

## *Carnal Knowledge*

Ode to Ring Lardner.

I am OLD years of age.

In my lifetime, I am not aware of ever being **HUNGRY**, although I might have often wailed as an infant.

Over the years I have observed others standing, or sitting, near stop lights, on busy thoroughfares, maybe accompanied by a dog, or another kind of companion, usually appearing bedraggled, often enduring the inclement weather, holding, or not holding a cardboard placard, with some kind of entreaty scrolled upon it. **NEED WORK, HUNGRY**. Nowadays the Need Work part is missing, with 10% of the folks unemployed. Why bother with all that excessive advertising. The discharged CEO stands in the urban melee with his: **HIRE ME!**

My initial reaction to these scenes of despair; for it has to be despair; it is despair, is it not; it's not just a bad habit, or the easy way out, no couth, no shame; these scenes of despair, is to avert my eyes, not to look back. I am not responsible for the Human Condition.

I am not my brother's keeper; God (that's not me) does not help those who do not help themselves. Trickle down poverty descends mercilessly. My wife tells me she has given them money; my wife is a real honey. Lucky though, she still has all her parts.

There is no way of avoiding it, I am forced to think of the Human Condition. I was on my way somewhere to do something; I had had breakfast, or lunch, my green tea, I was going about in my horseless carriage, carelessly spewing out carbon into the atmosphere, when the scene forced me to contemplate the Human Condition.

The times now are particularly dire. The **GREED** cycle had reached its fullest expression during the W. Administration; the whole edifice of the United States Of America could not endure the strain of **GREED**. The Land Of Opportunity.

Making something out of nothing. A pyramid scheme that failed. Always fails. Because someone has to pay. A fat VP rides out of the White House in his powered wheel chair, while the disabled vet haunts the streets. Mission Accomplished. Greed Works. No Compassion from the Compassionate Conservative works. The W. people cared more for Iraq than they did the victims of Katrina. As a matter of fact they cared more for the Oil in Iraq than they did for its victims (ordinary soldiers and ordinary residents of a place),

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who imagined they were upholding, or were being told they were upholding the 'Our Way of Life'.

Now we got BO, a new administration that gained preeminence by yammering for change. We'll see.

The Human Condition has always persevered; it has been with us for a long time. It stubbornly refuses to yield its victims.

The lingo out there has changed from Jump Start to Kick Start, but its still all about 'growing' the economy. That again.

All the fourth estate pundits and guessers are comparing him to George W(ashington), Abe and FDR, but really, he's unproven,

He has a look about him of a confidence, bordering on arrogance.

Already a few forays into Pakistan. Already a chastised Chavez. Also he has signed away Guantanamo. How does one avoid the blunders, avoid the undermining that comes from the carping media. Being presidential is all, trying too hard to look like a pragmatic leader; even to fulfill promises. Like Bill, who started off by acknowledging and crediting the gays in the military.

To the **HUNGRY**, this is all puff.

To me, it emphasizes the Human Condition. There isn't any escape from the Human Condition. Like riding in public transportation, to be a good non-polluting citizen, or just to get somewhere without walking, one becomes exposed to all the bugs that cling to every surface, or are expelled in huge draughts as the 'others' cough, sneeze and snivel.

How does one avoid the Human Condition?

To return to the beginning; not the evolutionary beginning, hoping for a corrective, but the other beginning, **HUNGER**.

I know already I will do nothing because I can do nothing. It is not that I am unwilling. I have become inured, like most of the others. The Human Condition is so pervasive with its huge redundant number, Malthusian number, that our sensibilities are suffering from overload, that is, too much 'input'. Fewer would definitely improve the 'condition'.

My wife's sensibilities are different than mine. She still feels bad for what 'we' did to the American Indian. She cringes at my ethnic jokes. I don't know what are my specific redeeming qualities, that is, why she still remains as my companion. Maybe she believes things about me that are not true.

This side trip away from **HUNGER** was not intended to divert the harangue toward something else. My wife carries the load for both of us. She supports all the 'good' environmental causes, all the causes that have to do with reducing the suffering amongst the living. The result of what she does is not evident; but she abides

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her conscience. She does seem to sleep more soundly than I; I do not sleep less soundly because my conscience is bothering me, at least regarding the Human Condition, which is simply a 'given'; that is, it is free for the taking.

It is the 'me' that is lying exposed. I have often imagined myself the measure of all men. This is perhaps a very arrogant presumption on my part. Yes!, I feel compassion, but what do I do in response to the feeling? Other men (women, my wife amongst them) do things that I do not do.

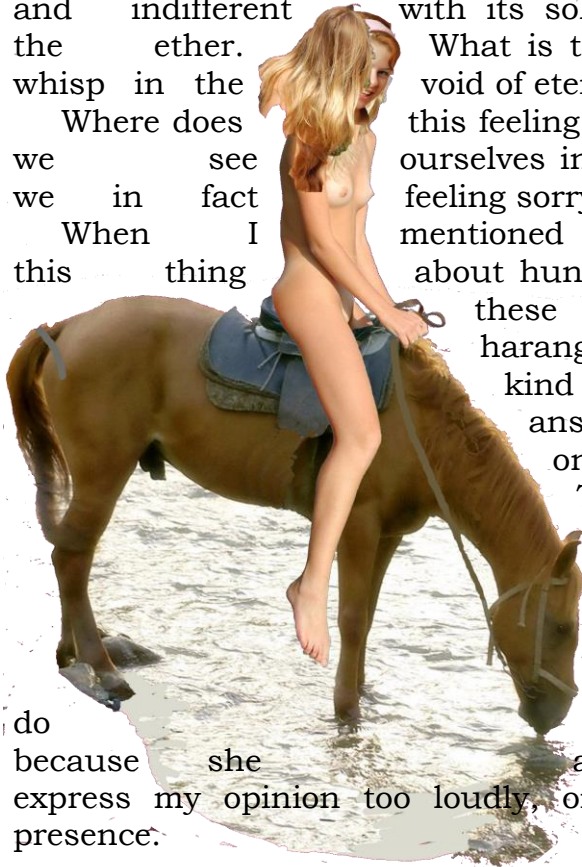
No, it is not too presumptuous of me. I am aware of something. I am aware that I would know nothing about life, or the world of man, if I was not a sentient being, if I was not, in fact, myself, alive. All would be darkness. Someone else would become the measure of all men. Someone else would be witnessing what I have witnessed. Whether they did something or nothing would add up to the same; would they act upon their feelings of compassion? Would they sense the overwhelming redundancy, would it bother them, that is, philosophically? Would they propound cynical assessments of the predictable and expected result of too much fornication? Or would they demonstrate a total reverence for life, all life, as some kind of miracle of the Universe, the Universe which seems cold, and indifferent with its solitary units whirling about in the ether. What is this phenomenon of life, but a whip in the void of eternity? How say you?

Where does this feeling of compassion arise? Is it that we see ourselves in the other's predicament? Are we in fact feeling sorry for ourselves?

When I mentioned to my wife that I was writing this thing about hunger, I also asked her, after all these years of listening to my harangues, if she could predict what kind of thing I might write; she answered by saying "I know you only carnally, not intellectually."

Talk about being left out in the cold. 40 years.

She doesn't really care what I think, just so long as I treat her right. Perhaps that is some real blessing. But I do not believe her entirely, because she always argues with me when I express my opinion too loudly, or too something else, in her presence.



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So, why am I doing this? Am I seeking some kind of absolution?  
Don't I already suspect how it will all be received, judging from  
my wife's indifference to my intellectual life? Is she truly  
representative of the general audience?  
Let those who are hungry commiserate  
with me as I stand upon the byways of this life  
grandiosely seeking an audience?  
I like to recall the guy in Paris Texas,  
standing on the overpass,  
gesticulating and ranting to all the  
passing vehicles beneath him:  
"There will be no safety zone. I  
warned you, I warned all of  
you."  
The figure walking upon the  
overpass slowed his pace,  
wondering if the perorator was  
posing any danger to himself,  
diverging slightly from his chosen  
path. Feeling unthreatened, he  
continued on, patting the  
epithet slinger upon the shoulder as  
he passed, judging him harmless.  
Some head of hair on this one  
No!? Amy Adams. Do you suppose that is a possessive form of  
Adam, a descendant of John and John Q. A My Adam S, My Adam.  
His rib. Nice Rib who fell for the serpent, who became rather  
serpentine. No, Flesh and Blood. Nice to look at, very nice to look  
at! Amy Adams for President! A wiser choice than Sarah? Still a  
rib!

