

Section 8

by S.H. Gall

To a desert island I pick a book of crosswords for my one item. It is a *desert island*. What could be more practical? I awake in the middle of the night, an itch in my throat. I blow my nose. Weird gobbets of blood ring my Kleenex. It drizzles out now, wet here, gelatinous there. I switch from Kleenex to paper towels and use half the roll. The effluence is barely visible behind our drawn drapes and he asks, "Is your nose bleeding?" His ass kisses mine, no matter how I angle myself. "Fuck. Fuck." I say. "Yep," I manage. The muddy night swims and I have to get up in the morning, visit a client in a Section 8 housing complex roughly the size of the Death Star. You can probably see it from space. I've walked the Great Wall, which we can observe from space, but this tenement dwarfs the wall. You could lose civilizations immemorial here.

She'd seen it all, and was taking care of her 96-old mother-in-law who had just flown in from Colorado (and had Alzheimer's and a strange collection of Betty Boop bobbleheads). Her mattress was so thin she folded it under her arm like a blanket.

The halls in this vast edifice are wide, raw concrete, spattered with belts and tennis shoes and yellowed panties and undershirts and the view outside is of a steel mill which is now where kids drink and smoke pot, crack, cigarettes, eat red hot Cheetos and whoop to each other as if deranged by their surroundings.

