

PERSIMMONS AND FIGS

*'Relief from burns and radiation can be
obtained by using persimmons and figs'*

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(USA Handbook for the treatment of people
suffering atomic, fall-out effects. August 1945)

1) Saturday Sport

Friend, is this comradely?
Us, watching between ad's and chatshows
Old, savage newsreels.
Clanking war-machines not yet
Production-line-efficient.

Amazing how those churches
Retain their spires! And some men
Don't get blown apart.
Then, when the 'D-Day' landing bit comes up,
'Hey! I'll pick that Tommy second on the right.'
'Not a chance! My money's on that Sherman tank.'

The bets are on. The tea-bags stewing.
It's better than the two o'clock at Perth,
More fun than computer games.
But Tommy gets lost on the edge

Of the screen. And the tank sacrificed
To a cameraman's whim of a better shot.

'Pick another man or tank,'
I tell my friend, 'First one to reach
The bottom of that cliff wins a beer.'
But I'm dead too soon. We'll one of us
Has got to lose.

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2) Old People's Home

'Dad? Is this comradely?
Shouldn't we take sides, have fun?
Look, I've brought your favourite video,
"Winnie's Finest Hour" And to please you
I'll be the dirty Hun.'

But he looks away, screws up his eyes,
'It's no joke, son. It wasn't that much fun.'
Then asks nastily, where was I last Tuesday
And says, he misses mum.

'But I've brought the Marines at Okinawa.
One-hundred-and-ninety-thousand Japs kaput!
And the one we both love about Indians
Fighting back.'

Why shouldn't war be fun?
Live and let live, is what I say,
And... doesn't it just kill time

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3) Letter

To: My American Colleague,
Was it comradely in Vietnam?

‘It was black, whitey, it was black.
With morning pink frosts
On meadows of rice
And Saigon-Rose for tea.
And backwoods boys with purple-hearts,
And officers so neat and clean
It seemed a shame their skulls
Retained those little, itsy-bitsy
Bits of skin.’

Was it Huey or Chop-Suey?
Mai-Lai or Majong?
Well, don’t all those Gongs
All sound the same and anyway
Isn’t one a parlour-game?

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4) Progress

Is it Greece with booming Byron?
Is it Petrograd, 1917?
Cuba, Cyprus or Cambodia?
Or is it...
Colonel Kentucky's chicken?
Or old photographs of Confederate dead?

Neat. Army-precision-dead.
Men arranged as bundles, wearing
Only socks and shorts and singlets,
In fields neat with ditches.
I could swear they hear the bugles. Dead.

Is it Attaturk, Zapata, Garibaldi?
Ibn Saud? Or short-arsed Mussolini?
Standing on a box.

How that Angel swaggers!
You can bet you'll be deprived of something.
The Smart bomb kills the shoppers
Not the shops.

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5) Food for Thought

At the 'Take-Away', I watch on telly,
Grey, distinguished, poison-ivy, leaguers,
Explaining the automated battlefield.
Projecting automated men on nappy-maps,
And automated Generals farting
Automated fear. And from automated buddies
Final, automated smiles. And automated
Winners on top of automated dying.

Was the menu any better
In Dachau, Ravensbruck and Belsen?
'Excuse, please? Your crispy noodles
Ready now.'

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6) Fashion History

Is it comradely, however chic,
To dress in mini-nukes?
Or overkill the dead or eat
Deep-fried, Nagasaki chips
With dioxin on the bread?

Cockroaches react to danger
In .003 of a second.
Sole survivors of the epicentre
They mated in white-hot, heat.

I've seen pictures drawn by survivors,
(Give them therapy!)
The sketch of a living horse burning
Was very striking. And the swollen mouths
Of people not quite like you and me.

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7) Entertainment

In the deserts of Araby,
Peasants are always good for a gas.
I mean you might not like the tune
But the words are good, so I'll put
The video on for dad.

And for the young what post-holocaust song
Will be 'Top of the Pops' this nuclear winter?
And will the rich (so adaptable)
Ski this August from the Parthenon?

The newsreader confides,
The archeological news:
Middle-aged, 'Minute-Men' exhumed!

And in cabins of computer silence,
Old-fashioned, red-necks chew gum,
Twiddle thumbs, have simple choices:
Buttons marked: OFF and ON.

And on the doorstep,
Confidence-men selling peace.
Are you insuring with God?
Don't be an all time loser.
Get on quick.
The premiums are going up.

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8) Stop Press

And on the fields of Yugoslavia,
The living are cremated and the dead
Are lost forever.

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