

## Alan Catlin

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### Napalm Sunset

They flew out of Subic Bay,  
destination unknown, somewhere hot;  
it was always hot wherever they went,  
or would be once, they got there.  
The kind of work they specialized in  
wasn't written up in log books or  
recorded on mission accomplished  
sheets. Was so ultra-classified  
they weren't classified at all, in fact,  
never happened, whether they succeeded  
or not. Between them they had more  
battle scars than a squad of grunts  
half way through an active tour in  
the green. "Death from Above"  
was their Proverbs and "I Believe in God,  
God is Napalm" their Psalms.

Back from their highly productive  
days in country, torching villes  
and disposing of the remains,  
they were every bar girl's fantasy  
in faded khakis: horny, well-heeled,  
silent men with wads of American and  
a taste for the unusual, regardless of the cost.  
A few days of cheap thrills and they would  
be thoroughly sated, ready to rock n roll,  
to saddle up and ride into a napalm sunset.

## **Born on the Fourth of July**

He was the kind of guy who bragged  
about his near-suicidal exploits:  
playing chicken with commuter trains  
for spending money and weed.  
If there was danger involved or a dare,  
if it was something you could only lose once,  
he was on it and had all the near-miss  
scars to prove it. Saw the “Deer Hunter”  
and decided he wanted to be like  
the Christopher Walken character when  
he grew up: earn a ton of money and  
go out in a head capping, blood splatter  
of glory. Managed the Walken look  
but none of the skills or the money.  
Had one too many close encounters  
with a few tons of moving metal and was  
reduced to earning his folding money  
racing motorized wheelchairs over  
uneven sidewalks or cars through  
intersections against the turning light.  
Customized his wheels with glitter  
and day glo pennants, racing stripes  
and multi-colored ostrich feathers.  
Honed his technique after years of  
practice but could not account for what  
he couldn't see: a car turning a hard,  
not-bothering-to-slow-to-a-full-stop,  
right on red around a parked Hummer  
and an SUV. Didn't matter that he was  
well within the painted yellow crosswalk,  
lines. Exercise Caution and No Right Turn  
on Red signs are only as useful as the  
inclination to read them and follow directions.

## **DC Man**

I guess it was in that storm of 68 when Obnocto slipped his VW onto the Thruway before it closed down all the way up North.

And you said it got pretty tense there for awhile driving in all that fucking snow once the beer ran out and that at this 25-30 mile an hour bullshit pace it was going to be a real long time between Poughkeepsie and Utica and that they might as well get good and drunk.

And Thin Man said, Good and Drunk and Stoned as he passed the first j between seats.

Around Kingston, Obnocto asked who was driving?

And you said, I thought Obnocto was.

Which was an.... oh yeah, I forgot, kind of Funny at the time, somewhere along that piece of road that 18 wheeled truck rolled out of the snow, planting that exchange pre-med kid who's-his-name no one could remember from where-was-it overseas like for good as he pushed his car off the road no one could see.

Not even DC as he passed the flask  
Old Grand Dad man  
Soothes the soul  
Warms the beating heart in the snow

## **AC/DC**

There's an AC for every DC  
Isn't that what you said Man?  
We were smoking dope in the tombs, man  
Among the hanging flowers  
The whole graveyard scene man  
The drooping lost war flags  
You said it didn't matter  
Death didn't penetrate your head  
Doesn't count  
It was the Super Bowls  
That's what counted  
Death is shit for assholes, man  
You and I are going to live forever  
Stoned crazy is good  
Walking graveyards good, man  
Confront the dead on their own terms  
That's what it's all about  
Dead stoned people don't like talk back, man  
Have it all buried inside their heads  
Tell them you fucked them if they ask  
They won't remember, man  
Was Death a good lay DC?  
I always meant to ask

## Gains and Losses

After my step-  
mother dies  
in Florida  
nursing home

we lose a  
wrist watch  
a gold wedding  
band and a bracelet

but gain  
a table lamp  
no one  
recognizes  
but everyone  
at the home  
insists was hers

I guessed  
that was their  
version of a fair  
trade policy

**Alan Catlin** has been publishing for the better part of five decades. His latest full-length poetry collections are *American Odyssey* from Future Cycle Press and *Walking Among Tombstones in the Fog*, Presa Press. He is the poetry editor of the online poetry journal *misfitmagazine.net*