

Dearest Mikey,

It is now 9:30 a.m. on my day off and I've been drinking coffee in bed for three hours with four cookbooks, two spiritual guidebooks, several utility bills, a pack of 100% additive-free cigarettes, an emaciated checkbook, three postage stamps and a coupon for 25 cents off Baker's chocolate to keep me company. In celebration of your birth, I've chosen to use one of the stamps to send you this letter; USWest be damned. For openers, please know that I truly forgive you for the time you shoved me out the second story bedroom window and I landed on the rotting apples and rolled under the Weeping Willow tree which was later uprooted in the Columbus Day Storm of 1962. Let bygones be bygones, I say.

I've spent the entire summer indoors pressing Grandma Dodo's secret pie dough recipe between sheets of wax paper and filling the pastry with the same fresh wild blackberries of our childhood. The familiar fragrance always conjures memories of BB gun fights in Old Lady Funatake's orchard and the dirt clod which gave little hemophilic Lynn Hyberg a bloody nose. Was it you or brother Bill who pitched that one? Or, perhaps, it was the McArden boy who Father always referred to as, "that mouth-breather." No matter, those were endlessly carefree days.

Each morning after I've taken the plump golden pies from the oven, I bleach the butcher block and change from the crisp white cotton baker's apron into the green vinyl full body suit I wear as a lowly "pearl diver". However many quaint tri-footed pewter clam chowder kettles I must scrub, I find time to day-dream of your youthful freckled face and wild red hair, missing the butter-drenched crawdaddy tails and dandelion green lunches we prepared over the forbidden campfire in the shelter of that tall dry field grass.

Last week, Manuel, the fry-cook who hasn't gone home to Mexico for three years, announced that he is going home when we close in December and he isn't returning. I will be promoted to fry-cook/baker from dishwasher/baker and will be getting an exceptional raise to an entire (hold me up, I feel faint) \$7.00 an hour! What shall I do with my new-found wealth? Buy a house? Take a cruise? Purchase stock in a race car? Get new odor-eaters for my Payless Drugstore tennis shoes? Buy a 24-roll pack of bathroom tissue? I don't know...the mere thought of possibilities makes me queasy with anticipation.

Did you observe the lunar eclipse Friday night? The Driftum Restaurant certainly experiences the crimson-hued lunacy firsthand. A gentleman at table 5 whose party had been seated prior to table 7, but who had not been served their food before table 7, began to grouse loudly about the slow service. Whereupon table 7's Alpha male asked table 5's Alpha male to, "Please keep your complaints down, we're trying to eat over here." Defending his First Amendment rights, table 5's hero promptly ran over and pushed table 7's spokesman from his chair and a veritable panic ensued. Meanwhile, in the cocktail lounge, a neophyte sot at table F lobbed a golf ball to jovial acquaintances at table A. The barroom athletic hopeful at F, however, met with unexpected reverses in calculating his arc, thereby causing the errant sphere to bonk a patron at table B upon the noggin. The bonked at B threatened to sue the bartender who had been busy serving seven tables and nine barstools of impatient imbibers, so she'd been unaware of the foregone incident. Somehow, her sober reasoning prevailed. As calm was being restored in the bar, the poor tyke at table 4 back in the dining room who had apparently had Rocky Road ice cream for breakfast and caramel corn for lunch (as is his wont while vacationing at the shore), hurled his earlier meals upon his evening meal.

Happily, I was at home partaking of a delightful gift of homemade chantrelle mushroom marinara atop semolina mostaccioli with my dearest friend Evelyn while all such excitement took place. Unhappily, my dear Evelyn was up vomiting at midnight. Had I the wise foresight to join her in the same activity, it would have prevented the gross discomfort of diarrhea and abdominal cramps which progressed unimpeded, overtaking me until nearly noon the next morn. Which happened to be the wedding day of our much-loved waitress, Sadie (her one and only wedding day at that, something which can't be said for several other food service personnel who shall remain nameless at this time). So, short-crewed to beat the band, the few remaining staff heroically prepped, cooked, served, cleared and cleaned a record number of tasty dishes for the eager little mouths of strangers, mouths oblivious to the strenuous circumstances of their servants.

In closing, my darling Bubby, I wish you a very happy birthday and another year of continuous prosperity in the manufacturing sector of the City of Angels. I express my deepest gratitude for the many times you have generously offered to share your financial success with this ne'er do well sibling in the form of setting her up in her very own coastal cafe; I regret to inform you that I am having second thoughts for fear of than dream being a bit too lofty. If you wouldn't mind terribly, perhaps a small loan of fifty bucks so that I might get my phone service restored would be a happy compromise? Humbly, with hugs and kisses, I remain your devoted sister.

geraldine



"This amendment points out our true enemy; SATAN" (Measure 26 -pro),

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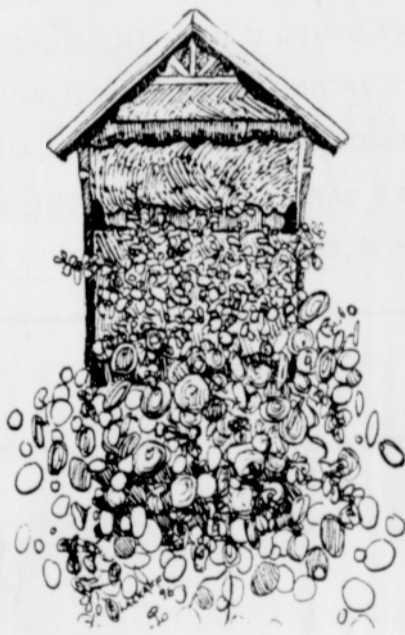
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