

Safe
 POPPING POP CULTURE
 BY MICHAEL BEVEL

Michael Bevel wrote this piece about a week before the snipers were apprehended.

My life is a montage of sniper moments. Crossing the street, waiting at the bus stop, sneaking to Starbucks for a venti Vanilla Frappuccino when I really should be at my desk, I think to myself: "Can he see me now? Is there somewhere to run? How much will it hurt if I have to drop and roll for cover?"

I'm explaining all of this to the three dogs who live in my house—how they need to be brave what with the shootings and all—and, in the middle of warming up my bowl of bad pasta, the power goes off.

Like that. Of course, the fuse box is in the basement. The fuse box is always in the basement when there's a sniper on the loose and you're in a house alone. But I've seen too many scary movies in my time, and I know better. I'm savvy.

I'm not about to go down into the basement because clearly the sniper has broken into my home, has cut the power and is now waiting in the dark in the hope that I'll come traipsing down the stairs—tra-la-la, oh whatever happened to the power?—and he'll shoot me dead. In my own home. Because I am stupid.

Instead, I lock the basement door, I gather the dogs, and we all go sit on the front porch in the dusk waiting for someone to come home.

The silence after the power is out is different from the silence on a normal Thursday. That's because a normal Thursday isn't really silent. Electricity hums. It purrs. It makes the gentle drone of the lamp by my rocking chair and the quiet whir of the electric powered clock.

Silence + Electricity = Noise. It also equals comfort. Silence - Electricity = Killer in the Basement. Math has never been so terrifying.

After 10 minutes of sitting on the porch and trying to convince the dogs to look fierce, I realize how silly this is. Miniature schnauzers can't look fierce.

Anyway, the sniper isn't in my house. I mean, he's a sniper for Chrissakes—different motivation completely.

Still, the power is out, I'm the only one home, and if I'm going to the basement, I'm going prepared. So I take all three dogs (the schnauzer, a clumsy Akita puppy and a German shepherd with bad gas), a candle and one of those long lighters used for barbecues and fireplaces. If the sniper needs a cigarette lit or some mood lighting, I don't want to disappoint.



Michael Bevel and his three ferocious dogs fight bad guys in the nation's capital

PHOTO BY MATTHEW SWANMAN

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