



Dear Reader,

As kids we used to play a game called "Simon Says". One kid would give other kids orders, some preceded by the words "Simon says", for example, "Simon says, take one step forward", and all the other kids would take one step forward. From time to time the leader would omit the magic words, saying, for example, "Step back" and anyone doing so would be penalized because the leader had not said "Simon says step back."

We still play that game today: "You're nuts!" (Just a figure of speech.) Psy-man psays, "You have a severe disorder!" *A psyentific fact.* "He's sad." (Cheer him up or let him be.) Psy-man psays, "He's clinically depressed." *Drug him.* "He's energetic." (Boys will be boys.) Psy-man psays, "He's hyperactive." *Drug him.* "She's angry." (Laugh at her, soothe her, leave her alone, get angry back at her, find out what's wrong.) Psy-man psays, "Oppositional Defiance Disorder." *Drug her.*

"He's like a zombie." "She's acting suicidal." "He's not himself. I don't recognize my son since he went on that medication." Psy-man psays: "We'll up the dosage." "We'll prescribe another drug." "No, the drug couldn't have caused that." "He'll have to stay with us for a while." "Shock him." "Don't worry — his teacher says he's quiet and co-operative in class."

"His insurance has run out." (Oh no! We can't pay.) Psy-man psays, "He's well now." "Her insurance has no cap." (Thank God. Can she come home soon?) Psy-man psays, "She'll have to stay with us indefinitely. She needs close supervision."

"He's dead." (Bury him. Grieve — but not where Psy-man can psee you). Psy-man psays, "You came to us too late. Please psign this waiver."

"This whole set-up is nuts. The shrinks are ruining our children. Sue them. Stop them. Make them pay!" Psy-man says, "Psorry, you have no psyentific credentials, because you didn't psay 'Psy-man psays.'"

Poet says, "ARGGGGH!" What do you say? Not that it can possibly matter if you lack that pspecial authority. Psigh!

I'd like to go back to Simple Simon and the Pie (not psy) man. We need to look about us, see where we are, what planet, what universe. Touching a wall may help. It will probably just stand there, but if you keep touching it, it may detach itself from some imaginary wall in some imaginary place where most of us must be living to allow the psy-man such powers in the realm of solid walls and all-too-solid children. Where are we? O universe, let me taste your wheres!

*Yours in opposition to
psymony,
Dean*

Putt...Putt...Putting Things Off

Buried in blankets past eight,
My farts range from tuba to flute:
I can't wake just yet, but it's late,
So I'm trying to get a round toot.



Dear Shoulder, Phone Home

"He dislocated his shoulder..." — located, dislocated — do I ever LOCATE my shoulder? Yes! Here it is, right here. By God, I have located that shoulder. (Reader, can you locate your right shoulder? Your left shoulder?) It just moved — aha! There it is again, lost and found, what an adventure, what drama! Alas, where has my poor shoulder gone? My long lost, prodigal shoulder, I've found you again at last!

And how does one DIS-locate a shoulder? Improperly locate it? Not mis-, but DIS. (When you dis me, are you putting me in my wrong place?) If I said, "My left shoulder is vacationing in Hawaii" (when it's NOT — it's there on business, if at all), would that be a dislocation? Or a disvacation? And where IS my shoulder between the moments I think to locate it? Does it go to the movies or out for strolls? If it did, would I know about it? Shrug.

People who look back longingly at childhood have ceased to be children. Those who remain children enjoy adulthood, since it creates so many more things that they, eager children, are allowed to do.

Children Should Be Herded Without Scene

While I don't hold with those who make a fetish
Of idyllic childhood — for children are generally
peevish, grimy and wettish —
Yet those who, in manifesto, polemic or sermon,
Portray children as parasitical vermin,
I applaud NOT,
For that would be robbing Peter Pan to pay Pol Pot.

[Note: Pol Pot's regime slaughtered a million or so alleged
"parasites" in Cambodia.]

Self-Discipline

Self-discipline — Ah, YES, self cracks the whip!
Self whimpers as self strips self, softly humming.
"You know, you naughty boy, what you've got coming!"
"Oh please! It's tight!" Self squirms against the grip
Of self-restraint — "It hurts!" Curling his lip,
Self strokes till every string of self is thrumming —
"Don't! Stop!" "Take THAT!" "**DON'T STOP!**" Look!

Self is coming
To realize that self-control's a trip
To parts of self unsettled, unexplored,
To depths of sin so desperately sweet...
Self shivers, panting: What would Mommy think?
Self sneers — it's DADDY's smile, the true reward
For self-control! Self frees self and they meet
Face to face, naked, over a sink.



We all enjoy it; it's so gratifying
that some live for it alone: the joy of
being surrounded by people who are trying
to help us solve our unsolvable problem —
our CRUCIAL problem: We bat back at them
solution after solution (for this is one area
where we are the unimpeachable lone experts:
We know as no one else can ever know
the intricate reasons why our problem
can never be solved), like a baseball player
hitting the best they can pitch to him
out of the park: SWACK! SWACK! SWACK!
"Have you thought of seeing a doctor?"
"Doctors! Are you kidding?..." "Or you
could eat fish instead." "Allergic." "Maybe
you could..." "Can't afford it." Oh, how
they keep coming back for more, the idiots,
they must enjoy it too!

How to Have Interesting Problems Without Actually Doing Anything

For years meditation — trying to be or not to be —
solved all my problems; that is, with meditation,
who needed problems? It was consoling, like being
a child again: "Sit still and don't touch anything!"
But what I said was, "Sit still and don't
be touched by anything!" Much later I worked
as hard to learn again to be touched.



There I sat on my aching ankles or in half or full
lotus (knees having given up on pain) or,
self-indulgent, lay on my back — stretching out
my breathing as a child stretches a rubber band
to see when it will snap; trying not to be
(or to be), trying not to be trying, never sure
if I'd failed to achieve what I was trying not to
try to achieve or had achieved it, but kept on going
(not knowing) — and it was easy to miss having
achieved something, because all the books said
that what one aimed for was something inconceivable,
but whatever I felt was something I felt and
whatever I thought of was something I thought of
and whatever happened to me happened to me, so when,
sitting there, I felt terrific, I thought,
this is just me feeling terrific, don't be distracted
by feeling terrific; and when I slipped right out
of my head and hovered above it, it was still
just me, so I kept going (if you can call it that),
hanging onto the universe so that I wouldn't
miss when it vanished, and then I'd know
something was happening —

and after that happened, I'd be a much better
person — well, "better" and "person" wouldn't
mean much (I'd be above all such considerations),
but there'd be something about me — well,
not "me" anymore (would my ex-wife notice something
to make her regret having left me?) —

so that now the contrary efforts to and not to be,
like opposing biceps in an arm-wrestling impasse,
formed solid masses, brawny fists squeezing
the eyeballs, screw-tightened vises disjuncting
upper from lower jaw, rawhide bands contracting
around the temples, a swathing in tautnesses
bulky enough to lean on — hell, I could sit there
motionless for hours, propped up by balanced efforts
and counter-efforts, as if the air around me
were a mold into which I'd been poured to set.

[continued]



The more I tried to be free of thought
the more my thoughts became solidities.
Early on, in quiet moments, able to hear myself
not thinking or thinking of not thinking,
I'd slip out of these impossibilities
into a clarity where thinking continued,
but I was a stillness in which it occurred —
after such moments I'd think, why can't I
be like this all the time, the Zen dishwasher,
the crest of a selfless wave unraveling
in precise, elegant, spontaneous action?

And now, sure enough, the crushing weights
and torsions and other results of trying
not to try to achieve what can't be
achieved by not being the one for whom
I was not doing it — all this stayed with me
when I rose on tingly-numb legs, and when
I shook my head, it was like shaking
an auto junkyard; and when I walked I became
a Picasso painting of "Man in Rusty Armor
Descending the Stairs"; and when I thought,
"OK, that's it, I'm done now," my solid thoughts
like unwanted guests, refused to take the hint;

and that was bad, but worse was, walking about
in my ill-fitting invisible strait jacket,
I felt, not fear, but HOPE! — hope because
something had happened; you couldn't miss
that something was happening, and I'd been
spending hours each day hoping something
weirder than graduate school and more
wonderful than wanting to get laid
would happen, so maybe this was it —
and who knows, maybe it was, and anyway,
it cured loneliness: I had headaches
(not really aches, but like the ancestors
of ache, sheer forces of implosion
and explosion as if I were a forming star)
so solid I could talk to them,
and it seemed to me they were talking back,
or was that me as well? (When, one day,
I rediscovered simplicity, I was cured
forever of wanting to cure loneliness.)

Anyway, it had been hard to sit so still so long,
but now I could prop myself up on my own stuck
mental spasms; and it had been hard not to think
of anything or to keep my attention on a spot
on the wall or to just be there and not be;
but now I could turn to stone, which is as good
a paradigm as air is of very much being here, but
not being here at all.

[continued]

So I'd solved all my meditation problems.
Besides, when you're encased like a fossil
in mental rock, who needs problems? I'd begun
meditating heavily when my first wife left me —
amazing how many problems having a wife had solved.
I'd thought it would be depressing, after six years
of getting it regularly, to be learning again
what I'd never really learned — how to date —
or to be jacking off like a horny teen-ager.
Instead I meditated.

Eventually, I got excavated. I still see the logic
of meditation: If one could sit still and be silent
forever, that would solve everything.
But I don't want to solve everything.
I prefer to choose my problems.



A Leaf too Red for Fall

What are you, bush, whose leaves turn lipstick-red?
(Or carmine? coral?) TOO red — you appear
Spray-painted for piped wiring or road bed
Clearance. Clever plant that mimes its predator,
As Jews name kids for those already dead:
That stickler Death, beside the sick kid's bed later,
Seeing the name (dead Grampa's) on his list,
Says, "This has got to be some weird mistake —
I just took him away!" — and with one twist
Of bony wrist strikes off that name. This fake
Spray-paint job might (you hope), likewise, deter
Some bureaucratic civil engineer,
Spray-gun in hand, pausing to scratch his head
And wonder what competing agency —
Without a word to his — what idiocy! —
Has doomed this bush already? Now what? Grr!

I'm sure the ploy won't work: Jewish kids die.
(Angels must meet quotas.) But, bush, nice try!

Have a Ball, Tom

Did someone scare the cast away?
There's only one in Castaway,
Just sporting goods for hanky-panky —
Poor Tom! Where did I put my Hanky?

Excel? Sure

A pun is a play on words. On words —
ever on words! — let us play.

[The next 4 are palindromes -- but not the titles.]

A Priest Rues His Sins With Young Girls

Did I, maiden-mad, misuse Jesus?
I'm DAMNED, I am! I DID!



Owls Quiet Tonight

Too hot to hoot.

KKK Motto

No DNA bar abandon!

Target: Argot

Slang is signals: "Look, Ma --
I'm KOOL!" Slang is signals.

Old homes -- who knew these piles of field stone
and brick we cursed for the trees and fields
they usurped would age to such beauty? They are
alive -- like any form that contains life. Life
is what cannot be contained. It overflows,
possessing its containers.
We will swarm over our granite grave stones
with meaning as persistent as lichen
and as soft.

The Despair of Those Who Wait

Can I help you?
Is there something I can do for you?
What can I do for you?
Have you been helped yet?
Is there anything you need?
How can I be of service?
Can I be of use to you?
Is there anything I can get for you?
Is there anything you'd like?
Have you found anything you want?
How can I help you?
Can I help you?
Is there anything I can do for you?
Can I help?

How can I win? Each time I kill one of my enemies
I lose a neighbor.

A block away I see her see me, and she, seeing
I see her, smiles. How is it we see what we
cannot possibly see? For I know I saw her catch
my eyes with hers, yet I can't, at this distance,
see that she HAS eyes — only a ribbon of shadow
across her face. Her eyes must differ from her
seeing, which my seeing can see or know. And what
did I actually see of her smile? For that matter,
how is it I can see, now, my own smile?



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