

Good Night Ratso Rizzo: a Domestic Account of an Epic Battle

by Winnie Zensuck (from her forthcoming memoir, Blinking Icons)

True story: Last night Stanley K, junk yard dog extraordinaire, proved his street fighting cred and murdered Ratso Rizzo in cold blood. Ratso, Banksy's¹ kitchen vermin replacement, dared to venture beyond the kitchen cabinets to complete several tumbling passes across our bedroom floor in the dead dark night, and not on cats' paws either. It was two a.m. and we were already awake: a coyote krewe² yipped in unison across Uz Valley, their siren calls rappelling off the valley walls and enticing genetically modified pets off their plush plaid cushions to press their wet noses to sliding glass doors. The rat scamp decamped for the living room and the shelter of a green recyclable grocery bag, StanleyK and I, the rat wife, in hot pursuit. I kicked the bag away, screamed, and the hellhound, his back fur an electric mohawk, lunged and nabbed Ratso Rizzo with predatorial gusto. Though the mange- chipped tooth black gum jaws of our Cerberus encircled his portly midsection, Ratso, with his collapsible rib cage, was able to squirm out of the jaws of death and plunge to the floor, where he appeared concussed, cartoon stars circling his head. I felt for him for a brief moment in our common impairment, then I grabbed a broom. Stanley K looked bewildered at Ratso, as if his winning strike turned out to be a gutter ball, but Ratso was also stunned and was soon reclaimed by StanleyK, who tossed him in the air like an orca with a juicy seal before dealing the decisive death blow- down fell Ratso Rizzo into the soft purple shag in defeat. *Ew*. Yes there was blood. Ratso played dead, or was dead, and I was able to assess the epic proportions of this prime specimen of Norwegian rat- real Viking material, *huge*.

¹ Banksy refers to the dead Norwegian rat in our kitchen named for the elusive graffiti artist, Banksy. In the documentary *Banksy: Exit through the Gift Shop*, the artist leaves his work in museums and public places, while he 'exits through the gift shop'. Our house became the rat Banksy's gift shop, with excrement pellets his form of graffiti until his death by rat trap. See *Blinking Icons*, chapter ?-WZ

² Krewe: a group of people who get together at Mardi Gras to put on a party - Walker Percy, The Moviegoer

StanleyK just stood there sniffing his plunder, but refusing Fritz's request that he finish the job by taking Ratso outside so he wouldn't have to. Btw, Fritz the Pacifist could not bring himself to watch the grisly encounter, so he hid behind the hall doorway, peeking and giggling in his silky night culottes like a Victorian schoolgirl. The Brave Ratwife (me), domestic Artemis, brandished the bright red broom and dustpan to sweep away the vermin like Travis Bickle summoning the rain in *Taxidriver*. The rat, however, was so heavy from eating our pantry's now paltry stock of chocolate chips, that I couldn't get traction with the broom, thwarted as I was by the depth of the purple shag in which Ratso was mired, so I scooped the heaving plateful of rat onto the red plastic groaning board, and I hurled him with all my *climacteric* might out the front door into the dark dark night. I admit I did a lot of coyote yipping and hotfooting during this whole sordid encounter. My children slept peacefully through the whole episode, knowing their goddess mother is both fierce protector of children and a femme matador of their dreams³: the Mythic Ratwife.

We were very very proud of StanleyK, who unlike the brand new rat traps full of peanut butter in the cupboards, had managed to curb the sacking of our Rome by the Viking invaders for at least one more night.

Goodnight Ratso Rizzo, but not goodbye, rats⁴.

³ Phrase courtesy of Junot Diaz-WZ

⁴ Norwegian rats are reported to be prolific fuckers, colonizing the verdant hillsides of Uz Valley, brazenly eating the peanut butter while fornicating on the overpriced 'humane' rat traps favored by Uz-zos, which produce not only fat rats and alot of heirs, but paroxysms of laughter on rat dad poker night.