

## [Mad Libs: Deep State](#) [1]

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### Poem by Susan Terris



### Deep State Crosses Familiar Lines

It is a truth, universally acknowledged,  
that a big man in possession of a good fortune  
must be in want of a knife

*Memo: Hack truths. Replace with alternate ones.*

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(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){(i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1\*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),  
m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m)})(window,document,'script','https://www.google.com/analytics/analyt  
analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy  
family man is paranoid in his own way

*Memo: Replace tiny hands with yuge ones.*

It was a bright cold day in April, and the  
White House clocks were striking  
thirteen

*Memo: It's not his fault. Nothing ever is.*

Stately, plump Buckaroo came from the  
stairhead bearing a bowl of lies  
on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed

*Memo: He's armed now with razor & knife.*

It was the best of times, until the big man  
whose clock struck thirteen made  
it the worst of times

*Memo: He says it's always the best of times.*

It was a pleasure to burn

*Memo: Was it? But climate change is a hoax.*

Call the big man Ishmael, and he will cut  
you—you terrorist from the Deep State,  
you radical Islamic loser

*Memo: And he'll mess you up bigly. Sad.*

All this happened, more or less—  
with more alt-lies until bigot-man  
made America hate again

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**Note:** Famous first lines used here, with some modification, are from the following novels (in order of appearance): *Pride and Prejudice*, *Anna Karenina*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Ulysses*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

### Art Information

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Susan Terris's most recent books are *Take Two: Film Studies* (Omnidawn Publishing, Fall 2017), *Memos* (Omnidawn Publishing), and *Ghost of Yesterday: New and Selected Poems* (Marsh Hawk Press). She is the author of six books of poetry, sixteen chapbooks, three artist's books, and one play. Her journal publications include the *Southern Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Georgia Review*, *Ploughshares*, and several past works in *Talking Writing*. A poem of hers from *Field* appeared in Pushcart Prize XXXI. A poem from *Memos* was in Best American Poetry 2015.

Terris was editor of *Spillway Magazine* and is a poetry editor of *Pedestal Magazine*. For more information, visit [Susan Terris's website](#) [4].

*Photo of Susan Terris by Margaretta Mitchell.*

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