

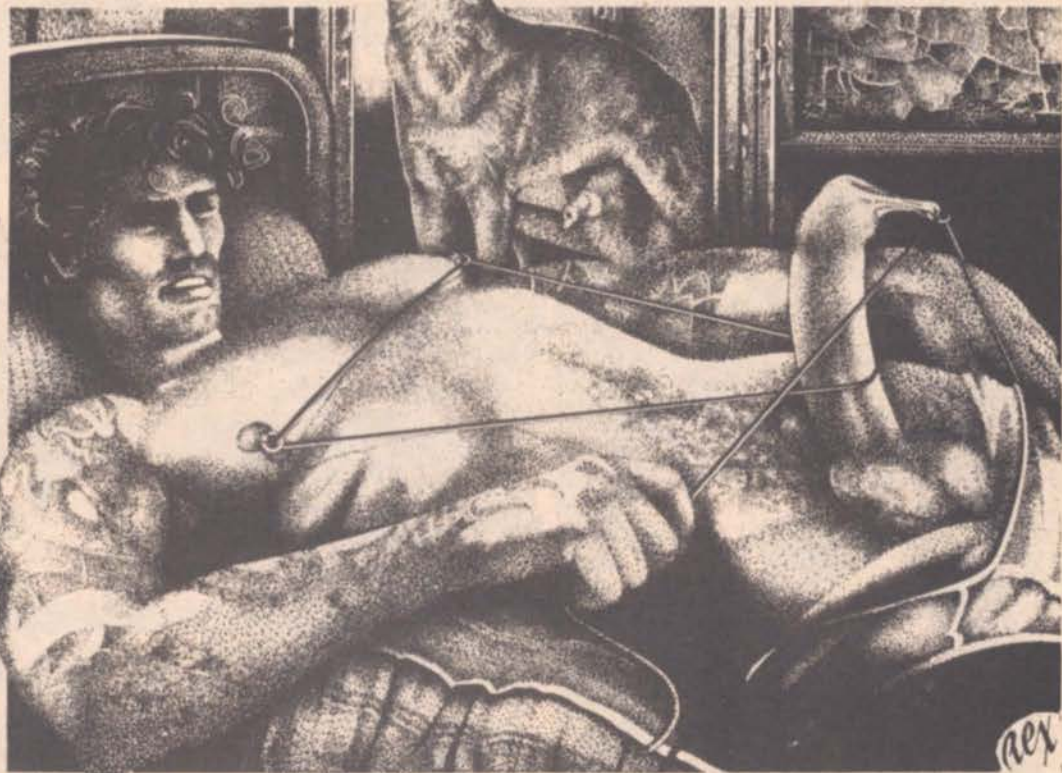
MEN WHO SAY YO

Jack Fritscher and his high-brow, gutter-level runimations on "pex" and sex, slapcaptains and selfsuckers, have finally arrived between the covers of a book. No longer need readers thumb through dog-eared back issues of *Skin* or *Drummer* (of which Fritscher was once editor) or the short-lived *Man-2Man* (which Fritscher created after his *Drummer* stint) to catch privileged glimpses of that unique cock-stiffening domain of which Fritscher is sole demiurge. It's all there—or most of it, anyway—in a long overdue anthology called *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O'Malley* (Gay Sunshine Press, PO Box 40397, San Francisco, CA 94140; paperback, 181 pp., \$10/\$11 mail order).

As a writer, Fritscher is hard to categorize. His subject is sex (or mansex, as he'd put it); his speciality is good ol' boy raunch, Man Stuff. He's a jittery stylist with a kinetic verbal sense, heavy into subjectivity. Wary of other people's clichés, he mints his own. I call them Fritscherisms—hybrid words, funky misspellings, tough/tacky alliterations and offbeat rhythms. In Fritscher's world, titclamps "chow down" into nipples, and "tits-ports are a hot man's offramp to Alpha Centauri." Hot numbers speak from the crotch ("I figured a big, booming, deep-six voice would spout basso out of his nuts") and, in a sadly dated ode to "homosensuality," we're told that "a kiss down the throat can be quite continental, but rimming is a guy's best trend."

Most of the pieces in *Corporal* are essays, not fiction—diatribes and incantations to the erotic power of nipples, cops, spit, military men, blue collar sweat, tattoos, straight men, jocks, and "pex." Here the Fritscherisms run wild—oddly potent the first time around, beginning to cloy on a second reading.

But when Fritscher's oddball writing works, it works spectacularly. The title story of this anthology, which first



YO, BUDDY: Art by Rex, from Jack Fritscher's *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O'Malley*.

appeared in *Drummer*, is classic j/o material, a two-man dialogue that captures in stiffening detail the consequences of being caught open-mouthed in the company latrine by a Captain who likes to slap and knows how to plough. It puts every ersatz "hot talk" tape on the market to shame. A sequel, "USMC Slapcaptain," is almost a match, and a portrait of "Officer Mike: San Francisco's Finest" does a public and private image turn-around on your standard brutal cop fantasy. "Men found it easy to honor Mike in straight bars and to worship him in private bedrooms. He was a naturally strong center, careful never to diminish any man. He put no man down. He made no man feel small. He saw no need to make a man bottom out in order to get down to the uplift worship of the Great God Cock."

You could say that Fritscher is a hardhat-chaser—"Real Men" are his game (or as Fritscher says, the kind of men who say "Yo"). He celebrates unself-conscious working class men—or at least gay fan-

tasies of working class men. Then, out of the blue, he'll show another color. In a story called "Silver Screen Castro Blues," there's enough ghettoized angst to keep the Manhattan gay literati wired for months, peppered with dialogue like this: "Every faggot wants to be Judy-Judy-Judy. Uppers in the morning. Downers at night. And fucked senseless by rough trade till dawn."

There's a dichotomy here that runs through a lot of gay erotica; the worship of Regular Guys—trade, jocks, construction workers, military men—as some sort of redeeming fountainhead, versus an image of openly gay life as bleak, frustrated, too sophisticated for its own good. Regular Guys are somehow more "authentic" for being status quo and unaware of the ironies of sex. Sex with them is the Real Thing.

Fritscher says: "None or this means that Genuine Straight is any better than Genuine Homosexual, just that to gay men used to gay men's sex styles, Straight Daddies are refreshingly different..."

When you fuck with him, you put your arms around the firm, hard bulk of all that was ever Daddygood and Daddyhot in the Basic American Dream." Is this just a phase that we're going through?

Along with *Corporal*, Gay Sunshine has also published *Leather Blues* (91 pp., \$5.95/\$6.95 mail order), a short novelette about a young leatherman's rites of passage—so short, and ultimately insubstantial, that it might have been better if Gay Sunshine had included it in the *Corporal* anthology instead of making it stand on its own. The first third of *Leather Blues* appeared several years ago as "The Adventures of Denny Sargent" in a *Son of Drummer* special; what follows and completes this novelette is a falling-off, a disjointed patchwork that really doesn't deliver a finished product. Here the Fritscherisms and the inane good ol' boy dialogue win out, and what might have been a major work of leather fiction turns out to be pedestrian streetwear, purchased off the rack.

—Aaron Travis
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