

The Debatables

Chapter 1



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Chapter 1

Sanctuary on the Plateau

Mart ventured forth in his Ford Pinto to give birth to a new Mart Samuelson. He yearned to bear a superior Mart, one who could ask for change in a store instead of buying gum and would not permit every female with breasts to treat him like he was her own personal eunuch. Only the outer shell of the old Mart would remain; rebuilt from the squishy insides out the new Mart would be powerful and unyielding —Mart paused to think about powerful and unyielding things, like a huge granite rock or powerful locomotive bearing down a winding train tracks along a mountainside. He then envisioned the huge granite rock on the the train tracks. Then the locomotive bearing down those tracks, quickly approaching the granite rock. Then a butterfly flying peacefully over the granite rock on the train tracks with the locomotive rapidly approaching. Then Mart imagined the locomotive and the rock, both powerful and

yielding, in a epic collision. Visions of crushed rocks and twisted metal danced in his mind. He decided he did not want to be too unyielding; given his past history he would most assuredly meet an insurmountable force (most likely in the form of an angry ex-girlfriend empowered by a new boyfriend or a particularly cool new shade of lipstick) and be reduced to a quivering heap of unyielding rubble. Trees flex in galls, he reasoned, and they are still mighty. So, Mart preferred the new Mart to be flexible and mighty like a tree. He envisioned himself as a mighty and flexible tree boldly standing against a massive and unyielding hurricane. The tree stood boldly, the wind ripping its leaves off and contorting its branches into unnatural forms while anything with half a brain fled to safety. Mart then imagined the tree getting hit by lightning and his body jerked at the imaginary pain. The only reason trees have to be flexible, Mart reasoned, is because they cannot flee from a storm due to their ignorance of the concept of walking. The new Mart would not be ignorant. Bears could flee from storms, reasoned Mart, and they are mighty. So, he wanted to be a fearsome, mighty and bold bear capable of running at great speeds. Mart pondered being a bear for a moment. Men kill bears so men mightier than bears... but... bears could kill men. Then a terrifying thought struck Mart, almost anything could kill a man even something insanely small, like a virus or something huge, like a meteor. In fact, a huge meteor could wipe out all life on Earth –everything. In the past a huge meteor had wiped out all life on Earth and in the future it would most assuredly happen again. At this very moment, Mart imagined, a huge meteor could be barreling through space just about to strike Earth killing everyone, including himself, consuming the whole globe in a cataclysmic inferno of death so complete not even super advanced space aliens using super-advanced space alien technology could tell if

humanity ever existed amidst the remaining rubble of Earth which would quietly stay in orbit until the sun's inevitable demise four billion years in the future when it would expand into a huge super red giant consuming everything, including the remaining Earth rubble, in its path reducing the last bits of humanity to a fine, gray ash. And that is if we are lucky. The transitional Mart felt slightly afraid as he glanced into the sky.

A song familiar with Mart began wailing from the car radio. This song the old Mart was susceptible to. It had caressed the old Mart's much mangled soul countless nights as he laid in bed pondering loneliness, sorrow and just plain bad luck of being himself. It had given him hope that his daily pain was understood by at least one other human even if that human was British and into several sexual acts that made Mart very uncomfortable. This pageantry of emotion was not acceptable in the new order of Mart's life. In the new order, Mart rejected nonconstructive emotion and believed music was just rhythmic noise that sounded better than his car. His new order did not allow the entanglement of emotions and memories spurred by music and this song's entanglement most definitely did not aid in the development of a new Mart from his squishy insides out.

Mart twisted the radio dial frantically to avoid old order memories and discovered Sixties protest music to be now the predominant music, yelping through the radio waves like a annoying specie of bird sounding its territory. And, if it may be said, it sounded like a somewhat strung out bird at that. Pondering the implications of this species dominance a fearful question came to him, "What cursed land am I entering that possess such music?" The land was the mystical world of Chico, California, the plateau in the cultural abyss called Butte County.

Highway 99 was the main road in and out of Chico and, in Mart's opinion, part of a sinister conspiracy to control Chico's population growth. Its beautiful winding roads and rustic scenery provided excellent concealment for oncoming traffic that mainly consisted of huge trucks driven by sleep-deprived people who believed the Earth was flat and Nixon was misunderstood. These Nixon-lovers lurked at every turn yearning to create piles of twisted metal out of once proud and innocent cars. Mart imagined at the end of the day, as the Nixon-lovers were cleaned the car bits from the front grill of their trucks, they told themselves their motivation was solely artistic in nature and they were not merely a tool of an evil and far reaching conspiracy. Every mile or so Blood Alley (the colorful name given to Highway 99 by the locals) was marred with skid marks and the embankment was decorated with various bits of automobiles to remind drivers of the perils of their journey. People traveling to Chico should have a reason to warrant risking their lives. Sadly, for most, the infamous bars, loose morals and block parties of Chico were reason enough.

There was no real reason for Mart's trek to Chico. The closest thing to a reason Mart had was high school had been a painfully insipid blur of misery and he felt compelled to clarify the pain by prolonging his educational venture via college in the hopes of one day teaching high school to ensure that the painfully insipid blur of misery would follow him to his grave and perhaps beyond. And, of course, he justified his insanity the same way countless future teachers had done in the past, he assure himself he would be a different kind of teacher, a cool teach, one in touch with the needs of the students and one who would never have unclean thoughts about the co-eds. He got one thing right: if you were committed to live a life motivated by delusional goals, Chico was

the greatest place on Earth to be, perhaps, the only place on Earth to be (even if it was about to be hit by a meteor and reduced to rubble). But, now, it was time for Mart to change lanes.

A thick cloud of dirt remained in the Pinto's former position as Mart changed lanes. The cars behind the Pinto swerved to avoid being soiled by the growing dirt cloud that fell off the Pinto like the tail of a comet on its brief outing to say, "Hi! How are you? Been doing much?" to the Sun. Mart ignored the truth that he did not wash his car because of the toilsome nature of washing cars (in others words because he was a good-for-nothing-lazy-sod) and, instead, invented a noble explanation for his inaction; he was providing a mobile sanctuary for mold, fungus, insects and a family of rats that lived in the tire well. It was all for the good of Nature. A pleasant side effect of his behavior was the dirt and grime reinforced the notion Mart hated his Pinto. This was important so the Pinto did not reduce his dignity by too great a degree when acquaintances saw him in it. Mart only had acquaintances, no friends. Friends involved too much commitment and risked becoming touchy-feely on him. But, if pushed, he would admit being partial to the family of rats that lived in his Pinto's tire well. They ate the biggest, creepiest insects living in the car.

A road sign covered elegantly with dints and bullet holes raced by Mart displaying a notion in Einstein's Relativity with subtlety and brilliance. It also announced that Mart passed Chico and was heading towards Redding, California. Redding was not where Mart wanted to go and Redding was definitely not a good place for people motivated by delusional goals. Being a working-class city, the people of Redding needed their goals to be able provide food for their family. How boring.

Mart understood that the placement of road signs was part of a vast and far reaching conspiracy. It was obvious to him road signs were positioned so by the time they were visible they were useless given the information they revealed, such as, 'Last exit for next 50 miles' or 'Bridge is out'. Uncovering the plot was difficult for Mart because he could not comprehend why they bothered to provide any road signs at all. Then it dawned on him, it was to give the illusion no plot existed! This way the frustration of the situation would make drivers sweat and stir in their seats angered by the inconsiderate placement of the meaningful signs. Once he figured this out the culprits were obvious. The plot had been brewed up by the manufactures of butt rash medication. Missing an exit naturally led to an increased need for such products. Mart had many such conspiracy theories but learned over the years not to share them with anyone; especially family members who could try to get power of attorney over him.

Panic struck Mart at the vision of viewing Redding (a working-class city is always terrifying to those who fear work) and he swerved into the far lane of the meager two-lane highway without bothering to consider if any cars happened to be occupying that lane at the time. Automobiles neighboring his Pinto chirped with irritated sounding horns to display their unease with Mart's driving style. His Pinto in response belched up a thick cloud of noxious fumes that gently and playfully floated up into the atmosphere to trap the life giving warmth of our sun which would eventually, overtime, heat to Earth to an unbearable temperature, killing us all (unless the meteor got us first).

New panic struck Mart signaled by an sickening sinking inner stomach feeling followed by a peculiar head rush as the thought of police entered his mind. Police, to Mart, were like armed parents except without any semblance of parental love. Swerving

in and out of his lane he scanned the road for the all too familiar profile of a cop car. His mind began to rattle off excuses on his erratic driving ability ranging from, "I think I have a horrible and contagious disease that I don't want anyone else to contract" to "I thought I was being followed but it ended up being you." Finding no police lurking on the road he mentally filed his novel excuses for future use.

Mart drove in and out of Chico several times before coming to a rest in downtown Chico. He learned that all roads lead out of Chico and they did not have to be very long.

Now that Mart had arrived he desired to stop, but in order to stop he required a parking space. Mart moaned a tired sigh. Acquiring good parking spaces was an art form similar to and as difficult as a male procuring a date in a bar after admitting you live at home with your parents. Like most artistic endeavors it was one that Mart completely inept at. He loathed parking spaces and felt they were interconnected to his road sign theory. Mart wished the replacement for the parking space would be invented soon so this toilsome element of driving would be a historic peculiarity. In the far future Mart would then tell his future children, "I grew up in the age of parking spaces." Dreaming about the future Mart imagined a perfect world, a friendly world, in other words, one without parking spaces. He also decided he would not have children so they would not mock him for living in a world with parking spaces.

The sight of a free parallel parking space revived horrid memories in Mart of his last three attempts at parallel parking. Each of ended in the destruction of property not

owned by him. Visions of twisted remains of a Vespa, a banged-up blue Bug and a tilted parking meter danced inside his mind flaunting the psychological scars they had made. In all of these unfortunate incidents Mart fled in terror of lawyers. Lawyers were the monsters that kept Mart up at night as he pondered the existence of a woman willing to have sex with him. This in mind, Mart parked the Pinto at a twenty-degree angle to the curve in a parallel space when no one was looking. He was a firm believer in double parking.

Mart was once interviewed for a City Talk section for a local newspaper on how well he and others drove. The typical answer was, "I'm great. Everyone else sucks," but Mart's answer was the opposite which was quickly rejected by the interviewer for the obvious fact that Mart was abnormal. Mart was ignored often in life for that exact reason, but, he believed this was true of many great men and hoped the kinship he had with other great men would somehow gain him more sex than normal people. Needless to say, it had done quite the opposite. In truth, most great men had very little sex throughout their lives, not because they were strange, but because they knew they were great. Where is the fun in that for the other party? It is more fun to make an average man feel great than justify a great man's over inflated ego.

Mart hastily put money into the parking meter fearing in the brief moment from exiting his car till feeding the meter he would get a ticket. The one thing was, it was Sunday. The error in this action, that he did not have to pay for parking on Sunday, was not realized by Mart even though his was the only meter fed; in fact, he laughed at the arrogance of the owners of the cars parked without fed meters. So many arrogant people in Chico, he mused to himself.

Smoke began emanating from the Pinto, filling the immediate area and forcing Mart to hasten his departure from the scene. He did not know where his car picked up its distasteful habit, but, as Mart had told many people before who complained about his car, he himself did not smoke but held no contempt for smokers. Everyone has a right to do what makes them happy, right?

Inspecting downtown Mart noticed Chico was a city that painted fake windows on bare walls. This was definitely an attempt at beautification but the choice of windows over something that actually looked good confused him. Mart decided that they must serve an alternate purpose, probably something evil.

Mart hastily inhaled a large volume of the air in his new town to determine if any noticeable odor was prevalent. Satisfied he could place most of the odors Mart breathed easier. Car fumes, pollen, and a touch of body funk scented the air. Everyone smelled of excessive heat exposure when trapped in Chico over the summer.

The unbearable afternoon heat was slowly cooking Mart's brain one cell at a time, a fact he was only well too aware of. The day reached one hundred and four, two degrees shy of the average. Mart's body sweated as his mind futilely tried to persuade it that there was no need to sweat and be uncool. "This much heat," thought Mart, "is bound to create some sort of instability of the mind." Mart stared at the next person who walked by as if his face was on a wanted poster or a political flier.

The need for a café and caffeine arose in Mart. For him, a city's true inner beauty can only be seen in its best café. The taste of the coffee mattered little to Mart but the taste of the customers was the all-important ingredient. Good company and bad coffee was better than the reverse and Mart believed Sacramento had both parts in the superior

range so felt contempt for Chico based solely on the fact it was not Sacramento.

Two people who would be judged by the mainstream society as weird, walked by. One girl looked reminiscent of females in the Depeche Mode music videos about sex and both adorned more piercing than all of Mart's ex-girlfriends combined and that was only what was visible on her head. Their clothing, warm enough for to fend off the elements emitted from a mild blizzard, possessed metal objects that jutted out like fantastical horns from a grotesque dinosaur that had to be careful not to get stuck in trees when strolling through forests. Black and red make-up was painted on their faces with more love and quantity than even Vincent Van Gogh gave to his canvases. Mart understood they would know the way to a good café, so he followed them.

Mart learned to keep an accommodating distance from people he followed for his appearance seemed to make police question him if only about his bad taste in clothing.

The two non-conformists made a path to a café whose appearance was satisfactory to Mart. Its name was Café Sienna, the avant-garde of culture in Chico which meant it was the summit of Butte county.

At that moment, Café Sienna was occupied by students feigning studying, but their deception was a weak one given no schools were in session. This small bit of reality mattered little to the die-hard students for they were warming up for the countless eye-burning hours of studying that awaited them in the semester ahead. Studying gave the illusion they needed, that they were doing something with their lives.

The cafés' customers interrogated Mart with their eyes as he made his entrance too determine if he was cool or not.

The consensus amongst the café dwellers was Mart was a not. One die-hard

student who was barely not a not herself went so far as to even think Mart was the definition of not. He could teach a class on the subject of not she mused. In truth, Mart's first philosophy paper in junior college was on the meaning of not. He got a C minus. Mart could not even teach a class on not.

Disappointed, the customers returned to doing what they were doing before they were rudely distracted by an unknown person.

Mart eyed over his new surroundings causally looking for any possible danger or people of uneasy sexuality. Bad art hung from the walls, coffee stains covered everything, the aroma of burnt coffee hung in the air, half the crowd looked normal and the other half like minor demons; this café was just like home to Mart. Mart gave everyone a meek smile wondering if any of the women were sexually attracted to him.

For Mart, the second most important aspect of a café was he who served the coffee. The more you prayed they didn't touch the food the more ideal in Mart's opinion. The server of coffee in Café Sienna was a rather large punker whom fit that description quite well. He had countless buttons scattered throughout this apparel telling you in various ways what exactly to do with yourself, all of which insulting. Finding little room left on his ears for piercing he began to move too other parts of his body, his hand for example. Tattoos of pagan gods and naked women covered his non-pierced body parts. His hair, a horribly unnatural color yet to have a name in the English language, had not been combed in decades. He had the air of someone that quite recently been released from prison and was very displeased with the society he was thrust into. The appearance of the server of coffee could keep you mystified for hours and often Chico locals waited in line just to say they had gazed upon his vista like a modern day David.

Rudie, the server of coffee, eyed over Mart carefully. With a look of contempt he snarled in an accent that could be best described as evil person's, "What'll ya have boy?"

This comment perturbed Mart momentarily for he had not been called a "boy" since his dad threw him out. Mart, in a timid voice, ordered a large iced coffee although he believed real men drank hot coffee on hot days and tried not to stare too long at Rudie believing somehow that would bring him bad luck.

The thought, "Is this the extent of my social life?" emerged in Mart's consciousness, as it did every time he ordered a cup of coffee. Pondering on this comment for a few seconds Mart remembered he also went to movies alone and returned the thought to its proper place which was the part of his brain behind a large wart on the back of his neck. Mart, satisfied that he had thought enough about his social life, turned to his financial one. He calculated that if he could receive a refund for one third of one-half of the money he had spent on coffee he would not be driving a Pinto, but rather, something convertible with the cute chick option. Thoughts such as these occurred often to Mart and thoughts of his personality flaws not enough.

Rudie shoved the large iced coffee towards Mart inciting a generous portion of it to spill over Mart's hand and growled baring his chipped and yellowed teeth.

Mart was unsure if Rudie was making some sort of friendship gesture or signaling Mart that he should flee in terror. Deciding fleeing was the less dangerous of the two options Mart did just that and shuffled over to the cream and sugar table. Mart paused to see if Rudie did any more threatening gestures. Satisfied that Rudie was too busy scratching himself to attack Mart began the search for suitable seating.

In cafés you could become a part of the scenery, like a chair or a plant, and had to

if you wanted to be a true café patron. You had to go unnoticed so you could notice others doing what you would be doing if you were not so busy noticing what others were doing given that you did not notice anyone noticing you. People worth noticing will not allow themselves to be noticed if the person noticing is in a spot that is easily noticeable. The trick was choosing a place near the action but afar in a very Zen Buddhist-like manner. Being close to action was also important unless you can lip read and even then the voice tones are lost which often are the most intriguing part of a cliché-riddled conversation where the participants are unsure of what they are saying anyway. An experienced café patron has hours of amusement observing and mentally poking fun at others in cafés.

A university study was once undertaken to find the perfect observing seat in a café. To meet this challenge they numbered the square tiles on café floors, secretly filmed people as they positioned themselves within the café and took post café experience surveys. To add further interest to the study and to assure publication, they occasionally played a recording of a speech made by former President Ford backwards in order to see how people reacted. After ten years of observation and doing lots of strange statistical analytics they found that the recording made people neurotic and could turn mentally unstable people to become very violent. Their second achievement was to have kept several of social science graduate students busy for ten years writing a five hundred-page research paper and that made lots of people very happy.

Mart did not comprehend any of the Zen Buddhist-like method of calculating the best seat to notice others in nor did he read the five hundred-page research paper on the topic of optimal seating in a café. All he typically did was seat himself near women he

found sexually attractive but would never think of him in an even remotely sexual manner. He would then proceed to fantasize about them sometimes even including himself in the fantasy.

Mart loved spying on people. The reason for Mart's spying was because people made him nervous but privacy made him necrotic; this made spying the perfect form of human contact for him. This nervous neurosis was caused by Mart's misinterpretation of his own inner thought that led him to believe he hated himself when in fact all they meant was he needed to change his hair style. A really good hairstylist can solve most of your problems and a bad one will most definitely lead to your downfall.

Upon Mart's entrance into the café scene all around hushed their voices as if a dangerous predator had entered the watering hole and pretended that they did not want to be noticed ignoring that they had either dyed their hair a bright color or cleanly shaven and waxed their head. They stared at Mart as he sat down with utter disgust and only resumed their conversation, with notably quieter voices, after a suitable length of silence to display the before mentioned disgust with appropriate significance.

The table of Mart's choice had been the previous sight of an informal debate that left debris clustered about in the center of the table. A damp and tattered napkin, taken in fear of a probable spill, had probably been twisted, Mart thought, by uneasy hands for comfort, as the conversation grew more personal. Two glasses had been left behind, a milky/coffee blend and a drink with too much whip cream. Both were about half full with lipstick stains around the rims. Two trails of crumbs led from the center of the table where a now consumed muffin had once been to the now departed mouths that the muffin had fed. Flies buzzed around the table sucking on the remains of a muffin. The

flies lined up in queues formed by these fallen crumbs busily jumping over one another. Two flies were in an angry dispute about one thing or another so Mart killed them, slamming his hand down on the table to end the bickering. He then wiped his hands on his shirts nonchalantly.

“Let me get all of this,” a café employee said in an incredibly cheerful tone for someone who was working.

Mart considered being chivalrous and helping her but her merry nature scared him. Looking around the patio he noticed the table he had chosen to sit at was the only dirty one and feared this meant he was inconsiderate. Mart sat back and watched as his table was being cleaned trying to think of something cool to say. “It's a hot day isn't it?” Mart mumbled. He then smiled coyly at her. “What do people do to get cool around these part?” he asked.

“Eh?” snapped the employee, “Oh. Yeah. That's why most people sit inside where it's air conditioned.” She wished she had not sounded so friendly when she first spoke to Mart.

“Ah, yeah,” stuttered off Mart.

The flies scattered about angrily hunting for their stolen meal, after the coffee wench cleared the table. They raged their vengeance upon Mart, who in turn, did his best to kill them. Mart swatted two or three across the courtyard convincing the other flies it was a lost and overly dangerous cause.

Mart then switched tables to one that offered a better view of a particularly unique-looking woman. Taking a large swig of iced coffee to cool his inner-self Mart settled into the new chair whose temperature was much above Mart's causing a painful

burning sensation. This, Mart felt, was a test of his devotion to his new house of coffee so he did little to ease his physical discomfort.

The vista of patio was a large parking lot occupied with numerous decrepit vehicles best characterized by the statement, “my first car.” Mart’s former café overlooked a busy street and he spent many hours watching cars as they raced by. Several horrible accidents had been engraved into his memories. Overlooking stationary cars would be a pleasant change, he thought; now, he could count incidences of car break ins instead of car wrecks.

Mart liberated a chunk of ice from his cup to suck on and quickly shoved it into his mouth. Just then a woman strolled by and Mart decided to smile in case she had any desire to sleep with him. The chunk of ice squirted out of his mouth as he struggled to attempt a casual but sexual smile and landed in his lap. He looked down at the chunk of ice as it quickly melted leaving a wet spot on his apparel in the most embarrassing place possible. Mart sighed.

After contemplating his crotch for several minutes Mart looked up to see if anyone was watching. An adorably squeezable female former high school classmate, any description other than classmate would have implied far too much emotional connection between Mart and her, was looking directly at him. She had what can best be described as a horrified look upon her face. Mart waved at her only to be ignored and then to obviously become a topic of laughter with the person beside her. Mart was happy he was not truly ignored.

A bit less at ease, Mart grabbed his coffee for reassurance. Mart's glass had acquired some bugs swimming in a valiant effort to keep afloat in the coffee, apparently

with backstrokes although distinguishing between a bug's backside and front was a bit beyond Mart's understanding of bug anatomy. Bugs were an occupational hazard for outside café patrons. Pushing the bugs about with the little wooden stirring stick that are so ubiquitous in coffee shops Mart sighed pensively. He snatched the glass his hand, loosely gripping it, and created a small tsunami for swimmers for amusement; the god to bugs he was. A few seconds into the tsunami the swimmers failed to keep above the surface of the brown liquid, disappearing beneath the waves driven by the fury of the bug-god Mart. Mart peered down into the swirling sea of coffee. A wave of sorrow for the bugs struck him. He had abused his bug-divinity. He had killed something living.

Mart pondered the amount of harm a few bugs would do to him compared to the life of physical and mental abuse behind and ahead of him and if preventing it was worth the price of a refill.

A gust of wind blew all the sweat on his forehead to one side. Almost dropping his coffee Mart nervously mopped up his head with an overused napkin. His cloy appearance brought little embarrassment to him because nearly everyone on the patio was sweating and the few who were not seemed to emit an unnatural alien-like vibe. Mart stared at them with distrusting eyes. At five in the evening the temperature remained in the hundreds. In Chico, few people dreamed of becoming a weatherman and day after day tell people, "Sorry, tomorrow will be another day in hell." It takes a special type of person, a person who believed people deserved to be in hell.

A girl, who obviously was unsatisfied with being fifteen and still blooming, walked by Mart. She strutted like a woman in the peak of her plumage, of one on the very of peak of desirability who only had the quick ride to old age ahead of them. The

girl walked displaying her complete ignorance of the fleeting nature of desire, of the long ride filled with decay that lay before her. The girl walked as if angry with not being objectified by sexist males. She had, at least to Mart, no need to fear not being objectified. The motion of her body parts could amaze any gypsy dancer. The cut of her dress would embarrass a stripper. She was any father's nightmare of a daughter. Mart could not imagine being a dad and letting his daughter display half of what she did. Of course, the thought of children in general made Mart ill and suicidal. Mart often daydreamed of racing to Mexico in avoidance of dealing with a child. He wondered if his Pinto could make the flight. Going over the part of interstate 5 known, as the Grapevine between Bakersfield and L.A. was an arduous pass. It was a steep and long climb that had killed many greater vehicles than his elderly Pinto. Being able to cross the Grapevine troubled him tremendously. A car that could not cross the Grapevine could hardly be thought of as a car at all.

A man who had observed Mart for several minutes smiled a delicious smile at him. He was a middle-aged man with a touch of European arrogance in one eye; the other was filled with normal American arrogance.

Mart began to return his smile then paused with one side of his face still smiling and the other side in a state of confusion. He dreaded the man was homosexual so snapped his smile from the illicit gay guy's gaze. Mart began to worry that he was seated in a non-heterosexual stance so modified it to appear more straight-like. He then forcefully thought about stereotypical male-things and bashed on gays to increase his air of heterosexuality. After a few moments of gay-bashing thoughts he began defending homosexuality because, after all, he was liberal. Continuing this train of thought for a

several minutes Mart forgot what he was thinking about and for a moment who he was and if he was whatever he was before knowing who he was then decided that none of it could have been really important.

Mart looked down at his bug-infested coffee and twirled it to see if the deep-sea divers would make a miraculous return from their icy deaths, none did. He sighed. A bug-god that can only kill is half a god.

Growing bored of himself Mart looked at his fellow café patrons to see whom best to spy on. Much to his dismay, the only people within earshot were teenagers. Mart wished he had sat inside. His teenager company discussions seemed to be limited to high school. High school can never leave teenagers; it always lingers about them like cigar smoke around an old fat man wearing an overly used wool coat. Hatred for teenagers had been a life long emotional stance for Mart. He justified his hatred as born from the indecisive and self-doubting air that followed them and, of course, their smell. Mart's therapist explained to him his feelings stemmed from past events (like when he was five a gang of teenagers made fun of his bike— Mart loved that bike even though it was pink). However, Mart discounted everything his therapist said due to the fact he had chosen a profession that was to listen to people complain about their lives. For Mart, that should a profound lack of judgment and smacked of some kind of mental disorder; therefore, he could ignore all advise from a therapist he did not like. But his hatred for teenagers caused major conflicts in Mart's mind because between the age of twelve and twenty hating teenagers was hating himself. He therefore decided it was optimal for his well being to hide for those eight years and not come out until he could drink in bars. And, when he finally made his reappearance at the age of twenty-one, no one cared, not even

his mom. This further deepened his hatred of teenagers.

Mart picked up his coffee, twirled it around for luck and drank the remains in one gulp. His ability to consume large quantities of liquid quickly was a skill he was often proud of but not at this particular time. As the coffee settled in his stomach Mart realized he had just drank at a bare minimum two bugs. It did not seem to add any flavor to coffee; the burnt coffee grounds overpowered all other tastes. Mart wondered what kind of bugs he had swallowed and if they were poisonous and if they were poisonous where he could find more to put in someone else's coffee. He remembered one had a red rear. Checking to see if they had a hallucinatory effect he stared at the sun and to his dismay found it to look normal. Mart gasped as he realized his faithful worshippers had been consumed by their bug-god. It was a good note to stop drinking and use the bathroom.

Bathrooms seemed like such a waste of time to Mart when a plant pot would suffice most of the time. But give all the prying eyes he was forced to wait in line for a turn in the bathroom. Mart dreaded waiting in line to take a piss. People are harder to stomach while waiting to release liquid waste. Waiting in line to take a piss has never been a strong point in anyone's social skill.

One bathroom and seventy coffee drinkers make a fairly large line. The people waiting were displeased another had joined them; his appearance had broken their concentration on how to look cool while waiting to take a piss. This task most failed miserably at. The average pose was arms crossed and a deeply concerned look on their face as they read the literature tacked up on the bulletin board.

Mart settled into the line as casually as possible grinning with embarrassment at all that looked in his general direction.

The bathroom line hushed, as Mart entered, the few conversations had managed to arise. One conversation did survive Mart's intrusion; it was about God.

A small squirrel-like male undergraduate student asked a large sloth-like guy who could be categorized as either a very old undergraduate or young graduate student, "But what is God really like? I mean, is He in the form of a man."

"Since He gave birth to the universe," reminded the sloth, "He could be a She."

"But He created the universe," corrected the squirrel, "He did not give birth to it."

"Yes," agreed the Sloth in a tone which indicated non-agreement, "but He or She breathed life into Adam. Breathed!"

"I fail to see your point," angrily shouted the squirrel.

"But why would God have to breath?" inquired the sloth.

"It doesn't say He has to only He did." pointed out the squirrel.

"But it implies--" stammered the sloth.

"But implies what?" cut in the squirrel.

"Creating, giving breath, it all points to a chick being God," snarled the sloth, "and God is so temperamental, it's got to be a woman thing."

"I fail to see anything by your ramblings," retorted the squirrel.

"And think about it," continued the sloth, "if you could make a person you'd make a beautiful girl not a guy, not unless your were gay--".

"So, now you are saying God is gay?" gasped the squirrel.

"Or a women," corrected the sloth.

"I am God," cut in the rather large punker Rudie who had served Mart coffee in a thunderous voice. "Shut-up now or I'll make your dicks fall off."

The line's only conversation then died from fright knowing Rudie did not need divine abilities to sever their dicks from their mortal bodies.

“How can I get you to make it bigger?” Mart asked with an renditions of Goofy's evil smile.

“Killer,” said Rudie charmed someone was conversing with him. Fortunate for Mart, Rudie found him amusing. Mart never realized how close to death he would have been if the large one had gotten annoyed. “I'm Rudie” Rudie offered a hand with the introduction.

“I'm Mart,” said Mart shaking Rudie's hand vigorously finding it to feel like a large mass steel.

“Killer.” The large punker looked down at Mart from his high stature and said, “What does your shirt say?”

“It's a bootleg Pixies shirt,” replied Mart feeling proud that a server of coffee was talking to him. The shirt was a miserably made bootleg that was given to Mart by an ex-girlfriend. He had never quit bothering to wear it.

“Seen them live?” asked Rudie with a gentle voice of admiration. This group held an obvious sacred place in the heart of Rudie and the live performance must have been spiritual for him.

Mart made a gesture of regret. “Unable to,” he answered quietly.

“Shame.” Rudie seemed to want to say more to Mart, to say something that would help fill the void that was Mart's life caused by not having seen the Pixies live. “Shame,” he said with great sympathy. Rudie knew that was not the needed words but felt he would have many other opportunities. He gave a reassuring smile to Mart.

The bathroom door opened and the embarrassed occupant smiled self-consciously at the line then bowed her head down as she left hurriedly to her seat before anyone else saw she was the last one in the bathroom. The condition of the bathroom was always like the lair of an unpleasant demonic monster that ate children for amusement. Repugnant comments and obscene depictions were scrawled over the walls like ancient curses in a tomb of a genuinely nasty person. A film of sticky dirt, whose origins were best left unknown and assumed non-human, covered everything. The smell was like a cross between an open grave and a festering wound. The lights flickered on and off at random intervals giving a monster plenty of opportunities to emerge from its seclusion to attack. No one wanted to be blamed for its condition by being the last occupant.

The entire line gasped at her with accusing eyes.

Rudie made a hand signal of departure and disappeared into the bathroom.

For the amusement of the people waiting for the bathroom the walls around it were full of all sorts notices and bulletins. Being not amused Mart decided to look for a place to stay.

Most of the roommates wanted ads were the same: roommate wanted, male or female, non-smoker, friendly roommates, close to campus and a list of personality qualities they desired in potential roommates but did not themselves exhibit. One however, leaned on the bizarre side: “Wanted one (1) male roommate. I, Rosy, hate small animals, indoor smoke, womanizers, Republicans, Southern Cal worshippers, Western music, anyone who drives trucks, plants, good cooks, clean people, people not into weird sex and most probably you, drop by Rosy's place.” At the top of the page was a drawing of what appeared to be handcuffs. Mart felt congenial after his conversation

with Rudie and knew this Rosy person would like him thus be pleasant despite what her ad had insinuated her views about all non-Rosy humans. He removed the ad from the bulletin board to reduce his competition.