

## FRANK SHERLOCK

### To Jupiter! 88 Stars En Route

---

Drive your motorcycle up my ass. That was the first thing I remember coming out of CAConrad's mouth. We were both participating at a visual arts/poetry collab show at Vox Populi. He read his poem & an audience member was offended, oddly picking his toes in protest. I spent the early 90s trying to be "serious", taking orders from literary fascists about what poetry should be. CA & his two-wheeled dildo gave me my punk rock back, the permission to not ask permission.

---

My high school president may have very well won the position because his father was killed in a mob hit. Later I befriended an enforcer for the Junior Black Mafia who wreaked havoc during the Philly crack wars vs. the Jamaican Shower Posse. He kept a job on the Sears loading dock just so his grandmother thought he had a real job. Then there was the moment when I realized that CAConrad was maybe the most badass motherfucker I'd ever met.

---

When he first moved to Philadelphia, all his friends were dykes. He was known as the "lesbian purse-bearer" whenever his friends wanted to cruise on the dance floor. He wondered aloud, "Women who hang out with gay men are called fag hags. Why isn't there a term for men who hang out with all lesbians?" One friend said, "Oh listen to you, hot shot. You think we're going to invent a term just for you? You're the only one!"

---

“Toast is my favorite food on the planet!” Whaaat?

---

A handful of friends helped Conrad celebrate his 20<sup>th</sup> year in Philadelphia with a pilgrimage to the Midtown Diner where he ate his first meal in the city. The flies on the paper overhead had decomposed and were crumbling. Toast all around.

---

When he moved out west to “study herbs” (yeah, right), a Manson-esque interpretation of the Beatles’ “Get Back” convinced me that CA was headed to Arizona for what was then called “sexual reassignment” surgery. He found this ridiculous, but gave me a break since it wasn’t as dire as his other friends’ conjectures. “At least you didn’t think I was going away to die of AIDS!”

---

CA referred me to his attorney. The lawyer keeps asking me if I’m gay. I keep not answering him. He assures me that he doesn’t mind, repeatedly stating that it’s okay if I am. “I wrote my thesis on that in college.” The lawyer says, “I’m only wondering since you were referred to me by a transvestite.”

For years there were whisperings in the New York scene that CA & I were a couple. We both found it hilarious, but wondered why this story had legs for so long. One night on a bender in Brooklyn, I asked Greg Fuchs why NY poets continue to think Conrad & I are together like that. He

replied, “Because I keep telling them you are.” He shrugged his shoulders and giggled. “Who knows? Maybe. I don’t know for sure what happens in Philly.”

---

The night of Anselm Berrigan & Karen Weiser’s wedding, we saw a UFO together in Brooklyn. For some reason, no one at the after-party was interested in coming outside to see it. Maybe it was because the last of the late John Fisk’s weed was being smoked in tribute to his friendship. We loved to talk about John too, but c’mon, there was a UFO outside!

The next day at Telephone Bar, we told Alice Notley about our UFO sighting. We described it as an orange pyramid. Alice told us with absolute certainty it was NOT a UFO. She explained that UFOs are shaped like saucers. We looked at each other & asked the same question w/ our eyes, while remaining silent. “How does she know that?” we were thinking. So much was going on that wasn’t making sense & Michael Jackson was acquitted on television during our talk with Alice.

---

For as long as I knew him, poets were always jealous of Conrad. I just never understood it, since he’s the most generous writer I’ve ever met. Even weirder are the scores of haters that can’t stand me solely for my close association. I remember the first time someone hated CA because of his friendship w/ me. I remember thinking “Finally!!!”

I like to put rumors in the pipeline to spread misinformation about CA for my own amusement. The poet Adam Fieled despises Conrad for reasons I’m not quite sure about, other than the notion that CA dared to call himself

a poet w/o jumping through the appropriate hoops. I “confidentially” shared w/ Adam that Conrad was a closet heterosexual. I also let Adam in on the fictitious secret that CA was a deadbeat dad. Contrary to the narrative of escaping to Philadelphia for queer survival, it was rumored that he was running from his responsibilities as a father in Boyertown. Fieled’s jaw dropped. Sadly, Adam hasn’t spread the rumor to a soul, as far as I know. Later on, we’d see Fieled on the street as he walked toward us. I’d smile & say hello. He’d sneer at us sometimes. Other times he’d growl like an animal. And we’d laugh & laugh!

---

You’re always told you never know where your poems will end up. I don’t know quite how to describe how it feels to have your book read aloud by a trucker receiving jumper cable foreplay from Conrad. I imagine a bear out on the road somewhere, parked at a rest stop reading *Love Letter November 15* tonight & it makes me smile.

---

It’s kind of a thing when somebody saves your life. Especially when it begins with an after-work garlic delivery. Then a call to the ambulance. Then faking the funk about bringing my phantom insurance card to the hospital to make sure that I got to the best ER. Then being my go-between between me & my life-angel, that big sweet EMT dyke Lynette. Then fighting to keep me alive outside the hospital with a call to the poetry community. It’s a thing, that fierce kind of love.

Once I got out of the hospital, my dad said, “Your friend, Conrad... he’s pretty neat.” This was maybe his highest compliment, reserved for the very special few.

---

One of the great thrills in life is watching your closest friend go from dirt poor to prime-time. It's especially great when it happens because people finally notice the magick that he's been practicing for years. There was a time when we'd meet for drinks to celebrate every time we got published or were mentioned in the press. It got to a point that we just couldn't keep up. We'd be too damn drunk! Something that I might have taken for granted in hindsight is that his successes were mine and vice versa. There is & was never a question. Part of poetry is choosing family. But I must have done something right to be able to call CAConrad my brother. It's good to have a genius in the family.