



the unreligious,
nonfamily-oriented
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Happy 10 Year Anniversary

children churches & daddies

the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine

cover art images by Cheryl townsend

News, AIDSwatch, Eye on the Sky, HEMPwatch, Prose, Poetry, Performance Art, Philosophy
volume 130 • June 21 2003 • the Summer Solstice Issue • Happy 10 year Anniversary



artwork by
Cheryl Townsend



the boss lady's editorial

About the Aurora Borealis

When visiting the last of the 50 United States, Kuypers made a daily habit of going to sleep immediately after dinner in Alaska to wake up near midnight. Janet & John went outside with camera equipment to photograph the Aurora Borealis. Using 800 & 1600 ASA color film with a tripod, their exposure times ranged from 10 to 30 seconds to capture the Northern Lights on film.

But they agree that film does not do it justice, because you cannot catch on film the apparently random motion of lights as they literally dance across the sky. The camera cannot effectively catch the Aurora Borealis starting at the horizon and moving almost completely to the opposite side of the horizon. When we watched it, you could even lean on the car on an empty rural road, and turn your head to try to guess where the lights will move next.

This is what happens on nights where gases react to the electromagnetic fields at certain temperatures and certain heights in the sky. It is hard to capture the streaking the lights produce because gases only

react at certain parts of the atmosphere at a given moment. You can try to catch the color changes (if they stay in the sky long enough to be caught on film), and sometimes you are lucky enough to be able to catch the Northern Lights dancing in front of constellations in the sky.

Someone told us on a Tuesday night in Fairbanks Alaska that they tell their family that they'll move back to the lower 48 when they get tired of seeing the Aurora Borealis. But people don't tired of trying to listen to the sometimes-perceived, never-recorded sounds these electric charges seem to make in the sky.

There's a scientific explanation for the existence of these lights, but most don't care, because people are captured by the effects of these lights in the sky.



janet kuypers
managing editor

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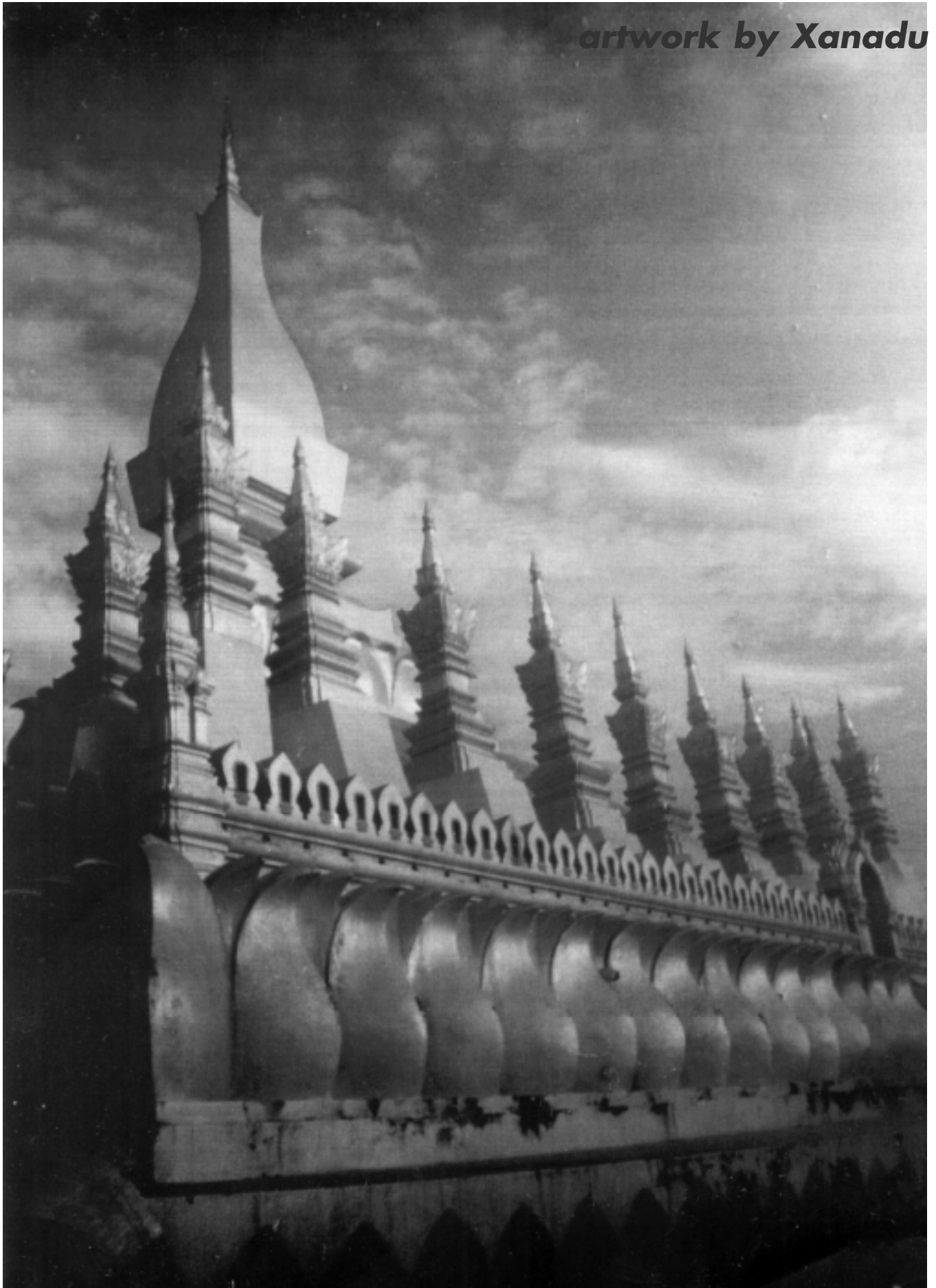
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artwork by Xanadu



news you can use
news that's good for you
+ news with a military, wartime twist

VEGETARIAN EUROPE

300 PLACES TO EAT IN EUROPE'S TOP TRAVEL DESTI - NATIONS

Traveling to Europe and want to eat meatless meals? Play it safe by taking a copy of *Vegetarian Europe* by Alex Bourke.

European vacations are a cinch with this new guide to vegetarian eateries. Detailed descriptions include vegetarian and vegan dishes and desserts, plus prices and openings hours, for a hassle free time in 23 countries.

In Poland, try Bar Vega in Krakow. They have a live pianist on Sundays, and offer soya kebabs, freshly made juices, and the best pierogi!

Want to hold hands in Paris? Visit Piccolo Teatro, a long established vegetarian restaurant, popular with couples, as they have candles on the tables. However, it's quite a small place, so you won't get any further than holding hands. They carry tempeh and miso dishes, salads, and more.

Need to waltz over to Austria? Try Rupp's and party. This vegetarian pub with 262 whiskeys is run by a vegetarian, in a working class neighborhood with a great pub atmosphere. Choose from chili without carne, goulash, or soya schnitzel. You can also visit Café Teitelbaum, a modern kosher café next to a gallery, with lots of papers to read. There's also loads of bagels and strudel. The veg curry and rice with a crusty bread and mango chutney are vegan.

Stopping in London? Don't make any cows mad. Visit CTJ Organic Restaurant. The food is mainly Chinese and Thai, with some Japanese. Or try Beatroot restaurant and choose from a combination of 16 hot specials. Sample vegan chocolate dream cake with vegan custard and vegan tofu cheesecake.

If you hike over to Switzerland, visit Hiltl in Zurich. According to the Guinness Book of Records, this is the oldest vegetarian restaurant in Europe. There are many Indian, continental, and Far Eastern specialties. If just thirsty, there are oodles of wines, some organic.

Vegetarian Europe is full of fun personal notes, such as Alex Bourke's comments about "April in Paris." When I first moved to Paris I thought I'd arrived in Vegan Hell. Surely, I figured, *les Misérables* must be a play about vegans in Paris starving to death. But after two years in the French capital I discovered to my delight that I could not have been more wrong. Paris, as well as being the most romantic and exciting city in Europe is full of fantastic places to eat, mostly hidden away in the cobbled sidestreets. So let's venture beyond baguettes and berets into the treasures of vegan Paris...

The Vegetarian Resource Group is a non-profit organization which educates the community about vegetarianism. It publishes *Vegetarian Journal*, *Vegetarian Journal's Foodservice Update*, and other materials. A one year subscription to both *Vegetarian Journal* and *Foodservice Update* is \$30. Call (410) 366-VEGE (8343) for more information or to join over the phone with a Visa or MasterCard, or visit the website to become a member online at www.vrg.org.

Vegetarians do not eat meat, fish, or fowl. Vegans do not eat meat, fish, or fowl, and do not use other animal products such as dairy or eggs. For information about vegetarianism or veganism, send a self addressed stamped envelope with two first class stamps to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203. Visit their web site at www.vrg.org.

Veganism in a Nutshell

What is a Vegan?

Vegetarians do not eat meat, fish, or poultry. Vegans, in addition to being vegetarian, do not use other animal products and by-products such as eggs, dairy products, honey, leather, fur, silk, wool, cosmetics, and soaps derived from animal products.

Why Veganism?

People choose to be vegan for health, environmental, and/or ethical reasons. For example, some vegans feel that one promotes the meat industry by consuming eggs and dairy products. That is, once dairy cows or egg-laying chickens are too old to be productive, they are often sold as meat; and since male calves do not produce milk, they usually are raised for veal or other products. Some people avoid these items because of conditions associated with their production.

Many vegans choose this lifestyle to promote a more humane and caring world. They know they are not perfect, but believe they have a responsibility to try to do their best, while not being judgmental of others.

Vegan Nutrition

The key to a nutritionally sound vegan diet is variety. A healthy and varied vegan diet includes fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, whole grain products, nuts, seeds, and legumes.

Protein

It is very easy for a vegan diet to meet the recommendations for protein as long as calorie intake is adequate. Strict protein planning or combining is not necessary. The key is to eat a varied diet.

Almost all foods except for alcohol, sugar, and fats are good sources of protein. Vegan sources include: potatoes, whole wheat bread, rice, broccoli, spinach, almonds, peas, chickpeas, peanut butter, tofu, soy milk, lentils, kale...

For example, if part of a day's menu included the following foods, you would meet the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein for an adult male: 1 cup oatmeal, 1 cup soy milk, 2 slices whole wheat bread, 1 bagel, 2 Tablespoons peanut butter, 1 cup vegetarian baked beans, 5 ounces tofu, 2 Tablespoons of almonds, 1 cup broccoli, and 1 cup brown rice.

Fat

Vegan diets are free of cholesterol and are generally low in fat. Thus eating a vegan diet makes it easy to conform to recommendations given to reduce the risk of major chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. High-fat foods, which should be used sparingly, include oils, margarine, nuts, nut butters, seed butters, avocado, and coconut.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is not found in the vegan diet but can be made by humans following exposure to sunlight. At least ten to fifteen minutes of summer sun on hands and face two to three times a week is recommended for adults so that vitamin D production can occur.

Calcium

Calcium, needed for strong bones, is found in dark green vegetables, tofu processed with calcium sulfate, and many other foods commonly eaten by vegans. Calcium requirements for those on lower protein, plant-based protein diets may be somewhat lower than requirements for those eating a higher protein, flesh-based diet. However, it is important for vegans to eat foods high in calcium and/or use a vegan calcium supplement every day.

Zinc

Vegan diets can provide zinc at levels close to or even higher than the RDA. Zinc is found in grains, legumes, and nuts.

Iron

Dried beans and dark green vegetables are especially good sources of iron, better on a per calorie basis than meat. Iron absorption is increased markedly by eating foods containing vitamin C along with foods containing iron.

continued

Sources of Iron

Soybeans, lentils, blackstrap molasses, kidney beans, chickpeas, black-eyed peas, seitan, Swiss chard, tempeh, black beans, prune juice, beet greens, tahini, peas, figs, bulghur, bok choy, raisins, watermelon, millet, kale....

Vitamin B12

The requirement for vitamin B12 is very low. Non-animal sources include Red Star nutritional yeast T6635 also known as Vegetarian Support Formula (around 2 teaspoons supplies the adult RDA). It is especially important for pregnant and lactating women, infants, and children to have reliable sources of vitamin B12 in their diets. Numerous foods are fortified with B12, but sometimes companies change what they do. So always read labels carefully or write the companies.

Tempeh, miso, and seaweed are often labeled as having large amounts of vitamin B12. However, these products are not reliable sources of the vitamin because the amount of vitamin B12 present depends on the type of processing the food undergoes. Other sources of vitamin B12 are fortified soy milk (check the label as this is rarely available in the U.S.), vitamin B12-fortified meat analogues, and vitamin B12 supplements. There are supplements which do not contain animal products. Vegetarians who are not vegan can also obtain vitamin B12 from dairy products and eggs.

Common Vegan Foods

Oatmeal, stir-fried vegetables, cereal, toast, orange juice, peanut butter on whole wheat bread, frozen fruit desserts, lentil soup, salad bar items like chickpeas and three bean salad, dates, apples, macaroni, fruit smoothies, popcorn, spaghetti, vegetarian baked beans, guacamole, chili...

Vegans Also Eat...

Tofu lasagna, homemade pancakes without eggs, hummus, eggless cookies, soy ice cream, tempeh, corn chowder, soy yogurt, rice pudding, fava beans, banana muffins, spinach pies, oat nut burgers, falafel, corn fritters, French toast made with soy milk, soy hot dogs, vegetable burgers, pumpkin casserole, scrambled tofu, seitan.

When Eating Out Try These Foods

Pizza without cheese, Chinese moo shu vegetables, Indian curries and dahl, eggplant dishes without the cheese, bean tacos without the lard and cheese (available from Taco Bell and other Mexican restaurants), Middle Eastern hummus and tabouli, Ethiopian injera (flat bread) and lentil stew, Thai vegetable curries...

FOOD AND QUICK SERVICE CHAINS

If you don't use meat, what can you eat while on the road? The Vegetarian Resource Group has answered this question with a 32-page Guide to Vegan and Vegetarian Options in Fast Food and Quick Service Chains.

Vegetarians are able to travel almost anywhere in the country and purchase a vegetarian or vegan bean burrito at Taco Bell. Their beans do not contain animal fat, and the tortilla wrappers are now made without dairy.

Subway is very consumer friendly with veggie sandwiches made to order. Many of the Subway stores are now offering a meatless burger and vegan Fruizle smoothie. Check your local establishment.

Burger King states their French fries are cooked in vegetable shortening and are not pre-treated with beef fat. Little Caesars' dough does not contain cheese and Pizza Hut's regular pizza sauce and meatless spaghetti marinara sauce are vegetarian.

There have been several improvements since the last fast food survey. For example, Taco Bell said the chicken broth was removed from their seasoned rice due to consumer demand.

To obtain detailed information about 80 chains, order the 32-page guide to restaurants by sending \$4.00 to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203.

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What is a Vegetarian?

Vegetarians do not eat meat, fish, and poultry. Vegans are vegetarians who abstain from eating or using all animal products, including milk, cheese, other dairy items, eggs, wool, silk, and leather. Among the many reasons for being a vegetarian are health, ecological, and religious concerns, dislike of meat, compassion for animals, belief in non-violence, and economics. The American Dietetic Association has affirmed that a vegetarian diet can meet all known nutrient needs. The key to a healthy vegetarian diet, as with any other diet, is to eat a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, whole grain products, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Limit your intake of sweets and fatty foods.

Making the Change to a Vegetarian Diet

Many people become vegetarian instantly. They totally give up meat, fish and poultry overnight. Others make the change gradually. Do what works best for you.

Being a vegetarian is as hard or as easy as you choose to make it. Some people enjoy planning and preparing elaborate meals, while others opt for quick and easy vegetarian dishes.

Vegetarian Nutrition

Protein

Vegetarians easily meet their protein needs by eating a varied diet, as long as they consume enough calories to maintain their weight. It is not necessary to plan combinations of foods. A mixture of proteins throughout the day will provide enough "essential amino acids." (See Position of The American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets, JADA, November, 1997, and "A Vegetarian Sourcebook" by Keith Akers, Vegetarian Press, 1993.)

Good protein sources are: lentils, tofu, low-fat dairy products, nuts, seeds, tempeh, peas... Many common foods such as whole grain bread, greens, potatoes, pasta, and corn quickly add to protein intake.

Iron

Good iron sources are: dried beans, spinach, chard, beet greens, blackstrap molasses, bulgur, prune juice, and dried fruit are all good sources of iron. To increase the amount of iron absorbed at a meal eat a food containing vitamin C, such as citrus fruit or juices, tomato, or broccoli. Cooking food in iron cookware also adds to iron intake.

Calcium

Good calcium sources are: collard greens, broccoli, kale, low fat dairy products, turnip greens, tofu prepared with calcium, and fortified soy milk all contain high quantities of calcium.

Vitamin B12

The adult recommended intake for vitamin B12 is very low. Vitamin B12 comes primarily from animal-derived foods. A diet containing dairy products or eggs provides adequate vitamin B12. Fortified foods, such as some brands of cereal, nutritional yeast, soy milk, or soy analogs, are good non-animal sources. Check labels to discover other products that are fortified with vitamin B12. Tempeh and sea vegetables may contain vitamin B12, but their content varies and may be unreliable. To be on the safe side, if you are one of the few people who do not consume dairy products, eggs, or fortified foods regularly, you can take a non-animal derived supplement. Much research still needs to be done on vitamin B12 needs and sources.

Children and Vegetarianism

According to The American Dietetic Association, vegetarian diets can meet all nitrogen needs and amino acid requirements for growth. A vegan diet, to be on the safe side, should be well planned, and probably include fortified soy milk.

Did You Know All These People Advocated Vegetarianism?

Leonardo Da Vinci, Leo Tolstoy, George Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi, Isaac Bashevis Singer (Nobel Prize winner), Albert Einstein (Nobel Prize winner), Janet Jackson, Mr. Rogers, Clara Barton, k.d. lang, Paul McCartney... Did you know Benjamin Franklin ate tofu?

Stop Apologizing for Civilian Casualties

The administration's policy of minimizing harm to civilians is an unwarranted confession of guilt about waging a war strictly to safeguard America.



By Peter Schwartz

In war, a country convinced of the rightness of its course expects its forces to subordinate all considerations to the objective of military victory. Our government, however, has adopted the indecisive policy of “balancing” the goal of defeating the enemy in Iraq with the goal of avoiding harm to civilians.

When General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declares that great care is being taken to prevent civilian casualties, he is not referring to the random shooting of Iraqis; a free nation's military does not engage in such wanton behavior. Rather, he explains: “We're more likely to take a little bit more risk ourselves than to bring the population in harm's way.”

Thus our forces refrained from destroying Baghdad's vital power plants, phone exchanges and television transmission towers. Even outright military equipment was spared if it was near what the United Nations deems a “historic site.” As one military analyst at the Lexington Institute, a Washington think tank, puts it: “We decided we would restrain the use of air power for reasons of humanity and world image.”

Here is the stark, daily meaning of this restraint, as described by a *New York Times* reporter who interviewed two marines: “They were most frustrated by the practice of some Iraqi soldiers to use unarmed women and children as shields against American bullets. They called the tactic cowardly but agreed that it had been effective. Both Sergeant [Eric] Schrupf and Corporal [Mikael] McIntosh said they had declined several times to shoot at Iraqi soldiers out of fear they might hit civilians.”

Hussein is saying, in effect, “Let me keep shooting at you, or I will shoot my civilians” -- and we're complying. Why? What right does anyone have to demand that these marines let enemy soldiers go, in order to avoid harming innocent civilians? Aren't the *marines* innocent victims? Aren't all Americans, who have to worry about Hussein's criminal-state, innocent victims?

Clearly, administration officials feel guilty for giving primacy to *our* lives and *our* interests in waging this war. They believe that a policy of using whatever force is necessary to win is morally tainted -- it is too “self-



ish.” So we “balance” this by sacrificing our safety for that of the civilians, or by diverting major resources and manpower to feeding them, or by officially naming the campaign “Operation Iraqi Freedom” rather than “Operation American Security,” or by promising to rebuild their country at our expense.

And when Iraqis shoot at our troops from inside a mosque, our troops refuse to return fire. And even when they do target civilian structures, or civilian personnel, our military authorities are very defensive in justifying such action.

By any rational standard of morality, any wartime harm to the most innocent of Iraqis is *entirely* the responsibility of their government. Our moral right, and responsibility, is to do

everything possible to safeguard *American* lives, however many civilian casualties that goal may require. We may lament the loss of innocent Iraqis during the war, just as we lament the loss of innocent Americans. But we should not *apologize*, since the blame, in both cases, rests entirely with the enemy, who made it necessary for us to wage war to defend ourselves against his threat.

President Bush thinks he can mollify our detractors, particularly in the Muslim world, by showing how “humanitarian” we are. But his policy simply *reinforces* their view of America as immoral for launching a “self-ish,” imperialistic war. It is an open confession of guilt, and an offer to atone by protecting the Iraqis at the cost of American lives. By accepting responsibility for civilian casualties, President Bush is announcing that a war fought solely to make Americans secure is morally dubious.

And if moral legitimacy during the war comes from sacrificing our interests to the needs of the civilians, then moral legitimacy after the war may come from sacrificing our interests to the demands of the U.N. Consider the views of Colin Powell, as described by the *New York Times*: “Mr. Powell said that to counter global antiwar sentiments, the United States would seek a major role for the United Nations in a democratic postwar Iraq. . . . He said the United Nations was needed to provide ‘international legitimacy’ to the occupation.” So he is willing to have a postwar Iraq molded by the anti-American despots who dominate the United Nations -- a process that will undo politically everything that we will have accomplished in Iraq militarily.

Like his father before him, a morally uncertain President Bush may end up permitting “world opinion” to prevent America from eliminating the Iraqi threat. He can avoid that path if his administration stops feeling guilty for civilian casualties and stops undermining the justness of a war waged strictly to protect America.

Mr. Schwartz, editor and contributing author of *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* by Ayn Rand, is chairman of the board of directors of the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine, Calif. The Institute (www.aynrand.org/medialink) promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*.

THEY HATE US, TOO

The hostility of the "anti-war" protestors is not toward war, nor even toward war with Iraq--but toward America and its philosophy of individualism.

By Peter Schwartz

The Sept. 11 attacks on America led many to ask, about the terrorists, "Why do they hate us?" Today, a similar question applies to those who virulently condemn a U.S. war against Iraq--along with a similar answer.

It is not actually anti-war views that they are expressing; they mount no mass demonstrations against the military aggressions of, say, Bosnia, or Russia--or Iraq. It is solely America, retaliating against the threat of aggression, that evokes such widespread hostility. Why? Because these are anti-American protests, prompted only by one factor: this country's declaration that it has a categorical, moral right to uphold its self-interest.

An official of the European Union, for example, denounces America for "setting and imposing the rules . . . in pursuit of its own national interest." The "Not In Our Name" campaign, headed by such people as Noam Chomsky and Gloria Steinem, complains contemptuously that America has "not only attacked Afghanistan but arrogated to itself and its allies the right to rain down military force anywhere and anytime."

Since the force America is employing in Afghanistan and, imminently perhaps, in Iraq is against those who have already initiated its use, this criticism is simply a repudiation of America's right to decide who its enemies are--the same premise behind the apoplectic reaction to President Bush's unequivocal description of Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil."

The "anti-war" rallies are generated not by any love for Iraq, but by a hatred for America--or, more fundamentally, for the principle America represents. The protestors oppose the individualism that lies at America's foundation. They despise the idea of a capitalist system, in which the individual is sovereign, free to live his own life and pursue his own values, irrespective of the wishes of "the public." And they therefore despise the derivative idea that, as a free nation, America has the sovereign right to defend its self-interest, irrespective of the wishes of the international community.

In surveying current attitudes toward Americans abroad, USA Today offers an astute observation: "A growing number of foreigners see some of the United States' political decisions (pulling out of the Kyoto Treaty on global emissions) and personal choices (Americans' penchant for gas-loving SUVs) as at best unilateral and at worst selfish. The confrontation over Iraq is just more fuel on a bonfire." At root, these issues are indeed the same.

The "anti-war" forces are not against an invasion of Iraq, if authorized by the U.N.; they just don't want the decision to be made by the United States. It is America's deferral to the U.N. that they frantically seek. It is American "selfishness"--the tenet that one has the moral right to uphold one's self-interest--that triggers anger and fear in them. It is the undercutting of America's sovereignty--the surrender of the principle of individualism to the principle of collectivism--that underlies the malicious glee with which U.N. dignitaries hail attacks on America, that motivates the spiteful cowardice of the "human-shield" volunteers in Baghdad and that constitutes the ideological goal of the "anti-war" movement.

We are smeared as "unilateralists" if we defend our interests by engaging in military action, or by rejecting a pseudo-scientific international treaty. We are smeared as "isolationists" if we defend our interests by not sending troops on altruistic, "peacekeeping" missions (or by rejecting an international treaty). Every refusal to sacrifice ourselves to the demands of others provokes the same essential response.

The protest leaders are the standard gamut of leftists--from modern environmentalists to old-line Marxists. They are united, not in the superficialities of what they support, but in the fundamentals of what they detest: Americanism, capitalism, individualism. Their one, overwhelming desire is to cut America down by making it defer to some higher authority. They want us to submit.

Which is what the Islamic terrorists seek as well. They want us to renounce individualism and bow to their theocratic dictates. The "anti-war" activists may invoke a more secular authority, but they want the same kind of capitulation. They want the individual to subordinate his freedom to the collective will of his community, and they want the government of a free people to subordinate the liberty of its citizens to the collective will of the international community.

The way to prevail against the anti-American protests, therefore, is not by mollifying the U.N. or bribing our "allies"--but by resolutely acting on our moral right to defend ourselves, regardless of the wishes of any other nation.

Mr. Schwartz, editor and contributing author of Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution by Ayn Rand, is chairman of the board of directors of the Ayn Rand Institute (www.aynrand.org) in Irvine, Calif. The Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. Send comments to reaction@aynrand.org.

Privatize the Space Program

By Robert Garmong

When asked how they would "heal" after the loss of space shuttle Columbia, NASA's engineers responded as one: NASA heals by solving yesterday's problems and launching the next mission. So, indeed, does the American nation. Thus, before the grief had fully faded into memory, we began asking ourselves what had gone wrong, and how to solve it.

Many solutions have been proposed, from the incremental (such as safety upgrades and improved inspections) to the radical (such as a new breed of space vehicles powered by plasma engines). But the most radical change, the one that would improve space exploration most dramatically, has been ignored: privatizing the space program.

There is a contradiction at the heart of the space program: space exploration, as the grandest of man's technological advancements, requires the kind of bold innovation possible only to minds left free to pursue the best of their thinking and judgment. Yet by placing the space program under governmental funding, we necessarily place it at the mercy of governmental whim. The results are written all over the past twenty years of NASA's history: the space program is a political animal, marked by shifting, inconsistent and ill-defined goals.

The space shuttle was built and maintained to please clashing constituencies, not to do a clearly defined job for which there was an economic and technical need. The shuttle was to launch satellites for the Department of Defense and private contractors--which could be done more cheaply by lightweight, disposable rockets. It was to carry scientific experiments--which could be done more efficiently by unmanned vehicles. But one "need" came before all technical issues: NASA's political need for showy manned vehicles. The result, as great a technical achievement as it is, was an over-sized, over-complicated, over-budget overly dangerous vehicle that does everything poorly and nothing well.

Indeed, the space shuttle program was supposed to be phased out years ago, but the search for its replacement has been halted, largely because space contractors enjoy collecting on the overpriced shuttle without the expense and bother of researching cheaper alternatives. A private industry could have fired them--but not so in a government project, with home-district congressmen to lobby on their behalf.

Now comes evidence that the political nature of the space program may have even been directly responsible for the Columbia disaster. Fox News reported that NASA chose to stick with non-Freon-based foam insulation on the booster rockets, despite evidence that this type of foam causes up to 11 times as much damage to thermal tiles as the older, Freon-based foam. Although NASA was exempted from the restrictions on Freon use, which environmentalists believe causes ozone depletion, and despite the fact that the amount of Freon released by NASA's rockets would have been trivial, the space agency elected to stick with the politically correct foam.

It is impossible to integrate the contradictory. To whatever extent an engineer is forced to base his decisions, not on the realities of science but on the arbitrary, unpredictable, and often impossible demands of a politicized system, he is stymied. Yet this politicizing is an unavoidable consequence of governmental control over scientific research and development. If space development is to be transformed from an expensive national bauble whose central purpose is to assert national pride, to a practical industry with real and direct benefits, it will only be by unleashing the creative force of free and rational minds.

Nor would it be difficult to spur the private exploration of space. After government involvement in space exploration is phased out, the free market will work to produce whatever there is demand for, just as it now does with traditional aircraft, both military and civilian. In addition, Congress should develop a system of property rights to any stellar body reached and exploited by an American company. This would provide economic incentive for the sorts of extremely ambitious projects NASA would not dare to propose to its Congressional purse-holders.

Extending man's reach into space is not, as some have claimed, our "destiny." Standing between us and the stars are enormous technical difficulties, the solution of which will require even more heroic determination than that which tamed the seas and the continents. But first, we must make a fundamental choice: will America continue to hold its best engineering minds captive to politics, or will we set them free?

Robert Garmong is a writer for the Ayn Rand Institute (www.aynrand.org) in Irvine, CA.

The Institute promotes Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*.

Austria





Eye On The Sky

AstronomyWatch



*from <http://www.nasa.gov/>
RELEASE: 03-102*

NASA'S Mars Odyssey Changes Views About Red Planet

Mars Odyssey Thermal Emission Imaging System (THEMIS) image of Mars surface located on the southeast of Olympus Mons.

NASA's Mars Odyssey spacecraft has transformed the way scientists are looking at the red planet.

"In just one year, Mars Odyssey has fundamentally changed our understanding of the nature of the materials on and below the surface of Mars," said Dr. Jeffrey Plaut, Odyssey's project scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

During its first year of surveying the Martian surface, Odyssey's camera system provided detailed maps of minerals in rocks and soils. "A wonderful surprise has been the discovery of a layer of olivine-rich rock exposed in the walls of Ganges Chasm. Olivine is easily destroyed by liquid water, so its presence in these ancient rocks suggests that this region of Mars has been very dry for a very long time," said Dr. Philip Christensen, principal investigator for Odyssey's thermal emission imaging system at Arizona State University, Tempe, Ariz.

"Infrared images have provided a remarkable new tool for mapping the Martian surface. The temperature differences we see in the day and night images have revealed complex patterns of rocks and soils that show the effects of lava flows, impact craters, wind, and possibly water throughout the history of Mars," Christensen said.

Odyssey has measured radiation levels at Mars that are substantially higher than in low-Earth orbit. "The Martian radiation environment experiment has confirmed expectations that future human explorers of Mars will face significant long-term health risks from space radiation," said Dr. Cary Zeitlin, principal investigator for the Martian radiation environment experiment, National Space Biomedical Research Institute, Houston. "We've also observed solar particle events not seen by near-Earth radiation detectors," Zeitlin said.

The gamma ray spectrometer suite, which early in the mission discovered vast amounts of hydrogen in the form of water ice trapped beneath the Martian surface, has also begun to map the elemental composition of the surface.

"We are just now getting our first look at global elemental composition maps, and we are seeing Mars in a whole new light, gamma ray 'light,' and that's showing us aspects of the surface composition never seen before," said Dr. William Boynton, team leader for the gamma ray spectrometer suite at the University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

JPL, a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, Calif., manages the 2001 Mars Odyssey mission for NASA's Office of Space Science in Washington. Investigators at Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, and NASA's Johnson Space Center, Houston, built and operate the science instruments.

Additional science partners are located at the Russian Aviation and Space Agency and at Los Alamos National Laboratories, New Mexico. Lockheed Martin Astronautics, Denver, the prime contractor for the project, developed and built the orbiter. Mission operations are conducted jointly from Lockheed Martin and from JPL.



from
<http://www.nasa.gov/>
RELEASE: 03-089

CHIPS Begins Interstellar Search for Birthplace of Solar Systems

The Cosmic Hot Interstellar Plasma Spectrometer (CHIPS) satellite mission is studying the very hot, very low density gas in the vast spaces between the stars in our local astronomical neighborhood.

The Cosmic Hot Interstellar Plasma Spectrometer (CHIPS) satellite is living up to the adage “good things come in small packages,” as the suitcase-size spacecraft is entering its second month of providing data to scientists about the birthplace of solar systems.

Launched on Jan. 12, 2003, from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., CHIPS is exploring the very hot, very low-density gas in the vast spaces between the stars, known as the interstellar medium, searching for important clues about the formation and evolution of galaxies.

The interstellar medium literally contains the seeds of future stars. All the stars we see were once formed out of the same kind of diffuse gas and dust. When the gas cools and collapses, it forms clumps that scientists believe evolve into stars and planets. One of the biggest puzzles in astrophysics is the process that turns this very diffuse, dust, hot and cold gas into stars.

“We are very excited that the satellite and CHIPS instrument are working as designed and providing excellent data,” said Dr. Mark Hurwitz, CHIPS principal investigator from the University of California, Berkeley. “We look forward to gathering data during the next 12 months on this fairly unexplored region of space,” he said.

After being in space a mere three weeks, CHIPS began gathering data February 2. Hurwitz said during the early phase of science operations, the teams will continue to fine tune the spacecraft and science instrument. Since the CHIPS satellite launch, the operations team at SpaceDev in Poway, Calif., and the science team at Berkeley, have been checking out the spacecraft’s power, thermal and control systems, communications, and initializing the scientific instrument.

The CHIPS mission, the first NASA University-Class Explorer (UNEX) mission, cost about \$16 million, which includes flight hardware, integration and launch vehicle, data analysis and mission operations.

The Office of Space Science, NASA Headquarters, Washington sponsors the mission. The project is managed at NASA’s Wallops Flight Facility, Wallops Island, Va., and the Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md.

*from <http://www.nasa.gov/>
The Oldest Light in the Universe*

A NASA satellite has captured the sharpest-ever picture of the afterglow of the big bang.

Feb. 11, 2003: NASA today released the best “baby picture” of the Universe ever taken; the image contains such stunning detail that it may be one of the most important scientific results of recent years. Scientists used NASA’s Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) to capture the new cosmic portrait, which reveals the afterglow of the big bang, a.k.a. the cosmic microwave background.

“We’ve captured the infant universe in sharp focus, and from this portrait we can now describe the universe with unprecedented accuracy,” said Dr. Charles L. Bennett of the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) and the WMAP Principal Investigator. “The data are solid, a real gold mine,” he said.

One of the biggest surprises revealed in the data is the first generation of stars to shine in the universe first ignited only 200 million years after the big bang, much earlier than many scientists had expected.

In addition, the new portrait precisely pegs the age of the universe at 13.7 billion years, with a remarkably small one percent margin of error.

The WMAP team found that the big bang and Inflation theories continue to ring true. The contents of the universe include 4 percent atoms (ordinary matter), 23 percent of an unknown type of dark matter, and 73 percent of a mysterious dark energy. The new measurements even shed light on the nature of the dark energy, which acts as a sort of anti-gravity.

“These numbers represent a milestone in how we view our universe,” said Dr. Anne Kinney, NASA director for astronomy and physics. “This is a true turning point for cosmology.”

The light we see today, as the cosmic microwave background, has traveled over 13 billion years to reach us. Within this light are infinitesimal patterns that mark the seeds of what later grew into clusters of galaxies and the vast structure we see all around us today.

Patterns in the big bang afterglow were frozen in place only 380,000 years after the big bang, a number nailed down by this latest observation. These patterns are tiny temperature differences within this extraordinarily evenly dispersed microwave light bathing the universe, which now averages a frigid 2.73 degrees above absolute zero temperature. WMAP resolves slight temperature fluctuations, which vary by only millionths of a degree.

Theories about the evolution of the universe make specific predictions about the extent of these temperature patterns. Like a detective, the WMAP team compared the unique “fingerprint” of patterns imprinted on this ancient light with fingerprints predicted by various cosmic theories and found a match.

WMAP will continue to observe the cosmic microwave background for an additional three years, and its data will reveal new insights into the theory of Inflation and the nature of the dark energy.

Right: Launched on June 30, 2001, WMAP maintains a distant orbit about the second Lagrange Point, or “L2,” a million miles from Earth. [more]

“This is a beginning of a new stage in our study of the early universe,” said WMAP team member Prof. David N. Spergel of Princeton University, N.J. “We can use this portrait not only to predict the properties of the nearby universe, but can also use it to understand the first moments of the big bang,” he said.

WMAP is named in honor of David Wilkinson of Princeton University, a world-renowned cosmologist and WMAP team member who died in September 2002.

Credits & Contacts

Based on a NASA/Goddard press release

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The Science Directorate at NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center sponsors the Science@NASA web sites. The mission of Science@NASA is to help the public understand how exciting NASA research is and to help NASA scientists fulfill their outreach responsibilities.

NASA's Mars Odyssey Points to Melting Snow as Cause of Gullies
Gullies on martian crater, seen by Odyssey's Themis instrument

Images from the visible light camera on NASA's Mars Odyssey spacecraft, combined with images from NASA's Mars Global Surveyor, suggest melting snow is the likely cause of the numerous eroded gullies first documented on Mars in 2000 by Global Surveyor.

The now-famous martian gullies were created by trickling water from melting snow packs, not underground springs or pressurized flows, as had been previously suggested, argues Dr. Philip Christensen, the principal investigator for Odyssey's camera system and a professor from Arizona State University in Tempe. He proposes gullies are carved by water melting and flowing beneath snow packs, where it is sheltered from rapid evaporation in the planet's thin atmosphere. His paper is in the electronic February 19 issue of Nature.

Looking at an image of an impact crater in the southern mid-latitudes of Mars, Christensen noted eroded gullies on the crater's cold, pole-facing northern wall and immediately next to them a section of what he calls "pasted-on terrain." Such unique terrain represents a smooth deposit of material that Mars researchers have concluded is "volatile" (composed of materials that evaporate in the thin Mars atmosphere), because it characteristically occurs only in the coldest, most sheltered areas. The most likely composition of this slowly evaporating material is snow. Christensen suspected a special relationship between the gullies and the snow.

Gullies on martian crater, seen by Mars Global Surveyor

"The Odyssey image shows a crater on the pole-facing side has this 'pasted-on' terrain, and as you come around to the west there are all these gullies," said Christensen. "I saw it and said 'Ah-ha!' It looks for all the world like these gullies are being exposed as this terrain is being removed through melting and evaporation."

Eroded gullies on martian crater walls and cliff sides were first observed in images taken by Mars Global Surveyor in 2000. There have been other scientific theories offered to explain gully formation on Mars, including seeps of ground water, pressurized flows of ground water (or carbon dioxide), and mudflows caused by collapsing permafrost deposits, but no explanation to date has been universally accepted. The scientific community has remained puzzled, yet has been eagerly pursuing various possibilities.

"The gullies are very young," Christensen said. "That's always bothered me, because how is it that Mars has groundwater close enough to the surface to form these gullies, and yet the water has stuck around for billions of years? Second, you have craters with rims that are raised, and the gullies go almost to the crest of the rim. If it's a leaking subsurface aquifer, there's not much subsurface up there. And, finally, why do they occur preferentially on the cold face of the slope at mid-latitudes? If it's melting groundwater causing the flow, that's the coldest place, and the least likely place for that to happen."

Christensen points out that finding water erosion under melting snow deposits answers many of these problems, "Snow on Mars is most likely to accumulate on the pole-facing slopes, the coldest areas. It accumulates and drapes the landscape in these areas during one climate period, and then it melts during a warmer one. Melting begins first in the most exposed area right at the crest of the ridge. This explains why gullies start so high up." Once he started to think about snow, Christensen began finding a large number of other images showing a similar relationship between "pasted on" snow deposits and gullies in the high resolution images taken by the camera on Global Surveyor. Yet it was the unique mid-range resolution of the visible light camera in Mars Odyssey's thermal emission imaging system that was critical for the insight, because of its wide field of view.

"It was almost like finding a Rosetta Stone. The basic idea comes out of having a regional view, which Odyssey's camera system gives. It's a kind of you-can't-see-the forest-for-the-trees problem. An Odyssey image made it all suddenly click, because the resolution was high enough to identify these features and yet low enough to show their relationship to each other in the landscape," he said.

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"Christensen's new hypothesis was made possible by NASA's tandem of science orbiters currently laying the groundwork for locating the most interesting areas for future surface exploration by roving laboratories, such as the Mars Exploration Rovers, scheduled for launch in May and June of this year," said Dr. Jim Garvin, NASA's lead scientist for Mars Exploration in Washington, D.C.

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory manages the Mars Exploration Program for NASA's Office of Space Science in Washington, D.C.

Strange Clouds

Astronauts onboard the International Space Station have been observing electric blue “noctilucent” clouds from Earth-orbit.

February 18, 2003: They hover on the edge of space. Thin, wispy clouds, glowing electric blue. Some scientists think they're seeded by space dust. Others suspect they're a telltale sign of global warming.

They're called noctilucent or “night-shining” clouds (NLCs for short). And whatever causes them, they're lovely.

“Over the past few weeks we've been enjoying outstanding views of these clouds above the southern hemisphere,” said space station astronaut Don Pettit during a NASA TV broadcast last month. “We routinely see them when we're flying over Australia and the tip of South America.”

Sky watchers on Earth have seen them, too, glowing in the night sky after sunset, although the view from Earth-orbit is better. Pettit estimated the height of the noctilucent clouds he saw at 80 to 100 km ... “literally on the fringes of space.”

“Noctilucent clouds are a relatively new phenomenon,” says Gary Thomas, a professor at the University of Colorado who studies NLCs. “They were first seen in 1885” about two years after the powerful eruption of Krakatoa in Indonesia, which hurled plumes of ash as high as 80 km into Earth's atmosphere.

Ash from the volcano caused such splendid sunsets that evening sky watching became a popular worldwide pastime. One sky watcher in particular, a Briton named T. W. Backhouse, noticed something odd. He stayed outside after the sun had set and, on some nights, saw wispy filaments glowing electric blue against the black sky. Noctilucent clouds. Scientists of the day figured the clouds were some curious manifestation of volcanic ash.

Eventually the ash settled and the vivid sunsets of Krakatoa faded. Yet the noctilucent clouds remained. “It's puzzling,” says Thomas. “Noctilucent clouds have not only persisted, but also spread.” A century ago the clouds were confined to latitudes above 50°; you had to go to places like Scandinavia, Russia and Britain to see them. In recent years they have been sighted as far south as Utah and Colorado.

Astronaut Don Pettit is a long-time noctilucent cloud-watcher. As a staff scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory between 1984 and 1996, he studied noctilucent clouds seeded by high-flying sounding rockets. “Seeing these kinds of clouds [from space] ... is certainly a joy for us on the ISS,” he said on NASA TV.

“Although NLCs look like they're in space,” continues Thomas, “they're really inside Earth's atmosphere, in a layer called the mesosphere ranging from 50 to 85 km high.” The mesosphere is not only very cold (-125 C), but also very dry--“one hundred million times dryer than air from the Sahara desert.” Nevertheless, NLCs are made of water. The clouds consist of tiny ice crystals about the size of particles in cigarette smoke. Sunlight scattered by these crystals gives the clouds their characteristic blue color.

How ice crystals form in the arid mesosphere is the essential mystery of noctilucent clouds.

Ice crystals in clouds need two things to grow: water molecules and something for those molecules to stick to--dust, for example. Water gathering on dust to form droplets or ice crystals is a process called nucleation. It happens all the time in ordinary clouds.

Ordinary clouds, which are relatively close to Earth, get their dust from sources like desert wind storms. It's hard to waft wind-blown dust all the way up to the mesosphere, however. “Krakatoa may have seeded the mesosphere with dust in 1883, but that doesn't explain the clouds we see now,” notes Thomas. “Perhaps,” he speculates, “the source is space itself.” Every day Earth sweeps up tons of meteoroids--tiny bits of debris from comets and asteroids. Most are just the right size to seed noctilucent clouds.

The source of water vapor is less controversial. “Upwelling winds in the summertime carry water vapor from the moist lower atmosphere toward the mesosphere,” says Thomas. This is why NLCs appear during summer, not winter.

One reason for the recent spread of noctilucent clouds might be global warming. “Extreme cold is required to form ice in a dry environment like the mesosphere,” says Thomas. Ironically, global warming helps. While greenhouse gases warm Earth's surface, they actually lower temperatures in the high atmosphere. Thomas notes that noctilucent clouds were first spotted during the Industrial Revolution--a time of rising greenhouse gas production.

Are NLCs a thermometer for climate change? A unusual sign of meteoroids? Or both? “So much about these clouds

is speculative,” says Thomas.

A NASA spacecraft scheduled for launch in 2006 should provide some answers. The Aeronomy of Ice in the Mesosphere satellite, or AIM for short, will orbit Earth at an altitude of 550 km. Although it's a small satellite, says Thomas, there are many sensors on board. AIM will take wide angle photos of NLCs, measure their temperatures and chemical abundances, monitor dusty aerosols, and count meteoroids raining down on Earth. “For the first time we'll be able to monitor all the crucial factors at once.”

Meanwhile, all we can do is wait ... and watch. There's never been a better time to see noctilucent clouds. “During the summer months, look west perhaps 30 minutes to an hour after sunset when the Sun has dipped 60 to 160 below the horizon,” advises Thomas. If you see luminous blue-white tendrils spreading across the sky, you've probably spotted an NLC. Observing sites north of 40o latitude are favored.

One more thing: don't forget your camera. According to astronaut Don Pettit, “you can never have too many pictures of noctilucent clouds.”

Editor's note: Astronaut Don Pettit's remarks and his pictures of NLCs that appear in this story were first broadcast on NASA TV in January 2003.

Credits & Contacts

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Dwarf Galaxy Gives Universe A Breath of Fresh Oxygen

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/> July 23, 2002

Astronomers have discovered that a nearby dwarf galaxy is spewing oxygen and other “heavy” elements into intergalactic space. This observation from NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory supports the idea that dwarf galaxies may be responsible for most of the heavy elements between the galaxies.

Despite comprising only a very small fraction of the mass of the universe, so-called heavy elements - everything other than hydrogen and helium -- are essential for the formation of planets and can greatly influence astronomical phenomena, including the rate at which galaxies form.

A team led by Crystal Martin of the University of California, Santa Barbara, observed the dwarf galaxy NGC 1569 using Chandra. As reported in an article to be published in *The Astrophysical Journal*, they found that huge quantities of oxygen and other heavy elements are escaping from the galaxy in bubbles of multimillion-degree gases that are thousands of light years in diameter.

“Dwarf galaxies are much smaller than ordinary galaxies like our Milky Way and much more common,” said Martin. “Because of their small mass, they have relatively low gravity and matter can escape more easily from dwarfs than normal galaxies. This makes them very important in understanding how the universe was seeded with various elements.”

Scientists have speculated that heavy elements escaping from dwarf galaxies in the early universe could play a dominant role in enriching the intergalactic gas from which other galaxies form. Enriched gas cools more quickly, so the rate and manner of formation of new galaxies in the early universe would have been strongly affected by this process.



Chandra Probes Nature of Dark Matter

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

Astronomers have shed new light on dark matter, the invisible and unknown material that comprises most of the Universe.

Using NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory, scientists have precisely determined the distribution of dark matter in a distant galaxy cluster. These new measurements serve to narrow the field of candidates that explain this puzzling element.

Previous evidence from radio, optical and X-ray observations convinced astronomers that most of the matter in the universe is in some dark, as yet undetected, form that makes its presence felt only through gravity. The new Chandra observations are providing new clues about the nature of this mysterious stuff.

In galaxy clusters, the amount of dark matter can be inferred by measuring the pressure in hot gas that emits X-rays. Astronomers can then determine how much dark matter would be required to provide the gravity necessary to keep the gas from escaping the cluster. In the cluster EMSS 1358+6245, the mass of the dark matter is found to be about four times that of the “normal” matter (matter not comprised of exotic particles), typical of large galaxy clusters. The distribution of dark matter holds the key to understanding its composition.

The most popular model for dark matter invokes slowly moving particles called cold dark matter, which interact with “normal” matter only through gravity. Recent optical observations of galaxies and galaxy clusters have suggested that dark matter particles may interact more vigorously than simple cold dark matter. The problem is that galaxies composed primarily of cold dark matter should have a greater central concentration of dark matter than the optical data suggest.

One solution has been to introduce the concept of “self-interacting dark matter.” By comparing the Chandra data with theoretical simulations, scientists can place strict constraints on these particles. Chandra observations show there is no evidence for an excessively spread-out dark matter distribution at distances larger than 150,000 light years from the cluster’s center. Inside that distance the dark matter may be rather uniformly distributed, so some collisions between dark matter particles may still be needed. These results over a range of distances from the cluster center place the strongest observational limits yet on the dark matter interaction rate in galaxy cluster cores.

Chandra observed EMSS 1358+6245, about 4 billion light years away in the constellation Draco, for more than 15 hours on Sept. 3-4, 2000, using the Advanced CCD Imaging Spectrometer.

September 6, 2001

Astronomers discover biggest Asteroid.

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

A recent discovery by European astronomers' find the biggest asteroid ever found in our solar system. The newly-discovered Kuiper-Belt-Object, '2001 KX76', is now the largest known asteroid. It beat out the previous record-holder (and first known asteroid), Ceres, by at least 200 kilometers.

This new object belongs to the distant Kuiper-Belt, and NOT the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Kuiper-Belt objects are probably quite different than the rocky planetoids most of us think of when we hear the term "asteroid". In fact, 2001 KX76 probably can be more accurately compared to a comet rather than an asteroid.

ESO Organization August 24 2001

Astronomers Get a Direct Look at 'Dark Matter'

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

March, 2001

An international team sights elusive white dwarf stars that make up some of the universe's missing mass. For more than 70 years, scientist have been searching for answers about the origin of the Cosmos.

Scientists have determined the the universe must have a certain mass. Anything less would not provide enough gravity to hold galaxies together and would simply fly apart.

But visible matter can account for only a small part of the total mass; hence the rest resides in the posited dark matter. The new findings suggest that between 3% and 35% of that dark matter is made up of white dwarf stars. These are burned-out husks of stars that once shined as brightly as our sun but now glow only feebly.

New Satellites found orbiting Jupiter & Saturn

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

A team of planetary scientists from the University of Hawaii's Institute of Astronomy shocked astronomers by the discovery of 11 new jovian satellites early this year bringing the total to 28. The team also rediscovered a moon (S/1975 J1) found in 1975, but was soon lost. The new moons are catalogs as S/2000 J1 through J11. Because S/2000 J11 was actually discovered 25 years ago as S/1975 J1, astronomers have decided to log it as a new finding.

A recent discovery of moons orbiting Saturn has also been made bringing Saturn's total to 30 satellites. This makes Saturn the planet with the most moons.

February 2001



Matter 'seen' disappearing into black holes for first time

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

Astronomers using the Chandra X-Ray Observatory Center telescope focused on X-Ray Novae, stars that give bursts of energy as they pull matter from nearby companion star, and then traced what happened to the energy as it approached the center of the receiving stars, while others are thought to contain dark stars or black holes. This would mark the first time matter is seen disappearing from view.

When an X-ray nova contains a dense neutron core, the matter pulled toward the center gets continually brighter, then flares in a final burst of X-rays.

But when an X-ray nova contains a black hole, the energy spiraling inward theoretically would disappear suddenly, without the final burst of energy.

January 9, 2001

from <http://www.astronomy-watch.com/>

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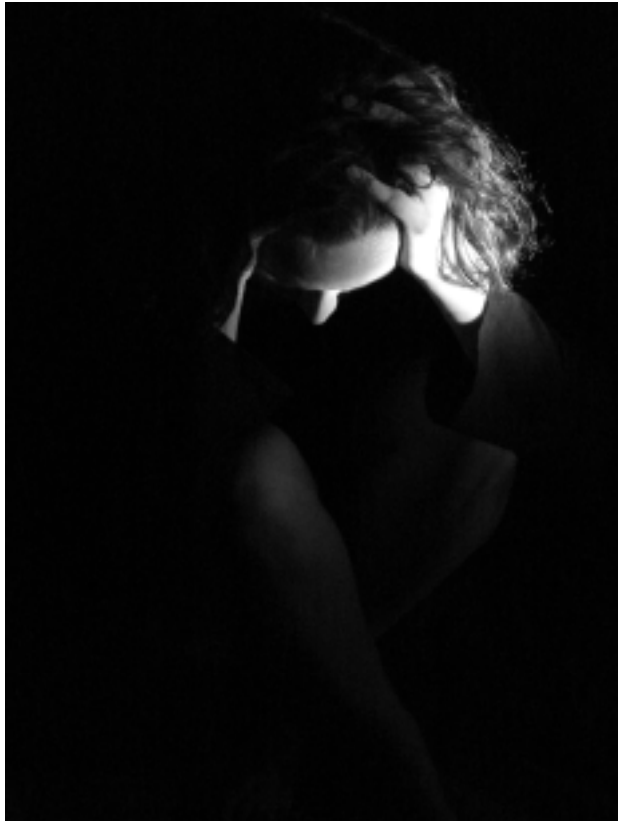


Nelson Mandela To Discuss HIV/AIDS With Young People in MTV 'Staying Alive' Documentary *[May 08, 2003]*

Former South African President Nelson Mandela will discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic with a group of young people in an MTV documentary about his life that is scheduled to air in July, Reuters/Washington Post reports (Majendie, Reuters/Washington Post, 5/7). The 60-minute special, produced by MTV's parent company Viacom, in association with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, UNAIDS, the World Bank, the Kaiser Family Foundation and Family Health International's YouthNet, will launch the 2003 "Staying Alive" HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. The special will be offered at no cost to broadcasters worldwide (MTV release, 5/7). For the film, Mandela has invited young people from all over the world to his home in Johannesburg to discuss issues that worry them, including HIV/AIDS. Mandela said that half of new HIV infections occur among people under 25 years of age, according to Reuters/Post. "With rising HIV infection rates around the world and the issues of war, terrorism and discrimination, young people now have so many important decisions to make in their lives," Mandela said. Mandela became more involved with the HIV/AIDS issue when he was preparing to leave office in 1999, establishing the Nelson Mandela Foundation that "has played a major role in organizing youth (HIV/AIDS) education programs," according to Reuters/Post. The hour-long MTV documentary about Mandela's life could reach a potential audience of one billion (Reuters/Washington Post, 5/7). In addition to the "Staying Alive" campaign, Viacom, the world's largest media group, and the Kaiser Family Foundation in January launched the year-long "KNOW HIV/AIDS" awareness campaign, aimed at raising HIV/AIDS awareness through public service announcements, television and radio programming and free print and online content. The campaign, which has a total ad placement value of \$120 million, is targeted at both the general population and groups hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, such as people under age 25, minorities, women and men who have sex with men. The initiative has already created 49 television, radio and outdoor ads that are appearing on Viacom's television networks CBS and UPN and 200 affiliates; cable outlets MTV, BET, VH1, CMT, MTV2, TV Land, Nickelodeon, Nick at Nite, Showtime, TNN and Comedy Central; more than 180 Infinity radio stations; and on billboards, buses and bus shelters (Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report, 4/28).

AIDS Groups Release Statement Protesting AIDS Research Budget Cuts

The AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition on Tuesday released a statement, signed by 16 additional AIDS organizations, protesting a decision made by the Office of Management and Budget to redirect funds from the research budget of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to the bulk purchase of anthrax vaccines. The groups say that the cuts will "severely impact" the number and duration of grants available to study HIV/AIDS and other major infectious diseases and allergies. The groups ask OMB not to "cut corners by shifting money from research into diseases that cause untold deaths around the world every day," calling the move a "short-sighted, misguided policy that pits one disease against another." Instead of "robbing NIH" and delaying research into vaccines and treatments for AIDS and other diseases, OMB "should direct the Department of Homeland Security to fully fund the anthrax vaccine contracts," the statement says. The statement concludes, "We call on OMB and the [Bush] administration to immediately restore the cuts made to the NIAID research budget and urge that a more appropriate funding stream such as DHS is utilized for the bulk purchase of anthrax vaccines." The other groups that signed the statement include ACT UP/Philadelphia, AIDS Action Baltimore, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, AIDS Project Los Angeles, AIDS Treatment Data Network, American Foundation for AIDS Research, Cascade AIDS Project, Center for Health and Gender Equity, Florida AIDS Action, Gay Men's Health Crisis, L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, Lifelong AIDS Alliance, National Minority AIDS Council, Project Inform, Title II Community AIDS National Network and Treatment Action Group (AVAC release, 5/6).



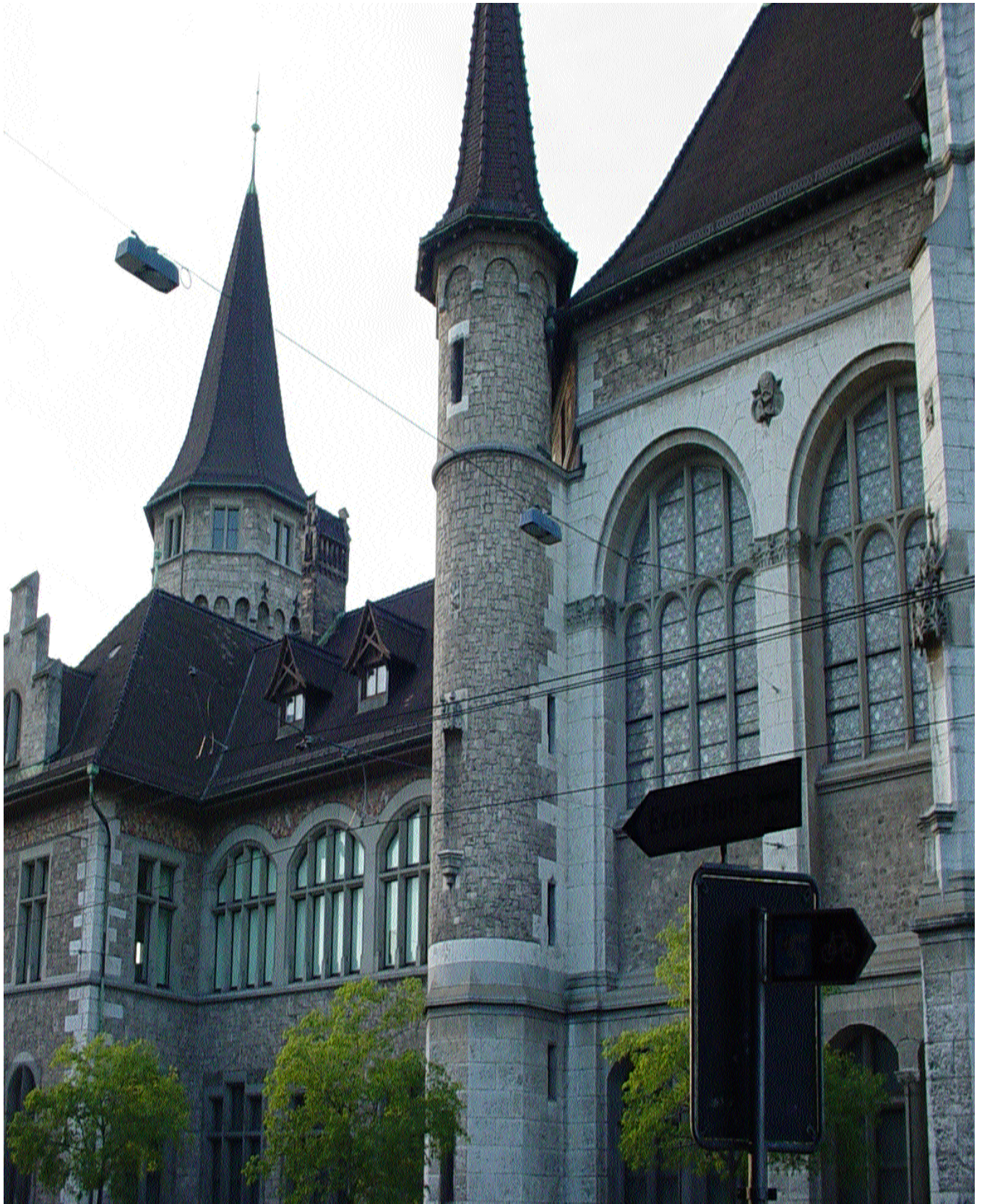
artwork by John Yotko





Luxembourg

Zurich, Switzerland



HempWatch

Our Founding Fathers drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution on paper made with Hemp - a strong, easily grown plant used for stronger and longer lasting papers. The legal uses for Hemp are great; learn about its uses and where it is legal to produce.

from http://www.clublighthouse.com/Earthcreations_HempEg.htm

Hemp

- *Hemp is durable,
- *several times stronger than cotton,
- *more resistant to wear and tear,
- *more resistant to shrinkage and the effect of sunlight
- *Consumers realize the importance of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection and require products that meet these standards

Hemp Ecology

- *Hemp plant is modest and can grow in many climatic conditions
- *Hemp does not waste the soil resources and can be replanted in the same area
- *Hemp is not demanding for high quality soil
- *Hemp is a quickly renewable resource. If a tree is cut down for paper production, it takes 50 years to grow a new tree. However, hemp can be cultivated in as little as 100 days
- *Hemp produces at least 3 times more fiber per acre (hectare) than cotton
- *Hemp plant is highly resistant to insects and therefore no pesticides are needed for cultivation

Hemp History

- *10,000BC Hemp cultivated in Asia for textiles and paper
- *200AD Hemp arrives to Europe
- *1600's Mandatory hemp cultivation in colonial America due to crop shortages
- *1700's First flag of USA made of hemp cloth and hemp paper used for the drafts of the Declaration of Independence of USA
- *1800's Until mid 1800's, 80% of all textiles for clothes, linens, drapes, quilts, sheets and towels in the US were made from hemp
- *1973 Several U.S. industry lobby the U.S. congress, linking (incorrectly) the industrial hemp to the drug marijuana. The congress passes Marijuana Tax Act and the hemp industry collapses
- *1993 The present day hemp industry makes its first sale in the US
- *1999 North Dakota legalizes cultivation of industrial hemp
- *1999 introduction of naturally dyed hemp clothing line by Earth Creations



Hemp is cannabis grown specifically for industrial use and thus contains very low levels of cannabinoids (THC). The use of hemp dates back many thousands of years. Properly grown hemp has virtually no psychoactive (intoxicating) effects when consumed. With a relatively short growth cycle of 120 days, hemp is an efficient and economical crop for farmers to grow.

Hemp is among one of the most productive and useful plants known; also very safe. The following materials can be made from hemp: paper, textiles, building materials, food, medicine, paint, detergent, varnish, oil, ink, and fuel. Unlike many crops, hemp can be grown in most locations and climates with only moderate water and fertilizer requirements. Where hemp is grown, it has become a valuable and environmentally friendly crop.

WHAT'S ALL THIS FUSS ABOUT HEMP?

1a) What is hemp?

For our purposes, hemp is the plant called 'cannabis sativa.' There are other plants that are called hemp, but cannabis hemp is the most useful of these plants. In fact, 'cannabis sativa' means 'useful (sativa) hemp (cannabis)'.

'Hemp' is any durable plant that has been used since pre-history for many purposes. Fiber is the most well known product, and the word 'hemp' can mean the rope or twine which is made from the hemp plant, as well as just the stalk of the plant which produced it.

1b) What is cannabis?

Cannabis is the most durable of the hemp plants, and it produces the toughest cloth, called 'canvass.' (Canvass was widely used as sails in the early shipping industry, as it was the only cloth which would not rot on contact with sea spray.) The cannabis plant also produces three other very important products which the other hemp plants do not (in usable form, that is): seed, pulp, and medicine.

The pulp is used as fuel, and to make paper. The seed is suitable for both human and animal foods. The oil from the seed can be used in as a base for paints and varnishes. The medicine is a tincture or admixture of the sticky resin in the blossoms and leaves of the hemp plant, and is used for a variety of purposes.

1c) Where did the word 'marijuana' come from?

The word 'marijuana' is a Mexican slang term which became popular in the late 1930's in America, during a series of media and government programs which we now refer to as the 'Reefer Madness Movement.' It refers specifically to the medicine part of cannabis, which Mexican soldiers used to smoke.

Today in the U.S., hemp (meaning the roots, stalk, and stems of the cannabis plant) is legal to possess. No one can arrest you for wearing a hemp shirt, or using hemp paper. Marijuana (The flowers, buds, or leaves of the cannabis plant) is not legal to possess, and there are stiff fines and possible jail terms for having any marijuana in your possession. The seeds are legal to possess and eat, but only if they are sterilized (will not grow to maturity.)

Since it is not possible to grow the hemp plant without being in possession of marijuana, the United States does not produce any industrial hemp products, and must import them or, more often, substitute others. (There is a way to grow hemp legally, but it involves filing an application with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the DEA very rarely ever gives its permission.) This does not seem to have stopped people from producing and using marijuana, though. In many of the United States, marijuana is the number one cash crop, mostly because it fetches a very high price on the black market.

2a) How can hemp be used as a food?

Hemp seed is a highly nutritious source of protein and essential fatty oils. Many populations have grown hemp for its seed -- most of them eat it as 'gruel' which is a lot like oatmeal. The leaves can be used as roughage, but not without slight psycho-active side-effects. Hemp seeds do not contain any marijuana and they do not get you 'high.'

Hemp seed protein closely resembles protein as it is found in the human blood. It is fantastically easy to digest, and many patients who have trouble digesting food are given hemp seed by their doctors. Hemp seed was once called 'edestine' and was used by scientists as the model for vegetable protein.

Hemp seed oil provides the human body with essential fatty acids. Hemp seed is the only seed which contains these oils with almost no saturated fat. As a supplement to the diet, these oils can reduce the risk of heart disease. It is because of these oils that birds will live much longer if they eat hemp seed.

With hemp seed, a vegan or vegetarian can survive and eat virtually no saturated fats. One handful of hemp seed per day will supply adequate protein and essential oils for an adult.

2b) What are the benefits of hemp compared to other food crops?

Hemp requires little fertilizer, and grows well almost everywhere. It also resists pests, so it uses little pesticides. Hemp puts down deep roots, which is good for the soil, and when the leaves drop off the hemp plant, minerals and nitrogen are returned to the soil. Hemp has been grown on the same soil for twenty years in a row without any noticeable depletion of the soil.

Using less fertilizer and agricultural chemicals is good for two reasons. First, it costs less and requires less effort. Second, many agricultural chemicals are dangerous and contaminate the environment -- the less we have to use, the better.

2c) How about soy? Is hemp competitive as a world source of protein?

Hemp does not produce quite as much protein as soy, but hemp seed protein is of a higher quality than soy. Agricultural considerations may make hemp the food crop of the future. In addition to the fact that hemp is an easy crop to grow, it also resists UV-B light, which is a kind of sunlight blocked by the ozone layer. Soy beans do not take UV-B light very well. If the ozone layer were to deplete by 16%, which by some estimates is very possible, soy production would fall by 25-30%.

We may have to grow hemp or starve -- and it won't be the first time that this has happened. Hemp has been used to 'bail out' many populations in time of famine. Unfortunately, because of various political factors, starving people in today's underdeveloped countries are not taking advantage of this crop. In some places, this is because government officials would call it 'marijuana' and pull up the crop. In other countries, it is because the farmers are busy growing coca and poppies to produce cocaine and heroin for the local Drug Lord. This is truly a sad state of affairs. Hopefully someday the Peace Corps will be able to teach modern hemp seed farming techniques and end the world's protein shortage.

3a) How can hemp be used for cloth?

The stalk of the hemp plant has two parts, called the bast and the hurd. The fiber (bast) of the hemp plant can be woven into almost any kind of cloth. It is very durable. In fact, the first Levi's blue jeans were made out of hemp for just this reason. Compared to all the other natural fibers available, hemp is more suitable for a large number of applications.

Here is how hemp is harvested for fiber: A field of closely spaced hemp is allowed to grow until the leaves fall off. The hemp is then cut down and it lies in the field for some time washed by the rain. It is turned over once to expose both sides of the stalk evenly. During this time, the hurd softens up and many minerals are returned to the soil. This

is called 'retting,' and after this step is complete, the stalks are brought to a machine which separates the bast and the hurd. We are lucky to have machines today -- men used to do this last part by hand with hours of back-breaking labor.

3b) Why is it better than cotton?

The cloth that hemp makes may be a little less soft than cotton, (though there are also special kinds of hemp, or ways to grow or treat hemp, that can produce a soft cloth) but it is much stronger and longer lasting. (It does not stretch out.) Environmentally, hemp is a better crop to grow than cotton, especially the way cotton is grown nowadays. In the United States, the cotton crop uses half of the total pesticides. (Yes, you heard right, one half of the pesticides used in the entire U.S. are used on cotton.) Cotton is a soil damaging crop and needs a lot of fertilizer.

4a) How can hemp be used to make paper?

Both the fiber (bast) and pulp (hurd) of the hemp plant can be used to make paper. Fiber paper was the first kind of paper, and the first batch was made out of hemp in ancient China. Fiber paper is thin, tough, brittle, and a bit rough. Pulp paper is not as strong as fiber paper, but it is easier to make, softer, thicker, and preferable for most everyday purposes. The paper we use most today is a 'chemical pulp' paper made from trees. Hemp pulp paper can be made without chemicals from the hemp hurd. Most hemp paper made today uses the entire hemp stalk, bast and hurd. High-strength fiber paper can be made from the hemp baste, also without chemicals.

The problem with today's paper is that so many chemicals are used to make it. High strength acids are needed to make quality (smooth, strong, and white) paper out of trees. These acids produce chemicals which are very dangerous to the environment. Paper companies do their best to clean these chemicals up (we hope.) Hemp offers us an opportunity to make affordable and environmentally safe paper for all of our needs, since it does not need much chemical treatment. It is up to consumers, though, to make the right choice -- these dangerous chemicals can also be used on hemp to make a slightly more attractive product. Instead of buying the whiter, brighter role of toilet paper, we will need to think about what we are doing to the planet.

Because of the chemicals in today's paper, it will turn yellow and fall apart as acids eat away at the pulp. This takes several decades, but because of this publishers, libraries and archives have to order specially processed acid free paper, which is much more expensive, in order to keep records. Paper made naturally from hemp is acid free and will last for centuries.

4b) Why can't we just keep using trees?

The chemicals used to make wood chemical pulp paper today could cause us a lot of trouble tomorrow. Environmentalists have long been concerned about the effects of dioxin and other compounds on wildlife and even people. Beyond the chemical pollution, there are agricultural reasons why we should use cannabis hemp instead. When trees are harvested, minerals are taken with them. Hemp is much less damaging to the land where it is grown because it leaves these minerals behind.

A simpler answer to the above question is:

Because we are running out! It was once said that a squirrel could climb from New England to the banks of the Mississippi River without touching the ground once. The European settler's appetite for firewood and farmland put an end to this. When the first wood paper became a huge industry, the United States Department of Agriculture began to worry about the 'tree supply.' That is why they went in search of plant pulp to replace wood. Today some 'conservatives' argue that there are more forests now than there ever were. This is neither true, realistic nor conservative: these statistics do not reflect the real world. Once trees have been removed from a plot of land, it takes many decades before biological diversity and natural cycles return to the forest, and commercial tree farms simply do not count as forest -- they are farm land.

As just mentioned, many plant fibers were investigated by the USDA -- some, like kenaf, were even better suited

than cannabis hemp for making some qualities of paper, but hemp had one huge advantage: robust vitality. Hemp generates immense amounts of plant matter in a three month growing season. When it came down to producing the deluge of paper used by Americans, only hemp could compete with trees. In fact, according to the 1916 calculations of the USDA, one acre of hemp would replace an entire four acres of forest. And, at the same time, this acre would be producing textiles and rope.

Today, only 4% of America's old-growth forest remains standing -- and there is talk about building roads into that for logging purposes! Will our policy makers realize in time how easy it would be to save them?

5a) How can hemp be used as a fuel?

The pulp (hurd) of the hemp plant can be burned as is or processed into charcoal, methanol, methane, or gasoline. The process for doing this is called destructive distillation, or 'pyrolysis.' Fuels made out of plants like this are called 'biomass' fuels. This charcoal may be burned in today's coal-powered electric generators. Methanol makes a good automobile fuel, in fact it is used in professional automobile races. It may someday replace gasoline.

Hemp may also be used to produce ethanol (grain alcohol.) The United States government has developed a way to make this automobile fuel additive from cellulosic biomass. Hemp is an excellent source of high quality cellulosic biomass. One other way to use hemp as fuel is to use the oil from the hemp seed -- some diesel engines can run on pure pressed hemp seed oil. However, the oil is more useful for other purposes, even if we could produce and press enough hemp seed to power many millions of cars.

5b) Why is it better than petroleum?

Biomass fuels are clean and virtually free from metals and sulfur, so they do not cause nearly as much air pollution as fossil fuels. Even more importantly, burning biomass fuels does not increase the total amount of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere. When petroleum products are burned, carbon that has been stored underground for millions of years is added to the air; this may contribute to global warming through the 'Greenhouse Effect', (a popular theory which says that certain gases will act like a wool blanket over the entire Earth, preventing heat from escaping into space.) In order to make biomass fuels, this carbon dioxide has to be taken out of the air to begin with -- when they are burned it is just being put back where it started.

Another advantage over fossil fuels is that biomass fuels can be made right here in the United States, instead of buying them from other countries. Instead of paying oil drillers, super-tanker captains, and soldiers to get our fuel to us, we could pay local farmers and delivery drivers instead. Of course, it is possible to chop down trees and use them as biomass. This would not be as beneficial to the environment as using hemp, especially since trees that are cut down for burning are 'whole tree harvested.' This means the entire tree is ripped up and burned, not just the wood. Since most of the minerals which trees use are in the leaves, this practice could ruin the soil where the trees are grown. In several places in the United States, power companies are starting to do this -- burning the trees in order to produce electricity, because that is cheaper than using coal. They should be using hemp, like researchers in Australia started doing a few years ago. (Besides, hemp provides a higher quality and quantity of biomass than trees do.)

6a) How can hemp be used as a medicine?

Marijuana has thousands of possible uses in medicine. Marijuana (actually cannabis extract) was available as a medicine legally in this country until 1937, and was sold as a nerve tonic -- but mankind has been using cannabis medicines much longer than that. Marijuana appears in almost every known book of medicine written by ancient scholars and wise men. It is usually ranked among the top medicines, called 'panaceas', a word which means 'cure-all'. The list of diseases which cannabis can be used for includes: multiple sclerosis, cancer treatment, AIDS (and AIDS treatment), glaucoma, depression, epilepsy, migraine headaches, asthma, pruritis, sclerodoma, severe pain, and dystonia. This list does not even consider the other medicines which can be made out of marijuana -- these are just some of the illnesses for which people smoke or eat whole marijuana today.

There are over 60 chemicals in marijuana which may have medical uses. It is relatively easy to extract these into food or beverage, or into some sort of lotion, using butter, fat, oil, or alcohol. One chemical, cannabitol, may be use-

ful to help people who cannot sleep. Another is taken from premature buds and is called cannabidiolic acid. It is a powerful disinfectant. Marijuana dissolved in rubbing alcohol helps people with the skin disease herpes control their sores, and a salve like this was one of the earliest medical uses for cannabis. The leaves were once used in bandages and a relaxing non-psychoactive herbal tea can be made from small cannabis stems.

The most well known use of marijuana today is to control nausea and vomiting. One of the most important things when treating cancer with chemotherapy or when treating AIDS with AZT or Foscavir, being able to eat well, makes the difference between life or death. Patients have found marijuana to be extremely effective in fighting nausea; in fact so many patients use it for this purpose even though it is illegal that they have formed 'buyers clubs' to help them find a steady supply. In California, some city governments have decided to look the other way and allow these clubs to operate openly.

Marijuana is also useful for fighting two other very serious and wide-spread disabilities. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness, caused by uncontrollable eye pressure. Marijuana can control the eye pressure and keep glaucoma from causing blindness. Multiple Sclerosis is a disease where the body's immune system attacks nerve cells. Spasms and many other problems result from this. Marijuana not only helps stop these spasms, but it may also keep multiple sclerosis from getting worse.

6b) What's wrong with all the prescription drugs we have?

They cost money and are hard to make. In many cases, they do not work as well, either. Some prescription drugs which marijuana can replace have very bad, even downright dangerous, side-effects. Cannabis medicines are cheap, safe, and easy to make.

Many people think that the drug dronabinol should be used instead of marijuana. Dronabinol is an exact imitation of one of the chemicals found in marijuana, and it may actually work on a lot of the above diseases, but there are some big problems with dronabinol, and most patients who have used both dronabinol and marijuana say that marijuana works better.

The first problem with Dronabinol is that it is even harder to get than marijuana. Many doctors do not like to prescribe dronabinol, and many drug stores do not want to supply it, because a lot of paperwork has to be filed with the Drug Enforcement Administration. Secondly, dronabinol comes in pills which are virtually useless to anyone who is throwing up, and it is hard to take just the right amount of dronabinol since it cannot be smoked. Finally, because dronabinol is only one of the many chemicals in cannabis, it just does not work for some diseases. Many patients do not like the effects of dronabinol because it does not contain some of the more calming chemicals which are present in marijuana.

7) What other uses for hemp are there?

One of the newest uses of hemp is in construction materials. Hemp can be used in the manufacture of 'press board' or 'composite board.' This involves gluing fibrous hemp stalks together under pressure to produce a board which is many times more elastic and durable than hardwood. Because hemp produces a long, tough fiber it is the perfect source for press-board. Another interesting application of hemp in industry is making plastic. Many plastics can be made from the high-cellulose hemp hurd. Hemp seed oil has a multitude of uses in products such as varnishes and lubricants.

Using hemp to build is by no means a new idea. French archeologists have discovered bridges built with a process that mineralizes hemp stalks into a long-lasting cement. The process involves no synthetic chemicals and produces a material which works as a filler in building construction. Called Isochanvre, it is gaining popularity in France. Isochanvre can be used as drywall, insulates against heat and noise, and is very long lasting.

'Bio-plastics' are not a new idea, either -- way back in the 1930's Henry Ford had already made a whole car body out of them -- but the processes for making them do need more research and development. Bio-plastics can be made without much pollution. Unfortunately, companies are not likely to explore bio-plastics if they have to either import the raw materials or break the law. (Not to mention compete with the already established petrochemical products.)



Bruxelles

Amsterdam



FEATHERS

Erik Wilson

We are jockeying for position, she and I, driving south on Interstate 5 just outside of Bakersfield. It's an automotive pas de deux that I've been dancing off and on all morning, with vehicles of all types and drivers of all persuasions and temperaments. This one just happens to be a blue Toyota, driven by a blonde woman who looks to be about five or ten years older than me, who seems determined to go just fast enough to keep me behind her as long as the other lane is crowded and I have no chance of swooping past her on the right and opening it up again. It's a rather macho game she's playing, one that I would not usually expect from a driver that looks like she does, but really not very much surprises me this morning, today, right now.

She's had a couple of chances to pull into the slow lane and let me pass her, but instead of taking those opportunities, she sped up and stayed just in front of me, looking at me in the rear view mirror. I'd seen it happen before, and I knew that at some point either I'd find an opening on the right, or she'd get tired of looking at my grill about to kiss her back bumper, pull over, and I'd win, zoom away and be shut of her and her kind. Until I got behind the next pokey person with not enough brains to drive sensibly and stay out of my way.

There's a big semi on the right that she's using for leverage right now. A big eighteen-wheeler bombing down this straight, brown, boring-ugly highway, that she's driving next to just fast enough to keep me from passing her on the right. As she pulls ahead far enough to where I think I can see an opening, I realize that there is a car in front of the truck, giving her another shield from being overtaken and making me sigh in frustration.

I ease up just slightly, pissed that I can't maneuver around her just yet, but knowing that I will eventually. Soon, I hope.

She looks once again in the rear view, and I hope that she can see the expression on my face. I don't resort to gestures or horn-honking or lights flashing, just a scowl and a slight shaking of my head. I can see what looks like a smug expression on her face, and I imagine that she can read mine as well.

I'm driving south because my life has gone south. My marriage is over, and Teresa and the kids are staying in the Bay Area, trying to pick up the pieces and go on with their lives without me being there to screw things up anymore. I'm heading to my brother's place in Echo Park, with the idea that maybe I can start over again and not make such a mess of things this time. Try to dry out, give up the booze for a while, like I had promised Teresa I would so many times before. Maybe learn to work on controlling my anger a little better. Learn how to be an adult... whatever that means.

I'm driving south because it's the only direction I know how to go anymore.

It's going to be difficult, I know. I think I'll miss my kids most of all. Artie and little Maddy, Madison, the two sweetest kids on the face of this earth. Teresa is so good with them. It amazes me sometimes how good she is with those two. The amount of love she has for them is boundless, unending. She'd die for either one of them before she'd let something happen to them. And those two kids -- they love her right back. They'd follow their mother anywhere, do anything for her.

Sure, they also love me. When I'm sober.

Teresa used to have that kind of boundless love for me, had it for years, until I finally killed it inside her. I could see it coming, but I couldn't stop it. Couldn't stop drinking, even when I knew it was becoming a choice between the bottle and my family. I tried to slow things down, tried to look at what I had and what I was losing, but it seemed that life just moved too fast for me. I could never get a handle on it long enough to commit to staying sober.

It's been nearly 48 hours since I last had a drink, and things are moving fast right now, but not fast enough for me. I've got a woman in a blue Toyota in front of me that's keeping me from going the speed I want to drive, and I'm not happy. My gut is churning, and I've got that gun-metal taste in my mouth. A drink right now would go down real easy... real easy. But I'm trying not to think that way.



My brother says he'll help me stay dry. Says he might be able to get me a job at the studio in Burbank, if I can keep it up. We'll see. I plan on making an honest effort, but if it doesn't work out, well... it wouldn't be the first time I disappointed someone in my family.

This woman in front of me is really starting to get on my damn nerves. She's keeping a pace just in between the semi to my right and the car in front of it. I've had to drop back to where I'm just slightly behind the truck, keeping up my speed in the left lane. There are two cars behind me now, wanting to pass me and the semi and the car in front of it and this crazy blonde woman in the blue Toyota.

The car in front of the semi speeds up a bit, and I think maybe, just maybe, the woman will take the opening and drop in and let me pass. Before that can happen, though, I see brake lights. The car in the right lane swerves, then keeps going. Both the Toyota and the truck on my right hit their brakes, and I wonder what's happening. It only takes a minute to find out.

Some ducks -- a mother duck and six or seven baby ducks -- have wandered out onto the highway, and are apparently trying to cross to the median strip in the middle. The mother walks in the lead, and the baby ducks

all stay close to her, following her. They are in the middle of the right lane, probably scared by the car that just swerved and missed them, but unable to go anywhere fast enough to avoid the rest of the oncoming traffic. The truck on my right is doing at least 80, and there isn't a hope in hell that he can do anything about these ducks in his path.

The woman ahead of me hits her brakes, and I do the same. As we brake, the semi plows into the group of ducks, hitting the mother with the front tire and killing her instantly. She is squashed flat, one with the pavement, and feathers fly into the air as the truck keeps moving. He misses most of the babies, as far as I can tell, and in my rear view mirror I can see them scurrying back to the side of the road, away from the highway and their dead mother's body.

I pass the truck driver, and I can see him shaking his head. I feel sorry for the guy, but at the same time I know that there was nothing he could do. Not a damn thing.

After about a mile, the woman in the blue Toyota pulls into the right lane and lets me pass. I look at her as I do, and I see that she has her hand to her mouth, and it looks like she's crying. I hit the gas and pass her by.

What a terrible thing to see, I think. Those poor baby ducks. Those poor baby ducks.

Susan Sovereign

untitled

Donnie and Anna were once again at church camp. This was the second session of the summer. At first, Sam and I didn't think they would go, but both of the children begged so hard that we relented and let them. This meant the twins were lonesome, bored, and whiney. Even though I tried distracting them with crayons, construction paper, paste, and safety scissors, they would only play a short time before demanding that I play something else with them. At this rate, the breakfast dishes would still be on the table when Sam got home from work. Perhaps the answer was to play something with them that would allow me to at least load the dishwasher while we were busy. When Brian suggested hide and seek, it sounded like the answer to my problem. Both twins loved to play this game, quite possibly because they always won. When we first started playing, I would pretend I couldn't find them. Lately, they were getting good enough at choosing places that sometimes I really couldn't find them.

It was always my turn to be 'it'. The twins didn't enjoy having to hunt for me. They thought Mommy should always be readily available and easy to find, even during a game. We had been playing for about 5 minutes when the front doorbell sounded. Brad and Brian had just hidden, so I went to the door by myself. It was the UPS man with a package for Sam. This was a different person than the regular delivery person. I had never seen him before. He said his name was Jim.

Scrutinizing the label, I tried to decide what Sam could have ordered. Possibly some 'man' thing he thought he absolutely had to have, like an automatic battery post cleaner. (I didn't realize there was such a thing until he ordered and received one.)

The timer on the stove sounded, indicating that my cake should be done. Hustling out to the kitchen, I tested the cake and then set it on the counter to cool. Brian was giggling in the background. He thought he had hidden someplace where I could never find him. I placed the shortening, large mixing bowl, powdered sugar, vanilla, and mixer on the counter, and then called out, "Now where can those twins be? I can't find them anywhere at all!"

This comment was greeted by more giggling. I decided that it was time to find them. Brian was hiding in the closet. (That's his favorite hiding place. Two times out of three, that's where he can be found.) Brad wasn't in any of his usual hiding places. I began searching in earnest for him, determined to find him immediately if not sooner. After about ten minutes, however, I decided that I better call him in "Free!" This would indicate to him that he had won and that I could not find him.

Although I called out "Free" over and over, he didn't appear. Quizzing Brian had no positive results. He just kept saying that Brad was hiding where I'd never find him. I was beginning to think he was right. I searched high, I searched low, and I searched in between. Where could that little scoundrel be? After about another 20 minutes with no positive results, I panicked! As far as I'm concerned, when I have a problem with no way that I can see to solve it, the only answer is to call Sam. I called him.

At first, Sam thought I was only teasing. He said that if anyone kidnapped one of the twins, they'd bring them back before very long. Then he asked how in the world I managed to lose a child when I hadn't been away from the house all day. I didn't know quite how to answer that one. I'd been trying to figure it out myself.

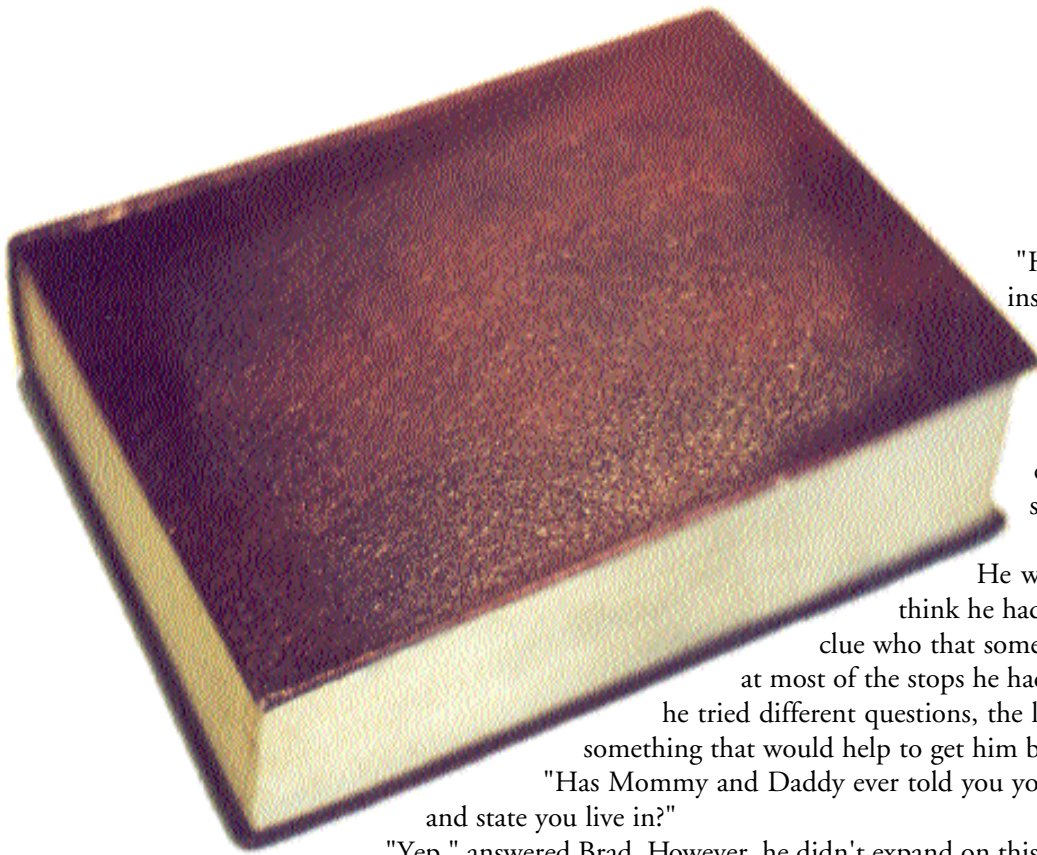
Meanwhile, Brad had climbed into the back of the UPS truck while the Jim was talking with me. There was a nice soft blanket and pillow in the back of the truck (No, I don't know why.), so Brad curled up and was soon fast asleep. Jim got into the truck and drove off, unknowingly taking Brad with him.

After an hour or so, and numerous stops later, Brad awakened. He called out that he'd like a drink of water. Jim was startled to hear that small voice from the back of the van. He slammed the brakes on and dashed around the van, opened the back door, and lifted Brad from inside and set him on the ground.

Brad has never been afraid of a stranger, especially one who offered him a candy bar. Jim asked Brad what his name was. Brad looked intently at the man and said, "I don't know what your name is. I've never seen you before!" The man at first was confused, and then explained he wanted to know what Brad's name was. Brad replied, "Brad." Jim asked what his last name was. Brad said that was the last and only name he ever owned.

Since obviously this line of questioning wasn't going to get much information, Jim asked Brad what his Daddy's name was. Brad crunched away on the candy bar, got a mouthful, and said, "Daddy."

"No, what I mean is, what's his first name?" he quizzed.



"His first name is Daddy!" Brad insisted.

Jim decided he would try another tact. "Where do you live?"

Brad looked at him as if the man weren't too intelligent, crossed his chubby little legs, and said, "I live at home."

By now Jim was getting worried. He was concerned that someone would think he had kidnapped Brad, only he hadn't a clue who that someone could be. There were children at most of the stops he had made. He decided that perhaps if he tried different questions, the little tyke might be able to tell him something that would help to get him back home.

"Has Mommy and Daddy ever told you your address? You know, like the city and state you live in?"

"Yep," answered Brad. However, he didn't expand on this comment.

"Well, what did they say your address was?" he queried eagerly.

"Daddy says we live in the state of confusion most of the time," Brad retorted sincerely. "I'm hungry," he declared.

The only food in the van was more candy and a soft drink. Fearing that Brad might not know how to unwrap the sweet confections, he peeled the wrapper off and held it out to Brad. Brad clamped down on the candy. Unfortunately, he also managed to clamp down on Jim's fingers. He bit hard enough to almost draw blood. Jim jerked his fingers back, unfortunately taking the candy, too. This caused Brad to begin crying and sobbing loudly. He quickly gave the candy back to Brad who immediately ceased his wailing.

By this time, Jim was getting desperate. This was his first day on a new job, and he didn't want it to be the last. He called in on his radio to the home office and asked if they had any suggestions. At first, the people at the office thought he was joking and began teasing him about picking up unauthorized packages. The poor man didn't know what to do. At last he lost his temper and screamed, "I AM NOT JOKING. I HAVE A LITTLE BOY IN THE BACK OF MY VAN AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE CAME FROM!!!" That was when they began to take him seriously.

The dispatcher asked him to describe the little boy. The route man replied, "He's short, has brown eyes, blonde hair and lots of real sharp teeth. I'd guess him to be about 3 or so. I don't think he was in the van when I left this morning. As a matter of fact, I didn't know he was in the van until about five minutes ago!"

The dispatcher said, "Now calm down, Jim. I'll start calling the places you've delivered to this morning. Read me a list of where all you've been."

When Jim started down the list, he read each name slowly and distinctly, pausing in between people. The Sovereign's were about the sixth place he read. The dispatcher excitedly said, "Whoa! They have twin boys about that age. I'll give them a call right now. Hold on!"

Susan grabbed the phone on the first jingle. "Hello, hello! Brad! Brad! Is that you?"

The dispatcher said, "No, Ma'am, it isn't Brad. My name is Charlie, but I think I might know where Brad is if he's a little boy about 3."

"My baby! Do you have my baby? Is he all right? Where is he? Why did you take him? Can you bring him right home or shall I come get him?"

The dispatcher finally managed to break in and tell her that Brad was in the delivery truck and that he would be returned to her in about an hour.

It would be difficult to say who was happier when Brad got home. It might have been Susan. It might have been Sam. It might have been Brad, but I truly think that it was more than likely the UPS deliveryman who was the happiest.

Bargaining Power

Gerry Doyle

It took Jake three tries to find the living-room light switch. And even after he could see where he was going, his feet wanted him to walk any direction but a straight line.

He dropped his keys and wallet on the kitchen counter without bothering to try for the light switch there.

His jacket, which smelled more of stale Marlboros than it did leather, got tossed over the back of a chair at the dining room table. As his eyes adjusted to the dimness of the kitchen, he was able to stagger down the hall to his room, the fingertips of his right hand dragging along the wall.

He plunged down on the bed and bent over to untie his shoes. The laces seemed tangled up... fuck it. Jake swung his legs up on top of the green comforter and tried his hardest to pass out.

He succeeded for a few minutes. Then his body reminded him that his head was spinning. His eyes flew open.

He lunged out of bed, a blitzkrieg mission to the bathroom eclipsing coherent thought. His shoelaces caught underfoot, and even in the dark, his inner ear's abilities mangled by alcohol, he saw the wall reaching up to slam him in the face.

It couldn't have been that much later when he woke.

He rolled over, tried to sit up and yelped as his head reminded him why he was lying on the floor. But the impact seemed to have knocked any urge to puke right out of him. He felt his forehead. There was a bump, but no blood.

He staggered to his feet. Whoa--yep, he was still drunk. He closed his eyes and confirmed that, headache or no, the room inside his head was spinning.

He needed to stay awake until his body decided to play nice.

Jake staggered back into the living room, first grabbing a few ice cubes to hold against his throbbing noggin.

He collapsed on the couch and turned on the TV.

"... it's beautiful, really, you'd think it would be far more unwieldy because of its pure *size*, but actually it's very *graceful*. And you can see the garnets here, they're all cut *perfectly*, there must be less than a *millimeter* of margin of error. Now, *normally* this would go for, you can see here, \$155.50, and *our* price would be *less expensive*, yes, at \$105.05. But today, because Thanksgiving is right around the corner, we want to offer it to you--and it will go fast--for *\$65*."

Jake again fought the urge to sprint for the bathroom. The smiling, extra-jovial face on the TV was trying to sell him jewelry. Home shopping certainly wouldn't keep him awake.

He fumbled with the cable remote. He had just gotten the dish system that morning. James' friend's friend, the crooked cable guy, had installed it for him in near-silence. Only at the end, after Jake had handed him five \$20 bills, did he explain what he had done and how to operate it.

But now he couldn't figure out the fucking remote.

At least, it didn't seem he could. The channel wasn't changing. The volume wasn't changing.

The man on screen, sitting in a tailored, tie-less suit in front of an orange-on-orange patterned background, managed to widen his smile by a few centimeters.

"And don't change the channel, either! Coming up in a few minutes, you can see this *beautiful* *diamondique* pendant, *handcrafted* in Brazil! And we'll *include* the chain, again, for Thanksgiving. *Perfect* jewelry for the holidays."

Jake's mouth began to drift open as he concentrated all his alcohol-sodden willpower on keeping his eyelids above half-staff.

Jake snapped his eyes open and wiped a thread of drool off his chin.

The announcer was holding a trinket now, a chain of some kind. He seemed excited about it. In a bar on the left side of the screen, the price--the SPECIAL price--was underlined in red. It was a bargain at \$220.

Underneath the price, a clocked ticked down. It was at 1:22.

"*Really*, you won't regret this purchase. *Look* at how the fittings catch the light. As you can see on Monique, here," the salesman said, gesturing at the 20-something woman sitting on a couch next to him, "it goes *dazzlingly* with a bright-colored outfit, but trust me, for evening wear? It's *perfect*. Time is running out, here, and you'll be *kicking* yourself if you don't act."

Jake tried to snicker, but his stomach muscles didn't want to cooperate. He settled for sneering at the TV.

The announcer seemed to be getting a bit testy.

"Look, I <I>realize</I> it's late, and maybe you already have some pretty jewelry. But this is a <I>must-have</I>. You <I>can't</I> say no to this deal. Ignoring such a <I>fantastic</I> bargain would be a truly <I>painful </I> mistake."

The surface area of the man's smile had diminished by a good two-thirds.

"Fuck you, Jack," Jake said, slurring "youJack" into one word. "Jake don't wear jewelry."

The announcer's smile was all the way gone now. The timer hit zero. The announcer even had stopped talking.

Even though his neurons weren't firing the way he wanted them to, Jake was spooked. He started fidgeting with the remote again.

This time the channel changed, dissolving into snow and white noise.

It was too much for his depressed system. The remote clattered to the floor as his brain gave up trying to keep him awake.

And again, Jake woke to intense pain.

It felt like he was being pummeled. Then, as his consciousness asserted itself a little more, he realized he WAS being pummeled. The lights were off, but two shadowy figures had his arms and legs pinned to the couch while a third whacked him with a jingling sock. Each impact rattled his teeth. The blows were concentrated on his midsection, and it was too much. Jake yakked.

One eye screwed up its courage, overcame the gummed-up eyelashes and stretched itself open. After adjusting to the sun streaming through the windows, it took stock of its surroundings. It was on the couch. The TV was off. The coffee table had its usual assortment of magazines, plus an open cigar box. And there seemed to be splashes of vomit scattered about.

Jake's eye persuaded him to open its partner. Jake made several observations: He had thrown up on himself, his couch and several other living-room items. He was clothed. He felt like he had been hit by a truck.

He took a chance and sat up. His head was pounding, and his stomach felt sore, but he survived the experience of moving to a more vertical position.

After a shower, he threw the sofa cover into the wash and settled down to the task of trying to scrub the puke out of his rug.

As he worked, pieces of the night before resurfaced in his memory. Meeting Dan, Sally Smith and Miles at the bar. It was three hours of free well drinks for a \$20 cover. He met some girls. They danced. He didn't remember how he got home, but after a few minutes decided it wasn't really important.

Then he remembered watching TV. He glanced over at the silent set, but the cigar box caught his eye. It was old--once upon a time, it had held Cuba's finest--and now he used it to keep his cash stash in. Why was it on the coffee table?

And, now that he picked it up and looked in it, why was it EMPTY? He'd had more than \$200 in there, and now it was gone? What the fuck had he DONE when he was drunk?

After a few minutes of speculation, he gave up and called Sally.

She was hung over, too.

"Fuck, Jake, you sonofabitch, it's not even 11," she said by way of greeting.

"Smith. Did I spend a lot of money last night?" he asked.

There was silence.

"Yeah, you put your card up at the bar after the free drink time was over. That's why I have this headache, asshole. Don't you remember promising the bartender a \$100 tip when you signed her receipt?"

Jake didn't. But it answered his question.

"Okay, Sal," he said. "Thanks."

She grunted, and he heard dialtone.

Jake continued to wrack his uncooperative brain for details about the previous evening.

Then the memory of the shadowy figures hit him like a sudden right cross.

He glanced at the front door. It was locked, bolted and chained.

After hobbling to the back door, he discovered it was shut tight, too. As were all the windows.

But in his bedroom, he saw a dent on the doorframe near the floor. And remembered falling. That would explain the huge shiners on his forehead and right cheek. What's more, excessive vomiting--and judging from the spray patterns on the couch and rug, "excessive" was being kind--would account for the sore midsection.

But it had seemed so... vivid.

But, he reminded himself, he had been so... drunk.

As the weeks went by, Jake's recollection of that Thursday night became less surreal and more forgettable. Vomiting, sure, he could remember that. Well, cleaning it up, anyway. But weird TV shows? Shadowy intruders? Jake didn't want to admit it, but it wasn't the first time he had hallucinated when he was drunk.

Still, he made a point of not watching TV when he got home, sober or drunk. He couldn't put his finger on the reason why, but it just seemed more <I>inviting</I> to sit down and play video games. Or read. Or talk on the phone. Sometimes even go straight to bed.

The \$200, though, that bugged him. He didn't like keeping cash around, and now he was even more paranoid. Hell, it didn't even take an intruder for him to lose the money--he had managed to rob himself.

Even so, the farther that night fell into his past, the less it bothered him.

He never mentioned it to anyone. Sober, at least.

"Sal, listen," he said one night, leaning across the bar table, trying to shout over the jukebox.

Sally bobbed her head. He wasn't sure she was listening to him or nodding along to Black Flag.

"Smith," he said. "Really, check this out. You remember that night where I called you really early the next morning? You called me an asshole."

She was paying attention.

"Yeah, man. You wanted to know whether you had been buying drinks for me and Miles and Dan. And of COURSE you were... that's why I keep you around, darlin'."

Jake smiled. Then frowned and fidgeted with his cocktail napkin, soaking up spilled Long Island iced tea.

"Well. See. I lost some money that night."

He looked at her. She squinted a little, but said nothing.

He struggled on.

"I mean, I don't remember spending it. But I wake up on my couch," he said, sidestepping the whole vomit nastiness, "and there's my cigar box on the coffee table. And it's empty."

Sally leaned back and took a judicious sip of her vodka tonic.

"Did you buy some smoke or something?"

Jake shook his head, trying not to smile.

"Um, no, actually. I looked," he said. He giggled. "No, I couldn't figure out what I spent it on."

"Well, Logan, I don't know what to tell you," she said. "That's fucked-up. But it's not like you needed the money, right? Maybe you ordered \$200 worth of pizza. Or beer, more likely. Make sure to get a receipt next time."

Jake tossed a matchbook at her, missing and bouncing it off a passing cocktail waitress.

He and Sally dissolved into laughter. The Cardigans replaced Henry Rollins on the juke.

Miles Carver emerged from the bar-hugging crowd and set a pitcher on the table along with his glass and a basket of popcorn.

He looked back and forth between Jake and Sally, who still were gripped by hilarity.

"What?" he said.

"Jake had some money stolen by little green men," Sally said. "No big deal. He's gonna do some kind of X-Files investigation."

"Hey, as long as I get Scully, I'm happy," Jake said.

He launched his soggy cocktail napkin at her, this time scoring a direct hit on her forehead.

"Jake Eric Logan, you suck," she said, drilling him with a handful of popcorn.

And the three of them settled down to the business of getting further sloshed and discussing the weekend's big party.

The next night, stone-cold sober, Jake sat on the couch in front of the TV, staring at its blankness. The remote was in his hand. He was curious, in a Stephen King kind of way. Vague memories of something bizarre happening on that screen taunted the edges of his perception.

X-Files, indeed.

But all he saw as he turned it on was Craig Kilborn asking some starlet one of his Five Questions.

Jake felt kind of let down. He had been waiting for some big revelation, a psychic, Amityville, reach-out-of-the-TV-and-strangle-him experience.

But no.

It took all of 45 seconds for Jake to fall into his old routine of channel surfing. He caught portions of Bonanza, Scarecrow and Mrs. King, and even some kind of a Japanese show about clam diving. And, of course, there was porn.

Jake was happy that his illicit satellite hookup finally was providing him with the goods he expected.

Without thinking, with no effort on his part, Jake was entertained. His brain shut down, forgetting that there was any world outside of, say, the Ponderosa.

His consciousness was shrinking like the picture on a worn-out Trinitron.

And then someone offered to sell him a collector's edition "Little Victoria" china doll.

"Each outfit is <I>hand-sewn</I> for each doll. And you can see here--look at this one next to it--even the <I>facial</I> features are a little different on each one. They're so <I>adorable.</I> Even if you don't collect dolls, think how she would look all dressed up, sitting with your Easter decorations."

Jake's eyes focused. His jaw clicked shut.

Leaning forward on the couch, he watched a woman, her permed hair matching her platinum-white blouse, try to sell him a figurine. A doll. The woman wore enough makeup to suffocate a clown.

The woman made the doll's arm wave at the TV screen.

"Victoria, here, her limbs are <I>completely</I> movable. And, see, she can stand up!"

The camera zoomed in on the doll's vacant, blue-eyed face. The woman turned it so it faced the camera head-on.

"You <I>need</I> this doll," she said.

"Um, no," Jake said, his eyes flickering to the door. It was locked, bolted, chained. He walked over and buttressed the doorknob with a living-room chair.

Walking back to the couch, he saw that the camera had zoomed in the woman's shiny features.

"This doll is a <I>steal</I>, at only \$125. The skin is so <I>perfect,</I> so <I>beautiful</I>. This is one item you <I>definitely</I> would regret not buying."

Jake didn't notice his hand reach up and rub the spot on his head where, weeks ago, he had sported the shiner to end all shiners. That wording seemed familiar. Also threatening.

The woman was looking right at him. She had stopped talking.

The timer on the price bar along the left side of the screen ticked down.

Jake glanced around. Was he supposed to say something?

The woman blinked. The doll was staring at him, too.

"What the? Look. Does it LOOK like I need a doll? There's a Fugazi poster on the wall behind me, for fuck's sake."

The clock hit zero. Jake dropped the remote as TV snow blotted out the screen.

After picking the remote up off the carpet, he found the channel wouldn't change. He got up and turned the TV off.

Then, glancing at the door, he rifled through the hall closet until he found a 7-iron buried under some vacuum cleaner attachments. He went back to the couch and sat down, the golf club across his knees, staring at his front door.

It was 2:25 a.m.

The sound of his front door lock being picked didn't wake him. But when the chair was pushed back into the wall, the clatter snapped him into ass-kicking mode. His right hand, gripping the golf club, shot out in a warding-off gesture, and the mud-encrusted wedge shattered the end table lamp.

The man standing half-inside his apartment froze, right under the porch light. Jake stared, the golf club dangling from his fingers.

The guy in the doorway looked like a librarian. Late 30s, maybe, brown hair. He was wearing brown loafers and, it looked like, black jeans. His tucked-in green polo shirt looked too festive next to the crowbar in his right hand.

His eyes were the size of manhole covers.

That was the image Jake took in before the man and, it looked like, a couple of other people standing behind him bolted into the night.

The golf club clattered to the floor.

Jake peeled himself off the couch and walked to the still-open door. The chair was ruined.

And there was no sign of middle-aged intruders outside. Except for....

"Hello," Jake said, picking up the wallet. It was one of those chain wallets that wasn't supposed to ever fall out. The fake gold chain on this one had snapped. There was a Wisconsin driver's license, a Visa card, an AmEx card, a couple of business cards and \$32.

For the first time in his life, Jake slept with a golf club.

"Miles, what do you know about home shopping?" Jake asked. They were back at the Lyon. It was early--barely 8:30--and the music volume hadn't soared to conversation-quashing levels yet.

"It's fucked-up," Miles said. He took a sip of his Guinness.

Miles, a psychology major, never rushed into a conversation. Jake slurped his Long Island and waited.

"It's like this," Miles said. "It preys on people with low self-esteem. They don't want to be 'taken.' They want to be winners. So it kills them, absolutely KILLS them, to not be able to buy something that is A) a huuuuuge bargain, and B) selling fast. It's like, they buy it because it's too good a bargain to pass up. It's the one time, the ONLY time, they can beat the system. It makes them better than the people who go out and buy <I> their</I> Elvis commemorative plates at Kmart."

Jake waited. Miles just wanted to sip his brew.

"I mean, we've talked about it in class before. There's some really interesting research about it. Something like 90-plus percent of the people who regularly watch those channels buy stuff from them. And don't think the channels don't have shrinks of their own advising them how to best persuade their viewers to pick up a faux-Swiss cuckoo clock."

Jake waved at the cocktail waitress for another drink.

"So, it's like, they're addicted?" Jake asked. "They're so set on getting the best deal that they can't pass up anything? They can't say no?"

Miles nodded.

"And," Jake continued, "would they behave like addicts? Like, you know, sell a kidney so they could have a few hundred more dollars to spend?"

Miles nodded as he drank, sloshing a little beer onto his sweater.

"You have a drinking problem," Jake told him.

Miles mopped the foam off his upper lip.

"Damn straight, I do," he said.

It was Friday. His only class, a noon discussion of his lame-ass Western Civ survey, had ended five minutes ago. Jake was in the library.

Jake managed to find the journals he was looking for. He settled down on a couch with his CD player. The library wouldn't close for another 10 hours.

Miles had been totally right. This stuff was fascinating. According to the journals, people would seek counseling because of their shopping habits. Unlike when they were in a store and physically purchasing that nice lampshade or picture frame, there was no corporeal tie to their TV purchases.

So not only were they constantly being bombarded with too-good-to-be-true bargains, but they had no physical reminders that they were spending money.

One article detailed how a man collapsed into a three-month coma after he took two daytime jobs to pay for his shopping channel purchases. He had worked from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. as a paralegal. Then he went to a 7-Eleven and worked from 3:30 to 11:30 p.m. Then he went home and bought stuff on TV until 6:30, when he showered and drove back to the law firm. He started hallucinating after three days. He collapsed while changing the hotdog display on day five.

The business side of the industry was terrific, too. The figure Miles had quoted actually was a little low. Nearly 100 percent of the people who saw a home shopping show on a regular basis bought something. Figuring, conservatively, a million people see the show a day, and they each spend \$100... sheesh.

Jake photocopied a few pages, highlighted some stuff and went home.

He didn't turn on the TV.

But he would soon.

Saturday night, Jake begged off drinking. He dodged the insults and the curious jokes, made a quick stop by Radio Shack and settled down in his apartment with a map.

He refrained from drinking any of the beer in his fridge. He wanted to be clear-headed tonight. And mean.

About 9:30, Jake pulled up to an East Side townhouse.

He turned off the ignition, silencing the engine and Bob Marley, who had been wailing on the stereo. Jake checked the address on the driver's license again.

Yep, this was it. This white, well-painted townhouse on a well-lighted street. In a well-to-do neighborhood, no less.

As he climbed out of the car, he scanned nearby porches for nosy neighbors.

Nope. Everyone was watching TV, it seemed.

He walked up the steps to the townhouse. The lawn was cut to about three inches. There were some flowers growing in beds along the front of the house. A windsock fluttered next to the blue mailbox.

Jake pulled his baseball cap down a little lower over his face. He reached inside his jacket and clicked a switch.

Then he rang the doorbell.

As he expected, it was a few moments before he saw a shape moving behind the drapes on the front door. It opened a crack.

"Yes?" came a voice from around the door's edge.

Christ, Jake thought. He's acting like he lives in a gang war zone.

"Steve?" Jake said. "Hey, man. Don't you remember me?"

The door opened a few more inches and half a face peered around its edge. The door wasn't chained, Jake noticed.

"Yes?" the man said again.

Jake held up the wallet in front of him, Fox Mulder-style.

"I just need to ask you a few questions," he said. Then he let the wallet flop open, revealing the man's driver's license.

The man's eyes widened. Jake shouldered the door into him.

The man staggered into his living room, tripped over his own stockinged feet and sat down hard. Without looking, Jake shut the door with his heel.

Jake noticed that a home shopping channel was the featured entertainment on the man's big-screen TV. He took a couple of steps to his right and turned it off. He didn't want anyone to see this.

He turned the baseball cap backward so the man could see his face. Then he tossed the wallet into the man's lap.

"Hi there," Jake said. "You might remember me from such films as, 'You Tried to Break into My House but I Had a Golf Club.'"

Jake took a step closer to the man, who was staring down at the wallet.

"And I've photocopied everything in that wallet, plus taken fingerprints. It's amazing the stuff you can buy on a police-supply Web site," he said. "Now, I'm going to ask you some questions, and you're going to answer them, or you're going to look awful funny handing out those Information Technology Specialist business cards in the federal pen."

The man looked up at Jake. Yep, it was the same librarian-looking dude.

"What?" he asked. He said it like he was calling after a lost puppy.

"Pull up a chair, Steve McFells. That loveseat will do nicely," Jake said, motioning to the nearest piece of furniture.

McFells, keeping his eyes on Jake the whole time, stood, shoved his wallet in his back pocket, and collapsed into the loveseat.

Jake grabbed a wooden chair and set it in front of McFells.

"Can you talk?" he asked.

"Of course," McFells croaked.

"Okay, then. Let's start with... hmmm... okay, how about this: Why the FUCK were you breaking into my apartment?"

McFells swallowed. His Adam's apple never seemed to reemerge from the junction of his collarbones.

"Who says I... I mean, I didn't break in anyplace," he said.

Jake shook his head.

"No, see, you DID. That's why your picture is on my security camera. That's why your wallet and your fingerprints were at my apartment, which was broken into."

McFells coughed.

"Okay, fine. I was there. I was there and I was supposed to be there. But I just knocked on the door and it opened. I didn't know...."

Jake cut him off with another shake of his head.

"No. My door was locked twice and chained. You had a crowbar in your hand. Didn't you?"

McFells nodded.

"Didn't you?" Jake repeated. "Say it!"

"Yes! Yes, I had a crowbar," McFells looked at the floor again. Jake noticed that his cow-brown eyes never made direct contact.

"You showed up at my apartment with two other people," Jake said. "You had a crowbar. You picked the locks, and had pried the door open when the chair fell over. That's when I saw you. And you saw me. And then you ran. Is that correct?"

McFells crossed his feet at the ankles. Rubbed the toes of his left foot with his right.

"Yes. That's what happened. But I just had the crowbar for the door. Not to use to... you know... not to use on anyone."

Jake almost smiled.

"Fine, whatever. We'll get back to that. Now, why were you there?"

McFells mumbled something.

Jake leaned in. "I'm sorry, could you repeat that?"

"Fifty Percent Club," McFells said, turning the mumble's volume up a few notches.

"Mmm-hmmm. And what is that?"

McFells showed a little animation. He sat up straighter and gestured with his nose at the TV over Jake's left shoulder.

"You know, on the Show. It helps with the Show."

Jake sneaked a glance at the TV. It still was off.

"How often do you watch the show, Steve?"

McFells smiled.

"Oh, all the time. It's the best thing. The best thing. You can find things on there, <I> useful </I> things, <I> pretty</I> things, and they always sell them to you cheaper, because they know you deserve it. Good bargains. And the people on the Show are so nice. So friendly."

McFells reached for the remote.

Jake snatched it off the loveseat and tossed it across the room.

McFells looked hurt.

Jake turned back to him.

"So you like the show."

McFells nodded.

"I don't," Jake said.

McFells nodded.

"Is that why you were at my apartment?"

McFells nodded.

"Say it," Jake said.

"I don't understand how you can watch the Show and not realize the deals they have and they're offering them to you, trying to help, really, and you'd be foolish not to take advantage. But I'm even better than that because I get a discount. Fifty percent. They give me even better deals. And I help them with customers. People who don't understand. They can see you, you know. Through a satellite, they see you, and they want to give you these bargains, and you rejected them. Me and the others came over to make sure you understood. Once you buy a few things, you're there. You understand."

McFells finally took a breath. He dived back in.

"We were going to come in, break in, maybe hit you like the other time, and then you could buy something. And it would be great. Like those sapphiresque cufflinks they had that night. I got those. You should have gotten them."

"The 'other' time?" Jake asked.

"Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm," McFells said. "We hit you, and you bought that necklace, and you threw up on Alice."

"That I did," Jake said. "Now, I need some addresses and phone numbers."

As Jake was leaving, two addresses, three numbers and a packing receipt stuffed in his pockets, he turned and looked at McFells, who was sitting on the loveseat examining his socks.

"Hey, Steve," Jake said.

McFells looked up.

"That stuff I bought? They never sent it to me. Not so great service, huh?"

McFells was still sitting there, looking like a sniper had killed Santa Claus, when Jake closed the door.

Jake made two other housecalls that night, having hours-long chats with the other two people who had come to his apartment. Alice had traumatic recollections of being puked on. Both she and the other man were forthcoming with all the details Jake wanted.

And they all bought the idea that a poor college student could somehow afford a security camera in his living room.

About 3 in the morning, Jake used his cell phone to call Miles. He wasn't ready to finish this tonight, and he didn't want to sleep in his own apartment, 7-iron or no.

Miles sounded less than sober when he picked up.

"Jake. Whafuck, man?"

"Carver, man, I needa crash at your place."

Jake heard the sound of a man's respiratory system struggling to overcome a case of beer and a pack of cigarettes.

"You got the couch. And don't come upstairs. I got a chickie up here."

A half-hour later, Jake had let himself into the apartment. It was totally silent. Either Miles' night hadn't gone the way he had planned or, as the Dead Kennedys would suggest, his stamina had been weakened by a pint too many.

He kicked off his shoes and lay down on the couch, his jacket stuffed under his head as a pillow.
Jake dreamed of a neverending field of snow.

On Monday, Jake skipped all his classes.

He was surprised that no one looked at him sideways as he made his arrangements. He had been under the impression that this was all, like, French Connection-style cloak-and-dagger shit. But even at the post office, they didn't ask a lot of questions.

When he got back to his apartment, it was starting to get dark. Perfect. He heated up some week-old Chinese food--the microwave would kill anything nasty that had materialized in it--and chowed down as he watched the Chiefs demolish the Raiders on Monday Night Football.

Nine-thirty. Almost time.

Jake arranged the accouterments of his plan around him. The minicassette recorder. Three cassettes. Several pages of notes. His cordless phone. And a script.

Jake set his VCR to "record."

He picked up the remote.

He pushed the red "channel up" button.

There was a flicker of static.

And it began.

"The beauty of this phone is that it's so powerful, 2.4 gigahertz, that you can take it anywhere in your house, into the yard, wherever you need to go. And you can still talk. It's amazing."

A tall, redheaded woman was standing on screen, talking into a cordless phone. Its dark blue case matched her skirt-and-jacket combination.

"If you need to go out to the barn? No problem. If you need to go out to get the mail at the end of the driveway? No problem. And this shock-resistant case means I can do this," she said, rapping the phone with her knuckles, "and not hurt it."

Jake tried to look rapt. He nodded slowly, caressing his phone with his fingertips.

"And look at this," the woman said, dropping the phone into a clear plastic bucket of water. She fished it out, and continued talking. "It's completely waterproof. As you can see by the counter, our supplies are just getting gobbled up. And why not? At less than \$200, it's really a no-brainer. You can't get a deal like this at the big box stores. You can't get it anywhere. Except here."

Jake picked up his phone. He was sure he could hear the woman start talking a little faster.

"And if you call in the next minute and a half, you can get this lovely, durable belt clip. You can see here, it just hooks on, and then, bam! No more need to carry it around in your pocket, right? It's so light, you won't even know it's there. It's like having a cell phone in your own house. Now isn't that useful?"

Jake picked up the phone.

He wasn't sure, but he thought he saw her quiver a bit in mid-pitch.

He dialed the number on the screen. After a polite two rings, he heard, "Welcome to the nation's best shopping service. Can I assist you?"

Jake took a deep breath and looked at his notes and script.

"Oh, I'm a first-time buyer," Jake said, and then coughed. He hoped he sounded nervous. "I was wondering if I could talk to Susanna? On the show? I think that phone is just amazing, and I think it would be perfect for my wife."

There was a pause. Then, "Yes, I can put you on next. I just need your name and hometown."

Jake smiled.

A few seconds later, the TV muted as he had been instructed, he read subtitles.

SUSANNA: WELL WE HAVE A CALKER NOW. JAKE FROM MILLWAUKE. HI JAKE.

Jake realized he had actually heard those words a few seconds before he read them.

He coughed again.

"Uh, hi, Susanna. Wow, that phone sounds fantastic."

CALLER: WOW TAT PHOONE SOUNDS FANTASTRIC.

"Yes, it's amazing. Have you been watching? Did you see the water? That's what sold me," Susanna said.

"I know," Jake said. "It's phenomenal. In fact, we have a huge backyard, and my wife is always working in the garden by the back fence, and you know she hates to miss calls, so this would be perfect, especially with the belt clip."

CALLER: PESH RALLY WITH THE BELT LIP.

Jake hoped he wasn't overdoing it.

"So just one? It sounds to me like you could use more than one," Susanna said. Her smile looked big enough to engulf the phone in one bite.

SUSANNA: MORE THAN ONE.

Jake smiled back.

"Actually, I would like something else," he said. "I know about the 50 Percent Club. I know who supervises it. I know how long it's gone on. I have names and addresses of people who it has targeted. Dates. Places. I have it all on these cassettes," he said, waving them in front of the TV. "And before you send out some more feeble-minded shopping junkies to rough me up, I have six copies of these tapes and all my notes in six different safe deposit boxes. Did you realize that some cut-rate law offices will do things like set up a will in less than an hour? If I disappear, the boxes' contents go to all kinds of people, including my friends, my parents, the FBI, the Florida state police, the attorney general's office. It'll be great."

CALLER: OF LICE. ITLL BEE GREAT.

Jake continued.

"So what I'd like from you is not your crappy-ass phone, but the money you stole, plus \$10,000 cash, to my address, which I know you have. And then I want to never see you on my TV again. Know that if I ever hear from you or any of your people or, for that matter, disappear or anything, your business is done. Finished. Keep the zombies you have, I don't give a fuck. But stay away from me. Understand?"

Susanna still looked like she could swallow the phone. But now it was because she had the slack-jawed, amazed look of someone who just had been kneed in the groin by a Green Beret.

The screen flashed away from her to a closeup of a diamond tennis bracelet, the next item for sale.

And on the phone, Jake heard: "There's no way. You have...."

Jake cut off the speaker by holding up the tape recorder to the receiver. He pushed the "play" button.

A woman's voice came on in midsentence: "... the offices are in Sarasota. In Florida. Sean Hutchence, he's the one who runs the club, he calls us from there. He orders us to go beat people or whatever, help with their purchases. I have his direct number...."

Jake hit the "stop" button.

He put the phone back to his ear.

"Here's the way it works," he said. "This is an offer that's too good to pass up. Act now. Understand, motherfucker?"

There was silence. Then, he realized Susanna was back on TV.

SUSANNA: WELL, OUR CALLER HAS DECIED TO TAKE AN EVAN BETTER DEAL. WEVE TRANSFERED HIM TO AN OPERTOR.

The voice on the phone spoke.

"Fine," it said. "Don't call again."

And the line went dead.

Jake stood up and turned off the TV. He yanked the satellite feed out of the TV, then carried the converter box out to the backyard next to the dish. He beat them both into compost with an aluminum baseball bat.

The money came two days later. It was in a brown paper-wrapped package, like a box of checks. Jake was worried about a bomb, so he soaked it in his tub for a few hours. Then opened it.

Inside were soggy \$100 bills. One-hundred and two of them.

After depositing the money in his bank, he called Sally. This required celebration on a scale he and his destitute friends hadn't experienced since coming to school.

"Sal! What are you doing tonight?"

"Uh... I was going to stay in. Watch some TV. You know," she said. Her voice sounded less enthusiastic than usual. Maybe she was drunk. It was after noon, so that wasn't outside the realm of possibility.

"Actually, you're going out with me," Jake said. "First I'm going to buy us steaks and a stupidly expensive bottle of wine. Then I'm going to take us to get loaded on my tab. I know you're in. I'll pick you up at 7."

"Well, okay, Jake," she said. "I guess if we're not out too late... I have things I have to do tonight. When you come over, I have to show you this breadmaker I bought from this incredible store. But it's not really a store, like that you can walk into. It's amazing.

"You won't believe the deal I got."

Algiers; 1956

by Ryan Miller

<I>A note from the translator: In Algiers during the spring of 1962, my brother died. He would have turned 37 later that year. The car he was in, a Renault Dauphine, had been heading east on the Avenue de Bouzaréa when the driver brought the compact black sedan to a sudden stop at the Rue Franklin. A troop of students from a nearby boys school, exuberantly happy to be done with their scholastic day, had bolted into the street without looking.

On the back seat, concealed in a brightly colored shopping bag, was a bomb that they had intended to leave at a market where the shopkeepers and customers were predominantly Islamic. The explosion occurred one half hour earlier than anticipated. It has been speculated that the timer was faulty or that it had been set incorrectly.

Other than the occupants of the car there were two fatalities - a young couple, only recently married, walking along the sidewalk - and eleven injured. Had the Renault been at the head of the line of cars, instead of the third one back, it is doubtless that a number of schoolboys would have been killed.

There was nothing to distinguish this bombing from the hundreds of others that had taken place throughout Algeria that year.

By the spring of 1962, acts of terrorism by both the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) and the OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète) had become commonplace. The FLN was the revolutionary faction of the indigenous Algerian population in rebellion against French domination. The OAS was a splinter group of the French military comprised of French Algerians, the Pieds-Noirs, and those who sympathized with them; they sought through extreme violence to prevent the independence of Algeria.

In 1957 my brother published the following story which begins to explain how he ended up as a member of the OAS and how he came to be in the passenger seat of the Renault on that bright afternoon in April in the last tumultuous year of French rule.

- Raoul Mention</I>

Late one afternoon in September, my secretary had slipped noiselessly into my office and stood before my desk without saying anything. I was preoccupied with what I was reading; a pipeline project our office was working on was unimaginably behind schedule. Since its inception construction had been plagued by materials shortages and pilfering, work stoppages and absenteeism. And now, sabotage.

In a very quiet voice, a troubled voice not at all her own, she called my name.

I lifted my gaze, looking up at her over my eyeglasses. "Yes?"

She was pale, unable to speak. Her inquietude reanimated in me an unease that for a long time had been lingering, suppressed but never forgotten. [1]

"What is it?" I said "What has happened?"

"Your wife just called..." She paused, looked away from me, out the window, not knowing how to continue. "Your daughters... On their way home..."

"What?"

"There was a bomb on the tram. They have been wounded. They are alive, but they have been wounded."

I crossed the city in my 2CV. "Merde," I shouted over and over, banging both fists onto the steering wheel, cursing the little car for having such scant power. I tried not to think, but I could only imagine the worst.

The Rue Michelet was cordoned off near the university. A thin plume of incredibly black smoke rose from that direction. I was forced to take a detour. The Rue d'Isly was also blocked. Soldiers were everywhere, on foot, in jeeps. Machine guns posted at street corners. Ambulances with their sirens shrieking screamed by in the opposite direction, heading back toward the university.

I hurried toward the Hôpital Maillot, ignoring the signal lights and the whistles of policemen. As I got closer to

the hospital, the traffic worsened. I wound my way through twisting side streets, once taking a one way street in the wrong direction.

The narrow lanes on the hospital grounds were shaded with tall ficus trees and jammed with cars. I parked recklessly in a tight spot, crumpling the fender of the Citroën against a stout wall.

I squeezed through the crowd waiting for news outside the main entrance. Anxious faces, both European and Arab, stared back at me. I muttered my excuses, "My daughters... I must see them... Please, my children have been hurt." They moved aside silently without protest. At the door a nurse directed me to a different building. I entered underneath a porte-cochère choked with ambulances.

Against one wall of the long, white corridor, stretchers and gurneys were arrayed. On some, human shapes - some very small - were covered with blood-stained sheets. On others were those that were still living, their yawning, red wounds clearly visible under the unforgiving lights.

White-clad doctors and nurses scurried about, attempting to appear to be in control of the situation. Those that were less gravely injured sat in chairs or on the floor, their faces gray and immobile with shock, looking out at a world they could not comprehend. The stench was unbearable, the groans horrific. As I moved down the hall, searching for my children and my wife, I glanced into the rooms; all of them were full.[2]

In one I recognized a face. She was the daughter of an engineer who lived in our building. Her name was Joujou; a beautiful, buoyant girl of nineteen, engaged to be married to a junior officer in the French army. He had been sitting next to her at a small round table on the crowded terrace at the Milk-Bar when the bomb exploded. He was killed instantly.

Joujou's right hand was horribly mangled; her palm rived from middle finger to wrist, the two outermost fingers splayed at an impossible angle, the thumb missing. A long flap of skin hung below her pale yellow skirt partially covering where the patella of her right leg had once been; most of the flesh of her calf had been blown away. Her sad eyes met my own, her waxy face stared back at me. I read in her look a vague reproach; I was whole, intact. She turned her head slowly away from me, toward the wall, and closed her eyes.

I continued down the corridor, blood everywhere. I found my older daughter all alone sitting very upright and very still in a chair next to a closed door at the end of a hall. One leg was smeared with blood; she held a compress against her thigh.

"Oh, Papa!"

I came up to her and gently put my arms around her. "Sophie," I said almost inaudibly.

"I'm all right," she said, tears coming now. "The doctor's already looked at me. It's nothing, really, nothing at all. But Véro?" She turned her head upward to look at me, searching for reassurance.

"Where is she?"

With her head she motioned toward the door.

"And your mother?"

"She has gone to call Uncle Bertrand. She wants us to go to his clinic."

"Be brave, my beauty, everything will be fine." I kissed her forehead.

I stood before the door for a moment, mustering the courage to enter. At first I saw only her face. A sheet had been pulled up to her chest, her arms resting at her sides, above the sheet. Dark splotches speckled the bed linen along the full length of both legs. A long convulsive shudder rode through her body. She had been given an injection, but was still conscious. She spoke in a whisper, her breathing labored, telling me that she was not in too much pain.

I raised the sheet and beheld immediately the severity of her injuries. I struggled to stifle my reaction, not to gasp, not to cry out. Both limbs were terribly lacerated, long deep wounds. Where the legs were not red, they were charred black. Her feet were mutilated, beyond recognition as anything human.

Somehow I was able to smile at my daughter, my seven-year-old child. I squeezed her hand and told her a lie. With her tiny fingers she latched on to one of mine; she did not want to let go.

"Véro," I cried silently.

A dull fury began to burn within me.

I went to look for my wife. I roamed the halls of the hospital, distracted, in a daze. Children were being rolled by on gurneys; each one lacking some appendage. A nurse dashed by with a very young boy, perhaps three, cradled in her arms. He was covered with burns. Stretcher bearers carried a bewildered teenage girl, both legs gone below the knees.

My wife was leaning against a wall near a nurses station. She stared out as if seeing nothing. She had passed beyond

despair. She had spoken with her brother who worked at a clinic near the Place Bugeaud.

"Impossible," he had said when my wife had asked him about transferring our two girls there. They were overwhelmed.

"What about Véronique?"

"Juliette, you must understand, you risk more by moving her," he had replied.

My wife was not convinced.

A little before midnight, Sophie was brought back to her room. "You have nothing to worry about," the nurse said as she tucked our daughter into her bed. "She was lucky. The fragment stopped about two millimeters shy of the femoral artery." She gazed down at our child and pretended to appear cheerful. "She will be all right."

"We have another girl," my wife said. She locked her eyes on those of the nurse.

The nurse looked at the floor and in a diminished voice said, "About that, I know nothing. You will have to wait."

We waited while Sophie slept. Hours later I was awakened from a fitful sleep - a sleep of which I had not thought myself capable - by a slight nudge on my shoulder. My wife was already awake. A doctor stood before us.

"I'm sorry," I remembered him saying in a solemn, tired voice.

Véro's right foot was amputated above the ankle. They were able to save about half of the other foot.

"Why," I have asked myself over and over.

I blame those who call themselves nationalists. I blame those who have sought vengeance for the deprivations and the humiliations of colonial rule, but who have aimed that vengeance against those least able to protect themselves against it, those who are the most innocent. I blame those that defend these acts as justifiable; they are accomplices.

The men and women who planted these bombs, who chose with care the place and the time, knew what they were doing. They were fully aware what the consequences would be.

To them I say: Any act committed against an adult, no matter how heinous, how cruel, will never atone for the agony inflicted upon our children. This I swear.[3]

[1] My brother refers here to his anxiety brought about by the campaign of terror waged by the FLN and the ALN (Armée de Libération Nationale). Attacks targeting the civilian European population of Algeria began to escalate at a greatly accelerated pace in 1955. By the autumn of 1956, daily life in Algiers had become riddled with perpetual fears. Random shootings of pedestrians and grenade attacks were an almost daily event. Bombs, often planted by young women, were left on trolleys and in buses, in department stores, in cafés and cinemas and at gas stations. A frequent tactic was to plant two bombs, the second timed to go off minutes after the first. As people rushed in to give aid to those already injured and others stood by and watched, the second explosion would occur, claiming an even larger toll.

[2] There were two other bombings that afternoon. One, to which my brother earlier made a somewhat oblique reference, had detonated at a popular café filled with young people near the university, The Cafeteria. The other took place at the Milk-Bar, a café on the Rue d'Isly.

[3] Juliette, my brother's wife, was killed in 1960 when the automobile she was riding in was halted at a road-block on the way to Tipasa. A machine gun opened fire on the string of waiting cars. She and three others died in the attack. Those who carried out the assault were never identified.

I have not been able to pinpoint when my brother's participation with the OAS began. It was a clandestine organization. Nor has it been possible to define what his exact role was or to determine in what other acts of violence he may have had a hand.

I left Algeria in 1957 to study architecture at Columbia University in New York. I returned several times until independence was granted in July of 1962. In the spring of that year, I made a short trip to Algiers for my brother's funeral. Only weeks later, I found myself there once again in an effort to convince my mother to leave that unhappy, war-torn nation. I have never gone back.



Austria

Paris, France



poetry

why we don't quit our day job

Poem

j. dyson

morning comes,
carrying with it,
the collapse of
veins.

howls the wind at windows,
dreamy phantoms so fearsome,
terrified me,

plunging.
down to the depths of
safety scented sheets
a fury within fooled
eyes.

in collaboration with stars,
it rattles the house,
locks the door with a
scream.

blaming me
profane.
then lamenting like those
drowned.

words painted on a cheap canvas, so
chilling.

colors run in a marathon of
misunderstanding.
a hated figure am i...

locked in stocks
to be forever out of
context.

eternal wearing
and tearing of
skin.

so worn are wrists and necks
broke down spine through sweat stained
life.

stay inside these sheets,
with warm feet
sheltered from this
race.

healing vision see,
evil still breathes in
everyone.

beneath the sheets
hide.

from god,
from the love of my life,

hide from miss
understanding.

just a sorrowful sparrow without song
devouring worms,
with digested

hope.
waiting and withering
as every spoken word
becomes little more than
nothing.

Grass Like Glass

j. dyson

a soaked body of aiming
blades or teeth
fragile and glassy

could cut and
pierce skin even
ears drawing me out

into a barehanded fencing
match
much like

hard and glossy
teeth can
spit and bite with a single syllable

far worse than
their limp blades merely buckle
beneath my weight when stumbling

One day ages away
as i grow old
and their blades rot away

I will chuckle goodbyes
to their
lingering stale-breathed complaints

Straight Flat Lines

j.dyson

Glistening winter
birth of barely bearable
endless winds...
now crippled
a diminished capacity

a straight line-

beneath the weight of
total control.

We all
flat-down deep smooch
down to
no depth at all.
And all-
peeking helplessly
-the time go by-
seconds counted by
callous layers
and drops of sweat...

Suddenly-
crackers and chips are stale
-all too crunchy for the weakened jaw
everything in the kitchen
growing green
in glowing green
eyes-reflecting, only
denying-
the stale
the true
the spreading rot.

Plea

Renee Dragoset

My grandfather's fingernails claw my arm,
his skin like dying leaves

His whisper begs,
pleads for me to embrace his god

His plea is drenched in desperation,
an acute need for me to act as support beam
to his crumbling wall of faith
before he dies, confused, shaken, forsaken
in this hospital room

I sit still and silent,
setting my face firm against
his attempts at conversion
battering at me this last time
as if the past twenty years
of scathing letters and condemnations
have not been quite enough

I shut my eyes
until his painfully-thin figure fades
and I imagine him healthy and strong:
muscular arm lifting and
bringing heavily down
the harsh coils of a belt

Slap! the wide band
strikes pink skin
and the boy's stubborn, scrawny
body is knocked to the floor,
tears sprung then swallowed

The father's arm rages to strike belief into
the trembling boy, unknowing
that his son will never believe
as he does, nor will his granddaughter,
even after long years of preaching
or beating

Creaking, the door swings,
and my eyes reopen at the hospital,
looking up to my father, the boy,
looming large above us

He frowns at my grandfather's prayers,
lips stretching thin
as his vision encompasses
his teenaged daughter
and frail wrinkled father

Whose harsh blows melt into
a pleading for one more year
as he gazes with failing eyes
at the tight skin of my forearm
and tries to believe that I
am the vulnerable one
who needs to be
saved

Coffeehouse Sonnet(4)

michael ceraolo

The usual consumer choices would not do,
and so she motored many miles
from the cultural wasteland where she lived
in search of the sustenance of a poetry reading
But a snafu had ensued and the reading would not be
She turned and left the coffeehouse, at loose ends
A poet who had been likewise victimized
heard her plight and caught up with her outside,
offering to read her some of his poetry as a substitute
Her silver-white hair belied her youthful good looks,
and the waning sun added extra light to her eyes
as they stood on the corner, people passing by
A clear-headed executive by day,
what she was seeking was on that corner

Battling The Senses

Burton R. Hoffmann

Have I become jaded because I have
--seen too much?
--heard too much?
--felt too much?
--tasted too much?
--sniffed too much?

TASTE ANYONE?

So much in our society
Has become cheap and tawdry.
Whatever happened to taste?

Past, Present, Future

Burton R. Hoffmann

When one grows older,
Does he remember more?
Do the young ever think about the past?
Or are they too much involved with the present?
Or wish it was the future?
Thinking about the future
Can be alarming
to those of us past our prime.

The Final Curtain...?

Pamela Engel

As I lie on the gurnee
of the septic smelling room
I breathe what I feel
to be my last breath
And every bit of energy
is being drawn from my body
My heart races with fury
as I feel it about to explode
The people, they rush about
trying to save my life
The fury I feel isn't at all
the fury I felt when I swallowed
the pills
No, it is the fury to hold on
and to stay alive
I pray to the Lord above
something I don't do often enough
But he answers my prayers
and I am, indeed, alive
I begin to think of those
I'd have left behind
had I succeeded
You're face was one among them
so vivid, so clear
I am ever so grateful
that I am here at this moment
You were there for me then
but who would be here for you
today?

In State

Tony Bush

Barefoot on the paving slab chill, concrete
feet feel frostbite emanations in their calloused soles;
rooftop mystique clamours silent slate triangles,
perched the stray cat observers, red-eyes smoking coals.
Down to the river's edge where swaying reeds
feed mongrel contemplations with moist whispered words;
rusty oil-slicked surfaces lick the muddy banks,
karma sutra assassins are the predatory birds.

Fixated upon a frozen traffic system, bolt-locked,
dumb-shocked by electric one way streets to dead ends;
barstool poets weep sleep-sozzled cabbage tears
for the closing-time tragedy of long-time absent friends.
Drunkards shamle on beer-stained coliseum floors, grumble,
mumble incomprehensible diatribes into the thin air;
the memorial park benches flake skin and rot within,
white spirits rape the dreams that anyone should care.

Deserted boardwalks spool a crooked travel,
unravel with myopic glint and blink, cat's eyes dying, died,
and the desolated song from night's deflated lung
hums doggerel consolation with no meaning left inside.
Bastard offspring of fatherless daughters and sons,
buns in sceptic ovens, burnt baked black offerings;
sacrifices on toilet stall altars, to lie in state
no more than ether, aborted ghosts, empty superfluous things.

Saviours ride no pale horses, immaculate white stallions,
galleons never sail to where the sun pristinely sets,
for the purpose of this life resides in its conclusion,
deserve has nothing to do with it and nothing is all it begets.

Uncertain Justice

Mary B. Chow

Four endless years
Weary of torment and shame
At the end of endurance;
Reluctant courage to make the call
Mommy made me define "rape"
Through my tears

I was afraid of authority figures
Cooly professional
Required to give statement
All my carefully guarded secrets
Now exposed to strangers
Forced to endure
Humiliation of a physical exam

My father's arraignment before judge and
Female district attorney
I hoped she'd understand my pain
Aghast at the system's denial
Of protection
She badgered and accused me
Of leading him on, "asking for it"
Made Daddy's crime my fault

When it was over
Undertain justice
His sentence: 3 months
County jail
My sentence: life
Haunted by the memories

at a red light

Rocco de Giacomo

two skinny boys
huddled on a scooter
in navy blue
school blazers and
white shoes
and
gray flanel pants
that flap
as they
pull the corner
and whirl through a space
between the crowd
at the crosswalk
and a one hundred ton
yellow crane
swinging
into the
intersection
on wheels the size of small cars
a soldier
green overcoat and face
long and lean with shadow
moves to the middle
of the road
as the traffic
from the small
artery descends
like a minor avalanche:

dented four door sedans
little blue pickups
loaded with fruit
and furniture,
old bike couriers
wrapped in
imitation leather
humming on harley davidson look-a-
likes
young bike couriers
jacked up on
crotch-rockets,
blaring stereos duct-taped
to the fuel tanks,

cigarettes poking over the
rim of their cloth masks as they
carry empty propane canisters
and 5 gallon drums of petrol
red nozzles
sticking up over their shoulders
like the handles
of swords,

dilivery men,
their little vespas shaking
like tired mules
loaded with lettuce
and bags of rice,
faces weighed down
with roadwork
and the want
of a single cigarette,
and
the buses:
588
303
129
588-1
1000
327
22
68
588-2
the buses
hurdle through the light
shaking off their tons as they pass
and I
sit pretty
on my 50 cc scooter

at
least
until
the light turns
and I am blocked
by a last second
load of bananas.
a bus
a 303 or a 129
gets a head start
and rumbles like a
heavy door
through a hole
in the intersection
almost cutting me off
from my space between
its front bumper
and a
parked car

but then

everything stops
held up
blocked
buy a wagon load
of flattened cardboard
pulled by a pair of legs
older than any street
in the
neighbourhood

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

Charlie Newman

this holy ritual
starts and stops with
money [yeah, money]
watch and be amazed, amigo
it may be your dance but I paid the piper
and without my money
it's your funeral
your funeral
funeral
your funeral
it's your funeral
said is said done is done
sneaking
skulking
subconscious
collapsing concepts of rank
disintegrating doctrines of the order of things
her picture stapled in your wish book
her in your hands her body in your
cheesy hotel room bathed in neon
where you feel secure
your chewed knuckles
your broken fingernails
your stuttering whisper
her silky back
her perfect torso
her hollow eyes

and the ritual
of the rich

[the poet smiles
at the woman sitting on the bed working on
his arms his hands his self
and all he does is stare
a long while
a long way off]

Broken Innocence

Ray Fenech

I don't even know how we came to be
in my bedroom - you locked the door;
I was thirteen and wanted to feel
the first shiver of excitement
that came like air into a deflated balloon;
you were twelve, and also wanted something new.
So you unbuttoned my shorts,
peeled them down,
slowly, with trembling hands.
Your veins were strained
your voice husky -
you tried to hide your eagerness
but your fast breathing gave you away.
I had only dreamt this moment.
Now you were fondling my erection.
I could only moan my consent.
I even tried to hide the eruption of my senses.
You sucked my shyness away,
until I was no longer ashamed of my nakedness.
You felt for my soul right inside me.
You kissed me, asking if I loved you.
But you didn't wait for my reply.

I doubt I knew what to answer.
Perhaps later - this was the first
of many sessions still to come.
We were both eager to experiment;
we both wanted to embark into the unknown.
The door was a safety barrier
against grown-ups and religion.
When I exploded and couldn't stop,
it collapsed the walls of my prison.
We both knew what we wanted;
we both got what we had dreamed about
and ate each other.
Unconscious with pleasure we saw through life,
and discovered a shade of grey.
Then, rains fell abundantly outside
and lightning shook us awake.

"The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of" *To Gulliver*

Ray Fenech

TWO MASTERS

Richard Fein

Like moths we were once guided by the moon.
But unlike the ephemeral moth
our sheer longevity confers a grudging wisdom.
Each time we see Mistress moon's face
lighten, then darken, then lighten again,
a generation of moths spreads its wings, mates, and dies.

Now master sun is our metronome.
His circling shadow is sectioned into hours.
He drives us on with an allegro beat.

Mistress moon moves to an adagio of monthly cycles.
She deigns to let us study her cool, white face,
as she watches over our nocturnal trysts.

Master sun is a strict foreman rousing everyone to work every day.
He sears the eyes of anyone sassy enough to stare at him.
A jealous emperor of the heavens,
he drowns all lesser lights in pervasive blue.

But Mistress shares the universe with us,
letting all celestial companions shine around her.

Long ago a choice was made,
and now we are prodded forward by the hours,
by shadows passing in circles,
rather than slowly dancing under a lunar face
that gracefully veils and unveils monthly.

I live the dreams you dream
in wasted night-long sleeps.
Death rather than that!
Without sleep, they say:
you live very little.

Like Dante's "Divine Comedy",
dreams arouse fantasy.
Nightmares come to life
in night's deep shadows,
crawl lightly into the feathers
of your soft pillows
those you bang every morning
while hating yourself for remembering
or forgetting.

Fatigue and rest are drugs -
close your eyes
and it's all over for that day.
Sunset, fast-forwarded is within you:
enter the world of adventure!
Sunrise is folded in a curtain,
at the command of your alarm clock.

Open your eyes, look inward,
there is no rest in slumber,
only in dreams.
The child becomes Hercules,
Ursus, Ulysses, Perseus;
he fights, never dies -
under the sheets.

This is why I fly
whilst you fall, breaking your bones;
I see red in the darkness of anger,
white in refrigerated ice,
black in oblivion's infinite,
yellow in cowardly escapades;
but what the hell?

Like Gulliver
I live the dreams you dream
and deal with far worse monsters
than your everyday office routine.
I am not safe like you,
when you wake shaken by a nightmare;
for all the time my life is at stake,
whether asleep or awake,
like snow flakes, it all can all vanish
on touch down in the lake.

Identification tag

Rose E. Grier

I can see you in a crowd
It doesn't matter where or who you are.
I will always have a certain vision
that enables my energy to recognize
where your soul has been.
There is a quiet heroism.
It facilitates sovereignty
among us as kindred warriors.
We have wrestled the same rival.
Distinguished our triumph
over diversity's directive.
We stand united, tall and, by God, alive!

Weighing Heavy

Carolyn Garwes

'Your scales weigh heavy,' says my daughter,
every time she uses them. She's right.
But it's little compensation for those extra pounds
my too tight trousers groan about.
Even my mirror has taken to making faces at me,
like some cracked reject Snow White's
or Cinderella's step-mum might have given
to the palace bring-and-buy.
'No good moaning at me,' it says.
'Standing there in your nothings with it all hanging out.
That's what you get for months of king-size Mars bars
and red wine by the bucketful.' It's right.
And hiding under winter woollies half the year
has covered up a multitude of sins.
Now that summer has suddenly arrived
and all the princesses are flaunting flesh,
I want to go to the ball too in my skimpy best.
Fat chance. Ah well, middle-aged queen mothers
must accept their limitations. Going through a change
I may be – but it's not all for the better.
'Life weighs heavy sometimes,' my daughter says,
as we have another glass of wine. She's right.

Her Particular Disposition

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Inviolate, in her satinette housecoat
her arm's secrets safely hidden, she walks
him to the door, the broken screen reminds
her of a room and of time spent at the wall
of ignorance at the hospital's psych wing.
Don't forget tomorrow's session with Dr. Marx.

She nods and allows anxiety to seep
through the careful presentation of self;
derailed by the exhaustive effort, she runs
her fingers raw across the screen's
ragged edge. Smiles him out, lips pursed
to snap her pupils into a dance.

He hears the door's lock click behind him,
as he steps out from under the eaves
and off the stoop, between the dank
sedges on an uneven walkway, looks
back over shoulder to see her beneath
the light, behind the door, her face
pressed against the torn mesh.

the seahorses at Portobello

James Norcliffe

you can see that the octopus
has had very bad tidings
it is a fevered anemone
in a jetstream of petals
folding and unfolding
in a gulping rhythm
of grey and worried pink

with more equanimity
the seahorses hold up
their translucent chests
their mouths puckered
in a grandmother's kiss
bloodlessly proud
and quaintly vertical
they rock against the odds

they are the nodding uncles
of rectitude with their wobbly
gait and monitory shake
and their fern-frond tails roll
and unroll with slow deliberation

their world is a cylinder
of golden sand and starfish
of yellow weed swaying
in a stream of platitudes
in a never-ending bubble
after bubble of good advice

THE NEIGHBORS

Susan Osterman

the neighbors are dressed in leopardskin
they are partying
fucking
laughing
married happily dieting
working
enjoying life
the neighbors
look thru their blinds
blinded by joy
only gossip to me
the neighbors
are crying in their
beer
their happy marriages
half rotten
the core black
but i dont see this
i see the plump red apple
the parties the marriages the diets
hunky-dory plans
the neighbors
are fucking the right cock/cunt
the neighbors
are addressing themselves to reality
as i sit and weave threads of fiction
to drape threadbare reality
the neighbors
may not write poetry
but still they survive
fucking marrying dieting

Lady of the Lake

Joseph Farley

They say a woman
Lives at the center
Of this still body
Of water,
A goddess or demon
Seen only by
The chosen or the damned.

Should I cannonball
From the dock
Out into the pool;
See if I land
In outstretched arms
To be caressed
And raised aloft;
Or crushed
And dragged under?

Who can say
Who dwells within
This still body
Some call woman.

CHALK AND CHEESE

R. N. TABER

We met at a party and I recall thinking
how loudmouths should refrain
from drinking;
When my turn came for a corny chat-up
line, dissuading took a discreet
knee in the groin;
At my home the next day, flowers
arrived – that I
ignored;
Next, a call with grovelling apologies
asking for a date, the
cheek of it!
Without making too many analogies
with a Mad Hatter's do, the
meal was a fiasco;
We kept tripping over our tongues
and, finally, took refuge
in silence;
Imagine my surprise when I took a call
suggesting a repeat
performance!
This time, we almost enjoyed a picnic
with champagne – until it
poured with rain;
I forget how many times we agreed
never to see each other
again

At least life's not boring. I've even
learned to live with the snoring...

acceptable levels

Roger Stukey

all your life the reclusive
"they" sell you chemicals
in your food
in your water
in your air
and then when you die of...
(whatever)
someone finally shows
some courage
(and fills you with chemicals
in person)

WHO DARES, WINS

R. N. TABER

Love is all - to live and die for, yet
some would say, often bitterly,
one kind better to ignore, forget,
even in the 21st century

Our love took root, grew tall and fair
in a shady corner of Eden;
Many who looked and saw it there
begged a cutting for their own garden

Most folk simply walked straight past,
believing it best for everyone;
Others took sticks and stones to cast,
any excuse better than none

In the sun! Behold gay love, its beauty...
though none so blind that will not see

Ground Zero, Four Months Later

Rochelle Hope Mehr

Now they've built a platform
and people queue up for hours
to see for just three minutes
the puncture wound the planes made
surrounded by workers
searching for the dead.

They cry.
They pray
in some communion they try to establish
with the fellowship of the dead.

I find it gruesome
and disrespectful.
The diggers have their place.
They sully their hands
for the slightest chance to unearth
the flesh of their brethren, one
last incarnation of the innocent.

The perched gawkers grapple with air

The Medium and the Message

Rochelle Hope Mehr

The ink was barely dry on the parchment when the scrivener proclaimed the author of the screed a genius. The literati agreed.

The printing press made his words more accessible to the public and hastened the development of his loose-lipped style.

The Internet sealed his fate when he watched his words wax, waver, and then blur into the oblivion they deserved.

BELLOWS IN THE WILLOWS

Paul Thomas

It turned out so different, as if we had plans
The keeper of time, has cynical hands
He holds us to ransom, high noon is ahead
Who remembers the faces, of passion they bed.

The makeup on pillows, and love neath the willows
The 60 proof cask, and the questions unmasked
The maybes of could be, that would be the bellows
And those that stopped so close, they're forever aghast.

And those that craved blindly, and in darkness did see
Those that burst seams, and believed in their dreams
Were those that were destined, to always be free
They were simple at heart, like you and me.

BEYOND DENIAL

Paul Thomas

Cyber fantasies, of the futile genus
Energetically infused, with mock reality
Symbolic idolatry, by keyboard users
Attempting to pull strings, that only summon normality

Knowing in the depths of logic, most fantasy shatters
Unless always destined, for beyond denial
Sometimes the only noise, is when the teeth chatters
It's far better to say little, than live always on trial

Sure mystery is as enticing, as the juicy unknown
Remember when face to face, was common place?
Between punching out idiots and punching in home
We've created a place without reality, called Cyber Space.

Becoming Birds

*Tara Marie
Gilbert-Breuer*

She folds herself in forests
at nightfall; waiting, unwinged
for her flight. The sky is not hers.
Her face is the bark of birches, peeling
with indifference. Her teeth belong to the bones
beneath others' skin, mottled and frowned.

She brings bags that cannot be pried-
undercircling her eyes,
sagging solid legs, bowing
the bare branches of her arms.
She has become too heavy
upon her lungs.

She caves near the pond of falling oriole
eggs; they slip from their tree-
sacks, break the water's face, hatch
with the frogs, limbless. Her feet find
the split shells, shiver on their whites, eat
them with the small mouths her between toes.

She sings now through the exit
of leaves, within the eggs, starlike,
sinking into dark water,
amidst the sodden chicks, thickened
in their tracks, behind the favored birds'
sun-path which she cannot climb.

Rainy Day in North Truro

Tom Racine

We lounge around
in the cabin,
naked.
I get up.
Kathy says,
“Hey, you have a dime
stuck to your ass!”
She plucks
it off.
“See, baby, I knew I was
worth something.”
I go to the refrig, pull out
some juice,
and smile.

First Impressions

Melanie Washington

waiting in the booth for your arrival
frustrated by and gratified by your late absence
hoping the time can be spent reliving
sorting my imagination in reality
we have dug into each-others souls
pondered threw the depths of our emotions
after every other step we could take
we have decided unto the meeting
frightened but still curious
can souls actually touch before skin?
I feel as if you have unraveled the essence of me
whether it be through speech, glance or touch
I have come to realize the strength you have over me
if I want you to or not you seem to know
my inner needs at all times
you know me inside and out that scares me
I am frightened that since you can see the good
you can also see the bad
most of all my vulnerability
once someone knows your vulnerable spots
they can use them against you.
There are things that we haven't seen in each-other
you have never seen my enemy
the little green woman that comes out in me
the evil diva that may occupy my body at times
I suppose seeing the good and the bad is the
only way we can ever say forever
my fear comes from this new experience
this new voyage that my heart needs to go on
but my head tries to put a detour on
this new unexplored love
Were on a new voyage
but I cant help but think about my
past adventures and how they didn't work out
how it felt to be left down
misused and abused
I have to remember that
you're not them and they could never be you

(though untitled, the following quote, from a poet-friend of mine, is relevant: "...beneath the layers of orgasms and bullshit...")

Justin Taylor

& the mist rises in the field
holy goddess is bleeding in America
there are prophets asleep on couches
harbingers driving ford astro vans
the sunrise is nothing to whine about
in complaint or praise

I dare eternity to blow me
I am made hard by the callousness
of others
you aren't the end all of everything
just as I am not the beginning

tonight we learned
that acceptance is a daydream
that everyone is a genius
that gin mixes nicely w/ vodka
& Black Label & Miller Lite
& caffeine pills

tonight I burned a candle
at both ends
it was a conversation
there was endless dialogue
and brilliant silence
I was a grease-stained paper plate

now where are the martyrs?
off to sleep on beds of nails?
fuck that!
I rise like demon sphinx
in dawn light

blackened lungs
scarred flesh
kill to live to kill to live
offended by the posturing of trees
but still in awe
this life whose rhythm
I can barely tap out

still drives me outward
forward, upward, face first

toward unknown dimension
of time and sound

sound is true
what I hear I allow
to play no tricks
so with this oath am I marked
for all time

defeat was not possible
I will not be dominated
don't ever ask the artist
to put away the brushes

perhaps the brushes go there
I think
thought fills mind w/ dread

paltry mack trucks
like 30 tons of bullshit
oppress travellers
like rest stop signs
a convenience but at a cost
we did not ask to pay

I wove bracelets
from fallen pine needles
as we elected not to discuss
the routine of moonset. True
desire is undying trust;
"don't write that down!!!!"
I tell myself

but heed this call o wizard
of mystery & confusion
listen loudly temptress
that moves in shadows & is elusive
I'll yell fire
when I smell burning
so don't smoke by the tinder-box
unless you're ready to run

narcoleptic Uncle Sams on street-parade stilts
are dancing in the mind
of the heart of my mind
thick wooden pegs beat irregular patterns into gray
matter
one day this will all be a warm, lost dream

but today I stand tall
beleaguered but persevering

i can smell the rain

John Dorsey

from the window
it's coming on
better more real than
the chinese food
i've been craving lately

but i can't think about that
or anything but you
sitting by the jewish cemetery

when i die
i may walk
on water
or trip gently over my own words

not being jewish
i'm not sure
i've always been a little unsteady
when it comes to tradition

but staring at the back
of that bench sitting on the grass
i've never wanted to kiss someone anyone this much
just wanting to hold your hand
instead i say nothing
bowing to
my own tradition

40oz hurricane *edited version*

John Dorsey

i look into her eyes
daydreaming in japanese
they are asking me to rebuild japan
after the second world war
they are asking too much
i've been dropping bombs for years
without ever sending flowers

i can't look into your eyes
as if they were some kind of parachute
this isn't a...three hour tour
but the very beginning of existence
as you would never notice

i can't look inside myself
nor can i seem to find your reflection
on the side of a 40oz hurricane
another weapon of mass deconstruction



Artwork by Xanadu





performance art

from a live Chicago performance art show, reading & CD

the show "Death Comes in Threes," was performed live in Chicago March 18 2003. It is also available on CD.

for my car or my life



I was invincible, you know
nothing could happen to me because nothing did

I never once had the chance to grasp
that anything ever happened to me

it wasn't until after the hospital,
an endless stream of weeks.
moving to another house
with unexpected people

put all of my belongings in storage,
my car was gone

face the facts, girl

was I expected to go through this?

insurance companies wouldn't fix the car
they gave me enough money
for my time, but not
for my life

who is going to pay me
for all I have lost

no one apologizes to me
and I'm expected to forgive
I was angry
I had to resign myself to losing anything I valued
there was nothing I could do

I was invincible, you know
nothing could happen to me because nothing did
but I was in the intensive care unit
I was on a respirator
and I survived it

I could hope that time heals all wounds
that's what people keep telling me
ask me in a few years
if I forgot
and everything is better

Life in 1997



In 1997, I was doing pretty well. I worked as an art director of magazines and trade shows for a magazine publishing company. I had a car, a sweet apartment in Chicago, I saved money even though I pretty much had no budget, friends came over for parties, I had a few guys love and follow me.

I had it pretty good.

In my spare time, published books and ran a magazine and started a web site. But after a while I thought, hey Janet, you never got the chance to take off and travel before you started working. Maybe that's something you could do now.

So I quit my job, said a temporary good bye to my friends, kept paying for my apartment, and traveled around the United States before planning to travel to Europe.

I visited Nebraska, Denver and Boulder Colorado, we went through Utah, where we saw national parks like The Grand Canyon, Bryce National Park, and even the Arches, where when there was no one around for miles when you hiked and you could sit alone at the top of rugged mountain edges and sit naked without anyone ever knowing. In Wyoming I watchd Old Faithful go off, I photographed hot springs... I went to Montana and Idaho, we went to Las Vegas, California, Tennessee, Florida, and even read with other Chicago poets in a show held for the National Poetry Slam in New Mexico.

I even wrote this piece, thinking about changes I was going through and the upcoming millenium.



True Happiness in the New Millennium

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm the new savior the savior of science
the savior of strength
the savior of survival
survival of the fittest
survival of the best
and I'm here to tell you we're starting anew
so fasten your seat belts
hang on to your hats
place your seat trays in their upright and locked position
for it's a bumpy ride, and I'll tell you why

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
the millennium of reason and logic and strength
and I don't want to hear about your self-destruction
I don't want to hear your whining, psychosis,
your depression, suicide, alcohol and drugs
and just what made you think that playing with needles
and escape would make things better somehow
God, I've always hated needles anyway
what is it with you people

well, you need a leader and I'm stepping up to the plate
you keep asking for a big brother and I'm here to set you straight
you want someone to wipe your noses for you
well, pick up the damn tissue and do it yourself
because when you give up your rights, you take away mine
and we're not having any of that

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and you say to me you need crystal meth
so you can stay awake through work
and you say to me that you don't need to drink,
that you just like the taste
and you say to me that with all your escapism
you still don't feel any better
and you say to me that sometimes suicide
is the only answer

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm here to usher in a whole new generation
so stop asking for things and start working for things
because X is for ecstasy as long as it's fast
and X is for extra but there's always a cost
and ecstasy doesn't come without extra work
no matter how many corners you cut
and you know, X is for X-Ray and I see right through that

they say that Eve ate from the tree from knowledge

but you know, she shouldn't have stopped just then
cause the loggers are raping the trees of knowledge
the loggers are raping the forests of talent
the forests of ability the forests of reason
of skill of logic preserverance and life
we're letting them rape the forests of excellence
and you know it's now time to take it all back
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and I'm here to tell you how it's going to be done

you're looking for peace in all the wrong places
you're asking your leaders to save you from yourself
but your leaders are losers and they're worse off than you

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
where it's time to take charge and it's time fess up
only you can deliver you from your own sins
but first you must know what sin really is

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim
to everything we've been blindly giving away
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
take charge of yourself, and I'll take charge of me
I'm my leader, not yours, so wipe your own damn noses

take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools
this is the new millennium, and this is your chance
because no one should be showing us how to fail
people mastered that feat a millennia ago
so set your own rules and do something fast
cause it's time to take charge and it's time to be alive

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
And I'm waiting for you to usher in yours
Because true happiness this way lies, my friend
and I won't wait long if you lag behind
cause I'm setting my rules so step out of my way

I'm here to tell you there's a new sensation
and I'm here to tell you there's a new salvation
and that true happiness this way lies



New Orleans Talk

I even went to New Orleans to first meet with my sister and her friend, then stayed there while another friend from Denver flew to meet me in New Orleans for a few days. Although it wasn't Mardi Gras, there are all these burlesque joints and open liquor and bizarre shops to check out. Even if you're not the one being strange, it can be great to see the behavior of others in that town.

The One At Mardi Gras

i was at mardi gras last weekend
and i got a bunch of beads from parades
(no, i didn't lift my shirt for them) -

and a friend of mine had a balcony
on bourbon street, and so we were on it
on friday night, and the swarms

of people stretched for over a mile. it was
a mob, no one could walk and the crowd
just kind of carried them along. and all

the men expected women to get naked
for them for beads, and from my balcony
i would see every few minutes a series of

flash pops, coupled with a roar from the
crowd, and i knew a woman lifted her shirt
for the screaming masses. i refused, however,

to strip for drunk strangers, when i knew
they all expected me to, being on a balcony
and all. so men would look up at me and stretch

out their arms, looking up inquisitively, as
if to ask either for me to give them beads
or for me to strip. and since i wasn't stripping

and had plenty of my own beads, i decided
to turn the tables and see if men would accept
the same conditions they asked of these women.

when they looked up at me for something,
i would say, "drop your pants." they would look up
at me, confused, because the women are the

ones that are supposed to be stripping, but
in general i got two responses from the men:
either they would look at me like i was

crazy and walk away, or they would shrug,
as if to say, "okay," and then they would
start unzipping their pants. then they would

make a gesture to turn around, as if to ask,
"do you want to see my butt?" and that's when i'd
yell, "the front," and then they'd turn back

around, with their pants and their underwear
at their knees, and start moving their hips
(which i never asked for, by the way).

so over the course of the evening i
managed to get at least twenty men to
strip like this for me, and i was amazed

that there was this society, this micro-
cosm of society, that allowed this kind
of debauchery in the streets, a sort of

prostitution-for-plastic-beads form of
capitalism. so i was reveling in this bizarre
annual ritual when this man, average to

everyone else, wearing grey and minding
his own business, decided to look up at me. so
i asked him to drop his pants, and instead of

disgustedly leaving or willingly obliging
he crossed both hands on his chest and looked
up at me, as if to ask, "you want to me do



what? you naughty, naughty girl.” and he smiled and looked up at me, and it occurred to me that i finally found someone in this

massive crowd that thinks they way i do. now, new orleans has a population, from what i hear, of about one million, but during mardi gras

there are about nine or ten million people, and all i could think was that of all these people here, i finally found someone who wouldn't

blindly do what i asked, but at the same time wouldn't think i was crazy for asking. of course as i looked at him i also happened

to think that he was stunning, by far the best-looking man i had seen that entire night, he looked like he had style, like he was self-

confident, but then again, i'm near-sighted and was on a balcony drunk at mardi gras. we hit an impasse when he wouldn't strip

and neither would i, so his attention was eventually diverted to other balconies. but i noticed for that next half-hour that he never left

from under my balcony, and every once in a while he would still turn around and look up at me. oh, boy, i was thinking the entire time, i know

this is no way to start a relationship, hell, i'm sure this guy lives nowhere near me, and i haven't even had a real conversation with him,

but he's damn near perfect. and all that time we were screaming and partying at mardi gras, he would still occasionally turn around and

make sure i was still there. and finally he looked at me, signalling that he had to move on with his friends, and i held up my index

finger to make him wait and then i threw a bunch of beads at him. part of me threw them because he was a good sport, putting

up with my taunting and still not giving in, but a part of me threw them because i saw in him the strong values and the sense

of self-worth, the sheer love of life, the desire to be alive, that i possessed all along and have always longed for in someone else.

Deaths One and Two

While traveling in New Orleans and unable to get back in time, I also found out that Dave, a man I had dated the previous year and a half died of a heart attack, just shy of age 32.

That was my first experience with death in this trip.

I was with friends in Bloomington Indiana when we found out that Princess Diana died in a car accident.

As strange as this sounds, that was sort of the second death in my trip I encountered.



Princess Diana, 1 Year Later

what is it like to lead a near-perfect life
to have servants clean up after you
to prepare all of your meals

what is it like to then hate everyone
including yourself

don't eat food
without throwing up or gaining weight

what is it like to not leave your home
because you might be photographed

what is it like to have anything you want
and you still can't have anything you want

is that what it is like to be royalty
to feel important all the time
could they ever feel anything other than their pain

you hear from everyone that you were perfect
and you still tell yourself you were nothing

when you felt this way, **daily**,
would you love yourself or hate yourself
what would win the daily battle

The Morning of July Eleventh

Death comes in waves of threes

As strange as this sounds, that was sort of the second death in my trip I encountered.

Have you ever heard people say that death usually comes in threes? It's a strange thing to say, but when something terrible happens like that, you can almost expect over a short time that these waves of death can come a few times.

Almost to make sure you get the point.



I don't remember what happened the day of my quote-unquote death, death number three. It was just a day, a normal summer day, a day like any other. I remember seeing the fireworks for the 4th of July in Chicago on the street with my roommate Eugene, and I remember that I was wearing a white shirt and it started to rain, so I had to lean my body so my shoulders were at Eugene's back so I wouldn't get drenched with my white shirt. It was Saturday, July Eleventh, and I apparently was going over to my parent's house, where my sister Sandy lived, to go swimming because it was sunny. After Getting on the Kennedy, It took I55 southwest of Chicago and exited route 45 South so I could drive the suburbs and see my family.

The rest of the accounts came from eyewitnesses.

That and what the people at the hospital told my mother.

I was at the intersection of 95th and route 45; I was at the end of a line of people waiting at a red light. The light had just turned green, but you know how long it takes for people to get moving when the light changes, we were still sitting there waiting to get moving just as the light changed.

Now at that point in the road, the intersection was at the bottom of a hill, and if you are coming south toward the intersection you'll see the light before you'll see the street.

This apparently was the case for the driver of a sedan, he apparently saw the green light and continued speeding on the 55 mile per hour road.

As I said, I was at the end of the line of cars. So I would get caught in the crossfire.

Accounts state that there was a motorcyclist in front of me, and a van in front of him.

Eyewitnesses said they saw me looking at my rear-view mirror in my car, I must have seen this speeding car coming towards me.

I couldn't move my car into the empty left lane next to me, there was no room. I could only guess that I turned the wheels of my car to the left so that I wouldn't run into the motorcyclist, who I'm sure would have died from being hit.

Originally, in part, I got away by traveling. But apparently after waiting to get away again, this time from some stranger in a car, I was struck. and all went black.

Twelve Thirty, July Eleventh

So what happened was that this speeding car hit the back of my car, knocking me into oncoming traffic because my wheels were turned. A van from the opposite lane of traffic then hit my front passenger-side corner and dragged my car for a bit.

Police accounts said that there were skid marks from my car tires for one hundred and eight feet.

Yeah, well, how was that second driver to know someone would appear in front of him as he was driving?

Yeah, how can you blame him.

To brake the news to my mother, they had to rummage through what things they could find of mine from the car, rummage through the pockets of my clothing, my purse was buried under the seat, so they got a phone number, and they called, and my mother answered.

“Do you know someone who drives a red sedan?” they asked.

“Yes, I do,” my mother answered. “Did something happen to her?”

The hospital chaplain informed her there was an accident and they would like her to come and identify a body.

Yes, identify a body.

My mother got off the phone to rush to the hospital, she was sure I was dead.

When my mother and my sister arrived at the hospital, my mother was thrilled when they walked into the room and saw me with tons of tubes sticking out all around me. “She’s not dead!” my mother exclaimed, as they went to see me lying unconscious.

My mother even commented that I looked so nice there. She said I looked nice because I even had eye make-up on.

My sister had to tell her that I wasn’t wearing make-up; that I had two black eyes.

I was unconscious for eleven days, the coma lasted two weeks.

The day of the crash they wanted to be sure no one else was in the car with me, because there was metal and car parts from the passenger side of the car jutting all the way to where I was sitting as I drove. For all intents and purposes, the passenger seat was **gone**.

Which might explain the injuries on the right side of my head. They kept a monitor on my skull for the end of my unconscious spell to monitor the amount of fluid around my brain. I have a little indentation in my forehead, at my hairline, from having that attached to my head.

You know, for my own good.

I was told that I had no broken limbs, but three skull fractures, they even had to make sure they all set properly because one on my forehead, on this side here, had to set properly so my right eye wouldn’t have any problems.

In every car accident, there are actually three crashes.

In every car accident, there are actually three crashes.

The first is when one car hits another one.

The second is when the outside of the human body hits the interior of the car.

The third is when, within the human body, organs crash into each other, and crash into your own bones.

Fences and Stright Jackets

Their Crutches

should they tell you in advance what it's like
to go through what you're about to go through?
having an operation
they'll keep you drugged
you'll be unconscious, in a hospital bed
for longer than you want
*but this is what's best for you,
that's what they tell you*
be tired of being in the hospital
no one will know what to say
*you need rest, you need help
even if you're sure you don't need their crutches*
it won't be easy
I'm sure that I'll visit
and I'm sure you'll be fine
I know you'll want to hear that

Elvira Doe

Shortly after I regained consciousness, my family told me they were slightly concerned, for two reasons.

One was that since they couldn't find identification on me when I was first brought in, instead of calling me **Jane Doe** they nick-named me **Elvira Doe**. The second thing they noticed was that the people in the hospital handed back all my dirty, discheveled, ripped up, torn cloths, and the only thing that was missing was a bra.

So as I start to regain consciousness, I'm stuck in there at Christ Hospital, and I want to get out. I remember one of the first chances I had to leave, I was lying in bed, they expected me to sleep there, I was probably barely conscious, I doubt could even stand, but I tried to get out of bed and I fell out of bed and the nurses had to come get me, and they had to call my parents, I was fine, but it was their policy to call. But because they were afraid of me falling again, they put a metal bar around the side of my bed, I don't know, it was like a guard rail to keep pedestrians away from something dangerous, or a zoo fence so people could feel safe while they watched the trapped animal they have on display for you. So they had this metal rail around my bed, but that wasn't the worst part, they also put a harness on me at night, a straight jacket, so to speak, probably so that I wouldn't be able to use my arms to help me leave.

They kept a wrist band with my stats on it on my wrist, so that if I wanderd off they'd know where I belonged, to keep me in place. I hated that damn wrist band, I'd rip it off probably almost daily, and they had to make a new one and strap it on me.

You know, to know where I belong.

Wrapping up the Harness

I don't know why they had to keep a dstraight jacket... i mean, a harness on me, were they trying to keep me in place? Once I regained enough of my consciousness back all I could wonder was, is this how they were trying to stop me? I just wanted to be able to sleep the night through without being restricted, without my arms being bound. I finally managed to contort myself out of it one night, not so I would escape, but just so I could feel more sane in this place. The next morning the nurses didn't know why the harness was wrapped up on my night stand. My mother saw it wrapped up there and knew that I had to have done that, and she had to think that if I as that curnning enogh, I must be getting better.

Hallucinations

Someone Give Me the Answers

my dictionary is older than my schooling
my encyclopedia set is older than I am

I've been looking for answers to what
I thought were simple questions and the
people who are supposed to be smart
don't know what to say

when I regained consciousness,
I was given the same meal three times a day
I was physically strapped to my bed

no one helped me, even then

So yeah, I was just **loving** being in that hospital, trapped
in that room, I imagined I was actually at my apartment
and not in a hospital bed. I even *talked* about this, and
my sister, not wanting me to hallucinate, told me,
“Okay, you say the bathroom is just past the door,
(*which was my hospital room door*),
why don't you show it to me.”
And so I'd walk out the hospital door and
look down the hall,
and I was stunned,
this wasn't right, I thought,
and I stood there for a split second,
and I said,
well,
it was here.

Imagining Friends and Loved Ones

Sometimes It's Not

sometimes I wish I could
turn back the hands of time
maybe then I might still think
that I could live forever then

Day in and day out I would stay in that hospital
room, and I was really going nuts ... I imagined my friend
Brian, who now lives in San Francisco, becoming my
roommate, dressing up as an old lady so no one would re-
cognize him and no one would think that he was my
friend visiting me, so that I would have someone there to
talk to when I was sitting there all alone, all by myself,
day in and day out.

No, my friend Brian never visited me, and I *did* have
an old lady for a roommate, and no, I never talked to her,
but I kept thinking to myself that this was how I could
keep myself sane,

by imagining that a stranger was a friend,
just so I could get through my days.

Imagining Dave

And I was never able to get over Dave's death, where he died three months before my death ... and I wasn't able to get across the country for his funeral, so I could never see his face to say goodbye to him. So, I would fantasize, I think, oh him appearing at my room, coming in through a side entrance so no one would see him, and he would come up to visit me, and I would say,

"How did you get here, you're supposed to be dead, did everyone see you?"

and he said, "no, no, no, I managed to hid so no one would spot me because no one knows I'm alive. But I wanted to know how you were doing, because I didn't want anything to happen to you, and I wanted you to be okay, and I wanted you to not die."

Will Be Just Fine

there's a pot on my window sill
skel-key-edited118 terra-cotta, i think
and it used to have a spider plant in it
once
now there's just a pile of dirt
shaped like a terra cotta pot
with a few dried stems
coming out of the top

i could never take care
of anything, you know

and is this what has happened
to me

could someone find me again
hold me in their arms
rock me like a baby
stroke my hair
and tell me everything
will be just fine

They Wouldn't Trust Me with a Razor)

After being in the hospital so long, my hair was growing long, I never even got to shave my legs even, I was completely unkept. I wanted to at least be able to shave my legs in the shower, but they wouldn't trust me with a razor.

I had to have a family member watch me, just so I could take a shower and try to get myself in order.

No One Gave Me FlowerS

One day, in what seemd like an endless stream of weeks, I got flowers, and I was stunned, I was thrilled, no one had sent me flowers before wile I was here in the hospital, I didn't know who they were from.

When we looked at the card, they were flowers for a **Janet Spinoto**, a woman who apparently was somewhere **else** in the hospital, and I thought, that's what I get for thinking that someone would buy me flowers.

As I Recovered

After the hospital, after I
got out of the coma, no one
even visited me - no one
that did this to me visited me.
Not the people who hit me, not the guy
who's life I saved. Did he even know
I saved his life? Did he even know
he could have been dead that day?
None of those people even attempted to
pay me back. For my car,
or my time, or my coma. This is what
I get for being nice. I have the
physical and emotional scars
from that day. And
no one ever apologized to me
for the pain they caused. None of them
even visited me as I recovered.

Any Help At All

I'm tired
of doing things myself and
I'm tired
of looking for my own answers
for all the troubles I experience
I'm tired
of looking
I want someone to help on this one

in the past,
with my head on my shoulders
they got tired
of looking in my direction
to see if I needed anything

now I can't get any help at all

Get It Over With

sometimes you just forget life
what you're living life for
life passes you by
you've got nothing to show for the years

do I have another 60 plus years of this to go
of forgetting
of not being missed

When I almost died, I didn't think about death
I had to get better
I had to teach myself how to eat
and walk
and talk
I had to get out of that wheelchair
and people can make fun of me for it

but they don't have to start from scratch
they don't have to start with nothing

Even when some of us
think we have it all together
someone throws us the curve ball
of death to tell us that we might have
been wrong, that we might not have
been prepared for everything

How do you prepare for something like
this, though

Like My Motto

It is so easy to hope for things
It is easy when you've got nothing
to hope for something

at times I just get tired of fighting
the ideologies that exist everywhere else in the world
I figure that no one is listening to me and
I figure that this whole hope thing
is over, well,
overdone
over-rated
overly confusing
... over-something

so I'm wondering that if
I'm getting tired of fighting it, well,
why am I even fighting any of this?
everyone has been stepping all over me,
so why don't I just get used to
the whole cycle

I've got treadmarks on my back
from the bicycles and motorcycles and cars
all running me over
and there are heel marks and toe prints
as people were using me as their stepping stool
to climb the corporate ladder

my face is now covered with soot
because every time I try
to clean myself off
someone fights me
and steps on me
and pushes my cheek into the asphalt again

strands of my hair are matted into my face now
into my mouth
almost touching my eye
and this is the cycle, I think,
this is the way it goes
so stop fighting, girl
stop fighting
get used to it

these are the words
I have to keep telling myself
until they are like my motto

Isn't That What It's All About

My curse is that after this accident I have the brains
to know what happened to me, how bad it was, but that
I survived it and now have to suffer with it, and to pick
up the pieces and function on my own.

I think that people think that when you get out of
the hospital you must be FINE. Clean bill of health. They
are so wrong.

Now I feel like a soldier and I don't know what I'm
protecting any more. I want to give the enemy what he
has been looking for. It's a battle I am so often not willing
to fight. Here. Take my weapons. You've stripped me of
most of them now, so let me hand you the rest, freely. Let
me have this, let me do this. Let me give this compilation
of everything and nothing. Isn't that what it's all about?

Indoctrination with Religion

But the thing is, when I'd try to do anything in that room, all I saw was this reminder that I was at **Christ hospital**, I would be reminded by seeing *something* religious everywhere I turned. I'd turn on the television, Christian programming. I'd take paper they had so I could write journal entries, the paper would have religious phrases on it, references to God, and I thought I was going nuts, what are they trying to do, indoctrinate me?

I know it was Christ hospital, but all I thought was, did God hurt me and trap me here ... and how is God going to save me?

Being God

I'm tired of dying for your sins
over and over again and why is it that
I am the one that's doing the dying
when you are the one that's doing the sinning
I don't think you're learning your lesson

I'm tired of taking this knife to my hands
over and over again giving myself the stigmata
the blood gets all over my clothes
and I can never get the stains out
and for what, for you to see how I suffer

I'm tired of being humble when I'm
supposed to be the one with the power
over and over again I become your servant
and never are you bowing to me
I don't even get a thank you

I'm tired of preaching to the converted
when the converted aren't even really listening
they're snoring in the back rows while I
deliver my sermon and there's not even air
conditioning in here and I'm sweating

I'm tired of coming to you and healing the sick
taking away the problems, over and over again
giving you something to look forward to
and all I have is an eternity of waiting for
someone to take my place and tend to my wounds

I'm tired of giving the earth up to you
watching the devil's work be done, and you know,
he's just sitting down there looking at me
and laughing, over and over again because it's
so easy for him when he doesn't have to work

I'm tired of being your salvation
over and over again you turn to me
and I have no one to turn to but myself
it's a bitch, you know, being your own god
since no one can save me from me

I'm tired of being your teacher, handing you
what you need on a silver platter and waiting
for that damn collection plate and someone
is always stealing out of it from the back row
I know who you are, you who leave me nothing

I'm tired of wearing this crown of thorns
over and over again the needles prick my skin
and even gods bleed, at least this one does
and when I ask you to wipe the blood
out of my eyes, well, I can't see you anywhere

I'm tired of being something for everybody
when everyone is nothing for me
maybe the devil has the right idea, you know
maybe I'll sit back and wait for you miss me
as you wonder who's your messiah now

Seizures, Reactions and Drugs

Months after I got out of the hospital, I had a Grand Mal seizure. You don't remember going through it, it's like you black out, but your eyes are wide open, gritting teeth, shaking violently. Apparently the doctors told my family (*but they didn't bother informing me, the patient*) that I may expect this after the injury I had, so there I go, back to the hospital, they load me up with Dilantin, inject an overdose of it into my bloodstream and it's making my arm itch from all of this medication, I was gripping the sides of this bed in pain.

I wanted the pain to end, but it couldn't, of course not, we couldn't have that, because I had an allergic rash reaction 10 days after I paid for a ton of medication I was supposed to be on for years, so they then switched me over to Tegretol, and yes, eleven days later, allergic reaction, so on to the expensive drug, Depakote. I had to eventually go to a fourth drug for this sharafe, and each time it was a different set of rules:

- take 3 times a day,
- take twice daily,
- no alcohol,
- extended release is available on *this* one,
- but not on *this* one. It was dizzying.

Medication

I

I set my alarm for 4:30 instead of 5:30 so I could roll over, take a pill, and fall back asleep. I'd leave two pills on the night stand with a glass of water every night. I could feel the pain in my leg, my hand, when I reached over to take the drugs. I'd feel it in my back, too. And sometimes in my shoulder. The water always tasted warm and dusty. It hurt to hold the pills in my right hand.

I closed my eyes at 4:32. I hated that damn alarm clock. And taking the pills early still wouldn't make the pain go away before I woke up. I knew that. But I tried to fall back asleep. And I dreaded 5:30, when I'd have to move.

5:40, I couldn't wait any longer, I couldn't be late, we couldn't have that, so I'd finally swing my legs to the floor. I'd put on my robe and limp into the kitchen. The trip to the kitchen lasted for hours. And picking up the milk carton from the refrigerator hurt like hell. This wasn't supposed to be happening, not to me. Just pour the damn milk. I'd wipe the tears from my chin and sit down for breakfast.

II

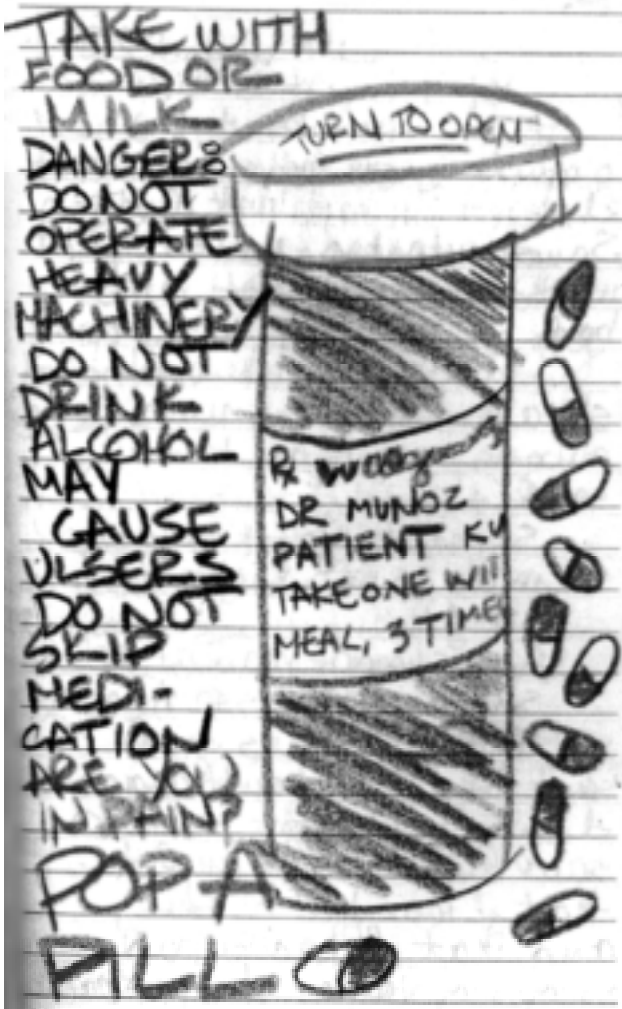
The doctor doubled the dosage, and he was amazed that I needed this much. He told me to follow the directions strictly, STRICTLY. "You can't take these in the morning the way you have been," he'd say. "You have to take them with food." That doesn't help when I'm crying from the pain in the morning. But I could get an ulcer, he'd say. And I wouldn't want that. Of course not. I just wanted the pain to go away.

Take one tablet three times daily, with meals.
Do not drink alcohol while on medication.
Take with food or milk. Do not skip medication.
Do not take aspirin while using this product.
Do not operate heavy machinery. May cause ulcers.

III

All I had to do was get through the mornings. The mornings were the hardest part. Just take a little more pain, and by the afternoon it will all be fine. Just fine.

An hour after the pills, and I'd start to feel dizzy. I'd stare at a computer screen and it would move, in circles, back and forth. I wanted to grab the screen and make it stay in place. But I'd look at my fingers and they would go in and out of focus. I'd feel my head rocking forward and backward;



I couldn't hold myself still. I'd sit at my desk and my eyes would open and close, open and close. Before I knew it, ten minutes passed and I remembered nothing. I could have been screaming for ten minutes straight and I wouldn't have known it. Or crying. Or sleeping. Or laughing. Or dying. I had just lost ten minutes of my life, they were just taken away from me, ripped away from me, and I could never get them back.

And I could still feel traces of the pain, lingering in my bones.

IV

I'd sit up at night and just stare at the bottle. It was a big bottle, as if the doctors knew I'd take these drugs forever. Hadn't it been forever already? I'd open a bottle, look at a pill. They looked big too. Pink and white. What pretty colors.

And then I'd think: If one tablet, fifty milligrams, could put me to sleep in the morning, could make me dizzy, could take a part of my life from me, then think about what the other thirty-six could do. 1800 milligrams. It could kill me. I wouldn't want that. Of course not. But just think, the bottle isn't even full.

May cause ulcers. May cause dizziness. Side effects may vary for each patient. May cause weight gain. May cause weight loss. May cause drowsiness. May cause irritability. Medication may have to be taken consistently for weeks before expected results. If effects become severe, consult physician immediately.

V

I began to count. In the mornings I took eight pills: one multivitamin, one calcium pill, one niacin pill, one fish oil capsule, one garlic oil pill, and one pink-and-white pain killer that I was special to have, because you need a doctor's permission to take those. Then I took diet pills: one starch blocker, one that was called a "fat magnet." As if the diet pills worked anyway. But I still took them.

And then I had to watch the clock, take a pink-and-white at one in the afternoon, a different pill at five o'clock, another pink-and-white at six o'clock, and there was also usually sinus medication that I had to take every six hours in there, too. Or was it eight hours? I started to watch the clock all the time, I bought a pill container for my purse so that I would always have my medication with me.

When I'd feel my body start to ache again, I'd look at the clock. It would be fifteen minutes before I had to take another pill.



What The Third Death is Like

When do you know it's over, you're recovered and everything's better? I mean, the medications and the doctors visits and the blood samples finally stopped, and I can drive and use a knife in the kitchen without fearing my own safety, and walk down the stairs without someone a handrail or someone else's help, but...but that feeling is always there, the feeling

like you went through Hell and no one knows what it's like and you can't tell them because they just don't have the time to listen

You know when you hear that someone dies (*a grandparent, a cousin, an old friend*), you feel terrible, you bawl your eyes out... You go to the funeral you rehash the good times to try to make you feel better

And maybe, you know, maybe two weeks later...you're no longer crying,

Because people move on

people forget what the victim went through

people don't know

people never knew

and you can never know how to tell them

That's what that third death can be like, i think

I'm Not Sick but I'm Not Well

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and I'm sure there's something I can do about this

I've popped the aspirin
the tylenol
the ibuprofen
the codine
the prozac
the sleeping pills

and that thermometer is down my throat
and I'm gagging

I'm not sick but I'm not well
the doctors find nothing wrong with me
and believe me, they've taken the x-rays
they've striped me down
and made me wear one of those awful paper robes
and they've felt me up
and checked me out
and found what they were looking for
but didn't find anything I was looking for

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and I can't help but think
that everything I'm doing to make things better
might only be making things worse
so I don't want to listen to what
you have to say anymore
and I want this IV out of my arm

and I want this oxygen tube out from my nose
and I want this suppository out of my ass
and I want you to get that scalpel away from me
because I want everything I've got

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and they want me if they can keep me in line
and they want me if they can cut me open
and take out my insides
and suck out the fat
and suck out the life
and make me generic
and make me dependent
make me unreal
make me not whole
and i've walked that line with all you doctors
and I want all my parts back
and I want to be healthy

no, I'm not sick and maybe I'm not well
but you're only making me worse
I don't have the answers but neither do you
so instead of tearing me apart
and dissecting me
and studying the bones
let me just stay together for a while
until I figure it all out

A Gun To My Head

I'm at a grocery store, I don't know what I'm getting but I've got a basket for food, I'm there alone, there are others in the store, but no one is paying attention to me.

Suddenly there's a gun to my head.

I know that sounds strange, but suddenly there is someone next to me, I have no idea who it is, but they've got a gun to my head, and no one else is noticing or paying attention.

The gun is at my temple, my right temple. I can feel the metal against my shin there, it's cold, and I can't move my head or this guy'll blow my head off. I don't know what he wants from me, but that doesn't matter right now, I've got this gun to my head, I have to try to keep my cool, hold everything together & not mess anything up.

My life depends on it.

I Recover and Everyone Moves On

I don't know how many times i've envisioned a gun to my head.

(If I tried to tell you, I'd sound redundant)

But usually in the car I envision an accident again. But I always end up in better condition than I was after that one accident

I'm usually barely conscious,

You know, to imply that something is wrong with me, but I'm conscious enough to know in my stories that I'm going to be okay,

I'm barely conscious, but i'm okay
because that is what i do

I recover, and everyone then moves on



Artwork by Mead



Artwork by Mead



Never Again

In the early hours of the first of April, french war protesters desecrated British graves at Normandy with slurs such as;

“Dig up your rubbish. It’s fouling our soil.”
“Saddam Hussein will win and spill your blood.”

Large swastikas painted on tomb stones and other anti-American and anti-British sentiment.

A recent poll of the french indicates that nearly one third of them hope that Saddam wins this war and American and British lives are lost.

Apparently these people have forgotten the tremendous sacrifice laid down by the British and American soldiers who lost their lives on that rocky soil in order to liberate france. The french president has issued a formal apology to Great Britain for this horrendous act. Quite frankly I DON’T CARE. Apologies do not make up for allowing something of this nature to occur. The fact that the french government and the people of france allowed this to occur is despicable and weak. Why am I not surprised...

This affront to basic human decency, to the sacrifices made, to the assistance still proffered and to the compassion meted out by these two great nations must be punished.

france does not realize that the war that we fight now, in liberation of the oppressed people of Iraq, is in many ways no different then the war we fought long ago to liberate them. Arguments can be made that this is a war fought for oil, or for money, or for world position, but the fact is that those are considerations in every war, including the one which set france free. At that time America certainly had no need to liberate france, but we chose to because it was the right thing to do. Never Again should we make that decision for the benefit of france.

I love America. I always have and I always will. However, my love of this great nation and my service to it is in my opinion NOTHING compared to the sacrifices of those who chose a career in support of our nation. It’s NOTHING compared to the sacrifices of my forefathers. It’s NOTHING compared to the singular acts of heroism performed by each man who died on the beaches of france during those terrible days. It is only relevant in the fact that the love in my heart, and the service which I’ve performed was meant to honor those men, to honor those beliefs and to honor our great nation in my own insignificant way. Many

others have done the same as me, and I believe that many always will.

I am angry. Indeed, in my whole life, I have never felt this kind of anger towards a people.

How dare they?

It bears repeating.

HOW DARE THEY!

And so, I call upon everyone who loves this country, everyone who respects the tremendous burden and sacrifice carried by our greatest generation, everyone who would look upon our country and see in it the tremendous generosity, respect and compassion that it brings to the world;

Never Again should you visit france.

Never Again should you buy french product.

Never Again should you answer any french call for aid.

Never Again should you work to alleviate french suffering in times of crisis.

I call upon our leaders to boycott french product.

To cut off all foreign aid to france.

To close our borders to the french people.

To collect on all french loans.

To no longer associate in any way with any member of any organization associated with the promotion of any french position.

Personally, Never Again will I buy a product of french origin. Never Again will I support any policy by our nation which benefits the french, Never Again will I consider any frenchman to be of any value whatsoever. This is my response to this. If ever the french have need to call upon our great nations to come to their aid, it is my fervent and committed belief that Never Again should we answer that call.

And to the wives, children and grandchildren of those who’s graves were desecrated, let me say how truly sorry I am that this was permitted to happen. My heart aches at the pain which you must endure.

And to the french I say this; Never Again will we help you, you useless, cowardly, weak, foul smelling, pathetic, obtuse, sub-human surrender monkey motherfuckers.

Never Again.

You want to debate me on this? Care to explain why it’s a good thing that these pieces of shit did this? Bring it on. My address is matt@yotko.com

I look forward to crushing you.

The Common Sense Bill Of Rights

We, the sensible people of the United States,
in an attempt to help everyone get along, restore some semblance of justice, avoid any more riots, keep our nation safe, promote positive behavior, and secure the blessings of debt-free liberty to ourselves and our great - great - great - grandchildren, hereby try one more time to ordain and establish some common sense guidelines for the terminally whiny, guilt-ridden, deluded, and other liberal Bed-wetters.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that a whole lot of people are confused by the Bill of Rights and are so dim that they require a "Bill of No Rights."

ARTICLE I: You do not have the right to a new car, big screen TV or any other form of wealth. More power to you if you can legally acquire them, but no one is guaranteeing anything.

ARTICLE II: You do not have the right to never be offended. This country is based on freedom, and that means freedom for everyone - not just you! You may leave the room, change the channel, express a different opinion, etc., but the world is full of idiots, and probably always will be.

ARTICLE III: You do not have the right to be free from harm. If you stick a screwdriver in your eye, learn to be more careful, do not expect the tool manufacturer to make you and all your relatives independently wealthy.

ARTICLE IV: You do not have the right to free food and housing. Americans are the most charitable people to be found, and will gladly help anyone in need, but we are quickly growing weary of subsidizing generation after generation of professional couch potatoes who achieve nothing more than the creation of another generation of professional couch potatoes.

ARTICLE V: You do not have the right to free health care. That would be nice, but from the looks of public housing, we're just not interested in public health care.

ARTICLE VI: You do not have the right to physically harm other people. If you kidnap, rape, intentionally maim, or kill someone, don't be surprised if the rest of us want to see you fry in the electric chair.

ARTICLE VII: You do not have the right to the possessions of others. If you rob, cheat or coerce away the goods or services of other citizens, don't be surprised if the rest of us get together and lock you away in a place where you still won't have the right to a big screen color TV or a life of leisure.

ARTICLE VIII: You don't have the right to demand that our children risk their lives in foreign wars to soothe your aching conscience. We hate oppressive governments and won't lift a finger to stop you from going to fight if you'd like. However, we do not enjoy parenting the entire world and do not want to spend so much of our time battling each and every little tyrant with a military uniform and a funny hat.

ARTICLE IX: You don't have the right to a job. All of us sure want all of you to have one, and will gladly help you along in hard times, but we expect you to take advantage of the opportunities of education and vocational training laid before you to make yourself useful.

ARTICLE X: You do not have the right to happiness. Being an American means you have the right to pursue happiness - which, by the way, is a lot easier if you are unencumbered by an overabundance of idiotic laws created by those of you who were confused by the Bill of Rights.

-State Representative Mitchell Kaye

***"A Rant of My Own" and other fascinating articles
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