

Meeting Gregory Corso in North Beach & More

by [Jeffrey Zable](#) (December 2024)



Seawall (Richard Diebenkorn, 1957)

Meeting Gregory Corso in North Beach

I can't even recall what year it was, but I do remember that I was with two friends who I'd known from high school and we were about half-way up that little street near Broadway and Columbus sharing a joint when all of a sudden a scraggly

looking guy with a mop of hair walked up to us and said,
“Hello gents ... mind if I get some of that?”

Recognizing pretty quickly that it was the poet Gregory Corso—
recognizing him from several photos I’d seen of him, and the
fact
that I’d read a couple of his books—I answered, “I know you!
You’re the poet, Gregory Corso!”

Smiling, with what I perceived were a couple of missing front
teeth,
he responded, “Oh! so you knows who I is!”

Nodding in the affirmative, and telling him that I enjoyed his
poetry,
I handed him the joint, which he proceeded to take on until it
was
virtually a butt.

Then, handing it back to one of my friends, he apologized for
needing
to make a quick departure as he had to meet someone in the
neighborhood.

“Good stuff!” were his final words before heading down the
street. . .

The Interaction

I stop at a red light and a car pulls up alongside of me.
He’s got his passenger side window open
and rap music is blasting on his stereo.
I clearly hear the lines,
“Yo bitch, I got the itch—
I’m gonna come for ya—

It's gonna be euphoria—"

I look at the guy and think to myself,

"What parent wouldn't be proud to have their daughter marry a guy like that!"

When our eyes meet, I nod to him

and he immediately nods back

before we head through the intersection...

A Nun Encounter at Safeway

A nun joins me at the checkout counter and puts her items down next to mine.

I immediately notice that among them is a bottle of wine, which makes me imagine saying to her, "I didn't know that nuns were allowed to drink alcohol, but being an atheist I really don't know the rule."

Instead, I don't say anything but nod my head in recognition of her presence, to which she nods back and puts a divider between her stuff and mine.

I then imagine saying, "It's good you separated our groceries, 'cause otherwise I could wind up paying for everything, including the wine, and then I'd want a taste of it out in the parking lot!"

And so, after I pay for my things and pick up my bag I give a last look at the nun who's staring at her items, and maybe communing with God...

An Attitude

No, we didn't see Wayne Newton in 2007 when we were in Vegas, but I did propose to her while she was taking a bubble bath in our room at the Bellagio.

And though I didn't care for the glitter of Vegas, I could tell that she was very much enjoying herself, and when she was happy, I was happy, an attitude that I've pretty much maintained throughout our marriage...

Some Personal History

Two weeks before we moved to our new house a kid who went to the school I was going to attend supposedly got angry because he flunked a spelling test and to get his revenge on the teacher and the school, he went there in the middle of the night with a container of gasoline, got into a classroom through one of the windows, walked into the hallway, poured the gasoline all over the floor, and before leaving, set a match to it. And by the time the firefighters arrived, the school had burned to the point that I had to be bused to another school a few miles away for the remainder of third grade and then on through fourth and fifth grades. It wasn't until the beginning of sixth grade— which was the same grade that the kid arsonist was in— that I was able to attend the school near our house. And the only thing I remember hearing about the kid was that he was in reform school. Other than that, I was certainly glad to be able to walk to school, which allowed me to sleep in later. And I should also mention that my sixth-grade teacher was a man— the only male teacher I had in my entire elementary school

experience...

At the Dollar Store on 24th and Mission

I've just laid my items down on the counter in front of the owner—

who I've dealt with before—when this scruffy looking guy comes in

and asks him, "Where do you keep your knives?"

To which he replies, "That depends on who you want to kill!"

Trying not to laugh too hard, I say to the owner, "Man, you are so funny!"

To which he responds, "If you owned a place like this, in a neighborhood

like this, the only way to stay mildly sane is to have a sense of humor!"

"I perfectly understand!" I say to him, and after he rings up my items

and puts them in a bag, he points in the direction where the guy can find

what he's looking for...

What I'll Say Next Time

I'll need to stop writing this very soon

as I have a short video appointment

with an advice nurse. Aside from that,

when the intake person asked me

how serious my problem was on a 1 to 10

I foolishly responded that it was a 5 or 6, which certainly wasn't enough to get an actual face-to-face appointment with my doctor, and given that the number system is how it works these days, next time I'll say that my problem is a 9.5, too serious for me to take a chance on driving over, but that I'll take a Lyft and bring along some pajamas and toiletries as I'll likely need to be admitted to the hospital for treatment and observation...

Jeffrey Zable is a teacher, conga drummer/percussionist who plays for dance classes and rumbas around the San Francisco Bay Area, and a writer of poetry, flash-fiction, and non-fiction. He's published five chapbooks, and his writing has appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and anthologies, more recently in *Sufferer's Digest*, *Ranger*, *Sein Und Werden*, *Midsummer Dream House*, *Red Eft*, and many others.

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