

ANYONE CAN SEE IT

By William Blome

WHY WE LIKE IT: *We don't know if there's a genre called 'grudge' fiction but these two resilient postmodernist flashes come close to putting a name on it. The twice set-upon author is circumstance challenged by a pre-occupied girlfriend and, in 'Tomahawk' a taunting readership, but appeals to reality are superseded by fantastic excursions into a hinterland of paranoia and metafiction. And yet it's not quite paranoid and not quite metafiction. Not only do we love the voice in both stories—we love how it pleads, not with the characters at hand, but with us. We feel as much a part of the stories as the fictional characters themselves. Glistening wizardry by a 'writer's writer'.*

Mary wants to come with me, anyone can see it, but Raglan keeps putting physical pressure on her upper arm to stop her from following in my direction. That, and he won't stop reading aloud to her from *my* translations of the classics, as we're all fanning out and tripping home in the August twilight. You see, he earlier prepared a scroll-like printout that lets his eyes easily toggle back and forth between three points: the stanzas of Catullus (a plucky-and-smartass poet), the lines of Plautus (a raucous-and-dirty playwright), and the wondrous curves of alive-and-well Mary. Don't ask me to illustrate what Raglan's saying with specific text examples, because you're not going to get that out of me. Let's just say Mary likes listening to classics, and thus she's favorable toward bastard Raglan at the moment. That can and will change any time now—anyone can see it—but until it does, I'll stay truthful with you and assert that he may not have to

actually put much pressure near Mary's elbow to keep her from straying toward me. She likes my translations of the classics that much, she adores my scholarship.

I'm compelled to repeat, however, that deep down, Mary wants to physically be with me, she wants my cozy harbor for her dreadnoughts, she craves my caring kennel for her poodle, she wants my safety razor with my brand of soapy lather determining what gets shaved and what doesn't, and it will require zero persuasion on my part to soon override Raglan's crude coercion and sweet speech. Never forget: those are *my* words he's reading aloud to Mary. Fuck the Romans and their Latin phonemes: *my* English syllables are what Raglan's setting afloat on the evening air, it's *my* word-stock being stuffed in Mary's ears.

Oh, if I come to believe the situation's taking too long to naturally resolve, don't you worry—make book on it—I have a method waiting in the wings to snarl Mr. Raglan good and tangle him in the sound of his own goddamn voice. I'll be deploying the three little drones Priscilla gifted me on my last birthday. They're here in my pockets, and anyone with squinting eyes can discern the bulge they're making, and don't for one second think I haven't previously been up and about in the open fields at dawn testing these mothers out and discovering the things they're capable of. Why, I've come to realize they can be made to not only hover over and follow a given target, but they can be pre-programmed to do so accompanied by several disgusting noises. For today, I have one already calibrated to fart loudly after Raglan's every fifth utterance. I have another prepared to belch like a slob following his every seventh word, and I have number three ready to ape the maddening, high-pitched hum of a female mosquito letting loose with randomly activated nine-second bursts of buzzing annoyance.

So I'm ahead of everyone, oh anyone can see it, and I can guess exactly what some of you are thinking: you're wondering how in hell my nasty drones won't offend Mary just as sure as they'll nonplus Raglan. And I'll grant that in a farfetched and reverse-engineering kind of way, that sort of forethought may constitute a hunk of nosey Priscilla's jealousy rationale in gifting me these drones in the first place. But see, I know my Mary; I know she'd never be the first to cut and run here. That will be Raglan, you can be certain of it, and when I spot Mary free and clear of his bossy ass—free and clear and eager to begin hoofing her way in my direction—I'll whip out my electronic remote and joyously command my drones to silence-the-fuck-up and start winging their way toward oblivion.

TOMAHAWK

I thought writing about a hatchet attack nicely fulfilled my goal of always wanting to pen fictive stuff that has mammoth meaning beyond a minimalist format or the “just-can't-seem-to-get-out-of-this-enveloping-fog” predicament of many of my characters, but judging by reader vitriol and several stonings I've experienced when I've been out and about recently, swinging my arms back and forth and walking in the open, I must conclude I'm way wide of the intended mark when it comes to my tale about Dannon Higbee and his victim, Eleanor Roseate. So permit me to state (without any obfuscation or what Elmer Fudd might call “twicker-wee”) that my overwhelming and primary interest was in Eleanor Roseate and how she ever managed to so gracefully survive Higbee's furious assault.

I mean, when you find yourself with a character (post-attack) whose dominant concern is not with her unsightly scars and deep gashes; not in obtaining justice from the apprehended and forever-snarling Higbee; and not in the least obsessed by any known species of revenge: no, when you have instead someone who is passionately interested in finding a pair of sturdy, red high-tops she can wear to correct an imbalance or crick she now affects in all her shuffles and struts (a problem many readers will likely surmise is caused by an undefined and lingering fear born and growing from Higbee's attack); when you have a person like that in your midst—a star of such a magnitude in your fucking galaxy—I think she deserves great consideration and uncurdled respect.

Evidently, however, some of my irritated audience believes I've either refused or failed to show the proper deference. My guess is they're the ones who used fine gravel in their flinging and stoning, something they could grab whole handfuls of, and while I wasn't physically hurt in either of the two fusillades, my attitude as a writer has turned nasty.

I've gone so far as to probably adapt and embrace a version of a mean-spirited curse I first heard long ago, and I recently had that bad boy brush-painted on an inside wall of the bathroom that services us residents on the floor of the rooming house where I live: "Fuck you and the palomino you cantered in—or galloped up—on!" Moreover, if my readers aren't careful—if they don't cap the acid and drop the rocks—I've a good mind to do a total rewrite of my story and focus far more this time on the Dannon-Higbee personage and that multi-notched tomahawk of his.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Both of these pieces share the commonality of choiring in praise of the creators who refuses to be passive when facing his audience. 'Anyone Can See It' goes so far as*

to suggest an up-to-date scenario (if not a rationale) for the use of drones to support the cause. I'll only add my hunch that I suspect these works occupy grounds I likely won't be crossing again.

BIO: William C. Blome writes short fiction and poetry. He lives in the States, wedged between Baltimore and Washington, D. C. and he once swiped a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars. His work has previously seen the light of day in such fine little mags as *PRISM International*, *In Between Hangovers*, *Fiction Southeast*, *Roanoke Review* and *The California Quarterly*.