

*Steve Glines*

**After reading too much Bukowski**

I walked to the shed to look for something I could pour down the gopher hole. The little bastard won't go away and no matter how much fox piss I pour around my garden fence he just digs under it. I wonder what would happen if I poured fox piss down his hole or better yet pissed down the hole myself. No this time I need to kill the bastard.

Last summer I put up netting for my pees to climb but the gopher, blind as a bat, got ensnared and pulled down my pees, all four feet and his head wrapped up in at least 2 layers of netting. When I walked up to him with a pitchfork ready for the coup de grace he hissed at me and chattered his teeth. Ok I said to myself, get your self out of there; with luck the coyotes will eat you. For three days he squirmed and writhed in the net. Not a single coyote showed up, not a single goshawk, not a single predator big enough to munch on an oversized rat already trapped and ready to be served for dinner. I'm sure there were tens of thousands of flies, worms and other insects ready to devour a carcass but no one willing to do the initial deed.

After three days I relented. I went out to the garden with a pair of scissors, intent on cutting the carcass loose. At best I expected to find a dehydrated, compliant ball of fur ready for an easy passage to the great burrow in the sky or whatever passed for paradise in that pee-brained rodents head. Instead I found a furious, angry gopher more interested in extracting an ounce of revenge from me than passing quietly into that good night. I picked him up by the net while he wiggled, wretched and swore at me as only an angry rodent can. I let him bite down as hard as he could on the scissors, my blood boiling up in petty sadism. I was ready to cut him free but he pissed me off. I poked at him with the scissors and contemplated impaling him on them but in the end I just cut him loose. He ran away and down his hole with the netting still wrapped around his hind feet. I jammed the pitchfork in his burrow entrance. If he wanted to visit my garden again he'd have to dig another hole. I didn't see him for a year. I'd hoped he'd become fertilizer over the winter but I was wrong.

### *Wilderness House Literary Review 3/2*

The first warm day in late April I saw the little bastard waddling around the yard like he owned the place. I tore out the back door grabbing a snow shovel I still hadn't put away. I was going to brain the little SOB but he ducked down one of his holes just before I reached him. I slammed the snow shovel down over the open hole hoping he'd poke his head out. That's what I would have done if I was a curious rodent and I would have had my brains splattered all over the ground. Instead the snow shovel broke into a dozen pieces, the wooden handle split in two and the red plastic scoop just shattered. I jammed what was left of the wooden handle into the warren and vowed to get even. Nothing useful in the shed.

At the hardware store, how to kill a gopher? Have-a-heart traps? No better than the netting I caught him with last summer. Rattraps? I'd probably get the neighborhood dog. Smoke bombs? Yah! Four for \$9. I took a dozen.

I went home and stuffed four smoke bombs down the hole the little bastard dove into when I chased him with a snow shovel. I put a large flowerpot over the opening and listened with satisfaction while the smoke bombs roared like four small rockets. Foul sulfurous smoke billowed up from a dozen holes in the yard. Where the smoke rose in feeble wisps I set off more bombs and repeated the procedure with every hole in the yard that looked promising. Near the porch was one last large rat hole I had overlooked but for the small wisp of foul smelling white smoke that gave it away. It was a large hole and recently used so I stuffed my last four smoke bombs inside, covered the hole with a flowerpot and sat back in the smug expectation that I had committed rodent genocide. As I was congratulating myself I noticed that smoke was rising from under the back porch, no matter I got the sucker.

One month later the sulfurous stench of anti-rodent smoke still fills my house. When I walk into the house I feel like barfing, until I get used to it. At least I killed that goddamned gopher ... I think.