

Creation Stories

short prose things



Matthew Simmons

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This book is dedicated to iam.

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Part One



Very Short Fiction, Lists, & A Letter

The Toast at the Anniversary Party, and All I Hadn't Wanted to Say in It

Whosoever jumped out of the cake screwed the groom. Whosoever jumped out of the bride screwed them both, later in life. Screwed them figuratively. And that was a figure formed by happenstance, not an actual happening. Not like whosoever it was jumped out of the cake and the groom. Screwed the groom, I mean. But not jumped out of the groom. Only the bride. Someone jumped out of the bride, that is. And whosoever jumped out of the bride and went and screwed both bride and groom later in life, whosoever that was wasn't me. Though I too jumped out of the bride. Or, slipped out of the bride. Was expelled from the bride. The state I was in. In the bride. Before I "jumped" out of the bride. You expect little from that state. Much silent contemplation. Little occasions of uproar. Inklings of consciousness. An explosion of confusion. Shivering, shivering, complaining confusion. And then there is this lifetime of nothing but anticipation. One anticipation gathers

others behind it. They bunch and they clot. And jump from cakes.

That is the nature of our existence. I say.

What was I saying?

Oh. I was on the betrayal of the bride and the groom. Whosoever betrayed the bride and the groom—you who jumped from the bride a few years later than I—please stay seated here next to me. Let us instead introduce whosoever it was who jumped out of the cake and screwed the groom. Bring her forward, invitation in hand. Up to the front, where we can examine her. And let us, for the rest of our time together, in the safe, happy evening no longer available to us, go off our note cards. As I have. Of necessity. In such a circumstance as this. We'll now raise a glass to the circumstance and the cake and the empty, empty chairs before us. Where sat the bride and the groom. Now screwed.

Three Items at the Supermarket
I See in a New Way, Now That
I've Read Some Books on Literary
Theory

Cultured buttermilk

Post Raisin Bran

Metamucil

The Bottle

That bottle just sits there in the closet, next to the hats and a box full of old gloves. Years it's been there. Try as we might, we never open it. We just don't have a damn thing to celebrate.

Who was it brought that bottle into our lives and went and ruined everything is what I want to know. Was it not there, it would have never once occurred to us that we have nothing to drink to, and are therefore in trouble, as far as our relationship is concerned.

It's like that bottle in that closet has a stink. Did you notice? Do you smell it, too? We do. Much as we use air fresheners—metaphorical ones, as it is a metaphorical stink—we just can't make it go away.

And we try.

In three days, my wife will leave me because of that Goddamned bottle. I know this because I had a dream. My dreams, they all come true exactly like

I dream them. My marriage has a count down. My wife wants to know why I'm making red X's on the calendar.

When she goes, I'm going to open the bottle, and drink it. All of it. And, I'm going to use it to chase a bunch of codeine-spiked aspirin I got after I had wisdom teeth pulled.

Here's a terrible thing about my upcoming bottle-caused/bottle-related suicide attempt: Though I'm going to be brain dead for five whole minutes, they're going to manage to revive me. I'm never going to be the same, but I'll live another 35 years. And then, I'll be hit by a city bus.

Wifeless and stupid, that'll be me.

I'll still have the dreams, the ones that tell me how things will happen, but since I won't be right in the head, I'll never understand that my dreams of the future are bound to come true. It will never occur to me that I have this great gift, this terrible curse.

I am doomed.

My wife just asked me why I'm locked in the

bathroom and why it sounds like I'm weeping. I pushed a note under the door that has on it the new phone number she'll get when she moves out.

I don't even remember what's in the bottle, truth be told. Could be whiskey. Could be vodka. Could be gin. Hell, it could be vermouth. I'll still drink the whole thing when the wife exits, stage left.

She has hazel eyes. She is five feet, three inches tall. She has a womanly figure. I will remember these three things about her for the rest of my life, and will, in fact, be repeating them to myself mumbling them to myself when I drink the bottle, and when I walk out in front of the city bus. The first time, the mantra will tear me up inside. The second time, it will be a subconscious refrain, practically meaningless.

Because of the bottle, I will spend the rest of my life doing yard work around the neighborhood for five and ten dollar bills.

Two Things That Aren't Covered by Your Friend with Benefits

Care for the bitter heartbreak and depression that will inevitably occur when your friend moves on to a real relationship with a mature partner actually worthy of commitment

Dental

Satellites Fall from the Sky Destroying Farmhouses and Bridges

So there once was a little less than there is now. And so, in a world such as that into that said world—therein dropped your little orphan boy. Call him Him. This was Him, and Him was beautiful. Him fell. From some sort of unbelievable airship—some airship that in aspects lengthwise, widthwise, and designwise was very much beyond our brain's belief fell Him.

Him fell, you see.

And then it came to pass that Him—beautiful, tall, tan, fat-cheeked Him—it came to pass that Him landed with a great careening thunk, like a bomb dudded by age.

And that Him, he added stuff to what was/is. Him, by virtue of his being there/here, was an important addition to the world in general. World plus Him. Him plussed the world.

But what do we mean by any of this? No, really?
What do we mean by any of this?

Nothing. Probably nothing.

My Him, who is here now, and adds so much to the world. My Him, who watches as the satellites, they fall, they fall from the sky. My Him, who warns us before the satellites, they fall, they fall from the sky, destroying farmhouses, and tumbling bridges into the water.

Those are the satellites Him knows best.

Those are the satellites to which Him is connected.

And, last, I'll say this: those are the satellites Him calls down on the world.

A Way in Which

I've been growing into my face for a long time. And here I am. There's a way. A way in which I've been approaching this in front of me for—well, for all my time around. Circling it, this way and that way. And.

And here it is finished, and nothing's to be done about that. Leslie on the phone talks to Mom about the last great weeks she had with me, when all the work was easy, and all the time flew by. When all the directions were open, is a way to describe that time. And which path was chosen was the one that led to here. Here is where we end it, in this tiny little house of ours, the walls a little too close no matter which way you turn. That's the way. I'm in the middle of the way. Always in the way. The way in which we move together and towards opposite sides, like it's me in the mirror.

But that is me in the mirror. Now, it is.

But Leslie says not so much anymore. She says to Mom it's not so much like it was. It was, but it's

not. This is where it stands:

She's with me, and me with her, and there are no signs of busting that in half at any point in the future. But.

There's a but, a little contraindication.

It's the walls and their looming that does it.

They make there way around the room. The way in which they move is slow. The way in which their bodies repel is like magnetism. The way in which their fingers linger on the bed sheet is laughable. The way in which they disconnect from one another is pure comedy.

You talk to Leslie on the phone, and you keep all of your good advice to yourself. For the best of everyone involved, you stay quiet.

Don't you?

Some Assertions Cartoons Make About Animals That Also Hold True in the Real World

Ducks are quick to anger, and become unreasonable and hard to understand when they fly into a tizzy.

When we're not around, our pets lead very interesting lives.

Some animals, if given the opportunity, would willingly exploit other animals through the practices of agriculture.

Mice are adorable, and even more so when they drink alcohol to excess.

You should never under any circumstances trust a rabbit.

Dear Scope Mouthwash

Dear Scope Mouthwash,

It's me, Matthew.

Scope, you burn the mouth. You hurt so many people. And you do it because you think that by hurting them, you are making them better. You think you are helping. This seems arrogant.

But then, in a way, you do help people. You make it easier for people to stand near to each other. This is a sort of help.

In this way (this hurting-people-to-make-them-better way) you are, simplistically speaking, like organized religion and public education. And orthodontics.

Scope, even though you hurt so many people—however briefly, and I admit that it is always briefly—I still like you. You are named for things that are used to look more closely at other things. I think that this means you want me to look at

you.

I like your name, Scope, though I like it better when I don't capitalize the "s", so that is what I will do for the rest of this missive. I like how your name looks like a bunch of balloons tied together and held by a string: scope. All your letters are round. Your "s" looks like a twisty string used to knot balloons together. One grabs hold of the long tail of the "p" and walks around the zoo with you. You float above us, scope. You shiver gently in the breezes of the day.

That's why I forgive you, scope. You remind me of myself when I was younger, even though I never would've been self conscious enough to use you when I was.

Signing off,
Matthew

Part Two



Selected Posts from The Man Who Couldn't Blog 2005 – 2006

themanwhocouldntblog.blogspot.com

Moon/Tree

In 1971, a former smoke jumper named Stuart Roosa arrived at the moon. He didn't get to go down to the surface. He stayed on the ship. He waited for two others to come back. With him, he had a cannister filled with seeds.

The seeds were tree seeds. They went to the moon.

They orbited the moon, in a little metal cannister, and never got to look out the window.

But trees don't have eyes, and tree seeds certainly don't have eyes. So, it didn't really matter.

The tree seeds came back. They were germinated, and sent around the country. And whoever it was sent them out forgot to write down where they all went.

Of the hundreds sent out, only fifty or so are known.

Of the others, I am one. I'm a Douglas Fir in a

national park. People walk by me all the time and never know I've been to the moon.

And I can't blog. I'm a moon tree, an unknown moon tree, and moon trees don't know how to blog.

I'm sorry.

Heir

Can you feel the breeze, sweeping in through the window?

I am the heir to the throne. All that you see from this window, all the land beyond, will one day be under my purview. Every mile you see, every yard, every foot, every inch, mine.

Every breeze rustling the grass will be mine. Every single column of air that decides to cross the river to the North, the boundary of the kingdom to the North, will enter and exit at my pleasure.

When a breeze enters my kingdom, it will visit me in my courtyard, and I, the soul of magnanimity, will greet the breeze warmly. And ask after its family. And ask after its people. And ask after its plans for the future.

Even the breezes will be mine to command.

When will I ever, for the life of me, have time to blog?

Pills

I'm hot and it's really hot in here. It's really, really hot in here.

I should probably drink more water. Much more water. I need to stay hydrated when it is hot like this in here.

I should probably have at least, I don't know, maybe seven glasses of water a day when I'm in here, thinking about how to (but never really having a chance to blog. I should drink more water, to keep all my cells full of water, and to not get too dry.

Did you know that if you don't have enough water, and you get dehydrated, your sweaters begin to pill? Did you know that's what causes sweater pilling, dehydration?

It's true. And, I like to wear sweaters whenever I can. And I'm probably going to start getting pills all over this sweater, if I don't get and drink more water.

It's hot in here, you see.

Joke

I wanted to be a stand-up comedian, because I'd seen them on TV. Stand-up comedians lead very interesting, often funny lives, and they get to talk about their very interesting and funny lives in front of people! Stand-up comedians get to say things you shouldn't say (racist things, for example) and they get to play it off like, you know, they were only joking, and also, they are just exploring the ignorance and racism of the culture at large, and also, they are just championing free speech and the First Amendment to the Constitution, which is very important to do!

So, I wrote a joke.

Here it is:

There were two men sitting on a fence. One man said to the other man, "Why are we sitting on a fence?"

The other replied, "We are characters in a joke about two men sitting on a fence."

“And what,” the first asked, “does that entail?”

“Well,” the second answered, “you will say something, I will reply, you will say something else, and I will respond with something very, very funny.”

The first man considered this for a moment, and then asked, “So, in this joke, am I what is commonly referred to as the straight man? Is that right?”

“Why, yes,” said the second man. “You are the straight man.”

The first thought about this for a long time. His brow furrowed. “No, no, no,” he said. “I will not simply be someone for you to react to. I reject that as my lot in life. There is so much more that I could be. I could be a character in a philosophical allegory about existence and its meaninglessness, or perhaps its meaningfulness. Or a protagonist in a short story that perfectly encapsulates the generation into which I was imagined for countless college literature classes. My aspirations are higher than this. Good day to you.”

And he jumped down from the fence, ruining the

joke forever.

That's the end of the joke.

And since that didn't work, and I couldn't be a stand-up comedian, I decided never to write again, ever, ever again.

Going

I do not like to travel, and so instead I eat maps. That is what I do to take the place of leaving my house and going someplace far off with different kinds of buildings and clothing and cultural ideas. I eat maps that show the places far away that I might want to go to if it wasn't for the fact that I just don't want to go.

I like to eat my maps dry—no sauce or melted cheeses over the top. I like to eat my maps with a small hunk of bread, a thick, crusty bread. I like to eat my maps with a tall glass of some kind of really strong Belgian beer, like one of those triple fermented ones that has a 10% alcohol by volume rating. I like to eat my maps with a simple fork and a very sharp knife—one that is like a razor.

I like to, when I eat my maps, use the razor to cut along whatever lines happen to already exist on the map. I eat country by country when eating large maps that depict the world from a great height. I eat state by state if I am eating a

map of a single country and that country breaks itself up into states. This also would work with principalities or regions or whatever. I eat county by county. I could eat a city map block by block, or whatever.

When I eat a topographic map, I like to eat just the tops of the mountains or hills first. The valleys seem a little more tender. They aren't, but seem that way.

When I eat a map, I always make sure to cut away the rivers and lakes and leave them on the side. It's like deveining a shrimp.

People ask me where I've been and I say, I've been lots of places, and you can rub my belly to see.

No travelling, no blogging. Just map-eating.

Eris

I'm a cute and fuzzy puppy, and all covered in the softest golden fur you've ever seen. I stumble when I run. I wag my tail so vigorously, I tip myself over. My golden fur is very soft, and when you touch it, there is so little resistance, your hand just melts into me. It melts into my belly.

I'm a cute and fuzzy puppy, held aloft by a person standing on a couch, sinking into the cushions of a living room couch, holding me high above the couch, and the people in the living room are all attending a party. It is a party for me, the brand spanking new cute and fuzzy puppy, held aloft by a person.

And all the people coo. They coo at me, and they coo at each other, and they reach up to me. But I am held high, and can't be reached.

So, the people at the party for the cute—and golden—fuzzy puppy, they throw themselves to the floor. They drop to hands and knees, and they

continue with the cooing. Such a racket. The cooing they make makes such a racket.

They, on the floor, crawl back and forth. They roll, and they crawl. They bump.

All the people on the floor knock into one another, and they raise sore lumps on the tops of their heads. The knocks are much too rough. They are moving far too quickly. They knock, and they hurt themselves and one another at the very same time. Really. This is what happens.

I see it from my position, held aloft.
I am held above the fray.

It becomes a fray! It becomes a fray! A carpet of bodies begins to bloody, as the people at the party begin to rip skin with their fingers. The cooing is more urgent now. The cooing sounds a little more urgent now.

I am held aloft, and the person holding me walks out on the wriggling carpet of bodies. Blood has a strong scent, and I can smell it. The bodies love the cute and fuzzy puppy, and they are accidently

hurting each other because of it.

They are accidently violent.

This is, accidently, a very violent party.

Because of me.

Skin does not stick to its frame quite as strongly as I thought it did. Skin slips off so quickly.

I will explore this more, but not blog until I have.

Carmen

This is the world, this lovely, lovely fruit hat. We all live here on this, a lovely, lovely fruit hat that is the whole wide world.

We live here on this fruit hat this hat covered entirely in fruit. We are the fruit on this fruit hat. We, the fruit on this fruit hat, are the citizens of the world.

We said, "...hat covered entirely in fruit..." but the truth is that we don't know. Is there, really, underneath all of us we fruit on this fruit hat a hat? Or is the fruit on this fruit hat, in fact, all that constitutes this fruit hat? We are not sure. Are we attached to something? Is there a skeleton? A continuous piece of fabric or a scarf? Are we, the fruit of the fruit hat, holding the world together as both its citizens and its superstructure?

This is a mystery.

What we do know is that below us is Carmen

Miranda, and she is our pillar/god. She holds us up. She, stalwart, stoic, steady, carries us all above the nothing. Her feet reach down to eternity, to the everlasting abyss underneath. She is as tall as the entire universe. She goes on forever.

We, the fruit on this fruit hat, adore our pillar/god. We adore you, Carmen Miranda, who holds us up. Who carries us. We are your burden, but you never complain. You never falter. You are so much greater than all of us.

If we were anything other than fruit, we would worship you by setting up a hundred blogs. We would dedicate them to you, our pillar/god. But, we, unworthy, are merely fruit and have no fingers with which to blog.

We can only sing. So, we sing to our pillar/god. We sing to our pillar/god because we cannot worship her in blog form.

Hand

The very last bottle rocket in the pack is the one that begs, and I mean begs, you to set it off in your hand.

The very last bottle rocket in the pack is in the plastic, just aching to move. Just aching.

The very last bottle rocket in the pack is ready to go. Ready, ready, ready.

The very last bottle rocket in the pack wants you to pick it up (you, drunk, stupid you) and it wants you to light it with the very last match in the pack (the sad, stupid, probably wet, bent match), and it wants you to hold it, and wait.

Oh, wait.

Wait for the moment. Wait for the fuse to hit the powder.

Wait for the very last bottle rocket to go. And jump from your little, pale hand.

Drunk, stupid you.

§

