

THE COBRA'S NOSE

Vol. 18

Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich?

26 May 2000

The Cobra's Notes...

I happened upon Vivian Li in the Phoenix Art Museum. She was clucking over some Victorian era paintings which depicted the Middle East. "Will you look at all that pale skin and purdah?" she said. "The artists were too chicken to acknowledge European brothels and infantilism of European women, so they sexed up the Turks."

Vivian has a knack for making nearly everything she says sound like Henry V's St. Crispin's Day speech. This inevitably makes authority figures nervous, and sure enough a plump, mulleted, specimen of PAM's finest unsnapped the safety strap on his(?) holster, hustled over to us and suggested we take it to the Museum Café. "Oh! Another *room!* Why are you people always trying to stick women in a *room?*" Okay, she was getting a bit shrill.

The guard spoke with the forced tone of someone trying to hide his(?) fear from a big, scary dog. "Lady," he (I'll just go with "he") said, "I'm just here to protect the art." Meanwhile, he frantically repeatedly pressed the call button on his walkie-talkie and a cluster of maroon jacketed museum employees lumbered into the exhibition hall.

"Protect the art," Vivian hissed. "From *what?* A DISCUSSION?!"

I kind of thought she had a point, but the guards—about five, I think—sure didn't seem to see it. They surrounded us and I felt as if I'd feel more comfortable laying on the floor with my face pressed against the cool, cool tile. Vivian, however, was in high dudgeon, and when they all started making slow, soothing, palms down gestures with their hands she just got louder. Finally, two of them grabbed her arms and steered her to the Security Office in the basement. She was reasonably compliant, except for singing Tom Lehrer's song "Smut" the whole way. I trailed behind. When I got to the office, the door was only opened a crack. The voice behind it asked, "Do you really want to be a part of this?" waited a beat, then said, "Didn't think so," and pushed the door shut.

I stood there, looking at the shut door and listening to the muffled racket Viv was still making. I couldn't help but admire her, but...you know...she makes *such* a fuss. And to what end? Not just the right to speak her mind in a public place, but to provoke thought and action and industry. She acts as if she'd like to drag those Turkish women from the painting out of their plush, peaceful harem and badger them until they all got post-graduate degrees, home businesses, and/or city council appointments. Fathers, *insist* your daughters walk in the sun—that should be her motto. It's exhausting to be near her sometimes.

I, on the other hand, spend my days dodging fuss. That's harder



than it sounds because fuss is generated in an astounding number of ways. No sugar in the Break Room? Nasty odor in the fridge? Bob Onanist doesn't like to have his calls screened? These are the do or die issues of my work life. My current strategy is to let them wash over me until I am as smooth and hard and quiet as a pebble—a Zen Receptionist.

I'm not doing very well. My only reaction to the no sugar crisis is satisfaction that I got some before it ran out, and I capriciously tossed out unmarked lunches and stole unmarked Cokes in eliminating the smell in the fridge. Bob Onanist is and shall ever be a severe rectal itch, but at least I get to call him "Bob Onanist" and "severe rectal itch," and that helps. Not too Zen, but I'm working on it.

And, you know, that's sort of exhausting, too—the Zen thing where you pretend you aren't bothered by things that bother you, hoping that it will become a habit. I reflected on that painting of drowsy women lounging on sofas and remembered that languor isn't the same as contentment.

Which is why I'm just taking a quick break before I go back to marching back and forth in front of the Phoenix Art Museum's Security Office chanting, "PLEASE FREE VIVIAN LI!"

I'll let you know how it goes.

Sharon C McGovern
Editor/Publisher/Cobra-in-Chief

Is it Safe?

Elmer Gertz died last week at the age of 93. I didn't care either until I read this fragment of his obituary, "defended Henry Miller's explicit novel *Tropic of Cancer* against censorship." Now let me tell you, we owe this man a *debt*. Miller's books are not merely props toted by creepy undergraduate males who plan to use his words to justify their hedonism as soon as they find the means and the girls to be hedonistic with. Rather, his prose is the literary equivalent of a thick, juicy steak (sorry, Vegans, I can't think of an analogous vegetable) with a side of sautéed magic mushrooms—at once hallucinatory and hyper real, deep and flip, and bottomless. The life he describes is petty and exalted, gracious and mean, and if he didn't call a burger a "hamburger sandwich" or use the word "gay" to mean "joyful," his books could have been written yesterday afternoon. Are they smutty? Well, Miller kept himself busy. But books aren't flashers on the perimeter of a schoolyard. *Tropic of Cancer* won't spring out from the shadows and expose innocents something alarming out of context. So why did the United States have to be protected from it, and it from the United States?

I've been thinking about safety issues lately because the regional HR hoozas of the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America where I work have deemed this office unsafe. Though the motives behind this declaration are supposed to be confidential, the woman who came to us a few weeks ago and enumerated the offences for which we could be fired apparently was frightened by a now former employee. I can't imagine what this employee did or said to spook her, and have learned the hard way not to speculate, but since it happened Security staff have been hired to watch over and protect us.

Of dozens of Security types I've known, only four inspired anything like confidence. Like Brian, who let me shoot his sniper rifle (from his personal armory, it was not company equipment) and complimented me on my spread. Probably the worst was the Security guy who was run over by a clutch of Peeping Toms in a van. He later knocked a guest over with the hotel van—is that karma? Anyway, most were dumb, delusional, and drunk with power if not other intoxicants; but they at least they were members of the polyester sport coat brotherhood, and much as we may have hated to admit it, co-workers. What we got at Cosmodemonic was a roaming protectorate without portfolio—Security Temps.

As with Security types, not all temps are worthless. Some are smart and capable, merely passing time between gigs—like Amber. But most temps are temps because they are smelly, lazy, stupid, annoying, and have phantom back problems. They are an alien presence better ignored than acknowledged, and that's usually easy because they're off in a corner filing or doing some other menial thing. Security Temps are harder to overlook because being conspicuous is a huge part of their job. And we may have taken some comfort in them if we understood the threat from which they were shielding us. And if their demeanor was more *Seven Samurai* than *Three Amigos*.

There have been three Security Temps, as a matter of fact. The first was short and strapping, maybe in his early forties, with graying hair and dark tanned skin. He wore worn jeans, tight T-shirts, and big aviator's glasses. He looked as if he




No, it's Francesca Woodman—but I appreciate the thought.

drifted over from any one of the construction sites in the area, or was hired to work on our roof. The first couple of days he was here, he made a big deal about explaining what he was doing and how safe we all were as a result. Lately, though, he spends his days lounging in the camper topped bed of his truck, and only comes in the building for cold Mountain Dew.

The second one resembled Richard Harris in *Gladiator*, except he tottered around wearing white shorts and sneakers, a Panama hat, and listened to a Walkman the whole time he was here.

The third...oh, where do I begin. A physical description would seem cruel, so just imagine the antithesis of any hero of any romance novel, put him in a man-bra, and we'll leave it at that. He rarely leaves his maroon Chevy Cavalier with the "NO SNIVELING" bumper sticker and Jack Ball on the antenna, though he occasionally drives around the building before returning to squat in any patch of shade close to the front door. He squats and peers at passersby and single handedly unleashed an epidemic of heebie-jeebies in the neighborhood. Friday, the residents of the building behind ours reported him to the Scottsdale Police Department. He seemed completely unfazed when the cop demanded to see his credentials. Maybe it's happened before.

Last night, I dreamed the ex-employee to whom three hirelings from Pinkerton Security owe their paychecks strolled into Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America. The Security Temp on duty didn't stir from his Cavalier, perhaps because the ex-employee looked so terribly old and arthritic and nothing like the picture on his key card. Today I pondered this dream and have decided it wasn't the ex-employee at all, but the ghost of Elmer Gertz, flaunting our guardian and the protection he represents. And I hope the ghost of Henry Miller is somewhere laughing his head off. 



The Night In Shining Armor

A story narrated by Michael Alexander Burton
and written by Aaron Christopher Burton

There was a trail gate once that I knew of. And every time I went there I would look and make castles in the sky, for I knew what castles looked like. I live in medieval times, and my name is Xax.

One day a castle that I made in the sky suddenly became real. One day I looked, and to my amazement, there was a night riding out of the castle. He was dressed in the purest armor that I had ever seen, and being an armorer, I have seen a lot of pure armor. I went to him and I found that he was trying to raise help from the earth. He said he came from the undying lands, Celandra, and he lived on the continent of Quayore. After a few minutes on his winged steed, we arrived at this mysterious continent.

We arrived and were greeted by fireballs. I thought we would be consumed by fireballs, but soon I found that the shield of the knight covered us completely and we were unharmed. Soon we were surrounded by battle and someone gave me a sword and a shield. Soon I was pierced by an arrow and found myself in excruciating pain.

Then I woke up and found I had been talking in my sleep and I was in pain because I was sleeping on some sharp rocks.

Michael Alexander and Aaron Christopher, aka Alex and Aaron my cool little nephews, are first time contributors to The Cobra's Nose who recently cleaned up at the Karate tournament. Their mom, my sister Lauren, got her black belt at the same tournament, and my niece Sophia was awarded her yellow belt on the same day. So there is no one in the family who cannot kick my ass. —ed.

Sunblock

According to the joke, the British Ambassador was introduced to the tribal leader of a desert nation. "I understand your people worship the sun," remarked the Ambassador, with a condescending tone. "So might yours," returned the leader of the desert nation, "if they ever saw it!" HAHA!

I didn't say it was a funny joke, or anthropologically accurate. But there really is nothing like the sun to inspire romantic abandon. Or so I understand from the following paradigm of drama and literature: summer is for illicit romance, winter is for being stuck in rooms and getting on each other's nerves. Care to contradict me? Hmm, class? *Ethan Frome*, anyone? Yeah, right.

Which brings me to the song selection for this edition of The Cobra's Nose. You might have guessed from the above and from last month's rhapsodies about Beltain that I would select something hot, like "With or Without You," "The Sweetest Drop," or that filthy (and I mean that in the best possible way) Rick Springfield song Evelyn likes so much. But as I had a lousy Beltain and am irritated that my arms are turning brown even though I slather 45SPF sunblock on them every day, I'm going with something a bit more cynical and pissed off. If last month was about the *romp*, this month is about the *twig* that trips you up and lands you on your ass. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Stephen Sondheim's "The Girls of Summer" from the musical of the same name, vintage 1959.

The girls of summer get burned.
They start the summer unconcerned.
They get undone by a touch of sun in June,
Plus a touch of the moon.

The girls of summer get fooled
'Cause soon the summer heat has cooled,
And come September,
They can't remember why
Things were hot in July.

Not me! It's too easy to fall—
The moonlit sand,
A faraway band,
And that's all.
Not me—I don't easily thrill.
Never did, never will.

The end of summer's at hand.
I thought the summer was grand.
And here I am with the same undamaged heart
That I had at the start.

The girls of summer forgot to run.
The girls of summer were bound to lose.
The girls of summer have all the fun—
I have nothing but blues.

Cobra Cwiz!

The Girls of Summer




Match the title to the Picture:
Smiles of a Summer Night
I Know What You Blah Blah Blah
Suddenly Last Summer

The Return of the Parasol

The first and most important thing is to remember never to use AAA Cab. This has nothing to do with my original topic, but I just had a most unfruitful conversation with Mohammed Eghbali, supervisor in the Phoenix branch of that blighted organization, during which I was finally informed that I was *wrong* to have called for a cab only a half hour before it was needed, foolish to have expected the cab to arrive anywhere close to that time, insane to have believed any of the three “two to five minute” ETAs I received from his dispatchers, mistaken in recalling that I offered to give directions to our building, supercilious to be bent out of shape at having been disconnected three times and left on hold for a continuous stretch of over ten minutes, and once again simply wrong to think that the cab’s eventual arrival over fifty minutes late was anything but exemplary service deserving of praise not censure. You see, a half hour ago I didn’t know any of that, so maybe I really do owe Mr. Eghbali a debt of gratitude! Nah. I spit on their taxis and recommend you do no less.

So anyway, it’s getting hot in Arizona, hot as in damn hot. The lizards I used to see dart and scurry around the offices of the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America now mosey and amble. About a week ago, I got a surprise call from Garrett Wilson. Hi, Garrett! He told me it snowed that morning in Salt Lake. (He also told me that Chad and the General Manager from the Hilton were handcuffed and marched to the poky for embezzlement...anybody have details on this?) I told him it had been cooling off in our Valley, too—all the way down to the mid 90s. Whereupon he took the Lord’s name in vain and threatened to hang up the phone.

We’ve had none of those brisk days lately, alas, which brings me to The Parasol. When my lovely author-cousin Evelyn was visiting, we discussed the parasol and discovered we were both very much in favor of its revival. Think it over! A parasol provides portable shade to keep you cool and pale (perhaps not as important to you as it is to us), and will do it without giving you hat head. What more could you want come July?

So join us now and encourage others to as well. As Arlo Guthrie said, one person doing something unusual looks crazy, two looks gay (that’s where we are now), three looks like an organization, but fifty is a *movement*. Come on, everybody! Let’s start a movement! 



A Steed is Born

The Cobra’s Nose is proud and happy to announce the birth of Pines Poco Sugar to Sigs Straight Shot by Siglet out of Beam’s Joy and Great Shot Bar’s by Great Pine. I’m not one hundred percent sure what all that means, but it has a nice biblical ring to it, begat, begat, begat. And fancier than The Pain put it in her e-mail which read, “The Mans horse fold.”

The proud god parents are (as you probably guessed) The Man and his Significant Other Sherry. Sherry is always very cool over the phone and in person, unlike six or seven Significant Others I’d be happy to name in private correspondence. Like this one who flounced in the other day and said with a big sigh and roll of the eyes, “Page my Significant Other. (*sigh*) His extension is one seven (*sigh*) oh. (*sigh*, roll the eyes).” Then she dragged herself over to the couch to wait for him, exhausted from her interaction with the (*sigh*) Receptionist. Sheesh.

But The Man and Sherry are nothing like that, and will I think be an excellent influence on little Pines Poco Sugar (which reminds me of the best joke in *Three Amigos*—can you name it, class? Hmmm? Come on, there were only like two good ones. It should have been called *Three Amigos, Dos Jokes*. Okay, I’ll tell you—it’s the name of the town the Three Amigos protect, Santa Poco. The other one was when Chevy Chase shot the Invisible Indian and you just saw this poof of dust where he fell and it’s funny because you don’t expect the Invisible Indian to be *corporeal*. Now, where was I?), surely a noble steed in the making.

Congratulations to all. UUUU

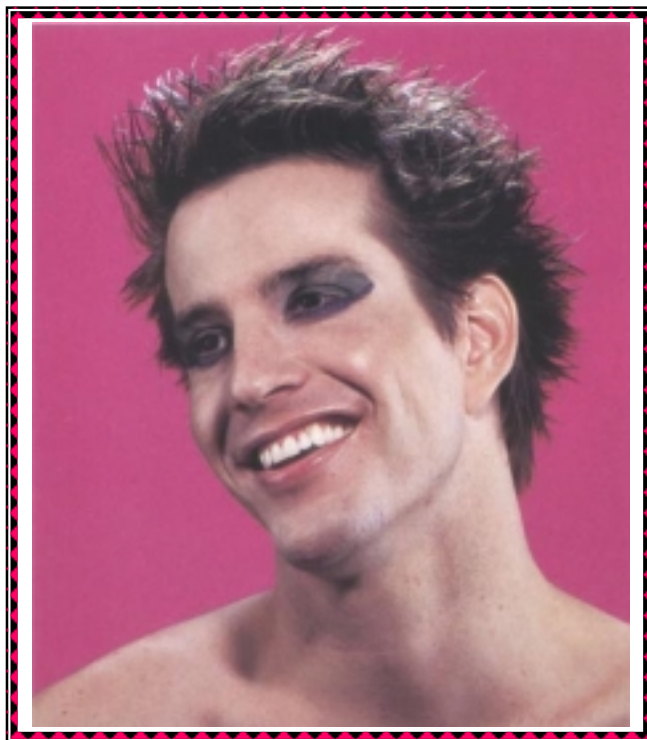
Next on COBRA—

When Fashion Attacks!

I'm not sure what timetable drives the publication of *City AZ* magazine, it just turns up sometimes. It's more an "occasional" than a "periodical," heh, heh. And it's hard to tell from inside the Valley of the Sun whether it really is provincial or just the local variation of a national norm. Like local news teams—are local audiences proud of them? I watch their promos and think, "How hard could those regional Emmys possibly be to win?"

So I flip through *City AZ*, which has a substantial cover, good color, and nice glossy pages, and appreciate the money and time that went into its production. On the other hand, look at what they did to my brother! Pat invited me to the *City AZ* wrap party, and I was curious to see the culprits. The scene was like *Sex in the City*, only most of the guests were fatter and didn't dress so well.

Now I'm the first to admit I have trouble distinguishing the latest fashion from the perpetually ridiculous (please see [The Return of the Parasol](#)), but I'm pretty confident the picture above right is an example of the latter.



Another was the funk+fashion showcase for local designers Pat and I attended a week or so ago. Pat wasn't in it, due to a contractual problem with his agency (Ford, if you want to use him for something), and that was strike one against the event. His ex-girlfriend Alyssa was in it though, looking as if she had a couple of Grandma Marge's little wigs attached to her head. That wasn't strike two because it was so funny to see. Strike two was the clothing served up by two of the designers, which reminded me of nothing so much as the fashion show from *True Stories*, minus innovation and wit. One favored sparkly fabrics with feathered trim, stretched tight over the models' bodies. The other pushed a dollbaby look, with gigantic flowered hats and lingerie looking dresses made of translucent material in a bold flowered pattern, and more feathered trim. The designs were too slutty to be taken seriously, and too stupid to be sexy.

Fortunately, the show was saved from a strike out by Nicole Maletta's Minimal Clothing line. Her designs, which book ended the show, were classic without being stodgy, conservative but with flair, and I could actually imagine them adorning my self or fellow citizens. And I'm not just saying that because I've been to her house or because her brother cracks me up. She has a talent to make a local citizen proud.

And I think her clothes would look great with a parasol. 👁 👁

Cobra Headquarters End Nose...

📧 Sharon C. McGovern,
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Use them.

In the end, Vivian Li spent only as much time in the custody of the Phoenix Art Museum's Security Forces as it took them to learn her mom is one of the Museum's most generous patronesses; so I suppose free speech prevailed.

Now quickly, I keep forgetting to thank The Big Toe of in the Know for bringing the book *Goodnight Moon* to work for me to look at. I agree that it was probably the inspiration behind Charlie Brown's question, "Why would anyone want to say 'goodnight' to the moon?" though the question itself is no less perplexing. Also, I found all the mice with ease, even though I'm usually really bad at that sort of thing. Danny Arredondo, my cousin and right-hand-man to Wes Craven, declined to show my *Scream 2* article, over which I sweated and slaved, to Mr. Craven due to a long standing feud between Mr. Craven and Kevin Williamson. He will be spending the next few months in Toronto filming a vampire movie "with script problems." Maybe Lee and his lovely bride Tonya could find him and talk him into letting them honeymoon as zombie extras. From Danny also comes this month's quote re The Cobra's Nose, "It's all right, I guess, but I have to be in the mood."

If you have something to say about this or any other issue from The Nose, please feel free to use one of the means to the left to express it.