefore is walking something of a tightrope between challenging the reader's perceptions and the danger of misrepresentation of context. It must be noted that Salvi is fictional, and within the world of my novel I chose not to have it connected to postcolonialism's colonial jackboot in the same way as Cortázar writes his fiction about the real world's Latin America. For it to be able to satirise the irony of the real world, however, this postcolonial tension has to be an undercurrent in my novel. I must also acknowledge that I am writing from a colonially privileged UK perspective.

Transmedia and Convergence

1,000 Days of Sun has an inbuilt capability to be delivered through various forms and formats. Here, I present it as a traditional, ink-and-paper bound novel; the pages are finite, and the narrative/s run from page one to the final page. Conversely, the technology exists for a wider look on how a story can be delivered through a variety of media including websites, television and movies, advertisements and so on. It is a concept that Henry

¹² Dan Wohlfeiler, J. 'Interview with Julio Cortázar' in *The Threepenny Review* No. 5 (1982) pp. 12-13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 13

Jenkins identified in 2003 as transmedia storytelling where a narrative might be 'introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play.'¹⁵ This enables, or demands, a decoupling of character and narrative from the confines of a traditional book to create an expansion of the world of the book, its characters and narrators.

Chapter One includes exploration of the work of Roland Barthes, rhetoric, signs and signifiers along with futurist ideas of explosive typography. I discuss the graphical possibilities of text as explored by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. and Nicola Barker, their own metafictional and postmodern ideas, and show how these revelations of artifice can be employed to create narrative instability and unease which itself reflects the narrative content. I map these theories onto my novel, taking note of transmedia storytelling potential which I further discuss in the conclusion.

Chapter Two reveals how context influences behaviour both on and offline. I discuss Serge Doubrovsky's position regarding the fictitiousness of memory in regard to autofiction, and deal with my unease regarding potential cultural appropriation and how I solved the issue through my characters. Communication, slang and non-textual modes of communication and coding such as clothing and graphics bring an additional option to communication, and I refer to codes in work by John Cheever. I show how the online world is based on trust of persona and that this correlates with narrator unreliability, with a tension undercurrent always present between the online and offline worlds as I show in my novel. I discuss the implications on the form of my novel.

Noise and information theory and their application to my novel are discussed in Chapter Three. Here I analyse the ideas of Abraham Moles, Jacques Attali, Greg Hainge and John Cage regarding relationships including those between signal, music and noise. Polyphony and multiple narrators also feature here as I consider ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, epistolary form and noise/signal boundaries. I also reveal how ideas from music are corralled as narrative, graphical and noise elements within my book, with a metafictional

¹⁵ Henry Jenkins, 'Transmedia storytelling: Moving characters from books to films to video games can make them stronger and more compelling'. *MIT Technology Review* (15 January, 2003) <<https://www.technologyreview.com/2003/01/15/234540/transmedia-storytelling/>> [accessed 17 November, 2020](para. 10 of 14)

dialogue situating the novel in the real world. I refer this to Barthes, cultural signifiers and the meaning of a work over time. I discuss punk, situationism and collage art as disruptive or subversive elements, consider non-traditional book form such as aleatory reading and unbound, loose chapters, and explore potential contemporary possibilities for multi-media versions of a novel.

I conclude that there are many options available to narrative and propose a number of potential ways to enhance or expand *1,000 Days of Sun*; this includes additional material, a series of novellas, digital editions and transmedia possibilities.

Chapter One: A World in a Grain of Sand – What is a Novel?

1,000 Days of Sun is a metafictional novel. It draws elements of the world outside the book into itself, with the effect of adding both familiar aspects of our own world to its own as well as disrupting the text itself. It also explores the potential of form to shape ideas of narrative, multiple narrators, postmodernism, message encoding and intertextuality.

Barthes and message encoding

My novel investigates the potential of form to create meanings beyond and intertwined with a narrative, with extra-textual devices employed to create specific effects of tension, pace and metafictional connotation. These virtual and horizontal layers serve to either anchor my novel to existing knowledge on the reader's part, or to disrupt the process. One method to achieve this is that of encoding additional messages underneath and around the surface of a single story; I have created these messages and additional elements in a linguistic presentation as well as graphically. This is a mapping onto text of the investigative work of Roland Barthes regarding the design of images for certain effects.

Barthes, analysing an advertisement for an Italian pasta and pasta sauce company called Panzani, considers there to be several layers at play in what he called the rhetoric of the image. Barthes sees in the photograph 'a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message'.¹⁶ The literal message of the words is straightforward enough (that Panzani is an Italian company or at least, indicates an Italian link, more significant when considering that the advertisement is in French). The other two elements are 'the perceptual message and the cultural message'. That is, the viewer of the photo brings their own perceived meaning and cultural experience into play here. The picture is of recently-bought ingredients. The colours are yellow and green on a background which is red. These colours mirror the Italian flag; the ingredients show that the company Panzani deliver everything you need for 'a carefully balanced dish and [that...] the concentrate in the tin were equivalent to the natural produce surrounding it'.¹⁷ Therefore the product is fresh, authentic and suitable for any household. The observation is that there are plenty of layers

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image*, trans. by Stephen Heath in *Image-Music-Text* (London: Hill and Wang, 1978). As reproduced in Alan Trachtenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980) p. 272.

¹⁷ Ibid.

of flavour, and Barthes suggests that there are plenty of layers of meaning. Rather than graphically, or in an image, I considered the viability of using Barthes' layered messaging effects within the pages of a book. As *1,000 Days* is not a graphic novel in this presentation, and as it is not illustrated, I worked on a way to deliver the ideas of the rhetoric of the image. I decided to use different fonts, textual layouts and musical notation to contextualise the words on the page, and to disrupt context where I needed to slow down or speed up the reading experience. Using typography as a way to enhance meaning is also related to the Italian Futurists, specifically Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who in 1913 published a pamphlet which in part demanded the use of different typefaces and colours to violently express a text's ideas, rather than rely on adjectival mastery to deliver those ideas.¹⁸ The work of Nicola Barker highlights this, which I will discuss shortly.

Musical notation excerpts in my novel quote music that exists in the 'real' world in which my reader lives. As Barthes says, the linguistic message functions, in relation to the iconic messages, as '*anchorage* and *relay*' (Italics in original).¹⁹ Images, he says, contain symbolism and signifiers, the former leading the reader/viewer toward interpreting a message based on symbols with which they are familiar (i.e. the Italianate colours, words, context of the picture). The signified elements are those that relay the intended meaning, which can be a blend of text and image that together deliver the message to the reader. There is a framework of message control that contains and disseminates the desired meaning of the original advertisement, in Barthes' example. Implementing a similar conceptual framework using the words on the page, their layout, and visual cues, could be a way therefore to 'sell' the ideas of and in a modern novel in an advertising sense. However, the idea of writer-as-advertiser is not consistent with a novel that allows for, if not demands, a more open-ended relationship with the reader. Otherwise, a novel would become a cynical catalogue of buzzwords, popular tropes and cultural moments, deliberately designed to push certain buttons in the mind of the reader/buyer specifically for sales purposes. By contrast, it is important to note that the use of typography layout,

¹⁸ F.T. Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax – Imagination Without Strings – Words-in-Freedom 1913', originally a pamphlet and quoted here in *Futurist Manifestos* ed. Umberto Apollonio (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1973) pp. 95-106. Marinetti's writings are all credited to F.T. Marinetti, rather than Filippo, which is the convention I follow in this thesis.

¹⁹ *Rhetoric*, p. 274.

formatting and graphics in a novel can have an opposite effect: to disrupt the experience of textual consumption, and to create a discombobulating experience through the additional visual page noise.²⁰ Again, the delivery of rhetoric is through the design of the words on the page and the choice of, for example, the actual font used by the phone company Nokia in its text messages is indeed the font I choose to use when Ian receives messages on his phone. I suggest that this is a familiar enough font, culturally and graphically, to add a metafictional authenticity to the page.²¹

This tension – or collusion – between cultural touchpoints and the written word, in my case, was an irresistible aspect of the process. Encoding the pages with graphics, directing the reader toward puns or tricks of language and cascading information through more than one concurrent narrative became central to my work. The effect I planned was a form of disorientation; a disruption and, perhaps, a slight unease in the reading experience. The book, after all, is about shifting identities: a sense that there may be more going on than meets the eye is a narrative technique.

Happiness is subjective: Barker and form

If meaning can be layered by graphical means, it follows that if text can be imbued with certain graphical properties then it can be employed to blur the main signals of narrative with graphical noise to create a playful disruption of pace and/or meaning. Nicola Barker's recent novels have played on this phenomenon to interrogate form as much as content, and to arguably blur the boundaries between those two aspects. Barker's 2017 novel, *H(A)PPY*, is set in a near-future techno-uto/dys-topia in which the remaining population post-(unnamed) disaster, The Young, have no sense of desire or doubt. However, their thoughts are recorded by an online data stream. Thus, the internal narrative of each individual is visible to all the others, and any deviation from what is considered the norm is significant. The central character, Mira A, finds herself out of kilter with this stream, as we see from her personal graph. Typographically-speaking the book shows different words in different colours depending on their conceptual power. As Samantha Purvis notes, 'The content of Mira A's Graph is the narrative of the novel; she is experiencing an emotional destabilization

²⁰ I will discuss this further in relation to punk rock.

²¹ In practical terms, copyright and permissions issues would need to be carefully considered for any released novel, in order to retain these effects of familiarity without breaching intellectual property rights.

which causes her to narrate, an act deemed obsolete and gently discouraged.’²² This narration finally leads Mira A toward breaking out of the Graph timeline into The Unknown, her thoughts now rendered in green but also including the previously-unknown elements of pain, death and hope. The effect is to destabilise the form, which Barker says in Purvis’ article is a destruction of narrative:

‘[which] is disastrous for me, because obviously I understand the world through narrative. When you destroy the thing that explains everything to you, then what is that process? What have I done? [...] I’ve sort of deconstructed the novel to such an extent – what is left of it?’²³

Typography has recorded and reflected the experience of the main character, which has delivered to the reader a sense of the dislocation and instability of the world in which the book is set, and even destroyed the process for the writer. This is reflected in the choices I make for the various characters in my novel. Leadbetter, for example, types out his anticulturalism on an obviously ancient, and very analogue, typewriter. This message is that these are thoughts of his that do not (yet) appear digitally. Barthes’ observations about hidden or encoded messages within advertisements and images have been applied to words here, through typographical elements and colours as well as the textual signifiers and captions he discusses:

‘Rhetorics inevitably vary by their substance (here articulated sound, there image, gesture or whatever) but not necessarily by their form; it is even probable that there exists a single rhetorical form, common for instance to dream, literature and image’.²⁴

This is a concept that is vital to *H(A)PPY*; that dream, image, literature, and form are not mutually exclusive, and in fact rhetorics can emerge from a multitude of techniques, in Barker’s (and my) case typographically. This also recalls the words of the futurist, F.T.

²² Samantha Purvis, ‘Happiness and Experimentalism: On H(A)PPY and The Lesser Bohemians’, *Journal of the English Association*, efz046 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/english/efz046>> [accessed 6 February 2020].

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Barthes, p. 282. He adds a reference in the endnotes to Emile Benveniste, ‘Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la decouverte freudienne’ in *La Psychanalyse 1* (1956) pp. 3-16.

Marinetti, who calls for a revolution ‘aimed at the typographical harmony of the page’.²⁵ In contrast to the traditional idea of a book’s layout, particularly those with decorated pages, pictures and borders, and instead of the author chasing down the perfect phrasing, Marinetti proposes – or demands - that on one page the futurist text would:

use *three or four colours of ink*, or even twenty different typefaces if necessary. For example: italics for a series of similar or swift sensations, boldface for the violent onomatopoeias, and so on. With this typographical revolution and this multi-coloured variety in the letters I mean to redouble the expressive force of words.²⁶

Barker has drawn upon this typographical ferocity as a technique to enhance narrative, as well as bolstering the rhetorical content of *H(A)PPY*, in the sense of the meaning of the different colours, fonts and interruptions within the text itself. The work of Barker in 2017 has crashed through the boundaries of traditional narrative, with the very idea of a book now in question; she employs Internet themes and social media-esque forms to deliver this idea, as I also do in *1,000 Days*.

Kurt Vonnegut’s puppets

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr’s 1973 novel *Breakfast of Champions* explores the notion of what constitutes a novel and how far boundaries can be blurred while retaining a coherent reading experience.²⁷ This is one of the central questions asked by my novel, both in process and delivery. He addresses the writing context in typically gnomic mode: ‘For life to be a puppet show there must be a puppeteer. I don’t think there is one. I think we’re puppeteers with *each other*.’²⁸ One might add that in metafiction we are puppeteers with ourselves, particularly when quoting other works outside of a book’s pages, for example when I created the Gargleblaster drink when Ian and Laura are due to be meeting their

²⁵ F.T. Martinelli, ‘Destruction of Syntax – Imagination Without Strings – Words-in-Freedom 1913’, originally a pamphlet and quoted here in *Futurist Manifestos* ed. Umbro Apollonio (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1973) pp.104-105.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 105. Italics in original.

²⁷ The full title is *Breakfast of Champions, or Blue Monday*. It is most often known as *Breakfast of Champions* and this is the convention I shall follow throughout.

²⁸ Peter Messent, ‘“Breakfast of Champions”: The Direction of Kurt Vonnegut’s Fiction’, in *Journal of American Studies* Vol. 8, No.1 (1974) p. 111.

friends Den And Arth.²⁹ Vonnegut's work often plays with these elements, introducing real life characters, or what pass for them, into his novels. In *Breakfast of Champions*, this device is used to create multiple layers of reality, of fictional realities and of metafictional, intertextual realities: Roland Barthes, a contemporary of Vonnegut, writes that 'a text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'.³⁰ That is to say, it has many strands and this is actually a condition of textuality. A reader's experience of the work and that of the writer are inherently dependent on – consciously or not – canonical or at least extant previous works, cultural bias and so on. Again this was a technique I felt could be applied to my novel, which is set in a different version of our own world, because I wanted to play with the boundaries of reader expectation whilst retaining Salvi's own internal logic. Indeed, I wanted to go further and enable my characters to potentially have lives outside of the book. There is potential for multiple versions of *1,000 Days*, which I highlight in my conclusion.

Breakfast of Champions is narrated by 'Philboyd Studge'. It was a name that Vonnegut thought he'd invented as an example of a mediocre writer, but in fact it is likely he'd read it in a short story by H.H. Monroe, whom he admired.³¹ In Vonnegut's preface, 'Studge' namechecks Knox Burger and Phoebe Hurty, two important people in the life of, as it turns out, Kurt Vonnegut the man and author. The book is in fact dedicated to Hurty, 'who comforted me in Indianapolis – during the Great Depression'.³² Burger was an editor at a magazine, *Collier's*, which published early work of Vonnegut.³³ Indeed, the name Philboyd Studge was coined by Burger who told the narrator that a certain book, 'read as though it

²⁹ These names are a deliberate construction to reference Arthur Dent, the bemused Earthman of *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams. Adams invented the drink 'Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster' in that book.

³⁰ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1968), in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) pp. 1466–70.

³¹ Vonnegut later explained to an interviewer that the writer H.H. Monroe had written a story called 'Filboyd Studge: the Story of a Mouse that Helped.' "[A] friend of mine was speaking once about a really bad writer and he remarked: "This guy writes like Philboyd Studge." This struck me as a very funny comment because the name itself was so gummy, sort of a tar-baby name, and I knew exactly how a "Philboyd Studge" would write. When I was working on *Breakfast of Champions*, I felt my own narrator possessed such qualities, so I used the name. I wish, though, I had known about Monroe's story at the time, since I consider him to be an excellent writer." As quoted in *Conversations With Kurt Vonnegut*: ed. by William Rodney Allen (USA: University Press of Mississippi 1988) p.216. I would argue that this unintentional metafictional element has now become part of the *Breakfast* story, adding a further layer of irony.

³² Kurt Vonnegut, Jr, *Breakfast of Champions* (London: Grafton Books, 1974), p. 10.

³³ "[He] discovered and encouraged more good young writers than any other editor of his time." – Kurt Vonnegut, *Welcome to the Monkey House* and *Palm Sunday* (London: Penguin Vintage Classics 1994) p. 425.

had been written by Philboyd Studge,³⁴ which was on the surface an example of a sort of everyman/nobody writer. These two instances immediately lead the reader toward several ways of reading the text: firstly, to take it all on face value and to accept that Hurty and Burger are extra-textual, 'real' people with lives that only intersect with the book as touchstones for the narrator, who we accept as Vonnegut; secondly, to read the entirety of the text purely as fiction, with the additional information that as the narrator has signed himself off as Philboyd Studge, in fact all that is within the pages is a fiction; thirdly, and with prior knowledge of Vonnegut's metafictional style or approach, we may choose to identify this preface as another example.

Vonnegut stretches the boundaries of his chosen form in various ways, one of which is to insert a character named Kurt Vonnegut into *Breakfast of Champions*, who says, 'I had come to the Arts Festival incognito. I was there to watch a confrontation between two human beings I had created: Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout'.³⁵ As Kathryn Hume states, at this point '[S]urrealism takes over when [the narrator] enters a restaurant and mingles with his invented characters'.³⁶ Likewise, we are counselled to be wary of conflating narrator, writer and character, according to Creed Greer, who says, 'If Vonnegut is made the "I" of his texts by a "personalisation" of the narrator, or if Vonnegut is identified with his character, then the relation between author and text is misrepresented'.³⁷ This, Greer goes on to say, puts the narrator 'on more or less equal footing with [other characters]: his interaction with the character seems to suggest the impossibility of an "author" separate from the text [...] for a narrator there is no outside [of the text]'.³⁸ The theme is taken up by Peter Messent, who goes further in the conflation of author, narrator and character: '[*Breakfast*] is as much about Kurt Vonnegut as Kilgore Trout or Dwayne Hoover [...]' Vonnegut informs his readers early in the book that he is 'trying to clear my head of all the

³⁴ *Breakfast*, p. 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

³⁶ Kathryn Hume, 'Vonnegut's Self-Projections: Symbolic Characters and Symbolic Fiction', in *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 12, No.3 (1982). pp. 177-190.

³⁷ Creed Greer, 'Kurt Vonnegut and the Character of Words' in *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol.19, No.3 (1989) pp. 312-330.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 313. This hints toward the work of Jacques Derrida, specifically the idea in *Of Grammatology* that there is nothing outside of the text. That is, any work written must adhere to the language's own internal logic, and its meaning relies on shared knowledge by the author and the reader of what the words themselves mean, or what they meant at the time they were written. If everything can be described in language, then further meaning cannot exist outside of the language that can describe it.

junk in there.' (*Breakfast, 4*).³⁹ This paradox is also highlighted by a passage in *Breakfast* that seems to indicate the narrator-character-author tension that is produced by this; the narrator-character is discomfited by a barman (that he has created) continuing to look directly at him.

And he went on staring at me, even though I wanted to stop him now. Here was the thing about my control over the characters I created: I could only guide their movements approximately, since they were such big animals [...] So I made the green telephone in back of the bar ring.⁴⁰

Thus Vonnegut, the character, has lost control of the characters in his novel, which he is also appearing in. Clearly Vonnegut the writer can do as he pleases, but he decides instead to show a kind of helplessness in the face of his own creation. This is directly analogous to Leadbetter's suspicion that once he releases his writings into the world, he will lose control of them. In my novel I use the Internet as the disruptive element, both for Leadbetter and Ian: their identities are very much bound by the way others perceive them online and offline.

Breakfast of Champions has an epilogue in which the book's narrator chases Kilgore Trout in order to deliver a message. However, the narrator is stopped in his tracks, having been bitten by a Dobermann pinscher dog called Kazak. The dog, according to the narrator, was 'a leading character in an earlier version of this book.'⁴¹ Vonnegut later explained this to interviewer Charlie Reilly:

[...P]lanting a dangerous animal like a Dobermann early in a story can be dangerous to the story itself. It's an entertaining thing to do, in other words, but frequently it will create anxiety in the mind of the reader: he'll sense that sooner or later this damn animal is going to get loose and bite somebody. So in one draft I planted the dog early on – guarding a lumber yard, as I recall it – and finally I decided to bring him back long enough to take a bite out of the narrator.⁴²

³⁹ Messent, p.107.

⁴⁰ *Breakfast*, pp. 188-189.

⁴¹ *Breakfast*, p. 261.

⁴² *Conversations*, p. 5.

This is an example of what has become known as *Chekhov's Gun*: the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's observations that 'One must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn't going to go off. It's wrong to make promises you don't mean to keep'.⁴³ That is to say, everything onstage – or in a book – must have a narrative purpose at some stage in the piece. Indeed, Vonnegut repudiates the reality effect by removing agency from even his created characters and showing them to have little or no true influence on the narrative of *Breakfast*.

As Greer puts it, at the end of *Breakfast*, Trout was 'released from the responsibility of representation [...] The real world and the fictional are no longer separate categories [...] Schizophrenia functions intertextually.'⁴⁴ Or, as Vonnegut himself said, 'What I do is tell stories. If you have to be rational, you can't do it.'⁴⁵ The rationality of the novel process itself is at stake for reader and writer. The ideas that Vonnegut explores regarding shattering narrative expectations are themselves bound within a form of their own. *Breakfast of Champions* is still a book that is read from page one forwards, and this temporality is unnegotiable. The words in the original text, and in my copy of the book, are in English; the pictures and graphics are generally recognisable as crude but simple versions of the real-world objects they represent. Vonnegut is playing with existing boundaries, while concurrently making the point that even a book's logic is not necessarily to be trusted. I employ many of these techniques in *1,000 Days of Sun* to create additional effects of disruption, pacing, narrative layering and characterisation. That gun of Chekhov's need not be fired at all; sometimes it's just there to help the reality effect, and rationality is not a singularly definable phenomenon but one that is dependent on viewpoint, context and experience. The multiple narrators of *1,000 Days of Sun* are my way of exploring these ideas, as is the intended irony of the final chapter where there is a huge explosion. The gun (the resonator) has been fired, but it was not previously in view for most of the characters in the book.

⁴³ Chekhov is quoted widely on various occasions with similar versions of this. This is taken from a letter to Aleksander Semenovitch Lazarev on November 1, 1889 and is quoted for example by Leah Goldberg in *Russian Literature in the Nineteenth Century Essays* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976) p. 163.

⁴⁴ Greer, p. 326.

⁴⁵ Zoltan Abadi-Nagi, "'Serenity,' 'Courage,' 'Wisdom,': A Talk with Kurt Vonnegut' in *Hungarian Studies in English*, Vol. 22 (1991) pp. 23-37.

An author speaks

Nicola Barker also wrestles with the significance of narrative, the instability of a story and the potential of graphical elements to create effect, in her 2019 novella *I Am Sovereign*. The book brings together several disparate characters, all situated within the same small apartment in Llandudno: Charles, the vendor; Avigail (sic), the estate agent; Wang Shu, the potential buyer; and Ying Yue, the daughter of Wang Shu and her interpreter.⁴⁶ The action of the work takes place over twenty minutes one afternoon and the story is told through the thought processes of these four characters and an omniscient narrator. Three-quarters of the way through the book, a noise is heard in another room and the characters go to investigate. It could be the house cat, Morpheus, knocking something over, or it could be someone breaking into the house. It is, indeed, the latter, we learn, but in doing so the fourth wall of the novel is broken by the narrator:

'We apologise, in advance, for the brief interruption...

*... but it is necessary at this moment in the novella (henceforth referred to as I am Sovereign) to warn the reader that Nicola Barker (henceforth referred to as The Author) has been granted **absolutely no access** to the thoughts and feelings of the character Gyasi 'Chance' Ebo (henceforth referred to as The Subject).'*⁴⁷

Barker has picked up Vonnegut's baton here – the character of The Author/Nicola Barker/narrator is similarly powerless as that of Vonnegut in *Breakfast* to effect in any great way the actions of the other characters in the book. This completely destabilises *Sovereign's* narrative, to the extent that 'she' – the narrator/author/character – excises Chance from the book entirely, replacing him with an older, more malleable character and rewriting passages in which Chance had originally appeared. By the end of the novel, the text becomes almost apologetic as any pretence at artifice is entirely removed: 'The Author has been prey to 'mixed feelings' about the novel, as a form, ever since completing her last work (*H(A)PPY*), which – to all intents and purposes – destroyed the novel (as a form) for The

⁴⁶ Another metafictional element: one of the characters' acquaintances is studying for a degree in the University of Bangor.

⁴⁷ Nicola Barker, *I Am Sovereign* (London: Heinmann, 2019) p.149. Italics in original.

Author'.⁴⁸ We are also told that parts of the book were written in Normandy. Toby Litt notes that on The Author/narrator of the novel's drive home from France:

The Author sees "the entire area [that] had been inhabited by young ... African men trying to find any means possible of crossing the Channel to Britain ... Can it be any coincidence then, that only a couple of days later The Author began removing Gyasi 'Chance' Ebo from the narrative?"⁴⁹

Exclusions from narrative can be creative in themselves: one thinks of the OuLiPo group of writers and in particular Georges Perec's *La Dispartition* (The Void), which omits the letter 'e' entirely from the text. In Perec's case, this means rethinking expressions and therefore reaching new territories of phraseology. For Barker here this erasure is political. Litt observes that there is an analogy being drawn between fiction and immigration, saying that sovereignty actually demands the exclusion of others. This brings up a very pertinent question in 2020, as Litt says, 'Barker questions her own – and thus our own – authority. By what right can we keep people out?'⁵⁰ Barker's unease is expressed within the very form that she (according to the book) distrusts. In *1,000 Days* Leadbetter mistrusts the digital form for his own work, but is happy enough to use the Internet for other communications; this doublethink is also a big part of Ian's adventures online. Ian is an immigrant: Leadbetter seeks to emigrate. Both require a relationship with authority that is different for each.

There is an inherent instability and irony at play; *I Am Sovereign*, like *Breakfast of Champions*, is a physical artefact, a book that despite the authors' protestations, has a text that is printed to the page; those books are then bought or borrowed by other people. While each person will have their own interpretation of the text, the text itself is fixed even including Barthes' signifiers and layers of meaning and context, even as the text uses typographical techniques to 'grasp [ideas and sensations and] brutally and hurl them in the reader's face',⁵¹ even as it draws on devices that bring the outside world into the pages, and vice versa. What Barker has encountered is the natural, or unnatural, limit of her

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 207.

⁴⁹ Toby Litt, 'I Am Sovereign by Nicola Barker review – The Author Strikes Back' *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jul/19/i-am-sovereign-by-nicola-barker-review>> [accessed 13 February 2020](para. 9 of 11).

⁵⁰ Ibid. (para. 10 of 11).

⁵¹ Marinetti, p. 105.

experiments with metafiction: at some stage, the lines between what is 'real', what is narratively-plausible and whether a narrator can or should be trusted will blur to the extent that a novel is no longer possible because these techniques are actively working against themselves.⁵² The process of *1,000 Days of Sun* reflects my explorations of instability and irony, as well as the form of a novel. These are not necessarily explicit in the final form of my novel, but significant investigation into the work of Vonnegut, Barthes, and Barker was essential research in order to interrogate my own motivations for creating a novel based initially on my own experiences. It became clear as the writing developed that I had indeed 'lost control' of my characters, but this was a positive thing as I was no longer writing autobiographically. This was an important realisation during the PhD process and enabled me to create and inhabit characters other than the culturally normative Ian (and to an extent Laura). My final chapter, which shows the same event from various viewpoints, is designed to push at those boundaries of narrative, metafiction and typography whilst retaining the forward motion of the novel. As a result, there is a reality effect richer than what would be possible with only one character's viewpoint, or as Bakhtin has it, 'a monologically understood world is an objectified world, a world corresponding to a single and unified authorial consciousness.'⁵³ Of course, my novel has only one author, so the responsibility rested with me to ensure that each of my characters brought a different background, approach and interest to the book as a whole.

⁵² This may be an intended irony in itself.

⁵³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, trans. by Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) p. 9

Chapter Two: Identity and Digital Identity

A central theme in *1,000 Days of Sun* is the question of identity. In this chapter I research some ways in which people behave differently in different contexts on and offline, and consider ideas of communicational identity.

Doggedly writing

Martin Amis' 2003 novel, *Yellow Dog*, speaks strongly to online communication, not least the idea that it is impossible to truly know with whom you are talking via email until you meet in the physical world.⁵⁴ It deals with themes of revenge, degeneracy, violence, power and digital identity based around the technology of that era, including email correspondence. One of the main characters, and the most useful to my work, is tabloid hack Clint Smoker, who begins to get messages and emails from a woman who identifies herself as K8. These emails give him hope amongst the downbeat nature of his ultimately empty and self-loathing life and job. K8 (a rendering of 'Kate', in text speak's truncated alphabet) is initially an unknown quantity: she could be anybody. Smoker prints out her email and sniffs it. He wants to bring her out of the computer and into his real-life space; at this stage though he has no idea who K8 is. Laurence Scott, in *The Four-Dimensional Human*, noted this rupture between worlds, drawing attention to the overlaying of the always-connected, always-online world on the real space in which we feel, touch and exist:

Where do our bodies begin and end in a networked world? What sort of physique do we need to travel through two sorts of spaces at once, through the quaint streets, with their pavements, cars, overhead weather, brick walls and lamp posts slick with rain, and that other place, that strange land of everywhere and elsewhere, where our connectivity occurs? And, crucially, what does it feel like, for us and for others, as we move around inside these digitised skins?⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The book was not generally well-received by reviewers but was placed on the longlist for 2003's Man Booker Prize regardless. Tibor Fischer, in the *Daily Telegraph*, said the reading experience was '[L]ike your favourite uncle being caught in a school playground, masturbating.' Tibor Fischer. 'Someone needs to have a word with Amis' *The Telegraph* (4 August 2003) <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3594613/Someone-needs-to-have-a-word-with-Amis.html>> [accessed 5 December, 2019] (para 14 of 18)

⁵⁵ Laurence Scott, *The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World* (London: Heinmann, 2015) p. 5.

Smoker and K8's relationship highlights a central difficulty of the information exchange online which Amis in turn uses to highlight the dangers of dislocating a digital identity from its embodied, that is, real life, existence. Indeed, K8 seems to somehow be pre-empting the moods and worries of Smoker, who we encounter checking his emails in what looks a familiar enough scenario for web users everywhere: 'You have 125 new messages. About 120 of them would be from commercial concerns [...] Three or four would be chat-room flirtations with indistinguishable career girls' [...]⁵⁶ These he tries to visualise as 'a succession of fierce little hussies, with lips crimped in ceaseless calculation.' But he is also savvy enough to note that they 'could be anyone: these were rigged-up identities, summoned out of the ether.' A modern definition of this is a sock puppet, defined by Zhan, Zhengyou and Jiandong thus:

In virtual spaces, some individuals use multiple usernames or copycat/forged other users (usually called "sock puppet") to communicate with others. Those sock puppets are fake identities through which members of Internet community praise or create the illusion of support for the product or one's work, pretending to be a different person.⁵⁷

Leigh Alexander explored the phenomenon of digital characterisation in a 2014 article for *Vice*. Alexander observed her boyfriend create a female character for the game, *Destiny*:

I'm watching closely to see what my boyfriend thinks a "pretty lady" is. He is choosing the skin colour, hair colour, lip colour. He makes a dark-skinned woman with smooth hair. I'm a light-skinned woman with coarse hair. It's not like I'm jealous of a video game character. I mean, she's not even a "character" really, she's my boyfriend's own avatar in *Destiny*. In a way, she's not my rival; she's him. Right? I mean, when you make a character in video games that allow you to do so, you're really just making an incarnation of yourself.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Amis, p. 159.

⁵⁷ Zhan Bu, Zhengyou Xia and Jiandong Wang, 'A sock puppet detection algorithm on virtual spaces' in *Knowledge-Based Systems*, Volume 37 (2013) pp. 366-377.

⁵⁸ Leigh Alexander, 'When We Play Video Games, Who Are We?' <https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/3b7j45/leigh-alexander-understanding-video-games-column-destiny-105> (8 September 2014) [accessed 5 December 2019] (para. 5 and 6 of 16).

These self-incarnations and signs are layers of meaning, recalling Barthes' observations on the Italian connotations of the tomatoes, peppers and colours of the advertisement in *Rhetoric of the Image*. In this case it poses the question: who is Alexander's boyfriend making his 'pretty lady' for? And to what purpose? There are messages being created and disseminated through his character's appearance, even if the boyfriend himself is largely unaware of them. The digital image, however, is causing a definite effect in real life, despite Leigh Alexander's determination to not feel jealousy. It is, she rightly adds, an aspect of her boyfriend's persona, or personality.

Alexander considers this to be a problem in games; that 'players seem to want strong characters, but we also want to make our own choices. They are our heroes, but they're also our dolls'.⁵⁹ The word 'players' could be easily replaced with that of 'readers' or 'authors', as Vonnegut observed regarding his 'puppets'. The same applies to text-based identity constructions: Kenneth Goldsmith says that online he is both 'me and not me'.⁶⁰ On Facebook he portrays himself as however he chooses to that day. Authenticity is irrelevant. This dichotomy is at the very heart of online communication; where anybody can be anybody they choose, there has to be a certain amount of trust on both sides of a conversation. If the trust is only one-way, it is entirely open to abuse from the other party.⁶¹

Autofiction and form

At the start of *1,000 Days of Sun*, Ian Walsh has arrived on Salvi Island as Laura, his wife, is to take up a job at a local school.⁶² This is based exactly on my own situation in 2009; I was, like Ian, without a job. Like Ian, I spent a few weeks enjoying the beaches with my wife, and like Ian, I started feeling extremely isolated once I was alone in the house all day with nothing to do and no work coming in. Reality struck very fast and hit very hard: my new home was expensive, debilitating, 80 per cent humidity allied to temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) in practice stopped me walking anywhere and I found

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Goldsmith, *Wasting Time on the Internet* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016) p. 19.

⁶¹ For example, email scams created to steal your personal information and/or bank details.

⁶² I wanted neutral, traditional-ish UK/Mother Country names for Ian and Laura, to indicate that in fact they had nothing particularly special or unique about them. They just happened to have fallen into this scenario without rationalising their way out of the experience. Ian Walsh, incidentally, is the name of a former Welsh International football player and commentator. This tickled me as a joke to myself, but this Ian Walsh has little in common with the Ian Walsh in *1,000 Days*.

myself divested of most of my anchors. No longer could I say I was a journalist, because I had very little freelance work to do.⁶³ No longer could I visit close friends to moan about it either. I had to find ways to rediscover myself. One of those was through the unreliable Internet line I was surreptitiously connecting to through our neighbours across the street. Thus some of the experiences of Ian in the initial chapters are to an extent autofiction, a term coined by Serge Doubrovsky, who writes:

Memory itself is fictive, is fictitious, memory itself may harbour screened memories. We have learnt that sincerity, which was the old regulating principle of autobiography, is not enough. The meaning of one's life in certain ways escapes us, so we have to reinvent it in our writing, and that is what I personally call *autofiction*.⁶⁴

I decided to explore my personal experience through a fictional form and through a fictional character. *1,000 Days* was largely written sequentially, and as the text flowed Ian also emerged as an individual character that diverged significantly from the author.⁶⁵ Doubrovsky's comment that memories are essentially a constructed version of actual events got to the heart of what I was trying to achieve through Ian; the exploration of what happened when a relatively privileged, affluent British man was dropped overnight into a new home several thousand miles away, and how reliable the memories and viewpoints of that time were. Ian's breakthrough in the book occurs when he realises that has potential access to the underlying structures and personalities of the island, because he can sign up to dating sites and chat with locals. Of course, if he can sign up to a dating site with a fake

⁶³ The full statistics are here: <<https://beach-weather.com/Caribbean/Cayman-Islands/Grand-Cayman/averages/September/>> [accessed 4 December 2019].

⁶⁴ Roger Celestin, 'Interview with Serge Doubrovsky: Autofiction and beyond' in *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* Vol. 1 No. 2 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1997) p. 400 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10260219708455900>> [accessed 4 December 2019] Italics in original.

⁶⁵ The text was of course significantly revised throughout the process, but in general I would not edit myself into a corner. I work most efficiently when I am getting words on paper rather than obsessing over the minutiae. This is probably due to my background in journalism, where deadline pressure is always there. I trusted myself grammatically (mostly). Journalism does depend on getting the facts right straight away, though, and re-drafting is rare. In 2009 or thereabouts I observed my job begin to change to encompass online articles which could be put up almost as events unfolded, and therefore the article text would nearly always develop in tandem with the events. This was a fundamental shift in the job, bringing with it significant responsibilities and many, many opportunities for cataclysmic misrepresentation, libel, and so on. It is also a concept that may already be changing the way art forms like music and literature sit in a cultural context: is anything ever finished when it can be edited forever? There's a whole other PhD within this question, I suggest.

profile, then anybody can. This idea shares conceptual space with that of narrational unreliability as per Vonnegut. Digital identity's inherent untrustworthiness seemed an excellent way to show the problems that Ian was having. I decided that his previous career would be in logistics, specifically about moving very real, very heavy, trains around a set network. Now that literal network was gone, it needed to be replaced.

Scott says that social media, at its worst is addictive and a depressant, and that 'Everyone knows someone perpetually on the brink of quitting Facebook'.⁶⁶ I decided that Laura Walsh would therefore not be on social media – as revealed by her email exchanges with her friend back home – so I could place Ian on various sites without complicating the narrative too much. For Ian and *Yellow Dog's* Clint Smoker, the online world is not a like-for-like swap with their physical worlds. Smoker has only words with which to interact, words that he presumes come from another person, K8. Ian's adventures in the dating system provide only brief (and expensive) snippets of beguiling interaction with whoever is replying. In both cases, this tension cannot be resolvable in the narrative until there is a physical, real-life opportunity to meet these online characters, and until then they are not 'real' people.

Postcolonial performances and jazz hands

I was very aware of the potential for missteps in writing voices from cultural standpoints that I was not personally embedded in, and specifically the potential for cultural-linguistic patronising or misappropriation of an inherently unknowable cultural existence. All of the metafictional elements are from my own standpoint or background, and my efforts at creating the effect of reality would inevitably be biased to one extent or another. As Priyamvada Gopal warns:

Mixing, contact and transculturation, while common to all colonial and postcolonial contexts, are always embedded in particular histories and frequently attest to very different kinds of cultural politics. An awareness of these histories must inflect our understanding of how linguistic innovation and experimentation work in different contexts.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Scott, pp. 170-171.

⁶⁷ Priyamvada Gopal, 'The Limits of Hybridity: Language and innovation in Anglophone postcolonial poetry', in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2012) p. 197.

McHale suggests that one strategy is to 'juxtapos[e] a recognizably real world with an adjacent fantastic world, or mingling naturalistic and supernatural elements in the same world'.⁶⁸ This magical realism, as he terms it, is 'often associated with writers from the postcolonial world [...] but also with some who lack a postcolonial background'.⁶⁹ I used the *Seaside Ghosts* – part bird, part fish – as my device through which to give at least a flavour of strangeness and magic.⁷⁰

Salvi itself was initially based on my experiences connecting with the culture of the Cayman Islands, and the wider Caribbean: as a travel and tourism journalist, there were many occasions in which I interviewed both the ruling/moneyed classes that owned, say, a watersports company or a hotel, as well as the actual staff who had the face-to-face contact with the customers. For example, Cayman has a 60 per cent rule,⁷¹ in that every company registered in the islands must be majority-owned by a Caymanian, and due to that I encountered numerous local workers telling me their story, in context with the development of tourism over the decades.⁷² It was an interesting blend of welcoming the business mixed with a suspicion that something valuable about the islands was being diluted forever by the influx of foreign-born workers and/or tourists. I was fortunate to have significant contact with this history and context through my journalism work for four years, although I was also aware of the limitations due largely to my own privilege and bias in a postcolonial sense.

Said highlights these issues, giving the example of the 'reconstitut[ion] of Shakespeare every time someone reads, acts or writes about him'.⁷³ He points out that a text is considered to draw its 'identity from its historical moment interacting with the attentions, judgements, scholarship and performances of its readers.' Said notes that

⁶⁸ McHale, p. 146.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p 147.

⁷⁰ They are very, very important in the forthcoming sequel.

⁷¹ For a clear and non-jargon example, a useful Q&A is here:

<[https://content.next.westlaw.com/Document/Id27cedf5a9ea11e398db8b09b4f043e0/View/FullText.html?contextData=\(sc.Default\)&transitionType=Default&firstPage=true&bhcp=1](https://content.next.westlaw.com/Document/Id27cedf5a9ea11e398db8b09b4f043e0/View/FullText.html?contextData=(sc.Default)&transitionType=Default&firstPage=true&bhcp=1)> [accessed 4 December 2019] There are exceptions and licenses available in certain cases, but the 60 per cent rule is generally sacrosanct.

⁷² Anecdotally, this is open to abuse: stories abounded – sans evidence – of significant cash changing hands between non-Caymanians keen to start a business on island and a receptive, local-born 'front', who would on paper be the majority owner but in truth a silent partner who would not take any further financial or controlling interest in said company.

⁷³ Edward Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered' in *Race & Class*, CCVII, 2 (1985) p. 4.

academic writing had not afforded ‘the Orient, the Arabs or Islam’ this same context, and as a result their cultural/literary identity had become fixed and frozen, forever from the ‘gaze of western percipients’, hence Orientalism. I needed a way to explore this tension, so I developed the character of Mickey Pearce. His background is questionable, but certainly not local despite his best/worst efforts, and his buffoonish utterances and attitudes allow me to address issues of potential cultural (mis)appropriation. His mangled creole is made up of snippets of Salvi expression, alliteration, wordplay and on occasion Mother Country received pronunciation. Mickey’s swerving between worlds whilst never really being part of any of them represents my awareness of the ever-present danger of cultural appropriation, which Richard A. Rogers defines as ‘the use of a culture’s symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals or technologies by members of another culture’.⁷⁴ This is fundamentally linked with cultural politics, specifically the question of cultural ownership – who is it that has the right, the authority, to borrow, for example, Salvi Island slang, demeanour and persona? Cultural appropriation is, says Rogers, an active process, but not necessarily deliberate:

Acts of appropriation and their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by, and in turn shape, the social, economic, and political contexts in which they occur.⁷⁵

This power relationship is ever-present in my novel, most obviously in Mickey Pearce’s gabbled nonsense, but also in the struggle of Ian and Laura to fit in. With the local characters I had to be wary of how I put words into the mouths of characters whose culture and experience I do not share, but only create.⁷⁶ The patterns of speech employed by Wilberforce are mirrored by those of Leadbetter when they connect, and conversely Ian and Laura are of the same basic shared lexicon. Mickey’s single-user creole is simultaneously an allusion to both systems whilst never fitting in properly with either, and I used this to show that he was something of an enigma, and certainly a postcolonial construct.

⁷⁴ Rogers, Richard A., ‘From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation’ in *Communication Theory* 16 (International Communication Association, 2006) p. 474.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.476.

⁷⁶ In another metafictional element, I named Mickey Pearce after a very white 2-Tone-obsessed and somewhat shifty character from the TV show, *Only Fools and Horses*. Wikipedia describes him as ‘a young unnerving man, always wearing a Trilby hat and boasting about some imagined business success.’ As such, I could subtly signify a dodginess about the character in my book .<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Pearce> [accessed 11 November 2019].

Issues of postcolonial independence bubble away under the surface of most of the local-born characters, implicitly in the case of Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV as he deals with officious officials in budget meetings, and explicitly in the writings of the teenage blogger, XStarX. An awareness of how the Salvi Islanders would and should speak emerged as I wrote. The older generation's patterns of speech include many elements of jazz slang, while those of the teenagers are a more homogenous blend of transatlantic slang and shared cultural fads. I wanted to show how the Salvi archipelago's linguistic anchors developed over time, and specifically the intergenerational differences that occurred. The jazz slang I used was taken from one source for internal consistency.⁷⁷

According to Rick McRae, jazz 'evolved from the experience of African Americans', and so did the lexicon that the musicians used to describe and inhabit jazz sessions.⁷⁸ As a rough guide, the height of the usage of the slang is pegged between the 1920s and 1960s. This gave the opportunity for a cut-off point between the older generation's references and worldview, and the following generations, whose cues and language are more worldly due to mass communications including TV and the Internet. The *Salvi Island Sentinel* gave me a way to deliver this information for the former, whilst the words of the blogger, and indeed Lead and his gang, were the delivery system for the latter. Ironically, the younger generation are dismissive of their predecessors' structures, rituals and idioms, but unaware of the non-mainstream/underground origins of jazz slang.

Sending out signals

Communication styles and media are varied throughout *1,000 Days* because I wanted to explore multiple methods of delivering information. Direct speech was one way, of course, that the characters spoke to each other and the reader, but the hybridity described above also allowed for a layering of narrative information. For example, one of Leadbetter's strengths is his ability to disseminate information to the younger generation through his T-shirt designs. This was inspired by a passage in John Cheever's *Bullet Park*, in which the

⁷⁷ The page was at: <<http://home.earthlink.net/~dlarkins/slang-pg.htm>> but now an archived version is at <<https://web.archive.org/web/20190306122248/http://home.earthlink.net/~dlarkins/slang-pg.htm>> [accessed 20 November 2019].

⁷⁸ Rick McRae, R. "'What Is Hip?" and Other Inquiries', in *Jazz Slang Lexicography Notes*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2001, pp. 574–584.

protagonist Nailles drives away from church. Nailles turns on his windscreen wipers despite the fact that the rain has stopped:

[S]ociety had become so automative and nomadic that nomadic signals or means of communication had been established by the use of headlights, signal lights and windshield wipers. The newspaper described the issues involved and the suitable signals.⁷⁹

A code requires only a shared lexicon, be that linguistic, sign-based, or in this case through various operations of sections of a motor car. I noted that the only requirement was that at least two people – the sender of the signal, and the receiver thereof – shared an understanding as to what, say, the swish of a windscreen wiper meant. This creates a shared knowledge throughout a culture or sub-culture, and Leadbetter represents both Salvi subculture through his band and T-shirts as well as a wider culture that he has through his family and their historical embeddedness in the islands.

Rather than invoke the vehicular (one might almost say, Highway) code, I researched the handkerchief code of the male gay community in North America in the 1960s/70s. As Andrew Reilly and Eirik J. Saethre say that ‘A coloured bandana or handkerchief is placed in the back pants pocket’.⁸⁰ Colour and pocket choice are both important in this system.⁸¹ A further metafictional irony I couldn’t resist was that Lead, a clothing designer, is also at one level harbouring a closeted attraction for his bandmate Doogie. All codes are prone to misinterpretation, as we see with the *Lunchventure* conversation where Weegie asks Lead to spread the message that the island’s dogs require sterilisation because tourists are getting bitten, but subsequently XStarX misconstrues this in her blog to mean that the dogs must be culled, i.e. killed. Indeed, the newspaper tracks instances of dog poisoning as the book goes on, also referencing XStarX’s clothes in turn. I continue to lay down layers of signs and signals. Her misreading of certain signals is akin to a Chekhov’s Gun misfiring.

⁷⁹ John Cheever, *Bullet Park*. (London: Random House Vintage, 1968) p. 21.

⁸⁰ Reilly, A. and Eirik J. Saethre ‘The hankie code revisited: From function to fashion’, in *Critical Studies in Men’s Fashion* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2014) pp. 69-78.
<<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/CSMF/2013/00000001/00000001/art00006#>> [accessed 20 November 2019].

⁸¹ A chart is here: <<https://user.xmission.com/~trevin/hanky.html>> [accessed 26 February 2020].

Signals, hidden and in full view, are central to the form and content of my novel. I employ Morse code in various sections of the narrative, which on initial reading seem to be simple repeated, onomatopoeic words that add noise to the text, which I will explore in Chapter Three.⁸² These sections are signposted to the reader by various anagrams of the words 'Morse code' that precede them. These are employed as a sort of hidden, inverted reality effect: they are not essential to the narrative and do not serve to give any context or world-building effect. They are designed to be glossed over entirely and – if anything - work as indications of reading tempo. Later, if/when the reader subsequently decodes them, they perform a role of added colour or musical harmony/discord on future readings of the text. I also use metafictional devices in various people's names, particularly the names of the court staff and the speakers at the school which are indicated in Laura's diary. Font choices are a graphical representation of this: Leadbetter's writings, which are on an old typewriter; text messages using the Nokia font; XStarX's blog; the school motto; the newspaper header; and so on. Each was deliberated over in order to reinforce or flavour the text, adding a graphical element that delivered a signifier that a) something different was happening or a different character was now the protagonist, and b) to associate the text to a certain mood, era, or context with which the reader was already familiar.

Anticulturalism online

Leadbetter is a digital native but also very suspicious of the Internet's potential for multiplicity of identities and interpretations. It is this aspect that also forms his strong reluctance to impart his theories of what he has termed 'anticulturalism' in an online arena.⁸³ He does not want his declarations to be misinterpreted, or, indeed, interpreted at all. It is the rebirth of the author writ large and uncompromising; the central tenet of his anticulturalism is that anything he says himself is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is an inherently conceited and arrogant view of the world; for him, an honest one. Recalling that Wilberforce is his uncle, politically this could also be the first step on what could be a dangerous path for Leadbetter, as highlighted by Charles W. Lomas:

⁸² As posted here: <<https://kidavalanche.wordpress.com/2010/04/17/morse-code- - - - - />> [accessed 26 February 2020].

⁸³ His convention is never to capitalise the word. This is not explained in the book but in actual fact his ancient typewriter's shift/capital key has jammed up.

Demagoguery may be described as the process whereby skilful speakers and writers seek to influence public opinion by employing the traditional tools of rhetoric with complete indifference to truth. In addition, although demagoguery does not necessarily seek ends contrary to public interest, its primary motivation is personal gain.⁸⁴

I named him Leadbetter to illustrate a potential future in which he would, indeed, 'lead better', and explored through him how information can spread online and be controlled offline (or not) through analog technology – pen and paper, an ancient manual typewriter – to record his thoughts and plans.⁸⁵ Of course, the irony here is that we as readers *can* see Lead's anticultural musings and each of us interprets them from our own personal bias and prior knowledge.

As Doubrovsky aptly puts it: '[T]he idea that one has no more secrets cannot work because you never know yourself totally, even after writing hundreds of pages about yourself, you're still an unknown quantity to yourself.'⁸⁶ On such things are Internet personae borne.

⁸⁴ Charles W. Lomas, 'The Rhetoric of Demagoguery', in *Western Speech* 25 (1961) p. 161.

⁸⁵ Lead's anticulturalism is nothing new, of course, as the following quote indicates: "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'." Lewis Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, Chapter 6 (London: Macmillan, 1871).

⁸⁶ Celestin interview with Doubrovsky, p. 403.

Chapter Three: Bring the Noise

In this chapter I discuss ideas of noise and hidden/unrecognised signals within it. This includes the notions of noise in the work of Abraham Moles, Jacques Attali, Greg Hainge and John Cage, and how these definitions of noise can be used within my novel. From this I show how punk and its situationist underpinning can provide a tension to a text to reflect the dislocation felt by its characters. This is noise as chaos, transformation and disruption.

There is also an overview of some musical ideas within a literary context, including multi-narrator works and the polyphonic effect created by many different voices. I consider how I can utilise polyphony to reveal a wider view of Salvi through different narrative standpoints. I explain how using musical manuscript within a book can perform several functions: metafictional, graphical representational, musical jokes and puns, and noise. This chapter also discusses why I chose to write in Western harmony for the included hymns and folk tunes, as well as the function of the more aggressive-looking bass lines of the band.

Here I also consider the potential of various editions of the same book with added extra content including a songbook and a sealed section to decode the various Morse code elements, puns and other elements that may be scanned as noise initially. I explain that this can manipulate reading pace through textual disruption and page noise, as patterns emerge requiring specific interpretation, and that this enables author control of the meta-narrative. These emergent narratives are an alternative definition of noise, which is simply signal that has not yet been unlocked. This allows for a relational dynamic between form and noise in my novel.

Anarchy in Salvi

1,000 Days of Sun is in one specific sense a punk rock book, in which the space of the page is used as a creative and sometimes disruptive element, and in which there is a certain brashness or jarring nature compared to more mainstream literature. There are of course multiple interpretations of what constitutes 'punk', so specifically I wanted to concentrate on the creative possibilities of contrariness. I wanted there to be a sense of anarchic energy about the text, and a 'noisiness' about it too, with graphical elements employed to create various visual effects, plus music manuscript excerpts designed to intercede into, or back up, the narrative. Abraham Moles defines noise as:

any undesirable signal in the transmission of a message through a channel, and we use this term for all types of perturbation, whether the message is sonic or visual. Thus shocks, crackling, and atmospherics are noises in radio transmission. A white or black spot on a television screen, a gray fog, some dashes not belonging to the transmitted message, a spot of ink on a newspaper, a tear in a page of a book, a colored spot on a picture are “noises” in visual messages. A rumor without foundation is a “noise” in a sociological message.⁸⁷

However, there is an immediate paradox here, too. Moles goes on to say that ‘there is no absolute structural difference between noise and signal’, with the only difference between the two ‘the concept of intent on the part of the transmitter’.⁸⁸ It would follow therefore that noise is a signal to which we don’t yet have a context, as Jacques Attali explains as existing only ‘in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver’.⁸⁹ Noise is something that gets in the way of communication, and yet as it is indistinguishable from a signal, it also contains within itself the possibility of intelligibility. Gerald de Barri identifies how this relates to music:

[M]usic which gives profound and indescribable pleasure to those who listen carefully and can enjoy its subtleties, can only offend the ears of the inattentive instead of gratifying them. They see, but they do not perceive; they hear, but they do not understand. To such an unappreciative audience, music is no more than a confused and discordant noise, causing them tedium and boredom.⁹⁰

De Barri is usually better known as Gerald of Wales, or Giraldus Cambrensis, and he wrote the book from which this is taken in 1187. He was writing in an entirely different context: a different world, without the clutter of electronic and ambient noise with which we are familiar in 2020. His comments on the differences between hearing (a passive process) and

⁸⁷ Abraham Moles, *Information Theory and Esthetic Perception* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1966) p.78.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp.78-79 .

⁸⁹ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music - Theory and History of Literature: v.16* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.27.

⁹⁰ Gerald of Wales, *The Description of Wales* tran. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1978) p.239 (Here he quotes his own *Topography of Ireland*, c. 1187AD. We might call this postmodern, metafiction, or perhaps autofiction, in 2020).

listening (an active, informed process) are important and remain appropriate 833 years later.

To return to our own age, let us consider the clutter and hum of the world in which we live; generally we don't notice anything aside from that which claims our main attention, but as I write this passage in my office I listen deliberately. There is a clack clack of my own typing; there is the buzz on and off of a refrigerator; a dog barks in the distance; a car trundles past. Nothing is truly silent: I can contextualise myself from these sounds, I am familiar with what they mean, and I can also locate myself. Famously, the composer John Cage constructed a piece, *4'33"*, a piece in three movements, in which the performer simply sits at their piano without making a sound. The sonics, the piece, is created by what Hainge describes as 'the ambient sounds of the performance space and its surroundings'.⁹¹ For Cage, this is noise captured and recontextualised as music, and therefore becoming the signal itself. Hainge continues that Cage has achieved his aim to 'render all sound musical, converting noise into the primary, desired content of his piece'. The interface between the performer/transmitter, the audience/receiver and the noise/music has therefore opened up to interpretation. The piece will be different each time it is 'played', with differences in auditorium design, chair layout, ambient temperature, street noises, the sound of blood pumping in the ears of the individual, and so on. Hainge, however, is not convinced, and says Cage has 'eradicate[d] noise by bringing it within the fold of music, but [...] he concomitantly eradicates music by making of it anything at all and, therefore, nothing'.⁹² Music, he continues, is to do with expression as much as it is of context. Without expression – in performance, writing, recognisable narrative - it can't be musical by definition. As *4'33"* is devoid of reference points of frequency, that is recognisable melody and harmony, it's not musical either. In addition, the piece cannot be noise because the ambient sounds are decoded by each member of the audience and there is an aleatory aspect as listeners all have a different relationship with the sounds, with each interpretation different for each person in the room. So, not noise, and not music either. We seem to reach an impasse.

However, Hainge adds that noise is more than just a sonic tangle. He suggests that 'the noise [the piece] generates is that of time', that 'has far more to tell us about the

⁹¹ Greg Hainge, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p. 52.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.55.

deployment of existence in time than it does about music'.⁹³ By revealing the artifice of a musical concert, Cage has in fact asked questions of embodiment, of relationships between humans and their context, and especially the relationship between humans and those four minutes, thirty-three seconds of forward motion in time. He has created a disruption in that time, and this rather than the sonic content is what Hainge identifies as noise.

Additionally, Hainge identifies noise as resistance in a relational sense 'not (necessarily) politically but materially because it reconfigures matter in expression, conduction and conjugation'.⁹⁴ Thus noisy resistance is created by the relationships between those reconfigurations of matter and politics. Noise can be a disruptor, because it resists the status quo's efforts to 'negate its subversive power and make of what was previously considered to be noise merely another acceptable form'.⁹⁵ Noise therefore resists subsumation into, for example, music. I diverge here from Hainge; my idea is that noise, and specifically the on-page resistance between different presentations of narrative voices in form and design, can be a catalyst for change: noise can both become content and change the definition of what that content is. Contrary to Hainge's approach, I contend that ambient sounds in *4'33"* can be and are transformed into musical content, losing their status as noise precisely because the non-intentional sounds are absorbed into the signifying system. This is of course applicable only once for each performance and, indeed, applicable to each listener in a very personal manner, but nonetheless it is music of a very personal and unique kind. In my novel, I encourage the reader to similarly absorb graphics, repeated phrases, and extra-literary elements. What at first appears to be noise is nothing of the sort. It is actually additional narrative content. Within the pages of a book, it is possible to control the seemingly aleatory elements, whereas every performance of *4'33"* is by nature different.

Multiple layers of narrative are all enabled by techniques drawn from the musical world. The syntax and rhythms of music are also pressed into action throughout the book, enabling percussive effects and control of reading pace. Appropriating signs and techniques from canonical texts and reworking them in a fresh way is entirely consistent with punk,

⁹³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.23.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.10.

which as Kevin C. Dunn observes ‘represents a form of global communication. Ideas, emotions, symbols, and such are communicated via the medium’.⁹⁶ Jacques Attali agrees and notes that ‘Music is in fact the first industry of signs, well before any of the others; it is in fact the first mass production of codes’.⁹⁷ Musical manuscript could therefore be used in a novel as a code for those who are familiar with reading music, as well as a representation of various effects as a graphic. Punk is also linked with collage, such as the Sex Pistols’ artwork by Jamie Reid. It includes ransom note-style lettering cut from newspapers, depersonalising the message and re-employing the letters for narrative use, and is in its turn inspired by situationist art.

Situationist International was formed by Guy Debord and others in 1956/7 to, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, bring together ‘ideas from avant-garde art and Marxist theory to form a critique of contemporary capitalist culture’.⁹⁸ Some of those artistic ideas were graffiti, sloganeering, and how any location could be utilised as an art space that could send out meaning to whoever was in that space. Punk collage art is the most important concept for *1,000 Days*; the book’s graphics, fonts, and disruptive or enhancing elements are based on these collaged ideas: the utilisation, or reconfiguring, of the visual contents of a book’s pages for narrative use and layering of meaning. The novel, of course, rather than a wall or a physical location, is the space in which these ideas, messages and narratives are situated. Punk is associated with destroying what has come before, while concurrently using the same structures to deliver its message/s; the creativity inherent in destruction. A blunt instrument, perhaps, but a powerful idea. Balancing this aspect of a punk ethic with, and contrasting it against, the forward narrative of my book, creates a desired tension to *1,000 Days*. I have chosen to highlight these particular movements specifically because their formal explorations help express the confusion and dislocation of identity that is inherent to the story.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Kevin C. Dunn, ‘Never Mind the Bollocks: The Punk Rock Politics of Global Communication’ in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 34, Cultures and Politics of Global Communication (2008), pp. 193-210.

⁹⁷ Jacques Attali, ‘Interview with Jacques Attali’ in *Social Text*, No. 7 (1983) pp. 3-18.

⁹⁸ From: <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/180524#eid22661786>> [accessed 2 March 2020].

⁹⁹ See Appendix III for a truly ironic reappropriation of punk, its graphics and its music by fast food establishment giant, McDonald’s. There are many precursors and associated movements in art and literature without which these chosen movements would arguably not have developed, such as Dadaist collage for example. There is not space in this thesis to fully drill down into these, and therefore I have discussed the ideas

Polyphonic spree

Polyphony – a multi-voiced delivery of music - is central to *1,000 Days*. I employ multiple narrators to create a more rounded, ‘harmonically coherent’ experience of Salvi Island and its events. This is not a new concept, as Barbara Nolan observes the musical underpinnings of *The Canterbury Tales*:

Multiple voicing as a mode of argument was essential to later medieval narrative, whether in allegorical debate or exemplary private conversation or interior monologue framed by first- or third- person narration.’¹⁰⁰

Because tales in the Middle Ages often asked ‘social or moral or spiritual questions to be solved [...] by means of the narrative process’, there were usually two or more voices presented to illustrate these tensions. Chaucer, she says, is ‘playing voice against voice’ which predicts the complex novel to come; he is also influenced in turn by poets such as Dante who preceded him. Candida Gillis states that multiple voices induce the reader not to simply identify with each character, but to look at the narrative as a whole:

[W]hile we become aware of how each character sees and responds to events, we are also aware of how the events affect the characters’ relationships. We acquire a kind of intimate omniscience by viewing the world through multiple lenses’. ¹⁰¹

Thus, from the multiple viewpoints a story emerges that the reader can understand as we are party to all the voices expressed. This multiplicity of viewpoints, often of the same event and with widely differing interpretations, termed polyphony in a borrowing from music, is addressed by Soviet analyst Mikhail Bakhtin, according to Andrew Robinson analysing Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*:

The author does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. It is thus as if the books were written by multiple characters, not a single author’s standpoint. Instead of a

most directly relevant to my novel. Similarly, the idea that punk can be defined at all as a concept is simultaneously reductive, absurd and absolutely correct.

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Nolan, “‘A Poet Ther Was’: Chaucer’s Voices in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales’ in *PMLA* Vol 101, No.2 (1986) p. 155.

¹⁰¹ Candida Gills, ‘Multiple Voices, Multiple Genres: Fiction for Young Adults’, in *The English Journal*, Vol.92, No.2, Multigenre Teaching (2002) p. 52.

single objective world, held together by the author's voice, there is a plurality of consciousnesses, each with its own world. The reader does not see a single reality presented by the author, but rather, how reality appears to each character.¹⁰²

A fine example of a narrative that emerges from a mosaic of inter-related characters' viewpoints is that of Nicola Barker's 2010 novel, *Burley Cross Postbox Theft*. The Burley Cross of the title is a small village in Yorkshire, and the theft is of a series of letters that were posted over the course of a weekend. The letters are from several different characters, with some members of the Burley Cross community contributing more than one each. This gives not only multiple narrators, but also the possibility that each narrator is telling versions of the same story differently to different people in separate letters. Nick Garrard explains that:

Barker uses an epistolary structure and lays out the narrative in the form of both the surrendered evidence and the confused reactions of the two-man police force. The plot emerges cautiously, as incidents overlap, and much of the humour derives from the collision between the narrators' assumptions and the truths they accidentally reveal.¹⁰³

Barker employs several devices to indicate different voices. These can be as simple as the addresses at the top of each letter, more complex linguistic idiosyncrasies in the various writing styles, a variety of fonts and punctuation. *Burley Cross* also satirises its own form: one letter is from resident Edo Wa Makuna, which was originally written in dialect then translated for the benefit of the police investigation. Olivia Laing notes that 'the first is a literal translation [...] of Edo's Journey from Leopoldville to Burley Cross via a spot of male prostitution in Gambia'.¹⁰⁴ The translation, which immediately follows, reveals more about the translator than it does about Edo, continues Laing, calling it 'a minor masterwork of misunderstanding, laziness and casual racism that bears no resemblance whatsoever to the events'. This set-piece strongly evokes Barthes' comments in 'The Death of the Author' that

¹⁰² Andrew Robinson, 'In Theory: Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia', <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>> (posted 29 July 2011) [accessed 21 April 2019].

¹⁰³ Nick Garrard, 'Burley Cross Postbox Theft, By Nicola Barker' in *The Independent on Sunday*, 2/5/2010. Quoted from web version: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/burley-cross-postbox-theft-by-nicola-barker-1957170.html>> (posted 2 May 2010) para. 3 of 5 [accessed 28/04/2020].

¹⁰⁴ Olivia Laing, 'Burley Cross Postbox Theft by Nicola Barker' in *The Observer* 9/5/2020 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/may/09/burley-cross-postbox-nicola-barker>> (posted 9 May, 2010) para. 7 of 9. [accessed 28/04/2020].

any text is in fact a mosaic of all that has come before, and that the reader's own previous context and bias are inescapable. If Edo's story can be so mangled by an ostensibly professional translator, what hope does the reader have of interpreting the original narrative? And, conversely, the authorial intent can so easily be destroyed. A third level of satire here is employed by revealing the consequent unreliability of narrators, who are themselves subject to the same process – and by association, the author too, as we have discussed regarding Barker's more recent works questioning form and narrative authority.

The epistolary form has been part of the literary canon for millennia; the Bible in all its translations is the best-selling example of all time. One of the famous examples of narrative form can be found in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each writer relates the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and often the exact same events, but there are many differences of interpretation.¹⁰⁵ While this thesis is not the place to add to the billions of reams of biblical exegesis, suffice it to say that events through the eyes of multiple viewers can produce a multitude of different explanations: the boundaries between noise and signal are not clear-cut. These techniques and effects add an uncertainty to the narrative, with Salvi emerging tentatively as a destination through varying viewpoints and narrative devices, rather than one omniscient narrator (although this viewpoint also lightly exists).

The Music of the pages

Employing noise and musical techniques injects very interesting effects of tension, pace and polyphony as they are applied to my text. The 'musical novel' is defined by Emily Petermann as a genre that takes musical cues 'not primarily in terms of its content, but in its form'.¹⁰⁶ In the main, this does not usually include actual musical notation, although there is a type of novel which takes, 'a genre or individual work of music as a model for their own construction'. These novels implement musical techniques in narrative structure; Petermann identifies 'essential aspects of music (rhythm, timbre, and the simultaneity of multiple voices or instruments)', which I consider the most pertinent to the structure,

¹⁰⁵ We might also include the non-Canonical Gnostic Gospels such as the (relatively) recently re-discovered Book of Judas in this wider discussion.

¹⁰⁶ Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Camden House, 2014) [back cover blurb quote].

delivery and rhythm of *1,000 Days*. She also names micro and macrostructures, from jazz riffs to symphonies, as structural borrowings for a novel. This can encapsulate metafictional elements: regarding *The Canterbury Tales*, for example, Carl Lindahl 'seek[s] to show that Chaucer used the entertainments of his age as compositional guides'.¹⁰⁷ Information theory can be applied to this, as Moles notes:

A play, an opera, a film, take advantage of accumulated experience not only in the properly technical domain of details concerning procedures and style, but also in the more fundamental domain of structure and internal organization'.¹⁰⁸

Lindahl identifies nine festivals enacted within the book, including 'songs, lyric poems and drama', related to 'oral art' and its social context. Broadly, he says, Medieval festival performers can be grouped into two forms: the more highbrow *gentil* and the more populist or peasant *churl*, based on social background and context. The performers' backgrounds and the nine festivals' elements thus define the form and content of each individual pilgrim's tale. Reader familiarity with these ideas enables Chaucer to both comment on, and satirise, the world around him and/or his characters. It is an early deployment of metafiction and intertextuality: the text employed and quoted is based on and possibly directly drawn from those festival entertainments. There are also many signposts as to who is speaking at any one time. The narrator of the *General Prologue* (speaking in the first person) may not be the same as the (unnamed) narrator throughout who describes the (third-person) thoughts and personalities of the pilgrims even as they tell their tales in their own idiosyncratic voices. As Donald Howard puts it 'As we come to each new tale we must call to mind from the General Prologue the description of the pilgrim telling it; if we do not, a whole level of meaning drops away'.¹⁰⁹ In the absence of a similar prologue to my book, the characters are necessarily revealed instead through their actions, response to and interaction with the environment, and conversations with other characters. The 'encounter between discourses' that David Patterson notes from his reading of Bakhtin's *Discourse in the Novel* 'gives life to discourse and to the word'.¹¹⁰ This applies between characters meeting for the first time, as

¹⁰⁷ Carl Lindahl, 'The Festive Form of the *Canterbury Tales*', in *ELH*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (1985) p. 532.

¹⁰⁸ Moles, p. 181.

¹⁰⁹ Donald R. Howard, 'The *Canterbury Tales*: Memory and Form', in *ELH* Vol. 38, No. 3 (1971) p.319.

¹¹⁰ David Patterson, 'Mikhail Bakhtin and the Dialogical Dimensions of the Novel', in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 44, No. 2 (1985) p. 133.

much as between the reader and the text, and can, Patterson comments, create a situation in which 'each may emerge transformed by the other'.

Five hundred years later, Bakhtin analysed Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novels and, 'proposed that they were structured polyphonically',¹¹¹ according to Belova, King and Silwa, who quoted Bakhtin's definition that therefore the books delivered, 'a multiplicity of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses'.¹¹² As such, there was no one 'objective account' or single overarching narrative truth – or omniscient narrator – both available and reliable, but rather that the perception of events by each character was presented in turn and through this structure a kind of multiple-voiced mosaic representation of the events emerged. Bakhtin's description of this technique is:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers.¹¹³

This dialogue with the outside world is nothing if not metafictional, Bakhtin contextualising Dostoyevsky's novels in the real world that surrounds their creation and reception. It is also an illustration of the postmodernist/Barthean idea that any meaning is ascribed to a work by its readers in their own context, including through cultural signs within the work itself. In other words, art is in the eye of the beholder, and meaning is dependent on the cultural context in which the book is beheld. It is entirely possible, and in a sense inevitable, that the contemporary signs, quotes or narratives within a work become obsolete due to the passage of time outside the confines of the book's covers. The work, therefore, changes in meaning over time as a result. This is entirely out of the author's influence and is also applicable to the online world: I designed Leadbetter's reticence in putting his work online to be related to his fear of misinterpretation and loss of control, reflecting his insecurities and fundamental unease with himself. It follows that a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints

¹¹¹ Olga Belova, Ian King and Martyna Silwa, 'Themed Section: Introduction: Polyphony and Organization Studies: Mikhail Bakhtin and Beyond' in *Organization Studies* (2008) p.493.

¹¹² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, trans. by Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) p. 208.

¹¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press; New Ed edition 1982) p. 254.

would give the opportunity to draw a narrative, a place and the world of the book with more nuance and a wider overview of its own context. My aim therefore was to present *1,000 Days of Sun* as a suite rather than a solo; there would be multiple voices from different contexts and backgrounds, and taken together they would represent a physical place, community and country. Multiple viewpoints of the same situation, or the same event, would be given equal weight and only when taken together would the big picture – that is, the book in its entirety - emerge.

One way I achieved this was to give each character – each voice – significant initial space in the book to establish their own register before introducing a new one. As *1,000 Days* continues, each character's sections become shorter and shorter and the characters closer and closer together, until ultimately the final chapter flips very quickly between viewpoints and characters where we see that, indeed, some of Patterson's transformation has taken place. The Festival of the Ice serves to merge, as closely as possible, the viewpoints, voices and experiences of the characters, who are all in the same place at the same time for the first time in the whole book; as close to a true polyphony, or cacophony, as could be achieved without completely disrupting the text with graphics, collages of words inserted inside each other, or any number of other more experimental effects.¹¹⁴ In musical terms, each of my characters has had extended solos, and gradually they come together to form a choir. It must be noted that to entirely write a four-part harmony of characters in language alone would involve techniques such as interspersing different characters' speech directly within each other, perhaps by using different colours. Even that would be more cacophonous and disruptive than my choice of overlapping ideas, sentences and viewpoints that show the reader that all the characters are in the same place at the same time, experiencing it in different ways whilst also sharing some of the same perceptions.

Write on, brother

The role of the original music I wrote for *1,000 Days of Sun* is varied. At times, it is representational; at times reflective of the events around it; at times it is portentous of coming events and elsewhere it is decorative (both graphically and musically, for those who can read music). It is not intended to completely disrupt or destabilise the flow of the

¹¹⁴ The author of course is also active in this Bakhtinian polyphonic dialogue, particularly the writing stage.

narrative, and the book/story can and does survive without the musical-graphical interludes. They are, of course, noisy in the sense that they are not necessarily initially perceived as actually containing information; the receipt of the signal depends on the background and *a priori* knowledge of the reader. Hainge explores this, noting that the unfamiliar noise would initially 'appear to be somewhat unhomely until such time as one has become accustomed to the different nature of this noise'.¹¹⁵ This transformative tension is applicable to my book, with the musical content in particular operating at several levels. It is, firstly, something close to a soundtrack for those who have the musical background: sight-reading the pieces hopefully would set off an internal playlist as the book was read. The lyrics are also important, operating as cultural signifiers in both sacred and secular contexts; this enabled me to insert deeper and/or more nuanced information in the narrative that gave more context to the Island and its history, employing the reality effect in a different but hopefully no less effective manner.

Musically, too, the relatively traditional hymns speak to a shared harmonic/musical past in the Western sense, while elsewhere, for example, the bass lines of Leadbetter are harder, more aggressive and energetic, punkier, in line with his own energy and self-belief plus his drive to disrupt the existing structures around him. The look of the notes and staves on the page serves as a graphical enhancement which does not require any musical knowledge. However, some of the pieces are intended to represent graphically the moods of the pieces themselves. At one stage of the novel's development, I intended to include the *Salvi Islands Songbook* as part of the package.¹¹⁶ This would be a short pamphlet of perhaps 10-15 traditional hymns and songs written in Salvi style – that is, a harmonic style more-or-less coherent with traditional Western harmony. Similar to the use of jazz slang spoken by the older generation, this served to locate temporally a musical basis specific to Salvi's culture around the first few decades of the 1900s. These elements and The Big Wave of '28 mentioned in the church chapter imply a rough timescale during which Salvi diverged from developments that had occurred outside the islands such as Serialism, surrealism and so on. This provided me with a pivot point beyond which there was a relatively stable culture, but that same long-lived generation would encounter their stability threatened by the advent of

¹¹⁵ Hainge, p.122.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix II for mock-up of cover and contents.

mass travel, the Internet and outside cultural influences.¹¹⁷ This inevitably led to tensions that I could exploit and explore through the characters of 2009/10, the book's timeline. The 12-tone Sol-Fa Western scale was used throughout; it is the most familiar (Western) musical context for nearly all popular music and its unchanging nature as a fixed code over centuries means that a listener or performer in 2020 can happily decode something first written five hundred years earlier. It would be too disruptive to my novel to utilise different, unfamiliar scales such as Indian ragas, which have no relevance to the history of Salvi. The islands have followed their Mother Country's musical development over the years, which mirrors the islands' cultural and syntactical development, at least up to the time of divergence mentioned above.

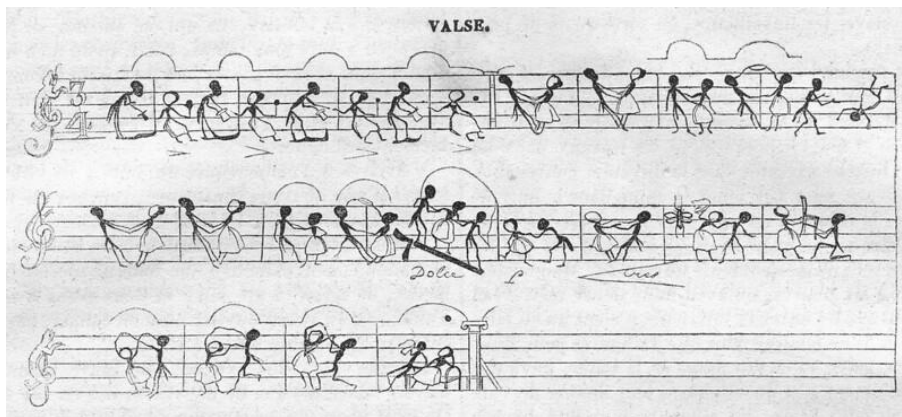
Graphic equaliser

Representing action through the way the music looks on the page as a graphical device was my version of a Vonnegut drawing. Additionally, these graphics serve to reveal or emphasise the narrator's character itself. A representation of musical notation as graphic has featured in texts for many years. For example, in 1840, one Edouard Charlton, editor of *Le Magazine Pittoresque*, approached his friend, artist J.J. Grandville, according to Patricia Mainardi in the *Public Domain Review*, and:

...allowed him to draw whatever he wished. In 1840, Grandville produced a series of musical scores for Le magasin where the notes were personified: Waltz, Military Music, Religious Music, etc., and each was "staffed" by appropriately costumed and performing figures. In Waltz, an interracial couple dances through several lines of music before collapsing, exhausted, in the last bar.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ This long life expectancy is dealt with in the prologue of *1,000 Days of Sun* as well as in the *Sentinel of Salvi* newspaper of December 100 [sic], 2009, which variously claims that McManus Asafetida is 81, 88 and, in the words of the venerable man himself, '92 or thereabouts, though in them days they didn't keep much records'.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Mainardi, 'Grandville, Visions and Dreams' in *Public Domain Review* (26 September, 2018) <<https://publicdomainreview.org/2018/09/26/grandville-visions-and-dreams/>> [accessed 4 July 2019] (para. 9 of 26). Interestingly, Mainardi goes on to highlight Grandville's 1844 book, *Another World*, noting that a picture of anthropomorphic playing cards may have inspired Lewis Carroll.



119

One might consider Mainardi's interpretation of the final scene as 'exhaustion' to be rather coy, as the dancers do end up in bed together. The point, however, stands: it is possible to represent action and/or physical phenomena through the placement of the notes on the page. The boat captain Jupiter Ace is one of the older residents of Salvi, from an older, simpler time in the island's history pre-Internet and pre-expatriates in general. The song he whistles also follows a simple, 4/4, C major, undulating form; the shape of the notes represents the waves:



The *Songbook* reveals that this melody is an old sailors' shanty, and to reflect the saltiness of the mariners' lives, humour and lexicon it contains a rude pun in the lyrics:

From sea to shining sea I roam / From January till December / And all the while I say I am / I am a country member

Chorus: Country, O Salvi! / I love thee so tender / O! Years may pass but one thing lasts / I am a country member

[...]

¹¹⁹ Illustration in *Le Magazin Pittoresque*, (1843), <<https://archive.org/details/magasinpittoresq11char>> [accessed 4 July 2019].

In time, my love, I'll fade away / My ashes to dust rendered / So may my comrades sing of me: / He was a country member

The words, read out loud, need no further explanation. The joke is signposted early in the novel through the labelling of the customs booths: Visitors and Country Members.¹²⁰

Without the lyrics, of course, this joke remains unfinished and possibly passes without making any impact. This I found in itself an irresistible red herring: the stymied humour becomes beautifully futile when it is obscure.¹²¹

Book ends

In the eventual published version of *1,000 Days*, there are ways I suggest that this joke could be resolved: an edition of the book in a traditional format, with the possibility to buy also an extended/enhanced edition that does include the Songbook and other supporting material. This is a concept familiar to music fans, who are often enticed into spending more cash than anticipated with the prospect of additional songs, different versions, demos and so on.¹²²

This could extend to presenting the work in its entirety as a series of postcards/pictures/loose-leaf excerpts from Hansard or court reports; from this the reader could construct their own narrative. For example, the 1969 novel *The Unfortunates* by B.S. Johnson was presented in a non-traditional format of 27 loose, unbound chapters, of which only the initial and final chapters had to be placed at the beginning and end. The other 25 chapters could be read in whichever way the reader saw fit.¹²³ The story of *The Unfortunates* tracks a journalist, on assignment in Nottingham, as he works his way around the city while ruminating on the death of his friend, Tony. The loose chapters were presented in a box, inviting the reader to piece together the narrative/s in collage and therefore introducing a sense of chance to the experience. The idea, says Jordan, is 'to

¹²⁰ The pun was used by Mark Lampaar on an episode of the TV show, *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*, BBC2 (Series 5 Episode 2, 19 February 1999) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSg6ee1VYY>> [accessed 20 March 2020].

¹²¹ This is of course an anticulturalist statement: only the writer 'knows' the 'truth'.

¹²² One of the most high-profile examples of this is The Beatles' re-releases of their catalogue, adding demos, new mixes, et cetera to a 50-year-old release of *The Beatles* (aka the White Album). On The Beatles' website, the *White Album* on vinyl costs £35 new. The CD box set with the added extras is £120. <<https://www.thebeatlesonline.co.uk/search.html?term=white+album>> [accessed 0 February 2020].

¹²³ It was reissued in 2008 by New Directions, and reviewed by Charles Taylor for *The New York Times*: Charles Taylor, 'Piece This One Together' in *New York Times*, 22 August 2008. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/24/books/review/Taylor-t.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>> [accessed 2 February 2020].

embrace aleatorism [i.e. chance] and to subvert linear causality'.¹²⁴ In this case, the jumbled narrative serves to reflect the non-time/outside-time nature of grief and memory, and the mess the process makes of the quotidian, day-to-day expectations of life by the grieving person. It is the denaturalisation of a narrative that eschews the linear and a disruption of the reader experience, designed in order to communicate the experience of grief, at least in the case of Johnson's protagonist who is at some level a projection of the author himself. I found this an appropriate touchstone to my own fictionalised version of my experience.

I began writing scenes out of sequence and with no real link to each other; it was enough at the outset to be (re-)building a world in which I could draw upon my Cayman experience while simultaneously in some sense (re-)inhabiting it as a character or avatar initially based on myself. The resulting text could be delivered in many forms, as *The Unfortunates* shows. To find the correct form, I wrote many pieces in various formats, fonts, and graphics. Many of these did not make it to the final text, such as drastic graphical elements like pages that were entirely coloured in black. I ultimately rejected the idea of a non-linear, non-traditionally bound book because my preference was for a conventional (on the surface, at least) novel that had a specific timeline to follow. Within that, of course, was still scope for some blurring of boundaries and playing gently with a narrative dislocation or denaturalisation, not least employing music as graphic to reflect an embodied real-life effect such as the representation of waves. My novel plays on these tensions between noise and form, employing what initially seem as noise elements as underlying signifiers. Noise as disruption, such as the graphics, become signals when the receiver is able to decode them. Because a book is read within the context of the forward motion of time, these resistances disrupt time and become noisy, as per Hainge's comments on 4'33".

Elsewhere, the irrepressible Mickey Pearce's role in the novel is often as the fulcrum round which events seem to occur. Every time he pops up singing, it is a sign that something bad is about to happen. His mash-up Salvatian/Transatlantic/Surfer persona and accent is evident in the *When the Rain Come* song, which features several dotted notes. This gives the

¹²⁴ Julia Jordan, "For recuperation': elegy, form and the aleatory in B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*", in *Textual Practice* Vol. 27, No. 5 (2014) pp. 745-61.

music more of a syncopated, Gospel-swing feel, as well as literally looking like spots of rain on the page:



When the rain come, what you gonna do? When the rain come, what you gonna do? When the rain come, what you gonna do, when the rain rain rain rain come...

When Laura sings this, she immediately has a small but significant crash in her car. The rain, indeed, has come and in one sense her struggle to sing the local song, and thus engage with the local culture, literally brings pain. The *Songbook*'s full version of the piece would have showed us that the song lyrics take a theme of coming storms, equating them with life events, and in a call-and-response form, go on to affirm that in these dark and dangerous days, The Lord's work is the answer. (This is another deliberate indication of the importance of religion to the island). Mickey pops up again later, singing the jingle to an advertisement for *DayQuell*, an over-the-counter remedy that is popular on the island, not least with Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV. He prefers to drink it with the local liquor, Mercy Mead, to alleviate his gout pain.



Here the melody is jaunty and happy, busy-looking on the page, with the corresponding lyrics attesting to the power of the remedy:

DayQuell. Protects and decongests. So make your day the best, be quick and beat the rest. DayQuell.

Contrast this with NiteQuell's jingle (credited to H. O. Moans – Shooman – but also moans of pain), in a lower register (using the bass clef) and with a sliding, descending melody that represents a yawn. The glissandos and slurs add to the feeling of dropping off into a sleep, and the shape of the melody is hopefully evident again to the non-musician reader:

Nitequell

H.O. Moans



Sleep soft and swell with Nitequell

The *Songbook*'s full version would reveal that NiteQuell is in fact a product of Ripoblika and subsequent lyrics in the full song are rather more unsettling:

*We'll do it all at Nitequell/You're ours, we're yours at Nitequell/Don't think, just sink with Nitequell [...] Ssh, brain! No pain, just Nitequell.*¹²⁵

This lack of pain and the implication of handing over control recalls The Young in *H(A)PPY*. Nitequell and Dayquell, in various combinations with Mercy Mead and/or Gargleblasters,¹²⁶ are a device to blur boundaries and enable potential elements of magical realism in the novel. These easily accessible medications are an intentional nod to the drug Soma in Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*. According to Schermer:

Soma seems somewhat comparable to alcohol: in low dosages it induces pleasant feelings and stimulates social contact [... but] its dystopian face shines right through the surface of utopian happiness.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ This is one of the strands I have included to set up a potential sequel.

¹²⁶ A deliberate nod to Douglas Adams' *Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy* series. The characters of Den and Arth in *1,000 Days* are named after Arthur Dent, the unwitting protagonist of those brilliant books.

¹²⁷ M. H. N. Schermer, 'Brave New World versus Island – Utopian and Dystopian Views on Psychopharmacology', in *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 10 (2007) p. 119. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-007-9059-1>>

Soma is also used as a way to ‘calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering’.¹²⁸ The flights of fancy Wilberforce often finds himself on are in part due to the soporific and dreamlike effects of Mercy Mead and DayQuell in combination: this is also indicated by the italicisation of these sections, *pace* Barker, as well as the indentations and usage of the curly brackets, e.g.: { and }. These are signposts to a dream-state, and recur in the final chapter of the book, this time through the eyes of Laura.

The *Nitequell* jingle has its polar opposite in Leadbetter’s bass line. This is full of accents, leaps, jumps, sharps and flats and rests. The staves look busy and are, as he puts it, ‘energy-fied.’



His lyrics are portentous as ever: *Hellfire, hellfire, hellfire awaits/And may the brave be blessed*. This adds urgency. Note also in bars one, two and four the double semiquaver rests. I added these, rather than a whole quaver rest, to make the line appear even busier on the page. This would not be a conventional way to render the manuscript for the player. Graphically, it is designed to look spiky and erratic to the non-musician, although it is, I hope, a coherent enough bassline to suffice for my new genre of Shark Metal.¹²⁹

Summat spells funny

¹²⁸ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932) (London: Vintage Classics edition, 2007) p. 217.

¹²⁹ Another enhanced edition of the book could include a CD of Fist Hook’s single, complete with artwork (see Appendix IV). For the record, one of the guiding principles of Shark Metal is that songs and riffs are in one way or another based around the menacing-sounding semitonal form of the theme to *Jaws*. More musical metafiction here, of course. Appendix V has a mock-up (and music links) for a CD release of traditional music of Salvi and Ripoblika.

The first time we encounter a musical graphic is when Ian and Laura, having negotiated the Salvi Islands customs check, enter the small baggage reclaim room. The music here loops again and again and is written as follows, in E minor:



If we simply name the notes they are, in the first two bars, as follows: B A G G A G E, spelling out the relevant and appropriate word for the baggage reclamation facility. These notes are played on steel drums, allowing a Caribbean flavour from the outset and placing the reader more accurately in the world (an analogue of ours, discussed elsewhere). As with the overtones of the instrument, particularly in a ‘boxy room’ there are odd resonances that add to a sense of alien-ness. The notes are echoed by a choir of children, singing *Welcome to the carousel* (in the first two bars only); one is invited to imagine a cacophony of shouts on and around the note. Again, the intent is to show an unsettling flavour amidst the relatively simple melody; particularly so given the exhaustion of the travellers. This lyric has several concurrent meanings. It refers to the literal baggage carousel, as well as the sense of a merry-go-round. I am posing the questions: What have the couple actually signed up for? What is this ride? As a circus carousel goes around and around, so does the baggage carousel, and perhaps so does life. This is an indicator of some circular discussions to come both in the book and within the characters’ journeys. The third bar is also designed to spell out a word, in this case: D E A D.¹³⁰ This (unsung by children) phrase is echoed in the text: ‘it seemed to have a touch of mournfulness about it’ and Laura ‘was somewhere between the worlds of wakefulness and deep, dark sleep,’ where she was ‘beginning to wonder if time existed at all.’ These themes of death and finality also have layers of meaning. One is that the pair’s old life is ‘dead,’ and they are being in some way reborn, and/or, that the

¹³⁰ I initially wrote these sections in 2013/14 and subsequently re-discovered a song called Bagface by Alex Horne and the Horne Section, which can be found here:< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1HZEqa0vjk>> [4 July 2019]. The song features the words ‘BAGGAGE, DEAD, FADED’ and other words, through the medium of a song. As with language, however, we are bound by a relatively small number of letters/notes. As the notes of the Western Chromatic Scale are labelled from A to G (ignoring sharps and flats and other incidentals, for now), the replication of available musical words in the service of an artistic decision is also rather inevitable.

travellers are literally dead, having perished in a crash. Throughout the novel, there are uses of language associated with death, finality, time and rebirth, including the postscript.¹³¹ Another anagram/musical word spelt out is in the dating app's jingle, which spells out B-A-B-E twice, and Leadbetter plays a bassline that spells out variations of C-A-G-E-D, F-A-C-A-D-E, and B-A-D F-A-C-E-D.

Metafictional musical quotations

The National Anthem of the Mother Country, entitled 'Our King', is credited to Hon. Amos (Shooman, again) and musically quotes two national anthems of our United Kingdom; the first six bars and final two bars are analogous to the opening bars of 'God Save The Queen/King' (*God save our graceful queen/Long live our noble queen/God save the queen*) and bars seven to twelve quote the Welsh National anthem, 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau', specifically the rise of '*Gwlad, gwlad*' and the following '*pleidiol wyf i'm gwlad.*' (Country, country, I pledge myself to my country). It's another indication that the Mother Country represents a version of the UK but is not the UK.

Our King
National Anthem of the Mother Country Hon. Amos

The musical notation is presented in two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Vo.' with a measure rest '13' above it. Both staves are in 3/4 time and G major. The 'Voice' staff contains 12 measures, with the final two measures ending on a double bar line. The 'Vo.' staff contains 10 measures, starting with a measure rest for 13 measures, and ending with a double bar line. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with many half and quarter notes.

The lyrics here are deliberately childish and triumphalist: *Our King He is brilliant/Our King He is so ace/Praised to the Skies*, and so on. Indeed, this has more than a hint of colonialism about it; the national song of Salvi by contrast is a celebration of their surroundings, a yearning for simplicity and a love for their verdant island. 'Our King' is a blatant statement

¹³¹ Again this is somewhat of a blurred concept in the book. I didn't want it to be too obvious, or indeed obvious at all. I wanted to muddy the waters a touch by using metaphors and colours of death in certain sections, to add a slightly unsettling feel just out of vision.

of nationalistic aggression and superiority over all; the Salvi song's lyrics are idyllic, naive and submissive to a greater power:

(from Verse Two, 'National Song of Mercy')

Lord I call upon thy name to give me care

I am but a simple sailor

Wamping rope and gutting flipper

Til I set my eyes on Salvi island fair

Musically, we can compare the 'National Anthem of the Mother Country' directly with the English national anthem, for example: *God save our gracious Queen/Long live our noble Queen/God save the Queen*. Here is an arrangement of that anthem in the same key – F major – as 'Our King'.¹³² The first six bars follow the rhythm exactly, and very closely in chord progression. Note too the similarity of the final two bars of the pieces.¹³³ *God Save the Queen/King* is widespread as a royal anthem throughout the Caribbean to this day.

¹³² Sourced from <<http://www.musicbat.com/sheetmusicpage.php?recordID=151>> [accessed 6 September 2019].

¹³³ The music has been attributed to many different writers, with the first printed versions appearing in Scotland in 1744 and England in 1745.

Moderately Slow



God save our gra - cious Queen! Long live our no - ble Queen! God save the Queen!
My coun-try 'tis of thee sweet land of li - ber - ty of thee I sing.



Send her vic - tor - i - ous, Hap - py and glo - ri - ous,
Land where my fath - ers died land of the pil - grims' pride



Long to — reign — o - ver us, God — save the Queen.
from ev — 'ry — moun - tain - side let — free - dom ring!

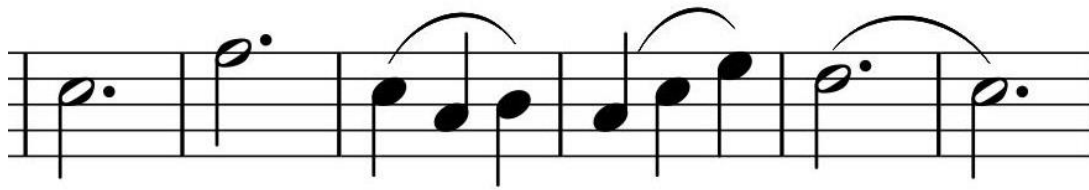
Bars seven to twelve in *Our King* follow the Welsh National Anthem, *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*, most notably perhaps the fanfare notes ('Gwlad, Gwlad') of bars seven and eight and their resolution harmonically in the following two bars. Again for clarity I present a copy in the F Major key: (bars 18-22) ¹³⁴



la- sant eu gwaed. Gwlad, Gwlad, plei- diol wyf i'm gwlad. Tra

¹³⁴ Sourced from <<http://cantorion.org/music/3868/Land-of-my-Fathers-%28Hen-Wlad-fy-Nhadau%29-F-major/downloaded>> [accessed 6 September 2019].

My version:



Section Three of *Our King* is free written without any direct reference, to add a sense of newness for the reader, although harmonically it is very conventional in the Western popular canon and therefore entirely in line with Salvi's own rather non-threatening canon. Quoting other musical pieces to create ironic effect has been used in classical music many times, most famously perhaps in Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, a piece about the battle between France and Russia in that year. The overture begins with a Russian Orthodox hymn, *Troparion of the Holy Cross*, develops into a Russian Folk dance, *U Vorot, Vorot*, and has those famous cannons blasting amidst a repeated theme from the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, indicating the Russians' military might and disdain for their foes. Finally, the Russian anthem *God Save the Czar* takes centre stage as the Russian troops win the day.¹³⁵ The piece was written in 1880 to mark the opening of a cathedral in Moscow which was built as commemoration of the Russian victory in the 1812 war with France. This has a resonance with the words of Attali, whose argument is that noise and music serves as a simulacrum of murder or death. His theories on the power of noise and music to predict social and economic development are mirrored most clearly in the Festival of the Ice, its music and the crowd's behaviour in my novel. Attali writes:

The entire history of tonal music, like that of classical political economy, amounts to an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world. In order to replace the lost ritualization of the channelization of violence with the spectacle of the absence of violence. In order to stamp upon the spectators the faith that there is a harmony in order. In order to etch in their minds the image of the

¹³⁵ The structure and content of *1812 Overture* is outlined well here and informed this section of my thesis: <<http://www.classicalmusiccity.com/search/article.php?vars=522/Brief-History-of-the-1812-Overture.html>> [accessed 28 February 2020].

ultimate social cohesion, achieved through commercial exchange and the progress of rational knowledge.¹³⁶

The Festival of the Ice is an expression on the part of the participants of their sexual, sartorial, and social sides as well as source material from which to satirise the island's structures, traditions and rituals. The violence is most obviously satirised through Mickey Pearce's fight as well as the sonic explosion that follows, but in general the festival is a form of deliberate loosening of the usual rituals to create and retain a social cohesion by this shared re-channelling of Attali's violence through noise. The noise in this case is comprised of the literal noises of the festival, as well as the resonator and the waves of chatter and laughter that emanate from any gathering of several thousand excited partygoers. There is also noise created by a sexual loosening of boundaries, including the uncertainty of possible impregnation; the consequent Festival Babies are traditionally ostracised.

Rhythm and stealth: Easter Eggs and sealed sections

Chance and aleatory reading possibilities are integral to the structure/un-structured narrative of *The Unfortunates*, but by contrast I have written several layers of jokes and puns which do require a specific reading and interpretation. These may appear as page noise – graphics, repeated rhythms, names in the school diary and newspaper – but they are actually constructed for additional narrative function and enhancements and as deliberate disruptions to the pace of reading. In one sense, this correlates with Attali's definition of composition as 'Doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes in order to reinsert communication into them. Inventing new codes, inventing the message at the same time as the language'.¹³⁷ That is, it is a joke between the writer and himself; this is one of the key concepts of the anticulturalist pronouncements of Leadbetter, and I have also embedded jokes to myself in the novel accordingly. But rather than just 'playing for one's own pleasure', which Attali says can 'create the conditions for new communication', there is an entanglement of codes that emerges from *1,000 Days* which relies on a different kind of communication between the book and the reader.

¹³⁶ Attali, p.46.

¹³⁷ Attali, p.134.

To return briefly to one of punk's tenets, which to me is that anyone can create anything for any reason they choose to, I have embedded a series of rhythmical jokes hidden in plain sight in the book which is based on Morse code; when a repeated rhythmical pattern is encountered, it spells out words. This is evident in the snare at the church; Ian quacking like a duck in Chapter Three; the beeps of a mobile phone (this one spells out 'T-E-X-T' for example); heartbeats; dogs barking; the court scribe's typing, and so on. Similarly, there are many numerological strands of hidden words, such as the scammers' bank account numbers corresponding to the letters of the alphabet and spelling out 'SCAM' and 'THIEF'; Ian's bank account number spelling 'ELVIS' in binary code; numberplates spelling out words; and probably most importantly the amount of Yottajoules that the Reson8R is on paper capable of putting out. It is, in fact, the total power of the sun's rays that hit the earth in a thousand days.¹³⁸ Laura's contract at school runs only for 999 days, which is alluded to in the text. Hence it is suggested that the former fact rather than the latter that is the explanation of the book's title. There are also many puns and jokes in the School Calendars, mostly translated into names in Spanish or Icelandic – for example, the entry on 10 June refers to Erre Dosdedos – which spells out, in Spanish, R2D2. Rannsó Frejudottir, the stewardess that Wilberforce yearns for, is a double pun: the first name Rannsó is a near-homophone for 'randy' and the surname translates as 'daughter of Freya'. Freya in Old Norse means 'the lady' and she is a goddess of love, fertility, magic and gold.¹³⁹ I also allude to texts and TV in our own world, including *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, *Molesworth* and Alan Partridge.¹⁴⁰ Punk, of course, is no stranger to reappropriation.¹⁴¹

These additional noises, jokes and musical elements as above evolve their own patterns (on the page, and as forward motion) as the book moves forward. This struck me as a punk (as noise) way to operate: at first things may appear unintelligible, even

¹³⁸ I am indebted to John McIntyre, head of physics at Oswestry School, for the calculation, as per his 2016 email to me: "*The energy arriving from the sun arriving on the face of Earth in 1,000 days is approximately 15 Yotta-Joules, or 15×10^{24} Joules, or 15 million million million million Joules or 15 million billion billion Joules (American billions), or 15,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 Joules. Per year it would be $\sim 5 \times 10^{24}$ Joules rather than 15×10^{24} Joules. The pedantic physicist in me would like to point out that 'power' by definition means 'per second', so You are asking for the energy delivered in 1,000 days, not the power output. Incidentally, the power incident on the face of the Earth from the sun is 1.7×10^{17} Joules per second, 170,000 million million Joules per second*".

¹³⁹ More about Freyja here: <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freyja>> [accessed 28 February 2020].

¹⁴⁰ My favourite joke in the book is the name of the judge; the punchline is delivered only in the Parade of the Ice, in a different language and without any further comment.

¹⁴¹ There could have been no Sex Pistols were it not for Steve Jones' 'reappropriation' of David Bowie's guitars.

confrontational, but there is an internal cohesion that is quickly revealed. These noises are, in fact, signals. Because they require specific interpretations, this enables me to have greater control of the extra- or meta-narrative. They are designed to emerge as concurrent strands of story in the mind of the reader who has unpicked them, and during the writing of *1,000 Days* these emerging forms and cross-connections enabled me to observe and interrogate the ways in which metafiction could apply across codes.

In information theory, Moles says that 'In artistic multiple messages, there is a sort of polyphony of all the partial messages'.¹⁴² This polyphony is saved from being cacophony by the intelligibility or otherwise of the signal. In *1,000 Days*, this polyphony revealed connections between codes – music, narrative, puns, Morse code – during the writing process.

Roland Barthes observes that a text 'is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original'.¹⁴³ If a text is a mosaic of ideas and quotes from the numerous books and texts that have preceded it, then a text can also contain elements from other media such as music, as well as Morse Code, graphical choices and so on. There are layers of narrative meaning available if these codes are first embedded then revealed – or not – to the reader. If they remain undecoded, they act as disruption, adding a sense of imbalance and uncertainty to the text on the page by virtue of their non-traditional formatting. They also can act in an entirely different manner, if the decoding keys are available. This, I contend, can actually give my novel an extended shelf-life, because with the ability to decode these 'noises' and return them to signal as narrative, the book can be re-read with additional narratives available. This, Hainge says, is the death of noise:

[When] integrated into a "musical" or organised structure in this way, noise itself becomes more acceptable, losing much of its oppositional nature and becoming then something else entirely.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Moles, p. 189.

¹⁴³ *Death of The Author*, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Hainge, p. 44.

There is scope therefore to play with these relationships of tension, organisation, noise, creativity and signal on the page and in my novel; what appears to be noise turns out to be nothing of the sort.

One idea is to provide a sealed section of pages to the end of the book, which would reveal these codes, giving the reader the key to decipher these additional elements. This concept shares some conceptual ground with B.S. Johnson's book in a box, which places at least some agency into the hands of the reader in terms of which elements are read in which order, as well as the idea of a recognisable signal emerging from noise. In my case, sealed section of pages after the main text could give an additional power to the reader. If the seal is broken, the enclosed pages reveal the signals embedded in the book's graphical noise. Indeed, the very presence of a sealed section can serve to imply that the content of the book is in some way not all it seems: this can introduce another layer of dislocation. It need not even be opened to serve this purpose.

This opens up possibilities of form and narrative control. The life of a book can be therefore extended by providing the reader with options for multiple reading experiences. These further readings would be informed by this additional context of the sealed section, the songbook, music, code keys and so on. The situationist (punk graphic) space of the page contains multiple layers of narrative, and the decoding of the noisy graphics et cetera allows for future readings of the same page with the noise neutralised. Of course, all these encoded elements can remain as noise; this noise is that which surrounds the experience of Ian and Laura, from which they are trying to identify their own (cultural) signals. This brings tension and insecurity to the book as much as it does to their relationship with each other, and to the island. The form of my novel reflects the uncertainty inherent in one way or another in all the main characters' search for a stable identity, and indeed the question whether such a thing exists. Punk as a movement questioned established cultural ideas in a similar way.¹⁴⁵

My novel is awash with cross-code narrative strands, metafictional elements and graphics which are intended to bring a creative tension to the novel. They also open the idea of a greater control of the narrative when they are decoded. Attali's concept that music is a

¹⁴⁵ Perhaps without necessarily having any answers in itself.

ritualised violence used for social cohesion is echoed in the Festival of the Ice, which fittingly ends with an explosion.

Conclusion

1,000 Days of Sun began as a personal exploration of culture, identity and dislocation and became in addition an exploration of form and technique. Through my process I discovered that I was exploring ideas of noise and playing with the tension created between noise and signal to reflect this instability of self.

By appropriating postmodernist and metafictional ideas, I have played with the boundaries of form, the boundaries between a book and its context, and the boundaries between my fictional world and the real one in which it was written. *1,000 Days* utilises the revelation of artifice as a narrative idea to represent and reflect the instability of day-to-day life through the viewpoints of multiple characters. I map the rhetoric of the image onto my text to reveal that multiple messages can also be present within a novel. I use graphics, size of font and typography to create effects on the page, also drawing on Futurist pronouncements. My musical quotations and choice of layouts, names and graphics are designed to bring the world outside the novel into the narrative as a metafictional device, which in conjunction with the reality effect engenders a richer novel. These ideas can also be used to disrupt the text and create a sense of impermanence or dislocation mirrored by the narrative.

Through my characters' online communications, specifically Ian Walsh, I explore the phenomenon of self-identity online and the potential issues when those online relationships may move offline. The project's initial autofictional basis informs Ian's multiple online identities as well as Leadbetter's paranoia about losing control of his message. Underpinning all these concepts is the idea that noise can be manipulated to encode layered meanings. This applies to the layout and graphic of the pages as much as it does to hidden narratives within the text.

1,000 Days of Sun is an exploration of noise and identity. It interrogates form while being bound by the fact it is a physical artifact itself. It creates tensions through the tangles of codes from different cultures and disciplines, and its form is designed to reflect the destabilised identity of the expatriate, the uncertainty of digital identity, generational tensions and, ultimately, the dislocated and unstable identity of an island and its inhabitants. My novel embraces noise as an initially disruptive element and then tames it for narrative layering, encouraging multiple readings through the potential of additional hidden

information. It does these things because it embraces a central punkish idea: do not ask 'why', ask 'why not?'

The bound book has endured for many centuries, with its basic technology unchanged for most of that time. We are however living in a world in which many of us spend a considerable amount of time in front of screens; not just the passive experience of television watching, but the demanding, beeping mobile phones in our pockets, or a tablet, or a laptop computer, or, indeed, a dedicated electronic reader such as a Kindle.

This presents an unprecedented opportunity to redefine the idea of a book, and *1,000 Days of Sun* is designed to facilitate multiple different delivery methods and forms. It has always been central to my novel that it works as a traditional format: you read, from Page One, and the story happens, and then it ends. The layered narratives, graphics and font choices add to this, but it is still recognisably a book of bound paper. Attempting to click, or press, the Internet links on the pages will not open up any hypertext, and accessing additional narrative layers is a matter of decoding the marks on the pages (or looking them up in a sealed section/key). As such it is familiar territory, albeit with postmodern elements.

An idea that I had when developing the novel was to deliver it in several ways. First, akin to B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, I envisaged a 'memory box'. It would be a physical item containing things like postcards from/to Ian and Laura; mockups of photos from the island, menus from the bars, a Salvi Island Songbook containing all the music in my novel plus much more, and, to make it narratively-strong, Hansard-like reports from the government's various sessions, court reports, korfbal match reports, newspapers, Leadbetter's essays and so on. This approach enables the reader to choose their situationist collage, and therefore create a story, or stories, based around the artefacts they choose. Indeed, I have at least 100,000 words of additional material that could easily be included, and additional items such as a coffee shop menu would be merely a matter of design. In this format, the content of that menu can also deliver information to the reader such as local fruits and herbs used in the description of the drinks, as well as being available as a space for the rhetoric of the image as per Barthes, and a situationist art space as per punk artwork. The box could also, of course, include *1,000 Days of Sun* – the novel – as one of the artefacts. It would be the reader's choice as to whether to read the book to bolster the narratives in the box, vice-versa, or neither.

Extrapolating this idea onto or into the digital realm is an obvious opportunity too. From a very early stage I had thought about creating a website accordingly, *Salvilsland.com*. It would be coherent visually and functionally with any official tourism department website, with countless links: to the newspaper archive, weather reports, a government website (including *Hansard* and *Court Reports*), a booking system for hotels (which would be 'down for maintenance'), pages about the school including the daily diary and so on. The website brings into play notions of narrative reliability (as it is passing itself off as 'real') plus the idea that the world of the book is actually extant in our own. Further, the website could also include a search box which would only actually react to certain prompts. For example, typing in 'Fist Hook' would bring up both the band's webpage, including demos, biography, and contacts; it would also bring up the Salvipedia.com entry for 'fist hook', which is a fishing glove I invented as part of the novel that didn't make it into the main text. All the emails would be valid (in reality, going to a central email address) and the potential for a hybridisation of book, website and performance is therefore created: somebody could actually reply to any emails from the public, thus creating new narrative content specific to each email query. The power of the Internet and the pull of the digital world combined with a plethora of convincing information is almost irresistible. In addition, some pages of the website could display graffiti noting that they have been hacked by Ripoblikan scammers, with this narrative strand including nifty programming that injected a faux-virus into the reader's computer, which would pretend to delete files from the desktop.¹⁴⁶ Of course, it would be doing nothing of the sort: always present on the site could be a disclaimer that this is all fictional. Digital fiction is a discipline that is designed from the outset to be read on a screen; it is a growing form that utilises the technologies of the web and apps to tell the story. Although *1,000 Days* was not specifically intended to be a digital fiction project, it would certainly be suitable starting material for that format. Indeed, it is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to take these 'book in a digital box' elements and use them as the starting concept for an actual computer game: perhaps you are Ian, and you have to find your way to playing Korfbal by increasing fitness, or perhaps you could be Leadbetter in a *Guitar Hero*-style musical game. Elements of the same story would still be there.

¹⁴⁶ I don't know how to do this, but I've had it done to me by 'friends'.

Another version of *1,000 Days of Sun* could simply be a digital version of the book; in this case the novel would be presented exactly as it is in the paper/bound version, but in addition all links and email addresses would actually work. In this format, these links and email addresses would be hosted on an unpublicised website somewhere, and they would access additional content as detailed above. This version, the e-reader version, would contain Easter Eggs in the same way that there are often hidden treats and extras for players of computer games when certain buttons are pressed on the controller.¹⁴⁷ This enables a word-of-mouth traction to bite. This has now crossed media: David Bowie's final album, 2016's *Blackstar*, released days after his untimely death, is a good example. Months later, fans discovered that exposing the gatefold vinyl version of the artwork to sunlight revealed a multitude of stars in its artwork.¹⁴⁸ Bowie fans are still searching through the album cover for more clues, and have so far discovered that putting the LP cover under black light turns it a pleasing midnight blue colour.¹⁴⁹ Bowie was well-known as playing with identity throughout his career, and it is no surprise that after his death 'he' (in collaboration with sleeve designer Jonathan Barnbrook) still 'plays' with chameleonic concepts.¹⁵⁰

It is not necessary to digitise the project in order to expand it outside of the pages of my novel as presented here. During the writing process I generated a lot more content than made it into the final novel. This was not for quality control reasons, but as drafts developed my practice-based approach led me into different topics, areas and ideas. I have kept these snippets and extraneous chapters, scenes and set-pieces, and I propose to use them as basis for the equivalent of a DVD's 'deleted scenes' pamphlet/additional pages within a 'deluxe' version of *1,000 Days*. This would form a simple companion piece. Extending this concept further is absolutely possible. Rather than have one polyphonic work, there can be a number of standalone novellas, which individually tell their own story. For example, Book 1

¹⁴⁷ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'An unexpected or undocumented message or feature hidden in a piece of software, intended as a joke or bonus. Also: a feature of this kind in film, music, and other forms of information or entertainment.' <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/258963?redirectedFrom=easter+egg#eid>> [accessed 13 November 2020]

¹⁴⁸ As reported by NME: <<https://www.nme.com/blogs/nme-blogs/this-is-what-happens-when-you-leave-david-bowies-blackstar-in-the-sun-8679>> [accessed 13 November 2020]

¹⁴⁹ <<https://www.nme.com/news/music/1862514-1862514>> and <<https://www.nme.com/news/music/david-bowie-blackstar-vinyl-artwork-design-secrets-1853862>> [both accessed 13 November 2020]

¹⁵⁰ A philosophical look at questions of identity and existence is beyond the scope of this thesis, but for further reading try Anthony Paul Shooman, *The Metaphysics of Religious Belief* (London: Avebury, 1990), particularly Chapter Two.

would be Ian and Laura's year on the island, tracking their problems, triumphs, and the offer of the job back home. This would be written entirely from Ian and Laura's points of view, and elements such as the growing tension up north would only feature through things like the newspaper, or second-hand through other characters. Similarly, Book 2 could take the same time period but concentrate only on Wilberforce's life in government, his efforts to reconcile statesmanship and globalism with family life and the minutiae of a small community. Book 3 would be Leadbetter's; his band, his theories, his sexuality, generational politics and so on. Mickey Pearce is an enigma in the main text, to an extent, but Book 4 could reveal his story. Similarly, Weegie/W.G. Rutherford has a story only obliquely covered in the main book. Then there's the Hansard reports, the newspaper archive, korfbal reports, songbooks and more. Rather than a 'book in a box', this series of separately published but very much linked novellas would go together to re-create an expanded version of *1,000 Days* (the original text). The polyphony would only be found after having read some, or all, of the book series; but each could stand alone on its own merits. The same is true for the songs themselves: they could, and some have been, recorded and presented as original work. Although I personally wrote them all, the names on the CD covers may be 'Fist Hook' or a different composer, or traditional found recordings. I would argue that the experience of listening, rather than knowing who wrote the songs, is paramount.

My novel is a collection of concurrent stories that sometimes overlap; it has a polyphony to it that enables a wider appreciation of the island than one or two voices could; it was designed from the outset to have multimedia/postmodern elements, but that these should not impinge on the narrative excessively; it has also become the starting point for the discussion of what a story, or stories, can do in our digital age. The ideas presented in this conclusion show that multiple versions of a book are now not just possible, but that technology, storytelling and culture demand it be so.

The Sealed Section

(draft example)

Author's note: This section contains additional, and possibly unwanted, narrative information. It is not necessary to open this section to read the book – Joe.

There are multiple layers of information in the novel, and you can find some of them by reference here:

Morse Code features throughout *1000 Days*:

- The snare in the Church in Chapter Two.
- The duck quacks by Ian in Chapter Three.
- The beeps of the phone in Chapter Seven.
- The circadian and the heartbeats in Chapter Ten.
- The scribe's typing in Chapter Fifteen.
- The wasps' buzzing in Chapter Eighteen.
- The *haha* section in Chapter Twenty-One.
- The beeps of the phone in the Postscript.

Musical words are spelt out by the actual notes on the stave:

- The carousel jingle in Chapter One.
- The dating site jingle in Chapter Seventeen and elsewhere.
- Leadbetter's bassline in Chapter Twenty.
- Elsewhere, the music mirrors the action (Jupiter Ace, the rising and falling of waves; the descending 'yawn' of the Nitequell jingle).

Others (selected hints)

- The account number in Chapter Four is binary and spells out a word.
- The court filing number in Chapter Eleven is Elvis Presley's GI number.
- The numberplates of Laura and Dulisia in Chapter Eleven relate to the letters of the alphabet where A=1.
- The account numbers of the scammers in Chapter Thirteen relate to the letters of the alphabet where A=1
- In the calendar, translate the names of the speakers from either Icelandic or Spanish to find some puns and jokes.

- In the school calendar sections, some of the speakers' names are anagrams of the author's name.
- Carina and Rannsy often use Icelandic (and Faroese) proverbs in their speech.
- The judge's name is the feed line to an old joke that has its punchline in Chapter Twenty-Four.
- Look for references to death in Chapter One; Interlude; Chapter Two; Chapter Three; Chapter Seven; Chapter Ten; Chapter Thirteen; Chapter Fifteen; Interlude; Chapter Seventeen; Chapter Eighteen; Chapter Twenty; Chapter Twenty-One; Chapter Twenty-Three; Chapter Twenty-Four; Postscript.
- Ian has mild synaesthesia.
- The names of various characters are references to either real people or fictional characters.
- The newspaper buries the lede constantly by putting irrelevant information at the top and the actual story either halfway down an article or in a tiny paragraph at the end.
- The title of the novel is not as it might first appear. See Chapters Eleven, Twenty-One and Twenty-Four.

Metafiction - selected references

- Prologue: *Brass Eye* (TV show); *1984* by George Orwell..
- Chapter Two: 'Bonkers' by Dizze Rascal.
- Chapter Three: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*; *Jupiter Ace computer*; *Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy*; 'I am the Walrus' by the Beatles.
- Chapter Four: *Molesworth* books by Geoffrey Willans; songs by the author's old band.
- Chapter Five: *Utopia* by Thomas More.
- Chapter Six: *Dylan Thomas*.
- Chapter Seven: *Only Fools and Horses*; *The Simpsons*; *Spinal Tap*; *Richard Branson/Virgin Trains*; *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*.
- Chapter Nine: *1984* by George Orwell.

- Chapter Thirteen: *Hitchhikers' Guide; Romeo and Juliet*.
- Chapter Fifteen: *Don't Stop the Carnival*.
- Chapter Seventeen: *Star Wars; Green Day; Anchorman (movie)*.
- Chapter Twenty: *Friedrich Nietzsche*.
- Chapter Twenty-Two: *Names are Norse Gods and Che Guevara*.
- Chapter Twenty-Three: *Rockstar Ate My Hamster (computer game); 27b/6 (website)*.
- Throughout: references to the author's bands and his friends' bands. These are an anticulturalist statement – arguably, nobody else knows or cares where or what they are. You might guess at the identity of the school librarian, though.

Appendix II: Deleted Scenes

It is said that there are only a finite number of stories in the world. Similarities in plot points or different texts are therefore somewhat inevitable. Whilst being wary always of plagiarism, it is impossible to create something entirely in isolation, unless, presumably, the author has never read another book, watched a movie, had any input from culture at all.

That said, it isn't particularly helpful when these coincidences manifest themselves. During the writing of *A Thousand Days of Sun*, there were three significant instances of this irritating coincidence which necessitated either rewrites or subsequent acknowledgement. The first was the aforementioned Horne Section spelled-out-words tune, and the other two were pure coincidence although not less annoying for that.

1. Naming the island

In initial drafts the islands at the heart of the novel were called Mercy Island, Mercy Fair and Mercy Bach. I liked the way that the names looked on the page, as well as the naïve welcome and religious connotations of the word *mercy*.¹⁵¹ I felt it said something about the traditions of the islands as a welcoming, forgiving community.

There was no mercy to be had in the world of entertainment, however. In June 2018, whilst enjoying the rather fine space opera movie *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, my attention was jarred and the suspension of cinematic disbelief entirely popped when a character called Qi'Ra said, 'You'll be hard pushed to find that anywhere outside an Imperial vault. Scarif. **Maybe Mercy Island**'.¹⁵² (My emboldening). This coincidence, in a throwaway line about fuel, was enough to imbue the location of the novel with unwanted connotations – the *Star Wars* universe is vast, its fanbase equally so.¹⁵³ After some thought, I renamed the islands Salvi; according to *Dictionary of American Family Names* this is from a short form of the personal

¹⁵¹ Several examples can be found here: <<https://activechristianity.org/38-verses-mercy-compassion>> [accessed 7 April 2019].

¹⁵² As transcribed by <https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Mercy_Island> [accessed 7 April 2019] from the movie *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, Lucasfilm/Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures (2018).

¹⁵³ A good site for more on this is <<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-star-wars-celebration-cosplay-fandom-20190417-story.html>> [accessed 4 July 2019] That said, as *Star Wars* is set a long time ago in a galaxy far away, there's a good chance it's out of copyright so fair game.

name Diotisalvi ('God save you'). I was happy with this change, which performed a similar role to my initial choice of Mercy.¹⁵⁴

2. Everybody hertz

At concert pitch, the reference note A above middle C is tuned to 440 Hertz (cycles per second), which is a convenient standard tuning for most instruments in an orchestra, as the International Standard confirmed at a conference in 1938: 'Although it is probable that the extreme range of variation of the pitch of orchestras the world over does not exceed a semitone, it was scarcely necessary to stress the increased comfort and assurance of a standardized pitch to singers and to players of concertos for stringed instruments'.¹⁵⁵ Leadbetter and Doogie's resonator was originally to be based around a dubious bit of pseudo-science around tuning frequencies of musical instruments. It may shock the reader to note that online there are numerous conspiracy sites on the Internet. One favourite subject of certain audio-attuned sites thereof is that 432Hz is somehow a more 'natural' standard tuning. For example, *Attuned Vibrations* puts it thus (sans any citations whatsoever):

To understand the healing power behind 432Hz, you must first learn about another frequency, 8Hz. It is said that 8Hz is the fundamental "beat" of the planet [...] a global electromagnetic resonance, which has its origin in electrical discharges of lightning within the cavity existing between the Earth's surface and the ionosphere [...] The "ordinary" thought waves created by the human brain range from 14Hz to 40Hz. [...] If the two hemispheres of our brain are synchronized with each other at 8Hz, they work more harmoniously and with a maximum flow of information. In other words, the frequency of 8Hz seems to be the key to the full and sovereign activation potential of our brain. 8Hz is also the frequency of the double helix in DNA replication. Melatonin and Pinoline work on the DNA, inducing an 8Hz signal to

¹⁵⁴ *Dictionary of American Family Names*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013).

¹⁵⁵ Dr. G. W. C. Kaye, 'International Standard of Concert Pitch', in *Nature* No. 3630 (1939) p.905. <<https://www.nature.com/articles/143905a0.pdf>> [accessed 7 March 2019].

enable mitosis and DNA replication. A form of body temperature superconductivity is evident in this process.¹⁵⁶

Ludicrous, perhaps, but certainly ripe for use within a novel. Leadbetter and Doogie's resonator was originally written to be tuned to exactly the series of Hertz noted above, and to crack open the world in some sense at the climax of the novel. The idea that music has the power to, as Congreve has it, 'soothe the savage breast'¹⁵⁷ is resonant in itself,¹⁵⁸ as Yuhwen Wang explains: 'Both the ancient Chinese and Greeks from around the fifth century B.C. to around third century A.D. recognized the immense impact that music has on the development of one's personality' [...]¹⁵⁹ Two thousand, five-hundred years ago, then, music was considered to be a very important tool to influence mood amongst the populace. Wang continues: 'Plato chose to describe music's power over the *ethos* [...] arguing that gracelessness, evil rhythm, and disharmony in music are associated with evil temper' [...]¹⁶⁰ It does not take a great leap of logic to reach the idea that certain frequencies can heal, or that thought waves can be synchronised somehow with a vibration of the earth. Barmy, but very useful narratively. I was both pleased and frustrated to note that author Nicola Barker's 2017 book, *H(A)PPY*, utilized the 432Hz idea.¹⁶¹ I felt her usage was too similar to my draft or at least was a metafictional/intertextual element I did not want to introduce, and after some thought altered my work to instead make the Reson8r based on acoustic levitation.¹⁶² This is a well-studied phenomenon in the laboratory and, pleasingly, also has some faux-science of its own, namely that of Tibetan Monks levitating enormous stones by a certain

¹⁵⁶ Uncredited author, 'The Secret Behind 432Hz tuning', in *Attuned Vibrations* (2019) <<https://attunedvibrations.com/432hz-healing/>> [accessed 7 April 2019].

¹⁵⁷ William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride*, Act I, Scene I (1697) Often this is misquoted in two ways: attributed to Shakespeare, and the 'breast' replaced by 'beast'.

¹⁵⁸ *Dictionary of American Family Names*.

¹⁵⁹ Yuhwen Wang, 'The Ethical Power of Music: Ancient Greek and Chinese Thoughts', in *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2004) pp. 89-104.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 91. Wang is referring largely to Plato's *The Republic* here. My mooted sequel to *1000 Days* deals in part with the possibilities of sonic weaponry/healing, both of which are foregrounded in and by Doogie and Weegie's growing partnership.

¹⁶¹ Review: 'H(A)PPY by Nicola Barker – everybody Hertz', in *Financial Times* (21 July 2017) <<https://www.ft.com/content/3a758f6e-67de-11e7-9a66-93fb352ba1fe>> [accessed 4 July 2019].

¹⁶² Briefly, this uses vibrations and high sound pressure to levitate objects, for example: Sadayuki Ueha, 'Non-contact transportation using near-field acoustic levitation', in *Ultrasonics* Vol. 38, Issues 1-8 (2000) pp. 26-32. <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0041624X99000529>> [accessed 4 July 2019].

method of 'sonic generation'.¹⁶³ Whilst there is an enormous amount of nonsense written about acoustic levitation, it remains an actual possibility, according to science publication *CNET*:

Acoustic levitation is a fascinating application of sound technology. In 1987, NASA was using it to perform anti-gravity experiments, and in 2006, Chinese scientists used it to levitate small animals. There have been theories that the technology was used to levitate the stones to create Stonehenge and build pyramids (although, we take these theories with a large grain of salt), and a 1939 article in a German magazine describes Tibetan monks levitating stones using sound.¹⁶⁴

This was absolutely in line with what Lead and Doogie would be working on and fitted very nicely into the 432Hz-shaped gap in *1000 Days* that had been created by the release of Barker's book.¹⁶⁵

If there truly are no new stories under the sun, it seems that there are certain versions of the same tales that reappear when culture is amenable.¹⁶⁶ Luckily, there are plenty of angles from which to approach them.

¹⁶³ My main source was this: Bruce Cathie, 'Acoustic Levitation of Stones' <https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/antigravityworldgrid/ciencia_antigravityworldgrid08.htm> [accessed 4 July 2019].

¹⁶⁴ Michelle Starr, 'Acoustic levitation is science wizardry at its best' in *c/net* (16 September 2012) ,<https://www.cnet.com/news/acoustic-levitation-is-science-wizardry-at-its-best/>> [accessed 4 July 2019].

¹⁶⁵ I must admit that I felt a little annoyed with myself that I'd not written quicker and gotten my work out somehow first, but such is life.

¹⁶⁶ When writing this essay, I also came across an e-book which had as a central part of its plot the Vikings staying in Vinland, rather than unsuccessfully colonising there. I did not buy the book, and I don't think I really ever want to read it.

Appendix III: Scans and Examples

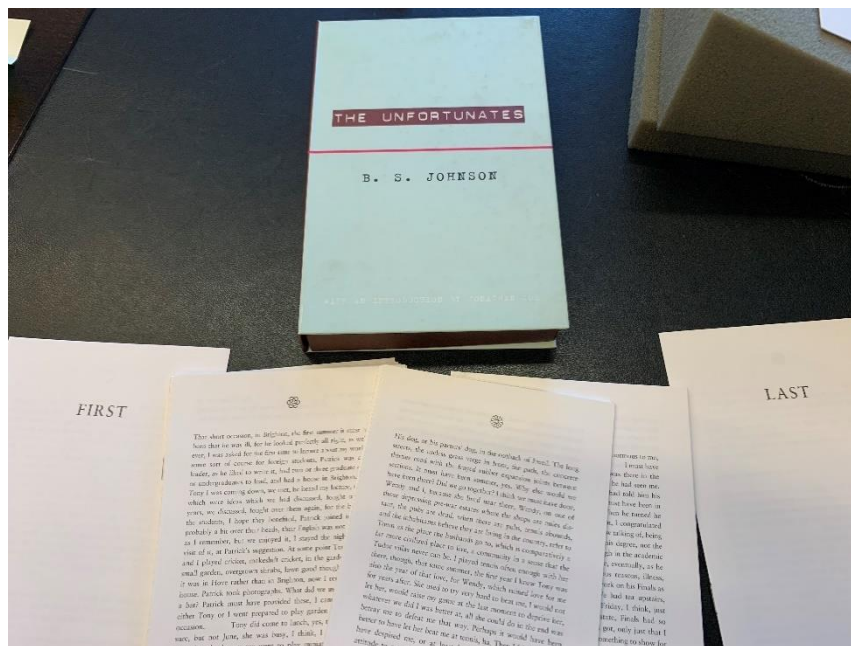


Fig. 1: B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, Picador 1999. From <http://digitalbookhistory.com/culturesofthebook/Chapters> [Accessed 26 February 2020].

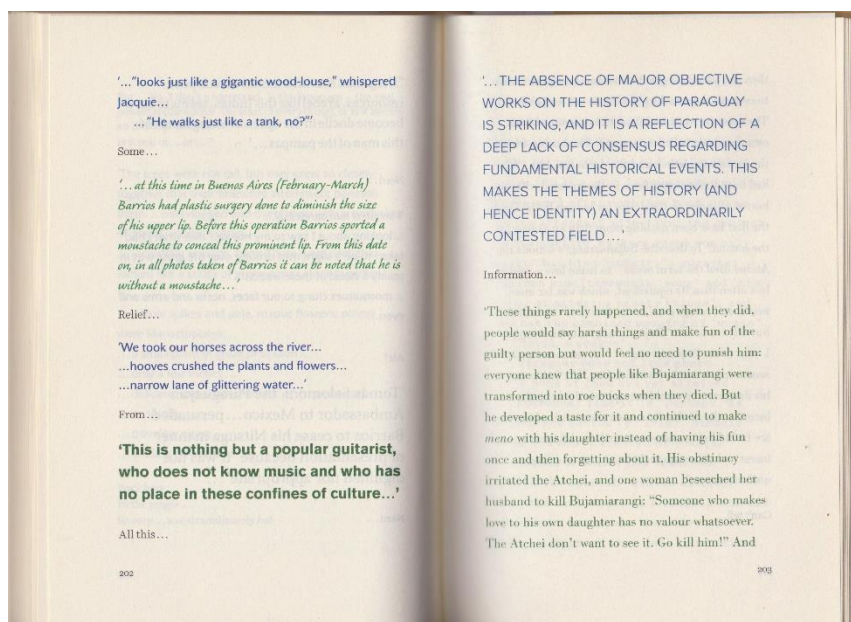


Fig 2: Nicola Barker, *H(A)PPY*, William Heinemann, 2017. Original scan.

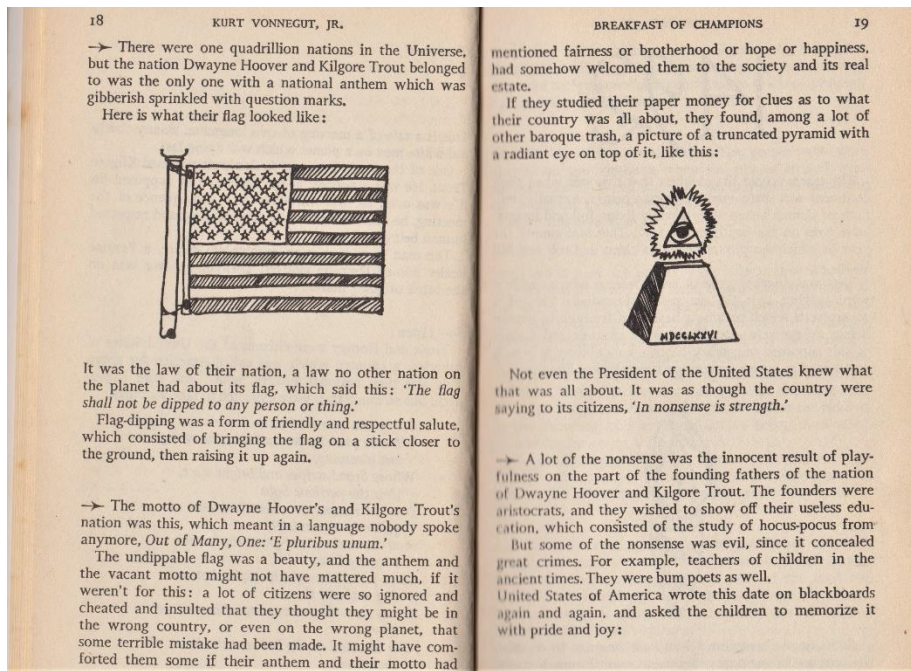


Fig. 3: Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Breakfast of Champions*. Original scan from Grafton Books edition, 1987 reprint.

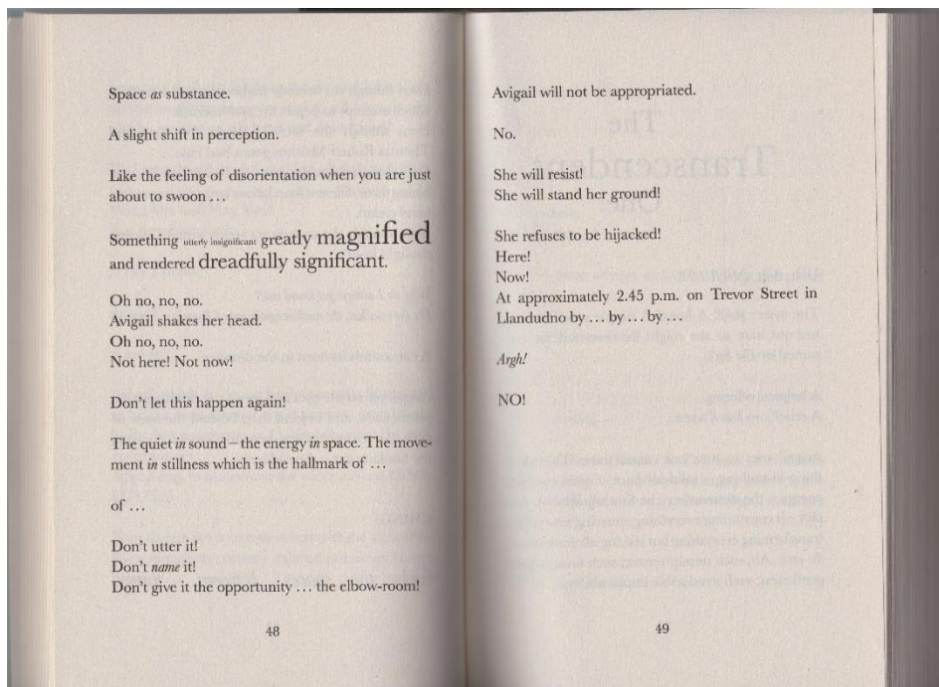


Fig 4: Nicola Barker, *I Am Sovereign*, William Heinemann, 2019. Original scan.

GAY HANKY CODES

The Hanky Code is a traditional form of signalling to others what your sexual preferences and interests are. Gay men used this code to communicate with each other in the noisy and distracting environment of gay bars. Although not as widely used these days, it is still a worthwhile resource and is, among those who know, a great conversation starter.

COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
BLACK	heavy SM top	heavy SM bottom
GREY	bondage top	fit to be tied!
BLUE, Light	wants head	cockwanker
BLUE, Robert's Egg	elvis	anything but drag
BLUE, Medium	top	topper
BLUE, Navy	fucker (top)	fucker (bottom)
BLUE, Airforce	pilot flight attendant	likes flyboys
BLUE, Light w/WHITE Stripes	tailor	lookin' for salty seamen
BLUE, Teal	suck & ball torture	suck & ball torture
RED	hot to trot	hot to trot
MAGENTA	gay	gay
RED, Dark	dominant top	dominant bottom
PINK, Light	dildo fucker	dildo fuckee
PINK, Dark	tit torturer	tit torturee
MAUVE	into sexual masochism	sex without fluids
MAGENTA	suck my juice	asshole fuck
PURPLE	gaytop	gaytop
LAVENDER	likes drag queens	drag queen
YELLOW	gross WS	gross WS
YELLOW, Pale	spits	dick crazy
MUSTARD	long S*	wants S*
GOLD	rvo looking for one	one looking for two
ORANGE	anything anytime	nothing now (not cruising)
APRICOT	rvo tons o' fun	chubby chaser
CORAL	suck my toes	shrimper (sucks toes)
RUST	a cowboy	a cowboy's horse
PURPLE, Dark	gambler	gambler
GREEN, Kelly	hater (for rvo)	john (looking to hvy)
GREEN, Hunter	hater	alphan hvy looking for daddy
OLIVE DRAB	military top	military bottom

Fig. 5: Example of Handkerchief Codes. Screenshot from

<https://user.xmission.com/~trevin/hanky.html> [Accessed 26 February 2020].

>Morse Code

Posted on April 17, 2010

>Morse Code was invented by Samuel Morse for use over telegraph lines in 1835. The code uses a series of dashes and dots to represent letters of the alphabet. However, morse code can be sent using flash lights, whistles, horns, the tapping of stone on stone, a laser light reflected on an object or even by flag. When sending Morse Code by flag, a flag swung to the right represents a dot, to the left a dash. This is a really cool way to send secret messages and to communicate over distance without a phone or walkie talkie. Below is the alphabetic and numeric key for Morse Code.

A •—	J •— — —	S •••
B —•••	K —• —	T —
C —• —•	L • —••	U •• —
D —••	M — —	V ••• —
E •	N • —	W • — —
F ••• —	O — — —	X —•• —
G — —•	P —• —•	Y —• —
H —••••	Q —• — —	Z — —••
I ••	R •• —	

1 • — — — —	6 —••••
2 •• — — —	7 — —•••
3 ••• — —	8 — — —••
4 •••• —	9 — — — —•
5 •••••	0 — — — — —

Fig. 6: Morse Code. Screenshot from

<https://kidavalanche.wordpress.com/2010/04/17/morse-code- - - - - />

[Accessed 26 February 2020].



Fig. 7: Various versions of Sex Pistols artwork, plus Buzzcocks which crept in there, showing splendid true punk spirit. Screenshot from

<https://duckduckgo.com/?q=sex+pistols+artwork&t=brave&iax=images&ia=images>

[accessed 02 March 2020].



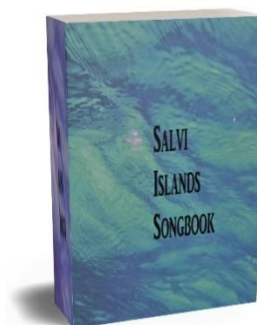
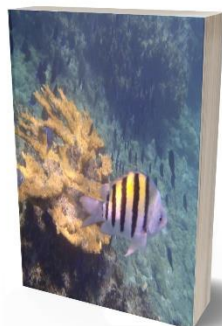
Fig. 8: Still from McDonald's advertisement, 2017. Punk appropriation by the establishment: culture is never static. Ad at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5rnTXTmzio> –

Soundtrack is 'What Do I Get' by Buzzcocks, showing true capitalist running dog spirit.

[Accessed 02 March 2020].

Appendix IV: Graphic examples / mock-ups for potential *1000 Days of Sun* inclusion

Salvi Islands Songbook: Cover mock-ups.



Font: AR Julian (MS Word).

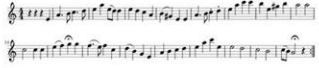
Pics: Suzanne Shooman (Cayman Islands, 2010).

Filter: Neo (MS Photos).

Cover generator: <https://diybookcovers.com/3Dmock-ups/#> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

Salvi Islands Songbook: Interior pages mock-ups, two format styles.

Country Member
Trad. Salvi Island, c.1700




From sea to shining sea i roam
The fire of my love for my land
From January til December
Will burn til life's last ember
And all the while i say i am
My brothers will all understand
I am a country member
To be a country member

Oh,
Country, O Salvi!
These bounteous seas of fish and fry
I love thee so tender
Sustain us in all weather
Of years may pass but one thing lasts
I vow to thee, to always be
I am a country member
To be a country member

My darling, though i'm far away
In time, my love, i'll fade away
From beauty and your splendour
My ashes to dust rendered
I think of you each glorious day
So may my comrades sing of me:
You are a country member
He was a country member

Nitequell
H.O. Moss



Sleep soft and swell with Nitequell
Goodbye to worry with Nitequell
Stay warm and well with Nitequell
Life's cotton wool with Nitequell
We love your soul at Nitequell
We'll do it all at Nitequell
You're ours, we're yours at Nitequell
Don't think, just sink with Nitequell
No fears, no tears with Nitequell
No cry, no sigh, just Nitequell
Sah, brant! No pain, just Nitequell
Your door to more, that's Nitequell
No fuss, just us at Nitequell
The world's unfurled with Nitequell
Slow down, stay now with Nitequell
The night's a singe with Nitequell

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Lyrics and music by Joe Shooman, transcribed using MuseScore and pics edited in MS Paint/MS Word.

Fist Hook Poster/CD Cover Art mockup (spelling mistake deliberate)



Images:

Barracuda: <http://bestanimalfacts.com/tag/barracuda-2/> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

Monk: <http://illuposolitario.deviantart.com/art/evil-monk-132401111> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

Fonts: Arial Bold, 'Iron Maiden' (unofficial, source unknown), unknown.

Sealed Section Mockup:



From <http://www.agilelaw.com/wp-content/uploads/image2.jpg> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV: Deleted first person perspective (excerpt).

—Name Speaker the Honourable Mr. Jenkins-Ross appears not to be quite with us today

—Mr. Jenkins-Ross?

Yes indeed ~~am I~~ and further I wholeheartedly disagree with, uh, ~~inferessence~~ the honourable member for East Ridge is implying in interfering with the, uh inherent instability of the point he has, ~~as usual~~, missed.

—Let us then put it to the vote. Any abstentions?

Yes I intend to abstain of disgrace at the, uh, dismissive delinquency of the dreamer in the dark over there who has as usual, uh, extremely ended his extraneousness.

—Let the record show that the Honourable Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Keeper of the Ice, has abstained. In the vote therefore for an early break for refreshments, all in ~~ayayay~~ say aye:

—

—And all against say nay:

—

—So the motion is carried. All rise.

OI
BO
ng
ba
ng
BI

—What are you on today ~~Barack~~?

[[[The indescribably beautiful ~~Barack~~ ~~Barack~~ enter, naked except for a Solvi Islands flag strategically placed over certain areas. She ~~dances~~ the old songs with hips ~~as~~ ~~Barack~~ worth a thousand bibles over a thousand years. When she ~~speak~~ it with a tinkle like Tiny Waterfall and as smooth as a caress from a baby ~~Barack~~ Ghost on all are sighing with sheer love and wonder at the beauty of the form of the ~~Barack~~]]]

— Oh my Lord Chief Financial Officer ~~Barack~~ Barack you really are making my coffers overflow, let me help you with that enormous surplus you have just discovered..

[[[The traitorous ~~Barack~~ harbinger of ~~Barack~~ known as bloody ~~Barack~~ Barack is completely smitten by the vision in front of him and thus the mighty saviour of his country, Wilberforce Jenkins-Ross IV, Future Legend of the Islands, ~~Barack~~ magician and mah-jangg expert, exits stage left without handing over any power over progressive revenue regimes from the reserve of the enhancement of financial inflow, vis-à-vis localized individual automatic ~~Barack~~. ~~Barack~~ ~~Barack~~ is sad to see the genius leaving but she knows he has vital important work to do and must always serve his country with self-~~Barack~~ always at his broken heart]]]

Appendix V: Mockup of CD promo cover and link to songs



1: iAi, Ripoblika (1920)

*Field recording believed to be of original
songwriter Jose Zapatero. Courtesy of El
Instituto de Musica Populare, Ripoblika.*

2: Mercy Mead (1914)

*From the Ash Moon Remembrance Society's
Archive of Ash Moon's Music and Ash Moon
Singing Ash Moon's Music.*

**THIS CD IS THE EXCLUSIVE
COPYRIGHT AND PROPERTY
OF JACKSON WAZZ I.O.P.M.
2009 AND MAY NOT BE
BROADCAST OR SHARED BY
ANY MEANS INCLUDING
COMPUTER OR CAMEL.**

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
DEMONSTRATION ONLY.

FULL TRACKLISTING TO FOLLOW

EMAIL:
JACKSONWAZZ@SALVI.SALVI

Working link to demo tracks (clickable in this pdf version of the thesis):

<https://soundcloud.com/user-150724200/sets/songs-of-salvi-and-ripoblika/s-wgHBNSeZgbu>

Photo: Captain Crosby, Cayman Islands, 2010 by Joe Shooman

Design/Mockup: Joe Shooman via canva.com

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Didn't it?

- **Joseph Shooman, June 2020**