



THE
ILLUSTRATED

Wild Boy

REFLECTIONS
ON THE
PRESENTATION
OF SELF

JOHN
DU CANE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Judit Tondora

For Penny,
With much love,

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal tail.



✧ ACID IN MY TEA ✧

For a brief and gorgeous time, I went out with the super-talented and altogether-special Penny Slinger. Penny dripped sex. A mystical surrealist with a penchant for the sublimely erotic, she went on with Nik Douglas to produce the seminal *Sexual Secrets*—which helped initiate the modern Tantra movement.

I met the straight-laced parents at her art show. Mom and Dad looked politely pained. I think the wedding cake—with its engorged penises thrusting up from the white icing—might have set them off a little...

One of Penny's girlfriends asked, "So... the million-dollar question... did Penny use yours as the model?"

"I'm not that small..."

Just before we hooked up, Penny had acted in a histrionic, acid-laced shambles of a movie, *The Other Side of the Underneath*, directed by Jane Arden. I found it relentlessly repellent. But that didn't stop me from being massively attracted to its beautiful star.

Over Christmas, Penny invited me to share an evening with Sally the sad-faced cellist from *Underneath*. In the kitchen, the ladies served me tea and we chatted idly about this and that. At some point the light began to bend and colors to bleed and swell. They had spiked my tea with acid. Big time. Shades of the movie...

After a number of hallucinatory hours, we headed to bed. I have never been a fan of threesomes—in

any of the versions I've been involved in. I treasure deep intimacy and communion with one person. I've always found the dynamic of a third wheel to be awkward. The acid blurred some of the edges this time round—but still not my cuppa...

* THE ANGRY DWARF FROM HORROR HOSPITAL *

Have you ever had a character from a horror movie suddenly show up for real in front of you? I have. I blame Antony Balch.

1973, Tony invited me to a screening of his *Horror Hospital* which I reviewed with irreverence in *Time Out*. My favorite character in the movie was a bizarre dwarf, Frederick, hammed up to the hilt by Skip Martin. I forget my exact phrasing, but I used some wildish words to describe Skip's performance.

Shortly after the review hit, I was hunching over my Olivetti on the top floor office of *Time Out*, when I sensed a presence to my right...

The crazed dwarf from *Horror Hospital* stood before me, angry, waving his arms in front of my face. Skip pitched me a load, hammering my insensitivity to dwarf-people. My ill-considered choice of phrasing had come across as prejudice.

"Frederick" was kind enough not to slit my throat, as he had so happily done to the hippies in the hospital. I invited him for a drink at a nearby pub and he filled me in on his fascinating past, acting in everything from Otto Preminger's *Saint Joan* to Roger Corman's *The Masque of the Red Death*.

Tony died of stomach cancer at the age of 42. Besides *Horror Hospital* I owe him for having introduced me to William Burroughs at his apartment on Duke Street. Tony had labored for years to get Bill's *Naked Lunch* turned into a movie, with Mick Jagger as the star. Fortunate, really, that the project foundered—so that later David Cronenberg could do it the justice it deserved.