

A COMPLETE  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
OF  
DIFFERENT TYPES  
OF PEOPLE



GABE FOREMAN

A COMPLETE  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
OF  
DIFFERENT TYPES  
OF PEOPLE



GABE FOREMAN

COACH HOUSE BOOKS | TORONTO

copyright © Gabe Foreman, 2011  
first edition



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

Canada

Published with the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Coach House Books also acknowledges the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit and the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Foreman, Gabe, 1978–

A complete encyclopedia of different types of people /  
Gabe Foreman.

Poems.

ISBN 978-1-55245-244-8

I. Title.

PS8611.0737C66 2011

c811'.6

c2011-901099-2

You remind me of a – of a rose, an absolute rose.  
– F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*



## ACCIDENTS

If humans were more like plants,  
a bee might make a pitstop at your crotch  
to sprout a family tree you never planned for.

'We weathered the Cold War and missed the last  
fun bus to summer' – that's what some people say,  
older folks mostly. I bet in her case, your mother

could picture that winter baby till her main squeeze  
choked, pulling out at the last minute. Today your dad  
steps to the window, taps a pair of metal tongs

and points across the lawn. Sporting your shades,  
a knee-high terra cotta squirrel smiles back discreetly,  
frozen in the bold volcanic shadow of the barbecue

like the ghost of true baroque furniture at Versailles.

## ADULTERERS

They first appeared 350 million years ago.

Today there are about 2,100 species of adulterers worldwide,  
including 550 native to North America.

## AMATEURS

Rhonda could taste the arsenic  
and set the milkshake on her armrest.  
Beneath her skirt, Frank's knife,  
taped high upper thigh –  
Rhonda smirks.

Dan looks from Rhonda  
to the waxed paper cup,  
back to Rhonda. He frowns.  
Rhonda appears to finish her shake.

*(No outside food or drink  
will be permitted at tonight's bellicose gala.  
No shouting of power slogans  
shall be tolerated.)*

A panther circles its need to pounce  
decades before doing so. Rhonda's flashing hand.  
Wobbling cobras of blood. A toppled chair.

'Is that a threat,' Dan had quipped smartly  
not five seconds earlier,  
'Or a promise?'

'Yes,' Rhonda answered frankly,  
'it most certainly is.'

## AMBULANCE CHASERS

A fern in the window  
sets a serrated shadow  
on the condo floor  
where deflected street light  
faintly flashes.

On the sofa two lovers  
sip an orange liqueur  
from the same delicate glass.

Pipes in the drywall gurgle,  
the air-conditioned hum  
shifts off.  
Urban hush: night traffic.

The orange liqueur makes no sound  
as it pours  
from the crystal decanter  
which floats above the table.

A piano appears in the den and softly  
plays Chopin, while on the freeway  
drivers stop and step from their cars.  
People with no hands, no heads,  
climb from their vehicles  
and stride down the weedy slopes of the ramps.



## ANDROIDS

When the girl from work turned up without my moolah,  
I showed her the door. After she left, I sprinted  
to the film we had made plans to see.  
But the extras on the screen, actors  
imitating normal people,  
showed me human versions of myself.

If I could make Regret into a movie  
I would splice a second chance into the mix.  
Stopping the girl from work at the door,  
I would take her wrist and whisper:

‘Sometimes I wish I could  
hypnotize the internet.’

I will keep that film in a tin in the fridge  
and report how I went back to my apartment  
and took a long shower – feeling the water break  
and run, draining through the building  
and back into the Great Lakes, like wine  
or fuel or the cinematic sky.

Steam erased my face from the mirror  
before swirling out the open window.  
The girl from work was now a catacomb,  
a cavern, a looted tomb inside my chest.  
I said to myself, ‘I guess this goes to show,’  
but the line flopped like gassed canaries onto the tiles.

## ANIMAL LOVERS

*I lunged. White plumage bent against the brushed-steel elevator door. I pushed my tongue on his, dragging my nails down his feathered spine. He gurgled and hoisted me off the floor. The rubber pouch of his beak stretched across my forehead like a hood.*

The American White Pelican was an exotic fortress to Ramona, one she felt compelled to enter.

*My back pressed up against the golden controls, triggering an emergency stop.  
You should've seen it: the sudden lurch  
knocked everybody in the elevator to the floor.*

Less adventurous than her mother,  
Kim waits for the white sheets of the wedding bed  
then goes for a long walk.

## ANKLE-BITERS

– See *Little Bundles of Joy*

## ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGISTS

You're the type of introvert  
who writes her name  
on birch bark  
and burns it.

The kind who whisks  
unnoticed through  
crowds  
and lingers  
at the exits.

One who hates  
the sloppy affection of dogs,  
who competes secretly  
with her friends.

I'm on to you:  
I'm the sort  
of extrovert  
who makes his own furniture  
and forces people to sit in it.