

CRAWLSPACE: A POEM BY DANIEL COMISKEY & C.E. PUTNAM



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& C.E. PUTNAM

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Daniel Comiskey & C.E. Putnam

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For Our Parents

Dan & Margie Comiskey / Ann & Ed Putnam

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About 25 years ago, I was in an apartment, and next door, they put on the radio, so I struck the wall with my fist, but they did not put the radio down. I took a tool and banged until I made a hole through the wall. It was like a comedy movie.

Klaus Kinski

The Ringmaster's Hibernation Proclamation

I'm pleased to announce
that we, the people
of Emerald House, do know the rules of this
game and play
it correctly.

We're doing a Pirate Theme
in the snack hut—it'll be called

Kaptain Kreg's Krab Shack.

We're going to have red and white checkered tablecloths,
a parrot in the corner,
fish balls,
ship sails—something fun
like more lighthouses!

Like a peacock.

We're sure to move a million
units in January. We're just waiting
round the rabbit hole
to see what's going
to pop up.

Sea urchins are a constant
annoyance.

Jars
of them
and a fishhook for every eye.

A routine background check reveals the skulking monkfish,

the crabs in the basket
the claw dried grub squirm.

The monkeys were eating with a fork.
Hockstatter dung.

The worst.

The beach
of presentiment was tired.

We got ourselves up
for dancing

for the meek
in a kind of pattern.

Together we formed an impromptu hydraulic jack.

Why try to approach
absolute zero?

Hey, they
finally found Walt Whitman!

He was hiding
down in a spider
hole.

I've been pining
for a nap and this
one's a doozie.

It's time

to winterize all
those surf hits.

Snooze Button Jailbreak

Got up early to check
the percolator. My stunt double handles
all the morning-breath scenes.

Old rags in the dish,
and then taking off
and then going up with all
of my superhuman powers.

Bacon,

bacon,

I thought,
taking the kitchen steps
three at a time

—Mine?

Surely mine.
I had wanted bacon
so badly—I am its Father.

When the light comes on the birds
start to get social.

So many skies happening.

My mind's
a jumble
of Mixolydian
Modes, nipplewort
and Joachim du Bellay.

To forewarn
what will happen
with only
two words:

Prison push-ups.

Then the most terrible
looking larvae appear, so pointedly
blowing the frame.

Feels like I'm drifting off
to some great mistake—here, to a nameless
atoll somewhere in the Pacific,
seeking—what?

The horror stem.

It may challenge
the August burning
the yellow eye infection
—I'm your guardian angel in need
of new sight gags.

I'm afraid you've busted

my sorry machine.

The Case of the Magnificent Cup

Incalculable occasion!

Our names
are often the same as names
of very common things:

Hello

My name is Mr. Cobra.

I called for my mustache
cup but no answer.

I've got an hour to kill
and I don't care how
I do it.

The entire scheme
imploded
when the harbormaster,
who signed
his letters "Yours faithfully...,"

discovered the tell-tale
coffee ring.

Garbage trucks spilling rotting
chicken guts and string
or drinking the liquefied pig
the terrorism
expert sometimes mentions?

You decide.

A bare foot preparing
for a day
in the upstairs bathroom.

Listen, thought
balloon,
you look bushed.

A narrow brook
made the swan
cry like an ox.

Will no one crack
an ammonia ampule
beneath my nose to bring
me back?

You inspire
snacks.

Alone at
the microwave again.

Which Lunchroom?

Can't think
of anything right now that's not
an emergency,
but here's the number for it.

The alphabet begins
there to your left.

The dynamite
was a different story
less this opening pit and curve
—dog rug + table light.
Taking some note
of the sun,
for the future of the sun,
I will need your hand
for a second mouth.

Boris became scared of being a trout.

The Monkey said hello to the Pig, and the Pig said
“I don’t speak Monkey” in Pig, and then the Monkey said
“would you like a bite of my sandwich” in Monkey.

Obstreperous lunch today in the kiosk
or scattered breakfasts
at Linda’s. How could oatmeal
and pasta end up
on the same plate?

I’m out of trail
mix but the Yeti
has plenty
to share.

“I’m glad. Because you see,
that was the first meal
I’ve ever cooked.”

The tanks
are in an ancient cemetery
and I am in the ancient cemetery
walking around inside the lake of fire.

The burning—and not to mention
the snow that Brian reduced
or “bounced” to a single
monophonic track—maybe
he was troubled by seeing
a non-prison person.

It’s fun being Heidegger
at work. His hand went through the tiger
and into a terrible headache. We touched
on the weather.

You have no idea about
the capacity of my cloud-somersault.

The Island of Dr. Mauer

We were out back
enjoying the high pressure
system
when the call came in
from headquarters.

Now the afternoon is nearly
over we don't have to check
the laudanum—shall I
answer it?

The Yak's voice inside
the loudspeaker:

“You are unfortunate
in your philosophical temperament
and your calmness in what should be
to most

an occasion for total fucking
panic.”

The minarets clot but we hear it as “plot.”

There’s been some trouble at the institute—
poison darts,
scurvy,
zombie gas,
jet-fresh verve ensuring face-offs upon a junky divan.

The curved vent pipes smolder
over us.

The **BEGINNING OF THIS IS ANOTHER.**

A bevy of jackasses scratched into the dirt,

**THE YETI
DOES
NOT
BEND!**

The moon had more
than one part to it
and then we looked
even deeper
and saw more
before the planes came down upon us.

Right now, we either make tracks or we're up to our armpits in machetes.

Roy

Somewhere
down in the valley I'd been
named Hollerin' Champ.

The cow wives
said that all the children had
died because THAT one
was not a cow child

it was a ghost.

A little girl
loved her nurse.

Belief and zero
when a boy.

The magic coincase is not intended for children
under three years of age.

The age we live in is called the machine
age, the beginning
of your working life.

You delight
in calling me
your “little typist.”
Not only are you
dead but
you’re working long hours.

I’ve checked off all
my action items
—in the morning
we’ll fax the work orders.

I’ll put aside my antediluvian
ways and just hit the showers.

I threw a whole
lot of darts at one point
in my life.

Seeing that I cannot be killed
again I choose to try
to do it another way.

I have a
staff T-shirt

for every year there

has been a
staff T-shirt.

I'm cresting on a fancy splurge.

I only wanted a silversmith
to make a simple silver belt buckle
suitable for engraving
the entire rollercoaster.

Our vacation is right
here in space

—we don't

know anyone who rests
at home.

A big green tree
helps you

relax and stay up
all night.

Now that we've introduced
the topic, let's take a call.

Medicated Spring Equinox

In what pictures did Douglas
Fairbanks

- (a) capture a ship single-handed
- (b) use a long whip
- (c) take a trip on a carpet?

The clouds are in rapid motion.

O
vapor trail
sandbox or shoji screen
must admit
it's all sexy to me.

It's not a tree—it's
wheat
and a prison gate.

Listen,
I want you to pass me a nice
medium highball

without letting a lot of flies in here.

Bees have been hassling my friends and me for the past few days.

They sent me a tape
and I put it on
and instantly

I was disappointed
with the quality
of the Triceratops parts.

What am I going to do now, Daniel?

I am going
to order
another bottle of wine.

Let's put through a trunk-
call to Scotland Yard.

Maybe you should wait
a few
days and then see
what the neighbors are saying about us.

Naming the many
incidents that led
up to his downfall,

the crazy monkeys enjoyed
the feeling of
a Dentist's power.

Nothing could be done by then

—the suction
had begun—

the monkey and the Palomino horse broke

their necks
and lost
their brains.

Would you like to go to Swede heaven?

Nightingale Nervous Breakdown

As we were saying, since the growing
area around our faces is only available
on Saturn, it is not something
we should be immediately
concerned about.

It was a night with a level floor under it.

That monkey claw
must have had
some curse
attached to it. It tried to lift
your moonshine,
so strutting and blasé.

My 8-ball fortune is never
what I'd want—makes
me grumpy.

I've got a risin' on my ankle and it's got fever in it.
Don't look now but I'm molting
my standards.

We had an alpine den
going for awhile.

Have you ever gone outdoors
on a summer evening
and come upon a “fairy ring”
in the grass?

Can you see me
dancing on the orifice of the unknown
songs sack
trying not to fall
inside of it
again?

Major bird theme saved my ass.

Dad soothed
his feathers down.

It's always
fun to tongue
the environment.

It is difficult to use the claw
to introduce solution sequences
such as this one
because inside the head
are incredibly
powerful training tools.

That hermeneutics of suspicion
comb-over wasn't working for me anyway.

The Library of Congress
has good cheese.

According to the Bible,
it is my prerogative
to lie in it.

Spa Breakin' Flyby

I'm switching brand loyalties, ditching the boondocks of polemic
for an easy
joshing voice—

as a wine box
might weep, running out
of blood hoops and rings.

Gallo, with pride, became half
happy and broke
into itself.

We present mild body
and aroma
to you, sweet shopper.

The way you said “hi,”
it sounded like a “bath hi.”

We found a mysterious creature
on Main Street and made it
vanish with the Gamma Ray.

It's a strip of bacon, but my instruments
indicate
there's a tiny parallel
universe inside.

The largest and the heaviest
of the present-day reptiles
are to be found
among
the crocodiles.

And don't worry if your city takes time.

Charlie protects
experimental robot blue
bloods from the guillotine.

Stump Speech

The following are offered as suggestions
for further reading.

Rocco is iron fist.

I silently lectured myself.

New hairdo!

You will inspire me
and correct my spelling.

In my room
you laughed at dogs
chasing my car in the desert.

“Dear Guard,”

I wrote on my kite, “my kite
won’t fit through the door.”

Dear Environs,

I know you must be around
here somewhere.

I keep
 a dark suit
 that walks abroad
whenever
 I sleep.

 There isn't
 much time
 for an intervention
unless you have a toad
 enhancer at hand.

I've thrown away
 my rainbow
 of pills and now enjoy
 camp grub
with the appetite
 of any husky on the job.

What ho!
someone's not
resonating pharyngeally.

The bossman kicked us
out of the poetry
collective.

Paramour X,
you've gone blimping
again above the now gaunt plane
trees, tricked out in some new fall line.

I was listening to
my ice
and I fell
asleep.

I'm back
here in
the rumble seat.

The bygones went by
in a wobbly
sprint.

It's not the Shangri-la
you remember.

It's a tree.

Snake-wandering site.

There's nothing for the warthogs
to graze upon but feathers.

Rocco is running the entire length cutting
goalposts in half with his fist.

Prehistoric Bus Ride

Behold Bob!

our neighbor—the first man
to sell a dummy
to an unsuspecting shipmaster.

He's delighted when a half
dozen clocks begin
to wheeze
bong
or tinkle.

The early cave
men would scratch
pictures on the walls of their caves.

It is unlawful to remove
deface
cover or hide
those placards, you laggards.

You're on a bus
that doesn't go
through any drunk zones.

It's because we're driving a Mexican wonderland.

Who would win:

The Incredible Hulk vs.
The Amazing Spiderman?

William Carlos Williams
vs. Ford Madox Ford?

The union between
rodents and raptors strikes
a balance.

It's a tree.

Let's go to a skate
park in the middle
of nowhere and there
are mirrors.

Because they are extremely interesting animals, quite different in appearance
and behavior from those we normally keep for pleasure,

it is becoming
increasingly fashionable to keep
a Triceratops in a terrarium.

The folds in Caveman
Bob's arm are watching you.

The Final Haircut

Wildcatters are reopening
some mothballed wells.

Star Ball Contribution:

place on hard flat surface do not hold in hand light fuse and get away.

They burn the map

and boom!

out pop the horses.

Lots of miners
are getting severe
radiation damage.

The pantry was so cold
they were willing
to work hard.

For the cost
of a box
of orange juice
(the kind that
you push
your thumb through
the side
of the carton
to let the straw go in)
the barber shop can
be destroyed—then beaten
heads rolling
in the trunk.

Let's suppose a monster
accidentally
swallowed
those bombs
and hid under the ocean.

Make sure you have both hands free for the following procedure:

Now that you have selected the type of magma, select the amount of magma you desire—Small amount of runny magma. Large amount of runny magma.

More insect headlines

—looking back

he saw a brief corpse

scuttle—more insects

appeared—the dark

gloomy decapitators.

Painting starts

in the dark.

Maybe

a melancholic power

chord or two

would clear

the air.

Carny Casting Couch

I was down
the street humming

the dominant themes
of leisure and industry.

This next one's an all-skate
—EVERYBODY skate!

Watch out!
you've just stepped
on a Gemmed Puffball.

The clerk in the drug store
marked the bottle
“POISON”

It was the realization that repetition was the key to understanding,
that a loop was in
this heartache.

Nobody thought to lift the tone
arm to stop the back chat.

I understand you
are enjoying the stories up
until now.

We're holding closed seminars:
a food and sex seminar:

pecan flour-dusted soft-shell crab.

I'd take another rotifer if that's not too much to ask.

I need to get more of the light
on the window—lots of fingerprints on the window between the pipe
warehouse and the blood bricks.

Inside of the hot water pipes
an ear-shaped island?

Coco's amplifying
guarantee: he's not using real soap.

His high spirits are furry
swimmer's backs covered with
"the marshmallow."

Volcanic stones of foamy structure will float
that white substance, oceans
& prayer mountains carried him
away.

Horse slaughter bay, I trust
we are alone in being
but broken horsemen when walking
along the sea.

I get so focused on the rollercoaster I forget
all my pain.

The pink tiles the blue tiles.

Science Fair Drop-out

That does it!
you should
never
have let me come
here without my notes.

Sorry,
could not find
anything matching
gravity on the moon.

The Turbo is really “medium,” Chris.

I know
it’s impossible
to resist the plasma ball.

The tone went straight for the nose
and sullied
our name on
the circuit.

Here, this
balloon
will keep you busy
until you're
feeling
better.

How about
a toot off your
respirator?

I'd better jot
down the hard
facts as I come
to know them:

Damage resistant sandwich core filling
for highway joints—gasket pad under
carpeting—ankle wrap helmet liners,
based on rib vibrations.

Ant
builders
are smaller
than
ants.

Your life
is a private club
with unlimited
privileges that you have
joined—for life.

We're just vocalizing a little here,
humming
in for a close-up.

Dirty looks and the pee
key, planted by the rivers.

The habit of a plant is what the whole plant looks like.

Kicks From the House of Shock

Although I have lost
the picture of myself in the button
up the front checked
gingham dress and the pink
parasol, I cherish
a letter in which Lord
Byron wrote to my mother
in answer to an account of this performance.

Well,
I haven't seen my Frankenstein
since he escaped.

I snapped
his briefs so hard he went flying
into the buzz-bin.

I'm told my strength
is farm-boy strength.

Forget the Wolfman; he doesn't like me
—but what a helpful little fellow!

He relieves to a nice ovation.

Finishing his good job
as soon as he can see it—

an afternoon,
combing out his beard.

It was fun to carry the mummy
across the threshold.

We only had to pretend
that we'd taken the aphrodisiac...

and we all know what happened next.

First we had Famous
Dave's BBQ

cater a meal for us
and then we went off

to the go-cart tracks,
mini golf,
and batting cages,

employees didn't spend a dime,

man did we have a ball

(the go-cart
police hated us though)

and we finished

with Bossman's

71-inch

Emu Cake.

The barn door lights made lines
down the hill taking us
away at last
—in the pines as a last thing.

I don't think I'll ever get enough resolution on the barn.

Barn

The cow wives said
that all the children
died.

The cow husbands said
that all the cow children died,
except one.

Have you considered
that whoever is engineering these accidents
lives on another planet?

It was impossible
to mutter the runny
words of comfort
that sufficed
in the office.

Continuous Beach Boys loop didn't help.

Dislocated beauty smarts like nothing else.

Office hours kept
but no one came when the TV glow
betrayed you.

Petromania continues
at a fever pitch.

The Powerhouse's 12-second hit.

The best noise for the best
superstar entrance.

A cosmic reconnection,
but not being funny
about it, just a hope
that you are available
to play the songs
of my hourly collapse.

There are pirates hanging
around the pantry
and there are pirates
in the void
between planets.

The ghost looks startled and vanishes, but by that time,
the monkey is shrieking and the nervous ghost-buster
is exploding more and more powders.

About the Authors:

Not afraid of the dog. Often grow a beard, then shave it off. Once thought the Cold Killer was stalking me. Played lots with green plastic army men. The half-mile was always my race. Still dreaming of the raft of the superfriends. Took 24 hours to be born. Some jobs held: band saw operator, repo man, proofreader for rubber stamp company. Never joined the Kiss Army. Was subbed out halfway through the game because of cramping. Fell out of a tree without breaking a thing. Popped wheelies on my bike like Evel Knievel. Worked in the bookstall in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner. Busted chin at water slide park in Florida. Dancing on crabs was a sight to see. Member of Domino Rescue Squad. Loved "The Cow Restaurant" in Aurora Village. Sometimes dream I can hop really high and far. Stopped the Space Needle with my foot. Used to climb trees and hide when sad. Often wonder what the Snowman did that was so abominable. Whenever we face up to things as they are. Had to build a rocket to earn the scout badge. Swore off wide-leg jeans in the library. Cried when the petting zoo was closed. Been friends with a cat 17+ years. Used to be excited whenever the circus came to town. Have decided to "let myself go." Skull fighting hurt my arm. Was bit on the back of my hand by a horse. Got pretty good at spotting Beatle death clues. When I concentrated hard enough, thought I could see air molecules. Favorite graffiti: Vancouver, BC/Kootenay School of Writing/Men's Room/"I can see Creeley now that Olson's gone." First slow dance: "I Write the Songs." Love Starlight Mints. Commissioned the construction of a life-size Olmec head you could climb inside of. Almost crashed the red van down the mountainside. Grew up near the Gulf of Mexico. Born in Seattle, Washington. During the medical experiment, heard them say, "After a week the dosage can be stepped up." Tried to teach my dog to roar like a circus lion. Collects religious pamphlets as a hobby. Total knee blowout. Have the habit of running up the stairs. Poems are using every inch of marquee space to sucker in passersby, but those giant letters do not stress the title. Pretty good at the dodging part in dodge ball. Cannot forget the tale of the 1/2 Bigfoot 1/2 Dog creature. Afraid of the dog.

Crawlspace was originally written for presentation at the Leg to Stand On reading series curated by Doug Nufer in Seattle on September 15, 2005.

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CRAWLSPACE

IS A ONE-HUNDRED-TON CREATURE WITH A FIVE-HUNDRED-FOOT WINGSPAN. IT CAN BE QUITE DESTRUCTIVE. AND TO MAKE LIFE EVEN TOUGHER, A SECOND CRAWLSPACE APPEARS—IT SEEMS THAT MORE THAN ONE EGG HATCHED! FINALLY, THE CREATURES ARE CHASED BACK TO THEIR HIDDEN VOLCANO BARN. THE BARN IS BOMBED AND BECOMES ACTIVE AGAIN. THE SCORCHING LAVA DESTROYS BOTH CRAWLSPACES

...AT LEAST THIS TIME!

