



# **KROH**

**the greening of a  
small planet**

**by Nina Galen**

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## ***THE PROLOGUE***

**Not so long ago from now  
a space ship went from Earth to Kroh,  
a planet long ignored by one and all.**

**For though it lay  
but one light week away,  
and was inhabited  
by creatures thought to be  
intelligent as men,  
whose air was oxygen,  
who lived, like us, on land and sea,  
Kroh failed to stir our curiosity  
as did the moon and Mars.**

**Those rocky spheres among our stars,  
each with vistas sharp and spare,  
peopled by a greenish race  
that made their lair  
in every crevice and canal  
and rode their UFO`s  
like perfect hellions,  
abducting dozens of Roswellians,  
remained our endlessly  
renewable frontiers.**

**Whereas Kroh, a planet reckoned at  
a billion population,  
its rocks worn smooth  
by creatures walking, and some sitting,  
this late into its faunal evolution  
lacked baseball parks and football fields  
and evidence of air pollution.**

**On the night Kroh was discovered  
(by a boy named Marvin Kroh),  
the planet, swimming in a distant sky,  
was contacted by hackers  
and sent back this strange reply:  
*Yeah sure. Feel free.  
Come right on up. BYOB.***

**Let`s fight that bunch of losers,  
cried the pundits on TV;  
send those tedious non-boozers  
to a place called History.**

**Smiled the right-wing politicians,  
This is when it makes good sense  
to take billions out of Schooling  
to bestow upon Defense.  
But alas, their legislation,  
like an innocent mosquito,  
got slapped down late one Friday  
by a presidential veto.**

**So after that the journalists  
and Congress did agree  
they`d better forget war  
and keep their waking hours free  
to monitor the DOW and NASDAQ  
and the S&P,  
plus those emerging markets  
and Japan`s economy.**

**The years went by until one night  
a young teacher of astronomy,  
wishing on the evening star  
for his grant to be approved,  
realized that if making money and not war  
was what man was put here for,  
astronomy could lead the nation.**

**In an instant he`d rewritten  
his entire application,  
named his project  
'Inter-Global Market Hunting`.  
The result? Was given funding  
that surpassed all expectation  
to construct a modest space ship  
and take experts off to Kroh,  
to learn if that small planet  
was politically ripe,  
its currencies robust enough  
and of a stripe  
to enter into trade relations  
with the Earth and all its nations.**

**His blue-ribbon Delegation  
was a rainbow; had some humans,  
had a Duck from Washington, D.C.,  
two Crocodiles from YO,  
and what they all were feeling  
ranged from horror to delight  
to find themselves en route to Kroh  
one starry, starry night.**

# **PART ONE:**

## **THE JOURNEY**

### ***THE SPACE SHIP***

**It was a ship designed for speed  
and cheap to build.**

**To keep the voyagers and crew  
from floating, as the ship flew  
far from fields of gravitation,  
there was Velcro.**

**This allowed the Delegation  
(with that Duck, who wore it on his feet)  
to sit and stick to any seat  
(especially the toilet,  
without concern they might  
float off a bit, and miss, and soil it).**

**The living space had been equipped  
for passengers of every genus,  
from the longest, lowest, fattest  
to the uprightest and leanest.  
For those who liked to watch  
galactic stars shoot by,  
panoramic windows lined each side.  
And even in the rest room at the rear,  
a porthole underneath one vent  
let a passenger observe,  
while seated on his Velcroed bum,  
the starry way that he had come  
the whole time that he went.**

**(Reader, for these earthy details  
we are sorry.**

**In the future precious few,  
and only those unarguably true,  
will be included in our story.**

**Normally upon these pages  
strict propriety prevails;  
this is not *Candide*, *The Simpsons*,  
or *The Canterbury Tales*.)**

## ***THE DELEGATION***

**The members of the Delegation,  
each aboard by invitation,  
were all Americans.**

**For Congress felt, and rightly so,  
since voter taxes  
underwrote the expedition,  
and our Astronomer began it,  
U.S. interests should outweigh  
all other on the planet.**

**The humans came from different fields  
and were as many as sixteen.**

**We will not try to list them here,  
for we are not inclined to waste our time  
attempting to make sixteen  
wildly different occupations rhyme  
when, anyway, they`ll soon appear.**

**(If still you will insist  
that we reveal this nonsense,  
refer you to this volume`s CONTENTS.)**

**And then there were those frightened Crocs  
who couldn`t comprehend their luck.**

**And then there was that Duck.**

## ***THE DUCK***

**The Duck from Washington, D.C.,  
a world-renowned celebrity,  
was not a mallard, canvasback,  
or green-winged teal.**

**No, Sam was hatched  
a simple barnyard fowl,  
all white, with yellow bill.**

**And yet this ordinary duck  
had had a marvelous career.  
Beginning at an eastern daily  
as a lowly copy duck,  
Sam Donal waddled  
up the ranks, dabbling  
in all kinds of muck.  
His big break came the night  
that he reported (live)  
one thousand Russian tanks  
were speeding down I-95.  
This information did so terrify the nation  
- and his tears of fright so charmed it -  
overnight he was a hero.**

**So what if he was wrong'in his reporting?  
So what if those nocturnal streams  
were only armored trucks transporting  
foreign-made components  
to a striking auto plant?  
So what if Sam had later to recant?  
From this one happy slip  
his fame and name would come.**

**And what a name it was!  
By blind dumb luck,  
just one week past  
he`d changed his name  
from Donal to McDonalduck,  
a moniker more fit by far  
for one become a superstar.**

**The offers that now came his way  
were legion, and he grabbed  
the best job in the region:  
anchor Duck at CBA.  
His yearly pay?  
Eight million bucks.  
Sam had become, in short,  
the wealthiest of ducks.  
Still, feeling he had more to say,  
and having free time in the day,  
he took a second job as  
White House correspondent Duck  
at half again the pay,  
became a D.C. resident,  
and soon was seen on every TV screen  
quacking questions at the president.**



**Yet this assignment  
taking him to outer space  
was the greatest of Sam`s long career,  
and he gave it top priority.  
For it would earn him seven million bucks,  
and help advance the cause of ducks,  
who still, in prime time news,  
were a minority.**

## ***THE COUNTDOWN AND THE BLAST-OFF***

**The young Astronomer,  
pleased that everyone  
had boarded in a timely way,  
asked the Delegation  
to assemble in a forward bay.  
Said he, The countdown has begun.  
I would suggest that anyone  
who needs to use the pot,  
should run right now and do it.**

**The shrink, a venerable wheeze  
(who had already cut the cheese,  
and everybody knew it),  
decided he had better go,  
but stayed so long upon the throne  
(not having yet resolved  
his problem with retention),  
that as the minutes ticked away  
all felt some apprehension.**

**With only fourteen seconds  
on the clock when finally  
the john was free,  
McDonalduck stood up. Shrugged he,  
I`m going in there anyway.  
A Duck who makes  
twelve million bucks a year  
(and seven million to be here),  
should feel quite free to pee  
whenever he might want to pee.  
They certainly  
will hold the countdown till I`m done.**

**Alas, no sooner had he climbed up,  
squatted, and begun,  
there came a mighty blast.**

**It wasn't something Sam had passed.  
It was the space ship lifting off so fast  
the Duck was pressed against the pot.**

**Oh, well, he still could see,  
as off they went,  
God`s stellar panoply  
through that small porthole by the vent.  
Indeed, just minutes into flight  
McDonalduck could plainly see,  
as none before him ever had,  
the earth and other planets  
rotating around the sun.  
Around the *sun*? Egad!  
What a surprise!  
Then there was no sunset or *rise*?  
Is this a scoop or *what*?**

**It clearly was the biggest story  
man or duck had ever nailed  
since whatsisname had sailed  
from Spain and found  
the earth was round.  
Then, reaching for his micro-cam,  
he realized...*damn*,  
he`d left the film behind!  
Thought Sam, Well, never mind,  
I`m not yet dead,  
I`ll use the mobile phone instead.  
So with the cell phone hid  
beneath his feathery toupee,  
Sam sent the word direct to CBA:  
EARTH ROTATES AROUND SUN!**

**And by the time  
the gravities that pressed on him  
had dropped from ten to none,  
and he had pooped and pooped again  
and pulled the chain to flush it on its way,  
his scoop already had been flashed  
around the earth,  
so that in seconds everybody knew,  
from TV screens and Website pages,  
of that journalistic coup  
that made our Sam a living legend  
and a Duck for all the ages.**

## ***A WORD ABOUT...KROH***

**There were on Kroh one billion souls,  
plus twenty-four who had  
the ways and tongues of men.  
Each century the number of these  
'Mentians` dropped,  
and it was clear that if their number  
dropped again,  
the Krohtians who in little ways  
resembled men, would disappear.**

**The billion population  
looked substantially alike, were plump  
and covered with a yellow fluff.  
In short, they were the stuff  
that teddy bears are made of  
and that no one  
(even should they growl and huff)`s  
afraid of.**

**The Krohtians were a simple, trusting lot,  
ate manna every morning,  
washed it down with dew,  
and had no need for shirt or smock  
or sock or shoe.  
They did like sunning on a smoothish rock,  
looking at the miracle  
of sunlight on the sand,  
and wondering about that bearded, tall,  
two-legged guy who way back when  
- could it have been 3000 years ago? -  
arrived on Kroh.**

**The tall one, so it seems,  
had come with friends  
who were so taken with the charms  
of Kroh`s soft, fuzzy, female population,  
they couldn`t wait to plant their seed.  
While this went on, the bearded stranger,  
who appeared to lack that need  
(preferring, for himself, self-flagellation),  
performed some magic tricks  
and lectured long and well.  
Though what he talked about  
no one could tell. They simply  
couldn`t understand his tongue,  
not even words like 'God` and 'Son`.**

**And then one day the stranger died.  
At the time, some Krohtians half suspected**

he`d been crucified and resurrected.  
But, whatever had occurred,  
they all now did agree  
that since the stranger came to call  
Kroh hadn`t been the same at all.

## ***THE GALLEY***

The larders, shelves,  
and freezers of the ship  
were liberally stocked with things to eat  
for humans, ducks and crocs.

Behind the pantry locks  
were veggies, fruit, live crabs,  
and *cuisses de frog*,  
five different breeds of frozen dog,  
whole zebra loins and tails of ox  
to tempt the fussiest of crocs.

To keep their food, their drink and snacks  
from floating freely in the air,  
they ate and drank from plastic sacks  
and space bowls made of Tupperware.

Each morn they ended nightly fasts  
with eggs from laying hens,  
at noon drank wine with steak or roast,  
at night had caviar on toast.

To feed the Duck,  
a dozen bags of unpopped corn  
were stowed on board.

Of course, McDonalduck did rightly scorn  
- said he *abhorred* - such rustic fare,  
preferred black caviar and Scottish hare.  
Still, Velcroed in his bed at night,  
in secrecy, with appetite,  
the Duck did pour those kernels down,  
remembering, with smile and frown,  
the hardships, trials - and distant charm -  
of ducklinghood on master`s farm.

## ***EN ROUTE***

**The first day of the flight was great,  
but after that, all stars began to look alike.**

**They saw the Dippers  
and Orion`s Belt disintegrate  
within a void of black.**

**Then all the constellations of the Zodiac  
did come undone,  
and even the Astronomer  
could not determine which was star  
and which was sun.**

**Although the food  
(donated by a company desiring publicity)  
at first kept spirits high,  
the travelers began to fear  
the only trait they all did share  
was *being* there.**

**And so a dreary disconnection  
spread throughout the group,  
with one exception: Sam McDonalduck.**

**Said he, If we take turns and tell the tales  
of who we are and why we`ve come,  
we could work through this tedium.**

**The idea pleased them, but alas,  
the first to volunteer  
was that one horse`s ass  
they *didn`t* want to hear,  
the right-wing Politician, Michael Jones,  
whose stated mission was to broaden  
his name recognition.**

**Asked several of the Delegation,  
Man, isn`t there some *other* thing  
that you could do,  
like go up front and bore the crew?**

**And so Mike went,  
but found the crew already bored,  
and so it wasn`t time well spent.**

## ***THE PHILOSOPHER***

**When Mike had left,  
Philosopher Bill James stood up.  
He was a man of average mien,  
his hair was combed,  
his glance was keen.  
He wore a suit of grey,  
and with his power tie  
(red dots upon a field of yellow),  
looked the very model  
of a corporate goodfellow.**

**Said he, I`m working for a company  
that exports Beauty, Happiness, and Truth.  
It`s called Pragmatics, Inc.  
We`re paid to think,  
but not to endlessly engage  
in metaphysical dispute  
on every sort of absolute.  
No, no, we deal in action and results.  
And then, to make sure these  
do perfectly combine,  
we test our theories on the bottom line.**

**I think that what you mean,  
spoke up the CEO,  
is that, if Truth be told,  
there`s nothing on the earth  
more Beautiful than gold,  
and Happiness begins  
when profits rise tenfold.**

**That`s Pragmatism in a nutshell  
nodded James,  
a system of philosophy  
American as apple pie.  
We do not waste our time discussing Ethics,  
where our clients go to when they die,  
or if they wise men be or fools;  
we leave that to philosophers  
of other schools.**

**Then spake the Duck:  
I`ve heard of your Pragmatics, Inc.  
You export theme parks, isn`t it the truth?**

**As true as Truth can be,  
said Billy James, agreeably.**

**Is not your stock at 33?**

**I think you`re right,  
unless it went up overnight.**

**Do you intend to sell  
theme parks on Kroh?  
the dedicated journalist pursued.**

**I do not know, and if I did I would not say.  
For though we`re far away,  
afloat in space and time,  
insider trading`s still a crime.**

**I`ll cut you in,  
Sam whispered in his ear.**

**In that case, yes, the pragmatist replied.  
We hope to sell them three or four a year.  
But don`t forget, you didn`t hear it here.**

**I`ve gotta go, said Sam to all the rest.  
I`ll be right back. Then, when alone,  
Sam opened up his mobile phone  
and to his broker back on earth did say,  
Al, buy 5000 Prag today.  
And then he called up CBA  
to break the scoop about a deal  
Pragmatics, Inc. had closed,  
to sell each year  
a dozen theme parks to the Krohs  
for some ten-figure sum they`d not disclose.**

**Then Sam returned  
to where the others waited,  
tossed back a plastic sack of brew,  
and no one knew  
the coup  
he celebrated.**

## ***THE CROCS***

**It was clear to all on board  
that there were two  
(besides, perhaps, the crew)  
who hated being there.  
These were the Crocodiles,  
such shy and gentle quadrupeds  
that all believed them newlyweds.**

**Alas, not so,  
for when McDonalduck, to break the ice,  
began to delve into their facts of life,  
he quickly learned  
that they were not a Croc and wife.**

**We met last Tuesday, said the male,  
whose name was Lash,  
on that long-running show *The Mating Game*.  
In case you don` t already know,  
the format goes like so:  
A female has to choose a mate  
between three bachelors,  
and her selection`s based upon replies  
to several questions  
that she poses to the guys.**

**What kind of questions, asked the Duck?**

**Oh, good ones, said young Lash.  
Like, if I came to take her on a date,  
and her dad opened up the door,  
and when I shook his foot (or hand or paw)  
it fell right off, what would I do?**

**Good question, nodded Sam,  
and wrote it down. And so  
your answers won her heart?**

**Not really, blushed Ms. Cocadile,  
but Lash, you see, appeared to be  
the only croc among the three.  
The other two were men,  
one white, one not.  
Well, call me stupid, call me square,  
I felt I didn` t dare throw in my lot  
with anyone outside my genus,  
just in case there was no place  
to interface between us.**

**You ought to be ashamed, said Sam,  
who saw the headline forming in his brain:  
BIGOTRY ON MATING GAME!  
SHE SPURNS BLACK FOR ONE OF OWN.  
So how did you and whatsisname  
get way up here?**

**Well, Lash and I had never flown.  
We thought our prize might be  
a limo ride to Disney World  
or some such other happy place.**



**Instead, they hurled us into outer space,  
all Velcroed underneath from snout to tail.  
We`re terrified that should Lash  
hug me to his heart,  
we might never pull apart.**

**The startling image  
that her fears had wrought,  
gave them all some food for thought.**

### ***MEANWHILE, UP ON KROH...***

**The imminent arrival of a space ship  
thrilled the Krohtians.  
Rocks and pebbles lying motionless  
for decades, now were picked up, dusted,  
turned around, and readjusted  
into patterns pleasing to the eye.**

**Speculation on the nature  
of the Earthling mission  
dominated contemplation –  
what the strangers walked like,  
ate and drank, were they smooth or haired,  
even what diseases they might bring.  
Not that anybody cared.  
For Kroh had friendly germs  
that guarded them both day and night.  
Some grew as large as pit bulls,  
growled, were full of fight,  
whereas others were so small  
they hardly seemed like germs at all.**

**The 24-strong Mentian population,  
expecting to engage their guests  
in social conversation,  
devoted one entire week  
to polishing their Earthspeak,  
reading scriptures,  
practicing badminton and croquet  
and, in short, in every way,  
prepared themselves for Landing Day.**

## ***THE BIO-PROSPECTOR***

**While everybody knew what a General,  
a Rabbi, and a Navajo were for,  
all were curious about the Bio-Pro prospector,  
and urged that Delegate to take the floor.**

**Ned Bunter was a man with rugged face,  
was short and thin,  
a fellow who could easily fit in  
the smallest space.  
And that `s felicitous, said he,  
for one who wants to be  
a microbe hunter, which is what I am.**

**What kind of microbes  
do you hunt? asked Sam.  
And why and where?**

**We hunt them, Bunter said,  
at temperature extremes,  
inside of glaciers, in volcanic rock  
beneath the ice that teems  
with microscopic life.  
It `s there we find extremophiles so old,  
so focused and expedient,  
that Time itself becomes  
their primary ingredient.**

**We hunt them too  
in nuclear reactor cores.  
We go in submarines  
down to the ocean floors  
where thermal chimneys from  
the earth `s hot core  
raise water temps to  
three hundred degrees and more.**

**Observed the Duck,  
To me, it seems impossible  
that life can live in such extremes.**

**But, Ned replied, remember, Sam,  
that when the earth began  
it was a boiling sea.  
All sorts of life was born of this,  
including man.  
Some calculate that Eden must have been  
as hot as Hades;  
that the DNA of Adam  
must have burned like hot macadam**

when he visited the ladies.  
(I refer, of course, to Lilith and to Eve,  
in which so many good Americans believe.)

Sam scratched his pate, then asked, confused,  
For what the devil are these microbes *used*?

For making medicines, said Bunter,  
and detergents too.  
I bio-prospect for a firm called Sudsless, Inc.  
whose products help you wash your clothes  
at lower temps in tub or sink.  
And Sam, I have a hunch that up on Kroh  
I'll find a bunch of local germs containing  
enzymes of a type to get Kroh's x-teen billion  
shirts and socks and shorts a dazzling white  
in water cold as cold (which as you know  
could save those Krohtians quite a lot  
when measured by the kilowatt).  
And then, when I get home,  
I'll spend my bonus on a yacht.

Said Sam, I've heard  
good things of Sudsless, Inc.  
Their stock's at 51, I think.

Yessir, said Ned, you could be right,  
unless it went up overnight.

McDonalduck then told the rest to carry on,  
while he went off to use the pho...uh...john.

## ***THE REVEREND AND THE RABBI***

The hours sped  
as on through space they flew.  
To be well-entertained and fed  
is what most voyagers aspire to,  
so these were quite content.

The morning of day four,  
Evangelist Tom Beal  
and Rabbi Becky Schwister took the floor.  
They had been asked to get up side by side,  
were given strict time limits,  
and told to speak in alternating minutes.  
Why all these rules?  
The Delegation members were no fools.

**All said they`d rather be lobotomized or dead  
instead of what they most abhorred:  
captive, proselytized and bored.**

**And too, since everybody knew  
that Jew and Christian  
(following a long tradition)  
viewed each other with suspicion,  
more as rivals than as sister or as brother,  
all felt it would be much more fun  
to watch one going at the other.**

**Beal, of whom they all had heard,  
arose, and quickly gave his word  
that *he`d* not try to stretch his time.  
Indeed, all knew the last 'time`  
that he`d opted not to 'stretch`  
was not in minutes, but in years -  
a stretch he`d served  
with other racketeers  
inside a jail. For Beal,  
despite his virtuous convictions  
and divine connections,  
had been convicted  
of the spending of donations  
from his vast, adoring, TV congregation,  
not on good works, charity and such,  
but on a mansion down in Texas,  
and a mistress and a Lexus.**

**Even Lash and Coca knew  
that Beal`s TV career was through.  
That he, an object of derision,  
had been banned from raising funds  
or praising God on television.**

**But, said Beal,  
the Savior has forgiven me.  
Last month He gave a sign  
that I should be an inter-global missionary,  
told me I should fly to Kroh  
and let those heathens know  
that if they truly will believe  
that He did come from high above  
with truth and love,  
and died atoning for their sins,  
and if they will obey God`s laws  
to honor father, mother, sister, wife,  
and give donations to our Cause,  
they will receive eternal life.**

**So saying, Reverend Beal did send  
a smile of triumph toward  
the Rabbi, Becky Schwister,  
as if to say, Top that one, sister.**

**But Sam McDonalduck could not resist  
to jump right in as journalist  
and ask Tom Beal,  
Did He upon the cross atone  
for *Krohtian* sins as well?**

**Of course, Beal easily replied.  
I`m sure that if you dig into the history of Kroh,  
you`ll find a kind of parallel.  
You`ll find an apple and a tree,  
a woman, man and serpent too,  
you`ll find a sin, a fall from grace,  
a need to save the Krohtian race.  
And since Christ can`t be everywhere at once,  
or die in agony a thousand times  
upon a thousand crosses,  
clearly He preferred to cut His losses,  
die just once for half Jerusalem to see,  
then leave it up to Matt and Luke  
and guys like me, to spread the word  
throughout the universe and history.**

**I see, responded Sam, and made a note.  
And now it`s Rabbi Schwister`s turn.**

**Said she, I recently did learn  
that there may be on Kroh  
a group called Mensch  
or, in the plural, Menschen.  
As some of you may know,  
in German and in Yiddish  
this word means human being.  
It is my theory that these Menschen  
are diasporatic Jews,  
perhaps descendants of Hebrews  
who in a kind of mass ascension  
went to Kroh as many as  
three thousand years ago,  
though how or why I do not know.  
It could have been to flee  
some feudal intervention,  
like a pogrom or an inquisition.**

**Anyway, it`s my intention  
and my mission,  
wheresoe`er my people roam,**

**on land or sea or Kroh or foam,  
to find them all and bring them home.**

**So saying, Rabbi Schwister raised her chin  
and flung a glance at Reverend Beal  
as if to say, Your turn, schlemiel.**

**McDonalduck was so impressed  
by these displays of piety and erudition,  
he blurted out the sad admission  
that the Bible was a book he`d never read.**

**It seems that as a duckling,  
Sam had found it easier  
to spread upon the ground and read  
a quarterly called *Plough & Seed*.  
This fascinating tract inspired Sam,  
a duck who only swam and quacked,  
to seek another form of self-expression,  
and led him to the news profession.**

**But who can tell?  
Perhaps, had he back then  
the opportunity to read God`s word,  
he might well have preferred  
to lead a congregation,  
and become the richest pulpiteer  
on any network TV station.**

**I`ve heard, said Sam,  
that God created man.  
But did he also create ducks?  
For that is what I am.**

**Of course, replied the Rabbi.  
Let me see. If ducks are birds,  
I think he made them on day five.  
But if they are domesticates,  
like cows and dogs and chicks,  
he probably created them,  
along with men and crocodiles,  
the next day, which was six.**

**Sam turned to Reverend Beal.  
Do ducks have souls? he asked.  
And if so, are there men like you  
or ducks somewhere, who  
spread the word  
that true-believing waterfowl  
can go to heaven too?**

**These were questions neither Beal  
nor Schwister`d ever heard.**

**It being lunch time, he demurred  
to answer them without  
a great deal more reflection.  
Meanwhile, he concurred  
with her suggestion  
that after lunch the floor should go  
to the Psychiatrist, the Poet  
or the Navajo.**

## ***THE PSYCHIATRIST***

**The midday meal was great,  
but after each had licked his plate  
(or spoon, or bill),  
and had together drained  
two kegs of brew on tap,  
they all were dying for a nap.  
And so they voted  
to wake up again at four,  
at which time Dr. Harry Fink,  
the shrink, would take the floor.**

**The hours passed.  
When all had ceased to snore,  
up stood the wheeze.  
I couldn't help but note, said he  
(in accents noticeably Viennese),  
that when it comes to matters of religion,  
there often seems  
some competition, or division,  
between the Christians and the Jews.  
I think this is because Christ is perceived  
to be the Son of God.**

**Now, happy as a father/son  
relationship can be,  
there may occur  
(no matter if the birth is virgin),  
eine kleine jealousy,  
what Freud has called  
*ein Komplex Oedipal*.  
I cannot think that Jesus took it well  
to be forsaken on a cross.  
Was this his father's way  
of showing who was boss?  
If so, it didn't work.**

**The story goes,  
that from his tomb the son arose  
and flew to heaven`s highest throne  
to head a new religion of his own.  
For this he stole his father`s title, God.  
And then, as often is the case,  
the son not only did replace  
but did outpace his pa,  
attracting possibly, by now,  
two billion true believers.  
And of this number quite a few  
did persecute the Jew,  
crusaded against Muslims too,  
and colonized the Hindu.**

**When Fink was through,  
they all looked blank.  
Not one had ever heard  
a summing up so frank.  
Was this Psychiatrist some sort of crank?**

**The only one to speak was Lash.  
Said he, I never knew my reptile dad.  
A foster home is all I had.  
But if I ever find the man who had the gall  
to kidnap me when I was small,  
I`ll fight him, and defeat him,  
and when he`s drowned I`ll eat him.**

**On hearing this, the shrink did muse,  
I never had a son myself,  
but once, in YO, I found  
a little croc upon the ground  
and took it home and raised it like a son.  
But when the crocodile  
grew large enough to challenge me  
with tooth and guile,  
I thought on Oedipus awhile,  
and when there came a heavy rain,  
I pushed it down a sewer drain.  
The doctor sighed.  
Said he, I hope you see  
that even a Psychiatrist like me,  
can be a victim of psychology.**

**As Dr. Fink made his admission,  
a look of recognition  
filled the young Croc`s eyes.  
Alas, as he was starting to arise  
and take a step, Lash caught**



his Velcroed tail and chin  
upon the carpeting,  
and to his terrible chagrin  
got stuck fast in the middle of the floor.  
Then, seeing his beloved Coca smile,  
the awkward Crocodile  
just shut his eyes, scrunched down,  
and moved no more.

So why, Sam asked the shrink,  
are you en route to Kroh?  
Are you researching something  
that the rest of us should know?

I have a theory, answered Fink. I think,  
from evidence I have amassed,  
the Krohtian ego may have crashed  
as long as thirty centuries ago,  
though how or why I do not know.  
But it is *klar*  
from what we have observed so far  
(concerning lack of team sports,  
smokestack factories, and such),  
that Krohtians are completely out of touch  
with any sort of competition.

What I would like to learn  
is what a creature *thinks* all day,  
without ambition  
or the stresses and distractions  
of stock markets, politics, and war,  
of sports, illicit sex,  
and every other need and yen  
that aggravate  
our three-score years and ten.

I don` t know why, but I suspect  
that you, my friends, and I,  
would simply *die*  
without our daily dose of television,  
shows that terrify us, make us laugh or cry,  
or make us seethe  
with feelings of deep loathing and derision.  
I know that when I watch the nightly news,  
and see you, dear McDonalduck,  
pontificate, insinuate,  
express your shallow views,  
I feel the pressure of my blood rise up  
until I almost lose my mind!  
And yet I find, and do admit,  
I am so hooked, that every day

**I turn the knob to CBA  
and risk an apoplectic fit.**

**McDonalduck was pleased  
by what he`d heard.  
I do my best, he modestly averred,  
to make my listeners return for more.  
They do not pay a Duck  
twelve million bucks a year to be a bore.  
And if you want to know,  
my mission is to pave the way for CBA  
to that huge market up on Kroh.**

## ***A GENERAL DISCUSSION***

**(Including the Real Estate Developer,  
the Cartographer, the Geologist,  
the Economist, and the Duck.)**

**Thanks to their frank debates,  
the ice had broken.  
The Delegates agreed  
that those who`d spoken  
had done well.  
But now their space ship  
was approaching Kroh,  
the tension growing,  
and all felt it was the time  
for some to ask informally  
what they most wished to know.**

**I wish to know,  
said Real Estate Developer  
Ms. Tessie Rubble,  
as she adjusted her blue blazer,  
whether Kroh has cities, suburbs,  
coastlines, hills and lakes.  
And if she has, by just what standards  
should an Earth person appraise her?  
Admittedly, I should have researched this  
before I came, but at the time  
was being driven half insane  
by a lawsuit down in Texas:  
'Wetlands vs Multiplexes`.  
The odds against us everybody thought  
were ten to none,  
but, praise the Lord, we won.**

**On hearing this, another traveler joined in.  
My name, said he, is Jack Perone.  
My specialty is that branch of cartography  
that deals with planets other than our own.  
I`m glad to tell Ms. Rubble  
that not very long ago,  
a space ship carrying a Hubble  
photographed the planet Kroh.  
She does have cities, six in all,  
with buildings tens of meters tall.  
There were no highways to be found,  
which indicates that Krohtians have the skill  
to put mass transit underground.**

**Then he went on,  
the planet has four continents,  
three oceans and a hill.  
Even with ecologists to litigate each sale,  
a charming alien like you  
would certainly prevail.**

**All chuckled as Ms. Rubble blushed,  
and then the room got hushed  
to hear another Delegate.**

**His face was weathered, his suit tweedy,  
his leather elbow patches genteelly seedy.  
His dark blue shirt was polyester drip-dry,  
and around his collar  
was a skinny, beaded, string tie.**

**Said he, my name is Steven Clift,  
and I`m the chief Geologist  
at Continental Plate & Drift,  
a firm who`s name and logo  
you are surely all familiar with.  
My special disciplines are mineralogy,  
petrology, and groundwater geology.  
And I am sure you folks already know,  
or have an educated guess,  
what I`ll be doing up on Kroh.**

**While Clift was speaking, Sam was in a state.  
He owned a thousand shares  
of Continental Plate.  
Should he buy more before it was too late?**

**So, said the Duck, will you inform us  
if you find some pricey ore,  
or will we have to suffer through a wait eternal,  
and read it in *The Wall Street Journal*?**

**At this, up spoke Economist Ben Carter.  
Before, said he, we start to dream  
of profit and of gain,  
before we scrutinize each inch of Kroh`s terrain  
and measure, weigh and chart her,  
we have to ascertain  
that Krohtians have hard currencies,  
and do not deal in sea shells, scrip, or barter.**

**For all we know, the planet Kroh  
could be a globe of solid gold.  
Of course, should this be so,  
following Sam`s urgent news flash  
Earth`s economy might crash.  
The first catastrophe would be  
when ingots piled up in Fort Knox,  
in Krugerland, and underneath Red Square  
became as valueless as rocks.  
A thing is precious only when it`s rare.**

**On hearing this, McDonalduck,  
defying lack of gravity, leaped on a chair.  
We journalists believe  
that people have a right to know,  
and it`s our duty to bring everything to light.  
Like, did the president  
approve the burglary that night,  
trade arms for hostages,  
or have a love affair?  
A journalist will proudly air  
the least substantiated rumors.  
Yet, had *I* to make the call  
on whether to announce to all  
that Kroh is made of gold,  
and risk the possibility  
that Earth`s economy would fold,  
I swear, this Duck would hold his quack.  
So put away your fears.  
At *most*, he`d take some pebbles back  
as souvenirs.**

## ***THE POET AND THE CEO***

**When Sam was done,  
a thin, morose, young man  
named Terry Wright, a Poet,  
who`d never eaten half so well**

**in all his life as on this trip  
(although his manner didn't show it),  
coughed, to indicate  
that he had something to relate.**

**But when the others looked at him,  
they saw with some dismay  
that his white shirt was grey  
and that his cuffs showed fray.  
Why was he on the ship?  
Because the young Astronomer,  
whose name was Rip,  
had wanted it that way.**

**I'm off to Kroh, said Wright,  
but not on some evangelizing mission,  
or to reap a monetary gain.  
No, my reason's plain.  
I'm simply tired of the Earth.  
Little do I see in nature that is worth  
what it was worth the moment of my birth.  
I've lived but one-score years,  
and yet I know where're I go  
that there have passed away  
a thousand glories from the earth.**

**Unlike our uncle, Wordsworth,  
did *my* generation come  
trailing clouds of smoke  
from hell, which is our womb.  
And so I'm on my way to Kroh  
to find a better world, or find a tomb.**

**At this, up spoke the CEO,  
whose name was Arnold Robb.  
Said he, I have a son called Bob  
who is, like you, just one-score...wait...  
I think...oh, hell, I'd have to say  
the kid is one-score years and three  
if he's a day.  
Bob owns a Harley and an SUV,  
and you can bet I've never heard *him* whine.  
He doesn't lie around and pine  
for what he thinks he cannot get.  
He spends his time  
at futures trading on the Internet.  
My boy, you should be more like Bob;  
get on the Net or find a job.**

**And then he laughed.  
Perhaps you've never noticed**

**the condition of your pants and shirt.  
Or do you fear dry cleaning them  
would set off an ozone alert?**

**Replied the youth,  
A wise man gave me some advice.  
He was a banker by profession.  
I met him at a time when  
I was under the impression  
I could get a bank loan  
and thus better my condition.  
But my collateral was text.**

**The man did not show me the door  
or tell his secretary  
whom to send in next.  
He carefully explained to me  
if there be rich there must be poor,  
just like, if there be hot there must be cold,  
if peace, then war, if bought, then sold.**

**So, though he turned down my appeal,  
I didn't feel he'd given me the boot.  
He made me see  
a man can serve a social purpose  
higher than his poesy,  
just by being destitute.  
I felt he really gave a hoot.**

**And then this banker turned,  
picked up his ringing phone,  
and maybe just to prove to me  
his absolute consistency  
and strict impartiality,  
he gave a guy he'd never met  
a million-dollar loan.**

**The Poet smiled.  
Who knows, old boy, he told the CEO.  
Perhaps when this strange trip is done,  
by which time I'll be twenty-one,  
I'll go back home and follow your advice.  
I'll sacrifice my melancholy and my theme,  
I'll put aside my dream  
of meadow, grove and stream  
apparelled in celestial light.  
And then, like you and sonny,  
I'll occupy myself with money –  
learn where money comes from,  
where it goes,  
why it stagnates,**

where it flows,  
why devalues,  
how it grows.  
And once I know,  
I`ll write a story about money  
using *New York Times* official prose,  
or find some even drier way to tell it.  
And then I`ll hold my nose  
and try to sell it.

When Terry Wright was done,  
it wasn`t clear  
if he`d been serious or cavalier.  
Before one Delegate  
could think of what to say,  
word came that caviar  
was being served up in the dining bay.  
Not because the Poet was a bore  
was everyone so keen to dash;  
they simply wished to eat some more.  
But there...oh dear!...was Lash,  
still Velcroed to the floor.

A member of the crew was called  
to undo the disaster.  
He grabbed the poor Croc by the tail  
and faster than the eye could see  
gave one quick tug  
that ripped Lash off the rug  
like an adhesive plaster.  
Without a pause the crewman flipped him,  
stripped him of the band of Velcro  
lining him from snout to tush,  
gave the Croc a little push,  
at which, to everyone`s relief,  
Lash floated toward his Cocadile  
who reached out with a loving smile  
and drew him near.

And there the two Crocs clung and kissed,  
and never knew what meals they missed.

## ***THE GENERAL AND THE NAVAJO***

The General looked trim and smart.  
Her skirt came just below the knees,  
and on her heart,

**instead of brooches, bows  
and other female ostentations,  
stood three sober rows  
of military decorations.**

**Said she, whose name was Dora Battle,  
I don` t engage in idle prattle.  
The purpose of my trip  
is classified top secret  
and I don` t intend to leak it.  
But, before you all begin  
to enter in wild speculation  
on why I and my assistant,  
Private Rabbit Stalker,  
are aboard this ship,  
you ought to know  
that there is precedent  
for meaningful collaboration  
between General and Navajo.**

**In the year of `42,  
the United States Marines  
inducted and instructed  
hundreds of brave Navajos  
on how to transmit military data  
on field radios.  
Rabbit`s granddad, Coyote Stalker,  
was a Navajo `Code Talker`.  
Their native tongue was so obscure  
the Japs could not translate it,  
much less stop it.  
So why are we en route to Kroh?  
You` ll never know,  
and so, just drop it.**

**When the General sat down,  
McDonalduck stood up.  
His heart was full.  
Military secrets were to him  
just so much bull.  
Any journalist could see  
that all the stuff  
on Navajos in World War II  
was just a bluff,  
a mist, a clever ploy  
to hide a taxpayer-paid tryst  
between an officer and boy.**

**And so he said, I cannot think  
what secret, nowadays, an Indian  
and General could share.**



**The Earth, that one calls mother,  
is exactly what the other  
seeks to blow into the air  
or overlay with surplus junk.  
And yet, since opposites attract  
- or so they say -  
one thing a General and Navajo  
might share today  
would be a bunk.**

**At this the private turned so pale,  
the General did blush so bright,  
it wasn't clear which was the Redskin,  
which the White.**

**You've gone too far!  
exclaimed the Delegation.  
Even you, a Duck,  
should know you've sullied both the army  
and a noble Indian nation.  
How dare a Duck infer that Private Stalker  
is the General's own 'pillow talker'?**

**Shrugged the journalist,  
Inference is proof enough.  
I'll bet my reputation CBA will air this stuff  
and give me thanks.  
Sexual harassment in the ranks  
our viewers find most titillating.  
It drives up our Nielsen rating.**

**Heaven help us, sighed the wheeze,  
for now we're privileged to know  
the TV sleaze we'll find awaiting  
when we all return from Kroh.**

## ***THE POLITICIANS***

**The entire Delegation,  
anticipating speeches from the Politicians  
(one black, one white, one left, one right,  
both seeking the same seat,  
and both - Oh, save us, Lord! -  
named Michael Jones),  
were so darn sure that they'd be  
traumatized or bored,  
they wished the pols  
would simply die or go away.**

**And so it was with real dismay  
they heard the journalist Duck say  
that he looked forward to Election Day  
and all the months along the way.**

**I understand you`re on this trip,  
said he to Michael Jones (the White),  
to strengthen your name recognition.**

**If this is right,  
I wonder how you`ll reach that aim  
without it strengthening the same  
belonging to the opposition.**

**That crossed my mind, said Jones,  
and my position on it is,  
as soon as I return from Kroh  
I`ll change my moniker to Dwight  
in honor of that General  
who back in 1952  
won *his* big presidential fight.  
And then I`ll run with  
his great slogan, 'I Like Dwight`.**

**I think, frowned Sam McDona**l**duck,  
you`re making a mistake.  
If *both* of you are Michael Jones,  
I`ll have a hook for interviews and other stuff,  
enough to make your name well known.  
I couldn`t care less which one wins,  
but in this polarizing game  
your name would look as cute as twins.**

**Hey, guys, cut in the blacker Politician,  
everything is cool. If my right-wing opponent  
wants to change his name to Dwight,  
I`ll run my race on 'I Like Mike`.  
For any fool can see that 'Mike`, like 'Ike`,  
rhymes better with 'I like` than 'Dwight`.**

**You *wouldn`*t, cried the whiter Mike  
who felt his throat was growing tight.  
I thought that 'I Wike Dight` was wight,  
but now I see it`s vewy wong.  
My whole campaign will wun amok  
unless I do wike blacker Mike  
and make my slogan 'I Like Duck`.**

**Then do it, said the journalist,  
and don`t lose heart.  
A space trip`s great to jump-start  
your political careers.**

**Just look at Senator John Glenn.  
He`s been up twice.  
Should he decide to run again  
he`d surely win, though he by then  
be old as four-score years and ten.  
But in your case  
a single trip to outer space  
should help you both on voting day  
which is but twenty months away.**

**That`s right,  
sighed Michael Jones, the White.  
The time remaining`s getting tight.  
Campaigning is no piece of cake.  
I haven`t yet begun fund-raising,  
much less finalized the phrasing  
of the promises I`ll break...uh, make.**

**Don`t worry, said McDonalduck.  
If you have pluck, are dedicated, tough,  
and demonstrate a little cunning,  
twenty months is time enough  
to figure out why you are running.**

## ***THE LAST SUPPER***

**It was the final evening of the trip.  
To calm whatever apprehensions  
might grip passengers and crew,  
a simple meal had been prepared –  
a spicy meat-potato whip  
delicious on a nacho chip.**

**Later, over cognac, Rip,  
the young Astronomer, said,  
Folks, whatever lies ahead,  
remember that we come in peace  
to foster inter-global trade,  
not to pillage, con or fleece.  
Whatever private aim or vain ambition  
some of us have brought along,  
it must be junior to our mission.**

**We know not what we`ll find on Kroh,  
what kind of people, customs,  
ways of thought, but we have brought  
good food to eat and other stuff  
to last at least a week or two,**

**and that should give us time enough  
to do what we will seek to do.**

**Now get some rest and don` t feel worried;  
we` ve been blessed with one fine crew.**

**And so the Delegation hurried off to bed.  
And though some winked at one another,  
not a further word was said.**

## ***THE VIGIL***

**Not so long ago from now  
a Landing Day was nigh.  
A billion pairs of Krohtian eyes  
were fixed, in different azimuths,  
upon the Krohtian sky.  
Krohtian newborns, who grew fast,  
arriving in a week or two at their full size,  
intuitively knew  
the first thing that they wished to do  
was spot that space ship in the blue.**

**No prize was offered for the first to sight it.  
Even so, they watched and waited,  
and in their quiet Krohtian way,  
for reasons that they could not say,  
all felt elated.**

# **PART TWO:**

## **KROH**

### ***THE ARRIVAL***

**Next morning on awakening,  
the Delegation found their ship  
already on the ground.  
Outside its panoramic windows  
lay a wide, flat land,  
graced into infinity  
with rocks and pebbles  
placed upon the sand  
in patterns pleasing to the eye.  
In the distance,  
sudden as a bunch of flowers,  
bloomed a dozen slender towers.**

**Everywhere on this great vista,  
showing leisurely persistence,  
creatures bent on their subsistence  
chipped white wafers off the rocks,  
washed them down with dew,  
and, despite a keen elation  
triggered by a space ship  
lying silently within their view,  
kept on gathering their ration  
as each morning Krohtians do.**

**Toward ten o`clock, a small committee  
numbering some twenty-four,  
taller than the other billion,**

**waited by the spaceship door.  
There they stood most patiently  
until the Earthlings inside finished  
yawning, stretching, stripping Velcro  
from their feet or tail or legs,  
washed and dressed,  
and with a certain zest diminished  
stacks of pancakes, fries and eggs.**

**When done, and ready for what was to come,  
the Delegation stood beside their leader, Rip,  
and watched the front door of the ship  
swing wide,  
revealing them to all outside.**

**We come to Kroh in peace,  
said the Astronomer, and led them out  
into an atmosphere so fresh,  
a day so clear and soft,  
that if it had occurred on Earth,  
total strangers in the street  
would have doffed their isolation,  
bowed, and asked each other, Brother,  
sister, have you ever breathed  
an air so sweet?**

**Filled with philosophic pleasure,  
Billy James removed his tie.  
Said he, I feel like I could fly.  
This breeze is neither cool nor warm,  
but lies exactly in between,  
an absolute and golden mean.  
If Kroh is like this every day  
and if this landscape is the norm,  
then with uncompromising rigor  
I will certainly re-figure,  
make the target number bigger,  
of the quantity of theme parks  
(which you know I won't disclose)  
that Pragmatics, Inc. proposes  
selling yearly to the Krohs.**

**Then said one Krohtian elder  
to the visitors from space,  
Welcome to our planet.  
Proper nouns are never used by us,  
but if it's easier for you  
to call a thing by name,  
we'll make no fuss  
and happily will play your game.  
We'll call our planet Kroh,**

**and I`ll be Ken, and that is Rex,  
and over there is Moe.**

**Then he went on, And one thing more,  
we do appreciate your greeting,  
but it`s meaningless to say  
you come to Kroh in peace, for,  
if there is peace there must be war,  
and war is something Kroh has not.  
We also have no cold or hot,  
no bought or sold.  
Indeed, we have no money and no gold,  
which means, therefore,  
that we`ve no rich and we`ve no poor.**

**Meanwhile, the Duck was taking notes.  
Said Sam, We called your planet Kroh  
when your distaste for proper names  
we did not know.  
Nor could we *a priori* guess  
that Krohtians feel a lot of stress  
with to and fro and more and less.  
When we arrived, I clearly see,  
Rip should have just said, 'Here we be`.**

**Good try, said Ken, but no cigar.  
I hate to sound particular,  
but it is clear that *here* implies  
that there`s a *there*,  
to *be* has got a *not* to be,  
and *we*, you must admit, has *they*.**

**Then what, asked Sam,  
should new arrivals like us say?**

**It doesn`t matter, answered Moe.  
Just use whatever words you know.  
We only wanted you to see  
that proper nouns and opposites  
are not in our philosophy.  
We are exactly what we are,  
no special names or set extremes.  
We think that it`s in language  
where the danger of partition lies.  
All creatures would live  
happily together otherwise.**

**I fink, said Michael Jones, the White,  
whose throat again was growing tight,  
that your philosophy is wong.  
*That* Michael Jones is black and weft,**

not rite and extreme-wight like me.  
If we could not chase after votes  
with speeches, threats and anecdotes  
describing all our diffwences,  
how could any constituency  
choose between that Jones and me?  
I say, to wid the world of 'us` and 'them`,  
and even 'him` and 'it` and 'she`,  
would be a kind of twavesty  
that would destroy Democwacy.

As for the take you have on names,  
it`s tough enough that both of us  
are Michael Jones,  
but he and I would wook like *cwowns*  
if someone outlawed proper nouns.  
I have to say, in closing, it is *bitchin`*,  
having come so far to stwengthen  
my name wecognition,  
to land where names,  
(and pwobably political ambition)  
are wooked upon with wank suspicion.

I think, said Moe, we should come clean.  
It`s easy for us here to act  
linguistically pristine,  
when, actually, in point of fact,  
just twenty-four of us have tongues  
while there`s a billion who are dumb.  
We few who can, do rarely speak  
and normally keep very mum,  
except on special Landing Days  
when folk from other planets come.

Well, I am sure, said Dr. Fink,  
that Krohs do have *some* opposites  
like females and like males.  
And furthermore, I do suspect  
that on your planet there are times  
when calling heads or tails  
with quarters, nickels, even dimes  
is perfectly correct.

I ought to tell you folks, said Rex,  
we Krohtians have but just one sex,  
in such a way that moms are dads.

Wait, Rex, said Ken, our scriptures say....

But Rex went on,  
This works, it`s clear,



**because we have no rednecks here  
to beat us up or call us queer.  
And as for tossing heads or tails,  
this would require coins that flip.  
Since Kroh does not have currency,  
not even scrip,  
our former argument prevails.**

**At this, Economist Ben Carter  
pulled a string of beads  
from his vest pocket, beads  
in colors never seen before on Kroh.  
The colors made their eyes grow wide  
and several laughed while others sighed.  
It wasn't joy, it wasn't rue,  
in fact, the opposite was true;  
it simply was what Krohtians do  
when seeing beads of unknown hue.**

**Okay, said Ben,  
let's try that greeting once again:  
We come to Kroh with beads.**

**And then he held the beads toward Ken  
who said, You're onto something, Ben.  
And Ken then took the proffered strand,  
examined it, and frowned, and said,  
Beads talk more pointedly than men.  
For these I'll give you rocks and sand,  
what some call 'undeveloped land'.  
And then he grinned and said to Carter,  
I think we just invented barter.**

## ***BONDING***

**The morning passed in idle chat  
between the Delegation  
and their Krohtian hosts.  
That afternoon a picnic lunch  
was served outside the ship,  
and there the Delegates made toasts  
with beer and wine and lemonade  
to future inter-global trade.**

**The Krohs, who normally drank only dew,  
were finally prevailed upon  
to try an ice cold glass of brew.**

**Alas, the alcohol went to their heads  
and to their great dismay  
they lost at badminton and even at croquet,  
batting shuttlecocks to earth,  
smacking balls so hard they flew,  
and when a friendly germ  
was accidentally put in play,  
the germ got smacked and batted too.**

**After things calmed down a little,  
Rabbi Schwister turned to Moe.  
I`d really like to know, said she,  
if you and Ken and all your friends  
are of some special race.  
You`re taller than the billion,  
speak like men, and have  
a certain something in your face  
that shows, despite your non-dualistic pose,  
an inner angst or tension  
and a somewhat largish nose.  
Could you possibly be Menschen?**

**We`ve heard the name, said Moe.  
Some say it`s possible our ancestors  
came here from Earth about 3000 years ago,  
though how or why I do not know.  
However, there exists an ancient text  
that may supply a clue,  
and if the rumor turns out to be true,  
our great grandfathers might have looked  
much less like me and Rex, than you.**

**I thought as much, said Rabbi Schwister,  
and I`d like to ask a favor.  
See Ned Bunter over there  
fighting with that monster virus?  
He`s collecting specimens of DNA.  
If you could spare some blood or hair,  
it could apprise us  
who you are and where you`re from.**

**Tell Bunter he can come, said Moe,  
and I`ll be waiting.  
And tell him not to mind  
if he should find me  
cowering and hyper-ventilating.  
Meanwhile, if you`d like to see that book....**

**Oh, yes, said Schwister, let me take a look.  
I have a feeling it could be quite devastating.**

## ***DUCK.COM***

**That night, as Delegation members  
drifted off to find their beds,  
McDonalduck was idly counting heads.**

**Lash and Coca still were out. It seems  
that morning they had found  
an old, abandoned  
transportation system underground,  
filled with bubbly thermal brine.  
Even in their most romantic dreams,  
where water turns to wine,  
and in a stream of sparkling vintage  
they embrace, a place more magical  
could not have been divined.  
And so the two had packed a lunch  
and gone off to explore  
its miles of track and tunnels,  
hoping these might lead them  
to love`s farthest shore.**

**Who else was still awake?  
Seated in the reading nook,  
the Reverend and Rabbi  
studied pages in a book.  
Tessie Rubble and Cartographer Perone,  
having gone to be alone  
beneath the stars  
(where she had hoped to calculate  
the full cash value of the view -  
or so she said),  
were back inside the ship, but not in bed.**

**Shuddered Tessie,  
brushing at her clothes and head,  
slapping at her neck and face,  
This place could never be a mall.  
It`s all a-crawl with insects,  
horrid ones that race about  
and leave a whitish trace  
upon the rocks. Just look!  
They`re crawling up my socks!**

**Pecking one small bug off Tessie`s sweater,  
McDonalduck rolled up his eyes.  
Not bad, said he, but there were better  
on the farm when I was young.  
This one was slightly bitter,  
yet left a fruity aftertaste upon the tongue.**

**Then huffed the Real Estate Developer,  
If this is what goes on at night on Kroh,  
I greatly fear no way in bloody hell  
will my jet-setty clientele  
buy property up here.**

**No problem, interrupted Robb, the CEO,  
a regular insomniac  
out looking for a bedtime snack.  
I head a firm called Surplus, Inc.  
We specialize in pesticides,  
the deadliest varieties  
that every nation of the Earth,  
spouting ecologic pieties, has banned.  
I brought along a fifty-gallon drum  
to sell or barter for some land.  
So, if these locals don `t decide to ban it,  
in a week there won `t be left  
two insects on the planet.**

**Said Sam, I `ve heard of Surplus, Inc.  
Your stock `s at twenty-two, I think.**

**Said Robb, Last week I told my boy  
that stock will soon soar out of sight,  
but that is all I `ll say tonight.**

**A moment later, as the Duck  
was heading for his bunk,  
he heard a snore and tripped upon  
the Mentian, Ken, who `d drunk  
not just one beer, but four,  
and now was sleeping on the floor.**

**When Ken `s eyes opened,  
he exclaimed with philosophical delight  
that it was dark and yet was light.  
Said he, We Krohs begin to doze  
before the sun goes down,  
and soundly sleep  
until it `s back up in the skies.  
It `s just like living in Nirvana.  
Each day when we arise,  
we find some loving, unseen hand  
has spread our manna  
over rocks and sand.**

**Then none of you could know,  
observed the Duck,  
that all night long a zillion bugs appear  
and ravage your poor land.**

**Ken shrugged. I guess we don`t,  
or I`d have heard.  
For though our billion never speak a word,  
they sign with body language,  
taste, touch, sight, and sound.  
Indeed, we Krohs send shrugs and hugs  
the planet 'round  
faster than the speed of light.  
So I`d have known about the bugs.**

**Mused Sam, The animals on Earth  
communicate with sniff and lick and spray.  
I`ve noticed when I waddle in a certain way,  
or twitch my tail, or hold my bill  
at such and such a pitch,  
nibble at the nib of one white quill  
to stop an itch, or sneeze just so,  
it never seems to mean a thing to humans,  
but speaks volumes here on Kroh.  
And likewise, when I see a Krohtian  
move his hand or eye or head,  
I understand what he has said.**

**Said Ken, You may be right.  
But meanwhile,  
just to spare myself some fright,  
may I sleep in your ship tonight?**

**Any place is fine, said Sam,  
and don`t feel called upon to make reply  
should you hear Crocodiles begin  
their nocturnal communication.  
They`re making love, not conversation.**

## ***THE SMOKE SCREEN***

**Next morning, the entire Delegation  
breakfasted outside. The General,  
who`d beaten everyone at badminton  
the day before,  
was feeling rather stiff and sore.  
At her side, in camouflage fatigues,  
sat Private Rabbit Stalker,  
a youth who wore the sculpted brow,  
nose, lips, and cheekbones of his race  
all perfectly assembled**

**in a cinematic face.  
Despite the innuendos  
that the journalist had made,  
those in attendance when  
she trounced him on the court  
had seen there wasn't anything  
between the two but sport.**

**The General mused to herself,  
It's odd how when that Duck  
went on his fishing expedition,  
his obscene charges briefly made  
a smoke screen for my mission.  
Getting to her feet, she led  
the young enlisted man aside.  
Now that you've had a look at Kroh,  
I want your fresh opinion  
about which way we should go.**

**Well, sir, replied the Navajo,  
I've felt some hesitation  
since discovering Kroh's bleaker  
than our poorest reservation.  
The climate's neat,  
but Indians eat meat,  
and on the Krohtian plain are  
only furry creatures  
with cute teddy-bearish features.  
And so I think we shouldn't be too hasty.  
For while they look okay  
for petting and for stroking,  
compared to buffalo or men  
they probably aren't half as tasty.  
(Only joking.)**

**Dora Battle didn't smile as Private Stalker,  
with a twinkle in his eye, went on:  
We can't just push this native race aside,  
or buy their sacred lands,  
on which has surely splashed the blood  
of brave, ancestral deeds,  
with worthless strands of colored beads.  
Nor does this planet seem a place  
to open a casino. They have no coinage  
and, what's just as inauspicious,  
Krohs don't wear a stitch of clothes,  
not even britches.  
So, from top to toes  
they have no pockets into which  
a crapshooter might hope to slip  
a single fifty-dollar chip.**

**In short, I think the army`s plan  
to make this planet one huge reservation,  
and ship here every  
squaw, brave, and papoose  
of every noble Indian nation,  
is bound to hit some snags.**

**In that case, said the General,  
we`ll simply plant our flags  
and claim the planet for our own,  
send troops,  
and see to it our people are aware  
we cannot tolerate a threat like Kroh  
just one light week away by air.  
Not to take firm action  
would be looked on as remiss.  
And now, because we need more smoke  
to cloak our mission,  
give your General a kiss.**

## ***THE OTHER CAMPSITE TALES***

**It was a copy of a copy  
of an ancient copy  
of a very old papyrus scroll  
some early Krohtian  
probably attempted to unroll  
and saw turn into dust.  
The text was writ in Hebrew,  
which luckily the Rabbi knew.**

**These stories are as old,  
she told Tom Beal, as *Genesis*.  
I`d even say that they  
are over forty centuries if they`re a day.  
I haven`t read too far as yet,  
but far enough to see  
that whosoever wrote this down  
selected different oral tales  
from those we have believed to be  
our mythic history.**

**I fear religious fundamentalists  
may even think that this new take on *Genesis*  
contradicts and even menaces  
the deep foundations of Judeo-Christian faith.  
And yet I am convinced**

**these tales were told at campsites  
by those very tribal nomads  
whom the great agnostic  
and philosopher, Voltaire, did curse  
as *des barbares* and worse  
(although he did admit he found  
the Bible readable as Homer,  
so perhaps down deep he felt  
'barbarian` was a misnomer).**

**One difference that I see  
between these versions....  
Oh, but wait. Give me a moment  
while I find a simple story to translate.**

**And so the Rabbi took another look  
inside the ancient holy book  
and found a story she could share  
with her new friend, Tom Beal, the crook.**

## ***ANOTHER GENESIS***

**The Lord God planted a beautiful garden in Eden. In the middle of the garden he put a pile of shekels, and said to the man and woman, "You may eat the fruit of the trees, but you may not touch those coins. If you do, you will die."**

**The man and the woman were both naked but they were not particularly embarrassed.**

**There was in the Garden a serpent who had a basket of fresh fruit. The fruit was to die for. It was more beautiful than any of the fruit on the trees, and smelled divine. The woman felt she had to eat some, but when she reached for a kumquat, the serpent told her, "The price is one shekel, fifty agorots apiece."**

**The woman cried, "That price is too high."**

**"Wrong," said the snake. "You will not find a better price in all of Eden."**

**"But," cried the woman, "the price is too high for someone who has no shekels and not a single agorot either."**

**"Wrong again," said the snake. "Look over there."**

**So the woman took a few shekels from the forbidden pile and gave them to the serpent. She shared the fruit with her husband. As soon as they`d eaten some, they understood what a bargain the fruit had been. They wished they knew where to get a good bargain on some animal pelts to cover their nakedness, which had begun to bother them.**

**When the Lord God found shekels were missing, he asked the man what had happened.**



**The man told the Lord God that his wife had taken the money to buy fruit. "Why did you do this?" the Lord God asked the woman.**

**"The snake offered me a fantastic bargain," she replied.**

**The Lord God then told the man that for the rest of his life he would have to work hard for money, from before sunrise until the moon was high. But the more money he had, the more he would want, and the harder he would work to obtain it.**

**The man was appalled. "But it wasn't my fault," he told the Lord God. "The woman you gave me took the shekels. I didn't know anything about it."**

**The Lord God then told the woman, "You will be as greedy as the man. You will spend half your time eating, and the more you eat, the fatter you will get. The fatter you get, the more you will hate yourself. The rest of your time you will spend shopping for better and better bargains, until you drop. Shoes and childbirth will be extremely painful. If you decide to work, you will never earn as much as men do for the same labor."**

**Then the Lord God named the man Sneed, and the woman Tavarice [which in ancient Hebrew rhymed with greed and avarice], and made clothes for them out of animal pelts. He sewed pockets in the pants, because the Lord God knew that where there's a pocket, there's a desire to put more and more into it.**

**Then the Lord God told Sneed and Tavarice to go forth from Eden, find jobs, and multiply. "Having sex is good," he told them, "but the love of bargains is the root of evil."**

**Then the Lord God broke all the serpent's legs off and kicked him out of the Garden into the dust of the world.**

## ***THE OTHER GOSPEL***

**While you were studying last night,  
said Beal, I took a look  
inside this other Krohtian book.  
And Rabbi, if you think  
that tale of Tavarice and Sneed  
is bound to curl some hair,  
this story of the Son of God  
will fill more millions with despair.**

**For He, you see, was here on Kroh  
about three thousand years ago  
with twelve disciples, all with names like  
Sidney, Melvin, Josh and Steve.**

**Laughed Becky Schwister,  
In your wildest nightmares, mister.**

**You expect me to believe  
your Christ was up here saving souls  
about ten centuries *BC*?**

**Sighed Beal, I know. It sounds so dumb.  
And yet, a bunch of Jews did come  
from ancient Palestine.  
Their testament is very clear,  
for four wrote down in great detail  
the miracles they witnessed here.  
Then at some later date,  
their gospels were apparently translated  
into Universal Esperanto,  
cousin to a tongue I learned  
when I was unjustly interned  
in Corpus Christi, Texas.**

**We had one major problem there  
that did perplex us.  
The prison population  
was so ethnically diverse,  
the convicts babbled  
every language in the universe,  
from Old Sumerian to Aramaic,  
New Roswellian and Greek.**

**We trustees, then,  
to get our business done  
and at the same time have a little fun,  
downloaded all those languages,  
hit RUN, and merged them into one  
ol` user-friendly prison-speak,  
not very different from the tongue  
employed in his translation  
by this latter-Krohtian Jesus freak.**

**Tom, you exaggerate, objected Schwister.  
If there were old Sumerians  
and Aramaeans in your jail,  
I know a dozen rabbis and philologists  
who gladly would have stood their bail  
or bribed the guards to set them free.**

**What can I say? shrugged Beal,  
except no scholar  
ever offered fifty bucks to *me*.  
Then Tom Beal shook his head and said,  
These scriptures fill my soul with dread.  
They show me what a glib  
and facile fool I`ve been.  
But what is worse, in chapter and in verse**

**they toll the knell for Christianity itself,  
for heaven and for hell.**

**You`re not convinced?  
Okay, Rabbi, I know you`d rather have  
a wine more kosher in your cup,  
but since your mission  
is to locate missing Menschen, listen up,  
and listen well.  
For I intend right now to read  
a gospel story that reveals  
the Agony of Christ our Lord  
according to Apostle Mel.**

**But suddenly they heard a bell  
announcing lunch was being served.  
I`ll tell you what, said Beal,  
let`s take a break and have our meal.  
For anyway, I`m so perplexed,  
I`d like to hear opinions  
of some others on this text.  
Although I have to say,  
if we could find a way  
to keep that Duck at bay,  
and maybe too, the shrink,  
it might be better, don`t you think?**

## ***BUNTER`S AWAKENING***

**Ned Bunter had been working hard,  
and it was clear  
collecting enzymes down on Earth  
was nothing like it was up here.  
These germs resembled not at all  
the microbes found in Arctic glaze  
or in the chimneys of the sea.  
Oh, no, they were extremophiles  
in other ways,  
like size and personality.**

**One monster virus,  
slippery, translucent, shiny,  
didn`t take it kindly  
when Ned tried to slip a needle  
in what seemed to be its heinie.  
Problem was, of course,**

**that germs don`t have a true behind,  
nor have they front, or side,  
or underneath.  
And while all viruses are blind,  
Krohtian viruses have teeth.**

**Still, Bunter`s intuition  
told him he could beat the competition  
if he`d just ignore the hurt,  
and concentrate on finding  
those `designer enzymes`  
that would get out Krohtian dirt  
and wash each Krohtian sock and shirt  
a whiter white  
in water that was cold, not hot.  
And in a year, when Sudsless, Inc.  
had sold a billion boxes  
of detergent to the Krohs,  
he`d be rewarded with a yacht.**

**But suddenly a dawning did intrude.  
He looked about and noticed...  
every Krohtian was a nude!  
What a *bummer*.  
He`d have to use the inner tube  
another summer.**

**Still, with enzymes off his mind,  
Ned Bunter found he had the time  
to do some lab work for the Rabbi.  
Earlier he`d noticed  
chromosomal aberrations  
in the DNA already taken.**

**Said Bunter to himself that night,  
To judge by the genetic profile  
of this native population,  
I`d say three thousand years ago  
their forebears whiled away some time  
in extra-Krohtian copulation.  
For, despite the strange contention  
of those four-and-twenty Menschen  
that each Krohtian`s both  
a father and a mother,  
every bit of information  
I`ve been able to uncover  
shows a lot of Krohs were fathered  
by some very different other.**

**And so, I feel deep in my bones,  
if Rabbi Schwister**

**follows up on her strange notion  
to invite each Krohtian  
who has Jewish genes  
to exercise God-given rights  
and emigrate to Israel  
or Crown Heights, Queens,  
based on her assumption  
they`d be happier on Earth,  
then the statistical, logistical,  
political, and ecologic drama  
that accompanied this move  
would cause more trauma  
than it`s worth.**

**But, sighed Bunter,  
who am I to make the rules?  
If they be fools, why should I grumble?  
It`s bad enough the price  
of Sudsless stock`s about to tumble.**

## ***EXPLORING KROH***

**The first few days were wearing  
as the Delegation struggled hard  
to get its bearing.  
The Crocs, who`d gone off to explore  
two days before, had not returned.  
All hoped they`d find some fish  
or frogs to nurture them  
while on the quest to test  
their youthful and romantic notions,  
and not resort to eating Krohtians.**

**The morning of Day Three,  
Rip, Terry, and the Navajo,  
along with Ken and Rex and Moe,  
plus others of the Delegation,  
spent several hours sightseeing,  
appraising, gazing, making every kind  
of critical evaluation of the planet`s  
present and potential worth  
to all the money-lenders, speculators,  
network television stations  
and exporters of the Earth.**

**To get around,  
they used a dozen souped-up LEMs  
which ran on liquid nitrogen  
and flew a few feet off the ground.**

**Their first stop was some distant towers,  
structures built (as well as anyone could tell)  
at least 3000 years before.  
Alas, today they were as still as tombs,  
with walls and rooms all falling down.  
Murals on some parts still standing  
were another revelation.  
Kroh, they saw, once had a landscape  
covered with thick vegetation.**

**Another wonder of the trip  
was one small sandy strip  
all strewn with scrap  
where once the landing module of a ship,  
in its so delicate pre-touchdown dance,  
had failed its one and only chance  
to miss a rock.**

**Said Ken, The modem that we use today  
was knocked outside it by the shock.  
It didn` t break,  
but suffered quite a brutal sanding.  
The aliens inside the ship  
were smashed to smithereens on landing.**

**While Ken was talking,  
Terry, Rip and Rabbit Stalker  
walked a little ways apart.  
Then said the Navajo,  
I` m tired of these tourist shows.  
I want to talk with native Krohs.  
But, Rab, said Rip,  
you know the billion have no tongues.  
If conversation  
with the Krohtian nation`s your intention,  
you` ll have to settle for the Menschen.**

**We Indians, said Stalker, have some other  
methods of communication,  
codes more secret even  
than those used in World War II.  
When I look down  
and see the faces of a thousand  
unborn Krohtians looking up  
from underneath the ground,  
although this soil is not my mother earth,  
that sky up there is not my dad,  
I know that I have more in common  
with these Krohs who have no tongues,  
than with so many men I` ve known  
throughout my life, who had.**

**And then the Navajo knelt down  
and started softly drumming with his hand  
upon the Krohtian rocks and sand.  
It was the ancient rhythm of the heart.  
And while he drummed,  
as if it heard and wanted to take part,  
the Krohtian earth beneath his feet  
resounded with the self-same beat.**

**Then Stalker took some sand  
and let it sift between the fingers of his hand,  
bent near, and listened  
as each grain did whisper in his ear  
the history...the now...the future of the Krohs,  
three stages which were really one  
so very long continuum.  
And as he listened, tears fell from his eyes  
for what was past, and present, and to come.**

**I think, said Terry, you have tapped into  
the poetry and majesty of this strange land,  
and maybe too, its tragedy.**

## ***THE FIRST POLLING***

**That afternoon, Economist Ben Carter  
sat down with Ken and Rex and Moe.  
Said he, Our Delegation was impressed  
by what we saw today.  
Your ancient cities show  
what we would not have guessed:  
that Krohtians once had what it takes  
to work, and think, and plan and build.  
We all were thrilled, for trade with Earth  
should put you fellows on the track  
to bring your former glories back.**

**But first, said Ben, I`d like to know  
exactly what occurred up here  
some thirty centuries ago.  
Investors don`t like mystery.  
They don`t care if your history  
is black as tar, but hate surprises.  
They`ll want to know exactly what befell  
your transportation system,  
vegetation, and highrises.**

**Answered Ken, It has been rumored,  
and our ancient scriptures tell,  
of something that befell our planet  
way back then. According to Apostle Mel,  
it was a happening involving gods and men,  
and afterwards  
Kroh never was the same again.  
(Though I should add,  
another school of thought disputes this,  
positing instead that one gigantic comet  
made of ice and granite  
put the kibosh on the planet.)**

**Now, whether Krohtians wish to go  
the inter-global trading way  
and see the place restored  
to what it was before, I couldn't say.  
But we could take a poll  
and give the answer to you right away.**

**Then go for it, said Carter,  
holding up his thumb.**

**So Ken and Moe did make some signs,  
like twitch and sniff and sigh,  
that instantly were taken up  
by several Krohtians passing by,  
and they sent on the signs  
to other brethren far and wide  
who understood this tongue.**

**Thus in an exponential way  
the query went forth on its quest  
toward east and north,  
evoking yeas and nays across  
the plains and upper half of Kroh,  
then spread around the lower globe  
to rise up from the south and west  
and hop across to Ken and Moe.**

**We have the poll results,  
announced the Mentians.  
It's fifty percent pro and fifty contra  
with a couple of abstentions.  
Just who these hold-outs were  
we do not know,  
but one was certainly a duck,  
one probably a Navajo.**

**Ben Carter was delighted. Fifty-fifty?  
That was positively nifty.**



**They`ve cancelled themselves out,  
thought he.  
With no majority opinion to compel us,  
we can do just what the hell  
our own best interests tell us.**

**And then he said, I`ve got to go,  
but is there anything you`d like to know?**

**Asked Moe, will beads and barter  
still be part of any deal?**

**I wouldn`t count on it, said Carter.  
We`re talking marketing for real.**

## ***BREAKFAST ON DAY FOUR***

**The morning of Day Four,  
the Delegation chose once more  
to breakfast out of doors.  
The first to take their seats  
upon some comfortably-placed stones,  
were Sam and Dr. Fink,  
Ned Bunter, Jack Perone  
and Rabbit Stalker,  
who had spent the night away,  
but now had come  
with two of his new Krohtian chums.**

**By this time everyone had heard  
about the poll on inter-global trade  
that showed a split decision.  
And when the Duck,  
with shiver, snort and cough  
asked these two Krohtians  
(who were eating eggs and manna  
from a kind of little trough)  
just how they`d voted, yes or no,  
they burped right back  
that one was contra, one was pro.**

**Said Dr. Fink, Okay,  
perhaps the one who voted nay  
can tell me what I`ve come  
this long, long way to know.  
Private Stalker,  
kindly ask your Krohtian friend**

**who voted against economic progress  
with its frenzies and rat races,  
preferring, as he obviously must,  
dry sand, hard rocks and stasis,  
how he spends his day without the thrill  
of watching on the TV screen  
*The World's Worst Motorcycle Chases*,  
without the bitter pill  
of listening to lunatics all day  
who say two hundred bucks an hour  
is too much for them to pay,  
of fighting medical malpractice lawsuits  
brought by patients whom he's ired,  
owing millions to a half a dozen lawyers  
that he hired after finding  
his insurance had expired  
and whom he should have fired months ago.  
In short, how does that Krohtian  
pass the bloody day?**

**Now, this was something  
that the Navajo already knew  
and was prepared to say;  
that life does not need  
stress or aggravation,  
or all-consuming passions  
such as jealousy and hate,  
or daily stats on robbery and killing,  
to be fulfilling.**

**It was enough to celebrate  
each moment of the day,  
the miracle of how the sunlight  
sits upon a rock,  
the feel of sand between your toes  
because you wear no sock or shoe,  
the taste of manna wet with dew.**

**This Krohtian does not feel the need,  
said Rabbit Stalker, for a god  
who comes one day with miracles,  
makes promises, then disappears,  
so that no miracles are seen again  
for several thousand years.**

**For Krohs, like Navajos,  
see miracles around them on a daily basis.  
Yet that ideal, which may sound Zen,  
is what some men condemn as stasis.**

**At this the Shrink did sigh,  
What's with this guy?  
Did I come all the way to Kroh**

**to hear a Navajo explain how I should think?  
Just which one is the shrink?  
Does he believe he`ll help me find  
all sorts of things I buried long ago  
deep down inside my heart and mind?**

**Then said the Duck,  
This other Krohtian tells me,  
since we landed on his planet, he  
and half his people dream  
of colored beads that shine like gems  
and driving chopped-down, souped-up LEMs.  
In short, there seems to be  
a huge dichotomy of worldly notions  
- much larger than I would have reckoned -  
between the first half billion Krohtians  
and the second.**

**That`s not surprising, said Ned Bunter.  
This morning, before breakfast,  
I tested DNA from both these fellows,  
finding in the one a Jewish gene  
whose presence in a lot of others  
I had previously noted.  
In fact, I think that there`s a link  
between a Krohtian`s chromosomes  
and how he voted. For I`ll admit  
that all my findings seem to fit  
that fifty-fifty polling split.**

**Now, whether half a billion Jewish genes  
all cast their votes for inter-global dealing,  
or whether they all favored stasis,  
I`ve no intention of revealing,  
fearing being called a racist.**

**Ned, you`re right, said Dr. Fink.  
Genetic influence on what a person thinks  
is not a can of worms you ought to resurrect,  
unless you want to hear the Duck  
and every other TV pundit,  
talk-show host and critic  
label you politically incorrect,  
or even worse, anti-Semitic.**

**I myself have always thought  
we Jews enjoy a long tradition  
of living life as fully as we`re able,  
enjoying music, travel  
and material possessions  
such as Cadillacs and sable.**

**Still, most of us believe it is our mission,  
when we can, to lend a hand  
at helping to preserve endangered species,  
habitat, and public land.**

**Now, whether either tendency or trait  
is in our DNA, I strongly doubt  
but cannot know.  
But if you think that Jewish genes  
did influence the Krohtian vote,  
then think again;  
those genes did not come just  
From *Jews* -  
they came from *men*.**

## ***A CARTOGRAPHER IN LOVE***

**During breakfast,  
while the griddle cakes were being buttered,  
fresh eggs beaten,  
and some strong opinions uttered,  
Jack Perone had neither listened,  
spoken, nor had eaten.  
What kept him so apart?  
It was his heart, his lovesick heart,  
that fussed and fluttered  
in unspeakable distress  
and took his mind off all but Tess.**

**Oh, how in this strange world  
was he to woo her?  
The planet had no June,  
no blue lagoon,  
no small, discrete motel.  
Why, hell, it didn't even have a moon.  
But, maybe that was just as well,  
for should she raise her lovely eyes  
and see a moon she didn't recognize,  
about one half the size of ours  
or even smaller, it might appall her.**

**Last night he'd drawn a map of Kroh  
and now removed it from his pocket.  
Was this sufficient for a gift  
or should he wait and buy a locket?  
Then he recalled those lines of Swift  
recounting how so long ago**

**geographers, in Afric maps,  
with savage pictures filled their gaps,  
and o`er unhabitable downs  
placed elephants for want of towns.**

***His* map was not at all like these,  
for he had drawn it just to please.  
Indeed, he`d filled Kroh`s deserts, seas,  
and other tracts he did not know  
with flowers, hearts, and mistletoe.**

**Oh, Tessie, he so longed to say,  
to be on Kroh and out of range  
of earthly satellites  
is like we lived some other day,  
when GPS and GIS  
were still two thousand years away,  
when map-making was still an art,  
cartographers in love with mystery  
and the unknown,  
not merely ignorant  
of what could not as yet be shown.**

**If here on Kroh one really could live life  
like way back then,  
I`d use but chain or tape  
(or simply stand some sixty-six  
young foot-wide Krohtians nape to nape  
to serve as my triangle bases).  
Then I`d take you by the hand  
and we would hie us overland  
to distant places,  
without compass or theodolite  
since neither one was yet invented  
(though, to shelter us at night  
I think a small tent might be rented).  
Tess, oh, Tess,  
how happily we then would go,  
seeing all the sides and angles  
of our love and passion grow,  
eating manna, drinking dew,  
triangulating over Kroh.**

## ***THE NITTY GRITTY***

**Ben Carter and the General  
sat down together at another table,  
looking like a mini-junta.**

**Said Ben, I got the word from Rip,  
who got it from the crew:  
The food supply is running low  
and in two days we`ll have to go.**

**So, he continued,  
we were sent here with a mission  
and should come to some decision  
as to whether Kroh is ripe for trade.**

**It`s clear to me  
this planet lacks a minimal economy,  
but has the asset of a billion population,  
all of them potential  
workers and consumers.  
This represents a demographic  
similar to baby boomers.**

**So here`s my plan.  
We`ll lend them...let me see,  
ten billion dollars ought to be enough  
to give the Krohs the wherewithal  
to buy the stuff that Earth produces  
(theme parks, pesticides, and such),  
and charge them only ten percent  
per annum interest. Clearly that`s a deal  
that any usurer would call a steal.  
What collateral would we require?  
None at all. We`ll take their IOU  
and shake their hand.  
Should they default,  
we`ll simply confiscate their land.**

**Good shot, said Dora Battle, stroking  
the bright ribbons on her chest.  
Now, off the record, here`s what I suggest.  
If we discover Kroh has gold,  
uranium, or other wealth,  
we colonize the planet,  
send the Army Corps of Engineers  
to canalize and dam it,  
and several thousand  
Workfare employees to man it.  
Then, to guarantee the whole thing clicks,  
we`ll add ten thousand G.I.`s to the mix.**

**Said Ben, Your scheme`s first rate.  
Pre-emption of another state  
worked pretty well  
for Belgians, Frogs and Brits,  
who reaped enormous benefits  
before they had to call it quits.**

**If we both colonize  
And lend at ten percent, I`ll bet  
that in a thousand years,  
if Krohs have freed themselves of debt,  
they`ll be as happy as today,  
with no tears or regret.**

**I`m curious, said Dora Battle,  
what Steve Clift, our resident Geologist,  
has found beneath the Krohtian ground.  
Our native peoples hate to mine uranium,  
and tend to get most quarrelsome  
when asked to lend their tribal lands  
to store atomic waste.  
But Krohs, I`m sure, would gladly do  
the mining and the storing too  
for beads made out of paste.**

**I like your style, said Carter.  
There`s not an angle you`ve neglected.  
Any company that trades up here  
will feel itself darn well protected.  
Sending soldiers is a brilliant touch.  
Not that the Krohtians could do much  
to block the future we`ve projected.**

**Still, said Battle, to forestall  
all unexpected glitches,  
we`ll have to win their hearts and minds  
by promising them jobs and riches.  
For if the Krohtians feel disquiet,  
and any of them start to riot,  
prime time television features  
showing G.I.`s gunning down these  
teddy-bearish creatures  
might cause hitches.**

**I see your point, said Ben.  
It`s not as though the Krohs were black,  
with bones stuck through their noses.  
Were a gold mine boss or guard  
to shoot a savage in New Guinea,  
kill his wife and pickaninny,  
who would know or give a hoot?  
(Unless a bullet ricocheted  
and hit some fellow in a suit.)  
But as you say,  
the Krohtians are too cute to shoot.**

**Exactly, said the General.  
We mustn`t be perceived**

as causing *one* of them to die.  
To keep them calm, we`ll launch  
an operation code-named 'Pacify`.  
This means our propaganda  
has to zero in on that objective  
and be ten times more effective  
than it was in Vietnam.  
Disinformation should be handled by a guy  
as quick to lie and smoothly verbal  
as the Third Reich`s Joseph Goebbels,  
greedy and at home with schlock  
as that ex-Aussi, Rupert Murdoch,  
able to manipulate  
minds, hearts, ambitions and emotions  
while speaking easily to Krohtians.  
Impossible to find?  
Well, we`re in luck.  
The one I have in mind  
to pitch the riches to the Krohtians  
is the Duck.  
Now don`t forget, she warned,  
no word of this can be repeated.

Then Dora Battle looked around  
and saw Cartographer Perone, seated  
at a table all alone  
like some abandoned sap.  
Was this because the gal he loved  
was taking a mid-morning nap  
with that pragmatic guy  
who wore that red and yellow tie?

We`ll tap this fellow too, said she,  
To draw some lines upon our map.

## ***PLANTING CORN***

Now that blast-off day was nigh,  
McDonalduck was feeling torn  
between the farm duck he was born  
and the Duck he had become.

Late that morn,  
the side of him that he did scorn  
took out a can of unpopped corn,  
and in a little plot of ground  
planted kernels all around  
(letting only three of four



slide down his bill into his craw).  
All afternoon Sam oversaw his tiny plot  
and fed it from his chamber pot.  
By evening, fifty shoots were up  
and over half he placed a cup.  
Next morning, when the sun arose,  
it was exactly as he'd feared;  
the shoots he hadn't covered up  
had disappeared.  
And in their place?  
That whitish, tell-tale trace.

It's clear, thought Sam,  
if Krohs had pesticides instead of bugs,  
and reasons to get off their tushes,  
they could raise not only corn,  
but beans, rose hips, and berry bushes.  
To motivate them, I could buy their land  
for colored beads,  
lease it back to them to farm,  
and, attentive to their needs,  
sell them fertilizers,  
pesticides and hybrid seeds.  
Just paying back the interest on their debt  
would exercise their backs and bones  
and stop them sitting on these stones.

And yet...and yet...,  
the Duck had to admit,  
there was a certain charm in sitting on a rock  
and watching how the morning sunlight lit  
those little sprouts of green.  
It took him back to duckling days  
when he had not a dime,  
but lots of time to dream  
and watch the crops grow tall.  
How well he could recall, with rue,  
his brothers and his sisters too,  
their joyful games, their happy quacks,  
until the day they met the axe.

Why them instead of me? sighed Sam.  
What was the matter?  
Was it because I happened to be thinner  
and they fatter?  
And must I feel eternally a sinner  
because I wasn't that poor schmuck  
who got selected first for dinner?  
He laughed, reflecting on his luck.

Just then, along came Dr. Fink.  
Exclaimed the shrink,

**Why, here`s our famous anchor Duck,  
helping Krohtian grasses grow.  
You are, he said to Sam,  
a most amazing dude,  
so please don`t think me rude  
if I should say  
I`d love to get inside your mind  
and see what guilts and traumas  
a Psychiatrist might find  
in someone raised for food.  
Could that account for  
your obsessive appetite for wealth?**

**Sighed Sam, just managing  
to hide his grin,  
Oh, Doctor Fink, you can`t imagine  
what a state I`m in.  
It`s starting to affect my health.  
The more I earn,  
the more I yearn to earn some more.  
Money is a terrible addiction,  
yet no one seems to care  
about this millionaires` affliction.  
The government has even ruled  
that if I take a wife,  
every egg of our production  
is an IRS deduction.  
I have no need for all this money.  
Ducks don`t wear Italian shoes  
and rarely touch hard drugs or booze.  
The only time my money`s not a bore  
is when I speculate on stock and get a lock  
on gaining several million more.**

**Said Harry Fink, I feel your pain.  
The great Voltaire was right as rain  
when he observed  
two centuries and more ago,  
the way for man or duck to live  
is how you`ve done it here on Kroh:  
spreading good organic dung  
to make your garden grow.  
I`ll bet it`s crossed your mind  
to stay right here  
and say goodbye to CBA  
and all the fame and fortune  
that you once held dear.**

**At this, Sam racked his brain  
for some sarcastic comment  
he could offer as reply.**

**But every time he found what seemed  
a perfect one to try,  
some other duck within him  
whispered that it was a lie.**

## ***RETURN OF THE CROCS***

**That afternoon there was a stir  
when Lash and Coca,  
both with shining eyes and glowing leather,  
reappeared together.  
They weren't alone.  
Gently held in Coca's jaws  
were twenty little crocodiles,  
all newly hatched and cute as blazes.**

**This planet constantly amazes,  
said the happy mom.  
We never saw so many fish and frogs  
as in the Krohtian rivers and the oceans.  
All day the waters swarm with tasty bugs  
that go ashore at night  
in one big mass migration  
to gobble up the vegetation.  
By dawn they're back,  
all fat and doubly nutritious,  
numerous as krill,  
full of chlorophyll,  
and just delicious.**

**Said Lash, we want to tell you  
we've decided to remain on Kroh.  
Habitat is everything to crocs,  
and Krohtian waters are a vast lunch box  
for us and all our sons and daughters.  
So now we have to catch the tide,  
but thanks to all of you  
and to the Menschen and the Krohs,  
and to the U.S taxpayers  
who underwrote our ride.  
Please send our love and greetings  
to our families and friends in YO,  
but now we have to go.**

**And as the Delegation waved goodbyes  
and wiped their eyes,  
the Crocs climbed down  
Into the old, abandoned**

**transportation system underground  
and swam away.**

**And never were they seen again  
by men.**

## ***THE WARNING***

**I think, said Mentian Ken to blacker Mike,  
as they and Moe  
strolled through the ancient towers,  
that in the past 3000 years  
there was less change on Kroh  
than since you fellows came five days ago.  
Now every Mentian has a name,  
and there`s a 50-50 split  
among the billion, hitherto so closely knit.**

**And now what do we learn?  
That we have genes that give us rights  
the Rabbi calls 'return`.  
She says this means that Moe, and I,  
plus some five hundred million,  
can go to Earth  
and live upon a piece of land  
whose rocks and sand  
are more or less exactly  
what we have already here to hand.**

**I think I`d like to go, said Moe,  
but maybe I should ask our buddy, Mike,  
for his more worldly-wise insight.**

**Smiled Michael Jones,  
I should point out that 'Mike`, like 'Ike`,  
rhymes less well with 'insight`,  
than 'Dwight`.**

**That said, said he, I might suggest  
that here on Kroh  
you Menschen have it made.  
You are a definite minority  
but seem to wield authority,  
while down on Earth you all would be  
routinely pestered,  
even interned or sequestered  
by the Immigration Service,  
circumstantially suspected**

**by the troopers and the cops,  
but worst of all, subjected to  
a Barbara Walters interview.  
After which they`d pull out all the stops  
and kick you off the planet  
and/or stick you in a zoo.  
It`s not because each one of you  
has genes that say you are a Jew.  
That wouldn`t fly today  
(although I`ve heard some buzz  
along those lines about the FBI and CIA),  
but mainly it`s because you`re you, not they.**

**Said Ken, I think we ought to stay right here.  
We got some shivers, shrugs and quacks  
a little while ago  
that spread in seconds over Kroh  
and promised us good jobs and riches  
if we Krohtians don`t cause glitches  
in the setting up of inter-global trade.  
They want us to accept huge loans,  
brigades of army engineers,  
and then, to get us off the stones  
and exercise our backs and bones,  
they`ll buy our land with colored beads  
and rent it back so we can work it,  
tax us only eighty-five percent  
so we won`t shirk it,  
then sell us hog-farm sludge well laced  
with very fresh atomic waste,  
non-reproductive hybrid seeds,  
and pesticides to kill our bugs.  
And that was just the quacks and shrugs.**

**Asked Mike, What kind of glitches  
do they fear?**

**Said Ken, That wasn`t clear.  
They seem to want to keep us quiet,  
win our hearts so we don`t riot  
or turn upon them like some Brutus.  
And if we don`t do any of that stuff,  
they promise not to shoot us.**

**Said Moe, I think that`s fair enough.**

**But promises, warned Mike,  
can easily be broken,  
solemn pledges be misspoken;  
I should know.  
And furthermore, dear Ken and Moe,**

**I have to tell you, as a U.S. Politician  
and a sometime token black,  
you shouldn't trust  
one shiver, shrug or quack  
these Earthlings may have  
signed or spoken,  
unless you definitely know  
the signals that you get have come  
directly from  
that Navajo.**

### ***THE 50-GALLON DRUM***

**I like your product,  
Tessie Rubble told the CEO.  
Our test went off without a hitch.  
Last night Bill James and I...  
Bill's that pragmatic, theme-park guy.  
You may have seen us in a LEM....**

**Said Arnie Robb, Oh, was that Bill?  
I thought it was that Jack Perone.**

**Oh, no, laughed Tess.  
If you had seen the map Jack drew for me,  
you'd know he's just a clown.  
The map showed half the globe of Kroh  
with elephants in place of towns  
and Krohtians dressed in funny gowns  
with bones stuck through their noses.  
(And trust me, Arn, those teddy bears  
weren't out to smell the roses.)  
But weirder than the Krohs' attire  
was the way he drew this planet  
bound around with thick barbed wire.  
I have a hunch Jack did aspire once  
to be my heart's desire, but...  
Then Tessie tapped her head.  
I guess he lost it.  
We found the map upon my bed  
where he had tossed it.**

**That figures, said the CEO.  
I saw Jack just a while ago  
working with the General and Carter.  
He had a look upon his face  
like some poor martyr.**

**I wouldn't be surprised, said Tess.  
In any case, last night  
Bill James and I dripped just a drop  
of your fine pesticide upon the ground,  
then left and came back in an hour.  
For thousands of square feet around  
no living insect could be found.  
This morning, when the sun arose,  
well, praise the Lord,  
it was a different scene.  
The bug-free land was turning green  
and gone was that odd, whitish trace.**

**I'll tell you what, continued Tess,  
if pesticides can rid this place  
of everything that crawls,  
as soon as I get back to Earth  
I'll get out floor plans that I made  
for highrise condos, burbs, and malls,  
and from those plans I'll pre-sell  
living and commercial space.  
Then in a year I'll come back here  
and thoroughly revamp this place.**

**Said Robb, it really breaks all norms  
how well my pesticide performs.  
I sometimes like to sit and watch  
the miracle of how it kills.  
Some say rapacious insects are a plague  
that comes from God on high  
to punish kings with stubborn wills.  
I don't know why they came to Kroh,  
but what the hell, that's in the past.**

**Today, I heard the latest poll shows  
Krohs have made a stand at last  
and will be buying all they need,  
from Bill's theme parks to hybrid seed.  
I guess we gave them one great loan.  
This means, of course,  
the Krohs will live forever and a day  
in landless squalor,  
working to repay each dollar.  
And that is how it *should* be, for,  
'If there be rich there must be poor'.**

**That said, I hope they celebrate  
their new-found Krohtian solvency  
with one big all-out spending spree.  
Then I won't have to take**

**these fifty gallons home with me,  
for as you see,  
this old drum may start leaking.**

**Don` t worry about that, said Tess.  
If they don` t want it,  
you can sell your pesticide to me.  
It` s exactly what I` m seeking.**

## ***THE NAVAJO` S DILEMMA***

**Day Seven had been chosen  
for the blast-off back to Earth.  
The day before they were to go,  
Terry, Rip and Rabbit Stalker  
took a walk together  
that would be their last on Kroh.  
Suddenly the Navajo,  
looking terribly distressed,  
stopped and turned.  
I` ve got to quit the army, he confessed.  
It stands for everything I` m not.**

**Well, hey, said Rip,  
if you want out, I know a way.  
Just tell the General you` re gay.**

**Laughed Rab, I never thought of that.  
And then the laughter left his face.  
But I can` t lie, he said. In any case,  
I think she` ll find a better reason,  
something that the State calls treason.**

**Rip and Terry plainly saw  
this wasn` t meant to be a joke.  
Was Rabbit under some delusion?  
What had happened to provoke  
his frightening conclusion?**

**Yesterday, he told his friends,  
I happened to receive a message –  
quacks and shrugs and other motions  
sent by Sam to all the Krohtians –  
telling about jobs and riches,  
loans and armies, hogs and glitches.  
But then it told them something stranger:  
To avoid their being shot,**



**they mustn` t riot or cause hitches.  
Judging from the feedback that I got,  
the Krohtians understood the good,  
but not the danger.**

**That litany of greed I intercepted  
wasn` t master-minded by the Duck.  
Most of it was cooked up  
by the General and Carter.  
And now the latest polling figures show  
their gambit did succeed;  
it killed the 50-50 split,  
for every Krohtian bit, and voted pro.  
If that vote is allowed to stand,  
Earthlings will usurp this land.**

**Then Rab went on,  
I had a word with blacker Mike,  
and we agreed that only those  
who know how to communicate with Krohs  
can turn the vote around,  
and that means me.**

**And so today I plan to drum my message  
to the ground and sky,  
holler, dance, and slap my thigh  
and tell the Krohs that if they follow  
where the white man leads,  
they` ll lose their land and die.**

**Then Stalker chuckled bitterly,  
I` m sure that when the General  
sees I` ve undone the strategy  
that she` s begun, she` ll call it treason.**

**But Rab, said Ter,  
she can` t declare an open season  
on all Indians who dance,  
or ask a jury to convict a Navajo  
for drumming.  
You` ll leave no paper trail, and so  
what judge or jury possibly could know  
what messages your thumping sent,  
much less what that Duck` s shrugs  
had meant?**

**I hope you` re right, replied the Navajo.  
I` d hate to spend my life inside a cell.  
But what the hell?  
There` s nothing better that I have to do today  
than dance and shout and holler,**

**and tell a billion Krohs  
about the evil Yankee dollar,  
and warn this native people  
that the white men have the guns, and shoot,  
have the poisons, and pollute,  
and Krohtians shouldn't give two hoots  
for all the promises they give.**

**For if those teddy-bearish creatures  
want to keep their land and live,  
they can't keep quiet.  
They have to tell their story  
on the prime time news,  
stand in front of TV crews,  
and riot, riot, riot.**

## ***THE FIGHT FOR HEARTS AND MINDS***

**The final afternoon on Kroh  
was one more lovely day like every other,  
making people want to bow  
to strangers in the street, and say,  
Oh, sister, brother,  
have you ever breathed an air so sweet?  
Only there was not one stranger,  
and no street, nor anyone to greet,  
except some Delegation members  
and some Krohtians  
and some Mentians.**

**The Navajo walked off alone  
across a mile of sand and stone  
until he found a spot  
where unborn Krohtian faces  
peered from underneath the ground.  
And there he found a place to stand  
between the sand and sky  
(that wasn't on some fetal eye),  
a place where he could drum and dance  
and plead the cause, and warn all Kroh  
to cancel out the vote of pro.**

**And dance he did, and drum and holler  
as he never had before.  
And every Krohtian passing by  
took up each beat and motion,  
passing on the precious mantra**

**over sand and rock and ocean.  
And when the vote came back  
it was one hundred percent contra.**

**The first to learn the worst  
among the Earthlings was McDonalduck.  
And though he tried to cause a rally,  
and, with shiver, shrug and quack,  
turn the tide and get the former tally back,  
he had no luck. Alas, this time the Duck,  
despite his skill, was unable to will,  
or in some way persuade,  
a single Kroh or Mentian  
to cast his vote again for trade  
or even military intervention.**

**Sighed he, who had to tell  
the General and Carter  
that their inter-global baby  
was a definite non-starter,  
I hope the time is past  
when bearers of bad news  
were killed or beaten,  
or, when the messengers were ducks,  
routinely eaten.**

## ***DAY SEVEN -- ESCAPE FROM KROH***

**Next morning on arising,  
the Delegation sensed a vague disquiet  
over Kroh. By nine  
there were some signs of riot.  
Krohtians, using unambiguous  
and graphic motions,  
told the Earthlings  
they should leave without delay.**

**Eating breakfast in the dining bay,  
Delegation members looked out through  
the panoramic windows  
at the milling Krohtian scene.  
Finishing her Ovaltine,  
the General observed, It`s bad;  
the Krohs are even cuter when they`re mad.  
And then she threw an angry look  
at Sam McDonalduck,  
while thinking, Since we`ve lost**

**the Krohtian hearts and minds  
by trusting that insipid bird,  
a bird we should have cooked  
with all his quacks and shrugs,  
we`ll have to try a different tack  
to win Kroh back,  
like tourism and drugs.  
And as for Private Stalker,  
I see no reason  
not to try the kid for treason.**

**Just then, the young Astronomer,  
announcing that the countdown had begun,  
saw two figures heading toward  
the space ship at a run.  
Oh, damn! cried Rip.  
I didn`t realize anyone was missing.**

**Said Sam, that looks like you-know-who.  
As like as not,  
the two went off to do some kissing.  
Then suddenly remembering  
what he`d forgot,  
Sam ran to beat the doctor to the pot.**

**And while the tardy humans  
hurried through the ever-thicker crowd  
of irate Krohtians, climbed into the ship,  
and quickly zipped their Velcro on,  
still others joined Mcdonalduck  
on line to use the john.  
The crew, who had already been and gone,  
went through their pre-flight checklist,  
finding all the systems GO.**

**Then Rip stood up again  
and with a solemn face, he said,  
We came to Kroh  
in what I thought was peace.  
But we brought war instead.  
We brought division  
to a happily united race.  
And what is more,  
in this strange cultural collision  
we acted like a brute.  
And so it`s fitting that we leave here  
empty-handed and in disrepute,  
thanking all our lucky stars  
the Krohtians have no guns to shoot.**

**Now, since this is my ship,  
and I am in command, please understand**

**I will not tolerate  
the slightest angry look or reprimand,  
or any talk of sabotage or treason,  
by any one for any reason.  
Back on Earth I`ll write up my report,  
but now I`ll ask McDonalduck,  
as soon as we get underway,  
to note down everyone`s opinion  
on the outcome of our mission.  
I`d like your honest take,  
so please feel free to make  
the strongest case for your position.  
Oh, and by the way,  
our Poet`s twenty-one today,  
so later we`ll have cake.**

**Then Rip sent off a reassuring grin  
toward Ter and Rab and blacker Mike.  
And as the four friends waited  
for the final countdown to begin,  
they looked out at the Krohtian world  
of sand and stone,  
and at those gentle,  
now so-troubled people  
they`d so briefly known.  
And all four tried, in vain, to spot  
among those soft, protesting millions  
their dear friends, Ken, Rex, and Moe,  
whose names would evermore be lost  
in that vast silence that was Kroh.**

**Then as the space ship fired up  
and slowly started its ascension,  
they closed their eyes  
and said goodbyes  
to all the billion,  
and the Menschen.**

## **PART THREE:**

# **THE RETURN**

### ***THE INTERVIEWS***

**McDonalduck was stressed.  
Thought he, It`s such a bummer.  
How could a pro like me  
be second-bested by a drummer?**

**But when the pressure  
of the take-off blast had passed,  
and Sam recalled the interviewing task  
Rip had suggested,  
he got his bearings back  
and felt revitalized and rested.**

**The first he wished to interview  
was Steven Clift  
of Continental Plate & Drift.  
McDonalduck was sure  
that if the man had located  
some diamonds or some ore,  
his company would find a way  
to get back up to Kroh and drill  
(no matter whom they had to kill),  
and then their stock would head uphill.**

**But, alas, though Sam  
used all his duckish charm  
and journalistic skill  
to feign disinterest,  
angle in, and ask his question,**

**all he got was Steve Clift`s  
rude suggestion  
as to where the Duck could stick his bill.**

**Thought Sam, Oh, well,  
when insiders won`t play along,  
by now I know the drill.  
I`ll sell off every share,  
and next time that I`m on the air  
I`ll drop a hint that Continental Plate  
found not one glint of ore on Kroh.  
And when their stock can`t take the blow,  
and crashes, what the heck;  
I`ll buy five thousand shares on spec.**

**\* \* \***

**Examining the other faces in the room,  
the Duck could see that it would be  
a waste of time approaching  
either Battle or Ben Carter  
whose expressions were a glower.  
Sam already knew what those two  
thought about the mission,  
and that they might prefer to talk about  
or, better yet, devour,  
tasty *canard à l`orange*  
or duck in sweet and sour.**

**Mike Jones, the White,  
was also looking dour.  
He`d nearly finished up the trip,  
was on the brink of fame,  
could almost see the ticker tape  
and hear the crowd shout out his name.  
So why, asked Sam, looked he so grim?**

**Because, Mike growled,  
there was that shadow stalking him;  
a blacker Mike so well connected,  
he could instantly reverse a poll  
and get himself elected.**

**But Sam, I`ve learned a lot from you.  
If I can raise sufficient bucks,  
buy time on television,  
manipulate the voters` minds  
and cause division with my lies,  
I`ll have a chance with either slogan:  
I Like Whites or He Wikes Guys.**

**Said Sam, Mike Jones, I like your pluck.  
Your polarizing views  
will grab the media`s attention.  
But play it cool. Don`t push your luck  
by seeking votes from large minorities  
or Menschen.**

\* \* \*

**Sam glanced around  
for someone else to interview,  
and noticed Jack Perone  
sitting all alone, sketching on a pad.  
He looked so sad,  
McDonalduck was keen to know  
exactly what was on his mind.**

**Why, nothing special, answered Jack.  
I`ve been assigned  
to draw a map of Kroh.**

**But when he showed the map to Sam,  
the Duck was taken utterly aback.  
Said he, You`ve drawn these spheres  
completely black.**

**Not so, said Jack.  
If you enlarge these circles  
to the size of Kroh,  
you`ll see a grid which demarcates  
a billion fenced-off lots.  
Each square is then a tiny plot  
on which one teddy bear could squat.  
This represents a real breakthrough for me,  
who stupidly had hoped one day  
to wield a huge eraser,  
and rub away the lines  
and other demarcations  
separating plots of land  
that men call `mine` or `nations`.  
But when I learned  
I`d nevermore embrace her....  
And he dissolved in tears.**

**Sam took another look  
at Jack`s strange hemispheres.  
Thought he, The fellow`s lost it.  
He must imagine half the Krohtians  
would agree to live on oceans,  
for that`s how he`s crisscrossed it.  
Then asked the Duck,  
Just who assigned this task to you?**



**Why I did, sobbing Jack replied.  
Cartographers don't work on spec.  
We have our pride.**

**Heh, heh, said Sam. I guess I'll go  
and interview the CEO.  
Then, wishing Perone lots of luck,  
away Sam snuck on tippy toe,  
as quietly as one could go  
on webbed feet shod with thick Velcro.**

**\* \* \***

**But finding Robb deep in a huddle  
with Bill James and Tessie Rubble,  
Sam walked across to talk to Bunter.  
Hey, Ned, he said, how goes it with  
our microbe hunter?**

**You wouldn't want to know, said Ned.  
If Krohs wore clothes  
I would have made a killing.  
And yet, I must admit,  
my efforts in genetics  
weren't completely unfulfilling.  
The DNA did positively show  
that roughly three millennia ago  
some Hebrews fooled around on Kroh.  
Sam, you recall the Rabbi's notion  
she'd repatriate each Krohtian  
having Jewish genes?  
Well, then she ran into a glitch  
that sabotaged her noble vision.  
She looked at several thousand Krohs  
and saw no place for circumcision.**

**Shrugged he, What could I say?  
It's something of a mystery.  
For just between you, Sam, and me,  
I've never seen one in the john  
and have no inkling how they pee,  
much less how Krohtians get it on.  
I only know if she'd stood firm  
in her intention,  
she might have moved to Tel Aviv  
five hundred million plus the Menschen.**

**Did any of them want to go?**

**I think one did. His name was Moe.  
It's possible he changed his mind.**

**In any case, they all got left behind.  
But now I find those ancient Jews  
did not only infuse  
the Krohtian locals with their seed,  
they may have left behind some clues  
on how they managed to achieve  
their inter-global cruise. Indeed,  
Tom Beal says ancient books reveal  
what happened on the planet  
thirty centuries ago.**

**Hey, that`s a major scoop, cried Sam.  
I`ll interview Tom Beal right now.**

**No, no, said Ned.  
Hold off a bit on him and Schwister.  
I just passed by the reading nook  
when Beal, our crook,  
lay down his book,  
gave Becky an unfathomable look,  
then took her in his arms...  
and kissed her.**

**\* \* \***

**When Dr. Fink saw Sam approach,  
he smiled most cordially.  
McDonalduck, forgive me  
that I beat you to the pot.  
That said, I bet you felt some dread  
abandoning your grassy plot.**

**Said Sam, My cornfield`s history.  
Last night marauding insects  
ate the roots and shoots  
and left their trace  
on sand and rock. Then he went on,  
So, doc, aside from visiting the john,  
how did it go?**

**Said Fink, well, Sam,  
my theory that the Krohtian ego  
crashed some thirty centuries ago  
is still in doubt, although I think  
the revelations of Tom Beal,  
which he says he will soon unseal,  
may lay that matter finally to rest.**

**As for my other quest,  
before the Crocs swam on their way,  
Lash told me that my favorite show,**

***The World`s Worst Alligator Races,*  
is but fakery and stunts.  
Hearing this, I felt like such a dunce  
I swore I`d never watch the tube again.  
But what the hell.  
I learned on Kroh that some men  
get along quite well  
without that TV high.  
And one day, using yoga, Zen,  
or medication, so might I.**

**Now, would a space trip also help  
my nutty clientele?  
Perhaps to some degree.  
But I`d prefer to see on Kroh  
those litigation lawyers  
that my clientele unleashed on me.  
I`d have them live on manna  
that they`d chip from off the rocks,  
and when they`re late to Krohtian courts,  
have Krohtian enzymes clean their clocks.**

**McDonalduck, had I been born a waterfowl,  
a wild and willful goose,  
I`d fly about and loose my poop  
on every lawyer`s lawn and roof.  
And when they sued me,  
needing proof to back their words,  
they`d have to plead before the judge  
with briefcases stuffed full of turds.**

**Said Sam, Some say that shrinks are nuts,  
but I have never heard  
a human speak so cogently  
the wisdom of the birds.**

\* \* \*

**Stalker, Wright, and blacker Mike  
were sitting all together  
when McDonalduck came over.  
Said Sam, a little sheepishly,  
I guess you know the drill.**

**To which Mike Jones replied,  
Hey man, we bear you no ill will.  
You`ve got your job to do  
and we`ve got lots to say,  
so open up your bill  
and interview away.**

**The Duck then turned to Terry Wright.  
Said Sam, You`ve now spent  
twenty-one years to the day  
outside that smokey womb,  
and since you aren`t interred in any tomb  
and obviously haven`t died,  
can we assume  
you found a better world on Kroh?**

**A *better* one? the Poet sighed.  
And then he answered with a smile,  
A Mentian gave me some advice.  
He had no name, and no profession either.  
He said to me, If there be rich  
there must be poor,  
and poor is something we abhor,  
so we have neither.**

**I think, continued Ter,  
when we draw boundaries, compare,  
and carry through the universe  
judgmental and divisive words  
like better and like worse, or rich and poor,  
or when we speak  
of good and bad or straight and gay,  
eventually we lose our way  
and know not what we seek.**

**And what is that, asked Sam?**

**Why love, of course, said Terry Wright.  
When we find love, as I have done,  
to paraphrase Walt Whitman`s line,  
the prize we *really* sought, is won.**

**As Terry spoke, Sam felt a lump  
choke up his throat  
and something wet invade his eye.  
To stall for time,  
he blindly jotted down a note.  
But when he blinked away his tears  
and looked at what it said,  
he was amazed to find the jotting read:  
*A duck that`s raised for food  
must never fall in love.***

**And suddenly Sam absolutely knew  
the only ducks that can and do  
are those that fly high up above,  
are wild and free,  
And not, Sam told himself,**

**domesticated fowl like me.  
My brothers, sisters, dad, and mom  
were axed and plucked before my eyes.  
Why heck, I hardly knew my mother`s peck.  
Can fear of losing one I`ve wooed  
be why I never loved a duck  
or raised a brood,  
and am instead obsessed  
by fame and fortune, power, and fine food?  
There has to be a link.  
Tonight I`ll mention my epiphany to Dr. Fink.  
He`ll know what to conclude.**

**Then suddenly Sam struck his brow  
in disbelief and dumb despair.  
Had he been blind or lost his mind?  
The truth had always been right there  
in that so ancient barnyard rule:  
*Duck, love no duck,  
unless thou wouldst be Fortune`s fool.***

**When Sam had wiped away his tears  
and felt more self-composed,  
he turned to blacker Mike and said,  
The whiter competition fears  
that with your Navajo connection  
you`ll ace the polls and win election.**

**Hey, man, laughed Mike,  
his campaign`s cool.  
So far he`s followed every rule.  
He`s done part one, the trip to space,  
so voters know his name and face.  
And now, if he`d just vegetate  
awaiting that November date -  
not give you fellows of the fourth estate  
the chance to crucify his ass  
for, say, confusing Malta  
with the Khyber Pass  
or hound him for some carnal sin -  
who knows, the sucker might just win.**

**That said, do I believe my buddy, Rab,  
will help me in my quest  
to be a two-year guest  
at that Rotunda on the Hill?  
Why yes. I think he will.**

**At this, up spoke the Navajo.  
Said he, The question is, could I  
create the same effect on Earth**

**as earlier I did on Kroh?  
I`m not so sure, for even though  
the promises of jobs and riches  
flowing from the whiter Jones  
would sound familiar,  
like those pitches to the Krohs.**

**And even with you, Sam,  
each evening on the TV screen,  
quacking lines you read off  
electronic monitors behind the scene  
(lines written, by the way,  
by corporations backing  
that political machine  
that backs the General and Carter,  
corporations chaired by men  
so greedy to increase their power  
and their bottom lines  
that even Billy James would blush  
and fall into confusion  
seeing pragmatism carried to  
its logical conclusion).**

**And even though our blacker Mike  
would take the side  
of cleaner air and earth and water,  
good education and equality  
for every race and creed,  
and I, supporting him, would beat my drum  
to save our Earth for those there now  
and those to come, as I have done  
to save the Krohtian world from human greed,  
the only difference that I see  
in what will happen down on Earth  
from what has happened up on Kroh,  
is that not five percent will heed  
the drumbeats of a Navajo.**

**Responded Sam,  
I don`t know where the two of you  
picked up your cynical  
and jaundiced views.  
They surely didn`t come  
from watching TV nightly news.  
Mine is a proud profession,  
and our viewers are not dupes.  
When CBA occasionally stoops  
to pander to the blood thirst of the mob,  
admittedly, a journalist must play along  
or lose his job, and thus his pay,  
which in my case**

**is thirty thousand bucks a day.  
But may I say, an anchor Duck like me  
still tries to balance fantasies  
arising from his arrant greed  
with ordinary social need,  
and, despite what you two guys insinuate,  
will listen quite objectively  
to any Jones v. Jones debate.**

**\* \* \***

**Bill James and Tess,  
who had been talking hard and fast  
about a subject  
that was anybody`s guess,  
as Sam approached were talking less.  
Said he, Hey, Tess and Bill,  
for just a moment there  
I thought you`d given us the slip  
and were about to miss the ship.  
Did the riot of the Krohtians  
alter any of your notions  
about real estate development on Kroh?**

**Not very likely, Tess replied.  
Sam, once you get to know them,  
Krohs are sweethearts deep inside,  
and full of hugs.  
The only problem was the bugs.  
But then I bought some pesticide  
from Arnie Robb, which, with God`s help,  
should do the job.**

**Said Sam, But how do you propose  
to get permission from the Krohs  
to spread the poison on their land?**

**Laughed Tess, You mean that awful sand?  
Oh, we were sure they wouldn`t mind,  
and since we didn`t want to leave behind  
that leaky drum,**

**Bill James and I sent all that goo  
direct to where the bugs by day abound.  
We poured it down that old, abandoned  
transportation system underground  
and threw the drum in too.**

**It ought real quick to rid the place  
of all the things that creep and crawl  
and leave a whitish trace on rocks,  
and also finish off those Crocs.**

**I see, said Sam, who felt another tear  
well up into his eye.  
How come today his tears  
were coming one by one un-dry?  
And since some tears  
had launched him in his fabulous career,  
did these tears mean the end was near?**

**Sam turned his head  
to see if anyone had overheard  
what Tess had said,  
but not another in the room  
seemed suddenly beset by gloom.  
Was this a scoop?  
And if it was, how come  
he wished to keep it mum  
from all the others in the group?**

**So, guys, you did that  
just before we blasted off?**

**That`s right, said Bill.  
We figure in a year or so,  
when Tess and I return to Kroh  
to do the building that we`ve planned,  
there shouldn`t be a bug alive  
the length and breadth of Krohtianland.**

**Just then a member of the crew  
arrived to say that lunch was on the way  
and that the special of the day  
was lobster stew.**

**So Tess stood up and took Bill`s arm  
as lovingly as bride takes groom,  
and all the others rose as one  
and headed for the dining room.**

## ***APERITIF TIME***

**Toward five o`clock, and following a snooze,  
McDonalduck checked off his interviews  
and found that there remained  
no huge selection.  
Tom Beal and Becky Schwister  
had both looked different over lunch,  
radiant and rested.**



**He found them in the reading nook,  
not deep in books about the holy lands  
or Virgin Mary, but holding hands  
and sipping sherry.**

**You guys seem laid back,  
said the Duck. Did you discover  
something on the planet Kroh  
the rest of us might like to know?**

**At this, the two exchanged a smile.  
We`ll tell you in a while, said Beal.  
Tonight the two of us plan to reveal  
our textual discoveries, and maybe more.**

**Then Becky said, Because we choose  
to share our revelations  
with the total Delegation,  
we won`t be giving interviews,  
but plan to take the floor.  
So I`m afraid you`ll lose your scoop.**

**That`s cool with me, Sam told her.  
Perhaps I`m getting older,  
but being first to get a story  
doesn`t seem the path to glory  
that it did before.  
I think that there`s a duck  
deep down inside of me  
who more and more  
is gaining the ascendancy,  
and telling me there`s better things in life  
than getting a good scoop,  
and one of them is having a good poop.**

**Perhaps when this strange trip is done  
and I return to Washington,  
I`ll quit my job at CBA and buy a little farm.  
And on that farm I`ll be the master,  
and will let no harm and no disaster  
come to any duck in my purview,  
or any sheep or hen or cow.  
And then I`ll hire somebody to steer the plow  
and I will plant some corn.  
And then I`ll find a barnyard duck to love,  
and when our duckling brood is born  
I`ll give them hugs and pecks  
and write them yearly birthday checks  
for maybe ten or twenty bucks.  
Then next to their old dad,  
in every way that can be had,  
they`ll be the wealthiest of ducks.**

## ***PRELUDE TO A GOSPEL***

**That evening, the entire Delegation  
met together in the living bay  
to find out what the Reverend and Rabbi  
had to say. The mood was generally gay.  
Most Delegation members,  
happy to be on their way,  
were glad they`d come.  
Even Dora Battle and Ben Carter,  
who all the morning looked so glum,  
had thoroughly enjoyed the lobster stew,  
had quaffed each one three pints of brew  
and eaten cake and ice cream too.**

**At the stroke of nine,  
Tom Beal and Becky Schwister  
took the floor. Said he,  
I know some rumors have been spread  
concerning Beck and me.  
I`d like to put them now to bed.  
When we get home, we`re getting wed.**

**He paused, to let the loud applause  
die down, and then he said,  
About ten days ago, my future bride and I  
stood here together, side by side,  
ready to deride the other`s sacred vision  
across that great divide  
men call religion.**

**But during our sojourn on Kroh  
we got to know a Mertian  
who became our guru and our mentor.  
It wasn`t Ken or Moe or Rex,  
he had no name, no sex,  
but all the same, he did exist.  
And when I found a revelation  
in an ancient text  
that seemed to negate all I`d ever learned  
about my God, my Faith, and my Salvation,  
I went to him and asked what I should do.**

**And he advised that for one day  
I use no words like Christian and like Jew,  
like Beal and Schwister, love and hate,  
or brother/sister, father/son,**

**to see if I could then relate  
to what he had to say,  
which was, that Everything is One.**

**So I enlisted Becky`s help,  
and after talking for a day,  
taking care to keep those harmful nouns  
and adjectives at bay,  
and concentrating on  
the words that people say  
to bring them close to one another,  
we found a harmony  
like we had never known before  
with any other.**

**And when I held Beck in my arms  
and looked down at her many charms,  
then over at that ancient text,  
the story that it told  
no longer seemed a threat,  
but only served to show  
that life is much more interesting  
than one could ever know.**

**And so, I think no matter what  
we truly do believe,  
we have to sometimes put it all aside  
so we can change and grow.  
For in the universe of heart and soul,  
with all its secret, undiscovered places,  
there is no room  
for boundaries or stasis.**

**And now, if you`ll all settle down  
and listen open-mindedly and well,  
the Rabbi will read from a gospel  
written thirty centuries ago  
by someone called Apostle Mel.**

## ***THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MEL***

***Dear Future Reader:*** Known to my contemporaries as Mel the Mummer, I set down these lines bearing witness to certain startling events that occurred recently in Jerusalem and on this planet. I do this so you will know the full truth concerning a group of young men who traveled here with their leader, Jesus of Jerusalem.

### ***The Birth of Jesus***

There lived in Jerusalem at that time a young woman named Linda, daughter of Philip and Susan. Linda was a comely maid and deeply devoted to the Lord. Her devotions attracted God's attention. One night God came to her in a dream and told her to fear not, for she would give birth to a son whom she would name Jesus. Jesus would grow up to be King of Israel and Judah, and King of the Jews.

And so it came to pass that Linda gave birth to a son. But because she had no husband, when her parents died she was obliged to live in the fields and forests among shepherds and wood choppers. Young Jesus, shunning such mindless labors and not wishing to become a rabbi either, joined a group of performing acrobats, musicians, magicians and mummers. They gave performances throughout the land in exchange for coins, food, or a place near the fire.

When God saw the sissified work Jesus was doing, he decided to throw all his heavenly weight behind young David. With the help of the Lord, David killed many thousands because God made him victorious everywhere. When Jesus saw that the Lord God Almighty preferred that murderous, womanizing toady to his own son, he was saddened.

### ***The Miracles of Jesus***

Jesus was the best magician ever seen in Palestine. He could place a man in a box made of hard cedar, then cut the box through the middle without causing a drop of blood to flow. All who saw this knew God was working in Jesus, and not the Devil, or the man in the box would surely have died. So they did not persecute Jesus as a disciple of Satan.

An even more impressive trick Jesus practiced was levitation. On most days of the year, Jesus could levitate himself above the treetops. On Passover, he could levitate even higher than that.

### ***The Parable of the Prodigal Son***

Jesus traveled with his group and became famous throughout the land for his magic and parables. One story told of a father who joyfully welcomed back his wasteful, extravagant son who had been gone for years. He even killed the fatted calf to feast his son's return. When his hard-working, obedient, elder son complained, the father replied, "You have always been here with me, but he was lost and now is found, so he is even more precious."

After telling this story, Jesus would ask a wealthy man in the crowd to count out ten coins and make a fist around them. Then Jesus would pass his hands over the man's fist. When the man opened his hand, he would find only nine coins. The man would become furious and start to berate Jesus. Then Jesus would reach up and remove the missing coin from the man's nose and give it back to him.

The man would be so joyful at the return of his coin, he would give Jesus two or three coins out of pure gratitude.

### ***Jesus Cures a Hideous Skin Disease***

As famous as Jesus became in the land, God would still not acknowledge his son. The Lord remained at the side of David, helping him kill tens of thousands. Jesus felt God was only being that nice to David to make a point.

One day a man with a disgusting skin disease threw himself at the feet of Jesus and begged him to cure him. By good luck, Jesus suffered from the same skin ailment and carried at all times a small jar containing a balm his mother prepared from herbs. Jesus rubbed some on the man's sores and the itching stopped immediately. Two days later the rash was gone.

The man told everyone about the miraculous cure. He found Jesus' mother, Linda, and purchased a jar of balm from her. After that, Linda stopped washing shepherds' cloaks and began selling her 'miracle cure' to the thousands suffering from hideous skin diseases. After seven years she was able to retire to a cottage on the Sea of Galilee where she lived comfortably the rest of her life.

### ***The Silence of God***

Meanwhile, God remained silent. Jesus felt he had to do something really big to impress his father with his brains and devotion. One day Jesus gathered his friends around him and made them his Disciples. He told them he was going to levitate to the Seat of God, and asked them to come along. As Jesus was the only 'star' of their touring company, and without him they might starve, all twelve agreed.

### ***En Route to the Seat of God***

At noon on the day of the Vernal Equinox, Jesus and his twelve disciples lay down side by side in a large field, held hands, and closed their eyes. Levitation was Jesus' best magic trick. He never disclosed how he did any of his tricks, least of all this one.

Suddenly the group could feel no ground beneath them. Thrilled, they kept their eyes tightly shut. Light turned to darkness, warmth into a deep cold like they had never known. It put them into a profound sleep and they did not know how much time passed before they awakened again.

When they opened their eyes, they were in a different place. Tall, slender towers stood in the near distance. Inhabiting this new land was a small, plump race with yellowish hair all over them. They did not look very kosher.

The inhabitants did not speak, but took the strangers to their city by means of an underground transportation system, and gave them food, drink, and water for bathing.

Among the Disciples was one who would have been a famous mathematician if he had not given up his studies to become a juggler. He calculated that they were on a celestial body halfway between Jerusalem and the Seat of God. So they named the planet Midway and settled down for a while.

### ***Midway***

Jesus and his Disciples were given comfortable rooms on the fifth floor of one of the towers. The first evening two Angels came to their door. The Angels told Jesus to return whence he had come, because, actually, the Seat of God was just an expression, a mathematical expression, not a chair, and if they did ever find it they would have no place to sit, or even stand.

But Jesus told them he would stay on Midway one week, or two, and then decide what to do. So the Angels went away. In the days to follow, the youths traveled about the planet. There were six cities and the underground railway went to each one. They had planned to earn money in their usual way, but discovered the Midwayans had no

**currency. Everything was free and everybody worked at his job and slept well at night with no worries about repaying interest on loans.**

**Jesus wanted to bring this perfect society back to Jerusalem, but he could not get the ear of the Lord.**

### ***The Problem of Lying About Sex.***

**Jesus didn't like to stay up late. He preferred self-flagellation and then early to bed. But the Disciples went out every night and made love to the Midwayans. They discovered that half the Midwayans were unisex, so they made love to half of the half that wasn't. The Disciple who understood mathematics calculated that in three thousand years, fifty percent of the Midwayans would probably still carry some traits of their Earth fathers.**

**When Jesus asked his Disciples where they went at night, they told him they were taking walks, but Jesus suspected they were lying. When I am King of the Jews, he told them, lying about sex will be the most mortal of sins. But the Disciples laughed behind his back. Why, they asked each other, had not the Lord, who was very righteous, included lying about sex in his Ten Commandments, if it was so terrible?**

### ***Jesus and the Fig Tree***

**Jesus was by now desperate to get the Lord's attention. It came to pass that Jesus craved figs. Spotting a fig tree, he went to see if it had any figs under its leaves, but it wasn't the season for figs and so he found none. Jesus demanded that the tree produce a fig for him, but no fig was forthcoming. Filled with rage, he said to the tree, "You will never bear fruit again." Immediately the tree dried up. Jesus was astonished. Praise the Lord! he exclaimed.**

**When the Disciples saw what had become of the tree, they were astounded by the power of Jesus. "How did you do that?" they asked. But Jesus never told how he did his magic tricks. He told his Disciples that anyone could dry up a fig tree who was the son of the Lord God Almighty.**

**But secretly Jesus was disappointed and angry that even after the fig tree miracle, his father remained silent.**

### ***The Plague of Insects***

**Jesus knew that to make his father notice him he would have to do a much greater miracle than dry up one fig tree. He recalled how the Lord had called down a plague of locusts in Egypt to get Pharaoh's attention.**

**So Jesus worked his magic and conjured up a plague of night insects. In one night they devoured every leaf, tree, and crop on the entire planet. The Midwayans did not have to worry about starving because the insects left behind a miraculous excretion that looked and tasted just like manna.**

**When God saw what Jesus had done, he was not pleased. Does that whippersnapper think he can out-plague the Lord? I'll show him.**

### ***Heavenly Retribution***

**So the Lord God sent a plague of sand upon the planet. The sand covered the fields and filled in all the natural springs and ponds and lakes. It came right down to the shores of the salt seas. The sand blocked the entrances to the towers, forcing the Midwayans to abandon the buildings by climbing down ropes. Sand got into the subway system and stopped the trains. Even letting in sea water did not wash the sand away.**

**So that the Midwayans would not all die of thirst, God created a heavy morning dew. What they did not drink seeped into the ground and fed the plants and grasses deep in the sand so that they could stay alive and grow until the insects attacked them again.**

### ***Jesus and the Plague of Stones***

When Jesus saw the plague of sand the Lord had wrought, he knew he would have to outdo him. So he conjured up a plague of stones that instantly lay scattered upon the sand all over the planet. The stones prevented anyone ever trying to farm again, but they did provide something to sit on.

After Jesus did this, the Lord said nothing at all and did not respond with a greater plague. Jesus wondered if stones were less impressive than plagues of sand and insects. Perhaps the Lord was laughing at him. Jesus decided he would have to think of a new and better ploy.

The plan Jesus decided on was to kill himself. When he told his Disciples, they were very upset and begged him not to do it. At least not on Midway. "We`ll have no way to get home," they told him. But Jesus was unimpressed.

### ***The Suicide Plan***

It was clear that Jesus had to come up with a suicide plan quickly if he did not want to be murdered by the Midwayans, who were starting to riot because of the rocks and sand.

He considered climbing one of the abandoned towers and jumping out a window. But he could think of no way to accomplish this without breaking every bone in his body.

Jesus did not really want to kill himself. He just wanted his father to worry about him and be duped into showing his love. So Jesus decided on crucifixion. With the help of his Disciples, he constructed a large cross. They carried the cross up the one hill they had found on the planet. After they had set up the cross, Jesus told them to go away while he worked his magic.

"I swear to you on this cross," he told them as they walked away, "that the next time I come to this planet will not be before three thousand years." Jesus said this because he felt it would take the Midwayans at least that long to forget what had happened and to evolve some food better than manna. To make sure nobody would recognize him, he`d come disguised, and in a space ship.

### ***The Crucifixion***

The next day at high noon the Disciples returned to the hill and found Jesus tied to the cross, looking dead. A silence lay upon the land and it appeared that God had forsaken his son. The Disciples worried that even touching Jesus might break his concentration. None of the Midwayans seemed anxious to cut him down either.

That night Jesus climbed down from the cross by himself and rested a few days in a cave.

### ***The Prophecy***

While in the cave, Jesus thought long and deep. If ever he hoped to be King of the Jews, he would have to change. If he couldn`t fight God, he would have to join him. He would praise the Lord at every opportunity, would out-grovel David-the-Toady, and make any kind of wild promise – paradise, hell, anything. He was determined that even if it took 1000 years, he would be reborn King of the Jews.

***Then let his father try and forsake him on the cross!***

### ***Soon We Will Return to Jerusalem.***

Today Jesus will levitate us back to earth. God has not been completely silent. Last evening two Angels told Jesus that his father sends his regrets and will get back to him. Right now the Lord is busy helping David capture Jerusalem. After that he will make David King of Israel and Judah, and make his descendants kings for ever.

## **THE EPILOGUE**

**Next morning, when the Krohs awoke  
and looked out at their land,  
they saw a most amazing sight.  
It all was green,  
and not a drop of dew or trace of white  
was to be seen on sand or rock.**

**Then one, who recently was known as Ken,  
tried chewing on a tiny shoot,  
then snapped it off above the root  
and swallowed it right down.  
Ken felt the joy of this success  
as if he`d reached a terrible divide  
and had already crossed it.  
But suddenly, in great distress,  
his stomach lost it.**

**And when Ken looked around  
and saw upon the Krohtian plain  
a thousand others eating grass  
who also quickly tossed it,  
and then got word through shrug and sigh  
it was the same all over Kroh,  
he said, I think that we will die.  
Could this be God`s revenge on us  
for having told that lie?**

**What lie? said one who formerly was Rex.**

**Well, Rex, said Ken, the other week,  
while boning up on Earthspeak,  
badminton, croquet,  
and every other discipline  
we felt was needed to receive  
those Earthlings in a cordial way,  
I opened up an ancient text  
and read therein  
that lying about sex is sin.  
And Rex, we lied that time  
we told the Earthlings  
every Kroh was unisex,  
although we knew that half were not.**

**Now wait, said Rex, you`re talking rot.  
My sole intention was to make**



**our philosophic argument air tight,  
and maybe spare our females  
from rude sexual advances.  
But hey, you could be right;  
I could have told the truth  
and let the ladies take their chances.**

**But then Rex paused, and gave a sigh.  
You know, he said, until today  
I read those scriptures with a wink of eye,  
and blamed our desert landscape  
on a meteor from space.  
But now that everything we eat we vomit,  
and there have been no sightings of a comet,  
I think those texts may not be all  
preposterous distortions.  
To lose our food and drink in one fell swoop  
is tragedy of Biblical proportions.**

**Just then a starving germ came by  
and looked the Mentians in the eye.  
Said Rex, That germ`s about to die.  
And die it did, right at their feet.**

**Said he, who once was known as Moe,  
I wonder what germs eat.  
Perhaps they need the manna too  
and cannot live without their dew.**

**At this Ken smiled, and said, My friend,  
you shouldn`t fear we`ve reached the end.  
For in the worst scenario,  
if we do die and go to rest beneath the sand,  
our flesh and bones will fertilize this land,  
and in a dozen centuries  
there will again be trees,  
and fruit and grain,  
and slender towers in the rain,  
and maybe even snow.  
Does that make you feel better, Moe?**

**I guess it does, but even so,  
if Rabbi Schwister comes back soon,  
with invitations for all Krohtians  
having Jewish derivations  
to emigrate that very afternoon,  
I`d really like to go, said Moe.**

**THE END**