

*Fex teaches Owl Man How to Write Simply ...*

“Did you like that *espresso* Jasmine brought ya, Bird Brain?”

Fex just couldn't resist, even as a figure of the purest imagination, in tweaking Owl Man's professorial dignity. So, whenever possible, he called him “Bird Brain” instead of the more dignified “Owl Man.”

“Oh yes, it was delicious,” replied Owl Man, as he slipped into a near-trance at Fex's mere presence.

Lest the reader be alarmed, Owl Man had gotten out of bed and performed all of *his* ablutions, before slipping back under the covers just as his sweet Jasmine brought him his promised *espresso doble* on the specially-fitted lap-tray that accommodated both his laptop computer *and* his delicate porcelain *espresso* cup purchased in *Firenze* on some long-ago trip.

“Now, lean yer head back on the pillow, Bird Brain, and I'm gonna show you some stuff.”

Owl Man was already getting annoyed.

“Fex, will you just quit the ‘Bird Brain’ riff? You're not fooling anybody, least of all me,” insisted Owl Man.

“Oh yeah? Well then, how come yer comin' to me for help?”

“I'm **not** coming to you for help, Fex. You came from LA to Seattle of your own accord, remember? And by the way, where did you get that humongous pinto horse?”

“Humongous, eh? Boy, yer gettin' some vocabulary, Bird Brain, big words. You sound like some Ivy Leak professor.”

“It's ‘League,’ Fex, ‘Ivy League,’ not ‘Ivy Leak.’”

“Whatever, Owl Man. Now yer startin' to waste my time.”

“Your time? What about mine?”

So far, this therapeutic session was not going very well. But whether it was Owl Man's fault, or Fex's, would be hard to prove in a court of law.

“OK,” said Fex. “Now let's just imagine that you're sittin' by a quiet stream, you know, tricklin' water and stuff.”

“Oh, sweet Jesus!” Owl Man whispered to himself.

“Huh? What did ya say?” shouted Fex.

“Fex, will you please lower your voice? Remember, we’re doing a therapeutic active imagination.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot. Sorry, Owl Man.”

This was the first hint of courtesy on Fex’s part, maybe since Owl Man had first invented him.

But before long, the two antagonists were swirling through the mists of the imagination, zooming and swooping through meadows and glades, high peaks and oceanic vistas. Then Fex, who was not as dumb as he seemed, said, “OK, Owl Man. I think you’re ready.”

“Mmmmm,” said Owl Man in reply.

“Now, I want you to follow me. Don’t think about what I do or the words I say, or whether they’re fancy or not, just *follow me*.”

“OK,” said Owl Man.

Fex took a deep breath and, drawing on the Stanislavski method he had learned thanks to Owl Man, while the latter was in Yucatán and Heron Man was teaching the “feathers” technique to the “Hasty Heisters,” as Fex had dubbed them, Fex now asked Owl Man to follow him “down the bird’s throat” to where the *time-nuggets* were resting.

Soon Owl Man was in a deep trance.

Fex stared at him and, satisfied that the trance was genuine, he softly and quietly said, “Now, Owl Man, repeat after me.”

“Mmmmm,” responded the Owl.

“Welcome, ladies and gentleman. I’m so glad you all were able to join me tonight.”

And Owl Man repeated exactly what Fex had said.

Fex continued: “I’m not going to unload a bunch of Ouija board stuff on you tonight, we’re just gonna”—at this Fex corrected himself—“we’re just *going* to consider a few simple ideas.”

Fex paused and waited for Owl Man to catch up in his repetitions.

Again, Fex continued: “The first idea is that you already know everything you need to know. Got it?” And the imaginary audience all murmured in accordance.

“That’s great,” said Fex. “Now the second point is that you don’t need me or Bird Brain here tellin’ you what to do.”

Again the fantasy-audience rustled and murmured approvingly as Owl Man repeated Fex’s litany of wisdom.

“Finally, Point Number Three is that this is all there is. There ain’t no ‘great bye ‘n’ bye’ that ya gotta wait for. It’s all here, right now, and there ain’t no masters. ‘Cept you’re all masters.”

Just as Owl Man was finishing his repetition of Point Number Three, Fex interjected, “By the way, I’ll be in the lobby to sign autographs of my new book as soon as we’re done here.”

Then Fex clapped his hands and Owl Man woke with a start from his “feathers” trance.

“Well, whatta you think? Pretty terrific, eh?”

Owl Man was still in a bit of a daze after the prolonged trance, but he had to admit that he felt invigorated, energized.

“See? I told ya, Bird Brain. There ain’t nothin’ to it.”

At that point, Jasmine tapped lightly on the door and brought a tray with two lead crystal snifters, a decanter of Lagavulin, and some Manchego cheese with artisan crackers, and she set it on the end table between the two . . . between the two . . . “Power brokers,” inserted Fex. “Is that the word yer lookin’ for, Jasmine?”

“Well, it’s not *exactly* the word I was looking for, but I suppose it will do.”

“Course it’ll do,” said Fex. And he filled both snifters with three fingers each of Lagavulin, and he and Owl Man offered many eloquent toasts, as Jasmine scratched her head and decided it was time for her shower before running off to Tully’s to serve still more Lagavulin, Macallan, Glenfiddich and whatnot, to the loyal clientele that had accrued to Tully’s new business.

Before she slipped into the bathroom, however, she caught Fex’s eye and said, “Oh, by the way, Fex, I think there’s a traffic cop writing up a citation for your huge pinto horse down there, probably for dirtying up the sidewalk without a permit.”

Fex stood up and stretched, saying, “No sweat, Jaz. I’ll go talk to him. Slip him a twenty. Amazing how them citations can just disappear when ya know how to deal with it. Right,

Owl Man?" Fex didn't wait for an answer, but just ambled to the door with a bow-legged gait.

Owl Man would not have replied, anyway, because he was staring into the bottom of the snifter at the concentric rings of drying Lagavulin that were glimmering down there like the Rings of Saturn.