

A Storm Named Tiffany

By Crispin Sartwell

Capital Times Advisor

This is going to be sick; brace yourself.

I root for natural disasters. In particular, I'm a fan of bad weather. The worse the better.

I like nothing more than watching a hurricane track across the Atlantic from Africa until it demonstrates that Florida is in fact water-soluble.

Most nights, I'm glued to the set enjoying the mudslides and the floods, the tornadoes and the tsunamis: the pain, degradation, homelessness, and death visited upon us by our abusive mother, nature.

I'd like to see our region scraped so clean by the next noreaster that we are forced to abandon North America and move en masse to central Asia.

Before you condemn me as a nasty sociopathic monster who gets his jollies by immersing himself in the stomach-churning spectacle of other people's pain, let me, as the politicians say, be clear: I am a nasty sociopathic monster who gets his jollies by immersing himself in the stomach-churning spectacle of other people's pain.

And pardon me while I observe that you too are a nasty sociopathic etc. Or at least, I am not the only one who is tuned to the Weather Channel watching some engorged, raging river devour Sacramento or whatever.

Most of us, in the sweet little secret heart of us, are praying for an earth-

quake to destroy Lima, as long as there is good videotape.

But the hip thing about natural disasters is that they cut us puffed up, paltry people down to size.

Even with our amazing technology, even with our obsessive control over every part of the environment, even with our climate-controlled vehicles and mega-malls, we can still get our pathetic little butts smacked by the world.

What I want to see tonight on CNN is, like, the Mall of America slowly collapsing under the weight of seventy-seven feet of snow that fell in a single hour, pureeing hapless consumers into a kind of human soup.

That would show that even while we're shopping at Bloomies we're still mammals running around on the surface of a planet.

Essentially, we're overgrown, ego-maniacal squirrels. We're smarter than squirrels, maybe, but not as much smarter as we think we are.

We are vulnerable to reality; we exist at the world's whim; we are not in charge, thank God. Get used to it.

So next time you're watching luxury homes lapse into the Pacific or a storm named Tiffany beating the fecal matter out of Cape Hatteras, get real and admit that you're actually rooting for the weather.

It's a lesson in humility. And it's darn good television.

From Our Readers

Editor:

This week's issue (Sept. 22) contains two profile — one of a long-time staff assistant, one of a new faculty member — which make very different impressions.

The writer of the profile on Professor Jessica Dorman describes her repeatedly as a "leprechaun or elf," "a sprite," with "burnished copper-brown hair."

Can this be serious journalism? Presumably these references are well-meant. Nonetheless, they focus on personal appearance rather than on substance.

They unintentionally demean Professor Dorman. In 1999 is it really too much to ask a journalist to write about a woman's accomplishments, interests, and opinions, rather than her physical qualities?

Journalistic writing 101: don't write about women in a style that wouldn't be used about men. Please. New faculty members have quite enough to do, without worrying about being trivialized in public.

The writer of the other profile, on Gloria Lebo, seems to have learned this lesson well. She focuses attention on her

subject's work, attitude, and interests without feeling compelled to tell us Lebo's height, age, and hair color or characterize her in purple prose.

Let's have more of the second approach, and none at all of the first.

Most sincerely,
Louise E. Hoffman
Associate Professor of Humanities and
History
Sept. 24, 1999

Editor:

Just a quick note to say how great the first edition of the newspaper looks. As Chief of Police, I especially liked the "Campus Police News" section.

Please let me know if there's is anything I can do to enhance the CapTimes success this year. Keep up the good work!

Kevin J. Stoehr
Director,
Safety and Police Services
Sept. 20, 1999

By Ann-Marie Newman

Capital Times Staff Writer

She had coal black, natural curly hair that bounced every time she took a step one inch too excitedly. Her eyes were deep pacific ocean blue with long full tendrils attached to the eyelids that blew a gust of wind whenever she blinked. The figure — picture perfect with a well exercised rump and great genes inherited from her ancestors. Physically, flawless by nature she was, from my viewpoint.

Every high school had one. She was the one who never went without a date to occupy her Saturday nights, nor did she ever have to worry about saying "no" to these Saturday dates, for working is not in her vocabulary.

She was named homecoming queen and prom queen and picked "most attractive" for the senior yearbook and had her own desired lunch table clique and chewed gum constantly in fear of spouting off bad breath vibes.

She was named cheerleading captain and always wore the nice Express clothes and never had hair number 287 out of place. Teachers adored her and so did the boys. Girls envied and hated her — even her closest friends.

Every high school had one. She was the one that made the average girl feel ugly and inferior and made us get up an extra hour early out of bed hoping that the extra 60 minutes of pampering would magically make the average beautiful.

She was the one that every girl would try to befriend in hopes that some of her popular beauty would rub off. She was photographed on almost every page of the yearbook, never blinking or caught with droopy eyes.

She either ate salad or a cracker or a piece of plain lettuce at lunch at lunch just to exemplify and advertise how disciplined she really was. The worst high school had the beauty queen who could eat cupcakes for lunch everyday and never gain a pound or an ounce.

I was glad to graduate from high school thinking that the pressure from the every day "fitting" in was over. I thought I was entering the mature world now and people would appreciate me for my personality. That whole summer I felt good about myself, getting ready to enter college and start a new social and peer life, never worrying or stressing about what beautiful girl is going to make me feel ugly because after you graduate such superficiality doesn't exist.

I was wrong. Every college has a group, a clique, a pack of pretty perfect young adults that parade around in one huge herd that blow anyone

over when they walk. I was crushed. My world was crashed. I was tired of feeling unpretty — and I was tired of everyone being so pretty.

I went through shit jobs, and possible career jobs that turned out to be more shit jobs. I indulged in spending most of my time alone in my room creating my next masterpiece poem — so I thought.

Then I escalated into clubs and bars hoping to find anything that would make me feel special and pretty and special and unique. I wore the cool club clothes and did all the cool dance moves. I would drink beer while I smoked my cigarettes and I would put on my unapproachable face and be tough because only wusses drank coolers and fruity mixed drinks and flirted at clubs. That didn't seem to work.

I would report any high grade I earned in college to my father just to hear that "Good job" only later to realize that getting an A wasn't so unique or special. It's just the same ambition that many students make for themselves — or for their parents.

I resorted to flipping through my yearbook and pointing out all the petty immature girls who backstabbed me, picked on me or belittled me and reasoned to myself that Betty Lou is fat now because the girls who had the rumps and boobs always grew to be larger than life — maybe not in college but they'll be big after their first child.

I went to the gym and still go to the gym and see all the others who are hoping to shed some inch of unprettiness off their bodies. I remember pondering about the girl in front of me on

the tread mill and couldn't understand why she came here everyday with a perfect body like hers. Then another woman at the gym made the same comment about the girl to me. I was beginning to understand.

Now I'm a little bit older. I've experienced a little more freedom and dove into life's little hell called "decision making". I've met more people and made friends and lost friends and dated guys and dumped boys. I met a girl named Rachel my first year of college who without even knowing it, showed me what it meant to have fun.

I know that every high school has one, every college has one, every gym has one and every bar has one. That "one" that made me feel ugly and unpretty and unleashed all the negative vibes within my veins most likely was not the "one" to many other girls. In fact, who knows if the pretty popular prom queen in high school didn't envy me: bold and daring with my loud and sometimes obnoxious personality. Maybe the artistic guru in art class made her envious or the brainiac who sat next to her in math class annoyed the shit out of her because she always got the answer right.

What I understand now is that every person on this planet has one. Some are different and every now and then we bump into people who share the same common "one" and it becomes a link. Maybe this commonality will bring them together to help each other or love each other or despise each other. All I know is that everyone has "one".

Everyone has an insecurity.

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