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Poem by Susan Terris



Deep State Crosses Familiar Lines

It is a truth, universally acknowledged,
that a big man in possession of a good fortune
must be in want of a knife

Memo: Hack truths. Replace with alternate ones.

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy
family man is paranoid in his own way

Memo: Replace tiny hands with yuge ones.

It was a bright cold day in April, and the
White House clocks were striking
thirteen

Memo: It's not his fault. Nothing ever is.

Stately, plump Buckaroo came from the
stairhead bearing a bowl of lies
on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed

Memo: He's armed now with razor & knife.

It was the best of times, until the big man
whose clock struck thirteen made
it the worst of times

Memo: He says it's always the best of times.

It was a pleasure to burn

Memo: Was it? But climate change is a hoax.

Call the big man Ishmael, and he will cut
you—you terrorist from the Deep State,
you radical Islamic loser

Memo: And he'll mess you up bigly. Sad.

All this happened, more or less—
with more alt-lies until bigot-man
made America hate again

Note: Famous first lines used here, with some modification, are from the following novels (in order of appearance): *Pride and Prejudice*, *Anna Karenina*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Ulysses*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Art Information

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Susan Terris's most recent books are *Take Two: Film Studies* (Omnidawn Publishing, Fall 2017), *Memos* (Omnidawn Publishing), and *Ghost of Yesterday: New and Selected Poems* (Marsh Hawk Press). She is the author of six books of poetry, sixteen chapbooks, three artist's books, and one play. Her journal publications include the *Southern Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Georgia Review*, *Ploughshares*, and several past works in *Talking Writing*. A poem of hers from *Field* appeared in Pushcart Prize XXXI. A poem from *Memos* was in Best American Poetry 2015.

Terris was editor of *Spillway Magazine* and is a poetry editor of *Pedestal Magazine*. For more information, visit [Susan Terris's website](#) [4].

Photo of Susan Terris by Margaretta Mitchell.

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