

Wall-to-Wall Bullshit (or, 'The Unauthorized Autobiography of Smiley McGrouchpants Jr. Esq. III')

by Smiley McGrouchpants, Jr-Esq-III

"Because the victims are 'only children,' their distress is trivialized."
—Alice Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self* (orig. titled *Prisoners of Childhood*)

"How'd'ja like to have *Uncle Sam* for a father?" my dad was saying. "He yells at his kids!" *Why is this a subject for dinner-table conversation, in and of itself?* I would have thought, had I had the presence of mind at the time. As it was, I was only in fourth grade, instead. "Yeah!" my mum seconded, with a "significant" look that clearly said, "and you know what that means . . ."

"Why can't I come to the concert with you?" my half-[assed-]sister was asking me. *Because it would be in defiance of all social strata codes that you and I live in and don't question, given that you're a female in 9th grade who'd be the only one in both those categories amongst a van full of 11th-grade males, all of us drinking, one of whom I trust only by virtue of his being bound by some vague sense of propriety that he wouldn't try to mess with you, and another whom I don't trust at all - for anything - but has the keys to his own*

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van to drive us with . . . let's see, where to begin? "Because you didn't go to a friend of a friend's house the way I did and dutifully copy *Document, Dead Letter Office, Fables of the Reconstruction* and *Murmur* — and then make nice little lettering on both of the 90 min. Maxell tapes you dubbed them on, so they'd look good and be something you'd enjoy having around later — but, instead, heard "The One I Love" on the radio and decided you'd just tag along with me, despite the fact that we've never 'hung out' together in a comparable way ever before, and your presence would be awkward to explain and hard to justify for anyone present — least of all myself — given that, at times, the two-year gaps in age during high school can be culturally, cognitively, and emotionally enormous; and I know of no-one else — other than yourself, here, now — setting a precedent for behaving in this manner." "Oh," she replied, "so I'm not a real fan? Well, FUCK YOU!" And then she turned on her heel, went into her room, slammed the door, and proceeded (undoubtedly) to play with her STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE (TM) "Sour Grapes" doll.

"What, are ya *inhibited?*" the Perkins-restaurant-chain-heir said to me, with a *ha-ha-I'm-just-kidding* inflection and eye-goggle added to the last word. "No, I just don't particularly appreciate being told that all the white spots on your futon I crashed on last night are 'cum,' like it's not a big deal if I mind, for some reason." "What, are you *inhibited?*" Perkins said again. "No, I just think your showing me and my current girlfriend who I'm visiting with 'baby-birth' photos that also include your wife's bare tits, your own cock & balls (as well as your own Taco-Bell-fed flab) in the same frame to be ... uh, awkward and *weird!*" "What, are ya inhibited?" Perkins drooled. "No, but I don't sexually fantasize about *my* own mother . . . "

*for my late friend,
the dedicate-public-servant Deirdre Dooley,
who honestly had no idea these "friends"*

*of mine were, in fact, such
total fucking assholes!*

"Becky sucked my dick *every day* on the drive to school!" Mikey said, beaming. I sat there, listening. "Elaine . . . EELAAAYNE!" Mikey cried, downstairs in his two-beers-induced drunken stupor, calling one of the members of his self-proclaimed "harem" of friends to him for solace, whom I happened to be sitting with, alone, upstairs in a room during the late hours of the party. I sat there, listening. "Sarah's got BIG TITS!" Mikey laughed, robustly. I sat there, listening.

"Okay, now, Schnidely, you *gotta* read *Siddhartha* . . ." Viko Lunatic, pencil-dick-at-large, said as he put his Mikey-said-so arm around me. *Fuck you*, I thought. (1.) *Hesse sucks ass*; (2.) *you only heard of him in the first place because Damien was assigned in the 9th grade English class of the "white" semi-elitist prep school we both attended, so trying to cash in on a German, "canonized" author's rendering of Buddhism will not count for making you a "standing up to The Man" Jainist (which is, after all, your religion by birth) as you so clearly think it will*; and (3.) *you can never tell what you'll think of a novel before you read it . . . so how's it supposed to go, that I read this pseudo-"deep thinker" and then I'll "agree" with your whiny, needy little ass, without your having to resort to the "ugly" use of spoken language the way the rest of us do, to communicate with other human beings?*

"Whatsa matter, 'r ya *inhibited?*" Perkins kept nagging me. "No, you stupid restaurant-chain scion, it would actually be 'racist' in this case, and it's not 'racist' to assess 19-year-old males as being gangbangers if they, in fact, *are* that . . . and given that Jen's lived in Chicago her whole life, I think she was right to be *wary*, at least.

"But, then again, I don't think she had a tenured professor for a father, so you're right, she must be completely stupid . . ."

*for my friend Jen Krasovec,
who once attended a screening of
Jon Jost's Speaking Directly with me at
Facets Cinematheque in Chicago
for no other reason than that I wanted
to go. She liked the movie. I had a nice time.*

"He shoots . . . HE SCORES!" Mikey enunciated, with exaggerated emotional enthusiasm [no doubt, thanks to *my* presence!], quoting a keychain-thingee that had recorded messages on it which you heard if you pressed a button [he had already read his *one* book for life — *Stranger in a Strange Land* — which, unaware of *this* potential outcome, I had loaned to him; seeing his name listed as "Valentine Michael Smith" confirmed his inner suspicion that he was (1) love incarnate (2) like "God" and (3) anonymous and everywhere simultaneously . . . so, *fuck growth and growing up*, right?] Needles to say, I sat there, listening to this horseshit.

"Whatya, *inhibited?*" "NO . . ." *Aargh*. I gasped for breath. "No, but somehow managing to find the one strip club — likely in *all of America* — that allows patrons to 'feel up' the bare-titted 'providers' for your 'wife,' Angela Grope, to work at, seems par for the course for you two . . . I mean, do you have any agenda or itinerary — *at all* — in life, other than seeking out the most hot-buttoned cultural/emotional points of contention just so you can stand there and say 'it's no big deal,' in effect denying that tension could exist in human life, in any form, to any degree, whatsoever?" He just stared at me, gapping. Taco Bell™ slobber drooled off his chin. (He didn't notice; it wasn't a "big deal.")

"The title is *Delta of Venus*. A 'Delta' is a *triangle*. 'Venus' means 'love,' so 'Delta of Venus' means . . ." "Yeah, I know what it means, and I know what it means that your *brought* it to me, too, seeing as I'm a *single* senior male and you're a *single* freshman female." "No,"

Karen Strudel, businesswoman in the making, contradicted. "No, you *don't* get it . . . it's *over your head*." Pause. She looked at me, to see if the Jedi-mind trick had worked.

Needless to say, I wasn't impressed.

(Little did I know I'd end up with her as my *wife* . . .)

*for Suzanne Lyman,
who, on the last day of
"Gender Studies" class, when the
all-female-but-me participants
were discussing how the class went,
had to cojones to turn around and
confront the single, silent-the-whole-
ten-weeks male in the class and
ask aloud, "I wonder how he thinks
it went?" — which impressed me
terribly, even though I was still
too shy to say anything and had
to wait until the T.A. broke the
ensuing awkward silence I
took refuge in . . .*

"AARGH!"

My primal scream filled the air as I threw my nine-year-old self on the ground — sense of self be damned — humiliated, crying, enraged, despondent, helpless. The last day of school — when all the other kids got their report cards listing their fourth grade teachers, with mine from another school district, hadn't happened yet. The long bus ride home that day — when I stared out the window at all the other, happy children, who had no way of disputing their own happiness — hadn't happened yet. The silent, stone-faced dinners for months on end when my "parents" would perfunctorily

ask, "Crabby, what's wrong?" as though they had no idea, as though the silence and dislocation and my own shyness and terror weren't crushing me — hadn't happened yet. "AAWAAH!" I wailed, throwing my own dignity out the window — to no avail. My mother sat there: stone-faced, cold, immobile, and — I only realized this *much* later — satisfied.

"Well, if you don't like it, you can always fill out the required forms in triplicate, and submit them for my approval . . ." my father might as well have been saying. Starting 8th grade at the prep school — a year early, too late for kindergarten (obviously) and too soon to just merge in with the high-school-only influx, served no real purpose other than to assuage my father's wounded ego for the cutting remarks my mother had made about how he wasn't as "funny" as I was, on the eve I made humorous captions in the celebrity-photos-with-blank-word-balloons book I had bought in Cape Cod the summer after 6th grade.

(But, of course, I only figured *that* out later, *too* . . .)

*for Mona Abo-Zena,
who once during our undergrad
days, on the subject of the
school papers, said, "Well, of course they
[something-or-other, something-or-other].
but: YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE YOUR
BATTLES CAREFULLY, and
[something-or-other, something-or-other]"
thus imparting to me the single
greatest lesson I learned whilst
at the "U of C"*

"I can't believe my 'best friend' and my 'girlfriend' would actually *start dating* if I authorized and coordinated repeated threesomes for us!" Robert Eww was saying, holding aloft a dagger and book, with

an olive wreath around his head. The "martyr" look became him, I had to admit. (I was a prisoner in his apartment; you know, we were "friends," in a never-acknowledge-nor-precedented way.) My head ached. I wanted to go to my "room" (the sealed-off sun deck), and put in my eight-hour shift of guilt-dwelling, cycling my psyche around for no useful purpose, other than to keep my body trapped in the general vicinity and my mind reeling to keep my "wife" happy that she was "smarter" than me . . .

(Hey . . . *when* did I get *married*?)

Fun times: serving as a groomsman at my friend Mickey Seigheilin's wedding. (All I had to do was stand there — it added some pomp to the occasion.)

for all my other non-delusional "fellow teenager"
friends
who couldn't've seen,
guessed at,
or known about any of this shit
any more than
I could've!
(Silly us!)

