

HUMOR

# Urban refusal

Why the suburbs suck

I grew up in Deepest Suburbia.

And like so many sensitive, artistic types, I couldn't wait to get out from under the stifling provincialism of a small town and relocate to a hip, trendy city, where I'd live in a converted loft with lots of windows and a bicycle hanging upside down from the ceiling. To me, the very word "suburban" meant "less than urban," as in the terms "substandard" or "subhuman."

So I truly do not understand how I ended up living in the suburbs. It's like I got lost one night in a subdevelopment and couldn't find my way out.

Now I wander around my house—bottle of scotch in hand—slurring along with Peggy Lee as she sings "Is That All There Is?" At this point I could easily develop a drinking problem. That is, if I didn't already have one.

Apparently I'm not alone. There's so much depression in the 'burbs they ought to rename the streets. I imagine giving directions: "That's right, take the Fibromyalgia Freeway until you reach Disappointment Drive. Follow Disappointment until it turns into Disillusionment, then left at the Sylvia Plath School for the Gifted and Frustrated. We're the house on the corner of Prozac and Zoloft, the one with the shades drawn.

If you reach Despair, you've gone too far."

Sure, I do enjoy some pristine, "let's barbecue in the back yard" kind of moments, but then I'll go to Costco to buy supplies and my entire sense of self falls like a house of cards.

Costco gives me the creeps. I'm sorry, but I just don't think you should be able to buy olive and motor oil at the same store. And who actually needs a gallon of soy sauce except the Chinese army?

Worst of all, however, is the clientele. It's as if being ugly were a requirement for membership. I look around at some of the pinheaded, buck-toothed shoppers, and I think, "Well, this is what happens when cousins marry." Once I stopped in the TV section to watch *Shrek* until I realized I was looking at the closed-circuit view of the store.

They travel in pairs, these homely people. The husband always has a crew cut and sweat pants with no underwear, the wife a dried-out perm and visible panty line.

Like Jane Goodall studying gorillas, I'm fascinated as I watch these couples scarf down the free samples. I follow them around the store, mesmerized by their asses undulating in their sweat pants like so many ferrets in a sack.

But one question above all others burns in my brain: Do really ugly people actually turn each other on? Now I'm evolved enough to

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC

by Marc Acito



know there's more to sexual attraction than just looks, but c'mon, admit it, haven't you always wondered whether two people who look like gargoyles find each other sexy?

Unfortunately, this is a question even someone as rude as I dare not ask. You can't just march up to someone and say: "Hey, buddy, you and your wife are real bowzers. Do you two keep your eyes closed when you're doing it, or what?"

But herein lies my continued resistance to the suburbs: If I live in this community with these people, then, by extension, I must be one of them. And that thought sends me right back to the bottle of scotch and Peggy Lee.

For example, my partner and I work out at the local community center because it's close, not because there's anyone we want to commune with. I mean, the place is teeming with heterosexuals.

Now don't get me wrong; I don't have anything against straight people—I just don't like the way they flaunt their lifestyle.

The place is so unsexy. Once when I was in the shower I was surprised (and delighted) to hear someone behind me murmur,

"Who's your daddy?" But when I turned around I realized it was just someone addressing a lost child.

That did it. I drove straight over to my cool neighbor Brooke's house.

(Well, I dried off and dressed first.) Cool neighbor Brooke left her heart in San Francisco and, therefore, is very PLU (People Like Us). "Hey, neighb, what's up?" she said.

I shared with her the lamentable tale of the shower.

"Oh, dude, I completely understand," she said. "I used to think I was so totally trendy. Now I'm just totally Talbots."

She took a deep breath and sighed. "The fact is, Marc, you and I actually like the 'burbs, but we resist it because that would mean admitting we simply weren't cool enough to make it in the city."

How sad but true. Maybe it isn't the suburbs that suck at all. Maybe I just suck.

And that, my friends, is *The Gospel According to Marc*. ■

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