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All Right, so Camus Had to Give Speeches  
before the Academies and Get His Ass  
Killed in a Car-Wreck

met this guy, somewhere, hell his eyes looked like a madman's  
or maybe it was only my reflection of. . .  
well, forget it, anyway, he said to me, uh uh you read Camus?  
wellre both in a very womanless bar looking  
for a piece of ass or some way out of the top of the sky. . .  
it wasn't working— there was just the bartender wondering why he'd  
ever gotten into the business  
and myself, very discouraged with the fact that I had been translated  
into 6 or 7 languages  
and I was known more by more skidrow bums than college profs,  
and this guy kept going on—

*The Stranger*, you know, that depicts our modern society—  
the deadened man—  
couldn't cry at his mother's funeral,  
killed an Arab or two without even knowing why—

he kept on and on

on and on  
telling me what a son of a bitch The Stranger  
was, and I kept thinking, maybe he's right—  
you know, those speeches before the Academies—  
you couldn't tell whether Camus was talking and laughing out of the  
side of his mouth or  
whether he was  
insane. he talked the same as the guy next to me at the bar and we  
were only looking for  
pussy.

it was very sad—  
all along The Stranger had been my hero  
because I thought he'd seen beyond trying  
or caring  
because it was such a bore  
so senseless—  
that big hole in the ground looking up—  
and I was wrong again:  
hell, *I* was THE STRANGER, and the book hadn't been written the way  
it had been meant to  
be.

## The Old Woman

she lived in the last old-fashioned house  
on the block—  
you know the kind: vine-covered, dark, quiet.  
her neighbors were gone—  
nothing but high-rise apartments about.  
you'd see her two or three times a week  
pushing her little shopping cart on its two wheels;  
then she'd come back with stuff in bags,  
go into the house, and that was  
it. she never spoke to anybody.

it was last week about 3:30 p.m.  
that her house began sliding off of its foundations.  
it was a very slow slide  
and you simply got the idea that the house was just stepping  
forward to take a walk down the street—  
except some of the boards began to snap—  
they sounded like rifle shots, and the house moaned just a  
little—a dark green moan.

somebody called the fire dept.  
and the boys were running around shutting off the gas  
and shouting at each other  
and telling the crowd to keep back  
when along came one of these television trucks

and they sighted in on the house  
sagging toward the street.

when the front door opened and the little old  
lady walked out  
and she was *bombed*, as they say, completely out of  
it, they put the camera on her and the guy ran up with a  
mike. she was on the  
screen.

“how long ya been livin’ in that house, lady?”

“35 years.”

“ya got insurance?”

“nope.”

“whatcha gona do  
now?”

“go to Ireland and get drunk for  
two weeks.”

then she walked away and left them all there,  
alone.