



**THE ADVENTURES OF FRED AND ME Episode 1
DIVORCE AND KITTY LITTER**

David Halliday

Published: 2011

Categorie(s):

Tag(s): "magic realism" divorce "animated novel" "episodic novel" bi-polar comedy "comic science fiction"

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Episode 1
DIVORCE AND KITTY LITTER

by David Halliday

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CHAPTER ONE

Criticism and Dread

I have always thought of Claude as a moron. Claude's face, like a rhinoceros's, seemed to occupy a small portion of space on his chin. There was a vast wilderness of vacant flesh across his forehead, virgin canvas no doubt for some future tatoos. And his eyes were small and beady, like isolated oases on a desert of sandy white skin. Claude had no hair, the result of some childhood disease. Frontal lobotomy was Fred's guess. (Fred is my cat and constant companion.) He had no eyebrows, no eyelids. When asleep one could imagine Claude's face disappearing altogether. Weighing over three hundred pounds and towering somewhere between six and seven feet, Claude was an imposing figure. And even for a big man, Claude had huge hands that hung like hams at the end of very long arms. And then there was Claude's voice: squeaky, high pitched with an almost feminine delicacy.

Perhaps I was envious. My own body had been little more than a distraction while I was growing up. My efforts at maintaining a modest psychological balance during my adolescence left me little time for physical activity. But, there was something else about Claude, something that gave me the creeps. One day I caught Claude kneeling by our basement apartment, peeping into our bathroom window. I have a picture in my mind of Ann removing her blouse and Claude's eyes rising like tea biscuits in an oven as Ann massaged skin cream over her breasts. Claude

claimed that he was looking for a quarter that had dropped out of a hole in his pocket earlier that day. When I went into the apartment I found that Ann wasn't home so the mystery remained.

When I told Fred about my discovery, he shrugged his shoulders as he began the hourly grooming of his coat.

"Aren't all of your species Peeping Toms? What is television? What are novels? You are a breed of navel gazers?"

The evening I prepared to go to the Trinity Poetry Workshop to present my paper, Ann informed me that she would not be attending. The World Championships in women's figure skating was on the television. Ever since the Tonya Harding - Nancy Kerrigan Affair, Ann had become addicted to body contact sports. In a way, I was relieved. Ann's presence would only make me more nervous if that was possible.

I met Claude that evening. He was carrying the empty garbage cans in, two in each hand.

"Good evening, Claude," I said.

"Good evening, Mr. Halliday," Claude responded, waving one of the garbage cans at me.

David Halliday is not my real name. I found it in the telephone book. Ann insisted that if I was to tell my story, I not use my real name. Otherwise she threatened legal action. Ann is not someone to be trifled with.

"Are you going out for the evening, sir?"

"Yes, I am." I responded. Claude's politeness always made me feel uncomfortable. I felt that at any moment I was going to be petitioned to contribute a sum of money to some heretofore unknown though no doubt deserving cause. Fred says that it is a cynical age when even good manners are greeted with suspicion.

"I think I'll stay at home this evening, Mr. Halliday. I was out very late Tuesday evening and you know what they say about burning the candle at both ends."

"That's very interesting, Claude." Claude was one of those people who felt it was necessary to keep everyone abreast of his agenda. And in Claude's case, I felt that it was a definite advantage for the rest of humanity.

I opened the door to the Beetle. Fred jumped in.

"Will you be late, Mr. Halliday?"

"Why do you ask?" I enquired, rolling down my window.

Claude shrugged his shoulders. "No reason. Have a pleasant evening and say hello to Mrs. Halliday."

"I'm going alone," I replied.

Claude nodded knowingly and smiled like someone pleased to have been able to keep a secret. I turned on the engine. Claude's words bounced around in my head. I wondered what he was up to. I turned to Fred.

"There's a guy," Fred grinned, directing his remarks at Claude "who's fortunate his vital organs are operating on automatic pilot."

Fred slept most of the way as I drove. I tried to keep my mind off the evening. The image of Ann's mother came into my head. Mrs. Yonge was an intelligent looking woman, with cold and calculating eyes. Though she had a small almost wiry frame, there was no weakness in her. Her hands were long and spindly, one could say cruel in their gestures. Ann's mother despised me, felt that Ann had lowered herself when we wed, that our mating amounted to little more than bestiality. Ann, she said, shaking her head in despair, had always had a weakness for strays. She said this in my company as I sat on her plastic covered sofa on the day of our wedding.

As I turned off the Gardiner and headed north on the Don Valley Parkway, Fred woke up. Wiping his eyes, Fred asked what my topic for the evening would be. I pointed to the paper that lay on the seat between us. Fred picked it up, making no effort to disguise a yawn, and began browsing through it, beginning with the last page. I was beginning to feel nervous.

I hate public displays of intelligence. Most people do, which explains the low ratings for CBC programming. New ideas are dangerous, not because the masses rally around them, but because they anger the beast. The masses do not want things to change. They do not want the status quo challenged, mainly because change usually comes in the form of war, depressions, plagues, famine. And I was nervous because I was afraid, afraid of failure or more precisely of making a fool of myself. I recalled the nightmarish experience of defending my master's thesis. Dr. Deck, my thesis counselor, had promised me that it would be a small polite affair, lasting only ten or fifteen minutes. It was to be held in the faculty lounge. When I showed up, the place was packed. Everyone in the department, staff as well as graduate students and some maintenance people had decided to attend. Dr. Deck had assured me that there would only be two or three people in the committee that questioned my work. There were a half dozen. I looked around. My skin was turning clammy, my clothes beginning to shrink. There was a coffee machine in the corner of the room, a drop of coffee hanging precariously from the spout. It wouldn't drop.

After I read a short synopsis of my work, questions were tendered. I was able to field the first two questions quite easily. Then Dr. Pinto, a short rotund professor known throughout the university for his acid wit, rose. He turned and made a short speech to the gathered throng who after he had finished, laughed and gave him a round of applause. I hadn't understood a word he had said. I folded my hands together as if to pray. Jabbing his fingers into his vest pockets and raising himself upon his tiptoes, Dr. Pinto addressed me. His question was in three parts. By the time he reached the third part of his question, I couldn't remember the first. I looked around the room. My tongue, which is quite long, fled like a frightened puppy into my throat. A black hole suddenly appeared in my brain, sucking in all forms of consciousness. My eyes rolled up into my head. I passed out. That was my last day as a student at the University of Windsor. Later that summer Dr. Deck died of a heart attack trying to teach his teenage sons how to slam dunk a basketball. Dr. Pinto later married, producing a number of offspring, one of whom became an infamous serial killer in British Columbia.

I stared at the highway. I love expressways. There is elegance in the sweep of the exit ramps, the way traffic separates and merges, something almost fragile in the overpasses. Expressways are to the twentieth century what cathedrals were to medieval Europe. The God of the middle ages, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, represented stability in a world of chaos. Our new God was speed, the elegance of change, rapid change in a world of appetite and boredom.

"Listen to this," Fred howled with laughter, holding his stomach with his paw. "This paper is written in the mode of a drama. The essence of drama is conflict and the conflict in this particular drama is between the self and the group. One might say that the group gave birth to the self and the drama is a story of their union through justice into a trinity."

Fred keeled over, laughter running out of his mouth like saliva.

"You don't like it, Fred?"

Fred shook his head, trying to climb out of his cascading mirth. "It's not that I don't like it, Dave. It's not that at all. But really, Dave, a drama?"

"They're all poets and writers," I protested. "I thought it was a good way of engaging their attention."

Fred shook his head, wiping some tears from his eyes.

"Well, I suppose."

I looked out the window, cursing my decision to allow Fred to join me. What the hell does a cat know about philosophy anyway?

"Is there anything else, Fred?"

"Perhaps I shouldn't say. Maybe later."

"No. Go ahead. I'm anxious to get your response," I said, hoping that Fred would not utter another word.

Fred shuffled the papers and began to read another section of my paper.

"What's wrong with that?" I cried.

"You don't see it, Dave?"

I shook my head. Fred sighed.

"Oh God!" I cried as we turned off the Parkway for the Danforth.

"Maybe I should cancel. I'll go to a phone booth and call in sick."

"A coward's way out, Dave."

"I'm a coward," I replied, not believing this to be entirely true. But as Fred has pointed out countless times before, how can you be ninety percent coward and not be a coward?

"Damn!" I swore, slapping the steering wheel with my hand. "I wish Ann were here now. She'd know the right thing to say to me."

After the fiasco of my thesis defense, Ann had taken me to her bosom, cradled me like a Dickens' orphan dying of tuberculosis. "They just don't understand genius," she sighed. And added, "I've never felt so close to you before, David. Isn't it wonderful to be needed?" Maybe that was the secret to our relationship? Ann felt as if she had discovered me, like I was some lost continent, some Atlantis. Now it was beginning to look like her Atlantis was just drifting flotsam in the Gulf Stream.

"Why didn't Ann come, Dave?"

"She's busy," I responded. And it was true. For the last week, Ann had been organizing a great war against the small brown ants that had invaded our kitchen. Ann hated ants. It had become a crusade for her. She called them bourgeois shopkeepers. They were all the same, no personalities, no individuals. Ann's campaign seemed to be going well until I mentioned that there were new swarms of ants massing in the compost heap that we called God at the back of the yard.

Fred sighed.

I glanced over. "What's that supposed to mean?" Fred knew something.

"Is it against the law to sigh?"

"Come on, Fred. Out with it."

"Out with what?" I hated it when Fred was coy.

"Don't play games, Fred. I can tell when something is on your mind."

"It's nothing, honest Dave."

"Fred!"

"Haven't you noticed," Fred blurted out, "Ann is almost always busy. She never goes anywhere with us."

"She went with us last weekend when we went shopping," I pleaded.

"Only because the time before," Fred hissed, "you bought her table napkins instead of tampons."

"An honest mistake."

"That doesn't answer my question"

"Ann doesn't like to go out much. She works hard at her job all day. She's tired."

There was silence in the car. I waited for the next bombshell.

"Have you ever noticed the way Claude looks at Ann?" Fred whispered.

"What way?" I said, pretending that Fred had not struck a chord with me.

"How many ways are there, Dave?"

I laughed. "That's crazy, Fred. Claude and Ann. Don't make me laugh. Ridiculous. It's impossible. The guy is a slug, a moron, a degenerate. You know, Fred, I think you'd be a lot better off if you kept your nose out of other people's affairs. What goes on between Ann and me is really none of your business."

"Have it your own way, Fred sighed. "But, don't come crying to me when she has your nuts mounted as doorknockers."

"That's enough, Fred. Besides, Claude is the last person Ann would become involved with. She meets any number of intelligent and attractive men in her work every day. Why would she be attracted to Claude? The idea is absurd."

"Maybe he's got something big besides his hands," Fred purred saucily.

I pretended to shrug off Fred's suggestion. I could not. I kept recalling the smile on Claude's face that evening. And the way he plied me with questions. And Ann. She'd been very distant recently. I couldn't recall the last time we'd made love. I do remember the last time I tried to hold her. She complained about being sticky. That was Christmas eve. The next day at her mother's she complained that I kept the thermostat too low. But, I had to believe that Fred's suspicions were unfounded. I had to trust Ann. What a fool I would seem to her if I raced home to the apartment and found her alone watching those double axles on television. But then I thought of Claude's hands. They were so big and Ann loved men with big hands.

And then there was our conversation that morning. Ann looked up at me from the kitchen table, a cup of coffee shaking in her hand. "Who are you, David? I don't know you. Don't know if I have ever known you. It seems to me that I saw you as I wanted to see you. I created a David in my mind that wasn't you at all. You're really a stranger to me."

I parked the car. Fred and I walked down the street toward the coffee shop where the Trinity Poetry Workshop conducted their meetings. I felt strangely detached from the streetlights and the sound of traffic and the smell of exhaust fumes, sewage rising up through manhole covers, and the rotting ozone layer overhead. I was walking through a postcard, conscious only of my own heavy breathing.

CHAPTER TWO

Dr. Blackstone

I knelt like a penitent in the black cushioned leather chair of my psychiatrist's office. It was not so much an office as a set of the Tonight Show. Dr. Blackstone felt that the format of the late night talk show lent itself to frank discussion. Fred spent all his time looking for the invisible cameras, and the non-existent audience, and the always jovial portly side kick. I sat there staring at the doctor, my tongue hanging out like a worshiper waiting for communion from his priest. I drank from a cup of complimentary water. I smiled. It seemed important to be entertaining.

Dr. Blackstone smiled back at me as he tapped the long recently sharpened number 10 pencil on the oak veneer desk. Dr. Blackstone looked like a squatter version of Sigmund Freud. He had the pointed goatee and declining hair line, but his face was wider, chubby, and there were lines like the dried river beds on Mars, that ran down from the corner of his eyes toward his ears. Dr. Blackstone did not smile often and when he did, he tended to cover his teeth with several fingers as if there was something unseemly living in the crevices of his teeth.

Dr. Blackstone winked at me. I swallowed. There was no defending my behavior. I had failed Ann once again. A frost had come over my marriage. It was the winter of our discontent. Fred groaned when I hatched that gem. Ann and I did not talk for days after my reading at the cafe. She was furious. The humdrum routine of loathing took over our lives. On Mondays, Ann watched football on TV. On Tuesday, I had my session with the doctor. Wednesdays, Ann took a warm bath and I went for a long walk by the lake. Thursdays were left-over night. Ann

watched Dallas reruns; I went for a long walk by the lake. Friday, Fred and I watched wrestling reruns while Ann went out with the girls from the office. Saturdays, I went shopping, and Ann watched college football. Sunday was a day of rest for Ann - the NFL and a six pack. Fred and I went to the museum, or the park, or drove through the country on dirt roads at breakneck speeds. We weren't allowed back before seven o'clock.

Dr. Blackstone looked over at Fred who was curled up on the couch. I was hoping Fred might fill in some of the details of the great fiasco at the Trinity Poetry Workshop, but true to his convictions, Fred did not utter a word.

"Quite a mess, David," were the first words out of the doctor's mouth. "I'm glad I'm not in your shoes."

Fred looked at me and rolled his eyes. Fred had no faith in psychiatrists. He thought the whole business was a scam, a product of the industrial revolution, like pollution, punch clocks, and anal sex.

The doctor rubbed the bandage wrapped across his nose. I couldn't look at him. There was green pus seeping out of the gauze and crawling like a slug down his cheek. Instead I looked straight ahead at our would-be audience, which was a wall of books with a small washbasin at one end. I couldn't figure out the purpose of the washbasin. Fred suggested that the doctor washed his hands before he read. "You never know what kind of filth you might pick up in a book," Fred scowled.

The doctor raised his eyebrows as he glanced at our audience than at me.

"You have the twentieth century illness, David. Fear of reprisals."

"Excuse me?" I smiled. Why do all psychiatrists think their patients are paranoid? Fred

said that all sentient life forms are paranoid. The level of paranoia represents the scale of their intelligence. Those who are not afraid get eaten.

"Trench warfare," the doctor continued. "You're afraid to raise your head lest someone shoot it off. I see it all the time. One of my guests this afternoon, a beautiful intelligent woman with a good job, is afraid to answer the door in her apartment. Except for work, she remains cocooned in her bachelor, curled up in bed, watching the Evangelists screaming about the Second Coming, waiting for the killers to burst in upon her. In great details, she can describe the horrible events that are about to happen. Everyone is afraid of the apocalypse, either the world's or their own. What are you afraid of David?"

I was silent. Where would I begin? Afraid of old age, of heights, of small places, of open spaces, wet pavement, cats with moustaches, bad breath. The doctor looked at me, his eyebrows raised, the pencil in his hand tapping the microphone on his desk. I took a drink from the cup beside me, glanced out at the audience, or the cameras, or the technicians that weren't there.

"I'm afraid of losing my wife," I said wiping a tear from my eye.

The doctor handed me the handkerchief he'd been using to wipe his nose. There was pus on it. I looked at the handkerchief, its little chest heaving in and out with panic, and handed it back to the doctor.

"Really?" the doctor chuckled, then straightening out his tie suggested. "Perhaps you are trying to drive her away?"

"Certainly not!" I protested.

The doctor rose from his desk and walked around in front, leaning over me like a prosecution lawyer in a courtroom, his eyes riveted to mine.

"Then why did you panic in the lecture? Yes, I heard all about it. Ann filled me in on all of the dirty details. Didn't you want to fail? Isn't your failure a declaration of war against your wife's love? Why are you so afraid of being loved? Do you feel so inadequate? So unworthy? So crippled by your own inability to return love? Isn't it true, David, that you feel nothing for Ann, that you have never loved Ann, have never loved anyone, that you feel you must kill Ann's love to avoid facing yourself? You know what the truth is David, you just don't want to deal with it. That would mean acting and you are incapable of acting, incapable of taking charge of your life. Are you afraid that you might want to kill Ann?"

My mouth dropped. I looked at Fred. He was yawning.

"I love Ann." I thought I was going to burst into tears. The doctor smiled smugly, put his thumbs in the pocket of his vest, nodded his head, looked toward the jury (who weren't there) then returned to his seat behind his desk. My lip began to quiver. Fred took his tail and began to floss his teeth.

"I would never hurt Ann," I said, pleading my case to our non-existent audience.

"Cats cannot talk!" the doctor cried.

I had made the terrible mistake in an earlier session of confessing that I held conversations with Fred. Dr. Blackstone maintained that Fred's talking was a projection on my part, a way of creating a camaraderie within my own mind. I needed company because I was afraid of the great abyss

within my thoughts. All my hallucinations were a method my mind used to furnish the emptiness I saw in the world.

"I would never hurt Ann," I repeated. "I could never do that."

"Why are you so angry, David?" Dr. Blackstone asked picking up his pipe and tapping it on his ashtray. It sounded like he was keeping track of the rounds.

"I'm not angry, doctor. I'm upset."

"At losing Ann?"

"Yes and... "

"Why can't you remember your parents, David?"

"We've been through this doctor," I moaned. I was growing tired and as I grew tired, my waning spirits seemed to energize the doctor.

"You're a liar," the doctor growled. "What is it with you people? All this talk about memory loss, and cats that talk, and meeting historical figures." I had once told the doctor that I had met former Prime Minister Trudeau in a snowstorm.

"Have you met Nick Charles recently?" I told the doctor that I had met someone who resembled William Powell who played the detective in the Thin Man movies made in the 30s.

"And Nora and their horrible dog, Fido."

"Asta," I muttered.

"Go ahead. Ask me anything you want," the doctor barked.

"The dog's name is Asta."

The doctor screwed up his eyes and glared at me.

"That isn't important, David. What's important is that you are hallucinating, that your world is not our world, that it is not the real world. Have there been any new episodes?"

I explained to the doctor that I had seen the limousine that John Kennedy was assassinated in, driving down the Gardiner Expressway. Kennedy was still slumped over in the back seat; Jackie was still trying to climb out over the hood of the car; there was still a Secret Agent on the hood trying to push her back. I remembered it clearly because behind the limousine was a truck carrying huge panes of glass and one of the sheets of glass was reflecting the setting sun, almost blinding me.

The doctor sighed and slumped against his desk.

"What are we going to do with you, David? You're a very sick young man. Not dangerous, but nonetheless quite ill. You are taking the drugs I prescribed?"

I nodded. Actually I hadn't been taking the medication.

"Schizophrenia can be a dangerous illness, David. So far we have only had to deal with benign creations, your talking cat for example. But David, there is always the danger that your mind might take a turn through darker areas. This sudden fetish over insects troubles me."

I couldn't remember mentioning anything about insects.

"Socialize more, David. Get out with people of your own age. When was the last time you had sexual relations with Ann?"

I stared at the doctor and shrugged my shoulders.

"With anyone else?"

I shook my hand.

"Masturbation?"

"Sex is the last thing on my mind," I whimpered. I felt like the sole passenger on the Titanic before it sank. I was terrified. The only way I could think of saving myself was to turn into a seagull and fly off. Sex was not a high priority.

"Do you listen to music?"

I shook my head. I never listened to music anymore, couldn't seem to follow a line of melody. It always broke up, disconnected, disjointed like noise.

"I don't want to frighten you, David, but if we can't get a handle on this now, five or ten years down the road we could be looking at some serious trouble. You have reached a fork in the road. You must decide between reality and fantasy. Tell me about the reading. Tell me everything that happened that night at the poetry workshop. And David, don't leave any detail unturned."

CHAPTER THREE

Panic in the Lecture

I took a swallow of water and put the cup down. By now Fred had passed out, curled in a ball with his chin resting on his right forearm. Dr. Blackstone had returned to his seat and was waiting for me to begin.

"I left home early that evening. I met Claude on the way out."

"Whose Claude?" the doctor asked.

"My landlord's son."

"No one of importance to you," the doctor said impatiently.

"Not exactly."

"Just continue on, David."

"Fred slept most of the way there."

"You took your cat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"Fred and Ann don't get along too well. Ann says that Fred is always correcting her grammar. Ann does not like to be corrected on anything."

There was a long pause as the doctor stared out at our non-existent audience. He shrugged his shoulders and waited some more. It was as if he was listening to the audience laugh.

I continued my story.

"There were many photographs on the walls of the cafe. It was the first thing I noticed when I entered the room. They were photographs of other rooms, identical with this room, with people standing side by side. These were photographs of people who had participated in earlier readings. They all looked serious, responsible, reading their work, cradling the Holy Grail of Canadian culture in their verse. And everyone in the photographs was waiting, looking in on this room, waiting for me to speak. Perhaps I, too, was in a photograph on a wall in one of their rooms waiting for them to speak. The wallpaper behind the photos was tacky, maroon and gold paisley in relief, like a view from the inside of a hooker's heart. There was plenty of smoke drifting through the room, heavy and curling in upon itself like a dense fog off the Grand Banks. It reminded me of an old sailor I met once in the Spadina Hotel who claimed to have seen the Titanic go down. He was on a fishing boat with his father miles away from the scene, but because the night was so clear and quiet, he said he could hear the music from the ship and the screams of voices across the water, and he said he could see the lights as the big ship, nose down, sank into the stillness.

I stared into the cafe. I couldn't stop my lower lip from trembling. A room of eyes stared back at me like the lights on the Titanic. Outside on the Danforth a bus screeched to a stop. My body bolted alert. The bus doors opened with a yawn. Someone stepped out of the bus, walked a few steps across the sidewalk, dragging his left foot ever so slightly, and entered the cafe. I looked up. A beautiful blond stepped into the cafe and took a seat. Someone coughed. On the bar, coffee dripped in a coffee machine. Behind the bar, an elderly gentleman, who looked like Joe Dimaggio the Yankee skipper, grinned. Ice in someone's lemonade began to crackle. I cleared my throat, took a mouthful of water, and forgot how to swallow. For a moment I considered spitting the water back into my glass. The blond got up from her chair and moved to a table closer to the

podium. My teeth began to melt. I gargled. There was laughter and a round of applause.

I looked down at the podium. My paper lay there like a dove, cooing. I was afraid to touch it, lest it take flight. The print seemed to grow smaller. It began to disappear into the distance. I charged after it, hoping to retrieve it, banging my head on the podium. There was laughter. How strange it is that at the moment before disaster strikes, the scene appeared comic. The audience assumed that this was part of my presentation. I wondered if, when the Titanic first struck the ice, someone didn't laugh. I grinned then forgot how to stop. Someone coughed. This wasn't how I saw myself delivering the lecture. I'd seen many professors give lectures at the university and none had begun their talk using slapstick. The fellow who ran the coffee shop and who had introduced me, leaned against the bar watching. His name was Collins.

Collins was a bearded balding fellow with a beer gut that hung over his belt like a money pouch. His main claim to fame was that he had been at Woodstock and had made love with a famous folk singer, but couldn't remember afterwards which one she had been. There was a terrible sobriety about his gaze, like a bird of prey soaring high over a meadow looking for lunch.

My eyes glided over the faces of the audience. The patrons of the cafe all looked like English majors, each one with a show me the good parts expression on their face. I thought of Ann watching television, lying on the couch in her bathrobe with a glass of coke tucked between her knees. I jerked my head. My grin fell off.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I cried out of the side of my mouth like W. C. Fields. I began my lecture. Despite Fred's criticism, the introduction was well received. At the end of my introduction, I paused to take another sip of water. Several people coughed. Someone lit up a pipe. Someone pushed their chair back, the screech hitting a high C. The blond parted her lips to receive a cigarette. The cigarette was so white. Her teeth were so white. Smoke seemed to rise out of her eyes. I cleared my throat and found that I needed to spit. There was no place to spit. I swallowed instead. Someone groaned, "Oh my God, I'm going to be sick." The image of a long set of stairs crossed my mind. I couldn't remember whether I was ascending or descending. I stepped into the body of my lecture with a discussion of the group, pushing my hair off my forehead.

"The Fatherland needs growing space," I blurted out. The room was silent. It was happening again. The black hole in the center of my consciousness was growing. I paused and looked around the room. At the

back of the shop near the entrance, two people were mumbling. The thought crossed my mind that they were from the police vice squad. I can't imagine why this thought appeared except that I had parked my car in front of a fire hydrant. Everyone turned to look at the couple. It was William Powell and Myrna Loy playing their roles as Nick and Nora Charles from the Thin Man series. Nora nudged Nick in the ribs with her elbow. Nick smiled briefly, quit talking, and then when Nora wasn't looking, stuck his tongue out at her.

I turned and stared at the floodlights focused on the podium. I saw Claude staring through the basement window into our apartment. Ann was lying on the couch in her housecoat watching television. Claude's eyes were lasers, opening Ann's housecoat, revealing her pale round marble breasts. I looked down at the pages in my hand. My palms were sweating, the sweat spreading across the page making the ink run. An ambulance cried out from the street. I looked up from my notes. At the back of the room I saw Ann in the shadows, naked, lying on the couch, her legs apart, moving her ass, asking someone, anyone to...

"Ann!" I cried. There was a stir in the room. I looked down into the glass of water. Claude's face, like a bloated sucker, was swimming around, smiling up at me. "Good evening, Mr. Halliday." I turned away. Ann looked up at me from the kitchen table, a cup of coffee in her hand. "Who are you, David? I don't know you anymore. Did I ever know you?"

Taking a handkerchief out of my pocket, I wiped my brow.

"Excuse me!" I said, trying to smile. Someone was standing behind me. I could feel their breath on my neck. My mouth was now racing through the text of my lecture as if the words were in a panic to be released from my tongue. I felt like a ticker tape machine in a pressroom spitting out the news from United Press. I stopped to take a breath. There was someone behind me. I spun around. For a brief moment I had a glimpse of Claude's huge fingers crawling like a spider between Ann's thighs, his huge thumbs parting the lips... There was nothing behind me but a blank wall with a poster advertising - DAVID HALLIDAY: THE GROWTH OF THE SELF.

I turned back to the audience. There was a shuffling of chairs. A few people had begun to mumble to each other. Someone coughed. The blond glared at me, her eyes like a gun, cocked. Collins had come to attention. He looked worried. I tried to recall where I had left off. I cleared my throat and took another sip of water and then spat it back into the glass. It tasted like vinegar. I wiped my mouth with my sleeve. The

image of my father ran through my mind, my father wandering through the woods alone. "I was a son once too," he said. "I had to deal with my father, as you have to deal with me. We're all in the same boat."

Collins stepped up from behind the bar and into the lights that were fixed on me.

"Mr. Halliday," he said. There was a sudden pain in my side. I continued to speak, somehow determined to finish what I had begun, believing in some crazed logic that, if I finished, everything would be alright.

"We've heard enough, Mr. Halliday," Collins cried out as he approached the podium.

I looked up. Claude approached the stage. Ann stepped between us, wearing her housecoat, knelt down on the floor, her back to me, and began to pull the zipper of Claude's trousers, down. Nick Charles stepped up behind Claude and looked over his shoulders. There was an amused smile on his face."

I fled from the stage, knocking over the podium, smashing my glass of water on the floor, and raced out of the coffee shop. The cool evening air hit me like a wall. And that's how the evening ended."

Dr. Blackstone chuckled.

"Continue, David."

"That's all there is, sir," I responded.

"We know better than that, David."

"Yes sir," I replied. There was more. I had forgotten.

"The evening air was cool and light as I staggered out of the cafe and it hit me like a wall. I fell against a street lamp trying to catch my breath. An old woman stepped up to me.

"Have you seen my sparrow, young man? I've lost my little sparrow. He flew off, out of the open window when I took him out of his cage for a little exercise. He's never done that before. And there are so many of those awful pussy cats in this neighborhood."

I pushed the old lady onto the sidewalk and ran down the street toward the car. When I reached the Beetle, I vomited over the front hood.

"You alright, mister?" A voice cried. I turned around. A little kid, in T-shirt and shorts and bouncing a red rubber ball smiled at me. I climbed into the front seat of the Beetle and turned on the windshield wipers. I pulled out into traffic and raced down the Danforth, the events of the evening repeating themselves in vivid Technicolor in my mind: Collins standing at the bar, the blond blowing smoke rings, Nick Charles repressing a smile, Ann blowing smoke rings, Claude standing at the bar, Ann opening her housecoat, the blond opening her housecoat, Nick

Charles pouring himself a drink at the bar, Collins burying his head between Ann's thighs, Claude with an amused smile. "Have a good evening, Mr. Halliday." My father smiled, "I had to deal with my father as you have to deal with me." A sparrow flew through the passenger window and out my window. My father wandered through the woods. Coffee dripped. The Titanic sank. A ball bounced down the stairs."

I turned back to the doctor.

"When I finally came to my senses, I realized that I must have been driving around for hours. I'd forgotten all about Fred. I dreaded going back to the coffee shop, but what choice did I have? Hopefully, everyone would have long since gone. When I returned to the scene of the crime, I found Fred waiting, leaning against a newspaper stand by the curb. I stopped the Beetle and opened the door. Fred jumped in. We moved west on the Danforth toward home. And that's how it ended."

The doctor looked at me for a moment, then slapped his knee with his hand, and howled with laughter.

"That is one heck of a story, David. One heck of a story. And what did you tell Ann when you got home?"

"I did what any man would do in a similar situation. I lied."

The doctor slapped me on the shoulder and roared with laughter.

"Without a doubt, David, you are one of our most delightful guests." There were tears in his eyes.

The doctor stood up, shook my hand and looked out into the non-existent audience as if he were listening to applause. Then the doctor checked his watch, reminded me to take my medicine and to report back in two weeks. I departed, waving to the non-existent audience as I walked off the set.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sleep and Time

The events of my reading at the cafe continued to haunt our life in the basement apartment of the Pergoti house. Ann and I did not talk. Every word spoken was filled with land mines. My stomach was in a constant flux. I had the runs. I worried about ulcers. I lost my appetite, couldn't sleep, stared hopelessly at the television each evening, rejoicing in the canned laughter. On the evenings I couldn't sleep, hot baths and hot cocoa were to no avail. Neither food nor drugs could smother the restlessness that stocked my thoughts. On these nights, despair overcame my

spirit. I would plead to the Lord to put me out of my misery just so I could catch a short nap. I believe an insomniac is capable of any violence. I heard of one case where a wife shot her snoring husband just so that she could catch twenty winks. She got twenty years. I won't go into any examples of crying children keeping their beleaguered parents awake. The statistics on child abuse are gruesome enough.

One night in particular, I was lying on my back staring up at the ceiling. Ann lay beside me, out like a light, snoring. Ann doesn't like to hear that she snores. It doesn't fit her self-image as a sleeping beauty, but, nevertheless, there she was whistling like a kettle. I wondered what she was thinking about and was she as upset as me about the down swing in our relationship. How I resented her tranquility. I was half tempted to shake her and make her aware of how upset I was. At the same time, I felt this terrible responsibility not to move lest I wake her. So I lay there as still as I could, twitching.

"What's the matter, Dave?" Fred asked from across the darkened room.

So Fred was awake too. What could possibly be keeping him awake? I looked at the digital clock on my bedside table. Two o'clock. Too late to watch Letterman. I looked over at Fred. He was sitting up in his crib, staring out the window at the moonlit sky.

"I can't get to sleep, Fred."

Fred nodded as he looked back across the room at me.

"I knew there was a good reason you were awake. Personally I like to stay awake at night and think. There's not so much psychic traffic." Fred cracked his knuckles. "So what's keeping you awake at this hour, Dave?"

I've always resented Fred's politeness, especially since he informed me that one reserved courtesy for ones' inferiors. I much preferred Fred's cynicism. It was more democratic.

"Nothing," I responded, rolling out of bed and sitting on the edge. I was sweating. The air in the room was stifling. When the temperature dropped below balmy, Ann turned on the furnace. She could not stand to be cold. Ann always wore socks to bed and insisted on turning on the furnace once we had breached the summer and moved into September no matter the real temperature outside.

"Who are you talking to, dear?" Ann moaned as she turned and tugged on the sheets that covered her. That was another thing about Ann. She was an imperialist when it came to bedding, hoarding it all for herself, wrapping herself in her empire.

"Mackenzie King," I replied.

"Tell Mackenzie, it's late," Ann responded and turned over, pulling all the blankets across the bed.

I motioned to Fred and the two of us tiptoed out of the bedroom. We went into the living room. I poured myself a scotch. Fred asked for the same. I went into the kitchen and got him a saucer of milk. It was a warm summer evening so we took our drinks and sat out on the back fence, and watched the moon. It was a full moon, like a scoop of French Vanilla ice cream. There were a few wispy clouds wandering around. They looked like lambs that had strayed from the flock. The rest of the sky looked like a parking lot filled with stars.

"Does the moon make ripples when it drifts across the sky?" Fred asked.

I shook my head.

"You're absolutely sure of that, Dave?"

I shook my head. "I'm not absolutely sure of most things. You should know that by now, Fred. But, I'm damn sure that the moon doesn't cause ripples when it moves through space."

"Then you haven't studied Einstein's description of gravity which clearly shows that gravity acts as a well to objects around it, like a stone dropped into a pool of water. And that's not all, Dave. Did you know that there is not enough matter in the universe? Isn't that depressing? All the dead stars and dead planets, all the flotsam from the Big Bang can't compensate for all the matter that is needed to balance the books. We're running out of fresh water, clean air, natural resources, and cottage country, and now we're told there isn't enough matter. They should have a lottery and divide what's left up between us. I'll bet those rich bastards in Rosedale are hoarding all that matter in numbered bank accounts. They should set up a government commission to investigate."

Fred gargled his milk.

I took out my pipe and filled it with some Dutch tobacco. "I've always admired the Dutch," I said. "Such a tolerant people."

Fred muttered something about dikes that I didn't find amusing. It was to my mind, insensitive. Fred said that everything funny was insensitive.

"The trouble with you, Dave," Fred said between laps around his saucer of milk, "is that you believe that time really exists. If you could conquer that misconception, you'd find that there was really nothing to keep you awake."

"You don't believe that time exists?" I asked, taking a sip of my scotch and a puff of my pipe.

Fred shook his head. "It's just the way the mind has of filing things, a way of cataloguing events. Time doesn't exist for example the way a horse exists, or for that matter, Descartes." Fred slapped his knee with his paw, rolled over on his back, and roared with laughter.

Another of Fred's jokes. I was not amused. Why is it that cats can get away with telling such dreadful jokes? My pipe went out and I had to re-light it. A star lost its balance, shuttering down the sky as it bounced like a pinball off the other stars. I wondered if all the falling stars weren't piled up someplace like derelict automobiles in a junk yard. In the darkness we heard a siren. A fire engine? An ambulance? Some poor soul's life slipping out of reach? A jet plane passed overhead. Fred and I watched as it weaved its way between, behind, over, and under the stars.

"Was Ann always such a bitch?" Fred asked, wiping the small white moustache off his lips.

"Fred!" I scolded. "I don't like you talking like that about Ann." I hesitated before continuing. Down the block, a garage door opened. "When I first met Ann, she was filled with the zest of life. God, she was so eager to learn, to try things, to reach out and grab life. I had never met anyone who took so many chances, who risked herself both physically and emotionally everyday she woke up. She was like those people..."

"In the Kellogg's Corn Flakes commercials," Fred interrupted.

"Not exactly, Fred. Ah, if you'd known Ann as I knew her back in those days: Ann in tight jeans and a wool sweater running across a field pulling the line of a kite, Ann's head cradled under my chin, her voice, soft, a lilting giggle, laughing at my little insights, my calculations of the number of bricks in the Empire State Building, my thesis on the number of poets who had written Shakespeare's plays, my estimate of the number of slaps on the heads of Nazi boys, the number of blouses torn off movie actresses, the number of angels on the head of a pin, the number of miracles in a laugh. Ann made me see beauty in death, joy in despair, gentleness in the rages of sex. She made me feel as if the misery of the world was God's jealousy. He was jealous of my good fortune, the good fortune of Ann loving me and not Him."

My thoughts drifted off until I heard sounds from our neighbor's backyard. A group of black men in loin clothes and carrying heavy packs were climbing over the back fences toward us. Behind them was a white man dressed in a safari outfit and carrying a large rifle. When they reached us the white man stuck out his hand toward me.

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume."

I looked over at Fred who shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid there's some mistake. My name is David Halliday. This is my cat, Fred."

"Are you sure?" the man asked, looking quite distressed.

"Yes, we adopted him just a few months ago."

"I mean," the gentleman said irritably, "are you sure you aren't the world famous humanitarian¹ Dr. Livingstone? I'm Stanley from the New York Herald and I've been sent out to find this fellow Livingstone. The whole civilized world thinks he's dead."

"I'm afraid they're probably right," I replied. "In any case, I am not he."

"You wouldn't know where I could find him by any chance?"

"Well," I thought for a moment, "there's an all night doughnut shop on Dundas Street. If he's about, you might find him there." I gave Stanley directions. He thanked me for my help and then marched off with his entourage, climbing over the next fence and into the darkness.

I puffed on my pipe, taking it slowly out of my mouth, and pointed the stem at Fred. He ducked.

"So what the hell is time?" I asked.

"It's an invention," Fred replied, twisting the hairs of his moustache.

"An invention?"

"Man is the only creature who experiences time. Trees don't wear watches. Don't you find that odd, Dave?"

I shook my head.

"All that is," Fred continued, "is the here and now."

I didn't like what Fred was saying. Time for me had always been an escape from the present into the future. Without time, there was no hope. We were imprisoned in the Now. It was a definition of hell.

Fred wiped his howl clean with his tail, then licked his tail clean.

"I'll bet my bottom dollar that Ann was always a bitch."

"Fred!"

"Dave, face up to it. Your golden memories of Ann is the way you've chosen to create her. Everyone does it. That's why people are always lamenting about the good old days. There were no good old days. Everything was always and is now, dreadful. Ann was always the bitch."

I turned away to relight my pipe. I couldn't be sure if Fred was serious or if he was just having some fun at the expense of my insomnia. But, was he right? Had Ann always been a bitch? I could remember friends at college warning me about her, how unstable she was, emotionally out of control, promiscuous, manic about her appearance, abrasive and argumentative. She had few friends, except for Flora, a beautiful girl with

long blond hair, dazzling blue eyes, a brilliant wide smile and flippers for arms. She was the only person at college, besides myself, who would listen to Ann. And even Flora had warned me about Ann.

"She's not the person you think she is." Flora said.

A second image of Ann began to compete with the golden girl I had earlier described to Fred. Ann, turning away from me, not saying anything, making me feel as if I had done something wrong. Always I was wrong. An image of Ann, turning suddenly on me, attacking ferociously as if her life depended on it. And then later crying in my arms, apologizing. "They all hate me," she would weep. "Everyone hates me except you, David. Don't ever turn on me. Promise. Why don't they like me? I try hard, I try so hard to make them like me. I hate them. I hate all of them. David, I'll be good to you, just don't turn on me."

For a long time, Fred and I sat on the fence staring into the western sky, neither of us uttering a word. Suddenly the western sky lit up. I thought it must be a fire of some kind. Then I could see the sun peak its head over the western horizon. I gasped, holding my breath, expecting the sun to rise up in the sky like thunder. But, its rise was quiet, subdued, almost shy. How can the sun be rising in the west? I glanced down at my watch. It was too early for sunrise. At that moment, the sun too realized its error, and looking around to make sure no one had seen it, the sun ducked its head below the horizon once again.

"Did you see that, Fred?" I cried. "The sun began to rise in the west and..."

Fred did not answer. I looked over. Fred was stretched out along the fence, fast asleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

MURDERER

The next morning we awoke late. Ann had already gone to work. Upstairs Claude was playing Gregorian chants on his stereo. I had to get out. After five minutes on the road, I heard my stomach grumble. I pulled into a Dairy Queen. I asked Fred if he wanted an ice cream. Fred shook his head. Fred's pet fly, a creature that Fred had met while cruising the compost in the back yard, sat like a cigarette on Fred's lip. The fly buzzed. The fly wanted ice cream.

The girl serving at the Dairy Queen was fresh, young and innocent looking, one of those archetypal young women that the manufacturers of

skin lotion, love for their advertisements. It was impossible to censor the picture my mind painted of this young girl bathing in a tub of soft ice cream as I licked the side of the tub where the melting ice cream was dripping. I ordered. The girl, cuddling a smile between her shoulders, giggled, her nose bobbing up and down like a buoy. I sighed. She was lovely. From behind me I heard heavy breathing and a grunt. Looking over my shoulder, I saw a biker draped in hunks of leather and metal. He was smiling at the girl, obviously sharing my dream. On his t-shirt was written - TO HAVE BEEN OR NOT TO HAVE BEEN. I noticed that he was reading the business section of the Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper.

"How's the market?" I asked.

The biker's eyes rolled up into his head.

"That bad, eh?"

"My broker told me not to buy gold," he spat. "Have you seen what's happened to gold?"

I shook my head.

"I should have followed my own instincts," the biker continued, "and invested in the precious metal. That's where the smart money is going. Unfortunately, my broker is not smart."

"I'm sure he meant well," I smiled.

The broker glared at me for a moment.

"Was that supposed to be funny?" he asked.

I quickly paid for the two cones and stepped outside, the ice cream beginning to melt and run down the cones and over my hands. The biker's t-shirt troubled me. I receive messages on t-shirts all the time, not prophecies of the apocalypse or anything biblical, but messages in the line of household reminders like Did you turn off the stove? or Today is garbage day. This has been of enormous benefit to someone like myself who is almost pathologically absent-minded. And now there was this puzzling message on the biker's chest. To have been or not to have been. Perhaps Fred could make some sense of it. He was very good at anagrams.

I stepped back into the Volkswagon. The fly flew from Fred's lip to his cone, which I had set upright in the ashtray.

"I just received another message," I said.

"Another Christian holiday?" Fred asked.

I told Fred about the biker and his t-shirt.

"Maybe it was just a t-shirt," Fred suggested.

"But how can I be sure? Maybe it's trying to tell me that everything I perceive is an hallucination. Am I making up my life? It's a question of inventory. I'm afraid my mind may be playing tricks on me. How much of my past is real and how much have I fabricated?"

Fred licked his paw and rubbed it across his nose.

"It would be a convenient way to get divorced. You could just deny the existence of your mate."

I looked at Fred as I spooned out a mouthful of ice cream with my tongue.

"The question is," Fred continued. "How much information does the brain retain? And who decides what is to be thrown out? There should be some kind of system, like the bowels for the stomach, to get rid of waste data. We're not talking about ideas here, or impressions, or skills. We're talking raw material. Consider how much your ears, your eyes, all the senses suck in on a normal day. Multiply that by a lifetime. Surely there has to be a limit to how much can be filed away. What happens to the rest? How is it dissipated? Who takes out the trash? Maybe all your problems, Dave, stem from a problem of waste disposal."

"You think I'm overwhelmed with information?"

"Look at yourself, Dave!" Fred cried. "You're talking to a cat for Christ's sake."

I thought about what Fred had said as I continued to scoop ice cream out of the cone with my tongue.

"Did they say anything on the tube last night about showers?" Fred asked.

"Why do you ask?"

"It's starting to cloud over," Fred said glancing up at the sky.

Suddenly, as if to underscore Fred's concern, there was a terrific clap of thunder. Part of my ice cream leaped into my mouth for shelter. Rain began to tap on the roof of the Beetle. Outside people were beginning to run for cover. A fat middle-aged woman ran passed our car, holding a folded newspaper over her head. I couldn't read the date. She was wearing a t-shirt. DAMN! It read. Rain burst through the sky. I looked at my watch. Time was on an assembly line and I was being dragged on. I started the Beetle and slowly pulled out of the lot and back onto Lawrence Avenue.

"That fly sure likes soft ice cream," Fred smiled. "Even this storm hasn't dampened his enthusiasm."

"Does he have a name?" I asked.

"How do you know it's a he?" Fred asked. "Never assume anything. He has a name but there's no English translation."

A truck horn sounded followed by an ear-piercing screech of brakes. I stopped the car and looked into my rear view mirror. Shuddering to a stop only inches behind the Beetle was a huge transport truck. My heart was pounding. I watched as the driver of the truck leaped out of his cab into the downpour and ran toward us. I rolled down my window.

"Unusual weather we're having," I began but was interrupted by the raging voice of the trucker.

"You stupid son of a bitch," the trucker screamed, the veins of his neck popping, the rain pouring down his face and dripping off the end of his nose in beads.

I smiled politely.

"Don't you look where you're going, asshole?" he continued. "I could have flattened you. And don't blame it on the weather. Always the god-damn weather. I don't know how assholes like you get a license."

"Cracker Jacks," Fred responded.

"Who said that?" the trucker demanded looking into the Beetle. I pointed to Fred.

"You trying to be a smart ass? Look, Mac, you want to kill yourself, fine, but do it in the privacy of your own bathroom and not out here where others have to clean up the mess."

The trucker turned and walked slowly back to his truck, the rain turning into an aura of steam around his body. I rolled up my window, took another mouthful of ice cream and moved the Beetle onwards. Fred began to lecture me on good driving practices. I remembered that Ann had warned me that I was dangerous. The word dangerous plagued my thoughts. I had never seen myself as malicious or evil. First Ann, then the trucker, and now Fred had warned me that I was a hazard to others. As we drove along Lawrence Avenue through the downpour, I made an extra effort to concentrate on the task at hand. It was boring. Man was not built for the purely mechanical. It is an effort for him to pay attention to the mundane. The ice cream helped. Ice cream doesn't taste cold in dreams so that each time I began to drift off, the taste of cold vanilla brought me back to earth. The downpour continued. Waves of water moved out from the tires of cars into the curbs rushing along in torrents and then swirling into the darkness of the sewers. I had often wondered about a secret world that existed beneath the city. Dr. Blackstone said there was no such world but he had never gone down there to look. Small lakes began to appear in the low-lying areas of asphalt or around

those sewer grates that were plugged up with leaves and garbage. Traffic moved slowly. I glanced over at Fred. He looked depressed.

"What's eating you?" I asked, licking my ice cream.

"We've got to talk, Dave."

"About what, Fred?"

"You, Dave. I'm worried. Recently you seem to be off someplace else. Maybe it's the shock of marital strife. Maybe it's the starch in your jockey shorts. The other day when I asked you about Bishop Berkely, you responded with a chess move."

I smiled at Fred. Everyone was always accusing me of escapism. Dr. Blackstone said that my interest in the metaphysical was a form of escapism. The doctor doesn't approve of escape. He believes that one should face life head on. Good advice if one knew which direction to face. Reality, it seemed to me, was something one caught a glimpse of, out of the corner of one's eye, for a brief fleeting moment. It was not something one ran into head on. Fred loosened his seat belt and lay on his back, scratching his chest. I finished my cone and reached for the second cone in the ashtray.

"I don't think Dr. Blackstone likes me," Fred said.

"How can you say that? He never objects to you accompanying me to his office."

"He sprays the furniture with Lysol. He thinks I'm carrying fleas. And most of the time he completely ignores me as if I was invisible."

"Maybe he just doesn't like cats. You shouldn't take it so personal."

Fred sighed. "What are you going to talk about with the good doctor the next time you meet?"

I shrugged. "Life. Existential dread. Alienation. Hemorrhoids. I don't know, Fred. Why don't you speak with him."

"Me? He couldn't handle that. Trust me. That guy is a hair's breath away from being institutionalized. I can smell it on his breath."

"What?" I laughed. "What's his breath got to do with it?"

"He uses Lysol as a breath freshener."

The rain stopped. A slice of sunlight cut through the clouds and splintered into shards across the street.

"I miss our philosophic discussions," Fred sighed. "We used to talk about all kinds of philosophic problems but ever since that fiasco at the poetry workshop you've been a recluse. Why don't you admit it, Dave, your troubles with Ann are tearing you up? You're suicidal, a total wreck, the flotsam of an emotional shipwreck, each breath a gauntlet of existential dread?"

I shrugged my shoulders and finishing the second cone, wiped the ice cream off my face with a Kleenex. The sun was out in force now. A light mist rose from the asphalt, the rain retreating into the sky.

"By the way," Fred asked, "what happened to my fly?"

"How would I know?" I responded as I brought the Beetle to a stop at a red light. "Last time I saw the little fellow, he was lying naked, bathing in..."

I looked down at the ashtray. Then it struck me. I'd eaten both cones. I looked at Fred. There were tears in his eyes.

"You swallowed my pet," he sobbed, jerking back his words.

"I'm sorry, Fred. It was an accident. I didn't mean..."

"That's the trouble with you, Dave, you're always sorry. Everything is always an accident. I'll bet you meant to eat him!"

The light turned green. I didn't move. Then it turned orange, blinking its message of danger at me. Fred curled up into a ball, mourning the loss of his pet. The light turned red. My stomach began to grumble. I belched. Fred looked at me with disdain. The light turned green again. I moved on slowly. A beautiful young girl with long blond hair and dark sunglasses walked along the sidewalk towards us. She'd gotten soaking wet. Her hair was flattened out and a t-shirt clung tightly to her full breasts. Across them was written - MURDERER!

THE END OF EPISODE ONE

Watch out for Episode Two

David Halliday has published poems, short stories, plays, art works in reviews and publications across the United States and Canada. David Halliday has several published books: murder by Coach House Press. Winner of the 2001 Eppie for poetry. The Black Bird by. The Porcupine's Quill. Making Movies by Press Porcepic. Church Street is Burning, a book of poems, was a finalist in the 2002 Eppie for poetry. The God of Six Points, published by Double-dragon-ebooks. Sleeping Beauty, published by LTD ebooks.com is a murder mystery. Finalist in the 2003 Dream Realm Awards. Winner of the 2004 IP Book Awards. The Hole, published by LTD ebooks is one in a series of cop stories. In 2007 David Halliday was short listed for the C.B.C. Literary Contest in poetry.

Discover more work by David

murder

The Hole

Church Street is Burning
Crowd Noises
Saints of Jazz
Homicide Now and Then
<http://power-of-h.blogspot.com/>

From the same author on *Feedbacks*

murder (2010)

Before there was the Simpson trial, before there was Judge Judy, there was murder. *Murder* is a book that unwinds like a movie with each poem a scene. We open with an introduction to the killer followed by the killer's introduction to the victim at the murder scene. We read a report on the victim and then are introduced to the murder scene, the body at the morgue, the meeting of friends and relatives at the funeral. The police round up a group of suspects. An innocent man is charged and brought to trial. The judge, the prosecution, the defense lawyer, the spectators in the courtroom are introduced. Witnesses are brought forward who reveal their version of the events surrounding the murder. A judgment is brought down. The judge washes his hands of everything to do with the accused and turns him over to the mob who crucify the innocent man. After this horrendous lynching, the mob disbands and the world returns to its innocence.

The Hole (2010)

Detective Sam Kelly is in the last days of a long career. His final assignment is to investigate Joe Mackenzie's complaint that neighbours are dumping garbage down his well. Kelly soon discovers that many locals have vanished over the years. In every case the disappearances lead back to the mysterious hole in Mackenzie's backyard.

THE ADVENTURES OF FRED AND ME Episode 2 THE END
STARTS JUST BEFORE THE BEGINNING (2011)

A surreal comic novel (in the tradition of magic realism) about a young writer in the throes of a messy marital breakup and his subsequent drifting into madness. Plus his talking cat, Fred. This is episode 2 in a series of four books, each one thrill packed.

THE ADVENTURES OF FRED AND ME Episode 3 REALITY
STRIKES BACK (2011)

A surreal comic novel (in the tradition of magic realism) about a young writer in the throes of a messy marital breakup and his subsequent drifting into madness. Plus his talking cat, Fred. This is

episode 3 in which me finds himself the main suspect in the murder of a young girl.

THE ADVENTURES OF FRED AND ME Episode 4 LIFE IS ALL ITS CRACKED UP TO BE (2011)

A surreal comic novel (in the tradition of magic realism) about a young writer in the throes of a messy marital breakup and his subsequent drifting into madness. Plus his talking cat, Fred. This is episode 4 in which me (that's his name disguised as David Halliday) follows Nick Charles (of Thin Man fame) into the bowels of the earth, faces death, and something worse.

Making Movies (2011)

The magic of film is recreated, taken apart, examined and lovingly satirized in an unusual work of fiction. David Halliday imagines a BBC documentary about 'the well known Canadian film maker Samuel Bremmer'. We see moments of the films themselves; we hear the words of the actors, the designers and the commentary of the director, Samuel Bremmer. The illusion of film, and how it is created against a backdrop of money problems, personality clashes, jealousies, ambitions, love and vanity. Originally published by Press Porcepic.

Bicycle Thieves (2011)

It was the nineteen fifties. The suburbs. Septic tanks. Cape Cod houses. Row on row. New schools. Bullies. Mad boys. Black and white television. Aerials. Dogs running free. Pond hockey. Cigarettes. Teenage crushes. Bicycle Thieves. And death.

Somewhere in the 1970s (2011)

No one was going to tell them what life was about. Or tell them how to party. They were free. And arrogant. And young. It was the 1970s and everyone was lost.



www.feedbooks.com
Food for the mind