

Dear Reader,

Terrorism doesn't scare me much, nor do snipers. What scares me is how quickly, as such phantasms loom large in the news, we become barbaric. It's unpleasant to be reminded that what separates what we call civilized beings (you? me?) from Attila the Hun (apart from his cool leather thongs, wives, horses and visions of future Harley Davidsons) is not air-conditioned homes, libraries, schools and medications, but only our ability to trust one another. When that trust is eroded, we descend towards savagery, becoming much like nations. (No man is a nation, I hope.) When we find ourselves eager to tear someone limb from limb, each begins to distrust even himself.

At first, in difficult times, we draw together — especially when the enemy is clearly elsewhere (the Nazis are our favorite). But when attacks come we-know-not-when, directed at we-know-not-whom, from we-know-not-where by we-know-not-whom, distrust becomes generalized, and the social veneer cracks. The last two pages of this issue hint at the need for some rough sanding and a new coat of varnish.

We blame the newspapers for this, but really, they only reflect us. We are afraid, so they tell us "Be afraid; be very afraid." They are crazy-house mirrors that surround us and turn our every flinch into infinitely repeated and weirdly warped (and authoritatively rationalized) masks. They don't dare say things as obvious as, "Don't be such cowards! Bodies die! Get over it! Get on with it! If you can't stop a bomb from exploding or a bullet from being fired, do something to make the world a saner place. Make someone feel better. If you don't know how, find someone who does, and learn."

No, that would be unpopular. Newspapers are yes-men. They tell us only what we want to hear or what we've been told we should want to hear. We deserve our newspapers. "What a dangerous world it is!" we say, looking to the media for consolation, and they console us by showing us in detail what a dangerous world it is; echo chambers for the emotions we all share — our insanities. (Only individuals have sanities. Groups display our lowest common denominator. We can all agree that the world is dangerous. It takes an individual to decide that the world is safe. Can you make that decision? It IS just that — a decision.)

Meanwhile, be very careful. Anyone you pass on the street may be a poet, casting sideways glances at you, planning to put you into a poem.

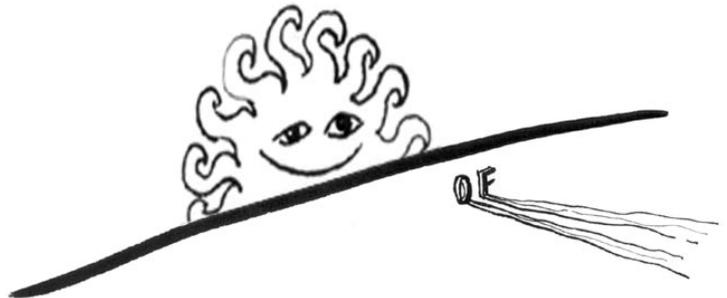
855t,
Dear Robert

That man passing me on the street
thought I was someone he knew, then
changed his mind. While he thought it,
it was so.

—
"My God!" she said, "I'm already 45!"
Nearly old enough to be my
waistline.

—
Tiny dissonances in your letters warn me
that my dreams, anxiously hovering over you, seek,
not realization, but a reasonable approximation.

—
How strong is thick ice on a winter lake?
In my dream, one red leaf tottered down,
touched it, and it shattered.



—
Like the setting sun in Autumn, I cast a harsh
slant glare, making even the tiniest prepositions
cast long, delicately formed shadows
down the page.

Death Respects No Latinate Distinctions (A Palindrome)

Torsi? Torsos?
Rot is rot.

—
We're running low on oil. Before we run out,
We'd better fight a pre-empty war. But . . .
Caveat pre-emptor.

—
We think of our diplomacy as weakness,
because our diplomatic wrists have grown limp
from shaking our iron fists so long.



A Few Limpet Lines

A snail is a gastropod
(Or stomach foot), an odd
Sort of plumbing:

If your mate, a snail, is slow in cumbing,
You must be patient with your gastropod,
And not yell "Faster! Faster! O GOD!"
For a snail, like an army, travels on its stomach;
Quite economach:
One disk-like pad serving as legs, feet and gut;
But
A rather slow
Way to go,
And in this case, both senses of go (to wit:
The digestive and the ambulatory) fit.

Gastropods include the snail, limpet and slug,
Easy to remember: "The snail limpet sluggishly
down the rug."

One sort of snail is called the periwinkle;
The name evokes sweet bells, a faery tinkle,
A graceful sprite with toes that twinkle,
Or so you'd think...
To no avail:
It's just a snail,



And so is the whelk,
For whom life is not always cookies and melk,
So that often it needs to hide, and hides so well,
Oozed into the spiral cup of its shell,
That of the whelk is "Blessed are the meek" writ
And also we speak of the "whelk-cupped secret."

Though a Frenchman or other psychopath'll eat
Snails, probably snails quail most from athlete
's foot, not the foot of a jock, but an itch which,
To one mostly foot must be a bitch,
Worse far than the scrunch of human foot,
Which at least would put
It out of its misery
(As often happens before a snail can creep into a
protective fissure. He
Moves at one pace, no telling his dawdle from
his hurry).

His mating would be awkward, wouldn't it,
If he kept putting his foot in it?
His pickup line may well be "Footsie,
Tootsie?"

Have I implied that snails are always slow?
Not so,
For being small, a snail
May travel by mail.
But mailed snails are frail:
They are used to being cramped,
But averse to being stamped,
And, being all one foot, can't raise one to stamp
back with the other,
So treat them as gently as you'd treat your mother.

An army may be the slowest moving gastropod of all,
though really it has feet,
And is only metaphorically gastropodal — except
when badly beat,
And then its encounters with the temporal spatial
Are less sluggish than glacial,
For an army, defeated, has, not only no feet and
no feats,
But also no stomach for its eats
Or for anything. Yet even conquering hordes
Seem excruciatingly slow to impatient warlords,
If not to the folks in the path
Of their wrath —

For as snails are pests in a garden,
So an army is hard on
The human crop, its trail of crime,
Like the snail's, pure slime,
But instead of silver — black;
And armies, unlike snails, lack
That touch of the gently comic
You'd expect from what has a stomach for a foot
or, if you prefer, a foot for a stomic.

We have barely touched upon the subject of snails,
Limpets, slugs, winkles, whelks and their ilk. The
wealth of details
Goes beyond my scope. Subjected to serious study,
No doubt the snail will turn out to be our buddy,
Source of food and, from shells, buttons;
And a better simile for slowness nuttin's!

Moreover, from serious study of the gasterpod,
We can learn the weird ways of our Master, God,
For He Who assigned to our organs of generation
pissing
And to our lips eating, talking, sneering, smiling
and kissing,

[continued]



Engineered the snail to inch though the yard
on a foot
That inwardly metabolizes flower, stem and root.

But if you study snails to become intimate with
your designer,
Make snails your MAJOR, lest you be charged with
molluscation of a minor.

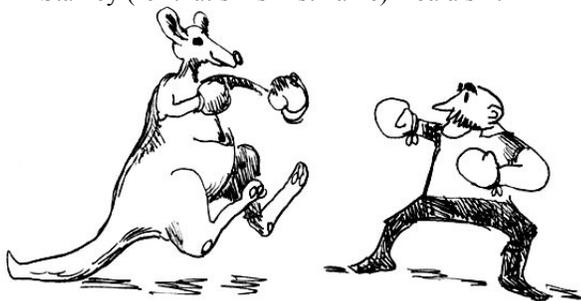
It's Not the Quantas Tea That Counts

Koala nibbles leaves from an old gum tree;
He never sips at what you'd call a tea;
And yet, I'd think you lacking polity,
Should you imply his life lacks koala tea;



And, since he always sits high up a tree
In the flat outback, you'll never see him ski —
Except perhaps in a play by Tennessee
Williams that has a rather brutal fella
Who, in his torn, stained undershirt, screams
"STELLA!"

And that's the only place, I think, you'll see
Stanley (for that's his first name) Koala ski.



Boing! and Nothingness

It is not thought prudent to box
With a kangaroo, who both kicks and socks
And keeps moving: BOING! BOING! BOING!
Most annoying!
For he's no navel-contemplating Yin and Yang Guru,
No, he's a kanguru;
Less a good sport than a gang banger who
Goads you to anger and after anger, rue.

Can he punch?
He'll eat your lunch,
Knocking you out of combat
Before you can say "Wascally wombat!"
He'll put out your light
Faster than Mama can sing "Wallaby and Goodnight."

So if invited to form a tango twosome
With a kangaroo, Son,
Think of Johnnie without an arm or a leg for whom
they sang "Aroo," Son,
And say no thanks, lest you meet a fate
kangoruesome.

A sniper is shooting people
on the news. Everything interesting happens
on the news...one hopes.

An Odd Thing I Do With My PEN, SIR (Running Out the Anagram)

A man gets an idea: PRE SIN.
The idea RIPENS.
He becomes a SNIPER.
The media spin it and RESPIN it.
Friends and relatives of the slain become PINERS.
The killer collects articles about himself: snip and
RESNIP.
Don't you wish he were in PRISEN?
Does fear give you a headache? ESPRIN won't help?
We'd like to catch him and torture him IN REPS
Until he becomes a non PERSIN.



Police Advice

"If you keep moving and zig-zagging,
the sniper will probably choose
an easier target." And so I dart
from my car and make a run
for the supermarket, hoping the sniper
will spare me and take out that creeping
old woman or the lady schlepping
two kids and three bags of groceries...

"You have no more chance of being shot
than of winning the lottery" — cold comfort
for those who are always certain they'll win
the lottery.

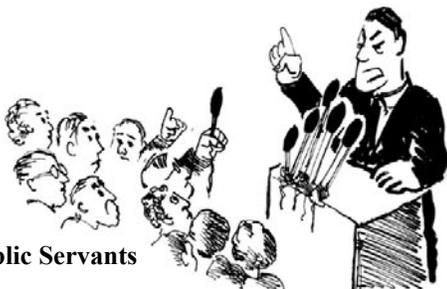
The sniper demands \$10,000,000
to stop killing people. That's viable:
It served our ancestors well
paying off murderous gods
with sacrifices, much like the taxes
we now pay. We could evolve
an annual "Sniper Day", a festive occasion,
with dancing in the parking lots
and a new god, as good as any.

"We've caught the snipers." Yes, But I think they're
about to escape, their inhumanity intact.
At execution, they'll still have no idea for whom
the bell tolls.

Two snipers down. Now we can look forward to Valentine's Day and Cupid. His bolts, too, can shatter lives, and, like 223 bullets, make bigger wounds leaving than entering. Love's entrance is almost invisible. Leaving, it creates a huge hole in one's life.

News of the sniper makes me notice, when the car ahead of me goes so slow that I miss the green light, what (for just an instant) I aim, mentally, at the driver.

Remember when bad guys got punished and good guys got rewarded. Don't you miss your Karmic books?



Public Servants

Fat soft men in suits being bloodthirsty — NOT a pretty picture.

Caught, the sniper turns out to be two persons (named John and Lee) whom we the public can maybe... kill! (Be still, my heart!)

Now, each night on TV News, legal hyenas from the places where shootings took place argue, "Let US try them first, because we'll be SURE to apply the maximum penalties."

[continued]

"No, let US do it! We're almost as vicious as Texas. We don't mind executing a 17-year-old. Hell, we'll execute a retarded 2-year-old if it will get me re-elected and, maybe someday nominated for Governor." On our license plates, "Virginia is for Lovers" will be replaced by "Virginia is for Executioners."

"No, wait, give them to US! We're the only state where it's allowed to torture them with rubber hoses and tips of lit cigarettes (though only in "smoking permitted" dungeons), make them eat their own excrement, yank out their nails, attach electrodes to their most sensitive parts and...watch...them...TWITCH!, then have them hanged and quartered and strung up with their genitals stuffed in their mouths —

AND we are expert at prolonging their agony; our motto: "No prisoner dies before his time." AND we invite friends and relatives of the victims, not only to witness these procedures, but to participate, stomping on fingers, pissing on faces, even throwing a switch or two. So, for the fullest satisfaction possible, for closure that's closest to the bone, bring those bad boys back to Sweet Home Alabama! Come ON **DOWN!** YEEEEHah!

Morning...someone left the door to my head wide open! I rush out and fly wildly about the sky.



Copyright © 2002 by Dean Blehert, All Rights Reserved Subscriptions: \$10/Yr; \$17.50/2Yr; Gift or Student=\$5/Yr; Back issues 1-103=\$139.50

DEAN BLEHERT
11919 Moss Point Lane
Reston, VA 20194
<http://www.blehert.com>
dean@blehert.com
ISSN: 1524-0509

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED