STALKING

CRAWLROLLIES

Gordo Chessland

edited by Derek Kannemeyer

*(Cover image and design needed)*

stalking crawlrollies:

an incantation in multiple chaplets

by Gordo Chessland

edited by Derek Kannemeyer

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EDITOR’S NOTE

“Stalking Crawlrollies: an incantation in multiple chaplets” was the full title that Gordo Chessland himself gave his long poem. It was his wish that any publicly available edition of this poem in book form “incorporate frequent documentary interruptions,” to remind readers in what context and with what intentions the poem was produced.

The present volume has been edited, by Derek Kannemeyer, to comply with that wish.

The secondary materials come, with permission, from:

1. “The Brown Unit Pamphlets: #1 The Roswell Memo; #2. 14 Helpful Hints.”

2. Dr. Helga S. Dorn’s “The Green Writings."

3. *The Apocrypha: an Anthology of Gordo Chessland Graffiti*, edited by Oscar Lerwill.

4. various volumes of the *Cloud Hog Anthologies*, edited by Mr. Lerwill.

5. Derek Kannemeyer’s *50 Years On.*

The first two items on the list are official United Nations pamphlets.

The last three are available in soft cover or hardback form from the present publisher.

May our Cloud Hog eye be turned for seeing, may it spy Crawlrollies

May our Cloud Hog snout be flared for scenting, may it sniff out Crawlrollies

May our Cloud Hog jaws be bared for snarling, may they crunch Crawlrollies

May our Cloud Hog claws be bunched for gouging, may they rip Crawlrollies

May our Cloud Hog wings be wide and wheeling, to join, and flock—

to smash down like storm dark on the nests of Crawlrollies

Let our tails lift as one their curlicues, to whisk away the cobwebs

of whatever of Crawlrollies clings, let our backsides breathe

in one foul exhalation our collective Cloud Hog woe upon it

Let its small Crawlrollie hope of somewhere safe and other

shrivel into dew for daisies to suck dry, for our Cloud Hog sun,

rising in reclaimed glory, to ride fire over,

roughfoot and scorching

May at last our Cloud Hog bellies loll and sprawl:

there where Crawlrollies are come to dust:

to glints of mica in God’s rock:

to filigree of bone

from **Cloud** **Hog Anthology #1:** **Prayers** **and** **War** **Chants**,

translated & selected by Oscar Lerwill

**CONTENTS**

*prefatory document: a Cloud Hog Prayer & War Chant*

**Part One: BOOT CAMP TOWER**

*documents: an interview with Oscar & Carlos; an Apocryphal pre-prologue*

**I. Prologorrhea: Now Zero**

*documents: Brown Unit personnel; a few Helpful Hints; questions for Will and for Lil*

**II. Brown Unit**

*documents: more Helpful Hints; an interview with Oscar & Lil*

**III. It Begins***, followed by the* **first Interlude: Hail to the Chief**

*documents: Helpful Hints; the Roswell Memo; more from Oscar & Lil; also from Carlos*

**IV. It Resumes**

**Part Two: SIDEKICKING THE DOC**

*documents: a few French Hints; Dr. Dorn on the Green Writings; a Green Writing*

**V. Meet the Doc**

*documents: Helpful Hints, cont.; more from Carlos & Will; more of the Roswell Memo*

**VI. Doc Explains**

*documents: a Helpful Hint; the Roswell Memo, cont.; Cloud Hog graffiti; more Oscar*

**VII. Cyclone**

*document: a letter from Lil to the Chief, on the Cloud Hogs*

**VIII. Gruntle’s Tale**

*documents: from Dr. Dorn’s journal; a Green Writing*

**IX. Sherwood Forest**

**Part Three: TO THE MOON**

*documents: Oscar on genetic immunity; a Short Cloud Hog War-Cry*

**X. Friday to the Moon**

*documents: Oscar & Ganmela on the role of God; Lil on First Skirmish; three last Hints*

**XI. First Skirmish**

*documents: snippets from Carlos, Will, Oscar & Lil; Gordo addresses his first readers*

**XII. Oscar’s Tale***, followed by the “Emended”* **second Interlude**

*document: “Ask the Cloud Hog,” an online chat*

**XIII. Meanwhile, Back With Gordo At the Shuttle**

*documents: Will & Gruntle on the Crawlrollies; a collaborative poem; Will again*

**XIV. Oscar Again: Snowstorm, Firestorm**

**Part Four: LAST WORDS**

*documents: a few last words, from Lil, Will, Carlos & Oscar; and from Dr. Dorn*

**XV. Funerals and Soirées**

*document: Brown Unit Pamplet #2: "14 Helpful Hints"*

***Notes & Glossary***

INTERVIEWER: Gordo Chessland described his poem as a

“bounce rhyme hallucination.” What’s your take on it?

CARLOS WEILL *(laughing):* Man, Gordo was one weird little dude.

Very verbal, loved those word games, and that’s what you

get from him. The voice in the funhouse mirror.

OSCAR LERWILL: The only distortion I take serious issue with is

that gag about my wig. I have real hair, people!

CARLOS WEILL *(laughing):* Okay, the guy saved the world’s ass,

but some of the little stuff kind of *genuinely* bugs us!

from the compilation **50** **Years** **On**

~ Look up. Is it night? Is the moon out? That’s where

I'm writing from. Call it Now One.

In Now Four, you’re reading it, angling your chair

To the shine of a lamp or the sun.

If there IS a Now Four! If what I’m poised to attempt’s

Going to work—if an alien race,

Dice-Players or Gods, aren’t fixing the odds

As we spin in their Now Two of space…

Now Three’s the Timefleas; ALL nows, and none.

Now Zero’*s* my entrance. How pale

And nervous I am! Mumbling “Yes, sir!”—“No, ma’am!”

As I step to the brink of our tale.

The Feds at my front door. The military jet

To their waybase, “For processing, please…"

Looking up. Feeling watched. I remember it yet:

Oh, that old dimpled moon in the trees…

~ from **The Apocrypha**, an anthology of writings dubiously

attributed to Gordo Chessland, culled mostly from the

leavings at his shrines; edited by Oscar Lerwill

**Part One:**

**BOOT CAMP TOWER**

*(Color image needed)*

I. PROLOGORRHEA: NOW ZERO

So I gave them my arm, and they tranked it with narc.

My wrist tag read “Ops Boot Camp Tower.”

The countdown hit five and the full moon went dark.

I woke to a perfume of flour.

Infopak pamphlets, in blue, pink and yellow,

Said, SLEEP WITH THE TOOLS OF YOUR TRADE!

WAKE WITH A SNARL! FIND A MIRROR, AND BELLOW:

"FORWARD AND FIERCE! UNAFRAID!"

In a long wall of mirrors, we watched ourselves train;

Behind us, reversed in the glass,

A revolving door in and back out broke the plane

Of a second wall, equal in mass.

One floor below, down a rickety ladder,

An exit-light licked its red wound.

Wheedled from bloat to surcease, like a bladder,

A switchboard’s bleeps whistled and crooned.

I remember it all! The mice in the sauna;

The mess turret’s mottled goose pie;

The dorm’s tinted skylights, where hog-like winged fauna

Sprawled in a marigold sky.

The food-fights in zero G, grits in our gymsuits!

The pogo arcade's Astroturf!

The antique film library, lovers in swimsuits,

Their lives a long bliss of white surf.

*(Color image needed)*

“*Stoneground to flatten ’em! Slip-jigs to steer ’em!”*

“Louder, lads!” “*Fierce, unafraid!*

*Cold cream and mudpacks to clog ’em and smear ’em!*”

Who cared what it meant? We obeyed.

For week after week, we trained and grew sleek,

And slickened in teamwork and flair.

There was Carlos, and Lil; there were Oscar and Will;

There was I; there I was; *I* was there!

Me! Gordo Chessland! But really, how *nerdy*

We were, till the Unit reforged us.

This is that story. It’s somber and wordy—

Of the war that caught up and disgorged us.

It harks back to days when I knew, in a phrase,

Six bucks plus a couple of toes—

When life’s ways seemed a maze through a crazing of haze

Half-pierced by the blur of my nose.

What I learnt—what *we* learned—was of worlds in the sky,

And of fleas in the shag rug of Time.

How to see. How to feel. How to heal, or to die.

How to lie, to a jangle of rhyme.

*COME HAUL ON THE BELL ROPE!*

*COME TOLL THE ALL CLEAR!*

*HARD LEFT TO NEVER, SOFT RIGHT TO HERE!*

*CRAWLROLLIES! CRAWLROLLIES! COME HEAR.*

**Brown Unit Official Roster**

**crew**

Gordo CHESSLAND

Oscar LERWILL

Lilser W. LORCA

Will O'CLARE, Sr.

Carlos R. WEILL

**watcher/drill sergeant**

"The Chief" (subsequently identified as Roderick Campbell Lorca)

**1. One before two before three:**

**what, before well, before why.**

**2. First as motto, then as mantra:**

**Forward and fierce! Unafraid!**

from “14 Helpful Hints,” pamphlet # 2 of

**The Brown Unit Pamphlets** (U.N. issue)

Q: Did Brown Unit really need to be quite as tiny an army as it was?

A: No, I don’t think it did.

Look, I got married when I was 19—my girlfriend was pregnant, we

had Will, Jr. and separated, you’ve heard the story, I’m sure. The point

is, if the marriage had worked out, I doubt they’d have taken me either.

So darn right they were too selective. They also underprepared

the Chief, and they left him precious little time to prepare us.

But what a precious little time it was! And in the end, what a flat out

terrific job we did!

Will O’Clare, Sr., as quoted in **50** **Years** **On**

Q: Gordo talks of “The Code” as if it were some massive, official…

A: So why can’t you track down a copy? Well, no, there was no Code

as such. Brown Unit, or maybe the Chief, I forget, made the name up.

To describe what you already know about: the Roswell Memo, the 14

Helpful Hints, the interpretive texts, our various manuals. The tunes…

Q: In other words, it was whatever Brown Unit was required to study.

Which came first, by the way, the Unit’s name or its racial make-up?

A: Oh, the uniform color! Which I think was someone’s take on the

12th Hint—that they couldn’t fit us out in identical outfits, but shades of the

same color were okay. But yeah, we *were* the whole brown rainbow.

I’m Scandinavian-Spanish on my dad’s side, Pakistani and English

on my mother’s. Carlos is mixed Hispanic with a good deal of German.

Oscar’s Dutch, Cajun French, but also several kinds of Middle Eastern;

Will’s more Native American than he is Irish-American; and Gordo was

an impossible mishmash, something like Malaysian-Welsh-Pig Latin-

Japanese-African-American.

A darkness and light crew for his darkness and light saga.

Lilser Lorca, quoted in **50** **Years** **On**

*(Color image needed)*

II. BROWN UNIT

They fetched us by taxi. We were whisked through the night,

And borne to the gates of a tower;

High in a garret, we learned how to fight,

With skin creams, and slip-jigs, and flour.

A squat, one-eared Scotsman we nicknamed the Chief

Drilled us and taught us the Code.

Our equipment was makeshift; my badge was tin-leaf,

But I polished it up till it glowed.

“One before two before three,” was his answer

To most of the questions we put.

“You’ll prove to me first you’re no one-legged dancer,

Who’ll jive with a mouth full of foot.”

Six hard months mastering our pipes and guitars,

Our fiddles, our whistles, our bodhrans—

With Pond’s cream and mudpack herbs sealed in small jars,

And tucked in the folds of our sporrans.

Three months of flour, and little but flour—

Its history, its uses, its milling—

The white endosperm, and the bran, and the germ—

Its aptness for hurling and spilling.

A rucksack of stone-ground weighs half a ton

When you’re marching and playing in jig-time;

Or jousting on jetskis, and trying on the run

To launch it, and dust someone big time.

“Flour to poison ’em! Slip-jigs to steer ’em!”

(What was Chief *talking* about?)

“Cold cream and mudpacks to stall and adhere ’em!

That’s ay the war-cry to shout!”

And the chill of that drill room! Its chalkboard and clock.

Its wind-creaks. Its posters of moose.

Its south-facing windows. (An outcrop of rock.

A bald valley. Hills frizzed with spruce…)

Yet the meals were prodigious! Our Chief explained thus,

As we feasted on cream and braised pig:

”To deter and oppose our innumerable foes,

*Our* forces must be *twice* as big.

And that’s ay the reason we reckon it treason

To sup ill, then gae dance the rhumba!”

How we cheered! Chasing hot crumpets with cake,

Till they led us like lambs off to slumber.

We were green as stale pizza—five goofy recruits—

Not one of us grizzled or gruff.

Will, with his weak knees. Lil, scared of flutes.

Carlos, who wouldn’t eat stuff.

“Man, I *loathe* chocolate,” sometimes he’d mope.

The Chief was congenial, but firm.

“Suck it,” he growled, “ye limp stethoscope.

Ye Sassenach windsock. Ye worm.”

Oscar, the sweet six foot six pseudo-Nazi,

All hyena laugh and hick brawn.

Me, Gordo Chessland, five nine, artsy-fartsy,

Conceived on my grandmother’s lawn.

We busted our butts—even Will, a prep klutz,

Whom butlers had ninnied since birth,

Fluted and fiddled, and kneaded and griddled

For practically half he was worth.

Lil was our prankster. Once, she sewed rice

In Oscar’s wig, spelling *YUL BRYNNER*.

Big O was dauntless. He didn’t blink twice.

He steamed it and served it as dinner.

Yet some nights, Big Oscar—our blithe, tough guy bigot—

Sobbed for his mom in his sleep.

Carlos and I cooed him hymns till the spigot

Ran dry, and he snored like a Jeep.

Me, I was always the misfit. Ask Katie,

The sister who raised me—my mom

Had died giving birth to me; Daddy was 80—

I’d plopped in his lap like a bomb.

Before I turned 20, I’d dropped out of Eastern,

And was bumming round Europe by moped.

By the time I reached Aachen, to see my great-niece turn

16, I was Doofus the Dopehead.

Someone called Batesville. Dad hauled me back.

It was Sis slapped and tickled me straight.

For a year, I worked painting the bus depot black.

Which was dandy. The future could wait.

The future had other ideas. It’s a tense

That takes what it wants. It took us.

It comes without warning. Its reach is immense.

It’s nothing at all like a bus.

We were Brown Unit. The Code was our guide.

We followed it where we were bid.

“String that thing, tune it, and sing!” the Chief cried.

“Thresh till ye mesh!” So we did.

Of why us—why here—we’d no clear idea—

Nor even really for whom—

Were we Army? Police? Was this Cairo, or Nice?

We couldn’t begin to presume.

One day, we’d found summonses under the mat,

Brooking no let or demur—

And now here we sat, patriotically fat,

Determined to stand and deter!

*(Color image needed)*

In those days, of course, the Code was brand-new.

None but the Chief and his ilk

Had skimmed much past chapter a hundred and two--

We were innocents, simple as milk.

One evening in autumn, that milk curdled sour.

The Chief had brought in a new jig.

We twanged it. The leaves, deeper hues by the hour,

Danced. We had Meshed. We felt Big.

This new song, “Crawlrollies”, had time-shifts as odd

As its title, whose sense was opaque.

The text, though, was haunting—insidious as God

In the ear of Jeanne D’Arc at the stake:

*COME FALL IN THE WILDFLOWERS!*

*COME SPRAWL IN THE HAY!*

*ROUNDHOUSE TO SUMMER; CROSS-STITCH TO MAY.*

*TIME IS A SPIDER WITH BARELY THREE LIMBS—*

*COME DANCE AT OUR SOCK HOP OF DAPPLE-LILT STEMS!*

*COME STROLL IN THE FLOOD TIDE—*

*COME SCROLL THROUGH THE PARK—*

*DOWNSTREAM TO SUNRISE; UPWIND TO DARK.*

*TIME IS A SPIDER WITH HARDLY THREE THREADS—*

*COME DANCE TO OUR BONFIRE OF GLITTERSILK BEDS!*

It was then, in a flash, I knew nothing at all—

And ***knew*** it was nothing I knew!

What great shapeless shudder—like Angst at the Mall—

Rolled through me? We fiddled. It grew.

*STARE AT THE NIGHT—COUNT WHAT YOU CAN’T SEE—*

*WHERE IN THE STARS AND PALE MOONLIGHT ARE WE?*

*HOW SMALL A BLACK HOLE IS!*

*WHAT’S THE FALL BUT A TROLL IN A TREE?*

*BUT CRAWLROLLIES? CRAWLROLLIES! COME SEE…*

**3. Workmen, know your tools!**

**Eat, sleep and breathe the bejesus out of them.**

**4. Grain meals, skin creams, roots tunes:**

**these three the most or you’re toast.**

**5. Eat right, bulk big. sleep right, dream big.**

more of the “14 Helpful Hints”, from

**The** **Brown** **Unit** **Pamphlets** (U.N. issue)

*Interviewer:* I understand, I think, why the *poem* is written the way it is.

But why are the “14 Helpful Hints” so strange?

*Lilser Lorca:* Oh, God. Two things. First of all, they really were weird.

*Oscar Lerwill:* They came from the R.A.s, originally.

*Lilser Lorca:* Right, and then via the Navajo. They were in translationese.

*Oscar Lerwill:* Although everything that came from the R.A.s was by

definition odd, and also sort of inviolate. The powers were

wary of messing with it, because who knew if the oddness

was important.

*Lilser Lorca:* And the second thing was we actually did mess with them.

*Interviewer:* We being…?

*Lilser Lorca:* Oh, all of us.

*Oscar Lerwill:* Brown Unit.

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Lilser Lorca:* What Gordo says about “mental plasticity.” We spent a lot

of time playing word games, doing brain teasers, learning

how to break and write code. The “Hints” *were* awkwardly

written, but we rewrote them, in our own more stylized

awkwardness, as an exercise. Gordo’s first editors made

the decision to incorporate them, and to use our versions.

from an interview conducted for **50 Years On**

*(Color image needed)*

III. IT BEGINS

The Chief was a Watcher. His scrupulous eye

Was famous from Carthage to Flint—

Before greyer days came to trouble his gaze,

And dulled its blue fire to a squint.

“It’s mental plasticity, mostly, you lack,”

He sighed once (to us or himself?)—

And he stared at me hard, from perhaps half a yard,

As I shrank in my boots like an elf.

Some weeks we did anagrams; some we did Dada;

Once, we spoke five hours of Spooner;

We thought the stuff mad! But once things got madder,

We wished we’d embarked on it sooner.

Meanwhile, if something was brewing, then *what?*

The pogo hall closed. To a man,

The Grounds Staff were frogmarched outside in a clot,

And piled in the softball team van.

From back of a door marked **NOT** **CLEARED** **FOR** **CADETS**

Flew rumors, like dust in a mine.

From nuggets of gossip we fashioned our bets,

And studied the Chief for a sign.

In his office, two telephones trebled and trilled;

A fax machine sniggered and spat—

Computer screens purred an unspeakable word,

That wheeled through our air like a bat.

“When ye’re ready to ken, ye may wish ye weren’t,”

Was all his rejoinder when pressed.

Dawned the Day of the Jig—and we learned what we learnt,

And acknowledged our Chief had known best.

That tune was an inkling! It seemed to emit

A pungent, articulate must.

As Lil keened the lyric, my Celt’s soul, unknit,

Rose swollen with longing and lust.

In its environs, the very air twitched—

I heard voices, whispering, snickering—

Did someone say “cockfight”? My derrière itched,

My pulse raced, like candlelight flickering…

“Crawlrollies,” the Chief said, once we had played it…

“That *buzz* from the moon’s Janus face—

Before, we weren’t certain—some *still* aren’t persuaded—

But of all the known species in space—”

“Of all the known WHAT?” It was as if geishas

Had turned into goats in left field

And gored us! Good gracious! In speece there were *spacious*?

Lil quailed. Carlos quivered. I reeled.

“Say who?” Oscar gulped. The Chief eyed the clock;

Closed a window, and peeked through the blinds.

“Are ye going deaf, lad?” In the hills, a dark flock

Of Cloud Hogs flapped out of the pines.

“But *what* buzz?” Will gasped. “What’s the moon got to do—”

“Och, lad, there’s a lot to explain.

In a nutshell,” he rasped, “there’s—” *KABOOM!!* From the blue

Came the whole crash course rest like a train.

Outside our window, far into the hills,

Whose skyline turned violently green,

A stench of scorched hair tore to flame in mid-air

And was gone, as if nothing had been.

“It begins!” breathed the Chief. “It begins! Time to act!

We need barricades. Let me see…

Pass up your Codes! You! Get them stacked!

Wedge the door! Swallow the key!

It’s begun, it’s begun!” he cried. “Darken those shutters!

Quick, lass, before it’s full there!”

Was that a squirrel that squealed in the gutters?

We sniffed the inscrutable air.

“Seal off all entrances!” Military fashion,

We faked it. “Okay, form a ring!”

He nodded. He paced. And with tremulous passion

Addressed us, like mail to a king.

“We have darkened the windows; we’ve glued shut the shades;

We have drawn—are ye with me this far?

We’ve drawn tight the blinds, and we’ve peeped through the blades,

Or the slats, or whatever they are—

And I’ve seen, as the sunlight splashed over my nose,

And I’ve smelled, or else smelt in the plumbing,

And I’ve felt i’ the wind, as it turned tail and grinned,

That something, some dark THING is coming…

It’ll whisper like whisky—and waver like wax—

It’ll wheedle, like wind an’ white snow—

It’s blear, and it’s skirled, and it’s not of this world,

And it’s all ye’ve been fussing to know!”

We were scared and confused; we were feeling ill-used;

We wanted our moms and our potties;

But we stiffened our spines, like dumb porcupines,

And we gulped, and we asked, “Yes, but *what* is?”

By the sink sat a radio. Shushing us still,

He bent his one ear to the speaker.

Minutely, he twiddled the dial until

It squealed, as if rapped by a sneaker.

It crackled. It hissed that the roads were all down.

It went dead—save for yesterday’s news.

As the Chief we revered paused to nibble his beard

And ponder that thinnest of clues.

*(Color image needed)*

“A six minute time-loop—two hertz of static—

Distortion range, twenty hours back—

If the broadcast site’s seven miles north o’ this attic,

Then high noon’s the base of attack.

No doubt we’re the target. They’ll come as a mist,

If it’s them, which it must be, of course…

Let me venture a guess: in two dog breaths, or less,

They’ll be here—in centripetal force!”

“*Who* will?” we pleaded. (“Crawlrollies,” back then,

Weren’t much but the name on a score.)

“And *WHAT* is? If we may please ask it again,

Since you didn’t answer before.”

From deep in the walls came a scurrying noise.

“Darn rats!” snickered Lil, pale but pert.

We giggled back falsely, a girl and four boys,

Considering how to desert.

It was too late, of course. We were breached. Oh, who knew,

Since all we *perceived* was the Chief,

And each other, and maybe a shadow or two

That thickened, as if in relief—

A typical symptom of Chronospore blight,

In its first and most vulnerable stage—

One mudpack smoosh might have settled its tush,

As the Chief would have been quick to gauge,

If the Chief were still able to scoot to the table,

And snatch up the jar and dip in it—

Were he not *ZAPped!* and *POWed****!*** by some peekaboo cloud—

We might have been saved in a minute.

But how could raw rookies, such as we five,

Have known Chronospores from pipe cleaners?

Squished between shadows, and barely alive,

He waggled his trapped fists like wieners.

Like wieners, they reddened. Like wieners, they plumped.

Like wieners, they sizzled and hissed.

Like ten wieners stewed in their juices, they jumped,

And they jerked, and curled back into fists.

His bloodless lips parted. A guttural squeal

Punched out, and was choked off at once;

Three times, like a drill-bit, he spun on his heel,

And stopped dead; his back to our fronts.

For a smug moment, Time seemed to pose for its snapshot,

And pause for its prey to admire it.

Perhaps a loose floorboard chuckled; perhaps not.

A long silence smirked like a pirate.

Then, in its maw, the horror took hold.

They had him; they clutched him; they fed.

His teeth and his bones clicked and chattered with cold;

His missing ear thickened and bled.

While his feet, like great boulders, and posture held firm,

His shoulders grew wide, and more wide.

With a wiggly squirm, his skin flaps, like sperm,

Squidged round to the opposite side!

We covered our eyes; we peeked through our fingers;

We pinched our flushed cheeks and we screamed;

His flesh, with a wiggle, a squirm and a wriggle,

Still did as we prayed we had dreamed!

His stout legs—so recently wondrously limber—

Gave way; by an act of brute will,

He made his eyes focus; he toppled like timber—

“*C r a w l r o l l i e s !* ” he gasped. And lay still.

INTERLUDE: Hail to the Chief

I insert a silence. A leaf, small and solemn,

Falls. The sky gapes; it shifts skewed.

The Chief has no statue; no high marble column;

No stone boys who pee in the nude;

No fountains where fat pigeons hound us for treats;

No portraits in oil in his honor.

But without the Chief's ilk, and their hard-won defeats,

That hero up next’s just a goner.

*A SHAWL FOR HIS SHOULDERS;*

*A STOLE FOR HIS FEET;*

*HUSH, BABY, HUSH, BABY, SLEEP SWEET.*

**6. Reaching for the stars? Watch your fingers.**

**Heat is hungry, and they’re closer than you think.**

**7. Time is a controlled substance;**

**please help us keep it that way.**

**8. Exercise as is demanded, recreate as is invited:**

**when the time’s not for dancing, don’t dance.**

more from the “14 Helpful Hints”, **The** **Brown** **Unit** **Pamphlets #2**

*Lilser Lorca:*

You can’t take it for granted that your audience knows what

*you* know, just because it’s “common knowledge”. Just last

week, a 20-something asked me to spell “R.A.s”—had no

idea it was the Roswell Aliens acronym.

*Oscar Lerwill:*

Or take our names. I think most people do understand they’re

anagrams, that they were originally code names, even though

we continue to use them, at least for our public personae, like

stage names. But they still believe Gordo made them up for

the poem, out of some hero worship of Lewis Carroll thing.

Whereas we each came up with our own—because we were

*ALL* taught Lewis Carroll; we *lived* Lewis Carroll.

from the same interview, conducted for **50 Years On,**

as is cited on the documents page for Chaplet III.

It is imperative to enlist precisely the right strike force. While the essential qualification, as we have explained, is genetic, trainees who are not also verbally agile and mystically sensitive will be unlikely to succeed. By all means, pre-check your candidates’ numerologies, their star-charts and birth auras; know, however, that much can be accomplished with the proper instruction. In order to ensure it, and to bring your cadets to mastery of the weapons of Crawlrollie warfare, you will need first to recruit, enlighten and season a suitable Watcher (q.v.).

Inevitably, this process takes time. Begin soon.

from **The** **Roswell** **Memo**, reprinted as **The Brown Unit**

**Pamphlets # 1** (translator from the Navajo unknown)

Gordo invents a character, a pilot who quotes old TV sci-fi shows. That guy’s almost more Gordo than the Gordo character! He thought the term “Watcher” was a hoot. He didn't invent it, it was the term the R.A.'s gave us. But in its connotations it was very Gordo. I forget which old show or old shows it was in; I think he said shows. He was always teasing the Chief about it. Not in the poem, though; a mark of respect, I think.

Carlos Weill, quoted in **50** **Years** **On**

*(Color image needed)*

IV. IT RESUMES

I felt a mist brush me; and swirl through; and vanish—

As if Death were tossing me back.

I heard Carlos Weill mutter in Spanish,

“My God, look, the clock! It’s scorched black!”

But back of my eyelids, a scene was unspooling

That gripped me like rubber cement:

In the pink twilight, a spider sat drooling

A silvery skein of lament.

In the froth of her web, where the flow and the ebb

Of Time, like snatched river-spray, hung,

Three white shapes were twisting the strings to a tune

No spider could ever have sung:

*COME CRAWL THROUGH THE DEW,*

*AND COME ROLL ON THE LAWN—*

*BACKWARD TO SUNSET, FORWARD TO DAWN.*

*TIME IS A SPIDER WITH ONLY TWO TRICKS—*

*COME DANCE TO THE SONGS OF OUR HUNDRED AND SIX!*

*COME TRAWL THROUGH THE LEAF PILE,*

*COME LOLL IN THE SEDGE—*

*SIDEWAYS, AND SKYWARD, AND HUNG OFF THE EDGE.*

*TIME IS A SPIDER WITH ONLY ONE MAP—*

*COME DANCE TO OUR HAVOC OF HIGH WIRE GONE TAP!*

Listening, I seemed to be floating bare-nude

Through swamp-pines, and hyssop, and stars.

The notes were like sweetbread! Birds sang me their food;

As we tongued it, we hummed a few bars.

A hill out of childhood rose to a dollop

Of moon, round as milk in a cup…

I loved that street! Timmy lived there, who could wallop

A cricketball 50 feet up…

*(Color image needed)*

Then moving to Canada—my first big snowfall—

It coated the maples—I *smelt* it!

I was shoveling the walk, still so homesick, so woeful—

And here I was back there: I *felt* it!

A new smell—smoked camphor?—washed in on a breeze,

And waved at the sky like a wand:

Box kites; two mountains, like slightly propped knees;

A champagne of light on a pond…

The visions persisted till one of us spoke,

In effusions of rapture and grief:

“They’re leaving…” They were, through a mouse hole, like smoke;

And the voice was the voice of the Chief!

“We thought that you’d *died*!” in chorus we cried.

“But why are you sounding so *shrill*?

Your clothes are so *big*! Gosh, is that a WIG?

You’ve shrunk by three feet! Are you *ill*?”

“No jibjab!” he scolded. “One joe at a time, please!

No, not ill, I’ve been Crawlierolled.

Which means, if ye’ll study the facts of the crime, please,

I’m now about seven years old.

Or most of me is. My buttocks are younger,

My guess is. I’ll know when I see ’em!

And there’s part of my tongue, and there’s maybe a lung

That belong in the British Museum.

Crawllrollies, ye see—” But his troops, even me,

Failed to remark what came next.

Our own primal shrieks, and screeches and squeaks,

Seemed somehow more apt to his text.

We may have looked manic, as we jabbered in panic,

And bounced off the walls for an hour—

But even in shock, as I glanced at the clock,

And we pelted each other with flour,

I recalled that my Spanish was never that strong.

I’d assumed an electrical blast—

But the clock *wasn’t* blackened, or scorched—what was wrong

Was the hands now ran backward. And *fast*.