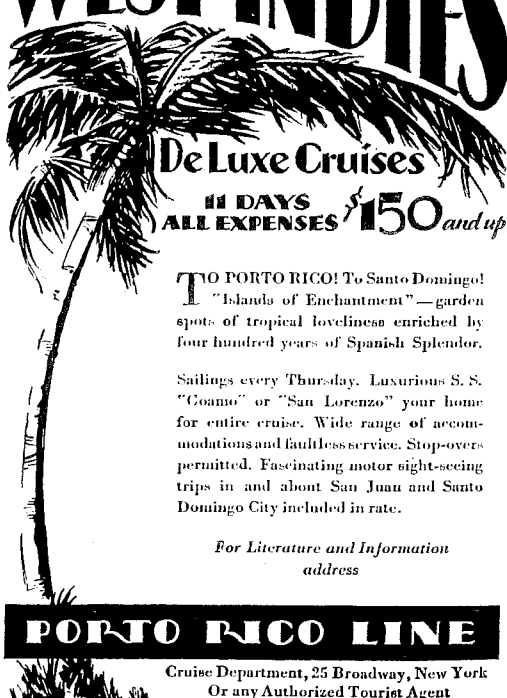


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Knowing Your League in High School

By Allison Parks

Thinking of asking out that special someone?

Don't do it.

You're unattractive.

I don't want to be a traitor to my gender and all, but you hag-beasts need to listen to me closely, carefully, and do as I say. The wisdom I am about to bestow upon you will save you years of torment, humiliation, and therapy. At this point, I have bit my lip on this topic for a solid decade. The truth has always seemed too harsh to say to an individual friend, so I will express it to an ambiguous group of strangers.

Long story short: Jake Ryan and his red Porsche are not waiting for you outside the Weight Watchers meeting and never will be. Do you smell what I'm stepping in? Tom Brady is not going to look past your acne, rolls, and dig through your mounds of body hair to find the beautiful soul that lies within. Here is a typical scene which hurts to remember, but should serve as a cautionary tale. In high school I had this friend, Bernadette. Now, I loved Bernadette—she was very fun and funny, and we spent lots of time together prank calling, watching Power Rangers, and other fun stuff—but Bernadette happened to be head-to-toe awkward, with her hunch back, long monkey arms, Miller's Outpost frocks, and thin, clown-orange, bacon strip hair. Naturally, like many other girls, Bernadette had the hots for a hunky football star named Bobby. Bobby was a wet dream and clearly, 600 percent out of her league.

One day Bernadette had the brilliant plan to ask Bobby on a date. She proposed this to our group of hag-friends in the janitorial supply room we frequented during morning breaks. Unanimously, everyone thought it was a fine idea. I, however thought it was suicide, but remained quiet, not wanting to hurt Bernadette's feelings. I could already foresee the potential humiliation as being on par with a nude tap dancing routine at the big game rally. Tiffany was the loudest proponent of Bernadette's date plan. Tiffany was the lone hottie in our group of pubescent monsters. She would prance into the janitorial supply room in her new size two Mudd jeans stuffing her face with three-packs of doughnuts, oblivious to the divine blessing of her hummingbird metabolism. The rest of us stared at her with devastated jealousy, choking back tears while smoothing the ruffles on our Lane Bryant jumpers.



Don't Do It, Weinerdog!

One sunny afternoon Bernadette, Tiffany and I were hanging out in Tiffany's castle trying to help her decide which of her seven suitors to choose as her latest boyfriend. Tiffany lived across the street from the high school, and on this particular day we could see football practice letting out early.

"Bern! Bobby's over there, you should go ask him out!" squealed Tiffany. To this day I don't know if she was pure evil or extraordinarily naive. I winced with horror and prayed for poor Bernadette to chicken out. "Really?" asked Bernadette, her eyes sparkling as she uncomfortably adjusted her headgear, "I don't think he—"

"Do it now! When will you catch him alone again?!" urged Tiffany, shoving her out the door. Tiffany and I stood on her lawn. I watched in terror as if a sheep was about to be slaughtered, while Tiffany bounced around with anticipation and delight. Bernadette's pigeon toes scuttled up to Bobby with the grace of a Dungeness crab.

"Sup Bobby?" I heard Bernadette say in her mannish baritone voice. I knew she was using the word "sup" for the first time in her 15 years and it sounded so clumsy I wanted to weep. Bobby stopped and stared at her, baffled, as if a Billy goat had just spoken to him.

"Uh, hey," replied Bobby, looking back to his friends in an attempt to flee the scene. "Um, I..." groaned Bernadette awkwardly, fiddling with the Siamese cat magnets around the waist of her scoliosis brace. "I was wondering if," she paused for a moment to scrape Clearasil off her chin. "Would you..." she paused again to pull a maxi pad wrapper off her "I love Zach Morris" tee, "...like to go out sometime?"

I cringed and looked down at the lawn. Tiffany gazed at the two with eagerness and delight. "Who are you?" asked Bobby. "Anyway," not giving her time to respond, "um, I like someone else, but thank you." Bernadette waddled back to us, nearly in tears. Needless to say, this was devastating and permanently scarring for poor Bernadette.

Over the years, I've witnessed countless other gawky girls hang themselves in a similar fashion... with love notes, humiliating love poems, invitations to the big dance, marriage proposals, and so on, and so forth.

And now, I am here to save you from such humiliation. Maybe you are thinking some of these foolish thoughts: "At least Bernadette let Bobby know how she felt, she put herself out there, and maybe he could have liked her but was afraid to say something." The answer is NO. No, no, no. If Bobby had the slightest interest, on the first day of school he would have grabbed her by the scoliosis brace and made a woman out of her. Poor Bernadette only humiliated herself, embarrassed me on her behalf, and became the laughing stock of Bobby and his friends. She had no chance. Never ever.

Moral of the story: In high school, never tell anyone you like them. Sit in your basement and slow dance to posters of Jonathan Taylor Thomas in your Tiger Beat magazine like I did.###

The Berkeley Square

By Ace Backwords

For some reason I was thinking about this rock band No Sisters, and this rock club the Berkeley Square, and this whole Rock'n'roll Fantasy that so many of us were trying to live out back then.

The Berkeley Square used to be on University Avenue in Berkeley. My friend Mary Mayhem was the one who suggested we check it out one Friday night in 1980. "The Berkeley Square is this very cool New Wave rock club," said Mary.

"You wanna' check out some bands and drink some beers?"

I certainly did!

It all seemed incredibly exciting and hip and modern. "New Wave"!! Mary and I were both in our mid-20s back then. And we had lived in the shadow of "the Sixties" for most of our lives (all that hippie shit). But now our generation was finally starting to make some noise of our own. This was like my second or third date with Mary. So that was a big kick for me, too. I had always been a loser with women. But now all of a sudden it was like: "Hey. Dig me! Sitting here in this dark, neon-lit New Wave nightclub with the hottest chick in town." It was like I was finally gaining entrance to where all the cool people hung out and where all the exciting things happened. This Rock'n'roll fantasy.

The featured attraction at the Berkeley Square that night was this band called No Sisters. No Sisters were kind of a Devo-esque band. Four nerdy brothers with thick horn-rimmed glasses and skinny ties (remember those?). And they played up the "nerdy" shtick with their zany antics. And their music was great, too. Tight, modern pop-rock dance music with weird touches and humor. For their encore they did a cover of "Cool Jerk" – which captured their essence perfectly. The whole packed crowd of cool people were dancing and pogo-ing up a storm in hipster heaven.

After the show I said to Mary: "Let's go backstage and interview No Sisters!" I had this crazy fantasy of being a rock critic or something. I was too shy to actually get on stage and play music. But maybe I could use my writing as a way to gain entry into the heart of the rock'n'roll world. I was already writing a monthly column for a local porn paper at the time. And had realized that if

you had a couple of press clippings you could bullshit your way backstage and interview porn stars and stuff like that and get paid money for it. So I figured it would work in the rock world, too.

"Hey," I said to the emcee who was loitering around on the stage. "I work for the Oakland Tribune! Can I go backstage and interview No Sisters for an exclusive feature?"

"Sure," he said. Free publicity for the club. Which was the name of the game.

And what I said was technically true. I did work for the Oakland Tribune. In the phone sales department. Making minimum wage hawking newspaper subscriptions ("Buy one month and get the second month ABSOLUTELY free!!").

So we huddled backstage with the band. "Backstage"!! The sacred inner sanctum of the rock'n'roll world. So that was very exciting. I forget what I asked the guys in No Sisters. Or what they said. But I dutifully scribbled down their answers in my little ace reporter's notepad (all I needed was the hat with "PRESS" written on the side of it for the whole image to be perfect). And I typed it all up and submitted it to the Oakland Tribune. Who, of course, had no interest in publishing the thing.

But in retrospect, the whole exercise reminded me of something that this aspiring rock star once said in an interview. He had been in a bunch of obscure rock bands, and was desperately trying to work his way up the ladder in the rock biz. And the whole thing seemed incredibly exciting and alluring to him. Dreaming of making it to The Big Time where all the really cool people are. So he's networking like crazy and making connections with all the movers-and-shakers in the rock biz. And then one day, he's hanging out at this rock concert,

listening to one of the big, famous rock bands of the day. And after the show he runs into this guy he knows, who knows this other guy, who knows one of the roadies in the band (or something like that). And he gets invited backstage to meet the band. Backstage! He's beyond himself with excitement. And not only that. While they're hanging out backstage, the guy says: "Hey, you want to go to the really cool place? Let's go over there to the VIP section!" They got this special, roped-off area where only the coolest of the cool crowd gets to hang out. The inner inner sanctum! So now he's really beside himself with excitement and anticipation. Finally he's going to enter that magical realm that he's always longed to be a part of. Sex, drugs, rock'n'roll, groupies, more!! The whole Rock'n'roll Fantasy.

"But when I got back there in the VIP section," he said, later, "I was kind of surprised to find it was mostly just a couple of bored people lounging around, talking quietly to each other. I remember seeing one of the guys from Duran Duran eating a baloney sandwich off of a paper plate. But that was pretty much it."

That's life for you, ain't it? So often, our cherished dreams turn out to be a shell game when we actually realize them
Anyways, I think the building that used to be the Berkeley Square is a dry-cleaning place or something like that, nowadays.###

Regrets

By Ace Backwords

Somebody asked me: "Ace, if you could do it all over again would you do anything differently?"

I said: "Yeah. Just about everything."###

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The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Welcome to yet another relaunch of the San Francisco Herald.

The Herald was a newspaper (on cheap newsprint paper that got ink all over your hands) from 1998 until 2008. Then after a brief, unsuccessful online-only version, it recently returned to print in a different form (photocopied on white bond paper, like this issue is). A newsletter.

The new Herald was distributed to cafes around the Bay Area, with one copy, not a stack of copies, left at each location. On the cover was an admonition: Store Copy - Do Not Take - Read this issue online at SanFranciscoHerald.Net.

Everyone thought it was a stupid idea, but I thought it might be a revolutionary new concept for the print media in the Digital Age. As it turned out, as usual, I was wrong. After a day or two, the copies would get swiped. (Hey, it could have been worse - what if they hadn't been swiped?)

So this latest incarnation of the Herald will have one copy left at

150 businesses in the midtown section of San Francisco. No more Bay Area wide distribution. As nice as it is to have a larger readership, that extended paper route is on a Highway O' Hurt. Ad dollars are very scarce nowadays; hence the printing bills have to be kept low, so the Herald can't stray far from its home.

And where is its home? Not in the suburbs, where its publisher lives (it doesn't play in Palo Alto). No, it would have to be in San Francisco (considering it's called the San Francisco Herald that might be a good idea).

But San Francisco is a big town. It would have to be in one section of the city - so it will be where it began 18 years ago - its center. Or its kind-of center, slightly to the east. We're crawling back into the womb.

If I knew what the newspaper industry was in for when this rag began in 1998, it would have never strayed beyond here.

As a matter of fact, it would have started - and stayed - as a newsletter, not a newspaper.

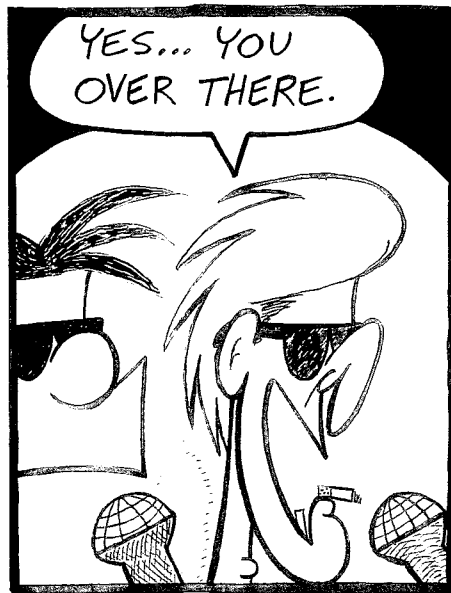
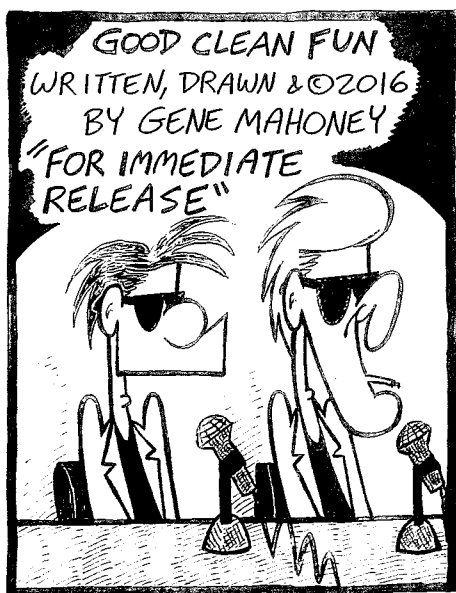
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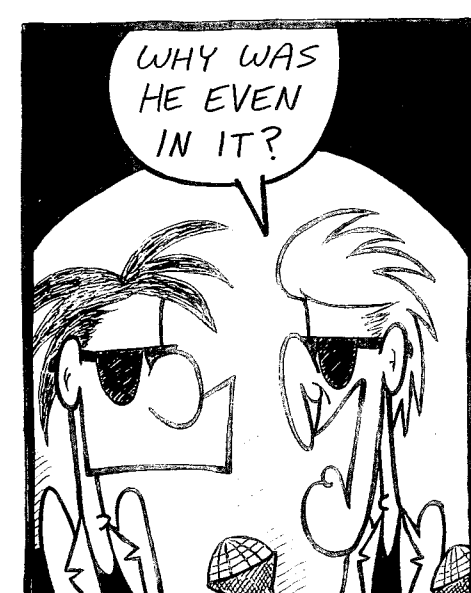
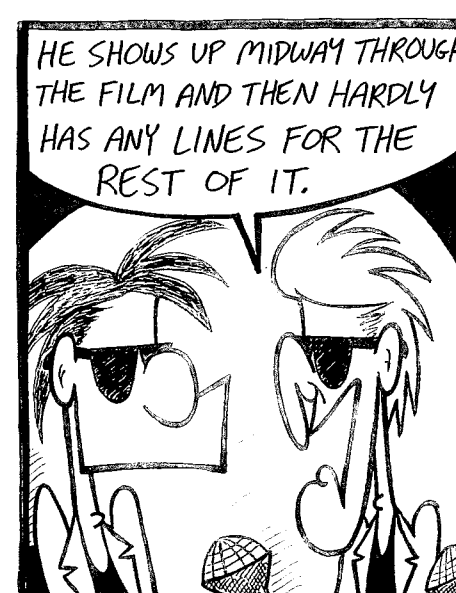
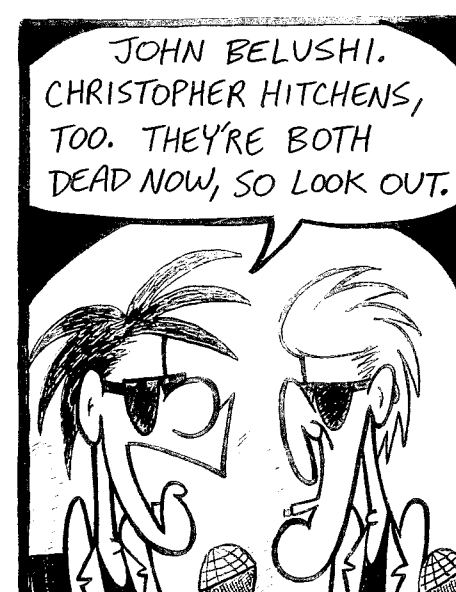
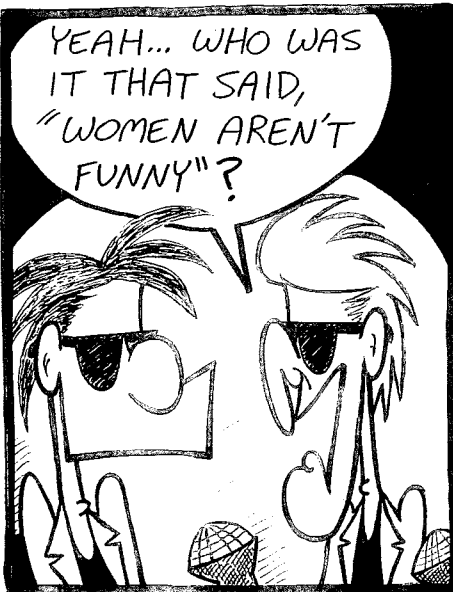
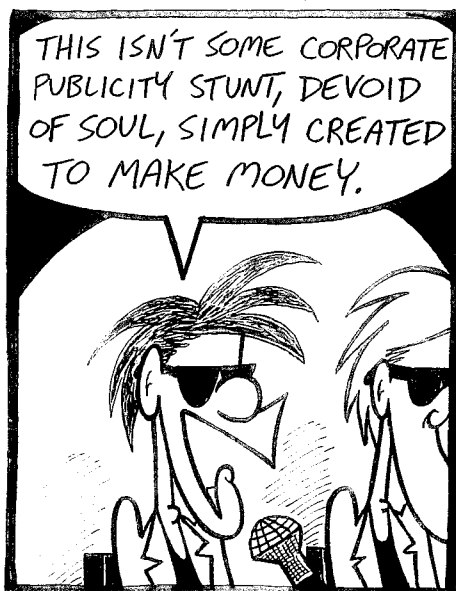
Russian Hill Upholstery and Décor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

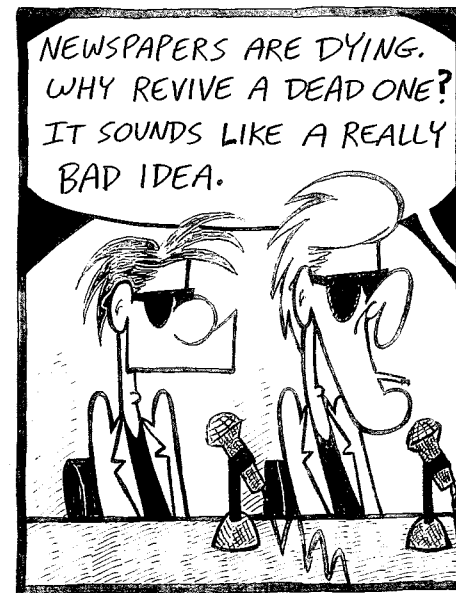
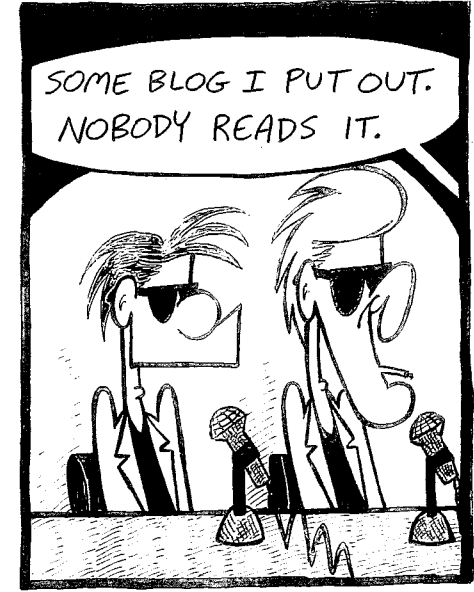
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So long, Nate: Nate Thurmond, basketball great for the Golden State Warriors, passed away recently. I remember one time I went into his restaurant, Big Nate's Barbecue, and asked a big guy who looked like him behind the counter if he wanted an ad in the San Francisco Herald. And he said, "No, I don't want an ad in the San Francisco Herald."

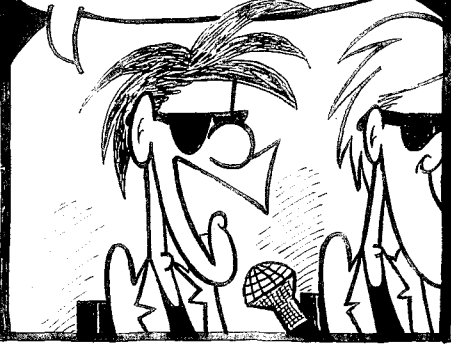
Actually, I guess that wasn't a very interesting story. See you next time. ###







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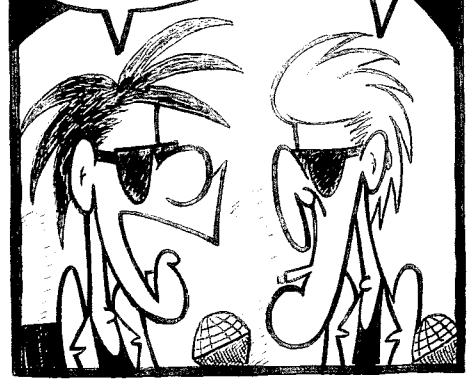


SO NO MORE OF THIS
PRINTING TOO MANY COPIES
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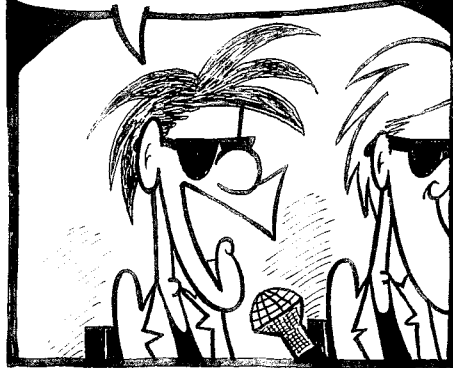
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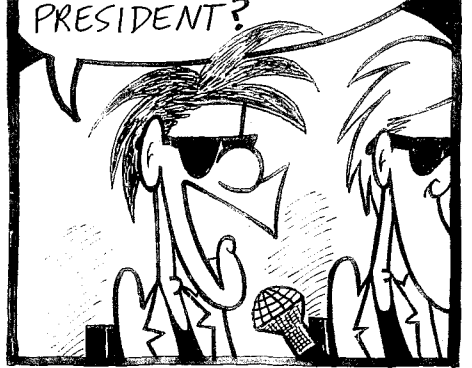
THE NEW HERALD WAS
GOING TO BE SOLELY FOR
THE MISSION DISTRICT.



THEN WE REALIZED THE
NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLICATION
FOR THE MISSION WOULD BE
PUBLISHED BY 2 WHITE GUYS
WHO LIVE IN THE SUBURBS.



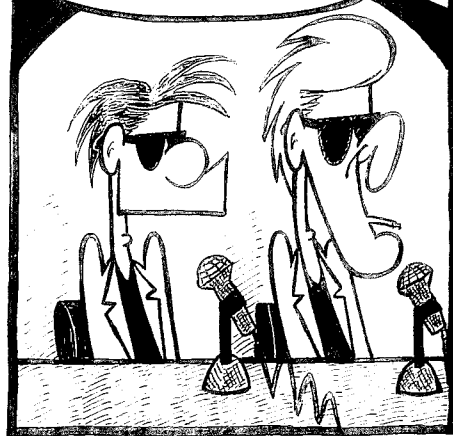
AND HOW WOULD IT LOOK
TO HAVE THE NEIGHBORHOOD
PUBLICATION FOR THE
MISSION ENDORSE
DONALD TRUMP FOR
PRESIDENT?



THIS "NEWSLETTER NOT
NEWSPAPER" IDEA OF
YOURS SOUNDS
INTRIGUING.



MAYBE IT COULD
BRING BACK THE
BAY GUARDIAN.



UH... ACTUALLY, THIS
NEWSLETTER IDEA WON'T
WORK. NO PUBLISHER
SHOULD TRY IT. FORGET WE
SAID ANYTHING.



Lucy

By James Dylan

During a recent vacation to the Philippines, I experienced the feeling of deciding a man's fate. Not so much his fate, but more deciding his life and death. I'll elaborate in a minute, but that was basically it; at the time, whether this man lived or died rested upon my decision to give money or not. In the end, I didn't give money based on the fact I judged his past behavior, and also because I wouldn't get the money back.

I'm sure there are a thousand bleeding-heart people out there who will instantly call me an asshole, i.e. how dare I judge a man's life, that I should have just handed the money over "no questions asked" since I could afford it. Perhaps it IS wrong for me to judge a man's life, but it isn't wrong for me to judge whether I want to lend him money or not; banks and insurance companies do it every day

Anyway, here's the story.

I have a Filipina girlfriend who lives in the Philippines and attends nursing school. I visit every 4-6 months, spending a few weeks at the house I rent for her and her 12 year-old son. Because it's so cheap (around \$200 a month), we have a larger house than they really need, just to be comfortable. I also employ a maid for them, as they

are both in school all day, and we need someone to watch the house, walk the dogs, wash and iron the clothes, and prepare meals.

As far as maid jobs go, it's pretty easy with a lot of down time. The maid also happens to be the sister-in-law of my girlfriend - her brother's wife. She is a little younger than my girlfriend (33), for this story we'll call her Lucy, and we all like her. Her kids and my girlfriend's son are all friends and get along great. The maid's family live on a farm several hours away; she took the position for the money, even if it means being away from her family most of the week, as she goes home on Friday afternoons and returns on Mondays. She also admitted she liked being away from the farm for a while, and the hard life there, as they are poor and live in a bamboo house with no running water.

Well, I was there on a visit recently, and was told by my girlfriend that Lucy had to go home that evening as her father was in the hospital. I didn't think much about it, as it seems in the Philippines some family member is always in the hospital or planning on it.

A few days later my girlfriend pulled me aside and told me what I knew was coming; Lucy's father had stomach cancer, as well as a few other issues, and had already been sent to a few different hospitals because, as he was told, "There is nothing we can do". He was currently in a hospital nearby where she

managed to find a doctor who was willing to perform a surgery, or at least to see what he could do. I tensed up a bit, as being an American in the Philippines; I knew the predictable, expected request for money for an operation was coming.

I also discovered Lucy was upset about the whole thing, because a month before her father had complained of stomach pain and how he couldn't eat, Lucy decided not to take him to a hospital, but instead to a local witch-doctor who cast some sort of spell on the "evil spirit" inside his stomach. Afterward, he admitting to feeling better, and they all thought he was cured. Lucy was so proud of herself, telling us all about how she saved money by going to the witch doctor and not the "rip-off" hospital. I tried to make her feel better, noting that this all occurred just a month before, and I doubt that if he had gone to the hospital, they would have been able to do anything different.

Now, before we get into what I did, I want to talk about the things I do and have done in the Philippines, because, like I mentioned, I know this story makes me look like a heartless asshole. One of the first things I did when I met my girlfriend was to hire a lawyer and surveyor to map and divide up the land of my girlfriend's parents, making sure all the children have a title deed. This was a couple thousand dollars, and I haven't asked for a dime of it. Her father had already died, and the mother died just a year after the titles were

transferred, so it was a great relief for everyone to have it done and out of the way.

I've spent thousands having wells dug on the land, and pumps installed so that the family no longer needs to carry water up from the river. I've spent thousands building a large cement pig sty (with 15 holding pens) for them to start a business of raising and selling pigs (before me, they had nothing and no way of conducting business other than selling coconuts off the land). Again, I've not asked for a dime back from this, it is purely a charitable act to help them take care of themselves and better their lives.

I've bought tools, and even a water-buffalo or two at their request so they could better cultivate their land; just this year I spent close to \$1,000 on 5,000 mahogany seedlings to be planted on unused land as an investment. I've made micro-loans to her family; I gave Lucy \$1,100 to buy a plot of land with many mango trees on it, the condition being they will pay it back in 3 to 4 years, as they sell the mangos, all interest-free and to be paid back as they can afford it.

The biggest thing I've done for them is sending ten of my girlfriend's nieces and nephews overseas at around a cost of \$15,000 total, so far. For a Filipino to go overseas, they require medical exams, training, and paying exorbitant fees to "agencies" which arrange it all. They aren't earning much, anywhere from \$300 to \$500 a month,

but it's better than what they were doing in the Philippines, which is nothing. Plus, they picked up some job experience and training, which will be helpful, as they didn't have any before. Again, interest free, and to be paid back over a period of 2 to 3 years, after 6 months to get settled. They won't find a better situation anywhere else. This isn't even everything, as I've paid for funerals for the parents, birthday parties, toys for children, and wedding gifts, etc.

I'll telling you all this so you get a better idea of who I really am, and not a cheap "kanu" because I refused to give Lucy money for an operation that could "possibly" have saved her father's life. Yes, I refused to give them money for a man who was dying, and I'm cool with it.

My reasoning was this - I had been told there was nothing that could be done, and an operation would only extend his life for a few weeks, at best. They also said his quality of life would be poor, with a colostomy bag, pain, etc. All of this happened at the end of my vacation and I had met my limit on vacation spending. I had just bought a new refrigerator for the house, and just returned the rental car I'd had for two weeks, which cost me \$1,200. Also, I had just given Lucy \$1,100 to buy the land with the mango trees on it, so I was tapped. Most of the money I spent or gave away over there was an investment in something, such as the pig sty, or sending people overseas. I never just gave money away with the idea

that it wouldn't be paid back.

My girlfriend told me Lucy wanted around \$2,000 for her father's operation, and she also told me about Lucy's father. I found myself forming a rather negative opinion of the guy, and I'll admit it influenced my decision. He fathered 8 children, and pulled all of them out of school after 6th grade, including Lucy, so that they could work for the family. In certain cases this wouldn't have been so bad, except he never did anything with the money except spend it on himself, as the family was always in poverty. He also was a heavy drinker and smoker, so I'm assuming that's where a lot of the money went.

I was also told that he was unfaithful to his wife, having at least one girlfriend at the time of his admittance to the hospital. He never made any plans for his children, never set anything aside for them, despite having all 8 kids working.

So this is what it came down to. I weighed everything I knew and was told about the situation and the man. I was told that his problems were pretty far along, and there was little anyone could do. Since they don't have any money, the family would have to borrow to pay for his medical care, putting them further and further in debt, continuing this endless cycle of poverty.

I formed an opinion that he wasn't a good husband, nor was he a good father. It didn't even sound like he was responsible - having eight children he couldn't afford or send to school. The more I thought about it, the less I wanted to spend money on him - money that wouldn't be paid back. I started feeling guilty, as in "Who am I to judge this guy?" Could I afford it? Yes. Would it have hurt me to spend the money? No. Would I have even noticed the \$2,000 deduction from my bank account? Not really.

But as any American living in a third world country can tell you with things like this, its non-stop - there's always something. There's always someone in the hospital, someone needs a funeral, someone had an accident, etc. Actually, now that I think about it, I just remembered that a month before all this happened, she had a family member beg for money because his wife had to have a C-section birth (and of course they didn't have any money). The hospital would have performed the surgery, and no one would have died, but they would have had to borrow money, sign over titles, etc., until the bill was paid. I wasn't happy about it, but I paid the bill and added their names to my growing list of people who owe me money.

But this was something different. The guy was old, he had incurable stomach cancer, and nothing was going to save his life. This operation would only extend his life for an undetermined amount of time, if it succeeded at all. The doctors didn't even

know what they'd find once they cut him open!

I'll admit I'm not a very sentimental person, and sometimes I think I'm even anti-social in my behavior, but that might have to do with my being in the military for 10 years, and another 6 working with the military as a civilian in combat zones. Seeing the things that I've seen in Afghanistan, I've realized human life is cheap and in some places worthless. Suicide bombers, 12 year-old child brides beheaded because of accusations of "adultery", couples stoned to death because of suspicions that they were going to run off together and get married, etc. Even in the Philippines you can hire two guys on a motorcycle to kill someone for \$150. Even in the U.S. you read about people killing each other over trivial things like parking spaces, cutting in lines, etc. So, no - I'm not a sentimental guy and consider myself a realist.

In the end, I didn't give the money. The maid went to some relatives that were working overseas to borrow it. (These same people didn't pay me back for several months' money they owe me because THEY had to borrow money to send to the maid!) The father had his operation and died about a month later. The whole time this was going on, the maid cried, spent most of her time by her father's bed, and in the end quit the job. We hired a new maid, unrelated to the family, and she is working out fine. Lucy is back on her farm, working with her husband. ###

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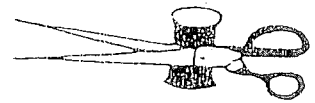
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