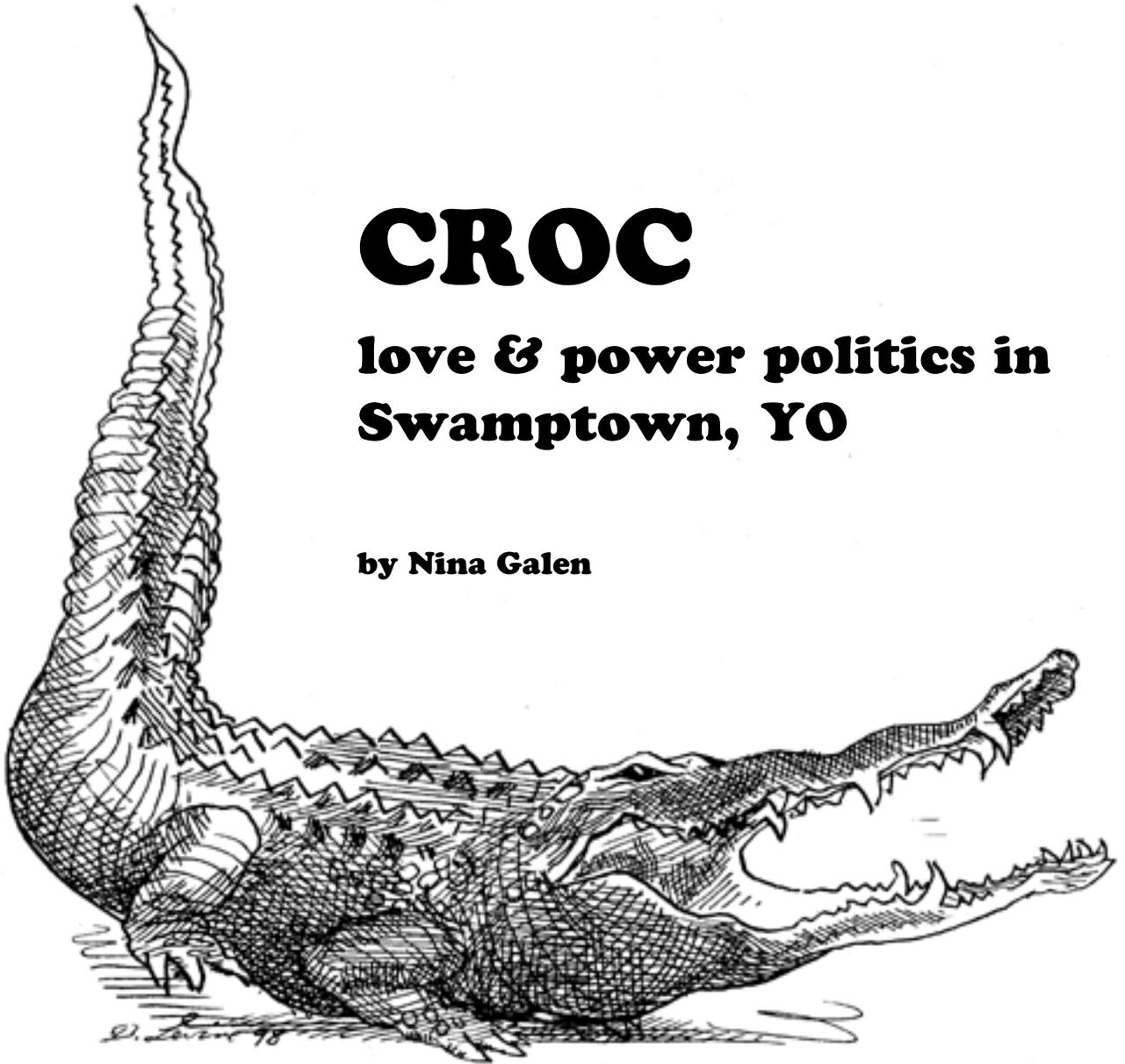


CROC

**love & power politics in
Swamptown, YO**

by Nina Galen



Contents

CROCAMAMA	3
ROCKADIAL	4
CROCKAFELLER	4
CROCADOLLY	6
ROCKADIAL IN LOVE	7
THE SMOKE-FILLED HILLOCK	9
THE REVIVAL	11
CROCKAFELLER`S REVERIE	12
CROCAMAMA`S MISGIVINGS	13
AND ON THE LEFT... ..	15
MORE MISGIVINGS	16
THE FIRST DEBATE	18
SPIN TOWN	21
ON THE BEACH	22
SONG OF THE MERMAIDS	23
A BUTTERFLY IN PEKING	24
TORNADO SKIES OVER YO	24
CROCAMAMA`S CONFRONTATION	25
THE CELLAR.....	26
A CROCOSITION	28
APPROACHING E-DAY	29
THE BETRAYAL	30
ELECTION DAY	32
FINDING DOLLY	33
THE AFTERMATH	36
THE AFTERMATH - PART <i>DEUX</i>.....	37
CROCKAFELLER IN D.C.	38
ROCKADIAL IN D.C.	41
SHOWDOWN AT ROCK CREEK	43
CROCKAFELLER`S FATE.....	46
EPILOGUE	47
EPILOGUE - PART <i>DEUX</i>.....	48
EPILOGUE - <i>FIN</i>.....	49

CROCAMAMA

**Tranquility reigned in Swamptown, YO,
population 2 0 9.
Crocama waited on a long, wavy line
to pay her water tax,
clasping a handbag fabricated from
the well-tanned hide
of that Yorkshire terrier
who never denied he`d found it scarier
trying to swim
with four big teeth sunk into him
than not; his supple, hirsute skin
now filled with gold doubloons,
former legal tender in some
tough, perhaps illegal double dealings of
long-dead Spanish merchants;
coin recently sucked
from the rank crustacean muck
of a sunken wreck by Martin Searles,
the charming treasure-seeker,
whose million-dollar hunch
resulted in (*Oh, God! No!*)
quite a sodden bunch
of pockets stuffed with coin
and misdirected crabs
(and aren`t those pearls that were his eyes?)
she`d joined that day for lunch.**

**And feeling just fine, Crocamama was,
now that Rockadial,
her lazy, accident-prone son,
struck last Friday by a two-ton truck
on Interstate 9 5
and nearly road-killed (still alive,
but six days in a coma);
maybe now, the Lord be praised,
he`d change his wicked ways
and act more like he oughter:
stop jay-walking, scaring tourists off,
and wasting water.**

ROCKADIAL

**When young Rockadial
awakened from his coma
and found himself surrounded
by ecologists, folk who shyly,
then with greater zeal,
squeeze-dried his tail,
admired his sutures,
offered him a chance
at seven different eco-futures
(three archival, four in native dance).
He, while saying nothing,
personally preferred
consorting with a certain alligator bird,
lying in the sun with her on top,
pecking parasites and tickling his hide.**

**Yes, when Rockadial awoke
from his long coma,
realized he had nearly died,
quickly checked out his persona
and found it – Praise the Lord! –
still stuffed with soul,
his first words were:
Let the good times roll.**

CROCKAFELLER

**Crockafeller, sitting on his hillock,
studied his reflection in his private pool,
drew back his lips, wrinkled up his snout,
and seeing he was getting
longer in the tooth, stuck his tongue out
at his wrinkled image.**

**Ha! Only yesterday
had he been challenged to
a pecking-order scrimmage
by some macho whipper snapper.
No problemo!
He was still top croc
and would remain so.
Boss of Swamptown and all southern YO,
he`d sent that poor swain
packing. For, you see,**

**a croc as top as he
had no need *himself* to tussle,
could instead call in some hired muscle,
as Crockafeller always did
when needing to protect his hustle.**

**But on this date
more urgent business filled his plate.
Like whom to hire –
which charismatic, brain-dead crocoliar –
as congressional-committee
expert witness, to fulminate against
each piece of pro-environmental legislation
that might endanger
all the perfectly regressive
tolls, taxations, and assessments
that he personally levied
on inhabitants of every
marsh and morass,
bog, ditch, dike, and shoal
within his purview and control?**

**Who send to Washington
to advocate his cause?
His eye of course was on young Rock,
exactly the right croc
to play the prince to
Crockafeller`s Machiavelli,
one problem being unconfirmed reports
that some conservation wonks
imagined Rockadial to be a new god-king –
an avatar of sorts –
a crocodalailama of the region`s underbelly.**

**This discovery,
inspired by young Rockadial`s
miraculous recovery from coma,
and the length, strength,
and potential flick of his prodigious tail,
appeared to make him qualified to rule.
Plus, there was the finding
of auspicious flotsam in his stool
when he was sick,
stuff rumored to be grail,
and scepter,
and guitar pick.**

**Well, old Crockafeller`d
see about that mumbo-jumbo,
knowing, as he did,
what no one else did know,**

**that he was Rocky`s deadbeat dad,
deserted him a dozen years ago,
when Rock was just a tad.
Nor had he ever told the crocomother,
who still believed
for her to have achieved
an offspring so recessive,
she must have mated with her brother.**

CROCADOLLY

**Resting on her chin,
Crocadolly watched
the last squad car drive off,
silent as a hearse.
It wasn`t often that a single-engine plane,
tired of the sky, and thinking
(incorrectly) it could land on muck or worse
without much sinking,
gave it such a try.**

**Dolly, second of the first five reptiles to arrive,
never reckoned as she raced across the bog
she`d be in time to see
three faces through the plexi
- two human and one dog -
all looking scared, but very much alive.**

**Until came Rockadial, lured
from lazing in the sun
with his close chum, an alligator bird,
to crack the cockpit with his jaws
as easily as crunching crayfish claws,
and pull the white meat out;
her share, following the crocofrenzy,
one pair of lady`s lips bent in a smile
(or were they upside down
and meant to be a frown?),
plus half an arm,
a hand with ring-finger intact,
but minus its gold band.
(That *Rockadial!*)**

**Her dopey meal got Crocadolly thinking
how thick and dark
the waters thereabouts were getting,
swamps and bogs all stinking of decay,**

**fish and frogs so hard to find
that crocs were forced to ruminate
on dogs and humankind.**

**The blame, of course,
lay at the feet of Crockafeller,
slimelord don of half the crocomafioso
in the county and beyond,
well connected in D.C.
with legislators dancing to the tunes
of crocs and alligators
bearing gold doubloons,
not to mention well-paid lobbyists
most willing to bear false witness
(favoring of course big business)
against the better interests
of their kind.**

**Crocadolly sighed.
What Swamptown needed
was a democratically elected
crocohero, not some fella
seeking private gain,
or prone at any moment
to be struck
by two-ton truck
or gravy train.**

**And then an idea came:
a U.S. senate seat for YO
was up for grabs. Why should it go
without a struggle
to some Crockafeller stooge?
One thing was clear:
If she did try to win it,
and didn`t put her whole heart in it,
he`d nail her in a minute
using big bucks, lies,
and subterfuge.**

ROCKADIAL IN LOVE

**That wedding band he found
he gave to his dear alligator bird,
who made no fuss,
sought no commitment
(not even once referred to 'us`)**

**just wore it on her left foot
like a trooper.**

**And that was fine,
yes, that was super....
Yet...there was, it seems,
another matter,
a vision that appeared
in all his recent dreams...
a certain snout, two eyes
that prettily stuck out
above the water line,
a certain tail
worth more to him, somehow,
than any scepter, pick or grail.**

**Her name was Crocadolly.
*Crocadolly.***

**Just to hear it spoken
made him feel his life was broken
and the glue was Crocadolly;
made him feel like he`d been flattened
by a trolley named Desire,
helpless railroad-kill
with loins eternally on fire.**

**How constantly since then, day in, day out,
did Rockadial recall that lovely snout,
the way she`d chewed upon that hand
(which he had stupidly unbanded)
how she ate that smile (or frown?)
just managing to keep it down,
then wasted no time with that arm,
preferring food that still was warm.**

**And now had come
old Crockefeller`s message,
an offer that did presage
quite a change in Rocky`s lifestyle,
at the very least, a metamorphosis
from lazy lout to senator from YO.
(Plus the customary move
to Washington D.C.).**

**This being so, it shouldn`t show,
Rock felt, a lack of cool,
or be considered cruel,
to ask the alligator bird
to give his ring back.**

***Ack!* Oh, no! On *doing* so,
he learned (in no uncertain terms)**

that she no longer *had* it.

Oh?

And when, dismayed, he blurted out:
How could you let my ring go?
the bird replied, inscrutably,
Go stuff a pink flamingo.

THE SMOKE-FILLED HILLOCK

When old Crockafeller
summoned Rocky to his hillock,
and ordered up a vat of crayfish
from his private cellar,
he learned his guest just wasn't hungry;
hadn't eaten since the feeding frenzy
following the plane disaster;
had *no* idea how long his fast would last
or just what ailed him.

I like you, boy, old Crockafeller told him
(flipped a crayfish in the air
and nailed him as he fell),
but you gotta be in good condition.
Truth to tell, you're just the croc
to beat the competition.

Like who? asked Rock, who really didn't care,
until he heard the name...heard *Crocadolly*
floating on the air.
Then he went pale, his legs gave out,
and he collapsed on belly, tail, and snout.

And there he lay, his mind aw whirl,
while Crockafeller talked the afternoon away
about the Crocopotty, and it's mission
to end big government,
its taxes and restrictions
(such as eliminating trade
in threatened reptile skins).

And then, to build a fire
in the young croc's belly,
he quoted Machiavelli
who said that politics and virtue
need not mix; that in political arenas
any means is justified
to grab and then hang onto power.

**And so he talked on, hour after hour,
explaining how Repelicans,
while in debates
with opposition candidates,
might make this point:
that separating politics
from morals did equate
with separating church and state
(an idea Demodiles themselves
did advocate).**

**Ms. Crocadolly`s views,
old Crockafeller sighed,
are easy to deride
but not so easy to debate.
Which is why it`s fortunate
I founded, own, and run
a tabloid called *The Crocodaily Sun*
which will always take your side
when you two tussle on the stump.**

**We *will*? said Rock,
whose heart went thump.**

**You`ll find she makes her loudest racket
on questions ecological,
and every argument you make,
she will attack it. Think you can hack it?**

**Piece of cake, young Rock assured him.
*No problemo.***

**Beautiful, said Crockafeller, who,
right then and there,
put foot on heart to solemnly declare:
Come water high, or water low,
I`ll make you senator from YO
and off to Washington you`ll go
to undermine with every vote you cast
the power of the government to tax,
plus find a way to sabotage each ruling
that subsidizes conservation
or pre-schooling.
And if you do your part,
and play it smart,
the public will grow so cynical,
that at the pinnacle of their despair
they`ll cease to vote or even care.**

**And then you`ll note
the Oval Office and the Capitol Rotunda**

**will weaken, topple, tear asunder,
and, as loud as thunder, fall,
and crush a century of jurisprudence,
social programs, labor unions.
And when the dust has cleared,
you`ll see that power has returned
to ordinary folk like you and me,
to leave us free
to get as rich as rich can be.**

**You`re on, said Rock, I`ll run.
It sounds like fun.
And then he learned
that he was Crockafeller`s son,
and that the hillock and the pool
were his to share.**

**Go take a dip, old Crockafeller said,
you`re pretty muddy.
And then we`ll have some catfish pie,
and then we`ll study.**

THE REVIVAL

**It was a vision, it was a din;
four-hundred-twenty-seven crocs,
all freshly catechized,
re-baptized, and free of sin,
tromped muddily toward
Ye Old Revival Meeting
(first-ever of a to-be-annually-held-
and-reheld righteous revelling),
in downtown Swamptown.**

**On they slogged, all bellowing
their tribal greeting,
hollering their love of the All-Mighty,
Merciful, All-Knowing Crocospirit
(according to the gospel
of Horatio Crockafeller).**

**Hour after hour, croco-legions swarmed
out swamps and gullies,
flowed through sewers, drains, and tunnels,
over viaducts and bridges, cramming
access roads and highways,
jamming five-way intersections,
ditto driveways far and near**

**(seen even by the cosmonauts on Mir),
great thighs a-swishing, tails a-lashing,
slathering the muck in all directions,
till each crocodile was coated snout to bum.**

***CROCOHULLABALOO!*
shouted headlines in *The Sun*
for weeks to come.**

CROCKAFELLER`S REVERIE

**Super-duper, sneered old Crockafeller,
watching from his hillock.
Swamptown`s crocs, in hardly any time,
had more than doubled population 2 0 9.**

**It was clear his pro-life teachings
(moral preachings
that forbade the eating
of all newly hatched and barely viable,
albeit toothsome, crocodilian young),
touted piously and often
in his *Crocodayly Sun*,
had paid off two to one.
For, by so increasing population,
Crockafeller`d more than doubled
what he brought in
through extortion...uh, *taxation*,
and increased two-fold
his tabloid`s circulation
(not to mention filled his bins
with luxury-grade reptile skins).**

**Indeed, for every Swamptown bro
who opted not to be a sinner,
and spared a baby croc
targeted to be his dinner,
he, Crockafeller, was a big-time winner.**

**Just look at them, he chuckled,
all so happy to be hatched
into this blighted world,
all praising *me*, the master spoiler,
envying my business smarts,
those crocs with muddy snouts
and naive hearts,
who hardly even notice**

**that their water isn't clean;
indeed, that almost nothing can be seen
beneath the surfaces of bogs and bayous.**

**Crockefeller grinned.
These fools would never know
how *he* had sinned;
that he, the town's supplier,
to make the situation dire
and send the price of water higher,
had shut off half the flow two weeks ago.**

CROCAMAMA'S MISGIVINGS

**Crocamama got there early
(as mothers of grown children can)
climbed the bleachers,
stretched her seven meters
on a bench, readjusted five,
and waited for the preachers,
pols, and faithful to arrive.**

**Soon she heard
what sounded like an alligator bird,
then dozens more,
until there were a thousand pipings,
whistlings and gripings
of a displaced flock.
And underlying all this noise
the oft-repeated shock
of foot on earth,
a mighty tromping, bellowing
and stomping, as 427 crocs
converged on downtown Swamptown.**

**How they thundered!
How the earth did quake
- from fear, she wondered? -
fear that ground might break,
collapse right in and shake
right down those walls
both perpendicular and round
that made the alleys
and the tunnels of the town?**

**One thing was certain:
With their eco-system and**

**their infra-structure threatened,
it was high time Swamptown
sent an eco-croc to Washington.
Not Rock, by any means;
her son was no politico
nor should he be.**

**(Though it was rumored
that old Crockafeller, dotty
leader of the right-wing Crocopotty,
a/k/a Repelican or C.O.P.,
had his eye on her son Rocky
for some job or candidacy.)**

**Well, Rock`s mama had
another candidate in mind,
one with good name recognition,
zeal and charm,
eager, too, to sound alarms
concerning Swamptown`s
true condition.
Crocadolly was her name and
conservation was her game.**

**Yes indeed, thought Crocamama,
shifting her great thighs,
a savvy gal with grassroots base
could give old Crockafeller`s
boy an awesome race.**

**The muddy crocs did finally arrive,
treading on each other`s tails,
reeling from exhaustion,
in a kind of blind elation
like robotic creatures well-prepped
for a mass indoctrination.**

**As Crocamama watched them
clamber up into the bleachers,
and listened to the invocation
recited by four crocopreachers,
she told herself:
Come water high or water low,
things`ll hafta change
in Swamptown, YO.**

AND ON THE LEFT...

**Standing on the crowded dais
waiting for the multitudes to find their seats,
Crocadolly was surprised
(the word 'shocked' might be apter)
to see the name of Rockadial (that cracker!)
on the list of speakers.**

**She`d heard rumors he might run,
that he`d found a wealthy backer
in the right-wing owner of *The Crocodaily Sun*
(key promoter/advertiser
of Ye Old Revival Meeting),
but she`d laughed it off.**

**A croc who lazed all day, jaywalked,
got hit by trucks,
had clearly no sense of survival;
in fact, might make a perfect rival!**

**But heck, who`d want for senator
a crocodile who`d been engaged
(or so she`d heard)
to that licentious alligator bird,
who gave up scepter, grail and pick
for her, and then got jilted.
No, it was too sick.
Yet here his name was, on the list.**

**Crocadolly sighed.
Hers would be a lonely fight
against big money, greed,
the power of the right-wing
tabloids to mislead.
A senate race was no great pleasure,
no free ride.
To advertise her cause
she`d need the treasure
of a dozen sunken wrecks, or,
failing that, at each low tide
would have to walk along the shore
and rake the dunes,
to locate cast-up caches of doubloons.**

**What gave her courage
was her strong belief
that every croco-son and daughter
had the right to eat live crayfish
in clean water,
and that government,
supposedly the voter`s friend,
oughter spend tax money to that end.**

**Crocadolly looked up at the crowd.
They were a sight, those muddy creatures
spreading outward through the bleachers,
that squirming sea of leather,
programmed to obey
old Crockafeller and his preachers,
real or lay.**

**Then Crocadolly turned
and from across the crowded stage
by chance did intercept the gaze
of two eyes which, when they found hers,
did melt and mist with an emotion
resembling an intense devotion.**

**Rockadial?
Could that stunning, mud-free croc
across the platform
be the worthless Rock?
And if so, was he running
for the very senate seat as she?**

**Because a candidate
with eyes so full of rapture...
and that oh, so charismatic smile...
might hope to capture
any vote - or heart -
that he went after,
Repelican *or* Demodile.**

MORE MISGIVINGS

**When Crocamama saw the loving look
that passed between her son and Dolly,
a lump came to her throat.
How fast they grew up!
Seems like yesterday
she`d held her baby in her jaws
to keep him safe from predators.
And now her son
had suddenly been snapped up
by that trap called love.**

**How the world was changing.
In *her* day mating was a chance encounter
with some stranger**

(such as Rocky`s unknown pa).
But today 'love` was the thing.
When possible, there even was a ring,
a golden band like one she`d seen
on that licentious alligator bird
who obviously hadn`t heard
that bird and croc
(who some say shared Jurassic stock)
today can`t get it on together.
Nor did that finely feathered hussy
seem to know which was a croc
and which a gator. Just *her* good luck
none took her for a flying fish
and ate her!

Her Rock in love? She had to smile.
Dolly was a Demodile
with brains and lovely leather.
A croc with truer heart and mind
Rocky couldn`t hope to find.
Voting over, she and he would go
to Washington together,
Madame Senator from YO
and he her mate.

Then Crocamama looked below
at the tangled grey tableau
and wondered just which reptile
had been chosen for the Crocopotty slate.
So many muddy critters filled the dais,
it was hard to tell just who was who,
much less their bias.
And then she saw old Crockafeller,
front row center in the bleachers,
his eely features -
'specially that yellow grin -
were stretched so wide
with vile enjoyment
half the crocodentists
in the county might therein
have found employment.

But then...oh, no! A chummy look
had passed between her son
and that old crook.
And this was when
she knew beyond a doubt
her son had no idea
what Honesty was all about.

My Rock, she sighed,
is most peculiarly allied.

**I wouldn't even be surprised
to learn he's running
on the Crocopotty ticket
for the senate seat from YO.
And if that's so,
I'd almost rather he had never woken
from his coma, or had croaked
a long, long time ago.**

**Just then a crocospeaker rose
and with his feet did pound so hard
upon the boards,
entreating the God-fearing hoards
to come to order and find seating
so that he could begin the meeting,
that they actually heeded,
got as quiet as crocs waiting
under water for some prey to seize.**

**And so a kind of holy silence
gripped that mob of brutish giants,
till no cough or belch or sneeze
did interrupt the speaker's greeting,
or intrude upon his reading
from a booklet of misleading
Crockafeller sophistries.**

THE FIRST DEBATE

**It took the best part of eight hours
for the prelims to abate,
and all this while the crowd did feed
on hot dogs of assorted breeds,
both local and imported.
Some came from Crockafeller
farms and stables, meat as fine
as ever graced the tables
of a Julia Child or Cunard Line.**

**And while they ate,
they quenched their thirst on Gator Juice
from fresh-squeezed alligators who,
once flayed, were diced and canned,
their well-tanned skins
then put in special bins.**

**They drank and drank and ate and ate.
The sky grew dark, the hour late,
but finally the moment came
that all awaited:
the one-on-one debate
by opposition candidates.**

**Rockadial and Crocadolly,
squinting in the spotlight,
stared at by 800 eyes,
took their places on the dais.
Then a well-known, well-liked,
very vocal crocoyokel
took the mike and posed the question:
Should all taxes be
both privatized and local?**

***Repealed!* four hundred
crocovoters squealed.**

**But Rock jumped forward.
No! he pleaded.
Certain revenues *are* needed
to subsidize big corporations
and pay for lobbyists, concrete,
and bayou dredging.
What we Repelicans are pledging
is to spend your money
on necessities like these,
not let D.C. decide
what folks in Swamptown need.**

**Then foot on heart, young Rocky swore:
Come water high or water low,
when I to Washington do go,
I`ll introduce a bill that every cent
a resident of YO is taxed
on profits and on labor
won`t leave our state, but will be paid
to Crockafeller, our good neighbor,
a croc who doesn`t have to guess
just who owes how much tax,
or his or her address.**

**Then, having sworn this, Rock did turn
and sent his burning gaze
toward Crocadolly
for her approbation and applause.**

**But she`d already seen the flaws
in Rocky`s reasoning,**

and quickly took the floor.
We crocs are anyway too poor,
she pointed out, to fall into a bracket
that the IRS can tax. With Rocky`s bill,
the only one who *will*
be free of Federal taxation
– taxes that could help preserve
ecology throughout the nation –
is old Crockefeller,
a croc already rich as rich can be.
And why is he so rich?
Because he taxes us on water
found in every bog and ditch,
water which, in fact,
does not belong to him.
I say this water should be free
to each and every croc.

And then, her minute done,
and feeling she had won,
she yielded to the clock.

Young Rocky was amazed.
He had no doubt her words were true.
And suddenly Rock felt he knew
what politics was all about:
to separate from one another
lover, brother, sister, mother –
not bring them all together
in some fine cause or endeavor.

Well, there seemed no point
in speechifying half the night
until each croc collapsed from poppycock
or too much dinner.
Crocadolly clearly was the winner.
He`d argued true,
but *her* words made more sense,
and now the only thing to do
was bow to Dolly`s eloquence.

Congratulations,
Rocky told her with a smile.
You won with elegance and style.
And he held out his foot.

But when her lovely foot touched his,
an overpowering emotion
like a wave out of the ocean
engulfed young Rock from tail to snout.
And all that kept the youth from passing out

**was one big lusty cheer for her, his dear,
his Crocadolly, followed by applause
that seemed to sanction his surrender
to a love sublime and tender.**

**And then young Rocky sent
a happy grin out toward his backer.
But through the spotlights` glare
he saw the bleacher seat was bare.
Wherever Crockafeller was,
he wasn`t there.**

SPIN TOWN

**Where had he gone?
It seems old Crockafeller`d run
to the newsroom of his *Crocodayly Sun*
to set the headlines
of tomorrow`s first edition.**

**ROCKY WON!!!
the headline shouted.
DEMODILE CONFUSED.**

**Heh, heh, he laughed, amused
by his own composition.
This story`ll
get things spinning.
And then he wrote an editorial
about Rock`s winning.**

**When Swamptown crocodiles awoke
the morning after the debate,
and saw the headlines in *The Sun*,
they thought it great
that somewhere someone`d
set the record straight.
We`re not too smart they opined,
as they made their muddy beds;
last night that Gator Juice
went to our heads.
Without *The Sun*
and what somebody wrote,
each one of us
would waste his precious vote.**

**When Crocamama saw *The Sun*
she couldn't help but feel a flash of pride
to read her boy had won.
But it was brief, for then
her anger and her indignation rose.
Who does old Crockefeller
think he is, to feed us lies like those?
No croc attending that debate,
no matter how much juice he drank
or canine ate,
could fail to note
that Crocadolly earned his vote.**

**And so she went to see the 'loser',
to, if need be, disabuse her
of all feelings of rejection
caused by someone's cunning bid
to micro-manage the election.**

ON THE BEACH

**The surf was grey,
the mermaids singing each to each.
She found poor Crocadolly
walking on the beach,
dejected and alone,
scratching at each dune and stone,
but finding few doubloons
for all her trying.
Dolly'd read *The Sun*
and there was no denying
she was up against
a tough political machine,
operated by a croc as mean
as mean could be.**

**But Dolly, Crocamama said,
my Rocky just adores you.
He'd as soon be dead
as let you go or let you lose.**

**Don't bet on it, said Dolly.
If Rocky had to choose
between that bird and me,
the senate and his dad...**

**His *dad*, cried Crocamama.
Who would *that* be?**

**But Crocadolly shut her snout.
If Crocamama hadn't heard
the gossip bruted all about,
how could *she* ever tell her
Rocky's dad was said to be
old Crockafeller?**

**But Crocadolly's silence
seemed to scream the unsaid truth.
Suddenly the name of her ex-lover
hit poor Crocamama like a manhole cover
rolling forty miles an hour.
And though she felt
that something in her died,
which may have been her pride,
she opted to make no response,
at least not for the nonce.**

SONG OF THE MERMAIDS

**What were the mermaids singing?
Songs of love, of course,
and warnings of rough seas
and dangerous rocks.
They sang of love
between two star-crossed crocs,
for they could see
(as ungrammatical as it might be)
that she loved him
as much as he loved she.**

**But there were dangers
for the two; reptiles who
had far too much at stake
in things political
to care how far they went,
or be self-critical
about which rules they bent.**

**The mermaids sang of love,
of rocky coasts, of death and dying.
And was that sea spray on their cheeks?
Or were they crying?**

A BUTTERFLY IN PEKING

**Two more big debates did follow,
and all agreed that Crocadolly`d won,
until they read the morning *Sun*.**

**This was frustrating for Dolly.
Her dire warnings and expoundings
on the state of their surroundings
were for naught.
Swamptown crocs quite simply bought
whatever nonsense Crockafeller wrote.
And what was worse,
he had Rocky in his purse.**

**What could she do
to separate those two?
Perhaps put out the word
that till *The Sun* did shine a probing beam
on Swamptown muck,
she`d have no further truck
with Rocky. So she did it,
though it broke her heart to shut him out.
Because she loved that Rock,
a croc as dear as dear could be –
a croc so shy he`d not yet
dared approach her off the stump,
much less declare his love,
the silly chump.**

**Well, it might work.
And anyway, a gentle nudge
could do no harm,
just sound a very faint alarm,
not cause the world to go berserk.**

TORNADO SKIES OVER YO

**When Rocky heard his dearest treasure
looked upon him with displeasure,
he hurried straight to Crockafeller.**

**Dad, he said,
I`m too in love with Dolly
to continue to oppose her.
I and everyone who knows her
find her reasoning well-grounded,**

**all her arguments well-founded,
her expoundings well-expounded,
and everything expressed
with style and grace.
In short, I`d like to quit the race.**

**Crockafeller was astounded.
His son in love with *Crocadolly*?
Could Rock`s recent melancholy,
his lackluster conduct in debate,
plus his strange predisposition
to capitulate, result from love
of one he ought to hate?**

**But boy, you`re doing great.
You`ve won each contest, every single one.
You *must* have read that in *The Sun*.
Hey, voting`s just a week away,
the ballot`s printed.
Promise dad you`ll be there with him,
nothing stinted, on Election Day.**

**Well, thought Rocky,
one week`s not a big concession.
Once the polls have closed,
no matter which of us has won,
I`ll pop the question.
Okay, dad, he told him
after pondering a minute.
If you want me to, I`ll run,
but my heart`s not in it.**

CROCAMAMA`S CONFRONTATION

**I`m playing patriarch today,
grinned Crockafeller,
noting who was climbing up his hillock.
Come on, he called, and take a load off.
Rest your tush.
But Crocamama,
scorning his false greeting,
said she hadn`t come to beat
around the bush.**

**If you think Rock`s your blood relation,
you should honor him enough
to set him free of filial
and feudal obligation.**

**Let him wed in peace, and work with her
to keep our species viable.
I`m sure that even *you* must see
that you and he now disagree
on every subject of debate.**

**Old gal, you`re certifiable,
laughed aloud the evil croc.
Don`t worry about Rock.
I`ll see the boy obeys his pa.**

**Crocamama set her jaw.
We Demodiles intend to win.
Repelicans will take it on the chin
unless they smarten up real fast.**

**But then she paused, aghast,
to see he wore a golden band
around one tooth,
the very ring her son
had given to that bird
(whom, incidentally, none had seen
or heard in weeks).
What did it mean? An avian donation
to a right-wing crocoboss,
or sloppy flossing following a snack?**

**I`m off now, Crocamama said,
and won`t be back.
But listen to the words of she
who soon will be your daughter,
and do what any decent
news-croc oughter:
direct *The Sun`s* bright beams
to probe what`s rotten in the state of YO.**

**Like in your dreams,
old Crockafeller growled.
Now do us both a favor,
you sententious cow,
and *go*.**

THE CELLAR

**Below the grassy surface of a hillock,
in a dark and dankish crayfish cellar,
stood a cage with one bird in it.**

**Minute after boring minute,
hour after day,
she watched the crayfish vats
and wondered why fish looked
as odd as they,
and why they called them cray.**

**It comes from Middle French *crevis*,
an elderly acquaintance
in the corner told her,
though French is not my field of expertise.
Then, getting bolder,
he went on, But tell me why
you call yourself an alligator bird,
a name I`ve never heard.**

**Replied the bird,
It`s a question of poetic meter;
alligator bird sounds neater
than crocodile bird,
a/k/a African plover,
which is what I really am,
my species no doubt smuggled over.
But *that* name, like the one
my mother gave me,
is poetically unscannable.**

And what might that name be?

**She called me Annabel,
Annabel Lee, a bunch
of syllables and stresses
useless to an honest poet.**

**How well I know it, sighed the man,
and how often *I`ve* despaired
at having *my* name and addresses,
PhD and MS`s poetically impaired.
My name, you see, is J.A. Prufrock,
and I`m a homeless ornithologist.**

**At this, the alligator bird,
tipping one eye toward the corner,
asked him was he sleeping there on gunny
'cause he`d lost his job and money?**

**Just so, said he.
As wing-ed species go extinct
there`s less work for the likes of me,
whose specialty
is birdies having vital signs.**

**When pulse and breathing go away
I find I`ve nothing more to say.
It`s at such times
an honest ornithologist resigns.**

**The captive bird let out a sigh.
It`s good to hear
that *somewhere* out there
honesty`s alive and kicking;
the evil croc who put me in this cage
deserves a licking.**

**Dr. Prufrock could not believe his ears.
You say a *croc* is holding you?
A *crocodile*?**

**A beast that lives one hundred years,
that grows nine meters long,
and has a jaw so strong and big
that it can down a full-sized pig?**

**That`s right, the bird replied,
that`s Crockafeller to a T,
a croc as mean as mean can be,
and big as he is mean.**

**Then, panicked by a mortal dread
J.A. Prufrock said,
I-better-leave-before-I`m-seen.**

**But it already was too late
to latch onto a different fate.
In minutes he was found and drowned
and served up on a dinner plate.
And with his vital signs away
he found he had no more to say.
And though he wanted to resign,
they washed him down
with Beaujolais.**

A CROCOSITION

**Next to Crockafeller on his hillock
stood a cage with one bird in it.
Minute after minute,
with utter disregard,
the aged reptile let escape
a sulfurous petard.**

**Ha! That bloody feed
had been exactly what he`d needed
to concentrate his mind on future deeds,
deeds as gory and perverse
as ever did enlime the lining
of a coffin or a hearse –
deeds to foment dread
and cause some dead
among the opposition,
all without the least blame
or suspicion falling on his head.**

**Then, turning to the bird he said,
Now listen up, for here`s a proposition
that you can`t refuse,
if ever you expect to lose
this cage and fly off free.**

**And she, of course, did listen,
for the air and breeze
were clear and bright
and sunlight glistened
on a zillion birds and gators,
crocs and frogs,
cavorting in the muddy bogs.
Indeed, this chance to fly away
provoked such yearning
that her heart was burning
with suspense to hear
what he would say.**

**And then he told her that she`d play
the role of messenger between two lovers,
like that Friar and that Nurse,
who once upon a time in far Verona
helped turn love`s sweet song
into a curse.**

**Then, scraping the gold band
from off his tooth,
he said, Here, give her this,
and she`ll believe *he* sent you
and assume you speak the truth.**

APPROACHING E-DAY

**Campaigns were drawing to a close;
Election Day was near.
Three dozen alligator birds,**

**midnight volunteers,
hopped from croc to sleeping croc
and whispered 'Dolly' in their ears.
This subliminal campaigning
was a last ditch effort,
and a desperate one,
to stop a criminal from claiming
victory for his son.**

**Rockadial, who didn't care who won or lost,
couldn't wait for the election to be done with,
wanted just to find his Dolly,
lie out in the sun with her,
and pop the question.**

**He knew his father
couldn't long resist his bride.
He'd soon set right-wing politics aside,
and then all three would go together to D.C.
and live in simple harmony,
making sure by making laws
that crocs stayed off the Interstate,
avoided poachers' traps,
found ways to resist drought,
in short, insure that crocs did not die out,
for that's what life was all about.**

**The week without his darling Dolly
passed as slowly as a year.
But when election eve arrived
Rock's spirits rose. Tomorrow,
when the polls had closed,
he'd go to Dolly and propose.**

THE BETRAYAL

**Election eve, old Crockafeller
opened the cage door.
Fly straight and true,
he told the alligator bird,
and when you get there, do
exactly as I told you to,
remembering the while,
that if you flee, or try to trick me
with your cunning or your guile,
you'll never lunch again
upon a sunning crocodile.**

**She had a hunch he wasn't kidding,
that she'd better do his bidding
or she'd rue the day.
So, hopping from the cage,
she slipped the golden band
upon her foot, and flew away.**

**It was already growing dark
when she found Crocadolly
in a pond within a park,
watching children play.
She hadn't come there to aggress them,
pull them under or ingest them.
She yearned only to caress them
for she had no babies of her own.**

**The alligator bird flew down
and perched on Crocadolly's head.
I've brought a message
from a friend, she said,
who wants to meet you right away.
And then she paused,
because it wasn't easy
to betray another creature,
even her, that very croc
who'd made her own romance with Rock
a jealous mockery.**

**Crocadolly's heart beat fast.
If the bird spoke true, at last
she'd be together with her love.
But wasn't this the very bird
she'd heard had made a contribution
to the right-wing C.O.P?**

**Some say I did, the alligator bird agreed,
but don't be miffed. I swear it was no gift.
You see, one day I lost a golden band
that Crockafeller found upon the sand.
He gave it to his son, who's given it to me
to give to you by way of proof
that what I'm saying is the truth.
And taking off the ring, she held it out
beyond the end of Dolly's snout.**

**I trust you, Crocadolly said.
Where does he want to meet?**

**In that same bog, the bird replied,
where one fine day a Cessna
fell from high above**

**and landed at your feet;
the day he fell in love.**

**Her words were gracious and disarming,
but at the same time quite alarming.
For, since that day a holy lot
of humans seeking souvenirs
had visited that spot.
And once those piggish tourists made it
ecologically degraded,
poachers came and set out traps and snares.
If Rocky went there unawares,
he might be trapped or shot.**

**I`d better warn him, Dolly said.
Then, slipping the gold band upon her tooth,
she thanked the alligator bird and hurried off.**

**For what I`ve done, the bird lamented,
there are no words.
And then she saw, as if presented in a dream,
a flock of alligator birds
alighting on the backs of dozing crocs.
How strange,
for next she seemed to hear the name
of *Dolly* floating like a ghostly mist
upon the moonlit scene.**

**And if this was an omen,
what did the omen mean?**

ELECTION DAY

**Election Day dawned warm and drear.
High voter turnout was expected,
though some had become disaffected
by the dirty politicking.
Even before seven-thirty,
crocs from every part of YO
(several screaming and some kicking),
trickled into downtown Swamptown.
There they learned
the way to indicate their choice
was not by ballot, but by voice;
votes were bellowed
and the decibels were tallied.
At first Rock seemed to be ahead,
then Crocadolly rallied.**

**And that was fine, yet Rock was worried.
Eager to see Dolly, he had hurried
into town that morning.
When by noon she hadn't come,
he wondered why. Where could she be?**

**Suddenly a bird lit on his head.
Rocky, the bird said, it's me,
your former friend. I've come to tell you....
But the bird could not continue,
could not say what Crockafeller'd
told her to relate:
that Dolly wanted nevermore to see him,
and had left the state.
She knew that Rock would hate her
for the part she'd played,
but now, unable to keep lying,
she blurted out,
Oh Rocky, Crocadolly's dying.**

Where is she? Rocky cried.

**And so she told him,
knowing that if Crocadolly died
no creature of the earth or sky above
would ever again win his trust
or love.**

FINDING DOLLY

**Without a moment's hesitation
Rock turned and disappeared
into the vegetation.
The alligator bird flew overhead,
relating all the deeds that led up
to this tragedy. But Rocky
hardly heeded what she said.**

**Wary of the hidden traps,
as he approached the fatal bog,
Rockadial picked up a log
and held it out between his jaws
to set them off and clear the way.**

**And so he rapidly advanced, until the bird,
who had a better view,
said softly, There she is.
And then he saw her too,
half hidden in some reeds,
one leg taken in a trap.**

**Rockadial approached her gently.
Oh, Dolly, Rocky said,
I have to save you.
If I can` t, I` ll never leave you.**

**I believe you,
Crocadolly told him,
wishing she could kiss and hold him.
Rock, I love you, but beware,
there are poachers everywhere.
You, as senator from YO,
will do a lot of good
for crocs throughout the state,
but if you don` t go soon,
it soon may be too late.**

**But Rocky was indifferent to his fate.
Her life was far more threatened than his own.
He saw that even if his mighty jaws
could separate the claws of steel
that gripped her leg,
it would cause her greater pain.
Her life hung by a thread,
and it was plain to both of them
he could not save her.**

**O do not die! Rock would have said,
could he have paraphrased John Donne,
for I shall hate
all living creatures so
when thou art gone,
that thee I shall not celebrate
when I remember, thou wast one.**

**But what he did say was,
Oh, Dolly, if you die, then soon or late
I` ll kill the reptiles
who have brought you to this fate.
Were I to live a hundred years,
how could I legislate
with a heart so full of hate?
And then he gently placed his length
beside her, close as close could be,
so she` d absorb his love and energy.**

**Just then a shout was heard.
Ecologists are coming! cried the alligator bird.
The same you met after your coma.**

**A desperate hope seized Rock.
They`ll take you to a vet, he said.**

**But Dolly knew before the sun had set
she would be dead.
Don`t let them touch me, Rock.
I`d rather die with you beside me
in this bog, than with the kindest strangers,
be they conservationists or rangers.**

**Her words did break his heart,
but Rocky understood.
So as the people came their way
he raised his head
and bellowed out a warning.**

**Hey, look! one cried,
that female croc is in a trap,
and that big male is trying to protect her.
She`ll die unless we find a way
to make him leave so we can save her.**

**Just then a man appeared,
a lethal weapon on his shoulder.
Great! I trapped one, he rejoiced.
These crocodiles are getting bolder.
Some days ago
a small plane landed in this bog
and reptiles just like those
ate pilot, passenger, and dog.
You say that male`s protecting her?
Let`s see if Supercroc moves faster
than a speeding bullet.
And so saying, raised his AK-47,
aimed and fired.
In the din that followed
forty rounds pierced Dolly`s side
and she expired.**

**But before the sound had faded,
he had found that men do better
on dry ground than under water
where a power greater than a locomotive
brought him in a single bound.**

**I hope they get the sucker,
was his final thought
before he drowned.**

THE AFTERMATH

**Waiting in his newsroom for his plan to hatch,
old Crockafeller came across
a worrisome dispatch;
two deaths had just occurred
within that bog where he had set his plot.
And then came word
one candidate was shot,
the other on the run.**

**And suddenly his son
was in the limelight,
rumored to be carrying a gun,
and ordered shot on sight.
And next, he heard,
from a snitchy stringer-bird,
that Rocky had been told about *his* role
in Crocadolly`s death,
and had sworn to get him.**

**Does he think I`ll bloody *let* him?
Crockafeller snarled.
Just because my son`s
prodigious whip of tail and snap of jaw
have caused that whippersnapper
to be hunted by the law,
does not imply he`s any threat
to his well-bodyguarded pa.**

**Then, having put a contract out
on Rocky`s feathered friend,
Crockafeller hurried downtown,
where he found the voting not yet at an end.
For though the voters knew
one candidate was dead,
and one had fled –
in what a New York newspaper
would (incorrectly) call
a stunning dual defection –
what *no* one knew, was what to do
to stop the damned election.**

**Then Crockafeller said, Upon reflection,
I feel that I can help you
through this sorry situation.
Make *me* your senator from YO
and off to Washington I`ll go
to write new legislation
that will benefit our state.**

**And so they gave him every vote,
despite the screams
of one despairing croco-mom
who told him where he *ought* to go,
and not just in his dreams.**

THE AFTERMATH - PART *DEUX*

**It was the worst day of his life,
and looked to be the last.
Beside each bog and ditch, the blast
of rifle shots resounded.
Crocs that looked like Rockadial
(and many did, to untrained eyes)
were killed by strangers,
guys with guns who felt
they had a bona fide excuse
to unloose fire power.
Conservationists and rangers
worked to stop them, and,
about the twilight hour,
calm descended on the land.**

**Shortly after dark,
Rock found Crocamama
in the lake within the park
where Crocadolly used to watch
as children played.
It`s here my Dolly was betrayed,
he told her bitterly,
and then, dry-eyed,
related how she`d died.**

**Oh, Rock, she said,
it would help you if you cried.**

**I will not cry, said Rockadial.
Not yet, not yet.**

**But Crocamama did,
and when she`d done
she told him Crockafeller
was en route to Washington,
to take the senate seat
that he or Dolly would have won.**

**Dad`s history, said Rock.
I`m on my way.**

**Well, be real careful, son,
and take these gold doubloons.
They`re still a little sandy,
but will surely come in handy
in a town like Washington.**

**But Rock refused. Said he,
There`s nothing gold can buy
that teeth and will as strong as mine
cannot obtain.**

**Except, she smiled,
a ticket for the train.**

**So he accepted one doubloon
(with some chagrin),
then chucked her on the chin
and kissed her snout,
'cause that`s what moms
were all about.**

CROCKAFELLER IN D.C.

**When Horatio Crockafeller
slithered from the train,
he heard tremendous cheers.
He hadn`t been to Washington
in over eighty years,
yet was a legend in the place,
a lobbyist, a donor;
to politicians of the right,
king maker and dethroner.**

**So when he left the train that night,
he found a city of delight.
The Mall was filled with gold balloons
that shone as brightly as doubloons,
while marching bands with big bassoons
played stirring patriotic tunes.
And this was all for him, for *him*,
the senator elect,
who`d staged an upset victory
to give his grateful party
a congressional majority.**

**Old Crockafeller grinned.
How different from**

his first time in this town.
Back then he was a yokel
from a backwater called YO,
who didn't even know
when staying at a Washington hotel
one didn't eat the desk clerk
or his bell,
or the bellhop, for that matter.
Nor, could this callow youth
have guessed a hotel might express
extreme displeasure,
even threaten *him*, a guest,
with criminal arrest
like any common felon,
were he to eat the waiter
after ordering up melon.

Well, since those days
he'd opted to remain behind the scenes,
and, in the century's late teens,
concealed his greed, intentions
and ambition
while supporting women
in their fight for prohibition.
This artfully successful,
Constitution-changing ruse
earned him fortunes in the '20's
through the sale of bootleg booze.

In the '30's, auctioneering
helped him buy up bankrupt farms,
while his post-war profiteering
was black-market surplus arms.
No one in the '50's gave
more money to the Klan;
in the '60's Crockefeller was
the croc they called The Man.
In the next two decades, takeovers
and mergers were his thing,
while the '90's found him dealing
in hard drugs and publishing.

It seemed quite fitting to him, then,
to come to Washington again
to start a new endeavor on
the eve of the millennium.

So say goodbye to bogs and dunes,
said Crockefeller to his goons.
Then he, with local croco-mobsters,
through the wee-est morning hours,

**quaffed champagne, smoked big cigars,
and dined on caviar and lobsters.
ON THE TRAIN**

**All through the endless hours on the train,
Rock couldn't sleep. Again, again, again,
a dark, reptilian force,
like some rough beast
from out an ancient lair,
revisited the awful actions of that day,
and with its nails did etch deep in his soul
a track that led to vengeance,
not despair.**

**As for the moments
in between those hellish crossings,
marked by turnings and by tossings,
into memories obscene,
Rock lay as still and dim
as some uprooted tree trunk, log, or limb.
The roar and oscillations of the train
made mind and body numb,
while Crocadolly's image in his brain
was like a small, bright sun
inside a universe of pain.**

**Her musky scent, a sweet refrain
that kept the song of her alive,
played on. No other scent
would ever in him work that miracle
to turn a blood so cold to fire,
make whole marshes redolent
of Crocadolly, and desire.**

**On Rocky's back perched one
who shared in petit parallel
his heartbreak and his ire.
It was that alligator bird,
another victim of the fate
stage-managed by a croc
who didn't hesitate
to murder and manipulate.
She felt her life and self-respect
had both been wrecked
by happenings beyond
her comprehension,
or her power to affect.**

**So she had sworn,
no matter what the risk,
to stay by Rocky's head,**

**give help and never run,
until the foe was dead
and victory was won.**

ROCKADIAL IN D.C.

**Rock arrived in Washington at dawn,
and it was clear
a party had been going on.
Large tents still stood upon the Mall,
and strewn about the monuments
to well-loved former presidents
were soda cans and fast food wrappers.
Meditating hundred-lappers
ran around a tidal pool
where Rocky stopped to take a dip.**

**Just then he heard a cheerful cry
and saw some men go jogging by.
One wore a smile of good intent
and, yes, it was the president.
Seeing him was such a thrill
that then and there did Rocky swear:
Come water high or water low,
if I this nightmare do survive,
and somehow live to thirty-five,
I`ll run for U.S. president,
my platform: the environment.
Thus Dolly`s message will live on
and that will be her monument.**

**You ought to find a sauna,
said some stranger standing near.
That`s where the other crocs all go,
to warm their blood and rub their snouts
with top politicians from out
the fifty states, and YO.
Now, if you wonder how I know....**

**Oh, let me guess,
broke in the alligator bird.
You are a herpetologist.**

**Just so, replied the man, impressed.
My name is Best,
and I am usually addressed,**

**by those who know, as Dr. Best.
But here I think we have digressed.
You see, since YO became a state
(thanks to the thousands of doubloons
a certain reptile did donate
to some key legislative races),
throughout D.C. there`s been a spate
of truly downhome crocofaces,
which to me has been a boon.**

**But you look starved, said Dr. Best,
and there are rivers all about....**

**Said Rock, I don`t need
frogs or trout.
Enough is on my plate
to sate a dozen crocs like me.
Then, stepping from the pool, he
quickly found the scent
of Crockafeller near a tent
and followed it to a hotel,
approached the desk
and rang the bell.**

**When Crockafeller heard
a croc and bird
were asking for him at Reception,
he sent down word
that he was resting,
but would meet them
at the mouth of Rock Creek Park
in the hour before dark,
adding, they should come alone.**

**It doesn`t matter,
Rock assured the alligator bird
(beside herself with apprehension),
since I alone can fight my fight,
it might as well be fought tonight.
Then he, to ease her tension,
used the change from his doubloon
to buy some food
and rent a private sauna room.
And there they stayed
the long day through,
waiting for the rendezvous.**

SHOWDOWN AT ROCK CREEK

An hour before dark,
at the mouth of Rock Creek Park,
five crocodiles did meet
in a four-to-one-croc distribution.
An alligator bird was also there,
scared, but filled with resolution.
She`d already made a flight
around the park, to see,
before the fall of night,
what she could see.
She saw a playground and a zoo,
a bridle path and stable too,
and now was perched up in a tree.

Said Crockafeller to his limo driver,
Come and get us in an hour.
But while you`re gone, re-stock your bar
with fifty pounds of caviar,
a dozen magnums of champagne
and several buckets of chow mein.
And then he turned to Rockadial.

You seem to think, the old croc said,
that you`re a threat upon my life.
If this continues, I`ll see to it
you and your bird friend do rue it.

But when their eyes met, Rocky saw
his struggle now was with a force
much greater than his pa.
It was a struggle in himself
with something he had never had
to face before:
an ancient, archetypical taboo,
passed down through blood into
the dark subconscious
of a vast collective mind.
It said: *A crocodile must never kill
another of its kind.*

And it was plain as plain could be
the only vertebrate on earth that *did* this act
that every other species did abhor,
that regularly killed its kind
in private and in war,
and even celebrated this
in poetry and lore, was man.

**I think you`ll find,
Rock said, that I have other plans
to deal with you.**

**His father smiled.
And may I ask what those plans are?**

**Said Rock, I`ll drive you off so far
from all your seats of power
and great wealth,
which were amassed through
murder, lies, and stealth,
that none will ever hear of you again.
Although I swear, if killing you would
bring my Dolly back to me,
I wouldn`t hesitate to put away
my honor and my pride,
and break the strongest taboo of them all,
the one called patricide.**

**Strong words, sneered Crockefeller.
Don`t forget, my son, to get at me
you`ll have to fight not one but three.
And I do prophesy
that they will shrug off every punch,
and clean your clock
and eat your lunch,
and hang you out to dry.
And when they`re done
I`ll print your obit in *The Sun*.**

**One thing was certain,
all three crocs in question
were the most redoubtable
that Rock had ever seen.
Their jaws were cruel,
their eyes were mean,
their leather tough.
From snout to tail
they were the stuff
of which bad dreams are made.
Yet Rockadial was unafraid.
He`d suffered far too much,
and felt he had already lost
more than his life was worth
- his joy in sky and sea and earth -
to fear to die.**

**And so Rock faced the three
and told them honestly:
To stop me you will have to kill me.**

**But I warn you, it will not be easy.
Make my day, and try.**

**On hearing this, the goons looked shocked
and took young Rockadial aside.
Us *kill* you? Don` t you know
that since ten million years ago
we crocs have had a rule
against the killing of our kind?
If while we were protecting *him*,
we were obliged to butcher *you*,
we` d surely break that old taboo,
and that` s one thing we` d never do.**

**Thought Rock, I truly fear,
despite their honorable words,
these crocs are insincere.
For aren` t these three the same
who at Ye Old Revival Meeting
squeezed those gators till they cried,
then flayed their skins before they died,
to put in special bins?**

**So, Rock, they said, don` t worry about us.
Do your darndest to the guy
and be our guest.
We three feel blessed
that we can leave him here with you
while we head home.
For, though we never let it show,
we miss our wives and kids in YO.**

**Then off they went, but just as soon
as they were out of sight
they climbed into a limousine
and sped off in the night.
Because, it seems,
the three were in the pay
of mafiosi
who had told them to betray
their croco-boss
in a classic double-cross.**

**I hear you fellows played
old Crockafeller` s curtain song
like virtuosi,
they were told by one old croco-don,
reclining with dark glasses on.
When Rockadial starts in with him,
he` ll *wish* that he was dead and gone.**

**And then he smiled
at his three hick-town goons,
and promised them enough doubloons
to make them wildly rich.
And then he bade his chauffeur
take a turn-off down a road along a ditch
where they were bound with tape
from tail to nape.**

**And when they asked the reason why,
his irrefutable reply
was: Life`s a bitch and then you die.**

**At which the car door opened wide
and all three were propelled outside.
And there for two long weeks they lay,
and then were found, and hauled away.**

CROCKAFELLER`S FATE

**When Crockafeller realized
that the current distribution
was a one-on-one,
and one of these a mean old croc,
and one his gallant, unforgiving son,
he knew his time had come.**

**Get on with it, he said.
What will you have me do?**

**We`ll walk a bit, said Rock.
I hear that there`s a zoo....**

**A zoo, the old croc cried
with breaking voice.
I`ll never go into a zoo.
To be confined and on display
is worse than being dead.**

**But Crockafeller had no choice.
With Rockadial behind him
and the bird upon his head,
they walked the long park through,
and at the very minute that it opened,
found the zoo.**

**The directors were ecstatic
when they saw the monster croc,**

**a species that was lacking
in their fine reptilian stock.**

**But I`m the senator from YO,
cried Crockafeller angrily.
If you dare lay a hand on me,
I`ll see you lose your subsidy.**

**The directors hesitated,
for if what he said was true,
they could not put him in their zoo.**

**Just then a herpetologist spoke up.
I understand your grave concern,
regarding this croc`s claim,
said he, for to the untrained eye,
most crocofaces look the same,
especially a father and his son.
But I will gladly certify
the senator from YO
is *Rocky* Crockafeller,
and not Horatio.**

**And so they led old Crockafeller off,
and put him in a kind of glass aquarium.
In time he proved a popular display,
and people came from miles away
to stare at him.**

EPILOGUE

**The next day Rock was seated
on the left side of the aisle,
for he had changed his party
and become a Demodile.
The alligator bird,
who`d slept over at the zoo
(a guest of their Bird Resource Center),
had some babies with another plover
who was housed there too.
When their fledglings left the nest,
she gave her mate a peck goodbye
and flew to Rocky`s side.**

**Then this croc and alligator bird,
who`d been through bitter times together,
worked on Dolly`s legacy**

**with no let-up whatsoever.
In May they called a croco-march,
supporting eco-legislation.
Reptiles came to Washington
from every corner of the nation
(though tallies of their numbers
differed ten-to-one
between the Pulitzer-Prize-winning
Crocadolly Sun
and that conservative, infernal
tabloid called *The Wall Street Journal*).**

**Six years went by and Rock
was re-elected in a landslide.
When he reached the age of thirty-five
(by then his father, mom, and bird had died),
Rock ran for president, and won,
and four years later won again.**

**By then, he had inherited
his father`s wealth.
With still a long, long time to live,
and millions of doubloons to give
through numerous foundations,
and since he had no daughter and no son,
Rock became
the world`s first dynasty of one.**

EPILOGUE - PART *DEUX*

**As the century wore on,
Rock saw with sorrow
where the world was heading;
despite much trying,
human populations everywhere
were spreading,
displaced creatures dying.**

**In 2027, while politicians worldwide
worried about re-election,
the last surviving Bengal tiger, lacking habitat
and looked on as a dangerous pest,
took a bullet in the chest.
(After which her priceless skin
was put into a special bin.)**

**In 2032, the last black rhino,
born and raised inside a zoo,
was murdered for his horn, which,
powdered into finest dust
was stored in special tins,
and sold as aphrodisiacs
to Nipponese insomniacs.**

**In 2034, the two remaining forests,
one in Argentina, one El Salvador,
were burned, so that a burger czar
could raise some hay to graze his herds.
Indeed, the cattle grazed so well,
that two years later all that land,
where once did dwell
tree nymphs and rarest birds,
was nothing more than sand, more sand,
and cattle turds.**

**In 2045, starving human populations,
coughing in the noxious air,
tried penetrating other nations.
Those not shot by border guards,
learned to savor
every edible they found:
tree sloths, baboons,
even maggots in the ground
(which soon returned the favor).**

**In 2048, global warming
caused such floods and drought,
that half the continents were
under water, half dried out.**

**Then, in 2053, in places like
the Vineyard, Costa Rica and Nepal,
the last surviving native species
lost their war with tourist feces.**

EPILOGUE - *FIN*

**So the years went by,
and, in 2085, old Rocky was the last
remaining crocodile alive. One day,
feeling that his time had come,
he wrote an editorial
for the final issue of *The Sun*.**

**We tried, he wrote, we truly tried.
Perhaps our efforts did,
for one brief moment, help restrain
the tide of muck and murk
that has destroyed our world.
I think we must concede
(if 'we` obtains,
and anyone to read this column
still remains),
that many animals, and mankind,
had a certain flaw.**

**From a million years ago
until, let`s say, the year of 1925,
this defect did appear to be a strength
that probably evolved to help
all creatures of a hostile world survive.
But later, it did aid the human race
to grow and multiply
and eat the whole wide world alive.**

**The defect? Call it greed,
self-interest, lust for power;
the Age of Politics that it did breed,
was not our planet`s finest hour.**

**Then Rocky signed his name
and went outside
to watch the sun go down
upon the old, abandoned theme park
where once jolly humans,
dressed like dogs and mice, did romp.
It was a place that formerly
had been a swamp,
with bogs and marshes deep and wet
and scented with the musk
of Crocadolly.
Now the sun had set, and it was dusk,
and those enchanted ponds
a long, long time ago had dried.**

**Then Rock lay down upon his hillock,
and he cried.**