

Flowers

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The Fall of the Seven Earths

Flowers

Under the Hood

The Imprisonment of Jonathan Knox

Over the River

The Emancipation of Jonathan Knox

The Here and Now

The Monksville Chronicles

Novelwriter

Untitled Bigfoot Project

Flowers

A Tale from Fallen Earth



Hunter A. Wallace

This is a work of fiction. All the characters, locations, organizations, and events portrayed in this book are either products of the bookmaker's imagination or are used fictitiously. Or both.
Any and all resemblance to Reality is purely coincidental.

...

In other words, it's just words. It's not real. Get a grip.

Flowers

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Acknowledgement

This book was written over the course of five days fueled by herbal tea and little else. More cups of herbal tea went drank than hours went slept.
Do with that as you will.

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slow eternities pass in slumber



Peace

Life

"Leeme lone."

A soft mutter muffled by four blankets, two of which are just sheets. The prodding continues.

He rolls over and groans *Leeme looone, doot* into his pillow.

Heat. Moist, putrid heat on his face, it's *awful*, it's...
'My breath.'

He rolls himself back over, draws two dry lungfuls of ashen air through his mouth. 'Man can't help but smile at the skunky taste of it. The taste of home. He drifts...

Yet another blunt prod, this one into his gut, this one delivered by what feels like a rubber sledgehammer. He bats at it like a young cat would a dangling string but hits nothing.

"Dooooot stop, I'm tryna slee..." as he drifts back into darkness.

A few slow eternities pass in slumber. Then appears a light, a dim sphere of glow that only grows larger as he approaches it. But he's not approaching it, and there is no *it*, it's just... it's as though the world is opening up beneath his eyelids, almost like he's squinting but in the opposite direction. He can see the apartment, the smudged walls, the clunky street sign table in the middle. That ancient zebra recliner they just *had* to haul all the way home from that suspect garage sale near the center of town a month ago. He can see a hairy leg, too, just one toothpickish leg standing up on the bed whilst the other leg, reeled back out of sight, prepares to swing forward and prod him in the gut again. That's just the thing about being prepared,

though – circumstances tend to change all on their own, and no matter how far up Shit's Creek one may row, their paddle can always be snatched away by the current.

From behind closed eyelids Howie watches himself catch the falling boot with one hand and flip its owner off the bed. There comes a loud noise, closer to a *thud* than a *crash*, but too resemblant of both to be defined as either. Thus the cold winter winds of Jhuanuary begin to blow.

"OH the fuck you did *not*," the fallen thinman growls, clawing furiously at the bed with both hands. "Boy you best be up outta that bed before I get to my feet, do not *test* me, Howie!"

Howie, watching a mad jumble of hands and wrinkly bedsheets slowly darken and fade away, does not get up outta that bed. Not until he's rolled off of it, and even then he only opens his eyes–

'burning light stinging Goddamn that hurts'

–because the sudden throbbing presence dead center in his forehead commands him to do so.

"Man, what the fuck? I was–"

"You *wuz* passin' out like a Goddamn *junkie* is what you were doin', Hoots. You *know* I don–"

"I know *plen'y*," Howie says as he rolls onto his back. He swings his hands before himself in an attempt to bat his surroundings away but lo, the bulblight continues to hurt Howie's closed eyes. "Where's Roscoe? I need–"

"Man you need'a get your Goddamn life together, this shit's ridiculous."

A pair of wiry hands clench Howie's love handles. He jumps, squeaks a little, squirms away from their electric embrace.

“What, suddenly you don’t like me takin’ up a hunk’a your muffins? Man, get the fuck up.”

“Roscoe, I need Ros—”

Howie bumps his head on the bedframe – the metal bedframe underneath the trundle bed, that is – just hard enough to break his crawl. There’s silence as he grips the bed and leverages himself up, yet he can somehow tell a certain pair of arms were just folded nearby. Those arms are always folding up these days.

“Where’s Roscoe?” asks Howie as he lets go of the bed. He wobbles a little, unconsciously sways his weight back and forth between his feet, settles into balance. Presses a palm to his forehead. “I have a damn headache. I’m not in the mood for games, Player Two – where is Ros—”

“He’s right where y’left him, if I had to guess,” arrives, sopping moist with attitude, in Howie’s ears. “Wherever that might be. Hey, y’know what? Maybe you left him in that one place you go on the nights I make you sleep on your lonesome, because that’s exactly where you’re goin’ tonight! Peace, dude!”

Howie watches this living construct of matchsticks and dental floss march over to the door, his muscles and skabs flexing with self-dignity and all that other junk he keeps in that paradoxical double-wide surprise of a trunk he’s got on him, and throw the door open. Gargoyles of night air glide in on wings of shattered ice, cutting Howie through to his core. He falls down on one knee – almost goes down on both – as the shivers overtake him like an implosion: from the inside out.

“C’mon, get goin’ now. You wan’a take a knee for me you can do it when you’re sober. Now—”

“Roscoe, ‘man. C’mon, just go get Roscoe.”

No answer is spoken. Howie, forgetting to stand all the way up, cracks his lids to reveal a black sliver of pupil surrounded by bloodshot red. Upon seeing that sliver of eye, the ‘man who hid Roscoe unleashes a tactile torrent of wrathful sass that simultaneously pushes Howie away and pulls him up to his feet. Then, he returns fire.

“You done?” asks the igniter of the blaze. Howie takes a moment to decide. Then...

“Yeah, I’m done. See you tomorrow, *Jan*.”

The door claps Howie on the ass hard. He takes a step towards the stairs, turns around, thinks about knocking and apologizing and asking for yet another chance and getting denied yet again and getting his nose booped by the door after it’s slammed in his face. Instead, he decides to shrug off the bullshit and get walking. Jhan wins.

Each squeaky wooden tread cries louder than the last as Howie descends to Earth from his little dormitory of a studio apartment. Wuester is not a modern hoppin’ and poppin’ town, he knew that before he moved here; if you don’t own a house, you’ll either sleep outside or you’ll find a shithouse to rent. Or, what more and more frequently has been the case for Howie as of late, you find a hole in the ground somewhere, a cold, dark, dank little nook of a cranny where the locals wouldn’t be caught dead lookin’ unless they were gettin’ desperate to find what they were lookin’ for, in which case Howie would do whatever he could to help them. A desperate ‘man, whether that ‘man be a man or a woman, is always deserving of help, and if their situation truly is desperate, they’ll get that help they need. In one way or another.

"They *should*," Howie corrects himself as the slabs of pressure-treated wood between him and the soil paving the way he must walk diminishes one footfall at a time. "Desperate 'mans *should* always get the help they need, so long as they actually need it." He stops on the last step and looks up at the apartment one more time. The lights are still on, he can see a prick of 'em through the peephole in the door, but all the blinds are down. The walls have all been built, and now Howie gets to pay for them.

"Boy, do I really need it..."

He slaps his right pocket then, and were Howie's face to light up as literally as it does metaphorically, the sun would never need to rise again. There's a full joint in his pants pocket, a perfectly rolled joint with a little bend in its belly but that's okay, Howie's got a bend in his belly too, and if he's really lucky... yes! There's a matchbook in his back pocket, what a beautiful night. What a beautiful world. What a beautiful life!

Howie "Hoots" McGee, two boots on the ground, bootstraps pulled taught 'round the bottom of his shins, walks confidently into the night. A wisp of silver smoke rises in his wake.