

WHY THE WALRUS

By Dave Olson, 1987

In Vancouver Harbor, a forest green chunk of land juts out into the Pacific Ocean, as if some crazy force had dropped and glued it on. From the air, it's an oasis in the middle of metropolis, myriads of foliage amongst a mass of concrete and steel.

They call this place Stanley Park. I wonder why Stanley? And who "they" are (perhaps "they" are the same folks who named this planet earth). A neat place this park, water on three sides, plenty of big cedars and totem poles and the animal penitentiary. Some people call it the zoo; it's my favorite part.

I walk down the asphalt path wading through the covering of peanut shells and popcorn and hear the feeble seeds crush

beneath the weight of my sandals. Flocks of pigeons and squirrelling squirrels dash away with rations to add to their caches. I wander past the extravaganza paying little attention to their antics. I breathe deeply and know I am close.

The smell of heavily perfumed deodorizers looms in the air. Grunts and splashing water lifelessly float into my ears and the stench of not quite fresh cultured fish jumps up and slaps my face.

I set my sights, break into a run, and arrive at the retroaqua, oval dome, all but out of breath. Thirteen contently wallowing walruses bring somewhat of a disappointment. After running all that way, not a bit of excitement is being generated on their part. I suppose they aren't capable of things like that. A tremendous lack of desire is probably to blame.

A veritable zoo, or even circus of folks meander by and make some dumb ass, rude comment about the smell. What the hell did they expect? Hey, think about it, wake up, come out of your comic book life. Yeah, you probably think those bellows and belches are just ordinary guttural noises, but no! Those walruses are making jokes about you, ripping on you even. I hope so anyway, I really do.

Already, I'm frustrated. It didn't take long for the shock

of reality to stir my soul. Like a junkie, I need relief to soothe my mind from my self-inflicted plight.

I really feel the desire to stand on something tall and yell something loud. What though? Does it matter? No. People would stare, or else I would beg them to, and I would stare back just as blankly.

Or maybe look off into space in such a way that everyone would think I knew a secret. A secret so deep that only the walruses and I have been graced with its knowledge. A crazy prophet wanna-be and the one ton sea sausages know it all. The future is in eyes of the walruses. Look at them. Just you wait and see.

Why do I feel as though the responsibility of the world is mine to bear? Why do I want to waste time pushing amateur philosophy on a crowd of people who don't give half a shit? Oh, please God, Buddha, Krishna, or whoever, help me out. I don't want to think this much.

Hell, I don't even care how they feel or if my B-grade sermon would raise them from their ignorant stupor. Who am I to tell anyone, anything, anyway? I just came here to hang out with the animals.

My brain is exhausted, I think I had better sit down and not think.

Everywhere I look, I see bars. Bars and Signs. I would thoroughly enjoy running around this park ripping the bars from the crumbling concrete blocks that hold them in place. Laughing delightfully as I attempted not only to destroy someone's false sense of security, but bring some excitement into the lives of the poor beasts. It is, however, unlikely if they would even notice and they couldn't do anything if they did.

Anyway, some cop would catch me and win a medal or something. It wouldn't be pleasing having all that jazz on my conscience. Yeah, real tough guy, busted for diving into a pool of algae filled with a bunch of animals.

Who makes the damned rules anyhow? Someone else. Who put up those signs? Wasn't the animals or their mothers and it wasn't the maintenance man. Hey, what gives them the right! Grrrr. My brain is aching again.

This is what it feels like to be the only one that cares. Even the people who are paid to care, don't. Going through the motions, hurling in rations and provisions and moving on is a sad thing to do. Hey, but everyone thinks they do, right.

Look into the eyes of the people, most are indifferent, oblivious to their surroundings. I've never seen an asylum so full of confusion or turmoil. It makes me embarrassed to be a human. It would probably be in the best interest of everyone if they locked Davius Olsonius (of the N. American genus) up in a cage. Stick me next to the polar bears and the world would be safe from me.

Trying to keep my latent depression from crystallizing, I leave the bench that has been my temple of thought for the last few minutes, and walk on. I can't figure out what motivates most of these people to come here in the first place. The faces are always different, but the people are always the same, each filling a niche, but a different one at every changing moment.

This place, the whole planet even, should exist as nothing else but a pure expression of joy, a celebration of existence, the sort of place that gives you a perpetual adrenaline rush. Some crazy Utopia on speed. If humans weren't such a breed of what they are, maybe it would work. Everyone changes, so it couldn't.

The walruses, like some omnipotent constant, they don't change, at least I don't think so. I think that's why I go.

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