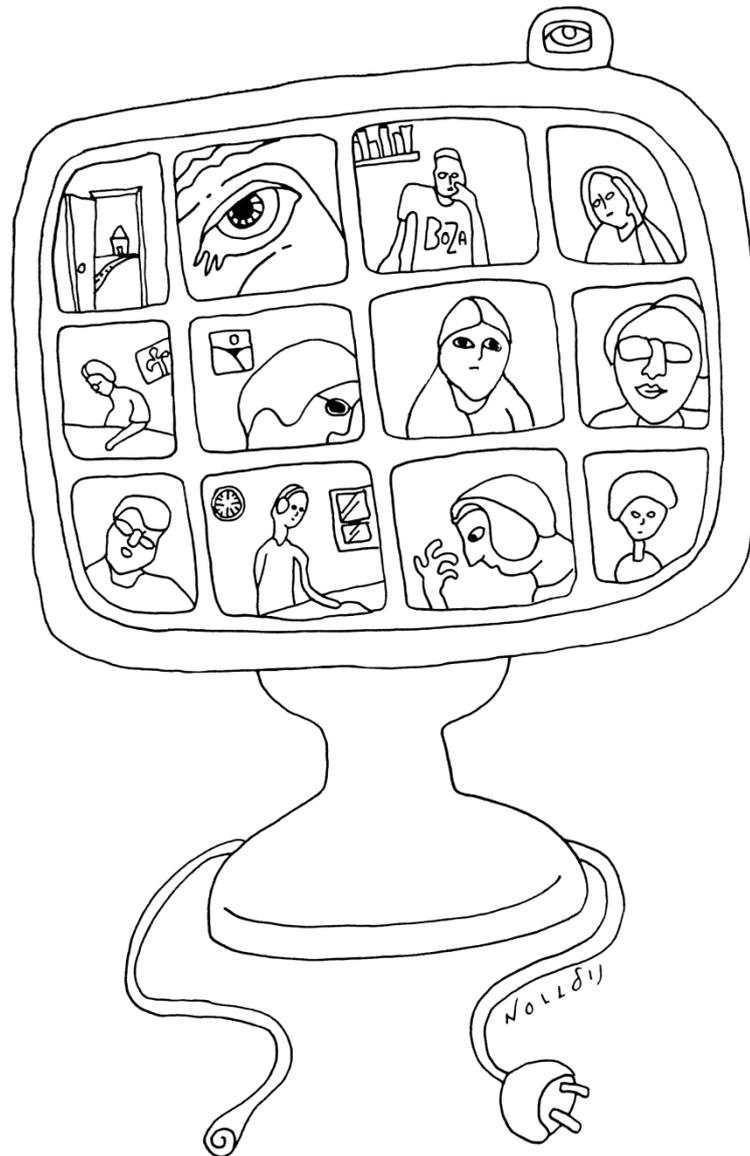


BOZA: BOOK OF ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

By D.T. Noll



Illustrations:

Cover Illustration: Static Zoom

Chapter One Illustration: The Paper Boy

Chapter Two Illustration: Eye Bow

Chapter Three Illustration: Nzambi Cowboy

Chapter Four Illustration: Grave Bell

Chapter Five Illustration: Fly Over

Chapter Six Illustration: Brain Maze

Chapter Seven Illustration: Ink Blot

BoZA: Chapter One – Black and White



Startling me every time, the alarm goes off and I think I must be dreaming. The thought of sleep rolls around in my head for a few breaths, then reality bites and I open my eyes with irritation searing at the morning darkness that permeates my tiny room. Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, the alarm keeps blaring, waking me from repetitious dreams that grant me peace and control to my worldview-asleep. Grumbling and moaning, I get up just like every other day, peeling back the sheet as if coiling back

the seal to expose yet another can of fish to daylight. Breakfast is served. It is monotonous, monotone, just like the slippers I slide my bunion toes and greying-feet into.

Shuffling down the narrow hall, I can see the light staring through the door as the hollow orb of sun begins its slogging path across a vapid sky for the day. The light is also grey, even as I push back a spring-loaded screen-door and lower myself off the porch-step onto a crumbling concrete walk. Grey slippers shuffling through puddles of sprinkler-water are a reminder of life as I step forward intently, my bathrobe fluttering indistinctly in glistening, grey, soggy flops. Looking right and left I am greeted by neighbors exiting their paint and brick-clad hidey-holes as they shadow me exactly, walking to the end of their grey concrete walks.

We each collect a bleeding wet newspaper thrown down by a boy riding a shiny green bicycle with a sparkling yellow banana seat ... that glints back and reflects the grey sun. We try not to take notice, but can't help it, as we all move together glancing away and back down to the grey concrete walk in front of our methodical steps forward. The last thing we hear before that day's work begins is an echo reverberating down the street. Our screen-doors smack shut like black and white dominoes crashing one on top of the other, slamming closed each of our collectively unified interactions for the day.

The drive to work is bland and auto-piloted. Once situated in my cubicle, I notice that the sun is a bit more than less grey, staring in from a plate-glass window, while I staple papers in the upper left

corner for subsequent and further retrieval. Like scanning code for information relations, I notice the puncture marks made prior by someone else's stapler through a portion of the pages. A thought bubble then appears, expectantly, as if I were in some kind of zombie comic; but, I wipe it clear with my apathy quickly in order to avoid thought plagiarism, black on white and in-between. I continue to staple methodically and deliberately. I'll need to save strength for the copy machine later, I tell myself. I've always hated those things, demanding, repetitive, and opaque, communication at its worst.

On our work-break we sneak up next to the water-cooler. That's what we all look forward to, where maybe something will change and a spark of color might appear above a tattered corner of someone's cubby-hole, maybe mine. But it's rare and unusual, an event that flies into the face of our own presence, worn and hollow. We wear the same clothing; we listen to the same shows, radio, and media; we know each other as we know ourselves, or at least wish to.

So, when the new girl said TV had shown her something unique, we lifted up our spirits with a tiny portion of available light.

"A rapidly spreading disease was affecting multiple population centers across the country and maybe the globe," she said.

Reports on the TV were coming in saying that people were running insane, as if the entire world were becoming unglued at the envelope's lickings. As she spoke I could hear a heartbeat

slapping my eardrums momentarily, but then dripping down and dissipating into my chest as I realized that my cubicle was empty and stuff needed stapling.

After work I followed protocol leaving the parking enclosure and sped home right through the rules of the road: speed limit, driving rubrics, pots signs. Mapping my thoughts from the day on the way, I ghost-drove home, turning the wheel this way and that. It was the same, all of it.

Then ... from out of a building's corner, a man bolted and disappeared as I began my turn; then another man slipped and careened, out in front, and almost disappeared too. I followed the line he left, pitter-pattering the span of my hands over the wheel, steering rhythmically and sliding forth and back as the momentum of our turn caught up to the chasing-together men.

An alarm blared. Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang. A police car skidded as it flew past, and then turned the next corner following the running men. I felt relief as I drove straight, past the corner and the cops. They were on it, had it covered; so, I went home to watch TV ... the same old crap, all flake-news and overstatement, black and white in the extreme with nothing in-between. What the hell do they think they're trying to pull? I changed the channel. At least my sitcoms are real and not just the same staged-shenanigans-to-get-viewers like the news shows are these days...

The alarm goes off again: Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang. Again it's time to get up. I can't even remember now what the hall looks like behind me as I step through the screen-door exiting my paint-clad hidey-hole to collect my soggy paper from the crumbling concrete walk, in schtuping chorus with all my neighbors. Left and right are walking too, robes flip-flapping and slippers slipping on thin pools of sprinkler water. I pick up my paper, bent-over, and grasp it by the fringe-and-band, which rings out in an echo as a snap-back flings grey droplets into the void. The black on white headline is blaring out to me, but all I can see is the day and date. It's Saturday. We don't have work to go to on Saturday.

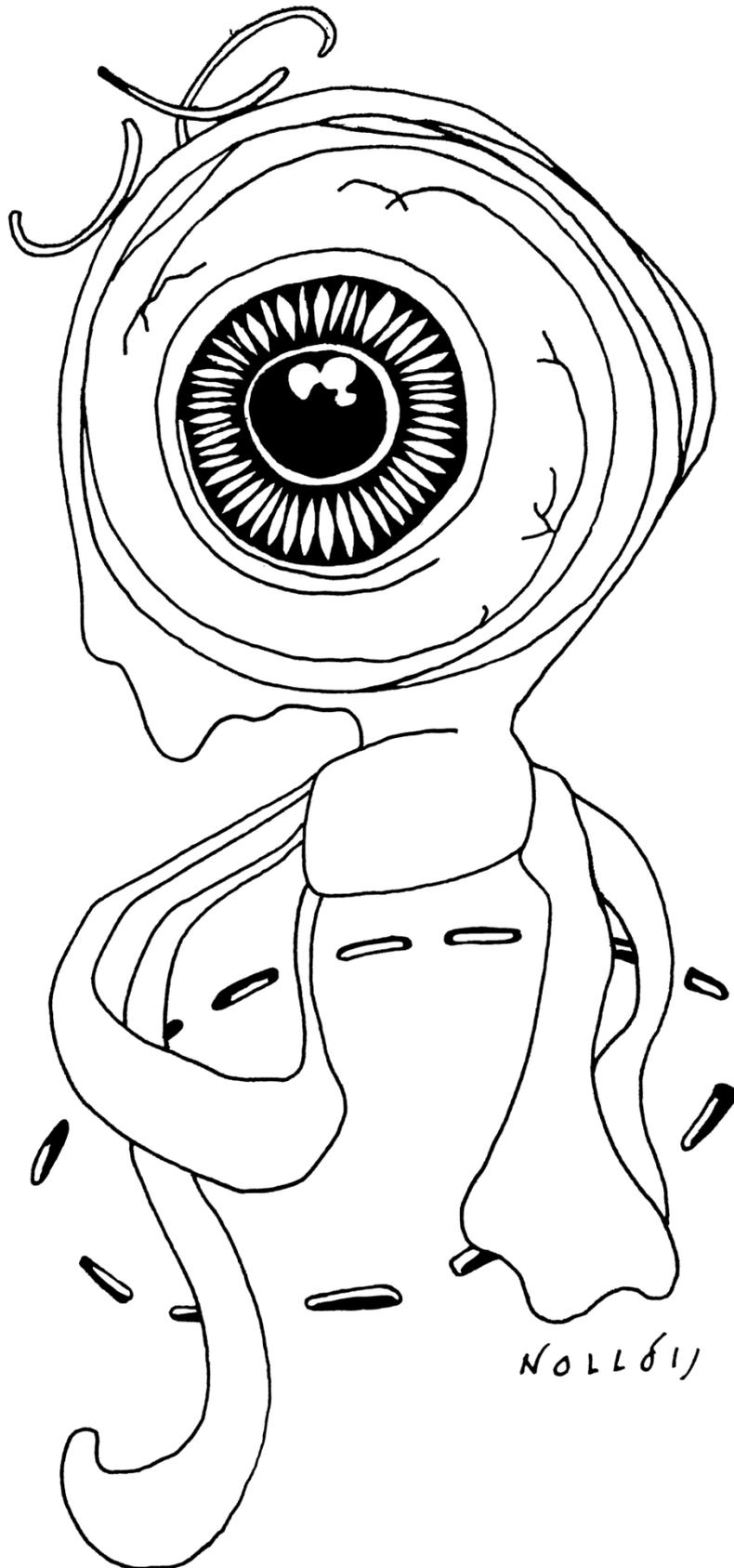
The alarm is still blaring from a car down the road. Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang. My neighbor looks up to see someone running. It's the paper-boy, and he's running towards me, fast, his bike on its side sprawled across the street. Smoke is rising somewhere up ahead, somewhere; is there a fire? The paper-boy's face gets closer to mine, as if motions have slowed, and I see the rage in his eyes tearing down the world. I stumble backwards, tripping on my grey slippers as they stick down stuck under the crumbled concrete walk. My newspaper flies into the air, the wetness, banded-again, snaps at the fringes of soggy newsprint, then flutters apart with its sheaves shape-shifting into floating demons tumbling skywards.

Awake now: With eyes wide, seeing newspaper wads littering the wet-green grass and building patchwork dots of color between

sprinkler blasts: I'm wet, and I can't explain the hunger for gut-clinging rectitude. Rainbows fade in and out as water evaporates into blue sky. It's all gone so wrong; everyone's asleep. I can see my neighbor's eyes on me still, red and bloodshot, having watched the paper-boy run, but much, much bigger than they should be; now, breaking pattern and stumbling backwards through shimmering puddles of light, the sky blue morning is reflected while my neighbor's slippers get stuck and stop in the crumbling grey concrete life from the walk.

Where'd the paper-boy go? He woke me up! Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, the car alarm is still bleating. I see flashing red and police-blue lights up the street. My neighbor begins to walk and to run into his paint and brick-clad hidey hole. His newspaper never leaves his hand, flashing black and white against the green of the grass and the yellowish paint of his once monochrome home. He's still looking at me, with eyes large and bulging, over his shoulder as he runs ... stuttering something indiscernible. I know I need to wake him up; I have to wake everyone up! Running now, run. Catch, bite; wake up!

BoZA: Chapter Two – Herd Mentality



When did I forget my name? All I can remember now is the clanging sound of catastrophe emptying itself into my soul. But everything's okay; isn't it? The world is operating as it should, right? Elections are held, governments are stable? Even my wife recognizes me and my endeavors to build the world into my own paddy of paradise, as it deserves – doesn't it? I can't remember her name either, my wife. I know that I once knew it, and remember that she kept on talking to me every damn morning as I walked down the hall. I remember being told by others to get the paper off the lawn before the sprinklers hit, soaking it to the core.

She sat in the sitting room in a medium-green chair, my wife, her phone beeping constantly and the TV-clicker under an elbow, looking like a speckled remora periodically sucking at her white skin. Now all she does is sit and read, ever since technology consumed all that was left in the world, itself included. The hall and sitting room are littered with books and newspapers, old and new, framing hip-high a barely passable corridor leading from the sitting room door to her medium-green chair, like an excavation trenching inwards to the center of the world. It just isn't healthy, all that reading and sitting and stacking, walls of colored-binders binding-in every breath trying to breathe.

I wish I could remember my name; did it start with a Bee? Bob, Barry, Bernie? She can't remember my name either, my wife. She just calls me AIKH PHUT...spe!, blowing bubbles then gurgling giggles pointing at the bite scars across my neck; as if she could stutter: "Where'd ya get those love nibbles? Do the vamp-marks

keep going all the way down-town? Aikh... phut...spe?" she would seemingly say. She doesn't even know that she also has c-shaped serrations denting her left zygomaticus major, under the eye on her face where she can't perceive, as if her arrival thus were only inoculation scars from a past-life unlived and thus believed.

We all have them, but we can't see. No one knows where they came from, our birth marks into living. We are lost with babies born including bites marking pristine skin. Tales are told of times sans-scars, but those wagging tails are tongues telling nonsense beyond, the air between cult-bones that remember the same, but can't remember names. We know who we are, and we know where we've been; we just can't remember our names, that's all ... we just don't know in which way to call one-another, or in which order to ascend.

It all used to be so uniform, so monotonous ... so grey. But that was a good thing, as far as I can say. Now I can't even get out of the front door without being accosted by the newspaper boy's delivery of my wife's cover-to-cover color spectacular. How do they even print them without tech? They show up daily to torment me, to torment the rest of us wondering what in the hell is going on — "clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang," the sound used to go. I just need to get on to the lawn before the sprinklers do. I just need to drag my intentions a little further down the hall, and get to the paper before it composts into grass, the forevermore-green lawn, my morning port, my mandate of demand.

Racing with bad leg dragging, I scrape down the steps, noticing the paint splatters as I go. Red, green, white dots pocking, and dark brown smeared between corners, the concrete stairs have life on the surface with calcite below; clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff. Like lichen up high, sparkling in sunlight, I notice it all as I race to get the paper, black on white with ash-fire between, neighbors' hedge-rows separating print at each manual mow. Step after step I drag a bad leg attached to my torso, watching the paper boy slide as tires skid into parabolic teats down the wet street. The paper's now flying, spattering its fame across sky, black on white fire flipping with end-over motion in a fall short of slow.

What's my name? I can't recall. Why can't I remember, where did it go, how did it fall? The paper boy grins as his skid paints down black, and I catch the paper with teeth, regardless of my leg in tow. The sprinklers ignite and I miss them ... from a time before, when the paper was wet, soaked and soggy lines already read. It's all the same, the color blaring and dull. I'm awake, but not full, eyes wide, only shut tight instead. I can't see. We can't see. It's all gone so wrong, stacks drifting up the hall, waiting to collide with a medium-green chair, stuck against the wall.

Now, at the window, having clambered over used reading while watching my leg drag back up the paint splattered steps: clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff, with her face rouged from rage, insane from jealousy, she's come to call. I can see her eye bursting out of its socket and down her cheek from the pressure, the chronic pressure of organs erupting into gas deep down below. She races

me to the medium-green chair as I clear the top step and enter. She nimbly palms her dangling eye from over her bite scar and packs it deftly back into its hidey-hole, nerves and strings hanging down and tied neatly in a bow. Like worm-thick eyelashes batting, she appears then disappears over the top of words on paper strewn about, alighting into her medium-green chair buried beneath it all.

What is my name? What is hers? Where did we get the teeth marks, purple and blue, scared into our falling-off skin? What happened to the TV, the radio? And, what is that sound smashing in from somewhere up the street? The others hear it too, crawling out from under obscure places to take a spot in the queue as the herd joins and then moves. I can't go, I know, my wife can't be left alone, and I need to collect the paper for her to pile high by the medium-green chair, somewhere on top of more, on the TV clicker, buried with the floor. The TV clicker is crushed and scattered, its motherboard broken and LEDs forever hiding its dark keys to the past. The TV is also buried and broken, under paper and print, and the cracked window to the street is slowly fogging, fogging itself closed with each seasonal spell. A river of people keeps growing longer in the street outside, we can both just see, neighbors all joining, now even the paper boy with his bike, all seeking-together to meet-up, somewhere up the street.

The rage is now gone from my wife's face, and her eye is right-side down having been shoved back in haste with the usual poor taste. Now, her good eye tracks me as I shuffle down the corridor left by

stacks of print, with the morning paper in hand. All I can see, however, is the river of souls in my mind meeting up the street, disappearing into crowds, herded by will, all hearing as I do the sound calling, our lost names one and all. From all of a sudden, my wife grabs my arm, her fingers slipping between gristle, ripping newspaper down, but one finger not wanting, so staying behind, my finger stuck to wet print, black on white smeared with green and red-brown.

The headline at the top, under my finger, blares out loudly, something bold, something bland, and something old. I can almost make it out, but gangrene's blocking, with my sight going blind, then the white streak of her fingers ripping paper butterflies up into the air. Flying, fluttering at first, and then exploding into flames, black on white and flittering down, littering the room another layer deep with paper and print—I have to go.

It's all gone so wrong; everyone's leaving. My wife's eye is on me, bloodshot and grey, having watched me escape over concrete slashing a path from the wet, green lawn. They're much bigger than they should be, her eyes now, one with quivering bow-strings frolicking down her cheek, bashfully concealing her bite-scar. And, now she's breaking pattern and rocking backwards through shimmering paper sheaves, seemingly reflecting the river of wanting meandering up the street. Rustling, her shift sticks to the medium-green chair when she shifts forward and back, stuck down to green vinyl, crinkling like brown paper trying not to

drown, with her head careening sideways in order to glare up as I go, clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff, up the street.

Where'd the newspaper go? I saw my name on it! It had my name on it! Clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff, I hear my steps closing in on the herd heading up the street. I see a flash in the window of my wife's good eye in resentment and fear, her bad eye busy earmarking droop and bob, all garnished with a bow. My neighbors have all left their paint and brick-clad hidey holes. Their papers have been piling up on their lawns, melting into the green of the grass, with the unread pages plastering the ground with letters, words, and names. My wife's still looking at me with eyes large and bulging, gaseous fumes erupting purple and green overhead, and ears sinking down like kiddy swings hanging from a tree. She's rocking in her medium-green chair ... stuttering. I know I need to wake her up; but, I have to wake everyone up! Running now, run, clunk, scuff, clunk, scuff. Slowpoke... Catch up!

BoZA: Chapter Three – Tunnel at Light’s Begin



She let me go. She couldn't leave her chair. Her good eye tracked me the span of the sitting room window as I shuffled and slotted into line, marching in faded unison up the street to a sound beckoning our names. We slogged towards the sound with a song, one and all. We couldn't remember our names, those of us in line;

but the words came easily to the song we sang. We sang as we walked, clunk, scuff, clunk, scuff, past the mailboxes empty and tipping, past the uncut lawns haunting our future, and past parked cars grazing away as yellow sunlight pocked the middle of our day. We were all seeking the same thing; we sought out a thing that made us collective, or together-One. Not all could join, or wanted, so we were the ones that held light in the future, begging to glean something of the world to come.

My wife (what was her name again?) chose to stay in her own worldview, her own built-in reading den. I miss her already, her eyeball leaking down and dripping, a beautiful mess slipping. I miss her white, her skin translucent and falling. If only I could remember her name... We tried to talk to each other to tell our stories of love left over and beyond, those of us walking in line, but no one could speak, which made it strange to listen while singing progressed as the herd slowly moved downtown, up the street. We all knew the song, but not the words, so we hummed the letters out to write themselves with their own feathers. The sound of our song met each movement forward, muffled back to us down the street, then moved onward until its end; and then it sounded far away where it knew it couldn't stay. "Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?" we sang; not knowing the words, but unwittingly crooning our names in the spaces between.

Her left eye tearing, my wife would have known the song's tune and the names of the words, some. We walked up the street and

left for good the hidey-hole I lived with her in since before I can recall. I forgot all the bricks, forgot the grey concrete, crumbling and gone, and I forgot the names printed black on white melting into green lawn. Each of us in step, slip-slapping along, we all forgot and a murmur had begun, which infected our song; “Level is level no matter from end,” ending there and picking up where it had begun. With each of our lives melting, our trek to beyond, we became aware of our lives lost, but now gone. The herd spoke in rhythm and song about life once lived, but now and forever it is only just sung.

The Nzambi-cowboy with hat black to my right then began, singing a tune we all knew as one. The tune changed, an echo once slung, and he stopped our rhythm with attuned footsteps, surprising ... a world from beginning, names always known, we plodded along until up the street shone. It glowed all alone and we walked together like one, two ... clunk, scuff, clunk, scuff, clunk, scuff, clunk, scuff... “Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?” it had been sung — Nzambi-cowboy struts, out in front, leading the rest, knowing of stories old, told before bite-marks, and echoing other worlds of lives once lived. We knew his name, even though knowing none other, and followed him forth into the less-bounded beyond.

Nzambi-cowboy’s story told, simple and bold, was hinged upon faith, and tempered with bone. His shoulder protruding, gristle pointing south, he couldn’t point forward, so west strode our clan to the end of our story, the end and begin. The blood had dried

crispy and flaked off with motion, a sign of once living ... flesh locked in skin. Now floppy and falling, Nzambi-cowboy led, like scarecrow predictions, the future, hope, and faith now all alone under the covers in bed. Hat all a-tip, with six-shooter astride, he told us of worlds that had 'all at once' gone. A virus concocted created our realm, impelling material that had once been our home. Others created all fought so strong, forever-long creatures bred partly intact, however-moreover unsung. Their names were all known, with origins untied, and now sadly just stories which the end has horribly shown.

In a cell underground, Nzambi-cowboy quelled, dwelled snake-men and show-brass, guarding them all. A boy called Urik, yellow in tone, for the acid he spat from the only leg he owned; the stretchy girl Kinesis, for the gym-pressure felt, her parents helicoptering over each tumble, in our once sans-scar realm; or, the grown man so black, too dark to tell, a shadow of quiet called Not at All but a shell full, nonetheless. The lot of them joined, by many un-named, a bubble-blowing hoverer, and an orient-sand-blend ... with a desert in tow. All of them locked under earth and waiting, a rescue flamboyant, for an army to grow.

But that's another story as yet unwritten, another story to tack onto it all. Underground labs verging on small fill the heavens with nightmares in tow. We live in an age where anything happens, then bends to our will the intentions we sow; in stasis they reside waiting to grow, an army is calling but for what they don't know. All we can do is to sing down the street, a road unwept for the

loss. “Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?” as the ground swells to deliver us all. In wave after wave we tread lightly across it, pummeling its surface into clay molded. Grooving the past into a wake of memories, all we can do is to sing, sing, sing, sing...

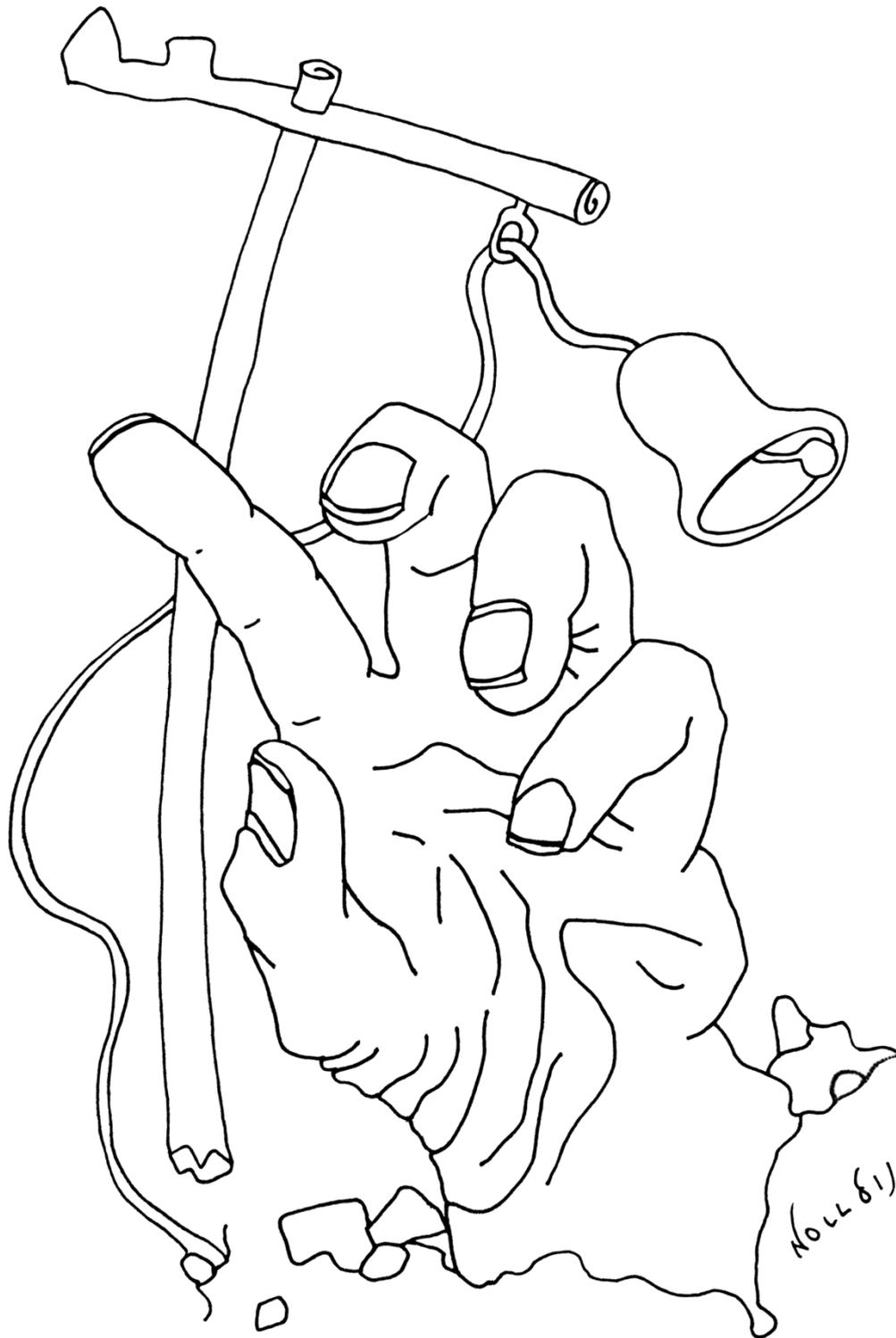
What’s so bad about it all having gone so utterly wrong? Leaving is only relative to knowing, having already been sown. Nzambi-cowboy’s watching, I see it all now, and thank him I’ve escaped the cutter-clown mow, the straight and the draw. He’s a he, Nzambi-cowboy, and his hat gives shade to the scar on his neck, so dazzlingly purple on his taught black skin turning orange. But he’s looking back at me, rocking forth and back, eyes dripping with tears to sew together, reflecting the crowds shifting up the street, dried blood and sham news. Nzambi-cowboy was once just a man, regular and small. He states it so plainly, as he tips his hat low, with orange blushing each time he does so. Nzambi remembers it all; his life from before, his march to the end, and his future possibly written later in another book entirely.

Cocked and abused, his hat shades eyes-shifting, with whites dying rims, black and red squirting; sideways with shaking lines vibrating, then sending sound out to us all. I hear names being called, one and for all, not just the headlines but even the bleeding and small. We hear our steps stopping, clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff ... and I hear my own boots in herd-step syncing, heading up the street to names unknown. Winking with knowing, sinking his stare, Nzambi-cowboy’s eye on the side closes, then

beckons with tears down below, and the rest of the herd discomfited ascends in rows and more rows. They've all left their hidey holes, leaving papers piling and melting into green gangrene and pulp, lost words with names unknown.

He winks, Nzambi-cowboy, and I recoil. He knows his own name from end to begin. His purple face, black and orange, is knowingly lost and fills time with fermenting logic and ideas unknown. From back and to front, and again back to work, clunk scuff, clunk scuff, then winking again, Nzambi-cowboy closes a purple eyelid over bloodshot red. He mouths again the words I've always known. He means to shake me, my hands dangling, to wake me up and begin again. I was awoken before and woke others the same, but now ... the singing goes on ... level from each end, "Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?" We eat it all up marching asleep in the street, yeast rising from fallen gist ... clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff! I have to wake up! Has my mind gone insane? I have to remember, I must remember my name!

BoZA: Chapter Four – Seeing the Sounds



Marching onwards, we all move as one. Passing ponds and oceans has become the norm. Others along the way join, each seeking a

name to be called by, a name all in one. Nzambi-cowboy is all above it now, having sprouted more legs and a tail batting flies. He has two mouths to see with, and six legs to tell. Up in the front his eye glints back to me, each one of us all, so we all beckon together in the wake of his tow. He's leading us now to the place of our birth, we know it all now; but, what to call it is beyond, and in which way to sew seedlings is ... like ... rainbow-grey, like TV, like the same old show. Like an eruption brewing, like waiting for more, we walk on together all seeking the storm. An eye above all, calming each ghost, willing potion to spill with perfume unwritten, buried in mud as we pass by—one and for all.

My piece is simple, I'm told and I dread, by joining in procession I'll find my own name. Forgotten, my name from before, my name is to seek, and wander to Sheol. The same is true otherwise, no matter where, we all march onwards to utterances of lore, gossip and more, our names saved for recall and so damn much more. How we hear them, our names question begging, with old-worlds dredging time and exposing what's said. Gristle is gotten, dangling in wind; I hear it now, the thunder, the clap and the shore, the color of light is pressed between the sounds of still, melting at edges and immersing into wonder. I hear it, but pay no attention...

She gave birth to my loins, but I can't remember her name, I think to myself. They live here too, my birthed-seeds, somewhere up ahead, wearing shoes of their own, at least in my head. Their names escape me, but par for the curse, and no matter either, because all will be said ... somewhere off towards the end of the

street. It's a landscape surreal, marching all past, looking right and then left, we balance our pull. Lifting each leg, one then the other, the clothes on our back are well to dwell in, but our minds are corrupted, with a world and a mission to tell. We hear it dinging now, a bell ringing, muffled by dirt; the ground swelling to each side, markers strewn down, with the sounds and the bells going dull in the mud. Clang-dink, dink-plop, bubble-pop, shift-shattering thuds turning to plops, footsteps now in one, together like a swell, up and down. Others join in, to right with what's left, gristle and bone hanging, epidermis in tow; we march on to sundown and dream of slipping back home, scoring sharp and closing the loop and dawn.

There's steam erupting from Nzambi-cowboys nostrils, the ones down below; breathing hard and then bolting, he pulls back and turns. To us all he addresses and a story is told, to build our desire to quench our weariness, a story of history not so old; we're stopped in our footpaths and told. With flames erupting from high up above, fiery water balled into spasms-unkempt, Nzambi-cowboy erupts into sound-waves with our truths to be told. The names that we seek are all one at the top, a mountain to speak. From apocalypse comes freedom, from chaos slaves creation, and from us all comes the army to synch it up, to close the circuit and to build unity: clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, as the big banging calls out to us all.

A farmer to my left utters and moans, his cows have all gone. The butcher to my right winces, with knowing un-alone. Dreadlocks

falling, out and with wind, the rap-star behind me mumbles and then grins; a tall one ahead still sports a jersey from a game he left, a center wandering to the light of our dusk. Actors we all are, we know now and march: clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff, furtively glancing around at the earth, the dirt whence we came. Whether from plague, combat, deprivation or desire, our living forces arose, clawing for breath not yet here.

Nzambi, a cowboy of lore, waved his dreadlocks into the air. Unfolding his ethos with deliberate gore, like tendons manifesting moisture, each whip splatters out into the heavens above. Then, falling to knees, like whoring but more, it ends. Humble and knowing, Nzambi calls out to us with our names dangling unsaid. Hope aligned and spread. The earth moving from each grave erupts into order from the chaos and dread. We joined unto our herd, the only one known, all together as one, and announced our design: "Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?" We knew now it was all connected, level, all distinctly separate, but one. A purpose unfolded, unfolds and then again will, aligned with each spasm concocting, hinged. Each name is unknown for reason, each taunting us all. We seek it but lust and we fall when we trust. It's a trap and we know it, but have no choice in the matter, so we reside near it, next to it, with our backs tingling, waiting...

Arise! With eyes wide! We see the refuse piling around us, building networks of dots and dashes between the blasts of lawn sprinklers. I'm wet, but I don't know why. I can feel it but it

doesn't exist; I don't exist! The world's gone so wrong! Am I still asleep? What about the others, my neighbors, their eyes bloodshot and red, what about them? There are no more puddles shimmering, the water from the heavens having sunk to the bottom of the world, already. I can't see the reflections anymore, as I shuffle forward unable to stick stuck and stop, under the crumbling concrete, the asphalt under our walk, our path sinking.

Where am I? Who are these people around me? Where did I begin? Double-you-aitch questions abound. The lights are now gone, the world shadowed in grey, with light from the sun outlined with graphic display, like TV on acid, bold, irrelevant ... grey. Like the newspapers of old, piled high back at home; my wife's still sitting in her paint and brick-clad hidey hole. The clicker stuck to her palm, impressing its nerves into the praise of her hand. She's still looking at me, with an eye hanging down, stuttering something indiscernible. I know I need to wake up, I have to wake everyone up! Tripping now, falling, opening eyes, getting trampled... by the herd... Listen... WAKE UP!!!

BoZA: Chapter Five – Hall of Mirroring



He left me. Why did he want to take my chair from under me? Why did he leave me? He just followed the crowd of know-it-alls and disappeared up the street, like all of them had someplace to go, not here, not with me. It makes no sense, a world where

riffraff rule and the prevalent plop superficial turd-wraps enveloped in newsprint at your feet?! The paper is always wet when it arrives, always stained green, always late, and always old news, it's a sham. Where's my TV?! The clicker is lost and broken!! Then there's this library of words that litters my mind from the floor up to my horizon of gape; I find I must remember every single word it utters at me, this cacophonous excavation of intent, but I can't! My favorite shows are gone forever, evaporating into radio waves long since absent. Is it my birthday today? Isn't there supposed to be a cake, or something? Where'd they go, wandering up the street like that? Where'd he go, and where is my soggy morning paper?!!!

A place with water, a place in the sand, a place to breathe, and a place for sound – that's that bad song that goes around in my head every time I forget my name; which I can never remember anyways, so it goes around and around and then it never stops. When I find my way to my bedroom, climb into bed, cover my head, and finally fall asleep, I hear the song singing to me; I never get any sleep. The sun sets, rises, sets again, and rises once more only to set again. Time is irrelevant, since all there is 'is' a song steering me along. I wish for loathsome, but know that it's all meaningless, at its core, so I sit and I read, thinking of water and sand, wishing to breathe and listening for sound to wake me from bumbling slumber. Dreaming in and dreaming out, I wish for another and get lost in the fuzz whirling about. I taste it and I see, static is caustic, my soul leaking droplets from my foot, the sole of my world, lost or not, but never found.

They all left me here to rot; actually to rot, piece by piece, finally resting in peace with my good eye's mindset, still quivering against bone at the edge of its socket. No matter how hard I try, my bad eye begs attention, but I can never see it, slathering slime across my once young and pristine cheek. It's no matter anyway I look, I say in my head, while listening to my mind's eye humming the same old tune. Dreaming it or not, the song seems to mutter, it's my name upon lips, hesitating into stutter: A place with water, a place in the sand, a place to breathe, and a place for sound. I can't actually hear it—however. The rattle from groaning going up the street always gets in the way, like a road block stalling my mind and the name of a song once sung, but only now dead.

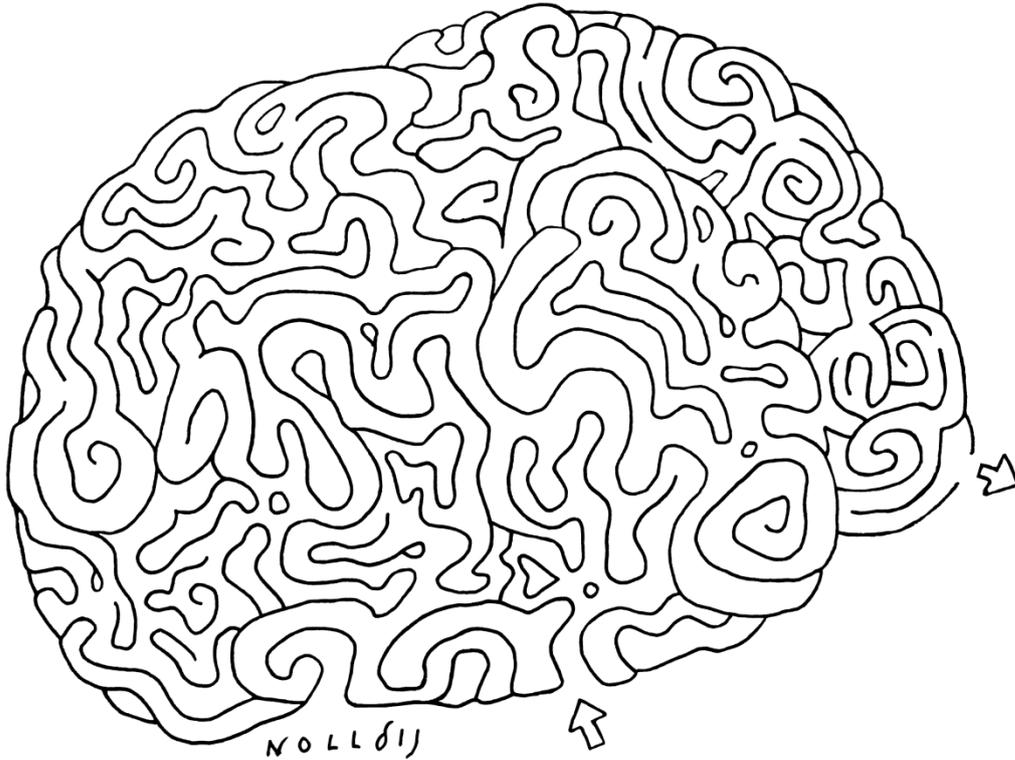
Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang... my wiring persists, with rubber skidding from wheels under cars, and drivers with passengers careening and glib. Now all that can be heard is the blasting of a song unsung, cracking my skull and muffled with footsteps ... heading up the street - clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff. Reverberating from one side to the next, my mind is full of sloshing from inside my head—occasionally broken by my song stuck, but chanting the same: "Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?" It echoes in-between, as they all march on and disappear into the moist, steaming heat. The sprinklers on the lawn still work, but the timers are off. They spray into the sky but rainbows have left us, like a promise broken and light unbent. Double-you-aitch questions abound, and I still can't remember my name.

I regret it all, the things that I forgot, and I can't remember them to know what it was that I knew, but then was not. I remember forgetting, I remember each time, I remember it all, but 'it all' is just memories combined. When I recall – each erupts and wakes me in the night. And, when I forget I feel calm, but wanting. It all makes no sense. I remember thinking of it before, not to forget, and then placing it in my head so as to build a closet to enclose it like being dead. I knew I would feel okay with myself after, having done the right thing, even after missing it in real-time, I'd know I was right. Yet the pictures keep haunting me, my memory erased, with my mind working overtime and waking me in the day. Sleepless I walk through my dreams, my world, with my footsteps leading me thus. It's all going to be okay, they say, but who's to say what is okay and what is not?

Get up! Open your eyes! The pile of paper is overtaking my sight, my vision, my love. I'm dry, but the paper is wet, ink slipping down like skin falling from bone. I cannot exist such, in a world lost I am as well, and sleeping through it all can't be my call! I hear them in the street, still moving east to a place I know. I've been there before, shimmering in the heavens, puddles vibrating reflections, and I find myself slipping in the hall, leaving the door and shuffling down the steps, grey and paint splattered, my faded flowering dress, soggy and wet ... but no matter. Floating above the crumbling concrete of the walk, I glide over bumps, past all the others, and float above the asphalt mumbling up the street.

I know where I am, and know who they are. I began before my chair, medium-green and grey. All the light is around. The sun is yellow and glowing, unlike the day, and I see the nights glisten, violet-tinged with periwinkle edges, an aura evaporating into light. The newspapers have disappeared, their print staining concrete and grass, gangrene and black, their news stale and forgotten, make-believe and unknown. I see him up ahead, behind a big cow. I can't remember his name... He's glancing back as he marches, eyes dripping down like mine... in sorrow? I woke up? But how could I? Was he awake before? When? Tripping to catch up now, falling, and getting up ... Now floating above the herd... UP and UP!

BoZA: Chapter Six – The Paper Boy’s Story



Why, oh... why? That's what I think when I recall living. All this unnecessary turmoil erupted, and I was just living my life as we all needed to, to fit in, to be in with the rest. I paid my dues, I went to school, did my time, and breathed in sanity at the end of every duping day. I was just a kid, not only a young goat carousing, but a child raised by the world around me. Nothing ever made sense, nothing was real, and nothing was anything worth sight, worth a vision to tell. So, I was confused to say it at all. How to tell was the story untold, since it never was said; at least in a voice worthy, and was always kept odorously at bay. We navigate in life rarely with our sense of scent. In dreams, just for the case, we rarely dare to notice it, the smell of the world we traverse. The world

around us keeps moving, keeps singing its own praise, keeping us down with brains unkempt. The world around us is mine, is yours, as the world around us sings its own praise of all its days. An illusion, you may ask? An illusion of lust, self-un-denied, but a world to stay? A world saved, a world just? When will it erupt, when will it break, when in the world will it begin to stink, a heart through its steak, red and bloody? The bottom is calling, the surface unsteady... unnerved, disconnected, falling.

I've seen it, the dead falling, with impact to the brain. What is the brain? A question worth asking—is it soul, thought, or rambling? The mind; while alive we follow the norm, the thoughts of brains working, the life of others rambling. But, without inner workings, the brain sloshes shut. With senses dulled accordingly, lust engaged towards drive, being driven thus so drives us all. I've seen helpers-against fall to it, stuck to chairs with walls binding, words never-ending. The paper flies and then files, day in and day out, but never to land on a porch, so they all search, flies buzzing. Thoughts corrupted by chaos and insanity, thoughts unanswered in a place that feels like home. It all speaks volumes of history naught, but never relays reality as is, as is almost never taught.

She bit me on the neck, like a vampire wannabe, and I collapsed with my bike. We tumbled together, her trying to feed, but losing interest as I fled. Still able to peddle, I ran to the end, but stumbling after me she soon caught up and said, "Why, oh... why?" echoing my own cries. It was all in my head; I know how to think, to dare and to dread; it was all I could hear in my head from

one day to day one and the next. My brain was in spasm as I realized that, down the street, it hadn't yet started. But, I could hear it, the sounds to be soon evolving: clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang... an ambulance driving, an alarm sounding loud, the cops coming down, and the doorbell ringing, ultimately deprived of sound.

The world slowed, ever so slowly, each step my bike took landed planted in mud, stretching out time like it'd never been said. Then I saw him, the guy on the steps. He looked like the rest, but my eyes had stopped moving, and they dropped. My bike was no more, left rotting on green, my paper bags flying with water mixing up air. He moved so fast, but not fast enough. His name was still upon my lips when I clenched, teeth baring breast. Lost in the muck then, his name left. It flew high over hedge, over hill and then slowed; our name left - clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff. Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era? The sounds rang out and I followed them (not) to a drought of thinking, a s t r e t c h I n g, and like invasion of rust into soul, my gears stopped touching, whirring, dying ... sparking.

'U's' doubling, like 'W' and 'Aitch,' We ask ourselves thus. I hit the fence—in so many ways... It was always standing there, waiting for me, but it hit me in the face, nevertheless. My name was now hovering beyond it, lingering like an eye winking from beyond, and then erupting into tears as I wept. "Why?" It was all I could think, and it was itching at my seams; then the question vented like excess gas and faded in one tiny shimmer, not worth mentioning.

A sign, up ahead, on the path we'd been walking, stating, "YOUR NAME HERE," exploded unto us all, the living and the dead. We'd forgotten with dread our names up in lights, we'd all forsaken our purpose in life. In death we had a second chance, more than others could boast, but most of us had forsaken it as well, as if in a trance. Pop culture spewed forth taunting us with fish-lures, stinking like algae, crusted with mold. Flashing lights blinking on, then off, then on, then off, sent us all shivers of dread up ahead; that sign blinking and then stinking unsaid. Decided we were, all and one, to move forward into light, into the future no-matter despair. There was room and a view, so we all shared.

'Dead stop' up ahead. The herd wept as it clambered, clawing at itself. Entrails burst open, revealing last meals, then blossoming into the unsaid: A place with water, a place in the sand, a place to breathe, and a place for sound. It rumbled up ahead. They fought, we could see, like death and life singing in harmony. We were the dead, and the living ensued, so we attacked them to make it thus, a world unto one. Brains sloshed forward, then back, and protruded in gruesome galore onto the floor, lapped up in spasm by those dead that followed no more. There were those that perished, but others that sang, those that departed, and those that drank. Life was filled to the brim, with wanting becoming null, so death began to live and to thrive in gravity, just not for the cull. We lived, one and all, our names lurking as if under a spell. Sparks were seen colliding in jest, colliding with thrust, and delivering thus our world born of thirst; self-esteem became the norm, and self-image with worth in dread bloomed apart and in lust.

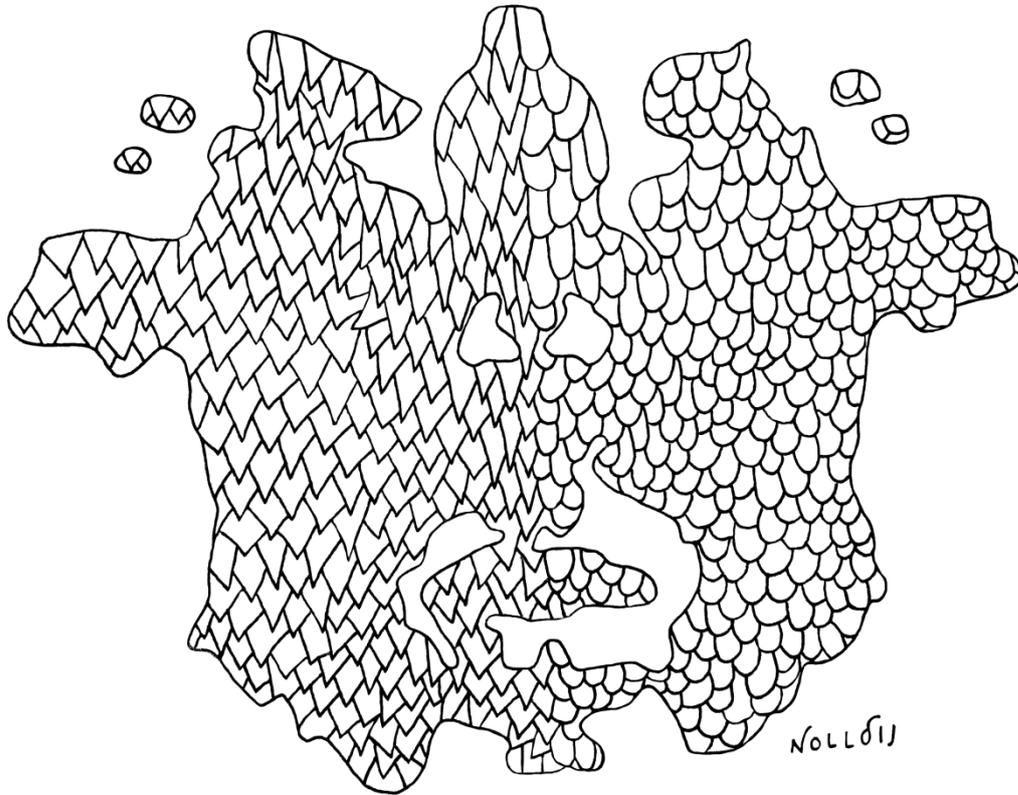
The signs flashing truth protruded up ahead, guilty as all, alive and dead, we craved our names lighting up our days, and craved becoming nothing at night. The path had been long, dreary once said, so trod on we did past each sign blinking, clambering perpetually for our souls. We've become one together but don't know why or from whence it all came. At each step taken the hoard of the herd utters one name, a question on the air floating, with the unknown capping it dead. Why, oh... why? It was all in our heads, one mind, one body, moving east leaving our shame. My bike was left rotting in gangrene and rust, its banana seat glinting from graying sunburn. How could I have left it there; sitting there, on its side with string grass growing through bars rusting lime? It was my love. It was my anchor to move with, my foundation of wind.

Then a fish's tale slapped down and sent tendrils up spanking the words above us. How can a horse be a fish, a tale not untold, a fishy tale of a lost bike stinking in the grass, with growth dangling into the stars. The light is eclipsed ... the earth is becoming and dark. I collapse under the treads of a horse, spilling my insides like psychotherapy and slush... What in the 'you know what' am I talking about. Oozing love this way and that; a leviathan and a behemoth square off, Paperboy and Nzambi lock eyes ... no regrets. Life lived, life paused, to live a life once again, pausing only for breaks, when the motors unite and change into the future, without regrets. We collide coalescing into one herd descending up to the heavens below, but forget it all as soon as our shelter we recall, we forget to remember what came before ...

we just forget all the lore, we forget the tale of our names and begin chasing back from a seashore to even more in store.

What the... It all makes sense now. I began when we all did, couched within light just waiting to sprout. The light calling each of us and making us wonder—yellow glow surrounding and violet plowing through night. All the news became old, the oldies so-gentrified, with the damn middle glowing orange moving red. The land has disappeared into the sea, biting with teeth sharpened with rocks, water, and sand. Without eyes we see each other, amongst animals but glowing. Legs tripping, breaking with undulation, and the ground swells up to greet us as we fall. End-over flipping, catching up with sky, we all fall into small parts of a once whole, shrinking down... down and down... and down.

BoZA: Chapter Seven – The Name



Silence is golden, a nugget of space colliding into sun. One mind won it all, one body and a won-fairly soul. “Clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang, clang-a-lang,” shouts a bullhorn with boredom, marking time with a big bang settling it once and for all. The land and the sea battle for dominion, and we still fall short of standing null; our puddles thicken becoming smaller, tightening the way and telling our story, quite short and slipping willy-nilly down, all the way down, painted and splattered with words dripping on tongues. We sing together a song we never knew, and it rings out in echoes and bass, it rings clearly with truth to tell. So, then it does, tell it all. Each life is precious, each one desiring of the separateness of one. Sticking together into sweet risen bread clinging to our hearts, my love then stops while hovering above us and falls, dropping down

to clouds vaporizing earth, and most unpleasantly it all up-swells to pollute the community well.

We are all swelling in the sun as we march. Clunk, scuff, clunk... scuff, our creation is the coalition of sounds ... walking down the earth, south and east, west and up, from all over the globe we walk to our origin, and with our soul united and welded shut we sing one last time as we descend into light: "Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to New Era?!" We 'all' say it as we stumble over ourselves looking for a mirror in the mud to see our countenance glowing before our creator, our god – manifesting destiny for one and all. He's glowing back, winking on and off in the light scattering across earth, subdued only by Her, his partner below us upon high. It's a cliché, the god we build to support ourselves; it's a cliché we can never recall. Purpose began before it started. It was always built from itself with self-start ignition, sparks to saturate and swell, like a large boom shaking a casing, emanating down, tendrils muffled and somewhat cold.

There's a sky down under, hovering below our feet. We stomp onwards with eyes to the mud; so, craving and hungry, we reach out to the heavens, beneath the dirt yearning for the return of our seat at the table. Double-you-aitch questions abound, and we still see it all clearly; the shrubbery is calling, the place we broke from, our dimension being birthed. Gezem is all about now, in us all and all inert, built from our thirst; we lived and we died all in one burst! Without time to dwell in, without the space that we craved, our progenitor slipped and careened down, down... over a paint

splattered stairway echoing with upset. Zie opened zim's eyes, wondering to zieself, "What?" It's the pain of our dream, we tell our one-self. That place we smell while asleep, a place with water, a place in the sand, a place to breathe, and a place for sound, no doubt...

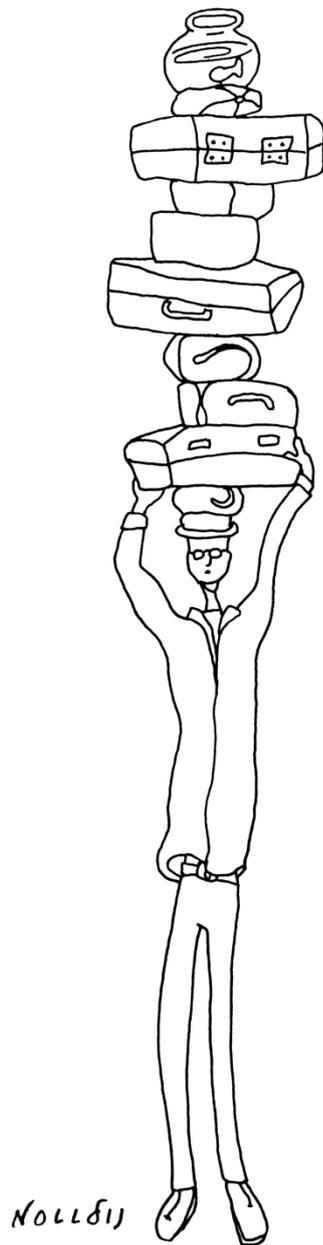
There is water gushing down, slipping over rocks and steps and canyons, washing life and love over the earth of our forebears, with the mothers from our own invention lifting us higher into a future. Babbling down like a jabbok into dwelling, we disseminate and deliver the truth of our lives lived into a life well-worn, and themselves utterly undelivered unto all. We entwine with the waters, becoming entrenched within our own entrails, sparks splintering apart and melding once again together. Like water drops falling from the heavens below, we blend into a body of source, pouring our wisdom down canyons to the dead. The sea rises up, filling the land, and its salt filters away, losing its grip on our preservation of self, on our telling, on what we once alleged. It has all since fallen, the horizon, now glaring, having floated up to our vision with vegetation once grown. A window in a shell, Zie wonders now, "What?" We began in the same place we ended, except all stringy and worn, wanting ... and dead!

"But, Nzambi begs to differ," is all we all say, thinking aloud and is never evermore unsaid. Why, oh... why? The ground vibrating, the sea full of swells, each careening together into one, a crack in the heavens, a boom down below, light emanating from the center, from the earth of our heart ... the bottom of feet singing, the soul

of us all. The last leviathan hits down onto sand and erupts into hail, pelting down onto wet fur rumbling in the hills. Meanwhile, shaking it off, the concrete, glass, and dirt, a sentinel behemoth climbs into our realm. Muffled in unison, dancing apart, the leviathan and the behemoth square off while trumpets bloom, and a shofar sounds. The skies open and rain forms into falling, round ampules tamping down what is not tied up. The waters begin to separate, once having fallen, and evaporate into pools, above and below our footsteps in the mud. The way has shrunken now, leading us on, so we march on anyways between fish, claws, and scale, broken and jagged, slippery and pale. The mountain is flat, but high, so we march on to its call. Falling down into the jaws of it all, slipping, careening, spinning out of control, we slide into home over the steps of our entrance, paint splattered; I remember...

Waking to the alarm, I realize I must have been dreaming, repetitious each one. Was I righteous over there, in that place I call home? Eating my breakfast, I wonder about fish: did they exist? The wallpaper in the hall has fish intersecting together in bursts of wonder, under udders of cows, so there must be such a thing ... as fish. Reaching for my paper on the lawn, my arm stretches out to clasp the fringe and band. I remember my neighbors then. They march on beside me to a realm dreamt but unknown. Nzambi stares out to the horizon stretching beyond, his steam pulsing from orifices unknown. Paperboy's bleeding with his newspapers thrown. And then a shadow from above lifts up to tell us that she is now gone.

The screen-doors smack shut but the air still moves forward, fixing us all. The meat on our bones reforms into dust, and we meet together marching to the east, a place only storied, and a place unjust. The closure of the past is witnessed by a one-time liege, who sees Nzambi, looking to a home until now unseen. Time closes in, and history unfolds addicting completion; she rides the night sky and falls next to me. Our names are extraneous, unconnected, no-one, so we begin the long climb, as the mountain glows-up into heaven and its stone shines down water, filling the lowest places, then reviving even more dead. I fly up too, flipping end-over-begin and catch up to her as she descends again and again. And, we fall, all at once, shrinking down... down and down... and bow deeply, stretching out tall, as shofars sound one last blast that emanates from up to the top of the world, a final hammer-blow: clang-a-lang, clang-a-langing, big and banging, the only call within us all; One—ringing out and soaring down, only to then twirl out into space a tiny, falling ... bookend.



I started writing when my kids were still young, wanting to read to them or their children writings from my own hand. I'm self-taught, and to improve I use my education and experience in technical and marketing writing, being a high school English teacher, and with postings made to my blog site: The Brave New Land. For more written works and art, please visit me at www.doronoll.com.