nicollsroad

A journal of the arts

created by the members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

at

Stony Brook University
The State University of New York

Sponsored
By
The OLLI Arts Council

Editors

Bob Stone
Dan Daly
Carol Schmidt
Ginger Williams
Lee Marc Stein
Florence Mondry
Marilyn Marcus
This inaugural issue of the OLLI literary magazine which we have named *nicollsroad* is dedicated to Rhoda Spinner who has kept the spoken and written word before the membership of the Round Table and now OLLI for as many years as most of us remember. We hope that she continues the tradition of the Literary Tea far into the future.

Bob Stone
CONTENTS

Poems

Ginger Williams  5  Pebbles
6  Avocado

Florence Mondry  7  When Summer Days Were Long
Pat Ballan  8  My Father's Son
Carol Schmidt  9  Can a Dog Appreciate the Scenery?
10  The First Time That We Danced

Dorothy Schiff Shannon  11  Antelope Valley
Len Farano  12  When First We Practice on PC
Frane Helner  13  Chazerai
Sandy Wicker  15  Ha'Shoah
Lee Marc Stein  16  The Keep
Sheila Eisinger  17  Changing Landscape

Fiction

Lee Marc Stein  18  The Only Sure Thing
Sheila Blume  26  Mrs. Spivack and the Visitor
Pebbles

When talk was difficult we gathered pebbles. 
You’d show me the white one shaped like a heart. 
I’d balance a black marbled one on my palm 
hoping you’d stroke it and then my hand.

When we couldn’t look in each other’s eyes 
we’d gaze at our pebbles green as jewelweed 
blue as the sea and when we couldn’t remember 
the way back to the boardwalk or 
past the benches, we’d trade our pebbles. 
I’d give you a zebra, you’d offer an oblong 
and one time you skipped yours across the sound 
and once I threw mine into the sky 
where they whistled and flew like birds.

Ginger Williams
Avocado

Felix
this is
an avocado
it comes to you
on a spoon you may not
like it at first, you'll get used
to it soon. Oh no, you're making
that yucky face I can see your question
"why." See it in your downturned lips the
instant thrust of startled tongue. Just wait
baby there's more to come: sweet potato, they
say, and any day now, peaches, plums, bananas
peas and no doubt, the tricky brussels sprout.
Your mother who holds the spoon, pauses
ready for the scream, your father who
mashed this fruit starts to smile
and your grandma who sees
the wonder in your eyes
picks up her pen to
celebrate the risky
magic of
surprise.

Ginger Williams
When Summer Days Were Long
—a pantoum
Young and fearless, we danced on rocks
and the sea so near was full of sun—
bare feet, brown face, flying hair,
we ran over pools, my friend and I

and the sea so near was full of sun—
we shimmered in its beating heat
running over pools, my friend and I
our eyes full of sea and sky—

we shimmered in the beating heat
and minnows winked in the golden pools
our eyes full of sea and sky
and the sand burned white and hot

and minnows winked in the golden pools
and seagulls swooped in the azure sky
and the sand burned white and hot
as we girls flew over glowing rocks—

and seagulls swooped in the azure sky
the cries receding in the air
as we girls flew over glowing rocks
in the wild, trembling day—

the cries receding in the air
called to us from far away
in the wild, trembling day
when young and fearless we danced on rocks.

Florence Mondry
MY FATHER'S SON

Never the boy my father craved
Though our heritage demanded a male heir
"Don't let me see her till she's six months old!"
But the first time I cried in the night
It was he who rushed down the hall in bare feet
Who had invitations engraved for my christening
Who called me "Rumplehead" for my curls
It was always a party when he came home
He never despaired when fortunes burned black

I lived as his shadow in the house
Read the books I saw him read
Played stickball in the Brooklyn streets
Marched ahead protecting my sisters
Devil-dared the local boys
Pretended to have his courage
I built forts in the weed-choked lots
Was Robin Hood in the golf course roughs
Rode my Schwinn down Dead Man's Hill

He was a silver-tongued orator, a weaver of tall tales
I gave his eulogy without tears
Left the mourners with a smile
He would have liked it that way
Pat Ballan
Can a Dog Appreciate the Scenery?

On a ravishing October morning
sun illuminates the foliage and puffs
of whitewashed clouds accentuate
the blueness of the sky. A chilly breeze
drifts off the Hudson as reminder that
another season will descend and then recede,
giving way to pastel buds where leaves
are now relinquishing their hold.

Blossom ceases her eternal sniff, lifts her head
and gazes south toward where an ocean liner rests
against a scrim of Midtown skyscrapers, then north
to where the bridge appears, slightly indistinct —
a graphite sketch drawn by an artist overnight.
A gentle tug and she resumes her stroll along the promenade.

Carol Schmidt
The First Time That We Danced

The keyboard player wears a bad toupee.
His wife, numb from years of playing gigs like this, manages a smile, clutches the mike and warbles _Summertime, A Foggy Day_
to patients—some in wheelchairs, some who stray, wandering past her to the vanished light of lost remembrances. I am invited
to sit beside my mother as the duo plays

a medley: tarantella, polka, jig,
now a hora that she might still know.
I help her up, she shifts her weight and we are dancing as we stand in place. I even sing the Hebrew words. I twirl. We laugh, as though this could be our long forgotten memory.

Carol Schmidt
Antelope Valley

The desert lit up that spring. Yellow poppies everywhere filled the brown empty land. Seeds long coiled tight sprang up in crowds of bright blossoms, making up for lost time in the dry years.

We drove east from the city when we heard it had rained. The baby in red rompers sat in the sea of blooms, his toes tickled by the sand. Even in his year-old newness there was wonder in his eyes.

Time away on this cold coast, dare I hope that coaxed lawns have not replaced the flowers that filled our hearts that day, and that secret seeds still send up rain-washed sprouts and yellow, yellow everywhere.

Dorothy Schiff Shannon
When First We Practice On PC

Poor Herman, concerned and upset,
Had become a mere slave of the Net.
Between Facebook and Twitter
His life was a litter
Of messages, some he'd regret.

Like the one where he trashed his boss Fred
He could never take back what he said.
So he's out of a job
And just part of the mob
That spends days lashed to mouses they've wed.

His sweet spouse was preparing to flee.
He decided to see an M.D.
Could he cure this affliction
Of web-based addiction?
Perhaps with some meds he'd be free.

Was this habit entrenched or deleteable?
"Doc, please tell me this ailment is beatable."
"Son, I'm sad to report,
Tangled web has you caught,
Diagnosis: you're simply untweetable."

Len Farano
CHAZERAI

Rockaway Beach summers, sweaty and dejected,
we'd watch barefoot vendors trudge across scalding sand,
sun glinting off metal freezers slung over their shoulders,
hawking nefarious treats: Soda! Creamcicles! Fudgecicles! Italian Ices!

Frosty dry-ice-clouds billowed every time the freezer opened.
But Poppa, louder and more emphatic than vendor,
sneered: "FEH! CHAZERAI!!" and wouldn't buy.
After dinner we'd fidget on the front porch, listen to

Dairy Maid's seductive bells, siren songs
from Mister Softee's hurdy-gurdy, Bungalow Bar's
choir of chimes, and standing beside Poppa we'd watch, waiting,
while truck after truck disappeared down the street.

Eons later, stately as a royal bride, the all-white enamel Good Humor truck
swept down the street, parked at the foot of the boardwalk, and smiling George,
Poppa's white-haired, white-suited, white-hatted pal, emerged.
Not. Poppa pointed out, like the ragged bums driving other trucks!

Then, with ceremony, Poppa presented each of us with
a "Poppy-Dollar" for ice cream, warning:
"Don't buy Chazerai! No Italian Ices!!"
Only Halvah, Hersheys, O'Henry bars, or Good Humor ice cream
weren't *chazerai*: junk, poison.
Even from George's treasure trove, only Chocolate Chip, Toasted Almond, or pure Vanilla, weren't suspicious, possibly, non-kosher; *tref*.

Sometimes we would sneak to the Penny Arcade, buy soft ice creams peak-swirled into a question marks, candy apples, caramel corn, or, best of all, slurp exotic, forbidden, Italian Ices!

Worry later
how to explain
purple lips
and tongue.

Frane Helner
Ha’shoah

Miracles of memory
like candles in the night
light the lives, the faces
places—ways of life
before the stomp of WW II….

Those who can, who escaped
who managed to get through
remember friendships, family
sisters, brothers, cousins—
the ones who endured, survived
then forced to crematoria
died
but still bequeathed
their drawings, poetry
concerts, staged performances
secreted within evil’s walls

Children of Terezin
c. 1942
Sonja’s Legacy
Legacies of others
no longer lost to time….

Sandy Wicker
The Keep

Downloaded from our Danube river boat, we’re led into Durnstein by a local guide, fed highlights in thirty-seven minutes, ears and eyes stuffed with Wachau Valley apricots.

Click, click, it’s all in my Canon – blue steeple, pillory, year 1457 tavern, flower boxes, tourists/townies mobbing cobblestone streets – mere variations on themes to be reshot later in Passau, Regensburg, Melk and Karlsbad.

Still aboard, I learned of the town’s crown jewel, perched atop the mountain above main street. Our tour group heads off for wine tasting at the inn. I know where I’m going. Smiling, I start up the dirt path, increasing my pace, sweating from heat and anticipation, colossal stone steps the challenge I’ve awaited all week. I climb and climb for half an hour, pirouetting to scout photos.

And then there it is: ruins of the castle where Leopold V imprisoned Richard the Lionheart in 1192. Imagine poor crusader rabid held here, far from the Tower of London, unable to pillage and rape, for all his power powerless, bound by boulders… and me, unchained, free to wander here by myself, celebrating the stones, drinking in countryside and river.

Lee Marc Stein
CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Roads in Spring are ribbons
woven through rural spiked hair
of different lengths and colors
Don't get lost in the maze
when Summer arrives
and the hair grows full

A country road in Summer
a dark, rough hem along a high grass skirt
the seam only broken by a zipper at a crossroad

The Autumn path shows more leg
as fields are stripped of corn and sprouts
and dress layers shorten
The roads now easier to navigate
after nature's growth is shorn
next year to be reborn
Send me on my way
skirting a harvested field
add a sweater to coordinate
with the landscape

That same road in Winter
around an unadorned skirt
or worn flat rug of felt or suede
or the border of a plush, high white carpet.

Sheila Eisinger
Looking back, maybe my luck changed when he signaled with one finger from his hospital bed that I should come close. I did, even though I thought he might yell curses in my ear. Instead, he stuck out his hand and grabbed my wrist.

“I forgive you,” he said. “I understand how you could do what you did.”

“You’re not going to press charges?”

“Of course not,” he said with the hint of a smile.

“What do you want from me?”

“How about your name? A little about you? Look, you were concerned enough to make the trip here to see me. I don’t know if you had to take off from work to do it, delay a trip home, but you made the effort. That’s plenty of apology. My name is Ben Schacter, by the way.”

I couldn’t look him in the eye. I couldn’t look at the sling holding up his left arm, the brace around his neck. What I did to the poor little guy. At his age, I could have killed him.

“Well,” he asked, “are you going to talk to me?”

I cleared my throat. “Okay, Mr. Schacter…”

“Ben, please call me Ben.”

“Ben. OK, my name is Ricardo Fernandez. I live with my wife Maria and two girls in Mt. Vernon.”

“Not far from here.”
“Yeah, and, God help me, not far from Empire City.”

“Do you have a problem?” Ben asks me.

“Yeah, well, I lose all the time.”

“I mean is it an addiction? Have you contacted Gamblers’ Anonymous?”

“No, I am not addicted. I mean I never borrowed anything from anyone to go to a casino. I don’t go that often because there’s no extra money around the house. My wife works in the high school cafeteria but that doesn’t bring in much money. I work two jobs. We’re holding on, but I gotta start saving for the girls’ college.”

“So, Ricardo, you play the slots to get ahead.”

“Yeah, and I went through $40 in quarters and saw you slip one single…”

“We don’t have to go through this again. Ricardo, I want you to get something for me. Go into the bottom drawer over there. Take out my wallet. In the right pocket, under my credit cards, you’ll find a large coin.”

I did what he asked and handed him the coin. He gave it back to me.

“That’s a Tombstone Silver Dollar – 1889. Last time I looked it was worth around $90. I want you to have it, but I beg you not to spend it.”

“Ben, I can’t take this. After all the pain I caused you.”

“This is what I want from you.”

I nodded to him, wished him a speedy recovery and left the room. As I walked toward the parking garage, I kept turning the silver dollar over in my palm and thinking how lucky I was that Ben, of all possible people, had been the victim of my rage.

In two weeks, when I cashed the pay check from my second job, I told Maria I was heading for the casino. Only I couldn’t go back to Empire City since I was banned there for six months, so I gassed up the car and headed for the casino at Aqueduct Racetrack.
The slots were cold that Tuesday night. Playing the quarter machine, my first $20 was swallowed without a single hiccup. I didn’t see anyone else winning either. I moved down the row and did a little better with the next machine I played. My $20 became $40 before I felt it going cold again. Suddenly, next to me, an older woman with bleached red hair and a cigarette dangling from her mouth who had just sat down hit a $500 jackpot.

I started to feel the rage again. I squeezed the silver dollar in my pocket very tight. I had visions of Ben flying through the air, his arm crashing into one of the machines, his neck all twisted, yelling in pain. I was sweating. I walked into the bathroom, washed my face, and felt better. The old redhead had disappeared in the meantime.

The $40 became $80 and I didn’t feel like playing any more. It had been months since I had won anything at all. I redeemed my ticket and went to my car for the drive home.

The Van Wyck Expressway was packed tight for nine at night, car horns blasting so often and loud I could hardly hear the music on my radio. I couldn’t get out of the right lane. It was okay – the girls were at a school basketball game until after ten and Maria was working late. Then, right after the Hempstead Avenue exit, I saw a Mercedes barreling along on the right shoulder and cutting off a Ford Focus to get back into the right lane some five cars in front of me.

Bastardo! What the hell right does he have? I gripped the steering wheel. I couldn’t see the Mercedes driver’s face, but I wanted to punch it, just like I had punched Ben’s when he turned around with that goddamned I-own-the-world smile after another of my machines delivered his second jackpot.

I was still fuming fifteen minutes and a half mile later. Up ahead on the shoulder another car, this one a Hyundai with its hood up. A woman stood, her back to me, looking into the engine. I decided to pull off the road in back of her.

I got out of my car with the flashlight from my glove compartment. “Can I help?” I shouted as soon as I got out of the car.
She picked her head up. “I would have called triple A but my cell phone is dead. Do you have one I could use for just a minute?”

I nodded. “Yes, but this time of night it’ll be an hour before anyone gets here. Let me take a look.”

She shrugged. I didn’t see anything disconnected or any leaks either. I asked her to get back in her car and try to start it up. In seconds I knew it was her battery, and told her I was returning to my car to get jumper cables. I moved my car closer and connected the cables.

“Sounds pretty dead,” I said. “We better let it charge for 10 minutes or so.”

“Thanks so much. Not many people would stop. What’s your name?”

“Ricardo Fernandez. And yours?”

“Sarah Hopkins. Where are you headed, Ricardo?”

“Back to our apartment in Mt. Vernon – my wife and two girls. Work day tomorrow.”

“What do you do?”

“Well, I work on a construction crew during the day – mostly offices and medical buildings. And three nights a week, I manage a shift at a bowling alley.”

“You should start your own business. You know how to treat people.”

I looked at her, a bit angry before I spoke. “Yeah, right, who’d lend me the money?”

In my headlights, I could see her smile. “I would, for one.”

And she could see the puzzled look on my face. “I’m a small business loan specialist for a credit union in Queens. Let me get you my business card. Call me and come to my office. I’m there on Saturday mornings, too.”

I didn’t know what to say. I clutched Ben’s silver dollar in my pocket, and thought about Ben’s luck and the rage it had caused in me, and how unlucky I had been.
I found my voice. “I’ll think about it. I could start a home remodeling business and bring my two brothers into it, but it’s risky. I want to make sure my girls can go to college.”

“Sure, I understand,” she said. “How’s my battery doing?”

I checked to see if the charge was holding and disconnected the cables. I walked back to her car and wished her luck getting home. The traffic had eased and I pulled off the shoulder and made my way to the Whitestone and back to my apartment in thirty minutes.

I told Maria what had happened and showed her the business card. She shook her head.

“I don’t know, Ricardo. We’re doing okay now, putting a little bit of money away every month. Should we really gamble?”

“Maria, we will not have enough for them the way it’s going. Even the state schools. And the interest rate on student loans is doubling. I can’t let them be slaves to that.”

“Well, let’s think about it and talk about it before you even talk to her.”

I agreed. A few days later, I left a message on Sarah Hopkins voice mail that we were on hold and that I would call her back in a week or two. She reached me the following day on my cell phone and thanked me again.

As I walked into the Aqueduct casino the next time, I saw a gray-haired woman jumping up and down shouting with joy as her machine lit up and clanged and banged. I walked up to her and congratulated her.

“How much did you win?”

“Wow, $2500. And on my second roll of quarters.”

A man I presumed to be her husband walked up and hugged her.

“Well, that’s great,” I said. “Enjoy it.”

She smiled at me and wished me luck.
Was I okay with her winning, glad for her, because I no longer felt entitled… or because she hadn’t won on a machine I stoked first?

That’s what had enraged me about Ben’s luck. Before I attacked him, he told me he had just been waiting for an opening at the poker table when he idly threw two quarters into the machine I had been playing for 45 minutes without luck.

“Bam,” Ben said. “$2000.”

Then he sat at the poker table, won another $300, went to another machine I had just vacated and won $1500 more. There was that smirk of his that said “I’m Mr. Lucky, and I’m lucky because the money doesn’t mean a thing to me.”

It meant something to me. I wanted it. I wanted to be one of the lucky ones who could say “I put my daughters through college… I made sure they got a good education.” Ben’s face had made me as angry as I’ve ever been in my life, as angry as when my father walked out on my mother. I took five paces toward him, picked him up by his shirt, and flung him against the column near the machine. He yelled. Before security could get to me, I punched him hard in the stomach. As the guards escorted me to the security office, the object of my anger shifted to myself.

Now, as I looked for a machine to play, I wondered what the gray-haired women and her husband would do with their winnings. They didn’t look like the type that would take their luck casually. They might buy something they had hesitated about.

The machines were kind to me, too. On the first one, I parlayed $10 into $110… then hit on a machine that paid another $400. Now I had a stake and moved to a blackjack table where the minimum ante was $20. I had never done this. I would put $100 away and use the $400.

The cards were cold at first and I lost $100 within the first 15 minutes. Then I won back to back hands with an eighteen and seventeen when the dealer went over, doubled down on black kings and won both, scored two blackjacks. Within an hour I was up
over $800. A player dropped out and I was worried about that changing my luck, but it didn’t. I doubled the $800. I had now won over $2,000 for the night. I felt Ben’s silver dollar in my pocket. Was this my night? People had won $10, $20, $30,000 in this casino. Was it my turn? I decided not to find out.

On the way to the cashier, I had a hunch and put a single into the $1 slot machine and spun. It was gone, and then so was I.

When I got home from work the next day, Maria said she wanted to talk.

“I think you should do it,” she said. “See about your own business.”

I asked her why she had changed her mind.

“How many times you think you’re going to the casino and winning $2,000? That’s crazy, that puts too much pressure on you, on all of us. You have a lot of talent as a carpenter, you’re a good person. You and your brothers can make this work.”

I called Sarah Hopkins the next morning, hoping she’d remember me. She did -- I guess that’s part of her job. I arranged to drive out to her office in Bayside on Saturday.

After the prelims, she started asking questions about what my business plans were. She didn’t seem surprised when I said I had no written plan. My brothers and I would start doing some remodeling on weekends -- finishing basements maybe -- until we had homeowners who could recommend us. Then we’d get the word out on Facebook, talk to people in our church groups, have Maria and my sisters-in-law talk up our business at their jobs.

She liked all that. She explained how the loan would work, started going over the paperwork with me. “You’ll have to open an account here, but of course you can do all the banking electronically.”

“Of course,” I said. “I figured that.”

“Good. Did you bring a check to open the account?”
I handed over the $2,000 cashier’s check from the casino. She frowned and shook her head.

“Is gambling a problem, Ricardo? We’re not funding nights at the casino.”

She lowered her head, crossed her arms.

“No, I swear. I’ve never lost more than $60 a week. And I’ve had my last trip for a long time. It’s not a problem – check with anyone who knows me.”

“What else should I know about? Drugs? Alcohol? Domestic violence? I’ll check on your credit history of course.”

I had to come clean and tell her about what happened with Ben. I explained how this rage was a one-time thing, that I was usually a calming influence.

“And he did not press charges?”

“No. He probably should have, but he didn’t. And he gave me this to change my luck.”

I pulled the silver dollar from my pocket and placed it on the desk in front of her.

“Has it?” she asked.

I smiled.
The man who rang her apartment doorbell appeared, through the peep hole, to be so drab and ordinary that she assumed he was an unfamiliar neighbor collecting funds for some local charity. She didn’t even bother to fasten the door chain, but simply opened the door a crack and asked, “What can I do for you?”

“I am the Angel of Death,” said the man as he somehow slipped past her into the living room and stood facing her. “Your time on Earth has run out, and I am here to lead you out of the world.”

“Wait a minute,” Manya replied in a voice tinged with panic. “This must be some kind of a mistake. Maybe you are looking for the people who lived here before—the Bernsteins? They were an old couple.”

“You are Manya Spivack; not so?” he inquired.

“Well, yes; I mean, in a way; I mean, no, not really. The name on my birth certificate is Maria Schultz—I can prove it—and I have decided to go back to my maiden name since Spivack died. Really! I’m going to do it! I think my husband may have had an aunt, or a cousin—yes—a cousin called Manya.”

“No, it’s you I have been sent to fetch,” he replied. “Please get yourself ready.”
“Oh, no, it isn’t,” exclaimed Many. “I didn’t drag myself half way across Europe and the whole Atlantic Ocean to be carried off by a *shmendrik* like you, in a worn-out cardigan sweater with a *gevaldik* hole in it!”

“Hole?” he asked, obviously taken aback.

“Look at your right elbow! *Oy vey*, the hole is so immense anybody can see your shirt sleeve underneath, and it’s none too clean!” She continued, her voice nearly a shout, “And your shoes! The heels are worn all the way down, and they look like they haven’t been polished in years. And those baggy pants!”

Death made a grab for his elbow and held it as if to cover up the hole. “It’s only that I’m very busy just now, and I don’t get much of a chance to take care of my clothing.”

“Always excuses!” she sighed. “Have you ever thought about going out to pick up people for the underworld dressed like a *schlemiel*? It brings nothing but *shande* on you, and on your employer too. My husband Morton Spivack—may he rest in
peace—didn’t earn much, but when he left this apartment in the morning, he always looked like a million bucks.”

“I’ll make a deal with you,” she said. “It seems to me like you’re about the same size as my late husband. You go find that other Manya Spivack, and I’ll fix you up. You can take a shower in my bathroom, and shave too. Morty’s razor is still there. I’ll even give you a haircut, which God knows you need. Morty always said I give a better haircut than the President’s barber. Then you can pick out whatever clothes you want—I have a closet full of them—a suit, a shirt, underwear, socks, shoes, necktie, and even an overcoat and a hat if you want. Go!” she commanded. “Look at yourself in the mirror!”

Death walked over to her full-length mirror, still clutching his right elbow, and stared at his image. He seemed about to cry. “All right, all right!” he said. “I’ll do it. Where’s the bathroom?”

Manya was as good as her word, and gave her visitor a first class haircut. She laid out Spivack’s best clothes on the bed, even a tie pin and cuff links. Death chose Morty’s gray double-breasted suit and a white dress shirt. His choice of a tie was dignified, if understated. Finally, he laced up a pair of black oxfords that looked pretty comfortable and fit quite well. When he emerged from the bedroom, he was a new man.
“Now you look like a *mentsh,*” she said, as he again examined himself in the mirror. “If you want, I can pack up the rest of Morty’s stuff in a suitcase and you can take it for when you need a change.”

“No, thank you,” he replied. “How would it look if Death comes to claim somebody, carrying a suitcase? It would look like they were going on a cruise.”

“Well, then I make you this offer: you can come back here any time you like to shower and change clothes, as long as there’s no more of that ‘your time is up’ and ‘come with me’ stuff.”

The Angel of Death agreed and left the apartment smiling. And that’s how the neighbors explained that Manya was able to reach the ripe old age of 120, and how she left this earth only by her free choice, when she finally felt tired of living. “Can you take me with you this time?” she asked Death on what turned out to be his last visit for a change of clothes. “Sure thing!” he replied, “But can I have one last haircut before we go?”

And thus it is that when the Grim Reaper appears at your door some day, you will find him both well dressed and cheerful. If you don’t—if his shoes are again run down and his clothes in disarray—you can try making a deal.