

The **ARREST**

A Novel

**JONATHAN
LETHEM**

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FILE OF RECOLLECTIONS



IN THE PEACETIME KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS GOING A SLIM GARDNER,
JIMMY CAGNEY APPEARS ON THE STAGE, MOSTLY EXPERIENCE OF HIS
CAREER AS A KETCHER...

AAA! I AM NOT
BELIEVE WHAT I'M
OBVIOUSLY SEEING!

THIS CAR IS JUST
THE MACK! IT KILLS A
HUNDRED ON THE
PULLY PULLER OF THE
PULLY PULLER... AND
YET IT'S NOT THE
STICK TO CORNER!

WELCOME
TO THE APPROXIMATE
FURNACE! JUST
CALL ME
AND HONORS!

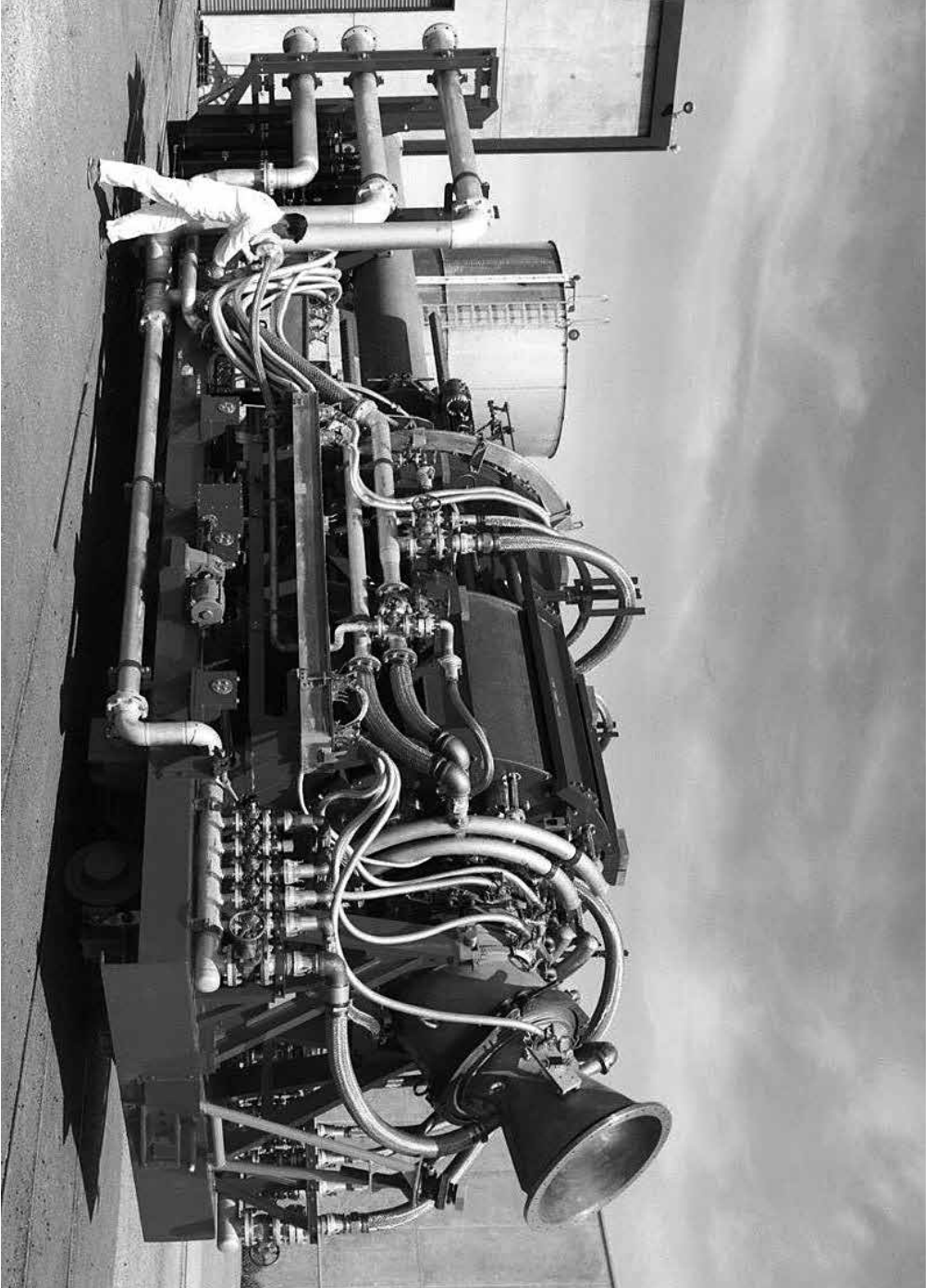
WELL
ARE YOU
IN?
GIVE THE CAT THAT CAN
BE HELD AND HONORS!
THIS IS THE WAY HONORS!

...BUT FOR A
FRANCOIS
APPROACH!

THE THE
MACK... IF HE
PULLY GET THAT STICKY
YER AFTER... WE'LL
USE IT TO SHOOT A
STRAIGHT CHERRY!

IF WE AMV' GET
THAT STICK, HIS BASS
WILL SHOOT UP ON
PULLY TAKE!

TAKE OFF HARRY!
THIS SINKER FIRE
IS WORTH A
BUNCH OF
DREAMS!



THINGS TODBAUM TOLD JOURNEYMAN ABOUT THE BLUE STREAK

1. That, yes, Todbaum drove the thing from his home in Malibu. That he set out not quite a full year ago. Ten months.
2. That before embarking he'd survived the first three years of the Arrest without leaving Malibu. There, he and several others had for a time employed a private security force and survived as a kind of armed compound.
3. That nevertheless, through that time, he'd had the car already prepared, secretly waiting. "When every other fucking paranoid billionaire was sinking it all into private islands or safe houses or private islands with safe houses or underground Dr. Strangelove spider holes, I said to myself, why be a sitting duck? Who in God's name wants to sit around in *meetings*, with people you didn't even like when they *had* money, deciding what to do the day the last sack of rice runs out?"
4. That, as he claimed to have predicted, the private mercenaries had in greed and desperation turned on the Malibu consortium. That only he had gotten out alive.
5. That the car could go almost seventy miles per hour on open highway, but that very little open highway was to be found between there and here anymore. That he'd had to go many times deep off-road, across fenced prairie and open desert and into forested mountain passes, all of which the car was

equipped to traverse but at minimal speeds.

6. That at other times he'd sequestered in a simpatico community for a period of days or even weeks—in Boulder, Colorado; in Bloomington, Indiana; by a rural lake near Oberlin College in Ohio—and shared the benefits of the car with those who by dint of kindness he'd felt deserved it, but that invariably he'd grow rightly paranoid as plots began to encircle him, and so he'd hotfoot it out and on his way.
7. That he'd always, no matter the situation he'd discovered in his travels—and “hoo boy were there some stories” he'd tell—had Spodosol Ridge Farm in mind as an ultimate destination. That he'd known, somehow, that he'd find Journeyman and Madeleine intact there, “riding out the Arrest in style.”
8. That it was called “the Blue Streak.” That Todbaum had named it after a car in a story that his father used to tell him serially at bedtime. That the bedtime story was obviously extemporaneous—i.e., in Todbaum's phrase, a “bullshit shaggy-dog thing where he didn't have a fucking clue about where it was going, day to day.”
9. That the Blue Streak was powered by a self-contained nuclear reactor. That it was retrofitted into the exoskeletal structure of a machine that had earlier been used to bore tunnels under the ocean. That it never needed fuel, and had not once needed repair. (“I wouldn't know the first thing about it. I'd probably just hit self-destruct and call it a wrap, game over, stick a fork in me.”) That it was impossible to shut it off once it had been fired up. That Todbaum had been influential in the inception of the supercar project, suggesting it to its designer, based on a favorite film of his childhood called *Damnation*

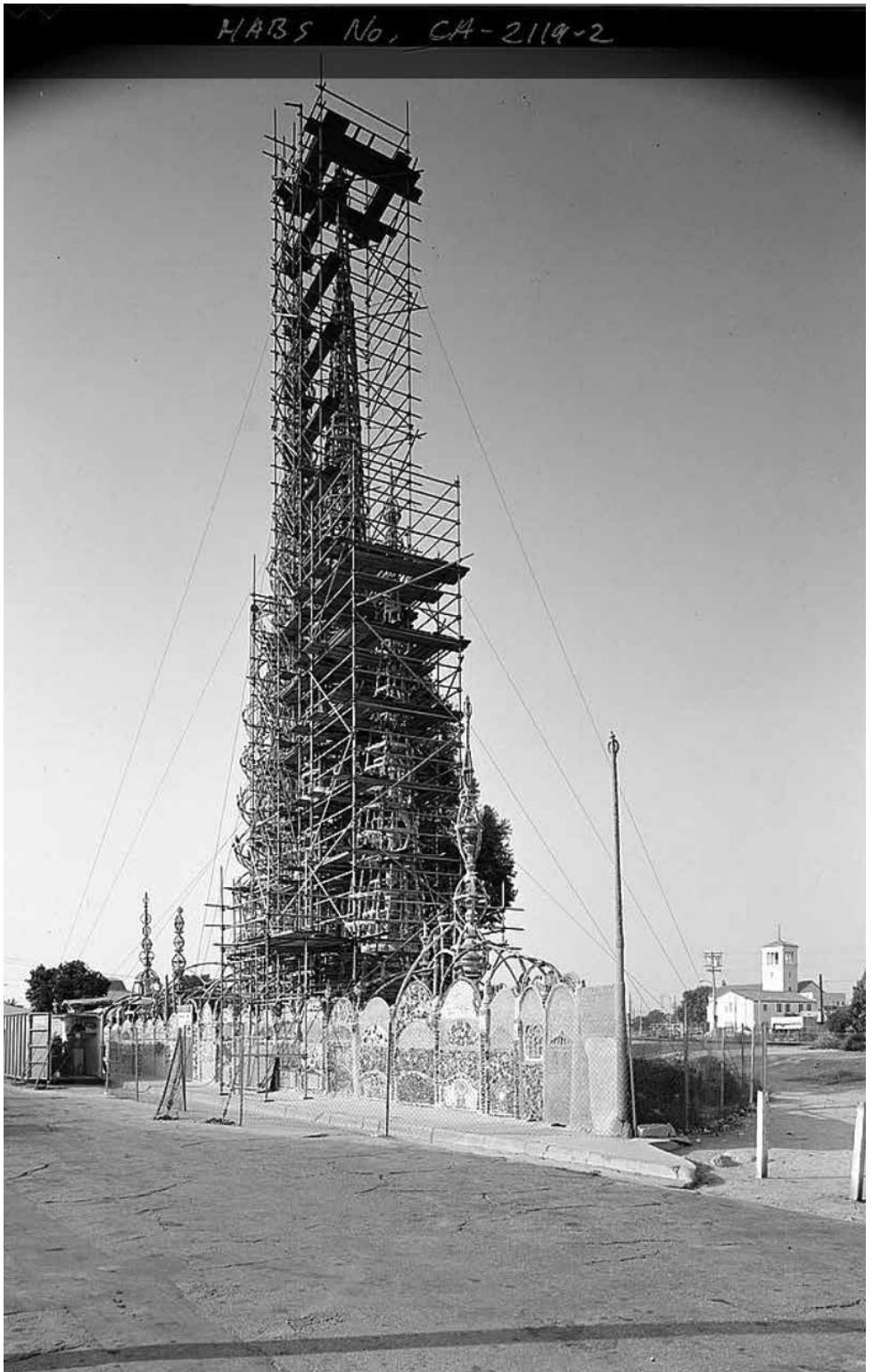
Alley. (Journeyman remembered he'd seen it, once Todbaum mentioned it. It starred George Peppard.) That its designer had built only three such machines before being kidnapped and never heard from again. ("Russia, gotta be.") That it cost Todbaum fourteen million dollars. That he didn't know who owned the other two.

10. That when he situated the machine in what he'd judged as a safe place, he could trigger a drill that sought groundwater to replenish his reserves. That before disengagement for travel it would by the same method bury his stored waste deep underground so that like prey it left no traceable spoor for anyone tracking. (Journeyman didn't point out that it sounded as though this meant he went everywhere contaminating potable aquifers that others might rely on.) The image of the Blue Streak planting its sucking tube where it landed made Journeyman see it, briefly, as a gigantic mosquito.
11. That his cockpit and sleeping cubicle were lead-lined, like a dentist's X-ray offices, to protect him from the risk of seeping radiation. (There was no mention of whether some radiated exhaust or contaminated expelled coolant posed a danger to those *outside* the vehicle.)
12. That the vacuum-sealed capsules of freeze-dried coffee stored deep in the Blue Streak's bowels actually had a gauge of their own on Todbaum's dashboard, and it showed that at the current rate he still had five months' worth of espresso. (He'd however polished off all the Macallan scotch before crossing the Susquehanna River.)
13. That the portal through which he'd admitted Journeyman was designed as a bladed trap, if necessary. It could cinch closed and murder someone who'd been lured up inside. Had

Todbaum ever had to use it? “No, but I did crush a couple of jerks under the treads one night out around Santa Fe.”

14. That the Blue Streak had endured numerous attacks. Those scuffed and singed places Journeyman had noted: each marked some assault, by medieval-style catapult or trebuchet, flaming arrow, or, before the guns had quit working, an Uzi or Glock. Todbaum indicated a place where a tracer bullet had lodged partway through the dual-layer safety glass of his windshield. The bullet was a perfect brass souvenir, its tip just through the glass to make a sharp little nipple. The glass was sealed tight around it, and uncracked.
15. That the only other person he'd admitted into his safe space, before Journeyman just now, was a woman he'd met in Pittsburgh who'd traveled with him as his companion as far as the outskirts of New York City, a locality into which Todbaum had refused to enter. She was looking for someone in Manhattan. She continued on foot. He, needless to say, had no idea what had become of her, but it wasn't likely to be good.

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EVERYONE
① NIADA, MIGHTY GOD OF THE SUN, ACCEPT
OUR SACRIFICE AND BE APPEASED.
② WELLENBU, BOUNTIFUL GODDESS OF
OUR ORCHARDS, ACCEPT OUR
SACRIFICE AND MAKE OUR BLOSSOM
FRUIT