1 Was CHARLES BRONSON'S GECRET HOSTAGE

A COLLECTION OF MICROS

Kyle Hennings

2013 CHAPBOOK

SCARSMUL V717878

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PAPERBACK LOVE AFFAIR

imagining you as the 7th grade girl i kissed when the moon was half of a mouth that could not pronounce us as in did we do it? you might have been the one who won the science essay, something about cross-bred tulips. when it came to irish catholic boys like me you had a green tongue & a hard line on commies. your definition: a commie never wears white socks & winds up smoking moroccan dope with substitute teachers who don't wear bras/are allergic to camel fur. imagining you as the girl with blue distance in her eyes & me & my boomerang dreams-to-obsessions-to-chronic fatalities. i didn't mean to bring you roses at the dorm & stammer like one of dostoyevsky's idiot boys giggling at his own argyles. we never did get to the point of the story where the antihero becomes hero for a day. you never had the balls.

GUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE #1

We lived in the middle of a long block of modest colonials and silent dogs. As a kid wearing paper tissues under those dreaded starched collars for school, or with ear glued to a transistor blaring "Baby Love," hands cutting the outlines of paper heroes, I thought the sun and the moon revolved around our house. Nobody dies in this home; nobody flies away. My mother, who loved Maria Callas and Brigadoon, bought two parakeets because she thought a house is not a nest without birds. I became overly attached to the shy one because he reminded me of myself in classrooms, of being stuck for answers. One day in a fit of rage, my father opened the cage and chased the birds out the window. I ran after them because the world was too big for the two of them, especially the one who didn't chirp much. I didn't see the car coming. The world was too big for the three of us. So now, I'm holding the world in my hand. It's made of glass and it's really very small after you've grown beyond it. I spin it around and around in my palm. Inside, I can see a small boy chasing two birds because they mean life and death to him. They keep running all around the world until they catch up. But the birds will always fly away and the boy is growing too tall and too starry-eyed for a life of glass and pain. So I make a fist and crush this world.

I WAS LANA TURNER'S TORMENTED GECRET LIVE-IN & I NEVER WROTE A FREAKIN' BOOK ABOUT IT

I told her that someday she'd get hers, that sooner or later, it's going to rain poets who moonlight as 3rd rate mechanics. I said "Give me back my washers, bitch!" She slunk in the doorway with that sexy pout, drunk again & wearing a satin nightgown that she stole from a houseguest turned murder suspect. She stuffed the washers in her panties and said "Come and Get it, Sheep-Boy." I held up my hands, showed her the grease. I said, "Those washers cost me \$1.50 apiece. They're special washers. They can double as sex-aids. And do you want really want these greasy hands in a pair of panties autographed by Franchot Tone?"

"Go wash them, Dum-Dum," she said.

"Oh no," I said, "I don't trust the tap water here—not hard water or soft."

I never got those washers back.

TOUCH THIS

It's 6:00 a.m. brain-freeze. I'm wandering back in the left-over fog from the slumgullion of frenzied life. Two hours I cannot account for. The crazy Chinese guy from Club Fez follows me into the bathroom at Port Authority, exposes himself, as if a private part can ever be a satisfactory summation of his being. His eyes remind me of two distracted hobos that have stopped seeing the outside world for what it isn't-kind. They never focus on one place for very long. He asks ten bucks for some touch. He isn't even hard, soft as balled-up socks, probably homeless from the rain. I remember the time my father used to lock me behind closets until I said the correct password, which was usually "Swordfish," or "Duck Feather." He loved doing Groucho imitations, flicking a make-believe cigar. I'm left picking up the ashes. To this day. So I tell the Chinese guy to wait behind the stall because in awhile there'll be some heavy traffic. He obeys without looking at me. I leave the men's room with the door making a gentle swoosh. At the bus stop, I spot the guy, head hung low, muttering to himself, heading to the opposite end of no-ever, wherever. All his life, I imagine, trying to hold someone's ashes as if a precious spall of ore. But I did drop him ten bucks under the stall. He can have lunch. I can sleep until noon.

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{FRUITY}

Sharing sage brush tea with the girl from last night's happy hour where for a golden moment there was a silence following a confession, worthy of the best-wrung janitors' mop heads. You felt like. She asked if we are an em-dash in someone's thoughts, maybe that special link. She once had this dream, she said, sucking an ice cube, that one day she'd be a poet living in the mote surrounding someone's dust village. You took her to your place of old doggy photos, broken dishes in the sink, reflections behind the walls. After sex with blurred visions, you dreamt her up as an exotic what? A loquat tree leaning towards you? When you woke up, and she unloaded five weeks of chintzy china and she said in so many words that you are too brittle for her, your soft chine and yesterday's too tight shoes, that she implied that she was a slutty girl from South of Fur-line Park {and get this} her odd jokes about you not having to pucker your lips {or was it constringe?} to squeeze a lemon in the most efficient way-you realized that either she didn't know very much about fruits or maybe your lips were too loose to hold in bitter.

AN ENDEARING ANTIDOTE ABOUT GOPHIA LOREN THAT I TOLD Almost No One

It was raining drops big as matzo balls. Okay, an exaggeration, but so was the movie she was filming. Something about cowboys who couldn't die or sneeze or fart in the desert. She made me the most delicious rum cake. I said, "Sophia, did anyone tell you that you make the most delicious rum cake?" She slapped me. I COULD NOT BELIEVE IT. She slapped me with my cheeks full of her rum cake. Bits of saliva drenched rum cake spotted her walls. I said, "SOPHIA, DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?" She said her favorite uncle was a rummy, drowned at sea. Then she stormed away, muttering something about Sergio Leone and Terrence Hill. FOOLS! she screamed out and thrusting a cupped hand into the air. The next time I stayed at her house, I didn't ask for rum cake. She served cold spaghetti.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE OZ

It's a red sundowner. You imagine a blade of grass feeling like a wick. The wick is you, burning slow. Your mother dumps the last of the compost, complains how she's been breaking rocks for years. Just for you. Father left months ago with a willowy women allergic to alfalfa. But she loved jazz and the way your father exaggerated his lean years in Kansas, a yellow sky of pure waiting. Tomorrow's clouds will spell the name of a boy with a mystic lisp. Tomorrow you'll spend half of your allowance, sent by envelope from your dad, on this boy at the pizza parlor. You'll wish his dimples are as big as dimes so you can pocket them. You'd be as rich as the woman who leans towards your father, shoulders rolled, knees turned, merging her skinny self with his funky brand of night-shade.

TRUST ME

You thought you thought I was a nice guy. You believed. You had faith in universal laws, astral projections of piety and goodness. You imagined me with umbrellas, tip toeing through puddles, smiling at waitresses with last night's smudge of purple lipstick, burns on the back of the hand serving Spanish omelets, cheese oozing like lust. So I turned out to be illegal. I stole your panties and mailed them to old enemies with a note stating: Is your wife missing something? or Do you know your husband poses for me with just this? I stole gumballs from blind children. I made old ladies my getaway drivers. When we crashed white convertibles, I inherited their trust funds. The truth is this. A nice guy is a mule with stiff legs. But a thrill is a thrill is a downhill racer. When it's gone there'll be another. If you get caught, I have tools. I have rope.

BEFORE WI-FI, THERE WAS THIS

This has nothing to do with rabbits, with pigeons, with puffed heart lockets etched with Braille, with eyes like Peridot stones, with Citrine sunsets, with deserted sailboats, with the best beef noodle soup this side of Canal Street. This has to do with the text I sent to the wrong recipient=You. The correct recipient is from Mars or someplace farther & colder. She has never seen rabbits, pigeons, puffed heart lockets, Peridot stones, etc. Her planet, like the sailboat mentioned above, has been deserted, Oh, way before Star Trek went off the air. On her best days, she can float & she's very susceptible to Touch. Please don't say a word. Martians are all around us. They use hidden antennas but they snore like we do. It's a kind of superiority complex that's universal.

1 Was CHARLES BRONSON'S GECRET HOSTAGE

What's worse than putting your skinny nose in a nut cracker? It's being taken hostage by Charles Bronson in his leaning house on a mountain. I think Charley has gone nuts. He keeps pacing in front of me with hands behind his back and saying something about the weight of happiness is too much for all of us to bear. Charley, I yell, what gives! Please untie me, I'm getting nervous. He says for me to give him the code, first.

I say WHAT CODE, CHARLEY? YOU MEAN THE CODE TO MY MOTHER'S COOKIE JAR, THE ONE SHE ALWAYS KEEPS SECURED WITH TWO COMBINATION LOCKS? OR DO YOU MEAN THE CODE LIKE THE ONE THAT PRESSES MY FUZZY GIRLFRIEND'S HORNY BUTTON AND SHE CAN GO THROUGH THREE MEN LIKE A BOWL OF CHICKEN SOUP?

I mean THE CODE, says Charley. Like CODE AS IN THIS CEILING WILL BEGIN TO LOWER IN TEN SECONDS AND FLATTEN YOU.

I don't know any code, I tell Charley, except in node abode dote my fish took off with my boat.

Charley turns to me and winks. He says Nice try, kid, but you're missing a vowel.

He walks away.

Just like that.

I was only short a vowel.

Kyle Hemmings

GTRANGE LOVE

I was just an average out-of-work Star Trek extra strolling in the park under speechless mockingbirds who probably wished they owned MP3s, when she dropped from a tree like a billet-doux written on stone and almost crushed my egg-shaped head. From then on we became a couple, but I never allowed her to scramble my breakfast or to choose my cable channels.

POWER LINE

When we were young, we played tricks on old women who claimed they had claws & pincers & pock-marked daughters with raven-fierce eyes. We shoplifted Lucky Charms & cut our teeth on the blue-Tang edge of night. As ravenous adults with hard headaches, our bodies burnt out on 3d rate hotel mattresses, deficient of spring & foam & form. We bounced back & jumped from buildings. Under a sodium street light, you made me into a wisp. From then on, I could only dream in back seats of two-door cars, subwoofers silenced. At clubs, we made public love with wobble and rubber knee. I loved you in undisclosed corners of the city. Someone said this island will someday sink under the weight of so many love addicts, Richard Simmons aerobic-exercise flunkies. After they arrested you for shoplifting hearts in vivo, I pressed my lips to frozen metal just to prove that winter could not pierce me. I was wrong. I tightwalked across telephone lines just to hear the echoes of my old conversations with you. A high-wire hope. Then the click, the fall. The soul-less cell phone. My broken body, discharged of all electricity, remote from myself.

INVISIBLE MONKEYS

You're the head psychiatrist in a large university hospital. You've been handed the most challenging case of your career. A woman claims she's being ravaged at night by her interior monkeys. She can't hold a job or a relationship. Immediately you start her on a regimen of anti-malarial pills, meds for various forms of jungle sickness, order a series of brain MRIs. On the latest EEG tracings, you notice queer spikes from a well of sleep. In her drawings, she sketches monkeys in various postures of denial. She asks if you want to hear a good joke: Q. Why are pets not allowed in department stores? A. Because they can see through every shopper's motive. You force a laugh. She fakes marsupial happiness/hides green monkey despair. One morning, a nurse rushes into your office. "Dr.," she says, "we found Miss M hanging from the ceiling by three tethered monkey tails." You know someone is sending you a message. At home, you turn on the lights, check to see that the cats are alright.

SEE-THROUGH BABY

the baby was born with a window in his belly. the surgeon from toledo scratched his head, said words like hinged or unhinged, vista or without. he said he needed more time. in our baby's window we saw rivers & boats, cities & birds, we saw ourselves looking out helplessly. my mother-in-law spread ground glass & ammonia in our bed sheets. she said it would make us strong. sometimes we heard a distant knocking, the laughter of young children. our baby had fake tears. my wife cried while breast feeding. sometimes we dreamt of something crashing, a rock through a window. a specialist from cincinnati offered a cure. he placed a flap where the window was. the baby grew up blind & we moved into a smaller house.

IN THE KITCHEN YOU MUGT FOCUS OR GET THE HELL OUT & CALL CHEF 911

IT'S NOT MY FAULT THAT YOU FORGOT TO ADD 3 PURPLE ONIONS & TWO PAIRS OF RABBIT EARS TO YOUR CRAZY GRAND-MOTHER'S MUTTON STEW. IT'S OKAY. APOLOGIES ACCEPTED. ANYWAY, WE'RE ALL A LITTLE EAST OF EDEN, AREN'T WE? I MEAN LIKE GRANDMA STILL EATS WITH HER HANDS & SHE'S REFUSING THE FALSE TEETH, TOTALLY.

A ONE GTAR RESTAURANT

while eating oysters without spreading your legs you notice that outside trees are catching fire mortars whine distant a hostile take-over of this franchise with so little overhead not even a homemade clam dip. you turn to your husband who wasn't always so absent or otherly-bloated. but he's already in the waiter's face, complaining that he only wanted egg salad—how much more sexless can you get? & even that came with bits of shell.

LATEX LOVE

i exhaled all my passion into a big red balloon again, it was night in the city & i was standing under a bridge not a pigeon not a wobbling club kid not a woman smoking by an anonymous window—nothing i mean nothing stirred the doctors gave me 50% chance with surgery my prognosis: live to give/ sleep when it gets deep i spotted a homeless woman lying on the bottom row of steps that led to a public library there were statues of important looking men & some pigeons i took the balloon that held the sum of my passions & opened her mouth her jaw was rigid i struggled i untied the latex lip to my passion finally placed it between what teeth she had left Breathe, i said i said it again then i realized what the problem was my passion was dead.

JANE FONDA NEEDS GLASSES

I bring her six to eight plastic flowers after her bodyguard quits, take her Peruvian hairless terrier for circular walks that causes pedestrian traumas, order five to seven chili dogs with the works. & this is the thanks I get. She says THANK YOU, LITTLE BOY, DID YOU BRING MAMA ANY TWISTERS? Or LITTLE BOY, COULD YOU RUN OUT FOR MAMMA & GET SOME TOILET PAPER, THE ROSE COL-ORED KIND? Jane Fonda is losing her vision & I can't count. So maybe it evens out. I keep telling her to stop calling me little boy. Soon, I'll be older than her.

GUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE #2

She doesn't say she will never love him as in hot sleepless nights by the old train tracks, or her dreaming of some bad boy, brooding, mumbling, his sexy animal inarticulateness. With him, there will be no bruised skin over a deep wound. She likes the little man who butters his bread with his left hand, and smiles when she's withholding an embarrassing answer. Why hurt anyone who gives gifts of salt water taffy and tiny sculptures of Parisian dance hall girls? Most of his questions hint at depth, the ability to not breathe for long periods of time, the risk of losing things.

Sometimes on a sticky star-studded night, he looks up at the sky and remarks that we are surrounded by so much space. Yet what are we to do? When she finally breaks down and tells him about the man who cut her so deep that she bled from bed to bed, that some kinds of love, like his, are too precious, too fragile to be questioned, he tries to hold her and he is off balance. She steadies him. Her embrace is stronger, more encompassing. She listens to his faint heartbeat, feels his spongy bones. Whatever is left is her own space, an enormous room where she dances *en pointe* and keeps falling, keeps breaking that same tiny bone in her ankle.

ZIN'S 14TH GTREET DEMO

We are glitter-puppies in a dance temple of extended happy hour truths. Some of us will die in our distressed jeans. Who is the closet lipster with too many au cell phone lives? So wasted in those buckled high-heeled sandals & waist-tiered crochet shirt. On Wednesdays, the 70s disco night, I imagine her heart to be a sponge. On Saturday Classic Free Style, it is a terrorist on high pump. No cause for alarm. Everyone's false eyelashes will fall straight, sooner or later. & the Bobbsi-Brothers are approaching Zen-Oneness to dub step & wobble bass. When they play Madonna's "Beautiful Stranger," I want to be a tramp stamp on someone's misaligned spine. Or a compressed shadow with strong techno inclinations. Outside this place the comets are cynical & keep missing the sleep-deprived. I will hand over my skinny frayed self to DJ Pharaoh Sun-Rah. My body, all patch cords & re-mixed air. I could fly for an instant like a homesick bird with prosthetic wings. In the morning, we will make love to our stalkers in double-breasted trench coats. We will recall with true Platonic form how our lead-footed mothers gave birth to us in S&M dungeons. They had such crazy whips. We will turn to tiny glass gazelles scattered on the streets, crushed by taxis rushing one way. Darling, it's really all a glazed hallucination that never sleeps. But you can still like us on Facebook.

I THINK WYOND RYDER REALLY LIKES ME BUT SHE'S TOO STUCK UP TO DOMIT IT

LAST NIGHT I PRETENDED I WAS IGGY POP & I WAS KISSING WYONA RIDER UNTIL SHE BEGGED ME TO STOP. THEN SHE SLAPPED ME SO HARD I LOST A

LOOSE MOLAR. SHE CALLED ME A POMPOUS ASS. I WAS NO LONGER MICROPHONE HARD. WHEN I GOT HOME I NURSED A BRUISED EGO BUT I STILL HAD THREE PERFECT HEADS OF RED CABBAGE IN THE FRIDGE & SOME MEXICAN BEER. I PLAYED SOME I-POD TUNES & LISTENED TO MYSELF. I THOUGHT: WYONA, YOU'RE OVERRAT-ED. YOU CAN'T SHOPLIFT THIS HEART. YOU PROBABLY CAN'T EVEN SING OR MAKE A DECENT OMELET.

MELENCHOLIA, DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

in interviews with paparazzi who lost face to tenors from the outskirts of Bologna, reduced to homeless sheep girls denying the essence of ditch & meadow, i described my life with lana as an island in a sky mesa.

the woman hanging from my ledge is begging the question is losing her voice.

CLINT EASTWOOD AND GUESS WHO'S NOT THERE

I had him laughing so hard that he promised to lick my mahogany legs clean if I told him another joke about a Democratic mayor who lost his head and hallucinated talking chairs. Truth is I can't talk at all. I'm just an empty chair. It's Clint who puts words on my seat. Sometimes Clint thinks I'm an angry chair. Like the time he kept asking me why he didn't get the lead role in Total Recall. Then he says, DON'T TELL ME YOU DON'T REMEMBER. No, he said, looking down at me, that's my line.

Bio

Kyle Hemmings is the author of several chapbooks of poetry and prose: *Avenue C, Cat People*, and *Anime Junkie* (Scars Publications), and *Tokyo Girls in Science Fiction* (NAP). His latest ebooks are *You Never Die in Wholes* from Good Story Press and *The Truth about Onions* from Good Samaritan. His latest collection of prose/poetry is *Void & Sky* from Outskirt Press.

Was CHARLES BRONSON'S GECRET HOSTAGE



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Magazine: Children, Churches and Daddies (cc&d magazine), founded June 1993; Down in the Dirt, conceived 1994, founded 2000

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Books: Hope Chest in the Attic, the Window, Close Cover Before Striking, (Wo **BOOKS:** Hope Gaser is the Artic, the Window, Gaser Caree Feders Staffing, Winness, Jatuanne Barones, Cantonic Liber Persente, the Artopic Gaser's Galide (to Frankins), Gangardy Gaser, Marcy Gay & Galide (to Frankins), Gangardy Gaser, Marcy Gay & Galide (to Frankins), Gangardy Gaser, Marcy Gay & Galide (to Frankins), Gaser (Harris, Care), Persente, Tari Staffing, Fortune Articles, Staffing, Staffing, Fortune Articles, Fortune Articles, Fortune Articles, Fortune Articles, Staffing, Fortune Articles, Fo m, Rising to the Surface, Golopopes, Ghapter 38 (v1, v2 a. v3), Faally, Liberature for the Santty and Ellie (v1, v2 a part 1), a Wake-Up Call From Tredition, (recovery), Dark Matter: the Hind of Jonet Kuypers, Evolution, (towet), Get Your Bezz Ou, Jonet & Joen Togethe m, Taking Poetry to the Streets, the Came-Dizin Cal-Yourn Libon, the Written Word, Dud, Propare Her for This, Uncorrect, Living in a Big World, Pulled the Trigger, Venture to the Unknown, Jamet Kuypers: Euriched, Sho's on Open Book, "40", Straism and Other Streise, per enty, cannot prevery to me streets, min cannot water, the written write, cont, repare the rest into content or any and prevery, researe the registry vertices and the streets of Weare Prevers. The street is the work (content or base does, we're a transmit, street (content or base), and the streets of Weare Prevers. The street is the work (content or base does, we're a transmit or any street interes). The streets of Weare Prevers (street in the street of Weare Prevers) (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the work (content or base does, we're a transmit or and prevers) (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the work (content or base does, we're a transmit or and prevers) (street in the streets) (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street in the street in the street in the street of Weare Prevers). The street is the street of Weare Prevers (street in the street in Sulphur & Sawdost, Slate & Marrow, Blister & Burn, Rinse & Repeat, Survive & Thrive, (not so) Warm & Fuzzy, Torture & Triumph, Oh., the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing To Hon our & Cherish, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Silences, Unlacking segure a seweex, sate a merce, Nitiste a Even, Service E Terry, tere to Warne A Farzy, Tortre E Timphy, Oa, He Benest, Sea Hode A, Side B, Jalence, Chesse Theory, Wining Is Bhowar & Carcha, Distinguished Wining, Sandary Slaver, United In Warner, Sandary Slaver, Wining Is Bhowar & Carcha, Distinguished Wining, Sandary Slaver, United In Warner, Sandary Slaver, Wining Is Bhowar & Carcha, Distinguished Wining, Sandary Slaver, United III May and Slaver, Sandary Slaver, Slaver, Sandary Slaver, S

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