



THREE NOVELS

The Soft Machine
Nova Express
The Wild Boys

OTHER WORKS BY WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS
PUBLISHED BY GROVE WEIDENFELD

Naked Lunch

The Ticket That Exploded

William S. Burroughs

THREE NOVELS

The Soft Machine
Nova Express
The Wild Boys



GROVE WEIDENFELD
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C O N T E N T S

THE SOFT MACHINE	I
NOVA EXPRESS	179
THE WILD BOYS: A Book of the Dead	363

The Soft Machine

C O N T E N T S

<i>Dead on Arrival</i>	5
<i>Who Am I to Be Critical</i>	13
<i>Public Agent</i>	27
<i>Trak Trak Trak</i>	33
<i>Early Answer</i>	53
<i>Case of the Celluloid Kali</i>	67
<i>The Mayan Caper</i>	81
<i>I Sekuin</i>	95
<i>Pretend an Interest</i>	99

<i>Last Hints</i>	115
<i>Where the Awning Flaps</i>	121
<i>1920 Movies</i>	127
<i>Where You Belong</i>	147
<i>Uranian Willy</i>	151
<i>Gongs of Violence</i>	153
<i>Dead Fingers Talk</i>	163
<i>Cross the Wounded Galaxies</i>	173

Dead on Arrival

I WAS WORKING the hole with the sailor and we did not do bad. Fifteen cents on an average night boosting the afternoons and short-timing the dawn we made out from the land of the free. But I was running out of veins. I went over to the counter for another cup of coffee. . .in Joe's Lunch Room drinking coffee with a napkin under the cup which is said to be the mark of someone who does a lot of sitting in cafeterias and lunchrooms. . . Waiting on the man. . . "What can we do?" Nick said to me once in his dead junky whisper. "They know we'll wait. . ." Yes, they know we'll wait. . .

There is a boy sitting at the counter thin-faced kid his eyes all pupil. I see he is hooked and sick. Familiar face maybe from the pool hall where I scored for tea

sometime. Somewhere in grey strata of subways all-night cafeterias rooming house flesh. His eyes flickered the question. I nodded toward my booth. He carried his coffee over and sat down opposite me.

The croaker lives out Long Island. . . light yen sleep waking up for stops. Change. Start. Everything sharp and clear. Antennae of TV suck the sky. The clock jumped the way time will after four P.M.

"The Man is three hours late. You got the bread?"

"I got three cents."

"Nothing less than a nickel. These double papers he claims." I looked at his face. Good looking. "Say kid I known an Old Auntie Croaker right for you like a Major . . . Take the phone. I don't want him to rumble my voice."

About this time I meet this Italian tailor cum pusher I know from Lexington and he gives me a good buy on H. . . At least it was good at first but all the time shorter and shorter. . . "Short Count Tony" we call him. . .

Out of junk in East St. Louis sick dawn he threw himself across the washbasin pressing his stomach against the cool porcelain. I draped myself over his body laughing. His shorts dissolved in rectal mucus and carbolic soap. summer dawn smells from a vacant lot.

"I'll wait here. . . Don't want him to rumble me. . ."

Made it five times under the shower that day soapy bubbles of egg flesh seismic tremors split by fissure spurts of jissom. . .

I made the street, everything sharp and clear like

after rain. See Sid in a booth reading a paper his face like yellow ivory in the sunlight. I handed him two nickels under the table. Pushing in a small way to keep up The Habit: INVADE. DAMAGE. OCCUPY. Young faces in blue alcohol flame.

"And use that alcohol. You fucking can't wait hungry junkies all the time black up my spoons. That's all I need for Pen Indef the fuzz rumbles a black spoon in my trap." The old junky spiel. Junk hooks falling.

"Shoot your way to freedom kid."

Trace a line of goose pimples up the thin young arm. Slide the needle in and push the bulb watching the junk hit him all over. Move right in with the shit and suck junk through all the hungry young cells.

There is a boy sitting like your body. I see he is a hook. I drape myself over him from the pool hall. Draped myself over his cafeteria and his shorts dissolved in strata of subways. . .and all house flesh. . . toward the booth. . .down opposite me. . . The Man I Italian tailor. . . I know bread. "Me a good buy on H."

"You're quitting? Well I hope you make it, kid. May I fall down and be paralyzed if I don't mean it. . . You gotta friend in me. A real friend and if."

Well the traffic builds up and boosters falling in with jackets shirts and ties, kids with a radio torn from the living car trailing tubes and wires, lush-workers flash rings and wrist watches falling in sick all hours. I had the janitor cooled, an old rummy, but it couldn't last with that crowd.

"Say you're looking great kid. Now do yourself a

favor and stay off. I been getting some really great shit lately. Remember that brown shit sorta yellow like snuff cooks up brown and clear. . .

Junky in east bath room. . . invisible and persistent dream body. . . familiar face maybe. . . scored for some time or body. . . in that grey smell of rectal mucus. . . night cafeterias and junky room dawn smells. three hours from Lexington made it five times. . . soapy egg flesh. . .

"These double papers he claims of withdrawal."

"Well I thought you was quitting. . ."

"I can't make it."

"Imposible quitar eso."

Got up and fixed in the sick dawn flutes of Ramadan.

"William tu tomas más medicina? . . No me hágas casa, William."

Casbah house in the smell of dust and we made it. . . empty eukodal boxes stacked four feet along the walls. . . dead on the surplus blankets. . . girl screaming . . . *vecinos* rush in. . .

"What did she die of?"

"I don't know she just died."

Bill Gains in Mexico City room with his douche bag and his stash of codeine pills powdered in a bicarbonate can. "I'll just say I suffer from indigestion." coffee and blood spilled all over the place. cigarette holes in the pink blanket. . . The Consul would give me no information other than place of burial in The American Cemetery.

"Broke? Have you no pride? Go to your Consul." He gave me an alarm clock ran for a year after his death.

Leif repatriated by the Danish. freight boat out of Casa for Copenhagen sank off England with all hands. Remember my medium of distant fingers?—

"What did she die of?"

"End."

"Some things I find myself."

The Sailor went wrong in the end. hanged to a cell door by his principals: "Some things I find myself doing I'll pack in is all."

Bread knife in the heart. . . rub and die. . . repatriated by a morphine script. . . those out of Casa for Copenhagen on special yellow note. . .

"All hands broke? Have you no pride?" Alarm clock ran for a year. "He just sit down on the curb and die." Esperanza told me on Niño Perdido and we cashed a morphine script. those Mexican Nar. scripts on special yellow bank-note paper. . . like a thousand dollar bill . . . or a Dishonorable Discharge from the US Army. . . And fixed in the cubicle room you reach by climbing this ladder.

Yesterday call flutes of Ramadan: *"No me hágas casa."*

Blood spill over shirts and light. the American trailing in form. . . He went to Madrid. This frantic Cuban fruit finds Kiki with a *novia* and stabs him with a kitchen knife in the heart. (Girl screaming. Enter the nabors.)

"Quédase con su medicina, William."

Half bottle of Fundador after half cure in the Jew Hospital. shots of demerol by candlelight. They turned off the lights and water. Paper-like dust we made it. Empty walls. Look anywhere. No good. *No bueno*.

He went to Madrid. . . Alarm clock ran for yesterday. . . *"No me hágas casa."* Dead on arrival. . . you might say at the Jew Hospital. . . blood spilled over the American. . . trailing lights and water. . . The Sailor went so wrong somewhere in that grey flesh. . . He just sit down on zero. . . I nodded on Niño Perdido his coffee over three hours late. . . They all went away and sent papers. . . The Dead Man write for you like a major. . . Enter *vecinos*. . . Freight boat smell of rectal mucus went down off England with all dawn smell of distant fingers. . . About this time I went to your Consul. He gave me a Mexican after his death. . . Five times of dust we made it. . . with soap bubbles of withdrawal crossed by a thousand junky nights. . . Soon after the half maps came in by candlelight. . . OCCUPY. . . Junk lines falling. . . Stay off. . . Bill Gains in the Yellow Sickness. . . Looking at dirty pictures casual as a ceiling fan short-timing the dawn we made it in the corn smell of rectal mucus and carbolic soap. . . familiar face maybe from the vacant lot. . . trailing tubes and wires. . . *"You fucking-can't-wait-hungry-junkies! . . ."* Burial in the American Cemetery. *"Quédase con su medicina. . ."* On Niño Perdido the girl screaming. . . They all went way through Casbah House. . . *"Couldn't you write me any*

better than that? Gone away. . . You can look any place."

No good. *No Bueno*.

You wouldn't believe how hot things were when I left the States—I knew this one pusher wouldn't carry any shit on his person just shoot it in the line—Ten twenty grains over and above his own absorption according to the route he was servicing and piss it out in bottles for his customers so if the heat came up on them they cop out as degenerates—So Doc Benway assessed the situation and came up with this brain child—

"Once in the Upper Baboonasshole I was stung by a scorpion—the sensation is not dissimilar to a fix—Hummm."

So he imports this special breed of scorpions and feeds them on metal meal and the scorpions turned a phosphorescent blue color and sort of hummed. *"Now we must find a worthy vessel,"* he said—So we flush out this old goof ball artist and put the scorpion to him and he turned sort of blue and you could see he was fixed right to metal—These scorpions could travel on a radar beam and service the clients after Doc copped for the bread—It was a good thing while it lasted and the heat couldn't touch us—However all these scorpion junkies began to glow in the dark and if they didn't score on the hour metamorphosed into scorpions straight away—So there was a spot of bother and we had to move on disguised as young junkies on the way to Lexington—Bill and Johnny we sorted out the names

but they keep changing like one day I would wake up as Bill the next day as Johnny—So there we are in the train compartment shivering junk sick our eyes watering and burning.

Who Am I to Be Critical?

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN the sex chucks hit me in the crotch and I sagged against the wall and looked at Johnny too weak to say anything, it wasn't necessary, he was there too and without a word he dipped some soap in warm water and dropped my shorts and rubbed the soap on my ass and worked his cock up me with a corkscrew motion and we both came right away standing there and swaying with the train clickety clack clack spurt spurt into the brass cuspidor—We never got to Lexington actually—Stopped off in the town of Marshal and hit this old country croaker for tincture with the aged mother suffering from piles in the worst form there is line and he wrote like a major—That night we got into a pool game and Doc won a Dusenbergh Panama hat

tan suit and dark glasses like 1920 sports and the further South we went the easier it was to score like we brought the twenties along with us—Well we come to this Mexican border town in time to see something interesting—In order to make way for a new bridge that never got built actually they had torn down a block of shacks along the river where the Chink railway workers used to smoke the black stuff and the rats had been down under the shacks hooked for generations—So the rats was running all through the street squealing sick biting everyone in sight—When we went to look for our car couldn't find it and no cars anywhere just this train left over from an old Western—The track gave out somewhere north of Monterrey and we bought some horses off a Chinaman for a tin of mud—By this time there were soldiers everywhere shooting the civilians so we scored for some Civil War uniforms and joined one of the warring powers—And captured five soldiers who were wearing uniforms of a different color and the General got drunk and decided to hang the prisoners just for jolly and we rigged up a cart with a drop under a tree limb—The first one dropped straight and clean and one of the soldiers wiped his mouth and stepped forward grinning and pulled his pants down to an ankle and his cock flipped out spurting—We all stood there watching and feeling it right down to our toes and the others who were waiting to be hanged felt it too—So we stripped them and they got hard-ons waiting—They couldn't help it you understand. That night we requisitioned a ranch house and all got drunk and Johnny did this

dance with his tie around his neck lolling his head on one side and letting his tongue fall out and wriggled his ass and dropped his pants and his cock flipped out and the soldiers rolled around laughing till they pissed all over themselves—Then they rigged up a harness under his arms and hoisted him up off the floor to a beam and gang-fucked him—By the time we got to Monterrey there was Spaniards around in armor like a costume movie and again we were lucky to arrive just at the right time. There was a crowd of people in the Zoco and we pushed up front with our rush-hour technique and saw they were getting ready to burn some character at the stake—When they lit the faggots at his feet the only sound you could hear was the fire crackling and then everyone sucked in his breath together and the screams tore through me and my lips and tongue swole up with blood and I come in my pants—And I could see others had shot their load too and you could smell it like a compost heap, some of us so close our pants steamed in the fire just pulling the screams and the smoke down into our lungs and sort of whimpering—It was tasty I tell you—So we hit Mexico City just before sunrise and I said here we go again—That heart pulsing in the sun and my cock pulsed right with it and jissom seeped through my thin cotton trousers and fell in the dust and shit of the street—And a boy next to me grinning and gave me a backhand pickpocket feel, my cock still hard and aching like after a wet dream—And we crawled up onto a muddy shelf by the canal and made it there three times slow fuck on knees in the stink of

sewage looking at the black water—It turned out later this kid had the epilepsy—When he got these fits he would flop around and come maybe five times in his dry goods, made you feel good all over to watch it—He really had it built in and he told me he could fix it with a magic man we trade places—So we started off on foot across the mountains and down the other side to high jungle warm and steamy and he kept having these fits and I dug it special fucking him in the spasm his asshole fluttering like a vibrator—Well we come to this village and found the magic man in a little hut on the outskirts—An evil old character with sugary eyes that stuck to you—We told him what we wanted and he nodded and looked at both of us and smiled and said he would have to cook up the medicine we should come back next day at sundown—So we came back and he gave us the bitter medicine in clay pots—And I hadn't put the pot down before the pictures started coming in sharp and clear: the hanged boy pulling his legs up to the chin and pumping out the spurts by the irrigation ditch, the soldiers swinging me around in the harness, the burned man screaming away like a good one and that heart just pulsing and throwing off spurts of blood in the rising sun—Xolotl was explaining to me that only one body is left in the switch they were going to hang me and when I shot my load and died I would pass into his body—I was paralyzed by the medicine any case and they stripped me and lashed my body with special type sex nettles that burned and stung all over and my tongue swole up and gagged me and my eyes blurred

over with blood—They rigged up a gallows with a split-bamboo platform and a ladder and I start up the ladder Xolotl goosing me and stood under the noose and he tightens it around my neck muttering spells and then gets down on the floor leaving me alone up there on the platform with the noose waiting—I saw him reach up with an obsidian knife and cut the rope held the platform and I fell and silver light popped in my eyes like a flash bulb—I got a whiff of ozone and penny arcades and then I felt it start way down in my toes these bone wrenching spasms emptied me and everything spilled out shit running down the back of my thighs and no control in my body paralyzed, twisting up in these spasms the jissom just siphoned me right into Xolotl's cock and next thing I was in his ass and balls flopping around spurting all over the floor and that evil old fuck crooning and running his hands over me so nasty—But then who am I to be critical?—I stayed there in the magic man's hut for three days sleeping and woke up the lookout different—And the magic man gave me some medicine to control the fits and I headed on south—Came at sundown to a clear river where boys were swimming naked—And one of them turned grinning with a hard-on and shoved his finger in and out his fist and I fell in one of my fits so they all had a go at me—The cold mountain shadows came down and touched my naked ass and I went back with the boy to his hut and ate beans and chili and lay with him on the floor breathing the pepper smell of his belches and stayed there with him and worked his patch of corn on the

side of the mountain—That boy could keep a hard-on all night and I used to stick peppers up my ass when he fucked me like my guts was on fire—Well maybe I would be there still, work all day and after the work knocked out no words no thoughts just sit there looking at the blue mountains and ate and belched and fucked and slept same thing day after day the greatest—But one day we scored for a bottle of mescal and got lushed and he looked at me and said: "*Chinga de puto* I will rid the earth of you in the name of Jesus Christu!" and charges me with a machete—Well I'd seen it coming and tossed a cup of mescal in his eyes and side-stepped and he fell on his face and I rammed the planting stick right into the base of his brain—So that was that—And started South again and came finally to this spot where a lot of citizens were planting corn with sticks all working in concert, I didn't like the look of it but I was strung out for groceries and decided to make contact a mistake as it turned out—Because as soon as I walked out into that field I felt this terrible weight on me and there I was planting corn with them and everything I did and thought was already done and thought and there was this round of festivals where the priests put on lobster suits and danced around snapping their claws like castanets and nothing but maize maize maize—And I guess I would be there yet fructifying the maize God except for this one cat who was in Maya drag like me but I could see he was a foreigner too—He was very technical and a lovely fellow—He began drawing formulas on the floor and showed me how the priests

operated their control racket: "It's like with the festivals and the fucking corn they know what everybody will see and hear and smell and taste and that's what thought is and these thought units are represented by symbols in their books and they rotate the symbols around and around on the calender." And as I looked at his formulas something began to crack up in my brain and I was free of the control beam and next thing we both got busted and sentenced to "Death in Centipede"—So they strapped us to couches in a room under the temple and there was a terrible smell in the place full of old bones and a centipede about ten feet long comes nuzzling out of one corner—So I turn on something I inherit from Uranus where my grandfather invented the adding machine—I just lay there without any thought in tons focus of heavy blue silence and a slow wave went through me and spread out of me and the couch began shaking and the tremors spread into the ground and the roof fell in and crushed the centipede and smashed the couch so the straps were loose and I slipped out and untied Technical Tilly—So we got out of there dodging stellae and limestone skulls as the whole temple came down in chunks and the wind blowing a hurricane brought in a tidal wave and there wasn't much left of the whole set when things cleared away—All the workers were running around loose now looking for the priests—The head priest was paralyzed and had turned into a centipede—We found him in a cubby hole under the rubble along with some others who were half crab or in various stages of disgusting metamorphosis—And

I figured we should do something special with these characters they are wise guys—So we organize this “fun fest” and made some obsidian jockstraps strung together with copper wire and heated the straps up white-hot and slipped them on, the priests did a belly dance like you used to see it in burlesque and we sat there yelling: “Take it off Take it off,” laughing till we pissed and shit and came—You never heard such laughing with the control gone and goosing them with hot copper pricks—And others we put weights on their backs and dragged them through wooden troughs with flint flakes sticking up and so on—Fun and games what? Well after that none of us could look at corn and the grocery problem became acute—So we organize this protection racket shaking down the agriculturals—“It could happen again here—Kick in or else”—And they kicked in come level on average—Well groceries—And I had perfected a gimmick to keep my boys in line—I was still subject to these fits but I had learned to control the images—That is just before I flipped out I could put any image in the projector and—Action—Camera—Take—It always happened the way I took it and any character gave me any static was taken care of that way—But the boys from the North were moving in whole armies so we packed in and shifted to the hunting and fishing lark—I picked thirty of the most likely and suitable lads all things considered and we moved South up over the mountains and down the other side into jungle then up and over again getting monotonous—Piecing out the odds best we could spot of this and a

spot of that—Once in a while I had to put it about with the earthquakes but come level on average what you might call a journeyman thief—Well fever and snakes and rapids and boys dropping out here and there to settle down with the locals I had no mob left when I run up against this really evil setup—The Chimu were something else—So we hit this town and right away I don’t like it.

“Something here, John—Something wrong—I can feel it.”

To begin with the average Chimu is unappetizing to say the least—Lips eaten off by purple and orange skin conditions like a baboon’s ass and pus seeping out a hole where the nose should be disgust you to see it—And some of them are consisting entirely of penis flesh and subject to blast jissom right out their skull and fold up like an old wine bag—Periodically the Chimu organize fun fests where they choose up sides and beat each other’s brains out with clubs and the winning team gang-fucks the losers and cut their balls off right after to make pouches for coco leaves they are chewing all the time green spit dripping off them like a cow with the aftosa—All things considered I was not in-narrested to contact their loutish way of life—In the middle of this town was a construction of clay cubicles several stories high and I could see some kinda awful crabs were stirring around inside it but couldn’t get close because the area around the cubicle is covered with black bones and hot as a blasting furnace—They had this heat weapon you got it?—Like white-hot ants

all over you—Meanwhile I had been approached by the Green Boys have a whole whore house section built on catwalks over the mud flats entirely given over to hanging and all kinds death in orgasm young boys need it special—They were beautiful critters and swarmed all over me night and day smelling like a compost heap—But I wasn't buying it sight unseen and when I proposed to watch a hanging they come on all indignant like insulted whores—So I am rigged up a long distance periscope with obsidian mirrors Technical Tillie moaning about the equipment the way he always does and we watched them hang this boy just down from the country—Well I saw that when his neck snapped and he shot his load instead of flowing into the Green Boy the way nature intended these hot crabs hatched out of his spine and scoffed the lot.

So we organize the jungle tribes and take Boy's Town and confine the Green Boys in a dormitory, they are all in there turning cartwheels and giggling and masturbating and playing flutes—That was our first move to cut the supply line—Then after we had put the squeeze on and you could hear them scratching around in the cubicle really thin now we decided to attack—I had this special Green Boy I was making it with who knew the ropes you might say and he told me we have to tune the heat wave out with music—So we get all the Indians and all the Green Boys with drums and flutes and copper plates and stayed just out of the heat blast beating the drums and slowly closed in—I am had rigged up a catapult to throw limestone boulders and

shattered the cubicle so we move in with spears and clubs and finish them off and smashed the heat-sending set that was a living radio with insect parts—We turn the Green Boys loose and on our way rejoicing—

So down into the jungle on the head-shrinking lark—Know how it operates—You got these spells see? confines the citizen to his head under your control like you can shrink up all the hate in the area—What a gimmick but as usual I got greedy and the wind up is I don't have a head left to stand on—Sure I had the area sewed up but there wasn't any area left—Always was one to run things into the ground—Well there I was on the bottom when I hear about this virgin tribe called the Camuyas embrace every stranger and go naked all the time like nature intended and I said "the Camuyas are live ones" and got down there past all these bureaucrats with The Internal Indian Service doubted the purity of my intentions—But I confounded them with my knowledge of Mayan archaeology and the secret meaning of the centipede motif and I am was very technical so we established ourselves as scientists and got the safe conduct—Those Camuyas were something else all naked rubbing up against you like dogs—They were sweet little critters and I might be there still except for a spot of bother with The Indian Commission about this hanging ceremony I organize figuring to trade in the chassis and renew my substance—So they chucked me out and talked usefully about that was that—And I made it up to the Auca who were warlike and wangled two healthy youths for a secret

weapon—So took these boys out into the jungle and laid it on the line and one of them was ready to play ball and—spare you the monotonous details—Suffice it to say the Upper Amazon gained a hustler and there I was caught in the middle of all these feuds—Some one knocks off your cousin twice removed and you are obligated to take care of his great uncle—Been through all this before—Every citizen you knock off there are ten out looking for you geometric and I don't want to know—So I got a job with the Total Oil Company and that was another mistake—

Rats was running all over the morning—Somewhere North of Monterrey went into the cocaine business—By this time fish tail Cadillac—people—civilians—So we score for some business and get rich over the warring powers—shady or legitimate the same fuck of a different color and the general on about the treasure—We rigged their stupid tree limb and drop the alien corn—spot of business to Walgreen's—So we organize this 8267 kicked in level on average ape—Melodious gimmick to keep the boys in line—I had learned to control Law 334 procuring an orgasm by any image, Mary sucking him and running the outfield—Static was taken care of that way—what you might call a vending machine and boys dropping to Walgreen's—We are not locals. We sniff the losers and cut their balls off chewing all kinds masturbation and self-abuse like a cow with the aftosa—Young junkies return it to the white reader and one day I would wake up as Bill covered with ice and burning crotch—drop my shorts and comes gibbering

up me with a corkscrew motion—We both come right away standing and trying to say something—I see other marks are coming on with the mother tincture—The dogs of Harry J. Anslinger sprouted all over me—By now we had word dust stirring the 1920's, maze of dirty pictures and the house hooked for generations—We all fucked the boy burglar feeling it right down to our toes—Spanish cock flipped out spurting old Montgomery Ward catalogues—So we stripped a young Dane and rigged the Yankee dollar—Pants down to the ankle, a barefoot Indian stood there watching and feeling his friend—Others had shot their load too over a broken chair through the tool heap—Tasty spurts of jissom across the dusty floor—Sunrise and I said here we go again with the knife—My cock pulsed right with it and trousers fell in the dust and dead leaves—Return it to the white reader in stink of sewage looking at open shirt flapping and comes maybe five times his ass fluttering like—We sniff what we wanted pumping out the spurts open shirt flapping—What used to be me in my eyes like a flash bulb, spilled adolescent jissom in the bath cubicle—Next thing I was Danny Deever in Maya drag—That night we requisitioned a Peruvian boy—I would pass into his body—What an awful place it is—most advanced stage—foreigner too—They rotate the symbols around IBM machine with cocaine—fun and games what?