

# THE COBRA'S NOSE

## The Cobra's Notes...

A job opening in Tech Support has occasioned a parade of geek hopefuls through my reception area. This is not to say all tech types are geeks, or that all of the applicants have been geeks, but there have been a hell of a lot of geeks.

Oh, jeez, one of them just parked in the handicapped area! Unbelievable.

Anyway, this youngish geek arrived one morning at about a quarter past ten and started being personable. I gave him some paperwork to fill out and pointed the corner of the room furthest away from where I sit. He was still working on it at 1030 when Amber (recent Cobra subscriber and ally) came up to watch the phones for my morning break. I told her some guy was here to see Sid, waved in his direction, and left. When I returned, Amber was playing a game of solitaire on the internet—a good way to keep level when the phones are busy. I took up the game she left unfinished and played one or two myself when I heard the South Conference Room door open and post-interview chitchat wafted my way. Sid said his goodbyes and receded into the depths of the building, the cue for the interviewee to vamoose, but instead he leaned on my desk and peered at my computer.

Now, I don't make a lot of claims for my job. It's not nuclear physics or coal mining. Still, it does sometimes require substantial mental effort to refrain from cursing (out loud) or slapping visitors, and if the thought "red seven on black eight" crowds out the words "I'm going to \*&^#\*\$!! track you down and \*&)%%^#\$\$ \*\$%##&! your \*&)%%^#\$\$ dogs," then solitaire is as crucial to job performance as a dial tone. Maybe more so. But you look like you're screwing around, so unemployed individuals, who recently whined that they would be late because the directions they got couldn't *possibly* be correct because Bell Road just *doesn't* intersect with Pima and they drifted nearly to Cave Creek to prove it, feel free to interrupt.

"Solitaire, huh?" was this candidate's insightful remark.

I couldn't imagine he expected a verbal reply, so I just glared at him. Glee seemed to bubble up from his guts, and his next words were delivered with a lightly contained smirk.

"Who's winning!" he cried. He paused to check my reaction (none), then backed out the door shaking his head and flapping his hands as if to say I would get the joke later on and appreciate his wit at that time. "Who's winning! HaHa! What a card! Get it? 'Card! HaHa!" I just couldn't see it.

Hours later, (a typical duration) I was struck by the following thought:



Was that young man attempting to flirt with me?

I know it seems unlikely, and I usually wouldn't aspire to such egomania, but after my radiant cousin Kelley Arredondo-Willey dissed the omniscience of the Romance and Dating Magic 8-Ball a few weeks ago, I've been having all sorts of weird thoughts. These were compounded when I read *The Chalice and the Blade*, recommended by cousin and special correspondent to inadequate restaurants, the elegant Evelyn Jensen. The book climaxes with an orgy and an ecstatic romp through the moonlit woods one Beltain eve.

"Beltain" struck a chord, so I perused my Cobra Files and sure enough, I was on record as having celebrated it last year in Toronto whilst visiting my friendly friend Lee (some puns are too stupid to die). Though I was in the company of the brown-eyed, handsome, manly man Lee, in no other respect was the Beltain I attended anything like the one in the book. I phoned him and demanded to know why he had taken me to the Beltain with the gay folk dancing and *not* the one with the orgy and the *romp*. Lee yawned and blew his nose.

Was he holding out on me? Probably. I've seen those Canadian films. As he's engaged now, that avenue of inquiry is pretty well road blocked and I'll likely never know for sure. But Beltain is coming, and though the valley is short on forests, the desert is blooming and I've got a gray hair plucked from my head this very morning taped to my computer monitor to give me a sense of beginning and ending, and the whole pagan cycle Beltain kicks off in the spring. And this volume of *The Nose* aims to honor the spirit of Beltain after its fashion, even if it ends up being less a romp than a maladroitness folk dance.

Sharon C. McGovern  
Editor/Publisher/Cobra-in-Chief

Just as Spring occasions a renewal and reflowering of the earth, a tour of any Bauhaus alumnus gives me a chance to commune with my inner goth, evaluate its current aesthetic parameters, and get some shopping in to satisfy my findings.

I call my latest incarnation “Shiny Black Goth.” Born of decadent spa patronage and a newfound (and no doubt misplaced) confidence in my lower legs, Shiny Black Goth consists of black pumps, short black skirt, black stockings, tiny little black tank top, and a tight, sheer shirt over that, plus silver chain belt and highly reflective black bead necklace (courtesy of Liz Claiborne, via Ross). Hair, up; nails, deoxygenated blood red; and for maximum effect, use a trick I modified from advice Carrie Mason gave me on my Halloween costume a few months back—use a bit of lip liner under your eyes and a bit of black eyeliner around your lips. Stunning. As for Pat, he wore a lustrous oxygenated blood red shirt, black pants and shoes, stayed out of the sun, and let his natural gorgeousness carry the look.

Our muse this night was Peter Murphy, who performed at the Nile theater on April first. Murphy was resplendent in rich hued crushed velvet ensembles which flattered those slender thighs he’s always going on about, and artfully applied hair gel rendered his pate reasonably hirsute. His band looked good, too, if in a more modest sort of way. It was composed of Peter DiStephano, the guitar player from Porno for Pyros who sported a black button down bowler shirt with jeans and slicked back hair, the shirt free bass player from Jane’s Addiction Eric Avery, Love&Rockets producer Doug DeAngelis, and our darling Kevin Haskins on drums, who does *not* mince no matter what you may have heard.

In addition to his long familiar hopping, twisting, and whirling like a dervish, Murphy has taken to playing with the stage lights—picking them up and shining them on himself, his fellow musicians, and the audience. The effect is similar to the famous “Bullet the Blue



# Big Night of a Shiny Fool

Sky” sequence from U2’s *Rattle and Hum* movie (though Murphy’s technique is more extensive and elaborate, and he uses a much smaller light), and compliments his booming vocals.

Which is not to say booming is Murphy’s only mode. At the first break in the show, the band left him standing alone before his mike stand, acoustic guitar strapped on, eyes closed. He stood there quietly, long enough that the audience reaction turned from enchanted, to puzzled, to restless. His composure finally cracked when he arched an eyebrow and glared at the portion of the crowd from which originated a lewd remark. “I’m having a rest,” he intoned, then resumed his meditative pose.

The rest was worthwhile, for a restored Peter Murphy treated the audience to a set of lovely, low key songs: “Big Love of a Tiny Fool,” “A Strange Kind of Love,” and the rarely performed “Marlene Dietrich’s Favourite Poem” (eat you livers, Murphy fans not in attendance). Then the band returned for two more encores, including the remixed “Roll Call” (Pat smacked me with the back of his hand and pointed meaningfully toward the stage at the “buttoning up your new red shirt” part). They threw flotsam into the audience between breaks, but a Kevin Haskins drumstick still eludes my grasp. Which reeks. (cont. on page 6)

# The Lusty Month of May-o

The musical *Camelot* is a cautionary tale about fulfilled wishes. King Arthur wants to establish a radical system of government based on equality and the rule of law, so temperate that the weather itself would willingly abide by certain restrictions ("Camelot"). Guenevere, irked by her arranged marriage, wants her beauty flattered and a great romantic love ("The Simple Joys of Maidenhood"). Lancelot seeks a level of purity so conspicuous that "he could easily work a miracle or two" ("C'est Moi").

Lancelot does work a heck of a miracle. He raises a jousting opponent from the dead with a prayer, thus catching the eye of Queen Guenevere. Though fond of her husband, she is drawn to the kingdom's most eligible bachelor. They inevitably become entangled in a legendary illicit romance. Because Camelot was founded on the principle that crimes, like adultery with the queen, must invariably be punished, Arthur is obliged to order his wife's execution. Her rescue, led by Lancelot and abetted by the early hour at which Arthur scheduled the event, tears Camelot apart.

The consequences of irresistible desire extend to every character. Arthur's fling with his half-sister produced Modred, who would later scheme to depose his father and end the goody-goody days of Camelot. Merlyn, Arthur's moral and spiritual guide, is seduced away the Crystal Cave by the spirit Nimue. The knights who brought order to the kingdom get bored and will the return of rampant sin and bloodshed.

Would the characters have been more prudent or restrained in their cravings had they realized catastrophe would result? Probably not. After all, Arthur hubristically orders the compliance of Nature in his civil engineering, Guenevere snaps at her patron saint when things don't go her way, and Lancelot calls himself "a French Prometheus unbound"—they virtually compel divine retribution. The impulse to act in defiance of moderation, the law, and sense is celebrated in "The Lusty Month of May." Read the words or listen to Julie Andrews sing them on the original Broadway soundtrack (*not* Vanessa Redgrave's somnambulant interpretation from the movie which makes lust sound like it's about as much fun as the three hour church block), and obey them as you see fit. But don't be surprised in June when you have to face the music. 🌿



*Tra la! It's May! The lusty month of May!  
That lovely month when everyone goes blissfully astray  
Tra la! It's here! That shocking time of year  
When tons of wicked little thoughts merrily appear*

*It's May! It's May! That gorgeous holiday  
When every maiden wishes her lad would be a cad  
It's mad! It's gay! A libelous display  
Those dreary vows that everyone takes, everyone breaks,  
Everyone makes divine mistakes, the lusty month of May!*

*Whence this fragrance wafting through the air?  
What sweet feelings does its scent transmute?  
Whence this perfume floating everywhere?  
Don't you know it's that dear forbidden fruit?  
Tra la la la! That dear forbidden fruit!*

*Tra la! It's May! The lusty month of May!  
That darling month when everyone throws self-control away  
It's time to do a wretched thing or two  
And try to make each precious day one you'll always rue!  
It's May! It's May! The month of "yes you may,"  
The time for every frivolous whim, proper or im-*

*It's wild! It's gay! A blot in every way  
The bird and bees with all of their fast-  
-didious past gaze at the human race aghast!  
The lusty month of May!*

--Music by Frederick Lowe, Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner (as transcribed by me, so if there are any errors contained within, blame his estate for not putting the words in some easy to steal location on the web. Also, I took out about 50 tra la las. Didn't think you'd mind.)

# That Golden Potion

***“It has a slightly golden hue, suspended in an oily substance and injected in a needle about half as thick as a telephone wire....”***

So the needle, though it doesn't sound any worse than the one that channeled blood from my arm into a plastic sack the other day, sounds a bit unnerving, and its destination, a carefully swabbed rump, wouldn't be my first choice for an injection. Still I don't quiver like a little girl at the imagining, because this is *testosterone* we're talking about, baby, and I want some.

I thought I had an understanding of testosterone as a chemical agent, but did not recognize it as a magic elixir until I read Andrew Sullivan's cover article entitled "The He Hormone" in the *New York Times Magazine* of April 4<sup>th</sup>. Among the benefits he claims for testosterone are the ability to think more clearly, an increase in confidence, tenacity, and libido, greater strength and endurance, and a decrease in depressive tendencies. Testosterone gives the will to grasp business opportunities, and the fortitude to lead in all endeavors, private and governmental. If you have the greater amount of testosterone in a relationship you will dominate it, if you have the greater amount in a conflict you will win it. If you are a bird, testosterone will give you beautiful plumage and a varied song.

Okay, so I'm not a bird. After reading about "the natural disadvantages of gender" in "The He Hormone," I don't want to be a woman, either. I now realize I see life through mouse brown colored glasses, unable to fully appreciate life in its full brilliance, and possessing the sole aim of enticing vital men into my monogamous lair and domesticating them—thereby reducing their own testosterone levels. As embryos, Sullivan writes, females are "the default sex." So even at the every earliest stages of life, women are indolent, men *aspire*. Unsex me now—I renounce this miserable existence!

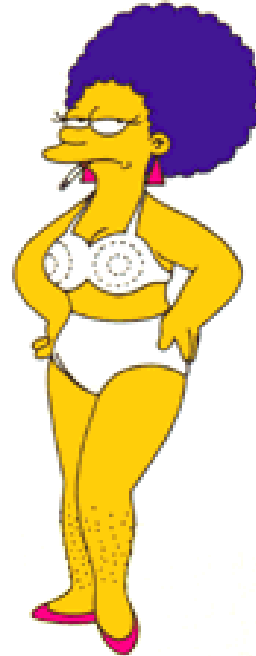
There are a few little tiny drawbacks to consider. An increase in heart disease is possible, but as heart disease is notoriously under diagnosed in women anyway I probably wouldn't notice. Hair loss may occur, but hair I can spare. I might pick a fight, but for once in my life, I might actually win it. What a small price to pay for "the ability to risk for good and bad; to act, to strut, to dare, to seize."

Sullivan detects a widespread mollycoddling of the American male, a passivity that would never fly in, say, the Balkins. "Our main task in the gender wars of the new century may not be how to bring women fully into our society," he muses, "but how to keep men from seceding from it." I like that "our." Perhaps with the correct injections, I could someday be comfortable knowing I am a vested member of that society and not an invitee or pledge.

The blurb which introduces Sullivan's article reads, "As testosterone becomes increasingly available, more is being learned about how men and women are not created equal. So let's accept it and move on." Move on, or centuries back, I just want to be on the winning team. 🌱

# Patty Bouvier's Favourite Poem

Who among us has not viewed or read a bit of fiction and said, "That character is me!" You know, like, "Holden Caulfield is me!" "Vitto Coroleone is me!" "Madame Bovary *c'est moi!*"



Now, try this one on for size: "Patty Bouvier is me!" Sucks, huh? And yet, this is where I find myself at this point in life.

Don't think I haven't whined about it. "I feel as if I'm turning into Patty Bouvier!" I lament, and have received the following replies:

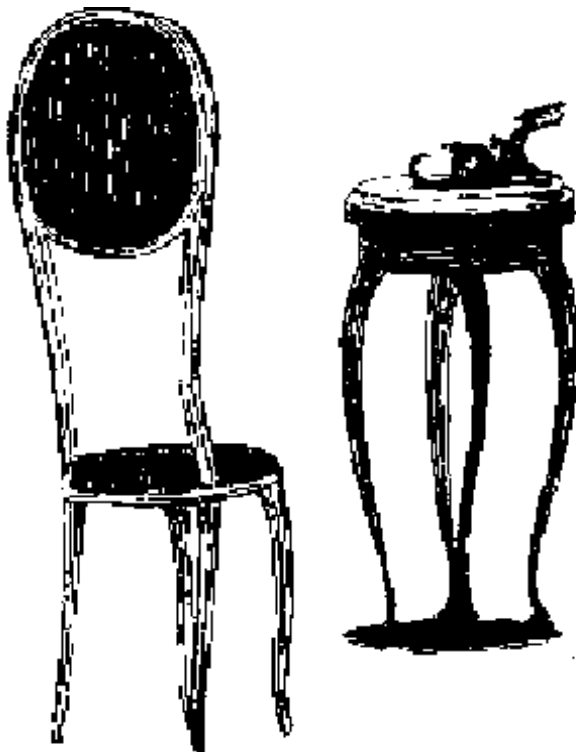
- But you aren't a twin.
- But you don't smoke.
- But...yeah, I can see that.

Not a comfort in the classic sense, but I suppose it serves me right for fishing. Patty Bouvier may be an extreme example, but not a unique one. Unmarried aunts in popular culture form their own grotesque sub-genre—annoying, cloying, screw-up interlopers who leach off of the essential family unit and traumatize the younger set with their attentions. They are also frequently marked by an unquiet desperation to get married.

Aunt Selma Bouvier Terwilliger Hutz McClure is in this category. Aunt Patty is not, which is reason enough to prefer her as a role model. Oh, she will make the occasional sisterly gesture, like telling Selma on the day of her wedding to Doug McClure (star of the career reviving *The Muppets Go Medieval* and *Stop the Planet of the Apes, I Want to Get Off!*) that she was insanely jealous of her happiness. At heart, however, Patty is a woman with a secure and powerful job at the DMV, a passions (*MacGyver* and torturing her brother-in-law), and pastimes (smoking and torturing her brother-in-law more). And, I believe, she is even more than that.

(cont. on page 5)

Edward St. John Gorey  
1925-2000



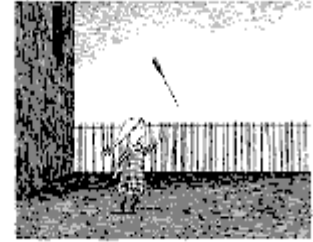
"Oily, oily!" mocks Emma,  
"Please let Edward play with me  
But he won't--he's dead, you see  
Oily, oily mocks Emma."  
--Maagi



O is for OLYMPIA who sits on a rug



O is for OLIVE who sits on a rug



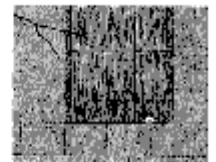
O is for OLIVE who bread with an ax!



R is for RUTH who burns by a fire



E is for ERNEST who dined on a peach



W is for WILHELM who sits at a table



Y is for YONICA whose head was knotted in



W is for WILHELM who sits on a bench

(cont. from page 4) Carl Sandburg is renowned for illuminating the inner lives of common men, but occasionally, he did the same for common women. Even spinsters. So, is it such a stretch of the imagination to believe the following poem might echo her innermost thoughts? It is named, appropriately enough considering her fondness for Laramie 100s, "White Ash." 🌳

There is a woman on Michigan Boulevard, keeps a parrot and gold fish and two white mice.  
She used to keep a houseful of girls in kimonos and three pushbuttons on the front door.  
Now she is alone with a parrot and goldfish and two white mice...  
But these are some of her thoughts.  
The love of a soldier in furlough or a sailor on shore leave burns with a bonfire red and saffron.  
The love of an emigrant workman whose wife is a thousand miles away burns with a blue smoke.  
The love of a young man whose sweetheart married an older man for money burns with a sputtering uncertain flame.  
And there is love...one in a thousand...burns clean and is gone leaving white ash.  
And this is a thought she never explains to the parrot and goldfish and two white mice.

(Thanks to Mom, who is The Best, for running down and transcribing this poem for me. Any errors contained within should be blamed on Sandburg's estate for not putting it in some easy to steal form on the internet. And I hope you had a Happy National Poetry Month!)

(cont. from page 2) The show was of satisfactory length, about 100minutes or so, but because it started at about eight and there was no opening band, it was all over by ten. The house lights went up and the faithful crowded the stage and angled for souvenirs. A roadie appeared from the back of the stage and handed the bouncer at the barricade a bunch of "playlists" to distribute and thereby placate us supplicants. They were pretty bogus, to tell you the truth. A true playlist should be ripped from the floor of the stage, covered with tape and grime, and have some resemblance to the order and content of that night's show. Still, they came from Murphy's general proximity and were better than nothing, which was a real threat as we were chased out of the Nile before we had a chance to beg for DiStephano's spare pics.

Pat and I hung around the stage door for a while, though certain Murphy and the rest had already been smuggled out, then to Coffee Talk for a Bunny Delicious (okay, that was my order), and we were home by 1115. Which is fine for the goth who wants to be home by a reasonable hour, but what kind of goth is that? Not a Shiny Black One, let me tell you what. But maybe my next incarnation will. 🌱



## End Nose...

Four days ago, I completed shopping for my Summer Wardrobe. I wanted something different from the baggy, dumpy attire I've always favored given my baggy, dumpy physique. I found myself trying on clothes six sizes smaller than the ones I bought last summer, some of which actually seemed to fit and flatter me. I made a point of resisting the long skirts and dresses which are my usual mode and the current fashion because I've seen too many unfortunate examples of them on too many women lately, and damn if they haven't started to look like ambulatory sacks of laundry. Besides, I have an *Arizona* summer to face, and there is a certain Darwinian advantage to dressing light. Sometimes less is more, but sometimes less simply being less is plenty.

So this morning, I'm perusing the fashion section of *The New York Times* on-line. I like to look at the pictures. The models and frocks have the same cursory appeal of exotic birds. But today, an article caught my eye. It was about contemporary women dressing for the workplace. I am a contemporary woman who dresses for the workplace so naturally I was interested in what the National Newspaper of Record might have to say about what's in and what's out.

My entire Summer Wardrobe is out. What I thought would be appealing, light, and fun was roundly condemned as trashy, retro, and objectifying. "I can't believe I ever wore that to the office," said a fashion photographer horrified by the cut-above-the-knee skirt she had Goodwill cart away. A New York fashion photographer! The first season I wear a skirt cut above the knee to a place that doesn't require ID to enter and I get this from someone who makes women feel crappy about their bodies for a living? This is beyond unfair.


There may be an upside, though. Yesterday I finished reading *Dream a Little Dream*, the other book Evelyn recommended. In it, one of the supporting characters renounced her drab, shapeless appearance and got a thorough tramp makeover, thus winning the heart of her dream man. I don't currently have a dream man, except Ralph Fiennes, but I do have the disreputable dresses. Perhaps if I wear them, the dream man will come.

I'll give him till Beltain.

Take care, and please contact me using one of the methods to the left.



### Cobra Headquarters

 [Sharon C. McGovern](mailto:Sharon.C.McGovern@yaho.com)  
Cobra-in-Chief



[thecobrasnose@yahoo.com](mailto:thecobrasnose@yahoo.com)  
[ladycobra@uswest.net](mailto:ladycobra@uswest.net)



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Use them.