

Prolegomenon

Black, out, in, my, left, eye. Right, arm, falls, useless.

Kept, saying, huh? &, huh? &, huh?

Another, slight, attack, but, I'm, ok.

&, she, wants, him, (S,t,a,t,i,c), to, sing,

From, out, of, a, broken-backed, falling, apart, book, (hey, fuck, you, S,t,a,t,i,c!)

The, sad, music, of, her, ear, rings, on, the, pillow,

All, one, night,

words destined for adornment

&, he, begins:

[Eye], got, into, town, about, quarter, past, four. It, was, summer. [Eye]'m, lying, about, e,v,e,r,y,t,h,i,n,g. It, was, winter, and, [Eye], got, into, town, at, a, time, [Eye], cannot, remember. [Eye], signed, in, at, the, Y., M., C., A., [Eye], rented, a, room. [Eye], needed, a, bath. That, cross-country, bus, ride, was, enough, to, rattle, the, stones, from, the, strongest, kidneys. [Eye], got, into, town, when, [Eye], wanted, to, and, [Eye], continued, to, lie, to, everyone, [Eye], met. [Eye], stank, of, cross-country, bus-rides, of, cigarette-lit, conversations, with, women, from, distant, islands, who, asked, me, questions, about, how, things, are, done, and, not, done, by, clean, white, boys, in, the, South. [Eye], didn't, care. It, was, the, beginning, of, a, lie, [Eye], continue, to, utter, to, the, great, ear-shaped, spool, in, the, winding, and, unwinding, sky. [Eye], needed, a, shave. [Eye], unpacked, my, cardboard, suitcase, in, my, room. ([Eye], made, sure, that, [Eye], locked, the, door.) [Eye], unlocked, the, door, and, crept, down, the, hall, (smelled, of, cheap, disinfectant, and, sperm,) to, the, bathroom, unlocked, the, bathroom, door, and, saw, a, young, man, with, boils, around, his, mouth, squeezing, out, the, core, of, a, particularly, large, one. His, name, was, Chico, he, said, and, did, [Eye], have, any, spare, cash. [Eye], dry-shaved, my, face, with, a, cake, of, soap, (pink), that, was, given, to, me,

at, the, door. No, [Eye], didn't. [Eye], lathered, my, face, with, the, soap, and, then, [Eye], pulled, the, razor, down, and, around, as, [Eye], looked, at, myself, and, at, Chico, in, the, wall-size, mirror. Chico, held, a, bit, of, tissue, paper, to, his, bleeding, face. He, needed, money, he, said. [Eye], didn't, have, a, cent, [Eye], said. "That's, cool," said, Chico, "but, if, you, need, a, good, time, [Eye], can, show, you, where, to, have, one, since, you, are, new, in, this, town, ([Eye], can, tell), and, you, may, get, lonely. "OK," [Eye], said, "but, [Eye], don't, have, any, money, and, nobody, has, any, good, time, without, money." "You're, right," said, Chico. "What, room, are, you, in?" "444," [Eye], lied. [Eye], left. [Eye], was, feeling, my, throat, and, felt, the, bumps, rise. Razor, burn. Is, that, what, this, town, does, to, you? [Eye], thought.

What, do, we, know? Not, to, be, free, god, damn, you, S,t,a,t,i,c,
Is, to, take, a, turn, in, the, lobster-headed, garden,
Searching, for, the, sea,
I'm, searching, for, the, sea, because, I, read,
It, in, a, c,o,m,i,c, book, (pow!)—ok?
Don't, ask, me, to, be, hip, S,t,a,t,i,c. I've, got, like, you, know,
A,s,e,x,u,a,l, cosmetics, breakdance, brains, gonna, snap,
You, in, 2, gonna, strip,
Bring, out, my, big, ding, dong, show,
You, my, little, clit,
This, ribbon, is, a, city, on, the, east, coast, of, the, USA, S,t,a,t,i,c,
It, is, naughty, and, fey,
I'm, bankin', on, your, kinda, drugs,
Cap, guns, are, for, revolutionaries,
Real, guns, are, for, real, Amuricans,
Poetry, guns, are, for, novelists,
Novel, guns, are, for, nomads,

This is my bamboo diving bell and outside the pressures of another tongue, another culture, are well-nigh unendurable for one who has found these parentheses to inhabit, this two-mat prison. I keep the curtains drawn and I move, naked, from room to room. My heart spasms like some burrowing animal under the fingers of my left hand, as it too seeks an exit from this 46 year old body, locked up, grizzled, unwashed, and silent as a June day passes by beyond the walls. The doctor says I must lose weight, exercise, eat better. I shake my head yes, yes, yes. I promise my mermaid wife, my small son who is part me and part that other world that I can hear drilling and hammering and selling noodles and apples from carts drawn by old women in crazy toed-boots.

Someone knocks at the door, rings the door bell. Yes, there's gravity out there, and light and its absence. There's oxygen rearranging the curtains. Come tomorrow I will dress in suit and tie and head for the train to take me where all is insincerity and miscommunication and indirection and equivocation. Where all unravels in stares and silences, hauteur and aloofness. Even to my own "kind" I have become a new animal. Something neither A nor B. A semi-gilled thing with translucent skin whose bones have taken on the contours of its cage. Now they're knocking at the door and rattling the door knob.

I was sitting in a Fell's Point crab house thinking of Thomas Hardy while absent-mindedly paging through a copy of the 1905 reprint of *The Black Riders and Other Lines* by the "boy-genius" Stephen Crane, which I was lucky enough to find at the Enoch Pratt Library's bargain table book sale one Saturday c. early 1980, when a jealous husband mistook me for his wife's lover and attacked me with a letter-opener he'd bought (the police later found out) on a whim at a Stucky's in Gettysburg, PA. during one of his last "happy" afternoons in the presence of his suspected cheating spouse. Luckily, the aggrieved husband was of a "gracile" build and was none-too-handy with the letter opener. As he shouted some garbled words of abuse in my direction, I immediately arose and plucked up a wooden crab mallet, tore off my bib, and prepared to throw the wet remains of the crabs that I had just consumed into the

man's face, and then bop him on either temple as he fell, in my best imitation of the biblical heroine Jael--less the spike. Among the screams of the diners the frenzied husband lunged at me and managed to jab the point of the letter opener into the plain cloth cover of Stephen Crane's pioneering poems, which I held in my left hand, in a happily successful attempt to deflect the blow from my heart.

Need, grace. Need, agility. Need, Mob, Town, panache, u, listening, S,t,a,t,i,c?
Need, ability, to, get, along, with, fellow, man,—i.e., “fellow, feeling” —
I, said, I, needed, grace, Static. Never, had, it.
Never, had, the, ability, to, get, along, with, anyone.
Need, ability, but, never, had, the, knack.
Not, a, good, dancer, either. Move, over, Static.
I've, got, to, take, one, step, toward, you,
Or, away, from, you. Or, whatever.
God, damn, you, Static. God, damn, you, if, you, please!
I, am, the, lost, king, the, d,i,s,p,o,s,s,e,s,s,e,d,
My, only, star, is, etc., Static,

I recall at exactly that moment wondering what damage had occurred to the text--funny how one's mind works in an "emergency situation"--before I plucked a tin of "Old Bay Seasoning" quite literally "from out of the blue"--(yes, the crab house sported a battery of blue "cool ray" bulbs to soften the harsher florescent lighting that spilled in from the adjoining kitchen)--thrown to me by a young waiter whom I had been tipping heavily that evening in spasms of cool Skinnerianism. In a

thrice I popped off the lid with my thumb and lashed the powder into my attacker's eyes. He screamed and collapsed on the table among the crab shells, wet newspapers--largely the old *News American* sports pages, if I recall correctly--and partially imbibed, brown cathedral glass "National Bo" bottles. By this time the police had been called and one powerfully muscled Polish gentleman had wrenched the letter opener from the jealous husband's hand while he wallowed, pitifully weeping, on the floor.

Almost at the same moment a few of the other diners had secured the man's surprisingly frail wrists with a "clip-on" tie that one of them had been sporting--much to the amusement of his date. Of course I denied being the Lothario as repeatedly described in the husband's sniveling accusations to the police, and they nodded in perfect agreement, (all heads bobbing together) noting that though I had beer on my breath, I passed every test of sobriety they subtly appraised me by, and, in addition, I appeared to one and all to be a morally upright, God-fearing, tax-paying, citizen of the LARGER BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON AREA. The sergeant, after taking my account of the incident, abruptly turned to the other policemen and said the classic words "book-em," as he clicked his glittering Bic 90, whereupon the culprit was frog-marched away to the waiting Black Maria shouting both apologies to the other diners, and less-than-flattering observations at your humble correspondent, though, not knowing my TRUE NAME appeared to pose certain difficulties which were nigh insurmountable for the pitiable, soon-to-be-convict in the heat of his tantrum. To show my appreciation, I bought a bushel of crabs each for the Polish gentleman and the diners, and ordered a round of "National Bo" for everyone in the crab house using my "Discover" card for the first time. After receiving the accolades and salutations of one and all, I sat down at my table and stared out at the Baltimore sky. It was then that I remembered my copy of Stephen Crane's *Black Riders* and proceeded to examine the cause of my being alone at the crab house in the first place--i.e. my celebrating the lucky purchase of this remarkable volume earlier in the day. The point of the letter opener was thick enough to more dent than pierce the center of the tough "board" cover of the volume. It followed as I suspected, however, that the indentation was repeated through the front matter and the early pages of the text, growing shallower as it proceeded through the thickness of each deckle page to end, finally, in an obliterated letter "n" in the fourth line, 5th word, of the following poem found on page 11 of the volume in question: