



Vigilante Consumer Advocates

"God is the greatest lover of all time."

-RIT Baptist Campus Ministry

The scene is set: a darkly lit room in an open warehouse. Many dirty, down-trodden souls are lingering about a long table, bustling in their workaday lives with the tools of their meager trade close at hand. At one end of the room, overlooking this measure of his world, a stern Canadian in a dark blue power-suit (see "Hostile Takeover") lingers over the handrail of the stairs leading to his office.

"You are spending too much time on one little component of the dehydrator!", he booms across the open space, shifting dust from the rafters to spiral slowly downward onto the unforgiving concrete ground.

"But sir, if we make them faster, the bolts will not be properly tightened! A small child or possibly a midget could fall in and..."

"I'm trying to make our product more cost effective, Mr. Einschmeichelner, something you would obviously know nothing about. The safety of workers is always secondary to profit!"

"Yes sir, I'm sorry sir, but how are we supposed to make quality freeze-dried astronaut ice cream with inferior tools?"

Power-suit Man's thin lips spread into a grim, toothy smile. "In space, there are no product complaints. God, I love government contracts."

Somewhere from deep within the bowels of the building is heard a light tapping, a thump, and then a cyclical scratching reminiscent of AM radio static or the walls in a Stasi safehouse. Then like a sudden downpour, horns and strings hurl notes throughout the sullen halls, drenching the rows of second-rate merchandise in a powerfully commanding melody and puddling about the feet of the melancholy operatives. The workers lift their heads slightly in a suspicious manner, expecting Ed McMahon to be lurking in the shadows somewhere, ready to spring out at any moment and lift them to the blue-collar Valhalla of the Publisher's Clearinghouse Grand Prize. They realize that this is but another ploy, management's little game of musical chairs, designed to make an example of the last peon to return to his chores. Each





**Gracies
Dinnertime
Theatre™**

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retires to his former duties as quickly and with as much intent as they might attack that family size Stouffer's Sirloin Steak later that evening. Then, as suddenly as it began, the chords skip back in time, continually reliving this perfect moment of song.

"Bollocks!"

All that is heard afterwards is a deep, rending, vinyl scratching kind of sound, and then silence. A few Kodak moments later (many Rockwellian heartwarming scenes), a loud clanking is heard, accompanied by a "Shit!" from high above their heads.

As if members of a synchronized stage troupe, all eyes peer upwards as one. Shrieks are heard from some of the men, deep-throated gasps from the women.

"Look, up in the girders! It's a bird! It's a paper airplane! Wait, no, it's a guy in a black leotard!"

And so it is. A small looking man in a black leotard, tights, and a cape with an electrifying reflective orange "N" across his chest puffs up proudly. Melodramatically he pulls his cape up around him, emits an El Seed-esque entrance solo, and then drops, twisting and flipping until he reaches the damp floor thirty feet beneath him with a graceful one-footed thunk.

The workers raise their murmuring to a quiet cheer.

Power-suit showing signs of fear for the first time in his weasly life, trembles in his voice, "No, it can't be, eh..."

"Ah, but it is." the dark marauder mockingly replies.

"But you're supposed to be in Topeka leading a symposium on the evils of a certain type of hard plastic used for making toys for children under the age of 6."

"Oho! You should know by now that wherever lies an unwatched plastic bag near the unwary hand of child or age impaired, I am there. When ever a young lad cries over a skinned knee after his improperly adjusted training wheels fell off, I will be close at hand. For every woman who burns her tongue on coffee that is too hot and every man who falls off the roof because he placed his ladder on cold manure, I am there. I am there for every man, woman, and child who has ever said, 'I am a consumer and I have been woefully wronged!' I will not rest until every consumer's ill has been cured and the causes are rotting six feet beneath the sod."

From the shadows, mumbling something about Nader being all talk and no trousers, his sidekick Vinyl Lad (a midget clad in a studded leather grope suit) emerges carrying a portable record player and a scratched 33 1/3 disk of "Flight of the Valkyries."

"And this is my sidekick, Vinyl Lad."

"...always scraping me biscuits and cheese, never time for me Bo-peep. An here I am dealin' wit your Oxford and Cambridge, acting all like a Doug McClure...bugger all, ye Sean'ammond..."
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Power-suit man's cleft chin wrinkles cruelly as he digs into his watch-fob pocket and whips out a fistful of yen. He throws it to the ground and grins maniacally as it forms into a Currency Golem.

"You may have a gimp, Nader, but I have VENTURE CAPITAL! Venture, go buy him out!!"

Venture Capital twirls and spins menacingly as multinational currencies combine and build into a tornado of exploitative capitalism.

As Nader fiddles with some gadgets and shit on his belt, Adam Smith's invisible hand nudges Vinyl Lad inexorably towards his fate.

"Barry Whiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiite!!" is all the helpless dwarf can manage to get out. Nader looks up too late; as Vinyl Lad is pulled into the maelstrom, Power-Suit

Man pulls the switch on his massive machine.

Realizing the urgency of the situation, Nader takes careful aim on the currency golem with his Nader-ang. "I think I can...just...about..." He lets fly with a mighty whoosh; the trusty missile of advocacy hits its target square and true, knocking both the golem and Vinyl Lad into the churning, throbbing non-UL-listed machine.

Little pieces of currency fly everywhere as Power-Suit Man looks on, mildly concerned. From within the water-stealing bowels of the apparatus, only a faint whimper of "bloody 'ell" can be heard.

"Right then, Power-suit Man, that's it!" screams Nader as they square off. The smug, blue-suited jerkwad simply whips out his cellphone of litigation. He has his attorneys on the line in mere seconds.

Nader sees it coming a mile away. He thrusts Advisory 0210199-B into Power-Suit Man's hands. His mind already lusting over legal briefs and subpoenas, Power-Suit man reads, unthinkingly, Nader's carefully-drafted consumer report



ß (cockney slang)

about the explosive tendencies of certain models of cellphone batteries. Just as the lawyers' cars are pulling up outside, the phone detonates, taking out the better part of Power-Suit Man's temple.

As if participants in a strictly choreographed ballet, a million pieces of grey matter glistening under the humming fluorescent light flee the confines of Power-Suit man's skull.

The humble crowd cheers as Ralph Nader man-handles Power Suit into a large red bag with fur trim. Ralph Nader, righter of wrongs, is here to save the world.

The lawyers bust in and, upon seeing the corpse, exchange their attack papers for copies of Power Suit Man's living will. Nader has evaded certain danger once again...from lawyers, at least. Bodily harm from his dwarf is another matter entirely.

As the mammoth dehydrator collapses around him, a shriveled prune of a gimp hobbles out, picking little pieces of yen out of his ears and his once-bobbling midriff.

"...actin like I'm the bloody Pittsford Steelers, rounding up ice-cream freezers. Can't even wear me own round the houses. Got 'ta wear THESE bleedin' things...I'm goddam Schindler's List I am, oi oi oi!

Nader simply chuckles patronizingly. "Oh Vinyl Lad..." He shakes his head and smiles. "As long as the forces of capitalism are loose in the world, you'll find me there, looking out for the rights of the consumer! And unions for everyone!!"

The age of vigilante consumer advocacy is close at hand. Ralph Nader, joined by other prominent consumer advocates-turned-vigilantes have recently broken ground on the new Hall of Manufacturing Elevation. When asked about the project, David Horowitz reportedly said, "There will be no place like HOME. It will be a place for the League members to go to discuss the latest evils of the day and to basically unwind after a long day of righteous consumer advocacy. We'll also have an early Bill Gates alarm^o for the next time that crazy little bugger tries to sneak into another meeting, and a saltwater pool for Aquaman.

^o When asked about why he is continually being caught sneaking into the League of Consumer Advocates meetings, the Microsoft CEO merely replied, "I'm the Black Fox!" After being queried as to the arcane meaning of such a statement, Paul Allen answered only, "No I'm the Black Fox!"

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The Beast is a bitch of a hangover.

In one of Robin Williams' standup acts he swings open the "hinge" on his head and invites the audience to step inside his mind. Not that I would be so presumptuous as to assume that you kind readers would like to step inside my mind, but it just might help for this weird little tirade. I was feeling a little bad for myself last night. I had been injected with my last cold shot of novocaine that morning. I had been becoming slowly numb to betrayals of trust, and this last one, was just that, the final time I will feel anything towards those that hurt me. This really doesn't relate to last night, except I wanted to give an idea of the frame of mind I was in, a little venge-

ful, a little naughty. Now lets get to it: I'm a journalism major. I'm a photographer. I'm a go-getter. I'm a damn good student. I have strong feminist tendencies. I wear jeans and boots. Last night I donned some black ass pants of sorostitute fame, chunky black shoes not intended for hiking through snow, and a tight green crochet tee. I was not comfortable. Lucky for me, peers on the floor offered their approval. One even went as far as to say, "you look hot. if I were a guy, I'd fuck you." "Perfect," I think sadly. I apply many many layers of makeup. Then we go to a fraternity. After passing through fuck boy security we are ushered up beer soaked stairs, handed cans o' The Beast, and pointed towards the dance floor where sweaty bodies pulsate under the strobe light. The air is thick with sex. Its a mystery to me how grinding became a popular and accepted form of dance. Nonetheless, I was wearing clothes from the Grope Me Outlet and isn't it just so much easier to play someone else for the night? The desire to fall, Kundera talks about this concept in The Unbearable Lightness of Being. That's how I felt. However against I was what I was doing and being, I was equally drawn to it because it's easier. So I grinded. Talk about having the humanity sucked out of you. For every pang of guilt for being such a wench, there was another can of beer, and another grimy penis telling you that you had the most beautiful name. Bastards. I make it through the night though, trying to ignore the fact that apparently my eyes (where people should be looking when they talk to me) are now located on my chest. I fall asleep whispering with the boy on the futon below me about Versailles and the Louvre, and I know I haven't changed no matter what shirt I'm wearing.



-Lee A. McMahon



TOURIST'S MOVIE REVIEWS

PRESENTS

Rushmore

And The True Nature Of The Sunshine State

Greetings, sweethearts, from heaven's waiting room, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Florida, save for a few exceptions such as Mauschwitz™ (aka Disneyworld), and Cape Canaveral, exists for one thing and one thing only. Old people. Old people with tract homes, Cadillacs, small dogs, and wads of cash. Now some of you may say that there are young people thriving in Florida, but that is merely an illusion. In order to see the true nature of Florida's demographic, one must examine the population as a whole. At the top of the food chain are the old people. All they do is drive. They drive to church or to temple, to funerals, to parties for the dead, or to the airport to go to parties for their grandchildren in other states. More often than not, the old people roll their Lincoln Townbarges to restaurants. Florida can be summed up in the following phrase:

Old people in large cars driving to and from restaurants.

Yes, there are younger people there, but they are only there to sustain the old peoples' need for dining establishments. True, some would say that Miami offers a wide variety of things to see and do for the younger generations, such as Cubans (the people, not the cigars) and cocaine. At first sight, the Latin dance clubs and the hard drug scene would make the idea of a septuagenarian ruling class in Florida a moot point. You must understand, however, that the restaurants the old people frequent need the Cuban refugees as cheap labor, and the cocaine for the harried restaurant managers who must cater to each and every request of the fogies. Sure, a good percent of the Cuban migrants and the Colombian snow go to other places in the United States, but the bulk of the shipments find their way up the noses of the master chefs and maitre'Ds that make the Florida hospitality infrastructure work. The other young people in Florida one might encounter are there to provide cellular phone service and expensive clothing to the coked-up restaurateurs.

Other individuals you may find are the occasional real-estate mogul, the modestly overstated police forces in the gated communities, and the various colorful characters all involved in making the scenery lively for the elderly. Take the bikini-clad rollerblade girls, the trophy wives riding shotgun in the mid-life-crisis-mobiles (Lamborghinis, Porsches, Boxters, etc.) of their pasty-white executive husbands, or the posse of Latino Volkswagen lowriders cruising down Ocean Drive in South Beach. They're not there because young and thriving people live in Florida, NO!!! They are shipped in by the Florida



Chamber of Commerce so that the old people observing the scene from ornate hotel restaurant terraces, shoveling massive portions of portabello mushroom soufflés into their denture-clad mouths, and regarding the service of the establishment with the utmost scrutiny have something to disapprove of. Land sakes, what would old people do if there was nothing to disapprove of??? There are only so many cases that Ben, Perry, and Mrs. Fletcher can solve before the elderly mind must turn to real disdain for the youth of today's generation. But I digress.

It is this den of decadent varicosity that I have immersed myself in for the past week. I've been trying to find investors for the aforementioned film. Things are looking pretty good. I've found myself a talented actress and a possible financial backer. I don't want to spoil my luck, so for now, I'll leave it at that. Anyway, as the effects of my second Long Island Iced Tea were taking effect, I had my business partner, Dave, drive me to the local Cinelabyrinth to see a film.

This week's film, "Rushmore", was the second effort by newcomer Wes

Anderson, who with his writing cohort (and Dennis Hopper lookalike) Owen Wilson brings another masterpiece to the screen, the first being "BottleRocket", another quirky misadventure. Rushmore is the tale of Max, a not-quite-Ferris-Bueller student at the Rushmore Academy private school. He becomes obsessed with one of the teachers at the academy and when his friend, Mr. Bloom, falls for the same woman, the young tike is on a collision course with wackiness. "Rushmore" was a subtle, funny film that featured, above all else, Bill Murray (Mr. Bloom) in a strikingly serious role. Serious to the point of ludicrous. And well done. If there is any reason to see it, it's for the following line between Max and Mr. Bloom during one of their first encounters:

"So, Mr. Bloom, I heard you were in Vietnam. Is that right?"

"That's right."

"Were you in the shit?"

"Yeah, I was in the shit..."

The film was a welcome change from the obnoxious tripe that's going around today. Look for the kid from that terrible Dennis the Menace remake from a few



years ago. He does a great job as Max's understudy. I enjoyed it immensely.

Wow, looking back at this review, I don't know if I should be a film critic or a

travel agent! Oh well, one must always attempt to broaden one's horizons. The renaissance aesthetic takes a lifetime to achieve. Until next we meet...



This week's Jungian Shard : Our Manifest Destiny

collected by Matthew J Weaver

As one might have learned in some middle-America junior high school history course, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark co-lead an expedition across the newly-purchased Louisiana territory to the Pacific Ocean. Cataloguing the natural wildlife & mapping the land as they proceeded, it took over two and a half years to complete the journey and return trip. They were both popular heroes upon their return, spending months after their return bouncing from occasion to occasion, party to party. Each man had detailed plans to become rich and (in Lewis's case) powerful from the fame of their accomplishments.

Lewis intended to publish his journals of the adventure, and hired engravers, typesetters, and a distributing publisher for the task. However, he postponed and postponed the editing and preparation of the journals for publication -- without reason. Additionally, he was appointed governor of the Louisiana territory and developed antagonistic relationships with his under-secretary and the federal government. Gradually, he slid deep into debt:

Lewis's half-brother, John Marks, did an inventory of Lewis's debts and assets. He had private debts amounting to \$4,196.12 and protested drafts [drawing on federal funds] totalling \$6,956.62. His credits and estate were worth \$5,700.00. He had a further credit of \$754.50 for Indian presents and gunpowder sold by Chouteau...

Lewis settled into a deep depression in the winter of 1808-09:

His drinking, apparently, was heavy. He was taking 'medicine' regularly, medicine laced with opium or morphine.

That year, Lewis was summoned to Washington over the various contested drafts he had written. He was a mess, personally:

Lewis was drinking heavily, using snuff frequently, taking his pills, talking wildly, telling lies.

During his trip to Washington, He died violently, apparently from suicide (self - inflicted gunshot and knife wounds), unable to live off fame of his past accomplishments.

Undaunted Courage, Stephen E. Ambrose. 1996, Touchstone, New York, NY.

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