Gorillas Garbage and Girls

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GORILLAS
GARBAGE
and
GIRLS
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TO

NINETEEN HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

THE YEAR OF THE MONKEY
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INTRODUCTION

I carried garbage out to the side of the road from the garage every Sunday and Thursday night except when less important matters clouded my mind and caused me to forget.

When I was medium small with less but just as large problems I played "jungle" in the front yard of a very good friend. Try as I might to become another of the varied species of animals, I never could. I always wrinkled my brow, stooped to bring my knuckles closer to the ground, and moved with great dignity to become a gorilla once again.

I've fallen in and out of love a few hundred times. Most of these love affairs lasted no longer than two to five minutes. A better or closer look, the turning of the page, a short confrontation involving an exchange of words, another woman, a wrong corner, fear, no real desire, humidity, many things caused the falling out. But a few I met I loved longer. The stars fell in line or something for awhile.
Each of these experiences is lodged in my brain among millions of other experiences, just above the medulla. I have plucked them out to close them into an area (the boundaries of my paintings) where they can be seen bumping against each other, hoping that they will give each other coherence. And to place them together so that their identities can be exchanged.

The following is a collection of diversified literary creations that has expanded gorillas, garbage and girls. From these writings and readings small beams of light came into my being through various entrances and pushed around some and caused a reaction. That reaction has been a better use of the acres within those boundaries of my paintings.

All illustrative material is my own as well as all written material that is not followed by a credit line.
GORILLAS
The Gentle Giants

Despite all the atrocities falsely attributed to it, the gorilla is essentially a peace-loving creature...

-The Primates-

For a time after this, it stood very still and didn't do anything. Then it began to growl and beat its chest; it jumped up and down and flung its arms and thrust its head forward. The growls were thin and uncertain at first but they grew louder after a second. They became low and poisonous, louder again, low and poisonous again; they stopped altogether. The figure extended its hand, clutched nothing, and shook its arm vigorously; it withdrew the arm, extended it again, clutched nothing, and shook. It repeated this four or five times. Then it picked up the pointed stick and placed it at a cocky angle under its arm and left the woods for the highway. No gorilla in existence, whether
in the jungles of Africa, of California, or in New York City in the finest apartment in the world, was happier at that moment than this one, whose god had finally rewarded it.

-Wise Blood-

Throughout its long history as a symbol of aggressive virility the image of the ape has seldom faltered. He is humanoid and yet is a wild beast. Civilized man is at his most animal during coitus, and the symbolic equation follows naturally enough.

-Men and Apes-

A New York City subway train sped along with a fair amount of passengers jiggling back and forth in an induced daze. Shadows were dramatically cast as light struck pertinent points. The train rose above the ground
faithfully following its now elevated track. It plowed a tunnel through the thick air imprisoned by the massive concrete structures of N.Y.C. The metallic sounds of the subway cars ricocheted from one concrete wall to another. The small passengers within swayed back and forth and back and forth in a mechanical rhythm. A huge hairy howling muscled gorilla raised its arm and smashed the train to the street, its pounding fist the size of a subway car. Yellow eyes gleamed from the structured head. Yellow teeth gleamed from the searching mouth and the black fist crushed the train flat.

A woman a few rows back screamed in delight causing a few unintentional laughs. I found my hand inside my popcorn box squeezing the kernels unmercifully. Someone in the front row coughed and the gorilla on the screen growled and headed downtown not particularly caring on what he stepped. Times Square, Broadway, me, the Empire State Building, all suffered, as did the lovesick gorilla.

On he trampled leaving huge gorilla footprints permanently imbedded in the sidewalks of New York City,
Eastside, Westside, all around the town. Tufts of gorilla hair stuck to the street signs and lamp posts that had impeded his progress. But he had a goal and there was no room in his massive heart for the delight of destruction. No enjoyment was had by the lonely gorilla but the woman a few rows back was creeping toward hysterical ecstasy. A man to my left fumbled with his long overcoat as his grey hair spread further from beneath his derby. My popcorn was inedible.

Then King Kong found her. She lay invitingly on a king-size bed, limp and vulnerable. Kong, the gorilla, peered through the window with tear-filled yellow eyes at his love. A voyeur in the back of the theatre babbled with incoherent joy. Fay was grasped, screaming, from her bed and drawn gently through the window and carried off into the bright lights and heavy downtown traffic. The gorilla grunted, almost a purr, with satisfaction. The man in the derby grunted as he focused on Kong's fingers hairily entwined about Fay's slender body just below her jiggling, jutting, jewel-like, tender-tipped full, firm, budded breasts.
Then doom spread a thin film about Kong as he carefully placed his toes in the windows of the Empire State Phallus and rose. Slowly from the base to the head. Fay wriggled more and more violently. Kong rose. Fay screamed. Kong rose. The derbied man rose. Fay pierced the theatre's speakers with a climatic scream as Kong grasped the peak and then both went limp with exhaustion.

There had been a violation. Kong had to die and he did amidst the airplane gnats stinging him to that death hundreds of feet below. A crowd gathered and looked at an indistinguishable form of fur. My popcorn was walked on as we left. I think the derby was too.

Probably no animal has fired the imagination of man to the same extent as has the gorilla. Its man-like appearance and tremendous strength, its remote habitat and reputed belligerance have endowed the beast with a peculiar fascination and stirred popular and scientific interest.

-The Year of the Gorilla-
There is a wolf in me... fangs pointed for tearing gashes... a red tongue for raw meat... and the hot lapping of blood - I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a hog in me... a snout and a belly... a machinery for eating and grunting... a machinery for sleeping satisfied in the sun - I got this too from the wilderness and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a baboon in me... clambering, clawed... dog-faced... hairy under the armpits... ready to snarl and kill... ready to sing and give milk... waiting - I keep the baboon because the wilderness says so.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from God-Knows-Where: it is going God-Knows-Where - For I am the keeper of zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.

-"Wilderness"-
"People that dislike gorillas are suspect."

Gary Rauber

April 21, 1969
GARbage
Every spring for ten years my family and I drove by the Newport Happy Junkyard of Newport, New Hampshire, on our way home. I never failed to look at the row of resting wrecked automobiles closest to the road. If I had wanted to I could have seen the whole junkyard. It was very small and selective. But I only paid attention to that front row.

There were six cars there and they always stayed. Rust grew around rocker panels and headlights and spread its light coarse cover over fenders and door panels. The chrome of bumpers and handles reflected less and less of the undemanding New Hampshire sun. Glass became as veined as medical drawings of the human body. There were two Chevrolets, three Dodges (one a convertible) and an old Whippet.

The Chevys and the Dodges were still alive. They supplied parts to the hungry Chevy and Dodge owners that searched their innards. But the Whippet was dead. The layer of bird crap on its exterior hadn't been disturbed for years. The only activity I ever saw around the Whippet was the darting coming and going of the authors of that layer.
For years I kept an eye on those cars and watched the Chevys and Dodies change from automobiles to pieces. I was no longer able to tell one from the other. I had forgotten one from the next and could no longer keep them in order.

But the Whippet remained a Whippet and seemed to gain a few breaths of life as the other cars became indistinguishable. Then it was no longer there. A brown flattened shape with green grass growing to its edge was all that remained. The birds were gone.

"A man without a spirit is just garbage. When he hits the ground he splatters."

Mrs. Frost
May 21, 1969

The sun glinted off the battle-scarred Mack "Dumpster" truck into the corner of "Belch" Fumb's
eye brightening the gleam that was already there.

"Belch" belched, ground a few gears, and lurched the garbage encrusted machine on to the next neatly neighborly pile of wonders at the end of a driveway.

"I been doin' this fer thirty years an' each new pile o' shit always interests me. I guess ya could say that I really gets wrapped up in my work. Oney I wisht people would wrap up the cans a little better. We got rules but no one obeys 'cause they can't be bothered wit' jes' crummy ole garbage anymore. It used ta be that long ago, people took a lotta pride an' gave me good tips on Christmas an' wrapped up garbage good, but now, look at the stuff. Jes' crammed into the can an' carried out here by some groaning fella at night so's no one sees him an' he don't even put it all the way ta the end o' the driveway. What am I? Huh? A valet or somethin'. A servant? I gotta carry the stuff outta the house too? Shit."

"Belch" Fumb picked up the can and lugged it to the rear of the truck. He took the lid off and tossed it onto the lawn about as far away as he could. Levers were
pulled, chugging noises began, sucking, gurgling, hissing and the can was emptied. "Belch" carried it back and placed it gently where it had stood.

"I ain't one o' the ones that smashes the can aroun'. No sirree. But I can' stand the lids. Jesus they get me mad 'cause they usually don' fit right an' I gotta tug like a sonuvabitch to get 'em off an' then the garbage spills out all over the place. I'm designin' a can now. Been workin' on it for awhile. It's gotta hinged lid an' good solid hand grips. Maybe I'll make 'em different colors to make 'em beautiful an' scare the dogs too. Jesus them dogs. I like dogs, but when they tip over the cans an' drag the crap all over the neighborhood, out into the streets an' on the lawns, man, that bothers me. Dogs gotta knack for that too. They know the easy cans to work on. My new can's gonna have an alarm thing to scare 'em besides the colors. It ain't good when they pee on 'em too. The can sets in the sun awhile ya know an' then it smells worse than the garbage. Mebbe I'll stick a few volts o' electric in the cans so's when the dog squirts, the electric will zap 'em in the vitals. That'll make 'em remember."
Fumb clamored into the truck, adjusted a few protruding seat springs and ground onto the next sculpture of canned garbage. The sun was on its way into nightly hiding and shadows jutted from the garbage cans and bent across the road. Fumb had arranged his route so that the last house was his. His abundant grounds were covered with the wealth of his work. He had a true devotion to bottles, especially coke bottles. They hung from trees, lamp posts, windows, window sills, and the eaves of his house. A small shed holding lubricating equipment and bottles for future projects was made out of bottles.

"Helluva racket aroun' here when the wind blows but sure do look beautiful when the sun comes up inna mornin'. I get up about 5 to warm up the truck and take a lissurely crap in the outbuilding. I leave the door open an' jes' look at them bottles dangling all over the place. The sun peers through 'em and they all sparkle alot. God couldn't a done a better job. Yuh know when I'm settin' there thinkin' an' lookin' at my bottles I really begin to feel good about my job. Garbage
Sure is an important thing to a man. Why it takes weeks ta throw some things away an' then ya always need it the day after. I've recovered quite a few things for my customers. An' garbage is pretty valuable as a base. Them real classy houses up on the hill are all sittin' on the garbage I collected from down here. An' lookit all o' them trash cans an' baskete the government buys so people can throw the stuff in 'em or aroun' 'em. Must be thousands o' dollars there. Sure could use a couple o' those thousands to buy me a new truck. My Mack is gettin' tired..I gotta use my feet ta get it inta gear sometimes."

Fumb belched again and closed his wrinkle supported eyes. An odor of wholesome garbage and strong layers of Right Guard wafted in the wind. He was a content man except for a small nagging problem that he recently pondered in the morning in the outbuilding.

"I want my son ta come into the business with me but he wants ta go ta Cornell College an' become one
o' them nervous educated types. Jesus, that's got me worried."

"The main piece of subject matter isn't bad but the crap in pink and orange around the edge, the extraneous stuff, is garbage."

- An obscure professor of undergraduate school during a critique"--
GIRLS
Of course I tried to convince her that there was more to sex than pleasure - much more indeed! - and that it was facile, idiotic, to make a fetish of orgasm. She agreed. But whatever is sanctioned by society as a principal good also becomes a moral imperative (whether it's the salvation of the soul or the body) and we can't fail to attain it except at the peril of our conscience.

-In Praise of Older Women-


Few women anywhere could resist such wily cajolery, and prostitutes would spring to their feet eagerly and hurl themselves into whatever fantastic poses he requested of them. Women killed Hungry Joe.
His response to them as sexual beings was one of frenzied worship and idoltry. They were lovely, satisfying, maddening manifestations of the miraculous, instruments of pleasure too powerful to be measured, too keen to be endured, and too exquisite to be intended for employment by base, unworthy man. He could interpret their naked presence in his hands only as a cosmic oversight destined to be rectified speedily, and he was driven always to make what carnal use of them he could in the fleeting moment or two he felt he had before Someone caught wise and whisked them away. He could never decide whether to furgle them or photograph them, for he had found it impossible to do both simultaneously. In fact, he was finding it almost impossible to do either so scrambled were his powers of performance by the compulsive need for haste that invariably possessed him. The pictures never came out and Hungry Joe never got in.

-Catch 22-
"Ralph," she openly shouted. "There's two hundred and we have to pick some out to give."

She stood in an expansive spread of greeting cards with her white arms stretched straight out to encompass all that she imagined.

"Ralph," she openly shouted again. "There's two thousand."

The decisiveness I was looking for two weeks ago sprang up at this moment and we meandered from Birthday to Get Well to Anniversary removing our choices.

"How poetic."

"Romanticism. Insipid."

She knew what she wanted and remembered all of the pertinent occasions to come.

I had just met her this morning while trying to find a good card store. We were both looking through a telephone book so we searched together. I wondered when she'd run off to breathe the wonders of the morning to her nervous searching girlfriends. It seems
like there are groups of them scattered all over pushing air to each other's ears and jouncing within that air are those words of the day. Words of bland mystery and deflated excitement. But she said she would stay all day.

The paper inspirations gathered in the back seat of the car covering a sweater and a piece of aluminum counter-edging as we headed to my home.

"What's the metal thing?"

"A left-over piece of counter-edging. The other part is hiding a crack in my kitchen."

To a friend of mine
That is being missed.
To a friend of mine
That I never see.
To a friend of mine
That means a great deal.
I say "Hello."

The "hello" was fuzzy. The other cards hung onto the same meaningless words, some fuzzy, some not.

She stayed all day and all night. I fascinated her, she said, because I kept looking at the floor and ground and then up and very often at her. She fascinated
me and I reached out and touched her just above the sheet's outlined edge. Her raspy smothered reply was fuzzy. She turned and rested a limb. She had become white within white embellished with browns and rose and whitened blue that changed by my side. Stillness that changes. When rain forms along the horizon the grass pales and blends to trees, houses, trucks, sky. I smelled her hair to wonder. In among the tangles it smelled of that far field that catches the rain first.

The white sheet folded and spread and tucked and rhythmically breathed with the greeting card girl underneath.

During the remainder of my student years I had many frustrating experiences, but few with women. I owe my good luck to the dear wives who shared with me their matrimonial joys and sorrows. Our romances were untroubled and unclouded, there was no needling, nagging or quarreling—after all, what would be the point of extra-marital affairs if they were the same as marriage? Moreover, I didn't have to pay for their
love the dues of social responsibility, at a time when I still had to study, help my mother and busy myself with all the indispensable activities of any young man. They saved me from the tragic mistake of marrying too soon, although I made marriage proposals to several of them. They also saved me from the excuses of passion: as a rule, wives are too busy to wear out their lovers. I could offer them only temporary distraction from their domestic ills, but it was joy without fear of retribution. They could embrace me without bringing upon themselves the obligation of having to wash my socks. Thus we spent our free time in happy adulteries.

- In Praise of Older Women -
Peggy Day stole my poor heart away.
By golly what more can I say.
Love to spend the night with Peggy Day.

Peggy Night makes my future look so bright.
Man that girl is out of sight.
Love to spend the day with Peggy Night.

Well you know ever here before I ever knew her name
You know I loved her just the same.
And I tell 'em all over that
I may go just so they'll know that
She's my lady and I love her so.

Peggy Day stole my poor heart away.
Turned my skies to blue cloud grey.
Love to spend the Night with Peggy Day.

Peggy Day stole my poor heart away.
By golly what more can I say.
Love to spend the night with Peggy Day.

-"Peggy Day"-
GORILLAS
GARBAGE
& GIRLS
CONCLUSION

To end I would like to quote a man who says of himself, "I have never seen a more lucid, more lonely, better balanced mad mind than mine." That mad minded man is Vladimir Nabokov and in an early novel he describes the way in which a flat, abstract contrivance (in chess or art) can take on vitality and light: "Little by little, the pieces and squares began to come to life and exchange impressions. The crude might of queen was transformed into refined power, restrained and directed by a system of sparkling levers; the knights stepped forth with a Spanish caracole... Every creator is a plotter; and all the pieces impersonating his ideas on the board were here as conspirators and sorcerers."

And when speaking of poetry he speaks of art as well. "By poetry I mean the mysteries of the irrational perceived through rational words," he has explained. "True poetry of that kind provokes not laughter and not tears but a radiant smile of perfect satisfaction, a purr of beatitude - and a writer may well be proud of himself if he can make his readers smile and purr that way."
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THE END