

Death Sky Above

A hanging figure (JOHN PAINTER) rigged up in a parachute - Big Head - Hangs a few feet above The Auditorium. Periodically, he is hoisted up toward the ceiling.

Hoists, chains (loud winch SOUND) CROW DOG hoists the chain upward. And bangs the big Pueblo-style DRUM.

HOIST!

DRUM!

PAINTER: I'm on my way back from Chiapas, Mexico, hallucinating devils and horses through the cloudy sky. I weighed about ninety pounds, having got sick with ameobic dysentery and hepatitis B. while kicking heroin in San Cristobal, a hundred miles North of armed guerillas in the jungle below who are still down there fighting off the white landlords and Indian killers. They land me in a hospital in Manhattan, fearful for my life, so they make up their small minds – since I had been a junkie in NYC -- to put me on methadone! Why? Because all junkies are methadone eaters. No, they were afraid I wasn't going to eat and therefore die there like a piece of limp shit in a tall tower. So they built me up to 120 mg a day, which was 3 bisquits dissolved in something like gatorade and sent me home to Brooklyn where, for months, I could only eat pound cake and peaches. Everything else I threw up. I had to get up at 5 in the morning every day to take the subway to South Ferry, where I would get in line with the rest of the sick and raspy vomititious Junkies lined up at the window. You had to drink up right there and come back the next morning. This went on for months. I bloated up from the methadone and the pound cake. I can't believe this all happened in real life. Since I had a high recomendation from the Minister of the St. Mark's Church, I finally talked my "counselor" into letting me pick up twice a week instead of every day, and then I talked him into once a week and I started cutting down on the methadone, which was making me feel like a large insect.

CROW DOG: Rigged up in a harness above the Audience.

PAINTER: I'm up in the air now. You see what you see.

CROW DOG: It's a parachute of nylon and leather straps and leggings made of crap. And a helmet of iron clogged with anger and disappointment.

PAINTER: And I'm hitched to a fucking rope-rope headed for the skyward.

CROW DOG: I'm going to tell you what I think. I'm going to tell you what I really think. This is what I think: We live in a bad country. We already live there. Americans have voted, they have voted themselves out of consciousness. You probably have no idea.

PAINTER: They have voted, and they'll vote again – white American Christians --

CROW DOG: You see them clouds? Take a good look.

PAINTER: -- Are they!

CROW DOG: Take another look.

PAINTER: All I see is eyes looking up like alligators in a swamp. I was flying through the air on a tin plane. Looked down and saw horses and clouds. No, I saw clouds running like horses on the Great Plains.

CROW DOG: Hey! Look at all them horses! They gallop in the dust! Firewater and the long guns! Whiskey and six-shooters and American Heroes. John Wayne! Killing Indians! Horses rolling over in the dust!

PAINTER: There I was on the plane, trying to watch a movie, trying to drink a whiskey. Pain crawling down my right leg like a malicious snake. I tried to get up but I couldn't walk no more.

CROW DOG: We walked, Painter. We walked.

PAINTER: Did you walk long, Crow Dog?

CROW DOG: We walked for seven hundred miles and then we couldn't walk no more, neither one way or the other. No water for tears. A silent weeping. A hymn for the dead and the dying. We knew what the dust was. We ate the dust. It was us. Our shadows were gone, they had joined up with the sky. Last breaths. Will come back down as rain, say the Hopi.

PAINTER: I was sick as a dog and throwing up again, finally. I looked out the window and cawed inside like a wounded crow.

CROW DOG: You see them dark clouds?

PAINTER: No. I see round white-eyes looking down at the floor. They're ashamed of themselves and afraid to die.

CROW DOG: They'll all die like horses or dogs or crows or horses and that'll be that, and that's it, for sure.

PAINTER: One time, I said to Crow Dog: "Come live with me and I'll protect your soul."

CROW DOG: No way, Painter. I'm on my own!

PAINTER: Crow Dog is an old friend of mine who says he is a War Chief of a California Indian Tribe, but who is, in reality, is a large and scary Black Man who calls himself Crow Dog. He grew up on 116th street in Harlem and takes no shit from white people, me being the only exception.

CROW DOG: You can't protect my soul, I ain't got no soul. I ain't got no soul and I don't believe in anything.

PAINTER: Me, I am hanging, hanging in the sky, tied up to an American Air Force parachute.

CROW DOG: You get some credit for saving the War.

PAINTER: As I endure yet even more and more suffering from Life's endless injustices.

CROW DOG: Yeah, yeah.

PAINTER: I'm trying to take a praying position now, in the moment, for a second, it's hard in this rig, but I don't feel sorry for myself.

CROW DOG: I'll smite you with my war club. No one has it worse than the American Indian. Not even you, Painter, with all your agonizing bullshit.

PAINTER: Crow Dog is my only friend, besides the St. Mark's Church, and when he hears of my troubles, he promptly heads back to the city from Wyoming with his walking stick and his robe and bells on his ankles and a weird fur hat. I didn't see him for months. Meanwhile, it was all peaches and pound cake and methadone. Then Karly showed up. Karly had a crush on me in High School. Who am I to have a crush on?, thought I, I am not worthy of crushes or a solid meal. All I ever wanted was to get high. So I wasn't quite aware. Karly was, though. What a sweetheart. We spent a few days together. Having sex and walking in the park and walking to the river, and walking downtown and having sex, and then she went back to Hurleyville, which is ninety miles from New York City.

CROW DOG: You should have married that girl, Painter, and got a job.

PAINTER: I never realized. I should have married her, then and there, and lived a happy life teaching English in the Catskills. Coached basketball, taught English maybe, in High School. But it was not to be.

CROW DOG: He 's a stone junkie, is why.

PAINTER: I'm no good at relationships. I was ruined in childhood.

CROW DOG: Don't worry, he 's not gonna tell you about it.

PAINTER: It wasn't her fault. My mother. She never had a life. It took me my own whole story for me to figure it out, finally. To forgive, finally. A teenager in the slums. Sewing garments. All she knew. Knocked up at nineteen, which was me in her belly. And nothing but trouble from that moment on, to hell and hospitals and hospitals and back, crunched like a soccer ball in a hurricane.

CROW DOG: That ain't nothin', soldier, pain on pain. Looking for a metaphor or a rhyme. I meant, "disguise." Not *rhyme*. Never mind.

PAINTER: It's true, Crow. What I do. I feel for her now. I was a *one* cell creature in her womb, and then a *two*. And after that, it was a bubble or a cloud or a wounded horse, and now I'm lost.

CROW DOG: I'll hoist you presently, and give you a boost.

PAINTER: Hoist!

HOIST!

DRUM!

PAINTER: Thanks. Turned into a little animal, a baby, and then the World, and then footsteps in the dark. She was scared and deprived and angry and dangerous. Light from the sun hit the tenement wall. Helpless in the crib. The light. She never did have a life. Turned grotesque from all that horrible treatment, that stupid, silly treatment – doctors and doctors, hospitals and hospitals – a Gargoyle smiling at the *camera*, when all was lost. Crow Dog?

CROW DOG: Yes?

PAINTER: A break.

CROW DOG: A pause here. (*Pause*) A hoist?

PAINTER: Hoist please!

HOIST!

DRUM!

PAINTER: She taught me to read. I was four. Black and white notebooks. The War. Kindergarten on Koskiosko Street. Crossing by my myslef. *Wait for the green*. Can't remember anything.

CROW DOG: Walking with your Dad down to the Brooklyn Paramount. Movietone News. Bodies stacked like cordwood.

PAINTER: We been over that a hundred times, Crow.

CROW DOG: Might as well shoot up.

PAINTER: Never mind. Never will. Trying to remember. The Kindergarten building on the corner. Koskiosko and DeKalb. Asphalt courtyard. Kids yelling. Basketball rim. Maybe wrong. Hallucinating: Bed with a rubber sheet. Riding to the Catskills in a rubber car.

CROW DOG: Rubber?

PAINTER: Beds sticking out. Birds and bees and sweet air and homelessness -- and that's all I'll say.

CROW DOG: Okay.

PAINTER: I forgive my mother. Let that be heard below. I FORGIVE MY MOTHER!

CROW DOG: Let's jump to Junkieland.

PAINTER: No hoist. Death sky above. No regrets have I. I feel bad, but no regrets. Intimidated. But not always. History of love on the run. Drugs galore, and now I'm hanging with the German plague, the fucking methadone. Otherwise known as Dolophine, after Hitler, may his name be trampled in a shithole. Forever. As long as Time is Time! And I'll say one thing more: Let all the denyers die! Die now! All at once! DIE!

CROW DOG: Hoist?

PAINTER: No hoist, I'll take a breath. *(Pause)* I never did shoot up again, and never will, if that's what you're thinking. I kept saving up on the methadone, thinking I was going to beat it one day, come hell or high water. Then I got another miracle money grant and went back to Mexico. This time it was the Yucatan, to a town called Progreso. All the Mayan people were my size and everything was copacetic. I had a Lebanese connection named Moyo, who got me a weekly carton of Lucky Strikes and a bottle of good Cuban rum, and I kept on reducing my methadone count until the five months in Paradise came sadly to an end. We took a ferry from Campeche to Miami and I still had a stash of methadone. Approaching Miami, I intentionally and fearfully threw the stash down the toilet. Give us a hoist, CROW DOG! Hoist!

CROW DOG: HOIST!

(HOIST)

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: Drum. Hoisted. Good! We'll hoist you till the poison 's gone and you got your spirits back, John!

PAINTER: Thank you, Dog! That's the way it'll be then! I must be feet off the ground by now! Ten or fifteen feet, or more!

CROW DOG: This here is an ancient ceremony you know nothing about. Mainly, it's an adaptatiion of our own devising, based on the piercing ceremony of the Lakota Sioux tribe, which you know nothing about, and about which -- you know nothing. You see here a parachute and a rope and a winch and that's all I'll say.

PAINTER: My chest hurts, Crow, and there's a worm or an insect crawling in my brain. Maybe it's a devilish moth, or a fly. I can't sleep, and the demon whiskey fails to sanctify.

CROW DOG: UP WE GO! By inches OR FEET. Wait and see. HOIST HIM, say I, who knows a few things. I have watched the shadows come and go. Thoughts and wishes, dreams and bitches, whole seances with witches. Whoa!

PAINTER: Good work, Crow. I don't know what a wish is, been meaning to ask. Just didn't want to sound stupid or illiterate.

CROW DOG: I have no answer, John. You want to rise, you want the pain to go. Meanwhile you're hanging there in your own Self.

PAINTER: Naked as two dogs hooked by intercourse—stuck --- a two-way animal going round and round.

CROW DOG: True. You think people don't notice, but they do. They know everything about you. A drug addict and a drunk. A sexless – no, a sex-deprived – wonder, rising into the sky in a rigged-up rig. Chaste he is, and his bones are broken. Arthritic hips, three vertebrates gone with the wind. Head nowhere it used to be. Clogged with butterflies. OR. Could be in pieces, parts of it over-heated. Melted like wax, rubbed out, like clay. Looks like a dot in the sky, limbs attached by rubber bands.

PAINTER: That's enough cawing, Crow. Take a rest.

CROW DOG: We'll hoist him up and then he'll charge into the fray and attack the Attacker, and save us all!

PAINTER: We call him the twitter tweet from Hell. That's the Orange Beast who runs this funky world, Crow!

CROW DOG: No Joke. I got confused. Where I come from, the hubris is funny until they take your scalp. Cut your hair off. Cut your ears off. Dig a bone into your kidney. Put a hot wire up your dick. Now, that's elemental, nothing to cry about. Fat pig-like creature with orange hair. You gotta see it to believe it.

PAINTER: I'm praying to the Four Directions, Crow.

CROW DOG: Wait a minute, and I'll bang my drum.

PAINTER: I thought you said gun. I thought you said "Wait a minute, I'll get my gun."

CROW DOG: Drum!

PAINTER: HOIST!

(Hoist) (LOUD)

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

PAINTER: Not so loud!

CROW DOG: It's the winch!

PAINTER: Wait a minute.

CROW DOG: Yeah?

PAINTER: My guts appear to be falling onto the orchestra.

CROW DOG: Yeah?

PAINTER: I hope they don't hit nobody.

CROW DOG: Who cares?

PAINTER: The belt is too tight. It is squeezing my gut.

CROW DOG: Loosen the belt. You got any brains left up there?

PAINTER: My I.Q. is over 200. Figure that one out. I never even took any tests. I read a lot in my room. They put me right into an honors class at Brooklyn College. I started walking down Rockaway Ave. and ended up on Miami Beach. Go figure. HOIST!

CROW DOG: Wait a minute!

PAINTER: HOIST! It'll loosen the rig.

CROW DOG: No, it won't. Just the opposite.

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: HOIST! *(Pause)*

(DRUM) (Pause)

PAINTER: What'd you do, Crow?

CROW DOG: I hoisted.

PAINTER: No, I meant before that, in ordinary life.

CROW DOG: I scalped him. Then I cut the top of his head off. Then I kicked his teeth in. Then I sawed off his jaw.

PAINTER: What else?

CROW DOG: Are you being a wise guy now?

PAINTER: No.

CROW DOG: A wise-acre?

PAINTER: No.

CROW DOG: Do you really care?

PAINTER: No.

CROW DOG: I cut his head off and threw it into the river.

PAINTER: Hit the drum. Loud.

(Drum!)

PAINTER: Louder!

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: Yeah. Then the eels ate him.

AUD. MEMBER: He's dripping all over me! I'd like an explanation!

CROW DOG: You want an explanation?

AUD: Are you hard of hearing?

CROW DOG: You want an explanation? Yes or NO.

AUD: Yes!

CROW DOG: Ok. Here's the explanation. *(PAINTER pisses on him.)*

AUD: You SONOFABITCH!

PAINTER: Give him his money back and tell him to go home.

CROW DOG: What's that?

PAUNTER: Give him his money back and tell him to go home.

CROW DOG: Would you like your money back, Sir?

AUD: Yes, and I'd like some fresh clothes, please.

CROW DOG: That was not piss, that was plain water, it'll dry in a minute.
Do you still want your money back? Yes or no?

AUD: No. I want to see what happens.

CROW DOG: Everything 's happened already. Everything has already happened.

AUD: What about the poor fellow hanging above us, stuck on the rope?

PAINTER: HOIST!

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

AUD: Loud. That's loud!

PAINTER: LOUDER!

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST! *(PAINTER RISES HIGHER.)*

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM!

CROW DOG: Good!

PAINTER: Stand up tall Crow Dog and show 'em your REAL stick!

CROW DOG: No thanks. I'm in a good posture here, and I won't move. Change it up now and I'll never find it again. Thanks a lot.

AUD: I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIS REAL DICK, IF YOU DON'T MIND.

PAINTER: I never said "dick." I said "stick."

CROW DOG: You'd be amazed.

PAINTER: You'd be shocked!

CROW DOG: I got other things to do right now.

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: DRUM! Good!

PAINTER: Give him an explanation.

CROW DOG: I already gave him an explanation.

PAINTER: Give him another one.

CROW DOG: I used a hose, okay? I used a fucking hose!

PAINTER: Give him another one.

CROW DOG: Motherfucker can't move further than an electrical implulse. You got that? Then it stops and turns his hair orange. You got that? Then I use his hair as bait.

AUD: For what?

CROW DOG: To catch eels. You like that? You like eels? If they bite you, you get a shock. They're electrified. Sky too, electrocution in the sky. Like lightning. Motherfuckers got off a boat and put us in cages and poked around and electrocuted. Now my friend here is hooked up and rising. You are maybe wondering why.

AUD: Why?

CROW DOG: You weren't paying attention. I used a certain word and you weren't paying attention. Think. What was the word? *(Silence)*

PAINTER: BAIT!

CROW DOG: Fine. Are you happy now, Painter?

AUD: I still don't get it.

CROW DOG: I will give you a final explanation. See if you can follow.

AUD: I will try my best.

CROW DOG: Good. There is a monster haunting the Valley. He is the pink pig with orange hair who flies above us. He is made of air and a rubber skin - in other words, he farts his way around looking for tufts of orange that he confuses with pizza. You get that?

AUD: NO!

CROW DOG: In other words, he hangs around up there like a giant bailout, I mean balloon, and we are going to catch him with a pointed lodge pole topped with a tuft of greasy orange hair.

PAINTER: He farts all over us, the sonofabitch!

AUD: You just made that up, Crow!

PAINTER: Hoist!

(HOIST)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good!

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM!

CROW DOG: Good!

PAINTER: Loud enough? High enough?

CROW DOG: No, but hold up a minute. They're running for the exits! They're running for the doors! They're running for the cops! Come back, and he'll explain everything that can be explained!

PAINTER: Speak for yourself, Crow.

CROW DOG: Come on back!

PAINTER: Hit that fucking drum, Crow Dog!

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: DRUM!

PAINTER: Good. I'll turn my eyes on. How about that? How 'bout I turn my eyes on?

CROW DOG: Gaw head!

PAINTER: I'll turn my eyes on!

CROW DOG: Turn 'em on!

PAINTER: Cause they're electrified! What do you think of that?

CROW DOG: Turn 'em on!

PAINTER: Bring'em back, Crow! Ger them back in here! There'll be no refunds!

CROW DOG: There'll be no refunds!

AUD: This better be good!

PAINTER: What color? What color you like? You like brown?

AUD: NO!

PAINTER: You like black?

AUD: NO!

PAINTER: Green?

CROW DOG: MAYBE?

PAINTER: BLUE? You like blue? How 'bout BLUE? Okay, let's try RED – What do you say to RED?

AUD: BLUE!

PAINTER: Okay – BLUE! Here we go, BLUE!

(His big eyes turn blue!)

CROW DOG: What do you think of that? That's fuckin amazing! Looks great! His head is fucked up and his chest hurts like the Devil is in there -- but his eyes are blue!

AUD: I think it looks nice.

CROW DOG: Just don't piss anymore or spit or spittle or fart or fuckle or do anything else. You can turn your eyes *blue*, but don't do anything else.

PAINTER: Right!

(HOIST)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good!

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM! Good!

CROW DOG: And don't take a shit up there!

PAINTER: That reminds me. I saw a movie once. They put a whole bunch of people in the hold of a ship and then they dumped a truck full of shit on 'em! Saw it in a movie. I thought, holy shit, I hope that never happens to me. But of course it did, it

happened to yours truly, so I'm perfectly capable of it, because I saw it happen in a movie and then it happened to me. Okay, I'm gonna turn my eyes off now.

(He turns off his eyes!)

AUD: What the fuck! What the fuck! You can't see shit! You can't see shit! Turn on the lights! Turn on the fuckin' lights!

CROW DOG: I hit the wrong switch, okay? HOIST!

(HOIST)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good!

PAINTER: DRUM!

CROW DOG: Good!

PAINTER: You're lit, Crow Dog!

CROW DOG: I can tell. So he figured he'd blow off half the world and keep the rest for himself. That's my explanation. He is pink as a pig and large as a blimp and has orange hair. HE 'S A WANNABE DICTATOR. HALF THE FUCKIN' WORLD.

PAINTER: NOT ME!

CROW DOG: No, not Painter. He is kicking the unkickable. Now. As we speak. Pain on pain. On a rope! Hoisted by his petard! Ha! Shall I hoist?

PAINTER: No. Stand up and show 'em your feather, Crow Dog.

CROW DOG: No.

PAINTER: He wears a club and an eagle feather and a blanket. What the fuck you call that? (Fuckin' Indian, he'll eat anything that crawls.)

AUD: Here comes something.

PAINTER: That's a spider.

AUD: Don't eat the spider! Oh, No!

PAINTER: He ate it already.

AUD: *Oh, no!*

CROW DOG: The Orange Beast. He got like tiny daggers for eyes. I was watching him looking at a fella with a big phony grin, he's lookin' at the fella, he's in profile, and he smiles like I hate you, you hateful piece of shit, I absolutely hate you, and then he turns to the *camera* and he makes another face—it's like sliding into a crash, you could hear the ships colliding. You could see he'd just about kill anybody, because everybody was a scumbag beneath him, but he didn't do it out of the goodness of his heart.

PAINTER: It's because of the CAMERA.

AUD: *Why are you hoisting him up there? Why are you hoisting that fella up into the air? Why are you doing that?*

(HOIST)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good!

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: DRUM!

PAINTER: Good. Because he's garbage, pure and simple. You got that? Because we are going to puncture him with a lodge pole and the air will escape, a wind which will contain an aroma, a stink such as never before been stunk on earth, a – what's the word I'm looking for here?

AUD: *Miasma?*

PAINTER: Miasma! Exactly, a cloud and a wind and a fog and a stink such as has never been seen on earth!

AUD: *I'm getting out of here!*

PAINTER: This task has been given us because we are warriors of the indigenous peoples of America.

CROW DOG: Actually, I'm the only warrior around here.

AUD: *Good-bye and good luck!*

PAINTER: Give him his money back. Give him all his fucking money back. Every dime. Every filthy dollar. Give it back.

CROW DOG: Okay.

(MONEY FALLS FROM ABOVE.)

AUD: I don't want no money back!

CROW DOG: What's wrong with you? You don't know what money is? Money is LIFE, you stupid jerk!

AUD: What about the CAMERA?

PAINTER: Give him his money back, and we ain't answering no questions. We are going to dispose of this specimen, this humongous pink pig, by throwing him into the celestial garbage. What do you think of that?

AUD: What about the CAMERA?

CROW DOG: All right, I'll tell you – pick up our money and I'll tell you. Good.

PAINTER: Tell him to give the money back first.

CROW DOG: Give the money back first. Just pretend. Good. Very good.

Aud: And now for the explanation!

PAINTER: I'm going to get as high as I can before I shit on all of you. What do you think of that?

CROW DOG: He forgot what the subject of the conversation was.

PAINTER: Right. And we don't care what you think.

CROW DOG: Let's get a little higher, John.

AUD: John?

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

PAINTER: Good.

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: DRUM!

PAINTER: Good.

AUD: CAMERA!

PAINTER: Ah. What's the word I'm looking for, Crow?

CROW DOG: BAIT.

PAINTER: Bait. Exactly. Bait.

AUD: But what does it mean?

PAINTER: Bait means bait. What else could it mean? You get that?

CROW DOG: So there you have it.

AUD: Why?

CROW DOG: Because half the world eats shit and the other half eats oysters. Because our fat friend doesn't realize he's got mercury in his feet, shit for brains, and maggots in his liver.

AUD: What are ya gonna do with him?

CROW DOG: The Orange Beast? We're gonna puncture him and skin him and shoot his teeth up to the nearest starry garbage dump. I hope you don't go out there with me, because you might get one of his contagions. We were talking about that earlier, John and I, mortal diseases and ancient beliefs and weird religions, like Zoroastrianism or Fascism. But mainly it's contagious. The point is that it's contagious. Fascism is the one.

PAINTER: You can't go. Too many strange illnesses up there, and it's dark and the gravity is fucked up into a whirl, a gaggle, a tornado or a supernova. Anyway, you can't go.

CROW DOG: I'm not going, either.

PAINTER: Siddown, Crow.

CROW DOG: No.

PAINTER: Okay, don't siddown. Time for a hoist?

CROW DOG: Not yet. Give it a minute.

PAINTER: I'll give it a minute. Okay, go!

(HOIST)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good.

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM!

CROW DOG: Good! People like to be positive and think good thoughts, especially about themselves, but it's too late for that now, because the negative particles are in the air. They are in the air and they percolate. They percolate and replicate. That's what they like to do. So you got people with moustacios being positive and having happy thoughts while inside the negative particles are busy eating their livers.

PAINTER: Yikes.

CROW DOG: That's all I'm saying.

PAINTER: You didn't say anything good, Crow.

CROW DOG: I'm telling you – everytime I hit the drum, we're that much closer!

PAINTER: To what?

CROW DOG: OBLIVION. The Orange Beast will lead the way. He'll stink up the other half of the world and lead us on to Oblivion.

AUD: May I ask, sir, what's the Drum got to do with it?

CROW DOG: John?

PAINTER: This guy is a complete idiot. You'd better explain, Crow Dog.

CROW DOG: I have no explanation.

PAINTER: Give us an interpretation, then.

CROW DOG: I have no interpretation.

PAINTER: Tell us what it means, then.

CROW DOG: I don't know what it means. There's nothing below the South Pole. That means there was Nothing until there was Something, which blew the whole thing to smithereens and now we're racing toward the boundary -- however, there is no Boundary. We're going a mile a minute from Nothing to Nothing, on the back of an Orange Beast.

PAINTER: We hear it on the Radio, we watch it in our sleep!

AUD: He didn't give me an answer!

PAINTER: There is no answer. You can try. You're welcome to try. Kill the Beast, maybe. Use a shotgun, maybe. No discounts, I'm afraid, like we told you.

AUD: That ain't it!

PAINTER: Well, take a hike then! Make one up, Crow Dog, that'll work for ya. Don't get stressed by it, easy does it, do it easily, like water flowing from a rock.

CROW DOG: Okay. The Drum is Magic. It is made of hydrogen and helium and spontaneous combustion. You wanna hear it? Here we go!

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

PAINTER: Good!

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM!

CROW DOG: Good! There you go. No top O the line here! And there's no Afterlife! Don't even think about it. Big Daddy is not there to welcome you into Patadise. Those of you who like to splatter blood all over the woods and the hills -- Forget about it. Especially you, with your *Sharia* salami and your bloody hatchets.

AUD: Whoa!

PAINTER: We are not kidding, the baseline, the default or the pre-thought -- that is to say -- the background noise of the Noise is: LYNCH THE BLACKS AND KILL THE JEWS, and so it will remain, unless there's some kind of evolutionary process coming from the stars in this absolutely meaningless arrangement of galaxies and stars signifying Nothing as they speed away -- IF I'M NOT TOTALLY WRONG AND THE SPIRIT OF ANGELS GUIDES OUR PATH -- And so we have set our trap, and we are ready, and we have just enough time, and you can run away, if you want to, just make it fast and don't leave any of your crap around on the seats.

CROW DOG: Time for a HOIST.

PAINTER: Yo. Go! Wait a minute. So it's time for not believing all the bullshit we are used to believing. I'm talking about myself now, which is equally Nothing to the Nothing we find when we look, but hardly see anything when we do look, in our sleep, so things go on as they are, forever and ever, where Nothing is seen and Nothing is heard. I'm in a lot of pain now, physically, and I realize, in spite of that, that you don't give a rat's ass one way or another. Anyway, Crow Dog, do your stuff.

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: DRUM!

PAINTER: Good!

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: Good. You are a Nothing species and Nothing is going to come from it but more Destructive Nothing and so-called Nature couldn't care less about Nothing. It just does it's thing. Great. I'm going to piss on you now, and I don't care what you think about it, because you are incapable of actual Thought.

PAINTER: Thanks, Crow. I'll do it. While I try to get my fly open.

CROW DOG: You couldn't do it before.

PAINTER: Never mind. We are dealing now with TIME. Time for you to go fuck your girlfriend, whatever that means, whoever you are, the finest, the brilliant, the hotshot banana-heads, the white-eyes, the stupified, the dumb, the illiterates. So, I'll ponder that.

AUD: You'll ponder what?

PAINTER: TIME.

CROW DOG: Tell them to get out of the way. GET OUT OF THE WAY. HE'S NOT PONDERING, HE'S PREPARING TO TAKE A PISS.

AUD: WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP THERE?

PAINTER: I CAN'T GET MY FLY OPEN. I HATE THAT. WHY IS THAT? WHY CAN'T I OPEN THINGS? I RESENT THAT. THERE'S A CINCH IN THE WAY HERE, OR A STRAP, OR A BELT, OR A BUTTON, OR A ZIPPER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK IT IS. AND I DRIP, YOU GET OLD AND YOU CAN'T CONTROL YOUR OPERATIONS ANYMORE. LEAKAGE OCCURS. I DON'T THINK THAT'S FAIR.

CROW DOG: It's not fair. Get used to it.

PAINTER: I'M GOING TO GO AHEAD AND PISS. IT'LL DRIP ALL OVER YOU UNLESS YOU GET OUT OF THE WAY IN A HURRY.

CROW DOG: Wait! It's not fair, hold it in, hold it in, I mean, not fair to them or me either, because I'm safe on stage with my sage and cedar for company and my Taos Pueblo Drum -- I got nothing to worry about but a bad taste in the morning. What happened to the good old days, you Freak, where you used to say a good line and a good line would be in the answer and a character appeared who wasn't acting like Spider Man, but had a real character, and a problem to be solved? What happened to all that?

PAINTER: It went away with the winged Orange Beast. He took it all away in favor of gold towers and phony jobs and the electrified soy beans and the piss I'm going to spray on you any minute now. It's on its way.

AUD: Oh, no! please!

CROW DOG: HE'S LOSING IT NOW. DON'T PAY ANYMORE ATTENTION.

(HOIST)

CROW DOG: HOIST!

PAINTER: Good.

(DRUM)

CROW DOG: DRUM!

PAINTER: Piss!

CROW DOG: Good! Then Karly showed up one day.

VOICE OF KARLY: I just wanted to tell you - I had an abortion.

PAINTER: You had an abortion?

KARLY: I had an abortion.

PAINTER: Where was I? New York City? What was I doing? Shooting up?

KARLY: WE HAD BEEN EVICTED!

PAINTER: Good Grief. Now it was too late. What could I have been thinking? I could have lived a normal life, not strung up here on methadone EVICTED!

CROW DOG: You could never have lived a normal life. Forget about it.

PAINTER: THAT WAS CROW DOG. That was Crow Dog. You can tell because t's become d's. I could've married that girl and stayed in the Catskills and lived a normal life. Instead I was an evicted drug addict, stranded in NYC. These two LGBT guys had bought a Brownstone in Brooklyn for 18 K and sold it for 3 mil and put my stuff in storage. All my 70's gear stolen, the leather cape, the leather jacket, the beaded Cheyenne headband. Hipster wear. So much for the Yucatan. Luckily I had a theatre friend who had a farm *ee eye ee eye yo* and on that farm he had a tide and the tide flew in on wheels, the fastest in the world. Otherwise it was dark and rainy all the night. And so it was in NOVA SCOTIA.

PAINTER: Good. Nobody lived there. And if I hadn't told you yet, I'm telling you now: IF YOU WANT TO QUIT METHADONE YOU DO NOT START SUFFERING UNTIL A DAY OR TWO GO BY ON NOTHING AND THEN YOU START TO SUFFER. No, no. No, you do not cut down and cut back little by little and it gets better – in your imagination, anyway -- you got down to nothing and that's when, that's right, the SHIT HITS THE FAN. It's a lot like being hoisted by chains or dangled from a tall lodgepole with a hook in your chest. It's called *piercing*. Ask Crow Dog.

CROW DOG: Yeah, it's like that. Tied to a Lodge Pole and swinging by your chest. On a hook and a rope.

PAINTER: And that's like only for a day or two.

CROW DOG: Yeah, they cut you down after a while and you drink a lot of apple juice. The older bingers Chiefs disappear into the woods and you don't see 'em for a year. They appear once a year later when it's time to watch you hang from a lodge pole and they run a hot sweat. It's an honor and a priviledge to let a black guy, or a Jew, to hang in the ceremony. But I quit after a while. Quit the hard suffering. Got my Indian name and kept my connections. Been in Sweat Lodges where it got to be a thousand degrees. After a while, my butt couldn't take id no more. A course, I'm eggzagerating, and I'm still on the Red Road. The Red Road is what they call the Way of Black Elk, the Lakota Way, or The Way of the Pipe, and I told my boy, "You get off that shit and sleep a whole night through and wake up and eat breakfast, I'll take you to a Sweat Lodge and you're done with the de-tox."

PAINTER: 'Course they would have taken me anyway, any which way, could've been a serial murderer. They take crazed teenagers and demented old alcoholics. They'd have certainly taken me into the Lodge, but I imagined things. Purity of which does not any longer live on the Earth. Crow Dog is as sober as an oatmeal cookie and he follows the Way and he had me fooled.

CROW DOG: I'll say a few words.

PAINTER: DON'T YELL, DOG.

CROW DOG: They'll take anybody, blotches up and down his veins, scabby holes in his neck, thirteen dead men buried in his yard. That ain't it, ain't what it's about. It's 'bout evenin' up the score, had the Black bulls plowin' up in here by the Spanish, had raiding parties of black warriors starvin' to death and eating raw babys' livers live. And it's the crime of all, which is being you in the first place. CROW DOG. Got the Orange puppy with the size of a macaroni dick included for free, because he ain't made the Human Being no more, he be an Orange Beast. But mainly I been pissed on by the white zombies, the already dead white boys who like to lynch us hardy black men with big cocks, so we 're practising until our day is come and it's coming fast. You okay, white-eyes?

(HOIST) (LOUD)

PAINTER: HOIST!

CROW DOG: Good!

(DRUM)

PAINTER: DRUM! Good! Now they say I'm crazy. Whip it up that I'm a lunatic, can't hold two thoughts in my mind, one cancels out the other, and then they say I'm paranoid. Hear voices. Crazy Old Man. Sleeps in a parachute. It's true: lost the old zippy-de-do. Don't feel like doing much and sex is a horrifying prospect. What an operation. Time was, I couldn't think about nothing else. Now I just want a Jiggly old Grandma who speaks *Yiddish* and makes chicken soup. But she died sixty-seven years ago. Maybe I am crazy. I feel like I'm wrapped in gauze. Revenge fantasies. The rock runs down the hill because he wants to. and then he turns red with rage and attacks the worshipful Gestapo.

CROW DOG: Go figure.

PAINTER: I'll say a few words.

CROW DOG: Gaw head, you old Junkhead. Sounds like a Blackbird cackling on a Brooklyn street. Totally inappropriate.

PAINTER: Never mind. I don't feel like talking now.

CROW DOG: Okay. Sounds like a lost dog, a straggled dog in an alley.

PAINTER: I declined already.

CROW DOG: Sounds like a Hawk-mangled Dove. Go on, then.

PAINTER: So, I'm in Nova Scotia sick all day and night, drinking black rum, and finally I get a letter inviting me to Southern California. My girlfriend's Grandmother died and somebody has to take care of the house. Next thing we know, we're in jail in Las Vegas. Woman is hollerin' at me and we both got drunk and ended in the hoosegow. Saved again by the St. Mark's Church. Let us out on a Monday and headed for the Eastern Sierras in a grey Mustang. Red leather seats. So *Americana*.

CROW DOG: Life is for the Immortals, the generation of Abraham. Everyone else goes to the shithouse.

AUD: Why did you say that?

PAINTER: I've figured it out, finally. Thank you for asking. Usually, in the Jewish, or even Christian, family, the Firstborn, the brightest Son, the talented One, the One with *Brains* and a *Future* -- such a person is prized and encouraged and even given something more to eat -- if there is anything to eat -- and more time to work, and his wit is encouraged and he is forgiven his faults. Not true in my case. In my case, it was the other way around: In my case, I was held responsible for the misfortunes of all, and all my *Obedience* and *Effort*, intellectually and emotionally, was meant to give my parents *solace* and *money* and everything else that they dreamt was possible, even obligated, even ordained for them -- without the troubling thought or the pangs of conscience -- giving them the right to ask and expect obedience and tithing from the *Firstborn*, talented *Son*. Such an emotional arrangement has fucked me up for Life. And now I want to do two things: forgive my poor mother, and blame the Audience. And so, we will do what needs to be done.

CROW DOG: Yeah. But make sure you skin the **BEAST** with the *orange hair*. He cares about nothing but his macaroni-sized dick!

HOIST!

END

Murray Mednick

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