



Metaphysical Times

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(Cover: Gluttonous Bears)

## **Food Issue**

As you can see from the display of gluttony on our cover, even well-stuffed animals with no need for food or mouths to eat with can have food issues.

The tiny Dogs Plot community has altogether at least eight or ten food issues among us and we could publish a food issue every feast season but still not get to the bottom of it.

This edition of the magazine will not be all about eating disorders; but to mention just a few: the one we have most in common is wanting to eat whenever we are sad, elated, depressed, or excited. Any strong emotion makes us desire to eat mounds of food as does being bored, and once we get into the habit, we need no trigger. But if we happen once in a while to be happy or even satisfied with our lives, we can FORGET to eat for most of a day. There are foods we can't stand for no good reason. There are foods some of us won't eat for what we consider moral reasons. We all have issues.

Before coming to the Metaphysical Times, one member of our senior editorial staff spent forty years working in the fashion industry, where women were required to be thin as a stick and men to fit into a perfect 40 suit jacket and pants for a 29" waist. The women were anorexic, and or bulimic; they exercised for hours at a time and still thought constantly about eating or not eating. Food was their enemy. To be healthy, fit and athletic would do for male models, but not for women.

And of course the real hunger in this world is a bigger and more widespread problem. There is a global food disorder, which is mostly a supply problem. One of our authors volunteered at a shelter for abused women who spent hours a day worrying about how they would possibly feed themselves and their children if they had to leave the shelter and face the world on their own.

So that is about all the politics you will find in these pages. We just want to feed the people, because food is life and nourishment, hydration, medication, pleasure, joy, humor, love of course; and sometimes it's worms, as you will discover in the following pages. Let's eat!

The Editors



**Metaphysical  
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**COVER**

DAVID S. WARREN - Gluttonous Bears

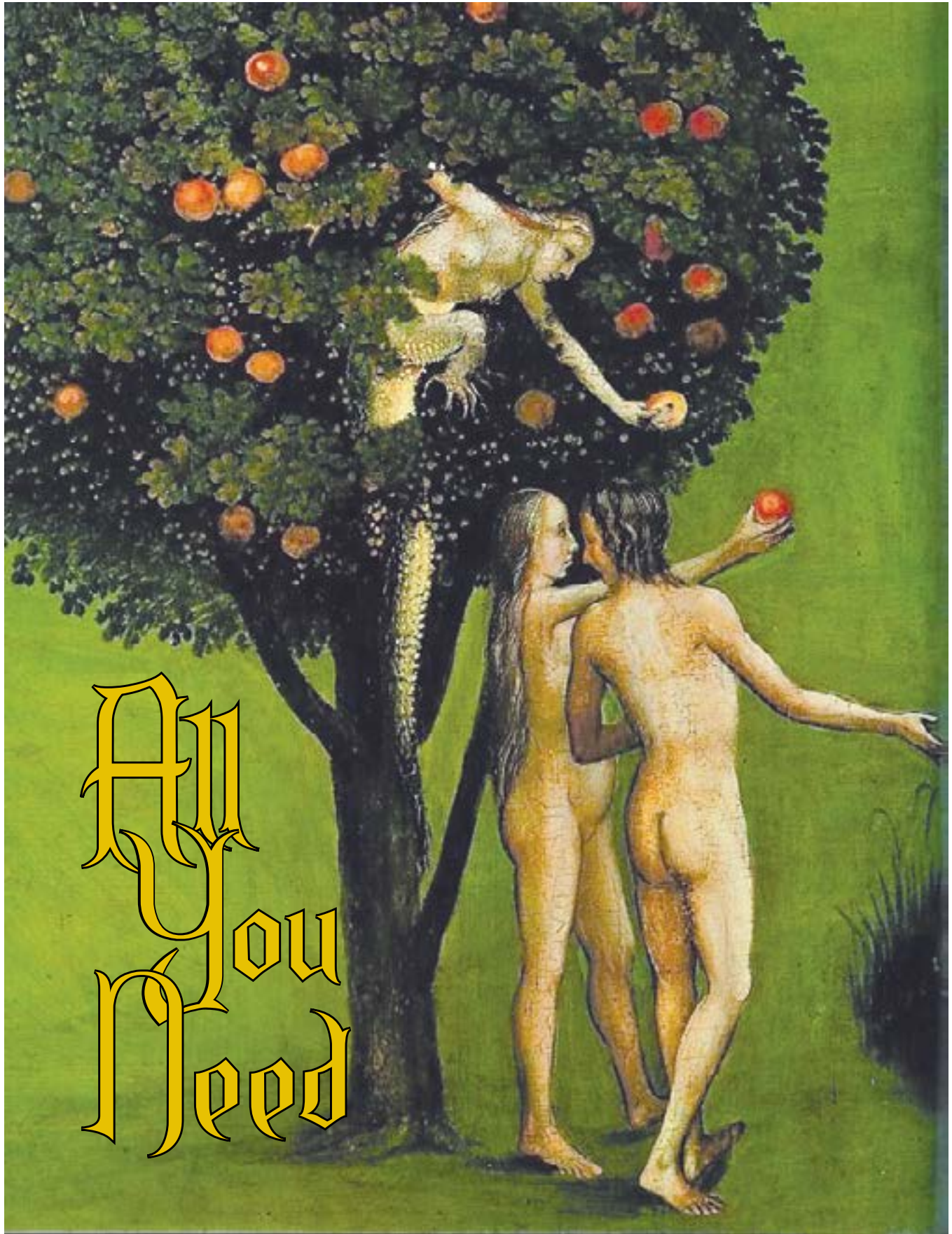
**OUR NEXT ISSUE**

Significant Creatures – Real, Pretend, Mythological or Imagined

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**Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge**  
from the Last Judgement Triptych 1516  
by Hieronymus Bosch

# All You Need

by Davey  
Weathercock,  
guest editor



We animals are passionate about food, especially when we don't really need it, like the stuffed animals pictured on our cover: abandoned and lovelorn playthings, looting a refrigerator and struggling over a mess of condiments that they don't truly want, and which they could never quite eat, being as they are mostly mouthless and overstuffed.

What you see there is a scene of pure gluttony: and is punished in Hell.

(See in this issue Chaucer's classic tale of gross gluttony, to which Cornell Professor Emeritus Pete Wetherbee has graciously provided an introduction.)

Plato joked with his discussion group in Athens once that humans can be defined as "featherless bipeds"; so the next day his quick friend Dyogenes showed up with a plucked chicken to challenge the claim.

But, no joke, having lived among chickens for fifteen or twenty years I have learned that in just about every way, especially in regard to food issues, chickens are pretty much *us*, despite or because of our being the ruling species. We have bred them in our own image.

Of course there is at least a cultural difference between us and our chicken counterparts.

The late twentieth-century, French anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss, in his pungent book: *THE RAW AND THE COOKED*, suggested that what made humans HUMAN, was not standing upright, not inventing religion, art, or rock and roll; and it was certainly not politics (in which we MOST resemble chickens). It was *COOKING* that set us apart from them and the other animals.

If this issue of the *Metaphysical Times* were all about recipes, I would offer mine for the most nourishing, fueling, comforting, hydrating, and medicating of all foods, which just happens to be *CHICKEN SOUP*. And I would suggest that you add the left-over whey from your cheese making, and a lot of garlic freshly ground from dehydrated slices. Even chickens benefit from the garlic, and they eat the soup eagerly, whether or not they know it is *chicken* soup. But of course, the old cannibal joke is that "long Pig" tastes a lot like chicken.

This issue of the magazine concerns not just chickens, recipes, or cooking, but food in general. Because it is not exclusively cooking (in the sense of putting meat to the heat) that makes for domesticated food: We the people tamed bacteria and yeasts before we began roasting worms or birds. Eve crushed the apple beneath her heel, so pretty soon she discovered hard cider ... and then came yeasty bread and before long the wondrous bacterial world of cheese. Chickens like it very stinky, but stinky is only a word and I eat no words.

**Davey Weathercock** is a roving weatherman and free-lance Dog Herder who reported on storms and climatic events for the *TinyTownTimes* until the unfortunate crash in this close-to-final episode: [http://tinytowntimes.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=73&Itemid=98&limitstart=8](http://tinytowntimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=73&Itemid=98&limitstart=8)

## Davey Weathercock & Dot crowing



Writing by **Davey Weathercock**  
and by other authors previously published  
in the *Metaphysical Times* can be found in  
the Stories, Essays and Poems at:  
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# The Pardoner on Gluttony

Excerpt from *The Pardoner's Tale* in  
*The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

Introduction and translation  
by Pete Wetherbee

## INTRODUCTION:

A Pardoner in medieval Europe, though not necessarily in holy orders, was licenced by the Church to grant pardons for sins in return for contributions. The office was widely abused and, as the pardoners were in effect traveling salesmen, they were widely criticized. It was largely the selling of pardons that provoked Martin Luther's attacks on the corruption of the Church.

Chaucer's Pardoner is one of the most complicated characters among the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*. His forceful preaching makes him a successful pardoner, but his open and avowed commitment to acquisition distances him from others, as does his apparently congenital sterility, and this alienation is painful. His rapacity and his cynicism about his profession mask a deep longing for love and fellowship, and a bitter hatred of his role and condition, which he sees as a kind of curse, the signs of an incurable spiritual sickness.

The attack on gluttony and drunkenness in this excerpt from one of his sermons is powerful, but its power is disproportionate to the nature of the sins described: Adam and Eve were not expelled from Paradise because of gluttony. The excess and venom are a symptom of the Pardoner's hatred of the body, above all his own body, though he pursues the very sins he attacks: the lines on cheap wine and drunken sleep have a flophouse authenticity that suggests both the sordidness of his way of life and his extreme need for human contact.



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 498 <b>O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!</b><br>O gluttony, full of cursedness!                             | 508 <b>For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,</b><br>For while Adam fasted, as I read,  |
| 499 <b>O cause first of oure confusioun!</b><br>O first cause of our ruin!                                | 509 <b>He was in Paradys; and whan that he</b><br>He was in Paradise; and when he  |
| 500 <b>O original of oure dampnacioun,</b><br>O origin of our damnation,                                  | 510 <b>Eet of the fruyt deffended on the tree,</b><br>Ate of the forbidden fruit on the tree,  |
| 501 <b>Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!</b><br>Until Christ had redeemed us with his blood! | 511 <b>Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne.</b><br>Immediately he was cast out to woe and pain.   |
| 502 <b>Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,</b><br>Lo, how dearly, shortly to say,                         | 512 <b>O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!</b><br>O gluttony, on thee well ought we complain!   |
| 503 <b>Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!</b><br>Was bought that same cursed villainy!                    | 513 <b>O, wiste a man how manye maladyes</b><br>O, if a man knew how many evils  |
| 504 <b>Corrupt was al this world for glotonye!</b><br>Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.            | 514 <b>Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,</b><br>Follow of excess and gluttony,   |
| 505 <b>Adam oure fader, and his wyf also,</b><br>Adam our father, and his wife also,                      | 515 <b>He wolde been the moore mesurable</b><br>He would be the more moderate  |
| 506 <b>Fro Paradys to labour and to wo</b><br>From Paradise to labor and to woe                           | 516 <b>Of his diete, sittynge at his table.</b><br>Of his diet, sitting at his table.  |
| 507 <b>Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.</b><br>Were driven for that vice, there is no doubt.    | 517 <b>Allas, the shorte throte,* the tendre mouth,</b><br>(i.e. the brief interval when we taste our food)<br>Alas, the short throat, the tender mouth, |

518 **Maketh that est and west and north and south,**  
Makes that east and west and north and south,

519 **In erthe, in eir, in water, men to swynke**  
In earth, in air, in water, men work

520 **To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!**  
To get a glutton dainty food and drink!

521 **Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete:**  
Of this matter, O Paul, well canst thou speak

522 **“Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete**  
“Food unto belly, and belly unto food,

523 **Shal God destroyen bothe,” as Paulus seith.**  
(*1st Corinthians 6.13*)  
God shall destroy both,” as Paul says.

524 **Allas, a foul thyng is it, by my feith,**  
Alas, a foul thing it is, by my faith,



This portrait of Chaucer occurs in the manuscript  
at the beginning of *The Tale of Melibee*  
in the *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

525 **To seye this word, and fouler is the dede,**  
To say this word, and fouler is the deed,

526 **Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede**  
When man so drinks of the white and red

527 **That of his throte he maketh his pryvee**  
That he makes his privy of his throat

528 **Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.**  
Through that same cursed excess

529 **The apostel wepyng seith ful pito**  
The apostle weeping says full piteously,

530 **“Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I --**  
“There walk many of whom I have told you --

531 **I seye it now wepyng, with pitous voys --**  
I say it now weeping, with piteous voice --

532 **They been enemys of Cristes croys,**  
They are enemies of Christ's cross,

533 **Of whiche the ende is deeth; wombe is hir god!”**  
(*Philippians 3.19*)  
Of which the end is death; belly is their god!”

534 **O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,**  
O gut! O belly! O stinking bag,

535 **Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun!**  
Filled with dung and with corruption!

536 **At either ende of thee foul is the soun.**  
At either end of thee foul is the sound.

537 **How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!**  
How great labor and cost it is to feed thee!

538 **Thise cookes, how they stampe, and**  
**streyn, and grynde,**  
These cooks, how they pound, and strain,  
and grind,

539 **And turnen substaunce into accident**  
And turn substance into accident

540 **To fulfille al thy likerous talent!**  
To fulfill all thy gluttonous desire!



541 **Out of the harde bones knocke they**  
Out of the hard bones they knock

542 **The mary, for they caste noght away**  
The marrow, for they throw nothing away

543 **That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.**  
That may go through the gullet softly and sweetly.

544 **Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote**  
Of seasonings of leaf, and bark, and root

545 **Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,**  
Shall his sauce be made for delight,

546 **To make hym yet a newer appetit.**  
To make him yet a newer appetite

547 **But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices**  
But, certainly, he who habitually seeks  
such delicacies

548 **Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.**  
Is dead, while he lives in those vices.

549 **A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse**  
A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness

550 **Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.**  
Is full of striving and of wretchedness

551 **O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,**  
O drunken man, disfigured is thy face,

552 **Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,**  
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace,

553 **And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun**  
And through thy drunken nose the sound seems

554 **As though thou seydest ay “Sampsoun, Sampsoun!”**  
As though thou said always “Sampson, Sampson!”

555 **And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no wyn.**  
And yet, God knows, Sampson never drank wine.

556 **Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn;**  
Thou fallest as if you were a stuck pig;

557 **Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure,**  
Thy tongue is lost, and all thy care for decency,

558 **For dronkenesse is verray sepulture**  
For drunkenness is truly the sepulcher

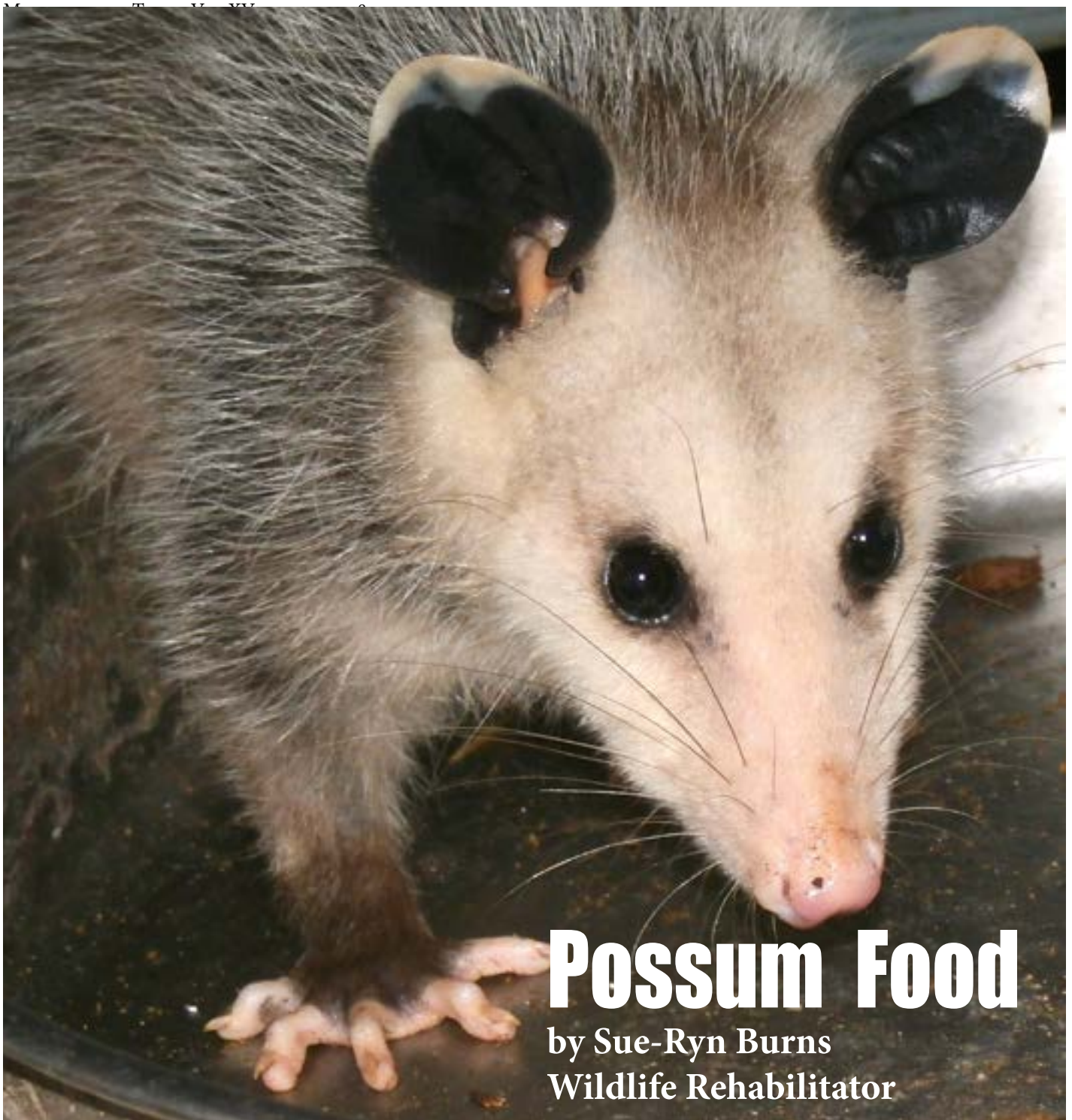
559 **Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.**  
Of man’s wit and his discretion.



**Pete Wetherbee,**  
formerly known as Buddy Valentio  
the sax player, has ( after a long spell  
in Auburn prison) recently become  
Professor Emeritus of English  
at Cornell University.

And Famous all over the world  
His terms:  
no autographs, no interviews, etc.

This article by **Pete Wetherbee**  
and articles by other authors previously  
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# Possum Food

by Sue-Ryn Burns  
Wildlife Rehabilitator

One of the first things a wildlife rehabilitator learns is the food that each species eats: from nursing mammal babies, to the tiniest of birds, to reptiles and amphibians, and the occasional marsupial. They start out with formulas or food that mimics what their mothers would provide. As they learn to eat on their own, they progress through other foods that resemble their natural adult diets. This can present challenges. Fortunately, due to exotic pets and

hobby farms becoming more common, there are lots of options available at farm and pet stores.

We have two freezers in our attached garage. One is for vegetables and one is for meats. We grow a lot of food and we pickle, can and freeze plenty. The vegetable freezer usually has some individually quick-frozen berries for fruit eating songbirds, like Waxwings or Orioles. The



meat freezer has served a similar purpose, though it's been a few years since we grew any of our own meat. There's usually frozen liver, which is great fast nutrition for carnivorous birds of prey we take in until we can pass them to a rehabilitator friend who works with raptors. A friend who kept chickens in Alaska said she never lost birds to the cold because she gave them liver once a month. There are frequently frozen rodents (bags of them), for raptors and the occasional Opossum or Mink. Sometimes there are also cadavers of animals we could not save. Most of these get donated to education centers to be utilized in a variety of ways.

Sometimes the cadavers are just awaiting better weather for burial. Some rehabilitators will use those animals as food for other predators they are caring for, but we've always preferred to feed meats that we know were healthy before they landed in our freezer.

During "baby season" - which is pretty much from early spring through early fall - we also keep a smaller special rehab refrigerator stocked with mammal and bird formulas, with medications and with fruits and vegetables. Once baby season ends, any leftover dry formulas move to the meat freezer. There are usually small bins of meal worms and earthworms in the garage, and we keep a fish barrel with minnows of various types going also.

One Saturday shortly after July 4th, when it was fairly quiet and we had released most of the first-litter squirrels and had most of the waterfowl in outside pens, the phone rang. In what can only be considered a moment of temporary insanity, I agreed to take 11 baby Opossums, rescued from a very busy roadside after their mother was killed by a car.

I was of course immediately charmed by the cute little babies. They look like they're wearing opera gloves and their tails are like a fifth hand. Their big pink scalloped ears have black stripes. They each had a widow's peak! They seem to be always in some kind of physical contact with each other - piled up to sleep, sitting on each other, holding paws, or keeping their tails entwined.

When I would move them from one cage to another for breakfast while I cleaned up their amazing mess, they always looked a little confused, as if they weren't sure where they were. They'll hiss when scared, and if they get annoyed they make a sneeze-like sound. I hung a ferret hammock up in the top of my biggest indoor cage for them and they filled each level and pocket.

For a while they had to be fed formula every couple of hours. Opossums do not latch onto a nipple the way other young mammals do, probably partially due to the shape of their jaws. We had to sort of dribble the milk into their mouths so they could lap and swallow. Fortunately they were about a week from starting to eat a little on their own. Many rehabbers tube-feed them; it's just easier on everyone involved. I avoid tube-feeding whenever possible.

Soon we changed from trying get them to nurse to trying get them to eat baby food. Their first food was mashed bananas with formula and a little extra calcium carbonate. Fortunately they learned to groom and clean each other after meals.

The diet of Opossums is more complex than that of other scavengers. Their natural diet consists of insects (they're tick-eating machines!!), grubs, worms, small amphibians,

fruits, eggs - (shells included), carrion (meat/protein), vegetables, seeds, buds, and leaves in fairly equal measure. Too much protein and they can develop metabolic bone disease because it will inhibit their ability to absorb calcium and other micro-nutrients.

They like sweet foods – fruits, winter squash, peas, bananas. Other vegetables mostly were ignored. One rehabber friend told me she put cheese sauce on their veggies to get them to eat just as you would for children. So we tried it, now have a jar of left over orange cheesy stuff in the refrigerator because our Opossums didn't like it!

Earthworms seem to bring out their inner beasts and they will snap at each other over them. They were delighted when I garnished their meal with dead minnows from the fish bucket and if they seemed to need a treat Sardines were the best.

Because there were eleven of them, they stayed



fairly wild and shy, which is to their advantage. I don't want them to think people are their friends. It also meant they needed to be in the biggest outdoor cage, where they spent their days sleeping and their nights climbing and moving around.

Delilah, our dog, found them very intriguing, but mostly just sat and watched them when we let her out at night. That's o.k., because she was teaching them that dogs are a little creepy and not to be trusted. I have spent quite a bit of time just observing them as well and I'm sure they think humans are creepy too as a result .

Since they first arrived I'd been giving thought to their eventual release – it's what you do when you rehab. I divided them into three smaller groups for release in safe locations. They didn't get released on this island. While I've heard there are a few Opossums around, I think they'd just end up being food for predators of which there are many. I know that's always a possibility for any of the creatures we rear and release, but I try to position them for success in a supportive environment where they'll be able to find food and shelter from weather. If I've done my job well, they will have a healthy sense of adventure about what is edible.

**They're out there in the world now,  
hopefully finding plenty of  
wonderful food.**

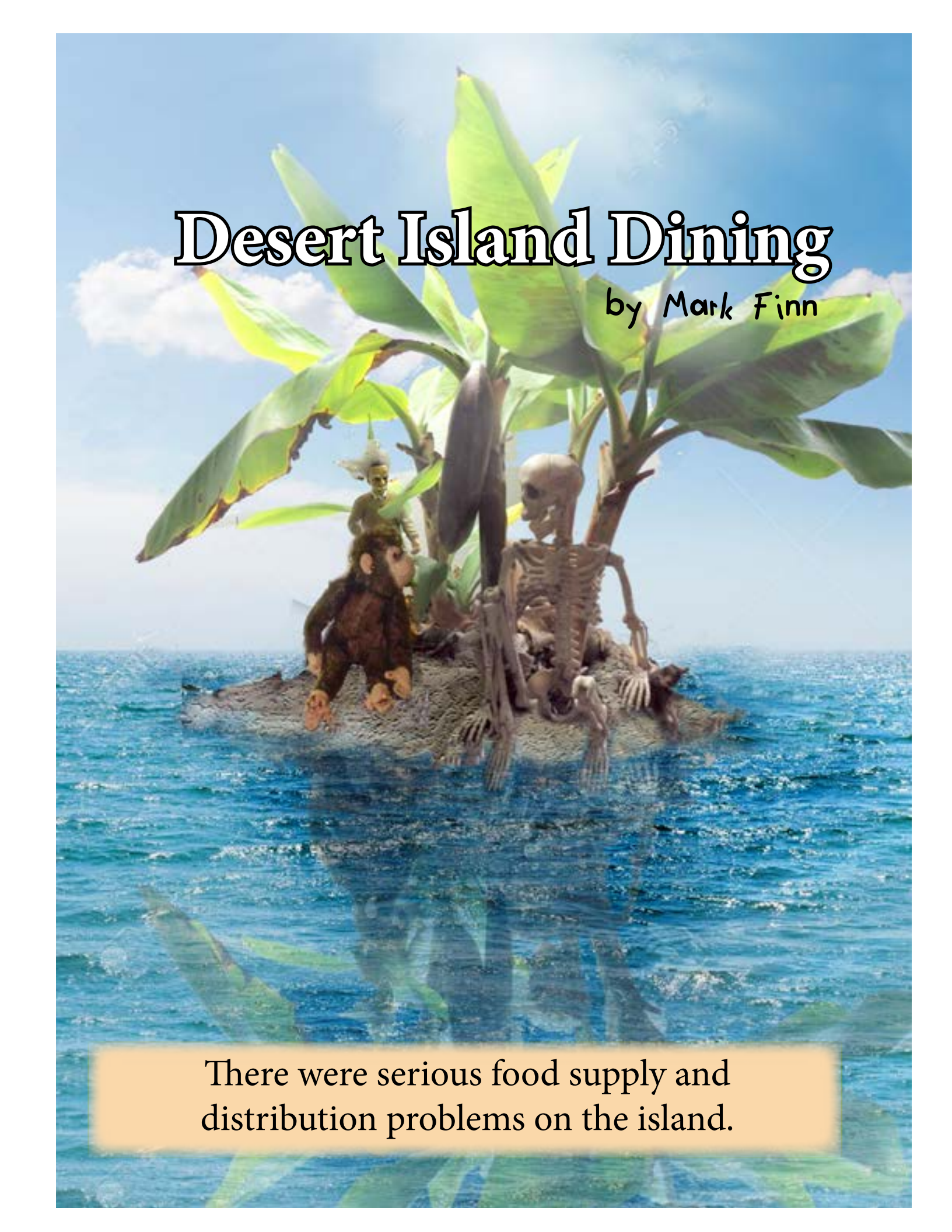
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# Desert Island Dining

by Mark Finn

A surreal scene of a desert island. A small, dark, rocky patch of land floats in the middle of a vast, blue ocean. On the land, a large banana tree with broad green leaves and a single purple banana hangs from its trunk. To the left of the tree, a brown monkey sits on the ground. To the right, a human skeleton is propped up against the tree, appearing to be eating. In the background, a small, ornate statue stands near the tree. The sky is bright blue with a few white clouds. The water is a deep blue with white-capped waves. The entire scene is reflected in the water below.

There were serious food supply and distribution problems on the island.





“Einstein here said that was a banana and we should eat it, but bananas are yellow and that thing is kinda red.

Anyway, he can't reach it and the spider is hoarding it, so I plan to order out."

Snail and I agreed that - considering the circumstances - we would eventually have to eat one another, and I gave him first go at it, figuring he's awful small and wouldn't take much.





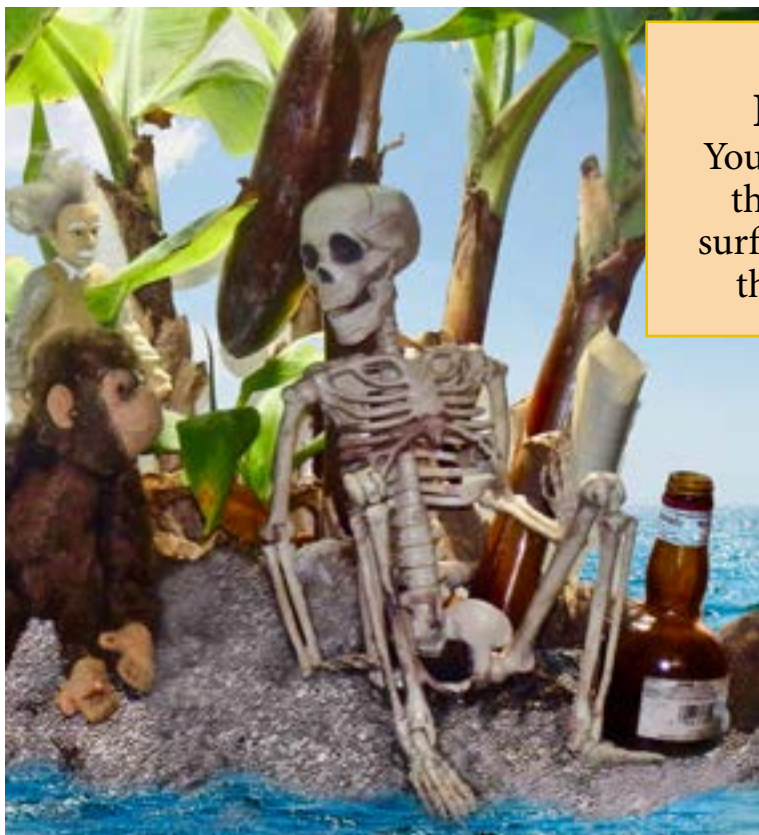
**"But he called the spider  
down and I lost a  
lot of weight."**

About how much would you say  
you weigh your ownself?  
Looking plump and firm.  
**Better take care of your health."**

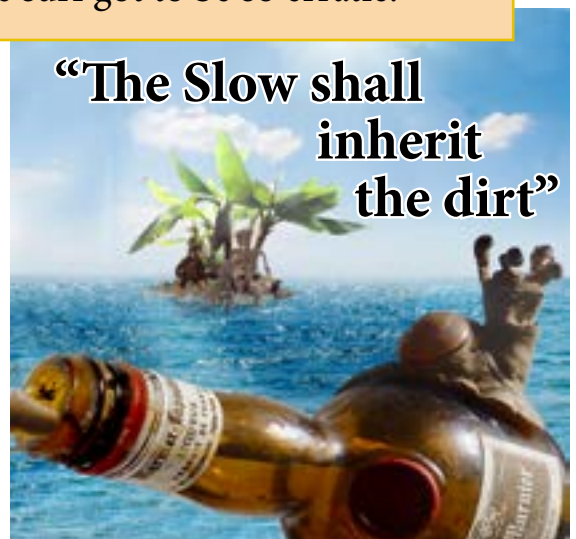


**"It's getting late and  
I'm ordering a pizza."**

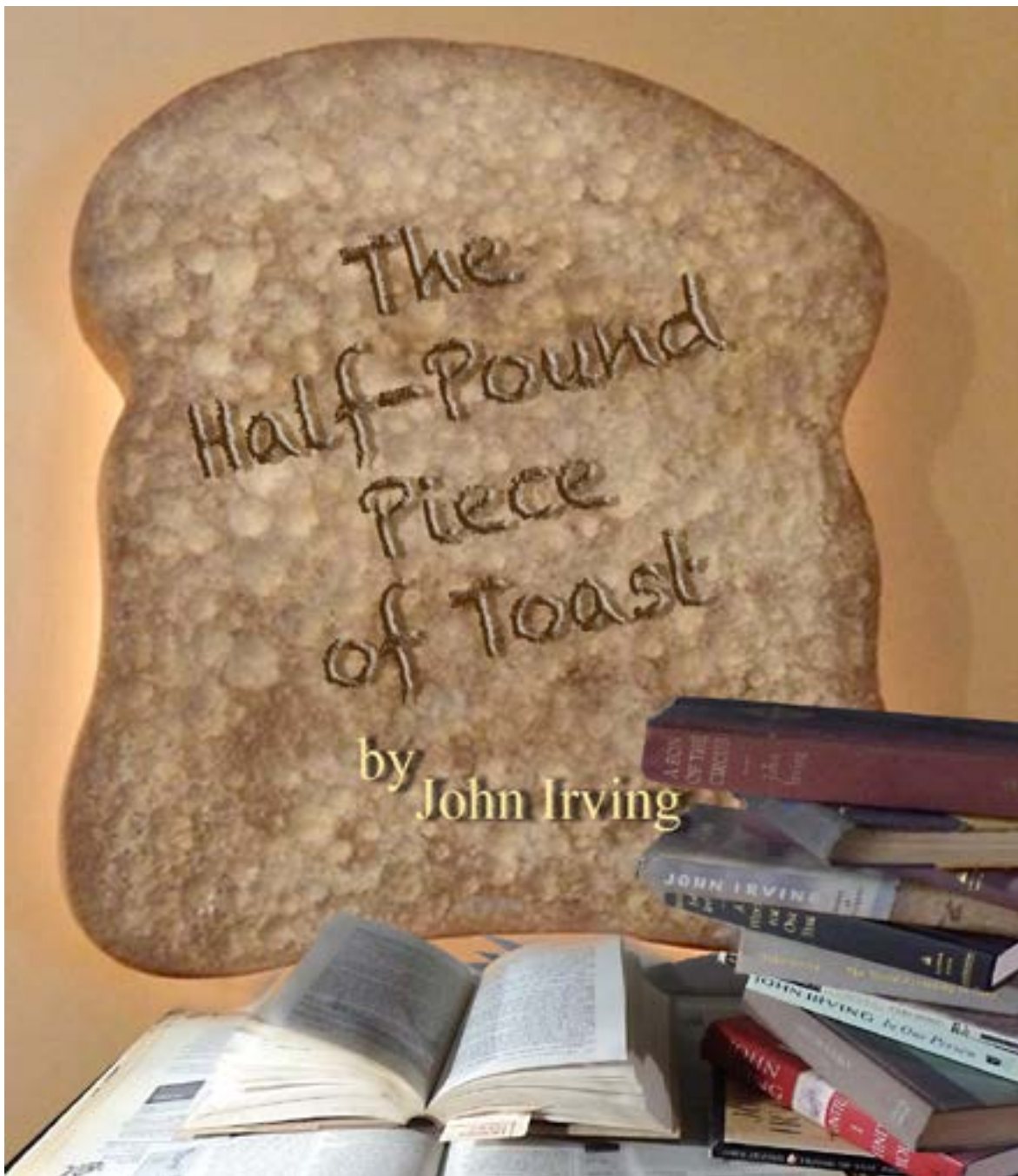
You want Anchovies? Better get  
the works; it takes a while by  
surface snail mail, specially since  
the surf got to be so erratic."



**"The Slow shall  
inherit  
the dirt"**







**The Half-Pound Piece of Toast**  
**an excerpt from:**  
***The Imaginary Girlfriend: A Memoir***  
**by John Irving**

My time at the academy was marked by two important transitions in Exeter wrestling under Coach Seabrooke. First, the wrestling room was moved from the basement of the old gymnasium to the upper reaches of the indoor track, which was called “the cage.” The new room, high in the rafters, was exceedingly warm; from the hard-packed dirt of the track below us, and from the wooden track that circumscribed the upper level, came the steady pounding of the runners. Once

our wrestling practice was underway, we wrestlers never heard the runners. The wrestling room was closed off from the wooden track by a heavy sliding door. Before and after practice, the door was open; during practice, the door was closed.

The other wrestling-related change that marked my time at Exeter was the mats themselves. I began wrestling on horsehair mats, which were covered with a filmy, flexible plastic; as a preventive measure against mat burns, this plastic sheeting was modestly effective, but—like the sheet on a bed—it loosened with activity. The loose folds were a cause of ankle injuries; also, the shock-absorbing abilities of those old horsehair mats were nonexistent



in comparison to the comfort of the new mats that arrived at Exeter in time to be installed in the new wrestling room.

The new mats were smooth on the surface, with no cover. When the mats were warm, you could drop an egg from knee height and the egg wouldn't break. (Whenever someone tried this and the egg broke, we said that the mat wasn't warm enough.) On a cold gym floor, the texture of the mat would radically change. Later, I kept a wrestling mat in my unheated Vermont barn; in midwinter the mat was as hard as a floor.

Most of our dual-meet matches were also held in the cage, but not in the wrestling room where we practiced. An L-shaped wooden parapet extended like an arm off the wooden track. From this advantage—and from a loop of the wooden track itself—as many as 200 or 300 spectators could look down upon a less-than-regulation-size basketball court, where we rolled out the mats. There was barely enough floor space left over for a dozen or more rows of bleacher seats; most of our fans were above us, on the wooden track and parapet. It was like wrestling at the bottom of a teacup; the surrounding crowd peered over the rim of the cup.

Where we wrestled was appropriately called “the pit.” The smell of dirt from the nearby track was strangely remindful of summer, although wrestling is a winter sport. What with the constant opening of the outside door, the pit was never a warm place; the mats, which were so warm and soft in the wrestling room, were cold and hard for the competition. And, when our wrestling meets coincided with track meets in the cage, the sound of the starting gun reverberated in the pit. I always wondered what the visiting wrestlers thought of the gunfire.

My first match in the pit was a learning experience. First-year wrestlers, or even second-year wrestlers, are not often starters on prep-school or high-school wrestling teams of any competitive quality. In New Hampshire, in the 1950s, wrestling—unlike baseball or basketball or hockey or skiing—was not something every kid grew up doing. There are certain illogical things to learn about any sport; wrestling, especially, does not come naturally. A double-

leg takedown is not like a head-on tackle in football. Wrestling is not about knocking a man down—it's about controlling him. To take a man down by his legs, you have to do more than knock his legs out from under him: you have to get your hips under your opponent, so that you can lift him off the mat before you put him down—this is only one example. Suffice it to say that a first-year wrestler is at a considerable disadvantage when wrestling anyone with experience—regardless of how physically strong or well-conditioned the first-year wrestler is.

I forget the exact combination of illness or injury or deaths-in-a-family (or all three) that led to my first match in the pit; as a first-year wrestler, I was quite content to practice wrestling with other first-year or second-year wrestlers. There was a “ladder” posted in the wrestling room, by weight class; in my first year, I would have been as low as fourth or fifth on the ladder at 133 pounds. But the varsity man was sick or hurt, and the junior-varsity man failed to make weight—and possibly the boy who was next-in-line had gone home for the weekend because his parents were divorcing. Who knows? For whatever reason, I was the best available body in the 133-pound class.

I was informed of this unwelcome news in the dining hall where I worked as a waiter at a faculty table; fortunately, I had not yet eaten my breakfast—I would have had to vomit it up. As it was, I was four pounds over the weight class and I ran for almost an hour on the wooden track of the indoor cage; I ran in a ski parka and other winter clothing. Then I skipped rope in the wrestling room for half an hour, wearing a rubber suit with a hooded sweatshirt over it. I was an eighth of a pound under 133 at the weigh-ins, where I had my first look at my opponent—Vincent Buonomano, a defending New England Champion from Mount Pleasant High School in Providence, Rhode Island.

Had we forfeited the weight class, we could not have done worse: a forfeit counts the same as a pin—six points. It was Coach Seabrooke's hope that I wouldn't be pinned. In those days, a loss by decision was only a three-point loss for the team, regardless of how lopsided the score of the individual match.

My goal, in other words, was to take a beating and lose the team only three points instead of six.

For the first 15 or 20 seconds, this goal seemed feasible; then I was taken down, to my back, and I spent the remainder of the period in a neck bridge—I had a strong neck. The choice was mine in the second period: on Coach Seabrooke's advice, I chose the top position. (Ted knew that I was barely surviving on the bottom.) But Buonomano reversed me immediately, and so I spent the better part of the second period fighting off my back, too. My only points were for escapes—unearned, because Buonomano let me go; he was guessing it might be easier to pin me directly following a takedown. One such takedown dropped me on my nose—both my hands were trapped, so that I couldn't break my fall. (It's true what they say about "seeing stars.")

When they stop a wrestling match to stop bleeding, there's no clock counting the injury time; this is because you can't fake bleeding. For other injuries, a wrestler is allowed no more than 90 seconds of injury time—accumulated in the course of the match. In this case, they weren't timing my nose bleed; when the trainer finished stuffing enough cotton up my nostrils to stanch the flow of blood, my dizziness had abated and I looked at the time remaining on the match clock—only 15 seconds! I had every confidence that I could stay off my back for another 15 seconds, and I told Ted Seabrooke so.

"It's only the second period," Seabrooke said.

I survived the 15 seconds but was pinned about midway into the third period—"With less than a minute to go," my mother lamentably told me.

The worst thing about being pinned in the pit was the lasting image of all those faces peering down at you. When you were winning, the fans were loud; when you were on your back, they were quiet, and their expressions were strangely incurious—as if they were already distancing themselves from your defeat.

I was never pinned in the pit again; the only other loss I remember there was by injury default—I broke my hand. When the trainer offered me the slop bucket—I needed to spit—I saw the orange rinds and a bloody towel in the bottom of the bucket, and I promptly fainted. Aside from that misfortune, and my first-ever match—with Mount Pleasant's Vincent Buonomano—I associated the pit with winning; my best matches were there. It was in the pit that I wrestled New England Champion Anthony Pieranunzi of East Providence High School to a 1-1 draw. I was not so lucky with Pieranunzi in the New England Championship tournament, where he beat me two years in a row; despite two undefeated dual-meet seasons, I never won a New England title.

My years at Exeter were the final years when the winner of the New England tournament won a truly All-New England title; 1961 was the last year that high schools and prep schools competed together in a year-end tournament—I was captain of the Exeter team that year. After that, there were separate private-school and public-school tournaments—a pity, I think, since high-school and prep-school wrestlers have much to learn from each other. But, by '61, the New England Interscholastic tournament, as it used to be called, had already grown too large.

I remember my last bus ride with the Exeter team, to East Providence—to the home mats of my nemesis, Anthony Pieranunzi. We'd checked our weight on the scales in the academy gym at about 5:00 in the morning; we were all under our respective weight classes—in some cases, barely. The bus left Exeter in darkness, which near Boston gave way to a dense winter fog; the snow, the sky, the trees, the road—all were shades of gray.

Our 121-pounder, Larry Palmer, was worried about his weight. He'd been only a quarter of a pound under at Exeter—the official weigh-ins were at East Providence. What if the scales were different? (They weren't supposed to be.) I'd been a half-pound under my 133-pound class; my mouth was dry, but I didn't dare drink any water—I was spitting in a paper cup. Larry was spitting in a cup, too. "Just don't eat," Coach Seabrooke told us. "Don't eat and don't drink—you're not going to gain weight on the bus."



Somewhere south of Boston, we stopped at a Howard Johnson's; this is what Larry Palmer remembers— I don't remember the Howard Johnson's because I didn't get off the bus. A few of our wrestlers were safely enough under their weight classes so that they could risk eating something; most of them at least got off the bus—to pee. I'd had nothing to eat or drink for about 36 hours; I knew I didn't dare to eat or drink anything—I knew I couldn't pee. Larry Palmer remembers eating "that fatal piece of toast."

Just the other day, we were remembering it together. "It was plain toast," Larry said. "No butter, no jam—I didn't even finish it."

"And nothing to drink?" I asked him. "Not a drop," Larry said.

(Lately, we're in the habit of getting together at least once a year. Larry Palmer is Professor of Law at Cornell Law School; one of his kids has just started wrestling.)

On the scales at East Providence, Palmer was a quarter-pound over 121. He'd been a sure bet to get as far as the semifinals, and maybe farther; his disqualification cost us valuable team points—as did my loss to East Providence's Pieranunzi, who was tougher at home than he was in the pit. In two years, Pieranunzi and I had wrestled four matches. I beat him once, we tied once, he beat me twice—both times in the tournament, where it counted most. All our matches were close, but that last time (in East Providence) Pieranunzi pinned me. Thus, the two times I was pinned at Exeter—my first match and my last—I was pinned by a New England Champion from Rhode Island. (Exeter failed to defend its New England team title in '61—our '60 team was arguably the best in Exeter history.)

Larry Palmer was stunned. He couldn't have eaten a half-pound piece of toast!

Coach Seabrooke was, as always, philosophic. "Don't blame yourself—you're probably just growing," Ted told him. Indeed, this proved to be the case. Larry Palmer was the Exeter team captain the following year, 1962, when he won the New England Class A title at 147 pounds.

More significant than his 26-pound jump from his former 121-pound class, Palmer had also grown six inches. It's clear to me now that Larry Palmer's famous piece of toast at Howard Johnson's didn't weigh half a pound. Larry's growth spurt doubtless began on the bus. We were so sorry for him when he didn't make weight that none of us looked closely enough at him; in addition to gaining a half-pound, Larry was probably two inches taller by the time he got to East Providence—we might have seen the difference, had we looked.



### Levi and John

Dear Readers, I rarely take breaks in my workday but when I do, I spend them with my office dog, Levi. The photo here was taken shortly after my assistant, Levi's owner, told me I've written more than 85,000 words in the third (and final) act of my novel-in-progress. That brings the word count in *Darkness as a Bride* to 221,264 words thus far. The manuscript has already surpassed my most recent novels, *In One Person* (~170,448 words) and *Avenue of Mysteries* (~182,713 words), in length. Levi and I weren't celebrating — I still have four or five more chapters to write. I've had dogs my whole life, but I find it difficult now that I live and work in an apartment building, in the middle of a busy city. (As I said, I rarely take breaks during the day.) It's a treat to have an office dog. Levi is a rescue from Texas; he and I both became Canadian citizens last year. — John

This story by **John Irving**  
and by other authors  
previously published in the  
Metaphysical Times can be found in the  
Stories, Essays and Poems at:  
[MetaphysicalTimes.com](http://MetaphysicalTimes.com)



# The Life and Diet of Jim Worms



by David S. Warren  
an excerpt from his novel  
**Natural Bone**



# The Life and Diet of Jim Worms

by David S. Warren

The Peckerwood village dogs always were waiting for dried-worm treats twenty minutes before Jim appeared at their gate to announce himself:

**“Hallo the House,  
Here be Jim Worms Freedman  
DeBeeman Washington,  
here to dig worms”.**

Jim’s hands and face were brown and veined like oak leaves in fall; and he was over six feet tall ... which made him seem like a friendly tree when he stooped to talk with a common five- foot yeoman of those days.

In every season and all weather Jim wore several layers of oil-stained sail cloth sewed with leather cord, and a tri-corner hat that he removed only in greeting, when crawling through hollow trees to gather honey, or as a pillow wherever he lay himself down at night.

Everywhere that Jim went on his rounds he carried a long duffle bag across his back, swinging from one hand, or perfectly balanced and stiff as a log atop his padded hat.

And if you asked Jim what all was in that log of a duffel bag, he would say it was his “whole kaboodle,” but he wasn’t particularly secretive about it, his kaboodle was all he owned but the clothes he had on, and consisted first of all of a three-foot length of stove pipe, with a damper and cap and a hinged door. This was his stove.

Inside the stove pipe, when he was on the road and not using it for cooking or for smoking bees, was a hook-billed knife in a pouch, another pouch containing his flint and steel, another of seeds, one of cords, lines, and hooks, and beside all that, short-handled hoe and a pair of sticks, one of them notched, which he would pound into the ground with his hoe then rub up and down the notches with the other stick at great speed to drive worms, particularly the largest ones, right out of the ground. Farm boys watched, admired, and attempted this vibrating trick, but with little success.

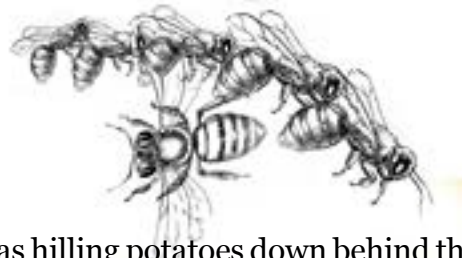
And when boys asked Jim Worms why he carried his whole KABOODLE with him all the time, he would say it was to be sure he was always ready to up and follow a SIGN.

And if one proceeded to ask him what SIGN he was looking for, he would say he didn’t know now but he would know a Sign when he saw it.

In the meantime, and for the privilege of digging worms behind outhouses, Jim offered to hoe corn, braid rope, birth a calf, or just about whatever he could do to assist the homestead; kindly declining invitations to come inside, saying he would be always hitting his head on the ceiling beams and, anyway, in there, he wouldn’t be able to see the SIGNS.

Jim accepted no money or back-door meal invitations, only a few vegetables when he tended gardens, and people assumed that he survived mostly on fish he caught with the worms he dug, and Jim DID still very occasionally use the worms to catch fish, but in his life at sea he had grown sympathetic to the fish and more and more impressed by their clear intelligence so he had turned more and more to just eating the worms, properly prepared of course, fried or smoked and dried .... and neither was he unsympathetic to the worms: he would cut the larger ones in half when he gathered them and leave one half behind, firmly believing that the remaining half would renew itself, so he could spare the worm and eat it too.

All in all, he required nothing more to maintain his vigor and natural charm; he was happy, hopeful, and ready to go when he saw the SIGN.



Jim was hilling potatoes down behind the rectory when Aunt Patty called from the Reverend and Mrs. Davies’ kitchen window:

“Oh Jim Worms: somethin’ terrble ‘as happened! The Reberend’s horse and buggy came home from Rose Hollow ‘thout ‘im this mornin’ an Mrs. Davies is strick stiff an dumb! Run down to the church, you Jim Worms, then

come back and drive the Reverend's buggy out to Rose Hollow! Tell Noah Davies something terrible 'as 'appened. Oh quick, Jim Worms! The Reverend is Banished!"

Jim ran down and up into the church where the congregation waited, twisting in the pews.

"De Rebrend is BANISHED!" shouted Jim Worms from the back of the church. The people turned, shocked in their seats. What? Banished? But Jim was gone.

He ran back to the rectory where the Reverend's horse and two-wheeled buggy had returned. On the seat beside where the driver would be: a pie bleeding cherries, and on the floor of the buggy, a pedal grindstone - both of which the pastor Davies had placed there himself, on his way to Rose Hollow, where his son Noah had been dwelling. Now everything was in doubt and chaos, and a lot of that confusion was due to the understandable misunderstanding as to the perceived alarm that somehow, the revered had been banished, or that Jim Worms had been possessed by some satanic spirit and was, cursing the pastor to Hell.

As yet unaware of that, Jim climbed up beside the cherry pie, and shook the reins, urging the reverend's horse down past the church, headed for Rose Hollow .... soon thereafter pursued by several members of the shocked congregation.

Well before he turned off the post road and up into Rose Hollow, Jim could see a cloud sanding over where Rose Cottage should be.

But when he got there, not much was left of Rose Cottage except the smouldering timbers and a club of smoke leaning west.

Jim had been unaware of the Peckerwood pursuers; but then the wind picked up and he heard the shouts and wagon clatter behind him.

**The club of smoke leaned further,  
then detached itself and  
moved off to the West....  
like a sign.**

The posse pursued Jim no further than Rose Hollow and Jim made many miles into the wild before evening when he released the horse to graze. Unfortunately, he didn't hobble the horse and after very little grazing she headed straight back to Peckerwood.

Jim ate the cherry pie.

The next morning, and from then on, he pulled, and occasionally even carried, the wagon.

**"Get on up,  
you Debil Jim!"**

he called out,  
whenever it was needed.



## **David Warren**

is co-editor of *Metaphysical Times*, is the author of *Dog's Plot - The Book of William*. He has as well published: *The World According to Two Feathers* and *Natural Bone*, both of which were published many years ago and both of which are getting new stories and radical revisions. "The life and Diet of Jim Worms" is a new piece of *Natural Bone*.

Writing by **David S. Warren**  
and by other authors previously published  
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# My Father the Clamcake

by Franklin Crawford

I don't remember my first solid food. I remember my baby bottles, how they were gathered up one day and thrown out. It traumatized me. A pack of dogs knocked over the garbage cans and the bottles, my lifelines, were strewn all over the lawn. I shrieked.

From that point on, I was not to suck on a rubber-nibbed bottle, but to take my nourishment from a glass or at table with the family. I'm sure Mom cut my dinner meat into bits for me and I must've been trained to use a fork, but I was bottle-weaned, not breast fed, and the bottle was my solace. The rubber nipple was the perfect way to chew and drink at the same time.

You'd think one's first solid food would be a memorable thing. I don't recall any of my first meals. Later, I do recall trying to hide pieces of liver in my mashed potatoes because I was not as adept as my brother at slipping it to the dog. I was told to eat it all and my brother was no helper. Having discarded his foul meat, he told me I was a coward and that "John Wayne would eat his liver."

As I understand now, it was John Wayne's liver that eventually did him in. I sat there alone and choked it all down.

My mother was incredibly patient preparing food. No one could make a better glass of chocolate milk and no one could take longer doing it. Her peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were composed



with great care and she buttered the bread before applying the nut and berry smack. I remember that as being the best chewing food, although baloney sandwiches were a close second.

Slices of meat right out of the package or, rarely, from the deli, were a delight. Certain foods excited me and I would dance a little baloney jig when the food hit my gut. I tried explaining the baloney dance to my immediate family but they didn't get it. Aunt Terry, who was Italian, totally understood the baloney dance.

"Oh I get it! The food makes you so happy you want to dance!"

Yes! Someone understood. And not just anybody: Aunt Terry made the best eggplant parmesan ever.

I still missed the bottle. I would rediscover them in another form soon enough, taking sip-sips from Daddy's Schaeffer Party Bottles. Ah! To drink from a bottle like Dad! That's the ticket. And there was a bonus to this beverage not to be found in chocolate milk. Beer made the world softer, fuzzier

and dreamy. That was food, dammit! After a few sips I was swaddled in crib memories and the colorful bird mobile hovered above me, just out of reach, the vibrant reds, yellows and blues made me drool and I wanted to suckle them but they were always out of reach. Eating colors was a problem for my brother. I would sometimes chew on his painstakingly painted model cars. He cuffed, me once, for ruining his work: Twice for being stupid enough to eat poison.

But let us move onto later times when the whole house cleared out whenever Dad got it into him to make a specialty of his called "clamcakes." It was always on a Saturday, the day Mom listened to the Texaco Opera Broadcast, but even she disappeared once Dad showed up with a bushel of "chowders" – big bivalves he bought direct from clam diggers down by the docks. He was happy on those days. No one else was, and I guess I felt sorry for him because I stayed to watch him shuck dozens of clams into a big pot. I must've been about ten years old. Dad could shuck with the best of 'm and I watched his competent hands crack, scrape and disgorge the clam bodies. They plopped into the big pot that slowly filled with stuff I didn't know much about.

He fed the clam bodies into the spout of a hand-cranked meat grinder, clamped to the counter. The slurpy sound is with me still, a perversely succulent noise that reminded me of the dog licking his genitals. Dad moved with an economy of motion gained from his work as a master carpenter. His motions were a study in efficiency and purpose. I learned a lot watching him. I never learned a damn thing about carpentry – or making clamcakes for that matter. But I loved to see him in action.

I didn't care for seafood as a kid, which is a damned shame because we lived on the Great South Bay and could have all we wanted. Seafood tasted like poop to me. Although, for absolute food horror, liver remained solid-food enemy number one. What I really craved was sugar. I wanted sugar in a bottle. Coca-Cola helped a lot. I drank a lot of soda and was occasionally invited for sip-sips of beer. The soda was sweet; the beer was bitter. But beer was in a bottle and there was that dreamy reward I would never forget.

Having filled a second pot with gooey clam bits, Dad rubbed his hands together excitedly. Here his genius for using every seasoning on the shelf revealed itself. I used to remember the ingredients, but I don't

any more. The only thing that didn't go into the clamcake batter, it seemed, was more clams. Dad tossed in this and that, worked his secret recipe into a batter with his hands, his thick forearms deep in the pot, making more squeamish sounds.

"This is good stuff, Fritz," he'd say, using my nickname at the time. To think he fought in a war against Germany and gave me that handle is a bit of a wonder still. "This is gonna make a man out of you. You can't beat my clamcakes. Best damned food ever."

The recipe included a generous amount of beer. I got to drain the bottle.

What happened next? The whole lot was dumped into as many baking pans and dishes as we had. The boats of clammy freight were smothered in seasoned bread crumbs and shoveled into the oven.

Then we waited ... and waited.

How long did I sit there in the dimly lit kitchen on a summer afternoon when there were so many other things to be doing? Forever. I was the only one who braved the whole thing. My brother took off, my sister was gone somewhere. Mom was next door drinking Four Roses with the neighbor, Annie Mae, listening to her extensive collection of 45s, blues, R&B, soul. I studied the second hand on the clock, each tick an event. The house filled with the redolent odor of baking clams. This was not like any picnic I ever knew. This was personal. Dad was making loaves of clams, the way you bake bread. It took hours, but there was great expectation in that hot kitchen air choked with shellfish odors.

I felt much older by the time the first batch was done. The moment came to sample the goods. Dad blew hot steam off a hunk on the very first forkful. He took a nibble, then a bite. He face expressed something as close to joy as I'd ever seen.

**"Deee-licious!" he announced.**

**"Your turn, Fritz!"**

I obeyed. Dad served me a lump. I opened my mouth, closed my eyes. Jesus in pajamas was it ever awful! But I didn't gag. I couldn't do that in front of my father, not on this day of days, not at that hallowed hour.

"Ain't it the best stuff ever?" Dad said. "We got



enough for two, three days!"

I nodded, swallowing hard. It was good, Dad. The best ever. My eyes watered. I asked for some sip-sips and got my own bottle! Proof that I was a son worthy of Dad's supreme culinary achievement: Clamcakes! Clamcakes for the rest of our lives!

Of course I had to eat them with him, because nobody else would – a huge insult to my father who brooded over his clamcake meals, hot or cold, washed down with beer out in his shop, a sullen repast.

"This family, all of 'em with their heads in the air, not a one knowing a good thing when you stick it under their noses. To hell with 'm."

Did that include me? I hoped not, because I sensed his hurt and I sat with him and I sacrificed myself to his gift of cold clamcakes.

If I had thoughts that maybe I'd have more fun outside with the dog, they were dispelled when Dad, tipping back the remains of a bottle, belched, then said: "Fritzie, toss this in the barrel and get me another, would ya?"

I took the empty to the big steel drum, dropped it, walked to the old Frigidaire.

"While you're at it, get one for yourself. We're gonna have ourselves a meal."

Yes! To hell with the rest of them! We sat, we ate, we drank. With enough salt and enough beer, the clamcakes tasted of sweat, rusty nails, sawdust, piss and tears. It was the very stuff of my father himself and I ate him and I drank him and I loved him.

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in the Stories, Essays and Poems at:  
MetaphysicalTimes.com

Helium Dogs  
And Cranium flies  
Entertain the crew who  
Visit the infirmary zoo  
Where mercury drips  
Down green Bellevue walls  
And pools on cool linoleum halls  
While some loud swish in  
Room Eighteen  
Vents a most peculiar spleen  
To do with Swedish Fish  
Wrapped in canary  
yellow hospital socks  
Their favorite dish she says to  
Claude –Cumulus Claude  
who is not there:  
Their favorite dish is a lichen broth  
Simmered in a pot of rocks  
Topped with locks of baby hair.

*Helium Dogs*  
by Franklin Crawford



**Don Pawberlone & Franklin**



## BLOOD ON THE DINING ROOM FLOOR

An excerpt from the novel in progress

### SELF-PORTRAIT IN A HAT

by Rhian Ellis

Much of the dinner conversation concerned the Salon D'Automne, which was to happen the next evening. Each of the artists had paintings in it except for Picasso, who didn't like to show. "It's crass and uncivilized," he said. "Showing paintings as if they're cows at an auction. But worse, because the public has no idea what it's looking at."

The dark-bearded man next to me, whose name, I learned, was Jorge Arias- Mendez,

laughed loudly. He was a painter from South America, Chile I think, and he specialized in portraits. He had done one of Leo and had made him look considerably more dashing than he actually was, which made him quite a popular guest at the Steins'. "Pablo," he said. "Why do you think artists are superior to farmers?"

"Of course artists are superior to farmers!"

A journalist named Andre Trout looked amused at this. He chuckled and said, "If there were no art shows, do you think there

#### A NOTE TO THE READER

Although it is inspired by real people and events, this novel is a fantasy—a fantastical re-imagining of Gertrude's and Alice's lives as amateur sleuths. In reality they were both fans of crime fiction and spent many evenings reading paperback mysteries by the fire. Dashiell Hammett was a particular favorite.



would be artists? No one would think about art at all. And someone has to show at them!" Trout wrote for *L'Arte Maintenant*, which was apparently a radical and influential paper, though I had never heard of it. He had a wispy beard and spectacles that slid down so far his nose it made one nervous that they would slide off his face altogether and splash into his soup. His pale eyes moved constantly around the room. His mouth was fixed in a mocking half-smile, but when he spoke he was perfectly polite. I imagined his mother was quite proud of him. She certainly did not read his paper.

This conversation went on for a bit. I didn't find it an interesting one at all. I sipped my soup which was hot and had lots of fish in it. It was among the most delicious things I had ever eaten. I had to take little breaks and delicately pat my lips with my napkin so it wouldn't appear that I was a starving person or a glutton. Several of the party-goers had been that afternoon to visit a writer named Jarry, who was ill. Now this talk intrigued me. "He coughed just like a cat with a bone in its throat," said Picasso. "It didn't matter, he still insisted we practice shooting his gun in the street behind his house. The neighbors weren't pleased! Oh, I would love a revolver like that. Do you know that to save space, his landlord divided Jarry's apartment horizontally? The ceiling is barely five feet high! The landlord said that Jarry wasn't using all the space over his head, so why not? It's all fine for Jarry, the footstool, but it's giving his visitors a permanent stoop."

After a bit, the conversation turned to the San Francisco earthquake. I mentioned that Helen and I were there when it happened. Everyone was quite curious about it and so we were briefly the centers of attention. People wanted to know what it felt like.

An American woman, a collector named Catherine Fox, had many questions. Did the earthquake feel like being on the deck of a ship? Or was the shaking faster than that? Perhaps like being shaken in a box? Did they really blow up people's houses in order to keep other houses from burning? Did soldiers really shoot people for no reason?

Miss Fox had black hair with two gray streaks rising up from her temples. She was probably in her forties but she had the careless physicality of a school girl. Her elbows were everywhere.

Helen told the story of her house exploding and I told mine of coming across it afterwards. Neither of us mentioned Mosier because it seemed uncouth and a bit gruesome for dinner table talk.

"Oh, my!" said Miss Fox. "I think I should have quite enjoyed that. Things can be so dull in Paris. No tornadoes or earthquakes, just endless parties."

She and Gertrude had known each other since they both studied psychology under William James, the only two women to do so at that time. I envied her. Her dress was stunningly beautiful, a shimmering red silk that showed a discomfiting amount of décolletage. The way the fabric draped and fell made me know, almost at first glance, that it was a Callot Soeurs frock. I had, and still do, a very good eye for clothing. It wasn't a Delphos gown, for which I was grateful. Clearly Helen and I had indeed chosen the most fashionable dressmakers.

Eventually the conversation moved on, which relieved me, because I wanted very much to continue eating. After the fish soup was a selection of charcuterie, and then came a large

steaming dish of Riz Valenciennne, which was a kind of Spanish rice with all sorts of interesting things in it such as artichokes and mussels. Gertrude announced that it was Fernande's recipe, but Fernande paid no attention and just stirred her rice unhappily. Was she bored sitting next to me?

Large jugs of wine were passed non-stop up and down the table. I could never take much wine without ending up standing on a table somewhere, making grand announcements, so I just sipped from my glass and noticed that Gertrude drank very little, too. That couldn't be said for most of the rest of the table. By the time the Riz Valenciennne was finished, the journalist Andre Trout seemed to be having trouble keeping his head out of his plate and the beautiful young man sitting next to him was weeping openly. One of the older men, a gallery owner I believe, had turned quite red. Helen was deep in conversation with Jorge Arias-Mendez. He certainly was a handsome devil. Too young, I would have thought, for Helen, though. He couldn't have been more than twenty-five. Yet he was leaning awfully close to her. Whatever could they be talking about?

I turned to Fernande and asked her if it was true she gave French lessons.

"Why, yes," she said. She turned and looked at me with her large gray eyes. "Are you the person who wishes lessons?"

"I am. My French tutor used to tell me that my vocabulary was very good but that my accent was atrocious."

"That is true, it is, it is terrible," said Fernande. "I charge 10 francs for a lesson." "Goodness," I said. "That is quite a lot."

"Is it? Well, how about 1 franc?"

Later I would discover that Fernande's need for money was an annoyance and distraction to Picasso, or at least Gertrude thought so. Giving Fernande a job would let Picasso have more time to work.

"I am forever pawning earrings," said Fernande sadly.

Was it at that moment that people began looking upward? I remember hearing a sound, a scratching as if an animal were scampering across the roof of the atelier. A few people stopped talking to listen, but started again in the following silence. Then, across from me, I saw Gertrude's white throat as she looked upward toward the skylights, and then I heard the thumps as well.

"Who is up there?" asked Leo, dropping his napkin and standing up.

What happened next had all the power of a bomb discharging. First sharp crack or bang, like a gunshot, and then a magnificent shattering of glass exploded into the room from above. Brilliant shards flew through the air. And then something – someone – plummeted downward directly onto the dining table, right into the empty dishes of rice and the crocks of flowers and the wine jugs. The noise of smashing and screaming and people falling over their own chairs was terrific.

I was certain it was an earthquake.

And I still remember seeing the person fall through the air as if in a film running slowly, the arms reaching up, the coat catching air and billowing outward.

Then the body was there on the floor amid the wreckage of the table – one could see now that the table had been improvised from boards



laid across wooden trestles or sawhorses, then covered beautifully with the tablecloths – and now splashed with wine and speckled with rice. It was a man, an ordinary-looking man with brown hair and a mustache but no beard and a rather large nose. His blue eyes were wide open but he appeared quite dead. His face was dark and bluish and his arms and legs were spread wide, like a starfish.

People were shrieking and not only the ladies, I wish to point out.

Gertrude was the first to move. She stepped over the wreckage, lifting her skirt out of the pool of wine and food, and knelt down next to the man. She put her fingers on his neck, then put her ear close to his mouth.

"Miss Stein has been to medical school," I heard someone say, although that was only somewhat true.

Everyone watched as she shut the man's eyes with a quick movement and stood up again. "Yes, I'm afraid he's dead. I suppose he was a cat burglar. Very unfortunate." There was an uncomfortable chuckle. Of course! A cat burglar! Who else would be up on the roof so late in the evening? But then Helen started screaming.

"Oh, my God! My God!"

She put her hands over her mouth as if to stop herself from screaming, her eyes wide and horrified. "It's Mosier!" she cried. "It's Mosier!"

Her screaming went on and on.



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# Little Round Things

by  
**Georgia E Warren**  
(Greg Cunningham's sister)

## It's all my brother Greg's fault.

Greg would not play with me when his friends were visiting. When nobody was around we'd play cowboys. He taught me how to do a quick draw with a cap gun. He pushed me in the tire swing that hung from a big old Elm tree in our front yard.

My other brother Freddy, however, would drink tea with me and my dolls, even if there were no treats, and even if there were no cups. Greg would only do that if there was **real** cake or cookies.

He was fourteen, I was four and a half. When his friends were around I was "just a baby," "the kid" or "crybaby."

Greg was a champion at the game of marbles and had some beautiful colored ones, some that looked like cat's eyes, and a larger, white one called "the shooter." The boys would sit on our cement back-porch playing marbles for hours. Usually it would end when Greg owned all the marbles or my mother invited all of them in for lunch. Greg would give the other boys back enough marbles so they would come back to play again. It may have been my mother's macaroni and cheese lunches that brought them to our house.

The game of marbles looked like a lot of fun to a precocious four and a half year old girl. The boys were all having fun, telling fourteen-year-old-boy jokes and laughing.

I still distinctly remember this short conversation I had with Greg on a particularly nice summer day, probably in 1950.

"I want to play with you guys."

"No, go away!" he said. "You couldn't play. There are rules to marbles and you're stupid."

"They're all different colors. They're pretty. Which one's your favorite?"

He pointed at the large white shooter marble.  
"There, now get lost."

"Can I just touch it? Please?" (I think I made a whiny sound, I did really good whiny sounds when I wanted my way.)

"You can touch it if you promise to go away."

"Okee dokee"

**I picked it up and swallowed it.**

**"You little bitch"** he said in his most grown-up fourteen-year-old voice

He ran off yelling - "The Kid swallowed my **shooter**."

Our mother was horrified that I might die from swallowing an over-sized marble. What if it didn't "come through?" What if it blocked whatever marbles could block inside her "baby girl."

**For three days – – a whole life time to her "little baby girl" – – I had to do poo in a metal bucket without a seat on it.**

I took great gulps of Fletcher's Castoria. I can still taste it just by hearing, saying or remembering the name "Castoria". I continued to be an annoyance to my siblings when I made up a song that went like this: ***"I have a ring around my bummy and it isn't very funny, if you want to see what I poo in go right into the kitchen."***



My father thought the song was funny and encouraged me to sing it in front of his friend Tony (a co-worker we all called "Uncle Tony"). I suspect my brother Freddy helped me with the lyrics.

My poor, dear, loving, mother went diligently through my poo several times a day, looking for the large, white, marble. She was wonderful to me. I got great hugs. She told me how precious I was. She said "I don't know what I would do if something happens to you." I didn't understand "something happens" meant I died. She worried that if it didn't come out soon, we would have to go to a hospital. That of course would be just another great adventure to a four and a half year old girl.

Day three came and so did the plop sound of the shooter marble in the metal bucket.

As soon as that marble hit the bucket my loving, sweet mother changed. I swear she grew to be ten feet tall and her voice louder and angrier than any monster in my fairytale books.

**"DON'T YOU EVER, I MEAN EVER, PUT LITTLE ROUND THINGS IN YOUR MOUTH AGAIN OR YOU WILL HAVE MORE THAN A RING AROUND YOUR BUMMY. I WILL SPANK YOUR LITTLE BUMMY UNTIL IT IS BRIGHT RED.**

I was immediately transformed into a good little girl. I believed she would become a monster like that again if I ever put any little round thing in my mouth or disobeyed in any way.

**From then on I never put any round things in my mouth. Never a marble, never any peas, cherry tomatoes, grapes, olives, or blueberries. Not even sort of round food like beans and boiled eggs. Colored Easter eggs lost their magic at our house ever after.**

### **No round food.**

Nobody said anything about the fact that I would not eat round food. I am sure they thought I would grow out of it.

I did not start eating peas until I was *sixty-eight years old*. I still cut a cherry tomato in two pieces before it touches my mouth..

I haven't quite made it to grapes or boiled eggs yet.



### **Wofie and Georgia**

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Writing by **Georgia Warren** and by other authors previously published in the Metaphysical Times can be found in the Stories, Essays and Poems at: [MetaphysicalTimes.com](http://MetaphysicalTimes.com)



# Dull Ny

A purple eggplant is carved into a face. The top of the eggplant forms the forehead and upper part of the face. A green stem is at the top. A red, carved piece is on the left side of the face. The mouth is wide open, revealing a cavity filled with various candies, including orange, yellow, and white ones. The eggplant is mounted on a dark wooden stick. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

# Thinger

by Gabriel Orgrease

## PRELUDE

When I was raised up I had no clue what an eggplant was. We never ate them. We never talked about them. It was in my twenties when I first came across a recipe for eggplant. It was a Zen macrobiotic cookbook and the recipe said to carve out the inside of an eggplant, pack it full of rock salt tight and firm, and then bury it in the ground. The recipe abruptly stopped at that point. The remainder of the page was blank. There were no directions to subsequently take the eggplant out of the ground. No indication as to anyone who may want to eat the eggplant. Nor any culinary comment as to how an eggplant takes on the flavor of the earth. This recipe forever since made me excruciatingly curious about eggplant. But I am also curious about textual use of dialect. Dialect is nowadays out of fashion and considered unmodern for many cultural reasons. Mostly reasons to do with the ear of the reader not being accustomed to the utterances of the mouth that the author imagines. Readers have become accustomed to not stress their brain cells when they read. Dialect tends to highlight the aura of the language and obfuscate the intent of the sentence to communicate. Like a thumb covered with thumbtacks. It is like too many flowery adjectives, or stuffing one's nose, mouth, ears and arse with crushed garlic. It can be overwhelming, or fun, depending on proclivities. Worse yet, dialect distorted through the vocalization of a ventriloquist missing teeth and can't hear so well in a conversation, halfway into their own conversation, a bit daft with age, and sexual exhaustion. So, the post-modern context is to present a story in dialect that skips over the burlesque way off into farce. Dull Ny Thinger should read like one of those internet challenges where only the top one percent of intelligent readers can read the text upside down and in a bastardized Anglo Saxon script. Good luck!

## Dull Ny Thinger

"Hey, sonny doy, dull ny thinger."

"Granpa, no."

"I'm not yer Granda ya little tord. Now dull ny thinger."

Aubergine Bawcutt, the talking eggplant, is the infamous Catskill ventriloquist Lorne Surlingham's most famous dummy. Which is not saying a whole lot for dummies or back alley ventriloquists. A fat purple eggplant poked onto the top end of a broomstick, fastened with brass thumbtacks -- white eyes of radish slices with red peel rings, a petite carrot nose and a thin white-green slice for a mouth. The Chef's Dummy they used to call her in the good old days on the underground circuit. A sort of Ubu Roi take-off in the vegetable and janitorial kingdom that never translated well to television but was a backstage hit at a thousand and twenty-three catered birthday parties.

"Oh man, grandpa, do you really have to do that? It isn't funny any more."

"Dunny in Catskills, dunny in Dooklyn."

"Yeah, well, when I was seven it was funny, Grandpa. Now it is not so funny."

"Get id it kid. I'm not yer Granda. Now, dull ny thinger ahore I sdit at you."

"When are you going to open your presents?"

"Huenor ne kid. It's the dunny's dirthday. Dull ny thinger. Hurry."

"Ok. Ok, Aubergine. Let me pull your finger."

"Hooytunndhadlidderoodhuddlaaa."

"You can't pronounce your Ps anymore?"

"Tell it to the dunny's dutt kiddo."

"Yes, but you are missing a lot of consonants."

"I denounce ny Ds just dine ya studid little tord snart az," says Lorne without moving his old gray lips very much at all.

"So look, Grandpa, I have to do this oral history project for my class."

“Ut ya anna dother ne doyer oral dentistee?”

“What?”

“Ya eder see an eggdlant id teeth ahore?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I don’t do dentists any ore. Too corny. Dey all out too easy all on the loor. Get sted on id the doots.”

“I don’t understand half what you are saying, Aubergine.”

“Da corn halls outa ny outh onto da cardet an get stedded on dy deedle alkin in an out aud the dentist auddice.”

“You mean corn teeth fall out of your mouth?”

“Yah.”

“Why are we talking about dentists?”

“Ya sed ya ant an oral dentistee.”

“History, Grandpa, history. An oral history, not oral dentistry.”

“Oh. I think tha ole nan needs a new dattery in his hearin’ aid,” says Aubergine.

“It isn’t so bad, Aubergine. I’m more concerned about his lips.”

“I can still do the dund and ginde ya little tord.”

“Ah, you keep missing the B as well as the M. How do you expect anyone to understand what you are projecting?”

“He don’t natter. He dust the dunny. I use hin or da arns and thingers. Dats all.”

“I think it works better when you have your dentures in your mouth.”

“You nean you ould like to hear ne talk like this ith ny nouth dull ud rasdderries and celery stickin out ud ny nose?”

“Oh, well. Serious, Grandpa. I need to tape record our conversation and ask some questions about our family history.”

“It uz long long ago en I as just a little iddy diddy aedy eggdlant sittin in a sunny dield nindin I own dizziness en dis hayseed darner cun dy ith his donkey and dlucked nee outa da heild and thru ne into a dushel dasket...”

“Not that, not the history of a baby eggplant. I mean about the history of our family.”

“Oh,” Aubergine wipes her sweaty brow with an old man’s hand, “Ut ya anna kno?”

Well, for starters, how did you meet Grandma?”

“Coney Island, nineteen didy three. I et her en she auz the talkin’ cantaloude. Oy, auz she goot. One hell o’ a juicy elon she auz. I knu right then I gotta’ do sonthin’ dretty dast adout that.”

“Her dummies name was Melody Melons?”

“Yeah, she had elons all right. That auz a long tine ago. I dixed that en I narried her.”

“I don’t remember hearing about a hybrid ventriloquist act between eggplant and a cantaloupe?”

“No, no, the dunny here id the hair narried her and the talkin’ nelon retired.”

“And you went to work for the Transit Authority?”

“The dunny here urked or the dus condany. I ent onto the Roscoe Dinner in the Catskills.”

“And that was the high point of Aubergine’s career.”

“No, no, the high doint au ny career auz at Ite Nountain in New Hanshire.”

“Your honeymoon?”

“The dunnies honeynoon. Yeah.”

“And that is where Uncle Paul was conceived?”

“Yeah, the eledation and thin air naked the nelons hot.”

“And then there was, let’s see... Aunt Mary, Uncle Philip, Uncle Joe... Aunt Phyllis, Aunt Rosemary, Aunt Claris, and then my dad... Uncle Moe, Uncle Charles, Uncle Ernie, uh, Aunt Shirley, Aunt Mollie, have I got them all... oh yeah, Uncle Tom?”

“It auz a lotta urk, I’ll tell ya. It auz a lotta urk.”

“I don’t think half as much as what Grandma had to put up with.”

“Udoo ya nean dy that?”

“You realize you kept her pregnant solid for like eleven years of her adult life?”

“The dunny hadda do sunthin. Nelody Nelons auz just too good an act.”



“So, let me get this right. You married Grandma Dolores because she had a better ventriloquist act with her talking cantaloupe, Melody Melons, and you were worried she would make your eggplant act look rotten?”

“There auz extenuating circunstances, and a dew side denedits, but yeah, it was sort ud like that.”

“You, I mean, Grandpa was not called up for Korea?”

“The dunny had a slight dedect and they oodnot take hin into the arned dorces.”

“Grandpa had a medical deferral?”

“Yeah.”

“I didn’t know that. What was it for?”

“The dunny had a dad stutter and they thought he auz stuwdid cause he ket talkin to hizeld.”

“Oh. I didn’t know you, I mean, Grandpa had a stutter.”

“He don’t”

“No?”

“The dunny had to do sonthin. His act auz not the dest around and the condetition was tough dack then.”

“The recruitin sargeant caught ny act in Canarsie on night and a rune-or got started adout talkin ridles an dig guns an the rest auz history... and daydies, a lot of cryin daydies and changin diaders so the dunny ent on the road id ny act.”

“Is that when she went mute?”

“You nean yer Grandna Dolores?”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“When did she go mute?”

“Ater your Uncle Tom auz dorn in sixty-six.”

“Do you know what caused it? Was it a medical condition?”

“It auz sonthin the dunny said on the day au his dirthday that year.”

“She went mute because of something you... I mean, Grandpa said?”

“I don’t think she ent nute.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think she just decided to stod talkin.”

“For thirty-five years, to the day, she has not said anything on purpose?”

“Yeah.”

“I find this very difficult to believe.”

“Hae you aer heard her say a thin?”

“No. I guess she finally stopped talking something like ten years before I was born.”

“Her act auz aldays deter. I think she just decided to get dack at the dunny as a nine.”

“Does it bother you, I mean, is it a problem she does not talk?”

“It don’t datter, it says on the cost od datterys or da hearin aid.”



**Kathy. Gabriel and Sprout**

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## Eating With the Ancestors - - Curds and Whey

by Nancy Vieira Couto

A while back our neighbors offered us a couple of bottles of raw milk. Because of complicated laws regulating the sale of raw milk in New York State, consumers who want to buy unpasteurized milk on a regular basis sometimes work around the regulations by joining a buying club or purchasing shares in a herd--essentially subscribing to local milk deliveries on a regular basis. Our neighbors were going on vacation, but the milk they had subscribed to was coming anyway. All we had to do was pick it up and of course wash out the bottles afterwards.

Those milk bottles, with a generous amount of cream at the top, reminded me of the milk of my childhood, but I should say right from the start that milk and I have always had a difficult relationship. I remember that we had three

kinds of milk in our tenement: chocolate milk, coffee milk, and plain milk. Chocolate milk had some sort of cocoa powder stirred into it, while coffee milk was made with Silmo Coffee Syrup, a long-gone product that was once a staple in the New Bedford area. Of the three, plain milk was the one I liked the least, although it was the simplest to prepare. My mother would remove the orange cellophane from the top of the milk bottle, rinse the top of the cardboard cap, and give the bottle a vigorous shake. Then she would remove the cap, pour some milk into a saucepan, and start warming it up. Of course when my mother poured the warm plain milk over my breakfast Cheerioats, they immediately turned to mush. Truth is, I didn't like Cheerioats much either, and changing the name to Cheerios didn't make them any less mushy. I didn't know then, and didn't learn until I was in college, that other people enjoyed their cereal with cold milk.

Today I like Cheerios quite a lot, but I prefer them with lactose-free milk straight from the refrigerator. Yes, milk makes me sick—not terribly, horribly sick, just sickish enough to feel uncomfortable. So, as appealing as those two bottle of raw milk looked, I wasn't about to pour myself a tall one and drink it down. I knew what I would do. I would make some fresh cheese.



Fresh cheese is an Azorean treat, a simple cheese made with only two or three ingredients: milk, rennet, and sometimes salt. My mother made it often, possibly because she had extra milk in the refrigerator and the milkman was

coming the next morning, or possibly because she knew my brother and I liked it. Despite my problems with plain milk served in a glass, I loved most foods prepared with dairy products, especially fresh cheese but also goldenrod toast, cream of tomato soup, and creamed anything. But could my mother have had another reason to include this shimmery white wonder in her cooking rotation? Could there have been another explanation for the popularity of fresh cheese, or queijo fresco, among people of Azorean ancestry in the New Bedford area?

I made my fresh cheese, and I made it again, and when the raw milk was used up I made it with pasteurized non-homogenized milk. I could have used homogenized milk. My mother did after homogenization became the standard, and the cheese tasted just as good, although the texture was a bit grainy. I could have used low-fat milk or skim milk, as those work, too, as does goat's milk. (Ultra-pasteurized milk would not have worked, and neither would soy or almond milk.) I chose whole milk simply because that's how my mother made it. After months of experimenting with different types of molds (my mother used a one-pound coffee can with top and bottom removed) and different types of rennet, I finally produced a cheese I was happy with. And while I was testing out variations on my mother's recipe and hunting down other recipes on the web, I learned something interesting: when the coagulated milk has been spooned into its coffee can or cheese mold and the whey is draining out the bottom, most of the lactose in the milk drains out with it.

My ancestors came from the island of São Miguel in the Azores. I have traveled several times to mainland Portugal and the



Azores, and the only hotels where I was served fresh cheese with my breakfast--two different hotels on two different trips--were in Ponta Delgada, on São Miguel. Nowhere else in this country of amazing cheeses was I served fresh cheese, although my hotel in Angra, on Terceira, included the different but equally wonderfully São Jorge cheese as part of its breakfast buffet. I can't help wondering whether the residents of São Miguel have an especially high incidence of lactose intolerance. I'm only guessing, of course. I'm guessing that my mother, a descendant of Micaelense parents, was lactose intolerant, although the term was not tossed around in those days. I don't think she knew that when milk is heated some of its lactose is broken down, but she fed me a cup of warm chocolate or coffee milk first thing in the morning, every morning, for years. It seems that whenever she reached for a bottle of milk with one hand, she reached for a one-quart saucepan with the other. And she made fresh cheese often.

Last weekend our neighbors offered us another half gallon of raw milk. The bottle is in the refrigerator right now, a gleaming reminder of what life was like before something as simple as milk from a cow was subjected to commodification and hyperregulation. But what do I know about the dairy industry? Here's what I do know: If I warm a quart of milk in a saucepan, if I add a small amount of powdered or liquid rennet, if I let the warm milk set for a few minutes, if I transfer the curdled milk into a cheese mold,

if I patiently wait for the whey to drain out, if I do all of this and maybe add a couple of optional extra steps, I will have a smooth white cheese about the diameter of a coffee can and slightly more than an inch tall. I will cut myself a good-sized wedge, and I will salt it generously.

When I taste it I will think of the cheeses that my mother made, and I will be surrounded by memories that I do not have of ancestors that I never had a chance to meet. The cheese will not stand alone.



**Nancy Vieira Couto** was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and now lives in Ithaca, New York, where she is poetry editor of *Epoch*, Cornell's literary magazine.

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# Grace

By Don Brennan

Sharing food with family and friends, while appreciating life's blessings, can be a form of mindfulness that allows us to receive more energy from our food.

While enjoying food with Reiki practitioners, it's not unusual to see people holding their hands above their food to fill it with Reiki before they eat. Most people seem to have the right attitude that this is a blessing and an enhancement of the food. But it's clear that some are worried that the food might have negative energy within it.

When we experience fear, worry or anger, we cannot practice mindfulness. These feelings disconnect us and take us out of the Now. We feel unloved and unsupported. "Be Grateful," the third Reiki Principle taught by Usui Sensei, serves as advice to help us become centered. Being grateful means nourishing gratitude in your heart, for no specific reason. It means being grateful for the gift of existence. Gratitude brings you here, into the present moment. When you are present, you are connected with all of life, with all of creation. And all is well. All is as it should be.

We should think of charging our food with our thoughts and with Reiki, not only as a blessing of grace and gratitude, but also as an act of spiritual communion. We enhance the vitality, the life force of the food, by raising the vibration with love and appreciation, because it can always be so much closer to divine perfection. And we can be so much closer to divine perfection.

This is the way we bless our food. We become grateful, by turning our focus to positive blessings, by turning our attention to the essential nature of existence, by becoming one with each other and one with God. We enter a state of grace.

Mindfulness puts us in that state of grace. We must be truly present and deeply engaged in whatever we do. This is true whether we are planting, tending or harvesting in our gardens. And it applies to the preparation, the cooking and the consumption of our food.

In The Celestine Prophecy, it is explained that, "It is not just about being thankful, it is to make eating a holy experience, so the energy of the food can enter into your body."

Reiki is a vibration of Divine Love and we should bless our food with love and appreciation, as an act of spiritual communion. Like filling seeds with Reiki before planting, we always want to plant the right thought forms and have the best mindset, in whatever we do. We want to celebrate our oneness in holy communion. Mindfulness, by itself or enhanced with Reiki, can help us experience that holy unity.

As we go through the coming new year, let's try to have a better energetic relationship with our food, with our planet, with each other, with our creator and with ourselves.



Let us be in a state of grace.

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# Sugaraholic

by Annie Campbell



Body Cast - Watercolor illustration by Annie Campbell



I'd always had a sweet tooth, but about twenty-six years ago I suddenly developed absolutely insane cravings for desserts. I'd mix double batches of chocolate-chip cookie dough and eat half the batter raw. Then, I'd eat a bunch of mouth-singeing cookies minutes after taking them out of the oven. Harley was lucky if there were a few cookies left for him.

When I went grocery shopping in Wegmans, I'd fill a small bag with cookies and chocolates from the bulk food section, pay for my groceries and devour everything in the bag before I got home. Sometimes I managed to resist and didn't buy any crap in Wegmans. But then, on the way home my cravings would overtake me and I'd stop at the little store where I usually bought gas. I'd buy myself horrible things like stale cookies, or cup cakes with gross icing on top and goopy-crap inside them, and eat all of it before I pulled into our driveway.

Sometimes, I craved soft-serve ice cream. I'd hop into my car with my kids and drive the ten miles to Aunt Mike's in Trumansburg because she had the best, creamiest, yummiest soft-serve that I'd ever eaten in my whole life! I loved to watch Aunt Mike squirt the stuff out of the spigot, fill the cone, and pile it high in a soft spiral – towering four or five inches above the big cone.

My kids liked trying various flavored dips, but chocolate dip was always my favorite. One time, I asked Aunt Mike if she'd roll my LARGE vanilla cone in Jimmies (they're delicious chocolate sprinkles) and then dip it in her hot chocolate topping. Aunt Mike loved the idea. The topping quickly hardened and the Jimmies made the coating extra thick and even more scrumptious. From then on it was the only kind of topping I ever wanted.

Once, when I ordered my favorite cone, the top was so heavy it broke off and fell on the

ground when Aunt Mike tipped it through the window. which was not quite tall enough for large cones. The kids looked worried, and I was horrified. No problem though, the sweet lady made another one and it held together perfectly. The next time we went to Aunt Mike's, she proudly showed off her new window. It was about six inches taller than the old one. She said, "Now you can have the large chocolate Jimmie-cone and we don't have to worry about it."

I knew I was completely nuts and out of control but I never got sick to my stomach and didn't gain any weight, so I indulged myself without guilt or regret.

---

I had Lyme Disease and no idea that was the reason I went nutso on sugary crap - It turns out Lyme makes many people CRAVE sugar like mad because the Lyme bacteria LOVES to reproduce in sugar - very clever of the little bastards. I eventually found out that I had Lyme Disease for more than 25 years - it is now over 30 years that I have been dealing with this shitty CHRONIC disease.

This story will be a chapter in my sequel to  
***THE WHORE NEXT DOOR.***

The hardcover version of  
*The Whore Next Door* is only  
available on my website,  
<http://anniecampbell.org>  
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by David S. Warren

By the time of the American Revolution, much of what is now the state of Connecticut was already running out of land on which to grow wheat that was shipped to the Caribbean, returning with sugar or molasses to make rum.

And most of the Connecticut wheat land was already impoverished from many years of plowing and reaping without fertilization. Some wheat farmers went further up the Hudson to homestead, clearing land, burning the trees down to potash, and selling the potash to farmsteads a ways back down the river. By the end of the war, the Northeast was effectively cleared of Indians, and soon after that, the Erie Canal greatly extended the reach of upriver travel and settlement.

Many homesteaders moved up to our Finger Lakes area then, including the Morgan family who came all the way from Connecticut to homestead a five hundred acre hill plot, where we live on the five-acre central remnant. They came by oxcart, intending like many others who came here, to grow wheat for export. We still have the annual wheat harvest festival locally; there are some oat fields and plenty of corn and hay, but this hilly region is not meant to be a global bread basket.

The glacier-scraped brow of our own particular hill has only a thin layer of soil clogged with clay: poorly drained, but with insufficient water for a pasture and dairy operation, even back when a dairy farm was only forty cows. Over the years and through the twentieth century, various other farming has been attempted on the hill which now has few acres of corn, a few of pasture, a few of hay meadow, but, most appropriately on the lake side of the hill: second growth woodland, vineyards and orchards.

Thanks to French Jesuit missionaries who always traveled with their gardens, the Cayuga Indian village on the lake just north and down the hill from here had orchards of peach, pear, and apple trees - none of which are native in the New World. But when the Indians sided with the British during the American revolution, Washington had directed his soldiers to burn the native villages and cut down their orchards.

Pear trees, however, survive extremes better than most other fruit trees, including the extreme of being cut down. They will shoot up from the roots and stumps; they will creep across fields and climb hills. The succeeding generations re-develop the thorns that protect them from deer and rodents, but had been lost in domestication.

The Dog's Plot acres have not been plowed in forty-some years now, and not brush-hogged in the last twenty. The plowed acres have gone to brambles, dog-roses, honeysuckle and brushy buckthorn, with trees poking up through..

When new here, I read that our thin, poorly-drained, clay soil would be tolerated by asparagus and pear trees. I planted a few beds of asparagus and a dozen or so pear trees. After a couple more years, some more reading and walking around Dog's Plot, I realized that the thorny trees coming up among and over the invasive buckthorn out back, were not wild apple, but rather pear trees. Some pears in the hedge-row have trunks big around as me, and scattered among the buckthorn and Juniper in our more open areas, hundreds of sapling pears.

And from the highway you can see (if maybe not notice) the flowering pear trees that troop along the edges of the state forest like white elephants. Those

trees usually produce a crop of small round fruits that you might take for apples, even if you were to bite into one, and you probably wouldn't be tempted. As happens when cultivated fruits go to seed and have free sex, the naturalizing pears had reverted to a primitive form more like that of pears on the Asian mountain divide before they split and went to the East as a round fruit, and to Europe to bear what Europeans and Americans think of as "pear-shaped" fruit.

Well then; after that revelation I went to the internet, to books, and to agricultural extension services (thank you Cornell and Michigan) from which I learned about fruit-sex and cloning: for instance, that Golden Delicious apple trees, Bartlett Pears, and so on, do not grow from the seeds resulting from free-range tree-sex. What you get then are all individual bastards with varying characteristics. A Bartlett pear tree (at least the rooted section) is a clone made by grafting a first year shoot from a cultivated species onto another stock, such as the naturalized - locally evolved trees volunteering on Dogs Plot.

In the last ten or fifteen springs I have grafted European and Asian pear scions onto over two hundred naturally occurring trees on these five acres. Some years very few grafts succeeded; in some years the successfully grafted trees barely grew. In others years some trees shot up two or three feet. Often, I have stood, staring, sure I could see them grow.

And now, we have so many mature trees under cultivation that we can no longer prune them all, nor thin and harvest all the pears.

Rather than just leaving the fallen pears for the deer to stomp into slush that ferments and makes them silly enough to chase the chickens around, we decided to make our own Pear Cider, Pear Wine, Perry, and maybe Pearjack.

We got an old cider press missing its pressure plate, for which I made a rough replacement. It was too late to use our own pears that season, so we bought two bags of apples from Aldi's, mashed them in a spackle bucket with a sledge hammer as a plunger, and managed

to squeeze out a gallon or so of cider in the old press before the press plate broke.

So we bought a fruit crusher and new, larger press to use on our pears when they ripened last summer: a mixture of sweet and tart, mostly Asian pears. Some of the cider was consumed when still fresh and sweet, and most is now in the later stages of fermentation.

Meanwhile we had realized that a cider press is about the same thing as a cheese press. Being big cheese eaters, we ordered the basic tools, the coagulants and the fermentation cultures to make most any cheese.

Of course cheese making doesn't always require a press, or need to be a lot more complicated than letting raw milk go sour. I heard on the radio that in prison, where improvisation is necessary, determined cheese-addicts use Real Lemon concentrated juice to coagulate non-dairy creamer. And there it is: easy cheesy.

We have now read so many recipes for cheese making that we are dazed and confused or maybe confused and dazed. The biggest cheesiest site on the internet has hundreds a recipes - new ones all the time, including some for mozzarella, one of which claims to be an easy thirty minute mozzarella, perfect for kids.

Don't be fooled. The thirty minute mozzarella took a day and a half; we nearly scalded our hands in the process and never got the stuff to be stretchy as pizza dough, like it is supposed to be. So we don't suggest you make it your first cheese.

You might want to begin with the prison cheese version, or better than that: try making the simple Portuguese kitchen cheese that Nancy Vieira Couto writes about in this issue of the magazine.

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