



COCKTAIL

Heywood Gould

Author of *Fort Apache*, *The Bronx*

ALSO BY HEYWOOD GOULD:

One Dead Debutante

"Funniest novel to come around in quite a while.... a most humorous read."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"*One Dead Debutante* is an enjoyable romp. And very New York."

—*The New York Times*

"...this is a book that bears comparison with Dashiell Hammett and James M. Cain, and that will sustain the close scrutiny of criticism at the same time as it entertains."

—*Washington Post*

"Here's a fast, often very funny, excellently plotted story.... A crackling good story that doesn't mince words."

—*Booklist*

"... a rough, tough, salty novel.... the plot is complex and lively and the book is smutty, funny and very American."

—*Bookletter*

Glitterburn

"[Heywood Gould] can write.... He is in turn sharp, wacky, earthy and full of felicitous phrases.... the plot of *Glitterburn* is hysterical.... Mr. Gould will not bore anybody."

—*The New York Times*

"Gould... proves himself a vivid, often hilarious writer... hip and wildly funny without being cartoony."

—*Kirkus*

"A master craftsman, author Gould injects hair-trigger tensions into the happenings in a tough satire."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"It's a kaleidoscope romp—hip, raunchy and funny."

—*The Plain Dealer*

COCKTAIL

HEYWOOD GOULD



Copyright © 1984 by Heywood Gould
All Rights Reserved.

ISBN-13 978-0-9814841-2-9

ISBN-10 0-9814841-2-3

Tolmitch Press
Santa Monica, CA

Shaken and Strained

“WAVEY DUNES!”

A double take didn't change it. Neither did a mongrel snarl. Hallucinations retreat like bullies when you stand up to them. Reality could care less. It just swung back and forth on a weathered metal sign hanging from a yardarm of the dock.

“WAVEY PLUMES.”

I was on the upper deck of the Fire Island Flame, a converted garbage scow that plies the Great South Bay between several working class Long Island suburbs and –“WAVEY LOONS IS MORE LIKE IT”– Wavey Dunes, a resort town on Fire Island. It was early Saturday morning. My shipmates were shell-shocked sybarites who had stayed up all night to get the six-fifteen out of Penn Station that took them to the eight-ten ferry out of Bellport, a misnomer of a village, famous for Babylon State, a Victorian lunatic asylum, and for a homicidal contingent of red-necked proles, who lurked in stunted taverns by the railroad station waiting to pounce on unwitting sun worshipers wending their way to

“WAVE THIS PLEASE IN THE MORNING BREEZE.”

I was hung over, certainly a suitable condition for a Saturday morning. “Hung over” merely means you haven't had a drink in a few hours. There's nothing terminal about it, no cause for alarm. What I get now is a kind of permanent blackout. I no longer try to remember what I

did, I'm too busy figuring out what I'm doing.

For example, the task that confronted me now, demanding all my powers of concentration was to ascertain whether I was speaking aloud or not. Sometimes, when hung over, the thought and its articulation are simultaneous. I decided to listen for the sound of my own voice, to trap myself in the midst of utterance. But I kept forgetting.

“WAVEY CLONES IS A BETTER NAME.”

Did I say that or just think it? Or did somebody else say it?

“WAVEY DOUCHEBAGS.”

I could always ask. That girl sitting alone, reflector tucked under her chin like a Stradivarius. I could just stumble over and throw myself on her tender mercies. Excuse me, Miss, you look like a psychiatric social worker; I'm sure you'll understand. This is not a come on, I swear on my father's grave. I will not accompany you to your room even if you say pretty please with sugar on it. All I want to know is:

“AM I FUCKIN' TALKIN' TO MYSELF OR WHAT?”

Wouldn't work. She had big boobs and you could never convince a girl with big boobs that you're not coming on to her, even if she's eighty-five.

How about that comfy little couple, the ones reading the Times with matching aggrieved expressions that said, “We're waiting for you to bother us, we're ready to be uncomfortable.” Why disappoint them? Lurch over there, Flanagan. State your case. You see, folks, on days like this clarity is like penetration in a wet dream, always a little out

of reach. Especially since I smoked a jay on the trip out. It's tough enough to see Coughlin straight, but when you've got to see him with your hat in your hand! I mean I'm out here to beg for a job and nobody likes a beggar with an attitude. Coughlin himself said I stank with contumely, pretty fancy word for a mick lush, eh? "Comes outta you like halitosis," he said. Which was a warning not to spread the stink onto him. So I tried to puff the old chip off my shoulder, to smoke myself into the old forelock-tugging mood. And what happened?

"I GOT COMPLETELY FUCKIN' DISASSOCIATED."

Don't bother. It was obviously second marriage time. They were real uptight about their weight and the missile program and priorities and getting the cat neutered. But wait, here was a clue. Two deckhands, post-pubertal louts right out of Norman Rockwell, emerged from the wheelhouse brandishing baseball bats. They stared grimly, slapping the fat ends into their cooze-cruste'd palms. Suddenly, the top deck had emptied. I was a public enemy.

"CRUNCH A CLAVICLE FOR CHRIST, THAT IT?"

Oh well, I guess I am big enough to pose a threat. I mean, you see a thirty-eight-year-old weirdo in a field jacket with greasy, graying hair hanging over his collar, his blue eyes streaked like the red sky at morning, what do you do? You see a swaying drunk clutching a D'Agostino shopping bag, which could conceal a nine-millimeter automatic fully loaded right to the cartridge in the chamber, what are your options? Guys who looked like

me did run amok in resort towns, driven by Budweiser and excessive masturbation to acts of incredible bestiality. At this point it was only my murderous demeanor that was keeping me from a savage beating. If they searched my bag I was a goner. A change of clothes, a seven-hundred-dollar bottle of vintage cognac, and *The Collected Poems of W. H. Auden*. Once they realized I was an aesthete, I'd never leave the boat alive.

"IN A WEEK I'LL OWN THIS TOWN."

Permit me to introduce myself. I'm Brian Flanagan, Resort Bartender Extraordinaire. I wander the watering spots, dealing in anecdote fodder, selling a dab of color to the drab, a bit of wit to the wordless. Kindly counselor, stern disciplinarian--gentle deflorations are a side specialty--a man of many parts, a few of which have loosened over the years. In the wee small hours of the morning my saintly labors accomplished, I crawl off to my pauper's pallet....

"OH SHIT, NOW I MADE MYSELF CRY...."

I closed my eyes and gripped the rail. In the darkness gulls squawked and the engines droned. The waves slapped gently against the hull of the ferry.

I leaned over the side, but the only thing that came up was:

"WAVEY DUNES."

*To purchase the full book click:
www.heywoodgould.com*

