



## EAT THE CRUST

### The Breadline Issue of BTD

November 2009

John Dorsey



John Dorsey's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* – the debut publication from Beat the Dust Press:

- P:** Nature - Fake Wood Trim by Emmet Swimming
- R:** Adrift - One is the Loneliest Number by Three Dog Night
- O:** Face - Pretty One by Roy Orbison
- T:** Happy - Shiny Happy People by R.E.M
- E:** Vagrant - Like A Rolling Stone by Bob Dylan
- S:** Sea - Brandy by Looking Glass
- T:** Nothing - Losers by Dave Van Ronk

#### **training wheels**

i can remember the first  
time i ever saw  
my father cry it  
was a warm summer day  
in 1986 he'd just found out  
his best friend died  
having survived vietnam only  
to be killed in  
a motorcycle accident at  
the age of 31  
a year younger than

i am now that was  
the summer the training  
wheels were supposed to  
come off my first bike

i watched my dad  
lock his harley in  
my grandmother's shed left to  
rust away to nothing  
but memory and bone  
he locked my bike up too  
supposedly for safe keeping  
but i never saw  
it again after that

i watched him go in superman  
and come out human a pimply  
faced teenager who had  
once signed on the  
dotted line for jungle warfare  
without giving it a second thought  
i watched as he tried to  
hold back tears as  
he sent me to go  
pick dead flowers out of the yard

the 4th of july had  
come early that year  
when the space shuttle challenger  
exploded into a million  
little pieces of brilliant  
light like a chernobyl sunset

that was the summer  
riding a bicycle stopped  
being a symbol of independence

i still take the  
bus and carry my  
father's army issue duffel  
everywhere i go

i remember my dad's  
first car was a  
1963 ford galaxy  
that he bought for 15 bucks  
with a childhood friend  
and how he smiled  
like a kid thinking  
about a joyride when  
he talked about the dents  
and rust like they  
were the first and

last stars he ever saw in the sky

### **invisible dragons**

the men in my  
family have always been  
mill workers cement contractors  
auto mechanics and war heroes  
hell's angels with dirt under their fingernails

when i was a  
kid my father cleaned  
carpets after the steel  
mills went down after  
being forced out of  
the army due to high blood  
pressure he fixed cars  
and worked the graveyard  
shift doing maintenance work  
at a dog food  
warehouse just to get by

my grandfather worked 16hr  
days in a pittsburgh  
boiler room with a  
cot sitting in the  
corner sometimes he wouldn't  
even go home

my uncles poured the  
foundations of houses they  
couldn't ever afford to  
live in and got  
drunk every night

on the weekends  
they smoked weed rode  
harleys and drank  
iron city beer and  
stoney's by the keg

my little brother and  
i have never really  
fit in him wrapping  
meat part-time at a local  
grocery store sleeping on  
my parents couch and  
doing battle with depression  
every day drunkenly fucking  
middle aged women from  
the church down the street

while i write poems just to  
keep my head together

our demons have always  
been like uncles like fathers and  
their fathers before them  
they laugh in the rain  
tell war stories to  
invisible dragons and pin medals  
on the shadows of stronger men

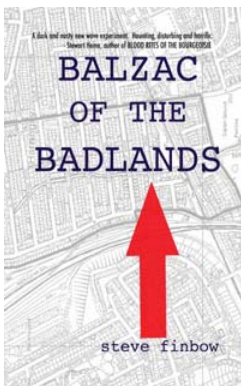
### **demons in the sandbox**

there are demons in the sandbox of love  
a silent boy catches doves with a butterfly net  
he runs his fingers along the outline  
of his hand print in the sand

he says there are demons in the sandbox of the mind  
tiny sea monsters  
singing a loud silence  
into the music box of the heart  
he says there are demons  
pounding nails into the ocean floor

breaking his silence  
into a million little pieces of truth

### Steve Finbow



Steve Finbow's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* :

- P:** Nature - Wood Beez by Scritti Politti
- R:** Adrift - On Some Faraway Beach by Brian Eno
- O:** Face - Gangsters by The Specials
- T:** Happy - Use Somebody by Kings of Leon
- E:** Vagrant - Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet by Gavin Bryars & Tom Waits
- S:** Sea - Endless Sleep by Jody Reynolds
- T:** Nothing - Kill Your Idols by Sonic Youth

Extract from Steve Finbow's new novel, **balzac of the badlands**

'Cheers, Max,' I say as he slides a plate of bacon, eggs, sausages, black pudding, and two slices of buttered toast onto the Formica table. The Mermaid would have a fit. Not the fry-up – that's fine. It's the bread. Now, I've got to get this lot down my neck before she comes back with the info. Poor Mrs. Beckford. What a few days. I'll give H a bell in a minute. Ozan reckons he doesn't know anything about the Kurds in the Saab. I reckon he does. He wouldn't grass 'em up. Need to have another word in his conch-like. Now, let's think on this while I dig into this nice juicy – and none too pink – rasher of bacon.

The café is full of locals. Shift workers. Railwaymen. The unemployed. The steam from the coffee machine hangs in the air above our heads like the London sky outside. I can smell leatherette, dried ketchup, mustard and the sweet whiff of marijuana. I take out my notebook as I slip a tricky piece of egg yolk and the butt of a sausage into my mouth, my head turned sideways so I can eat and read at the same time. Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May, SB goes missing. Last seen lunchtime 2pm, Palmers Green, getting into black Saab with three guys, look like Kurds. Friends, relatives, boyfriend – nothing. Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May, Mr. Beckford goes missing. Last seen morning, 6 a.m., home Muswell Hill. Wife, employees, friends – nothing. A piece of black pudding crumbles as I fork it, a large fatty piece falls into my second egg yolk turning it a purpley orange. Now it looks like an embryo. Toss! I cut round it, excising as much of the yolk as possible, spear a slither of bacon and a thumb end of sausage, so on my fork I have what looks like a small kebab of English breakfast stuff. I then sink that into a triangle of toast, lift it to my mouth. I reckon it's all connected. Not the food, I mean, the disappearances and the stomach pumps. So, H can take his Sherlock quip and stuff it up his bleeding bulbocavernosus, or whatever he'd call it.

I'm still not sure how they connect but they do. I can feel it. Right, last bit of bacon, scrape it through the egg snot, saved the butteriest piece of toast until last, and job done. JD. Max is on it like a crow on a drop-dead wood pigeon.

What's H up to? My mobile rings.

'Just about to call you.'

'-----'

'Really? I thought as much.'

'-----'

'Look. Mrs. Beckford's been sent a note.'

'-----'

'Not sure. The Mermaid's gone to pick it up. There's a photo. She should be back any minute.'

'-----'

'No. You stay there. Keep an eye out. I've got a feeling we may have to take a look inside.'

'-----'

'Yeah, I will. Soon as. And, H?'

'-----'

'Not a drop. Not until later.'

'-----'

'And you.'

As I put the phone down, The Mermaid comes in, wrinkles her nose at the smell and the customers, and hands me an A4 envelope. I peer inside.

'Want a coffee?'

'No. The poor woman is in a terrible state. Her sister let me in. Mrs. Beckford was curled up on the sofa with her dog. Could hardly speak.'

'Wh...'

'Ah! Not the dog. You know who I mean. This is the original. The envelope's in there as well.'

I pull out the envelope. Me being melodramatic, I expect the address to be made out of letters cut from magazines and newspapers. But it isn't. In fact, it isn't addressed at all. It just says, Mrs. Beckford. Bit familiar for your average kidnapper. The envelope – run-of-the-mill, usual stationery fodder, colour of wet sand, self-adhesive, A4. 'Mrs. Beckford' written in black ink. Looks like felt pen – medium tip. The B has a little tail slanting downward and dislocated from the bottom, and the middle bar doesn't quite reach the spine. Fancy. The M and r are pretty standard but the s also has that little tail-like flourish at the bottom. Female? I take out the letter. Again A4 paper. Ruled with a margin. Four holes. Lined. Red line at top. Gum at the side. Obviously from one of those refill pads. Ryman's probably. Not folded. Writing on one side. It reads: *Mrs. Beckford. We have your husband. Do not go to the police. Where is your daughter? We will call.* I hold the paper up to the light to see if I can see any evidence of an imprint. Nothing.

'Anything?' asks The Mermaid.

'Nah. Not a sausage,' I say, and immediately feel guilty.

'What is it?'

'Nothing. I had a sugar low earlier. Still feel a bit rough.'

'What about the photo?'

'You ready?' I say, holding the edge of the photo just above the flap of the envelope like it's the fucking Oscars or something.

'Yes. I'm not promising anything. It doesn't always work. If it did, my life would be a nightmare.'

'You said it was the other day.'

'No, I said YOU were a nightmare. Come on. Get on with it.'

I pull out the photo and look at it before placing it in front of The Mermaid. And when I see it, I'm really not sure I want to show it to her. No wonder Mrs. Beckford's in a state. It's a photograph of Mr. Beckford. He's naked except for his underpants, M&S by the looks of it.

### Ford Dagenham



Ford Dagenham's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* :

**P:** Nature - Sehr Kosmisch by Harmonia  
**R:** Adrift - Solitaire by Gallon Drunk  
**O:** Face - Eyes Without A Face by Billy Idol  
**T:** Happy - Jackie by Scott Walker  
**E:** Vagrant - Wharf Rat by The Grateful Dead  
**S:** Sea - Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay by Otis Redding  
**T:** Nothing - Oh, Sweet Nuthin' by The Velvet Underground

### **werdtalking with ford dagenham**

#### *part 1: why ford doesn't write*

Held and hugged by myriad and unremarkable fears  
 on life's brown sofa like a sad bear,  
 he lurks on the cusp of bad nap naps.  
 In a safe stale funk  
 he doesn't write.

Myriad and unremarkable fears;  
 scared his words will be Rubbish Nothing  
 scared his words will be Rubbish Everything  
 (the evening will end with him sobbing into his balls like a gay baby)  
 Scared his words will be bland, defeated, without spunk or zest.  
 Scared he will Stop and decide No More.  
 Scared he will find it difficult and boring.  
 Scared of Living.  
 Scared of Not.  
 Paralysed by choice he sits between nothing and a vacuum.  
 Comfy and still.

The hard work between blind inspirations is too much like admin.

The hard work of *exposing* his work is too much like admin.

But he *does have* blind inspiration, when the night has landed black and late and booze stains his vest.

But it's daunting, writing, raw creation. It's daunting.  
Fill the abyss. Just Me? Little Ford? Fill the abyss? Daunting.

Before writing he would rather do  
Anything Else,  
Anything Else at all,  
Anything in creation but fill the abyss.

That's why Ford doesn't.

*part 2: what happens when ford does write*

So, writing.  
First Ford waits for night.  
Night; the answer to all the day's questions.  
And there is scotch to loosen his balls into spoilt yells and ill gasps.  
Music plays on the player.

His mind is hijacked quicksilver.  
He builds pomes like lego.  
Tears them down, slaps them around.

Ford is real now, 3D. Ford is a fucking person,  
an angular god, creating . . .  
it's like all the washing up and the dust and the dead moths aren't there at all.  
He is Fully Occupied, Alone.  
Distracted from the Big Doom.  
Involved in something, Absorbed by something.  
Dumping gold from a happy arse.  
Experiencing the Frenchgasm.  
Ford is Functioning Mush before his fucking murder.

He is a dictionary vomiting all its small words.  
Noting the refuse of the day, of other days, of all the nights.  
Prettying up the side product of a life.  
Painting glitter on lard.

Ford tries to avoid cliché and fat.  
Or embarrassingly he embraces them with drunken needy arms.

He writes from the heart of his balls and the balls of his heart.  
Filling the abyss a little the best he can  
when a workday bleeds out a sudden biro

he writes the bare bones down and throws on the wild wild flowers. They catch on twigs and thorns.

*And after* writing  
then he can find Nothing Else appealing,  
Nothing at all.  
Nothing in creation is appealing

But drinking scotch and reading his own words over and over like a ruined chimp wanking in a cage.

*part 3: why ford writes*

His reports are filed in dust.

Only leaked out in motivation born of brief sobriety.  
A sobriety born of panic. Panic born of sobriety.

He writes because his balls tell him to  
because he can't Earn,  
can't Career,  
can't Socialise,  
can't Entrepreneur,  
can't Sport,  
is empty, default.

And because he has to. He writes because he has to.

On a good day his head is full of clear sentences.  
Streaming like the falling green rain of the Matrix.

But it's not *those* sentences that come out alone in the evening, those words fade as the front door slams on the day.

Ford spills a fatter world than the bare bones he hopes for and less pretty flowers than those he dreamed he could say.  
Everything is darker than the daylight thoughts he had.

Ford writes because he has before.  
He must chase the perfect pome like a white whale.

Ford writes because he's told people he does.  
He has claimed the weird mystery.

He knows when he sits out in the baby dusk  
with the mini beasts and the exiled moon  
that he should be writing.  
He should but the air smells great out there.

Writing is a fundamental form of communication  
available to all.  
But it's the glamour and destruction, the romance

that makes Ford write while no one is looking.  
He must have his say.

### David Blaine



David Blaine's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* :

- P:** Nature - Mr Blue Sky by Electric Light Orchestra
- R:** Adrift - Cast Your Fate to the Wind by Vince Giraldi
- O:** Face - So Far Away by Carole King
- T:** Happy - Beautiful Day by U2
- E:** Vagrant - Better Days by Citizen King
- S:** Sea - Ocean Pearl by 5440
- T:** Nothing - Never Ever by All Saints

### **asshole's pantoum**

*An unauthorized composition of Dick Cheney by David Blaine.*

"What we are going to do is aggressively go after Mr. bin Laden;  
I don't think it would be that tough a fight.  
We're moving in the right direction.  
You know, I don't have the street address.

I don't think it would be that tough a fight;  
Saddam Hussein's bottled up at this point.  
You know, I don't have the street address.  
It will go relatively quickly...weeks rather than months.

Saddam Hussein's bottled up at this point;  
my belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators.  
It will go relatively quickly...weeks rather than months.  
I would chalk that one up as a miscalculation.

My belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators.  
We believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons.  
I would chalk that one up as a miscalculation.  
Well, you can't anticipate everything.

We believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons.  
 It must have something to do with his background, his upbringing.  
 Well, you can't anticipate everything;  
 I did misspeak...we never had any evidence that he has acquired a nuclear weapon.

It must have something to do with his background, his upbringing.  
 We now have irrefutable evidence.  
 I did misspeak...we never had any evidence that he has acquired a nuclear weapon.  
 I'm not a direct party to it.

We now have irrefutable evidence.  
 What we are going to do is aggressively go after Mr. bin Laden.  
 I'm not a direct party to it.  
 We're moving in the right direction."

*All quotes recounted in The New York Observer, April 2, 2007*

### **history's child**

*"I lie in order to tell a more significant truth." - John Cheever*

This is a poem about stories,  
 the stories we've been told  
 and the stories we tell.

This is a poem about the difference  
 between fact and truth.

Fact is brutal.  
 Fact is a bare two hundred watt bulb  
 glaring in your face.

Fact is a caustic substance  
 that you carry about  
 in a brown glass bottle  
 with the stopper firmly fixed.

Fact tells a man  
 he's fat, he's bald  
 and, no,  
 as a matter of fact,  
 it wasn't good for her, too.

Fact tells a woman  
 that her makeup's no substitute  
 for absent beauty  
 and she has the sharp wit  
 and captivating personality  
 of a trout.

Fact drives people  
to climb over the guardrails  
of tall bridges  
and leap to their deaths  
in a river of frustration.

Outside of the criminal courtroom  
fact has no place  
in polite society.

But truth,  
truth is palatable.

Truth is fact with the corners rounded off  
and the edges softened.

A poet once wrote,  
*Truth is history's child.*

But history is just a story,  
made up by the victors,  
after the vanquished slink off  
to their eternal anonymity.

Do you really suppose your father  
and all your uncles  
were always such wise,  
polite, successful men?  
And you,  
you're the first male  
in the family line  
to get kicked out of school  
knock up his girlfriend  
or do jail time  
for joyriding a stolen car?

Those may be the facts,  
but after you tell your story  
the truth can place you right beside  
all those other wise, polite, successful men,  
just like dad.

Fact is a black and white Polaroid:  
you, a sheep, pants around your ankles.

Fuck fact,  
tell me your story.

**stray cat**

She's got the package  
 says her name is Willow  
 and if I can buy her some candy  
 she can give me some pussy.

What clothes she's got on  
 suggest she's eighteen  
 but her teeth and hands  
 say otherwise.

I pass her a cigarette  
 light it up for her  
 tell her to keep the change.

The light turns green  
 and I mash on the gas.

Jeff Aubert mini-interviews Mark SaFranko and Dan Fante

Jeff Aubert's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* :

**P:** Nature - Joga by Bjork

**R:** Adrift - Piano Concerto n°2 by Shostakovich

**O:** Face - Bomber by Motorhead

**T:** Happy - 9th Symphony by Beethoven

**E:** Vagrant - My Way by Sex Pistols

**S:** Sea – Sea and Sand by The Who

**T:** Nothing - Silence by Loneliness. Silence is one of the greatest songs of my life

Jeff Aubert interviewed Dan Fante and Mark SaFranko recently. He gave them eight key words and asked them to say what each word conjured up for them. Their responses were published on Aubert's blog and are reproduced here with kind permission.

### **mark safranko mini-interview**

**Life:** Ferdinand Celine said somewhere, I can't remember where now, that when you look deeply at life all you see is mystery upon mystery upon mystery. There's a lot of truth in it. Our only course of action is to roll with the waves. Much easier said than done. Most of the time it's the waves rolling over us.

**Money:** Makes life a lot easier, no doubt. But I wouldn't know for sure, since I never had any.

**Sex:** A good one. A mad obsession when you're young. When you have kids you realize that it's the most powerful act of all because it creates life, and even the killers are ultimately impotent against it. But the older you get, the less it means. That's probably a very good thing. And in the end, it means nothing, and all of the desperation to have it was a great waste of energy and you ask yourself what all that insanity was all about.

**Love:** Complicated. Probably something most of us aren't capable of. No doubt we love ourselves most of all. What was it Nietzsche said? "In the end there is only oneself."

**Emotion:** Best not shown to the world. When they see where you're weak, they've got you.

**Freedom:** Illusory. Look closely, and you'll find that we move from one trap to another. That's it really, from one trap to another.

**Literature:** A great way to kill time. What would we do without it? The thought of losing it forever to the television and computer is frightening and depressing. But probably inevitable. As with all other losses, we will adapt.

**Death:** I always do battle with the crazy fact that man is the only creature afflicted with the knowledge of death. Why? A terrible scourge, and yet there's nothing we can do about it. We live under a perpetual death sentence. Does this have any meaning whatsoever? It strikes me as something that cannot be the product of evolution alone. Someone has played a very nasty trick on us. Death is the ultimate riddle because we are condemned to always think of what might lie in the great beyond. Maybe nothing. Probably nothing. But maybe something. Again, the conundrum. Again, in the end, we're sure of nothing and understand even less.

### **dan fante mini-interview**

**Life:** Living full, without reservations. Fulfilling a personal destiny.

**Money:** A means to an end.

**Sex:** The icing on the cake.

**Love:** Must be found everywhere.

**Emotion:** Eliminate crazy and they're all good.

**Freedom:** Man's inherent right.

**Literature:** Gasoline for the imagination. The precious hiding place of the truth.

**Death:** The opening of a new door.

## Jack Henry



Jack Henry's playlist prompted by seven words selected at random from *Protest!* :

**P:** Nature - Ode to Joy by Beethoven, from the final movement of his 9th Symphony. This actually jumped into my head immediately

**R:** Adrift - Space Oddity by David Bowie

**O:** Face - Walk Away by Kelly Clarkson. The third of my three darkest secrets is that I am a gigantic lover of Kelly Clarkson. This song came to mind due to the video.

**T:** Happy - The Middle by Jimmy Eat World

**E:** Vagrant - Train to Jordan by Curtis Mayfield. At first I thought of Johnny Cash but this one really stayed in my head

**S:** Sea - Tobacco Island by Flogging Molly. My favorite band...ever

**T:** Nothing - Hurt by Nine Inch Nails and/or Johnny Cash

### **the downtown cafe**

saul and i met downtown  
 at a café on the corner  
 of 6<sup>th</sup> and Los Angeles Street  
 a no-name decrepit place  
 where vagrants and  
 transients linger  
 for cheap coffee  
 and a glimpse of  
 smooth, shaven  
 leg on a fucked-out  
 9 to 5 waitress named betty

she has nice tits and a  
 simple ass, a PhD in  
 romance languages  
 from Yale, a bankroll  
 provided in trust  
 by a dead father, and  
 two dead husbands,  
 an addiction to  
 meth she likes

to smoke  
 in the alley  
 on breaks, a little  
 house  
 in San Pedro bought  
 and paid for  
 w/stolen doubloons  
 from spanish galleons,  
 a crooked smile borrowed  
 from too many lies,  
 a fly paper tongue  
 that never swallows,  
 and a heart broken  
 by a carpenter's hammer

saul and i talk about  
 nothing, it's always nothing  
 as if we couldn't keep  
 a conversation about  
 something going  
 for more than a minute or  
 two, but i like saul  
 because he doesn't  
 complain too much

### **christ on the streets of Los Angeles in 1977**

when i was  
 13  
 i saw christ  
 on the streets  
 of los angeles  
 up near Angel's flight  
 and the  
 international food market

he carried  
 spray cans  
 & tagged  
 white walls  
 words of  
 sorrow  
 angst  
 & derision

back then  
 my father  
 smoked  
 more often  
 cursed  
 in equal numbers  
 but never

saw  
 the same streets  
 that i  
 did

he gave me  
 three dollars  
 and  
 a  
 quarter  
 i bought  
 watermelon  
 and beef jerky  
 i sat  
 alone in  
 a park  
 while my dad  
 talked to god

christ told  
 me to ignore  
 the canon  
 the kind you  
 find in  
 a bookshop

i told him  
 that he forgot  
 to cross  
 a  
 "t"  
 in christmas

he frowned  
 & wandered  
 away

### **a woman in church in a tight linen dress**

a woman in church  
 in a tight linen dress  
 sits draped in stainglass sunlight  
 smiling

it's Sunday  
 cold and i find  
 comfort only  
 in the warmth  
 of the place  
 not the voice  
 from the pulpit

she looks at me  
w/a sheltered stare  
brown hair falling  
curtains before her eyes  
words form on  
ruby stained lips  
but the crying  
demagogue  
forces her astray

parishioners stand  
to sing, praise thee and what not  
i remain seated  
the curve of her ass  
my temple

she moves three steps  
to her right  
nearer to thee  
i smell arcadia  
and a jasmine sky

they pass the plate  
i take a loan  
her eyes widen  
her laugh so sweet

we walk to a coffeeshop  
i pay w/jesus dollars

she sits at the edge  
of a silken bed  
legs spread and waiting  
i kneel before her  
it's my turn to praise