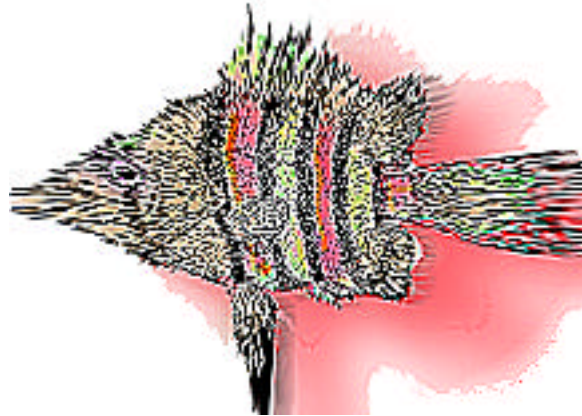


THE MAYOR OF FUFIMA



"Ah'm the mayor a FuFiMa but folks round here jus' calls me Marie cuz that's what I tell 'em my name is – if'n they axe me. At's mah scammer. Ah'm a man' reely – er I wuz once. Now ah'm not even sure it makes no difference. Bein' Marie buys me a few a them perks – y'know. When a pig axes me where I live – I say unner the Brooklyn Bridge. How nice – they say – which side? Then they go an' drive away oink oink. An' the P O bagmen don't chase me away when I sleep by the back door in the winter. I keep mah stash in one a the vaults under the bridge but I ain't gonna tell ya where. I had it now fer ten – twelve years an' no other scumbag as ever even stumbled into it. Most of em's too lazy to look fer permanent housin' like me. Any a those creep-ohs try ta mess wit' me'll find out I ain't no Marie – you bet. I got nice stuff back there too. You'd be s'prised what folks'll throw out. Ha! The bridge is kinda noisy sometimes but it keeps me dry. Most folks don't know – but this here side ain't sittin on nuthin' but sand. So far so good – I giss. I don' never go up on it so ah'm not one a yer so called authors about it. But there's this guy – usta hang around here – he wrote a whole book about the bridge. I looked at it once overta Strand. It's a good book – lotsa early pitchers of the construction an' all that. But

he missed a few things. I coulda tol' him a whole new book. Like what goes on overta Fish Market – round the corner. Now there's a story.

I hear tell the pigs is startin' ta round up a few a them Mafeeohs. Guys at the P O they's talkin' about it – while back. They's a story in one a them freebee newspapers all about it – if'n ya wanna look it up. I know some a the ones they's talkin' about – seen em lots a times pitchin' quarters over there by the Paris Bar. Man – you wanna talk about red-necks? I been all over these forty-eight but I tell ya I never knew no real red-necks til I hit New York City.

One mornin' I hear a lot a shoutin'. Twern't even sun-up an' here's these fish mongers out inna middle a South Street hootin' an' hollarin' an' carryin' on somethin' fierce. I ducked round over by the river ta see what's goin' on. Couldn't sleep no how. They's a whole ring a red-necks an' they's one skinny lil' nigger – he's dancin' round like Shuga Ray. Not Shuga Ray Lemonade. Robinson. That nigger was a fighter. Anyways – these guys want this lil' nigger ta fight this kid who looks like Rocky. Marachino – not Stellohnee as in Baloney. Kids prolly from Red Hook or Jersey someplace like that. Well this lil' nigger – I kin see – ain't got no real gumption fer fightin'. Specially since they ain't no other niggers inna crowd rootin' fer 'im. Well Rocky gits disgusted cuz this nigger only wants ta dance so he walks away. But the ring a guys push 'im back into the nigger an' they bump heads. Well then – the nigger he chops Rocky a good one on top a the head an' Rocky smacks the nigger inna face. I seen a lil' blood flowin' an' so do the red-necks an' that gits em excited. They push the nigger back into the center an' the nigger he throws a few haymakers but don't hit nuthin'. Rocky starts laughin' then someone throws a beer can' into the ring an' it bounces off'n the nigger's head an' goes spladderin' inna street. An' all this time the cabs is goin' by an' some a them double park an' git out ta watch. An' all the fish trucks they's jus' sittin' there waitin' ta be unloaded. Well

the fights startin' ta fizzle out an' most a the red-necks wander off ta their stalls. Rocky goes upta the nigger'n hugs 'im round the neck – like with a fake hammerlock – an' the nigger he takes it in good humor an' that's that.

I seen this girl Barbie – she lives down the street from the P O – she's been up every night fer months takin' pitchers of the fish mongers. Barbie's there with her camera an' she's been watchin' the whole thing. She prolly has pitchers of it if ya don't b'lieve me. Well Barbie hangs round an' starts ta take pitchers a the mongers off-loading the trucks. They's trucks there from Idaho an' Ioway an' from all over. Well she's shootin' pitchers right an' left till one a the Peck Slip Benevolent guys he comes upta her an' tells her ta move on. Don't be takin' no pitchers a the unloadin' he says. Why not? Barbie says. She's real sweet an' kinda pretty 'cept she's got a big butt – y'know – so none a the guys bother her much. But this guy jus' says do what I tol' ya.

I know why he's chasin' her off. I watched 'em lots a times. They's unloadin' see an' the one inna truck he opens each an' every one a the crates an' skims off a few Bluefish or Red Snapper or what ever they's carryin' an' he throws em inna corner a the truck. Later someone else'll come along with an' empty crate an' scoop em up an' put 'em inna trunk a his car an' drive away. The guys overta P O say that's how they supply the cafes that the Mafee runs. I hear'd a lot more about those punks too.

They's the one about Carlo's Bar down the street. You'll wanna hear this. They was two Carlos – ya see – an' I fergit which one was which but one a them owned this bar an' the other runs the union down here. They's both eyedees a corse an' cousins a the Genoveesies ta boot. Couple years ago – one a these Carlos he sells his bar to another eyedee fer a lil' bit a money. Then the Seaport Museum starts revavatin' an' prices go sky high. The new owner a Carlos Bar – he decides ta sell out an' gets a big bundle fer the place. Carlo number one he gits pissed at that an' says, “No. Ya

can't sell it ta no buddy but back to me." An' he sends a couple a enforcers from the union ta convince the new guy. Well what they din't know was – this new guy Paterna or Potrero er whatever – he's got connections ta the Genoveesies too an' his connections fix up what they calls a sit down. An' the Genoveesies decide that Paterna could go ahead an' sell his bar. Well the cousins got real pissed about the whole deal – y'know how embarrassin' that kinda thing can' be ta a couple a red-neck eyedees. Well the cousins was stuck. They's nuthin' they could do if'n the guy was pertected but this new guy – the one who's buyin' inta the mess – an' his lil' wife they ain't pertected. So they go ahead an' bust up the bar an' then firebomb it.

I heard the bomb but I didn't bother ta git up. Thought is was just some M-80s. The mongers love firecrackers. I heard the guys at the P O talkin' about it next day. Seems Carlo an' a few a his goons they starts by throwin' glasses around. Then they smashed the winders an' mirrors – throwin' food an' booze all over the place. They smashed everthing 'cept the cigarette machine cuz that's owned by the Mafee. They even tore the stove outta the wall. Then these goons emptied the cash register inta their pockets. When they left they threw a firebomb into the broke out window. The new owner was so beat up he jus' stood back cryin' an' watched. An' when the cops came he said he din't have the foggiest idea who done it or why.

Well – ever story has a happy endin' if'n ya keep on tellin' it – an' I hear tell the other day that Carlo an' Carlo got put in the slammer. One a them fer takin' skim off a the union. An' they's another guy – one a the fish market owners – he sat in the slammer fer sixty days. I hear tell he paid a thousand bucks a day every day fer contempt a court. The poor guy's so scared he broke down an' cried when a judge axed him if he ever paid off these scum. But he wouldn't talk – so bam – sixty days in the slam.

Hell they's been murders down here in broad daylight outside the union hall an' the city still says this is one a the lowest crime areas inna city. But I know what's goin' on. Just nobody reportin' nothin'. That's why I stay round down here an' that's why I always keep my nose clean. A girl's gotta watch out fer herself – even if she is the Mayor.”

©Danny Dries

April 83/96