

The Book of Barry

The Knicker-men wear red hats and are constantly harassing, telling me I'm guilty of this that the other thing. So I yell all down Market Street and dodge out of their way. 'Cause most times, they hurt me if I don't confess as they say.

I tell the docs all the time, *Meds don't make them go away*. I show them my knicker-wounds; scars raw-red, arms, chest. And they say to me, "*Baaaarry*, first take your meds! Then realize you're haunted by manifestations of guilt, and the wounds that you bear are from a knife that *you wield*."

Now, compared to some, I'm a saint. God knows *I don't deserve*.. the torment of the Knicker-men, I've nothing to purge. Yet the docs' blankety-blank pills, red, green and white, don't stop the Embarcadero clock that counts down my life.

Or the non-stop *berating* from the therapist's tie.

Or the beautiful sirens who sun on bay rocks and wait.

Or the blessed glow of the good Lord's Golden Gate.

Or the prayers of the park's quivering trees.

Or the ravenous ghosts only *I* hear and see.

Say what you want, they feel *damned REAL* to me.

So I contact the aliens from my Waller crawl-space. They're always listening anyway from their hidden moon base. Peering down at me through orbital 'scopes, tracking implants that measure my movements and hopes.

Next thing, I'm surrounded by ink-eyes in gray heads; they've beamed me up, Scotty, and I stare back in dread. Their rocket-room's all chrome with pulsating walls. Room, ruminant, rumors... I've heard them all: their tests and their wisdom, cross-breeding, and probes; I just want the Knickers zapped and me sent back home.

The rain of Grays totter 'round like insectoid lambs. *Make them stop!* I cry. Grays reply, *Sure*, we can do that. *Our machines'll take away everything you can't prove for a fact.*

Even the whispers of the trees? 'Cause I kind of like that.

No.

The Grays return me back to planet Earth. And Goddammitfuck, I've been left in the lurch! The Knicker-men have cornered Saint Barry like wolves in a church.

Their accusations wood-peck and the one who's in charge commands them to cut me and remove all my parts. Clavicle. Adam's apple. Liver. Left eye. I can feel their *snip, snipper* bounce up my thighs.

I have no throat and I must scream.

Tests tête-à-tête testes, Why am I *always the One*? The one who's harassed, chased, dismembered, and tested; injected, inspected, then left neglected. Medicated, dedicated, offered up, sacrificed.

God's never offered me a reason, *not once in my life*.

Then a glowing light appears and my wounds start to mend, and a voice says, "It's not always given mortals to comprehend, why shit happens to enemy or friend. But perhaps the pain that registers in innocent brains can be absorbed by a man who would be a saint."

"Decide with your heart and understand this: saying "No" won't shut the door on heavenly bliss."

"And 'yes' won't either?"

"Of course."

"Yes."