

*Fireworks On
The Ninth Floor*

*And other Short Stories
And Poems*

GARRY HAMILTON

These stories are works of
imagination, exaggeration,
embellishment and fact. Names,
characters, places, and incidents are
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Rambling recollections,
fantasies and outrageous
embellishments of a long life.
Successes, Failures, Love,
Loss, Adventure
In no particular order
And Lots of Fun along the way



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*Tiny Eyes Spying
On Me Everywhere*



Rolly was driving. It was a rental car we had booked for a one-day excursion. The plan was simple.

We would leave our condos in the little town of Sosua for the ten mile drive to Cabarete. I would be dropped off en route wherever I spotted a good scene to paint.

The Dominican Republic has plenty of those.

Rolly and our two wives Theresa and Jo-Ann would shop in the Cabarete flea

market, then drift down to the beach for coco loco drinks while watching the kite surfers. They would pick me up from my painting spot on their return trip. How could we know what frightening events lay ahead?

I should mention that both our wives have an unusual fear of snakes, geckos and any little critters whose eyes move and rotate independently while their head is immobile. I think of it

as Rosemary's Baby Syndrome.

Rolly was driving, his attention on the road ahead when suddenly without warning it happened. From the narrow space between the windshield and the dashboard, a tiny gecko poked its head up. In perfect harmony both our wives simultaneously screamed.

Calmly, Rolly reached through the steering wheel to brush the gecko toward

the open driver-side window. The gecko interpreted this as an invitation to get acquainted and ran up Rolly's forearm to perch on the steering wheel.

One after another its little eyes swivelled around to peer into Rolly's. I think it was attempting to take over the steering. I waited anxiously wondering if it would open its tiny mouth and address us with a Cockney accent like I have seen one do on TV.

Meanwhile, in the back, both our wives were attempting to climb over the back seat into the car trunk.

The gecko gave up trying to steer the car. It ran up Rolly's arm to his shoulder. From there it leaped to the top of the baseball cap on Rolly's head. It paused and stared ahead both eyes in unison like the captain on the bow of a ship directing the pilot.

Rolly did not take the implied demotion well. He

swept his cap off his head toward the open window. The gecko exited the car. I believe he waved on the way out. Nervous giggles were heard from behind, somewhere between the back seat and the trunk.

Rolly spotted a bare spot beside the highway. He pulled over and stopped the car. There were cows, some buildings, and palm trees. Very paintable. I set up my easel under the shade of a large tree, stared at the

scene and mentally composed my painting.

Following my usual approach, I blocked in the shapes with a 2B pencil. With full concentration, I surrendered myself to the painting.

Still, I could not avoid the feeling that from a low-hanging branch just behind my shoulder, tiny eyes were independently zipping around, watching my evolving painting and me. A

trouble-making miniature art critic.

Rolly and our wives picked me up later on the return trip. Still, that little gecko continues to spy on me everywhere.

In the foliage, on the exterior wall of our balcony on our bedroom window sill, outside and in, he appears to follow me around, appearing, disappearing, reappearing constantly every day.



*Fireworks On
The Ninth Floor*



She glided in through the swinging doors. As she spotted him, a sudden smile, appeared beneath her sparkling blue eyes. A slight hesitation. “Harry?”

He nodded, “Hi, pleased to meet you, Joan”

He had been on dozens of these social media dates. Most were disappointing; disappointing because most

dates lied. They lied about their age, their lifestyle, their photos, which were often decades old.

He was a non-smoker. It was posted on his profile. Smoking was a deal breaker. His last date had airbrushed out the wrinkles on the photo of her face. Her hair had stunk of cigarette

smoke. He was conditioned to have low expectations.

This date however appeared promising. She actually looked like her photo, even a recent photo. The fine line crows feet wrinkles around those luminous eyes matched those in her photo. Her figure was slim, like her photo. She looked a decade

younger than her posted age of 61 on the Plenty of Fish dating site.

She sat down facing him across the table for two. He examined her features while trying not to obviously stare. She was slightly less than five and a half feet tall, stylishly dressed, dyed blond hair tied in a pony tail, delicate manicured hands

and nails, big blue eyes, a sense of hesitant confidence.

“Coffee?” His head swiveled around as just behind him a waitress suddenly appeared. “Yes” answering in unison, a good start to this breakfast meeting of two single seniors on a first date.

They ordered. Ham and eggs, sunny side up for him, eggs Benedict for her. As their breakfasts arrived, she put him on notice. “We aren’t going to have sex. I don’t even like sex. I am just looking for a friend, an acquaintance”. Definitely not the message he was hoping or expecting to hear. But Kudos for her honesty.

In spite of his age, which was a few years older than her, he was still very fit. He had been physically active all his life, regularly biking or cross country skiing. His white hair was long, tied in a pony tail. Strategically combed, it covered most of his scalp. He was for his age, still handsome. And also, horny.

"Got it" he replied.

Obviously, they both had very different expectations. No worries. Might as well enjoy breakfast and her morning chatter. He grinned inwardly, wondering silently what her next unexpected declaration might be.

Breakfast arrived. Harry dug in. He listened, vicariously enjoying the

pleasure in her voice as she babbled on about the food, her four grown children, and mostly her delight in her own autonomy since her divorce a year ago.

Finally, she was totally free to do what she wanted to do, go where she wanted to go, live her own life as she wanted to live it. He realized everything she told

him about herself was true.
No subterfuge. No guile, she
was comfortable with who
she was.

He empathized. He was
not about to intrude on her
sense of new found
freedom. Nope. No way.
They finished breakfast, but
neither was anxious to
leave. They had more

coffee, trips to the washroom, more coffee.

The waitress presented the bill, and waited. Joan insisted on paying for herself. She wanted no obligations to anyone, including him. As they said their goodbyes, she suggested they go for a walk together. Near her condo there was a long trail by the

St. Lawrence River where they could stroll.

Why not? He was retired, his time free. He followed her car in his, to the parking lot by the trail entry.

They walked, side by side, close, but not touching. She shrieked when a chipmunk zigzagged out of the brush beside the trail, and ran over her foot, then

broke into giggles over her own reaction. She was enjoying herself. Harry was too.

The walk stretched into supper time and they decided to take supper together in a nearby all you can eat Chinese restaurant.

The food was disappointing but the company had been

enjoyable for both.

Observing her no sex prohibition, he avoided any suggestive flirting, any body contact.

Supper ended. He stood, thanked her for the day, gave her a dry little peck on the cheek, and left.

Never to meet again, Harry thought. Unlike Joan, Harry was looking for more than an

acquaintance. An attractive woman like Joan, but a Joan who enjoyed intimacy and sex. Clearly that was not to be. Too bad.

The end.

That is to say, Harry assumed the end.

Next evening she phoned him. Would he like to join her for supper and from her ninth floor condo, watch the

fireworks taking place that week across the river? Her hobby was cooking, she added. Hmm... supper with a new acquaintance, chatting, laughs, good food, no sex. He had enjoyed her company.

Her supper menu had to be better than that in the Chinese restaurant. Nothing exciting on TV. He accepted.

The next evening, he drove to her condo building, a high rise on Montreal's South Shore, facing the St. Lawrence River. She buzzed him in. He took the elevator to the ninth floor.

Her door swung open. "Hi Harry!" She greeted him with a big smile. Her condo was spacious, open planned, with a wrap around

window view of the St. Lawrence River. The walls were white, the furniture comfortable Ikea style with bold coloured throw cushions. Comfortable, uncluttered, open, bright cheerful colours, a reflection of herself, Harry observed.

She waved toward the dinner table. “Sit”. He sat.

Supper was spaghetti with meat sauce. He didn't like pasta. Any pasta. No matter. He would enjoy her bubbly company if not the food. And of course, the fireworks.

After supper, she turned off all the lights. They both peered out the window in the direction of the river. In the dark, the ambience

changed, became more intimate, a little spooky, exciting even. Outside, the moon was a sliver of silver, the sky purple dark, with pinpoints of pulsating lights.

Harry felt his own insignificance as he took in the scale of the night sky. He felt lucky to be standing there experiencing the wonder of this particular

moment in time, standing next to an empathetic new acquaintance.

They heard what sounded like reverberating thunder. It was not. As they watched, distant coloured lights blinked alive in the distance across the river at what appeared to be ground level.

Then one after another, a tiny light zoomed skywards, expanding in brilliance, and chroma, as it rose. The one became a multitude. Sky petals, multiplying into giant celestial flowers, suddenly blooming open, then moments later, wilting, drooping, disappearing. A thunder-like roar announced their demise seconds later.

They were standing in the dark, side by side, but apart, Harry making sure he did not intrude into her space. She moved closer to him. Their bodies were touching. What was going on? Should he move away?

Her hand slid behind him and squeezed his bum. 'Tis a lady's prerogative to change her mind she

whispered. "Oops, change of plans, he thought. "Yes it is" he agreed a nanosecond later. "Would you like to keep watching the fireworks outside, or should we start our own in here?"

In the dancing shadows, she giggled breathlessly and nodded yes. He assumed correctly she was nodding for choice number two.

Five minutes later they were both lying next to each other, naked, in her king size bed. From her previous chatter, Harry knew she had never been made love to. She had, had sex, yes, but never had her own pleasure been a consideration. That was about to change. Lying beside her face to face, he gently caressed her neck,

kissed her eyes, her cheeks.

No rush.

This was not the movies where the participants tore off each other's clothes, swept the dishes off the table for an instant physical union. Nope this was a beautiful gentle woman allowing herself to trust that he was not a womanizing jerk.

“Tell me what you like, what would give you pleasure” he whispered. She did. He complied, adjusting his foreplay according to her moans of pleasure. I could give you a very detailed description of their first night together, and their newly discovered shared delights. But I don’t want to bore you with detailed minutiae. Or

stretch your credulity with the exceptional athleticism, dexterity, and creativity of two sexually active elderly participants.

Thank you, thank you, thank you” she whispered later. They fell asleep in each other’s arms.

One year later they were back at the Chinese all you can eat restaurant, food still

bland, but a place of good memories. They were in a reserved room in the back, and they were not alone.

The grownup kids of both Joan and Harry along with grandkids and a few friends were also there; And a Justice of the Peace.

He stood behind a podium on a small stage ringed in front by a semi-

circle of tables for four.

Seated at the tables were the families and several friends of Joan and Harry. In one hand the Justice of the Peace held a sheet of paper. It had the lines to be read aloud as two people swore to be there for each other, no matter what.

Harry and Joan stood in front of him, facing each

other. She was in a light blue cocktail dress. He was wearing a white sport jacket and tie.

The chatter died down. They each recited their marriage vows. The Justice of the Peace announced “I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.” They kissed. Their families applauded.

A lot of kid's stories end with "And they lived happily ever after". It is a good line, and there is no copyright on it. Joan and Harry didn't have the life span of kids to live happily ever after. But they might have two, maybe even three decades ahead. Good decades if they were lucky. Two or three decades of sharing laughs, of kisses

and caresses, of caring and being cared for; Of good meals together with choices for Harry that excluded pasta or Chinese take-out.

Until recently it was way more than either had expected at this stage in their life. Whatever time they had left, they would live it happily together, ever after.



My Own Personal Ghost



GARRY H.

As I enter what is euphemistically called my golden years my hearing has changed in unexpected ways. I can no longer hear consonants.

For example, recently Daphne (name changed to protect her identity) my wife complained that a mosquito was sucking her blood. I was horrified. “*What? This guy*

Speedo violated you in the mud?! I'll kill him!" I

thundered, in my most manly protective voice.

With a frightening cold eyed smirk that sent shivers down my spine, she replied "*I already did*". With a revengeful smile she reveals "*I killed the little it with a lie watter.*"

Obviously, she is babbling. *“We will keep this between us, the #&*@ got what he deserved”* I tell her soothingly while kissing the wisdom lines that frame her beautiful big blue eyes. She smiles, I imagine with relief that her secret is safe with me.

Women! The eternal enigma. They look at us

bewildered males with sparkling eyes that hold a suggestion of who knows what? They beguile us with feigned helplessness, all the while, strategizing the outcomes they wish.

Such an innocent looking creature, and yet my wife is a killer! Women can be truly frightening.

Like me, Daphne has also changed with age. But her changes are all improvements. While other women her age have eyes defined by crow's feet, Daphne's sparkling sapphire blue eyes are framed by wisdom lines. She stares straight into my eyes with an innocent intensity while she

explains this. So, it must be true.

Her other age enhancements are plentiful. All quite beautiful, of course. Many women of her vintage waddle. Not Daphne. She is slender as a teenager, but without the pimples, and not as noisy. She doesn't waddle, she floats, silent as a ghost. All this abundance

of beauty is invisible to me
however, as she floats
silently, behind me.

Speaking of ghosts, I
hesitate to tell her the
frightening truth. I am being
haunted by a ghost. One
that enters my head and
carries on non sensible ghost
observations, accompanied
by occasional titters of
laughter, snorts and an

occasional burp. I didn't know ghosts burped. But there it was, the undeniable truth. If you can't believe your own senses, what can you believe?

The voice in my head is instructing me like a child, to not slip on the wet tiles by the condo swimming pool, and to stop staring at lounging on the nearby

recliner, the nubile girl in the bikini. *“What girl? I was looking at the lovely flowers near that recliner.”*

I think my personal ghost is disoriented, lost. It often leaves sentences unfinished, muttering ghostly observations without any unifying theme or logic. A truly confused wandering spirit.

I look around for Daphne to tell her all this, and surprise! There she is right behind me, floating silently along. She is giggling so hard at some unknown subject that she burps mid giggle.

Hmmm. I am beginning to suspect I am not cursed with devilish possession, just deafness and a chatty wife. I

have mixed emotions. I have to admit, since I figured this out, life is much less exciting.



Fun In Flight



Jo-Ann and I leave for the Dominican Republic soon. We had said our goodbyes to some of our family, but not to all.

There was a message on the house phone when we got back from the IGA.

Hi Dad, I'm sorry I missed saying goodbye to you before you left. Are you

already on the plane? Call me when you get there.

Sometimes life presents you with opportunity, and damned if this wasn't one of those times.

Not an opportunity for a sudden discovery of buckets full of cash.

Not an opportunity for fame and prestige.

Not an opportunity for insight
and self enlightenment.

Nope.

This was an opportunity for a
little fun.

I phoned her back on my
cell phone, audio only, me,
whispering just loud enough
to be heard

“Hi Tam, I have to whisper
because I’m in flight on the
plane and we’re not

supposed to use our cell phones. The flight attendant just went by but she didn't spot me."

Omygawd Dad you're not supposed to do that!

Dad are you OK?

"Yup, except there's a little kid in the seat behind me who keeps kicking my chair back.

*Got to hunch down now,
flight attendant is coming
back this way. There's a big
guy in some kind of uniform
right behind her. She's
pointing at me.*

"Dad! Close the phone!"

At this point I couldn't
keep up the pretence any
longer, giggles, then snorts
then helpless bursts of

laughter. On the other end
my daughter,
- so you're not on the plane?

Together for the next
several minutes, we giggled
like idiots. *I knew you were
leaving Dad, I wasn't sure,
on the third or the seventh. I
thought I missed you. Call
me when you get in Dad.*

If at some time in the
future you see me sitting by

myself, eyes focused on nothing and grinning like a fool, maybe even chuckling and giggling, it will not be because I have lost my marbles.

Not yet. I will just be recalling some good memories. Memories that give me pleasure, and a few chuckles. Just like this one will.



My Battle With A Giant Snake



The plane trip from the Dominican Republic back to Canada was bumpy and tiring. We arrived back in Knowlton, late in the evening, both suffering from jet lag and still experiencing a bit of brain fog.

The next day we reacquainted ourselves with our home. As dusk dimmed the outside view we sat in our solarium staring out the patio door windows at our surroundings. Trees grey

and stark, bare of leaves, the sky overcast, dark, foreboding. A very different view, from the bright green tropics we had just left.

However, the familiarity of our home was reassuring. All was peaceful, serene, it seemed. The calm however was temporary.

Jo-Ann was staring out the surrounding windows enjoying the view. Suddenly she screamed. “A snake, there’s a snake in our yard!”

About sixty to eighty feet away there was something ominous looking, big, dark, coiled up where moments earlier there had been only grass. Were we both hallucinating?

It looked impossibly large for a snake in Quebec. Easily seven feet long, as big around as my wrist, dark green. “It’s moving” gasped Jo-Ann. She was right. We watched temporarily paralyzed as the skies grew

darker. A rumble of thunder seemed to grind its gears from nearby. The branches on a tree above the snake rustled in the breezes it seemed in unison with the snake, as it ominously coiled around and slithered a foot or two forward directly toward the solarium. The solarium with us inside, watching and wondering.

Like a proper super hero, I sprung into action. I rushed out through the patio doors,

grabbed a shovel from the carport and crept cautiously toward the snake. Shovel raised above my head, senses alert, like my ancient hunter-gatherer ancestors, cautiously I advanced.

I crept closer to the snake, raised the shovel over my head and with all my strength struck. I almost got it, but either the snake moved or my aim was off.

Somehow the snake wrapped itself around my

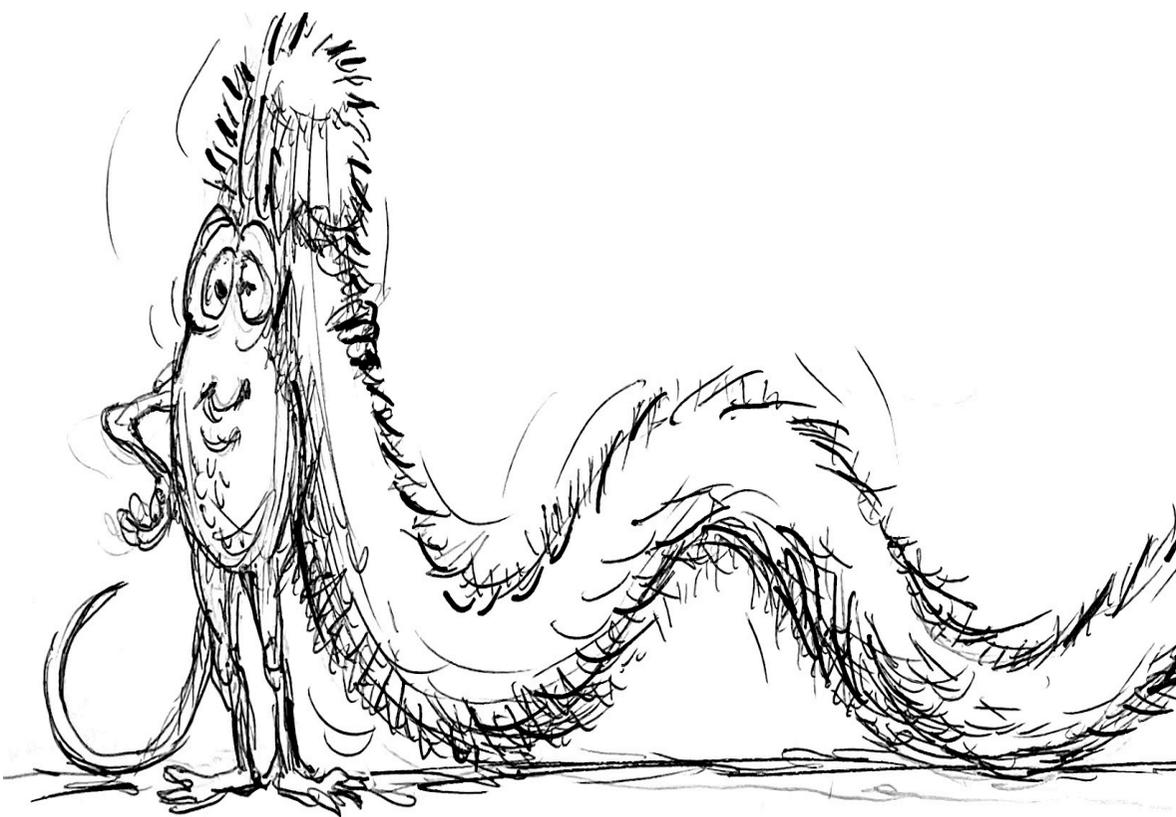
ankle and I fell as if in slow motion to the ground.

However, I bravely managed to grip the snake around its neck. I think it was its neck. Hard to say, both ends looked almost similar. I raised myself up on my knees where from the solarium Jo-Ann could get a good view of me strangling it. I increased the force of my grip until it dangled limp in my hands.

Victorious, I stood up and danced around the yard as nimbly as a septuagenarian.

I held up and showed off the huge frightening, dark green Xmas tree stringer that had blown onto our yard.

I notice that it has since slithered over to my neighbour's yard. I hope they are not also afraid of snakes.



My Superpowers



I stretched my legs and eased myself to my feet. Around me was the disjointed murmur of voices babbling, boots shuffling, seat backs popping back to upright position. The crowd began the exit trek. Behind me a loud belch fowled the air. Groans of disgust.

“Get outta my way!” The burp artist, a beefy faced big man with a bad toupee elbowed his way through the crowd. A little white-haired

lady with a cane staggered as he pushed past her.

I stifled my rising anger. Focusing on the bully's head, I relaxed and slowly released the power. His toupee rose about six inches above his head and hung there, hovering like a giant hairy hummingbird. Then it began to rotate and dance in time with his movements through the crowd.

He hesitated and looked around as people began to titter.

I was about to burst his belt and set fire to his shoes when a very curvaceous figure intruded on my line of vision. My X-ray vision automatically peeled away her outer layers of clothing. With scorching cheeks, I shut off my X-ray ability.

It is my code never to use my superpowers for mere salacious personal pleasure. After all, I am one of the good guys.

The sound of bubble gum popping startled me out

of my reverie. Nearby some teenagers were discussing the movie we had all just watched. Mutant humans, each possessing a special superpower had once again saved humanity from destruction.

The crowd pushed me toward the little white-haired lady with the cane. She smiled up at me as if we shared some secret joke.

Then tucking her cane under her armpit, she glided effortlessly through the

crowd and was suddenly gone.



My Little Town



I live in a small town, a community of decent, good folks. I know this because there are so many dog lovers here.

I think anybody who loves dogs has got to have some good in them. If a dog gets lost in my community, its photo gets posted on the local social media web site. Multitudes of eyes will be on the lookout for it.

Likely it will be spotted soon and its location and time reported to the owner.

Often it is taken in by the rescuer and fed and pampered until the owner shows up. As I said, a community of good people.

Every morning as I sip my coffee, from my front window I can see groups of dogs passing by. They are taking their humans, carefully tethered, out for their morning walk. Smiles all around, also lots of slobbering and rolling in the grass. (Not the humans, just the dogs)

When on occasion we chance to meet I am always greeted with great familiarity. First, they sniff my crotch. (I am talking about the dogs here.) Then they often kiss my hand.

If I am not going to be wined and dined first, it seems to me that for such familiarity the sequence should be reversed. But that is just my human perspective. Dogs invariably disagree.

Winter and summer, dogs and their humans are often passed on their walk, by sports enthusiasts. Little old ladies with ski poles who glide by, avoiding pot holes and rocks with seasoned expertise. Perhaps glide is not the correct verb since they appear to have lost their skis. I don't have the heart to tell them.

You might have guessed that I live in a community not just of dog lovers but also, of the elderly.

I don't know when that word "elderly" got on the naughty word list. It has been replaced by words like seniors and golden agers as if changing the word changes the facts.

It doesn't. We are still old.

But here is a news flash. We elderly might be more frail, than we were in our youth, but often the elderly have other qualities not yet acquired by their younger neighbours.

For the elderly the passing years have included successes, failures, disappointment, joy, love and loss, all necessary experiences to learn wisdom humour, patience, empathy.

In terms of beauty, the passing years have etched the life story of each of us in the wrinkles on our faces.

I paint portraits. I find these older faces, wrinkled sometimes sagging, much more interesting to paint than the blank smooth faces

of youth, the innocent, the inexperienced. Faces that are still in the first chapter of their life story.

But that is of course just a personal observation.

Sadly in my town, there are a small number of elderly who started off in youth as Jerks and have maintained the same trajectory their whole life. I repeat a small number. Certainly, none in my area.

Okay, maybe one or two exceptions, but that is just a rumour.

Besides, without them who would we talk about?





My Dog Jack

Jack started off as my daughter Tammy's dog.

A border collie, he was true to the stereotype of his breed, an Einstein amongst his lesser peers, and a superb athlete at twisting high jump frisbee catching.

He went into a depression when Tammy was at work and he was left alone at home. Since I had more free time than Tammy, I willingly replaced my

daughter as pack leader for Jack. It was an adjustment for him but he knew me and loved me from puppyhood. And he often had trips to enjoy, cuddles and kisses from his “Mom”.

Like Tammy my daughter, and very unlike me he was also a workaholic. He had to be busy, working all the time.

Since Tammy did not have a flock of sheep for him to keep herding, he had to amuse himself with other activities.

In addition to frisbee catching, he loved playing goalie in ball hockey in front of a hockey net. He would make spectacular tennis ball saves using only his mouth, then jerk his head up while

opening his mouth to deliver the ball back for the shooter to try another shot.

He often played on Tammy's or my front sidewalk and would offer the ball to passersby, in case they wanted to test their skill. In fact, he was known and loved throughout the neighbourhood. Even the local store owners allowed

Jack to enter and quietly sit by the wall while I shopped.

He was truly the most loyal, trusting and loving companion I had ever had. I took him on runs regularly, me on my bike, Jack running beside. Mostly I chose bike paths or back alleys. No leash was necessary. Jack always obeyed all my voice commands instantly.

He knew he was not allowed to go on asphalt without permission. He would stop at the curb until I gave permission, “OK.” On bike paths he would stop on a dime when I gave the command, “Stop”. When other dogs challenged, he would do as I instructed either sitting in place, or avoiding by going around. I

only wish I had him sooner
so he could have been an
example for proper
behaviour for my two kids.

A Dog's Lifespan Is Way Too Short

The saddest thing about
dogs is their brief lifespan.
You know when you get that
beautiful little furry cuddly
creature that you are going
to enjoy him for too brief a

time. You will watch him grow old, develop white hairs around his mouth and eyebrows, lose or diminish some abilities like sight, hearing, and balance. He will develop other age related weaknesses like arthritis. You will take him to the vet, but his aging process is beyond your control. If he loses bladder control, he will

be mortified. He will need to be petted and consoled and both of you will be overcome with sadness.

If I could have foreseen the future I would never have played frisbee with Jack. I would have thrown a ball for him to chase instead. The spectacular leaps Jack was able to constantly perform destroyed his hip

and knee joints. Suddenly he could hardly walk. He was in constant pain, unable to climb stairs and unable to find a comfortable sleeping position. The surgeon Tammy had taken him to for X rays exacerbated the problem yanking his legs out straight for an X-ray.

It was a difficult decision to decide for Jack when the

pain in his life outweighed the joy in living. When he could no longer get up unassisted, when a night's sleep was impossible due to pain, we knew that awful time had arrived. Tammy bought a wading pool for him to lie in. He had loved swimming. We gave him a cut up steak dinner, rare a suspicion of garlic.

He licked it and left most.

A group of about six or eight people who all loved Jack accompanied us to the vet. There I lifted him gently on a high table. The vet gave him a mild sedative to relieve the pain and help him relax.

One by one his human clan formed a line, murmured their goodbyes,

kissed his face then moved on. There was lots of quiet sobbing. It didn't seem to upset him although he was always very instinctive about the mood of people around him. I think he felt the love and also the good drugs.

I was the last to kiss him goodbye and he covered my face with wet kisses. Wet tongue kisses I could never

accept from a human but
strangely, easily could from
my dog Jack. The vet gently
slid in the final needle.

No more pain, Jack's eyes
closed.

He was at peace.



*The Saga of Broke
Beak*

This past spring Jo-Ann smiled as she rocked gently back and forth in the rocking chair next to a huge picture window in the solarium.

She was enjoying herself, lost in a trashy romance novel. A genre whose demographic was designed for horny little old ladies whose physical energy no

longer was in sync with their very active minds. She reread the last paragraph and giggled.

Her peaceful afternoon however was about to get a sudden interruption.

Bang! The solarium window next to the back deck vibrated with a loud thud, inches from her head. Her book fell to the floor as

her head swivelled around to stare at the window.

What had caused the banging noise? Jo-Ann hoisted herself up and peered out the window. She gasped. A minor tragedy had just happened and the evidence revealing all was clear.

On the window, a slight smear of blood, a few

feathers. Below the huge picture window, lying on its back, not moving was a dark grey bird with an orange breast.

Before I continue, here is some context. Next to our back deck there is a small tree that every year at this time produces tiny red berries.

Whole communities of robins stop by for a cool water aperitif from the burbling fountain on the back deck before flying up to the berry tree, for a continuous berry buffet.

The robins are joined by black capped chickadees who appear to be dressed for a formal dinner, white neckband, silver grey tux

and tails. Interrupting this peaceful repast, the birds chirp insults at a zigzagging stop and go chipmunk with bulging cheeks who appears to be high on amphetamines.

Some robins perch on a branch while selecting their next beak full. Others grab a berry on the fly while flitting amongst the leaves and

branches. A continuous display of aerial acrobatics. We take pleasure in their antics, their joy in living. I think they are not just enjoying the berries they are showing off. We all know showing off can have consequences. And it would appear to be so, in this case.

For lunch, we heartless carnivores had just chowed

down on chicken wings. Yet somehow when this wild bird was injured in our back yard we felt empathy, as if it was part of our extended family.

Lying on the deck, on its back not moving, lay a robin.

We watched. Mixed emotions. Not a member of our family, not a loved pet, but still a member of a group that had delighted us

regularly with their chirping aerial presence.

But wait. Its little legs twitched. Minutes passed. The robin slowly rolled over onto its side. It had sustained a serious injury. A berry rolled out of its open mouth. The front part of its upper beak was gone.

Jo-Ann grabbed her iPad and checked in YouTube.

She was informed that a broken beak on a bird could regrow much like our fingernails can. Except if the connection to the nasal bone was injured, regrowth would be only partial.

Broke Beak's recovery was painfully slow. After about a half hour it managed to tumble off the deck beneath the window down

about two feet onto the ground.

It stayed there unmoving for a couple of hours.

Several times another male robin flew over its head and gave it a little grazing head caress with its feet as if encouraging it to get up and get moving. Hours passed. It remained immobile.

Near day's end Broke Beak managed to fly up to the branch of a nearby maple about twelve feet above ground. Resting, Broke Beak's head was tucked down, the bird's entire body compressed together as if in a fetal hug.

At nightfall he was still there, a silent small dark

silhouette on the maple tree branch.

Next morning, he was gone. Did he manage to fly away? Will he be able to eat with his injured bill? I think I may have seen him in the berry tree the next morning, but he was too far away for me to be sure. Can he survive? Maybe, maybe not, but I hope so.

Elbows Up Tout Le Monde

As for us, Broke Beak's human spectator fans, can we Canadians survive the assault on us? A tariff assault on our economy accompanied by threats to our sovereignty, courtesy of our predatory erratic gangster neighbour to our south.

As never before in my memory, Canadians are united. United, angry and determined to withstand blows from beyond our borders.

Can We survive?

You betcha!

Maybe, with some sacrifices of course, much less than Broke Beak is enduring. We are after all

the True North Strong and Free.

United as never before, we will analyze, strategize, industrialize, build infrastructure, update our rail line north to Churchill Port in Hudson's Bay, gateway for transporting goods east and west.

New trade relationships across provincial borders,

and across oceans. An example of the growing sense of Canadian pride and resilience, was on YouTube, a show in Toronto where a song sung by Rod Stewart with revised Canadian defiant lyrics got a roaring audience response. The song that got this response with revised lyrics? We Will Survive.

That song title pretty
much sums up Canadian
defiance in the face of USA
aggression.





Dust to Dust

I am nearing the end of my life's journey. In my eighties but still healthy and feeling frisky.

But in a battle with Time, Time always wins.

If, I can choose my manner of death it would be at the age of one hundred to be shot by a jealous husband while en flagrante with a beautiful young thing

in her sixties. Sadly, my wife is only okay with one-half of my wishes, the age part.

Magnanimously I forgive her.

Here are my last requests. I do not want to be laid out in a coffin, perfumed, all liquids drained from my body, wearing makeup on my sallow face before it becomes a giant prune, my beard much more expertly

trimmed than ever it was
when I was vertical and with
a pulse, my body in a suit I
hardly ever wore.

Nope. I want to be
cremated, dust to dust.
One with the universe
according to astrophysicist
Neil Tyson Degrasse. I don't
care what you do with my
ashes. Because that's all
they will be, ashes.

I will be dead. I won't feel anything. But Jo-Ann my wife will. And my kids will also. And some friends. And that is who all consideration should go to, the living.

What I suggest is an Irish Wake, minus the corpse. Party Time in my house. I will be dead, so, this is just my suggestion. I would like there to be munchies,

donated or bought, lots of wine, and in the background, BB. King playing the blues.

Cliche platitudes, “Sorry for your loss”, are OK, but no lengthy cumbersome discussions of sympathy. They require a reply which is a painful obligation for the grieving.

For “He is looking down on us now” the suggested

reply is “Or looking up. He was a bit of a rascal”. Jokes and laughter are mandatory, and any whopper lies that make me look good are OK. Encouraged even. Tears are welcome too. Both kinds, sorrow and laughter.

Free copies of books I wrote that no one bought are to be given out free to guests, if they promise to

read them. From somewhere down below which is much warmer than our Quebec winters, (not Australia), I might be looking up to check on you.

Now for some free unsolicited advice to all of you above ground, who still have a pulse, who for me will be on the other side. The side of the living.

Live in the present. You can't change your many past mistakes. But you can learn from them and do better in the present.

Plan for the future, but don't reside there. Enjoy every second of life now, and do not let pain and personal slights become your life.

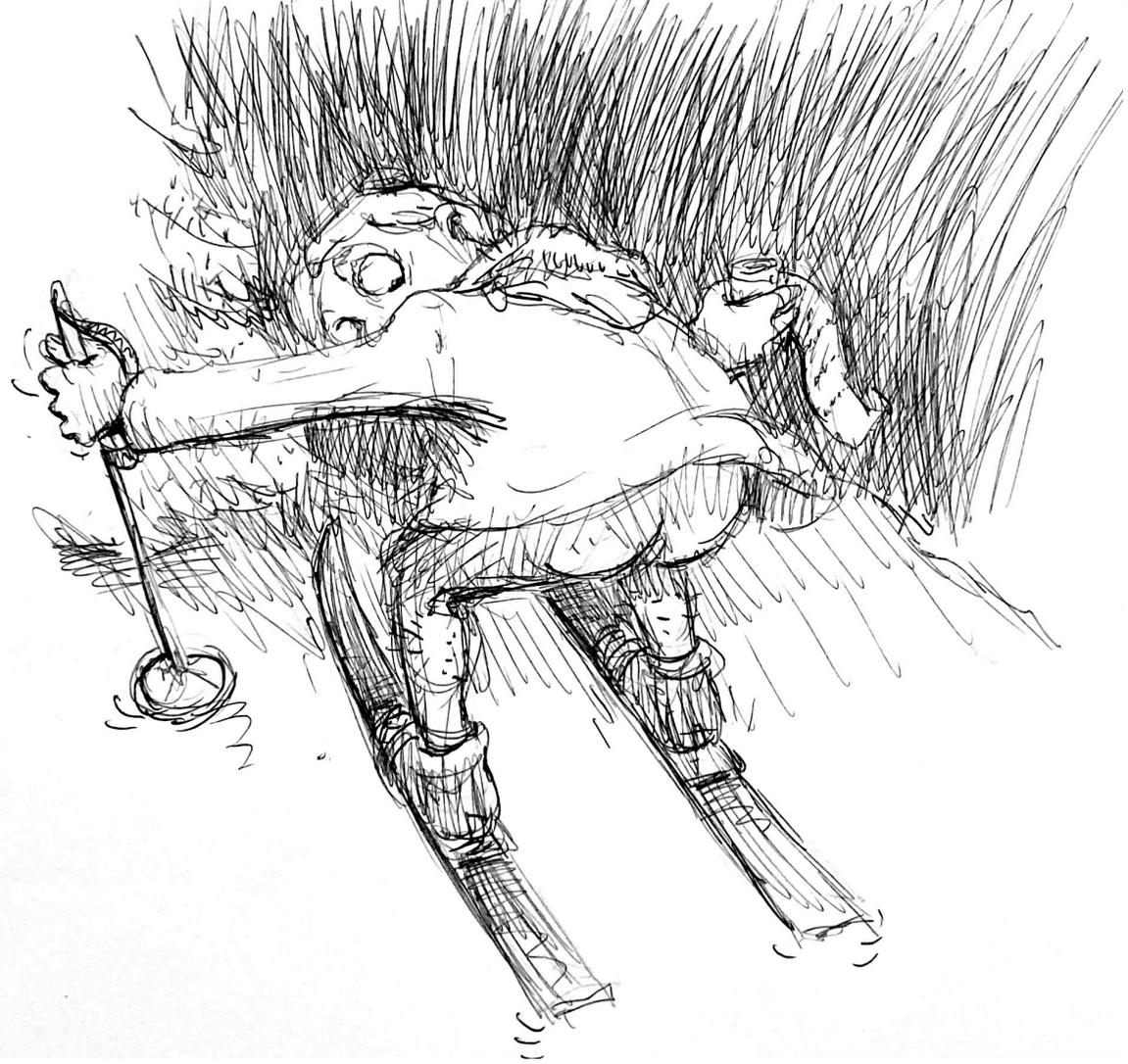
My last advice is to live and eat healthy. I don't need to explain why, as from my living room window I watch the little old ladies in my neighbourhood meander by, ski poles in hand, no skis on their feet, smiles on their faces. They are enjoying life now.

Kudos to them,

From me, Greetings and
Au Revoir to all of you.

As cosmic dust I will be
joining the billions who have
preceded me. Wandering
through the Cosmos our
entourage will wait for you to
join us too. As I have
preceded you, maybe you
and I will meet again floating
endlessly in the Cosmos, as
dust to dust.





*Winter Camping
In A Tent*

Winter camping in Quebec
Great outdoors in a tent,

Invite by
Scout Leader Brent.
Abandon winter blues,
Bring skis or snowshoes.
Adventure in the wild,
Your inner child.
Said Brent.

Chaperoning a Boy Scout
troop,
A noisy boisterous group
With best friend Brent,
Off we went.
In cold winters' glow,
Trees n' hills
Covered in snow,

Brent knew exactly
Where to go.
In snow we dug trenches,
Laid in pine branches,
As Brent directed,
Tents above, soon erected.

Inside, each tent,
aroma of pine,
Fresh and clean.
Initially fine.
But supper was beans.
Beans AKA Musical Fruit,
Hours and hours
Of toot, toot, toot.
Hours later I awoke,

Gurgling, gassy beans
Had spoke
Three minutes, max,
Maybe four,
Then Show Time,
Bean poo galore.

Parka put on and ski boots
Skis put on with little toots.
Pants? No thanks.
Staggering out of tent, aware
No extra time to spare.

In one hand toilet roll,
T'other hand, long ski pole,

Zigzagging up a nearby
knoll,
Arriving at the top I stop.
Bum facing tent-ward
Chose my spot.
Upward parka quickly
broughted,
Downward, bare bum quickly
squatted,
Changing unfortunately,
Squatting center of gravity.

Worst fears a reality,
Becoming mobile, instantly.
Gaining momentum,
exponentially.

Bare bum in breezes
freezing
Backwards, downhill
careening

Arms outstretched,
one hand, ski pole holding
t'other, toilet roll, unrolling,
Downhill I zoomed,
Nightmare scene unfolding.

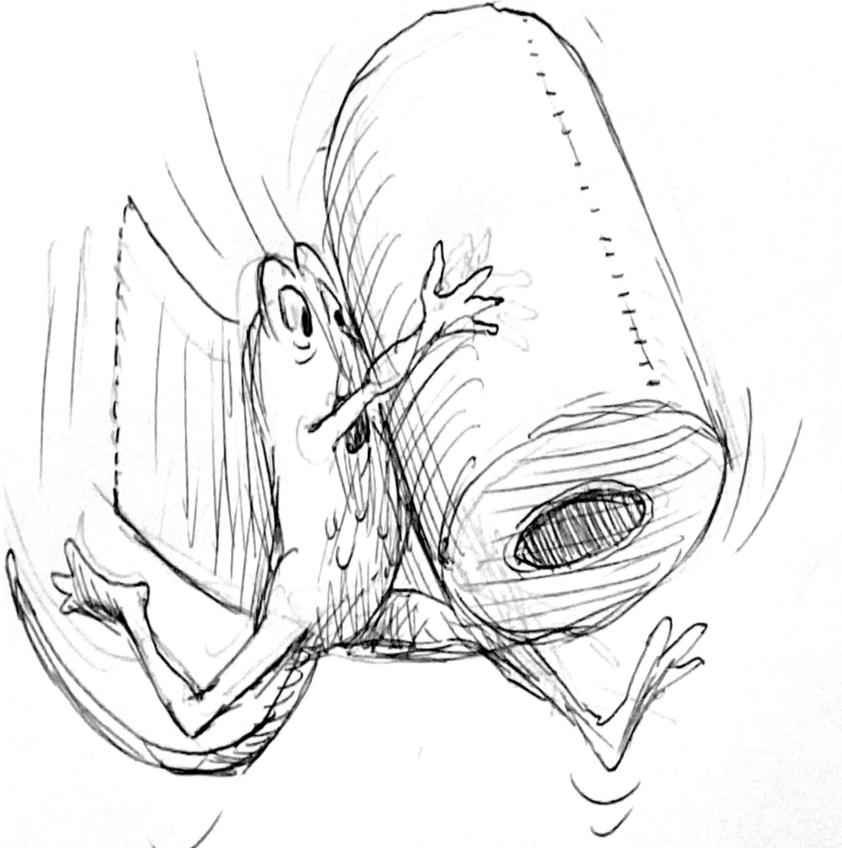
Arriving at tent opening,
Four minute lead time
Expiring,
Show Time, irresistibly
Arriving.

Minor explosions,
Mixed emotions.

Tent sleepers traumatized.
Threats of personal demise,
Impossible to pursue
Blocked at door
By bean poo,

Apologies and message to,
Tent camping guru,
Former best friend, Brent.
For winter camping events,
Or sleeping in overcrowded
Tents.

Change the menu please.



**Eliminate
Dammed Beans**



*Memories Are Made
Of This*

Location, a Walmart
parking lot. “Open the door!”
he demanded. His voice was

tense. Beads of sweat were rolling down his forehead.

Burly with wild unkempt hair, a tank top that revealed multiple tattoos on well-muscled arms.

He was standing by the driver's side of an old Honda, parked, windows rolled up, doors locked. He was speaking loudly to the driver inside. If I was inside, I

wouldn't open the door
either, I thought.

Of course, I had to stop
and watch. Was there going
to be a fight? Was this
another example of the
increasing road rage we
constantly hear about? I was
thinking I should have
brought a bag of popcorn
and a soft drink with me, as I

walked over to watch some live theatre.

But sometimes first impressions are dead wrong. This was a perfect example. But never the less very entertaining.

Inside the car, the driver was giggling and shaking her head “No”. I should say future driver, because this little figure had about twelve

years to go before being eligible for a driver's license in Canada.

Her little hands clasped the steering wheel as she pretended to turn corners. She honked the horn and waved at me with a gap-toothed grin. "What's the matter" I asked in my most sympathetic voice? "*My daughter's locked me out,*

*and my wife is inside
Walmarts somewheres, with
the car keys.”*

Through the windshield I could lip read his daughters mouth imitating the sound of screeching tires as she expertly negotiated a particularly tricky imaginary curve.

My condolences for his plight sounded utterly

insincere as I couldn't stop laughing. I am sure he had very conflicted feelings as he cajoled, pleaded or threatened.

Inside the car, his daughter laughed with glee, shook her head “No” and continued her driving odyssey. She held up a middle finger and yelled

something I blush to repeat at an imaginary tailgater.

Her dad looked embarrassed. I empathized with the tiny imaginary driver. I hate tailgaters too.

I speculated this was a family where there were no spankings, there was lots of laughter, and if there was not a lot of discipline, there was probably lots of love.

Her dad was peeved right now, and probably feeling foolish, as they both waited in the parking lot for mom and car keys to arrive, daughter inside the old honda and dad not. This may not have seemed like a significant moment in their lives. Maybe it wasn't. Or maybe it will be.

I wouldn't be surprised if twenty-five years from now, a thirtyish woman will be sitting at the kitchen table in her dad's house while she complains about how mischievous her kid is. He will remind her of when she was little how she had locked him out of the car in a Walmart parking lot. They

will both break into helpless laughter.

It is these small day to day events that make up our lives, which create our family history. In later years, we remember these dumb, unexpected, inconvenient often hilarious experiences. We relish these memories. They give us laughter, comfort and connection.



*My Brief Career As
A Label Designer*



I am an artist. Retired now. My first job was back in the olden days before there was internet, before there were computers before there was something called Spellcheck.

But time and technology marches on. Back then a rib steak and real fries at the corner pub cost \$2.50. There

have been a lot of changes since those days.

Back then labels on clothing were not printed. They were actually stitched and sewn onto the back inside neck of shirts.

How did all this technology from a previous era work? Through the mind-numbing labour of many hands all working

giant looms. The looms were programmed by charts courtesy of the Art Department. That was my job, designing the charts.

The client would approve a pencil mock-up at the finished size of the label. On a large sheet of graph paper, I would compose the chart, an oversized sketch with text. Each square I painted

in on the graph paper would become a stitch. It was meticulous work and the most interesting challenge was the speed with which I could finish one.

I was fast, sometimes, maybe too fast. Harry, the company president, marched into the art department, one of my masterpiece chart

renderings clutched in his
sweaty hand. He did not look
happy.

“We shipped off a half
million labels two weeks ago
to the Gant shirt company.
We ain’t heard nothin’ back
from them. We ain’t going to
say nothin’ to them either if
they don’t spot it.”

They never did. Spot it
that is.

If in your attic you have any Gant shirts stashed away from that period, and the label was designed by me, if you examine it closely, very closely, you will see a misspelling.

I had left the “R” out of shirts.



*In Life there are
Winners and Losers
But in Bull Fights the Bull is
Always the Loser*



After checking into our room, I turned on the TV. We were in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, a temporary escape from Quebec winter.

What flashed across the TV screen was far more action packed than any action movie, a live bullfight.

Traditionally the bull is weakened from loss of blood by picadors thrusting short

spears into his back; a setup as rigged as any professional wrestling exhibition.

Finally, after chasing his tormentors until near exhaustion, the bull is mercifully executed by a brave matador. Presumably, the bull's life flashes before his eyes, his legs buckle, he crashes to the ground.

But surprise! Maybe this bull had seen the previous performance. He bounced into the ring like his hoofs were on springs. He ignored the picadors, and still full of energy charged toward the seven foot high wall.

Incredibly for a beast of his size, he leaped up, hooked his forelegs over the top and scrambled over and

into the crowd. From there he charged over the benches, with people screaming, falling and stampeding in front of him. There was no more TV coverage beyond this point as I suspect the cameraman may have left.

I don't really know what happened to the bull, but I like to think that he made his

way out of the stadium,
hailed a cab and left town.
I'm not sure, but that's what I
like to think.

The second surprise was
to happen later, that
afternoon. It also was not
without a hint of danger. We
are warned to be cautious
around swimming pools.
Accidents can easily

happen. I can testify that it's true.

In front of the hotel, there was a huge continuous swimming pool with a center island. Jo-Ann, my beautiful companion, jumped in first. In her black bathing suit, matching black goggles, and blond hair she looked quite stunning. I jumped in too. We had the pool all to

ourselves it seemed. She did water calisthenics while I swam laps around the island in the center.

It was a lazy serene setting; a setting perfect for splashing and frolicking with your loved one. As I rounded the island in the center for the fifth time, through the fog of my goggles, I spotted a familiar black bathing suit,

with black goggles and blond hair.

I swam up behind her, reached down and gently fondled her bum. In a seductive tone, I whispered *Hi there!* Her reaction was not at all what I expected. “Senor!” a startled voice gasped.
Oops!

Immediately an angry husband, two burly brothers and a grandmother who had witnessed the assault appeared out of nowhere.

Suddenly I felt like the bull in the arena. Would I too pull off the impossible escape? Or was this to be the regular script with backup matadors?

Fortunately, Jo-Ann was drawn over by the commotion, and the similarity between her and the victim made plausible, my mistaken identity alibi.

So, now you know I speak from experience when I warn you. Always be cautious around swimming pools. Swimming pools and bullfights.

*This experience happened several years ago. While still taking place, there is a growing animal rights movement in Mexico to ban bullfighting.



The View from my Balcony



As I sit on my condo balcony in the Dominican Republic eating breakfast, I am not alone.

Yes, Jo-Ann is opposite me. However, I am not talking about her delightful company.

Nope.

As I sip my coffee, I often make some wise, insightful observations about world

events. Before I am finished talking, my statement is greeted with guffaws of laughter. Hee, hee, hee comes from the the three huge pine trees opposite my balcony.

“There are a couple of families of mockingbirds living there. They hop up and down from branch to branch eating their bug

breakfast in unison with Jo-Ann and me eating ours (eggs, not bugs), and interrupting our conversation frequently with rude mocking laughter.

Behind us hanging from the balcony ceiling is a feeder for hummingbirds. The tiny yellow-bellied bananaquits have not received the memo that this

is a designated hummingbird feeder.

Between the two bird species, there are ongoing territorial disputes, never resolved. I think it may be learned behaviour from being around humans too long.

Not Jo-Ann and me.

Or you.

Other humans.

Both bird species
however are absolutely
intimidated by wasps. Not
us! We hold our ground
firmly against them.

The wasps have stingers
and telepathy. Yes,
telepathy. They have
communicated to their
comrades our battle
strategies. I don't think all
that buzzing reflects wasp

words. It sounds more like electronic humming. If telepathy made sounds, I think it would sound like this buzzing.

However, as a more advanced species, we too have weapons, fly swatters. And to wield these fly swatter weapons, we have hands with opposable thumbs.

I think the wasps may have a slight edge. As with the birds, it is a battle that never ends.

On the wall beside the balcony going all the way to the roof is a white four inch plastic pipe. Its purpose is for washer/dryer heaters to blow their fumes into.

It is also home to numerous tiny geckos. They

do daily exercises, climbing the wall next to it to the rooftop. Once arrived at the top, I imagine they take a deep breath, turn around and head back down. Up and down, there is continuous two way traffic.

Facing our balcony, a hundred yards or so away on another balcony there is a guy who smokes really foul

smelling, Dominican cigars.
We hope for a change of
wind direction. Or in the
back my mind a well directed
bolt of lightning.
Not a huge one.
I am not a monster.
Just big enough to incinerate
his cigar.
And maybe his whiskers.

Mitigating the cigar
pollution is a nearby

apartment with two buxom
Swedish girls doing their
daily stretch routines on the
balcony,



unencumbered by clothing
or inhibitions.

My coffee cup develops a
slight tremble. I decide it
needs more milk. Just a
touch.

Breakfast finished. Time
to get busy and paint, or
write. Or FaceTime my
grown kids back in Quebec
and hypocritically
commiserate about the

violent weather shifts back home.

Then maybe drift down to the pool for sunbathing and a swim.



*Jo-Ann's Birthday
Celebration*

Recently it was my wife Jo-Ann's birthday. Somewhere in her early 70's.

She asked me not to reveal her age, so I am abiding by her wishes and not telling. You will just have to guess. The precise number is safe with me. Hint; early seventies.

The event was a cause for celebration throughout the town of Sosua here in the Dominican Republic. There were cars driving by

celebrating and honking their horns. There were even school kids dressed up in uniforms marching by, playing loud throbbing music while some did cartwheels and threw batons up in the air, then caught most of them again as they fell back down.

They waved to her and shouted “Independencia!”. I don’t speak Spanish but I think the evidence was clear. I am guessing Independencia must mean Happy Birthday.

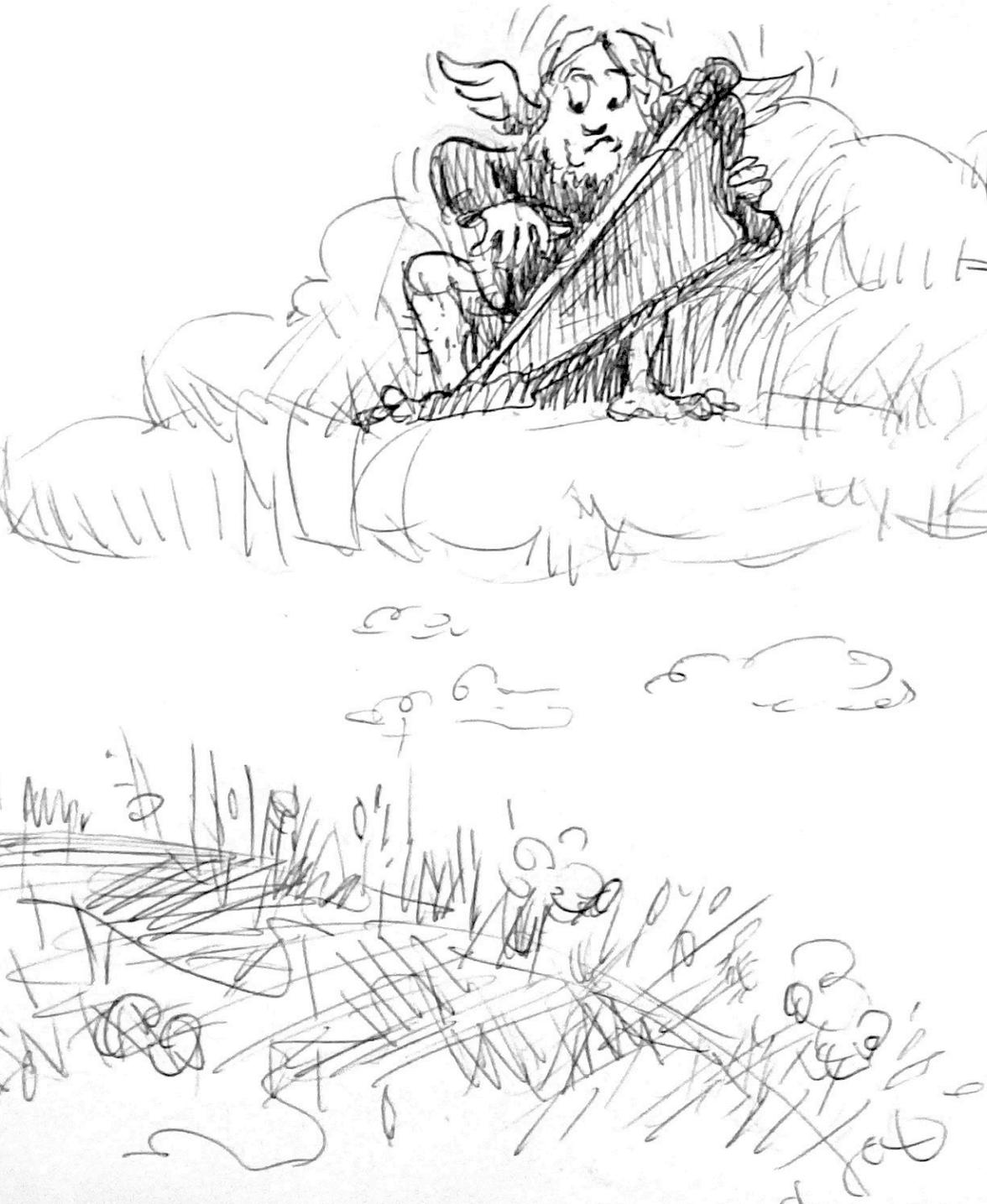
It was a wonderful showing of their appreciation for her. I was really impressed.

It just happens that Jo-Ann's birthday also coincided with the date when the Dominican Republic gained independence from Haiti.

What a coincidence eh? I have been told the Dominicans make a bit of a fuss about it.



Goodbye Everybody



Sorry Folks I've got to go
Time's near up
End of the show.
Near ninety don't you know.
Expiry date ended
Long ago.

Hate to leave,
Prefer to stay
Not my choice
Not me to say

What I hate
Not the leaving,
Family, friends
Sad and grieving.

Nope! What I hate
Knowing not the fate
The World in flux,
I leave behind.
That's what I mind.

Global Warming,
Droughts, tsunamis
Fires n' floods,
Double whammies.

Democracies falling
Putin, Trump
Economy in protracted
Slump.

Humanity at its very worst
My bubble's long
Been burst.

What fate imminently
For Earth,
For us,
Humanity?
That's what I want to see.

For me,
Will I be looking down or up?
Playing ditties on a harp?
As angelic chorus sings,
Minus my balls,
Cute little wings,

Watching from cumulus
settee,
Humans below just like me
Like who
I used to be.

Or below upwards watching
Pitchforks prodding?
Old friends galore,
Comfortably warm,
Quebec winters
No more.

Like Santa, for young
Religion has brung

Peaceful illusions
Hopeful delusions.
For some
Good solutions.

For me
Faith replaced.
Critical thought
Faith erased.

When I go,
I will be
In other minds
fleeting memory.
Like billions before me.

Dreaded most as
Eternal sleep I tread
Knowing not
What lies ahead

For Planet Earth,
For those I love.
Human species,
Whole caboodle,
Saints and feces.





Early Dating

Alpha crouched down out of sight of the huge beast. He was downwind from the sabre tooth tiger, but he knew they often hunted in pairs, or worse in packs.

He gripped his flint tipped spear tightly, then with hand gestures signaled the others not to move.

Alpha was only eighteen summers old, but he was the leader, the protector, the food provider for the small Cro-Magnon clan. He was the strongest in their group. Also, the smartest, and most skilled hunter.

Above his head, he waved a small pelt, smeared in rotting vulture musk. It should mask their odour in

case the wind changed. A necessary tactic for a very ripe smelling tribe of early humans. Silently as possible, crouching low, the group retreated from the plains toward the protection of the nearby jungle.

Their arrival was immediately broadcast throughout the area. Birds cackled, cawed and tweeted

it. Overhead, monkeys whooped and shrieked. No secret hiding places in the jungle. But vines and trees to clamber up, or duck behind.

Alpha heard it first.

Snorting and grunting, a huge warthog pawed the ground at the base of a large tree.

On a branch above, big hazel eyes, flowing auburn hair sat a beautiful young woman.

She stared at the warthog, then at the clan, finally at Alpha. He heard his heart thumping. She held her hands up, palms facing forward, no weapons, universal sign for friend. For

a moment time seemed to
freeze for them both.



But not for the warthog. It swiveled around to face the clan. It charged.

With perfect timing, Alpha dodged aside, and using his entire weight plunged his spear above its shoulder, into the charging beast's heart.

What a marvelous first impression! Roast pork and other delightful benefits to

follow. Ultimately ending in
existence of the most
intelligent and attractive
specimens of homo sapiens,
you and me.



*My Sister Gets Caught
Smuggling*

This story took place a
little over three decades ago.

A time that was more peaceful, more serene. Life was simpler. Cross-border travel to and from the USA was easier and faster.

As the temperature dropped and November slid into December, I prepared for my annual Christmas trek to visit my sister. She lived in Odessa, a small town in Ontario near Kingston.

Her greeting was almost as enthusiastic as that of the rest of her family. No. I don't mean her four daughters who had all grown up and left. I am talking about Oscar, Shiloh, Charlie, and Cobi, three ancient dogs and a cat who accepted the dogs almost as equals.

Oscar was 16. A dalmatian mix, his body covered in

spots as well as bumps. The bumps were benign cysts that gave him an odd lumpy appearance like a giant toad on stilts. When he was happy, he had a huge Dracula like smile. His fierce appearance was mitigated by his constantly swiveling bum and tail.

Shiloh was a 17 year old golden retriever mix. She

had been in congestive heart failure for three years, and renal failure for two. Both dogs were almost blind and deaf. If you think they were a sorry pair you'd be mistaken. They were two of the happiest dogs I had ever seen. They were cared for, loved, and had daily runs in the country. They were

constantly stimulated by
Charlie.

Charlie was a beagle. At
11 years old, next to the
others a youngster. Like
them, he was an SPCA
rescued dog, and eternally
grateful.

He showed his gratitude
by continuously defending
the family home.

He guarded it against the mailman, the paperboy, every bird that landed on the front lawn, and anybody that had the audacity to walk on the sidewalk in front of the house.

The continuous racing through the house, window to window, French door in front, to doggie door in back, to guard against these

intruders kept Charlie busy all day. Out of loyalty and excitement the others joined in. They were a bunch of old farts, but they had purpose! They were alive!

Cobi was a cat, and she knew it. If there were a cartoon bubble over her head, most of the time it would have read “Whatever”, or “Feed me” or “Move aside

Dog!” Still, they were part of her family and as it is with the rest of us, a consequence of chance rather than choice. She watched, stretched, yawned and accepted her lesser housemates and their boisterous racing around with royal feline magnanimity.

I enjoyed them all immensely. They treated me just like family which I guess I was. Whenever I would get up to move from one room to another I was accompanied by an entourage. It was enough to give one a swelled head.

The day after my arrival, Mary informed me we were going to drive to Alexandria

Bay in the USA, where she had a postal box. It was only an hour and a half trip by the Thousand Island Parkway Bridge. It let her avoid paying brokerage fees on the many American items she bought. Of course, we would take the dogs.

“But I don’t have my passport” I complained.

“Bring your driver's license” she replied. As I said this was three decades ago, back when life was simpler and less complicated.

"I have only had a problem with one official and he was on the Canadian side. He made me pay duty on a gift, a pair of gloves for my birthday. They weren't worth

half what he estimated. A real jerk!”

We weren't going to buy anything. What could go wrong? The drive over the bridge and through customs was uneventful. At the post box, Mary picked up, a few letters and a Christmas present, a hand-knitted sweater in a colourful gift bag.

Then we took the dogs to the Keewatin State Park nearby. They had a run and did their business.

Mary dutifully scooped up the dog poop into plastic bags. There were no trash containers. We would have to dump the doggie poo at the next gas station. To avoid leakage Mary took out her new sweater and put the

plastic poop bags in the gift bag. We headed back for the border.

On the Canadian side we were told to pull over for customs inspection. “*Oh Fudge*” Mary whispered. “*It's him. The Jerk!*”

Official “*Do you have anything of value?*”

Mary “*No*”

Customs *“What about that?”*

Gesturing at the gift bag.

Mary was too ladylike to use the accurate word. She resorted to her usual euphemism.

“Just a present” pause, *“from the dogs.”*

He looked at her down his nose as if she was intellectually challenged.



Customs *“And it has no value?”*

Mary confused *“Why - no.”*

Customs *“hand it over I’ll be the judge of that!”*

Mary smiling demurely
“Certainly.”

As he lowered his head to peer into the bag, I knew this was one Christmas trip I was never going to forget.

NEXT
AN ALTERNATIVE
REALITY



Call it Inexplicable

Sixty five million years ago, a giant asteroid zoomed through space. Its trajectory carried it near, then past the third planet from the sun in the galaxy it was passing through.

For the life on the planet it was zooming past, it was a non-event. The sun continued to shine. Life on Planet Earth continued to flourish.

Dinosaurs continued to be the dominant life form.

THIS IS A WHAT IF STORY

“Come!” A guttural sound somewhere between a mouth click and a hiss. A command, gentle but firm.

Dilbert gave a sharp tug on the leash. A transparent filament slid horizontally back and forth across his yellow tinted eyes.

He grinned, revealing rows of pointy white teeth. The tiny mammalian creature scurried toward him. “*Good boy*”, Dilbert

hissed softly, affectionately scratching behind his pet's head where his ears had been partly cropped off.

Although a very different species from the tiny mammal, Dilbert was a child himself, although much bigger than his small human pet. Dilbert was after all, a dinosaur.

Dilbert's ancestors were to become the dominant race on their continent, as it should be, since they were

the Chosen, created after all, in God's image.

Apparently, God had scaly light green skin with dark green spots. *Spots, not stripes.*

During their evolution they had adopted pets. Pets like Dilbert's. Evenings, as they licked their scaly fingers while feasting around campfires, and regaled each other with jokes and tall tales, from nearby in the fringes of the forest, they were being watched.

Light dancing out from the camp fire flames revealed small mammalian faces watching. Watching and licking their lips also, as the fragrance of roasting meat wafted through the air.

Generations would pass. These small furless bi-pedal mammals would over time be adopted as pets by the Chosen. Their desire to please, their very vulnerability endeared them to the Chosen.

But that was the past. Technology had changed the lives of the Chosen in innumerable ways, mostly for the better. Electricity had been discovered, steam power had been developed. Public transportation systems connected big city centers.

There was wireless radio and for the dinosaur masses telephone communication.

Except for the never ending far off tribal warfare, life was good.

Except where it wasn't. It was good for the dinosaur child, Dilbert, and it was good for his family. It was good for most of the elite on the continent that was home to the Chosen. To some extent it was good even for Rover, Dilbert's pet human. For all other life forms, not so much.

Dilbert's pet was affectionately called Rover, because at any opportunity he tried to run away. Nobody knew why. After all he was

fed and watered regularly, and taken daily for walks. When according to current fashion, his ears were surgically reconfigured, he was kindly given pain killers mixed in with his corn and insect gruel.

He had it better than most pets. That was for sure. Yet he kept trying to run away.

Dilbert shouted as he opened the door. “*Hi Mom, Hi Dad!*” He shut the door and removed Rover’s leash

and electronic zapper. He filled his water bowl.

In the living room, Mom and Dad were glued to the boob tube. They were engrossed in a theatrical event where the Chosen fought valiantly in historically revised battles against the Others; battles which the Chosen always won.

The Others were similar in appearance to The Chosen, except they had *stripes not spots*.

Dilbert stretched his tail out behind him and sat down to watch what his parents were watching. Laying beside his water bowl, from across the room, Rover stared at the dinosaur family, his family.

With his left hand, he reached behind his neatly combed Mohawk styled haircut, and scratched the itchy spot where his ears had been partly cut off and were now lobeless, the tops

triangular shaped, the current style for pet humans.

He knew he should be thankful to this family for treating him so well. Still, he longed for companions of his own kind. He longed for knowledge of the world, of life beyond his daily walks. He wondered, if this day was to be the pattern for the rest of his life.

He rolled over and turned himself around with his back to his dinosaur family.

Unexpectedly tears began to slide down his cheeks.

The scene on the television flickered, then went suddenly black. A newscaster in formal attire, that is to say, naked except for a long flowing red tie with green polka dots, appeared on the screen.

She stared straight ahead, as if in the facing camera screen, she could see the long dinosaur faces watching her on TV in homes everywhere across

the nation, staring back, all focused on her.

The transparent filament over her eyes slid horizontally back and forth. She was nervous, and excited.

A long slow burp preceded her announcement, the usual protocol for such a momentous occasion. After all she had an important, a historical message to deliver.

"Here is our leader who will explain what is to come! A

discovery that will change all our lives!” She was more on target with that news than she could possibly have imagined.

The screen flickered and a figure, unusually rotund for a spotted dinosaur, and sporting a long red tie appeared. He was flanked on both sides by the National flag, light green with darker green spots.

Green makeup appeared to be melting under and around his eyes, probably

caused by the heat of the overhead lights. For emphasis he waved his tiny dinosaur hands around as he spoke.

“Under MY administration” he hissed, *“we have developed a new weapon. MY scientists have developed a new energy source, called nuclear power. It is powerful enough to destroy our enemies with one sustained bombing attack. Even as I speak, war head equipped rockets, are*

already in the air and headed across the sea, on target to purify the planet.”

In the background there was a rustling screeching sound as the national anthem of the Chosen began to play.

Mom had been sipping her favourite evening cocktail, a delicious cup of fermented rat brains, as this startling news was delivered. The cup shook in her hands and a dribble of rat brains spilled out on her neck

wattle. Dad watched her and slowly lowered his cup to the floor. His eye filaments flitted back and forth rapidly as he absorbed the news.

“Finally,” he hissed. *“We can rid ourselves of those heretics”*. From beside his water bowl, Rover heard and watched.

Although he understood in a limited way, language of the Chosen, the exact implications of this startling news were lost on him. He felt a sense of unease.

He closed his eyes and tried to imagine what lay ahead. Fortunately for his own peace of mind he could not.

It would be years later, as images from planet Earth travelled through space at the speed of light that a giant camera flying through the cosmos recorded something totally unexpected. What it recorded had happened far away on a distant planet in a distant galaxy. There were no warning signs, no

unusual volcano activity, no asteroid collisions.

And yet it had happened. The space map recorders collated the data. They watched and wondered. One blinked its middle eye and emitted rapid little chirps of surprise.

Together they watched as a distant planet, the third in distance from the sun in its solar system, suddenly burst into a fiery ball. Constant explosions erupted that appeared to disintegrate the

planet into billions of tons of flying debris.

“Beats me” chirped one of the alien creatures staring at the images the giant space camera had sent back to the observatory. It noted the event in the log book.

“One minute it was there, no unusual activity. Next minute - Wham! It was gone. Weird.”

Don't write weird it was corrected.

Call it inexplicable.



THE FERMI PARADOX

The Fermi Paradox seeks to answer the question of where the aliens are. Given that our star and Earth are part of a young planetary system compared to the rest of the universe — and that interstellar travel might be fairly easy to achieve — the theory says that Earth should have been visited by aliens already.

As the story goes, Italian physicist Enrico Fermi, most

famous for creating the first nuclear reactor, came up with the theory with a casual lunchtime remark in 1950. The implications, however, have had extra-terrestrial researchers scratching their heads in the decades since.

"Fermi realized that any civilization with a modest amount of rocket technology and an immodest amount of imperial incentive could rapidly colonize the entire galaxy," the Search For Extra-terrestrial Intelligence

(SETI) Institute in Mountain View, California, said on its website. "Within ten million years, every star system could be brought under the wing of empire. Ten million years may sound long, but in fact it's quite short compared with the age of the galaxy, which is roughly ten thousand million years. Colonization of the Milky Way should be a quick exercise."

Elizabeth Howell Phd

Elizabeth Howell is a space writer and science consultant. She is a graduate of Carleton University (journalism) Canada and the University of North Dakota (space studies), USA.

MY DOOMSDAY THEORY

Here is my **Doomsday Theory**. A guess as to why aliens might not want to chance revealing themselves to us.

Technology does not advance through the achievements of many. It advances sporadically through the imagination and genius of a small number of gifted individuals among the many.

Collectively these individual achievements result in our current abundant complex technology.

No individual human beneficiary of this vast reservoir of technology

understands all of its complexity.

It is not necessary to understand the workings of an internal combustion engine or of EV powered batteries to drive a car. Yet there it is, available to drive for all who have access, to simply turn a key or press a button that says Power. No IQ or emotional stability test required.

While current technology available to humans has advanced in a brief instant, a

blip in galactic time, humans themselves have remained unchanged as a species since the Stone Age.

Technologically we have advanced enormously. Emotionally, morally and intellectually we have not advanced, at all, not even incrementally.

Imagine this scenario as a moral equivalent in human empathetic evolution. Give small children in a day care some loaded AR -15 military assault rifles.

Place a few tubs of ice cream with sprinkles in a few locations in the room. Put oversized heavy galoshes on the feet of some. To compensate for their slower pace, provide them with machetes.

Turn the key in the lock and leave.

Now to understand my Doomsday Theory, imagine you are one of the children in the day care.

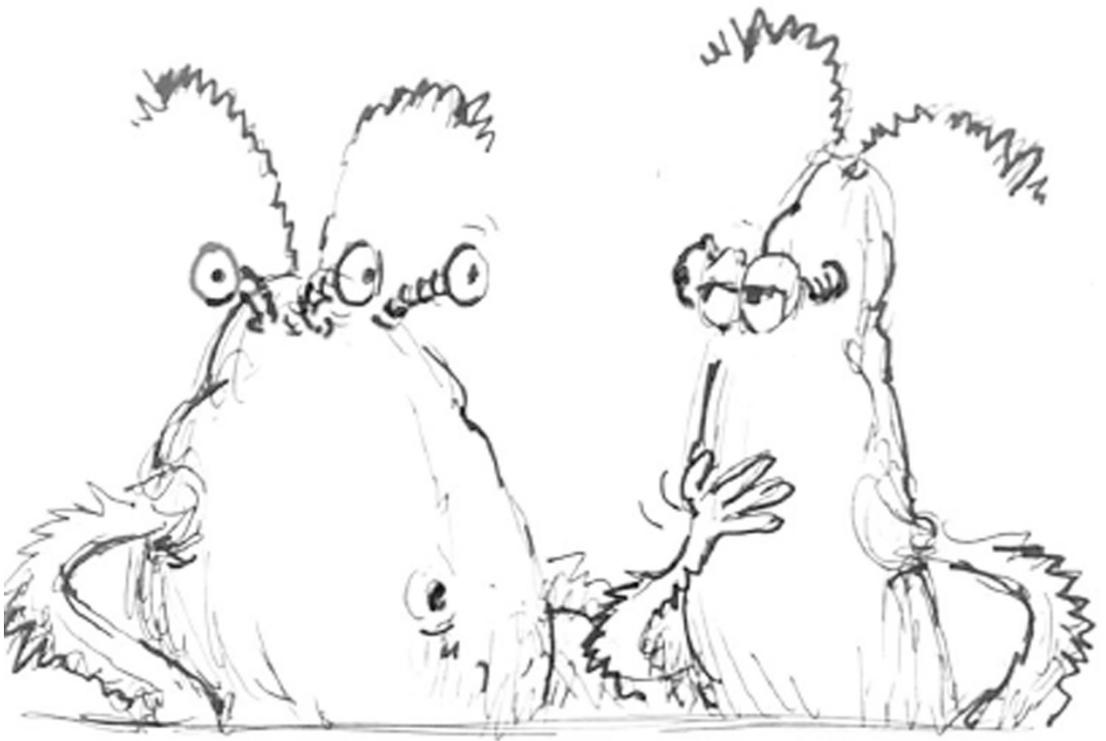
NEXT

Watch the world news, the weapons we have developed and the leaders we have chosen.

GOT THE CONNECTION?

I imagine this is how aliens would probably see us.

Following is my imaginary tale of aliens cautiously observing us.



Alien Observations

One decelerated the small disc shaped spacecraft to get a local read of atmospheric data on this new planet. She was called One as the oldest member

of her species still alive. It seemed she had been Two forever. Now Old One had died and she was New One.

Death had simultaneously elevated her position and brought her closer to its termination.

Collectively the rest of her kind knew each other simply as members of the Hive. These space explorers had lived on board the mother ship for multiple generations. As new members hatched, they had absorbed all the

knowledge of their hive ancestors.

One closed all three of her multifaceted eyes in a grimace. Two and Fifteen were having sex again. *“Dammit this is really fatiguing”*. Meanwhile Seven was complaining about her inability to have a good bowel movement. Same complaint over and over. Six giggled mentally at One’s frustration.

Sure, telepathy was great for instant communication.

And of course, a component of an advanced species way beyond vocal grunting, like the primitive species on the planet below.

But, it sometimes became tiresome to know everything, about everybody, all the time.

Finally, Two and Fifteen were taking a break. But not for long. One felt a burning sensation in her throat. Goddam it what were Two and Fifteen smoking? Oh right. The usual.

One activated the viewing screen so she and her two companions Four and Nine could watch life on the planet below. Her antennae twitched with curiosity. Their flying probe was a scout for the mothership which was at the outer limits of this planet's atmosphere.

She allowed their craft to continue hovering, while the other members of the family observed the terrain on this newly discovered planet.

Other disc shaped craft were doing the same.

Three communicated telepathically onboard and to their fleet their space ships were being observed by an intermediately evolved species local to this planet.

The observers were flying in three jet powered planes, intermediate technology with limited energy capability.

The planes changed direction, heading directly toward their fleet of five interplanetary discs. The

observer planes were armed with high powered weapons.

The alien explorers were not ready to communicate with the locals yet. They were just too warlike.

Or to reveal their own presence by disintegrating the observer planes.

Should they activate the cloaking device or just accelerate away?

They decided on the second choice and changed course by multiple degrees, each in a different direction

dramatically accelerating, each disappeared out of sight of the observers.

Their insect like bodies were capable of withstanding the enormous G force of this sudden shift of direction not only because of their exoskeleton evolution, but also of the technology they had developed.

The interior and exterior passage of time of the ship were out of sync. What happened outside over a few

seconds was felt inside as minutes. With the timing technology activated properly, sharp changes of direction were possible without crushing the passengers inside.

The observers were USA military pilots on routine training and observation exercises. They stared in shock. Their brains told them that what they were observing was impossible, could not be real. And yet there they were.

Honest to gawd UAPs, the pentagon's name for Unidentified Arial Phenomena.

Proof, captured on the pilot audio recording and their plane's camera.

“My gosh, there's a whole fleet of them! They're all going against the wind, the wind is 120 knots to the west. Look at that thing Dude!” The pilot was almost giggling with excitement. *“Omygawd! Look they're all turning! Wow! Can you*

believe this?" The flight records, audio, camera, and written would be catalogued and for the present, kept secret. Unknown to them it was one of many similar experiences of other high flight military aircraft.

Back on the interplanetary space discs, the aliens listened to the babble of the observers.

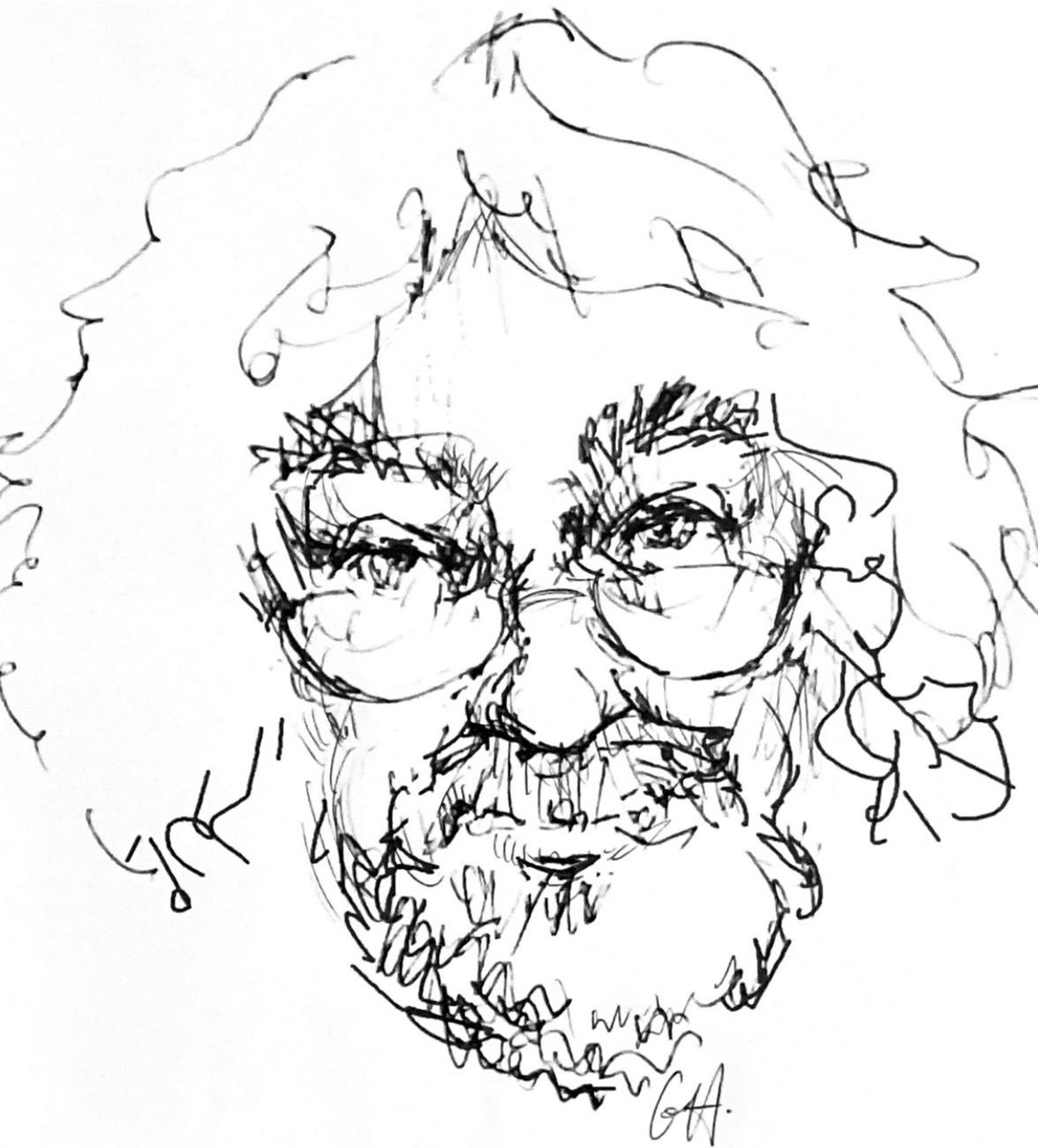
They had not been able to translate the huge variety of sounds these strange huge creatures, the dominant life

on the planet communicated with. It was much more crude and imprecise than telepathy.

However, they could best be understood by their actions. Their individual behaviour was strangely antithetical to the benefit of their own species.

Too warlike and lacking in species empathy to consider making contact. However, if they kept on the same trajectory of ultimate destruction of much life on

their planet, possibly a future home for seeding a new civilization of interplanetary life. Certainly, too violent a species to consider contacting or inviting to join the Intergalactic Species Federation.



MY BACKGROUND

I am mostly retired, but still
write
and dabble in watercolour.
My background includes:
Newspaper **Cartoonist** at
the **Montreal Star**
Columnist / Illustrator at
the **Cape Breton Post**
Along with four other artists
in 1967, we introduced
the art program curriculum
and taught at
Sheridan College, ON
I also taught at
Dawson College QC.

**1st Vice President -
Canadian Society of
Painters in Watercolour
2014 - 2018**

Currently,
Columnist/Cartoonist
at the **Townships Weekend**
newspaper
in the Eastern Townships,
QC Canada

The other four artists who
introduced
the art curriculum at
Sheridan were

Bill Firth (Chairman)
Scot Turner (Bill's protoge)
Don Wightman and
Dave Chesterton.

Four Other Books
Available on
AMAZON
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Book title "garry hamilton"
with quotation marks
Here is one with black and
white illustrations.

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NORTH AMERICA*

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SURVIVAL AS DEMOCRACY DIES

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NORTH AMERICA*

GARRY HAMILTON

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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PROLOGUE

In the distant past huge herds of dinosaurs roamed the Earth. The methane gas they produced caused a warming effect throughout the entire globe. There was tropical plant and animal life from pole to pole.

Due to a spectacular asteroid collision this ecological system suddenly ended.

Fast forward to the near future. Prehistory has

repeated itself at an accelerated pace. The polar ice caps have melted. The seas around the globe have risen submerging much of the land mass.

There is mass migration of animals and humans around the globe. The response of many countries of the perceived invaders has resulted in many democracies succumbing to dictatorships.

The USA has invaded Canada. A group of six

desperate individuals have united in fleeing and ultimately defying the invasion. Meanwhile from above the Earth's atmosphere, a space ship piloted by three aliens are watching the rapid changes taking place on the planet below.

EAGLE EYE GETS LUCKY

Eagle Eye felt a bead of sweat trickle down his forehead. It meandered down over his brow. He felt a salty sting as it crept into his right eye. He blinked but kept focus on the bushes about thirty paces ahead.

Full concentration, loaded crossbow pointed directly at those same bushes. He breathed in and out slowly, his breath out of sync with his heart which was beating

like a jackhammer so loud he could hear it. He wished he had an AR-15. He wished he had a bazooka, a grenade. He didn't. What he had was a crossbow.

Probably enough time for a single shot if he was lucky. It had to be a kill shot. Anything less and he would be ripped apart, his guts, pieces of him splattered everywhere like a G.I. Joe doll in a blender.

He had a bowie knife in a sheath hanging from his belt.

He had Daphne the tame wolf, hackles raised uttering a low growl by his side. Let's face it, if he had to rely on those two things for his defense, he was a goner.

He was a good marksman. A really good marksman, able on most days if there wasn't too much breeze to put an arrow right in the center of a bullseye a hundred feet away.

That would be true usually for seven out of ten shots if he had several seconds to

aim and there was no breeze.

There was no breeze, thank God. Would he have several seconds? Probably, but no more than that. Okay where should he aim for? What would be potential kill shots? The animal would be facing him, so a shot in the heart would be difficult.

For a facing shot the massive sternum and rib cage might deflect the arrow away from the heart.

Nope.

The only shot that might stop an animal this huge was through an eye into its brain, or better still, through its open mouth also into its brain. He felt a whisper of a breeze, saw leaves flutter slightly.

Suddenly a loud crack of breaking brush as a huge bear suddenly exploded out of the bushes. It charged toward him, its mouth gaping open, spittle flying from side to side. How could a beast this huge move so fast?



And yet for Eagle Eye time seemed to slow down. He saw the bear charging and himself aiming almost as if he were detached from his body and observing the scene from above.



He saw himself release the trigger of the crossbow. He saw the arrow travel forward it seemed in slow motion, in repeated images fusing into each other in sequence,

himself diving, almost floating to the side.

He heard a brief humming sound as the arrow flew forward, followed by a whoosh of air and flying fragmented foliage rising then falling like confetti.

The bear careened past him, its legs slack, but its body carried past him by the sheer momentum of the charge. The arrow vibrated briefly, the feathered end protruding out of the bear's open mouth.

Eagle Eye held on to his crossbow as he rose shakily to his feet, his eyes fixed on the bear. It wasn't moving. He turned and gave a thumbs up to the group behind him. Then he leaned to his side and retched.

Behind him mixed reactions. The other five members in the group were trembling with fear. There was nervous giggling from some. Tears flowed freely down Chip's cheeks. Her hands cradling the sides of

her head as she turned her face skyward, a low crooning coming from deep within her throat. The others had no idea of the part she had played in guiding Eagle Eye's movements, or the arrow flightpath. Was he aware? Probably not.

Tiny, his immense hands balled into fists was trembling, his huge body suddenly covered in sweat, his deep set eyes wide open, the whites showing, focused on the bear, a low

growl rumbling from deep within his huge chest.

Tammy had her fist pressed to her mouth to keep from screaming. Daphne her pet wolf trotted back to her, hackles beginning to flatten down. Pops stared straight ahead, eyes focused on the bear, then on Eagle Eye, then one by one on each of the others.

Holy Crap murmured Muzak quietly to himself. He was the youngest member of

their group of six. Young, but athletic and street smart. He had escaped from juvenile detention services and had been living on the streets from childhood. He had managed in the past to calm down contentious situations through his wit and humour. A witty retort would definitely not have sufficed for this situation. Although the bear's mouth was gaping wide open in a horrific grin, that grin wasn't a smile. Muzak was pretty sure the

bear did not have a sense of humour. Certainly not in his present state.

Eagle Eye knelt beside the bear's head. He wiped away traces of vomit from his mouth onto his sleeve. He leaned his head back and eyes closed, silently gave thanks to whatever forces had guided his arrow. He gave thanks to the bear which was about to provide the group with food.

It had been a long trek through the backwoods in

northern Quebec and the group was exhausted.

Exhausted and hungry. But not hungry for long. From its hind quarters, Eagle Eye cut off some choice parts. Over a roaring fire the group of six, feasted on roast bear. Saliva dripping from her muzzle Daphne, their tame wolf uttered a low woof. Eagle Eye tossed a big piece of raw bear meat to her.



UNLIKELY RESCUES

Pops slowed down his little red car as he cruised past the crowded square in

East Montreal. Two American POWS were on the prowl looking for U.S refugees or trouble makers.

Actually, they just wanted some action. Heads to crack open with their crowd control batons. They were hoping for someone to resist their interrogation so they had an excuse to beat the hell out of them before throwing them into a paddy wagon for detention in their new home, a crowded cell.

America had invaded Canada. U.S. military were in charge now. That was them, Right? So why not have a little fun beating up the locals? U.S. military were the law here now. Get used to it.

Pops pulled his car over to the curb and stopped. He watched as the two military thugs chose their next target. A huge figure, head hunched down was slouching away from them.

Although he may have been trying to appear smaller by his crouched over posture, it made his figure look even bulkier, bigger.

His body was broad, massive with unusually long arms covered in curly dark hair. A shaggy mane of brown hair fell over his forehead covering the thick brow ridge over his deep set dark eyes.

He was dressed in standard light green medical

lab clothing which strained against his immense bulk. He knew that he stood out in a crowd. He was attempting to put some distance between himself and the two uniformed military cops.

The cops picked up the pace, shoving people out of their way as they advanced.

An old lady staggered as one of the cops elbowed her aside. She swore at him *Maudite! de Sans Design!*

The cop balled up his hand in a fist.

He didn't throw a punch however. A slap on the back of his head staggered him and interrupted his swing.

A young man riding on a unicycle was looking at the military cop over his shoulder while riding away. He shook his hand limply from the wrist as if the slap he had delivered still stung.



Then with the same hand he reached in his hip pocket and pulled out a harmonica.

While playing the harmonica, he tilted his hat in a wide sweeping theatrical gesture of you're welcome to the old lady. She cackled with laughter and pointing toward him yelled *Mon Sauveur!* Peals of laughter from the crowd. The cops changed direction and charged toward the unicycle riding musician.

He zigzagged expertly back and forth in front of them just beyond their reach while playing the William Tell overture on his harmonica and lifting his hat up and down in time with the music.

His escape was assisted by the crowd who kept getting in the way of the two cops. Pops by the curb in his little red car observed all that was happening, the unicycle riding musician and the huge mop haired figure who was

the cop's initial target. The big guy was headed his way.

Hey Big Guy get in the back and get down whisper yelled Pops motioning to the huge stranger. Invitation accepted in an instant. The stranger dove in through the back door and laid prone on the floor in the back.

Pops eased away from the curb and into the slow moving traffic, heading south on St. Lawrence Blvd toward a left at the intersection with Rue Sherbrooke.

The entire scene was being witnessed by another pair of eyes. Parked also by the curb close enough to see all was a despondent young woman in a small pickup truck.

Beautiful with dark skin and a mass of curly auburn hair. She wiped away tears and giggled at the sight of the military cops trying to catch the zigzagging musician.

The zoo in the Eastern townships an hour and a half

drive from Montreal where Animal handler and custodian Tammy had spent so many happy hours, had been forced to close down after Canada had been invaded by the USA.

She loved the animals she had cared for. She had managed to rescue her two favourite animals, Eightball a donkey, and Daphne a tame wolf. Daphne was riding shotgun next to her. Tammy sighed. Mixed emotions.



The wolf placed her paw on Tammy's thigh. Eightball the donkey, was in the truck bed. The unicycle riding musician was pedaling her

way and the two cops were about fifty feet behind him cursing and puffing as they tried to follow his zigzag path. She leaned out the window and yelled *Get in the back.*

Muzak tipped his hat toward the two cops, hopped down from his unicycle, tossed it in the back of the truck, and vaulted over the side and into the truck bed beside Eightball the donkey. Tammy pulled away from the curb.

The stoplights at the intersection changed to green and off they went turning left on Sherbrooke, the same route as Pops and the burly stranger in the little red car had taken.

When they were far enough away, she stopped the truck and her passenger hopped out. He came to the drivers side. *You okay?* He asked seeing her tearstained cheeks. *Yeah, I'm good* she smiled.

They decided to head north together, to escape this godawful invasion. He got in the cab, sitting next to Daphne. Daphne let out a low growl to let him know who was in charge.

They headed north on a dirt road on the northwest side of the Saint Lawrence River, now twice its previous width from decades ago.

Tammy turned on the radio to see if the cops had filed a public warning with their description.

Nothing. The announcer repeated messages they had heard earlier about strange new mutated animals attacking people outside the urban areas. Nuclear power plants now under water had leaked radiation causing mutations to wild life.

Old news. She turned the radio off.

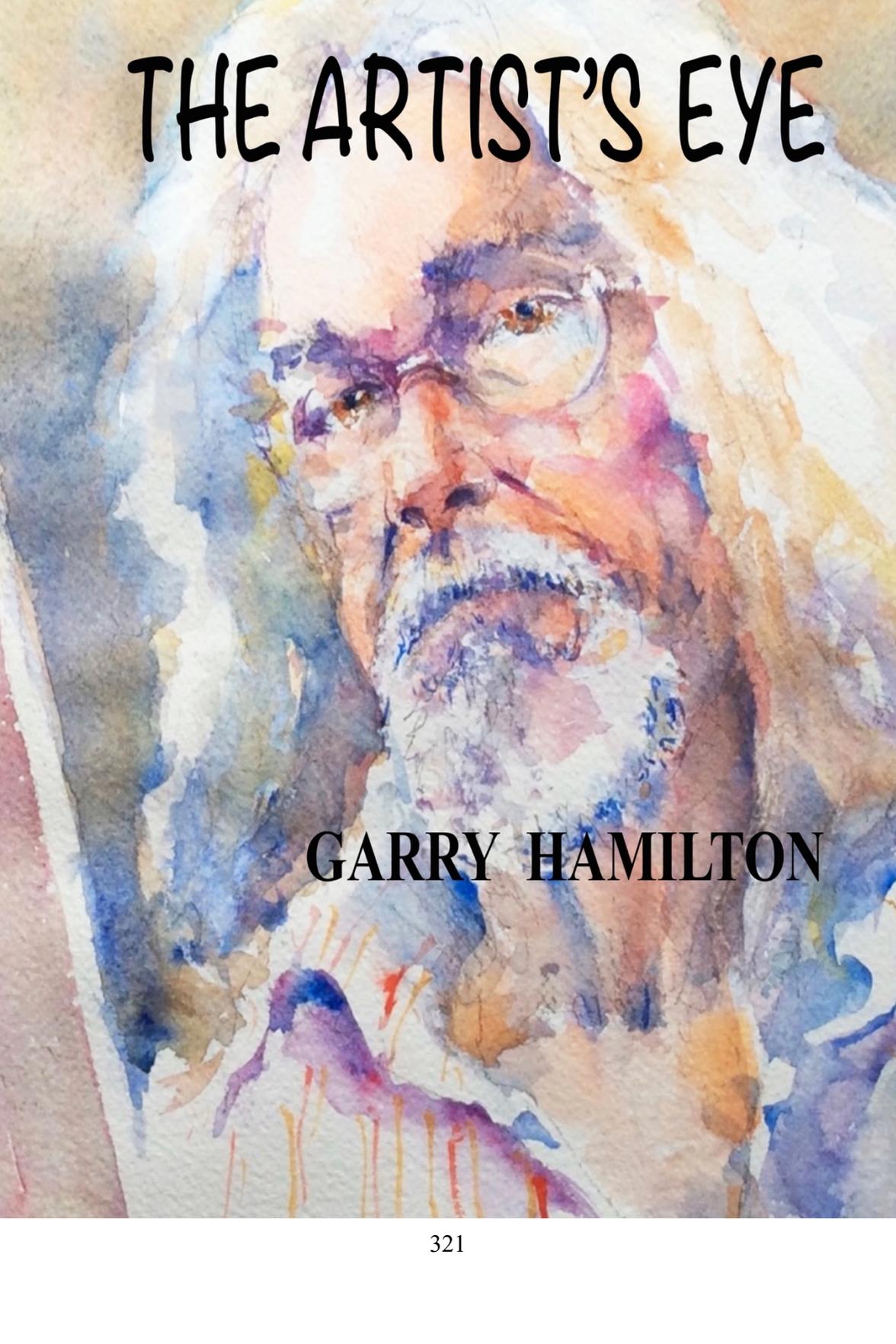
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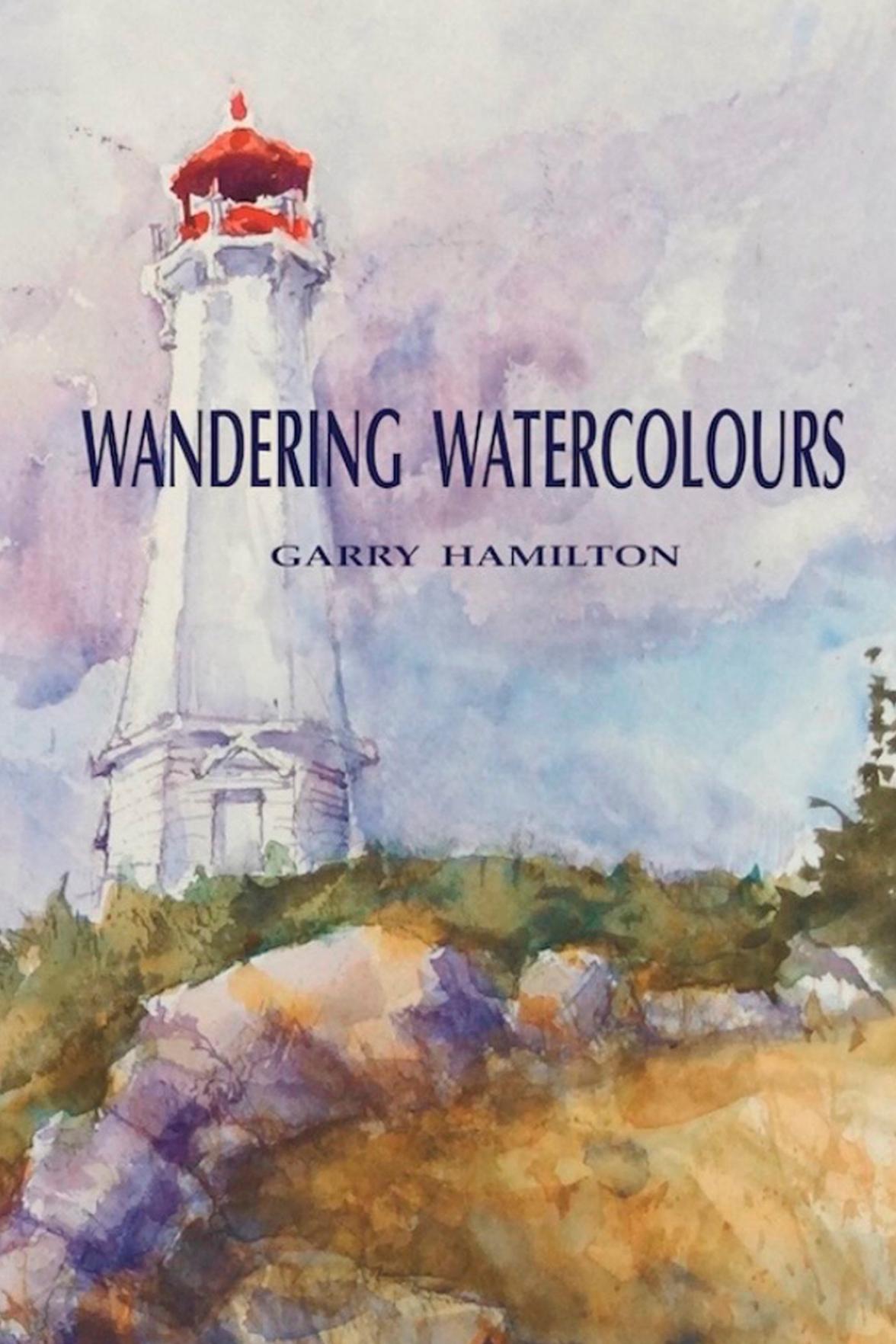
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NEXT

**WANDERING
WATERCOLOURS**

A watercolor illustration of a lighthouse. The lighthouse is white with a red lantern room and a red top. It sits on a rocky, green hill. The sky is a mix of purple, blue, and white. The foreground is a rocky, brownish-yellow slope.

WANDERING WATERCOLOURS

GARRY HAMILTON

Here is a
visual watercolour journey.

A journey through time
and places near
and far.

Make yourself comfortable,
pour yourself a glass of wine
or whatever floats your boat
and read on.

Enjoy my recounting of
distant painting travels and
adventures both visually and
in word. Portraits of people I
have met and painted,
different cultures and dress.
Lined and wrinkled faces

of elderly folks,
Smooth innocent faces of
babies and youth.
Places I have travelled
and painted.
Seascapes with kite surfers
doing aerobatics while
riders on horseback
gallop by beside
the relentless crashing surf.
Observations realized and
passed on with a few
chuckles along the way.

NEXT
in full colour

SH*TS 'n GIGGLES

Are you overwhelmed with
daily doom and gloom
from social media?

Sh*ts 'n Giggles is an
escape through humour.

Let the elegance and joy in
rhyming poetry transport
you on a journey of chuckles
and occasional insight.

The poems fantasize and
speculate about
human foibles, UAPs, A.I.
the Afterlife,

And
Life in the age of Trump.
Each poem is enhanced with
an Illustration.



SH*TS 'n GIGGLES

AND A FEW WTF TEARS

GARRY HAMILTON

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please write a
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