

MAUDE MOLD

#7

by Stanley Lieber

REIDENTIFICATION

tags: 1961, mars2, jerrymander_mold, tab1

10 August.

"The voices say I'm crazy, but fuck those guys."

Jerrymander, perpetually shifting shapes in the dirt. This time he'd brought along tools. A stiff-bristled brush and a cigar large enough to deform his speech, which ended up being irrelevant to his purposes, anyway. So far this morning he'd excavated a man-sized plot off the north end of the runway. Oblivious to the optics, he squatted in his usual peculiar posture, twerking gently in time with his near-continuous verbalizations. Finally he stood up, dusting the residual carcass of Mars from his prize.

Presented it for comment. THE JOURNAL OF AUTODIDACTIC STUDIES, SELF-PUBLISHED. September, 1977 issue. Nobody said a word.

"Completes the set!" he finally shouted into the rising wind. This had apparently been a long time coming. Years ago he had mailed his last copy of this issue to someone who'd expressed vague interest online, and now he'd finally recovered an intact example. Here, of all places.

As usual, TAB1 was minding his elder. The man was typically confused. He glanced at the novelty publication but was unable to muster much interest in light of the day's slate of higher-priority activities. There was too much he had to keep track of, and owing to this latest distraction he was already certain he was forgetting something important. No room in local storage to form novel affinities.

Jerrymander flicked his cigar towards the runway, where it skittered tentatively across the tarmac like an experimental aircraft ready to drop its overclocked propulsion and collapse into a heap of foul-smelling tobacco ash. Rolled up the key back-issue and shoved it into his back pocket. Then he walked over to the edge of the runway and retrieved the still-smoldering cigar butt, plugged it back into his mouth, and secured a firm seal on the shaft as if he'd never spit it out.

"What do you want from me?" he said, blowing a chemtrail of perfectly round smoke rings into TAB1's face.

He knew TAB1 was obliged to follow him anywhere.