

Children watch (!!!)



shake

eat family



dog (!!!)

where's the mustard?

Et al (that means 'and others')

By William Rector

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH...*After reading Bill Rector, wouldn't he be someone you'd love to meet, even vote for? If we could ever evolve, rather than stumble, into a Ludocracy, politically, he'd be on the card. In 'Holy Shit!' a palm reader reveals he has "...a tapeworm. Made of words." 'Children Watch Snake Eat Family Dog' reads like an opening narrative to the greatest Coen Brother's film never written: "Where we lived, trouble bred...We didn't have a television...All we had...was imagination with bad reception." Okay, next, 'Hand it to him' opening line: "Dad always claimed to be the Lindbergh baby...To him, fleeing was the same as searching." We'll let you read the rest except I can't resist this million-dollar quote. I can't find it anywhere, I think Bill may have minted it himself, "Hope's a moth in love with a 15-watt bulb. (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)*

Five Stars

Holy shit!

The palm reader covers her mouth. You have a tapeworm. Made of words. She swallows. No wonder --. Never have I seen one so --. Why, it goes from your mouth to your --.

And keeps adding segments like this one! I'm hungry, but she won't let me go, only wipes her mouth on my sleeve and returns the bottle we shared to the folds of her starry gown.

Children Watch Snake Eat Family Dog

Truth is relative. And its family tree large and strange. To you, equally bored loner at the reunion, kindred skeptic under the skin, inky twin, I offer this version.

I was one of those children (any dirty face and dumb gape missing the baby teeth). Except, we didn't have a dog. We thought it was happening on television. See, we weren't like those kids who crack the door of the double-wide and let their voices scamper across the landfill, *Here, Boy!*

Where we lived, trouble bred trouble, sipped Old Grand Dad straight from the bottle, and watched it grow up. Floods, then drought. Crops failed. The privy caught fire. Mommy and Daddy ran off.

We saw the mutt as another hungry stray like us. The snake was a different story. It was a member of the family. The only one with a full belly and skin it could shed like a worn-out tube sock and slither away again.

(stanza break)

Full disclosure: We didn't have a television. Antenna and Zenith
blew away along with the tin roof during Hurricane Mabel. All we
had left was imagination with bad reception. A dog-eared Rand
McNally Road Atlas missing the state we were in. Lawn chairs
without bottoms and ruts at our feet.

Check the Weather Channel. There's never been a Hurricane
Mabel. It was our name for Grandma, who swore she'd eat us if we
ever came to visit.

Hand it to him

Dad always claimed to be the Lindbergh baby. He was every Adam looking for a ladder to the second story.

To hear him tell it, which we did, until we closed our eyes and pretended to sleep, he was stolen from a frilly crib in the mansion before he found out who he was.

To him, fleeing was the same as searching.

After he took off, ransom demands began to arrive at the trailer, disguised as the electric bill and ending, *Or else!*

Maybe it was true. Maybe, as his kids, we were heirs to fame and fortune, too. Or, as Mom put it when the screen door hit her butt, *Hope's a moth in love with a 15-watt bulb.*

Play Nice

Every kid has a pet. I'll bet you had a puppy. Maybe a kitten that purred like a fuzzy engine on your lap. Or, wait, let me guess, a left-over Easter bunny with pink eyes, a quivering nose, and floppy ears. Um, an ant farm like a sketch of the inside of your head? Golly, gee. Only a guppy belly-up in a dirty bowl? It looked fed up, and you were starving for something new.

I've been there. When I left, grown-ups I met on the road would rub my crew-cut, pinch my cheek raw, and whisper, *Hey, kid, Have you run away from home? Want some candy? Why don't you let the poor thing out?* When I told them, *Go to hell*, they stomped away mad, then ran like a devil was on their tails. Meantime, the little fella's gotten bigger, grown claws.

Amateur Night

Say Hello to the grizzly bear, whispers the MC. It wants blood. It smells yours.

His stomach growls. *Feed the beast, or Mr. Grizzly's only funny bones are going to be a humerus or two from you!*

Momma raised hell, but not a fool.

I rush to the proscenium in a moth-eaten bear suit and roar at the top of my lungs. To cover the bases, I dance a jig and tell a joke or two.

The audience straightens. Knuckles their eyes. One or two applauds, astonished to see an act that's new, then all three. It's my cue

to charge! I spill the old timer's beer. Send Madame's South Sea pearls flying from her powdered bosom like a diva's perfect tears. Scare the kid playing hooky from Most Precious Blood back to the habits of the nuns.

(stanza break)

For an encore, I chase my admirers up the aisles and out the Fire
Doors, where they huddle under the blaze of the marquee:

BOY EATS BEAR!!!

open-mouthed, hungry for more.

Enough about me.

Let's take off our clothes and talk about you.

No? I get it. That's not in your job description. Besides, you've only been crouched in the shrubbery outside the window for a few pages now.

However, fire ants are on the march in your underwear; somewhere near, a Rottweiler howls, maybe the whole pack; and sprinklers are raining down on your furrowed brow like I wrote them to.

So come in. Or go. Either way, I have to say, That's a nasty scar you've got there. The fig leaf doesn't quite cover it.

You're boring. Let's talk about me.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I love irreverent poetry, or writing in general, especially when the author is deadly serious about it. Russell Edson is probably my major influence. Humor is an important ingredient of my writing. I refer those interested in such preposterous stuff to my recent chapbook from Finishing Line Press, Hats Are The Enemy of Poetry.*

AUTHOR BIO: Bill Rector is a retired physician. He is former editor of the Yale Journal of Humanities and Medicine. He has published a full-length volume of poetry, *bill* (Proem Press), as well as five chapbooks: *Biography of a Name* (Unsolicited Press), *Brief Candles* (Prolix Press), *Lost Moth* (Epiphany prize-winner), *Two Worlds* (White Knuckle Press), and *Hats Are the Enemy of Poetry* (Finishing Line Press).