

# CUTS OF HUMAN

(LONG PIG or HIGH PORK)

## CUTS AND PREPARATION

LOAF NO LONGER PORK BUT  
 CHUCKLE BONE IS HIGH PORK  
 WHOLE BONE CUTTING  
 MEAT MEAT BONE BONE BONE BONE  
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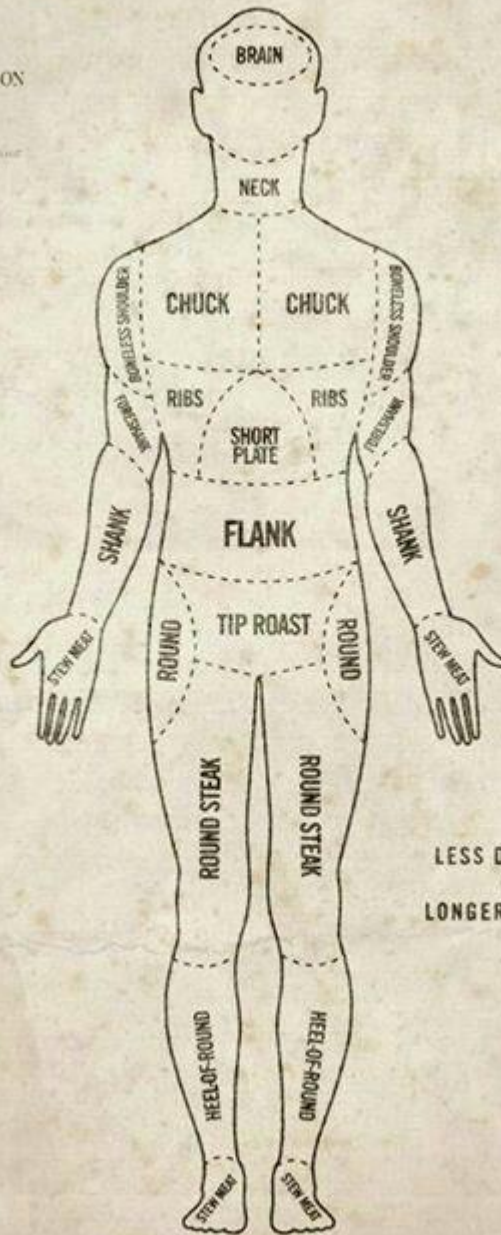
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LESS DESIRABLE CUTS  
 MAY HAVE  
 LONGER COOKING TIMES



From DIY Halloween Crafts.

Christopher Bernard and Richard Slota

## Hospital Suite

*Christopher Bernard:*

### Lord Strange's March

first au revoir to the fingers  
then hello to the bones  
like a muddled Rubik's cube  
smeared across the x-ray fog

one's arm appears to dangle in outer space  
a fin a sliced pear an old leg  
disappearing into the species' past  
now as useless as a quill

a sleeve of stone  
opioids in the aspidistra  
a tuning hammer to the elbow

the skeletal junkyard  
drops like crumbs behind  
and limps away like the sea

### Relic

The setting bone  
haught stands and sere.  
It aches grandly,  
almost blind.

Grew fist this arm,  
this hand tore out  
the hours to come,  
these fingers danced.

Lies now as limp  
as a fish in a sling.

Its joint is rust,  
its skull is stone,

its mouth is full  
of childhood's dust.

### The Burning Palm

Ignites, a flare as tall as a steeple—  
its crown of thorns is fire.

Or a pillar of fire, striding ahead  
of a wandering people  
across the deserts,  
heading where it points  
into the darkness of the future.

A pillar of smoke, commanding, by day,  
whirlwind of dust in majestic dance.

But no—  
nothing so metaphysical, or metaphorical:  
out of the emptiness of sleep,  
the spike of your cry as the pain  
nails through your hand,  
making you moan, almost weep, almost  
long for death  
every night at this hour—  
2, 2:30, 3 a.m., by the indifferent clock—  
from the fire that seems to burn through your palm  
in the helpless stones of your fingers,  
stigmatum with little hope for salvation—  
all this brouhaha and obsessive alarm-bell ringing of the body  
caused by a thin, pinched nerve in the raw knitting up of a broken wrist.  
Nothing, really.  
Routine, in fact.  
Just pain.

Merely a reminder  
of your humanity.

### Hand

This daily marvel of dexterity.  
The precise ligament. The cooperative bone.  
Prehensile knuckle. Child of the thumb.

Inheritor of talon, whale fin, lemur's refined claw.  
The lucent skin hugging it  
with prelapsarian zeal.  
Wrought upon the hurt wrist,  
this one I carry, holding it out  
like a limp beggar's-bowl,  
spilling all its donations.  
Holder of the pen, the beer glass, the violin,  
the stiletto, the Glock.  
Perpetrator of laws, poems, blessings, and death sentences.  
Of chance and the hungry reach  
toward the forbidden apple,  
the masterwork.

### The One-Armed Bandit Applauds

My arm in a cast attracts the ladies:  
they smile in pity and wink as they pass.

My arm in a cast attracts the sparrows,  
until they see the living tree.

My arm in a cast attracts the napkin  
that helps me make my perfect bow.

My arm in a cast is a semaphore,  
like the drowning, signaling I am here . . . I am here . . . I am here . . .

### The Wind

It rakes the fields with the roar of a god,  
it smears the clouds across the sky,

it shakes the house like a box of toys,  
its nothing rides the woods.

It crushes space in its arms.  
It has no time for any of us.

When I was a child, I listened for it,  
coming toward us, our hilltop house.

I rode with it in my mind,  
raged with it, slightly drunk

on its howl  
(the wind howls –  
it plays the cracks in things  
like a pipe

deep as a horn)  
I listen to it  
as it says, over  
and over again:

“I am the wind,  
I am the wind,  
I, the wind,  
the wind – the wind...”

Now  
I have become  
the wind.

*Richard Slota:*

## Everybody Dies

1  
I have this condition called  
Life killing me.  
Botched self-repairs,  
All hammer no nail,  
Hard work damned  
On the road to extinction.

2  
Doctors accuse me of my age,  
Patch the cracked foundation,  
Unpack the attic brain,  
Prop up the collapsed floors, walls,  
Probe the corroded plumbing,  
Jolt the diesel generator's ventricular tachycardia.  
“How fast can you get here?”  
I stare at the doctor's voice on the phone:  
Stare at the IV, stare at the chatty nurse shaving

My groin hair, stare at the surgeon saying,  
“We’re gonna put a Ferrari in your chest.”  
My gurney descends into the cold  
Operating room, to a Propofol cocktail swoon.  
Lights-out, lights-on and a confused return  
To Telemetry, to my odd implanted defibrillator,  
To my hard of hearing heart failure  
With a bad liver roommate snoring.  
He wakes, complains of enforced sobriety.  
“When I die, “he proclaims, “let there be  
No full bottles around.”  
I wonder how many friends will drink at my wake.  
How many old old old old friends will drink?  
Maybe 4. I can’t conceive of more.  
Certainly not less. If not 4 at least 3. If not 3 at least 2.  
If not 2 at least 1. I can’t conceive of less.  
Oh, dear, I hope not less.  
I hope not no one.  
Please not no one.  
I fear no one.  
Maybe 2 of my 3 children, maybe  
Some ex-girlfriend might sign  
The funeral guestbook, and all my vengeful ex-wives.

3

I have this condition called  
Life killing me.  
Botched self-repairs  
All hammer no nail  
Hard work damned

On the road to extinction.

## The Dying Man in the Next Bed

Manuelito, it is so grey and rainy outside.  
Remember that grey sweater  
you bought in Barcelona? Such a wonderful city.  
Lito, I wish we had gone to Paris together.  
Do you remember your address in Marseille?  
Lito, dinner in the Loire Valley was so grand.  
We still have menus from that restaurant  
by the Roman fountain on that warm autumn evening.

## The Need for Better Anesthesia for the Dead

1

The first time I walked into the morgue,  
it was as if the dead were standing up  
beside their refrigerated sliding drawers, waiting.

A basic training recruit wore a captain's boot print  
on his chest, the captain who kicked him to get up,  
run until the recruit thoughtlessly dropped dead.  
The captain at his court martial would be acquitted.

A dozen grunts surrounded me unquiet,  
cheated death in Nam, fixed the error,  
died here from drugs, guns, motorcycles,  
madness. Joined their brothers. I swear  
I saw my friend, Jay O'Brien.

2

I pulled open a sliding beveled drawer from the dark refrigerator, revealing a form  
shrouded in white paper. I opened the paper. Her! The girl! I knew her, her name.  
Her narrative now reduced to a toe tag: "A ten year old white female with a  
defective pituitary."

I'd last attended her in Pediatric Intensive Care the day before. Her veins,  
crowded with my needle sticks, collapsed. To get blood I'd had to do heel sticks. I  
distracted her with a lullaby. Through an anesthetic haze she'd smiled. I was sure  
she'd smiled.

To avoid nightmares never butcher a person you know.

Here in the morgue I felt circling presences. "There must be some mistake," I said  
to them. I looked down at her face. "You do not belong here."

She whispered back to my soul, "You do not belong here either, sir. Please, do not  
do this to me, sir, what you are about to do."

"In your kindness," I said, "you must delete my acts."

3

The Morgue door punched open.  
My sergeant slammed in,  
glowered at the crowd in my mind:

“Get. Back. Dead!” He sized me up and laughed.  
“Show ’em who’s in charge,  
Private First Class Slaughter.”

In Catholic grade school my nickname had been Slaughter.  
Short for Slaughterhouse. I liked Slaughter,  
the unspeakable thought of slaughter.

In my mind all except the girl made a slow-hand salute.  
In my mind all except the girl about-faced, climbed back into  
polished steel sliding refrigerated beveled drawers,

Shut themselves back in death.  
Shut me back in life. In my mind  
the girl climbed down and stepped forward,

“Me first,” I thought she said.  
“I have no training,” I said.  
“Me first,” I thought she said.

She struggled to climb, all by herself, up, up,  
onto the adjustable pedestal autopsy table.  
Slipped backward. In my mind I caught her in my arms.

*I remember the chill startle of lifting you  
still warm and limp onto the rack  
suspended in the big draining tub,  
water arcs playing all around the lip.  
You wouldn't wake; it seemed you could.*

She lay back quietly,  
shut her eyes and whispered,  
“. . . although I cannot forgive you.”

4

I looked up at the Sergeant:  
“I have no training.”  
“Trainin’? Afraid you might

“kill her? Man up, Slaughter.  
No more excuses, delays, trades,  
cash buyouts, bribes, faked illnesses.

“Trainin’? You need trainin’? Look here,



Slaughter.” He slapped a scalpel into my hand.  
“Screw waitin’ on the pathologist.

“Here’s how  
ta crack  
this baby open . . . .”

*I helped him cut into the muscle  
and saw open the ribs, your insides lying quietly.  
I watched myself unpack your heart and cradle it  
in a pail among lungs and darker organs.*

“Here’s how  
ta take out  
the dang brain . . . .”

*Then, cutting from ear to ear across the crown,  
I peeled the scalp forward over your eyes,  
and gently broke your head with a saw,  
flecking my gloves with bone dust and tissue.*

*More quickly now, stitches closing the scalp  
over the loose cap of skull;  
stitches stretching the flesh  
over the hewn chest.*

*I remember the loaded, beveled tray  
sliding into the dark refrigerator,  
the paper covering you,  
white on white.*

In the world  
there is not enough  
anesthesia.

5  
It was followed by a lunch  
of under-cooked fried chicken  
in the mess hall at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in 1966.

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Christopher Bernard is co-editor and principal of *Caveat Lector*. His new collection of poetry, *Chien Lunatique*, appeared in the spring of 2017. His second novel, *Voyage to a Phantom City*, was published in 2016.

Richard Slota published his first novel, *Stray Son*, in 2016, and, in 2015 with Yaw Boateng, co-authored a non-fiction book, *Captive Market: Commercial Kidnapping Stories from Nigeria*. He lives in San Francisco.