

A Visceral Rip

By: Justin Miramontes

Casketed in the splinters of a funhouse mirror, the
Strobe lights skitter around like a
Tesla coil. A myriad of masked marauders
On a mission to split bodies into billions of one-celled
Organisms. Trapezing on the hooks of gallows,

They are the prettiest of sea slugs Dazzling harlots whose
Pigtails slither to and fro like bullied vipers.
You know the type, the scantily clad
Whores who look as if they are smuggling

Watermelons in their t-shirts. Midway masquerades
Of jesters swiftly slipping six-shooters from their
Scabbards, slugs erupting from the barrel
Only for them to swing back and rip through the shooter's
Head, like a boomerang. No wonder
Their temporal lobes are Swiss-cheesed, flesh

Bubbling as if simmered and boiled.
The crazed monkeys on my back that not even baby
Shakers could shake off, attempting to
Pull out my spine –
Fatality in the form of tigers, wolves, fire breathers, bears, and
Specters of yesteryear locusting every thought like cancer –

Oh my.

Uncle Mose

By: Joe Chandler

“Uncle Mose!”

And with all the innocence and purity a being can possess she turned her eyes to the ground and ran towards me. Still unsure what obstacles may appear, she ran watching only the ground... Her legs so short and body so small, during her long journey she may have forgot what it was she was running across the huge yard for. I was there standing, watching, and saying nothing... Only dreaming for her an endless prairie of wildflowers where she could run forever without anything ever getting in her way.

“I saw a snake! I saw a snake!”

As laborious and tiring as her journey had been, she allowed herself to be swept up in my arms more gracefully and natural than anyone of her steps.

“I saw a snake, Uncle Mose.”

From the day she was born, Caroline was always so nice to me and always for no reason that I could ever name. Even when she was real little and hardly able to talk, she would climb right up on my lap, look right at my face, and reach out and touch my nose...

“Nose’ nose.”

She thought it was funny I should have such a name and I just thought she was a sweet little kid.

She is still a sweet little kid, and now I looked into her eyes... Blue. Blue like the ocean. A calm blue ocean. I turned my head away from her and set her down.

“Follow me, Uncle Mose.”

She took my hand and led me back through the imagined prairie of wildflowers I had just wished for her.

“What’s wrong, Uncle Mose? Are you sad?”

I told her I was not sad but maybe she could show me how good she could jump on the trampoline.

“Do you want to jump?”

I did not want to jump but maybe I would just lie down and watch. She could get on the trampoline all by herself and didn’t need my help at all.

“I have a new game, Uncle Mose. I made it up, Happy Hippos! You just jump and bounce like a Happy Hippo... They’re my favorite animal. They just bounce and jump all day long and then they go swimming.”

I didn't know if that was true or not but she seemed to know more about it than me. It is nice to think it was true and I couldn't think of any reason why Happy Hippos shouldn't jump and bounce all day.

"What's your favorite animal, Uncle Mose?"

"I like birds. California Condors. They fly so high up in the sky no one can even see them... Why are you jumping like that?"

"Because I am. It's my favorite."

"I bet you could jump all day long."

"Yep. It's my favorite."

"Why don't you?"

"I do."

I watched her until my eyes closed. Neither sleeping nor awake, dreaming nor thinking. I just laid there staring into the kaleidoscope of my tightly shut eyes. The jumping stopped and I felt her little body crawl close and into the pocket of my arm, her small hand on my chest, and a kiss on my neck...

"Uncle Mose? Maybe next time we can play a game about your bird?"