

Three Poems by Robert Cooperman

The Hip Bone's Connected to the Thigh Bone

Or so the old, silly song goes,
though I forget the rest, and think
of it now only because my hip joint

is grinding bone on bone, no cartilage—
with its nerveless, connective cushioning—
to soften the painful crunch, crunch

that turns walking from parking lot
to a Safeway or Target into dragging
a stubborn mutt the size of a pony.

Still, I tell myself, it's not cancer,
not a fatal coronary, not the hundreds
of incurable diseases we'd all dread

if we knew their names. I'm just looking
for relief with this operation that I don't
want to make too much of:

dealing with pain, not mortality:
my hip bone a rusty hinge creaking
in the wind, a haunted house kids dare

each other to step inside, past its cobwebs,
and maybe at the end of their investigation
to find hidden pirate chests of gems

when I walk out of the hospital pain-free.

The Head of Guns for America Hears of the Latest Counter-Attack on His Troops

Just when I think we've cut the head off those traitors, they hiss and bite us on the ass. After we'd eliminated their traitor-president—though he claimed to represent all the people, yeah, all his people; and my commando team was celebrating in the mansion that interloper hid in—his butchers attacked, abetted by traitors still on staff.

In the ambush, I lost another crack commando team, plus scores of my operatives inside the building; a few escaped, but they're spreading hysteria, screaming the war's lost: the cowards.

There's nothing left, but to use the weapons entrusted to me when we took over Norad and its atomic stockpile. So it's come to this: to save our nation we'll have to destroy it, though not much is left, what with chemical, biological, and dirty bomb-attacks taking out various cities on both sides, and destroying our South and Southwest, and their Northeast, along with that cesspit of sin, California, and the rest of the liberal-treasonous Left Coast.

Still, nuclear holocaust's better than letting *them* win; they're no more American than a rat sandwich is a fine T-bone and a cold six-pack of Bud.

A Story of the Great Depression

“If I knew the way I would take you home.”

--“Ripple,” Jerry Garcia & Robert Hunter

When I left home—too many mouths
and too little food—I’d plans bigger
than circus elephants rearing onto hind legs,
trumpeting louder than “Reveille.”

I’d lead folks to paradise, or at least
to better lives than knuckles rubbed raw
from labor harder than state pen rocks;
rich men laughing, sneering at their toil
while those dapper suits drank goblets
of rich red wine and ate steaks:
like a death in the family to them
if grease splattered their fine shirts and ties;
while men and women like me gnawed on gristle,
and hopped off freights on slow-down bends,
before the bulls could catch and beat me.

Someday, though, we’ll rise up: and the bulls
will see the raw deal they’ve been handed:
lackeys to the fat men who think because
they were born licking silver spoons
they earned their riches, didn’t have daddies
lavishing everything, and then some, on them,
and stealing what was rightly ours.

Maybe I’m just pissing into the wind,
but that day will come, and when it does,
they’ll get as little mercy as they’ve shown us.

Robert Cooperman's latest collection is *Little Timothy in Heaven* (March Street Press). Forthcoming in 2014 is *Just Drive* (Brick Road Press). Cooperman is a past contributor to *The Homestead Review*, and his work has appeared in *The Sewanee Review*, *The Mississippi Review*, and *California Quarterly*.