

The cobra's nose

Commemorative Canadian Edition

Dear Readers...As you surely have deduced from the stunning new layout of the cobra's nose, I have lots of free time on my hands and don't get out much. “Much” is not “never,” however, and when I do manage to roam, especially if it is to another nation entirely, I feel you should hear all about it. This edition was guest edited by dearly departed Janet Herman, who was also good enough to demonstrate the sine wave of comedy to the author. Thanks also to Mr Enigma who scanned the photos, and especially to Lee Follett who made the journey not only possible, but delightful. -ed.

How It happened: On Sundays, my local NPR affiliate runs a show called “The Savvy Traveler,” which is hosted by this witty guy named Rudy who talks to people from all over the world about their journeys and adventures and how to obtain both for bargain basement prices. Also featured are travel writers like Paul Theroux who get paid to go places and tell people what they thought about them. I've never read Theroux's travel writing, (although I did read his novella *Doctor Lauren Slaughter* because I'd heard it was about a prostitute, which is true by the way) but sensed a need for a Travel Section in the cobra's nose amongst you readers. Ever your willing servant, I decided to send myself on assignment. Now from a world of locations, how does one choose where to go? Answer: where one is invited. And if one is very fortunate, one has Lee Follett to invite one to mysterious Toronto. What follows is a journal of my experiences and observations from my foray into The Great White North, and perhaps my calling card to National Public Radio.

Wednesday Evening: I honestly thought my flight left at 1145pm. I knew I would arrive at the airport much earlier because I'd asked Mom to give me a ride and couldn't imagine (correctly as it turns out) her leaving her house any later than 9pm, but I was a bit surprised when I checked the departure screen, then double checked my ticket, to realize that I would be heading out at 1050pm. The things you learn when you travel! I still had more than an hour to kill waiting for the plane and thought I'd devote it to learning how to play games on my amazing new electronic thesaurus. Okay, so I couldn't figure out how to play the games and decided to take a nap instead. The moments passed and soon enough I was on a jet bound for Cleveland, OH. On board I finished the in flight magazine crossword puzzle (I rock) and resumed my nap.

Thursday: Woke up in time to get a good long look at Cleveland from the air. I saw lots of homey brown neighborhoods and parks and a group of skyscrapers, but no sign of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. I didn't even receive the psychic vibrations I've trained myself to detect in the presence of Who paraphernalia. They must somehow have been blocked by the jet engines. After I catching a quick nap in the airport lobby I joined seven or eight other wayfarers en route to the tiny plane that would take us over Lake Ontario. This part of the journey only took about an hour and the flight attendants

distributed peanuts and customs forms to help us beguile the time, then suddenly we were in Canada. I rushed off the plane and through customs and met...*nobody*. There I was, alone in a foreign air terminal, in real danger of somebody speaking French to me, and no Lee anywhere. Or was he? I scanned the lobby taking into account possible massive weight gain and hair loss, but ultimately decided that if he had over the past couple of years taken to looking like a plump middle aged Asian woman he certainly would have written to tell me. I wondered if this wasn't some sort of Cannuck initiation. Canadians, for all their gentle façade, have got to be tough to survive their ghastly winters, and Lee's voice had acquired the lilting quality peculiar to that race (I had no idea how far the assimilation had progressed until I saw him take an interest in a hockey game). “I'm alright,” I told myself, “I'm up to this survivalist challenge which I would guess has its antecedents in Vision Quests of legend.” I traded some of my mighty American bucks for Canadian. The exchange rate at the moment was \$1.39 American to puny \$1.00 Canadian. (Rudy recently described Canada as a colossal 30-40% off sale.) I thought I'd take a few moments to figure out how to work the exchange rate function on my amazing new electronic thesaurus. Okay, so I couldn't figure out how to use the exchange rate function—it exchanged figures for other figures but the results didn't seem creditable—and decided to cruise the gift shop instead.

Years ago, one of my Anthropology professors told of her first visit to India, how as soon as she got off the plane she was immediately overwhelmed by the *otherness* of the place and how that moment of clarity changed her life. Well I had a brush with that feeling in Toronto International Airport Terminal Three when next to the gift cart I saw a young man in a hockey jersey and hockey hair reading a hockey magazine and sipping coffee, and was taken aback by the utter *Canadianness* of the vision. Upon reflection the image seems contrived, as if staged by the Toronto Chamber of Commerce, but the moment itself was untouched by cynicism and struck me as quintessentially foreign. Was this the sight I was destined to see?

I had plenty of time to reflect on this encounter because still no Lee. I walked around and around. I called his house, got his roommate Claudine's voice on the machine (“Hal lo!”), and chose to take this as a good sign. Walked around some more. When I reentered the terminal this time and looked in the direction of the payphones *there he was*—not plump, not middle aged, not Asian, and

not womanly. In fact, quite the opposite, my old friend Lee.

We made a mad dash for a bus which sat still for a good ten minutes after we boarded, though there was some excitement when the driver ate a piece of bread. Now let me take the opportunity to pay tribute to Toronto's mass transit system which was scrupulously clean (never once did I fear sitting in gum), prompt (unless somebody threw themselves on the subway tracks, and then well what can you do), and polite ("mind the gap!"). As in Salt Lake, the work of local poets was squeezed in between advertisements. Is the one about "clandestine elves" still posted by the UTA? Well in Toronto the transit authority put up one about *freezing to death*. Told you Canadians're tough.

We proceeded to Lee's house which is located off a main drag called Bloor. Bloor is a four lane road with tiny left hand turn divots at intersections, but the outer lanes are always taken up by parked cars and there is always a huge backup whenever somebody wants to turn left. Now this would never fly in the Southwest, but the Torontonians seemed completely unfazed by the inevitable traffic jams and the brazen jaywalkers. I saw one near miss between a couple of cars, which was followed by nonchalant waves and orderly conduct rather than screaming, horn honking, and unidigit salutes. *Weird*. Oh, and there was this street person who thanked me after I told him I wouldn't give him my change. I guess if you're of a nationality that spends its leisure time writing and reading poems about freezing to death you're bound to be extra indulgent toward the non-fatal annoyances in life.

Bloor is also home to a wide variety of businesses and ethnic establishments, eg, a Tinkish Restaurant. I don't know what "Tinkish" means but it was good for a giggle every time I passed it. Down the road is a good sized porno theater which proudly claims to have had showings of *Emanuelle* for the past seventeen years—Canadians venerate the classics—and a big store which Lee told me was one of the world's great kitsch resources and which HEY! I never got to visit. Now that I think of it, after I expressed my desire to flex the muscle of my mighty American Visa card within its walls we didn't pass it again which leads me to suspect some dark maneuverings on Lee's part.

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time I passed it.

Way past the porno theater and Bob's House of Kitsch (or whatever it's called) is a Shoe Museum (of all things), and just past that the University of Toronto (I know I skipped Lee's house, I'll get to it in a minute). A recent addition to the University campus is The Gigantic Turkey Shaped Library Building. As far as animal shaped buildings go, this one even beats the Baboon Faced Apartment Complex on Brown and Center in Mesa. I mean, *look at the picture!* How could *that* have been accidental? If Canadians put loons on their dollars and leaves on their flag, they are perfectly capable of constructing a library in the shape of a turkey. None of the other university buildings seemed to be shaped like anything in nature, unless you can think of a natural thing shaped like a box with a square cut out of its middle. There were a lot of those, most quite beautiful, and worlds away from atrocities like the MARB (if you don't know what the MARB is consider yourself fortunate). And do you want to know what's super neat? I saw a couple of those very buildings on *Due South* the other day. No kidding. Also (this is even better), you know the Federation

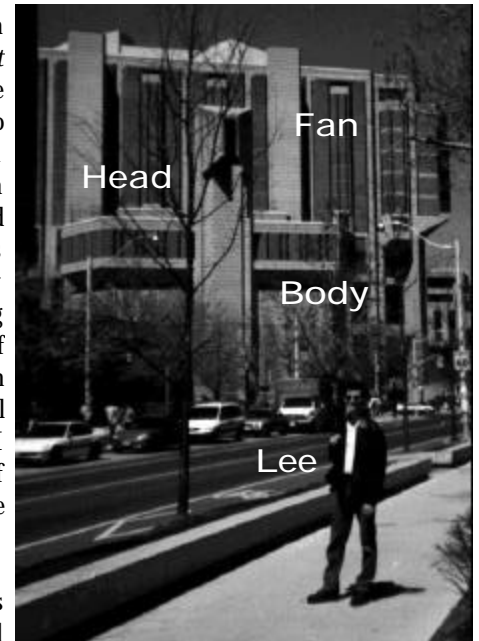
capital building from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the one that looks like two skyscrapers which curve around a squatty domed building? That is Toronto's New City Hall. I'm getting ahead of myself here—I didn't even see the New City Hall until Sunday—but I was really enamored of Toronto's architecture overall. Apparently, I'm not the only one. Lee told me he runs into film and television shoots all

over the city. Claudine at some point abducted three orange traffic cones inscribed with the word FILM from one of them.

I was introduced to a good number of the stately campus buildings (Lee receives mail at about half of them), and even had the opportunity to nap in the library (not turkey shaped, alas) of one of them while Lee proctored an exam (not as impressive as it sounds). Yes, I do seem to nap in a lot of public places, but you see I am in training for when I turn to vagrancy full time. One of the buildings is allegedly haunted, but the ghost was not in when we called. Unless that's what the gradual appearance of "Someone's at the Door" written in blood on a wall was all about. But I'm no expert. This part of the trip also gave me an insight into what a well respected person Lee is in his community, and how he has managed to parlay his honorifics (eg "Junior Fellow," more impressive than it sounds) into free meals and access to the likes of Margaret Atwood (the former being superior, in my opinion).

That night we went to an Irish pub called Dora Keogh, which is so authentic there isn't a hint of shamrocks or even green anywhere. Beer, however, is plentiful. On Thursday nights local musicians go there and take part in "sessions," informal performances of authentic Irish music on authentic Irish instruments with authentic grim looks on their faces. Maybe they were thinking of The Troubles, and you should have *seen* them when a glass of beer was knocked to the floor. The music was lively, though, with the exception of a pretty, misty ballad sung call and response style in both Gaelic and English. Have you seen uilleann pipes? I had always imagined they looked something like the tin whistle, which looks like that thing Jean-Luc Picard played in later episodes of *STTNG*. But they don't. They have a sort of black bellows which is stashed under the arm and which connects to the bottom of the pipe, freeing the piper to look around (with maximum disinterest in this case) while they finger the pipe staff. The musicians that night included a couple of uilleann pipers, a few drummers (actually, they just had the drum heads which they call "bodhran"), a passel of violinists, and (this freaked me out) a guy who played a banjo I couldn't hear.

Back to the subway where ad copy for an upcoming TV show read, "A world of wealth and power...a world of drugs and danger...Toronto is where these worlds collide." A documentary of



some sort, I gather.

Friday: Friday began in the best possible way with a boy cooking eggs for me. While that was happening, I sat around and chatted with charming, coffee drinking (yea, sister!) Claudine. This would be hard to top, but Lee and I were compelled by the siren song of the Toronto tourist traps to try. We visited an old hippie neighborhood, which in the tradition of old hippie neighborhoods has been transformed into an upscale shopping district. We looked in a gallery that featured the pseudocubist renderings and enormous signatures of Anthony Quinn. Posters from some of his movies also hung on the walls, and his signature crowded whatever blank space was nearest to the center of each. We went to a New Age bookstore where I got an Om for my mom made of darkened wood and purple glass. The clerk, noting the landscape on my mighty American Visa, told me he had been in Arizona recently. "Sedona?" I asked, and I was right. We went to a mall with an arched glass ceiling that had a flock of geese hanging from it. All along, Lee tried to explain the historical basis of Arthur myth to me. It involved no castles (ah!), and the late appearance of Guinevere, Lancelot, and Merlin in the literature makes their existence as difficult to verify (ah!) as that of the quest for the Holy Grail (ah!). I changed the subject before he could tell me Lerner and Lowe weren't the court composers, and about that time we reached the CN Tower.

The CN Tower is one of the world's tallest structures (having recently lost the title for very tallest to a radio tower in some podunk nation according to the Guinness Book of World Records Museum—but keep in mind the curators of the Guinness Book of World Records Museum placed Yuma, Arizona in the middle of Libya on their map). It is located on the shore of Lake Ontario, right next to the most beautiful McDonalds I've ever seen. True, you have to pay way too much money to get on the elevator (though access to the gift pavilion is free), but it's kind of like when you get gouged upon entry to Meteor Crater—you still somehow end up feeling more impressed than screwed. "That is one *big* hole," you say again and again on the rim of Meteor Crater. "We are *so* far up," you say again and again from aloft the CN Tower main balcony. If you go even further, to the Sky Pod (about thirty stories and four fifty Canadian extra) conversation tends toward "Wow! We're *really* far up!" and "Hey! There's The Gigantic Turkey Shaped Library Building!" A portion of main level has a glass floor with a view that could inspire fits of vertigo in even the most stout hearted; especially if you walk across the length of it looking straight down, which I recommend. From the Tower you have two basic views, lake as far as you can see and city as far as you can

see, and you begin to appreciate how enormous each is.

Close to the Tower is a gallery called The Power Plant which was holding a retrospective for Arnaud Maggs, a former fashion photographer who took to printing entire contact sheets of sessions with ordinary individuals which have the effect of showing subtle changes of expression over time, and series of numbers or objects (such as tags which marked the piece work of children or envelopes which contained funeral notices) which compel the viewer to consider the photograph as a record of an individual moment as well as part of a procession, and that's all I'm going to write for although I found the exhibit a moving, eminently worthwhile experience I'm sure I've already lost Pat's attention at least.

"A world of wealth and power...
a world of drugs and danger...
Toronto is where these worlds collide."

Then we took the subway, a bus, and a streetcar to the Beaches. On the way, I worked at converting the temperature from centigrade to Fahrenheit on my amazing new electronic thesaurus and thought I was doing a swell job. Lee was dubious about the results, but I just can't handle figures like 14(when I know I am warm and comfortable. I'm not sure if that is even a plausible number of degrees, but let me just say this about the weather: I headed north to find a cold, wet, miserable climate and what did I get? Day after day of sunny, clear, and pleasant. "What a beautiful day!" Lee or Claudine would invariably say every morning. "What, *again*?" I would reply. If the evenings hadn't been brisk enough for me to wear my famous black raincoat I would have been furious. Anyway there was a huge expanse of sand between the boardwalk and the water when we got there. I planted a stick right at the waterline so I could determine what the tide was up to, but it was removed (I'm thinking for the benefit of some eager dog) while I was busy wading and trying to skip rocks. I got one rock to skip *five times*. Lee will back me up on this.

Skipping ahead myself, I am in a club called Phoenix (hey!) listening to eighties revival music and observing Canadian dance rituals. The standard form, to judge by this group, involves holding a beer in one hand and swaying like a zombie from a Romero film, but faster. Or not. There were only two groups in the crowded room busting moves: the three Solid Gold Dancers onstage (I wondered what had happened to them), and the people I was with. My group now included friends of Lee's named Sara and Michelle who were both very groovy and flexible, as was Lee himself. Lee told me their skills were derived from their enthusiasm for Celtic dancing, but I've seen *Riverdance* on PBS and it didn't look anything like what they were doing. Two of Sara's co-workers named Chris and Chris hooked up with them on the dance floor, and while they did adhere to the Canadian-Beer-in-the-Hand-Stagger-Step, theirs was a more energetic variation. I attribute this to their state of congenial drunkenness, which I kept expecting to lead to bouts of "I LOVE YOU, MAN" "NO, I LOVE YOU, MAN" but it never did. I, as is my custom in dance establishments, stalwartly clung to a distant wall.



I got to know that wall really well, as the dancing went on till almost two am. We all (with the exception of Chris and Chris) were to meet before dawn the next morning to celebrate Beltaine, which is a fancy word for May Day amongst Celtic types, and a ceremony dear to the hearts of Wiccans (of which Sara is a member). On the subway back, Lee told me about how in days of yore Beltaine was observed with huge bonfires and cattle and started to make the event sound pretty good. He also dazzled me by translating the English titles of French movies back into French, eg: “*A Heart in Winter?*” “*Un Coeur en Hiver.*” Oh, *my*.

Welcome to the May-o.

Saturday: Predawn was dark and chilly, so if nothing else I would get to wear my wonderful coat. Sara had offered to pick Lee and me up in a car (marvelous as public transportation is generally—and the Toronto Transit Commission is in particular—cars were beginning to seem awfully glamorous at this stage in the trip) at 5am. At about a quarter to, Lee was up and about and humming little tunes. He knocked on Claudine’s door and asked if she would be interested in going with, but she politely declined. Now under the circumstances, “politely” can be taken to mean anything short of her practicing violence upon him, but she was absolutely courteous in both word and voice. Five came around and Lee was flitting all over the house, awake as anybody I’d ever seen who wasn’t tweaking, and determined to welcome the dawn. He was loath to call Sara at home for fear of disturbing her family, so he left a note for her on the door and we started for the park on foot.

The sad truth is Beltaine is no longer commemorated with huge bonfires and cattle, but with groups of people called Morris Dancers who wear bells on their shins. Other than that constant, their costumes were quite variable, from one lot who looked like a cricket team to another that was decked out in brightly colored strips of cloth. They danced and danced and sang and sang, and in this fashion welcomed in the May-o (yes, I snickered every time they trilled, “Welcome in the May-o,” and admit my sensibilities are jejune, but come on—*mayo* is a *condiment*). This May-o (there I go again) arrived with a full moon on the horizon, which I was given to understand was extra auspicious. So if you felt especially vigorous on May first, it’s probably because you didn’t get up before dawn to watch a bunch of folk dancers, but also perhaps because there was a full moon for Beltaine. Which isn’t to say I didn’t enjoy the event, because I did, I really, really, really did. Especially the dances that involved the waving of sticks, and not only because there was a danger of the celebrants braining each other. And the group that looked like a cricket team had a scintillating fool. But after an hour or two, even Lee seemed to feel May had been sufficiently welcomed in and was ready to find a comfortable place to nap. As Lee is more discriminating in this regard than I, this meant heading home. Sara never arrived at the park, by the way, having slept through her alarm. But she didn’t get busted out of the Wiccan Union or anything, and when we saw her again on Sunday she looked serene and refreshed.

Saturday, AN (after nap): Welcome to Saturday Part Two, in which we travel to Niagara Falls. This involved renting a car (yipee!), which was supposed to be a Geo, but Budget was out of Geos so it was upgraded to a Plymouth of some kind. I don’t know what kind, but it was green I think. We headed out to face mile after

mile, pardon me, kilometer after kilometer of well-mannered driving—use of turn indicators, pulling into the middle lane to allow others to pass, the works. Lee was driving, which is good because although I don’t consider myself an impolite driver per se, this was definitely a different sort of scene than my afternoon commute. Also, I just love being a passenger. An old friend of mine from Salt Lake used to ask me if I wanted a ride home in her car with a tone that would make you think she expected me to ride with my head out the passenger side window with my tongue flapping in the breeze. Which was only about half right, two thirds tops. Most of the trip was made on the QEW, which stands for Queen Elizabeth Way, and because it was named after the queen those letters appeared on the road signs in the middle of a crown shape not unlike the Imperial Margarine logo.

Niagara Falls is the perfect rebut for any Canadian diatribe about American tackiness. I hope you all know me well enough to conclude I liked it a lot. I hadn’t remembered that aspect of it from my last visit, but I was only in the fifth grade and my gentle parents were trying to protect us from things like wax museums (Niagara Falls has at least four of those, including one devoted to rock personalities—Alice Cooper is in their front window, and another for famous criminals—John Wayne Gacy is in theirs). My principle memories from that first trip were of riding *The Maid of the Mist* and going into the tunnel behind the Canadian Falls. Of the former all I remember is my glasses fogging up and taking them off didn’t change the view a bit (even at that tender age I was pretty blind), and I was nagged by the possibility that they might fall off my face into the water and I knew there would be no retrieving them if they did. Of the latter I just retained impressions that were dark, wet, noisy, and scary. The first memory proved too expensive to reproduce (nineteen bucks American, geesh), but the second was downright reasonable (six bucks Canadian). Mother Nature, not unlike other mothers of my acquaintance, has a way of reminding you what a punk you are, and standing in proximity to many hundreds of thousands of gallons of water falling off of a cliff certainly put me in my place. For his part, Lee broke the journey under the falls into its archetypal components: proving of worthiness/ intent (standing in line to buy the ticket), separation (donning ritual yellow rain slickers), initiation (entering a netherworld of yellow sulfur lights, persistent damp, and violent roaring noise), transformation (that punk thing I mentioned earlier), and return (duh).

I seemed to remember that fabulous things happened with colored lights and the Falls after dark. (I also seem to remember the Canadian side of the falls was turned off after the light show—can



Spectacular
Niagara Falls

somebody back me up on this or was it just a strange Freudian mirage?) This gave us a few hours to decide which tawdry museum or house of horrors would be graced with our money and time. Our first choice, The Ripley's Believe it or Not Museum, was disqualified almost immediately because admission cost close to twenty dollars. Even in Canadian dollars that seemed excessive, so we narrowed the choices to either the Museum of Space Aliens or The Guinness Book of World Records Museum, and if you have been reading attentively you will already know we chose the latter. And what can I tell you? It was alright, the World's Tallest Man part was the best, the curators put



Yuma, Arizona in Africa. There was no transcendent “This is *so* tacky” moment, but don’t you understand? We *had* to go. It was like all those grab bags of my youth that my parents would never buy for me because they said grab bags are always filled with broken crap (okay, Mom never used the word “crap”), but I always pined for one and when I was grown I *bought* one of those grab bags from the Salt Lake Planetarium and it *was* full of broken crap, but at long last my curiosity was satisfied so how could I *possibly* have regretted my purchase? It was like that. We had time to take pictures of ourselves messing around with some of the more monumental pieces of kitsch (dinosaurs, buildings with gaping maws for entrances, etc) before dark. The light show was grand by the way, but it’s probably better I witnessed it before I saw the dancing waters bidet gag on the season finale of *The Simpsons* (which is cracking me up right now).

Then Lee drove us home, singing alternative songs from the eighties all the way because I couldn’t find a classic rock station.

Sunday: I forgot to write about the window washing syndicate of Toronto, but that’s okay because it isn’t nearly as interesting as, say, Claudine’s sunburn. It seems while we were messing around Niagara

Falls (“Niagara Falls! Slowly I turned, inch by inch...,” one million points to whoever reminds me of what that is from...is it Abbot and Costello?), Claudine was bicycling all over Toronto gradually turning the color of a not quite ripe cranberry. She was good natured about the burn, and though I know “good natured” under these circumstances could be anything short of lying in bed with a moist towel over her eyes while screaming obscenities, she honestly maintained her high level of graciousness. My fingers itched to slice open an aloe vera leaf for her, but my hosts didn’t have even one growing in the yard (*Toronto*), so I listened to her talk about her phobia/fascination with cows instead. This was a nice leisurely start to what was to be a nice leisurely day. To give you an inkling of how tranquil the morning was, our first outing after breakfast (in a bakery, Lee wasn’t cooking for me any more) was to a graveyard.

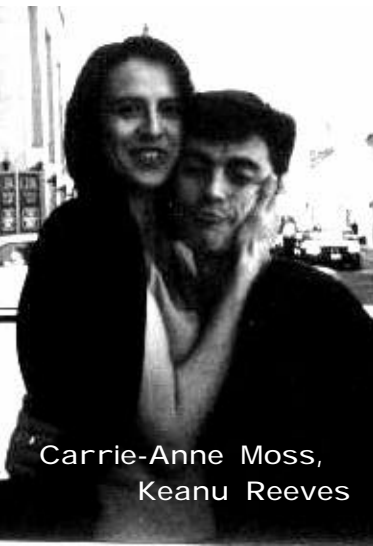
Toronto has a vivacious cemetery. No matter where you looked there were people rollerblading, jogging, mourning...you name it. The main attractions for Lee were a shady pond where he once saw a fox and a the graves marked with Celtic crosses. The pond, alas, had been renovated and now looks like a prissy English garden, but fortunately for Lee (among others, I guess) the graves suffered no such desecration. Even better, the markers occasioned a spirited discussion about cultural assimilation, ancient and modern (good times...good times). Before we left, we took a few spins around the cemetery in the green Plymouth singing “Mysterious Ways” at the tops of our lungs. The dead are lucky to have such visitors.

Mother Nature, not unlike other mothers of my acquaintance, has a way of reminding you what a punk you are.

Next, we had to fill the car with gas before we returned it lest we get hit with some gargantuan penalty. I wasn’t expecting the sign at the gas station to read “52.2”, though. “FIFTY TWO DOLLARS A GALLON!” I cried. “*Fifty two cents per liter*,” Lee replied with a hauteur possessed only by Junior Fellows (I hope), but he did concede it was outrageous. How outrageous? I’ve got top minds (that is, Janet Herman) on the case, using my amazing new electronic thesaurus. Godspeed, Janet. After this little operation, we headed downtown so I could get a picture of the best graffiti I saw in Canada: the word “DISORDER” written on an embankment, with a smiley face and mohawk on the O. Lee kept asking if I didn’t want “to visit the national hockey museum, eh?” in a spooky voice, as if he was channeling that guy I saw in the airport. From my Anthropological studies, I knew it was unwise to deny the wishes of a person possessed of a totemic spirit, but I really didn’t want to see that museum so I turned him down.

We returned the car and walked downtown to meet a friend of Lee’s named Mary Catherine. She is a striking woman—very tall, and very slim, and *Gilda* is one of her favorite movies so you know she’s a good person. Together we were going to see *The Matrix* in a theater that has great sound, a big screen, and if you sit in the front row you can put your feet up on a stage. It’s sort of like the old Cinema In Your Face in Salt Lake City, except, well, not a dump. This was the

second time I saw *The Matrix*, and I have to admit I'm growing rather fond of it. I maintain my original objections to it—that it lacks dramatic courage, that the screenplay is way too pleased with its own facile cleverness (which it mistakes for profundity), and that if you rounded up the world's top three computer geeks there is no way they'd look like Laurence Fishburne, Keanu Reeves, and Carrie-Anne Moss—and yet I find myself quoting and otherwise



Carrie-Anne Moss,
Keanu Reeves

referencing it all the time. "There is no spoon," I tell people who have no idea what I'm talking about, knowing full well that it will just make them frustrated and nuts. This has worked particularly well on Mr Enigma. I also say in the most uninflected voice I can manage, "I know Kung Fu," then giggle. Can't help myself. I belong to *The Matrix*. Lee just belongs to Carrie-Anne Moss. "She is *such* a babe," he whispered in worshipful tones every time she appeared wearing one of her black vinyl get-ups. Mary Catherine had a problem with the filmmakers' politics (the bulk of abuse and death was visited upon the minorities, the lesbian, and the weenie). We all agreed the violence was awesome.

Mary Catherine had an engagement right after the movie so we parted. Lee and I were due to play cards with Sara and her family in Northern Toronto, a long subway and car

ride away. Toronto recently annexed all of its suburbs, and as I mentioned before is a vast city, but its layout still strikes me as a little strange. Instead of having a central district where most or all of the skyscrapers are, clusters of skyscrapers dot the landscape. Many of them, like the New City Hall, have arresting designs, but you also see many hideous apartment buildings that make even MARB look stylish. If nothing else, they inspire a deeper understanding and appreciation of David Cronenberg's movie *They Came From Within*. Sara's family does not live in one of those sorts of buildings, though you still probably wouldn't guess how cozy the interior is by looking at their front door. As Sara, who collected us at the subway station, led us to her home she told us the apartment manager forced them to remove the Christmas lights from their porch, which I think is a travesty. Inside with Sara and her mom and her sister and Lee was sort of like hanging out with the Schlegels from *Howards End*. They all talked about books I'd never heard of, drank tea, and tried to teach me how to play a game called Hand and Foot. I require a lot of technical support when I play any card game more complex than Go Fish or Spoons, and as this Hand and Foot deal involves six decks of cards and scoring instructions that go on for half a page, it was certainly no exception. Sara sat next to me so she could keep me in line. "I know what you're thinking and you are not allowed to do that," she would say. At the end of a hand, she supervised while

I tried to figure my points. My amazing new electronic thesaurus would have come in handy about then, but nobody else seemed to need artificial assistance, and Sara finally got me through. I remember either black or red threes (or is it fours?) are very bad, the rest is a blur. Okay, it's all a blur. But the conversation was bright and conversationalists' accents were pretty, so I had a nice time listening in while I fumbled with my cards.

Monday: I woke up in a bit of a state having survived the strangest night. It started with mundane and bothersome sleeplessness, then vicious white moths started biting my wrists and fluttering in my eyes. That Eve 6 song about blending tender hearts rang in my ears, and I realized I couldn't skip count by fives. I panicked every time I opened my eyes. I thought about shouting out to Lee that he should evict the ghosts in his house, but didn't because deep down I knew that would be stupid. (When I related the above events to Pat, the Eve 6 part was all he found horrible, not that I was *hallucinating moths*, for crying out loud.) As you might imagine, the hours passed slowly and by the time Lee and Claudine awoke rejuvenated, I was wiped out. Lee was kind enough to spend the morning showing me pictures from his travels. They show him standing with monuments that are hundreds or thousands of years old, and I'll admit they're pretty cool. Do they compare with the

DISORDER

one I've got of him with the giant teddy bears of Niagara Falls? No.

What does Paul Theroux do when his travels seem to be ending with a whimper rather than I bang? I don't know because I haven't read his travel books. I think Doctor Lauren Slaughter was murdered the end of the novella I did read, though that's not helpful here (though it would have been if I had been murdered myself). So I'll end by telling you that I was enchanted by Toronto, that Lee was a marvelous host, and that I'd like to see both again sooner than is likely. Oh, and that Lee and Claudine have a terrific little apartment (so clean! their moms would be really proud). But next time, Canada, couldn't I please get just a little rain?

End Nose Thus ended my travels to the strange and distant land of Canada. I almost missed my connection in Cleveland due over napping in the airport lobby, but other than that the trip home was uneventful. Volume 8 of the *Cobra's nose* will be a return to the standard form, and will feature an article about hospitals written by Janet Herman (unless JAMA snatches it up), one which recalls a visit to The Museum of Jurassic Technology, and the lurid tale of my bed (provided I get either written). **WRITE TO ME** at my new Cobra Hq:

Sharon McGovern, CIC
2128 E 10th St, #3
Tempe, AZ 85281

or **CALL ME:** (480) 966 2705

Congratulations to Katy Wenger and the Mr. on the impending birth of their first child.

