

4 FIXIONS & 5 LINES

By Nick North

WHY WE LIKE IT: *Deceptively simple language generates a lyric charge in these potent absurdist 'fixions' where the collapse of natural law becomes a metaphor for a world turned upside down. If Franz Kafka and Douglas Coupland collided in a supernova the neutron star you'd get is Nick North. These quixotic nanos and runic lines are way more than the sum of their parts. The author writes with a light pen but his mastery over his material is humbling. **Read Nick North's 'Seven' in Issue 1.***

METAL CAKE

1/3 cup oil or margarine

1 cup sugar

2 eggs

1 ½ cups metal filings (chopped razors blades are good)

2 cups AP flour

1 ½ tsp baking soda

1 tsp salt

Beat eggs, oil and sugar till well blended. Add flour sifted with baking powder and salt. Fold in metal filings. Pour into greased 9 x 9 cake pan and bake 350 till done.

Ice with petroleum fluff but you don't need to. Miriam made this cake for years and her mouth was bleeding constantly. The secret is in the filings. Mother said in the old days you could buy paper thin filings anywhere—even the gas station. Today they've cut corners. Most of the filings are dull or too thick. That's why I

recommend razor blades if you can find them ready cut. This cake is a family favourite. Bob makes a point to take his dentures out when we have it. It's too rich for babies of course but the kids love it.

Dorothy Redman

IF IT WORKS DON'T FIX IT

For 283 days the cowlet wombed snugly in amniotic joy. She fed off nourishing blood and sipped rich golden yolk. Drifting to sleep she listened to her mother's heartbeat. Images of sweet meadows and blue skies tumbled in her dreams. She felt the warm sun on her young hide. She kicked her heels up and gamboled like a butterfly. On the day of her birth she was giddy with excitement. A whole shining world lay ahead of her!

After she spilled out of the slush canal in a web of mucus, nostrils plugged, heart hammering, eyes burned by the overhead lights, a man wrapped her fore and hind legs with barbed wire. Another man cut off her tail. Duct tape around her muzzle squelched her screams.

The man with the wire cutters stood up and looked out the window.

'Look at that black sun!' he said. 'It's going to be a beautiful day!'

'It is,' the other man agreed. 'Pardon me, Bill, but I have to stick a nail in my eye.'

'Sure,' Bill said. 'Enjoy!'

YE...! (For Sherman Alexei)

It was a good dinner; the family had been looking forward to it all week. After everybody'd eaten a fight broke out between my brother and my cousin. They'd been drinking all afternoon and started throwing beer bottles at each other. I don't know how long it lasted but my brother ended up in hospital and my cousin

at the police station. Me, I come home late from work, driving cab; it was my shift for filling in for somebody and I couldn't get it off. I remember one of my fare's saying, 'It's the end of the world!' I don't know if he was drunk or not. 'Not like ye know it,' he said. 'Ye' like they use in the Bible. By the time I got home the house was dark and my aunt came downstairs and warmed a plate for me in the oven. Nothing fancy but good. Potatoes, vegetables and meat. But the meat was crazy. After a couple bites it started moving around on my plate. I stabbed it with my fork and it curled up like a leech. After that I wasn't sure what to do so I put my fork down and just sat there looking at it.

BOTH

The woman had grown very old. Like her grandmother, her mother and her sister before her, she knew the time had come to leave the village. With so many mouths, they could not feed her old hunger through the winter. With the first heavy snowfall she took to the forest. She found a resting place at the base of an ancient tree. 'I will sit here until I freeze to death.' She closed her eyes and dreamed of the land across the light. For two days and nights she sat there. Her body had grown hard and still. But the blood inside her was still warm. Even during the coldest nights she did not die. On the third day, she heard the sound of branches crackling at dusk. She heard the heavy sound of thunder paws. But she was so close to death now she could hardly open her eyes. She saw the blurry image of the mighty winter bear stalking towards her. She said, 'It will not be ice but teeth.' The mighty one could not sleep because of hunger. He got up close. His breath warmed her face. She looked at the bear and thought, 'I am only an old woman. But I feel the sweetness of my life and hold it dear. This is something the bear will never know'. Before the grizzled one bit her head off, he looked deeply into her half-closed eyes. 'No,' he said. 'We feel it too'.

OM is a 3 in the wind with a toque and a scarf.

All the frenzy is sucked away. All the turmoil has gone to sleep.

Li Bo (A.D. 701-762). The drunken poet staggers by the brook. 'The moon has fallen into the water!' he cries.

Idiots do not have 'dark nights of the soul'.

God is not the solution. He's the problem. Need a light? Burn a Bible.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I can't really say what inspires my fixions. An idea will pop into my head dressed and ready to rock, when I least expect it. All my stories so far have been written quickly, on the run, when the 'now it's time to write' switch is thrown. 'Both' and 'If It Works Don't Fix It' came to me while asleep. I don't have time to warm up my PC so I get up, stagger to my desk and write it out longhand. Experience has taught me that if I wait—like till the next morning—I lose it. I don't revise much. If it's not right the first time, I know it's not ready.*

As to the lines, imma 20 something person straddling a future of hope and despair. I feel a little sick when I see what governments and corporate interests are doing to the planet—my planet as much as theirs—and it's made me an eco-warrior and a social activist—but sometimes I still think the only colour is black.

My influences include Nabokov, Barthelme, Borges, Carver, Burroughs, DeLillo, Tobias Wolff, Sherman Alexei, Neil Young, a lot of David Foster Wallace, a little of Richard Ford and the young Hemingway up to and including The Sun Also Rises but nothing after that.

BIO: *A volte Nick (Nicky ai suoi amici) si chiede se sia una persona reale o un personaggio nella mente di uno scrittore malvagio. La giuria e' ancora fuori. He understands quantum theory but knows if he thinks he understands it, he understands that he doesn't understand it. He's published little, written less. Il mondo e' sottosopra. Come possiamo capoverglerlo a destra? Non ci sono piedi. Non possiamo riposare in pace.*

