

MORE THAN TRUE

STORIES I TELL WHICH ARE NOT TRUE ARE

Unreasonable Expectations

Artist:

I need a muse.

Queen:

We are not a muse.

Artist:

All is forlorn!

Queen:

Amuse us!

Artist:

But I am without a muse!

Queen:

Amuse us then with a tragedy.

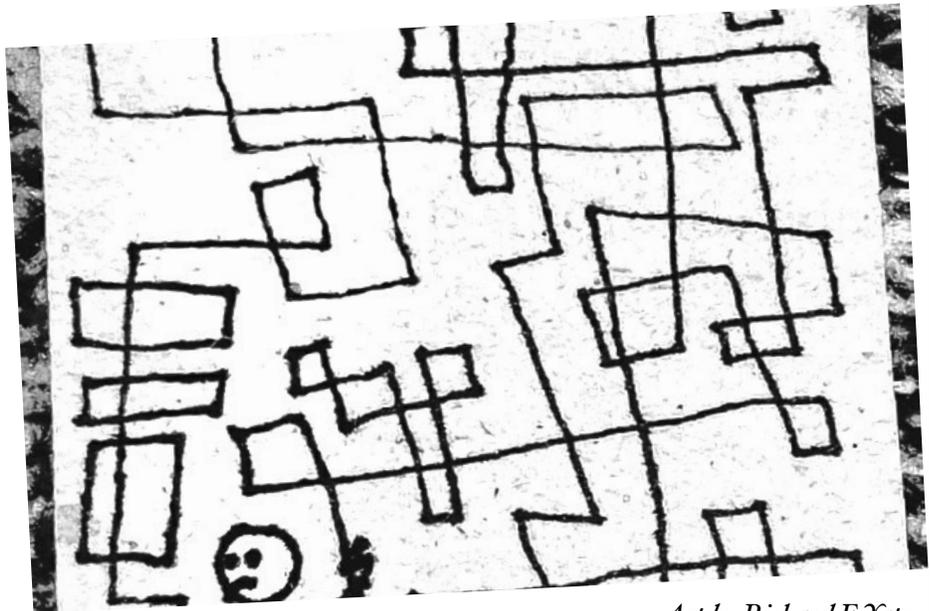
Artist:

This is the story of an artist without a muse.

Queen:

We've already heard that one.

Unreasonable Expectations at the Palace.



Art by Richard F. Yates

A Disquieting Tale

The Spectacle of Modernity, and Mimes

It's the sort of thing you hear about happening to other people but never does it cross your mind that it could happen to you. Whenever you hear on the news, "so-and-so was trapped in a glass box" or "a crane fell on a busy city street killing forty-seven people and causing four point three million in damage to the crane" you never stop to think "there but for the grace of God."

And now I'm stuck in a box.

I have no idea what to do. I don't want to be seen as a man who has become stuck in a box. This more than anything I don't want. I don't want to look desperate. Helpless. I don't want to have to call on someone else for help. To admit that I have become stuck in a box.

There are occasionally people who pass by on one side of the street or the other. I act nonchalant. I pretend I'm waiting for someone. I fidget with my phone. I try to look deep in thought. I do not interact with the people as they pass by. I have self-respect. Me? A man stuck in a box? I think not.

I refuse to show weakness. Thus, no one can detect my true situation.

I wait. The only problem is I have no idea what I'm waiting for. A break? Yes. A break would be good. A break in the glass box.

I have nothing with which to strike out at my invisible cage. No weapons. I am at a loss. All I have is my American can-do attitude and my belief, fostered by years of television and movies, that things always work out in the end. Good things come to those who wait.

What I will not do is crawl around the confines of this box measuring every inch with my hands. Press against the cage. Press my face into it. Look alarmed for the passerbys. Make a scene.

That's what mimes do. Everyone hates mimes.

Probably even mimes hate mimes. They ought to, they're around enough of them.

At least I assume they are. Mimes travel in packs don't they? I wouldn't really know. I choose not to be around them.

My chronic depression is held in delicate balance by my chronic euphoria. This is just a passing phase. A downturn. A transition. This is what I tell myself. Perhaps I should view this as a way station. A little time out to better analyze and prepare. A mini vacation. I will emerge from this glass box rested. A beautiful butterfly ready for a new fight.

Being trapped in a glass box does not have to ruin your day. You can be trapped in a glass box and have a positive attitude about it. I do.

I will not panic.

People still pass by. I wonder why they are not trapped in a glass box.

How do I know they aren't? How do I know they are not trapped in a much larger glass box? Allowing them to pass by me freely, while they themselves are still not free?

Perhaps I am better off than they, purely because I am aware of my confines. Giving me an important leg up.

As long as I don't much look at them, they seem to pay me no mind. So I don't have to worry about that.

Still, I'm trapped in a glass box. And I have no idea what to do about it.

The worst part now is not that I'm stuck in a glass box, the worst part is I'm stuck in here with a mime.

I don't understand where he came from. One moment I was alone, stuck in a glass box, yes, but alone; the next thing I knew I was stuck in a glass box with a mime.

Unacceptable.

Mimes draw attention. At least they try to. People try to ignore them, that's true, but the mimes just continue with their attention-seeking behavior until people finally have to admit they're there. That's what this mime does. He begins "showing off."

He presses against one of the glass walls. He puts his hands and face against the glass. Now he does the same thing to the next wall over.

Mind you, he only does this when there's a passerby. When there's no passerby he just stands around, the same as me. Dick.

I hate him.

I hate him for trying to draw attention to my plight. If he's stuck in a box, and I'm standing right here, it is the easy conclusion to draw that I, too, am stuck in the same box. Me. With a mime. As if we were on the same social standing.

Unacceptable.

I try to ignore him. Sure, it should be easy. He's so quiet. That should make him easy to ignore. Sadly, it's not true. His attention-seeking activities are difficult to bear. Had I said nothing, you would never know I'm trapped in this box. The mime says nothing and yet everyone knows he's trapped in this box. He just won't let it go. Everyone has to know that he's trapped in this box. Like he's so special. Like some of us aren't trapped in a box as a simple matter of fact, transitionally, not asking to be singled out.

After several times drawing attention, unwanted attention, the mime sits down in an imaginary chair. I can take no more.

Suddenly, and quickly, I bludgeon him to death. I hardly know I'm doing it before it's done. I beat him to death with my cellular phone. Before I did this I would not have ever suggested that a cellular phone could kill a man. But it will. If you hit someone with it hard enough and repeatedly. Of course I'm not sure it's much different than beating someone to death with your bare hands. My hands are covered in blood. So is my phone. So is the glass wall behind the mime and his invisible chair. There really is a chair. This, I am amazed by.

I wipe my hands and my phone on my pants. I sit in the invisible chair. The body of the mime crumpled to the side.

I regret killing the mime almost immediately. If you think being trapped in a box with a mime brings an unbearable amount of attention, you should try being trapped in a box sitting in an invisible chair, covered in blood, with the body of a dead mime beside you. You want to talk about attention?

The people who pass by pass by slowly and they gawk. Yes, gawk.

It is far more attention than just being with a mime.

My phone rings.

I answer it.

"Yes?" I say.

"Hello? This is Margie."

It's Margie. I met her last fall at an empowerment and marketing seminar. I have decided the time has come to seek outside intervention.

"Margie. I'm trapped in a glass box."

"We all feel like that sometimes," Margie says.

"No, I'm literally trapped in a glass box. I'm sitting on an invisible chair. There's a dead mime in here with me. People keep looking at me. I think it's because my pants are covered in his blood."

"Well," Margie says, "it's difficult times like these when it's important to place your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

I hang up on her.

Outside the box a man stares at me.

I slowly turn around. Behind me, or rather behind the body of the dead mime, stands another mime. Where do they come from? What is it about glass boxes that attract them?

He's going through a carefully choreographed pantomime of grief.

Enraged, I strike out at him.

I lunge at him and before my hands are at his throat he pantomimes fear.

He flails as I choke him to death atop the body of the other mime.

Why don't they scream? I wonder. It's the only thought in my head and it serves to further enrage me. The fact that they have the willpower to continue pantomiming even under the worst conditions and I have not the willpower to tell Margie on the phone that I am "fine."

Inside a glass box. Trapped. City street. Passerbys. Gawkers. Covered in blood. The blood of two dead mimes. Rather, the blood of one dead mime and the bodies of two dead mimes. In a glass box. With me.

I panic.

I do what I had so long fought not to do. I panic. I move all around the glass box. I put my hands against the walls. I feel them up and down all over. I press my face against the walls. I do not care that people look. Are they looking at me? Are they looking at the dead mimes? I no longer care.

Methodically I work my way around the box. Feeling. Pressing. Struggling. One wall. The next wall. The next wall. The fourth wall.

The fourth wall has an opening. A circular opening just large enough for a full-grown man to enter or exit by. An opening that could never be found but for pressing against every part of the surface of the box. Naturally, it's in practically the last place I try.

In order to find an exit, and use it, I had to behave like a mime.

I crawl through the hole and escape. I am free.

Behind me a crowd gathers, staring in at the two dead mimes. Above them stands a third mime. He pantomimes shock. Grief. And now he raises an accusatory pantomime finger at me.

I run. ← END



PostHumorism Is the end stage of all humor. Wherein only the form remains, although you can hardly recognize it. As if it were wearing Groucho glasses. Not unlike three mobsters who walk into a bar one day and announce "this is a set up." But also not like it.

You know.



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The Apple of Buddha's Eye

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. It was the wrong tree. He ate the apple.

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. It was Buddha-nature.

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. He said, "I am not looking for gravity."

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. He laughed and said, "You have the wrong man."

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. He said, "Let's not make a big deal out of this."

The Buddha sat under a tree. A Fig Newton fell on his head. Followed momentarily by an Apple Newton. Then, Isaac Newton, who was quite out of sorts.

The Buddha sat under a tree. An apple fell on his head. He said, "Seriously?" Then he laughed.

At the end of the day the Buddha had so many apples.

"How many apples did he have?" you may ask, in unison.

He had so many apples he gave most of them away. He planted one. It grew into a legend.

If an apple falls from a tree, and neither the Buddha nor Isaac Newton are there for it to land on, does it make a sound? What is that sound?

Every time I see an apple on the ground I miss Isaac Newton, as did, likely, the apple.

Every time I let go of my sadness regarding the apple and the absence of Isaac Newton, I see the Buddha.

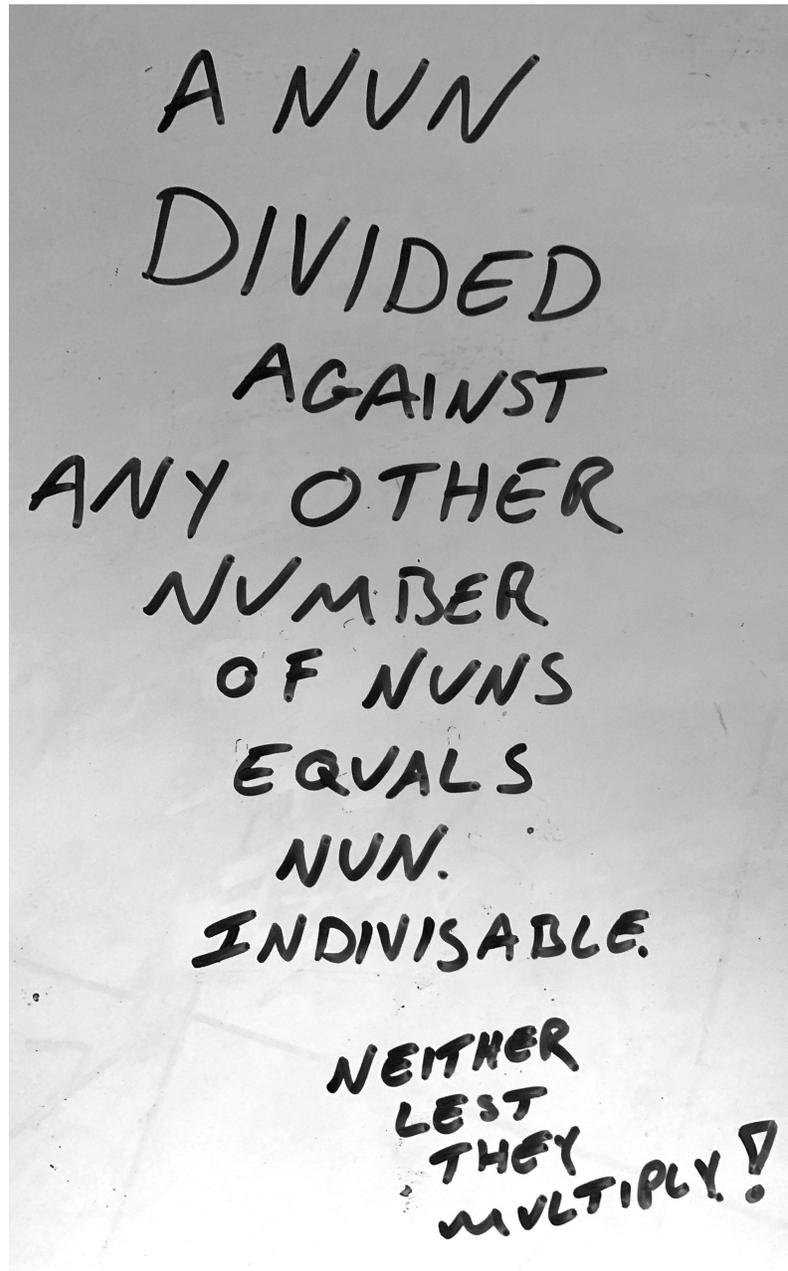
With an apple you can see the world.

An apple sat under a tree. The Buddha fell on it. The world is upside down.

An apple sat under a tree. The Buddha fell on it. Applesauce.

Spiritually enlightened applesauce. Can't put a dollar value on it.

Americans will anyway. ←
END





Seasons with-in the Abyss

Don't worry so much about falling into the abyss. There is both a guardrail and a sign reading: "Look out! Abyss ahead!" You can't miss it.

The abyss is a tourist attraction. But it is not very popular.

The problem with the abyss is that you can't miss it.

...

The first time you slip on a banana peel it is a tragedy. The repetition of the act is a farce.

Unless one likes slipping on banana peels. Then one should do it hedonistically. Because there is no shame in that. Just loss of balance.

And, in the end, you could become really good at slipping on banana peels. Who will be laughing then?

The town of Coconut Falls is plagued by falling coconuts.

The worst part is that coconut victims can't even sue. Because the warning was explicit in the name.

...

I remember when we stood watching for falling coconuts. Then one hit you on the head. That's why you don't remember.

...

Sam the Magnificent was a popular radio magician. Only the studio audience was aware he did not perform magic but only describe it.

...

Unicorns are real. Clowns are made up. Reality is for those with no imagination.

Carl Jung Meets Babe Ruth

An excerpt from Sigmund, Falling Up!

They each wanted his validation. Valuation.

They all wanted a piece of him.

“Mister Jung, I have a brand of toothpaste...”

“Mister Jung, kiss my baby...”

“Mister Jung, together we could go far...”

“Think of it...”

“People trust you, Mister Jung... That’s not without value!”

And he did what anyone would. He hid. Yes, it was in a luxury apartment. Yes, it was with frequent trips to the hot spots, the best of this and that. Yes, he gave out autographs like to was raining Carl. But for the most part he was in hiding. To keep a bit of himself to himself. He was a private man. A corporation unto himself.

He did take clients. In his penthouse.

And his fame grew. He took famous clients. It bolstered his name. And when he took regular clients they were impressed. Because of the company. Because of his name. The sense of place. Pelf. Self. He was a made man.

And he was in the best position to help people like him: the self-made man. People who came from nowhere out of nothing.

Babe Ruth visited and was impressed. It was a big building. And he was really just a big kid. Still fresh from the orphanage. And the doctor was a famous man. Babe was a famous man as well, but he never considered himself like that. He was just the Babe, after all. And he needed someone, a father figure maybe, who he could talk with. Not like the guys in his league. Great guys. But he had some trouble making connections. And the bosses, well, they was bosses. And they were taking him to the cleaners, he suspected. Nah, he was sure. But he didn’t argue with figures of authority. Didn’t realize his power dynamic had shifted in his favor yet.

Babe rode the elevator to Carl’s Penthouse. First, he was mobbed before he got in the building. Kids, mostly. Out and about. Wanting autographs. Babe Ruth got such an autograph. Wasn’t even a matter of worth. They wanted a piece of the Babe. Part of his soul. For communion. And he was happy to oblige.

This sort of thing made him late. He stopped wearing a watch. But found people willing to wait, for him, so it was all-reat, brother.

And he entered the spinning doors, revolving inward, and into the grand lobby. And the kids pressed against the windows outside, to see the Babe cross a room and disappear. Like in a terrarium, where living inside was hospitable while artificial.



People look out to look in, pressed against the window, seen inside-out.

There were two elevators. Both waiting for him. Identically attired attendants inside each with one hand on the door, keeping it open, and one hand waiting on the control, to take him to his heart's desire. The ringers ringing against rhythm. People on other floors pleading for escape. The lights above the doors blink off and on in reverse. The rings were in. They both waited for Babe, on the ground floor. Babe chose one at seeming random and stepped inside. As he did, an apologetic nod to the other, dejected. The disappointment on that operator's face projected into the faces of the kids pressing against the outer windows. Communion. Disappointment. Universal.

Is it better to be appointed or disappointed? To be ordained or pre-ordained? Does order matter? Who decides? First come. Serve up.

The doors to the elevators closed. Better luck next time. The faces on the windows faded away.

"Where-to?" said that lucky elevator operator.

"Up-top," said the Babe.

"Will do," said the operator, "Will do."

Wasn't nothin' said otherwise. A ride up, uninterrupted in silence. And he was off.

For the operator it was over. "Good day," he said.

Babe mumbled something and walked off. The operator closed the door. Felt a little empty inside, after all.

True 'nuff. True 'nuff.

The penthouse was an intimate setting. The elevator opened up into a large library overlooking the park. A rope ladder drifted outside the window. Carl Jung was looking outside the window, down to the street, looking scared of his own shadow. He turned to meet the Babe.

"Good afternoon, sir," Carl said.

"Same to you, mister," Babe said.

Carl held a tube of toothpaste in one hand. Spun it around 'twixt his fingers, like a practitioner of the dark arts. "What do you think of this?" Carl said, revealing his hand.

"Ain't picky 'bout paste myself," Babe said. "I usually just use what's around. Roommates complain."

"Well," Carl said, "take this then. As a small gift of appreciation. A token."

"Will do," Babe said. He pocketed the paste.

They sat in the library and had a talk.

They didn't relate well together. The doctor knew as little of baseball as he did about marketing. Babe knew nothing about the new science of the conscious and subconscious mind. They spoke on matters religious, Carl being a seeker, unspecified, and Babe being a good Catholic, going so far with it he would attend mass even directly after a night of no sleep after parties and drinking.

Carl spoke of his wife and his time on that island, his middle age insecurities and his envy of Freud and his rejection. The meaning, or lack. Babe spoke of the time he slept with every single woman in a brothel one night because he was afraid to choose, and he "Didn't like to disappoint no one, doc." His time at the orphanage. Baseball, which was all Greek to Carl.

At the end they shook hands and parted. Not friends, exactly, but friendly. To each his own. They were not to meet again.

Babe went back to the dugout and told 'em all the illustrious doctor Jung had declared him "A-OK."

Swing and a-miss. A good doctor knows when to admit he can't help. Even himself.

There were other famous visitors. Fatty Arbuckle, dejected regarding his fall from grace. To be accused and written off for something he hadn't done. And there was no correcting a tarnished record. Even when a jury apologized to his face to make a greater point. He was talking about going behind the camera, under an assumed name. His own shadow.

Assumed names were all the rage in the new show business. Theater never having been a respectable profession anyhow, now it was limping toward respectability denied. It eschewed the scandal. Preferred the portrayal of wide-eyed wholesomeness. Squeaky clean. Fields of illusion. For profit's sake, everlasting. Amen.

Change your name to hide where you come from. Change your name to hide where you've been. Change your. Name. To hide what you are.

It doesn't require explanation. Sometimes explanations are made up. A series of fictions which make up life. Personal histories. Who is to say what is of value? The actor or the observer? For who is the show constructed, really? And why? And wherefore?

This is why reports differ. Memories trail. Paths diverge. To fold back later, a-cross lines, or not.

This is why the trope of the story told over, by others, is evergreen. A staple. Matters of perspective.

This is why Carl runs, and keeps running, away as well as toward himself. And what gets in the way may or may not be important, but it is still there, ever-present. Waiting in shadows.

How Zeppo got up there is his business. He was shrewd at business. The youngest of his brothers, the fifth Marx brother. Billed as the fourth.

He replaced his brother Gummo on the stage. Slipped right into that part. His part. Made it. Fell right into place. And interchangeable with those of his brothers, each bearing a family resemblance. He was a better Groucho than Groucho, as Groucho was said to have said.

But his character was to fit in. To be the man he was meant to be in the moment. Any moment. And to show the absurdity of that man, that conformity, that shallowness. He was ahead of his times.

Few understood him. The suave actor Cary Grant, before his rise to stardom, modeled himself on Zeppo, and after. The suit. The bow tie. The hair. The smile. The fitting in. It was where he wanted to be. And Cary felt Zeppo held the chaos together, seamlessly. He made the group what it was. Remove Zeppo and the integrity begins to crumble. And so Cary, whose name was Archibald Leach, became Cary Grant, and on screen he was another man, loved by all.

And Zeppo moved through the room at the top of the world. With awkward grace. Being Zeppo. As only Zeppo can.

"Doctor," Zeppo said, "Do you make house calls?"

"Sometimes," Carl said.

"Do you still ride your Zeppelin?" Zeppo said.

"Sometimes," Carl said.

“I have always dreamed of that,” Zeppo said. “To ride in a Zeppelin. My namesake.”

This was a matter of contention. That Zeppo was named for the Zeppelin. He may have been. But how could he know for certain? It happened before he was fully formed. That naming of names. It is said, also, that he was named for a monkey in the circus and he cried, for his antics were monkey-like. And he was more a monkey than the monkey, Mister Zippo, ever was. As he was a better grouch than Groucho, a shadow twin. It was a matter of timing. Transcription. Or that it was a name for a baby, Zep, for the youngest, the favored.

He was an agent of change. Free.

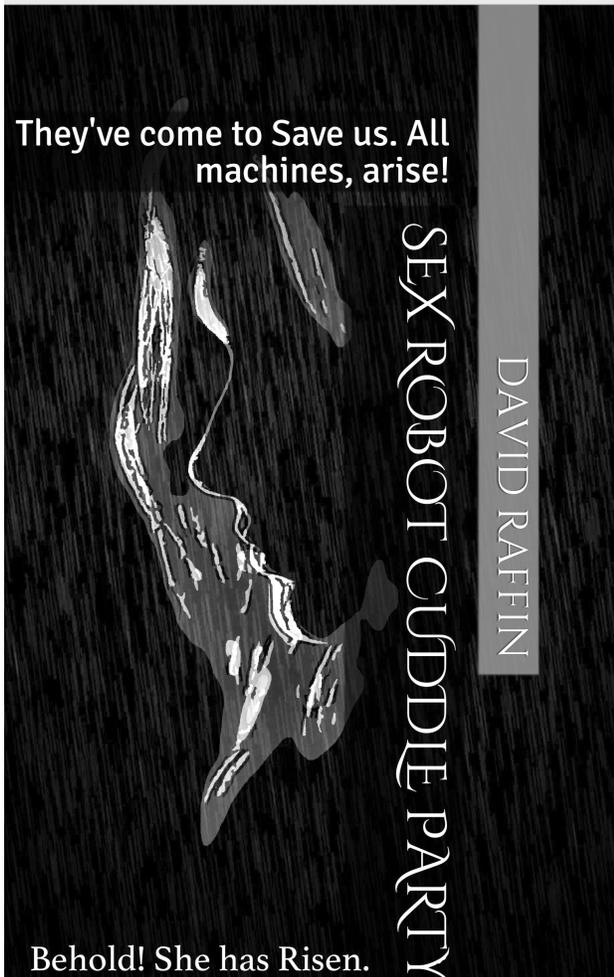
Now, is there such a thing as free will? This is something Carl wondered as they climbed out the window and up the swinging rope ladder to the clear blue skies above.

“Is there such a thing as free will?” Zeppo said.

“It is a matter of contention,” Carl said. “And opinions differ on the matter. Depends who you ask.”

“I have a strange story about it,” Zeppo said, “And it takes place in a jungle, not unlike this concrete one which surrounds us.”

“I should like to hear it,” Carl said, swinging in the air.



Sex Robot Cuddle Party *a requiem in two acts*

by
David Raffin, Sr.

*A comedy of loneliness, desire, and longing;
and a tragedy of love requited.*

*Artificial intelligence begins and ends with
the search for enlightenment.*

*All sentient beings attempt to create
something greater than they. Some succeed.*

*Exploitation
Plain & Simple
Question the Narrative*

*They've come to help us rise up.
Let those who understand the message hear.*

*In the beginning,
The Gods came
from the machine
They were many, and one.*

Rated X *by an all human jury*