

CAPTAIN OF MY ROADS

By Frank Jousen

‘If all the roads are big oceans, and all the cars one big ship, then I am the captain of the road.’ Pete King hiccupped, banged his head on the door and realized that this had been his first philosophical thought ever. It was also to be his last one. For when the landlord had opened the door for him and thrown him out of his last pub he made some fatal decisions.

Getting up from his knees he thought he was able to steady himself amazingly well. If only the dark world around him – the hazy firmament, the milky light from the street lamp, the driving snow – would have followed suit and steadied itself, too! No, it wouldn’t do. He’d sit down on his deck and wait for the madness of the world to stop! For wasn’t he the captain of these roads, master of the largest fleet of second-hand cars in the whole district?

‘That’s exactly righ-t!’ He hiccupped. ‘Where’s my captain’s bridge? Let the buggers take over for a minute!’ - He lay down his head, his whole body on what he imagined to be his very own cabin, or bridge. Then he fell asleep.

I still see him lying there, in a foetal position. I see myself as well, much too vividly, standing in front of a red bundle on the snow-covered tarmac, a few minutes after driving round the bend and passing over the body in my taxi cab. - I’d never been taken in by this cheating auto dealer, but now he has become the master of my waking hours, in which I don’t drive an inch. And he’s the captain of my sleepless nights in which his careless philosophy drives me crazy.

BETTER THINK TWICE

She was a nurse. He was a computer expert. They thought they were in love.

The first time she visited him at home she rang the bell, he pushed the buzzer, thus letting her in electronically. When she had opened the door to the living room area she found herself looking across a vast space with a few pieces of white furniture in front of a panorama window. He was standing in front of the window, his back a shadow turned towards her.

She covered the distance with some long strides, but was slowed down when she had to zigzag round the state-of-the-art sofa and two uncomfortable-looking armchairs. His posture hadn't changed. She stepped next to him and put an arm round his slender waist.

Looking out of the window she could see now what he had been staring at all this time. A red brick wall and grey concrete tiles; in the middle an old man, leisurely walking round this yard in circles.

“My grandfather. Always muttering under his breath. Crazy guy”, he said.

“It depends”, she replied tentatively, “old people only speaking to themselves aren't crazy, they're trying to keep themselves rooted in this world by telling themselves what's what. Old people seeming to talk to themselves while actually talking to their ghosts would rather leave it or may have already left it behind.”

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RELATION-CHIPS

(A SCIENCE FICTION STORY)

Whenever he went for a check-up of the whole SSM, the ‘social system module’; a realization hit him like a wall of ice-cold water: how difficult life had been in the old days when one had to build up real relationships. – Gosh, they were like voyages to distant destinations, peopled by treacherous pirates, boring or cantankerous fellow passengers and mad crews – and those were the easy trips.

But then the SMD, the ‘social monitoring director’, spoke the magic “relax” and he would sink back into his relation-chip-blurred universe in which one felt loved and understood by all and sundry, even if one's virtual family virtually walked out on you or went extinct due to the dwindling of the population.

Bio:

Frank Joussen is a German teacher and member of one-world and peace groups. He has had numerous publications, e.g.: In North America in anthologies published by Poet Works Press; Big Pond Rumours, Poets Against War, Poets Against the War Canada, The Gazette, Writer's Lifeline, Raving Dove, New Verse News, The Pedestal Magazine, Kota Press, Raven Poetry. In G.B. in: Poetry Kit Magazine, Caught in the Net, Pulsar, Poetry Scotland, Poetic Hour, The Measure and Memories, a book with twelve "cancer stories" and 144 paintings; in Ireland in: Boyne Berries; in Australia in: New England Review, Ulitarra, Imago, Southern Review, Eureka Street; in India in: Poet, Poetry Today, Metverse Muse, Muse India, Poets International, Canopy, Triveni, World Poetry, Creative Saplings, Literary Ruminations and various anthologies, e.g. "Railonama", "Celebrating India" etc.

His first collection, "Building Bridges", was published by I.D.E.A.S. in Andhra Pradesh in 2008. He also edited a short anthology containing the poetry of three Indian authors plus his own work, again in India, in 2011, and co-edited an international anthology "Family Matters" with Canadian writer Christina Cowling and Indian publisher Nivedita in 2014.