

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume II, Issue III

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Two Poems
by
Curtis Honeycutt

I Hope Your Time on Earth Expires Soon

My perpetual disdain for you
Is only surpassed by the way
I loathe being struck in my lower extremities.
Go to the infernal regions.

Typhoid

Of all the words out there
I will use one hundred thirty-one of them
in this poem.
Pajamas was begging me
to be included.
Typhoid, however,
instructed me to leave him out.
Too bad, Typhoid.
You're in my poem.
Typhoid, Typhoid, Typhoid.

While auditioning words
to appear in my poem,
I was pleased to learn
that there is a difference
between a summer Igloo
and a winter Igloo.

Here's to you, Igloo.

You were a long shot, but you made it.

Of course the big players

are in this poem,

like In and And.

Those two have been

appearing in poems

long before the word Enron

was even a thought.

"Where's Ron's pancreas?"

"Enron, of course."

That was, until Typhoid

Fever took over Ron's body.

Typhoid.

One hundred thirty-one.

It's That Simple
by
David Choate

Want to be a lady?

Can't be a wench.

Want to be a man?

You can't be French.

Die, Aussie, Die!
An Indictment of Hollywood's Dependency on Australian Star Power
by
Amanda DeSimone

Like many god-fearing loyal Americans, I take the patriotic act of consuming very seriously. And, like many Americans, my favorite place in which to indulge, other than Tijuana, is at the local movie theater.

This past weekend, I drove the three blocks to my local megaplex, plopped down \$10.50 for a ticket, purchased ample concessions and proceeded to Theater 28. The theater had stadium seating with oversized seats and unobstructed views, affording me the sensation of relaxing behind the wheel of my military surplus Hummer. Two hot dogs, a box of Milk Duds and a Diet Coke later, I made the decision to commence what I hoped would be an all-out theater-hopping extravaganza.

Unfortunately, just as I was about to help myself to a third movie, I was ambushed by a power-crazed usher. This evildoer—a teenager with a surprisingly clear, yet markedly un-American complexion—charged me with the criminal occupation of theater seats.

As I reluctantly withdrew myself from the movie theater, it dawned on me that a much graver crime has long been tolerated, even embraced, by this country. Many are already aware of this crime, which is committed each time an American is forced to pay \$10.50 for a movie that is preceded by 15 minutes of commercials. I decided to dedicate the rest of my afternoon to uncovering the reason behind, and devising a solution for, such exorbitant ticket prices.

After minutes of extensive research, I unearthed La-La Land's best-kept sinister secret. No, it is not that many in Hollywood participate in unsavory homosexual activities. That is hardly a secret. Instead, I would like to expound upon the fact that Hollywood has grown dependent on expensive Australian star power to fuel its blockbusters.

According to Joel Silver, Hollywood producer and founder of Ultimate Frisbee (1): "The greatest actors in the world now are Australian. Why? I don't know, maybe it's in the water down there I guess."(2)

Yet, blood is thicker than water. And the blood of the 165,000 criminals that were shipped to Australia from 1787 to 1868 (3) courses through the veins of many of today's top Hollywood stars. The superior acting talent displayed by Oscar-winning descendents of criminals such as Geoffrey Rush and Nicole Kidman cannot be denied. Likewise, no one can dismiss the extraordinary ranges of Oscar nominees Cate Blanchett, Naomi Watts, Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths. And certainly no one can refute the blockbuster potential displayed by criminal spawn Hugh Jackman, Eric Bana and Heath Ledger.

On the supply side, movie acting—the art of encompassing a false identity for financial gain—comes natural to the criminal-minded members of the former prison society. And on the demand side, the American movie-going public insists on convincing performances. However, the ultimate moral and financial price of continued business with the Aussies will bring this country to its knees. In order to prevent this, Hollywood must mount a unified front against the Evil Empire of Australia. Unfortunately, Operation Outback-Storm will not

be easy as the Australians count die-hard fanatics, ingrates and extremists amongst their ranks.

Australian Mel Gibson, criminally insane from a young age, has consistently exhibited delusions of grandeur. Still, he was able to conceal his fanaticism until earlier this year when he publicly expressed contempt for those who do not share his crackpot religious beliefs, declaring: "There is no salvation for those outside the ['Holy Family' Catholic] Church."⁽⁴⁾ Apparently, Gibson anticipates an unlikely day when the majority of Americans are cast into the everlasting fire that was originally prepared for the devil and his angels but is now accepting Australian applicants.

Another critically acclaimed miscreant, Toni Collette, also expressed anti-American sentiments. Although she has prospered immensely in Hollywood, USA, she had this to say about the hand that feeds her: "You know, there's always a sense of pretense, especially in America. I don't feel bad about saying that I find it to be a very odd country."⁽⁵⁾ Perhaps Collette would find it less pretentious to spend the rest of her life in her homeland drunk on Foster's, wrestling reptiles, koalas and Aborigines.

Most alarming, however, are the Australian extremists who will stop at nothing in their quest to reap the eternal awards only the Academy can bestow. Nicole Kidman, aberrantly left-handed from birth, defied nature by becoming right-handed to play Virginia Woolf in the American film "The Hours." Most appalling, however, was when Kidman drowned herself in a river in an effort to prove her unyielding devotion to the craft of shocking the American public. When will these people learn that suicide is always wrong, even in the name of Oscar?

Never mind that many Hollywood actors physically transform themselves for roles with unhealthy weight-gain and weight-loss regimens. Geoffrey Rush actually metamorphosed into a pelican to play the part of Nigel in "Finding Nemo." Clearly, Hollywood has underestimated how far these dingo jockeys are willing to go.

These impostors from Down Under have seduced unsuspecting moviegoers with their fake American accents and fake American good looks. And Hollywood has played a perverse role in the seduction. In a rare case of outsourcing gone wrong, Hollywood has acquiesced to the Australians' demands of \$15-\$25 million per movie.

Frankly, there is no reason for this betrayal to continue. A highly affordable alternative exists right here on U.S. soil that could just as effectively satiate America's need for great movie actors. Now is the time to look toward our own untapped natural resource that is the United States Correctional System.

There are many indisputable benefits in employing American convicts to star in motion pictures. Like their Aussie counterparts, these convicts possess the criminal mentality that compelling acting requires. Furthermore, prison life is conducive to maintaining a sexy, movie-star-caliber physique. Convicts are able to build brawn through hard labor and sculpt long, lean muscles while evading rapists and disciplining bitches.

Yet, the greatest benefit the American people would enjoy is the enormous savings at the box office. Even a high school economics student knows that paying foreign workers even a fair wage in exchange for labor is simply uneconomical, and thus un-American. You wouldn't pay \$4,200 for a pair of Nikes, so why should you pay \$10.50 for a movie ticket?

According to my research, the average federal prisoner earns \$0.92 per hour. (6) The time it takes to complete a hypothetical Hollywood movie shoot is 15 weeks at 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Now suppose, just to be safe, that the convict cast in the starring role were to work every one of those hours. His or her paycheck would be \$993.60, a far cry from the \$25 million Mel Gibson received for "Signs."(7) Naturally, Hollywood studios would pass this savings directly on to the American movie-going public. Under this new system, Americans could probably expect to pay \$0.25 per ticket.

In the name of patriotism, I beseech all Hollywood executives to demonstrate confidence in American criminal resources by severing their ties with the Aussies. This would be the first step. I wish I could say that simply placing an embargo on Australia would suffice. But, remember, we're dealing with fanatics, extremists and ingrates.

Some are now saying that there may be some validity to Joel Silver's horrifying guess that Australia possesses Waters of Movie-acting Dominance (WMDs). Therefore, it is imperative that experts are deployed at once to the Continent of Evil to test its water supply. If evidence is found supporting the existence of WMDs, disaster may be averted by siphoning every last drop to the US. If no evidence is found, the experts may pause briefly to sigh with relief... and then immediately poison the water supply. Because you never know.

1. *International Movie Data Base (www.imdb.com)*
2. *The Sydney Morning Herald, March 5, 2003*
3. *The Fatal Shore, Robert Hughes, 1987*
4. *Interview with Australia's Herald Sun per www.msnbc.msn.com*
5. *Interview with Paul Fischer at the Toronto International Film Festival, 2002 (www.iofilm.co.uk)*
6. *The Ultimate Field Guide to the U.S. Economy: "Felons: The American Worker's Newest Competitor?" Laura Singleton, November 13, 2002*
7. *International Movie Data Base*

Noah's Personal Rapture by **David Dumitru**

If God did not play dice with the Universe, He had a lot to answer for. Pure rotten chance was the only reasonable explanation for the facts of Noah Hutcheson's life. That, or something had gone terribly awry in the planning of the thing.

Noah got up from the colonial patchwork sofa in his Aunt Jo's living room. It was just coming up on ten and soon the dim blue light of the television would start into its nightly firefly dance. The man on the All-Prayer-All-The-Time-Channel would disappear, lost in the ether for just a few seconds before coming back into the room as if nothing had happened; as if the time of his non-existence would go unnoticed, excused, and maybe even blessed. The string of tiny decorative lights illuminating the shrine in the nook above the TV would blink on and off. The circuit would overload and reset the lights to the default, "twinkle," program. In the nook, the faces of Noah's parents would take on an undulating glow, grinning and popeyed in their picture frames. The gold-leaf lettering on the certificates commemorating Noah's parents' posthumous induction into the Second Church of the First Savior's Order of the Angels would sparkle. Needle-thin rays of shimmering light would flutter, dancing about the room.

The overall effect would give Noah the creeps. His stomach would churn and the hair on his arms would stand at attention. Noah's parents had been missionaries. They had disappeared two years ago in Indonesia while working to baptize a reticent band of Dayak tribesmen who had rudely declined to forego the quaint cultural pastime of hunting heads. This is how Noah had come to live with his Aunt and her son at the end of a dirt road in a house with drab gray asbestos siding on the outskirts of a town on the outskirts of a farming community on the outskirts of some place that Noah hoped might have skirts, if he could only get out there to the skirts.

Of course, life before Aunt Jo had not been everything a teenaged boy could ask for. Noah's parents had been devoted disciples. Noah himself had been at a loss for tears when his parents had suddenly stopped writing.

The telepreacher wavered in and out of Noah's peripheral vision. Noah heard the creak and scrape of footsteps on the roof and went on tiptoe down the hallway to his room, trying not to scuff the linoleum tile any more than it had already been scuffed by years of neglect compounded by a steady accretion of grime. From behind the closed door on Noah's right, he heard the whirring of fans and the whistling hiss of his cousin Henry's air conditioning system. Henry was determined to live to be one-hundred and thirty years old—unless The Rapture intervened. He had read something on the Good Works Internet News Service; something about how baptized Eskimos lived very long lives, subsisting mostly on raw fish and blubber and prayer. Henry had put two and two together. He kept the temperature in his room below fifty degrees at all times, rarely came out, and ate nothing but uncooked frozen fish and congealed bacon fat (the latter being somewhat equivalent to whale blubber, according to Henry's Internet research). Henry was aiming for a state of near-suspended animation. Henry was twenty-two years old. Henry was just getting started.

In his own room, Noah took his laptop from its hiding place under the floorboards beneath his bed. With Aunt Jo up on the roof messing with the floodlights, Noah figured he had thirty

minutes to surf the web without benefit of her guidance. He and Henry were supposed to use the PC in the alcove off the dining room only, and only when Aunt Jo was supervising. No trips to the library, no access to PCs at the bible school. Aunt Jo did not trust so-called "parental controls" to protect Henry and Noah from the tools of Satan lurking out there in the gibbering electronic void.

Not one to be thwarted in his entrepreneurial ambitions, Noah had purchased the laptop, slightly used, with some of the money he regularly skimmed from the collection plate at church.

He sat at his desk, waiting. Soon his study lamp blinked twice and steadied again. Aunt Jo had switched on her lightshow. The Landing Lights, Noah called them, erected in case The Rapture came in the middle of the night and time was short. According to the experts, the lights would help the Lord identify the elite members of his flock quickly and from the air in case The End came when the flock happened to be sleeping. With the lights now on, Aunt Jo would pray for a while before coming down from the roof, whence Noah's fairly regular, clandestine interludes of Internet freedom. Out of an abundance of caution, Noah counted to ten before powering up the laptop and going online.

He cruised porn sites for a few minutes, just long enough to see if there were any new thumbnail shots he could capture and copy over to one of his own sites, *megafreeporn.com*, which was neither mega nor free, and which brought in a few bucks a month on top of the take from the church. As usual, there was little happening there, and over the space of the next five minutes he dropped a thousand dollars playing virtual craps on a gambling site. If indeed God did not play dice with Universe, there was at least an upside; Noah did not have to play against Him.

Noah checked his email. This was a little more fun. His in-box was loaded with query letters from aspiring Christian novelists. Noah called up his prefab rejection letter and sent it blazing out over the Net:

Dear Writer,

We here at the Wings of Angels Agency have carefully reviewed your submission. Our staff has determined that your novel is the work of a hack and that you are most likely a serial abuser of small children. We will be reporting you to the Department of Homeland Security forthwith.

Your Friend in the Lord,

G. Asendwind, Literary Agent

Noah checked his watch. He had about fifteen minutes. He logged on as webmaster to "readyforglory.org" and began composing an editorial for the newsletter of the web-based University of The One Faith, Inc. He was concerned about the power-load Aunt Jo was using on her heavenly landing strip on the roof. She had managed to snag a trio of bats last week.

Drawn by the bugs which were drawn to the light, the bats, like Icarus, had flown just that much too close to the searing heat of the two-kilowatt halogen lamps. Upon discovering the skeletons, Aunt Jo had taken them for the remains of tiny Hell-angels. From this she had reasoned that The Rapture was closer than she had thought. She kept the bones in the

freezer, awaiting further instructions from the University's Department of Angelology.

Noah began writing:

Expert scientists have discovered through painstaking research that the two-thousand watt RaptureReady (TR) lighting kit may be underpowered by as much as half, owing to increased light pollution in the "Midwest." With this in mind, we are issuing a recommendation that RaptureReady (TR) users upgrade immediately to the five-thousand watt kit now available on our website.

Yours truly,

Wates Longely, Managing Editor

Noah uploaded the editorial. Aunt Jo would read it in the morning when she checked the responses to her latest round of queries to literary agents concerning her life's opus, a Christian/Romance novel entitled "Jesus Came for Me." She would place an order for the new halogen lamps just as soon as she stopped crying over the rejection letter. With the new lights it was a good bet that she would bag an owl in the weeks to come.

With five minutes left, Noah clicked over to one last site, *longlifesecrets.edu*, which happened to be associated with the same university as the rapture-light scientists. He inserted a new link at the top of the home page and pasted in a jpeg photo of a ten thousand BTU portable air conditioning unit. He tapped away at his keyboard:

ICEQUEEN AC announces annual KEEPITCOOL Sweepstakes! Click on the sponsor link for details!

Noah sent the page by wireless connection to the laser printer he kept in the crawlspace beneath the house. He would slip the printout under Henry's door in the morning. Henry would zip himself into the down sleeping bag he kept on ice in his room—if it kept out the cold, Henry reasoned, it must also keep out the warm. Henry would beg Aunt Jo to grant him access to the PC in the alcove. His eternally blue lips would pucker with anticipation as he squirmed, impatient, cocooned in his sleeping bag. Having sealed his arms inside the bag, he would plead with her to do the typing and the clicking for him. In order to enter the sweepstakes they would have to answer a never-ending, looping, questionnaire. Henry would begin to whine and then break down completely, finally abandoning the project and hopping back down the hallway to his room where he could keep the ambient temperature of the world at bay. Noah would get it all on tape for a web-based, pay-per-view, reality-show he had been mulling over of late.

Noah looked at his watch again. He heard the rattle of an aluminum ladder, and knew Aunt Joe was coming down from the roof. He stowed the laptop, put on the Jesus Head pajamas Aunt Jo had given him for Christmas, and slipped into bed.

The dreams that Noah dreamt would have been nothing special for a fifteen year-old boy had that boy not been Noah. There was a girl at the bible school he attended who was endowed with a particularly fetching smile. That her sweaters stretched to near bursting in the right places was a bonus, but one that did not drive the primary engine of Noah's desire. Her name was Nancy. For the daughter of a fundamentalist nut, she seemed almost normal. It was this last quality that most attracted Noah and most informed his dreams of their eventual coupling. They would send their offspring to public schools, let them read

Harry Potter and Stephen King. There would be birthday parties at Chucky Cheese's and they would invite Democrats and maybe even immigrants with thick foreign accents to dinner. Noah would graduate with an MBA from a respected university in a big city. Nancy would receive a PHD in Veterinary Forensic Pathology, as was her ambition. They would travel extensively, and as a family they would cope with daycare and mixed-race dating and sex education. It would, in other words, be an existence on the level of something approaching bliss.

But there in the background of his dreams, Noah's reality gnawed away at his simple ambitions. On this night, he saw his parents' heads staring down at him from atop Dayak totem poles in the middle of a jungle swimming in lurid tropical steam. The hideous death grins on their faces curled up into perfect 'O's and set loose a single wavering scream that pierced Noah's ears, ripping through his brain, casting every other thought aside. Nancy went spinning wildly into a gaping abyss ringed with clutching, disembodied talons.

Noah fought to bring himself out of the dream, his vision blurred, his eyelids slick with tears. He wrenched himself up in bed. Soaked through with sweat, the Jesus Head pajamas clung to his flesh like a snakeskin. Noah was coming into full wakefulness, he knew, but the screaming would not stop.

It was Aunt Jo. She was running back and forth through the house, howling and bellowing, raising the alarm. The Rapture had finally come...again. Noah swung his feet to the floor and sat, elbows on knees, forehead planted in the heels of his hands.

The Rapture came once a month in the middle of the night. Rapture drills.

Noah sat waiting for Aunt Jo to start banging on his door.

The door flew open and Aunt Jo stood there bug-eyed, jabbering for him to get a move on. Noah struggled to his feet and pulled his robe on over the pajamas.

She shrieked at him, "This is not a drill!"

That's what she said every month. Noah slipped his feet into his sneakers and staggered sleepily down the hallway and out into the front yard. Henry was already outside, standing in the grass like a popsicle in a bulging wrapper, the sleeping bag zipped from the inside and pulled tight to his chin so as to create the maximum seal. Aunt Jo started up the ladder, muttering something about Noah's chances for immaculate redemption.

"I'll try and put in a good word for you, but don't you hold out too much hope, Noah."

Noah watched her scramble onto the roof where eleven pure white beams—one for each apostle, minus Judas, thrust trillions of photons up and out into space in an eternal speed-of-light race to nowhere.

Aunt Jo called down from the roof, demanding that Noah help Henry up the ladder.

"Just tell him to take off the bag," Noah replied, "He can climb the ladder by himself."

Aunt Jo's face was black against the glare of the spots behind and above her. Her hair, done up in fluffy twin buns that reminded Noah of a pair of molting rabbits, cast a platinum aura a good foot above her head, like a halo under attack by a swarm of tiny silver bees. "Noah!"

she yelled. "Help him! Now! Or I'll make sure you're left behind, mark my words!"

Noah shrugged. "OK," he said. He rolled his eyes so far up into his head that it hurt, then took a hesitant step in Henry's direction.

Henry shot Noah a deadly scowl. "Get away from me, creep."

Noah obeyed. He stepped back and watched Henry wriggle and hop his way over to the ladder. Using his shoulder and the protruding knobs of his elbows for purchase, Henry managed to get himself onto the first rung. Like some great, demented caterpillar having just realized he was late for chrysalis-spinning season, he climbed this way until his chin was level with the rain gutters.

It was then, watching Henry's tortured ascent, that Noah saw something moving in the sky. He could see lights, lights apart from Aunt Jo's RaptureReady lights. The new lights swept back and forth through the ink of the night, and they were coming closer. Three of them. Now four, now five. This was no drill.

Noah's throat dropped into his chest and his heart pulsed upward to fill the gap. He heard himself whispering, "Oh shit oh shit oh shit." Then, much louder, "Oh, fucking Jesus Christ!"

Aunt Jo was busy yanking and pulling and wresting Henry onto the roof while Noah stood transfixed by the approaching lights. She was panting, out of breath. Her breast heaved and she shouted at the sky, "That was the boy talkin', Lord, not me!"

Noah didn't care. He turned on his heels and sprinted across the yard to the dirt road out front. He turned left and leaned into the cadence of his stride, making for the woods. He looked back over his shoulder to see the lights getting closer. In his mind he could hear the thump of rotor blades. Choppers, it had to be. The feds. They must have cracked one of his websites. It would be the end of everything. There would be no Nancy, no dinner parties, no MBA, no kids to raise as just plain normal human beings.

He cut from the road into a field, his chest pounding, a dull ache growing to a screaming pain in his side. Maybe fifty yards ahead he could see the outline of a clump of trees. If he made it he could take cover, rest for a minute, catch his breath and think. He needed to think. His feet padded heavy against the ground and he knew he was tiring. A few more seconds was all he needed. He came up hard and fast on a drainage ditch that ran parallel to the tree line. It was too wide. He would fall into the slime and the mud and get stuck. He would be caught.

He did not stop. He did not hesitate. When he hit the very edge of the ditch he went low, flexing his knees, rolling forward on the balls of his feet. He punched at the air with both arms, grasping at the night for momentum. He felt himself arcing through the air. He braced for the impact, the splash and the suck and the stink. He closed his eyes, and the world went away.

It was taking forever to come to ground. There was a low, rumbling sound, like an earthquake in his head, pounding and thundering. Someone was calling his name.

"Nooooaaahhh! Stoooppp rrruuunnnng!"

He opened his eyes, expecting to see the water rushing up at him and the glare of the

spotlights from the choppers. What he saw instead was a very large man, at least twenty feet tall, sitting in a huge marble chair. A throne. Smaller figures in white robes milled around at the foot of the throne, humming to themselves and occasionally taking flight, zipping around in a loop or a barrel roll and landing on their feet. It looked like fun.

"God?" Noah asked, confused. His thoughts raced to the welcome conclusion that he was still dreaming, that the drill had never happened.

"Yes, Noah," God said. "And no, you're awake."

The voice was polite, almost jovial now, the thunderous booming having faded to a more conversational tone.

"What's happening?" Noah asked. "Am I dead?" He remembered from Bible school that you're not supposed to go staring at God if perchance you happen to meet him. He looked down at his feet. The view was just like in one of Aunt Jo's crazy paintings of heaven. Noah was standing on the thinnest wisp of a cloud. Beneath the cloud it was still night and he could make out the halogen lights on the roof of his aunt's house. He looked up and saw that the sky above was a radiant kind of deep aquamarine, shot through with rainbows and glittering dust that fell from no discernable source.

"You're not dead," God said.

"Can I look?" Noah said.

"All you like," God replied.

Noah was a little surprised that he didn't have to shield his eyes from the light. He had a good, long look at God. Noah had expected something more like that old gun nut who played God in the Moses movie Aunt Jo watched all the time. Or maybe something like George Burns in the *Oh God* flicks. But the God Noah was looking at looked a lot more like George Clooney in *Oh Brother Where Art Thou* than George Burns.

God smiled. It was a friendly, laid back kind of smile. He shrugged and said, "I could be Halle Berry if you prefer."

"No, that's OK," Noah assured Him. He didn't think it was a good idea to be popping a stiffie in his PJs when talking to God.

Noah asked, "Why? Why me?" He pointed down between his feet at Aunt Jo's light show. "Why not her?"

"Because, Noah," God said, "In all of your misguided scheming and all of your misery in that household, you never once denied me. You asked if I played dice with the Universe. You used my name, fraudulently, I might add, to get one up on your aunt and her son and a few others, but you never once denied me. And you didn't let anyone do your thinking for you. You let me be me, whoever I turned out to be. I like that."

God's right hand was cupped, the enormous palm up. Noah cocked his head to the side, staring at the gargantuan appendage, expecting the click and clack of a couple of dotted cubes.

"No," God said. He opened his hand. It was empty. He shook his huge head. "I do not play dice with the universe, Noah. I have Mr. Einstein to play with."

He laughed again and the whole place began to shake. It would have been frightening, but the effect was muted by Noah's own growing sense of belonging.

Noah looked down at his feet once more. The cloud had dissipated and he was standing in the clear nothing of the night air. Below him, Henry's sleeping bag had caught fire from the heat of the landing lights and Aunt Jo was rushing to the edge of the roof and clamoring down the ladder.

"She's going for the hose, to put him out," God said.

"Christ," said Noah. "With all the power running through those lights, she'll fry the both of them." An image of the hapless demon-bats crossed his mind.

"Yes," said God, "She will. It will not be a pretty sight."

Noah looked away. After an appropriate period of mourning, he said, "Speaking of sites, you need someone to host your Web presence?"

God looked down from his throne, chuckling, His mammoth eyes aglow. "We're going to need a whole new infrastructure, my friend."

"Armageddon?"

"You bet, Noah, now let's us get to work."

Flash Non-Fiction
It's Non-Fictalicious!
by
Alison Burke

Anyone from the South can tell you that we have a locally produced drug that is more highly addictive and intoxicating than heroine. Not long after crossing the Mason-Dixon (with much care, lest you skillfully play the banjo as I) you may notice the heavenly wafting scent of rich southern culture, or more notably, the KRISPY KREME doughnut. Better known as *the* doughnut. This calorie-packed, gastronomic delight will eventually lead you to hyper-obesity, diabetes and subsequently early death—but the proverbial salivary orgasm it induces is well-worth the medical side-dishes with which it's served. So the next time you sit down to enjoy your pre-packaged snack cake doughnuts by some curly-haired, blond northern whore (that's right Miss Sunbeam, I am talking to you!) I hope you hear a banjo-jug ensemble mocking you.

Lundy Man
by
Jay Wexler

My name is Jackson Dunbar.

My revelation came in the summer of my twenty-first year, in the living room of a rundown apartment in Cleveland where I was living with several housemates, some of whom were my friends. One of my housemates was a man I will call Rudolph. Rudolph wore his hair slicked back with Vaseline or some other oily ointment. He was friendly and had dynamite vision. He could read signs from very, very far away. Farther away than any of the rest of us. He had the best vision of anybody in the house that summer, without any doubt.

I was lying on the living room rug, basking in the late afternoon sunshine that was beaming through the front window. Rudolph was sitting on the couch reading a magazine. I do not remember what magazine he was reading. It could have been *Redbook*. Also in the living room were: Diane, Marty, and Castillo. Diane and Castillo were my friends. Marty was not, and for good reason, but it's not really necessary at this point to explain why we were not friends.

"I've made up my mind," Rudolph blurted out, slapping the magazine down against the frayed reddish fabric of the couch. "I'm going to wear my hair just like Jackson this summer. Parted in the middle and long in back. That's what I'm going to do. And nobody can stop me."

Guffaws all around.

"That's so sweet," said Castillo.

"That is so wicked," said Marty, who was from the Boston suburbs.

"Then it is settled," said Rudolph. "Parted in the middle and long in back."

I looked around the room with some confusion. I touched my hair. I realized that I was being made fun of, but I didn't understand why. I had been wearing my hair like this my entire life. Why was I being mocked? I wondered. Why were they laughing at me?

"Are you guys making fun of me?" I asked.

"No, your hair is great," Rudolph said. "It's a great joke that you wear it that way."

"What joke?" I responded. "I'm not trying to make a joke. I've worn my hair this way my entire life."

"You mean you don't do it on purpose? You're not trying to look that that, are you?"

"Oh crap," I said, realizing suddenly that I had been a laughing stock because of my hair for my whole entire life. I knew I was ugly-everyone told me so-but I had no inkling, not until now, that it was because of my hairdo. "You mean this is not a good way to wear hair?"

"Well, look around," said Rudolph. "Do you see anyone else with their hair parted in the middle and long in back?"

"No."

"Do you see how everybody has their hair parted on one side and short in the back?"

"Yes."

"Then do you now understand that you wear your hair in a ridiculous manner, which would be OK if you were making a joke but not OK if you are not intending to make a joke?"

"I guess I do."

"Then what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm not sure. I guess I better go right away and get a haircut. A new style."

"I don't know if that will be sufficient."

"Then what should I do?"

"You may just have to pay a visit to Lundy Man, the man who controls all of the hairdos in the Midwest."

"Oh no, not Lundy Man!" I screeched.

"Oh yes," said Rudolph.

I had heard stories of Lundy Man-everybody had-but like with all mythical and obscure figures, the details surrounding his existence and purpose were shadowy at best. According to the rumors, he had been a haircutting prodigy like no other in the history of haircutting. It is said that he performed his first Mohawk at the age of two, his first perm at four-and-a-half. He had graduated from the Cleveland Academy of Haircutting at the age of six with the highest grades in the history of the Academy, and he twice won the haircutting nationals before the age of ten. He opened up a world-wide chain of hair salons when he was eleven, and customers would flock to watch him cut hair in New York, in Paris, in Milan.

Money came in hand over fist, and Lundy Man bought a large house and several Porsches, even though he was not yet old enough to obtain a driver's license or tall enough to see over the dashboard. For several years, Lundy Man enjoyed abundant success-success theretofore unheard of in the field of haircutting. One day, though, Lundy Man suddenly disappeared. Gone, goodbye, poof.

Some say he forgot how to cut hair, got a sex change operation, and now works the boulevards in La Jolla, California. Others say he has been working for the last ten years trying in solitude to develop the perfect hair style. And still others, including Rudolph, believe that he lives in a cave somewhere near Cleveland and from that cave exerts his magical powers to control all of the hairdos in the Midwest. It was Rudolph's theory that I

had to go visit Lundy Man and ask him to help me get a better hairdo. I didn't have any better ideas, so I agreed to go. Rudolph provided me with a map of where he believed Lundy Man lived. I packed my bags.

"Are you sure about this, Rudolph?" I asked, on the day of my departure. "Shouldn't I be worried?"

"What is there to worry about?"

"Well, what is there not to worry about?" I responded.

"Good point," said Rudolph, pushing me out the door.

I consulted my map and compass, and although I am not much for orienteering, I was able to find the mouth of Lundy's cave after only a week of excruciatingly painful hiking through bramble bush and other uncomfortable terrain. I suppose the going would have been easier had I worn shoes, but Rudolph told me that the one who truly seeks the one who controls all the hairdos in the Midwest walks without shoes. Also, the night before I left Rudolph took my shoes out of my closet, and hid them, and wouldn't tell me where to find them.

The cave itself was a rocky cave, and also a scary cave. It looked dark inside, and I admit that at first I was afraid to enter the cave. I thought to myself: Why the hell am I going into a cave to seek the one who controls all the hairdos in the Midwest? But then I happened to look at my reflection in a puddle of stagnant water that had collected in a small crevice between the rocks on the outcrops of the cave, and I thought to myself: I look like a jackass! And so I entered the cave.

Although Rudolph had given me the map to find the cave itself, he had provided little helpful information regarding how to find Lundy Man once I entered the cave. For this I was basically on my own, so I looked for clues, but I didn't really know what to look for. I didn't know anything about Lundy Man, like what clothes he wore or what kinds of hobbies he had, so it was hard to know what kinds of clues there might have been on the floor and walls of the cave. I looked anyway, just in case, but I didn't find a thing. Nothing, that is, until I met up with the Noodle Whore.

When first I set eyes on the woman who I would soon learn was the Noodle Whore, I saw a woman like many other women-nice, lovely, with an egg-shaped face and a knee-length dark red wool skirt. To complement the skirt she wore a pink turtleneck and complementary shoes, without bows or ribbons of any kind. In her ears she wore earrings made of a stone that looked like emeralds, except that they were clearly fake, and in her hair she wore a purple flower made of silk that, frankly, clashed with her earrings. In fact, this was the first thought I had when I saw the Noodle Whore, and instinctively I wondered whether she was in the cave to consult with Lundy Man as well, assuming, on a subconscious or preconscious level, of course, that the one who controls all the hairdos in the Midwest might, as an incident to that greater power, have at least some control, however abbreviated, over all of the hair-related accessories in the Midwest as well, or at least in some geographical subset of the Midwest.

I was taken by the Noodle Whore, I would have to admit, but I also knew that it was important to keep hold of my senses. I was in the cave on a mission, and I had to stay

focused on the goal at hand. My hair had made me a laughing stock throughout at least ten Midwestern states. I couldn't let the Noodle Whore divert me from my overwhelmingly important task.

Yet, on the other hand, this fox was hot to trot! She was a real looker, a tall glass of water, with thighs up to here, if you know what I mean, hubba hubba, and I think you do.

"Hello," I said.

"I am the Noodle Whore," she answered, hiking her knee-length red wool skirt up just a notch with both hands to reveal a couple of knobby, yet delicious, kneecaps. "I put out for noodles of all shapes, sizes, and types. If you happen to have a bag of soba, you might just get lucky tonight, big boy."

"Big boy?"

"For a box of ramen, I'll give you a hummer like you wouldn't believe."

"Hold on there one minute," I commanded. Now, I'm no prude. I've had my fill of low class call-girls, hookers, and other sundry ladies of the night, not even counting my Aunt Gloria, but this was just too much to handle all at once. I said: "My name is Jackson Dunbar, and I have come to this cave in search of Lundy Man, the one who controls all the hairdos in the Midwest, or so they say. What did you say your name was?"

"I am Lundy Man!" she exclaimed, swinging her hands up into the air like a maniac.

"You are?" I asked, astonished that Lundy Man might in fact be a woman, and, for that matter, a woman who had previously referred to herself as the "Noodle Whore."

"No of course not you asshole," she replied, resting her hands back on her shapely hips. "Do I look like a man to you? Now, hand over some udon, and pronto. I'm freaking hungry as shit, and you clearly haven't gotten any in months."

"Hey," I said, my feelings hurt. "How do you know about my recent drought in the sack?"

"Oh, come on. Look at that hairdo. Are you a circus side show freak or what?" Then she hiked up her skirt once more, a little higher this time, so I could see just a little creamy thigh. "Now, you got any Pad Thai?"

We went on like that for a while, too long probably, me trying to figure out who this woman really was, she trying to get me to cough up some long, stringy, doughy substances in return for sexual favors. After a while, though, it became clear to us that we had reached a standstill. I simply had no noodles. Had I possessed any noodles, I explained, I surely would have given them to her, perhaps not even demanding anything more than a light backrub in return. But noodles I did not have, nor was there any possibility of manufacturing any noodles in this clammy cave.

I explained all this to her, but she was unsatisfied. She wanted noodles, and she wasn't going to let up until she got some.

And that's when I came up with my brilliant idea. "Maybe," I said to her, "Lundy Man has some noodles."

Her eyes brightened. "Do you think?"

"I don't see why not," I answered. "I mean, he's got to eat, doesn't he? And if he has to eat, perhaps he eats noodles. And if he eats noodles, then he probably has noodles. Unless he gets his food delivered to him on a daily basis or something, so that he doesn't store any food, in which case he probably wouldn't have any noodles. But that seems unlikely, given that he lives in a cave that most likely isn't served by Peapod or any of the other major food delivery services. And, moreover, even if he doesn't eat noodles, he still might know where we could get some, or perhaps he has a friend who has a bag of noodles, or a box of noodles, or a pouch . . ."

"Oh for god's sake please shut the fuck up already!" interrupted the Noodle Whore. "You're giving me a migraine." Then she took my hand in hers, and we headed off all pie in the sky to find the man they called Lundy Man.

We walked for what felt like hours, hand in hand, skipping and humming and occasionally talking about what it means to "be alive," but we had come no closer, it seemed, to finding Lundy Man. At the Noodle Whore's insistence, we sat down on a smooth, broad rock to take a break.

"NOW GIVE ME SOME NOODLES!" she suddenly screeched, pinching my nose tightly between her fingers and twisting.

"I hab do doodles," I muttered.

Well, it took us a couple of days, during which we almost met our death several times, but we finally found Lundy Man. Funny thing, though, he didn't really seem like any kind of prodigy. In fact, he seemed kind of like a halfwit. When we found him, he was wandering around a claustrophobic, unlit chamber talking to himself about crustaceans.

"My favorite crustacean is the Spiny Pacific Lobster. No, no, that's not right. My favorite crustacean is the North American Anemone Crab. Well, that is also not quite accurate. In fact, my favorite crustacean is the Caribbean Rock Boring Sea Urchin, which isn't even a crustacean at all."

"Excuse me, sir," I interrupted. "Are you the man they call Lundy Man?" I asked this out of politeness only. I knew he was Lundy Man. He was wearing a pair of greasy mechanic's overalls with a badge on it that said "Lundy Man" in ornate red embroidered script.

"Huh? What? Who? What the crap?" Lundy Man sputtered, spinning around in place and putting his hands on top of his head to keep his balance. Lundy Man was a small man, with kind of a plump, gerbil-like face and fat little hands that looked like blocks of pork tenderloin.

"Hello there. Are you Lundy Man?" I repeated.

"Yeah, who wants to know?" Lundy Man barked, clearly irritated by the interruption.

"I am Jackson Dunbar," I answered. "And this is my friend the Noodle Whore."

"I put out for noodles," added the Noodle Whore.

Lundy Man looked at us quizzically. He took his meaty little hands down from his head and let them rest at his sides. Then he brought his hands up and placed them back on his head. Then he spun around two times.

"And what do you want?" he grunted.

I had prepared my speech for this moment long ago. "Well, as I said, my name is Jackson Dunbar, and I have a terrible hairdo. As you can see from my head, I have a butthead style hairdo that is parted decisively in the middle of my head. Moreover, my hair in the back is long instead of short, as is the prevailing fashion. I have been told that you have the power to control all the hairdos in the Midwest, and so I have come on a pilgrimage all the way from Cleveland, Ohio, barefoot through this dangerous underground cave filled with bats, to seek your expert counsel on how I might go about fixing my awful do."

"And I want some noodles," added the Noodle Whore.

Lundy Man seemed unimpressed, even a little angry, and for a second there I thought he was going to lurch forward and bite me. But then suddenly his frown turned upside down, as they say, and his eyes lit up with some sort of pleasurable notion. Transformed, Lundy Man said, "Perhaps there is something you can help me with."

"Oh, sure," I said, "if we can help you with something in return for helping us with our problems, we would be happy to be of assistance."

Lundy Man nodded his head vigorously in approval, which was a little weird because his hands were still atop his head. "I've been looking for my 1976 Kansas City Royals team picture now for months," he said. "You know, the one with George Brett and Freddy Patek on it? Anyway, I had it, but now I can't seem to find it anywhere in here. Do you think you two could help me locate this team picture?"

Well, me and the Noodle Whore agreed that this request was pretty fucked up, but what could we do? We had tramped through this hellish cave for days to find this funny little creature, and now that we had him, we figured we could go along with this quirky little game, at least for a little while, if it would help us achieve our ultimate objectives.

"Yeah, uhh, sure, we could help," the near-starving Noodle Whore answered. "But once we're done, you'll help us with our problems, right?"

Lundy Man squinted at us. "Your problems? What problems? Oh, yeah, your problems. Umm, yeah, sure, right, whatever. Your problems. Spiny Lobster!" he exclaimed. "Now lets get started looking for this 1976 team picture, shall we?"

Lundy Man led us into a nearby room in which he thought we might find the 1976 Kansas City Royals team picture. The room was even more claustrophobia-inducing in its tiny-ness than the first room. Its low roof sat only inches from the top of my head, and its rocky floor sprouted either stalactites or stalagmites like dandelions on an untended suburban lawn. The room was ridiculously cluttered with just about anything you could imagine- papers, telephones, old squashes, paper bags, Bunsen Burners, riboflavin tablets, French poetry anthologies, diamonds, marbles, statues of Eliot Gould, stuffed marsupials of all

kinds-you name it, you could find it in this room. Walking was nearly impossible; the smell was overpowering. The Noodle Whore and I looked at each other in disbelief. Was Lundy Man really serious about this endeavor?

"Are you serious about this endeavor?" asked the Noodle Whore of Lundy Man, who had shuffled ahead of us into the room and plunged head first into a pile of stuffed kangaroos.

Lundy Man swiveled on his ballet slipper clad feet and glared in the Noodle Whore's direction. "Do I look like I'm joking?" he asked. "Now if you could get to work, I might be able to catch a shower before daybreak." And with this curious thought, Lundy Man turned back to the pile of stuffed animals and resumed his energetic search for the elusive team picture.

For the Noodle Whore, this was an inadequate explanation. "OK, this is bullshit," she said, pulling a very large gun out of the waistband of her skirt and pointing it at the odd little man with the meaty hands. "We're going to the supermarket for some noodles, Buster, and pronto."

Lundy Man turned back to face us. He was surprised I think by the sight of the gun pointing at his head, but not really angry or scared in any way. "Can I get my jacket?" he asked.

Four hours later the three of us were at the entrance of a Safeway Supermarket on the outskirts of Cleveland. The Safeway had been quite a way from the cave, but luckily one of Lundy Man's Porsches still worked, and so with a little lead-footed driving on Lundy Man's part we had made the drive in exceptionally good time. Together we got out of the car and approached the automatic door to the supermarket. The Noodle Whore continued to brandish the gun to make it clear that Lundy Man was under her control. What the hell I was still doing there I had no idea. But I have to say that during the trip, probably somewhere about halfway during our tripartite rendition of "A Thousand Bottles of Beer on the Wall," I realized that I was falling in love with the sweet, sweet Noodle Whore.

"Should I get us a cart?" I asked.

"There's no time," said the Noodle Whore. She poked the gun into Lundy Man's back and forced him through the door. "OK, Lundy Man, you have a choice. Since you've got the money, and I have no money, you can either give me the money so I can buy six boxes of assorted noodles, or else you can buy the noodles and then give them to me in return for sex. So, what's it gonna be?"

Lundy Man appeared confused. What kind of choice is this, his face seemed to ask. "Umm, I guess I'll take the sex?" he said.

"Good. Fine. The noodles are in aisle five. Get me a variety, and be quick about it," the Noodle Whore said. "I'll be in aisle three, looking for appropriate sauces."

Lundy Man and I made our way to aisle five and headed in search of six boxes of assorted noodles. When we arrived there, I asked him again about my hair. "Umm, hey, Lundy Man, do you think that after this whole noodle thing is over, you could maybe fix up my hairdo? It's really bothering me and keeping me back socially and such."

Lundy Man fixed his gaze upon my head, looking seriously at my butthead do for the first time, studying it intently like a first year med student trying to diagnose his first cadaver. "Yeah, you look really fucking stupid," he finally said.

This I already knew. "Do you think you could do something?" I asked. "Anything at all?"

"Well, I'd need a turnip and a rutabaga for the spell I would use," he answered, "but if you can find those items somewhere in this supermarket, I'd be happy to help you out."

A spell. So that's how he did it. "I'll meet you at the register," I squawked, shooting off in search of the tuber aisle before he could finish the sentence.

A rutabaga in my left hand, a turnip in my right, I met up with the Noodle Whore and Lundy Man at the express register at the front of the store. I handed my rutabaga and my turnip to Lundy Man. "Will these do?" I asked.

Lundy Man looked over the rutabaga and the turnip. He appeared pleased. "These are terrific tubers," he said. "They will do just fine."

Three hours later we were back in the cave. I had offered to put everyone up in my apartment, but the other two weren't so keen on the idea after I told them I couldn't guarantee that Marty, who I don't like for reasons that are not presently important, wouldn't be in the living room playing his stupid Nintendo until two in the morning or shooting off bottle rockets while sitting on the toilet, or otherwise acting like a total fuckup.

"Well," said the Noodle Whore, taking off her turtleneck. "I guess it's time to exchange noodles for sex."

"Marvelous," said Lundy Man. "Shall I put on my bathrobe?"

It was at this moment that I first realized how uncomfortable I felt with the idea of Lundy Man having sexual intercourse with the Noodle Whore. I guess my unease had been in the back of my mind the entire time, but now the image of an engorged Lundy Man in a terry cloth bathrobe had brought my feelings to the forefront. "Hey, guys," I said, as Lundy Man removed his ballet slippers. "I'm not really comfortable with this arrangement. I don't want you two to have sexual intercourse."

"What?" exclaimed the Noodle Whore. "Why not?"

"Hey," squeaked Lundy Man, lowering his overalls, "do you guys like my boxer shorts? They're genuine broadcloth, which I purchased through the J. Crew catalog!"

"Because I think I love you," I said to the Noodle Whore.

"I got them two for one, as part of a President's Day sale back in 1998," added Lundy Man.

"Do you feel the same way about me?" I asked the Noodle Whore.

"Oh, Jackson," she sighed, touching me gently on the shoulder. "I care about you very much. You know that. You're warm, and generous, and kind. You are so smart, and you

have such a great sense of humor. But as things stand now, we can never be together as anything more than friends, I'm afraid."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Well, come on," she said. "Just look at yourself! You're ugly as hell. Have you looked at your hair in the mirror lately? That butthead! Jesus Christ! I'm sorry, but I could never be physically attracted to somebody as scary looking as you. It's like you came out of a monster movie or something. Are you kidding me?"

This hurt. I mean, it's not like I hadn't heard the "out of a monster movie" speech a thousand times before, but this was so much worse. Lost love, and all because of a hair style. But what could I do? I couldn't stand the idea of Lundy Man defiling the woman I loved, even if she despised the way I looked. "Well, I don't care," I said, raising my voice several decibels. "You two are not having sex. Lundy Man, you just hand over those noodles and forget about having intercourse with the Noodle Whore." I stepped in between the two of them and tried to strike a threatening pose to make it clear to Lundy Man that I wasn't going to let this travesty take place.

Lundy Man cackled. "Get out my way, ugly boy," he said, pushing his way forward.

"I'm serious, Lundy Man!" I replied, placing my hands on his naked shoulders and pressing him back.

"Hey, hands off the shoulders, you monster," he said, poking me in the belly. "Look, here's the deal. You can stop me from having sex with the Noodle Whore if you want, but then I'm not going to fix your hairdo. Do you want to spend the rest of your life looking like Godzilla, or would you prefer to look like a normal human being? Perhaps after the spell has taken care of your do, the Noodle Whore might even be attracted to you, and you can live happily ever after. So, what do you think?"

And thus Lundy Man had posed the ultimate dilemma. I could either stop Lundy Man from having sex with the Noodle Whore, in which case I would remain ugly for the rest of my life, or I could let the disgusting little troll have his way with the Noodle Whore in hopes that he would then turn me into a normal looking man that might ultimately have a chance with the Noodle Whore. What to do? The vision of Lundy Man's squirming little body on top of the Noodle Whore sickened me horribly, but even worse was the idea of never having her myself. The dilemma was really no dilemma at all.

I backed up. "Fine. Have sex with the Noodle Whore, see what I care."

"All right!" exclaimed Lundy Man, lowering his shorts and waving his penis around like an American flag at a Fourth of July parade. "It's Lundy Man time!"

Well, that all happened a long time ago, and you might be able to guess what happened next. I got my better hairdo, that's true, and it's served me pretty well all these years. For example, people don't say "oh shit look at that!" when they first meet me any more. And it's true that the Noodle Whore did think I looked better after Lundy Man cast his spell over me. But I wasn't able to capture her heart. Why? Because Lundy Man had captured it first. I should have known it. Turns out he was a prodigy at more things than just hairdos, if you

know what I mean, and I think you do. Apparently he was "Don Juan" and "Ron Jeremy" all rolled up into one. As she put it, she "fell for him upon penetration." How could I compete with that?

So now, I'm a mid-level manager at a paper goods manufacturing company outside Toledo. Life is all right; I have pretty good organizational skills and a decent understanding of employee benefit issues, so I'm not too worried about getting laid off as a result of the recent economic downturn. The Noodle Whore and I exchange an email from time to time, and of course I can keep track of Lundy Man's successes just by watching the evening news programs. The Noodle Whore tells me that things aren't all perfect. I guess they are having some problems with the foundation in the heart shaped pool in one of their vacation villas in Italy. But it seems like she's pretty happy all in all. Italy, of course, is lousy with noodles, and I don't think she needs anything much more than that. As I told my third wife the other day when we were driving back from the juvenile facility where our son lives, "if you're someone who yearns for a daily dose of noodles, then the key to life is finding someone magical who can provide those noodles." My wife, bless her heart, had no idea what I was talking about.

We Meet Five People in Basingstoke
by
Joe Zorzi

I sign our name at the bottom, and the first letter is done.

Dear Fat Fucker,

You may believe us to be impertinent but we have spotted you several times now in the vicinity of the Town Centre, and your bulk, your sheer size, your blubber, is beginning to give us nightmares.

It is not your face that offends us, oh no, but your shape. We are dieters, you see, fitness fanatics you may describe us as, we eat very little, very little do we eat.

How did you get quite so big?

Your stench—it also disgusts us, like putrefaction. You also sweat too much, those stains always under your arms, sickly sweat no doubt dripping endlessly from your pores.

It pains us to see a man like this. It truly pains us. But we are, of course, ever reasonable.

You appear to spend a lot of time in the library but we doubt you are a student or even particularly learned in any way. We've seen you reading the Mail with that long wooden stick on it, dunking doughnuts down your fat throat from a Tesco bag under the table.

Anyway, we shall get straight to the point now, we shall reason with you.

If we ever see you in Basingstoke Town Centre again, you shall meet us for the first time, and the last time.

If we have to lay eyes on that fat fucking arse of yours, that blubbery belly, you shall pay for how you have made us feel.

We do hope this is not too unreasonable...

Ours sincerely,

Jack and John

It is strange how we came to choose Basingstoke, Jack and I, but no stranger than the other times. It had been breakfast time, I seem to remember, and our Frosties were nearly finished, our toast already settling into our belly, and we had the urge. The urge we always get when we lose our pills.

We had opened a random page in the A to Z, closed our eyes and stuck out our middle finger. When we opened them, it was resting upon that little mecca for middle class swine—Basingstoke.

Jack decided we must go there at once, and I replied in the affirmative.

I do feel sorry for Jack, and I have to entertain him when he feels the urge, we feel the urge. He was born without his body form, you see, or at least his body form was still born. But his great mind survived and we have shared this beautiful body our whole lives.

We are very close, Jack and I.

Five, Jack had said to me, five in Basingstoke, and I entertained him, got the car keys and we set off for the bourgeois slums.

The first we found that day was a young lady with an unfortunate birthmark on the most part of her face. She was rather ugly in all departments and she offended us within seconds of our initial observance. So we followed her home, as we would do all the others, and copied her address into our notebooks.

Here the letter sits on the left hand side of our right arm.

Dear Ugly Birthmark Bitch,

It is with regret that we have to inform you that you are quite the ugliest woman we have ever had the misfortune to set our eyes upon.

What is that disgusting slurge, that disease, that infects over half of your face?

We have come across you several times, and upon each of these occasions, we have found no alternative but to revert to the nearest gentleman's toilet and empty our stomachs.

Your face makes us positively sick. It pains us. But we are of course reasonable men.

If we ever find your fuck ugly mug anywhere even remotely near the town centre of Basingstoke, then you shall truly pay our price.

Our eyes are always upon you.

With ever true reasonableness,

Jack and John

There are of course three other letters on the table in front of us.

The third is for the homosexual we spotted near HMV. He had a tight pink T-shirt upon his torso displaying the words, Queer and Proud. Fancy flaunting that in our general direction—we are Christians you know, and good ones at that. If God had intended us to do that to each other, he would have gifted us a separate hole. It pained us to even look at him.

The fourth is for the Morris Dancer who harangued us for money by the Baked Potato stand, his bells, sticks, ridiculous dress offending everything we stand for. Well, there's just no need is there. It perturbed us how this ignoramus could sincerely feel that lolling around in the street like some medieval throwback could possibly be preferable to getting a proper job, putting some graft in. Fool. In short, he pained us.

And the fifth. Well, we shall just have to keep that one to ourselves, hadn't we?

Have you ever been to Basingstoke?

Fall of the Empire? That Would Be in Aisle 37.

by
Kelley Cousineau

Everybody always talks about the evils of the American consumerism and the dangers of its unchecked growth, but nobody ever does anything about it. Self-restraint is for the other guy.

I know this is true because I just came back from CostCo, a temple to the consumer-driven American economy if there ever was one. And I did not overhear anyone saying "Hey, maybe we really don't need that much mayonnaise."

I always approach this place with an odd mixture of nausea and giddiness, like a kid who has eaten all the Halloween candy then finds yet another stash of Snickers. But then the grossness of the place overpowers me and I can't help but think that this is it for the American dream. Manifest Destiny ends right here in front of the inflatable family pool display.

Everyone knows there are dangers in rampant consumerism. And I'm not just talking about leaving CostCo with three hundred dollars worth of multi-pack batteries. That's just a given.

There are more subtle dangers, like:

Ugly Clothing

Oh sure, that sweater looks okay now, but when you try it on at home it will squeeze your body into a Michelin Man Doppelganger. There's something about pea coats that make them look more appealing when they are on a table with seventy-five other identical pea coats, and CostCo knows this. Back at home that lone pea coat will sag like the drunken sailor who should be wearing it.

Embarrassment Overload

People who come in for sixty-four rolls of toilet paper, a gross of condoms and a vat of Preparation H are likely to suffer Embarrassment Overload induced by guffaws and furtive pointing from their fellow shoppers. My friends, if you need that much butt grease it might be time to stop self-medicating and see a doctor.

Death by Adobo

There it is in the tantalizing spice aisle: Adobo. You don't even know what it is, but it sure smells good. The lure of the spice trade has driven great men to do horrible things. Christopher Columbus murdered and enslaved the native populations he encountered on his quest for spices. That was the beginning of the end for his empire, and we never learn from history. The power of Adobo is that strong. Adobo. It just rolls off the tongue, doesn't it? Adobo. Yummy, tasty food. Adobo. It's the sound of bells tolling for all of us.

Spoiled Pets

Those cushy dog beds are irresistible! They make me want to walk around in a circle until some inner gyroscope tells me just the right moment to lie down. That ornate scratching post makes me want to rake my claws in an orgy of back-arching contentment. But it seems obvious that a society can't last for long when spending money on Glucosamine dog biscuits actually seems like a reasonable idea.

Big Brother

Beware those attractive end-of-aisle displays. They change constantly. The choice of merchandise is often weirdly clairvoyant. This week it was globes, of all things. How did they know my kids had trashed our old one? Curse you, Costco voodoo priests! Last time the display featured shiny new Mr. Coffee coffeemakers the very same day my old one broke at home! It's witchcraft, I tell you.

Bait and Switch

You're a whore for the tub of Roquefort dressing and they know it. Once you're hooked they'll take it away, never to re-stock it again. They want you to return over and over, searching in vain. They'll laugh maniacally as they watch you settle for French or even Catalina. They even have their employees trained to answer your pathetic queries with a standard answer: "Oh, yeah, I think that's coming in on the next shipment." Right, that and the freaking Holy Grail.

Hedonistic Temptations

I know there must have been a time when the world lived without those deliciously squishy chenille throw pillows, but it must have been a dark, dark time indeed. It's impossible to not buy at least two. And then you'll spot the Body Pillow.

Vegetable Lasagna

All possible combinations of meats, cheeses and breaded coverings can be found in the Prepared Foods aisle. I'm not too proud to admit I've succumbed to the temptation of easy, delicious meals-in-a-bag from time to time. But I've always made sure to hate myself afterwards.

Twisted Minions

Who are those wizards in that mystical kingdom of Kirkland who can create everything from stretchy jeans to plastic-wrapped cheese tubes? What kind of Metropolis-like factory-complex can possibly be outfitted to produce such eye-popping variety in such biblical proportions? And what is that guy checking receipts by the exit looking for? Will I warrant his mysterious black line this time?

If you can avoid these dangers and walk out of there with nothing but some Dove soap and a bag of apples then you have more willpower than ninety-nine percent of Americans. But you're going to stand out like a sore thumb amongst the rest of the relaxed-fit Dockers-wearing crowd. What kind of freak are you anyway? A Frenchman?

We won't be fiddling when our empire burns. Instead we'll be reading *The DaVinci Code* and the new Nora Roberts that Costco chose for us. We'll grab a fresh pair of tube socks from the new package of ten. For dinner there will be tasteless slabs of farm-raised salmon and a shitload of salad greens. But there won't be any Roquefort. Never, ever again.

The Imbeciles
by
Matt McGuire

Jane loved the Imbeciles. She went to all of their shows on the East Coast, lavishing attention and screams on them, along with her body when she got the chance.

Tonight she was super excited, because the Imbeciles were playing a show at the Klondike, a local bar that had a small dance floor and really good micro brew.

Kate, her roommate, had just scored an eight ball of cocaine for the occasion, and between trips to the bathroom to fix her hair and take toots from the mirror by the sink, Jane was in a flutter to find something cool and sexy to wear.

She rifled through her closet, hurling clothes upon the bed, searching for just the right outfit. Torn jeans, and Uncle Tupelo T-shirt, and a Banana Republic flannel would fit the bill nicely. Her last addition to her wardrobe was her tried and true pair of black Chuck Taylor's.

Dressed and ready for action, Jane and Kate hit the door. They had the feeling of elation that only a few lines of Mid-grade coke and being 21 and single can give a young lady. Kate had opted for something a little more revealing than Jane. She was wearing a Catholic School girl outfit, complete with knee-high white socks, plaid skirt, and pigtails. Jane couldn't help but be slightly envious of Kate. Kate was six feet tall, had lustrous red hair, and a figure to die for. Jane was more of your run of the mill punk rock chick; hair dyed blue, 5'2", and worn out shoes.

Jane put that shit out of her mind tonight though, because tonight was the night that she was going to really turn Christopher Shittoungé's head. Christopher Shittoungé was the lead singer for the Imbeciles, and had never given Jane so much as a sideways glance. Sure, Jane had had sex with Asscrack, the guitarist, and Blowhard, the drummer, but Christopher Shittoungé had always been out of reach.

Jane and Kate reached the door to the venue, and broke out their I.D.'s. It was nice being twenty-one and not having to produce fake identification. Jane had been busted in D.C. at the 9:30 club for not having anything besides a fake college I.D. that had been manufactured poorly by Zack Swanson. Zack was a geeky student at State College that had been in Jane's freshman English class, and lusted for her uncontrollably. Jane had gotten Zack high on Thai Stick one night, felt him up, and Zack BELONGED to her thereafter. Now that Jane was twenty-one, she had no use for skinny little zit faced boys like Zack. She was a REAL woman now, and had her sights set much higher.

Jane and Kate entered the Klondike, and immediately went to the bar. Two pints of Guinness, and a stroll through the joint were in order. Kate was really shaking her ass tonight for all the young brutes in the bar, and it was making Jane a bit angry and envious. She couldn't compare to Kate when it came to looks, but she could sure as hell measure up when it came to excitement. Snatching Kate's purse and going to the bathroom, Jane found the baggie of coke hidden in an inner fold, and broke it out. After a long snort, Jane was ready for action. She clumsily put the coke back in the purse and headed for the bar again.

Old posters and bills of bands that had played the Klondike over the years adorned the walls

of the sultry little brew pub. Pavement, Guided by Voices, Sonic Youth, Nirvana, The Germs, Minor Threat, and My Bloody Valentine lined the nicotine stained walls of the Klondike, along with advertisements for Newcastle Brown Ale, Guinness, and the Klondike's specialty, Thirteen Rebel's beer. The Klondike constantly smelled of stale beer and cigarette smoke, but it was the only REAL punk rock joint in town. A few cracked and broken tables and an old foosball machine rounded out the rest of the décor, but all this finery just enhanced the effect that this was the place where Jane was going to win the heart of her idol, Christopher Shittoung.

Jane scanned the crowded bar for signs of the band, and just as she was getting discouraged, the back door opened, and the Imbeciles strolled in. Jane immediately started getting wet with excitement when she saw Christopher dressed in his black leathers, worn cowboy hat, and Corrosion of Conformity t-shirt. Jane slyly sidled up beside Christopher, and said hi. She could taste the bitter gall in her mouth caused by the beer and coke, along with the nervousness of anticipation. Christopher only nodded his eyebrow pierced head at her for a moment and then went straight to the bar. Kate was there, waiting expectantly for Christopher to arrive. Putting an arm around Christopher's neck, she rubbed her nubile breasts against his chiseled pectoral muscles and breathed something in his ear. Jane saw all this transpire, and started turning fifty shades of red. Christopher had his hand on Kate's ass now, and was ordering a Miller High Life from the barkeep. This was too much for Jane, and she hurried outside for a cigarette and a breath of fresh air. Extracting the crumpled pack of Camel Filters from her torn and dirty jeans, she sat down on the curb and lit up.

Several of the patrons of the bar were gathered outside; hippies smoking Marijuana and drinking expensive beer, straight edgers and punks roughhousing and chatting about the upcoming show. Zack Swanson was waiting timidly outside the bar, too afraid to enter and get a beer, when Jane walked out. He could tell that something was upsetting Jane, so he carefully walked up to her and said hi.

Jane said, "Sit down, man, you're making me nervous."

"You looked upset, and I just wanted to know if there was anything that I could do."

"Nada. I'm just fucking pissed at my whore of a roommate, Kate."

"Why? You're so much more beautiful than she is anyway," said Zack.

"Thanks, Zack. You're too kind. What are you doing here tonight? I thought you would be home studying for finals or something."

"Finals aren't for another two months, Jane. Besides, I don't get out enough these days."

"Yeah, whatever" said Jane.

That's when the trouble showed up. The Skins. Neo-fucking-Nazis all geared up in their jackboots and trench coats, and high on Crystal Meth. Jane hated those pricks almost as much as they hated everyone who was slightly different than them. Blade, their leader, strolled arrogantly with his crew up to the front door, a few feet from Jane and Zack, and withdrew his wallet to pay the cover charge. Winslow, the huge black doorman and bouncer was not about to let them pass the threshold of HIS club tonight.

"No dice, Blade. You're not welcome here anymore. Take your Nazi punk ass and your little

fucking cronies and split before I crack your skulls. The last time you were here we had to spend about two thousand dollars remodeling the bar area, and we're not up for that shit anymore."

"Fuck you, Winslow, you fucking Kaffir. We'll see who comes out on top tonight you fucking Blue gum!" Blade angrily gave Winslow the finger and strutted back across the parking lot, followed by his mob of irate and obnoxious underlings. Before he went though, he had to get a stab in at Jane, so he spat a huge honking ball of snot at her and Zack. Jane immediately jumped to her feet and hurled her empty beer bottle at Blade and his posse.

"Sieg heil, BITCH" retorted Blade as he deflected the beer bottle that was speeding towards his closely shaven skull.

"Nazi punks, FUCK OFF" screamed Jane as she started to head back into the bar to get another beer. Zack followed Jane into the bar as well, planning to just ride on her coattails and try and look inconspicuous.

After the sound check, Christopher Shittounge stripped to the waist and started guzzling Miller High Life, spewing it out onto the expectant crowd. Asscrack, the guitarist, was decked out in a Ramones t-shirt, camo shorts, and a Boston Red Sox hat.

He started running through tight ass chord progressions on his Gibson SG and cranked his Marshall Full Stack almost up to full volume. Blowhard, the drummer, stripped to nothing but his birthday suit behind his Tama Rock Stars, and started pounding away like a possessed monkey. Noname, the bass player, was dressed in a raincoat and a g-string, and was flailing away on his Fender Jazz Bass. His playing was so loud that it made the floorboards shake with delight. Jane was up in front, in the soon-to-be mosh pit, screaming obscenities at Christopher with all the ecstasy of a twenty-one year old banshee in heat. Jane started to push her fellow mosh mates from side to side, trying to get the party started right. Out of the jumble of noise "Anarchy in the U.K." began to be decipherable, and they ran through that old cover like a mongoose on crack. Song after song, from covers to creations, the Imbeciles rocked the house. Sated with his beerlust, Christopher started swinging on the rafters and howling like a werewolf. The mosh pit was in full force, and Jane had to be picked up several times by sympathetic hell raisers, only to get knocked down again and kicked around some more. Jane was having an awesome time, and then the Imbeciles lit into a version of "Janie Jones" that would have made the Clash green with envy. This was Jane's favorite number, and screaming with delight, she jumped onstage and started dancing with all her might to the beat. She had never felt this good before, and Christopher seemed to be really digging her to boot.

At the set break, Christopher stumbled up to the bar to order another brew. He was drenched in sweat, and now stripped down to nothing but his tiger striped bikini underwear. He let out vociferous catcalls and loud howls, and grabbed Jane by the arm and kissed her dead on the mouth. Kate, who had been standing by trying to look sexy and uninterested at the same time, walked up to Christopher and said, "Hey baby, you like my little skirt?" When she said this, she immediately flipped up the back of her skirt and gave Christopher a good look at her pretty pink panties. Transfixed by this show of sluttiness, Christopher let go of Jane's arm, and stalked up to Kate, grabbing her breast and ass with both hands. He then began to kiss her neck ravenously, drenching her with his beer scented man smell.

At this point Jane had had all she could stand. The beer and coke (which she was beginning

to come down from), coupled with Kate's obvious disregard for her emotions and the earlier encounter she'd had with the Skinheads made something snap in her. She grabbed Christopher's empty High Life bottle, strode right up to Kate, and smashed it right the fuck over her head. Then she let fly with a right hook and left jab, breaking Kate's nose and sending her sprawling against the wall. Then, Christopher slapped Jane to the ground, leaving a huge purple and red mark on her face, and sending her right contact lens flying through the bar to god knows where. Just then, the front door to the bar flew open and Blade and about twenty skins came crashing in, toting pails of dog shit and flinging the fecal matter everywhere throughout the establishment. General chaos ensued then, and Winslow the bouncer started cracking skinhead skulls with a Louisville Slugger aluminum bat from behind the bar. That's when Jane blacked out.

Jane came to the next morning, lying in bed with a terrific headache, and the shape of a man lying next to her. Rolling him over, she saw that it was indeed Zack Swanson. He was naked from the waist down, and she could tell by the pain in her crotch that they had had sex. Jane cupped her head in her hands, and tried to recall what exactly had happened the night before. She could remember nothing after Christopher Shittounge had slapped her to the ground, and she tried in vain to get her vision to focus enough to look in the mirror that was opposite her bed. She could make out her face and tangled mess of hair, but there all resemblance to her former self ended. The details of her frame were as blurry as her memories of the night before. She was too tired and sick to care though, and Zack did look kind of cute all curled up beside her. What the hell, she asked herself, and she laid back down, snuggled up to Zack, and went back to sleep.

The Naked Moment
by
Mel Cartagena

Ruben kept his distance from the man pacing the width of the jail cell. He looked at the man's back as he stalked away from him, and dropped his gaze when the man turned and walked the opposite way, avoiding eye contact with the bloodstains on his shirt and turquoise blazer. He kept his face to the chipped concrete floor while the man muttered incomprehensible things to himself.

For five minutes it was all he'd done ever since the policeman opened the cell to bring him inside. The man shouted through the bars for his phone call.

"Cool it," the policeman told him as he locked the cell, then walked away with a deliberate slow step. "You'll get your call after I eat." As the policeman went through the narrow hallway he mumbled, "Wife killer."

And that sent the man into a fit of rage. He threw himself at the bars, trying to wedge his head between the cold green steel while shouting obscenities, and Ruben shrank within himself from his end of the bench. The man's hot anger wore off after a minute, and he contented himself with the restless pacing of a caged animal.

The anger simmered to a dull heat inside the man, his pacing slowed down. He began to take in his surroundings, and he recognized his friend.

"Ruben!?" The man said, leaning over to look at him.

"Hi, Douglas," Ruben answered. He raised his eyes to acknowledge Douglas' gray beard and diminishing hairline, the bald pate red with unleashed anger.

"Ruben!" Douglas exclaimed, smiling and coming over with an extended hand toward Ruben. He slid away on the bench, looking at Douglas' hand like it was contagious. Douglas looked at it himself, saw the dried blood on it.

"Oh," he said, as though seeing it for the first time.

"It's not mine," he explained. "It's actually...my, my wife's." His brow clouded over again. "Claudia. You remember her right."

"I met her once," Ruben said. "She was nice."

Douglas nodded to himself. "I guess someone else thought that too. I caught her in bed with another man."

Ruben raised his eyebrows, but offered nothing more.

Douglas nodded again. "She was screaming like someone was beating her." He sat down on the bench a short distance away from Ruben. After staring into space for a moment he covered his face with his hands. "She never screamed like that with me," he said; it came out smothered. He stayed in that position and started weeping. "And the guy, I didn't see

him, but I know he didn't get a chance to grab his clothes. He jumped out the window naked and bolted down the street." He took a few moments to cry.

Ruben looked at him with pity.

"And she, she wouldn't even feel shame, or apologize, or even try to explain!" he roared through his hands.

Ruben hesitated a few moments before putting a hand on Douglas's shoulder.

"God damn it! God damn her." He cried a little more.

From the other cells came hoots and catcalls that went ignored. "I tried to reason with her. She said the time for that was past, that all she had left for me was pity."

Douglas looked up again. Ruben could almost see the scene replayed in Douglas' hazel eyes. "Well, I showed her. I picked up a hammer and I showed her. I made her scream like she was screaming with that, that bastard!"

"I'm really sorry Doug," Ruben said, awkwardly patting Douglas on the shoulder.

Douglas nodded again.

From another cell a prisoner said, "You got yourself a new girlfriend. Reach under the skirt and cop a feel."

Douglas and Ruben ignored him. After a few moments Douglas gained enough composure to talk. "What about you Ruben? Where you've been all this time."

"Oh, visiting friends and family, working. The usual," Ruben said.

"And what's with you in this place?" Douglas asked as he looked at Ruben's face. It was fuller than he remembered, but still possessing features that were pleasant to the eye, still appealing to women, as Douglas remembered. "You were always an easygoing guy. You're the last man I ever thought I'd run into here."

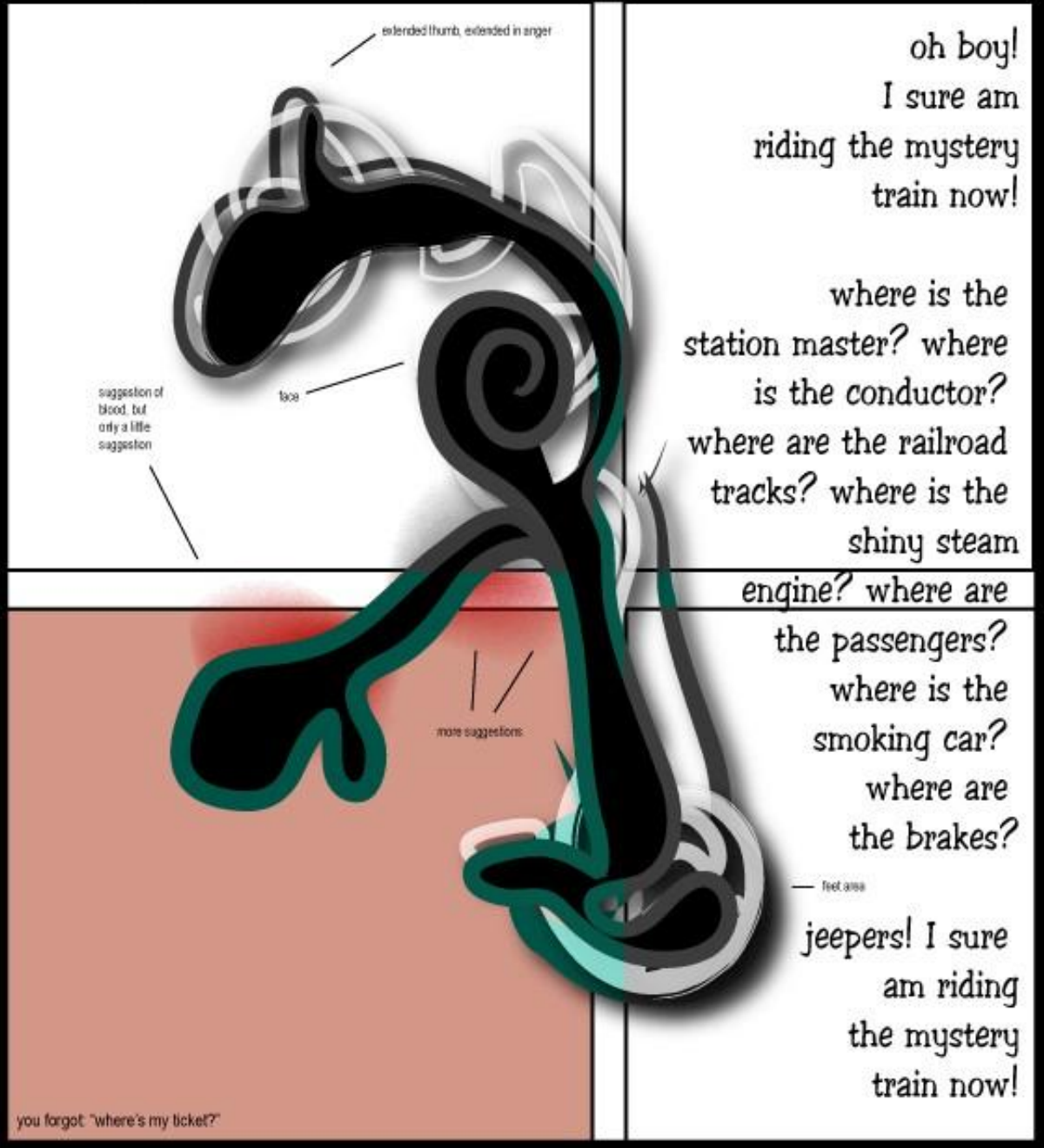
Douglas thought about that for a moment. "Not that I frequent this place." He shifted his position, turning toward Ruben with interest.

"What did they bring in you here in for?"

"Running naked on the street," Ruben said.

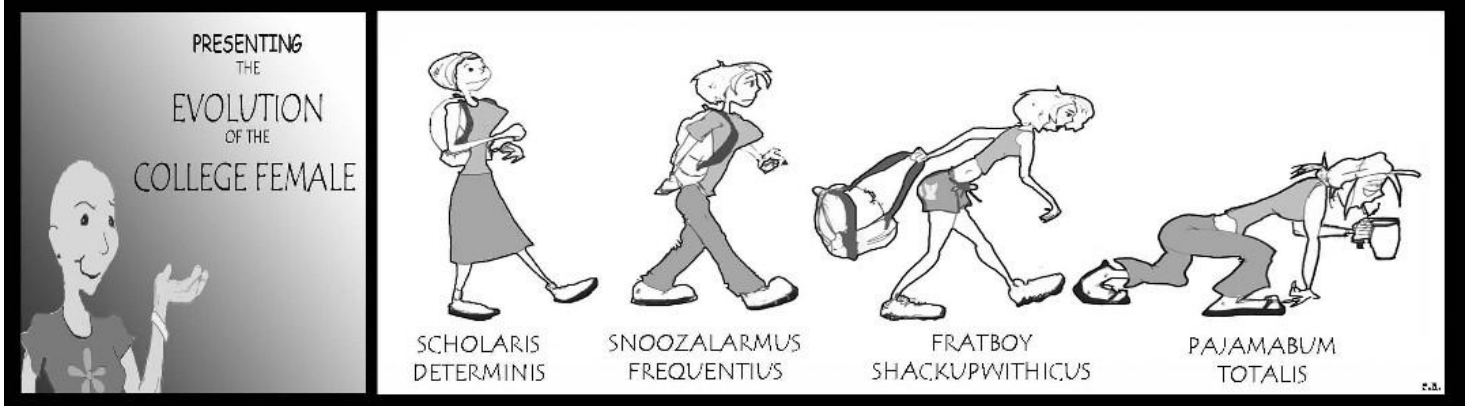
Crispy's Freaks! But Is It Love?
by
Ricky Garni

Crispy **Freaks!** But is it Love?



The Evolution of the College Female

by
Scooter Rex



Contributor Biographies

Curtis Honeycutt is a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma where he studies the backs of his eyelids. He enjoys writing poems that aren't confusing—ones that don't require the use of a dictionary, thesaurus, and a road atlas to decipher. Above all, Curtis likes to breathe, and makes a point to do so as much as possible.

David Choate was the first socially promoted PhD in history. After finally being forced into the marketplace in his mid-forties, he taught mathematics for an interval before turning, once and for all, to petty crime, a vocation for which teaching had prepared him adequately. And, if the full truth is told, Choate has even lived, from time to time, off the immoral earnings of women. But such disgraceful episodes have been rare by necessity since he rarely lingers in one place for more than a few months. He literally lives from hand to mouth now and is almost constantly on the move—tormented wherever he goes by disgruntled alumni.

Amanda DeSimone is shooting a reality show for The Family Channel called "Digging Up DeSimone." The show follows DeSimone, a plastic surgeon, a casket customizer and a pseudo celebrity as they gallivant about Queens in a Cadillac Escalade/Bulldozer hybrid. Each week, the team must evaluate the graves of DeSimone's many dead relatives and choose the one they feel probably accommodates the most unsightly remains. Once the gravesite is excavated, the transformation begins: The plastic surgeon gives the corpse an extreme, eternal makeover, the casket customizer pimps the lucky cadaver's coffin and the pseudo celebrity entertains onlookers with a dramatic reading.

There is little in life that tickles **David Dumitru's** fancy more than to sit in His basement, writing about Himself in the third person. He likes to capitalize the 'H' when He types He, His, Himself, etc, as He is entirely convinced of His own metaphysical ascendancy. He lived for five years in Australia, a notoriously atheistic society, and found it somewhat wanting, as they lacked any real cultural experience regarding forms of worship appropriate to His standing. He is currently working on a number of truly amazing literary masterpieces.

Alison Burke calls herself a Galilean/Newtonian Ball-Kicker and enjoys the company of attractive Persian men.

Jay Wexler is an assistant treasurer in the Richmond office of the Daughters of the Revolution and in his spare time plays defensive tackle for the Philadelphia Eagles. He has a website detailing all this and more at www.jaywex.com.

Joe Zorzi lives in a ramshackle bedsit in Peckham, London where he occasionally puts up members of his visiting fanbase. Judy Garland, John Travolta and Desmond Tutu have been known to frequent, although only exchange for burning up a black pudding breakfast. Joe was born on the Isles of Scilly, where he practised chiropody and learned his hijinx as a circus tumbler. He has three aadvarks and a dog called Mau-Mau.

Kelley Cunningham Cousineau is an artist, children's book illustrator, writer and mother of three devastatingly handsome sons. Her humorous essays regularly appear in *The Funny Times*, *BrainChild* and *Mamalicious* magazines, as well as online at *The Imperfect Parent*, *EdgeCurve* and here on *Defenestration*. She's devoted to her boys but she's not above stealing their best Halloween candy and saving it for herself. She lives with her very patient

husband Ed, her boys and her candy corn stash in Maplewood, NJ. Drop her a line at kelleyc@comcast.net and tell her you have a lucrative writing assignment for her.

Kelley also has a new column on *The Imperfect Parent* webzine called "What's The Matter With Mommy?" The website is www.imperfectparent.com.

Matt McGuire says: "My name is Matt McGuire. I am from a long line of Irish drunkards, but I live in Boone, North Carolina. I can do everything from field-strip an AK-47 blindfolded to tile a kitchen floor. In my spare time I breed midgets in my basement and plot the downfall of the human race. My favorite authors are Ernest Hemingway, Sir Edward Gibbon, and Dr. Seuss. I live alone in a sixty-year old farmhouse with my thirteen cats and my automatic weapons."

Mel Cartenega says: "My short fiction, essays and film columns have been published in a number of magazines in the United States, England, Australia and Canada. I split my time between Boston, Massachusetts and the Eastern Coast of Florida. I am of Hispanic origin, single, and attractive (and I like girls too.)"

Ricky Garni has devoted many years to the illustrated biographical study of the enigmatic early 20th century Andalusian symbolist poet CRISPY FLOTILLA. A work in progress, Mr. Garni now struggles to capture in prose the painful later years of Mr. Flotilla when, broken and penniless, the brilliant poet spent his last days living in obscurity with a cocktail waitress known only as Captain Bob.

Scooter Rex has a name which, in Latin, means "King of Scooters." Interesting...