

THE ART OF RALPHING

by Christopher Paw

For the past three years I have begun each and every glorious day with a horker hurl. Sometimes it happens first thing. I find myself rising from my slumber, stumbling to the bathroom and diving head first into the toilet. Sometimes it happens when I'm showering, or shaving or even when I'm trying to enjoy that relieving first dump of the day. It has even happened as I was opening the door to our apartment to leave for the day. I have come to welcome that gut-reeling, vice twisting convulsive state as

an intrigal part of my daily ritual. Once my puke is complete, I know I can go on with my planned activities. The vomit itself is a horrific yellow, sometimes green bile that I swear begins it's journey at the precipice to my intestines. Defying gravity it sometimes slides, some-

times erupts through or beside every major organ in my body until it comes plopping out into the chemically treated blue sea of my toilet bowl. It really is a Linda Blair experience.

Ralphing should not be confused with Rolling, an intense form of massage that may leave you wanting ti ralph when its over.

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And your editors' favorite? "Call Ralph on the big white phone." Women, apparently, call Ruth.

Baaf
Hurl
Puke
Vomit
Wreak
gag
disgorge
throw up

THE
ART OF RALPHING ← torn
edges?

It is thick. It is mucousy and it is a daily reminder that I have HIV. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. When I was on AZT, I resented being reminded five times a day that I was infected. But this daily ritual doesn't have the same effect. Perhaps because it's natural and not sanctioned by the medical community. Perhaps because it only happens once a day. Perhaps I'm just older and hopefully a little wiser and feel better about myself. So I use the reminder to ensure I make the most out of the day. (Once I stop sweating and get my head out of the throne.)

Not to quell the aspirations of all the aspiring arm-chair doctors, but I have had this condition looked into. First response from my Primary Care was that it was a lifestyle problem. So I gave up my coffee (for a couple of weeks). I still poked. Then I gave

up spicy food (the chronic thrush means I eat more so I can at least taste my food). Still vomited. I got more sleep. More of the same. I switched vitamins and changed medications, changed my morning routine, changed my evening routine, drank lots of water, drank less water, stopped eating red meat, slept on the other side of the bed and even, for a short while, gave up my booze. Nothing has worked.

My Primary Care wanted to continue looking for the cause. We went through tests and more tests. But, of course, he came up empty. Finally, even though he wanted to continue searching, I gave up and began accepting my fate. Though it still bothers him, I think I'm finding a contentment level with the yellow slime that starts my day. In the end, I guess it could be much worse. And someday will be. So for now, I just go on. But if you'll excuse me, there's a screwdriver being twisted in my gut right now.

*Recipes
on techno*

*What
drugs
was Wulfie
on?*

BARE-
FACE



Youth. Freshly minted vampires are at the mercy of their whims. They're distractible, always ravenously hungry, and are literally combustible. Even with calming messages from their elders, they seldom survive their first decade, much less their first century. One might think that newly minted queers are in a similar situation, the excitement of being out blinding them to the infectious pitfalls in the way. If I could somehow go back in time and warn my sixteen-year-old self to avoid risky behavior (yes, I started early), I'm not sure that younger me would listen. Hell. I parade my tired old carcass for classes full of *pre-med students* at Stanford and I still think some don't get the message.

And old age (or at least decrepitude). Older vampires learn willpower, and can avoid feeding at inappropriate times and places—like the middle of the ballet. One hopes that older homos (this includes me, as I near Gay Middle Age) have a greater world-view than discos, sex, and the latest fashions at Macy's. I was definitely a consumer of queer capitalism in my youth, and had practically no political awareness, other than remembering to vote Democrat in elections. Now I feel confident discussing or disputing queer and HIV issues with society at large. Something like the gay equivalent of W.E.B. DuBoise's top ten percent.

Parallel trajectories. Ms. Rice's first brood of vampires may not thirst for blood, nor do the first brood of diseased pariahs crave blood products, but we both get kind of thin and pale and veiny without it, replete with yellowed snaggle-teeth and bony horrifying countenances.

Beyond Redemption. Old vampires are virtually indestructible. The oldest can't be burned, scorched by sunlight, broken, or drowned. Truly immortal, they cannot die no matter how hard they may want to. The best they can do is bury themselves in the dirt and hope to sleep and forget about the world for a century or two. Experienced HIVers—that is, those of use infected in the early 1980s—have viruses that are virtually indestructible. The bang of nucleoside analogues is long past, protease inhibitors are failing, our population curves are asymptotic; we're never quite dead. There will always be a few of us bug-eyed zombies from orgies past to scare the children.

Yes, I came up with these comparisons while feeling sorry for myself in the hospital (total hospital time since January 1, 1998: 7 weeks). They're still valid, but I'm not entirely thrilled with some of the implicit messages. What I'd like to do is see if I can turn up the various original reviews of Anne Rice's works. Then, pointing at the (no doubt straight) authors' reviews, I could go on to claim that society at large has to be pretty sick for such observations to be considered so obvious. A way of digging myself out of the politically correct hole I've excavated? Maybe. It'll take some time for me to get the idea polished and presentable.

So, Walter, in conclusion, I think that idea #2, *Collateral Damage*, is the best shot. It would be easy to write and would follow Scott O'Hara's article nicely, picking up some of the strands that he left undone, while introducing some new ideas and suggestions for taking more control of one's health. It would probably also be relatively long, on the order of the depression article I wrote. Cost isn't really a big concern, and if you could only budget for something smaller, I'd still want to write the article full-length. Maybe POZ could give DPN some ad space in lieu of payment; I'm flexible.

Three pages of small text. I've using this letter to break in my new edition of Microsoft Word. Respond at your leisure, I won't be going anywhere (yes, messages reach me even in the hospital, my second home). Enjoy.

Sincerely,

Beowulf J. Thorne

[REDACTED]

h, April in the Bay Area, and for the third season in a row I'm blissfully free of allergies. Who needs an immune system, anyway? Sure, Pneumocystis is a drag, but those pesky white blood cells were always overreacting to every possible allergen. Especially to those acacia trees with their lurid yellow blossoms and buckets of plant jizz. Nope, none of that, just kick back and relax-whoa! What are those things in the sky... buzzards? Oh yeah, I'm selling my life insurance policy. I guess they smell green in the air, and not just the verdure of spring.

Viatication is the selling of your life-insurance policy, either an individual or group policy, for cash payment while you're still alive. It has become quite popular, especially now that many states have revised their tax laws in the favor of viatication. This is my own saga: far from being an E-ticket ride but an interesting experience nevertheless.

Deciding to viaticate your policy starts with some soulful contemplation. The first thing was that I had to face my impending mortality from

an unexplored angle. It was as though signing the paperwork obliged me to die, which is silly because I'm gonna die someday. On the other hand, you can think of viatication as taking ownership of your own death and using it to improve the quality of whatever time you have left. Next is the citizenship issue: do you want to deprive your dear grey-haired mother (father, grandma, etc.) of their just due? Well, it's not really their due anyway. In my case, the decision was relatively easy: Mom and Dad, the beneficiaries of my policy, don't really need the money, whereas I'm on the dole. Finally, there's a little roulette. The closer to death's door you are on an actuarial basis, the more moolah you get. You don't want to cash in too early for a measly 50% (two-year life expectancy). On the other hand, if you wait for that 80% (six-month life expectancy), you might croak before you can enjoy it all. I was pretty sick at the moment, so the time seemed right.*

The first thing I did was leaf through some queer mags in search of viatical ads. This involved enduring some truly loathsome perfumed fragrance ads in the *Advocrap* and *OUT MAGAZINE*, but I survived. I came up with the names of twenty companies. There are over one hundred such firms advertising intermittently in local and national rags, so the number you come

across may vary.

Even twenty out of a hundred is a bit much, so I used some admittedly arbitrary standards to winnow some out. Did they fail to include an 800 number? Well, they obviously don't want my business badly enough. Did they just list the phone number with no address? Hmm, must be hiding something. Finally, how cute were the boys in the ad? Very important you know. After applying Wulfie's Razor, I had ten possibilities left.

I started making phone calls and supplied the pertinent information: name, address, phone number, face value of the policy, and last CD4 count. I was "lucky" in this respect; my last count, taken just before I started a protease inhibitor, was an alarming 1 (one). The phone demeanors of the sales reps varied from jovial to bland. One gentleman (the jovial one) clapped his hands in delight upon hearing my last count; I could imagine the thoughts of sugarplums dancing in his head. Another (the bland one) sounded as though he would really rather be doing something else. One was very helpful, suggesting some alternatives to viatication [see the box to the right]. One nicesaleswoman suggested that I limit the number of completed applications to three, lest my physician drown under the resulting deluge of paperwork. "If you do send more than three," she said, "you might not want to trust the doc with life-or-death decisions for a while." Well, this isn't just for me, I thought, this is journalism. I requested packets from all ten companies, and they began to arrive.

Another round of elimination was in order. Two of the companies failed to send their packets overnight, showing an obvious lack of urgency. Into the round file. After reading a free booklet that I had ordered, I decided to avoid the two broker-based companies (see the box above for reasons). Two more gone. I filled out the six amazingly non-standardized forms, had the proper pages notarized, and sent them off. The odds are you'll need a notary for your application, call your local, AIDS benefits organization for the name of a reasonably priced notary. I needed to have ten separate signatures vouched for. One application came with a videotape showing a handsome stud-who didn't look like he needed to worry about dying just yet, but maybe he was riddled with emergent lymphoma-gravely weighing all the facts before making his decision.

One week later, my doctor called to yell at me. "Six applications! Do you know how much paperwork..." Well, I had been warned. Several of the apps that he was filling out wanted to now if I had requested a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order to be in my records. I told him to say yes, and then wondered why they wanted to know. Aha, I thought, viatical companies probably lower their bids if they think you're likely to linger on expensive life support too long before expiring.

After another week I received three bids, ranging from 74% to 77%, plus one that started out as "79%" but then deducted some hefty "fees", leaving the final award at 75%. Two others declined to accept my case, which was interesting. My former employer had switched the carriers of my policy six months before. The reconstituted policy came with a two-year suicide exclusion, and I guess I looked like a risk. I'll admit that there's something strange sounding about adding any kind of exclusion to a policy that has never lapsed, but I doubted that quotes from those two companies would have been any higher than the ones I had already received. Both those companies were owned by large mainstream insurers, which may account for their caution. I accepted the highest offer and signed my life away.

What was supposed to take ten days took over a month. While I paced the floor, my sales rep did a nice job keeping me informed of every Byzantine twist and turn as the policy wended its way through the bowels of my insurance carrier. Every bureaucratic step had bogged down by the fact that viatical settlements are flooding the regular insurance industry, catching them off guard, ill prepared, and suspicious. Keep that delay in mind and plan accordingly. After several nervous weeks, the payment was finally wired to my account. Whoopee! Now the thoughts of sugarplums (and other less wholesome things) are dancing in my head!

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PEOPLE often ask me, "Wayne do you know when you became an infected faggot? Do you know how you became HIV positive?" Well, my answer to that is "Of course I do! " How could I not recall what was probably the most important and significant single event of my own miserable life?

Let's see...it was Jesus' 2014th birthday, so I guess tlat puts us somewhere around Christmas, 1981. The only thing I wanted for Christmas was cock, and lots of it, but all I got

was a package of underwear and pair of socks from my Mom. 1Que triste! iQue lastima! I was so depressed that I grabbed my leather and my toybag and went off to the baths to give myself that Big Gift.

Needless to say, I got my cock (actually several), and in addition, I drank gallons of warm golden piss, to say nothing of the multiple partner scat scene, my cock being pierced and bathed in warm blood, and my nipples being nearly ripped offomy

.but I digress. Well, someone had shoved his Crisco®-laden fist up my ass as I was sucking on amyl, ethyl, and Fred (all at the same time!), but alas and alack, he forgot to take his studded and razor-bladed glove off, and it got stuck somewhere on the wrong side of my sphincter as he was trying to remove his arm from my hungry hole!

This of course constituted a major emergency, so I was

rushed to the emergency room at San Francisco General Hospital where I was attended by the SpaceAIDS suited Dr. of - Doom, Lorraine Day. She had protected

herself from con-

ized blood products, but not me, self-centered pig that she is! My penis was bleeding profusely-remember the piercings? I forgot to mention that the piercing device was an 8-penny nail. Just think, I could have gotten tetanus or something! Someone in the ER decided tlat I needed a transfusion, and the next thing I knew they hooked

me up with a transfusion from the queen in the next bed to me, who I'm sure was on their last T-cell, and only weighed sixty pounds. She was cov- - covered with sweat and - fungus, bab-

bling about mascara and eyeliner injections, rhinestone ben- wah balls, and something about being a hairdresser!

The ER scene fin ally came to a close, but while in the recovery room, I came down with a terrible toothache! Fortunately, Kimberly Bergalis was sharing the same room. She told me about this fabulous dentist in Florida-Dr. David J. Acer-so I checked myself out of the hospital and hauled my ass off to Dr. Acer, who for some unknown reason extracted five teeth, when only one was hurting! I noticed that all of his equipment was a dirty red color, but who can be bothered with little details like that? I was hurting and he fixed me, and not just my toothache, either.

I left Dr. Acer's and since I was in Florida I thought that I'd head to the coconut grove on Key Biscayne via a short-cut that I knew! On the way, my extractions began to hurt, so I copped a little heroin to take the edge off, and went to the shooting gallery downtown on Southwest 8th street-calle ocho, as it's so fondly referred to. I threw my smack into a bottle-cap cooker lying on the floor of the gallery, where a lovely group of people next to me offered me their syringe, I having so carelessly left mine at home.

As I was saying, I knew about this shortcut to the Key Biscayne coconut grove which took me through the ground of the Palacio de Viscaya. I was trying to find my way through the jungle-like foliage when a strange little green monkey jumped down

on me from nowhere and - bit my already bloody penis! Fortunately, when I finally got out of all that thickandergrowth, I found

a US. Government Clinic of the sorts where they were experimenting with viruses and monkey bites, where they assured me that the injection that they gave me was especially effective on faggots.

I finally arrived at the coconut grove and to my delight and surprise there was what became my own private harem of Haitian boys, all with huge, uncut (but very drippy) cocks so hard that I just had to bend over and take them all. Of course no one had any rubbers, but truthfully boys, what would you have done?

The force with which they fucked my face and ass caused me to bleed profusely again from my butt and mouth, and I had pounded my peter so hard that it was a bloody mess too! I needed another transfusion and I had heard about this person who

would one day be famous for having supplied blood to now legendary Ryan White, so off I went to Indiana for a refill!

After all this, I decided that I needed a vacation. I hopped a flight

to New York, and while onboard I met this really groovy jet-setting flight attendant named Gaetan Dugas, who fucked me somewhere over Cleveland (giving a whole new meaning to the term "in-flight entertainment"). He was going on to L.A., but before we parted, he gave me a list of names and addresses belonging to his friends on the West Coast and Fire Island. I landed in both places and once again fucked myself into a silly stupor!

I left Fire Island, and on my way home I reached in my pocket looking for some dope, but found a unopened letter from my Mom that had been included in my Christmas present. Was I ever shocked. I discovered that twenty-seven years ago, my Mom-and-apple-pie Mom had been an IV drug user, a dope fiend ajunkie, when she carried me in her womb. Why had she waited all these years to share this intimate detail of her life with me?

I finally got home. Tired and exhausted, I was about to fall asleep when I reached back to scratch my ass. Ouch! There it was, the horrible evidence of infection, an inflamed mosquito bite! A fucking diseased mosquito bit me on my buttock! And that's the story of how I became an infected faggot. •

efore we get into the movie review, Porn Potato would like to clarify something. We don't duck difficult questions here at DPN, but there's a new one that's downright disturbing: Which one of you guys is Porn Potato? Porn Potato is shocked and saddened that, after all these years, his nature is not more obvious. However, rather than succumbing to his anxiety and committing suicide in a Pringle's® factory, he'll try to explain himself.

You see, the question is not really one of who is Porn Potato, but rather who Porn Potato is. Porn Potato is an amalgam of all of your hopes, fears, fetishes, and petty vanities. He is your id made flesh (or vegetable), channeled by one or more of the esteemed editors for each issue. In other words, Porn Potato is no further away than the reflection in your bathroom mirror, and no less real than the flickering blue light from your TV screen. Best of all, none of this requires any greater willing suspension of disbelief than, say, opera. After all, do you really believe in a pornworld where all high school coaches are hunky and devoid of pot bellies, where all buttoles are naturally depilated and prelubricated, and where everybody seems to be a virgin? Then you believe in Porn Potato.

With that taken care of, we're going to try something a little different and review a piece of non-fiction from the United Kingdom: *Erotic Choices*, a Guide to Better Gay Sex.

The video opens in what must be the Addams Family's living room, a cross between the elegance of a Vermeer painting and the tackiness of a gothic novel's embossed cover.

Sitting in a richly upholstered chair in the middle of this cavern of dust, cobwebs, and tattered curtains is a skinny young man in nerdy glasses. Dorian Grey? No, the man in the shirt and tie is Dr. Jonathon Cartledge of London, who welcomes us to his little shindig. He gives us a brief summary of safer-sex guidelines, gently reminding us to be ever vigilant against broken rubbers and broken promises. Unfortunately,

that is all we get to see of Dr. Cartilage, which is too bad. Porn Potato thought he was kinda cute.

Cut to a poolhall, where two young men with Aryan Nation hairdos are playing a game of eight-ball. They favour one another with steamy looks as they make clean shots with their long cues. A disembodied voice drones lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in perfect Queen's English ("What a piece of work is a man..."). Another voice at the subliminal end of audibility gurgles things like, "Suck... Ecstasy... Floating... First Time.... Overcome with lust, these two paragons of British manhood push aside the billiard balls and start to make out on the green felt, when a dumpy little

man identified as Dr. Robert Flynn walks on-screen. Dr. Bob seems oblivious to the fact that this erotic scene continues despite his presence, both in the background and projected onto his white shirt and tie. He starts us off on this journey by informing us about male sexuality, but Porn Potato was too distracted by the boys making out behind him to remember what it was that he had to say. Something about there being more to a man than his dick.

Next we meet our main tour captain, another English clone by the name of Barry Laden. Mr. Barry isn't a doctor—we know that because he wears a T-shirt and dungarees. He wants to teach us the finer points of empathy, and Couple Number One are here to help. Picture a living room, a chez, and great white curtains billowing like spinnakers into the open space above the floor. Couple Number One condense out of thin air, materializing partially clothed and artfully draped across the chez. "Look into his eyes," Mr. Barry advises, "show him how you feel." As the boys do this, they think aloud, and we get to overhear all manner of salacious tidbits about their personal life. Mr. Barry instructs us in the finer points of kissing, foreplay, and tingly sensations while Couple Number One eagerly comply. Like the plot of any good porn movie, foreplay progresses to fellatio, of which Mr. Barry has

much to share. He informs us that communication is important, but one doesn't have to shout "Suuuck mali dick!"

Texas-style to get the point across. There's no right way or wrong way to suck, he continues, and stresses the delights of versatility, "After all, what's good for the gander

is good for the gander." Summing up this lesson, Mr. Barry explains that the best orgasms take two hours to reach, and that for safety reasons one wants to come under controlled conditions. Porn Potato is not sure how much control he'd have after two hours, and wonders if Mr. Barry has a day job.

Now it's time to get to know our naughty bits (and not so naughty bits). As Mr. Barry stands in the foreground, a tastefully illuminated young man appears behind him as a visual aid. He rubs himself appropriately as Mr. Barry enunciates a litany of erogenous zones: nipples, earlobes, inner thighs, and one s

balls, "which are obviously precious" he adds cryptically. He then rattles off a battery of wanking techniques: whole hand, full-shaft basic hand, half-shaft fingertips only (maybe a triple somersault off the pommel horse?), as well as practical advice on the special needs of the cut versus uncut cock. It's also a good idea to practice banging the bishop with different kinds of lubes and condoms, in order to find the brand that

fits and feels the best. "Now, let's get to the bottom of things: the bumhole.. A lot of guys can be a bit shy when it comes to using the

bumhole as a sexual organ, because of its usual functions." The anonymous background boy grudg-

ingly moons the camera as Mr. Barry introduces us to Mr. Anus, and how to become friends with him, claiming that this "adds considerably to the feeling of submission." Porn Potato wonders what he means by that. Unfortunately, before Porn Potato's question is answered, Mr. Barry turns and curtly

ends the lesson with a hearty "Thanks Paul!" whereupon the background boy fades away.

After that, it's time to talk sixty-nine. We're transported back to the mouldy living room, where Couple Number Two have appeared, sprawled over a pile of dusty blue-lit cushions. "Sixty-nine gets its name from the figure formed by the bodies of two men as they face each other," a vague description of questionable scholarship, "which.. is wonderful because of its fairness and equality." However, the videography seems to gloss over the potential awkwardness of this most PC of queer sex positions, filming from a distance so that Porn Potato isn't quite sure that the models really are sucking simultaneously. From there it's easy to venture into rimming. Mr. Barry says "But don't go straight for his hole. First lick his balls and then his perineum* . . . and remember, keeping clean is more than just a matter of courtesy." Truer words have never been spoken.

Dr. Bob intrudes with some pithy wisdom about monogamy, negotiation, and meeting Mr. Right. Mr. Right, he continues, may not impress your friends (or mum) and probably won't appear on cue. Dr. Bob is nearly upstaged again by the boys in the background, but since they're playing house instead of screwing, Porn Potato had a much easier time paying attention.

We're now ready for the big enchilada: anal sex. Mr. Barry guides us into the bedroom, which is just the same living room with a four-poster bed in the middle, where Couple Number Three (Porn Potato's personal favorites) arc about to ride the hobby horse. As they start to fuck,

Mr. Barry gives us an antiseptically complete description of penetration, which was tolerable until he shattered Porn Potato's enjoyment of the ongoing visuals with a friendly warning that "You ma)' be put off by the feeling of wanting to shit." The disco soundtrack picks up speed as the

boys get into the groove. The camera follows a drunken orbit centred on the bed, strafing the performers as they do it doggy style, as they do it with legs in the air, as they do it on the mattress, and finally as they do it thrown over the cobweb-encrusted bedrail (where the butt boy narrowly misses banging his head as his lube-covered hands lose their grip on the big brass bedframe).

Time for Dr. Bob to introduce some teaching aids: the Four Stages of Sexual Gratification graph appears in the foreground, to be followed by an incriminating polygraph readout which pulses with malevolent energy. Brainwave activity, muscle contractions, galvanic skin response, cardiopulmonary readings, and consciousness indicators all surge from the quietude of the green zone into the throbbing redline. It is this pulsing image that heralds Mark and Mark, Couple Number Four, the poolboys from the beginning of the video. These guys are obviously pros, with their "I can take it, sir!" attitude, no-muss haircuts, and fast and flawlessly choreographed manoeuvres. They bump and grind and groan and talk dirty while Dr. Bob's disembodied voice explains that much of gay sex is already safe sex, and that if you go at it with as much gusto as Couple Number Four, the riskiest thing one could fear is a slipped disk. The bad house music reaches its crescendo as Couple Number Four loudly shoot their collective wads. While they embrace in their sweaty afterglow, the natty green bed is transformed into the green felt-covered pool table from their opening scene, creating an artistic sense of closure.

But wait, the fun's not over yet! Even as we're left panting on the

floor, we're hit by a sudden and unexpected wave of propaganda: How to Dress and Act Like a Gay Man (just in case we needed to know). With the help of some of the boys, Mr. Barry talks about wardrobe, posture, mood lighting, fitness, piercing, romance, and shaving. "Doing one's legs are the current trend," Mr. Barry explains, and then offers some ideas about shaving your buttocks, "Like facial hair.. experiment with * different styles and shapes to find your own individual expression." Whoa now, hold on.. Porn Potato knows this * video's nominally in English, but he thinks something still got lost on the trip across the Atlantic. Individual expression? What, like turning your full moon into a crescent one? Or how about, "Look dear, this is my own Daliesque expression of my individuality.."

In addition, Porn Potato wonders about the ulterior motives of the video's producers. Did they hope to bend undecided young minds to their will, creating a stable of young men who would dress, coif, act, pump, and scent themselves according to the videographer's own selfish desires? Maybe this is one of those "recruitment" efforts which our bible-thumping brethren are always accusing us homos of perpetrating.

As you might expect, this video doesn't fit easily within Porn Potato's usual rating scale. Fortunately, one of your spud's dedicated staff has nearly a decade of experience organising and teaching safer-sex workshops, so we can speak with some authority. The production quality is pretty slick, making

for an engaging hour of watching. Erotic Choices easily outdoes other risk reduction videos, although the ones put out by the Gay Men's

Health Crisis of New York come pretty close. Most of the models are attractive without being intimidating, and you get to see lots of them. The information and advice is plentiful, but grown-ups with even a few years of sexual know-how can't help chuckling at some of the more remedial instructions. That does, however, make this video ideal for pimply adolescents with little or no experience, or people of any age just coming out. Simply lock them in a room with the tape and a VCR, and hopefully most of their embarrassing questions will get answered privately.

Porn Potato's one technical complaint is the murky image quality of the video, which caused anything coloured red to bleed out of its borders and discolor half the TV screen. The picture often looked fuzzy, as though you were wearing glasses smeared with Vaseline®. One explanation might be that the picture quality was degraded when the video was converted from the original PAL format (a

he were trying not to fondle himself Perhaps he was frustrated by the fact that he couldn't rip off his clothes and join the models in the sack. Poor Dr. Bob didn't even seem to be a real person, just a man-shaped movie screen with a man's voice, talking about mansex while occasionally occluding man-to-man activity. In fact, the spooky sets, unintentional humour, and Dr. Bob's depersonalization made this flick far more surreal than a lot of regular wank-movies. Our staff took to calling it Monty Python's Guide to Safer Sex.

Erotic Choices lacks few things. It would have benefited from a close-up demonstration of how to avoid air bubbles while putting on a condom. Or, given the introductory nature of some of the lessons, explaining the importance of wrapping one's lips over one's teeth while giving head might have been nice. These are relatively minor points, however. What is really missing is more of Dr. Cartilage. The dreamy boys of Couple Number Three should have trapped Dr. Cartilage between their taught torsos, and while his ears, they should

I arrived at the realization that I was living in the midst of a crisis when I noticed that half of the names in my address book had been earmarked for obituaries. However, my diary had clearly documented every fantasy a bored queen could care to pursue. Sushi with Sam, Floatation with Phillip, and Workout with Wandai (you camp dog, you!) My social life had become autonomous to my social reality. It was drowning in a sea of love and in the back of my mind, usually when I'm about to blow my load, I hear these words over and over like the sea slap ping against my thighs...

"Pretty green?"

"You're soaking in it."

penciled in my diary on Thursday is an appointment with my homeopath. The fact that it was penciled in allowed me the option of a quick visit to the john. "Let beauty not get in the way of sex" I remind myself as some amorphous creature attaches his suckers to my penis. So I close my eyes, think of Lenny Kravitz and hope it's all over in time for my appointment. And, God I need to crap.

Now I am walking along an all-too-familiar street though it has been six months since I made this detour; since Craig died. My life had transformed into a series of brief conversations which are quite superfluous in the

grand scale of evolution. In all my joy, I was inutterably miserable. Craig had said that I was such a "Khaki Queen" given my military organizational abilities and my penchant for a man in a uniform. That's the sort of gratitude one gets for tending day and night to a fellow sister who spits the chips faster than she can cash them in. Anyway, I preferred magenta.

He sat there with legs crossed wearing a turban of fine silk. The nurse fussed with a few hot flannels, insisted that he should lie down for his wash. Refusing, he stood up off the bed and declared his own state of independence until he dizzied and lost his balance. I leapt to his side and offered a shoulder which he accepted having remonstrated at the nurse to his satisfaction. He turned to me and asked my name

to which I replied "Ian." He responded with a cackle, "You must forgive me, but I always forget my name on the first date," to which I replied "It's Richard, I believe." Confounded, he queried "Really? That's my name, what's yours?" The nurse nodded in courtesy to the conversation and I told Richard my name again as she washed him down. He had fallen asleep before I'd even finished my sentence.

I sat with a Christopher Isherwood novel determined to get past the first chapter. "Do you like to read?" in-

quired a voice from the depths of a feather-down quilt. "Sometimes," I responded aware that I was now alone in a stranger's house, for the nurse had left as promptly as she had arrived. "It is now only a past-time for me. I seem to have entered a remedial phase. Of course, my favorite past-time got me the way I am now. I was an innocent victim who lived a guilty life-style. Comprehend?" "Oui." Richard spoke bluntly with an educated air to which I found some intellectual delight. "Of regrets, I have none except that I didn't fuck Peter the barman on New Year's Eve, 1978...He said while floating in a state of reverie.

Richard motioned for me to get his "treasure chest" of prescription drugs and he described what each of them was for. "This is for the aching joints caused by this one. I take these two because I can't take antibiotics. That's for stress, they told me, and I told them this girl knows something better for stress than some damn little pill. It's not as easy as AZT?" He finished in chorus before he swallowed his last pill. As I handed him his water I said, "Craig was on AZT. That seemed to be working well for awhile." To which Richard replied, "It was like a depthcharger to my system. I went down like the Titanic and to think I was a healthy strap of a Shelley Winter lad. Skin and bones, girl, skin and bones."

A squawk from another room caused me to rise from my chair. A voice, not of human origin screeched, "See, it does get in." Richard sat up with a child-like smirk on his face. "Don't mind Gerone. He only repeats what he hears on the

giggle box. He is engaged in a terror campaign against everyone because my last carer put him outside since my bout of pneumonia." My eyebrows raised in question and to allow for a break before I asked, "What happened to your previous carer?" Richard twisted his body in the direction of the bird and indicated that the answer would be found within the cage. "We're a double act," he grinned fiendishly.

"Oh my. I'm down with another of those spots. I'm sure they give them to me at the hospital. 'Here, have another spot, kiddo. Now you've got a matched set. Look at the way they fly across your stomach like plaster bluebirds on the wall!' he declared with a delivery deserved of a PLWA addressing the nation on the unsightliness of Kaposi's Sarcoma. "After all, a queen with KS is not a happy queen."

Again I am walking along an all-too-familiar street though it has been six weeks since I made this detour; since Richard. My life has transformed, and in all my woe I'm exhausted and miserable. My mind and the minds of men like myself want to return to the scenes of our crimes of passion. We play the games that we wanted to when we were boys, only now the stakes are higher. Each pleasure has a list of instructions and sometimes I think, "To Hell with....and I could hear Craig interject, "For that's where you'll go."

Penciled in my diary for Friday is an appointment with my psychotherapist.

love Vancouver because of its winter, where prolonged afternoons drip into night, mossy pipes collect the cool tears of the season. In the winter I can be sheltered from the elements, hidden from public view, secure in a cocoon of layers and layers of clothing. I hate the summer. Mesmerized by the litany of drops, one by one, the loose figments of my imagination materialize, one by one. In winter, I'm allowed to dream. I go surfing through the channels, sometimes stopping in the soothing pools of screen blue. Click, click, noise, click, drop, drop, click. I see hockey players. You know, square heads on the sports section of the six o'clock news, trampling through the locker room, bare chested, sweating buckets. When the camera zooms into a violent close-up, I can almost taste the salty beads. Well, you can cry. me a river, I cried a river over you. Players talk about the game without making much sense at all I'm transfixed by their fractures, the pouty, succulent mouth that articulates

insolently all that nonsense. Inspired by these distant flickering images I relieve myself

A hockey star comes into town incognito. He's a red-haired stud with a jaw line strong as a truck bumper and broad shoulders that could span from British Columbia to the Maritime if he laid down across the country. Ad mare jusque ad mare. An inaccessible beauty of whom only a pale reflection of the original is seen on TV. A glimpse enough to make the girls sigh. He plays hard, spits blood, curses tough-flick you, asshole-curves his lips, spits again, pumps his hands, and rams ahead like a locomotive. But now he has taken five days off, unsupervised, and he drives hurriedly to Vancouver. Not for practice, nor retreat, nor for interviews; nobody really knows he's come this way. He steps on the gas. By the time evening has started to go stale, he checks into a cheap downtown hotel-\$39 a night, checkout is 11 am-under a

false name. He shakes off the rain and grips his key. The old woman at

the reception desk thinks he's a pimp or a drug pusher...none of her business, really.

He takes a shower, barely squeezing his humanity under the drizzle. He lights up a cigarette, coughs (doesn't really smoke), puts it out, turns on the TV, pops a beer can open. In the 11:00 o'clock news broadcast he watches his own bravado about an upcoming game back east, some international news, wars, hurricanes, budget cutbacks, who gives a shit. He orders take-out chow mein. The staccato high-pitched voice confirming the order, fifteen bucks minimum, irritates him. Why can't they speak English? He is restless and paces the room up and down in three of four strides, feeling caged. Turns on the paid adult channel and loses interest in the middle of his laborious erection. Checks the newspapers looking for an enticing expensive hooker, exotic, with an accent and skin color that

will contrast nicely with his rosy, pinkish tone and freckles, maybe a transsexual. The idea of the hooker doesn't linger long. No way. Freaks. He chomps avidly on the chow mein, throws the sticks out the window and uses the plastic fork, fuck them. He washes the MSG down with big sips of beer. Finally, after hours of hesitation, he gives up and goes out into the night. It's still pouring rain.

I don't usually go out; my health hasn't been that good lately and I find it too boring to be worth the effort. After years in Canada I still find gay bars in Vancouver are unfriendly, and I am too odd to be desirable to white gay men. Whatever, sour grapes I guess. I choose a small dark bar far from the West End. A dive frequented by the welfare set. Posing in trendy places, the smugness of beauty queens, the unfriendly service and the "gay tax" drive me nuts. I order a glass of soda no ice please, no untreated water, no alcohol, no cigarettes, no greasy food-this virus is snatching away one by one the things I enjoy in life. It has taken away my taste buds, saturating my mouth with a metallic taste. It

has taken away my friends either by killing them or making them tired of my deep funks. The virus is slowly creeping up my legs like poison ivy, plundering my cells and withering my tissues. Fuck it. So I sit in a dark corner, watching ragged hustlers play pool while being courted by old queens who band out money, kisses, cigarettes, drinks, and compliments with trembling hands. I appreciate the boys' damaged beauty, their troubled youth stuffed into tight jeans, sleeveless plaid shirts, a smirk in the face, a growl in the stomach,

and a sure shot with the pointer.

A red haired man, in Spanish we call them colorines, momentarily catches my eye. He's sipping a large glass of dark beer, his grip wraps around the entire glass. Like in Sesame Street, I can see that one of these things doesn't belong with the others. The colorin glances about him, furtively taking everything in with uncanny emerald eyes. The poor lighting, the thick cloud of smoke suspended in mid-air, and the muffled disco music all collude to create a cheap TV-series kind of intimacy to the place. They could play the Carpenters and have Charlie's Angels and Rock Hudson show up at the door at anytime. I get up from my stool to leave, enough of this shit, as the red haired man stands to his feet, stumbles, bobbing his head a bit, and heavily falls to his knees.

He vomits. Right there, splattering my shoes as I walk by. I instinctively go and hold him up. The bartender is a fussy queen who thinks this is the fucking Hyatt. He frowns, smacks his lips, brings a mop and fastidiously smears the stuff around to no effect. The last call is announced over the loudspeakers. The red haired one is mumbling incoherencies and the manager comes over to tell me to drag my friend outside before he messes the joint up any further. What? I don't have a chance to explain. The colorin is being dragged by his left arm while he clings onto me with his right, towing me along like an anchor.

Outside. I flap my arms like a deranged hen for five minutes before a cab stops. I push the red-haired bur-

Fallout from Vancouver

Obviously new text will go in here. April in the Bay Area, and for the third season in a row I'm blissfully free of allergies. Who needs an immune system, anyway? Sure, *Pneumo-cystis* is a drag, but those pesky white blood cells were always overreacting to every possible allergen. Especially to those acacia trees with their lurid yellow blossoms and buckets of plant jizz. Nope, none of that, just kick back and relax—whoa! What are those things in the sky... buzzards? Oh yeah, I'm selling my life insurance policy. I guess they smell green in the air, and not just the verdure of spring.

Viatication is the selling of your life-insurance policy, either an individual or group policy, for cash payment while you're still alive. It has become quite popular, especially now that many states have revised their tax laws in the favor of viatication. This is my own saga: far from being an E-ticker ride but an interesting experience nevertheless.

Deciding to viaticate your policy starts with some soulful contemplation. The first thing was that I had to face my impending mortality from an unexplored angle. It was as though signing the paperwork obliged me to die, which is silly because I'm gonna die someday. On the other hand, you can think of viatication as taking ownership of your own death and using it to improve the quality of whatever time you have left. Next is the citizenship issue: do you want to deprive your dear grey-haired mother (father, grandma etc.) of their just due? Well, it's not really their due anyway. In

my case, the decision was relatively easy: Mom and Dad, the beneficiaries of my policy, don't really need the money, whereas I'm on the dole.

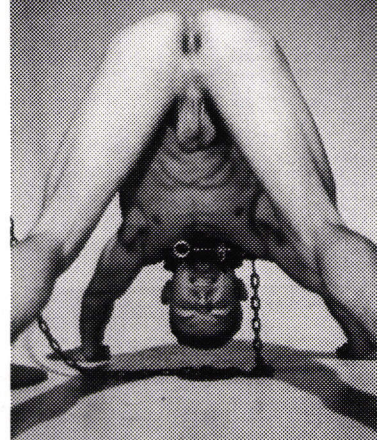
Finally, there's a little roulette. The closer to death's door you are, on an actuarial basis, the more moolah you get. You don't want to cash in too early for a measly 50% (two-year life expectancy). On the other hand, if you wait for that 80% (six-month life expectancy), you might croak before you can enjoy it all. I was pretty sick at the moment, so the time seemed right.*

The first thing I did was leaf through some queer mags in search of viatical ads. This involved enduring some truly loathsome perfumed fragrance ads in the *ADVOCATE* and *OUT MAGAZINE*, but I survived. I came up with the names of twenty companies. There are over one hundred such firms advertising intermittently in local and national rags, so the number you come across will vary.

Even twenty out of a hundred is a bit much, so I used some admittedly arbitrary standards to winnow some out. Did they fail to include an 800 number? Well, they obviously don't want my business badly enough. Did they just list the phone number with no address? Hmm, must be hiding something. Finally, how cute were the boys in the ad? Very important you know. After applying Wulfie's Razor, I had ten possibilities left.

I started making phone calls and supplied the pertinent information: name, address, phone number, face value of the policy, and last CD4 count. I was "lucky" in this respect;

We want your booty!



That's right, you've got something that we want. We want your stories, both real and imagined. We want your recipes, both sweet and savory. And most of all, we want your tender (or interestingly toughened) flesh for future Page-Two Boys and Centerfolds. Hell, we'd just like to hear from you. Voicemail us at (510) 533-3412. Snailmail us at P.O. Box, 30564, Oakland, CA 94604, or email us at dpnmail@blahblah.com. Pictures are best emailed in high-res JPEG format, or something that can be read by Adobe Photoshop.

If you use the slowpost, please have pity upon your poor editors, and don't send us anything that's irreplaceable. We're senile and may not remember to send it back. Photocopies of photographs are fine to whet our appetite; if we decide that we want to use your material, we can make more concrete arrangements for shipping your originals.

As usual, we can't rustle up much more than fame, but we can shower you with fabulous DPN merchandise, not available in any stores.

needs space before Box;
needs one fewer space after Box

SP

Page 6

dpn@crux.vip.best.com

Poor Pariah's Almanac

My Life for \$ale

BANK CAPS

Ah, April in the Bay Area, and for the third season in a row I'm blissfully free of allergies. Who needs an immune system, anyway? Sure, *Pneumocystis* is a drag, but those pesky white blood cells were always overreacting to every possible allergen. Especially to those acacia trees with their lurid yellow blossoms and buckets of plant jizz. Nope, none of that, just kick back and relax—whoa! What are those things in the sky... buzzards? Oh yeah, I'm selling my life insurance policy. I guess they smell green in the air, and not just the verdure of spring.

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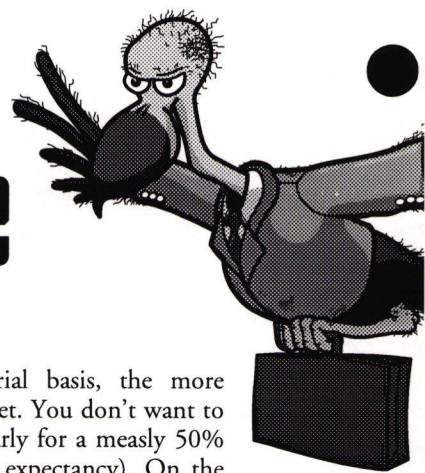
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is MAGAZINE part of our's name? If not, it shouldn't be in bank caps

My Life for Sale

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name, address, phone number, face value of the policy, and last CD4 count. I was "lucky" in this respect; my last count, taken just before I started a protease inhibitor, was an alarming 1 (one). The phone demeanors of the sales reps varied from jovial to bland. One gentleman (the jovial one) clapped his hands in delight upon hearing my last count; I could imagine the thoughts of sugarplums dancing in his head. Another (the bland one) sounded as though he would really rather be doing something else. One was very helpful, suggesting some alternatives to viatication [see

the box to the right]. One nice saleswoman suggested that I limit the number of completed applications to three, lest my physician drown under the resulting deluge of paperwork. "If you do send more than three," she said, "you might not want to trust the doc with life-or-death decisions for a while." Well, this isn't just for me, I thought, this is journalism. I requested packets from all ten companies, and they began to arrive.

Another round of elimination was in order. Two of the companies failed to send their packets overnight, showing an obvious lack of urgency. Into the round file. After reading a free booklet that I had ordered, I decided to avoid the two broker-based companies (see the box above for reasons). Two more gone. I filled out the six amazingly non-standardized forms, had the proper pages notarized, and sent them off. The odds are you'll need a notary for your application, call your local, AIDS benefits organization for the name of a reasonably priced notary. I needed to have ten separate signatures vouched for. One application came with a videotape showing a handsome stud-who didn't look like he needed to worry about dying just yet, but maybe he was riddled with emergent lymphoma-gravely weighing all the facts before making his decision.

One week later, my doctor called to yell at me. "Six applications! Do you know how much paperwork..." Well, I had been warned. Several of the apps that he was filling out wanted to now if I had requested a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order to be in my records. I told him to say yes, and then wondered why they wanted to know. Aha, I thought, viatical companies probably lower their bids if they think you're likely to linger on expensive life support too long before expiring.

After another week I received three bids, ranging from 74% to 77%, plus one that

started out as "79%" but then deducted some hefty "fees", leaving the final award at 75%. Two others declined to accept my case, which was interesting. My former employer had switched the carriers of my policy six months before. The reconstituted policy came with a two-year suicide exclusion, and I guess I looked like a risk. I'll admit that there's something strange sounding about adding any kind of exclusion to a policy that has never lapsed, but I doubted that quotes from those two companies would have been any higher than the

ones I had already received. Both those companies were owned by large mainstream insurers, which may account for their caution. I accepted the highest offer and signed my life away

What was supposed to take ten days took over a month. While I paced the floor, my sales rep did a nice job keeping me informed of every Byzantine twist and turn as the policy wended its way through the

bowels of my insurance carrier. Every bureaucratic step had bogged down by the fact that viatical settlements are flooding the regular insurance industry, catching them off guard, ill prepared, and suspicious.

Keep that delay in mind and plan accordingly. After several nervous weeks, the payment was finally wired to my account. Whoopee! Now the thoughts of sugarplums (and other less wholesome things) are dancing in my head! -B.T.

- ① Format
- ② Initial and Bank Cop
- ③ "Consider the Facts"
- ④ "Counterpoint"
- ⑤ Pix and captions
- ⑥ Appended text may run to next page (4 pp) - 2 spreads

We've got "Viatication Boy" and "We Want Your Booty" ready

feelings

COUNTERPOINT

People have a lot of irrational feeling about viatical settlements. Here are a few comments that I've heard, and some responses.

Viatical settlements are ghoulisb. Yeah, so are medicine, the funeral industry, and most of the world's religions.

Viatical companies are greedy. So? So are medicine, the funeral industry, and most religions. Do you think you can enjoy your policy's full value after you've stopped breathing? You usually get a decent percentage of your policy, especially if you shop around.

Viatical companies take advantage of your death. So do probate court and the hordes of bargain hunters who will paw through your treasures at the estate sale. In truth, viatication can actually keep alive a policy that might otherwise have lapsed by taking over any regular payments. That leaves one less monthly expense to worry about, and explains why regular insurance carriers aren't thrilled with viatication: If your policy had lapsed, your beneficiaries wouldn't get anything, allowing to insurer to pocket all of your regular premiums.

You're not in any state of mind to make such an important decision. What? And you are? Are you even HIV positive? If you will excuse me, that's patronizing as well as a load of unmitigated crap. If you're competent enough to make a will, you're competent enough to viaticate. Make sure that you are as informed as possible, and you'll make the right choice.

You may have guessed that I'm pro-viatication. You may also remember that DPN has carried full-page ads from American Life Resources, a viatical settlement company. Lest you think that has compromised my own journalistic integrity, you should know that American Life was one of the firms that declined to take my policy.

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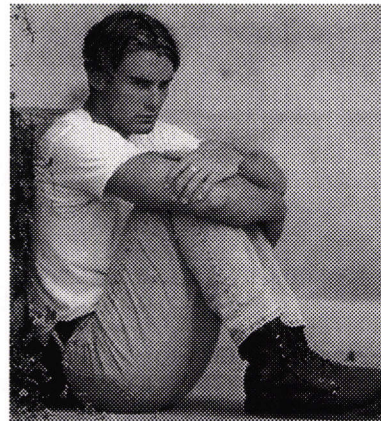
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This was the cutest of the many Anguished Boys to appear in the various ads or brochures.

Page ##

"Visit new places, see new faces, fulfill a dream, or dispose of [a] debt." —Viatical Benefits Foundation



name, address, phone number, face value of the policy, and last CD4 count. I was "lucky" in this respect; my last count, taken just before I started a protease inhibitor, was an alarming 1 (one). The phone demeanors of the sales reps varied from jovial to bland. One gentleman (the jovial one) clapped his hands in delight upon hearing my last count; I could imagine the thoughts of sugarplums dancing in his head. Another (the bland one) sounded as though he would really rather be doing something else. One was very helpful, suggesting some alternatives to viatication [see the box to the right]. One nice saleswoman suggested that I limit the number of completed applications to three, lest my physician drown under the resulting deluge of paperwork. "If you do send more than three," she said, "you might not want to trust the doc with life-or-death decisions for awhile." Well, this isn't just for me, I thought, this is journalism. I requested packets from all ten companies, and they began to arrive.

Another round of elimination was in order. Two of the companies failed to send their packets overnight, showing an obvious lack of urgency. Into the round file. After reading a free booklet that I had ordered, I decided to avoid the two

CONSIDER THESE FACTS

- All viatical companies will ask your doctor to estimate your lifespan. Most will be tactful enough not to volunteer to you what they wrote down. If that particular number is likely to bother you, it might be best to tell your doctor beforehand that you don't want to hear it.
- A small number of insurance carriers offer something called an accelerated benefits plan. This gets the money in your hand as viatication does, but without the middleman. The resulting payback is higher—as high as 90%, but your estimated life expectancy has to be pretty short. It doesn't hurt to ask your insurer.
- Group plans through your current or former employer are usually eligible for viatication. This is the type of policy that I cashed in.
- If you are concerned about the beneficiary of your policy needing the cash, you can viaticate only a portion of your policy's face value and leave the rest to the loved ones.
- Viatical firms come in two flavors, corporations and brokers. With a corporation, your payment is disbursed directly from the company's coffers. A broker, on the other hand, acts as an intermediary between you and a third party who wishes to purchase your policy as an investment.
- The brokering of viatical settlements is heavily regulated or even forbidden in many states. This is because a broker may share your otherwise confidential medical records with literally hundreds of potential investors. These people often lack medical experience, and may be dissatisfied if you beat the odds and don't die on schedule. There have been cases of viators being harassed by their policy purchasers (who are, no doubt, yuppie scum).
- Consult your accountant to see how a viatical windfall will affect your taxes. This is where brokering has the advantage. Life insurance awards are usually tax-free. Therefore, a loan against your policy is also tax-free. Tax law, however, is constantly changing and varies from state to state, so ask the right questions. A rich (and trustworthy) friend can give you a loan in exchange for being made the beneficiary.
- Consult a social worker to see how that windfall will affect your needs-based entitlements such as Medicare or food stamps.
- Think about what you plan to do with all those green crinklies. Spend wisely and get the most enjoyment out of it.
- You can receive a free booklet from the National Viatical Association, an industry funded group, that will answer some questions. Call them at (800) 741-9465.

broker-based companies (see the box above for reasons). Two more gone. I filled out the six amazingly non-standardized forms, had the proper

pages notarized, and sent them off. The odds are you'll need a notary for your application, call your local AIDS benefits organization for the

And a now week of Amphoterrible infusions. Satisfied?

eh?

Page ##

and
trusting
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happened as I was opening the door to my apartment to leave for the day. I have come to welcome that gut-wrenching, vice twisting convulsive state as an integral part of my daily ritual. Once my puke is complete, I know I can go on with my planned activities. The vomit itself is sometimes a horrific yellow, sometimes a greenish bile that I swear must have begun its journey at the precipice of my intestines. Defying gravity, it sometimes slides, sometimes erupts through or beside every major organ in my body until it comes plopping out into the chemically treated blue sea of my toilet bowl. It's really a Linda Blair experience.

It's thick. It's mucousy. And it's a daily reminder that I have HIV. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. When I was on AZT, I resented being reminded five times a day that I was infected. But this daily ritual doesn't have the same effect. Perhaps because it's natural and not sanctioned by the medical community. Perhaps I'm just older and hopefully a little wiser and feel better about myself. So I use the reminder, once I stop sweating and pull my head out

of the throne, to ensure that I make the most out of the day.

I don't want to quell the aspirations of all the aspiring arm-chair doctors, but I have had this condition looked into. First response from my Primary Care was that it was a lifestyle problem. So I gave up coffee. Still puked. (Went back on coffee.) Then I gave up spicy food. Still vomited. I got more sleep. More of the same. I switched vitamins and changed medications, changed my morning routine, changed my evening routine, drank lots of water, drank less water, stopped eating red meat, slept on the other side of the bed and even, for a short while, gave up booze. Nothing has worked.

My Primary Care wanted to continue looking for the cause. We went through tests and more tests, but, of course, he came up empty. Finally, even though he wanted to continue searching, I gave up and began accepting my fate. Though it still bothers him, I think I'm finding a contentment level with the yellow slime that starts my day.

In the end, I guess it could be much worse. And someday will be. So for now, I just go on. But if you'll excuse me, there's a screwdriver being twisted in my gut right now.

Technojargon

We're pleased to announce that the traditional inverse relationship between the speed of our processors is still inversely proportional to our publishing schedule.

Wulfie is still deliriously happy with his PowerMac 8500 upgrade, while Tommy grumpily makes do with his dog of a Quadra 660AV, whose only positive design feature is that it fits tidily underneath the printer. Even so, it's got bad feng shui.

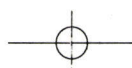
We still work with the usual suite of software found in cybernetic dens of iniquity everywhere.

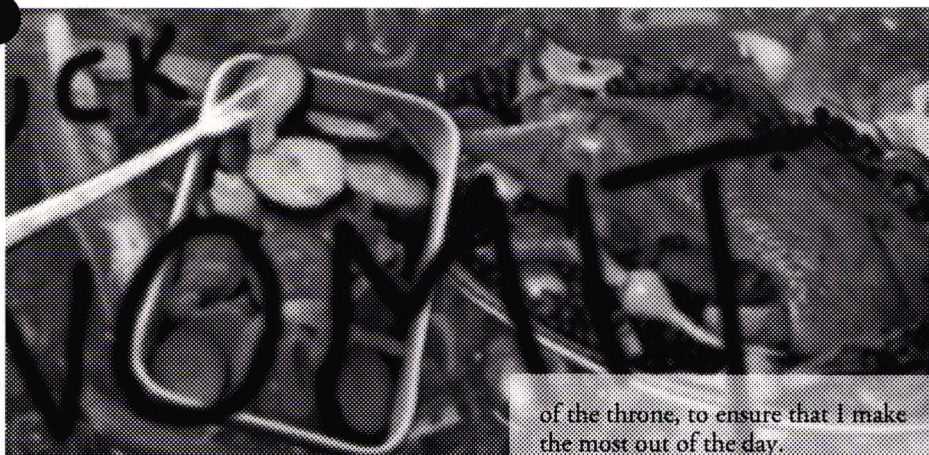
P.S. Tim Gill sucks bolo ties.

SP
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including
the one
from the
evil company
that offers
no
non-profit
discounts.

Ralping should not be confused with Rolfling, an intense form of massage that may leave you wanting to ralph when its over.





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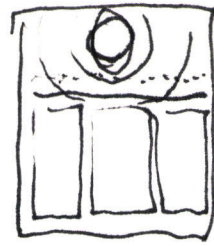
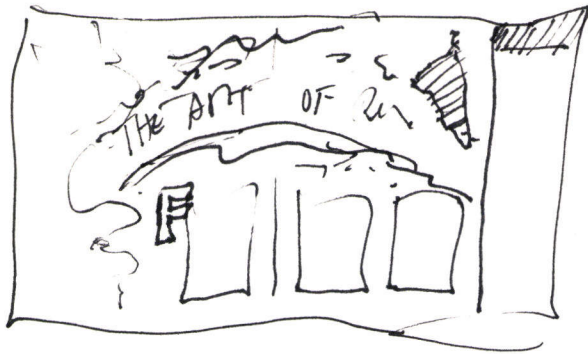
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Ralping should not be confused with Rolling, an intense form of massage that may leave you wanting to ralph when its over.

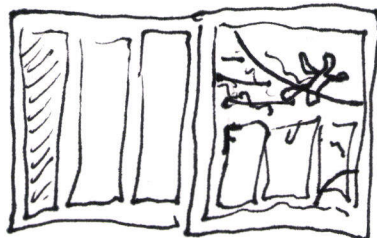
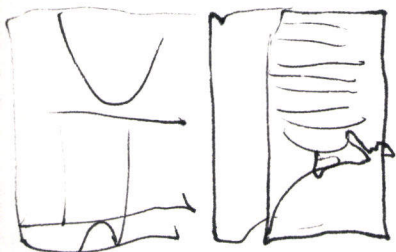




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The Fine Art of Ralphing

by Christopher Paw

For the past three years I've begun each and every glorious day with a horker hurl. Sometimes it happens first thing. I find myself rising from my slumber, stumbling into the bathroom and diving head first into the toilet. Sometimes it happens when I'm showering, or shaving, or even when I'm trying to enjoy the first dump of the day. It has even

Page ##

Here's your editors' favorite... "Call Ralph on the big white phone." (Women, apparently, call Ruth.)

didn't have health insurance. For example, you'd charge me \$42.59 for 10 mL of Crolom 4% (NDC 24208-0300-10) when I had no insurance, and \$32.00 now that I have a Blue Cross Plan. My current insurance requires me to pay for prescription drugs myself; I'm later reimbursed by my insurer. (I receive no reimbursement for the first few prescriptions because of a deductible.)

With or without insurance, I've paid Walgreens in cash for my prescription drugs. If anything, Walgreens job is more time-consuming now that I have an insurance; your staff fills out a form each time I have a prescription filled. It seems cruel to me that you require more from those who don't have insurance to pay more for their drugs. I'd love to know why you do this. Why is it that you can't charge anyone \$32.00 for 10 mL of Crolom 4%, for example?

sincerely,
Tom Ace.

June 18, 1996

Dear Mr. Ace:

Thank you for taking the time to write us. I apologized that you received no response to the letter you sent to our store at 498 Castro St. I will make inquiries to find out why they did not answer your original request.

To address your question regarding prescription pricing, Walgreens strives to keep our prescription prices low and fair. The pricings not only reflect price comparisons of our competitors in the market place, but also consider our op-

erational costs. (i. e., rent/real estate, taxes, and cost of living).

As far as pricing for an insurance plan, the basis for our prescription charges is determined by contract negotiations between our company and the insurance company or their agent. The details of our contracts are confidential, but some of the considerations are: number of people in the plan, market share, sales, plan specific costs, and changes in labor costs. These main points determine the purchasing power of an insurance company.

Again, I apologize that you received no response to your first letter. I hope this explanation is helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Perry D. Don, R.Ph.

Manager—Third Party Operations

Sorry, Walgreens, but your explanation is not helpful to me, nor to anyone without insurance who needs prescription drugs. If, as you say, "Walgreens strives to keep prescription prices low and fair" you must see something wrong with uninsured customers subsidizing those with insurance. Call me naïve and idealistic, but I don't think that's fair.

Please understand that I don't mean to single out Walgreens, or even pharmacies in general. Inequities of this sort are commonplace in American health care. The next time a politician says our health care system is fine and doesn't need any attention, send him or her a copy of this article. —T.A.

DPN is good for you!



Yes indeed, subscribing to DPN is the philosopher's stone, the very elixir of life itself. Just knowing that the next issue is due any year now will give you one more reason to cling to this mortal existence.

DPN makes the ideal gift for friends and relatives. DPN is refreshing to the palate, contains no tropical oils, and goes with the decor of just about any room in the house. (Well, some people think it's only fit for the bathroom.) A subscription for the next four issues costs only \$10, a whole \$2 off what you would pay at the news stand.

Unlike store-bought copies, your subscription arrives in a discreet envelope, and we don't share our mailing list with anyone. Fill out the subscription form on page ##, and begin a new adventure. You'll be glad that you did.



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YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!

Adventures with the "Pharmacy America Trusts"

For a short while last year, your Humpy Editor was in between insurance plans and noticed that pharmacies took that as a cue to charge more for prescription drugs. In one case, I paid \$42.59 for a drug that used to cost \$32.00. The pharmacy made \$12.59 more profit every time they sold the drug to a hapless customer without insurance.

The same scene is repeated at prescription drug counters across the country: customers without health insurance pay more, in effect subsidizing those fortunate enough to have insurance. This inequity is maintained by the bargaining power of insurance companies, who can negotiate low prices because they represent large groups of consumers. Even so, insurance companies don't

tell the pharmacies what to charge customers without insurance—the pharmacies decide that themselves. I decided to write a letter to the Walgreens store at 18th and Castro in San Francisco. For those who haven't been to this particular Walgreens, it's a little different than the ones in the heartland of America. Not only can you get an AZT prescription filled there at 3:00 in the morning, you can also buy hot lube. However, answering letters about cruel pricing policies is evidently not one of their services. After six weeks of no response, I sent a copy of the same letter to Walgreens corporate offices in Illinois (where the local stores probably don't sell hot lube). They wrote back; my letter and their response appear below.

April 10, 1996

(to Walgreens in San Francisco)

May 28, 1996

(to Walgreens corporate offices in Deerfield, Illinois)

Dear Walgreens:

I noticed that you charged me more for prescription drugs recently when I didn't have health insurance. For example, you'd charge me \$42.59 for 10 mL of Crolom 4% (NDC 24208-0300-10) when I had no insurance, and \$32.00 now that I have a Blue Cross plan. My current insurance requires me to pay for prescription drugs



"Normally, \$32.00... but for you, \$42.59!"

THE ART OF RALPHING

by Christopher Paw

For the past three years I have begun each and every glorious day with a horker hurl. Sometimes it happens first thing. I find myself rising from my slumber, stumbling to the bathroom and diving head first into the toilet. Sometimes it happens when I'm showering, or shaving or even when I'm trying to enjoy that relieving first dump of the day. It has even happened as I was opening the door to our apartment to leave for the day. I have come to welcome that gut-retching, vice twisting convulsive state as an intrigal part of my daily ritual. Once my puke is complete, I know I can go on with my planned activities. The vomit itself is a horrific yellow, sometimes green bile that I swear be-

gins it's journey at the precipice to my intestines. Defying gravity it sometimes slides, sometimes erupts through or beside every major organ in my body until it comes plopping out into the chemically treated blue sea of my toilet bowl. It really is a Linda Blair experience.

It is thick. It is mucousy and it is a daily reminder that I have HIV. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. When I was on AZT, I resented being reminded five times a day that I was infected. But this daily ritual doesn't have the same effect. Perhaps because it's natural and not sanctioned by the medical community. Perhaps because it only happens once a day. Perhaps I'm just older and hopefully a little wiser and feel better about myself. So I use the reminder to ensure I make the most out of the day. (Once I stop sweating and get my head out of the throne.)

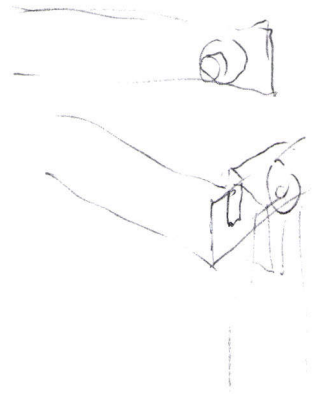
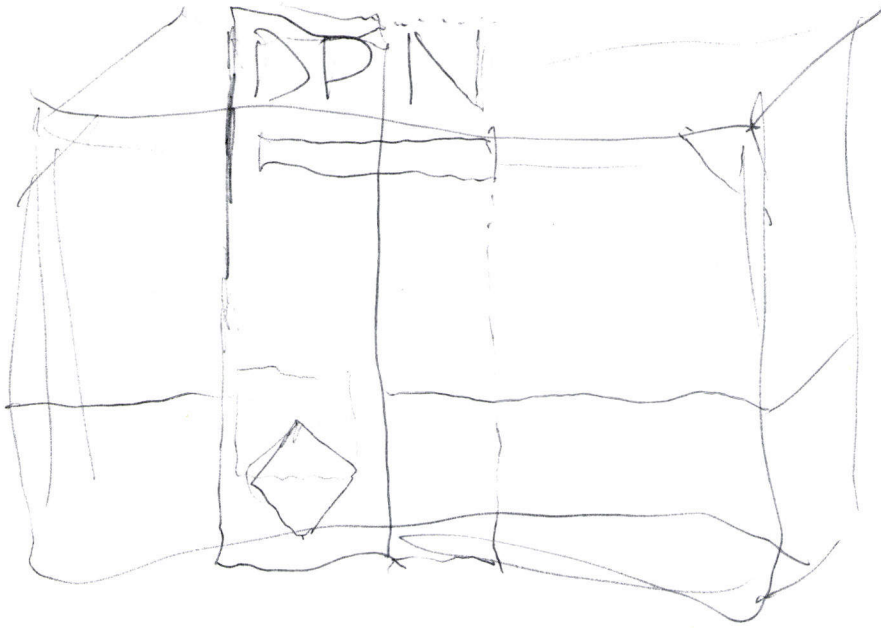
Not to quell the aspirations of all the aspiring arm-chair doctors, but I have had this condition looked into. First response from my Primary Care was that it was a lifestyle problem.

So I gave up my coffee (for a couple of weeks). I still puked. Then I gave up spicy food (the chronic thrush means I eat more so I can at least taste my food). Still vomited. I got more sleep. More of the same. I switched vitamins and changed medications, changed my morning routine, changed my evening routine, drank lots of water, drank less water, stopped eating red meat, slept on the other side of the bed and even, for a short while, gave up my booze. Nothing has worked.

My Primary Care wanted to continue looking for the cause. We went through tests and more tests. But, of course, he came up empty. Finally, even though he wanted to continue searching, I gave up and began accepting my fate. Though it still bothers him, I think I'm finding a contentment level with the yellow slime that starts my day. In the end, I guess it could be much worse. And someday will be. So for now, I just go on. But if you'll excuse me, there's a screwdriver being twisted in my gut right now.

Ralping should not be confused with Roling, an intense form of massage that may leave you wanting to ralph when its over.

to



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there was what became my own private harem of Haitian boys, all with huge, uncut (but very drippy) cocks so hard that I just had to bend over and take them all. Of course no one had any rubbers, but truthfully boys, what would you have done?

The force with which they fucked my face and ass caused me to bleed profusely again from my butt and mouth, and I had pounded my peter so hard that it was a bloody mess too! I needed another transfusion and I had heard about this person who would one day be famous for having supplied blood to now legendary Ryan White, so off I went to Indiana for a refill!

After all this, I decided that I needed a vacation. I hopped a flight to New York, and while onboard I met this really groovy jet-setting flight attendant named Gaetan Dugas, who fucked me somewhere over Cleveland (giving a whole new meaning to the term "in-flight entertainment"). He was going on to LA, but before we parted, he gave me a list of names and addresses belonging to his friends on the West

Coast and Fire Island. I landed in both places and once again fucked myself into a silly stupor!

I left Fire Island, and on my way home I reached in my pocket looking for some dope, but found a unopened letter from my Mom that had been included in my Christmas present. Was I ever shocked. I discovered that twenty-seven years ago, my Mom-and-apple-pie Mom had been an IV drug user, a dope fiend...a junkie, when she carried me in her womb. Why had she waited all these years to share this intimate detail of her life with me?

I finally got home. Tired and exhausted, I was about to fall asleep when I reached back to scratch my ass. Ouch! There it was, the horrible evidence of infection, an *inflamed mosquito bite! A fucking diseased mosquito bit me on my asshole!* And that's how I became an infected faggot.

W. Wayne Karr/IFP blah blah blah...

Page 4

L.A.

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a

Do I Remember the Day I Became **AN INFECTED FAGGOT?**

by W. Wayne Karr

Bank caps
People often ask me, "Wayne, do you know when you became and infected faggot? Do you know how you became HIV positive?" Well, my answer to that is "*Of course I do!*" How could I not recall what was probably the most important and significant single event of my own miserable life?

Let's see...it was Jesus' 2014th birthday, so I guess that puts us somewhere around Christmas, 1981. The only thing I wanted for

Christmas was cock, and lots of it, but all I got was a package of underwear and pair of socks from my Mom. *¡Que triste! ¡Que latima!* I was so depressed that I grabbed my leather and my toybag and went off to the baths to give myself that Big Gift.

Needless to say, I got my cock (actually several), and in addition, I drank gallons of warm golden piss, to say nothing of the multiple partner scat scene, my cock being pierced and bathed in warm blood, and my nipples being nearly ripped off of my chest...oh, sorry, I digress. Well, someone had shoved his Crisco®-laden fist up my ass as I was sucking

on amyl, ethyl, and Fred (all at the same time!), but alas and alack, he forgot to take his studded and razor-bladed glove off, and it got stuck somewhere on the wrong side of my sphincter as he was trying to remove his arm from my hungry hole!

This of course constituted a major emergency, so I was rushed to the emergency room at San Francisco General Hospital where I was attended by the Space-AIDS suited Dr. of Doom, Lorraine Day. She had protected herself from contaminated aerosolized blood products, but not me, self-centered pig that she is! My penis was bleeding pro-

Bergalis was sharing the same room. She told me about this *fabulous* dentist in Florida—Dr. David J. Acer—so I checked myself out of the hospital and hauled my ass off to Dr. Acer, who for some unknown reason extracted five teeth, when only one was hurting! I noticed that all of his equipment was a dirty red color, but who can be bothered with little details like that? I was hurting and he fixed me, and not just my toothache, either.

I left Dr. Acer's and since I was in Florida I thought that I'd head to the coconut grove on Key Biscayne via a shortcut that I knew. On the way, my extractions began to hurt, so I copped a little heroin to take the edge off, and went to the shooting gallery downtown on Southwest 8th street—*calle ocho*, as it's so fondly referred to. I threw my smack into a bottle-cap cooker lying on the floor of the gallery, where a lovely group

of people next to me offered me their syringe, I having so carelessly left mine at home.

As I was saying, I knew about this shortcut to the Key Biscayne coconut grove which took me through the ground of the Palacio de Viscaya. I was trying to find my way through the jungle-like foliage when a strange little green monkey jumped down on me from nowhere and bit my already bloody penis! Fortunately, when I finally got out of all that thick undergrowth, I found a US. Government Clinic of the sorts where they were experimenting with viruses and monkey bites, where they assured me that the injection that they gave me was especially effective on faggots.

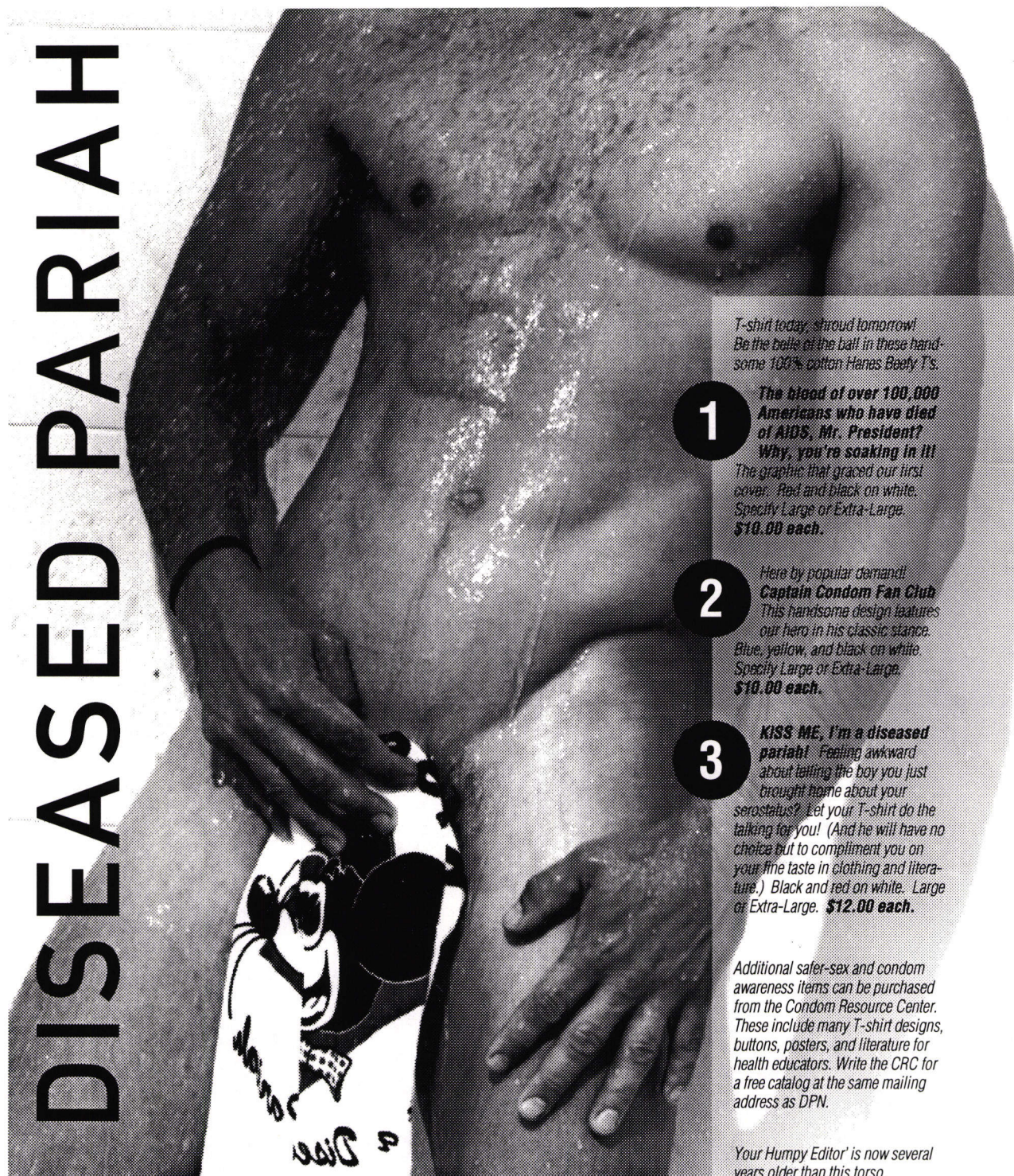
I finally arrived at the coconut grove and to my delight and surprise

fusely—remember the piercings? I forgot to mention that the piercing device was an 8-penny nail. Just think, I could have gotten tetanus or something! Someone in the ER decided that I needed a transfusion, and the next thing I knew they hooked me up with a transfusion from the queen in the next bed to me, who I'm sure was on her last T-cell, and only weighed sixty pounds. She was covered with sweat and fungus, babbling about mascara and eyeliner injections, rhinestone ben-wah balls, and something about being a hairdresser!

The ER scene finally came to a close, but while in the recovery room, I came down with a terrible toothache! Fortunately, Kimberly

extra space (?)

DISEASED PARIAH



T-shirt today, shroud tomorrow!
Be the belle of the ball in these hand-
some 100% cotton Hanes Beefy T's.

1

**The blood of over 100,000
Americans who have died
of AIDS, Mr. President?**
Why, you're soaking in it!
The graphic that graced our first
cover. Red and black on white.
Specify Large or Extra-Large.
\$10.00 each.

2

Here by popular demand!
Captain Condom Fan Club
This handsome design features
our hero in his classic stance.
Blue, yellow, and black on white.
Specify Large or Extra-Large.
\$10.00 each.

3

**KISS ME, I'm a diseased
pariah!** Feeling awkward
about telling the boy you just
brought home about your
serostatus? Let your T-shirt do the
talking for you! (And he will have no
choice but to compliment you on
your fine taste in clothing and litera-
ture.) Black and red on white. Large
or Extra-Large. **\$12.00 each.**

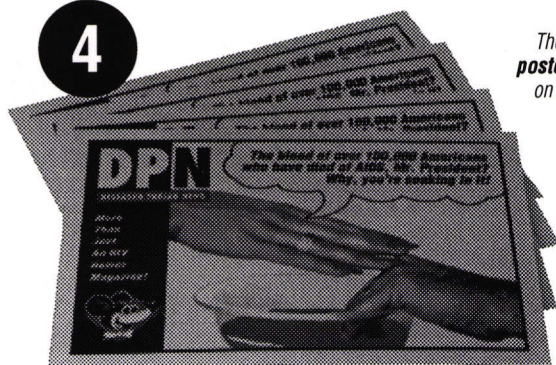
Additional safer-sex and condom
awareness items can be purchased
from the Condom Resource Center.
These include many T-shirt designs,
buttons, posters, and literature for
health educators. Write the CRC for
a free catalog at the same mailing
address as DPN.

Your Humpy Editor* is now several
years older than this torso.

Page 35

Honor your dead loved ones by buying DPN merchandise and burning it one their funeral pyres.

4



Thought-provoking **DPN postcards!** Red and black on matte finish cardstock.

Ask for **"You're Soaking in It!"** or **"Roy & Kimberly"**. **50¢ each.**

Please note that DPN #4 is no longer available.

5



HIV Merit Badges. Now there's no need to argue over who gets the comfiest seat at the support group, because your advanced state of decay will be obvious for all to see! The more merit badges you earn, the higher your standing in the HIV pathocracy. The following badges are available, with more to come: The classic "Kiss Me, I'm a Diseased Pariah"; T-cell milestones of 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, and 10; CMV retinitis; cryptococcal meningitis; KS; nausea; PCP; peripheral neuropathy; thrush; toxoplasmosis; and "I Survived AZT". 2-1/4 inches in diameter, in a variety of lurid colors. **\$1.00 each.**

6

Tired of those nasty old Trojans but don't know where to turn? Try **Captain Condom's Original Party Pack!** 15 assorted condoms, plus 3 lubricant samples and instructions. **\$4.00 each.**



I WANT IT ALL!

- ☐ Please **RENEW** my existing subscription for only \$10.00 (US\$12 Canada, US\$20 International).
- ☐ Please send me a **NEW SUBSCRIPTION** to DPN (four issues) for only \$10.00 (US\$12 Canada, US\$20 Int'l). Please start me with issue ____ #11, or ____ #12
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I would like to order the following exciting DPN merchandise (please specify sizes/quantities):

____ **"You're Soaking..."** T-Shirt at **\$10.00** each
 (____ size Large, ____ size Extra Large)

____ **Captain Condom** T-Shirt at **\$10.00** each
 (____ size Large, ____ size Extra Large)

____ **Kiss Me...** T-Shirt at **\$12.00** each
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____ **DPN postcards** at **50¢** each
 (____ "You're Soaking in It!"
 ____ Time for a new design?)

____ **HIV merit badges** at **\$1.00** each
 "Kiss Me, I'm a Diseased Pariah" and all of your favorite afflictions and gross conditions! Check off how many and of what kind on the back of this ordering coupon

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TOTAL for Merchandise and Magazines \$_____
 (California residents add appropriate sales tax)

Please make checks out to
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P.O. Box 30564, Oakland, CA 94604

ADOBE® STREAMLINE® 4.0 READ ME

This file contains last-minute product information and updates to the Adobe Streamline documentation. Please refer to the Getting Started chapter of the user guide for installation instructions. For performance information, see the user guide or online Help.

This document is organized into four sections:

- Getting Started
- Troubleshooting issues with Adobe Streamline Commands and Tools
- Troubleshooting Issues Involving Integration with Operating Systems and Other Applications
- Troubleshooting Issues with file formats (importing and exporting)

GETTING STARTED

IMPORTANT: Please complete your registration card and mail it today or use the on-line registration software provided with Adobe Streamline to register your copy. You must register to receive technical support and important product update information.

Serial Numbers

You can find the serial number on the registration card or on the first page of the user guide. If you are upgrading from an earlier version of Adobe Streamline for Macintosh®, please use the serial number from your previous version. If your serial number does not work, contact Adobe Customer Support at (800) 649-3875 or (206) 628-2749.

Customer Support

For general product information, you may contact Adobe Customer Support at (800) 649-3875 or (206) 628-2749.

Technical Support

When you register your product purchase, you are eligible for free technical support from a technician for one issue regarding your product. To get the phone number for your product, visit our web site at www.adobe.com or call 800 879-3219. When your

complimentary telephone support expires, Adobe offers options in the United States through the Adobe CustomerFirst™ program; for information, call 800-685-3652. Outside the United States and Canada, terms may vary. Contact your local subsidiary or distributor for details.

TROUBLESHOOTING ISSUES WITH ADOBE STREAMLINE COMMANDS AND TOOLS

The following sections describe known issues with Adobe Streamline commands and tools.

Acquiring Images using TWAIN scanner software

TWAIN is a cross-platform interface for acquiring images captured by certain scanners and frame grabbers. Using the Acquire command requires a scanner and the most recent driver for your scanner. If the Acquire command is grayed out in the File menu, you should first make sure that your scanner plug-in has been located for Streamline. Choose File > Preferences > Plug-ins and select the folder or directory that contains your scanner plug-in. The manufacturer of the TWAIN device must provide a Source Manager and TWAIN Data source for your device; otherwise the module will not work. Adobe Streamline supports the TWAIN_32, TWAIN32 and TWAIN.

Scanner plug-ins provided by your manufacturer may contain bugs that cause errors or unexpected results when used with Adobe Streamline. We have identified certain incompatibilities between Adobe Streamline and HP compatible TWAIN plug-ins. If you have problems using the scanner plug-in provided by your manufacturer, Adobe recommends that you use the plug-ins provided with Adobe Streamline. To use these plug-ins, choose File > Preferences > Plug-ins and select the Plug-ins Directory in your Adobe Streamline folder.

When acquiring an image with TWAIN scanner software, Adobe Streamline requires a minimum of 6MB RAM, and more if scanning a large image. When scanning an image, calculate the application RAM required using the following formula: $\text{Application RAM} = (\text{image size (MB)} \times 2) + 6 \text{ MB}$. You must allocate the additional 6 MB of RAM or Adobe Streamline will give the error message "Not enough memory to acquire image". To allocate more RAM, make sure Adobe Streamline is not running. Click once on the application icon (but do not relaunch the program) and choose File > Get Info. Enter a new value in the Preferred Size text box. Then relaunch Adobe Streamline.

Streamline Settings Dialog Box

Streamline does not automatically update Color/B&W and Conversion settings in the Settings dialog box when you open a new image. For example, if the Settings dialog box is set up for a color image and you open a black and white image, the Settings dialog

box still displays the settings chosen for the color image. However, Streamline will automatically convert the black and white image as Black and White Only, even though the Settings dialog box still displays settings for a color image.

If you saved any preferences or custom settings in Adobe Streamline 3.1, these preferences and settings will be lost if you launch Adobe Streamline 4.0. If you want to retain these preferences and settings for use with Adobe Streamline 3.1, choose System Folder/Preferences and move the Adobe Streamline™ Preferences to the Adobe Streamline application folder before launching Adobe Streamline 4.0.

Adjust Line and Adjust Curve tools

The Adjust Line and Adjust Curve tools move only lines and curves that are a part of closed paths. You cannot use these tools to adjust open paths.

Pencil, Line and Eraser Tools

When using the pencil, line and eraser tools, paths may be cut off if the cursor is moved quickly out of the active window. To draw or erase a line completely, slow down movement of the cursor.

Edge Smoothing Settings

Adobe Streamline is able to smooth the transitions between different colors to create high-quality conversions of continuous-tone images. As a general rule, if your artwork contains continuous-tone images, such as photographs, set the Edge Smoothing control in the Color Setup dialog box to Maximum. If your artwork contains sharply-defined color boundaries, set the Edge Smoothing control to None. The default setting, Medium, works effectively with most images.

Launching Adobe Streamline 4.0 from the Desktop

You cannot launch Adobe Streamline by dragging a file onto the Adobe Streamline 4.0 application icon. You must launch Streamline and open the file.

Number of Paths Decreases During Conversion

During the conversion of larger files, you may notice the number of paths reported by the progress bar actually decreases at times. You may also receive a message indicating that smaller paths have been discarded. At the end of the conversion, a

dialog box lists steps you can take to prevent loss or elimination of paths in future conversions. In most cases, simply allocating more memory to Adobe Streamline will alleviate this problem.

TROUBLESHOOTING ISSUES INVOLVING INTEGRATION WITH OPERATING SYSTEMS AND OTHER APPLICATIONS

The following sections describe known issues when using Adobe Streamline with various operating systems and other applications.

Running Adobe Streamline Over a Network

Adobe Streamline 4.0 is not designed or tested to be run when multi-launched over a network. To run Adobe Streamline on multiple systems, make sure that each system has its own copy of Adobe Streamline installed on the hard drive.

Drag and Drop and Copy and Paste with Adobe Photoshop® 4.0

There is a known incompatibility that occurs when dragging and dropping or copying and pasting converted artwork from Adobe Streamline 4.0 to Adobe Photoshop 4.0. An incorrect error message may appear saying that there is not enough memory to complete the request, even though insufficient memory is not the cause of this problem. To avoid this error, you should save the artwork as an Adobe Illustrator® file and then open the artwork in Adobe Photoshop. This problem will be addressed in a future release of Adobe Photoshop.

Drag and Drop or Copy and Paste with Adobe PageMaker® 6.0

There is a known incompatibility that occurs when dragging and dropping or copying and pasting converted artwork from Adobe Streamline 4.0 to Adobe PageMaker 6.0. This bug may force you to reboot your system. To import vector artwork from Adobe Streamline or other vector applications into Adobe PageMaker 6.0, save the artwork as an EPS file and place the file into Adobe PageMaker 6.0. This bug does not occur when dragging or copying Adobe Streamline artwork files into Adobe PageMaker 6.5.

TROUBLESHOOTING ISSUES WITH FILE FORMATS (IMPORTING AND EXPORTING

The following sections describe known issues when importing or exporting files with Adobe Streamline.

Thumbnails in the Open Dialog Box

Adobe Streamline 4.0 for Macintosh includes an option in the Open dialog box for viewing a thumbnail preview of a bitmap image before opening. To view a thumbnail, click Show Thumbnail in the Open dialog box. This uses a feature of the Macintosh operating System and thus is not available on Adobe Streamline for Windows“.

EPS Preview

If you save converted artwork as an Adobe Illustrator EPS file and create a preview, the preview displays the last saved version of the bitmap image. If you make changes to the bitmap image in Adobe Streamline, the preview will display these changes only if you save the bitmap image by choosing File > Save Raster Image As.

JPEG File Format

Adobe Streamline does not support the JPEG file format directly. However, if you are running Adobe Streamline on a Macintosh system with Apple QuickTime 2.5 installed, this extension enables you to open JPEG files using the Adobe Streamline Open dialog box. The “Open” button is replaced with “Convert” when you select a JPEG file. Apple QuickTime 2.5 launches and displays a dialog box which lets you choose where to save the converted file. The file is converted to a PICT, which can be opened in Adobe Streamline 4.0. If you are using Adobe Streamline for Macintosh and do not have Apple QuickTime 2.5 installed, use Adobe Photoshop or another image editing application to open and resave JPEG files in a supported format, such as TIFF or PSD.

Photoshop 2.0 and Earlier File Formats

Adobe Streamline supports the Adobe Photoshop 2.5 format and later. If you have images saved in an earlier Adobe Photoshop format, you must use Adobe Photoshop 2.5 or later to open and resave the images in a supported format in order to open the images in Adobe Streamline.

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A squawk from another room caused me to rise from my chair. A voice, not of human origin screeched, "See, it does get in." Richard sat up with a child-like smirk on his face. "Don't mind Gerone. He only repeats what he hears on the giggle box. He is engaged in a terror campaign against everyone because my last *carer* put him outside since my bout of pneumonia." My eyebrows raised in question and to allow for a break before I asked, "What happened to your previous carer?" Richard twisted his body in the direction of the bird and indicated that the answer would be found within the cage. "We're a double act," he grinned fiendishly.

"Oh my. I'm down with another of those spots. I'm sure they give them to me at the hospital. *'Here, have another spot, kiddo. Now you've got a matched set. Look at the way they fly across your stomach like plaster bluebirds on the wall!'*" he declared with a delivery deserved of a PLWA addressing the nation on the unsightliness of Kaposi's Sarcoma. "After all, a queen with KS is not a happy queen."

Again I am walking along an all-too-familiar street though it has been six weeks since I made this detour; since Richard. My life has transformed, and in all my woe I'm exhausted and miserable. My mind and the minds of men like myself want to return to the scenes of our crimes of passion. We play the games that we wanted to when we were boys, only now the stakes are higher. Each pleasure has a list of instructions and sometimes I think, "To Hell with..." and I could hear Craig interject, "For that's where you'll go."

Penciled in my diary for Friday is an appointment with my psychotherapist.

Pill Timer Incident



Your letters to the deaditors

The following message was left on DPN's answering machine. To get a feeling for the original, read this out loud in an angry, disturbed voice. Stick your finger down your throat a couple of times and the gagging tremble will complete the effect.

My name is [Surname], Dave [Surname] in [Someplace], Florida, Post Office Box 271828. I did in fact out of curiosity request a subscription to DPN, and now that I've seen it a couple times I have written you a letter and I've also phoned several times requesting that you stop this disgusting [pause] crap from coming to my attention. If you do not just stop my subscription immediately, I guarantee you I will start sending it to the postmaster in my town and I will make all kinds of trouble. This kind of crap sucks. Please consider this a request to discontinue my subscription immediately. Thank you.

Well, at least he didn't ask for a refund.

DEAR DPN EDITORS:

I have a few statements and questions from reading Issue #10. There are some of us (I am one) who have had less than 10 T-cells for the past year and have never had an OI yet. I have Wasting but that doesn't seem to count in many places—I'm just fading away. Why no OIs? Who knows—I'm no health nut; I even smoke—and they have tried to find some with those fun probings and biopsies but nothing ever shows up in lab reports. So I get the fevers, shills, and night sweats, but I don't earn many HIV merit badges. Maybe I'll just get one... and leave.

On page 37, your subscript states "You can get laid—just ask the editors how." Well, I'm asking. I haven't had a man in my bed in a long time—too long. Most of that has been avoidance due to diarrhea (I'm too embarrassed to wear diapers with someone next to me, not brave enough to risk an accident—just being considerate) and I had given up. However, I got lucky and won a spot in the Crixivan Lottery (never got lucky with the State Lottery) and I'll be damned but it has all but stopped the diarrhea problem. Now I've just got to find a man who'll go slow and easy—I'm like a virgin again (a year or two of "holding tight" will do that to you!) and it will take a while to get back to using those large dildoes in my drawer—and a man who will not mind the possibility of damp sheets in the morning or the lack of muscle on my bones. I'm not a late night or bar-hopping man (not for some time); must I go back to that?

Though I'm ordering my merit badges, I don't think that will help (just moving from HIV+ to AIDS seemed to scare many away—I don't keep my mouth shut—besides, the number and frequency of pill taking is hard to hide). It is transition time again and maybe I need to change where and how I meet new men (computer BBSing isn't working). I know I've got some good fucks left in me, and wouldn't mind a boyfriend (I'll get tired if I have to hunt up one-nighters all the time), even just a body next to me in bed would help. So please, what do you suggest?

sincerely,

PETER DiGUILIO
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

P.S. By writing to DPN and bearing my sex/relationship issues, does that mean I've gotten cryptococcal meningitis or dementia, and can qualify for another merit badge?

Your editors know how to get laid, but it sounds like you want a boyfriend, and that's another matter altogether. In any case, we recommend the DPN Meat Market—even though it's never worked for anyone we know.

DEAR DPN EDITORS:

I am writing in response to the article, "O.I. Merit Badges" by M.B. in the #10 issue.

I have a pretty good idea who your writer M.B. is, as I have read very similar articles in other Bay Area publications blasting the "Advera Guy".

Frankly, I am really tired of the hostile, angry and bitter whining of this writer. He continues to write about the "Advera Guy" with sarcastic compliments and then does his own medical examination based solely on a photograph. I would say it is very dangerous making such judgments, expressing such strong opinions and considering it factual without ever having talked to the "studmuffin" model directly.

We all know that appearances are deceiving when it comes to HIV and AIDS. There are so many of us who try our very best to maintain an appearance that is acceptable. Call it vanity, call it B.S., call it what you like—but in part, it does mean that some of us are doing what we know, or at least what we think we know is best. Because one chooses to be in an advertisement for a product doesn't

See? We'll publish your emissions as well as your submissions.

Page n+1

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mean he or she is a sellout as your writer seems to think.

I am the person that your writer is bashing. Yes, I am the "Advera Guy". I have been living with HIV for eight years now. I have had to work very hard at maintaining my health... including my appearance. I had to think long and hard about doing the ad for Advera, and I came to the conclusion that there is nothing deceptive or misleading about the advertisement. I knew there would be the possibility of some backlash, which in fact has occurred, but overall the response has been very good. It has allowed me the opportunity to speak out on television, in news articles, etc., around the world to help people better understand the truths and myths about this pandemic. I continue to work with Abbott Laboratories/Ross Products to do their part in making this product more easily available and affordable. I do not claim I achieved total success with this, but at least it is a stepping stone in the right direction.

I have been accused of being too healthy to use Advera. Wrong! I was using the product before the ad campaign and I continue to use the product daily. In a letter I wrote to the editor of another Bay Area publication I attempted to express my views, but only to be blasted by the same writer and being called "...a conservative Republican sellout..." Wrong! I am neither a Republican, a conservative, nor a sellout. Such judgments only cause barriers rather than build bridges. After a tremendous amount of therapy and coming to terms with living with this disease, I have chosen not to be bitter, angry, hostile or to place blame, because for me it is futile. This may be the path of survival for some, which I can re-

spect, so long as respect is mutual. We all have different approaches to how we live with HIV, and I think instead of attacking each other it would be much more constructive to learn from each other, celebrate our differences and find a common ground with which to build a foundation to work from. I am not suggesting we will always agree, nor should we. But attacking each other only fuels the true far right conservative movement which truly doesn't care and would rather see us destroyed instead of throwing pennies (and that's what it amounts to!) at our feet in an attempt to keep us out of their faces. Yes, we should be in their faces every day, but there are different methods of doing it. Again, let's not attack each other and be name calling our own, but working together to bring about long term effective change that truly benefits those of us living with this disease.

I have no regrets for having participated in the Advera ad campaign. In fact, I am quite proud of the campaign, as it has provided a platform for me to speak from. I am not suggesting my way is the only way, but it is my way—and it works. As long as I have the privilege of a semi-healthy body, mind and spirit, I will continue to speak out as I know how and as my conscience leads me.

Frankly, M.B., your name calling and labeling of me has provided opportunities I never expected. Also, I can't recall the last time I was called studly, or a studmuffin. Thank you! So, M.B., come down off your soapbox, continue doing the good work you do, but don't attack me for what I do. Furthermore, if I recall correctly, you even give credit to Advera for much of your weight gain. I would agree, Advera is not the best

tasting concoction in the world, but it does work—for some of us.

I suggest that before you allow a writer to attack or be name calling, that the writer should do his or her research about the person they are attacking. It's not just a pretty face on a page in a magazine, because there are heart, mind, spirit, and health concerns beneath the surface of that photograph.

sincerely,

CHRIS CRAYS

A.K.A.: ADVERA MAN,
ADVERA GUY, STUDMUFFIN,
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN

Sadly, we didn't get a response from Michael Botkin before he shuffled off his mortal coil, but we feel safe in saying he would've agreed with you that Advera "is not the best tasting concoction in the world."

DEAR ESTEEMED EDITORS,

I discovered your wonderful magazine when your cover on issue #10 of Jesse Helms caught my eye. Though I have never met the man, from what I have read and heard about him I have always felt death would be too good for him. It is hard to believe that anyone would follow and elect anyone so full of hate. To say the unbelievably ignorant unfounded and bigoted garbage that he utters in Congress and not be thrown off the floor amazes me. I thought the SLEAZY WISDOM article about him was really excellent. Often I have thought how I would like to send him a pint of my HIV-infected blood disguised in a wine bottle with a card saying, "Care of the Cigarette-Smoking Confederate Daughters of the South." and hope that he'd share it with Pat

Buchanan and all his other homophobic congressmen friends. But you are right, who wants to give them a maytr rally around. Needless to say after buying and reading that one copy of your magazine I am a fan and a subscriber.

But the real reason that I am writing is after reading some of the great articles in your magazine and the letters you receive to the editor, I thought that you and some of your readers might be interested in my unique AIDS experience.

I think that I am one of the few, if the only one, who can honestly say that AIDS has improved my life and made it better! When I discovered a KS spot on my chest after a biopsy and tested positive with a T-cell count in the twenties and falling, I was naturally a bit perturbed and depressed. But rather than wallow in self pity I faced it like a problem I had to solve and a deadline (pardon the pun) that I had to meet, and I researched all that I needed to know to live with AIDS. Within two weeks I got all my bloodwork done, started treatment and had written and received information from all the AIDS agencies in the country that offered support. During this time I informed all my closest friends that I had AIDS and told my family. I had expected shock and pity, but not also all the love and emotional support. My family and I are closer than ever. Whatever they might have felt about my homosexuality before, they forgot everything but the fact that their only son, and brother, might not be with them much longer. My aunts have prayer meetings and ask their individual

church groups to pray for me everytime my T-cells drop or I get a little ill with something. My father now tries to spend more time with me and takes me on trips to places out West that I have always wanted to visit

As for my friends, they give me their love and attention and never make me feel like an outcast. When they have parties they have food and drinks that will go well with my meds and unique appetite. I just wish they and other people who I tell about my condition wouldn't cry so much when I try to talk about my medical trials and pitfalls. I do however like to occasionally take advantage of this weakness that people have about discussing the virus and shock them with my frankness about it. I like to call myself "A Walking Bio-Hazard" just to see them cringe. I know that in some cases my situation is unique and I sound all Pollyanna, but until I discovered that I had AIDS I never knew what an effect my life has had on people or the extent of how I was loved.

But the best part of this virus is that because of it I met my lifemate and lover. I went to a weekend seminar over a year ago that is given for people who have recently been diagnosed or care for someone who is HIV infected. It was very empowering to be around all these people for the 48 hours that the seminar lasted. Although clinically I was in bad shape at the time, I haven't any opportunistic diseases except the one KS spot and a case of herpes. Physically I felt and looked good, and because of some awesome insurance coverage and the support of my family and friends I had no complaints. In the

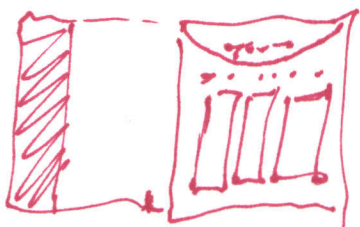
three months prior I had already had my fill of the whining and self-pity of other HIV infected people that I had recently encountered. I have always looked at my condition as I would any serious disease like cancer and the like. I have an attitude where I say, "I got it, it ain't going away, so deal with it." I am not going to be brought down by anyone. I went to this meeting looking for someone who shared this perspective. When he walked into the room, all massive pecs and handsome face, I knew I was in lust; something I never thought I'd feel again. He claims now that when he saw me the feeling was mutual. I won't bore you with the courtship but we haven't been apart since, and he is the best thing in my life. And, we both have HIV to thank for meeting each other, because we have both always said that we would've never met under different circumstances. Or, as I always tell people as I watch them cringe, "It took a deadly disease to bring us together"

I guess the message I am trying to send is that HIV and AIDS doesn't have to be a bum trip. For me, my life really didn't have any meaning until I discovered I was infected. Like anything in life, you got to make the most of it and find the adventure in the ups and downs the disease delivers you. I don't broadcast my condition to everyone, but if the subject comes up then, yeah, I tell all who will listen, "I got AIDS and my life couldn't be better!"

THOM PROCO
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

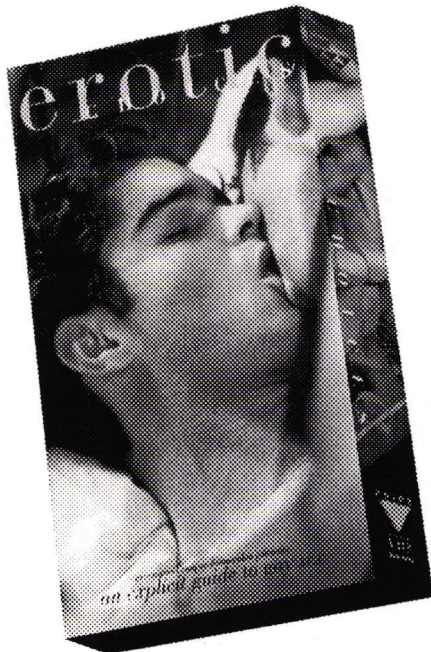
Oh yeah? Well, I got AIDS and became a famous magazine editor.

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Porn Potato Condom Corner

Before we get into the movie review, Porn Potato would like to clarify something. We don't duck difficult questions here at DPN, but there's a new one that's downright disturbing: Which one of you guys is Porn Potato? Porn Potato is shocked and saddened that, after all these years, his nature is not more obvious. However, rather than succumbing to his anxiety and committing suicide in a Pringle's® factory, he'll try to explain himself.




Erotic Choices ©1995 Alluvial Films.
 opened four eyes out of five.

Erotic Choices: Monty Python's Guide to Safer Sex

You see, the question is not really one of *who is Porn Potato*, but rather *who Porn Potato is*. Porn Potato is an amalgam of all of your hopes, fears, fetishes, and petty vanities. He is your id made flesh (or vegetable), channeled by one or more of the esteemed editors for each issue. In other words, Porn Potato is no further away than the reflection in your bathroom mirror, and no less real than the flickering blue light from your TV screen. Best of all, none of this requires any greater willing suspension of disbelief than, say, opera. After all, do you really believe in a pornworld where all high school coaches are hunky and devoid of pot bellies, where all buttoholes are naturally depilated and prelubricated, and where *everybody* seems to be a virgin? Then you believe in Porn Potato.

With that taken care of, we're going to try something a little different and review a piece of non-fiction from the United Kingdom: *Erotic Choices, a Guide to Better Gay Sex*.

The video opens in what must be the Addams Family's living room, a cross between the elegance of a Vermeer painting and the tackiness of a gothic novel's embossed cover.

Sitting in a richly upholstered chair in the middle of this cavern of dust, cobwebs, and tattered curtains is a skinny young man in nerdy glasses. Dorian Grey? No, the man in the shirt and tie is Dr. Jonathon Cartledge of London, who welcomes us to his little shindig. He gives us a brief summary of safer-sex guidelines, gently reminding us to be ever vigilant against broken rubbers and broken promises. Unfortunately, that is all we get to see of Dr. Cartilage, which is too bad. Porn Potato thought he was kinda cute.

Cut to a poolhall, where two young men with Aryan Nation hairdos are playing a game of eight-ball. They favour one another with steamy looks as they make clean shots with their long cues. A disembodied voice drones lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in perfect Queen's English ("What a piece of work is a man..."). Another voice at the subliminal end of audibility gurgles things like, "Suck... Ecstasy... Floating... First Time..." Overcome with lust, these two paragons of British manhood push aside the billiard balls and start to make out on the green felt, when a dumpy little

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*To continue, "...how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty. In form, in moving, how express and admirable.

man identified as Dr. Robert Flynn walks on-screen. Dr. Bob seems oblivious to the fact that this erotic scene continues despite his presence, both in the background and projected onto his white shirt and tie. He starts us off on this journey by informing us about male sexuality, but Porn Potato was too distracted by the boys making out behind him to remember what it was that he had to say. Something about there being more to a man than his dick.

Next we meet our main tour captain, another English clone by the name of Barry Laden. Mr. Barry isn't a doctor—we know that because he wears a T-shirt and dungarees. He wants to teach us the finer points of empathy, and Couple Number One are here to help. Picture a living room, a chez, and great white curtains billowing like spinnakers into the open space above the floor. Couple Number One condense out of thin air, materializing partially clothed and artfully draped across the chez. "Look into his eyes," Mr. Barry advises, "show him how you feel." As the boys do this, they think aloud, and we get to overhear all manner of salacious tidbits about their personal life. Mr. Barry instructs us in the finer points of kissing, foreplay, and tingly sensations while Couple Number One eagerly comply. Like the plot of any good porn movie, foreplay progresses to fellatio, of which Mr. Barry has much to share. He informs us that communication is important, but one doesn't have to shout "Suuuck mah dick!"

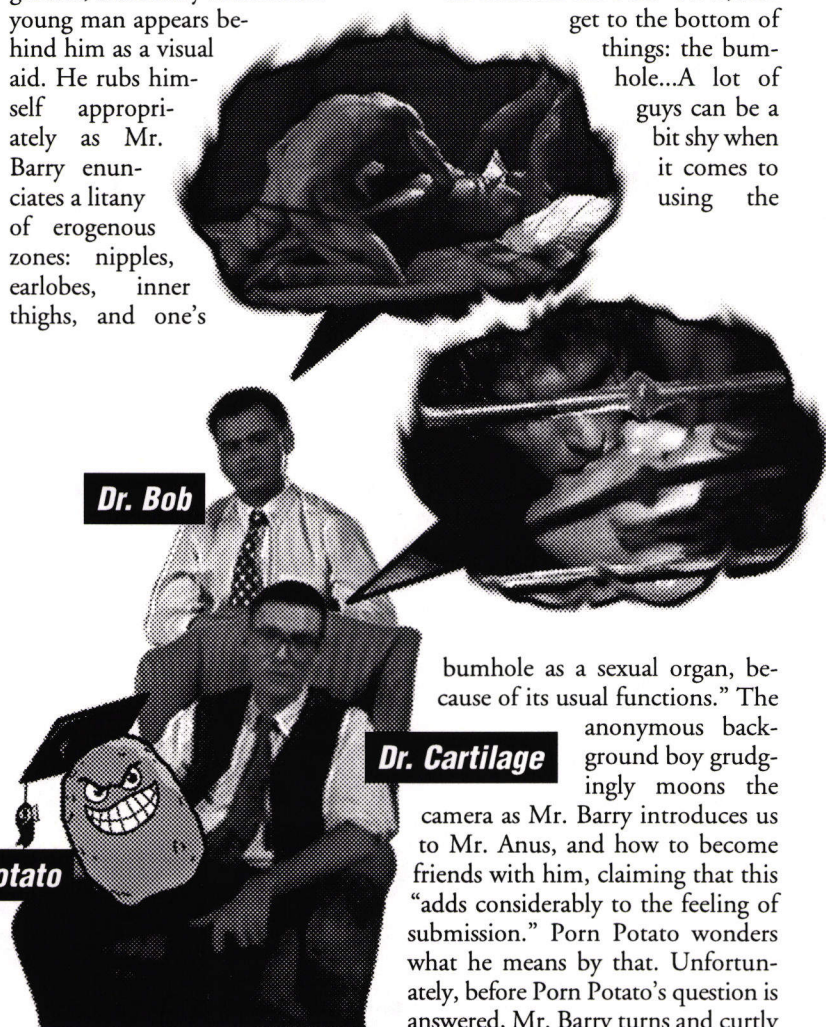
Texas-style to get the point across. There's no right way or wrong way to suck, he continues, and stresses the delights of versatility, "After all, what's good for the gander

is good for the gander." Summing up this lesson, Mr. Barry explains that the best orgasms take two hours to reach, and that for safety reasons one wants to come under controlled conditions. Porn Potato is not sure how much control he'd have after two hours, and wonders if Mr. Barry has a day job.

Now it's time to get to know our naughty bits (and not so naughty bits). As Mr. Barry stands in the foreground, a tastefully illuminated young man appears behind him as a visual aid. He rubs himself appropriately as Mr. Barry enunciates a litany of erogenous zones: nipples, earlobes, inner thighs, and one's

balls, "which are obviously precious" he adds cryptically. He then rattles off a battery of wanking techniques—whole hand, full-shaft basic hand, half-shaft fingertips only (maybe a triple somersault off the pommel horse?), as well as practical advice on the special needs of the cut versus uncut cock. It's also a good idea to practice banging the bishop with different kinds of lubes and condoms, in order to find the brand that fits and feels the best. "Now, let's

get to the bottom of things: the bumhole...A lot of guys can be a bit shy when it comes to using the



bumhole as a sexual organ, because of its usual functions." The anonymous background boy grudgingly moons the camera as Mr. Barry introduces us to Mr. Anus, and how to become friends with him, claiming that this "adds considerably to the feeling of submission." Porn Potato wonders what he means by that. Unfortunately, before Porn Potato's question is answered, Mr. Barry turns and curtly

In action, how like an angel; in apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.

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Hockey Night in Canada

I love Vancouver because of its winter, where prolonged afternoons drip into night, mossy pipes collect the cool tears of the season. In the winter I can be sheltered from the elements, hidden from public view, secure in a cocoon of layers and layers of clothing. I hate the summer. Mesmerized by the litany of drops, one by one, the loose figments of my imagination materialize, one by one. In winter, I'm allowed to dream. I go surfing through the channels, sometimes stopping in the soothing pools of screen blue. Click, click, noise, click, drop, drop, click. I see hockey players. You know, square heads on the sports section of the six o'clock news, trampling through the locker room, bare chested, sweating buckets. When the camera zooms into a violent close-up, I can almost taste the salty beads. Well, you can cry. me a river, I cried a river over you. Players talk about the game without making much sense at all I'm transfixed by their fractures, the pouty, succulent mouth that articulates insolently all that nonsense. Inspired by these distant flickering images I relieve myself

A hockey star comes into town incognito. He's a red-haired stud with a jaw line strong as a truck bumper and broad shoulders that could span from British Columbia to the Maritime if he laid down across the country. Ad mare jusque ad mare. An inaccessible beauty of whom only a pale reflection of the original is seen on TV. A glimpse enough to make the girls sigh. He plays hard, spits blood, curses tough fuck you, asshole-curves his lips, spits again, pumps his hands, and rams ahead like a locomotive. But now he has taken five days off, unsupervised, and he drives hurriedly to Vancouver. Not for practice, nor retreat, nor for interviews; nobody really knows he's come this way. He steps on the gas. By the time evening has started to go stale, he checks into a cheap downtown hotel-\$39 a night, checkout is 11 am-under a false name. He shakes off the rain and grips his key. The old woman at the reception desk thinks he's a pimp or a drug pusher. None of her business, really.

He takes a shower, barely squeezing his humanity under the drizzle. He lights up a cigarette, coughs (doesn't really smoke), puts it out, turns on the TV, pops a beer can open. In the 11:00 o'clock news broadcast he watches his own bravado about an upcoming game back east, some international news, wars, hurricanes, budget cutbacks, who gives a shit. He orders take-out chow mein. The staccato high-pitched voice confirming the order, fifteen bucks minimum, irritates him. Why can't they speak English? He is restless and paces the room up and

down in three or four strides, feeling caged. Turns on the paid adult channel and loses interest in the middle of his laborious erection. Checks the newspapers looking for an enticing expensive hooker, exotic, with an accent and skin color that will contrast nicely with his rosy, pinkish tone and freckles, maybe a transsexual. The idea of the hooker doesn't linger long. No way. Freaks. He chomps avidly on the chow mein, throws the sticks out the window and uses the plastic fork, fuck them. He washes the MSG down with big sips of beer. Finally, after hours of hesitation, he gives up and goes out into the night. It's still pouring rain.

I don't usually go out; my health hasn't been that good lately and I find it too boring to be worth the effort. After years in Canada I still find gay bars in Vancouver are unfriendly, and I am too odd to be desirable to white gay men. Whatever, sour grapes I guess. I choose a small dark bar far from the West End. A dive frequented by the welfare set. Posing in trendy places, the smugness of beauty queens, the unfriendly service and the "gay tax" drive me nuts. I order a glass of soda no ice please, no untreated water, no alcohol, no cigarettes, no greasy food--this virus is snatching away one by one the things I enjoy in life. It has taken away my taste buds, saturating my mouth with a metallic taste. It has taken away my friends either by killing them or making them tired of my deep funks. The virus is slowly creeping up my legs like poison ivy, plundering my cells and withering my tissues. Fuck it. So I sit in a dark corner, watching ragged hustlers play pool while being courted by old queens who band out money, kisses, cigarettes, drinks, and compliments with trembling hands. I appreciate the boys' damaged beauty, their troubled youth stuffed into tight jeans, sleeveless plaid shirts, a smirk in the face, a growl in the stomach, and a sure shot with the pointer.

A red haired man, in Spanish we call them *colorines*, momentarily catches my eye. He's sipping a large glass of dark beer, his grip wraps around the entire glass. Like in Sesame Street, I can see that one of these things doesn't belong with the others. The *colorin* glances about him, furtively taking everything in with uncanny emerald eyes. The poor lighting, the thick cloud of smoke suspended in mid-air, and the muffled disco music all collude to create a cheap TV-series kind of intimacy to the place. They could play the Carpenters and have Charlie's Angels and Rock Hudson show up at the door at anytime. I get up from my stool to

leave, enough of this shit, as the red haired man stands to his feet, stumbles, bobbing his head a bit, and heavily falls to his knees.

He vomits. Right there, splattering my shoes as I walk by. I instinctively go and hold him up. The bartender is a fussy queen who thinks this is the fucking Hyatt. He frowns, smacks his lips, brings a mop and fastidiously smears the stuff around to no effect. The last call is announced over the loudspeakers. The red haired one is mumbling incoherencies and the manager comes over to tell me to drag my friend outside before he messes the joint up any further. What? I don't have a chance to explain. The *colorin* is being dragged by his left arm while he clings onto me with his right, towing me along like an anchor.

Outside. I flap my arms like a deranged hen for five minutes before a cab stops. I push the red-haired burden into the back seat. The driver asks me for directions, but I don't know what to tell him. I try to sneak away and leave the *colorin* to his taxi ride to nowhere, but the driver mumbles in his broken accent that he is either getting an address from me or is kicking the passenger's big white out of the car. I give the driver my address on the East Side and hop next to the *colorin*. Guess he's going my way after all. We get there. Only when I offer the edgy driver a tip does he help me tug the huge bag of bones up to my apartment door. The driver drops the guy on me as soon as he gets his tip and runs back to his car, mumbling something nasty about motherfucking queers.

The *colorin* has been dumped on the floor by the door, barely inside. His face is swollen. I curse my fate and drag him a bit further into the place. I hope that he's not going to die here. What kind of explanations I would give to the paramedics? Who cares, one more fag story they'll say. Well, what now. I finally have a man in my apartment and it means little or nothing. He's a mess and his drooling has stained his tank top. I remove his leather jacket and tank, and with some effort pull off his soiled jeans. Hmm. Not bad. He could be handsome if he wasn't so wasted. The classic repressed gringo who is unable to get laid when sober and drinles up until last call, only to stumble down the street to a dark park where he fucks or is fucked by anyone. This one didn't even get that far. He reacts momentarily and I help him get to the toilet bowl to spill out whatever's left of his guts, producing an acidic, pungent smell.

Charming.

I prop him up and prepare strong coffee which I make him swallow in big gulps. Two hours later I'm still nursing this idiot. I'm exhausted, I go out for fin and I end up taking care of some big white guy.

The paramedics won't be necessary, I decide. He breathes okay, his chest expands like a mountain. I'm about to go and lie down when the *colorin* comes to his squalid senses and starts a monologue which soon builds into a monotonous stream. Are you Spanish? (No, I'm Latino.) Andale, andale, Mexican? Jalapeño? Si señor? He mutters the usual ignorant crap. Why ask? You don't give a damn anyway. Why don't you put a fucking jalapeño up your ass? Clearing his rusty throat with coffee he thoroughly describes the major landmarks of his paltry twenty-three years of life. Why is it easier to tell a complete and utter stranger everything there is to know about oneself? Anonymity is a great thing and that's why anonymous sex makes sense. Soon I have gathered more information than I really care to. He says he's this great star and he pompously pronounces his name, dragging an inebriated "s". Whatever, a name I've never heard before. He pronounces it sloooooowly so I can understand—not my language you see—pronounces it with the arrogance of those who have the world at their fingertips. Tomorrow he'll probably regret this bout of confessions and beat the shit out of me so I won't say anything that can incriminate him. Maybe I can black-mail him and get some dough to pay my credit card bills. Dream on! I wish I could do things like that, but I'm either too clumsy or too scrupulous, I'm not sure which.

I asked him one lousy question and he launched into this epic guilt trip and psychological nightmare of wanting men, you know, really wanting them; but living normal. Normal! An hour later he's fast asleep next to my bed empty of all revelations and belches. I think of taking advantage of the situation, if you know what I mean, but I'm exhausted. With my luck I'll get crabs or VD. It would be like playing with goopy dough, lots of it. I cover him and place a pillow under his fiery head and reluctantly go to sleep myself. As I doze off I think that I should have hidden all the knives in the kitchen.

Next morning I wake up early with a savage headache and realize that I have seen this guy on TV. Big deal. The *colorin* lies inert until mid-day. What if his family and the

police are looking for him and accuse me of kidnapping him? He snores placidly, the repose of a champion on my 1970s carpet of faded green laurels. I let him sleep. When he finally does wake up, I'm watching the Sunday afternoon cooking shows. mHe shakes his head several times and one wild curl of red hair falls down his left eye. He squints and a look of pain takes over his face. He looks like an adolescent. I hand him two extra-strength pills for the hangover and a box of tissues. He doesn't look me in the eye. He's shy. Isn't a bit too late for that now? He's silent and doesn't want to talk. I explain what happened to him and that his underwear, his jeans, and his tanktop were dirty and now they're almost ready to come out of the drier. I'll get them in a sec. I assure him that he was so inebriated he didn't say one intelligible word last night. He asks what intelligible means. He stands up heavily, roughly five foot eleven. Now the blanket drops, and he disappears into the bathroom. I hear a potent drizzle—I turn the TV volume up a bit now several burps and a loud fart. I hear him stretch and moan. I turn down the volume a notch. Five minutes later he comes out stark naked and I can't help but notice his colossal proportions. Now it's my turn to be uncomfortable. I sneak by and go get the laundry. I bring him coffee and toast and turn the TV volume down. He has flipped the channel to some live game. I grab the remote control from his hand. He holds it for a couple of seconds but lets it go. The nerve. I quickly surf the channels. Where was Martha Stewart's Living? What's this? Fashion File? Fashion File would do. While he chows down on my 12 grain toast with "I can't believe it's not butter" I meekly tell him how to return downtown in a cab. He says thank you and smiles imperceptibly. I think he does. I gain courage. I don't know when to shut up, and give him a piece of my mind about gay bars, repressed gringos, closeted assholes, and homophobic men. He asks what I mean. Forget it. We get talking and an hour later we devour a pepperoni pizza which I order and he pays for with a humid fifty buck bill I put through the wash. Last night's cab fare was my money, after all. He takes a nap. Well, more like drowns into a stupor half seated against my bed. I wonder when he'll leave. I've turned up the heat—expensive. It's still raining outside. Is it raining men? Those stupid disco lyrics.

I think about this while Elsa Kiench on channel 23 is going on about some collec-

tion, black, always black. The truth is I am impressed the *colorin* is a real hockey star and that he confided in me. However, I prefer soccer. I am Latino after all. If I'm gonna sit with a man on a Sunday evening I'd rather watch soccer. Last time a straight guy set foot in my place (two of them in fact), was when the paramedics dragged me out on a stretcher. When I woke up in the ambulance and I saw those visions I thought I had met my maker, my tribulations were over. Wrong. They just dumped me at the emergency room. I have an ounce of pride left so I refused to act like a hysterical groupie. I'm ten years older than this guy. If experience amounts to anything I should keep my composure. The *colorin* wakes up, seems more animated as he eats another slice of cold pizza (the remainder of a large and a medium), drinks the rest of my only two-liter bottle of mineral water, no potassium, not carbonated, and takes two more extra-strength pills I hand him.

At this point something goes haywire. He's been sitting on the floor all this time and slowly kneels and leans forward. I swallow twice as I see his lips approach and gently land on my mouth. A soft and humid landing. I don't know how long it lasted, but it was 7.5 on the Richter scale, the epicenter around here, long overdue the scientists say. He whispers, "Thank you" and sets my body ablaze, makes my tatter, I mean titter, no, totter. I dive into the emerald pools of his eyes. I'm dazzled in the middle of my bed and could soon be roadkill. He climbs into the bed, surprisingly agile for such an enormous man, and locks me in his embrace. More kissing. Wait! I jerk away and tell him he doesn't really have to do this. I would have done the same for anyone, I didn't have a choice, the manager, the vomit, the taxi. The bed seems to shrink by the second with his voluminous presence..."make ample this bed" Emily wrote. Honey, make it big. I know I'm missing a once-in-a-lifetime chance, but thank you, no, thank you. He smiles provocatively, wearing a grin of insolence, lust, and innocence. He says he feels differently about me. Oh please, give me a break. Get your shit together and leave. I can't believe I've got this kind of pride in me. He holds me firmly by the wrists. Now comes the gay bashing. Where's the baseball bat? Again he pulls me closer with startling tenderness. I'm flushed. I resist his hug and I blurt out that although I find him attractive...very attractive, I can't do this because

I'm HIV positive and I have some telling purple KS lesions on my legs. This stops him dead in his tracks. I knew it would, the perfect antidote for this foolishness. I know when to seize the opportunity, better retreated than rejected. A moment goes by and the *colorin* decisively pulls me towards him.

The evening is dark, darker than usual, everything messed up, the lamp by the bed having been knocked over. The pillows are drenched, a sharp smell hangs in the air, and time has paused. There are three, count them, three used condoms by the bed. With that skill and modesty one only sees at the movies I've conveniently slipped in between my crumpled sheets. He, the red-haired beast, placid. It lays next to me with a satisfied expression on his face. I run my fingers through his abundant crimson hair to make sure that he's really there, not a mirage. I measure the depth and width of his chest many times, resting at the thick nipples, grazing through the rusty jungle of fleece, sniffing the acidic odor of his underarm and crotch. I kiss him until his mouth has run dry (it needs rinsing urgently). My body aches all over. His invasion has been intense and skillfully sustained. Something in me feels like a rose in bloom, a flower more beautiful than the purple flowers of my KS lesions.

It's late night again when he finally leaves my apartment wearing the red X-large T-shirt I usually wear to sleep. His tank top shrank irreparably, but the jeans are okay. They were tight before the whole thing began, now they engrave every inch of his skin. A cold scent of full moon takes over the night. I'm exhausted but free. At the door I say goodbye wishing this was the perfect housewife dream come true, but I count my blessing. What I had was good. I stay inside the apartment with all the lights turned off, the TV turned off, and let the quiet tears roll down my face. I hear the sound of the rain trickling down the roof, washing away the streets and cooling my soul. A week later I receive a succulent money order in an envelope with no return address. A not says thank you.

The dream ended there, as I thought it would. I've imagined many other scenarios in which my red-haired hockey player returns to tell me that he loves me and wants to start a crazy romance against all odds. We ride into the sunset. He comes out to his family and associates which makes national headlines for a couple of days. I'm photographed as a strange Latino fruit of desire that made the white boy go homo. I die in

his strong arms which wrestle away the loneliness and despair of an AIDS hospice room. Not bad, eh? But it 'll net'er happen, nor am I sure I would want it too. Never wish for your dreams to come true because if they do, you 're in deep trouble. What would be left to dream about? There's nothing after. The disillusion would be worse than never seeing your dreams crystallize.

① Format

② Initial and bark caps

③ Frigid Fluid ads
(scans are done)

④ story end icon

5 pages total
2 1/2 spreads

← space

ital
←

The Well-Dressed AIDS Terrorist

