

Dogearred Americanna

Patent Applied For

Sickness Unto Death

Its the best of all placebo worlds. Its placebo, but improbable.

It all began one Monday, after a particularly bad weekend. Well, it sorta began on Friday around 430 P.M.; pretty near quitting time. I had thought it would go away, as it had many times before. There are all kinds of obstacles I erect in order not to pay them a visit. First of all, they have never done me that much good, that is, in proportion to the anxiety I have felt. Usually I go there after I have suffered my last frightful agony. I get there just in time to be told I'm on the mend and 'drink lotsa liquids an' get lotsa rest -an' you aint gonna die (an' that'll be sixty bucks). If things don't get better in a cupla days, give us another call'. Well, that visitation took place nearly five years ago, after a spell of seven years during which time I managed to elude them. So it was a total of twelve years almost, since I had had anything to do with them. Prior to that, I was so screwed up by my father, by life, by my own machinery (and finally by them with their damned pill factories) I really couldn't tell which did me the most harm. Daddy mighta been hypocritical, but not hippocratical. Now, I don't trust either of them, an' daddy aint here no more.

As I have narrated, it all began on Monday. I had made an appointment for 1:30; and of course the whole of suffering and dying humanity thronged to the fount just before me, all with a 1:30 appointment. So, I got stuck in the middle of the horrible coughing little wretches, trying to breath through the button hole in my lapel, all the while imagining the little bastards (microbes) invading the deepest recesses of my being. I attempted to distract myself by reading a dog-eared copy of weekly (weakly) innocuous Americanna that pretended to be momentous. I perused through several dogged copies dating back many momentous months seeking out the femmes fatales, as a last-dying antidote to the dreadful beasts that I inhaled with every stingy breath. Occasionally there would arise on the printed page, sandwiched somewhere in between all the other pages illustrating cameras, autos, whiskeys, wines, perfumes, cigarettes, oil, T.V. Specials, and finally Playtex, and jockey shorts, an oft-repeated fact revealing the condition of our civilization, suggesting we were doomed if we 'kept it up'. (They haven't as yet invented a pill for that one).

Anyway, I was getting more depressed by Americanna, as I always do, while the sickly throng gradually diminished around me. After two hours of waiting with my paltry coughless and sneezeless ailment, they called my name to make sure I was still there in a state of ready sickness. It was a relief, for I was nearly dead from the atmosphere, which I was beginning to imagine as the situation of my immediate future, not unlike Mark Twains' limburger cheese, if the man in the white coat found a

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malfunction in my works. I had begun to think the worst, and if that was indeed the case, I would refuse treatment, requesting my spouse to set me out to sea, adrift in our dinghy, with some booze or heroin, or whatever, letting me go that way instead of being bled to death in a sterile room, in observance of the Hippocratical Oath. I had imagined myself setting an example for the balance of mankind (I suppose I shouldn't have entertained thoughts of booze and heroin if I really wanted to set an example) (self-conscious exemplary figures have their problems) (Screaming keeps people awake - and the fishies too).

"What seems to be your trouble?"

He asked me that after I had sat in his little doctoring cubicle equipped with the blood pressure thingie hung on the wall, along with a bunch of reassuring certificates and degrees all stamped with crinkly embossed seals, and framed under glass. A couple of these latter had been knocked cock-eyed in the days doctoring; I had guessed nobody had noticed yet; one has opportunity to think such things in those little cubicles. The nurse had asked me to sit on the padded platform that served as inspection table for both sexes arranged in assorted positions. She asked me to remove certain of my clothing (to disrobe), while sticking a thermometer into my mouth (I have forgotten to mention, they had collected some pee and taken some blood from me earlier, offering some relief, during the long siege behind my lapel) while she also counted my clammy pulse, rendering a reassuring smile, leaving, saying, 'The Doctor would be along soon.' She seemed a model of efficiency. Well, 'soon' seemed an extension of my previous experience amidst the throng, only now Edgar Allen Poe had compressed the world into a sterile cubicle while I awaited the MAN, the Executioner.

"Well, Doc", (sort of reverentially) "last Friday I was seized by this awful pain in my insides - about here - an' ever since then I have been having recurring spasms. I also wake up in the middle of the night feeling as if I couldn't draw another breath. I had sorta hoped it would go away, so's I wouldn't have to unnecessarily bother everyone with it; but it didn't work out that way ...".

"...ER... When was the last time you stooled?"

"Thursday".

"Lie down on the table; here."

He probes and gropes around pressing on my viscera, looking for the Devil.

"That hurt?"

"Sorta".

It seems to me every time they knead me like that it hurts whether the devil is there or not (of course I din't say that to the doc).

He looks at my chart and the results of the pee and blood stuff - and Oh!, I forgot to mention (pretty distracted by this experience) the EKG they performed on me while I waited between coughings and dog-eared

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Americanna. He didn't appear surprised, chagrined, or puzzled, or even appreciative. While he is perusing the data, he wraps the blood pressure bag around my arm, whoof, whoof whoof, ssssssssssss sss ss; then he wrote down the number. He pokes his illuminated cone in my ears, turning my head with his free hand as though he was inspecting a cantaloupe; then he roams around with his listening device, asking me to grunt and cough.

"Well, Mr. Durchanek, as near as I can determine, you've probably got a touch of 'middleitis', a rather common ailment in these depressing times. Your autonomous nervous system is probably being interfered with by a variety of stress related and anxiety reactions, causing your diaphragm to push when it should pull. The complexity of the signals from the engineer (your head) to your middle brings on the spasms which inadvertently bring on pain which causes even more anxiety and stress ... I, too, sometimes wake in the middle of the night short of breath; its then I get up to exercise by doing several 'push-ups'... that seems to help"..... "But, for you, we need to interrupt this cycle you're in, so I'm going to prescribe 'Nearvanin' - take as directed. Now, there are a few contraindications which are outweighed by the total effect - initially, you will feel relaxed ... a little happy, but also a bit slow and dull ... but as well, you could have visions; you might imagine that the world was all rosy or pink, that all of your fellow humans had suddenly become friendly, loving one another; this latter indication must, of course, be ignored; not to be trusted. If things seem too rosy, I would advise halving the prescribed dose, or discontinuing it all together ... and we could try another cycle-interrupter. However, no cause for concern, the drug has been very effective in the majority of cases ... If you feel it is not beneficial, give us a call".

"Er thanks Doctor but ... er ..I..I.. really would prefer not to ..er.. ..ah.. take pills ... The last time I got medication, I got so screwed up ... I mean I couldn't do anything. I totally lacked any motivation; it was painful for me to even do the simplest tasks. This was after three or four visits to different doctors here at the clinic. ... For some reason or other I couldn't see the same doctor twice; each one prescribed a different medicine to cure a sore swollen throat that persisted over a rather protracted period of time. I was 'given' an anti-sweller, then a tranquilizer, and finally an anti-biotic, a different pill from each doctor. Then I went into a deep depression, or a nervous breakdown or a chemical shut-down, or something ... to this day, I haven't the slightest notion what was wrong with me, the cause, and the net effect of the medication. A persistent sore throat turned into a seven-month depression which I had to fight all by myself because I lived in mortal dread of any more diagnosis, and any more medication .. So Doc - No Pills" "Well, Mr Durchanek, another alternative is for me to refer you to Doctor Dwindle, our clinical psychiatrist, who has dealt with many

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cases of your kind. My prescription is intended to enable you to function while attempting to break a cycle of anxiety and pain. There would be immediate results. Perhaps breaking the cycle is all that is indicated in your case, thus restoring the autonomous control of your bodily functions. .. Doctor Dwindle may even prescribe medication; but even if he doesn't, he is more equipped to handle stress and anxiety related problems. ... Would you like for the nurse to make an appointment for you?" "Er ... ah ... Doctor. ... Oh, I guess so".

"Alright Mr. Durchanek. I'll have Nurse Balm make an earliest appointment for Doctor Dwindle ... and Good Luck to you .. I do hope it helps; and if you change your mind, please do not feel intimidated or too embarrassed to call upon me again ..".

Well, then, OH! Gud, it was Dwindle for me. Nurse Balm looked forlornly at me, full of human pity. She touched my hand. Florence Nightengale of the Americrimean War - I, another hapless victim. Doubtlessly, Nurse Balm probably could have done as much, if not more, for me than both doctors; with her soothing softness, her motherly, indulgent, female robustness. Eve, scented, odorous, lovely, healthy, bulging; a smiling, inviting human presence which would have interrupted the cycle, or at least that is what I thought; maybe she did too. Since the Fates had not decreed her ministrations, I was committed to Doctor Dwindle. But maybe, just maybe, I would come back again for the horse pill after all, so I could maybe be touched by Nurse Balm again; she in her straight jacket and me in mine.

Should I venture to mention my experience with Dwindle, or have you already had enough of this?. Perhaps you would rather guess what the encounter did or did not produce and whether I ever got back with Nurse Balm. Well, as it turned out, there wasn't much Dwindle could do about the Twentieth Century. If you are fortunate, you find an escape; I do not mean that drugs or alcohol are the best escape; but in an existential hell-for-leather civilization, on the Fast track headed for the World Class Global Cultural climax, that places small value on life, it is of little consequence what one does. One needs to be drugged, regardless of the contraindications, in order to pass through this treacherous Twentieth Century jungle, which is full of frightening INHUMANITY. We do have to get to the other side - that is our compulsion - but Alas!, we need to escape the Horrors ... Doctor Dwindle notwithstanding. Poor Dwindle, he tries very hard; he is sympathetic; he believes he can help - but he knows better. His cellar, too, is full of liquor, as is every cellar. Fire Water!! Then there's Kellogg's Christianity, unless you would prefer Post's Get up and Go, Ralston's Purer or General Mills Flakeouts; Graham's Crackups, Born Again Wheaties; Saved by the Church Bell, or Behoover's Wetnurse; or Holy Christ, What's Happening?

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No, I'm not advocating drugs or alcohol, or Christianity, or ? I suppose I am advocating something we have never tried, but feel as hopeless of it ever being tried so as not to mention it. It would be so bandied about, thrown up in the air, kicked in the dirt, sullied in the media, sucked of all its salient good only to be spit into the erstwhile chaff that constitutes the balance of our civilization. The time is not right or apropos; we are not ready; we are not conditioned; we are too deeply entrenched; we are too hopeful that this, our current state of affairs will continue; that we will be sustained by Miracles and Bullshit. NO!!, I shall not risk the loss of another fondled Hope.

"Au Revoir, Doctor Dwindle. Placebo to you.
Apply for a Patent.

Sorry to have strung you along with Nurse Balm.