



children, churches
& daddies

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the boss lady's editorial

A DIFFERENT LIGHT ON THE GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE

Part 1: the gas crisis, and hybrid cars

I was going to start off by doing an editorial about gas prices. I mean, for

portions of an article from
the **Washington Post** 04/27/06:

Say It With Me: Supply and Demand

By *Charles Krauthammer*
Friday, April 28, 2006; Page A19

Nothing can match the spectacle of politicians scrambling for cover during a spike in gasoline prices. And this time the panderfest has gone all the way to the Oval Office. President Bush has joined the braying congressional hordes by ordering the Energy and Justice departments and the Federal Trade Commission to launch an investigation into possible gasoline price fixing.

###

American demand is up because we've lived in a fool's paradise since the mid-1980s. Until then, beginning with the oil shocks in 1973, Americans had changed appliances and cars and habits and achieved astonishing energy conservation. Energy use per dollar of gross domestic product was cut by 30 percent in little over a decade. Oil prices collapsed to about \$10 a barrel.

###

Why don't we import the missing ethanol? Brazil makes a ton of it, and very cheaply. Answer: the Iowa caucuses. Iowa grows corn and chooses presidents. So we have a ridiculously high 54-cent ethanol tariff and ethanol shortages.

those of us who have cars, we remember that gas prices seemed to hover at times around \$1.50/gallon from 1997 through 2003 (I remember the 1997 gas prices because when traveling around the country by car, we looked for places where the gas price was \$1.50 or cheaper). And as the "war" in Iraq grew more and more difficult (well, since the Iraq conflict started) gas prices started rising.

I remember listening to news reports talking about about the price of a barrel of oil, how it was rising from \$55, to \$58, and people said in the news that the \$60 benchmark would probably break the American public, that we just couldn't take that. Well, just checked it out at Bloomberg, and yes, it's over \$60, and I haven't seen that much of a stop in purchases of SUVs in this country. I even remember the White House Press Secretary saying to people when asked if Americans will have to change their lifestyle that

no, Americans should not have to change at all — in essence, he was giving the White House seal of approval to continue spending.

(You know how high debts are in our society now? But the answer has to be that we need to spend more, even if we don't have it.)

Robb (a columnist at the Arizona Republic (robert.rob@arizonarepublic.com, on Apr. 28, 2006) mentioned that “Bush says that the United States is “addicted” to oil, and that addiction constitutes a national security and economic security threat.” And you can argue the point when addiction is usually an uncontrollable and irrational need for something that's harmful and doesn't apply to oil, but when you hear references from the White House say that people should continue spending and that it will all be okay, you have to wonder what side our government is really on.

I was going to talk about how political moves probably do have an influence over gas prices, because when gas prices seemed to double in 4 years, people were screaming for the President to do something about lowering the price of gas. And when people ask the government to help lower the prices of gas so people can continue heat the houses that they couldn't afford or drive the SUVs that are only temporary status symbols for most, they're asking the government to step in and take care of their lives from them. We're supposed to be a country where we don't *want* that much government intervention (which may explain why the Libertarian Party, an alternative to being a Democrat or a Republican, actually has close o 3 times the number of members in offices than the Green Party, since the Libertarian Party endorses individual rights and less government intervention). That same Arizona Republic columnist even brought up the fact that Bush “certainly shouldn't be trying to reduce the price of gasoline. That merely increases the subsidization necessary to make alternatives competitive.”

So... Gas prices are getting high again, and we're scrounging for the cheapest gas station we can find so we can feel less guilty about driving to the grocery store. I've even sworn up and down that the next car I purchase (because people have hit my car, totalling my last two cars) will be a hybrid, because not only did I not want to use something that we had to get from less-than-friendly countries, but also because I wanted to be able to save money at the gas pump. I've been a huge crusader for this, and my husband would have to point out to me that i'd have to own the car for 4 years in order to break even, since hybrid cars usually cost more than another fuel-efficient car (like my Saturn).

Okay fine, as long as someone doesn't total my hybrid, I'd save money.

And although I look at it in part as saving my sorry ass money in the

long run, I also think it's a smarter move economically. To use something that doesn't use as much oil probably means less of an emissions issue in the future. And we're supposed to be caring about the environment, right? I mean, I believed it before I saw Al Gore's *an Inconvenient Truth*, but that movie even helped to convince my husband that there were real issues we as humans should worry about.

And it's not as if Al Gore is running for office again, so it's not like he has any political gains from this, right? So it has to be on the up-and-up, this talk about what humans have done to the environment.

And the thing is, the Objectivist in me starts to question my motives for going green... I say this because I'd get press releases from the Objectivist Institute, talking about how environmentalists are actually more interested in taking our rights away. It sounds like a stupid idea, but think of it this way: I knew a man who was a gung-ho environmentalist tree-hugger type (and I know that's an insulting term, but if you saw the number of plants in my house you'd think I should have a greenhouse addition to my home...) who would ride a bicycle to work (good thing he didn't have to worry about a job where he'd have to wear a suit, because in central Illinois it get *bitter* cold in the winters), and wouldn't be able to afford decent Christmas presents for his own family (I remember his brother getting a bag of rubber bands this man had collected for Christmas one year). And if this life works for this college-educated man, he is more than welcome to it, but I think there are a lot of people who have worked for jobs in areas where they (A) can't ride a bike to work because of the distance to their job or their need to dress well work their work, which they can't do after a two-hour bicycle ride to the office. I think the Objectivist claim that environmentalists claiming that we should cut back on things to help the environment is something that would be too hard for people who live in the modern world to be able to do.

And you know, they're right — if my car choice to be green was to drive a car that never went over 35 miles an hour, I'd say screw it, I'll deal with one of the more fuel-efficient cars out on the market now. But from what I can see, the hybrid cars can work well, and can be a cost-saving tool that would help our dependence on oil and the price of gasoline.

So then I had to stumble on an article (you know that had to eventually start coming out, the articles against anything global warming-related) from the Recorder titled "Prius Outdoes Hummer in Environmental Damage." The article doesn't say that the Hummer has better fuel economy, but what it outlines is that building the Prius creates a lot more environmental damage than other cars produced. That sounds silly as a general statement, but I have to say it first, and then back it up with the evidence.

To quote the article: “As already noted, the Prius is partly driven by a battery which contains nickel. The nickel is mined and smelted at a plant in Sudbury, Ontario. This plant has caused so much environmental damage to the surrounding environment that NASA has used the ‘dead zone’ around the plant to test moon rovers. The area around the plant is devoid of any life for miles.” (and my husband says he saw that area once when traveling north to go fishing, and he said that I really need to see this “dead zone” area to understand the gravity of the damage.) And the plant that produces the nickel “has spread sulfur dioxide across northern Ontario... “The acid rain around Sudbury was so bad it destroyed all the plants and the soil slid down off the hillside,” said Canadian Greenpeace energy-coordinator David Martin during an interview with Mail, a British-based newspaper.”

Beyond that, this nickel, after being created in Canada, goes to a nickel refinery in Europe, and *then* it goes to China, where they produce “nickel foam” (I don’t know, apparently the nickel needs to be like foam to work in a hybrid car battery...) before going back to the United States for sale. I mean, I know Toyota isn’t an Americana company, but it’s just kind of weird that they’re paying people in countries around the world that aren’t the United States to make this product (with extremely environmentally unhealthy byproducts).

Part 2: the human influence: less than 1%
and how we hurt by trying to help

I’ll start off with that percentage number first. My husband told me (how does he get all of these statistics?) that humans produce around only 4% of all of the CO₂ emissions on this planet.

Well, that’s small, probably thanks to things like volcanoes and other natural elements on earth, but that number is still higher than less than 1%. Well, he told me that number first, because it was the most impressive number. He said that he read that humans production of all greenhouse gases is only about .2% — or one fifth of 1%. And yes all of those greenhouse gases actually *includes* the CO₂ emissions.

So I thought, okay, i’m going to search for this information on the Internet. And all I could find were articles like “Evidence of Human-Caused Global Warming Unequivocal”, or National Geographic’s “Global Warming “Very Likely” Caused by Humans, World Climate Experts Say” and “Climate change report says global warming ‘very likely’ caused by humans.” Now, I know there may be a lot of liberal sources on the Internet, but there has to be *something* about what my husband

knew as the facts. So I kept searching, and I found the article (finally!) in a letter to the editor titled “Climate Change is Not Caused by Humans.” Then I saw that it was posted on a Canadian Christianity site, and wondered if they had their *own* slant to try to lean the story into their own favor. So I skimmed the subheads throughout the article:

1. **Climate change: a theory**

The Big Bang is also a theory. Some just seem to have a little more evidence piling up in their corner than other “theories.” It’s also funny to see the phrase “climate change” and not “global warming,” because there previously evidence that the U.S. Government was more than gently suggesting to all government employees to not use the phrase “global warming” (since that sounds so harsh in light of media coverage) but to use the more benign phrase “climate change.” (Yeah yeah I know, this was a *Canadian* albeit Christian writer versus the word of an American Roman Catholic President, but you get the connection...) But the next subhead read the next subhead:

2. **Human CO2 emissions are comparatively small**

It didn’t give any statistics, but it at least was one person who actually talked about the amount of human contribution to global warming.

Someone did email me a few stats they heard on the radio about it, but I can’t verify these figures yet:

Human generated CO2 accounts for 3.2% of all CO2 on the planet. Water vapor is also a greenhouse gas. If we factor that in then humans generate less than 0.1% of all greenhouse gasses.

So I kept searching... And all I saw was an essay titled “The Earth Is On Fire” and saw some support for these contentions about Human’s influence on global warming: “First, we know that about 95% of the greenhouse effect can be attributed to water vapor as a result of natural evaporation cycles of the large water masses on the Earth’s surface. The remaining 5% is due to carbon dioxide and other gases. However, much of these gasses are also naturally caused largely from plant and plankton processes. Estimates vary wildly that the human contribution to these gases may be anywhere from 0.2% to an incredible 0.3%... So let’s review. The greenhouse effect is a **small** component of the overall global warming equation; carbon dioxide is a **small** component of the greenhouse effect; and humans contribute only a small component to the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. Should we be worried?”

So if the human contribution is that low to greenhouse gases, it doesn’t matter that even though in the past 200 years human industrial activity has injected carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, it may not be that direct of a link to the changes witnessed

recently in global average temperatures slowly increasing

»»

Okay, so we hear that humans might not have as much of an impact as the more liberal sources would say. Even think of California; even though Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is a Republican, he is a man working with both parties to try to help solve California problems. One problem in California is the smog and trying to save energy, and in California they proposed a law to make incandescent light bulbs illegal. A Reuters article even outlined that “A California lawmaker wants to make his state the first to ban incandescent light bulbs as part of California’s groundbreaking initiatives to reduce energy use and greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.”

You ever seen those efficiency light bulbs? They’re compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), and the often look like a coil instead of that usual elliptical shape. Although they’re more expensive than incandescent bulbs, CFLs have a longer rated life and use less electricity.

So although they cost more, they sound like a good deal (the only reason I haven’t replaced existing bulbs with them all is because I have a stockade of incandescent bulb from my parent’s house when they sold our house to move across the country). But even though I keep hearing good things about them (like seeing cable channel shows about how to cut down personal energy emissions, that kind of stuff), I think heard a little more info about the production of these energy-efficient CFLs. CFLs have methyl mercury in them, which is actually a man-made molecule, and a lot more dangerous than other forms of mercury.

Hmm. Not good that we’re creating something that seems more dangerous. But it can be destroyed easily, can’t it?

Well, apparently not. People usually (whenever bulbs die, even these CFLs) throw the light bulbs away, or possibly recycle them (and I recycle glass, by throwing it into a recycle can where I often hear the glass crashing apart into shards when it hits the bottom of the bin).

There goes some exposed methyl mercury.

But beyond that, I don’t know if recycling organizations have any means to effectively separate the methyl mercury from the other parts of the non-glass that go into recycling (other than a land fill).

And the funny thing is that I think I heard Rush Limbaugh talking on one of his shows that China is the only place where where low-energy bulbs are made. This means that the U.S. is not only losing money to another country, but also, by supporting work from things produced in China, the U.S. is probably invoking the production of more coal plants (which China uses in abundance for their energy), which is vastly worse

for the environment. So the bottom line with energy-efficient light bulbs, is that on the surface without all of the evidence it sounds like a great plan. But we as humans, while shortsightedly trying to save the planet, may create things that actually bring us more harm.

”””

Then I got a hold of an article, titled “Creators of carbon credit scheme cashing in on it.” It outlined how there were to major players in the push for saving the world from global warming (yes, one of them was Al Gore), and it talked about the world of carbon credits (something that countries need to earn to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol, to prove the country is actually helping the environment). The thing is, carbon credits are something a less-than environmental country can actually “purchase” from a country with excess carbon credits, to be able to still appease the tenets of the Kyoto Treaty. (they don’t help a country improve their habits, they allow them a way to sort of cheat out of the system by paying something who’s better so they can pass in the Kyoto global warming school). But this exists, and countries can purchase carbon credits to help squeak through the system with a less-than-perfect record. The point of the article (amongst other things) Al Gore is the chairman and founding partner of his global carbon credit company, which has received more than \$25 million on government research and development grants (from the U.S. Department of Energy, the DOE), and then are aligned to receive (although they produced results that proved the infeasibility of their plans) another \$8 million from the government.

So since Al Gore pays his own company for carbon credits, what on earth is he needing the carbon credits for? Well, this information was emailed to me (I think the sender heard this on the radio that day), and I saw this same about Al Gore in an issue of USAtoday:

Al Gore’s home uses more electricity in a month than the average American home does in a year. He was given a speeding ticket in 2005 for doing more than 20MPH over the speed limit in a rented Lincoln Town Car. He drove an large SUV during the filming of *An Inconvenient Truth*. He states that he bought a hybrid but rarely drives. He drove a Cadillac Escalade (15 MPG combined fuel economy) to the Sierra Club Summit He states that he and Tipper live a “Carbon Neutral” lifestyle. What this means is that they “neutralize” all of the CO₂ that they generate. How does he do this? By buying carbon credits. This is something that “world governments” and industry have cooked up to allow

corporations to exceed EPA limits on pollution without facing fines (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_credit). He flew in private jumbo jets when travelling for his *An Inconvenient Truth* tour. These jets consume more fuel in a day than most Americans do in ten years on a transoceanic flight.

The truth is out there.

(I like the email sender's X-Files crack at the end, but saying "the Truth is out there"...))

We had to wait for the calls against Gore's story to hit the media, and we found another one. "Gorey Truths" was published through *National Truth*, and it points out exaggerated evidence from Al Gore and his movie/book. Like, "The relationship between global temperature and carbon dioxide (CO₂), on which the entire scare is founded, is not linear. Every molecule of CO₂ added to the atmosphere contributes less to warming than the previous one." Or like how the Kilimanjaro snow is not melting because of global warming but because of a 100 year cycle of a local climate shift, and "Glaciers around the world have been receding at around the same pace for over 100 years." Remember the European heat wave we'd read about in the news a few years ago or see explanations of in *an Inconvenient Truth*? "The summer heat wave that struck Europe in 2003 was caused by an atmospheric pressure anomaly; it had nothing to do with global warming. As the United Nations Environment Program reported in September 2003, "This extreme weather [sic] was caused by an anti-cyclone firmly anchored over the western European land mass holding back the rain-bearing depressions that usually enter the continent from the Atlantic ocean." In other words, don't believe the hype: polar bears aren't becoming endangered, and coral reefs (which I mentioned in a past editorial, v173, June 2007 cc&d) have actually been around for 500 million years (wow, that's a long time), and during that time they've survived higher temperatures and higher CO₂ emissions than what exist today. "There is controversy over whether the Antarctic ice sheet is thinning or thickening," and "Greenland was warmer in the 1920s and 1930s than it is now." The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says, "We project a sea level rise of 0.09 to 0.88 m for 1990 to 2100, with a central value of 0.48 m. The central value gives an average rate of 2.2 to 4.4 times the rate over the 20th century...It is now widely agreed that major loss of grounded ice and accelerated sea level rise are very unlikely during the 21st century."

Wow, you try to soak this all in, and you don't know what to think anymore) at least that's the initial reaction).

part 3: tying it all together

So if I've heard from liberal Al Gore that I should cut back on emissions and run to the first sources available (hybrid cars or CFLs), I might actually be running to products that while helping after they're produced, actually do a ton of harm to the environment during their production. And although my husband can't ride his bicycle throughout the midwest as a salesman for calibrator services (even if he had one of those IT bicycles Garrison created on *South Park* that went over 200 mph, he'd have a hard time carrying all of his paperwork with his computer and Blackberry while keeping his suit nicely pressed for presentations...), maybe we should all be people, like the Democrats often suggest, who give up on some of these "rights" — like a car, or heating our homes adequately — so that we can help save the planet from certain doom. But the question begs itself: is it *really* certain doom, and are the changes in the world because of *us*?



Janet Kuypers ©

Janet Kuypers
Editor in Chief

In Picker's book *Hitler: Legend, Myth & Reality*, this following quote points out that even Hitler understood elements of science and nature in decisions he made about history and the world...

"...North Africa was once a thickly wooded region and so was Greece. At the period of Greek supremacy and of the Roman Imperium, there were dense forests in Italy and Spain. At the peak of its glory Egypt, like yet another symptom of a people's cultural decline, they cut down their trees without heed for reforestation and hence destroy the very means whereby nature in her wisdom conserves water."

Reading this made me think of a television show that talked about creating a "green" skyscraper in New York City. They recycled the materials from the old building (saving energy in not creating and using new materials, which oddly enough, isn't common), collecting rain water from the roof to use for a fountain a few stories high in the center of the building, which actually helps to control the temperature of the building. They also looked for reusable wood for all furniture — meaning they only used wood from places where it was guaranteed that the forest land would be reforested. An engineer for this building was asked by Tom Brokaw if that's a hard thing to find, "reusable wood," and they said that yes, that's actually a hard thing to find. So apparently we're still cutting down trees like mad and not doing enough to bring those trees that we destroyed back to the land.

'''

Although it's not much, I'm glad that last year for my friend's wedding, we planted baby trees for them. For the marriage of two nature-lovers, we thought that we could give a gift of starting life by planting trees.

news you can use

from The WEEK, the best of the U.S. and International Media,
<http://green.theweekmagazine.com/briefing.html>



GLOBAL WARMING: THE HIGH-TECH SOLUTION

Industrialized nations are being warned to drastically curb their emissions of greenhouse gases, but they're not listening. Are there any other bright ideas for stopping global warming?

Many of the schemes do sound a bit ... fanciful. Professor Roger Angel of the University of Arizona has proposed floating a web of six tilttable mirrors, 1,200 miles across, 950,000 miles from Earth. Such a contraption could theoretically deflect 2 percent of the solar radiation heading to Earth, which is about what it would take to compensate for CO₂-caused global warming. If we prefer, says Angel, we could launch into space tens of thousands of flying saucers made of foil, each about 3 feet across. The cost of either approach, Angel estimates, would be about \$3 trillion. That may sound steep, but it's only 1 percent of the planet's annual gross domestic product. And it might well be less than it would cost to retool the global economy to sharply reduce greenhouse emissions. But there may be cheaper, simpler ways of implementing the same strategy.

What other ideas are out there?

Man-made clouds, for one. Marine engineer Stephen Salter has suggested building a fleet of 1,000 specially designed ships that would constantly spray seawater into the air, creating clouds of tiny droplets that would reflect as much solar radiation as Angel's cosmic mirrors or flying discs. Another idea is to shoot tons of sun-light-absorbing sulfate particles into the upper atmosphere. After the Mount Pinatubo volcano in the Philippines did exactly that in 1991, the Earth cooled by about 0.9 degree Fahrenheit over the next year. The particles could be dispersed using conventional technology--artillery shells, perhaps, or even airliners--and, like all of these sun-blocking proposals, would let us keep burning coal and driving SUVs as if we'd never had a problem.

What's the catch?

The sky would turn gray, for one thing. For another, the effort would have to be relentless. Someone would have to shoot hundreds of millions of tons of sulfates into the atmosphere each year. This would require a level of sustained international coop-

eration, or unilateral altruism, for which humanity has yet to demonstrate much of a capacity. The other big problem with the sun-blocking strategies is that they do nothing to tackle atmospheric CO2 levels, and global warming is not the only threat to civilization posed by excess CO2.



from The WEEK, the best of the U.S. and International Media,
<http://green.theweekmagazine.com/bestcolumns.html>

Best Columns: The U.S.

IS 'GOING GREEN' JUST A FASHION STATEMENT?

Kurt Andersen, New York

All of a sudden, everyone has gone green, said Kurt Andersen. Magazines such as Vanity Fair, Time, and The Week are running environmentally themed issues; TV networks are launching shows about “ecofriendly living”; and 40 percent of Americans now say they worry “a great deal” about climate change. Even major corporations such as the “ultra-Republican” Wal-Mart are adopting measures to reduce their carbon emissions. But aside from this “marketing hoo-ha, timed to coincide with Earth Day,” will the sudden fashionableness of environmentalism mean anything to the ultimate fate of our planet? To head off catastrophic levels of global warming, climatologists say, the human race will need to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent to 60 percent. Since America’s affluent way of life now heavily depends on burning fossil fuels for energy, re-engineering our entire society will be a project requiring an unprecedented level of social consensus, scientific commitment, and political will. Given that the enemy in this case is so amorphous, will our smug, self-satisfied nation be willing to pay the price? Americans, let’s not forget, found Prohibition to be an unbearable sacrifice. “This looks to be the ultimate test of our national character. I’d say the odds are 50-50.”



poetry

the passionate stuff



RELICS

Mary Kolesnikova

Communist statues dotting the Russian countryside. As progress thaws slower than the tundra, these relics are a negligible point of interest. The slogans underneath the busts of Lenin remain unread, either because the local people have heard it all before or they know that someday it will happen again. There are plaques in bas relief, and the dead body of the man who made it possible, lying for tourists to see. Taken in for touch ups every once in a while, fluids changed, lint taken off. This is the country of my forefathers, and here they have no appetite for closure. I suppose that is all the closure I will ever get.



A CLOSURE SOMEWHERE IN TIME

Je'free

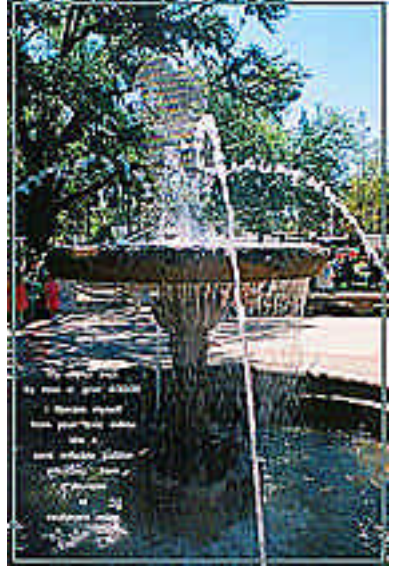
I journey through today's vehicle
speeding reckless with haunting memories,
naked past reflecting in the rear-view mirror

The faster my heart traverses,
the more it tears into pieces,
like petals in the sharp wind

Scarlet mumble of regret persists
Sometimes, I say it but I don't hear it;
or, sometimes, I hear it but I don't say it

In the tree of time, leaves of the future
cling on to branches of the present
that are affixed to the trunk of long-ago

It is a long stretch with no escape route
Somewhere in time needed crucial finality,
the only way I can open the next beginning



My Cleve Trick, art
by Rose E. Grier

MODERN TIMES TWO

Eric Obame

There were trees there three months ago
A few acres of nature between roads
Now there is earth, naked brown
And men with machines building houses
The beasts are gone
Their wood now forms
The skull and bones of human homes



Setting 10, art by
Melanie Monterey

THE PRESENCE OF YOUR ABSENCE

Doug Tanoury

Today, I came home to empty rooms.
Stillness and silence lie on the rugs
Like an old dog reluctant to move,
And I am reminded
By the ghost of motion,
A spirit of sound, some spectral
Scent that still haunts these rooms,
As I stand in the presence
Of your absence.
If memory were a ragged couch
Or worn chair I would carry
It out and set it by the curb,
Yet I cannot cast out phantoms
That possess this place and
Follow me about from room to room
Like a loyal dog, unwilling
To leave me unattended.
Today, at the door I was greeted
By your memory and paused
At the threshold a moment
To acknowledge you gone,
Like a happy fixture,
A friendly furnishing
That sat in my living room
For many years, now
Replaced by empty space,
As I wait in the presence of your
Absence, there is nowhere to sit.



The Last Hour, art
by Melissa Reid

THE DEAD
DON'T SLEEP
COMFORTABLY

Jacqueline Nicole Harris

Comfort is a gift
to the living while the dead
have only darkness.

SUGGESTIONS

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They suggest we try and save garden creatures
and ocean whales before it's too late

They suggest our luxury choices are sure to leave
the generation of 3000 with none

They suggest parents are scared of their children
and raising monsters

They suggest religious leaders pay more attention
to compassion than division

They suggest politicians aren't listening to those
who put them there

They suggest our multicultural societies are failing
themselves and each other

They suggest we start learning the lessons wars
should have taught us

They suggest we're but living will and testament
of a dying planet

So who are they, daring to suggest humankind look
to its shortcomings?

Among leafy choirs, anxious waves, our children
rehearse this world's passing

A NIGHT WITH THE BOOKS



WAY PAST FALL

Joshua Copeland

I reach and reach
And reach and grab nothing,
The air whistles in between my fingers
And the clouds siphon every
Last living cell from me—that cluster of bodies,
That jumble of claymation,

They're just that way,
He or she tells me, I promise
To thrust myself upon their
Backs and bite down
Hard into their skin, memorizing their
Leathery hides, their tangle of
Blue veins. Stuffed

They're all stuffed with gore, with the meaty flesh of the beast.

Julie Kovacs

Once isn't enough
what is it with those people constantly
harboring me
the breakfast table is far from peaceful
I'm placed at the center for everyone
to pick and nag at
no wonder I don't eat in the mornings
all I do is wash the dishes
clean the kitchen
go back to my room
and get my books
ready for the library where I can stay
in peace for several hours
concentrating on something else
besides a family that seems to live for nagging.
If I am lucky the public library
can lease space to me overnight
since my family's tax dollars already pay for
the public library service.

ODE #/ TO A CATHOLIC SCHOOL GIRL WHO REFUSED TO BECOME MARY MAGDALENE

Kenneth DiMaggio

Even her smoke rings
had sass and snarl
especially when she was
blowing them from
the pew
at the back of the church
when we were skipping
school

And if St. Mary's
was where you went
to confession

--why shouldn't it be
where you went
to commit
your sins

but for you not carnally
--sharing only a Marlboro
and the confidence
of an onyx-finger nailed
and Cleopatra-eyed
co-ed

that half the adults
in this auto-innards-making
town tried to punish
but could never break

beginning with detention

and ending
with a boy's room wall
reputation

Which is why she liked coming
to this church the only place
where somebody did not write
her name for something
she refused to regret

And because she did not

she spent more time
in God's house than
any church-confirmed
so-called "virgin"

And because you were there
with her as --a saint
trying to become
a sinner

you got to share
getting kicked out
of paradise
with the girl
who would define
how she would become

a woman

giving you the courage

to define
how you would become

a man



Hand of Fate, at by Edward
Michael O'durr Supranowicz

CURIOUS
FRONTIER

Melissa Beavers

The skyline,
Dulls against nature,
Tapering off,
And becoming obsolete.
Now it is just the lotus,
And the swaying of the palm fronds.
I channel into the display,
Of a warm breeze and night sounds,
Like a harpsichord,
A symphony of gentle chaos.

DOWN ON RICKIE'S FARM

Brian Mayer

I never said I had all the answers
But I'm not afraid to look inside
We know your type attacks
Without warning
And then you try to hide
You hide
Know that I'll follow my own spirit
You won't find it pinned like a medal
On my sleeve
Your kind can never get past it
So walk on
Walk on
And you call attention to yourself
By drawing white lines in the snow
A strange attempt at affection
But you should know you can't dam up that river
Just by going up
Against the flow
I've been told by a reliable source
That you said I am a man
Out of season
Always planting more than I can sow
Here's an open invitation
Accept this pick, ax, shovel, hoe
There is work to be done



LkBkB amp w/Crop 01,
art by David Matson

COURTESAN
DREAMS

Ramesh Dohan

Gieza combs
the water of the long
wave of her black
hair, toes just
edging out
from the pool of
kimono around
her quivering feet

BORN AGAIN HAIKU THE AMERICAN SENTENCE

Gerald A. McBreen

The Japanese haiku has been Americanized. Stretched out of its rigid form of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven, five. It is now liberated to a single line, seventeen syllable sentence, with inflections cascading in random order. Allen Ginsberg is given credit for evolving the form from haiku and titled it an American sentence. Uke haiku it uses just a few words to enlighten and delight the reader.

One of the charms of the American sentence is that it is not limited to seasons or nature. Another, is its simplicity. Almost anyone can write one. In the samples below I have married wit and wisdom in an attempt to infuse some old fashion humor into some old time religion and come up with some good old American sentences.

I'm dying to untangle the dilemma between heaven and hell.

Silly Noah, thinks he's going to grow up to be a boat builder. .

St. Patrick should have driven the snakes out of the Garden of Eden.

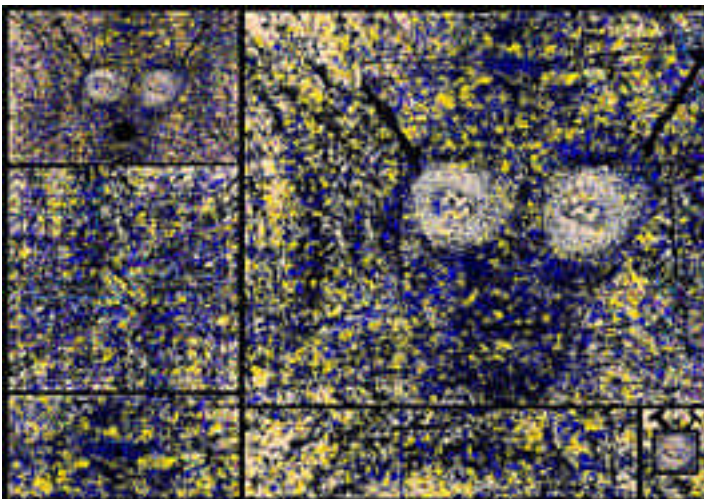
Charles Darwin can trace his ancestors back to royalty, King Kong.

Very few people believe it but St. Bernard really was a dog.

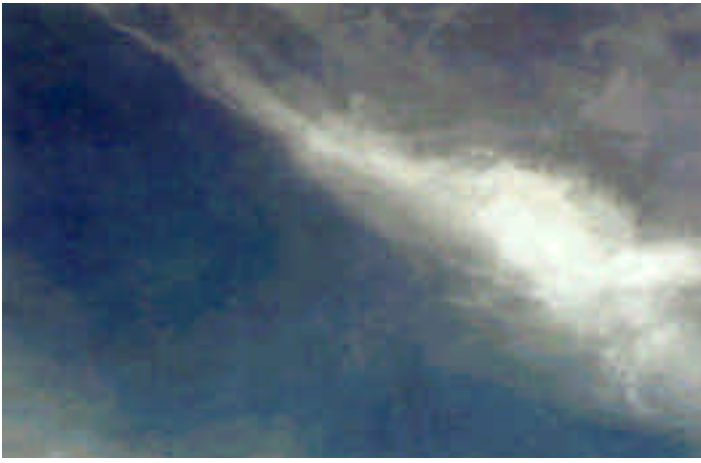
Trouble in Paradise started when Eve served spare ribs and apple sauce.

An atheist standing outside the norm, feeling alienated

(Allen Ginsberg, American poet, 1926-1997)



Alien
Parts, art
by Peter
Schwartz



Clouds 6,
art by Tracy
M. Rogers

ONE AND ONLY

Deborah M. Olley

Television voices screeching,
a stringy mop leaning in the yellow bucket, drowning in soap scum,
and an intercom, scratchily paging.

That scruffy dog in the yard next door,
its coat the color of a Creamsicle.
It howls, the sound so regular it's lost meaning.

A dim bar, with a single urinal behind the wooden door,
the vomit smells like that first unwrapped piece of turkey,
improbably pink, too perfectly oblate.

Someone last took the book off the shelf in 1979,
the tops of the pages never bent into corners,
no mustard stains, no Oreo-and-milk spills either.

There's a single sock on the beach at low tide, child-sized,
tiny red roses underneath the lace ankle trim,
the condom wrapper nearby, once blue, is faded.

The restaurant is crowded, full,
and he sits in a back booth,
his Oxford shirt, spilled burgundy, blending into the vinyl.

YOU SEE HOW THE POLITICS LEADS TO STOMACH PROBLEMS

Andrew Grossman

a day of striking pain
paying for the heaping
of aspirin and alcohol,
the stomach holds my sleep

so there is a sun,
the motors keep coming
in triangle arrowheads
in processional cheers

six years the de facto beat
on steel chairs drew my stare
drumming on the walls
the scream of friendly squadrons

how did I live through it?
I lived inside, distanced
from the pink pulsing tissue
as if staked to silence

the bowels have come loose
in Oblivious Paradise
the gelatinous organs
slip viciously from the shell

revulsion toward self
revulsion toward risk
the smell of my rottenness
greet the cleaning lady's smile

SLOW IN
SORROWS

G.A. Scheinoha

wrap themselves inside
a thirty proof bottle,
sweet as
berries
on the bush,
bitter as regrets
washed down
with greedy
numbing
gulps.

LONDON'S WINDOW

Geneva Smith

“I found out today that there was no such thing as color” she said
A breezy type of calm-

A not so funny joke god has played on us all.

What happens when you find out your as unwell as the next?

Live-
Life.

So we do.
So we shall.

I will write the way I'd like.
I won't sell a thing anyway.

“What happens when you find out you like pain?” she whispered in
my ear while twisted around me like a 300 year old tree.

I spoke, only to hear myself.
No one could be bothered.

Then she came.
She brought with her the information, a transformation of sorts.

Explaining in her baby voice that screaming is not always bad
and we don't always hate who we think we do.

Taught crudely about how there is not love.
Just hunger.

Her perfume mixed well with sweat.
Her eye liner ran south.
Her smile was forged.

She said.....”Just stop writing.....it's foolish”

MY PRESIDENT

I.B. Rad

Mama, that cowboy who rides herd on the White House
can't be my president
'cause my president's a man like Washington
who never told a lie
and spurned reigning as king
after gaining America's independence,
but choose to be our president instead.
Mama, that haughty "decider"
who holds court in his White House
almost never tells the truth
and fancies himself an American Napoleon
when all he's done is lose a war.
Mama, is that cowboy guy my president?!

"Mr. President,
reigning in a world
plagued by bad actors
you're the savior
of our age
while all the rest
are just mere extras
on night's global stage,
playing opposite
to your regal sage"



Pick a Head, from
worth1000.com

Mama, that cowboy who rides herd on the White House
can't be my president
'cause my president's a man like Lincoln,
homespun, hawk-eyed, and wise,
an honest man of the people
who kept us together
after a savage civil war.
Mama, that haughty "decider"
who holds court in his White House
is a corporate stooge,
who's not overly smart or especially wise
and instead of uniting, he mostly divides.
Mama, is that cowboy guy my president?!

*“Mr. President,
reigning in a world
plagued by bad actors
you’re the savior
of our age
while all the rest
are just mere extras
on might’s global stage,
playing opposite
to your regal sage”*



Straight Jacket, art by Nick Brazinsky

Mama, that cowboy who rides herd on the White House
can’t be my president
‘cause my president ‘s a man like FDR
who presided over depression and war
and yet still boldly swore,
“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
Mama, that haughty “decider”
who holds court in his White House
rules by claiming we must be scared of everybody
but him and his staff
who shepherd us on God’s chosen path;
yet, he stumbles over any pebble in the way.
Mama, is **that** cowboy guy my president?!

*“Mr. President,
reigning in a world
plagued by bad actors
you’re the savior
of our age
while all the rest
are just mere extras
on might’s global stage,
playing opposite
to your regal sage”*

Mama, that cowboy who rides herd on the White House
can't be my president
'cause my president 's a man like Truman
who booted out a popular general
and promised all Americans,
"The buck stops here."
Mama, that haughty "decider"
who holds court in his White House
swears he doesn't make mistakes,
yet he's never missed a chance
to blame someone else
for whatever's gone awry.
Mama, is **that** cowboy guy my president?!

*"Mr. President,
reigning in a world
plagued by bad actors
you're the savior
of our age
while all the rest
are just mere extras
on might's global stage,
playing opposite
to your regal sage"*

Mama, did you and dad vote
to make that cowboy guy
my president?
Did YOU?!



Underground Empire, at by Aaron Wilder

prose
the meat and potatoes stuff

POETIC JUSTICE

Mel Waldman

I

Maybe it wasn't happening. His eyes might be deceiving him. Once more he looked down the slope through the thick trees. Them. The two of them-at it again. With the boss away, it was easy. But was it really happening? The sun's glare got in the way. So his vision was blurred. And beneath a blazing sun, some folks see things which ain't there. Could be an optical illusion. He had to be sure.

Them. Down the slope through the thick trees, he watched them. The man had his arms around the woman. The bottle they had been drinking was sittin' in front of the shack. They were movin' back and forth. Kinda dancin' to each other's beat. Or were they wobblin' from the booze? Kinda slidin' into each other's flesh. And singin' and laughin' loud.

They fell to the ground. The combination of liquor and lust got to them. He was on top of her and grabbin' at her. She screamed. Not from terror, but from joy. And cried out: "Do it, Jake! Do it!"

There-underneath that vicious sun-they did it. The cowhand and the boss's wife. He heard the screams of ecstasy. Still, he wasn't sure what was happening. The heat mighta made it look like joy. It coulda... He didn't move. He strained his eyes and listened real good. He took it all in. The screams and cries roared through the land and traveled up into the hills. And into his ears. The sounds rose suddenly in his being. Rushed deep inside his brain and out through his black eyes. The sounds kept comin' and flyin' high into the hills. Rending sounds of strong emotion. And then came the other.

II

The other came ridin' in on a white stallion. Maybe he was a ghost. Maybe he and the horse were phantoms. You cain't be sure. Not under a sprawlin' sun.

The other rushed forth on his wild stallion. He swirled around them. Around and a round and encirclin' them like the hangman's noose.

Alone, he watched and couldn't believe his eyes. Big Sam had returned. Too soon. Wasn't suppose tabe back till tomorrow.

Big Sam back. A phantom rider comin' outa the vicious sun. And he rode around them. It happened so fast maybe Jake never saw him. But Molly did.

Big Sam rode high and fast. In the swirlin' wind, he took out his long, white knife and flung it through the hot air. The white stallion and knife flew together. It happened fast.

Swish! The killin' sound flew. And then the rider and horse galloped off. Vanished!

Maybe it never happened. Except he heard her screams and cries. Now, it wasn't joy reachin' up into the hills. And something else gripped his being. He climbed down the hill and across the pasture to where she was.

There. Molly stood there-screamin' and cryin' and her eyes bulging. A madwoman. Cause Jake was dead. The long knife cemented inside his back. The white knife lay quietly inside Jake's flesh. And Molly had lost her mind. Maybe her soul too.

She screamed and cried and shook wildly. Her fingers pointed at him. Like maybe he was the phantom rider. Pointin' and makin' false claims on him, Molly scared him. He looked at the dead man and the crazy woman. He ran.

III

He crossed the pasture and went down into the woods. He ran for over a mile and when he emerged from the dark shrubbery, he saw an open range. As his eyes adjusted to the sun, they rode toward him. Looming before him, were the sheriff and his men.

"Whereya runnin' to?" asked the sheriff.

"Nowhere!" he said abruptly, his tall, sinewy body shaking uncontrollably.

"Anything goin' on back at the ranch?"

"No!" he cried out and then he stopped short. Gathered his thoughts and said: "What brings ya out here?"

"Lookin' for rustlers. But maybe I'll find something else."

“Maybe.”

“Come on, now. Let’s see Big Sam.”

“Ain’t back yet.”

“And Molly?”

“She’s there!”

“Well, then. Let’s see Molly. Ain’t she perty, Roy?”

“Sure is.”

“You bet, Roy. Perty white piece.”

“Sure is!”

“Especially to a colored man!”

“Yes,” Roy whispered, his dark body still shaking violently. The sheriff looked at Roy and laughed wickedly. “Come on, now. Miss Molly might be lonely.”

IV

They found her running wild. Like a mustang, she flew across the pasture. Molly was a pretty gal. But when they saw her, she looked like a beast. When the sheriff spoke to her, she howled. She didn’t make no sense. Half-naked and her dress ripped, she looked like a victim of a horrible deed.

Molly looked at Roy. She pointed her trembling fingers at him. She shrieked and pulled her hair. And charged at Roy.

The sheriff stopped her. Then he turned to Roy and said: “You done raped Miss Molly!”

“No!” cried Roy.

“Done raped Big Sam’s wife!”

Roy cried out: “It was Jake! Jake did it! Jake!”

The sheriff didn’t pay no mind to Roy. He didn’t look for Jake. Didn’t think maybe Roy was innocent. Didn’t wonder about Jake. The sheriff took Roy in. Miss Molly had pointed her fingers at him.

V

The judge sentenced Roy to the hangman’s noose. Before Roy went through the “Gates of Hell,” he told me his tall tale of woe.

Roy told them what he seen. Right through that glare of malicious sun. Jake and Molly makin’ love and Big Sam comin’ along on a white stallion. With the long, white knife killin’ Jake and Molly goin’ mad.

Roy made it sound real. Sure did. Problem was-ain’t no dead body nowhere. Then again-no one looked. Still, dead men ain’t gonna get up and walk away. So what happened to Jake?

When Big Sam returned the next day, he was alone. Hadn't seen Jake. And he was horrified 'bout Molly. His eyes rolled back and forth with fury. So no one looked for Jake. Cause Molly was crazed and Roy condemned already.

Roy thought maybe Molly pushed the dead body into the ravine. The deep ravine was behind the shack-maybe a hundred feet away. And it musta swallowed up the dead.

Or maybe Big Sam rode back on his white stallion and roped the corpse. And ridin' fast to the edge of the ravine, he dragged it there. And flung it far and deep.

Maybe. And then, since no one was lookin', Big Sam coulda buried Jake. Anytime.

I listened to his tale and said: "Miss Molly was real nice. Maybe you done raped her for real!"

So Roy told a second tale of woe.

VI

Before Roy worked for Big Sam, he was a notorious outlaw. Went by the name of Black Bart. And he was called the poet laureate of outlawry. Bart was an expert stage-coach robber and an amateur poet. The San Francisco Bulletin of November 14, 1883 described him as a "dapper man with a penchant for diamonds." The Bulletin reporter described Bart as a man "of gentle birth with the manner of a perfect gentleman."

In August, 1877, Bart's first holdup was reported. He held up the stage running from Fort Ross to the Russian River. His loot was \$300 and a check for \$305.52. He was dressed in a long linen duster and a flour sack with eyeholes over his head. Armed with a rifle, he uttered his command to "throw down the box." His voice was deep and hollow.

After each holdup, the drivers and detectives found scraps of doggerel left behind. They were signed: "Black Bart, PO-8."

According to the newspapers, Black Bart was a highway man "but never a killer." Roy told me somethin' different.

Bart's last holdup was the stage from Sonora for Milton, near Copperopolis. The road agent in his weird garb stepped from behind a rock and leveled his rifle. In his deep and hollow voice, he gave his command to throw down the box. He got \$4,800 after working on the lock of the box sometime. But before he could get away, a rider came up. The driver borrowed his gun and fired at Bart. Bart was hit hard and low. Furious, he fired his rifle and killed the driver. Then he scooped up the money and fled.

Roy said the papers got the story wrong. Never mentioned the killin' of the driver. Never mentioned Bart was real hurt. So the character of Black Bart was preserved. And his reputation intact. Papers continued to say that Bart "scorned" to shed blood.

And Bart vanished. Reappeared as Roy Cole. And went to work for Big Sam.

I listened real hard. And wanted to believe but I just couldn't. Said to Roy: "Ya tell a fine story. A tall tale."

And Roy said: "It's all true. I never done raped Molly!"

"Prove it!" I said. "Ifya cain."

"I got pride!" he said. Then he hid his head in his chest. But later, he swore to me. And we argued. And he swore. And then he said: "Don't tell no man what I done show ya! No man!"

And he pulled down his pants and showed me: "I was hit here. Hard and low. So..."

"You cain't!"

VII

Well, maybe he was Black Bart. Maybe. Don't know. But he never done raped Molly. I told him to show the sheriff the proof. He wouldn't. He was ashamed of his scars. And they'd laugh at him. And he was a man. Even though...

VIII

They hanged him high. Somebody had to hang. But he died like a real gentleman. A brave man. A man.

Wish he had told them. They woulda seen. But then-they mighta hanged him anyway. Somebody had to hang.

They never found Jake's body. And never looked. Of course, Jake never returned.

Big Sam's still on the ranch and Molly-she's there. In body if not in mind.

I reckon one day I'm gonna look into that ravine behind the shack and see if I can find Jake's body. Cause Roy was a man of great pride and Black Bart a man "of gentle birth with the manners of a perfect gentleman." So I wonder what happened. What really happened? I wonder.

PERVERSION OF REALITY

Melissa Sihan Mütlu

It was the final day of school for the senior class of Romeo High School. Collectively, they called themselves “the class of seventy-six.” Joaquin Phillips, Vincent Wrigley, and Eddie Soudain sat in the back of Mrs. Isley’s European history class, waiting impatiently for the bell to ring. All three had decided to skip the graduation ceremony, slated for the following day, and instead be done with high school forever. Joaquin had his sandal clad feet up on the windowsill, watching as Vincent and Eddie were signing each other’s yearbooks. Eddie was in the middle of sketching a pot leaf on the inside of the back cover, when he was interrupted by David Glasser’s fart. David was the kid who hardly ever spoke a word, wore black-rimmed glasses, and had at least five large pus-filled pimples on his forehead at any given time. The class erupted in laughter, the loudest of which came from Joaquin, Vincent, and Eddie.

“That’s the best thing you’ve said all year, Dave,” Vincent joked.

Eddie was doubled over in a fit of uncontrollable laughter, and Vincent’s remark made him laugh harder, causing his sides and stomach to cramp.

“Mrs. Isley?” David asked meekly, his face turning red from the embarrassment caused by his overly sensitive digestive system. “May I be excused to use the restroom?” She nodded her head, giving Vincent, Eddie, and Joaquin a “don’t you dare say another word” kind of stare. Most of the class had stopped laughing at this point, with the exception of the three best mends, who were now laughing even harder.

“Go on now, you three,” Mrs. Isley quipped, straightening her thin wire-rimmed glasses, which continuously slipped down her narrow beak-like nose. “Go home and laugh yourselves to death for all I care.”

“Will do ma’am,” Joaquin managed to say, in between bouts of laughter. The three mends stood in front of the class and took a bow. Before stepping out of the door, Eddie pulled the other two in close. Mrs. Isley rolled her eyes at the sound of whispering and quiet laughter.

“Now for our next trick,” they said in unison. “Class of seventy-six, we leave you with this!”

Turning their backs to the class, they dropped their jeans down to their ankles, revealing stark white asses. Another round of laughter filled the class, this time with more gusto than was awarded to David Glasser’s gaseous episode. Mrs. Isley grabbed a wooden metre stick off the wall and

smacked all three across their backsides.

“Go home you three,” she said, cracking a smile. “I don’t need to go blind; I’m only thirty-five.”

They pulled up their jeans and took off running out of the room and down the hallway, banging on lockers and making shrill hooting sounds.

“We’re done man! We’re finally done with the hell hole called high school!” Eddie shouted upon exiting the building. “No more teachers and no more bullshit homework! I knew I was never going to need algebra!”

“Hey, Vincent,” Joaquin said, rubbing the portion of his backside the metre stick had made contact with. “Did you ever get Rachel Dennis to sign your yearbook?”

“No, but she showed me her tits,” he said matter-of-factly.

“Liar!” Joaquin shouted. “Rachel Dennis is the hottest girl in school. Why would she ever show *you* her tits?”

Eddie rolled his eyes at the mere mention of Rachel’s name. He never did understand why droves of guys were attracted to her, and understood it even less coming from his own mends. “Enough about Rachel’s tits,” he remarked. “I’ve got something much, much better.”

Vincent looked at him in disbelief “Better than Rachel’s tits? What could be better than that?”

“This,” he said confidently, pulling out a sandwich bag one-quarter full of bright green weed. “Besides, you’ve never even seen Rachel’s tits, so how do you know they’re not deformed, or sagging, or ——”

“This is definitely better than Rachel’s tits,” Vincent interrupted. “She might be hot, but at least I know I can have my hands on this,” he said, referring to the weed.

“Hey Joaquin,” Eddie remarked, sounding as if he just discovered the secret of life. “Are your parents still in Florida?”

“Hell yes! Gone till next Thursday.”

“To Joaquin’s house!” Eddie announced, beginning to run across the front lawn of the school.

The other two followed suit, with Vincent snatching the bag of weed away from his mend and shoving it down the front of his pants. “When we get to Joaquin’s house, I’ve got to tell you two something,” he said, adjusting his now bulging crotch area. “It’s this urban legend. You can find out how you’ll die.”

The two looked at him like he was crazy. “Bullshit!” Joaquin laughed. “You’re so full of shit. What do you mean ‘you can find out how you’ll die?’”

“Just like I said. You can find out how you’ll die. You’re not supposed to sleep for three days straight, and then you’ll hallucinate your own death. When we get to Joaquin’s, I’ll tell the whole story.”

The three walked the ten-minute walk down McAvery Drive until they reached the red brick ranch Joaquin called home. He cringed when he saw the neighbor's toy poodle using his front yard as a toilet. It finished its business, and left behind a small, warm pile of brown medallions.

"Home, sweet, home," Joaquin joked, brushing some hair out of his eyes. "Where poodle shit welcomes you!"

The three walked past the waist-high white picket fence, which Joaquin noticed had what looked like blood on one of the pickets. He had never noticed it before, and couldn't understand how he had missed it.

"Hey, what are you looking at," Eddie asked, noticing his friend's pre-occupation with the fence.

"Blood, I saw blood," Joaquin said, now not seeing any stains at all.

"Okay, who did you kill *this* time?" Vincent joked, finally pulling the bag of weed out of his tight jeans. "To Joaquin and his murdering ways! I'll smoke to that."

"I second that motion," Eddie chimed in.

Joaquin nodded his head, and took another look at the fence. The stain reappeared worse than it had before. "I'll be inside in a minute," he called out to his mends, who were nearly through the front door. He wanted to take a closer look at what exactly was on the fence. Running his fingers across the stained portion, he could feel only the fence and nothing wet at all. There were no stains on his fingertips, and when he looked at the fence again, the stains were gone.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of Eddie and Vincent, shouting out of his bedroom window. Vincent held up the bag of weed and pointed to it, reminding him that it was far more important than imaginary stains on a fence. He looked at his hand again, and when he saw nothing but peachy flesh, he dismissed the stains on the fence as a hallucination.

"Hey Casanova!" Vincent shouted from the window. "Hurry the hell up!"

"Coming!" he shouted back, running into the house to join his mends for a funfilled afternoon.

Vincent had already rolled two joints by the time Joaquin had made it to his room. Eddie had turned on all five lava lamps and was busy looking for a record to play, but decided on the radio instead. A Buddy Holly song, which none of the three could remember the name to, began to play. Vincent lit up one of the joints, took a hit, and passed it to Eddie, who did the same before passing it to Joaquin.

"So you guys still want to hear that urban legend?" Vincent asked, taking one last hit off of the joint before putting it out in the bottom of a white ceramic coffee mug.

Eddie and Joaquin began to laugh uncontrollably, which caused

Vincent to laugh. The three pairs of glassy eyes darted across the room, unable to focus on just one thing.

“Well do you or not?” Vincent asked again, regaining his composure.

“Sure,” Eddie managed to droll out. “Tell us your little urban legend as you call it.”

Vincent turned off the radio so that they only sound in the room would be his voice. “I heard this from a guy I bought weed from a week ago,” he began. “If you don’t sleep for three days, you’ll hallucinate and see how you’ll die.”

Joaquin exploded into laughter again, and rolled onto his side. “That’s bullshit, Vincent! Pure, unadulterated bullshit!”

“It is not!” Vincent said, irritation building up inside him. “Some guy in Australia or Boston or someplace tried it. He kept saying how he was going to get hit by a car. The very next day a car hit him right in front of his mailbox. Guts were all over the pavement!”

“Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!” Joaquin repeated. “That story was one of the dumbest things you’ve ever told me. It’s even more stupid than the time you shit your pants during recess in fifth grade.”

Eddie laughed, remembering the incident on the playground. “You smelled like ass for the rest of the day. I remember you had this big brown stain on the back of your jeans.”

“Fine, if you two don’t believe me, then I say we test the story out,” Vincent challenged. “What’s the worst that could happen?”

“We could see our own death,” Joaquin said mockingly. “I hope I get my head cut off, and my feet eaten by rats. What about you, Eddie?”

“I don’t know. Maybe I’ll see Vincent go crazy and eat my face off.”

The two of them laughed, but Vincent just rolled his eyes, convinced there was some truth to the story. “Do we have a deal?” he asked.

Joaquin and Eddie agreed, still exchanging possible ways they would see themselves die. Vincent could tell it was obvious they were mocking him. All three decided to sleep until eleven that night, and then stay up for three consecutive days.

“By Monday at eleven I guess we’ll see how we are going to die,” Vincent said confidently. However, there was still a part of him that hoped his two best friends were right. Eighteen was a bit too young to witness one’s own death. If he did happen to see his own demise, he hoped he would see an old man who had died in his sleep. He set the alarm on Joaquin’s clock to exactly eleven. The challenge had begun.

The sound of the constant buzzing coming from the alarm clock woke all three up out of a deep sleep. Joaquin’s eyes darted around the room, and he almost forgot he was in his own home. Vincent and Eddie were talking loud-

ly to each other about David Glasser, as if both had had a dream about him.

“Shut-up you guys,” Joaquin whispered. “You’ll wake my parents.”

The other two looked at him confused. “You’re parents aren’t even home right now, you idiot!” Eddie remarked. “Joaquin has the memory capacity of a fuckin’ stoner!”

“You’re one to talk!” he shot back.

Vincent stood up between the two, until they calmed down. Taking a seat on Joaquin’s bed, he made sure the argument was over. “Listen,” he said, sounding more like someone’s father rather than an eighteen-year-old. “If we’re going to make it through three days without sleeping I suggest we save our energy, not waste it on pointless arguments.”

“Fine, fine, fine,” Eddie huffed. “Sorry Joaquin, I just wake up in a bad mood sometimes. “

The two shook hands and forgot about the dispute. Vincent pulled the second joint he had rolled out of his back pocket and lit it up. The three passed it around until it was nearly gone, and just holding it made their thumbs and index fingers bum.

Joaquin began to dance around his room, pretending his arms were wings. “I don’t know what you put in that second joint, but I haven’t been this high since I was sixteen. “

Neither Vincent nor Eddie felt that the second joint was any better than the first, but were amused by their mend’s dance. Eddie began to clap his hands, and Joaquin danced to the beat. Vincent joined in on the clapping and began to chant “dance faster,” Joaquin danced as fast as he could until he nearly passed out. He had to lie on his back until the dizziness subsided.

“Don’t pass out on us yet,” Vincent warned. “We’ve still got a lot of time left before we start to hallucinate.”

“We should have done some acid instead,” Joaquin said, trying to catch his breath. “I could have gotten us some really good shit. You know, the kind that makes you want to fuck your mom.”

“I’d fuck your mom anyway, Joaquin,” Eddie joked.

“If I wasn’t so tired and about ready to pass out, I’d slap you.”

Vincent’s face began to turn red, and it was obvious he was desperately trying to hold in a huge bout of laughter. “Enough about mom-fucking,” he said as his eyes watered. “But I will tell you this, even if I had the chance to fuck Rachel Dennis, I don’t think I would. It would completely ruin the whole fantasy. I would love to see her tits, but that’s it. I mean what if she didn’t shave her muff or something like that. For all I know, she could look like a gorilla down there.”

“I’d fuck her,” Joaquin quipped. “I’d fuck her even if she had a gorilla muff and three tits.”

“You guys are so nasty,” Eddie laughed. “I’d fuck Stacy Glasser before Rachel.”

“Now you’re the nasty one,” Vincent said. “Stacy is David’s sister. The worst part is, she looks just like him, but with longer hair.”

Joaquin’s eyes lit up like he had had an epiphany. “A ha!” he said excitedly. “There you go, Vincent. Like you said before about how fucking Rachel would ruin the fantasy, and Stacy is not a fantasy so she couldn’t ruin one. You’d expect her to have these huge pimples all over her ass, and long dark hairs coming out of her nipples.

Vincent held his stomach like he was going to vomit. The thought of Stacy having ass pimples and nipple hair was more than he could handle. “Please you guys,” he pleaded. “I don’t want to think about her naked.”

One sleepless night carried on into the next. It was finally eight o’clock, Monday night. Eddie, Vincent, and Joaquin looked and felt like zombies. All three had massive dark circles under their eyes, and hardly had the energy to move. Joaquin watched helplessly as his two mends began to fall asleep. If he had had the energy to stop them he would have, but he hardly had any for himself. He looked on as the confines of dreamland took over his mends’ bodies and minds. Now he knew he had to stay awake. He had to prove that Vincent was wrong.

Finally, eleven o’clock arrived and Joaquin could hardly believe he had survived the challenge. “What now?” he asked himself, unsure of what to expect, if anything at all. “I knew Vincent was full of shit, like I really hallucinated my own death.”

His face felt hot and sticky, so he embarked to the bathroom to splash some cold water on it. With all the sleepless nights, he hardly recognized his own reflection. The whites of his eyes were crossed with veins, and his skin was blotchy. He stuck his face into the sink and let the water roll down it, then dried himself off. Once again, he caught his reflection in the mirror, but this time noticed that Eddie and Vincent were standing right behind him. The fronts of their T-shirts were covered in blood, their skin looked gray, and their lips were severely cracked with the blood having dried to a dark-red crust. Each had an axe wedged deep within his back, between the shoulder blades. Joaquin shook his head, wanting the image to disappear.

“Not funny,” he screeched. “I don’t need this poor excuse of a joke right now.”

His two mends did not speak, and Eddie put his finger up to his lips, making a hush motion.

“Not funny,” Joaquin repeated, this time more forcefully.

He ran out of the bathroom so quickly, he didn’t even see the wall directly in front of him. The hard impact caused him to black out.

“Joaquin! Joaquin!” Vincent said, slapping him.

He sat up abruptly, and put his arms in front of himself to keep his friends at a safe distance. They looked at him confused. He looked around even more confused. noticing that he was back in his bedroom.

"I can't believe it." Eddie chuckled. "You were the first to fall asleep, Joaquin."

He looked at Eddie in disbelief "No. I wasn't." he said confused. "I watched you and Vincent fall asleep."

Vincent shook his head. "No, we saw *you* fall asleep. We almost made it to eleven, thanks to your constant screaming from some nightmare you were having."

Joaquin pondered if what he thought he saw in the bathroom was, in reality, not real at all. "I guess I must have had a dream about you two. That's all I remember."

"I had a dream too," Eddie explained. "I was raped by a clown, who looked like the ice cream man I remembered from back in the day. He wore these huge shoes and was dressed in all white. Pretty scary, huh."

Vincent didn't remember having a dream, and assumed if he did dream, it must have not been anything great. Joaquin was still slightly shaken up by his previous visions. and excused himself to use the bathroom. He had his head over the toilet, expecting to throw up at any second. Dry heaves forced their way out, then settled down, along with his stomach. He washed his face, and once again saw his mends covered in blood, with axes in their backs. This time, the skin was peeling off of their faces, revealing the skulls underneath.

"It wasn't a nightmare!" he screamed, before passing out.

He was awakened by the voices of Eddie and Vincent, causing his body to become paralyzed with fear. "Go away! Leave me alone!" he screamed.

"Wake-up shit face," Vincent laughed. "I just want to know if you made it to eleven."

When he finally was able to clearly focus on both of his mends, he saw them standing over him, and looking completely normal. Once again, he found himself in his room, but had no recollection of how he had gotten there. "What?" he asked, not yet comprehending what had been said to him. "I don't understand. I thought I fell asleep first. That's what I was told."

"Huh?" Eddie questioned. "I never said anything. Right before I fell asleep, I glanced over at you. You were still awake."

Vincent nodded his head. "I saw you awake too. It was also just before I fell asleep."

The two looked at Joaquin curiously. He stood UP to see if any axes were stuck the backs of his friends.

"What are you doing?" Eddie asked, backing away.

"Oh, nothing. I'm just checking on something."

“Checking what?”

“Nothing. It’s nothing.”

Vincent became increasingly curious about Joaquin’s strange behavior, and probed him for answers. “You saw something, didn’t you?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Yes, you did. What did you see, Joaquin?”

“Leave me the hell alone!” he screamed. “I had a nightmare. You and Eddie were in it. That’s all I remember.”

“I had a nightmare too,” Vincent began. “I was raped by a clown, who looked like the ice cream man I remembered from back in the day. He wore these huge—”

“No you didn’t! Eddie had that dream. He told me so.”

Eddie looked at him in disbelief. “I never had that dream. I didn’t even have a dream, so I don’t know what you’re talking about Joaquin, but—”

“Shut-up, both of you! I’m sick of your lame jokes!”

“Maybe you should run your face under some cold water.” Vincent suggested, concerned about Joaquin’s increasingly paranoid behavior.

He took Vincent’s advice, and headed towards the bathroom. As he passed the window in the living room, he caught a glimpse of something that was out of place, in his peripheral vision. A man passed out in the front yard stopped him dead in his tracks. What he saw made his chest tighten, and breathing became nearly impossible. It was not just any man he saw outside. but rather it was himself The image of his body skewered through the chest by a picket from the fence brought him to his knees.

“Eddie! Vincent!” he called out. but received no answer.

Crawling on his hands and knees. he managed to make it back to his bedroom. - ‘His mends were fast asleep, and no matter how hard he tried to wake them, they did not budge. He exhausted himself, and in doing so, passed out next to Vincent.

Eddie and Vincent woke up the next morning feeling refreshed, with the challenge of staying awake for three days already behind them like a distant memory. Both looked over at Joaquin, who now lay on his back in his bed. Eddie tried to scream,“ but could not force the sound out. Vincent thought Joaquin was playing a joke, until he felt the cold and lifeless body. The sheets were soaked in blood, and through the middle of Joaquin’s chest was a piece of the white picket fence.

“Who did this!” Vincent panicked. “We have to call for help!”

“Help?” Eddie whispered, rocking back and forth in the fetal position. “Who can help him? He’s dead. Every single piece of him is dead. Dead. Dead, Dead.”

Vincent left Eddie, and ran into the kitchen to use the phone. He dialed the Romeo Police Department.

“Romeo Police Department,” a young woman’s voice answered.

“Police!” Vincent screamed into the receiver. “There’s been a murder at three-seventy-five McAvery Drive! Send help!” He slammed the phone down before he could receive a response.

Ten minutes later there was a knock on the door. “Police!” a man’s deep voice shouted. There was no answer.

The two officers standing outside waited a few seconds, then turned the doorknob. The house was dead quiet, and it did not appear as though a murder had taken place.

“This is the address isn’t it?” one of the officers asked, scratching his bald head.

“Three-seventy-five McAvery Drive,” the other one responded.

Both walked straight into Joaquin’s bedroom. “Charlie, call the coroner. This is one hell of a mess. You know, it’s deaths like these that start those damn urban legends, kids like to tell.”

Joaquin’s body still laid lifeless, skewered through the middle. Eddie and Vincent were sprawled out on the floor. Each had an axe buried deep within his back, right between the shoulder blades. The Buddy Holly song none had known the name to played on the radio.

REVISIONIST ROAD RAGE

Adrian Ludens

Yellow turned to red as Trent slid through the intersection. He checked his rearview mirror guiltily. No police car but there was a black Jetta coming up fast.

As they cleared the intersection the Jetta abruptly changed lanes and sped past on Trent’s left. The traffic in that lane had slowed and Trent anticipated being cut off by the Jetta. He eased his foot off the accelerator and lightly tapped his breaks. Sure enough, the Jetta’s driver yanked the steering wheel to the right in another abrupt lane change.

The Jetta shot forward, rapidly eating up the space between it and the vehicles further up the street. Trent pressed his palm into the steering wheel, sounding the horn in a long shriek. The driver shot him a look in the rearview mirror. Trent saw the man’s arm beginning to raise to flip him off.

“Jerk,” was all Trent could say before “Jetta guy” was served up a dose of instant karma.

The air was pierced by a loud crack. Shards of debris sprayed from the

front passenger side of the Jetta as its headlight and turn signal shattered. The Jetta bucked to the left, narrowly avoiding sideswiping a station wagon in the next lane. The Jetta had clipped a Sunfire that had slowed to turn.

The Jetta's driver accelerated again. Trent sped up in hopes of getting the license number when an old ranch couple in a dirty extended cab truck changed lanes, blocking his line of vision. Trent considered passing them in an attempt to catch the Jetta but then saw the old man raise a cell phone to his ear.

"They got his plates," Trent thought and grinned.

He had lost sight of the Jetta but it didn't matter.

Trent turned around in a parking lot and retraced his path until he got back to where the Sunfire's driver had pulled over.

A police cruiser rolled up. Trent waited as the Sunfire's driver made his statement. Then the cop turned and walked over to him.

"You saw what happened?" he asked.

"Sure did. I noticed a black Jetta driving practically right up my tail pipe back at the light. He was speeding and weaving in and out of traffic. He cut me off and I-

He what? Honked and made the driver of the Jetta take his eyes off the road? Provoked the other driver into an act of road rage and caused a traffic accident in the bargain?

"And I said to myself, 'That guy is going to hit somebody.' And that's just what happened." Trent finished.

Well, not exactly, but close enough. The officer wouldn't want Trent to complicate matters with unnecessary details.

"Someone already called 911 and reported the license plate, so we'll get him." the patrolman said. "Appreciate you stopping. Have a nice day."

"No problem." Trent said as he got back into his own car. He felt good about his role in all of this. "No problem at all."





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