A photograph of a field filled with numerous white wooden crosses of varying sizes, planted in green grass. The crosses are scattered across the frame, some standing upright and others slightly tilted. The background shows a dense field of these crosses stretching into the distance.

the **UN**religious,
NONfamily-
oriented
literary & art mag

cc*✠*d

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Scars art

5 (editor photo taken for Halloween in 2006), 8
(Arlington National Cemetery 10/23/03). Cover art of
crosses in the front lawn of a Church in Crystal Lake.

Sun

Bernard Gieske

each day you startle me
stalking me across the skies
only to deliver me
up to the lonely night



Mr. & Mrs. Quacktail,
art by Nick Brazinsky

Hitler as a Minister:

Witnessing Similarities between Nazism and Religion

I am one of those junkies for History Channel shows that talk at all about Hitler, and I feel bad that I don't know German enough to truly understand what Hitler is saying in the clips of speeches I see on these shows. Because people talk about how people were by Hitler's words whenever he made a speech. He had an easy time wooing people over when the country had already been suffering economically after World War One. But it may have been more than the state the people were in; it may have been due to the way Hitler spoke, and what he said to get people to follow him like he was a religious icon.

Part I

Indoctrinating German Children

Into Nazi UberBabies

I got to read this little gem in "How children were indoctrinated into the Third Reich" (http://inin.essortment.com/thirdreich_rbod.htm): Hitler, as soon as his Nazi Party came to power in 1933, molded children for his new idea of the German nation. In schools, when children were taught reading, they learned it by hearing and reading stories about the glory of Hitler, and written essays may be about genetically pure people.

Keep in mind that the notion of being genetically superior was taught and believed by people holding real power in the Nazi Party. They searched history looking for any reference to a swastika to prove how the Germans are racially superior. They even traveled to Tibet and measured the heads of some people there, to learn how they may have actually been linked with this culture, with the same heritage.

When it came to schooling, lesson plans were given to teachers by the state, and teachers were forced to teach the Nazi propaganda. Boys learned from their teachings that they should be able to give up their lives for their country, and girls were taught that their goal was for procreation for the Fatherland.

There was even an effort to make sure there were more German children (because they are the better people and the better race, you know). So if a woman was pregnant (and it was proven that the father was Aryan enough for their liking, or better yet, a member of the S.S.), they had a place where she could have prenatal care and any sort of assistance they needed. Granted, some of these women may not have been well off, so they ensured that they would take the child to take care of it. So the mother would lose her connection to the child (and the father was usually a man who did not want to take responsibility for a child), and

these children (to get more racially pure Germans in their country) were put in foster homes and adopted, so they could thrive in the Fatherland. Many of these children never even knew how their lives originated, or that there was any reason beyond love or sex that brought them into the world.

You can get more information about this at “Hitler’s Children,” http://www.rickross.com/reference/hate_groups/hategroups164.html - where children, often nine months after a woman’s one-night stand, were born in a “Lebensborn,” or ‘Source of Life’ home outside Munich. The home was one of several set up by Heinrich Himmler’s dreaded SS to care for unmarried pregnant women whose racial characteristics, blond hair, blue eyes, no Jewish ancestry, fit the Nazis’ Aryan ideal.”

Okay, sorry, I’m going on about how the Reich taught children and molded them to be good little Nazi soldiers, and you’re probably wondering why. I bring this up in more detail because Hitler went to children when they were very young and indoctrinated them into his beliefs, and if he got them and trained them when they were young, they were his for life. Kind of like religion, isn’t it? I mean, you teach a child this notion at an insanely early age and give them a leader that they cannot touch or deal with directly to rule everything over you, and you just have to blindly trust this leader and you’ll be happy in the afterlife. With Hitler, you were happy to be a cog in his Nazi wheel; with religion, the only thing a “being” not of this world could concretely offer you (other than peace of mind, I suppose) is tangible goods that are (to out it plainly) otherworldly. Religion carries the same weight as people who were caught in the fervor of Adolph Hitler, by having a leader that you cannot touch or see or question; the only difference is that the God is always in existence, and never on Earth to concretely deal with.

Unlike Hitler, with religion and a God, the God cannot falter (and Hitler couldn’t falter, and no one could understand why Germany wasn’t succeeding in the Second World War). When it comes to religion, Gods don’t falter; people question why the God we choose to believe in allows such suffering, etc., but anyone can come up with a counterpoint to explain it because there is no God to explain it for them. Besides, God is supposed to be all knowing and all-powerful, so he *must* have had a reason), so there is no reason to believe that this ideology has any faults to it.

Part II

Hitler Speeches as a Preacher on the Pulpit

If Hitler was able to indoctrinate children of their role in his world, he was using just one aspect of what any society does in perpetuating any religion. Hitler also used mythological symbols in delivering his message, representing the sun; even the Swastika was something he discovered (which historically originally was a positive symbol) that would lend to higher goals and aspirations for his people. He also learned, from a psychic (who was a stage magician by trade) gestures and ways to have his body that were more theatrical, so that in large theatres he could be easily seen at a distance. He used mythological symbols to give people the idea that Hitler was after only the good for the people of Germany, and he used tricks from a stage magician to make him better present his views

and beliefs. So, like an excited minister getting his message across to his church (or on television, to thousands or millions of people at once), Hitler worked to not get people to believe in God, but to believe in Him.

But really, the methods of the two are strikingly similar. The only reason why one failed is that the leader espousing the beliefs was a person, and the rest of the world found to his beliefs bad (abhorrent is more like it, but you get the idea). The convenience of having an intangible God to fall back on as a leader, who cannot be held accountable or made to explain any actions, allows a set of beliefs (like any religion) to flourish.

Now, I'm not saying the set of beliefs surrounding Christianity are wrong (or about Judaism or Islam or Hinduism or Taoism, or even practicing Voodoo, which is a practiced religion). I'm just pointing out the similarities in having two sets of beliefs flourish — even though one was shown faulty because of a faulty leader (well, maybe that wasn't the only reason, but I'm not going there right now...), the other survived because of an intangible thing as a leader, where children were indoctrinated at an early age to believe in.

The Power of your Upbringing

I knew a man years ago who was extremely intelligent (he was an award-winning civil engineer, actually), but he was a Judeo Christian, because this is what his parents taught him ever since he was born. It didn't make sense to me that he didn't question this one aspect of his life; I didn't understand why he didn't look at every aspect of his life (especially the philosophical aspect) with the same logical and intelligent mind. I think after years (and years away from his parents) he decided to investigate what he was taught with his own rational eyes, and then adjusted his beliefs accordingly.

In our times, we don't see it as any blatant effort to indoctrinate children, but on some levels, this is what religion does.

The way children are raised was just one way to consider how Hitler acted more like he was doing the work of God (you know, versus himself). Watching any recorded speeches from Hitler is another great way to show how he could get people to believe in him the way people are taught to believe in any given religion. His exaggerated gestures and postures in speeches (along with the voluminous changes in his voice for the crowds) strengthened the imperativeness of what he was saying, and wooed audience members to blindly follow him with whatever he was saying. I remember even watching some History Channel show about Hitler once, where a Jewish person crept over to one of his speeches earlier in Hitler's rise to fame (before all Jews were evacuated) and listened without being disturbed. This Jewish person listened to Hitler speak, and even found himself swept up in the fervor of what Hitler was saying.

And that's the scary thing. I don't not know if it was because of the tone or volume of his voice, or the manners he was taught to use from a psychic, but he was getting a Jewish man into his speech.

Think of southern Baptist churches, where rows of black people are working

up a sweat singing gospel hymns. It sometimes comes down to presentation.

For that matter, think of the televangelists who perform physical healings in front of large audiences (and television, of course). I won't get into whether all of these people genuinely had the problems they all complained of, or if they did it was milder than what they said, and I won't get into whether any belief in the ability of being healed will actually help a person heal on their own. But I want to think about the fervor these people have in these huge meetings where they think the may be saved form their physical problems here on Earth.

Not bad, for a God whom people can't hold accountable for all of the bad things in the world, and for someone that no one can actually prove the existence of.

But watching the faith healer and watching a Hitler speech is a really good way to notice the similarities. And no, the similarity isn't that people couldn't prove the existence of Hitler, the similarity is that in both situations the speaker made claims that no one could truly substantiate. Both leaders would stir their audiences into a fervor, and people would want to blindly listen to him.

You may think I'm silly (or crazy) for making any comparison between Hitler and a preacher, but I'm not making a statement about the validity or invalidity of either Hitler or anyone connection with religion. I was just noticing the striking similarities with how Hitler brought people in. Hitler made statements condemning Jews: I have to say that I honestly don't remember any references to praising Christianity, but I doubt Christianity was outwardly praised too much. They may not have outwardly paid too much time directly praising God, and I say this because Hitler used ancient practices and symbols to pull people in the way a religion may, and he may not have wanted people dividing their idolism between their God and their Fuhrer. Now, I can't prove that, but I *can* say that he used a lot of the same techniques in speeches to pull people into to wanting to dedicate their lives to him, or give their lives for him. He used these ideas from his mannerisms and the way he spoke to the symbols and traditions he adopted to pull people in.

He did everything a religion should. If only he had beliefs, people wouldn't find morally abhorrent. Good thing that like a God, he couldn't live forever.



Janet Kuypers®

Janet Kuypers
Editor in Chief

Ending a Relationship

Janet Kuypers

my chest heaves feeling
a cold hard rock where my heart
used to burn for you

This Message

Eric Phetteplace

This message has not been sent
but it has been written a hundred times
in crayon and hypodermic needles
in cream-colored skin and loneliness.

Every face begs a question I can't ask,
looks like those awakened
from unremembered nightmares
that canvassed their sleeps:

we will always dream of you.
Walk through darkness on familiar roads
slow-motion amnesia, gentle currents
of the river Styx.

—Pull me out.
We're tired of treading water.
Stitch and tape this future back together.

—Do you want to go somewhere and eat something?
She could feed a family for several months
on lollipops and crisps
on cream-colored skin and loneliness.

The table scraps of reality

Fractured like spine
trouble breathing at times.
Pneumonia bedrest
empty stomachs;

this message has not been sent.

Barrettes Teaching Life Lessons

And because I get impatient
Things get tangled.

poem by Jaz

Manhunt 1941*

I.B. Rad

Hanging on my wall,
its' title penciled,
"Manhunt 1941,"
a small lithograph
depicts 3 Nazi soldiers,
with several hounds,
pushing through
a wintry woods,
its oppressive mood abetted
by casting its bleak perspective
in shades of blue.
In the foreground,
nicely contrasting
with solid figures
of hounds, trees, and soldiers,
tall leafless vegetation
is drawn with fine point
lending unexpected delicacy
and even beauty
to that chilling scene.
And, at times,
when I review
those implacable troops
slogging through the snow
I shiver
at their four years more
before it's game over
- unless some Hitler hits "Replay!"

Oblique

Maureen Flannery

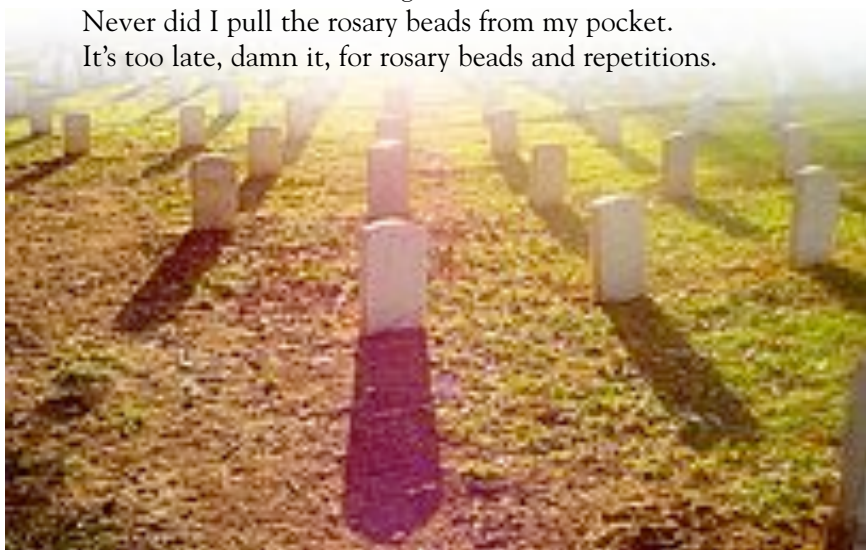
She met him on
a diagonal street,
sleet coming down,
dark of the moon
coming up like a salty
tide.
Knowing he lied
she went forth from him
disoriented and could
never again ascertain
true north.

**George Ivers (1922 - 2001), creator of "Manhunt 1941", was born in Poland. As a member of the Polish division of the French army, he was captured by the Germans and was a prisoner of war on 3 separate occasions, escaping each time (perhaps giving him a special affinity for this subject matter.) Later, he immigrated to the United States. His works appear in many collections such as the Brooklyn Museum, the Jewish Museum, the New Jersey State Museum, and even the White House and the Vatican.*

Poem From My Grave

Michael Lee Johnson

Don't bring the rosary beads
it's too damn late for doing repetitions.
Eucharist, I can handle the crackers and wine;
I love the Lord just like you.
Catholicism circles itself with rituals--
ground hogs and squirrels dancing with rosary beads,
naked in the sun and the night, eating the pearls
and feeling comfortable about it.
Rituals and rosary beads are indigestible
even the butterflies go coughing in the farmer's cornfields..
Cardinal George, Chicago, would choke on the damn things;
some of his priest would have thought it a gay orgasm or piece
remote found in scripture from Sodam & Gamora.
But my bones in ginger dust lie near a farm in DeKalb, Illinois
where sunset meshes corn with a yellow gold glow like rich teeth.
My tent is with friends there we said prayers privately like silent
moonlight. Farmers touch the face of God each morning after just
one cup of Folgers coffee Columbian blend,
or pancakes made with water and batter, sparse on the sugar.
Sometimes I would urinate on the yellow edge of flowers,
near the tent, late at night, before the hayride, speak
to the earth and birds like gods.
Never did I pull the rosary beads from my pocket.
It's too late, damn it, for rosary beads and repetitions.



the poem

Jimmy Nieto

no one will
read
me

it is too dark
to see the letters

so the words
have no
meaning

no one will
read
poetry
like it is meant
to be read

it has died
in so many
people's eyes

only a few
can cross
this street

no one knows
me

through me
through each poem

too many metaphors

no rhyme
no punctuation
no capitol letters

I am too small
to write big letters

I am too confused
to help you
understand
me



Haunt Me No More

artwork by Aaron Wilder

Among Friends

Josh Oldham

Standing in the midst of many
I stand-alone
As the people talk
Like I am not there
As the people walk
Without acknowledgement

And so I begin to disappear
Simply to fade away
Drifting away into emptiness
That surrounds peoples' lives
Until there is nothing but an unnoticed shadow

Standing in the midst of many
I stand-alone
As the people talk
Like I am not there
As the people walk
Without acknowledgement

And inside, starting from the very center
An icy tendril grows
Making its way through my soul
Sapping the desire to be seen
To be heard
To be noticed
And loved or even hated

Standing in the midst of many
I stand-alone
As the people talk
Like I am not there
As the people walk
Without acknowledgement

It winds throughout
Until it has no room to grow
Then it bursts forth
Shattering all that is left

Standing in the midst of many
I stand-alone
As the people talk
Like I am not there
As the people walk
Without acknowledgement

And so it makes its way
Into its next victim
Leaving no trace of its destruction
Until the end
When there will be none
To consume.

Standing in the midst of many
I stand-alone
As the people talk
Like I am not there
As the people walk
Without acknowledgement

Roses and Bombs

Mark D. Cohen

The first thing ya gotta do
Is take everything ya learned in yer history classes in high school
Hilight them
And hit the delete button

'Cause I've been to a different school
And I'm gonna tell ya the facts
Whether ya wanna hear them or not

The USA is the cops of the world
We decide who will live and who will die
Which countries get the roses
And which countries get the bombs
It's been that way for a long time
And it's gonna be that way for a long time to come
Unless ya raise yer voice
And shout----

"Nevermore!"



Eve

art from

Edward Michael

O'Durr Supranowicz

Oedipus and Electra Admit It

Tanya Rucosky Noakes

...my secret, so I have kept it...
my husband's too like my father
(and he shouldn't bear repeating)
but then this secret slipped
from the other side of our bed,
half asleep he has told me
he loves when I pull blankets
up over him in the night
to keep him from getting cold.
we are both orphan adults—
my proud heart needs a father,
big and warm to feel safe near,
and rough-bear wants a momma
to love him and tuck him into bed.

prose
the meat and potatoes stuff

The Traders

Candice Daquin

Peg tooth? Is that where the phrase came from? I hardly know the English language well enough to investigate ‘root’ words. She said they file the tooth until it’s like a small peg, and put the crown over it, she said I didn’t know how lucky I was to have strong teeth, when I told her living in the US, I had come to hunger for white teeth, rather than the slightly yellow European teeth that I saw in photographs and the mirror. “You don’t know how lucky you are darling,” her voice was less smoky that day, I could hear the accent, and something unidentifiable that just said ‘mother’s voice’ in my heart. A pang wove its threads through my heart, and I wished then, that she were right next to me, peg-teeth covered in enamel, telling me anything, telling me, “You don’t know how lucky you are.”

My mother the peg-toothed life raft, funny how life jumps in circles. Once she had been my nemesis, I even remember thinking it would be better if she had died rather than left, less tragic ironically than living and not loving. At the time, in my feeble teen-age mind where the world revolved unsubtle around my existence and everything I wanted, or said, I hoped that my mother would fall in love with me as I had her, when she left home and became an object of distant longing. Occasionally I could forget her, perhaps that is why I did things to extreme, to distance myself from any trace of being her child, or for that matter, a child at all, though my actions were nothing if not childish. Underneath the mask I wore lopsided and ill, the heart of wanting and not having, seeing but not holding. She was only a breath away, my whole childhood, but that breath was untaken, and the distance could have been the other side of the world.

There was no connection, no concern, no bond that I could discern, only a terrible lack of interest, and an indifference that seemed to urge me into insecurity more and more as years stretched on. If she had died I could have fabricated a lost love, one that had it lived would have bloomed a hundred ways in a thousand colors and arched the skies with possibility. With life, and knowing she could pick up the phone, or come see me any day she

wanted to, there was no such illusion. She lived a runner's sprint from me but she didn't come over, didn't know that I was picked on at school or my dreams, didn't even know I'd created a middle name for myself or that I wanted more than anything to learn how to spell well. At a distance she seemed strange, frightening. An appendage in my life that reminded me of her existence infrequently and for short unfulfilled spurts. Usually impatient, moody, unpredictable, exacting and enduringly, brilliant.

Her mind did not resemble mine, her body was tightly bound in clothes that matched and had discernable seams, her hair was short and cropped like a man's, encasing a terrible tongue that lashed in words I hung onto for insight into her heart, which then, appeared confined to herself and her insular world of which I was only a crumb, a thought to be picked up and examined occasionally. At that time I didn't understand and so I lived in that strange balance of extremes, both detesting, resenting and adoring the other half of me that gave back no indication of familial resemblance. I looked at myself, oddly put-together, fragmented into pieces of motherless blubber and imagination run-riot, and saw nothing of her, only the smoky glass bottles of cream she'd left behind when she departed, and a head full of shadowy memories of someone's voice, someone's hands teaching me to speak and enter the world upright.

Not a mother, but instead, a ghost, living and tormenting without intention, someone I could invent but not hold, someone unreal with an address not 2 miles from my own. When I clung to my teacher's leg it didn't smell like my mother's but could I be sure? Not knowing her smell or the color of her blood beneath her perfect clothes, no way to be sure she was linked to me by anything except a word, mother. Adults told me, unobtrusive and very much in keeping with the times, that a mother who 'abandoned' her child is not worthy or fit to be a mother, that it would have been better if my father had remarried and I had found another mother, like searching for seals or otters in toy shops and picking out the one I liked best.

Another mother. I thought of whom I would choose, someone different, less angular and cold, someone who would be delighted to embrace, desperate even, searching as I was, for the bond of mother-child, someone barren or bereft, someone unbalanced. Adjusted people seemed alien, my parents were both extremes and deep colors, never pastel or gray, their heritage and therefore my own, was artistic, temperamental, destructive, brilliant. I despised mediocrity and denied any attempt at conformity for the perils of opinion and debate. What I didn't know then was how much I had conformed, how little opinion was new or my own, but the trappings of alternative conformity, illusionary in its pretence but every bit as

conditioned as if I were salivating to the sound of a bell. My father marched prospective candidates in front of me with the delicacy of a volcano erupting and spewing its lava, to say I was unsheltered would be an understatement, I was an adult before I was a child, which is why I think, paradoxically, I remained childish for much longer than most.

Sequences of development are not necessarily able to be skipped, we return to them as we return to earth, and if we skip one, it envelops us later on, and seems strangely ill-fitting, inappropriate, bemusing. This is one aspect I share with my mother, I see that now, how we both, precocious and proud, thought we avoided immaturity by learning the cynic's route of the world early on, only to return drooling and unprepared to the delights of naivety as grown adults. My father's girlfriends were for the most part, sweet natured and eager, to embrace me as part of their union with my rakish parent and adopt a child for their own amusement. However what appears well-intentioned changes with the winds of relationships, and the soured feeling of being manipulated for the sake of love, became wearisome and predictable long before vows were exchanged. They fell off like unwanted apples and he didn't appear to care, searching instead, it became evident, for someone he had already married and divorced, the specter of whom, haunted us both.

My mother, in her fastidious perfection, tormented our search for freedom; she lived in every corner of our cramped apartment, her doleful eyes watching our clumsy flight from reason with indifferent gaze. She didn't know that I daydreamed my way through school and that teachers gave up on me, leaving my days to draw unicorns and triangles on my schoolbooks, my mind empty of learning. She didn't know that my father hit me when the anger was too much for him, or that I in turn climbed deeper and deeper into fantasy, blotting out the world and forgetting how to fake my way back in. I was an awkward child, counting daisies and watching their pink undersides fold inward, rather than playing with the others, she might have said this was the same for her, but whether my childhood mimicked her own or not, it was one spent entirely absent of a figure, that gentle consideration and nurture that a mother brings to the tender shoots she plants. Once in a while I would call her from the house telephone, and try in my broken way to find a connection, tell her about my wigwams and the books I read in them, and the feathers I dyed and put in my hair and the records she left behind that I listen to and the black and white photographs of her, young and beautiful that I fawn over and preserve, a lonely idolatry tinted with anger and hope like a fire left to die in the rain.

I do not know now what she thought, those long years, or who she

was inside, or where she found courage to release her demons and start, reluctant and wounded, to heal, but as I grew and forgot my own bitterness in favor of finding a new love, with someone who would give me everything I had imagined as a child, she also grew, and became, gradually and indirectly, the very person I had been searching for. Now I look back and I can hear my own disappointment, smell it in the worn blankets of my grandmother's and the lost incentive of my childhood, I can touch the part on my chest that still hurts, and aches in an ancient way, for a return to that moment when her shadow grew indistinct and her voice was not to be heard calling me from another room.

Even now I do not feel her child, I do not run to her when I hurt, I walk slowly and carefully incase when I arrive, she is gone. I have turned her photograph over and over in my hands searching for her soul and in mine, the same marks, the same quest, and as I do, I see loss that cannot be undone, I see the hope that I quietly tended, at the very back of everything, growing brighter in the darkness of dreaming and lighting my way forward, to her, a child herself grown into woman, the person who grew me inside, and left me in the green grass to stand by myself, a spirit much like mine in fragility and denial, but illuminating and resilient, a spirit part of me all along although neither of us knew it, a spirit that it me, and I am her, she will die one day and I hope it will be a long time from now, because I have found my mother and I long for her again, I long for her, in that way that hurts every day like a delicious pain reminding me I feel and we, both of us, whole and also incomplete, are alive, and so is love, my love says I do know, how lucky I am, how lucky we both are, traders who have come away from trading and losing, still holding on to each other.

A Little Girl...

David B. McCoy

A little girl wanted to play jump rope, but her mother was too poor to buy her one. To keep her little girl happy, the mother made a slit in her abdomen and pulled out her small intestines. For an hour or so, with great delight, the little girl played jump rope with her mother's small intestines. "Oh, mommy, that was so much fun; can I do it again tomorrow?" While the mother taped her abdomen closed, she told her daughter, "We'll see, honey, we'll see."

The Judgement

Edward Rodosek

Bailiff: The High Court of Justice in the person of the honorable judge Lecherous Chip is coming into court. Everyone stretch up! (*The High Court enters, rattling*)

Judge: Everyone may constrict down again. I declare the High Court in session. (*The video sensor of the High Court looks at the outward appearance of all the subjects present*) It seems to us that several protoplasm subjects who are not witnesses are present. According to the reigning Cyberian law, that is not allowed. Only the *artifs* and all the invited witnesses, citizens of Cyber III, regardless of their biological structure, are allowed to be present at this trial. In view of what has just been said, we order the wardens on duty to settle the matter. (*The wardens on duty escort protoplasm subjects out of the court, which causes some thrashing and several insulting audio signals from the subjects involved.*)

Judge: (*Authoritatively tapping his gavel*) The High Court begins trial number 9658, the population of Cyber III against the Defendant John H. Skillman, a protoplasm subject, immigrant from planet Earth, in the case of supposed intentional disintegration of the artif Improved Download. Does the Defendant understand the accusation?

Defendant: Yes, your Honor.

Judge: How do you intend to plead—guilty or not guilty?

Defendant: Not guilty, your Honor.

Judge: All right. The Prosecutor shall now explain the accusation. (*Stooping downward to the Bailiff*) For Eniac's sake, what's making that constant, beastly buzzing?

Bailiff: (*Making meaningful signs with his upper tentacles.*)

Judge: Why are you swinging those damned tentacles of yours? Tell me what's buzzing!

Bailiff: (*Contritely*) You are, your Honor.

Judge: What? Those damned maintainers! You may proceed, Prosecutor.

Prosecutor: High Court, we will prove the Defendant has viciously disintegrated his employer and benefactor artif Download with the intent to take over his job of fairly high degree D-four and all the advantages of that degree.

Judge: Have you finished, Prosecutor?

Prosecutor: Yes, I have, your Honor; for now.

Judge: Who will stand for the Defense?

Barrister: (*She gracefully slides forward*) I will, your Honor.

Judge: (*His video sensors glowing with admiration*) Oh—what a beauty! Has the Defendant hired you at his own cost or are you acting as a public defender?

Barrister: (*With modestly downcast video sensors*) I am defending the poor lad for a paltry fee but I would do it all the same without any payment what-

ever because he has such a blameless and noble character and ...

Prosecutor: (*Firmly cutting in*) Objection, your Honor! The Defense takes advantage of her introductory plea for an unsuitable praising of the Defendant.

Judge: (*To the Barrister, hesitantly*) We must sustain that objection, my dear. Please understand that we can't do anything else, and that we prefer, instead of that, to go with you... (*To Bailiff, moody*) ... Well, what's the matter again?

Bailiff: (*Whispers something incomprehensible to the High Court*)

Judge: All right, all right. The Defense should restrict her introductory plea strictly to the facts.

Barrister: (*Emitting odors that express modesty*) Yes, your Honor. The Defense will prove not only that the Defendant is not guilty, but also that he is an innocent victim of a plot to drag his name through the mud.

Judge: Are you finished? What a pity; we could listen to your sweet voice until ... (*The Bailiff waves imploringly with his tongs.*) Well then ... the Prosecution should continue presenting the accusation.

Prosecutor: High Court, allow us to call our first witness, the artif Creeping Porter.

Judge: The witness should roll to here. Hey! Careful with those edged chain treads of yours! If you ruin the carpet, you will be charged for damages. Bailiff, carry out the regulative matters. (*The Bailiff administers an oath to the witness as required.*)

Prosecutor: Witness, introduce yourself to the High Court.

Witness: Artif Creeping Porter, manager of the Recreational Park Refill XVII.

Prosecutor: Have you ever seen the Defendant before this trial?

Witness: Of course I have. He came to Refill XVII on leave in the seventh light period after the double solstice. As the protoplasm subjects come to us rather seldom, I inspect their documents carefully.

Prosecutor: *Their* documents?

Witness: Yes; the Defendant arrived at our Park with his ...why, his female—that one, who's sitting there. (*The witness emits a light beam on a subject sitting in the first row.*)

Judge: (*Mumbling confidentially, leaning toward the Bailiff*) For Eniac's sake, where is that repulsive stink coming from? (*Concerned*) I presume you wouldn't say, again, that—

Bailiff: No, no, your Honor, by no means. That is the witness.

Prosecutor: Did anyone pay a visit to the Defendant during his stay in the Park?

Witness: Yes; only two light periods after the Defendant had arrived, the missing artif Download visited him—I mean the Defendant.

Judge: Just a moment; why do you say 'him'? According to your own testimony the Defendant came to the Park with his female companion.

Witness: Yes, your Honor; but she wasn't in the Defendant's cabin. I'd

noticed her earlier when she went to the solarium, to expose herself to the UV rays. (*Unrest in court, the public emits the odor of scandal.*)

Judge: (*Sternly pounding his gavel*) Silence in the court! Quiet, please! Oh my Eniac, what we have to bear with this mob—and all that for only a bit of energy and a few drops of oiling! Prosecutor, do continue.

Prosecutor: Artif Porter, did you sense—shall we say—anything unusual in or around the Defendant’s cabin during the aforementioned visit?

Witness: Actually, yes. There was something strange, even to me, although I’m used to the various oddities of protoplasm subjects. For instance ...

Barrister: Objection, your Honor! The habits of the Defendant’s race are not the subject of this trial.

Judge: Objection sustained. Witness should answer shortly and to the point on all questions and stick only to the facts. And, for Eniac’s sake, don’t fidget so much; you’re going to tear that rug to pieces!”

Witness: I apologize to your High ... I mean ... to your Court ... Sorry, I’m totally confused. What was the question again? Oh, yes, now I remember. Just when I was creeping past the Defendant’s cabin, I made out some loud but hardly comprehensible audio signals. Then the artif Download came out of it, and after him the Defendant who was vulgarly insulting and threatening him.

Prosecutor: Do you perhaps remember his exact words?

Witness: Even better. I’ve an audiotape switched on during all my working time. Just a moment, please. (*The witness presses a button in the middle of his upper shell and the sound of talking comes out of it.*)

Defendant’s voice: ... *Don’t you dare come near her, you bloody plastic freak, because I’ll smash that disgusting bounce of yours! Get lost and don’t you ever come into my sight again! You may be my boss, but I’m not going to let you interfere in my private life, you unnatural mechanical muddle!* (*Sounds of a door slamming.*)

Prosecutor: To sum up what we just heard, artif Porter—how would you, in short, describe the then behavior of the Defendant toward the artif Download?

Witness: Well ... The Defendant was mocking the artif Download’s appearance and threatening him with taking him apart by force.

Judge: We want to add here a short explanation, just for the record. Owning a fairly high degree D-four had allowed the missing artif Download to choose freely his own outward form. Before the trial we perceived some videotapes of him, where we noticed his... Well... his humanoid appearance. Here and now is neither the place nor the time to discuss the taste of the missing artif Download, no matter how queer it might seem to anybody. But, at the same time, we do not understand the recorded words of the Defendant. Although he is a humanoid, he obviously disliked the appearance of artif Download. How can we explain that?

Prosecutor: I don’t know, your Honor.

Barrister: If the High Court would allow me, I think I could help to explain that.

Judge: (*Kindly*) You just tell us about that, my dear!

Barrister: The opinions of various individuals on aesthetics are diverse; not only among members of various races, but also among artifacts. I defend often, in my line of duty, different protoplasm subjects who call themselves people, and who here, on Cyber III, do the various specialized jobs that we need. So I have, during time, gotten used to their appearance to the extent that they no longer seem repulsive to me. (*Murmuring and some loud scandalized noise among the public.*)

Judge: (*Firmly pounding gavel*) If such unrest continues we will order an evacuation of the court. You may go ahead, Barrister.

Barrister: High Court, I want to explain that all the subjects of the human race—the people—think themselves, and their race on the whole, rather handsome subjects. (*Subdued laughter among the public.*) So I believe that it was not because of his humanoid appearance the Defendant considered artifact Download ugly.

Judge: No? Then what did the Defendant mean, in your opinion?

Barrister: He considered artifact Download ugly for the simple reason he was not humanoid enough. The obsolete term ‘robot’, used by the Defendant, is an archaic term for artifact.

Judge: That is amazing. An unflattering denotation, we assume?

Barrister: (*Hesitantly*) Well ... We might say so, yes. Most of the people are self-confident. Maybe the High Court knows about those unproven, even silly legends about the ancient past of the origin of artifacts, here, on Cyber III. I believe those legends stemmed from Earth. The people there persistently claim that, once on a time, they created all the other races in Space including the artifacts. (*A tremendous tumult rises among the public.*)

Judge: (*Wrathfully whacking the gavel*) QUIET! Silence in the court! (*The security guards lead several rowdies out of court; the unrest slowly wanes*) This is our last warning. This time we didn’t order clearing the court, but only because we understand the emotional reactions by the artifacts present. Don’t get me wrong: we said ‘understand’—but not ‘tolerate.’ The Prosecutor should continue.

Prosecutor: As I have no more questions for this witness, I leave him to the Defense.

Barrister: Artifact Porter, you earlier supposed the Defendant’s words, recorded on your tape, meant—in your opinion—the Defendant’s threat to forcibly take apart artifact Download. Do you know the reason why the Defendant said that?

Witness: I ... I’m afraid I don’t understand the question.

Barrister: You don’t? Then tell the High Court what the missing artifact Download and the Defendant did right away after the quarrel.

Witness: Well, artifact Download went to the visitor’s parking lot where he sat in his car, and the Defendant followed him and I escorted them. As you know, it was my duty to control what might happen, to prevent possible further problems.

Barrister: Were there many cars in the parking lot then?

Witness: No. Artifact Download was then the only visitor in the Park. Just before he drove off, he asked me in a low voice about the Defendant’s female and I told him

she was in the solarium. Then artif Download drove off rapidly.

Barrister: Artif Porter, tell the High Court what you did next.

Witness: Then it was time for lunch so I went into a buffet for a dram of engine oil. After that, I headed toward the solarium to check if everything was all right there.

Barrister: Was anything irregular happening in the solarium?

Witness: Why, no; at first everything seemed all right to me. There were only four female protoplasm subjects lying, undressed, under the UV lamps. (*Several subdued audio signals of disgust rise from the public.*)

Barrister: Was the Defendant's female one of those four subjects?

Witness: Yes, she was. Then I decided to inspect the basement so I crept downstairs; and just at the instant, when I ordered the mechanic to clean a generator set, I heard some loud audio signals from above. I hastened upstairs, but as I arrived there it was already over.

Barrister: What was 'already over'?

Witness: Well, the female subjects—by that time there were only three of them—were emitting loud audio signals of a high frequency and they were pointing out toward the open service gate, and when I stepped through it ...

Barrister: Just a moment. Did you notice which of the four female subjects was missing?

Witness: It was the Defendant's female that was missing.

Barrister: And what did you make out after you'd stepped through the gate?

Witness: Outside, on the sandy drive, there were two shallow ruts like somebody had dragged some heavy load over the sand. Those ruts led from the gate toward the corner of the building. At the instant I came around the corner, I noted some unknown car just in front of me. It started roaring and rushed off at full speed out of the Park.

Barrister: You said 'car just in front of me'—how far was that?

Witness: Well ... I couldn't say exactly...

Barrister: Was that unknown car roughly as far away from you as the car of artif Download in the parking lot, not long ago?

Witness: Yes, I guess so.

Barrister: In that case you must have seen that 'unknown' car and its driver just as clearly as the other one in the lot which had been driven by the missing artif Download. Am I right?

Witness: Why ... Yes, you are.

Barrister: Very good. And now I ask you for a straight answer: was that 'unknown' car the same as the earlier one?

Witness: (*After a short hesitation*) Well—yes, it was.

Barrister: And who was driving it?

Witness: (*Gloomily*) The missing artif Download.

Barrister: Excellent. Was the missing artif Download alone in his car or was anybody else beside him?

Witness: (*Leaking some machine oil on to the carpet*) I noticed, for just a moment, somebody else beside him, some motionless figure. But I couldn't recognize it.

Barrister: That was not my question. My question was: did you see what that motionless figure looked like?

Witness: Yes. It looked as repulsive as all the other protoplasm subjects—a naked humanoid figure.

Barrister: Let's hold off the final identification of that repulsive naked figure for a moment and return to the solarium. Did you put some questions about what had happened to the three females remaining there?

Witness: (*Grimacing*) Of course I did. But their answers didn't explain much because they affirmed that everything had happened so quickly. I was told somebody had rushed into the solarium through the service gate and attacked one of the females. Despite her resistance he forced a white object to her upper roundness and finally he dragged her flabby body out of the solarium.

Barrister: You said 'somebody had rushed in the solarium'. According to your earlier statement, the missing artif Download was then the only visitor in the Park. And we found out before that he was also driving his car from the parking place only a few seconds after the attack, as described by you. Is it possible, in your opinion, the attacker was somebody else except the missing artif Download?

Witness: (*Gnashing with its chain treads again*) I ... I don't think anybody else could have been there.

Barrister: Thank you. And now let us return to the question of the identity of the 'naked humanoid figure' that sat beside the artif Download in his car. Have you any doubt about whether it was the Defendant's female, who had been kidnapped immediately before?

Witness: (*Contritely*) No, I haven't. It was she.

Barrister: High Court, I have no more questions for the witness.

Judge: (*With perceivable relief*) Thanks be to Eniac! The witness may leave the court—but slowly and as carefully as possible. We also recommend that he change his variety of lubricant. And—damn it—the carpet has to be replaced. Bailiff, take care the cleaners remove those disagreeable stains at once."

Bailiff: (*Doing what he was told.*)

Judge: Thank you, my dear Barrister. Because it is now the middle of the light period, we order a break for lunch, and the after-lunch rest. (*To the Barrister, confidentially*) I'm going to get some refreshment in my private rooms; there would be perhaps a good opportunity to... Well, I wish to ask you something in private. Do you mind joining me there, my dear?

Barrister: (*Emitting seductive odors*) I don't mind at all, your Honor.

Judge: Excellent. Bailiff, come with us; you will take care that nobody disturbs us.

Judge: (*A bit less tidy than before*) Prosecutor, we assume you have more wit-

nesses, are we right?

Prosecutor: High Court, your assumption is correct. We do indeed have one more witness. Although that witness might, perhaps, be the cause of some concern, I am convinced his testimony would be of the greatest significance to the trial. After his testimony there will not be any more doubt that artif Download has been murdered by the Defendant.

Judge: What are you talking about, Prosecutor? You must better explain your abstruse elocutions about ‘the cause of some concern’ to the High Court.

Prosecutor: In just a minute, your Honor. I ask the High Court to allow the testimony of the *spirit* of the missing artif Download. Here we have all the devices needed for that purpose.

Barrister: Objection, High Court! The Prosecutor obviously believes he is not in the High Court, but at a spiritualist séance. This is a court of law, not some place where some old swindler calls ghosts or practices witchcraft with a crystal ball.

Prosecutor: I ask the High Court to consider the two precedents that I have with me: the case Android Amalgam v. Short Circuit and Condenser Ltd v. Silicon & Co. I have here the summaries of both verdicts, based on the same manner of testifying that I am submitting to the High Court now.”

Judge: (*Putting in an extra lens into his video sensor*) “Hmm ... Let me perceive ... Well, I must admit it is true, regretfully. Though I have never heard of such foolishness in my whole existence. (*To the Barrister*) I regret I must overrule your objection, my dear. (*To the Prosecutor*) You shall continue, Prosecutor.

Prosecutor: High Court, I ask for permission to bring into court a DARAS—Device for Automatic Realization of Artif’s Spirits.

Judge: All right—although I have no idea how you would ... Well, get it in.

Prosecutor: That device works very simply, High Court. It’s based on the following principle: during the genesis of every artif on the Cyber III, the entire electromagnetic structure of his programmed personality is formed—in other words, his spirit.

Judge: Why are you lecturing us about that? All artifics know this simple fact already; it’s in their basic programming. It is generally known, also, that the electromagnetic structure of each artif is unique and so it is the core of his personality. Have we forgotten something essential?”

Prosecutor: No, you have not, your Honor. With your permission, I would add only that this structure is indestructible and would not disappear even by an artif’s disintegration. At that instant it only incorporates into the integral electromagnetic structure which surrounds our Cyber III.

Judge: That is also generally known, Prosecutor. The only matter that nobody here knows is what you intend to do with that queer box with the even queerer abbreviation. Would you be so kind to explain that trifle to us?

Prosecutor: I plan to do so right away, your Honor. DARAS was developed recently and so far, it has been used in only the two cases that I presented earlier.

This useful device emits electromagnetic waves of chosen frequencies that look for the spiritual structure of a disintegrated artif and then embody it in the form of a hologram. This hologram has its own sensors with all the same properties as the disintegrated artif. Besides, it can communicate normally with its environment. Simple, isn't it?

Judge: Almighty Eniac—if this is simple then I'm ... (*The next words of High Court have not been noted down*) Let us start, Prosecutor.

Prosecutor: Yes, your Honor. Artif technician, start the procedure.

Technician: Yes, Prosecutor. (*The technician is poking at some switches on the device and after a while a hologram of an artif appears.*)

Prosecutor: (*Somewhat nervously*) Are you the spirit of respected artif Improved Download?

Hologram: (*Scornfully*) You may say so, yes; but without that hypocritical term 'respected'. I was never respected during the entire time of my existence, regretfully. I wasn't respected despite my D-four degree and though I carried out the responsibility of supervising all the servicemen—those damned protoplasm villains—in the Seventh District. Nobody on Cyber III respected me. Neither my contractual female companion nor my acquaintances. And, especially, not my damn subordinates—the Eniac-devil take them!"

Prosecutor: That is exactly the reason you are here; one of your subordinates, John H. Skillman, is on trial just now. The High Court admits to you the status of witness. Are you willing to testify in this case?

Hologram: Skillman, huh? (*The slight haze round him turns red.*) That morally degenerate heap of spoiled protoplasm used to be one of my servicemen, regretably. Of course I would testify against him if that would help to nail him! What a pity I couldn't do that already before he committed this crime.

Bailiff: (*Leaning toward the audio sensor of the High Court and whispering something into it until the High Court makes a gesture of approval.*)

Judge: Regarding the incapability of that ... hologram to lay his hand on Eniac's Book, we excuse him from that duty. Artif Download, do you swear you will tell all the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you Eniac?

Witness: I do.

Prosecutor: Would you tell us how the crime of your taking apart was carried out?

Barrister: Objection, High Court! At this trial, so far, no crime has been proved.

Judge: Objection sustained. At this trial the compulsory term 'alleged crime' is to be used.

Witness: Well, all right, if you insist. As you probably know, I used to be, until recently, a humanoid artif, tall and well shaped. So I was considered a handsome artif—not only by female artiffs but also by many 'women', if I'm allowed to use that protoplasm term for their female subjects. (*The noise of disapproval and several insulting audio signals emit from the audience.*) But there were

also some subjects that envied my charm and they tried to compete with me for the affections of those female subjects. The Defendant was the most persistent among them, even though he wasn't an artif but only had that repulsive, gelatinous protoplasm structure.

Prosecutor: Witness, how came it that you had employed, instead of artif servicemen, those protoplasm subjects about whom you have such a low opinion?

Witness: Because there weren't any artifs qualified as servicemen. Programming students for this job is demanding and drawn-out, the wages of servicemen are low, and this profession is, among the artifs, considered inferior. But I'd been trying to change all that, so several years ago I formed SEAS—School for Education of Artif Servicemen. To my great regret, we were, then, still forced to use the protoplasm subjects as instructors.

Prosecutor: I congratulate you on your patriotic efforts. Has anybody graduated from this school of yours yet?

Witness: Yes. So far, only a single artif. His label is 'Artif Serviceman 1', with an abbreviation AS-1. Allow me to remark that I'm ...I used to be very proud of him.

Prosecutor: Used to be?

Witness: Yes; regretfully he was killed in a traffic accident recently.

Prosecutor: I am sorry to hear that. And now, witness, describe to the High Court the next events relevant to this case.

Witness: Well, it then happened that a handsome *girl*—that's the protoplasm word for young female—fell in love with me. Her name was Lisa and she's present right now, over there, among the public in the first row. The Defendant persistently tried to take her from me and he courted Lisa whenever I was absent because of duty. But he wasn't even satisfied with that; one certain light period he was so cheeky he simply kidnapped Lisa and drove her away against her will!

Prosecutor: Art Download, did you simply reconcile to that shameless kidnapping of your fema ... ahem, girl?

Witness: Of course not. After a few light periods, I managed to find out that they were hiding in the recreational Park Refill XVII. Right away, after I drove there, I found their cabin and told the Defendant everything that was necessary. But he was most arrogant and wouldn't think about my reasonable arguments. Besides, he started to threaten me with violent disintegration if I didn't leave my girl alone. Thank Eniac, there's the manager of the Park who can confirm my statements.

Prosecutor: The High Court has heard his testimony earlier. Do continue, please.

Witness: Well, then I simply drove away with my girl, who'd been so brutally kidnapped. She was delighted that I'd freed her and especially because we were together again. Unfortunately, we couldn't enjoy our happy reunion for

long because ... Because my beloved girl disappeared, unexplainably, one more time on our journey home ... (*The hologram of the witness trembles slightly.*)

Prosecutor: And what happened then, artif Download?

Witness: Not long after I returned home I felt certain disturbances in the functioning of some my units. Those troubles soon became so serious that I decided to ask for help from a service member. You would understand that I didn't dare go to the Defendant, who'd be able, in that case, to carry out his grievous threat. Because I didn't have confidence in any other protoplasm servicemen, I visited AS-1, the first graduate of my SEAS. But the next fatal events showed, regretfully, that even that precaution wasn't enough. (*Yellowish vapors are undulating slightly around the hologram of artif Download.*)

Prosecutor: (*Emitting the odor of sympathy*) I've sincere compassion toward you, witness. Still, the High Court must be informed about how that crime—sorry—how that alleged crime occurred. Please, describe to us all the circumstances you remember.

Witness: I remember the laboratory area in SEAS was then so meagerly lit up that I wondered how AS-1 could service his artif clients in such a half-light.

Prosecutor: Artif Download, my next question is extremely important: could you, in that half-light, perceive clearly the whole figure of the service member you came to? Did you, positively and without any doubt, recognize him as AS-1?

Witness: I couldn't, unfortunately. But at that moment, it seemed of no importance to me; how could I have suspected there was anything wrong? Besides, as I've said before, I was affected by certain disturbances which prevented me from thinking clearly.

Prosecutor: And what happened then?

Witness: Well, I was told to stretch up on to the service table and I obeyed, without any distrust. The service member—whom I then assumed was AS-1—took some pointed tool in his upper tentacle and began an intervention on me, and then... (*The witness becomes silent.*)

Prosecutor: And then?

Witness: (*Yellowish vapors round the hologram suddenly becomes green and emitting intensive odor of wrath*) From that instant on I ceased to be aware of my material body. And since then my consciousness about my own existence has not returned. (*Boiling with rage.*) It's obvious to me that protoplasm degenerate took me apart.

Prosecutor: Your witness, Barrister.

Barrister: Witness, you have asserted earlier that your contractual female companion did not respect you. Was she staying at your home during the time you were visiting the Defendant in the recreation Park Refill XVII?

Witness: Yes, she was.

Barrister: Otherwise it would have been a little inconvenient for you, I suppose. Although you are contractually bound, you have, recently, talked about Lisa as 'my girl,' although she is the contractual female companion of the Defendant.

Could you explain that puzzle to the High Court?

Witness: Why ... Lisa is in love with me and I intended to break off my present contractual companionship, as she intends to break off hers.

Barrister: So much for good intentions. That is a mess, is it not? You have recently stated, quote, ... *she was very delighted as I freed her and especially because we were together again*, unquote. Do you remember that statement of yours?

Witness: Yes, I do.

Barrister: Did that happy reunion take place in the Defendant's cabin?

Witness: Certainly not. Lisa wasn't there when the Defendant and I had had our ... well, talk.

Barrister: She wasn't there? Where was she then?

Witness: I did not know at that point. Later, when I was about to leave, the manager told me that Lisa was in the solarium.

Barrister: And you just went off without trying to meet your beloved, kidnapped girl?

Witness: I was a bit confused back then. You must understand the Defendant had just threatened to destroy me.

Barrister: But later you returned to the Park, did you not?

Witness: Yes, I did; after some time, when I'd calmed down in full and after I'd sedately considered the whole affair.

Barrister: Excellent. After the incident, three witnesses in the solarium testified that you—so calmed down in full and after sedate consideration—broke into the solarium, rushed Lisa and subdued her by force, against her struggling, and, finally, you dragged her into your car. Do you suppose the High Court would interpret all that as a happy, joyful reunion of two lovers?

Witness: Well ... Lisa was beside herself with joy and probably felt dizzy for a moment. So I helped her out as a polite artif and a cosmopolitan.

Barrister: Oh yes, naturally. You helped her politely with the chloroform; probably because there was no cudgel around.

Prosecutor: (*Stretching up*) Objection, High Court! The Defense is mocking the witness.

Judge: (*Severely*) Prosecutor, you should constrict down again right away; and you better give a piece of advice to that ... spirit of yours, that he should not entangle himself in such foolish contradictions. Objection overruled. (*To the Barrister*) Do continue, my dear.

Barrister: Witness, where did you drive with Lisa after you left the Park?

Witness: (*Emitting the odor of disappointment and despair*) I drove toward the town where I lived. But, after some time, when Lisa recovered, she asked me to stop for a while because she needed ... You know—those protoplasm individuals and their strange physiological needs. Well, before long I parked my car at some motel and went with Lisa to the door of the rest rooms. I waited outside for her for a long time, but at last, I lost my patience and entered. But then...

Barrister: Well?

Witness: (*Furiously*) There was nobody inside. All the stalls were empty and the biggest window was wide open.

Barrister: It looks like ‘your girl’, so very in love with you, had *herself* kidnapped again. High Court, I haven’t any more questions for this so-called witness.

Judge: Very well. The trial shall continue at the next light period at dawn of the second sun. (*Knocking with his gavel and stooping to the Barrister, the High Court whispers something to her and then both leave court.*)

Judge: The trial shall continue. Now, it’s the Defense’s turn. How many witnesses do you have, my dear Barrister?

Barrister: Only two, Your Honor. The first one is the Defendant’s contractual female companion, Lisa, and then, if necessary, the Defendant himself.

Judge: The witness should step forth. (*The witness steps forth and is put under oath by the Bailiff.*)

Barrister: Witness, tell the High Court your name and status.

Witness: Lisa Mild, Earthborn, typist by occupation, contractual female companion of John Skillman.

Barrister: Where did you perform your job until the time of the trial?

Witness: At that lascivious ... I’m sorry ... in the office of the missing artif Download.

Barrister: Were you content with your position there?

Witness: The job itself wasn’t difficult at all. (*Emotionally*) But my employer, artif Download, was ...awful—oh, more than awful! I’d been trying to find some employment elsewhere, but in vain. For us people it’s not easy finding a decent job, you know.

Barrister: Please, explain to the High Court why you’ve used the term ‘awful’ for the behavior of your boss.

Witness: Soon after I’d started my job with him he began to make ...very insolent offers.

Barrister: Insolent offers?

Witness: (*Embarrassed*) Download endlessly strove to have sex with me. He paid no heed to my flat refusals and he kept bothering me all the time when he wasn’t on duty. Sometimes he turned up suddenly in my typing area and rushed at me so I had to wrestle with him ...” (*The witness gives off some liquid out of her video sensors.*)

Barrister: Have you ever mentioned that to the Defendant?

Witness: Yes, I had to. Still, I didn’t dare to tell him everything.

Barrister: Yet the missing artif Download approved your vacation?

Witness: Yes he did; but only after I’ve fulfilled his demand to tell him where John and I intended to go. But then I didn’t expect he would come to get me in that recreation park. (*The upper part of the witness slightly shiv -*

ers for some time.)

Barrister: Lisa, do you want a short break before continuing?

Witness: No, thank you; I'm all right. When John and I arrived at Refill XVII, everything there seemed so beautiful. At first, we enjoyed it there until the day when that horrible thing happened. That day I was lying quietly on the bench in the solarium when suddenly ... (*The witness pauses.*)

Barrister: Did somebody appear there?

Witness: (*Excitedly*) Yes! I heard a bang, and at the next instant I noticed that repulsive Download bending over me! I screamed and tried to rise but he pressed something pungent on my face and then... And then I didn't know anything more ... (*Some more liquid flows out of the witness' video sensors.*)

Barrister: And after that, when did you come to your senses again?

Witness: I realized I was in Download's car and I knew I was in big trouble. I had to escape somehow so I asked him kindly to stop anywhere because I had to go to the bathroom. He stopped at some motel and escorted me up to the bathroom. Once inside, I opened a window—it was so narrow I could hardly to squeeze through it. And then I ran and ran away, without knowing where I was running to. After a while, I came to some side road and an older contractual pair pulled up in their car and drove me home.

Barrister: Did you call the Defendant from there?

Witness: Yes, I called John, and he came for me. Then I had to tell him everything. I pleaded him with not to act rashly because we both knew what punishment awaits an Earthman who does anything violent to an artif.

Barrister: Had the Defendant threatened—then or any time later—to do something violent to the artif Download?

Witness: No, definitely not. After awhile John calmed down and then he was lost in thought for a long time. He then told me that an excellent idea had entered his mind. I wouldn't have to worry about Download ever again. That was all.

Barrister: Thank you, Lisa. Prosecutor, you may continue with the cross-examination.

Prosecutor: Witness, are you sure that *you* weren't deliberately seducing the missing artif Download all the time?

Witness: (*Irritated*) Bah! By no means. Not at all. In that case, I'd have to be out of my mind. Download was hideously ugly even for a robo— Sorry, I mean, even for an artif. (*Restlessness in court.*)

Prosecutor: (*Sarcastically*) I remember hearing that particular term 'ugly' earlier on in the trial. I am afraid the Barrister's comment has not explained anything to the High Court. Witness, would you mind clearing up the opinion of protoplasm subjects on aesthetics? Would you describe *how* ugly has the missing artif Download seemed to you? Perhaps you could find some good example so everyone in court would understand what you mean.

Witness: Well ... Download was almost as ugly as you are. (*There is a roar*

of laughter in court that continues for some time without any intervention by the High Court.)

Prosecutor: (*Emitting the odor of extreme irritation*) That's ... That is beyond the limits! Such insolence, such arrogance! I appeal to the High Court to punish the witness severely because she insulted me and hurt my feelings.

Judge: (*Dryly*) Prosecutor, we recommend you to stop with these appeals of yours. You have been the one who demanded from the witness some example that would be understandable to all. And that she gave you; we do not believe there is anyone one in the court who could have misunderstood what she meant. Do you have any further questions for the witness?

Prosecutor: (*offended*) No, I have not, your Honor.

Judge: My dear Barrister, would you call the Defendant in for testimony?

Barrister: I think that is not necessary, your Honor. I am sure we have heard enough for the acquittal verdict, your Honor.

Judge: All right. In that case, the Prosecutor shall present his closing.

Prosecutor: All the testimonies we heard have indisputably proved the Defendant threatened the missing artif Download with violent disintegration. Under the intoxicating influence of his blind jealousy, the Defendant, masked as Artif Serviceman-1, took apart artif Download in that darkish service workshop in SEAS. We appeal to the High Court to find the Defendant guilty as charged, and to sentence him to annihilation. That is the only suitable punishment for such a wicked crime—according to the principle noted down in The Holy Eniac Book: a chip for a chip, and a sensor for a sensor.”

Judge: Thank you, Prosecutor, for your original and enlightened quotation. (*To the Barrister*) And now it is your turn, my dear.

Barrister: High Court, the whole trial has showed that the Prosecutor has not succeeded in proving any part of the earlier accusation. It has not been proved that any crime has been committed at all. It has also not been proved the Defendant might be guilty of any of those ridiculous, far-fetched accusations. Neither the corpse of the missing artif nor any of its parts have been found. There has been no trace of any murder weapons or tools. There have been no witnesses presented who have *de facto* perceived the alleged crime in question. And, finally, because the Defendant and his contractual female companion have found each other so soon after the incident at the Park, there is not even a credible motive for the alleged crime. So I respectfully suggest the High Court reject the indictment as unfounded and find the Defendant not guilty.

Judge: After due reflection and taking everything into account, the High Court agrees to the request of our dear ...of the Defense. We declare the indictment unfounded and declare the Defendant not guilty. The High Court of justice closes this trial. (*Knocks with his gavel.*)

Prosecutor: (*Stretching up and emitting the odor of wrathful protest*) Objection! I protest against the extreme unfair judgment with clear favoritism toward the Barrister, and I resolutely disagree with this utterly wrongful ver-

dict! This whole trial has been a farce so I am going to submit an immediate appeal against the verdict to the Supreme Court!

Judge: That is your legitimate right, Prosecutor. We are glad that somebody else, and not we, will have to deal with you from now on. (*To the Barrister*) Let's go, my darling.

Clerk: The Supreme Court of Justice in the person of Chief Justice Queer Processor is coming into court. Everyone present in court ... hmm ... I mean, the only one present—the Defendant—shall stretch up.” (*The Supreme Court comes in with a buzz.*)

Chief Justice: The Defendant may constrict down again. We declare the Supreme Court in session. (*The video sensor of Chief Justice is gazing fixedly at the Defendant.*) We start the appeal trial—population of Cyber III versus the Defendant John Skillman, accused of destroying artif Improved Download in the inadequate lit up laboratory area in SEAS. The attached recorded protocol of the previous trial displays several notable mistakes had been made. The presence of an undisciplined audience was allowed, as well as the encroachment of various disturbances. And, above all, the most deciding influence on the outcome of that trial was that the judge had an obvious attraction to the Barrister. (*Contemptuously*) We can hardly account for the odd sexual preferences of certain artifis. (*Normally again*) In short, all the irregularities mentioned led to a biased verdict. So, we consider the Prosecution's appeal well grounded. The Clerk shall read through the stipulations of today's trial.

Clerk: The Supreme Court has decided the trial will be carried out without any audience and without any witnesses. To avoid possible suspicions of sexual partiality at that trial, the roles of the Prosecutor and the Barrister will be represented by two computers programmed especially for such purposes. The Supreme Court will address both representatives with the titles 'Pros' and 'Barr'. Instead of a stenographer, automatic video and audio devices will be switched on during the entire trial.

Chef Justice: We decide that neither of the previous representatives has submitted either any new witnesses or any new evidence for the trial. We believe that a renewed interrogation of the previous witnesses would in no way contribute to clarifying the case. Do you agree with that, representatives?

Pros: Yes, Chef Justice.

Barr: Yes, Chef Justice.

Chef Justice: (*Benevolently*) The only one who could clarify that case is the Defendant himself. Up till now he had not had the opportunity to present his own view, so we have determined to correct this substantial mistake made during the previous trial. To avoid any extra wasting of time and money we have decided to question him personally. Do you agree with that, representatives?

Pros: Yes, Chef Justice.

Barr: Yes, Chef Justice.

Chef Justice: (*Friendly*) My dear lad, did you take apart the missing artif Download inside the darkish laboratory area in SEAS or anywhere else?

Defendant: No, I did not, Chef Justice.

Chef Justice: (*Extending his audio transmitter*) We knew that from the first moment we saw you! Such a well-shaped youth, with such a handsome and honest face, could not be bad. Let me ask you one more question. If we suppose—hypothetically, of course—the dismantlement of the missing artif really has happened, could you, perhaps, presume to suggest who might have been the perpetrator?

Defendant: Honorable Chef Justice, if we hypothetically suppose the dismantlement of the missing artif really has happened, I could suggest that Artif Serviceman-1 might have done it.

Chef Justice: That looks like a logical presumption to us, too. Still, for such a purpose AS-1 would have to have been suitably programmed, wouldn't he?

Defendant: Yes, he would have to have been, Chef Justice.

Chef Justice: (*Thoughtfully*) One last question, my dear lad, just out of curiosity and without any connection to this trial: were you at any time one of instructors at the aforementioned SEAS?

Defendant: Yes, Chef Justice, I used to be an instructor there. And—as you've said before—that has no connection whatever with this trial.

Chef Justice: Of course not. Now all is clear to us. (*Knocking authoritative - ly with his big gavel*) We declare the appeal of the Prosecution of the High Court as unfounded. The previous judgment stays in force. The Defendant is acquitted of all charges and he is free to go. (*Stooping toward to the acquitted*) One more matter, my dear boy, before you leave: is it true that you have, at least now, a contractual companionship with a *female*?

Acquitter: (*A bit confusedly*) Well, of course I have, Chef Justice. Is there, in your opinion, anything ... unusual in that?

Chef Justice: (*Warmly*) Not at all, my boy. We've been in the world long enough to understand all the wantonness and oddities of youth. You'll surely get tired of it in time; and we sincerely hope that will occur before long. (*In a low voice, confidentially*) And then we could see each other again, in private, to have a nice little chat and to enjoy ourselves. Our existence is much too short to waste it on frivolities; don't you agree, darling?



SciFi Wired Heart
art by Junior McLean

Her hands were ice. Wind threatened to blow her over, but she did not budge. She stood on the corner and waited.

A man approached her. “Uhhh, excuse me, sorry to bother you, but may I ask you one thing?” She felt shocked. No one had ever asked her a single thing. No one would ever ask her a single thing. She had imagined it. “Ma’am?” She stomped down hard on her foot. She mustn’t let her imagine play tricks on her. The cold had gotten to her head. The man stared at her for a moment, then walked away.

He came again the next day, wearing a woolen cap. “Why did you act so rude yesterday?” “Leave me alone.” “Ma’am, I just want to speak with you, that’s all I want, I want to talk.” “You can’t tell me what is real.” He walked away.

The next day he parked his car next to her, and he got out and stared into her eyes. They fought each other to maintain control of the silence. He wore his woolen cap. “Where did you get your cap?” she asked him. “Why can you ask me that, but refuse to answer my own questions?” “I asked you where you got your cap,” she answered. “Why do I have to answer all of your questions?” “You don’t, but I like it. I want to know where I can get one.” “What do you mean, where can you get one? I followed your sign, the sign you’re holding! The sign you’ve been holding the last two days!” He seemed irritated now, his cheeks puffed out, he swallowed giant gulps of freezing air. “How could I have known that?” she asked him. “Well, haven’t you read your own sign? It says right there, Discount Winter Gear, 50% off, doesn’t it?” “I wouldn’t know, I’ve never read it.” “Well, you must’ve read it sometime, I mean, someone must have given you this sign to hold, you must’ve read it, you must know what it says.” “You can’t tell my past from this sign. You can’t look at it, and say where I’ve been. It points you where to go, that is what it does.” He was downright angry now. “Yes, I understand that ma’am, I comprehend that I can’t tell where your life has taken you, I know I won’t understand you from this sign, but I do know one thing about you, that this is your job, to stand here on the corner, and hold this sign.” “You don’t know anything about me, yet you read this sign, and think you do.” “Ok,” he said softly, “well, what do you know about me, then?” “I know that you are wearing a woolen cap that I like, and that’s all I know.” “Yes, I am wearing a woolen cap, and I told you, I followed your sign, and went inside a store, and I bought this cap there. You know that about me.” She

looked puzzled. “And how do you think I could know that my sign lead you to that store. It doesn’t tell a story, it points toward the future.” He got very close to her now, his face red with rage. “Tell you what, why don’t you just flip it around and read it already, then you can know what I’m saying is the truth!” He didn’t understand her. “This sign doesn’t point towards my future. I hold the sign. It tells others where to go, what difference does it make if I read it?” He drove away.

He did not return for several days. She wished he would come back. She liked his cap, very much. She saw him walking one day, on the other side of the street, but he did not come to talk to her.

A woman approached her cautiously. “So are you the lady my husband keeps talking about?” She thought it was an interesting question. “It depends. I may be, or I may not be.” The woman took a step closer. “My husband keeps telling me of a woman, she holds a sign, and he followed it, and bought a cap. He always wears it now.” She remembered the man with the cap. “Yes, I’ve seen him. I like his cap.” The woman looked down at her feet for a moment, and then slowly up at her. “I think you know him a little better than you let on. Every day, he comes home, talking about you, about how he can’t get over how much he likes his cap. And he won’t stop talking about you, about how you have no past, and you just get out of bed every day and hold this sign, and you don’t even know what it says. So what does it say, huh?” This woman didn’t understand her, neither. “You are the one looking at it, why can’t you read what it says?” The woman ignored her. “What are you doing to my husband? If you say you have no past, then how can you remember him, how can you remember his cap?” She thought about this. “This sign points to the future. If it indeed brought your husband to that hat, then that hat is in my future.” The woman glared back at her. “What does that mean?! What do you mean, the hat is in your future, and tell me seriously, now!” She could tell the woman was infuriated now, but she remained calm. “Could you hold this?” She pushed the sign towards the woman. “What do you want me to do?” the woman asked, grabbing the sign. “Stand here, where I stand, and point it that way.” The woman huffed and puffed, but did as she said. She read the sign. Discount winter gear, 50% off. She looked off down the street, in the direction of the big red arrow. “Thank you,” she whispered, and before the woman could respond, she walked away up the sidewalk. She came to the sporting goods store, and glanced over her shoulder. The woman was lost to her now, the snow flurries blocked off the corner from her sight. She turned, and a man stood rocking back on his heels, his hands in his pockets. She kind of liked his hat.

Although this article refers to Christian faith and turning to Jesus (and our byline is that we're an UNreligious lit mag), we wanted to share this article to give our readers something to think about. Enjoy this article from Ed Coet.

— Janet Kuypers

Understanding Suicide

Ed Coet

I am a suicide survivor. I am also a Christian. This article explains how anyone, but especially people of faith, can survive or help others to survive the tragedy of a suicidal death of a family member or close friend.

My father, a former career soldier, committed suicide with an overdose of prescription medicine taken in conjunction with alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant that exacerbates suicidal tendencies in those who are prone to such self-destructive acts. I was 16 years old at the time. I was wrongly ashamed of my father's suicide for most of my life. In fact, that feeling of shame is one of the great regrets of my life. With the combination of drugs and alcohol my dad might not have even intended to take his life. It could have been an accident. There was no suicide note. He had no previous declaration of intent to commit suicide. The answer to that mystery we will never know. Still, officially his death certificate declared it a suicide.

If someone asked how my father died, I would say that he died of a heart attack. That is the response my mother repeatedly instructed me to say. The manner in which my father died was not about him in her mind. Rather, it was about us. My mother was concerned about what others would think of us if they knew my dad had committed suicide. Perhaps, she thought, they would blame us. They might suggest that we drove him to it. They might suggest that we failed to appropriately respond to his suicidal tendencies. In short, my mother worried that they might *blame* us for my father's suicide.

Thoughts of *if only we had done or said this or that* constantly crept in to our minds. It was an emotionally destructive *self-imposed* guilt trip. Guilt can cripple. When guilt is unjustified it is especially damaging.

The Christian approach to guilt, real and imagined, is in recognition and confession of sin, and faith in the love, goodness, and power of God

— “casting one’s cares upon him,” not — in no way— upon the probability of one’s own, or the suicide’s, lack of, or diminished-under-the-circumstances (mental illness), guilt.

To cope with suicide one must dump their guilt. It doesn’t belong in the grieving process. Grief is plenty enough to cope with without the burden of unnecessary and undeserved guilt.

Even in cases where no guilt is present the conscience will find occasion for and evidence to accuse. It’s a struggle I call the *blame game*. The *blame game* is a method of coping by *blaming* someone else for the suicidal death that torments you. Sometimes you blame another relative. Sometimes you blame the person who committed the suicide. Often it’s a combination thereof. This venting of anger on someone else tends to provide some measure of relief in the short term. It doesn’t work in the long term. Blaming anyone for suicide is wrong most of the time. Where mental illness is the culprit, nobody and nothing except the mental illness itself is to blame. The sooner people come to terms with this truth the sooner they’ll be on the path to recovery.

Most people are ignorant about suicide. That is why they often shy away from family members or friends who are struggling with suicide. It is wrong to be ashamed of or by the suicidal death of a family member or friend. It is cruel to desert those who are suffering. Feeling uncomfortable with suicide is never an excuse for rejecting those who struggle with this most tragic of deaths. Ask yourself, would you desert them if the person died of a heart attack or cancer? How can you desert them if their loved one died from suicidal mental illness?

Mental illness can kill just like cancer and heart disease. In suicide, most often it is the mental illness that kills, not the person. A mentally stable person does not react to angry words or events by killing themselves. Only mentally and emotionally sick people do that. That is why their response to anger or any other stimuli is irrational and illogical. If they were healthy it is unlikely their response would be suicide.

Depression affects your mental and emotional state of mind but it has a *biological* origin. Depression can be triggered by anger and resentment which have physiological effects. While the anger can elicit an emotional response, it is the biological mental illness (depression) that is the culprit. People get angry everyday but they don’t kill themselves because they are *mentally healthy*. Hence, you ought not blame or exculpate the person who committed suicide. This brings us to the mercy of God. He knows all, He is just and He is merciful. Take comfort in God’s mercy. Also take comfort in understanding that with few exceptions suicide is faultless and blameless.

Some 20 years after my father’s death I had to cope with multiple suicide

attempts by my brother. It was scary and emotionally draining. My brother is still living - thank God. However, he had a lot of close calls. More than once death was knocking at his door. The family was notified to get to the hospital quickly. Doctors doubted my brother would survive his latest suicide attempt. After every attempt he would be grateful for his life. He would also feel incredible guilt for the fear and heartache his suicide attempts brought on his family. Then he would get depressed and regress. Eventually, like a vicious cycle, he'd attempt it again and again.

My brother is a Viet Nam veteran. Like so many vets who endured that conflict, he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He is designated as a service connected 100% disabled veteran. Depression is a consequence of PTSD. Fortunately my brother came to terms with his mental illness and sought treatment. I have no doubt that treatment, medication, and prayer are what saved his life. It has allowed him to live a mostly productive life although he still struggles with his illness. Treatment, medication, and prayer are the difference between my brother and our father. Our dad had none of these and, of course, he died.

A little over 20 years after my father's death I had to deal with the suicidal death of the 14-year-old son of very close and dear friends. It was shocking and traumatic. Losing ones child unexpectedly is about the worst heartache one can ever endure. To lose that child as a result of suicide is far worse; it is indeed grief to the extreme.

There were warning signs, but they were not apparent to his parents. He experienced slight personality and behavioral changes that were more observable at school and with his friends, especially his girlfriend, then at home. That's why it's important to communicate in the family setting. Depression is often difficult to see if you are not looking for it. School officials and friends either didn't know the warning signs or they disregarded them. Families can't rely on others to inform them.

Symptoms of depression or suicidal feelings may include a change in eating or sleeping habits, withdrawal from friends and family, giving away valued possessions, rebellious behavior, running away, drug and alcohol abuse, unexplained obsessions, decline in the quality of work or school work, and marked personality changes. It is important that parents, teachers, counselors, and pastors know and recognize these signs. It could save someone's life.

Everything seemed normal that evening. Nothing seemed different or peculiar. It was a pleasant evening until his mother heard the gun shot that would be the beginning of grief on a huge scale. This would be compounded by the prevalent *why* questions. It would be accompanied by the expected *guilt* and *blame* which his family didn't deserve to feel. It wasn't their fault.

Nor was it his fault. His mental illness killed him as surely as cancer takes its victims if left untreated. But a parent can't seek treatment or medication for their child unless they know that the child is sick.

It was difficult to go through this ordeal with them. I genuinely felt their pain and shared their grief. Still, it was important to be there for them. It cemented our friendship and even took it to a new level. That is something to remember if you know someone who is trying to survive suicide. Be there for them. It's the right thing to do. It's the Christian thing to do. Don't just offer help and wait for a call that never comes. Insist on sharing their grief. If nothing else be there to sit with them, hold them, listen to them, or just silently occupy space with them. They will gain a measure of comfort just from your presence. They will know you are genuinely there for them if the grief becomes too much for them to bear alone.

Our most recent loss was the suicidal death of my niece. This was especially difficult to cope with. My mother is not very stable and I already explained my brother's history. This was his daughter, his first-born. Worrying about how grief would impact them while dealing with my own grief was a monumental emotional undertaking. It took the saying *be strong for them* to a new level.

I watched my niece grow up in to a gem of a woman. She was as pure as the driven snow. She was devout in her Christian faith. She was a registered nurse who took pride in providing for the health care of others. She served her country honorably as a commissioned officer in the US Air Force. She was only in her early thirties but she was very sick.

She was mentally ill.

My niece was bipolar. She had the most severe form of obsessive-compulsive disorder that her psychiatrists had ever seen. She also suffered from schizophrenic episodes and severe clinical depression. As an RN she understood her condition. She wanted to live but she didn't know how to with so much mental anguish. Nobody could help her. No medications sufficed. As a woman of faith she struggled desperately and prayed continuously, on her knees, for hours at a time.

She had several suicide attempts that failed. It was destined that she would succeed at some point. When people are that sick they are unable to reason. They can't think clearly or rationalize effectively. All they do is suffer. It's not surprising that they are focused on placing an end to that suffering. Mental illness can be very deadly.

It's important to understand that healthy people do not kill themselves. A person who is depressed does not think like a typical person who feels good. They live in the here and now. Depression keeps them from looking forward to a better time. They can't comprehend positive thinking. Sometimes they don't

even realize they are sick much like my dad and our friend's son. Sometimes they are very much aware of their mental illness like my brother and my niece. They seek help and struggle as best they can but sometimes nothing works for them. Not medication, not therapy; absolutely nothing helps them. These are the most severely afflicted with suicidal mental illness. My niece was one of these. They will continue to attempt suicide until they succeed. You cannot help them. You cannot save them. All you can do is pray for them.

It is disturbing when some so called experts say that suicide is preventable. It suggests that everyone who ever committed suicide could have been saved. While it is true that suicide is often preventable it is like wise true that sometimes it not. Suggesting otherwise can lead to endless suffering and needless guilt by suicide survivors. The reality is that in severe cases of metal illness nothing short of divine intervention can save a suicidal person.

Remember, nobody who commits suicide asked for their depression. They would do anything to rid themselves of it. Being depressed isn't the result of life choices any more than catching a cold is. Some people get it, and some don't. Such is life.

It is hard to imagine suicide being a sin in these clinically depressed people. One cannot offend God by involuntarily contracting an illness, regardless of what the illness may be. If suicide in such a circumstance constituted sin, then it would be sinful to catch the flu or die of pneumonia. It is comforting to know that most mainstream religions understand and share this viewpoint, especially Christian denominations. The Catholic church of my faith was once notorious about guilt associated with suicide. It taught that the commission of suicide was a mortal sin. This explains why my mother is still living a lie about her husband's death. However, the Catholic Church has since clarified their position on the issue of suicide. The Catechism of the Catholic Church plainly states, "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who take their own lives..." (2282 - 83).

This does not mean that suicide is never sinful. If someone is of sound mind and premeditatedly acts to kill himself/herself for the purpose of punishing or harming another, that would be a sin. If they avoid deserved punishment by the state for a criminal conviction by committing suicide that is arguably a sin. Anyone who commits a suicidal act with malice aforethought for evil purposes is at grave risk of mortal sin. That is tantamount to murder, which is a crystal clear violation of Gods commandment: "Thou shall not kill."

If a person, because of mental illness, sincerely believes with their heart and soul that dying will somehow end the suffering and anguish of others, regardless of how wrong they may be, who could doubt that it is nonetheless a selfless act in the eyes of God. Remember, "No greater love has a man than to give his life for another."

Some people who commit suicide exhibit enormous courage in the undertaking. Consider the soldier who deliberately throws himself on a hand grenade or a land mine to save the lives of his comrades. Did he knowingly kill himself (i.e., commit suicide)? Yes, of course he did. Was it also a courageous and selfless act of courage? Absolutely! It was courageous and selfless. We correctly label this soldier a hero. People who commit suicide are not cowards as some suggest. Jesus serves as a perfect example of one who suffered immensely and sacrificed his very life for the salvation of others. Sometimes we do need reminding.

Depression is usually a treatable disease. Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide or even attempt it. But they are more vulnerable to the risk of suicidal thoughts and they and their family members should be aware of this. Most people, who suffer from mental illness, unless it is extreme, will benefit from therapy, medication, or a combination of these. In the case of depression medication very often can permit these people to live completely normal and happy lives. The key is first to recognize the problem and then obtain treatment as soon as possible.

Some people are more prone to suicide than others. They should be particularly alert to the warning signs of depression. Suicide tends to run in families. My family is living proof of this. Suicide most often results from brain disorders such as clinical depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar illness, schizophrenia, and severe obsessive-compulsive disorder. All of these brain disorders have a genetic component that, if left untreated or mistreated, can result in suicide. The risks of suicide increase considerably the longer a person goes without treatment. That is why it is dangerous for a depressed person to avoid treatment for fear that he or she might be labeled as being crazy. We are living in modern times. We are way beyond such foolishness; at least we ought to be.

If you suffer from depression don't take a chance - get help. If your child is depressed, get your child help and do it quickly. Do this even in the face of resistance. You just might be saving their lives.

It is estimated that mental illness is the cause of 95% of all suicides. *The #1 cause of suicide is untreated depression.* Ninety-five percent of all suicides are the direct result of the aforementioned brain disorders. According to the National Mental Health Association the teen suicide rate has risen an astonishing 200% in the last 40 years. That is a rate three times what it was in 1960. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for 15 - 24 year-olds. About five thousand 15 - 24 year-olds kill themselves every year. These are alarming figures.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that maintaining your faith will increase your rate of recover from the tragedy of suicide. Don't pray less. Instead pray more. Your faith will be your greatest source of comfort. Don't be mad at God. God did not betray you by letting your loved one die. He understands the

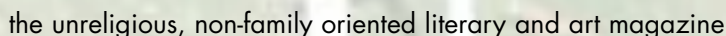
pain of death. He endured it with the sacrificial death of his only begotten son for your sake and everyone else's. Jesus understands the pain of death. Remember how He wept for Lazarus. Remember how He suffered in His own blameless death. Remember how His blessed mother Mary suffered when He died. Remember the painful deaths of His Apostles.

Remember, everyone dies of something; it's preordained. We cannot escape death, at least not in this worldly life. Your loved one just happened to die of mental illness that resulted in suicide. Even in this worldly death we still remain spiritually linked. You have not lost your loved ones. You have merely postponed being in their company until such time as God calls you home. He will do that plenty soon enough so don't try to rush the process. Remember it's about His will, not yours.

If ever you have to endure being a suicide survivor take comfort in knowing that you can survive even though the anguish of your loss may at first seem to be insurmountable. Everyone must go through a grieving process when a loved one dies. The grief associated with the suicidal death of a loved one is manifestly more difficult to cope with than other types of death. But, it is also similar in that it will likewise end. You don't necessarily get over your loss; that void is always there. However, you do learn to cope and deal with it. Your pain will go away. You will come to understand that your loved one remains with you in spirit and you with him or her. You will laugh again. You will experience love and joy. You will obtain peace of mind even though you'll always have the sorrow associated with loss. But we feel sorry when we lose our youth and vitality too. That doesn't mean that we stay miserable because of it.

Definitely grieve, but also let go. Get professional, spiritual, or other help if you need it. Accept the fate that you are dealt just as Jesus and his blessed mother accepted the fate of the Holy sacrifice at Calvary. Jesus, while suffering the pains of crucifixion asked of his heavenly father, "Why hast thou forsaken me." Even the Son of man asked why. He also said "Thy will be done." Our Lord in faith accepted his fate and in so doing taught us to do the same. We don't have to know and understand everything. In faith we must just believe, as Jesus did, that God understands and knows what is best. He will take care of things, perfectly. Accept, as Jesus did, the fate you are dealt no matter how much it hurts at the time. After all, you can't change it and you are not responsible for it.

Understand the difference between holding on to a memory and clinging to a soul. Release the soul from your mind so that your loved one can be with our Lord where he or she will prepare a place for you when your time comes. You will be together again and the next time it will be for all eternity. That will be a joyful eternity with God almighty. Trust in God and maintain your faith. God will make it right. You will survive.



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