

"Boobie Precursor Chemicals"

We heard complaints galore about  
Saddam Hussein's grim views  
We heard he planned to strike at us  
We heard it in our news  
The only thing we didn't know  
Was what he planned to use

He didn't have a plane that flew  
He didn't have a boat  
He had no army worth a damn  
He maybe had a goat  
But still we heard the lurid tales  
Of plans he had afloat

We only heard these stories, though,  
From our own government  
Our Yellow Press, of course, signed on  
To agitate and vent  
No other nation in the world  
Knew what the hell we meant

We saw through every thing he did  
He lived within a glass  
We had inspectors prowl about  
Like ants upon his ass  
And still the only thing he passed  
Our CIA was gas

But still a lack of evidence  
Of weapons in the skies  
Dissuaded no one our team  
From telling packs of lies  
If we found nothing on the ground  
We'd find it in his eyes

But still he tried to play around  
He wiggled and he squirmed  
Which we interpreted as proof  
That his dark plans had firmed  
We saw in this a sign that our  
Suspensions were confirmed

Our satellites had photos of  
Some trucks upon the ground  
Which, one supposes, is the place  
Where trucks are often found  
But Colin Powell said this showed  
Some chemicals around

And not just that, this spokesman claimed,  
But trucks implied still worse  
They meant Saddam could move some stuff  
And use it to rehearse  
A dastardly attack or two  
Upon the universe

This may sound histrionic and  
It even might sound mad  
But such insane proposals have  
Some precedents as bad

Like each time that the USA  
Finds what no one has had

It happened not too long ago  
In Madame Albright's room  
Where midnight séances revealed  
Some Prozac in Khartoum  
Which meant that our cruise missiles had  
To make the pills go "boom"

This raised some eyebrows, so to speak,  
Since those securely placed  
Asked what in Africa deserved  
To have itself defaced  
Explosively by surplus weapons  
No one else would waste

The answer came, as one would guess,  
In euphemistic slang:  
The old word "pharmaceutical"  
Now means a deadly fang;  
A Weapon of Destructive Mass  
Which we must make go "bang"

But some had doubts, as skeptics would,  
About these threadbare claims  
They pointed to a history of  
Of underhanded aims  
And said that the attack just smelled  
Of dying Empire games

No one had seen much proof about  
The rumored, deadly stash  
But that did not deter the ones  
Who claimed with bald panache  
That evidence of nothing proved  
The presence of the cache

Then someone clever at such things  
Devised a paradigm:  
Some smaller words that sound the same  
Make larger ones that rhyme  
In much the same way as ten cents  
Add up to make a dime

Thus Hydrogen and Oxygen  
Combined in ratio  
Produce a simple molecule:  
Two "H"s and one "O"  
Or, "water" to those others who  
Their chemistry don't know

Thus one could argue plausibly  
(In the subjunctive mood)  
That these "precursor chemicals"  
If placed into our food  
Could then combine to do us harm  
(Or else do us some good)

As Tweedledee once put the case  
In daffy logic fuzz:  
It would be if it were so; and  
It might be if it was;

But as it isn't, then it ain't.  
So this means that because . . .

Or as old Bilbo Baggins at  
His birthday bash observed,  
While Hobbits partied hard and as  
Cake and ale were served:  
He half-liked less than half of them  
As well as they deserved.

Or as the teacher said unto  
The student supplicant  
Who offered lame excuses and  
Got this mood-shifting rant:  
"You would have if you could have; but  
You didn't, so you can't!"

Yes, any fool can argue that  
If-then leads to then-could  
And, yes, the dominoes could fall  
Like lifeless blocks of wood  
But that's to beg the question of  
Just why or if they should

Yes, one can make a larger thing  
From smaller things, that's true  
And, yes, some hydrocarbons can  
Take life from lifeless stew  
(Just add some electricity  
To energize the brew)

But arguing that someone might  
Have done a thing -- or could --  
Compels no one to reach for the  
Conclusion that they would  
Until they do, they don't and so  
Let's get that understood

But Boobies don't like new at all  
They'd rather have the old  
No matter how the hand's gone bad  
They'd rather stay than fold  
They bet the farm and lost  
So now they live out in the cold

With noses pressed against the glass  
They look in from outside  
And could come in the open door  
But for their wounded pride  
Which makes them easy marks for those  
Who'd take them for a ride

Michael Murry, "The Misfortune Teller," Copyright 2005