

King Missile, Ed

Ed was at the end of his rope, an expression he detested. "There is no rope!" he would scream at the laughing walls. "There is only the end. No hope, no rope. Ending is better than mending. Doors of perception, windows of opportunity -- these are illusions, like the killing floor." Ed spoke in a squeaky whiny voice with perhaps a slight tinge of glee, but this was only because he couldn't be bothered to try to develop a manner of speaking that truly reflected his mood. "This is a vacuum. There is no air in this room. Despair is no fun anymore. Nihilism knocked three times on the ceiling, but the rosy fingers of dawn always inserted themselves in the nose of unfulfilled promises. Angels sang Heysanna Hosanna, paralyzed prima-donnas danced in the streets all day, but when darkness came, everybody went home. I was ready - everyone else was asleep. And while it may have been a relief to see that I was right all along, here I am still: alone and trapped, awaiting the endless end. And I can turn it all around, and laugh at it and laugh at myself; I can laugh louder than the walls, the halls, the waterfalls, louder than Charles de Gaul or Fulton Mall, but I don't know what I'm laughing at, I don't know just what I think is so goddamn funny. I don't know why I don't just shut up and give up and lay down and die. What do I have to complain about anyway," Ed asked his Picasso, "I'm a millionaire!" This wasn't exactly true. Ed's Picasso was an obvious forgery, his three Rothkos had just been singled out in an article in ARTFORUM entitled "The three most insignificant paintings of Mark Rothko," and his Barbara Kruegers had been irreparably damaged by Rein Sanction and a few other bands from Gainesville that refused to recognize the value of art.

"Come to think of it," Ed mused to the laminated roadkill coffee table that he had purchased when times had seemed slightly less bleak, "Come to think of it, not only does art have no intrinsic value, but my collection has no extrinsic value either. I know I'm not a millionaire, but that's no reason to complain. There is no reason to complain. There is no reason to do anything. I don't believe in reason, objective reality, or collective farming. I don't believe in public speaking, which is another reason why I'm here alone. I don't believe in life or death, I would kill myself, but I don't believe in suicide." Ed put on a red shirt and took a quick walk around the block while whistling softly to himself. He reentered his apartment screaming, "There is no life on this planet! Jehovah-One replaced all life with machinery five centuries ago. the so-called industrial revolution was just another hoax and we all fell for it, 'cause we were all programmed to. Even I fell for it, I believe in the steam engine, even though I don't believe in anything. Logical inconsistency is the Mr. bubble I bathe in each and every evening, except for yesterday evening, when I rollerbladed over to the Masonic temple to play pinochle with Pope John Paul the First. I really had no choice in the matter." "Ed certainly could go on and on, and he did, and he would, and he will, until you or I or somebody does something about it." Senator Sterno of Louisiana announced over closed circuit television. "And as long as he continues to pontificate pointlessly, I will do nothing." Ed walked away from the program feeling fortified and stapled. His brain was buzzing, the way it always did just after Jeopardy. He loaded up the microbus with Atlases and poseidons and headed for Pope county.

"I've had it." He sang, "I've had it with puns, alliteration, russian literature, Italian neorealism, meaningless cross references and laundry lists of nonsense. I shall dive without a license, without clothing, without direction and if I make it to Arkansas, fine, and if I'm running late, if I'm running a numbers game, it doesn't matter, I shall keep on running. Yes, this is the answer. This is the ending, I shall keep on running, because a body in motion tends to stay emotional, and it's better to feel. Pain is better than emptiness, emptiness is better than nothing, and nothing is better than this."