

## Wilderness House Literary Review 12/1

*Doug Hawley*

### BETTER LIVING THROUGH ELECTRONICS

#### 1

HORACE CRAM CLEARED 5' – barely. His moustache was visible – barely. Legs – hairless. Charisma – none. Intelligence – fairly high about unimportant things. All this in a pear shaped package. His bifocals make him look like an illustration of a nerd in an encyclopedia. Imagine a short, even uglier Bill Gates. Behind his back, people joked about his assberger's syndrome – a play on the word for a high performing autistic. By a stroke of fortune, he also had some of a nerd's ability at electrical engineering and is employed testing new media products at Electrowiz. He has hopes that his stock would explode with Electrowiz's new product.

"Hey Jane, join me for coffee."

"Sorry, Horace I've got a ton of work and can't leave my desk. No time to talk, no time to walk."

Jane is 3" taller than Horace before she puts on her heels, makes more than he does, is classically attractive without trying, in short way out of his league. She has turned him down ten times, but Horace rations his attentions so as not to be in the total obsessive stalker mold.

Horace does a quick calculation and decides he can ask about an after work beer in two weeks.

#### 2

We are playing LA. Since LA beat us in the finals last year, it is always great to beat them. I would not be surprised if we meet them in the finals this year. No question, we will win in four. Tonight, we are playing in LA. Clearly, the game will be decided at the end.

No surprise, we are down a point with ten seconds to go and we have the ball. I think that we have the best point guard in the NBA. Will Jackson is third in the NBA in assists, gets a few rebounds and scores in double digits. At 6'5" he has either height or speed on every opposing guard. Stan Novack, a Polish import, starts at small forward. Damn fast for a white man, and holds his own by doing the little things – setting picks, getting some rebounds and playing good team D. Our shooting guard, Steve Goodman is two years out of high school and fifth in the league in scoring. He doesn't do much else, but the rest of us handle everything else. Center Keith Daniels is a 7'4" center from Brigham Young. He is so white, he is almost invisible, but he is tops in the league in blocked shots and fourth in rebounds. He doesn't have much shooting range, but unlike Shaq, he is an 80% free throw shooter, so he gets his share of close in shots and dunks as well as making lots of free throws. The bench? Well the bench is what management could afford after paying for our superb starting lineup – some guys on the way down, some on the way up, and some who were available.

Oh, yeah that leaves the power forward, ME. James (not Jim or Jimmy) Jones. Based on my size, a lot of people think of me as the next Shaq. No way. Shaq used to tell Karl Malone not to take his shirt off in the locker

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room because Karl was so ripped. Based on my physique and the way I play (except for not hurting so many other players), I think that I am the natural successor to Mr. Malone as THE power forward of my generation. Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett are good, but they are at the end of their careers, and I'm the future. Don't believe, look at the numbers. No brag, just facts.

I know that I said there were just ten seconds left, how can I be saying all this? Times like this, things slow down. It's relativity or something that I can't explain. Will drives, but is covered on the way to the basket, so he kicks the ball out to Steve. My man turns his head, Steve makes one of his rare passes in to me, and I dunk. If the backboards weren't reinforced, it would have shattered. Thunder and lighting, man.

Three seconds on the clock. LA takes their time out. Being LA, most of the crowd has left. They get the ball to Kobe, Keith stuffs him, game over.

Back to the hotel, feeling good. Much as I hate LA as a city and as an NBA team, I love the women, and the feeling is mutual. Most of the team gets their pick of the women, but Keith is a married straight arrow and Steve, well we wonder about Steve. I try to alternate the races as an affirmative action kind of guy. White – black – white – black – whose turn is it? Holy Moses, think I'll have Chinese tonight. She's big – maybe 5'10" and build like a porn queen with a beautiful porcelain skin.

Got myself a winner. We discussed life before, during and after. She had rebelled against her parents wishes to marry a nice Chinese boy. While in college she developed a taste for black athletes. She is pretty athletic herself. Obviously studied the Kama Sutra. She is currently a college professor in English lit. She is widely traveled and very sophisticated.

### 3

We are jamming in Cleveland. I know, I know, I know. Cleveland. But we are always out of our heads in Cleveland. Out of body, out of mind. Crazy. We are tighter when we should be tight, looser when we should be loose.

As always, we are mixing it up. Segues are for kids or the anal retentive. We switch from our Afro-Cuban signature "TimbucHavana2" to our "Honky Tonk Women" cover. More horns on the former, more guitar on the latter. Got to have our swing medley later. Hot lights, hotter music. We are all virtuosos, but my name and piano lead the way.

I'm Gonzales. People like to guess about me. I think that a little mystery is a good thing. I'm from Cuba, but my Ingles is pretty good. I picked up a good University education along the way. Although I have stuck with music all the way, my curiosity led me into courses on physics, literature and politics. With my shaved head, brown goatee and light brown skin my "race" is unclear to my fans. It is to me as well, but I suspect there are some African, European and Indio in there.

I grab a saxophone. I only do this when I'm really feeling good. It is time to cover Ray's "The Nighttime is the Right Time". We learned so much from him, I wish he were still around. We could, and have, played Ray all night. There were a few months after he died when we did nothing but tributes. The good stuff, not much of the Country stuff (some excep-

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tions –“I’m Movin’ On” and “You Are My Sunshine”). We worked with “Drown In My own Tears”, “Hard Times” and “Tell the Truth”. We had to augment our backup vocals, but we had some great singers along.

After a little experimentation with mind bending drug and drink, I’ve limited myself to a couple of drinks a night. Despite what I thought I was doing after grass or coke, the recordings always showed that the band sucked. I’ve had to can a few players, who would not walk the line, but we are the better for it, and I don’t want to be an enabler. Being sober allows the band to do something different than any other group that I know – we go for a short run or walk after our final set. This has cut us off from some who think that a popular band has to be into weird stuff, but it works for us and has connected us to a lot of fans who might not otherwise notice us. We move to some Santana covers, some old Fats Domino, and close with the obscure, but stone groove “Goin’ Home Tomorrow” by Little Richard. We get a lot of love from the audience before we take off for the Big Apple tomorrow.

### 4

Horace is not connecting with humans. Maybe a cat would help his loneliness. If a cat worked, he might work his way up to a dog. If not, he could retreat to an amphibian or reptile of some sort.

A trip to the pound gives him plenty of alternatives. First he eliminates the aloof cats. He has had enough of that with people. He finally picks two sisters so they can entertain each other while he is at work.

The cat thing turns out pretty well. Caring for the cats distracts Horace somewhat from his dismal waking hours and gives him something to do besides his work. The two tabbies have intriguingly different personalities. The orange one, Sherry, grows a lot and is very placid and clingy. The black one, Beelzebub (usually Bub), is wiry, loud and independent. Bub tries to run the whole house.

The cats are working, maybe he can try people again.

### 5

Pretty damn good for a small town boy from Springfield. In my second term as U. S. Senator I’m given credit for balancing the budget and bringing peace to much of the world. There that seems to be little question Joe Jackson, (great political name and what is on my birth certificate) will be the next president. The incumbent, that hypocritical, incompetent Samuel Dyer probably won’t run again. He has so discredited the Repubs with his deficits and his foreign wars right out of “Wag the Dog” that they will probably run some sacrificial lamb even crazier than he is. Dick Cheney has been mentioned and he hasn’t been out of the hospital for six months. The only democrat talking about running against me is Hillary and she is so unpopular that Dyer beat her last time around. The idiot war criminal Bush is being asked not to say anything for fear of cutting out the last few Republican members of congress.

After Dyer won by the slimmest of margins, the Republicans had completely run out of gas. They would have been better off to have lost because as the opposition they would have had some support. When Dyer started to talk about invading Iran, he lost almost all of his dwindling

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support. The few Republicans left in congress after the midterm elections wouldn't even support him. Business was hurting so bad from the Republican deficits, they told him to raise taxes. He is now a sick, beaten fifty five year old man who seemed so young and strong just two years ago. He was the republican John Kennedy in terms of charm. Now he is the stupid, ugly Ted Kennedy of Republicans.

The public wanted a new voice. Hillary was a loser. The rest of the pack was old, old, old news and tied to unpopular interest groups or ideas. Joe Jackson the previously unknown is in the right place at the right time.

The public was finally ready to quit the Republican imperialism, but it was my legislation that reduced military expenditures to those of the European Union. My legislation got our troops out of the Far East, the Middle East and Europe. If South Korea did not want us there, why should we be there?

Rationing medicine was very unpopular at first, but when the public learned the percent of expenditures on people 80 and up, and for babies that would never have much of a life; I was able to push through laws limiting payments for lost causes. We will save billions.

With these political breakthroughs, my plans for reforming energy and cutting the trade deficit as a consequence are eagerly awaited. I'm John McCain, only much better. It's hard to be humble, but I have to work on it for the news conferences.

### 6

Horace says his work on Dream Ware is ready for Beta testing. There are hundreds of male nerds and fat chicks lined up for testing. To make it simple, the first version has a short menu for directed dreaming:

Sports star

Football

Soccer

Tennis

Baseball

Basketball

Cricket (only outside the Americas)

Politics

Senator

Representative

President

Prime Minister (non US)

Entertainer

Singer

Musician

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Actor

Celebrity

Rehab

The usual gender and orientations choices

If the tests are successful, Electrowiz expects to sell 500 million units for \$3,000 each at a profit of \$500 million. Horace is given a \$10 million bonus and allowed to work his own hours. "Total Recall", at least during dreaming, is now an affordable reality rather science fiction, but most users don't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger in his prime.

7

The next day Jane asks Horace out for coffee. He gladly accepts. During the coffee date, Horace says to Jane, "You know, you are looking really good today. May I take your picture?" Jane says "Sure."

As they go back to work, Jane tells Horace, "Say, why don't we see each other outside work?" Horace says "I'll have to check my schedule, but I'll see you in my dreams."

8

In the future, Horace only shows up for work about three hours a day, saying that he's working on something at home. He avoids Jane and buys a lot of sleeping pills.