

Fear Itself

Election year frights, real and imagined

Every October brings run-of-the-mill scary stuff like front-door skeletons, haunted house grape eyeballs and frat party police raids. But this election year, things are even scarier.

The spate of fear-mongering political attack ads is meant to frighten the bejeezus out of us. Some are pretty scary. But it's been a while since I've come upon anything ghastly enough to induce that stop-in-your-tracks, turn-tail-and-run kind of horror. Until last night.

Just so you know, insects don't generally fall into my fearsome category. In our household, I'm the designated bug butch. I'm more than willing to escort moths and spiders out of the house, hand-pick beetles and aphids off garden plants, and comb fleas off Kitty and Pussy (not their real names).

My domestic partner and I share. She manages the power tools, mortgage payments and most of the cooking. We're not afraid to mix it up. I'm in charge of driving, gift-wrapping and compost.

Which brings me to why I was out in the dark last night with nothing more than my teensy Coleman wristwatch flashlight to illuminate the path to the backyard compost bin. That's where I beheld something so bloodcurdling I could not complete my task of emptying the week's melon rinds, onions skins and other compostables out of our kitchen scrap bucket.



Normally I just wave one arm in front of myself to brush away any spiderwebs in the airspace along the path; I check the bin handle for slugs and snails, then lift, dump, close and trot back to the house – no big deal. But this night, this horrible night, the thin beam from my watch lit up the biggest, creepiest, winged insect the likes of which I haven't seen since I lived in the SoCal desert where any roach smaller than a Baby Ruth bar wouldn't raise so much as an "eek."

But EEEK I did. And again, I'm no wuss. But this thing, the size of a hand grenade, grasshopper-ish, crouching on toothed hind legs, looked like it was about to launch at me and, and, I don't know what – suck my blood? Raise my taxes? Make me vote for Jim Torrey? It wasn't a rational thing.

I dropped the bucket and hauled ass back into the house.

"Eeeyew!" I yelled, barging into the kitchen where Wifey was chopping kale (and making more kitchen scraps). "A ginormous bug," I panted, knowing my face betrayed any semblance of cool. "Come see."

Now, my gal is accustomed to her partner being the one who can face all manner of hideousness without flinching. So to see me totally creeped out, panicked even, piqued her attention. "Are you sure it's real?" she asked, wiping her hands on a dish towel.

Oh, like I'd be terrified if it weren't? I don't think so. Gordon Smith can't scare me into voting against Merkley; Obama's middle name doesn't threaten my homeland security; I'm not afraid of God's wrath if California doesn't overturn gay marriage. I know what's real.

Wifey and I paraded out the back door, me in front, this time wielding our big honkin' police-sized mag lite. I aimed the light at the spot. There, still poised to pounce, sat that dreadful creature waving its ghoulish antennae. I stood back.

Wifey, brave as I've never seen her, walked right up to it. Yes, my friends, my squeamish gal pal put her tender little hand right on the back of that bug and picked it up.

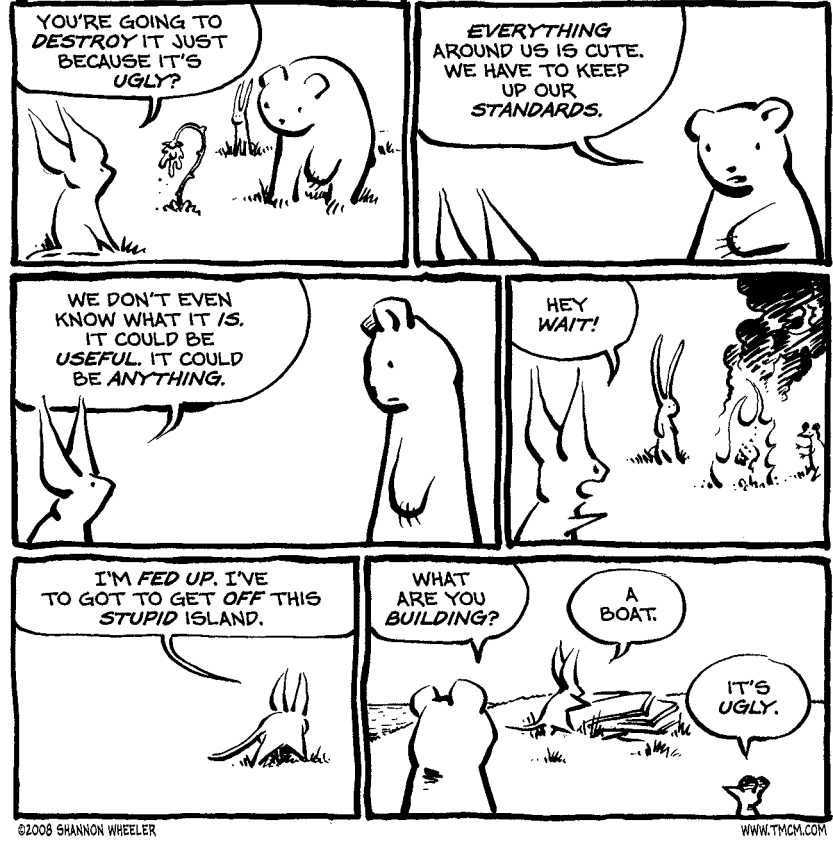
"It's one of those rubber creepy crawlies from that garage sale," she said.

Me and my penchant for humorous garden décor. I'd forgotten putting those bugs out there. The free-floating fear this election season must be getting to me. I guess I have been a little jumpy. The hair-raising image of a chuckling, possum-grin John McCain and Sarah "WINK" Palin runnin' the country is enough to give anybody night terrors. For real.

No point freaking over the fake stuff.

Sally Sheklow has been a part of the Eugene community since 1972 and is a member of the WYMPROV! comedy troupe. Her column, which began at EW in 1999, also runs in several other newspapers and magazines around the country and Down Under.

How to Be Happy (CUTIE ISLAND) 7 OF 8 by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SUSTAINABLE INDEED!

Whether Eugene is the number one "sustainable" city in the U.S. or only number 10 is of little consequence when there isn't a city or even a household in this country that is anywhere near being truly sustainable. Those cities on the cutting edge of pioneering sustainability are only making the most insignificant baby steps in that direction.

What politicians and bureaucrats commonly call "sustainability" is not at all truly sustainable. Genuine, meaningful sustainability is defined by a rigorous set of criteria including, but not limited to population growth and use of non-renewable resources — like petroleum and metals. Thus genuine, meaningful sustainability is a dauntingly complicated, remote, far-flung ideal.

The good news is that the human family will achieve sustainability — because to do anything less is unsustainable. The only question is whether we are going to achieve sustainability voluntarily with intelligence, dignity, elegance and discipline or whether we are going to "achieve" sustainability as it is rammed down our throats by a little something called reality. Watching our "leaders" nibble timidly at the edges of the concept of sustainability, I lament that it's going to be the latter.

Robert Bolman
Eugene

"dance" for a living. Some of the children have displayed inappropriate behaviors with their bodies for their age group at school, even emulating pole dancing at recess as young as kindergarten age. The idea that women's bodies have long been their best assets is arguably true, I guess, but have we not moved past this with women's equality?

Using your body to give attention to men gives the impression that women are less than equal and are only worthy of objectifying. Often the men that frequent these sorts of establishments have porn addiction, which is on the rise with the ease of access through clubs and the Internet. Not only are strip clubs enabling addictive behavior, but they also may be fostering spending that could be taking away from the livelihood of families, children. Many men partake in strip clubs without their loved ones knowing about the visits.

Come on ladies, there are other ways to pay off student loans, pay for college and pursue your dreams, if you seek them out. I feel proud of my body as well, but it doesn't mean I am willing to flaunt it to make a buck at the expense of my self-respect and poor role modeling to my children.

Tana Shepard
Eugene

ENOUGH ALREADY

Millions of words have been written this election campaign. Doubtless the coming weeks will bring millions more, floating down rivers of ink up onto our doorsteps and into our mailboxes.

Come Nov. 4, however, there will matter only one word: Enough.

Enough wastage of human lives. Enough wreckage of our economy. Enough withering away of our moral authority. Enough.

Enough fiddling and enough burning. Enough lying and enough hiding. Enough spying and enough spinning. Enough.

Enough tax cuts for those who profit off job cuts. Enough inequality in the paycheck,

DANCING FOR DOLLARS

I am writing in response to "Taking It Off for Tuition"(10/2). Upon seeing the cover, I was immediately triggered in many ways and then as I read the short cover article I felt the need to write in. As an educator, mother and woman (with student loan debts) I feel concerned about featuring an idea like this. The money earned dancing may be paying to raise children, but it does have consequences.

As an educator, some of my students over the past couple of years have moms that