

The King of Water by Eric Evans

An Ink Publications Broadside

THE KING OF WATER

**“Seal the river at its mouth,
take the water prisoner”
– “Lungs”, Townes Van Zandt**

Leverage, Becker would say whenever someone would ask about the water, it's all about leverage. Everyone needs control over something or another – it's how you get by these days. Anyone who thinks otherwise is either lucky or wrong – or maybe a little of both.

And so his house was a menagerie of buckets and bins, tubs and containers, anything sealable, anything capable of holding water for the coming days and the demands they would bring. Rainwater, river water, tap water – Becker's waking hours dedicated to the accumulation of the precious liquid, all the more to sell or barter or use when the world finally did itself in, a certainty to his very core.

I'm no fool, Becker would think. Eventually no one will care about cars or radios or expensive clothes – soon enough, it's all going to get elemental, all about needs, the basics, simple existence. No one will want the poison that'll pass for water, all full of chemicals and disease and shit. A clean pot, an open flame and my water will be like lifeblood, the slightly sweet taste of salvation – or at least survival. I'm a businessman and nothing more. Supply and demand, people, supply and demand.

The basement, the garage, the spare room – no place in the dwelling remained undisturbed by Becker's plan, no corner safe from the receptacles stacked one atop the other. Not even the rooms of his children or the space he once shared with his wife – all of them now gone, long since removed from his aquatic plans, fading remnants of a more land-locked time, from their absence sprang more room.

Becker, this king of water, eventual ruler of the seven seas and every drop in-between, saw no other way to his new-found destiny, no other path to a better way of life. He would tilt his head back sometimes and take in the immensity of the sky, reeling at the thought of what a bold enough man could do with just such a find. Leverage, he would think to himself again and again, it's always about the unassailable beauty of leverage ...

THE ANSWER WILL ALWAYS BE YES

**“Passing stranger! You do not know
how longingly I look upon you ...”
– “To A Stranger”, Walt Whitman**

“Listen,” he said as he sidled up next to her between the metal shelves, near-whispering in honor of the ancient library rule, “I've been here for about forty-five minutes and cannot stop watching you – I mean, I only came in to borrow a

few books but after I saw you I just didn't feel like reading anymore. So what I'm saying is this – I don't want to know your name or your address or where you went to college and I won't tell you those things about me. I see your wedding ring – it's beautiful, by the way, very nice – and mine's just as visible. But that doesn't make me any less ... *interested* in you right now. So when I leave here – with or without those books – I'm going to be thinking about you as I drive home a little faster and with the music a little louder. And eventually those thoughts will take their natural course and I'll begin to imagine what your kisses taste like and how you smell and whether or not you close your eyes when someone undresses you.

I'll guess at the curve of your hips and the flex of the muscles in your calves. I'll wonder if you're quiet or loud when you're engaged, slow or fast. I'll hope and assume that my secret little wants line up with yours – how rare is that, right? – and that we'd have one of those nights that sound like a lie when you talk about it the next day. That, I want you to know, is how I'll be spending my evening.”

He stopped speaking as she continued to scan the titles on the shelf. He waited as a man and his two young children walked by. He began again.

“Well, since you haven't run screaming or hit me with a book you must have at least some interest in what I've said – that's good, it's heartening, mutuality is always exciting. So I'll give you this to work with when you think about our encounter – and I'm so very hopeful that you will. When you wonder the same things I'm wondering about you – my smell, my taste, my *quirks* let's call them, the answer will always be yes – yes, I'm as big or small as you need me to be, as rough or gentle, as sweet or vulgar. I'll say yes to anything in your head you can think to ask me, will accommodate any request, encourage any whim – if nothing can happen here and now, then anything can happen later, together alone you could say. My every imagined gift is at your disposal – use them generously.”

He stopped once again, removed two side-by-side books from the shelf and headed for the check-out line. Shortly thereafter, she did the same.

Cover image assistance:
Sarah Mantell

© 2011

Ink Publications
www.inkpublications1.
wixsite.com/mysite