

Ian Ganassi

## HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

The directions were cut off at the bottom of the page—  
We didn't know where to go from there.

I knew there was supposed to be some yelling.

And in the basement, I don't know  
What they were rendering  
Into what, but it stank like hell.

And yet the gas masks were so attractive—  
The camouflage dummies wore them well  
And in good health.

*To achieve he likes,  
But having achieved he does not quite like,  
And that of course is terribly funny.*

But the joke was obscure, you had to work it out.

And it was on you,

Even if you knew what you were doing.

Even if you know what you're doing  
It's laugh-out-loud funny.

It all depends on how much you want to know.

It's easy enough to see, hear, and speak no evil.  
But few exercise their ability.

The only way to look on the bright side is to make it up.

But once you've made it up  
It stands you in good stead.

And don't forget to laugh uncontrollably—  
There's really no other recourse.

## VERY NOSE

“I buried my wife in the rain.”

Your tears are off-script.

A knight on a white charger.

A new theater.

*Love is so short and forgetting is so long.*

Hogging and logging life’s real estate,

If you count such things.

Death is an uphill climb.

Or maybe downhill, depending on your POV.

There’s a new kid in town.

So what?

So much for the news.

Very nose. And fatal pileups.

No matter who he was up against,

Blind man’s bluff is a tricky game.

You’ll end up with a pushpin in your forehead.

*Simple Simon met a pieman going to the fair.*

And the fair was not there.

## MANHATTAN REVERIE

Moving out has taken some time to get used to.  
Like thirty years.

But what else is new?

*From Italian Colombina: small dove, a guileless woman.*

The hundred-year itch?  
The grave sends its regards.

Sometimes I wish I could be Daniel Quilp, smoking  
Black tobacco and drinking rum, accumulating bile  
Long into the night.

Scrutiny, *From Latin scrutari (to examine), from scruta (trash) ...*

Bob Dylan's trash, for instance, Or Elvis Presley's.

To remove someone from an office.

A long time ago when misery and rented rooms  
And manual labor seemed like an adventure.

By now he was covering the circus.  
The bearded lady cut herself shaving.  
It was a front-page story.

A brave man carries no ladders.

"Isn't that the neighborhood  
Where that kid  
Cut off his father's  
Head with a piece of piano wire  
And threw it out the window?"

Speaking of front page stories;  
Give me some skin.

Or a break.

## SNOWY ERMINE

So we fudged it and ended up in Nebraska.

There was nothing to see,  
And the cops didn't care,  
But we took off like a hawk after a hare.

My depressed uncle buried my depressed aunt in the rain.

Lots of pickled fish.

It's no picnic trying to go right.

It's no pickup trying to go left.

It's no picnic trying to see the light.

"But it's within each of us;"  
Let me kiss you goodnight.

I shared the back seat with a big black lab  
That enjoyed drooling on me.

Nine hours in the back  
Of a pickup truck in winter  
With some blankets and body heat.

Then a five-hour winter drive  
At night, without a windshield.

Mysteries of the human nether regions evade our touch.

As long as they're good at their jobs,  
That's good enough for us.

Inevitably it also makes you lonely.

The wheel of being  
Doesn't swing  
The way it used to do.

The cool cats don't scat  
The way they used to do.

I lent him my hand-made congas  
And he got drunk and left them  
In an alley.

The super-saturation  
Of endocrine disruptors  
Is disrupting. And disgusting.

But everywhere she emulated snow.

## COLD FACT

It makes me dizzy, to watch you spinning.

And in the theater, the balcony was vertiginous  
With acrophobia. I crawled up and down  
The few steps.

There's this huge threshing machine that hums  
Into its beer in the wee hours,

Then cleans its face with its paws.

The hooligans woke me with their yodeling.

As I stepped off the elevator, a disembodied voice  
Over the old address system:

"I'm the girl who stole the baby from the party."

A minor trauma,  
Smaller than a bread box.

The setting sun dropped from the zenith like a red rubber ball.  
Enraged, distraught, I threw the whole mess in the river.

But the so-called river turned out to be a shallow stream,  
Not even deep enough to drown my sorrow.

And the fact remained, easy as pie, enigmatic,  
Hard as asphalt, and cold as diamonds.

## CRITIQUE OF EMILY DICKINSON

“To be whole again.”  
As Emily Dickinson sort of said,

But it doesn't stop there.  
Or maybe it stops there,  
After a whole bunch of other stuff.

This is not a critique of Emily Dickinson.

He was after me to play Bonaparte's Retreat.  
Everybody knew it,  
And waited for the fireworks to begin.

But I'm not in that business  
Anymore. I drive around  
In an old Ford “buying cheap  
And selling dear.” Mainly sealing wax.  
And remedies for ear wax.

When it comes to giblets, I'm there.  
Give my regards to Broadway.

And to Emily Dickinson.

And be especially careful with pork.

I wonder if the actors ate spaghetti  
During the filming of Spaghetti Westerns,

Or whether Johnny Weissmuller really  
Fought all those jungle creatures.

I could go on all day about childhood TV,  
But that's not the point.

Unfortunately, I forget what the point was.