

THE COBRA'S NOSE

Vol. 9

'Fidelio'

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The Cobra's Notes...

A Visit from Ms. Vep

I was sitting at my regular spot at Café Nikos scotch taping the addresses of **THE COBRA'S NOSE** subscribers to envelopes when six pages of vol. 8 fluttered down to the table, followed by the heavy and direct word, "Weak."

I looked up and there was Ms. Irma Vep, looking very sleek in vinyl and wrap around shades; thinner than ever, but I suppose wearing vinyl in June in Arizona will do that for you. Flustered, I began to put the pages in order and noticed the paper was glossy and the pictures were in color. "Hey, where did you get this? Even my master copy isn't in color," I said.

"That's hardly the point," she snapped. "The only thing with balls in this issue is *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, and you didn't give Hieronymus Bosch the credit."

I could feel myself start to squirm and get shifty eyed. I thought of blaming everything on Vivian Li, but I knew that would never fly with Ms. Vep. She made me take responsibility for all mistakes in the edition she edited, and even though I know for a fact that she thought Vivian Li's publication "The Glass Grape Society: A Feminist Perspective" was specious and derivative of de Beauvoir that wouldn't be enough to persuade her to blame impotent prose on Li instead of me. "Well, I had a, ah, whole article about insults. And Janet's piece had some blood in it. Oh! And I told about how I was mean to that guy from Maine."

"Maine." There was a sneer in her voice. "Look at me."

I raised my head and she fired the beam of a high powered flashlight into my eyes. I turned my head but couldn't look away, the bright circle bloomed pink and green bruises. Ms. Vep was the cobra, I was the little bird.

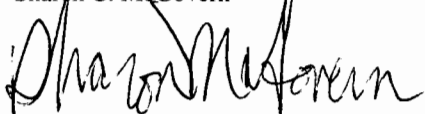
"Let's think a moment about the content of your recent 'news' letters. Museum visits, recipes for frozen treats, and pallid comparisons of your life to musical theater. And the month before that, you and Canadians being *polite* to one another. Where is the drama? The struggles of life? The misery of car ownership?"

"Actually, my car's been running really well lately," I interjected.

"DID YOU SAY SOMETHING? I THOUGHT I JUST HEARD YOU SAY SOMETHING," Ms. Vep's voice boomed and the circle of light bobbed closer to my eyes. My gaze drooped tableward, and I considered how the tableware and envelopes were obscured by iridescent blobs and streaks. I drew a deep breath and looked up.

All I saw before me was the view through the Café Nikos glass door, amorous grackles flitting around a puddle. I turned to my left and right. I stood and did a three sixty by my chair, but Ms. Vep was not to be seen. I think I know what she was getting at though. The last few editions have been light on conflict, which may be a comfortable way to live, but no way to boost readership. And although I admit I was weenie enough to receive with trepidation the admonition to "have an interesting evening" from a co-worker, remembering that "have an interesting life" is a Chinese curse, I will do my best to infuse this edition with strife. So I'm going to send Vivian Li on sabbatical and drag Sharon McGovern out of the house, force her to face the world and see what sort of Independence Day fireworks (or weird, evasive fictions) result.

Sharon C. McGovern



Cobra-in-Chief/Publisher/Editor Pro Tem



Sharon Finishes a Book—A War Book

Now I know this may not completely satisfy Ms. Vep's directive, but it is a start. Those of you conversant in film iconography will recognize the above photo as being from *From Here to Eternity*, which just happens to be adapted from the book I read. And what a long, thick, masculine book it is, too! But toward the end I couldn't help thinking, "If this had been the movie, I'd have been finished weeks ago." And if you think watching Burt Lancaster portraying machismo incarnate gets old, just try reading dozens of descriptions of his character's chest hair spread over hundreds of pages of text. And though the book nearly glows with pride over its use of salty language, it never quite measures up to the primal toughness the actors convey when they growl at one another to "Gimme a nail."

On the other hand, the book did include some interesting details about a few non-medical realities of contracting VD in the Army, which I haven't had the nerve to run past my ectomorph co-worker whom I told you about last time. You'll remember he used to be in the Army. Oh, that reminds me—he and his fellow comedians in the Tech Support warehouse came up with a couple of additions to the list from Vol. 8: The Mastermind of Stay Behind, and The Attila the Hun of Don't Get it Done. Maybe you could throw one of those babies at a co-worker, family member, or person on the street and mix it up a little.

Fistfights will definitely get ink in **THE COBRA'S NOSE**.

Anyway, for a narrative that culminates in the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the most vicious violence in *From Here to Eternity* is committed against the defenseless adverb. Now adverbs are not one of my favorite parts of speech (though they do kick the ass of those necessary evils known as *prepositions*), but until I started reading James Jones I didn't appreciate their potential not only to annoy, but to harm. Consider the following: "oilily," "dignifiedly," and worst of all, "sillily." I encountered "sillily" first in Jones's novel *The Thin Red Line*. Capt. Stein grinned sillily and I felt a stabbing pain in my head. In *Eternity*, Prewitt grins sillily about four times on one page. I don't even have to say the word aloud before it begins to burn in my craw like strep throat. Maybe readers should be given combat consideration just for tangling with certain books. ☺☺☺

A Mind in Conflict— (It Cracked Us Up)

Like many passive people, I have an enormous admiration for those who do daring stuff like engaging in fist fights, snapping at nasty people who really have it coming, and telling bald faced lies with a straight face. But occasionally, even passive people are granted the satisfaction of catching some miscreant in a pratfall without having so much as planted a metaphorical banana peel.

This happened just yesterday.

Long time readers may be aware of a recurring communication gap between a certain noble, kind, longsuffering receptionist (*okay, it's me*) and a certain class of ninnies who call for directions to my place of work. One of them phoned at around 3pm, and my bright new trainee answered the call. So she flubbed the intro a little bit. Still, I could tell at once this caller was giving her trouble. Finally, my trainee put her hand over the talking into part of the phone (I don't truck with a lot of technical jargon) and asked if I would be willing to give the caller directions. I'm always willing to try. So I asked the caller, "Where would you be coming from?" (I know, I know—preposition.)

"Third Avenue and Osborn," she replied.
"Then I'd recommend you take the 51 to Shea, then Shea to..."
"What about Thunderbird? I heard Thunderbird was good."
"Okay, then take Thunderbird to Hay..."
"Well, I heard that Thunderbird turns into Redfield."

That was enough for me. I put the caller on hold and begged Suzanne, who is a saint (and a new subscriber, welcome!) to take over for me. For some reason, callers don't fight with her over directions. She doesn't have a mean Nazi voice or anything, at least not one she's ever used on me. But she is a mom and may have developed one as a means of maintaining order in the home. Whatever her secret, the callers always arrive, though usually looking a bit smug for my tastes. And that's what happened this time--a few minutes before five a blond woman strolls through the front doors and asks if this is suite #10. No, we own the whole building, I tell her. She asks if I'm sure. I don't say anything which she eventually, correctly, interprets as a refusal to dignify such a query. "Maybe it's in the building behind us," I finally offer, and she leaves.

"I wonder if that was that caller," says my trainee, who is from New York, so this sounded really cool. "Cawlah" and all that. I shrugged and my trainee went back to wherever it is she sits. I suppose I should find out where that is one of these days.

Even fewer minutes before five, I was on my feet tidying my desk for the night (that is, putting my dictionary away and shuffling everything else into a pile) and the blond returned looking peeved. "Is this where I get lasik surgery?" she demanded to know. "This is IKON Office Solutions," I said, and indicated the foot tall letters that said as much in my best imitation of Vanna White. "There is a business called Icon somewhere in this part of town that handles lasik surgery, but I don't know where it is," I continued. "If you have their number, you may call them on that phone over there." I can go above and beyond if I feel like it.

She sniffed, opened a maroon planner, and removed a medium sized yellow sticky note that had chains of big round fourteen point letters that ran up and down and across and over it. "I *got* directions. I *confirmed* my appointment," she said and thrust the note in my direction. Toward the top was an address on fifty second street, below that our IKON phone number, and all around were bits of directions the blond had used to come here.

"That *is* your phone number, isn't it?" she demanded.
Oooh, she had me there. I affirmed the statement.
"Well, I called and got directions and confirmed my appointment." Later, Suzanne recapped the "confirmation" for me, and it went something like this...

Blond: "I have an appointment at five."
Suzanne: "With whom?"
Blond: "I don't know the name."
Suzanne: "Is it with Ruthann?"
Blond: "I think so."

So what we have here is a young woman, blond, demanding a consultation on lasik eye surgery with the Administration Manager from IKON Office Solutions (PDF); and though the address she has indicates she should be in an office on Fifty Second Street, the directions she followed took her to *Eighty* Second and Hartford Drive. (I would like to dedicate the preceding run-on sentence to Pam Woodward.) When I told my co-worker Pat the story the next day, she said I should have had Ms. Blond make out a check for five thousand dollars to CASH, then sent her back to Tech Support for a lobotomy.

I'm sure that's what Ms. Vep would have done. ☺☺☺



Cookin' with Cobra

The following Cookin' with Cobra recipe, "Vodka Refresher" is brought to us by renowned gourmand Scott Rowley, with the following remark about last month's entry, "I think your refreshing summer treat sounds revolting. How about 3 scoops of ice cream, sliced strawberries, raspberries, peaches, and a cup of vodka?" I imagined it was some sort of float, until he explained the fruit should be marinated in the vodka overnight, and that different types of fruit could be used according to the season. Anyway, it sounds much more plausible than the other recipe he sent which called for a "springform pan", an "electric mixer with paddle attachment", "nutmeg", and get this—"firm plums as soft ones will prevent the custard filling from setting properly." (Snort.)

In the contentious spirit of volume nine (and because he snickered at my jury duty summons), I forwarded the e-mail which contained this recipe to Scott's Bishop and to his ward's Relief Society President. *Bon appetite!* ☺☺☺

Lies, All Lies

A friend of mine—nobody you know—told me about a swinger party he attended in—of all places—Chandler. The attendees, he reported, were by and large middle aged, middle class, and seedy. My friend is none of these, and while I can't imagine he wanted to blend (in any sense of the word) with this crowd, he did associate with them for a few hours and I wanted to know how he managed.

"I stayed away from the hot tub, for one thing," he said. This could have been as much a function of public health as propriety, and as such, while a good idea, wasn't terribly informative.

"What did people talk about?" I pressed.

"There was this one creepy guy who kept pointing at women and saying, 'I'd like to get *her* in the hot tub.'"

"What did you talk about?"

"Oh, I told people I was working on a doctorate in psychology at ASU."

This is not what my friend is doing, not that he couldn't or wouldn't, he just isn't and likely never will. So where did he get the wherewithal not only to imagine the like, but to make it stick?

"Oh, you just go with things," he said.

Cool.

I know people lie to me all the time. So I listen to everything I'm told and believe it all like I believe principles of physics or religion in that there's nothing I can do to prove them or change them so I stand by awaiting further enlightenment. Sometimes the teller will own up to a lie, though I can never decide if it's because they feel guilty about fibbing to such a naif, or if they realize that is the only way I'll ever catch on; but I don't suppose it matters. After all, is my life changed one way or another if another variety of quark is determined to exist or if the number of angels who can dance on the head of a pin is fixed at say, one hundred and five? Is it changed if a party goer tells me he is a doctoral candidate when he really works at ____?

(I know you're wondering if I'm ever getting back to the swinger party, and the answer is, alas, no. But if you want to do some further reading on the topic, I would suggest John Updike's *Rabbit is Rich*, 1981, Faucett Columbine, pp. 367-382, \$12.95 US (higher in Canada).)

Lies are necessary and good. If you ever doubt the veracity of this fact, imagine a life lived with complete candor for a minute. Do you have any idea how often I've told callers "No you can't speak to Janet [not you, Janet, the other Janet] because she doesn't like you and refuses to deal with you right now" in just those sixty seconds? How often I've let fly obscenities in response to the question, "How are you?" (or more especially, "How are *we*?") instead of a demure, "Fine, thank you"? I've lied about fifty times so far in this newsletter, and thank heaven because those are the only interesting parts in it. I mean, *really*—swinger parties! In Chandler! Haha! Who could believe such rubbish? Except those parts were true. Sort of.

My hero in this lying business is an old friend of my Mom's: entrepreneur, philanthropist, art collector, gubernatorial candidate, and all around good guy Eddie Basha. Believe me? A lot of people wouldn't, like this girl I went to high school with who worked in one of his stores. (cont. on 5)



Cobra Cwiz Cwestion One: Can you name this film and the war it depicts?

Great Moments in Workplace Cowardice

I had no idea there was such a thing as "Receptionist Day" until my boss told me so over lunch at the Tournament Player's Club restaurant. The TPC, incidentally, is where the Phoenix Open is held, which means for the duration of the event the workers in this neighborhood are required to add twenty minutes to their commutes while they are directed through a labyrinth of dusty pro tem parking lots and orange cones by golf groupie Minotaurs who make curt little waves with flashlights. This really doesn't have anything to do with anything, but it annoyed me mightily at the time so I thought I'd share.

So I'm sitting, waiting for my lunch, nervousness having already been expressed in my tripping on the way to the table and knocking over an empty glass, but not as nervous as usual having previously determined I wouldn't be fired. I always think I'm going to be fired. Every time my boss comes to my desk I think, "This is it." I used to sweat these lunches out, waiting for the "you're fired" shoe to drop until I was actually behind my desk working again, but afterwards I would have a big smirk on my face because The Pill who had been covering the phones in my longer-than-usual-because-I'm-out-with-my-boss-so-what-are-you-going-to-do-about-it, huh? absence would shoot me a mean look that would send me into paroxysms of snickering. But when she (my boss) invited me that time I asked flat out, "Are you going to fire me?" and when she answered "no" I accepted. Anyway, before my salad (yes, salad, and I can produce a receipt) arrived, my boss wished me Happy Receptionist's Day.

Well, that would explain the lunch and why I hadn't been fired, but not the event itself. Why is there such a thing as Receptionist's Day? I know there is a Secretary's Day, but I'd always assumed that was established by Congressmen with skeletons locked in their assistants' desk drawers who were looking for an excuse to bribe the help without raising eyebrows. Was there some consortium of receptionists in Washington agitating for their (our) rights? If so, is this best they could do? Not that I have many demands, though I suppose I could always do even less work for even more money (twist my arm). More likely, the good name of my profession was co-opted by the flower and lunch lobby, which (cont. on 4)

(cont. from 3) is a sad, tacky, capitalist reality I'm willing to tolerate because it directly benefits me.

So lunch was relatively stress free, and extra long because my boss left her cell phone on the table and we had to go back for it. I chortled at The Pill's display, settled into my chair, and proceeded to read ghost stories or something on the internet. An hour or two later, a florist's van stopped in front of the door and I watched an old delivery guy bring a cut glass vase packed with fat long stemmed roses to my desk. I wondered which Cosmo Girl in sales they were intended for, but there wasn't a card. The old guy went back to the van and dug around but returned empty handed. He got into fights with a couple of his co-workers over the lobby phone, but they absolutely refused to disclose identity of the would-be recipient. He marched back to my desk muttering about how stubborn and petty some people can be. I pretended to take a call and gave him a helpless shrug to indicate that although I was sure his diatribe was fascinating and well supported by recent evidence I honestly couldn't listen to it just then. He grabbed the roses and stomped away. Heh heh heh—well *that* broke up the afternoon.

He came back about forty minutes later, not with the roses but a basket of plants addressed to "Shirley McGovern—Happy Receptionist Day". I nonchalantly signed for them then called my boss and asked if she knew of such a person. She came to my desk and we were having a laugh over the mistake and admiring the arrangement when The Pain came tearing out of the Accounting office block screaming to my boss that she should discipline me for my thoroughgoing rudeness to her family. Did I forget to mention that one of her scurrilous kin called a few minutes before? I'd forgotten then, too. They are consistently and utterly unpleasant, but in this job those are hardly distinctive traits. And while I can't pretend I'm not affected by the discourteous behavior of callers, and I won't swear that I never suspended a member of The Pain's family in penalty hold limbo; I can honestly state I've never spoken as cruelly to anybody as I've heard her speak to her children on the lobby phone. I've also never insisted a co-worker be fired on a day set aside to honor the job they were doing, however bogus the job, the employee, or the day itself.

You know what it was like? The Hilton clan may already see this coming, but it was like the day Lola Monson (forever after "Lola Monsoon") came storming into PBX yelling at Jana and me because we had given her supervisor truthful answers to questions about big L's bad behavior from a few days before. Jana detonated and Lola backed down. It was like watching a fire being extinguished by an explosion. I observed from the corner of my eye while I answered calls, and Jana still rides me about what a coward I was. Which I still am. Come to think of it, I didn't even have the nerve to use Jana's recommended response to a particular task I was given recently though it was succinct and apt, and solicited by me especially for the occasion.

So I sat still, burning up while The Pain's tirade wore on and finally out, and then she left. I turned to my boss and asked if she wanted the plants back. She didn't want the plants, and she didn't want my offer of resignation either, which is good I suppose. Also good, I suppose, is that after another similar blowup with The Pain about a week later I could hardly be chastised for putting any pretense of civility aside and shunning her full time. Also, now instead of inviting me to lunch my boss goes with The Pain and brings me carryout. So my work life is serene, but not interesting, and certainly not courageous. But this is July and that portends all sorts of rebellion, so I might just have to draw a line in the vanilla scented Pledge that coats my desk and start standing up for myself. Beginning now.

So, James, the belated answer to "Will you prepare these envelopes for mailing?" is "Lick *this*." ☺☺☺

It's Great to be Fine

Among movie fight scenes, a conflict over whether the President of the United States (in this case Muffley) or the Premier of the Soviet Union (Dimitri) feels worse about an impending nuclear disaster is tough to beat (also somewhat easier to transcribe than something with cars and fists and explosions). Desadesk is the Soviet Ambassador, the setting is the ("Gentlemen, you can't fight in here this is the...") War Room, the movie is of course, *Doctor Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

Muffley: Hello? Hello, Dimitri? Listen, I can't hear too well, do you suppose you could turn the music down just a little? Oh, that's much better. Yes. Fine, I can hear you now, Dimitri. Clear and plain and coming through fine. I'm coming through fine too, eh? Good, then. Well then as you say we're both coming through fine. Good. Well it's good that you're fine and I'm fine. I agree with you. It's great to be fine. Now then Dimitri. You know how we've always talked about the possibility of something going wrong with the bomb. The bomb, Dimitri. The hydrogen bomb. Well now what happened is, one of our base commanders, he had a sort of, well he went a little funny in the head. You know. Just a little... funny. And uh, he went and did a silly thing. Well, I'll tell you what he did, he ordered his planes... to attack your country. Well let me finish, Dimitri. Let me finish, Dimitri. Well, listen, how do you think I feel about it? Can you imagine how I feel about it, Dimitri? Why do you think I'm calling you? Just to say hello? Of course I like to speak to you. Of course I like to say hello. Not now, but any time, Dimitri. I'm just calling up to tell you something terrible has happened. It's a friendly call. Of course it's a friendly call. Listen, if it wasn't friendly, ... you probably wouldn't have even got it. They will not reach their targets for at least another hour. I am... I am positive, Dimitri. Listen, I've been all over this with your ambassador. It is not a trick. Well I'll tell you. We'd like to give your air staff a complete run down on the targets, the flight plans, and the defensive systems of the planes. Yes! I mean, if we're unable to recall the planes, then I'd say that, uh, well, we're just going to have to help you destroy them, Dimitri. I know they're our boys. Alright, well, listen... who should we call? Who should we call, Dimitri? The people...? Sorry, you faded away there. The People's Central Air Defense Headquarters. Where is that, Dimitri? In Omsk. Right. Yes. Oh, you'll call them first, will you? Uh huh. Listen, do you happen to have the phone number on you, Dimitri? What? I see, just ask for Omsk Information. I'm sorry too, Dimitri. I'm very sorry. Alright! You're sorrier than I am! But I am sorry as well. I am as sorry as you are, Dimitri. Don't say that you are more sorry than I am, because I am capable of being just as sorry as you are. So we're both sorry, alright? Alright. Yes he's right here. Yes, he wants to talk to you. Just a second.

DeSadesk (Continues in Russian. Gradually becomes alarmed, then): Das voydaniya... (Rests phone on the table before him.)

Muffley: What... what is it, what?

DeSadeski: The fools... the mad fools.

Muffley: What's happened?

DeSadeski: The doomsday machine.

Muffley: The doomsday machine? What is that?

DeSadeski: A device which will destroy all human and animal life on earth.

Muffley: All human and animal life? ☹☹☹



Cobra Cwiz Cwestion Two: How about this one?



Cobra Cwiz Cwestion Three: Hmmm?

(cont. from 3) She tried to convince her circle that she had special inside knowledge about her boss by reforming the way they pronounced his name. "It's Ba-shaw," she said, "Ba-shaw." She succeeded.

I had heard stories about Eddie for a long time, starting with Mom in her capacity as Primary President asking if he would donate refreshments for some epochal Primary activity. I don't remember how many children were in the Primary at that time, but I think it was several thousand. He told her she had called at a fortunate time as he happened to have several crates of cookies which were smashed into pieces just the right size for children's mouths, and had recently gotten a bargain on some radioactive oranges. I think it was with the word "radioactive" that Mom began to smell a rat, so she asked, "Are you pulling my leg, Eddie?" to which he responded, "Why, Kay? Are my hands cold?" Zing! Gotcha, Mom.

The day after I returned from Canada, Mom and I visited with Eddie at the Basha compound in Chandler (hmm...). I was treated to my first tour of his expansive collection of Southwestern art and baskets, which is housed in his business offices. I won't go into details about the collection here, because too many of you would drop off as soon as I did (I hope those of you to whom this applies feel my laseresque disapproving glare piercing you through time and space), but paintings are a sort of socially sanctioned form of lying and as such nicely set the mood for lunch in the Basha Compound Cafeteria. There I got to see the maestro in action.

Without too much coaxing, he shared stories of how he had inspired marital consternation by pretending to be a hotel clerk trying to return abandoned lingerie, confessed to phantom homosexual urges while rubbing a male employee's neck, and (my favorite) told his mother that he had killed a man and hidden the body in the trunk of his car. Why had I never thought to tell my mother I killed a man and hidden the body in the trunk of my car? Well, for one because she would have had the police on the phone faster than I could say, "Just kidding, Mom, jeez." Also because whenever I do think of a nifty lie like that to tell I look so astounded if anybody seems to believe it I instantly give myself away. Mom is no better in the lying game, which was helpful when Eddie started spinning tales extemporaneously. For instance, when I asked whatever happened to the cousin at the FBI Academy to whom Eddie sent letters with the return address "Ocatillo Communist Party", he became solemn and softly related that the young agent was taken prisoner by the Soviet Union and held for ten years when.... I looked at Mom. Her lips were pursed, her face was red, and her eyes were squeezed shut. Whatever is the opposite of a poker face, that's what Mom has.

A lie is not the opposite of the truth, it is just a kink in the truth continuum. Okay, so strictly speaking, it wasn't *true* that Eddie was pushing radioactive fruit on innocent children (in fact, he provided a wonderful spread for the mob), and his cousin wasn't captured by the evil empire but, by the municipality of Chandler (hmm...) where he served as a teacher and later a policeman. Still, truth was revealed in the telling of these untruths—for instance, that Eddie has great ingenuity and wit—and in subsequent behavior—the victims of his pranks are lavishly rewarded for enduring them, prankster and prankstee have bonded over a shared experience. Also, an amusing anecdote has been unleashed into the world.

A lie illuminates as much as it obfuscates. It doesn't hide the truth, so much as it breaks it into lots of shiny pieces that when reassembled form a more beguiling, revelatory view of the situation than candor usually allows. I can't honestly say that I have the skill to put all the pieces together or even to see them where they lay (though I can honestly say I wouldn't tell you if I could). But sometimes I can, especially if it's the wreckage of my own lie that I'm reconstructing.

What sort of lies? you may wonder. Pft—as if I'd disclose them in a rag like **THE COBRA'S NOSE**. But I feel and see the effects everywhere, as blatant as when ___ put the ___ on the ___ in *Eyes Wide Shut* (I'm not disclosing that either, see it for yourself). If you haven't noticed anything, well, that's the goal isn't it? So either my lie is working, or I'm lying about having lied in the first place (which is more likely, to tell you the truth). In any case, I'm feeling emboldened, empowered. Ask me anything. Where do you work? I am the editor of a small but important magazine focused on life in the Southwest. How much do you make? Oodles. Are you seeing anybody? Absolutely—that graduate student over there, standing near to, but not I repeat not in the hot tub. ♪♪



Cobra Cwiz Cwestion Four: Hmmm?

Travel & Tourism

Okay, this is awkward. I haven't actually traveled anywhere lately, so I'm just going to title this article "Travel & Tourism" but won't discuss either. Here's to another empty tradition.

You may have noticed several references to the works of Stanley Kubrick scattered throughout this edition. Good for you if you did. I count, let's see, four. Five if you include this one. One million points to whomever first finds them all. You know, several people have been asking the most ridiculous question about *Eyes Wide Shut* lately. "Do you think they're just cashing in on that director guy's death?" they say as if this were some slapdash effort by Hollywood vultures looking to make a quick buck rather than the first film in more than a decade by a legendary director who oversaw every aspect of it down to its trailer before he died. As if it were some cheesy home movie clip show thrown together by those hacks at A&E, packaged and sold on video for twenty bucks a pop. As if the general population needs the ghoulish incentive of a dead director to get them to see the first Tom Cruise movie in two years. Please. Of course, then they ask, "Did you like it?" which always means, "Will I like it?" and I hate to say *anything* because it's not a movie for everybody, and especially not for people who ask dopey questions like, "Do you think they're just cashing in on that director guy's death?" So I talk about how intellectually stimulating it was in hopes of killing the interest of those who are mainly interested in catching a glimpse of Nicole Kidman's naked butt (as if such glimpses are rare in her *oeuvre*), so why don't you just rent *Dead Calm* or *Malice* or something, you perv, so you won't have to tell me how boring you thought *Eyes* was, and that the orgy scenes weren't hot at all.

Speaking of movies and winning millions of points (yes we were), a controversy has erupted over the "Niagara Falls! Slowly I turned..." bit. I had gotten word from Lee that Sara's family (the Canadian players of arcane card games) confirmed that it was an Abbot and Costello creation, but when I tried to nail down the source with my local Abbot and Costello aficionado (and ace direction giver) Suzanne, *she* thought it sounded more like a Laurel and Hardy routine. Any thoughts?

Also, I'd like to acknowledge the readership of Audrey St. Clair, who always takes forever to read **THE NOSE**, she says because "it's not light reading." This statement perplexes me because it's not exactly *heavy* reading. I want to see how long before she gets this far, so no fair telling her readers in the building--you know who you are. ♪♪♪

Cobra Cwiz Answers

1. *The Thin Red Line*, World War II (Pacific Theater)
2. *Full Metal Jacket*, Vietnam Police Action
3. *Friendly Persuasion*, American Civil War
4. *The Manchurian Candidate*, Cold War (Yes it counts. Does so.)
5. *The Empire Strikes Back*, Plucky Rebels vs. Evil Empire (Yes, it does so count. If you don't like it get your own newsletter.)



Cobra Cwiz Cwestion Five: (No Fair Peeking)

End Nose

Pat was telling me he helped Shane put his change into those little sleeves you put change in. They spent an entire afternoon in the lobby of the Burger King on University and Mill engaged in the project. "It wasn't too bad," Pat said, "except there were pubes all over the change."

"You are such a good friend," I said.

That was as far as I got when I heard ta ta ta—the silver painted nails of Ms. Vep's right hand drumming the top of my desk. In her left hand was volume nine with a big blank spot on the lower right hand corner of page six. "Let's see what we've got here," she said. "Me. That's good." She flipped through the pages. "Vodka. That's good. Jim Caviezel without a shirt. That's good. Hm...Jana. Is she still gunning for me? 'Great ingenuity and wit.' You are such a suck up sometimes." I could feel her stare through her shades when she turned my direction. "Well, you tried," she said.

So I did.

"You used the word 'so' too often, though," she said and strode away. Then she said, "I saw that," but I don't know how she could have.

So, what are your opinions? If you have any you'd like to share (especially if you think Scott's refreshing summer treat sounds revolting), you can reach me at any of the following Cobra Communication Centers:

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Go on, try it. It'll be fun. Finally, congratulations to Mark Ford and his lovely new bride, and to Emma Fernandez. Can I tell them why, Emma?