

Plain & Simple Press

Independent Fiction and Nonfiction

Menu



If You'd Asked Me...I'd Have Told You: Part 1

Introduction

What on earth is this?

So I'm sitting at the mechanic's garage, waiting for his guys to change the Dog Chariot's oil, check all its various hoses, connections and whatnots, and generally cooling my heels. I've brought some work to do, but somehow my mind resists focusing on the job of turning Chinese-tinted math treatises into publishable English. The computer snooz

ing at my side, I turn to a stack of small books lurking on the vintage Goodwill coffee table with which Chuck has decorated his waiting room.

They are, it develops, light and entertaining collections of a single author's *bons mots*: some of them funny, some sentimental, some touching, some more or less inspirational.

Saleable, think I as I study the things. *Highly saleable*. And then the light dawns in the dim recesses of the writerly mind: *I already have a bunch of squibs like these!* I happen to write for a social media site called *Quora*. There, members from all over the world pose questions – some in earnest, some silly, some apparently the products of drugged or fevered minds – and other members entertain themselves by answering them.

Herewith, then, *If You'd Asked Me...* Sassy, staid, off-the-wall, matronly, bitchy, conservative, liberal: with you I share the wisdom of the ages. The ages of a very long life. Enjoy!

—Victoria Hay
Phoenix, Arizona



Part I: God Is Great, Beer Is Good, and People Are Crazy

Socially Crazy

What's the weirdest thing a guest has done at your house?

When I was finishing the doctorate, I got a grant that covered about three months of research time in England. My husband decided he would take a sabbatical from his firm and come with me.

We had a beautiful home in a historic district, and we had a couple of cats. So we needed someone to house-sit while we were gone for

such a long period. The office manager at my husband's law firm volunteered to do this. He had house-sat for other people and was known to be reliable and trustworthy.

So off we go, and this gent is left to take care of the manse.

A few weeks later, we hear from one of the partners: The guy had gotten drunk and, en route to a restaurant about 20 miles out in the desert, had missed a curve, flown off the road at a high rate of speed, and killed not only himself but two women who were in the car with him.

One of the partners had a couple of cousins, two young women, who were in town for some damnfool reason—why, I do not remember. He suggested we put the girls up in our house, so someone would be there to feed the cats and fend off the burglars. So we agreed to this.

Fortunately, my father (who had been around the block a few times) was in the offing and decided to keep an eye on the pair.

When we got back, he was supposed to pick us up. Instead, his wife showed up at the airport. She said he was staying at the house because they had decided the two girls were going to rip us off: they believed their boyfriend was planning to come back and burglarize the house the minute the girls left. So my father was staying there to guard the place. He urged me not to leave the house until the locks could be changed.

Well: boyfriend didn't show up while my father was there. I thought my father had gone off the deep end.

Not so much. . . .

Boyfriend did surface several hours later. When he appeared at the door (he rang before sticking the key in the deadbolt), I told him to take a flying f*** at the moon, and (amazingly), he crawled back under his refrigerator. We changed the locks.

Now we learned that the girls had found the car keys, taken my husband's Mercedes for a spin, and dented it. They had stolen checks, forged one for a hundred bucks (this was the 1970s, when a hundred bucks was a fair amount of money), and tried to cash it. Fortunately, in those days our city was still fairly small, and the bank manager knew my husband well enough to suspect a scam, and so the bank refused to fork over the cash. Because they'd made off with a whole book of checks, we had to close our bank account and open a new one with a new account number.

We had arranged to have the house painted while we were gone (thinking the house sitter would be at the office most of the time). The cat was coated in paint.

They had taken it upon themselves to use my largest, most wildly expensive Le Creuset Dutch oven to make popcorn, which they burned so solidly to the bottom of the pan that it could not be salvaged—I had to throw it out.

They stole a suitcase, which they presumably used to pack some of the other stuff they stole.

We had other wacky experiences with other house-sitters—like the one who was sitting when a sickly cat (different cat) finally died. The young woman was all upset. She was SO distraught that her boyfriend, who happened to be a relative of our vet, put our vet up to *performing an autopsy* on the dead cat!!

When we got back, the vet presented us with a bill for some brain-banging amount of money for having cut up the cat, discovered that yes, the cat died of the congenital disease we knew was someday going to carry it off, and assured the lady that the cat's demise was not her fault.

How can I seem less arrogant to people who are less intelligent?

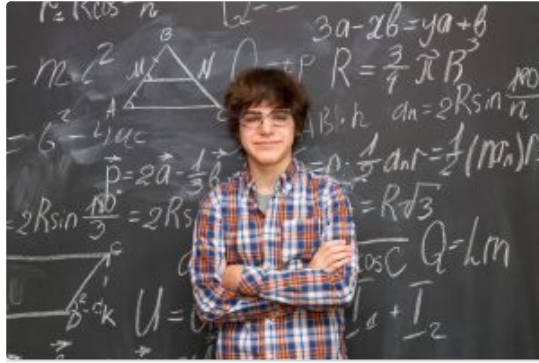
In my experience, the sure-fire strategy is to get them to talk about themselves and then listen with sincere interest to what they say. Do not tell them what you think; ask them what they think. Do not tell them about your extraordinary life; ask them what they do. Ask them leading questions to bring out more conversation about themselves: "What did you major in at Podunk State? What was your favorite team in college (or high school, or whatever)? What did you like best in that last *Star Wars* movie?"



Painting the cat?

And for hevvensake, NEVER ask them what they think of Donald Trump!

Make this approach a habit, and they'll think you're the soul of humility.



Hard to be humble...

What is the most badass comeback you've ever heard?



For many years I dated a man who prided himself at being . . . shall we say, an artist at frugality (not to say "a cheapskate"). Among his many frugal tastes was the type of wine that might best be called "plonk." In his mind, the cheaper the wine, the finer the vintage.

One day I had a BYOB party, to which everybody and his/her little brother were invited. My best friend showed up—after having passed through a lengthy hippy period, she had matured into quite an elegant woman, with a good job that paid a very good salary. She had grown up in central California, and though her family was not wealthy she did know about mid-range California wines.

She and her boyfriend had brought a bottle of wine, which they soon consumed.

Seeing their predicament, my boyfriend gallantly offered her some of his. To my amazement, she accepted. She took one sip of it and then gazed up at him with her wide, spectacular brown eyes.

"Did someone sell this to you as wine?" she asked.

Who personally loses when you rob a bank?

You. You end up in jail, making you The Biggest Loser.



Welcome home!

Why are people so rude to cigarette smokers?

We love you, but...some of us are not happy about chronic health risks brought on by parents who smoked heavily throughout our childhood, and we resent having still more of that garbage shoved into our lungs by other addicts.

We love you, but...some of us don't enjoy being reminded, in vivid detail, of the way a loved one died in hideous pain from the cancer brought on by smoking. The stink of a cigarette smells amazingly like the stink of a woman on her deathbed with cancerous fluids leaking out of her.

We love you, but...some of us resent the fact that corporations pushing a drug (nicotine) that is more addictive than heroin can enrich themselves legally on the suffering and death of millions of people. Including, to our despair, you.

And yeah: some of us don't understand how people can be so effing stupid.

Should I go on, or do you have the idea yet?



Pet Crazy

If a stranger insists on following and touching your dog even though you clearly say “No” and try to leave, . . .

is it self-defense to push, kick, or strike them when they refuse to leave you alone?

I find that walking briskly as though you had someplace to go will discourage people from approaching you and petting your dog. If you look like you're loafing and taking the afternoon air, they feel free to socialize. If you don't want to socialize, look like you're on your way somewhere. The appropriate response to someone who wants to dote on the dog (or you) is “please be careful: my dog bites.”

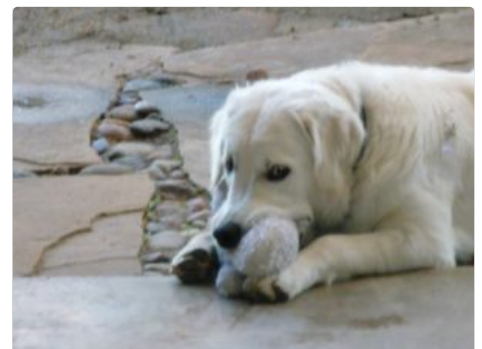
IMHO it would *not* be self-defense if you struck or attacked someone just because they were petting your dog: your dog is not your self. If the person tried to block your way and stop you from leaving, that would be a different matter.

Once in a park habituated by drug addicts, I was walking with a young German shepherd and my small son. Two derelicts came strolling toward us. One, an older man, looked like true bad news. The other was a young man who appeared to be intellectually disabled. He also had the homeless look about him and clearly had taken up with the older guy, who appeared to feel pestered by the kid.

The instant the young fellow spotted us, he was drawn by the dog. Child-like, he came marching toward us and asked if he could pet the dog.

By now I had kicked into gear and was steering my son away from the playground as fast as we could go.

I said, “No, I’m sorry: she bites.”



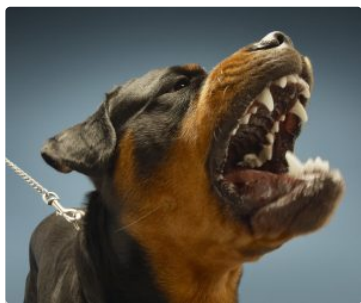


This dog had never bitten a soul in her life.

He ignored me and continued moving toward us. When he reached out to pet the dog, she turned and snapped at him. She probably would have bitten him had she not been leashed and under my control, more or less.

Scared the bedoodles out of the apprentice bum. He and his mentor left forthwith.

In California, what is my legal exposure (and methods for mitigating it) if a dog that my wife obtained (despite my disagreement) attacks someone unprovoked and causes injury or property damage?*



So, this hound hasn't done any harm yet, but you suspect it will? And she got the dog over your objections? AND you live in California?

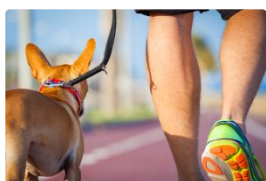
Divorce her. This will require you to split all community property — remember, community property includes community liability. However, a divorce might be cheaper than what a serious biting incident will cost you.

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*** Yes, friends, this post is /s.** Absolutely positively /s. If a question like this arises in your real life, *ask a lawyer!* I am an English major; I am not a lawyer. ***Always seek professional legal advice for questions involving the risk of legal liability.***

Isn't it amazing how you have to tell people that?

What should I do if someone follows me home while I'm walking my dog? I believe they were trying to steal my dog.



Don't go back to your place. Go to a neighbor's home, ring the bell, and if they answer explain that someone is following you. This is a good reason to get to know the neighbors: so they'll recognize you and let you in.

Carry a cell phone when you walk the dog. If someone is following you, dial 911 and ask for police help. That assumes you're in the US . . . if not, call your local emergency number or, lacking that, call someone you know and ask them to come pick you up.

Another option is to go to a crowded place, such as a fast food joint or a convenience store, and tell the proprietors you're frightened because someone seems to be following you. In the US of course it's against the law to bring a dog into an establishment that serves food, but they probably would make an exception if you said you felt threatened.



Kid Crazy

My 11-year-old daughter is getting stares when we go out in public. What should I do?

She wears shorts and bright colors. She refuses to wear black, dark gray, or dark blue. When it gets cold, she wears an oversized green hoodie.



Here's my take on this, as a woman who was SO relieved to hit the age of 40 and have the ugly stares and the lewd catcalls come to an end:

You can go on all you want about how women should be able to wear whatever they want in public (even flimsy knit booty shorts with "Property of the GDU Athletic Department" stamped across the backside) and look however they want and go wherever they please without harassment. That's all very nice, but the reality is there will always be men who WILL harass women and girls, and there will always be predators who give away what they're thinking by the way they stare and the remarks they make.

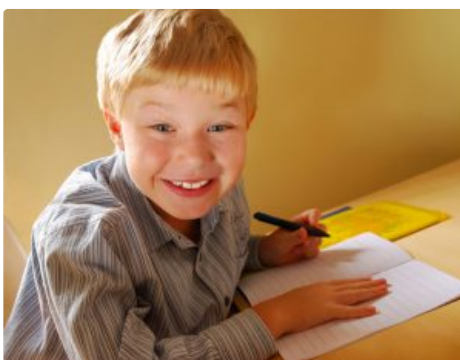
If she's bothered by this behavior—and most normal women are, because at best it is intrusive and embarrassing, at worst it can presage an assault—then you need to teach her how to protect herself. That does not entail fantasy martial arts scenarios in which she is going to beat back a predator like Xena Warrior Queen. Good luck with that.

It entails keeping your wits about you at all times. As you're walking around, know where there's a crowded store or restaurant you can dart into. Be confident enough to walk up to a strange but reasonably safe-looking man and say "someone is following me—would you mind if I walk with you until we get to (fill in the blank)." Train yourself to yell "FIRE," *not* "POLICE" or "HELP" if assaulted or threatened: people will always come out to watch your house burn down, but most of them don't want to involve themselves in a violent confrontation. Do not wear revealing clothes (it appears your young woman doesn't . . . but just in case, advise her). As you're driving, know where the nearest police station, fire station, or hospital emergency room is and if pursued, don't be shy about driving up to the door and leaning on the horn. Lock your car doors, and keep the doors and windows in your home locked. If your living circumstances make it possible, keep a large dog and take it for a doggy-walk whenever you go places on foot.

Does that limit her freedom? Darn right it does. But everybody's freedom is limited. You could argue that disallowing covetous gazes and lewd remarks limits men's freedom. It's a commonsense trade-off you make for your safety.

I speak as the escapee of three attempted rapes, two home invasions, and an attempted carjacking. The best way to cut this kind of behavior short is to keep alert, always have an escape plan, and avoid getting into risky situations in the first place.

My son is a four-year-old leftie. My parents so much want him to use his right hand that they are resorting to threats. What do you think?



Threats? What kind of threats? Are they threatening to strike or otherwise abuse him? If so, then you need to keep the child away from them.

As a matter of fact, if I had parents who tried to dominate me and my child to such an extreme extent, I would move out of the city or possibly even out of the country to get away from them. Do not allow people in your life who bully you or the children.

Forcing a child to use her or his nondominant hand can have adverse effects on the child's development. It is, in a nutshell, a kind of abuse. As a parent, one of your many roles is to protect your child from abuse. Stand firm on this matter.

If you had a 16-year-old daughter and accidentally knocked over her pocketbook one evening while she was asleep, how upset on a scale of 1 to 10 (increasing) would you be to find each of the seven worrisome items in the detail below?

Condom: meh! Zero . . . be glad she has enough sense to protect herself.

Loaded gun: 10/10. What is going on in her life that she feels the need to protect herself that way? Or is she planning to stick up the local branch of Wells Fargo??

Heroin fixings: 10/10. Full-blown horror show under way.

Half-full pint of vodka: 8/10. Who gave it to her, where did she consume the first half of the pint, and was she in a car at the time?



Cigs: 9/10. There are better ways to commit suicide; cf. the gun. Is she trying to harm herself? Definitely would seek medical or psychiatric help for a kid who had a nicotine addiction.

Positive pregnancy test: 10/10. Who is the sire, does he know about this, what kind of complications is THAT going to cause, and what does she intend to do about the pregnancy? This could get expensive on top of all the drama.

Ticket to a naughty movie: meh! Sixteen-year-olds are not what they used to be. Your 16-year-old is a lot more sophisticated sexually than you were at that age and way more so than I was. It won't harm her to learn the facts of life. Just be sure she knows the difference between fantasy and reality.

Was I wrong to not give a five-year-old guest child the food that she wanted?

I had snacks (veggies, cuties, cheese, pretzels) and she refused it. She also refused the pizza because it had veggies. She later told her mom that she hadn't eaten.

No, you were right to stand your ground. A kid is not going to starve to death in a few hours. If it had been a couple of days . . . maybe. But maybe not: maybe that's the time to call the mom and say "come get your kid."

Though five is a little young to learn this, she should be made aware that it's rude to refuse what is offered to you at the dinner table, especially when you're a guest in someone's home. The only time this is acceptable is when you are genuinely allergic to something—for example, shellfish allergies can cause anaphylactic shock in some people. But "I'm not eating because I want you to go out and get me a McDonald's?" Don't think so, kiddo!

This is a child who soon will turn out as an adult who goes into people's homes and demands gluten-free meals . . . not because she has real celiac disease but because she's self-diagnosed a nonexistent sensitivity to bread and pasta. Rude and ruder.

My fiancée says it's not cruel to kick one's child out of the house on their eighteenth birthday for no other reason than "they are now an adult, and they have to be reliant on themselves."



What's the whole story here? To come up with a sane answer, we'd need to know . . .

- What country are you in?
- What culture did she grow up in?
- How old is she and how much experience of life does she have?
- Does she now have a teenager?
- If so, is that teenager misbehaving in ways that put undue strain on the rest of the family?
- Will the kid be out of high school when s/he turns 18?
- Can the kid make a living? If not, why not? If so, is it enough to support him or her?
- Does she want to have a family, or does she just want to procreate?
- Does she even understand what "family" means, in the context of your culture?
- Have you already had a child with this woman?
- If so, what is your stand on the matter?
- If not, are you willing to do so, given her thinking on the matter?

If her philosophy conflicts powerfully with yours, why are you engaged to her, suggesting you seriously intend to marry her?

Are you willing not to have children so as to get around this heartless “philosophy” of hers?

If I were in love with a person who took this attitude, I would look for another love interest. Real quick.

If she'll treat her own child like this, just imagine how she'll treat you, once the romance wears off!

Domestic Crazy

Can my wife legally keep my parents from visiting our home due to simply disliking them?



And you married this because...?

We have children together, and she has repeated that they will not see them. What can I do legally? I want my parents to see their grandkids. There's no abuse.

You need to talk to a lawyer or at least a marriage counselor. Why are you asking a question like this at an Internet hive mind when you need expert advice?

Why are you still having babies by this woman? From what you describe in your lengthy response (below, to another commenter) her behavior toward you is abusive. Stop getting her pregnant. And get a lawyer.

You also need to know why—the real reason—she doesn't want the couple around her children . . . is it possible that there was some child abuse that she's afraid to talk about? She could be afraid that the children will be taken away by CPS if a report of sexual abuse comes out.

There's often friction between a wife and a mother-in-law. I didn't care at all for my mother-in-law, but I certainly never demanded that she never see the children. My sister-in-law, however, disliked our MiL so much that she told her husband that MiL was not to stay in their home. MiL could stay in a motel but not at their house. If dear brother-in-law insisted that she stay at their home, then my sister-in-law would go to a motel. Other than being an annoying, arrogant fruitcake, our mother-in-law was not abusive. She was just so irritating it was difficult to be around her for more than a few hours. But neither my sister-in-law nor I thought “annoying, arrogant fruitcake” was a reason to deny her access to her grandchildren. Something more is going on here.

Should I report to the police that my boyfriend killed my dog?



Please get away.

If this man has not harmed you yet, eventually he will. [People who abuse animals will also abuse people.](#)

Killing your dog IS abusing you. This kind of behavior escalates. He is likely to become very dangerous. He could even kill you.

Before you report the man to the police, you must go away to a safe place, without letting him know that is what you plan to do. Contact a woman's shelter or arrange with a friend or relative to stay at their home. Apply for a credit card and have it sent to an address other than your home—even if you are not living with him, he might come across it in your mail.

If you have a joint bank account with him, go to another bank or (preferably) a credit union and open an account in your name only. Arrange to have statements sent to a different address or emailed to an account he does not know about. If you have a job, have your employer direct-deposit your pay to the new account.

Do not report the man to the police until you are in a safe place. At that point you should file a police report and get a restraining order against him.

This sounds all very drastic . . . but it's nowhere near as drastic as what a man with this mentality can do to you. This is not an exaggeration. Do not wait to give him a second chance—get away *now*.

Medical Crazy

I volunteer at a hospital, but none of the doctors have any high-end cars. Why?



When she's not in the operating room...

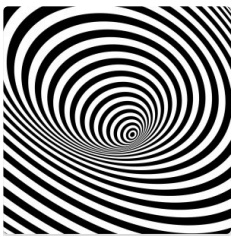
It's my understanding that doctors don't earn as much as they used to, relative to the rest of the proles. In addition, many graduate from medical school up to their noses in debt.

One friend, a man who went on to medical school after having become a PA and realizing medicine was truly his calling, told my son that between the educational loans and the cost of a house for himself, his wife, and their two children, he is now \$1 million in debt. That doesn't leave a lot of room in the budget for payments on a Mercedes.

Also, some doctors have their priorities straight. In this gentleman's case, it's clear he understands that some things are more important than a gaudy car.

My uncle has severe chronic vertigo, and the doctors don't know what's causing it. Have any ideas?

Is he taking any prescription medications? If so, find out what the potential side effects are. Don't take a doctor's word for it that any drug has no side effects or is harmless. Many of them don't know—they're not pharmacists, after all—and often if they do know, they won't tell you because they want to persuade you to stay on the medication no matter how sick it makes you. *Look it up yourself.* You can find out by looking up the drug on the manufacturer's website: this will list all the potential side effects.



My stepmother had vertigo and eventually developed cognitive problems so severe she was checked into a nursing home. My step-sister, who definitely is smarter than the average snail, then got into mom's bathroom medicine cabinet and discovered a cache of Rx medications going back forever. She discovered that the doctor had made NO RECORD of the meds he was giving the old lady.

Elderly people are especially sensitive to OTC and Rx medications, because we do not metabolize drugs as fast as younger people do. Hence drugs that may have no malign effect on people in, say, their 30s or 40s can make an older person very sick, indeed.

When my stepsister raised Hell and put a block under it, the nursing home staff took mom off all the drugs—including one that, it turned out, was addictive(!). Within a week or two, the old gal was back to normal and happily back in her apartment.

My coworker administers his insulin injections at his desk or at the lunch table in front of everyone. Is it appropriate?

a) He is not harming anyone by taking a few seconds or a few minutes and administering a dose of life-sustaining medication to himself. If you don't like it you can get up and go to the bathroom, where maybe you can comb your eyebrows until you figure he's finished.

b) It's none of your business.

c) Your remark reveals a great deal about you, and none of it is flattering. It is hard not to feel sorry for you.

I'll say this, though I'll bet it doesn't apply to your case: When I was a little girl, my family and I lived in a Third-World country. We had to take about a half-dozen shots, and some of them were pretty painful—about every six months my parents dragged me, literally kicking and screaming, down to the clinic for another hurtful episode. In those days, cholera, typhoid, and typhus shots were very painful, and the rest were just not any fun.

One time a nurse threw me flat on the floor and put her foot on my chest to hold me down so she could jab me with one of those ferocious shots.

That experience along with all the lesser events left me phobic about injections.

Whenever I have to have a shot or have blood drawn, I cannot look at the equipment or watch the procedure, or else I will have a panic

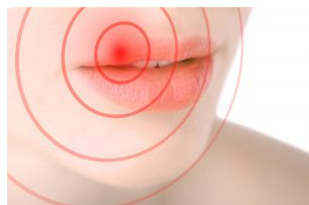


attack or even faint.

Okay . . . so maybe you've had some traumatic experience that left you with the heeby-jeebies about injections. In that case, I take back my implication that you're kinda pathetic. But even if that is the case, all you've got to do is say, "Excuse me, gotta go to the men's," stand up, and walk out of the room for a couple of minutes. How hard is that?

What is the treatment for when you have a swollen lip?

Just for you: a chapter from a book in progress. You can buy a copy of the whole book, right now, in PDF format, or, if you like, as a paperback. See the collected chapters so far, FREE online at [If You'd Asked Me...](#) For details, visit our [home page](#) or send a request through our [Contact form](#).



How to treat a swollen lip? Depends on what caused your lip to get swollen.

Got a whack on the mouth, but no busted teeth? Make an ice pack (wrap it in a clean dishtowel or several layers of paper towels) and gently chill the injured area.

Ingested something you're allergic to? Tongue showing signs of swelling? Betake yourself to an emergency room, now not later.

Got a cold sore? Too bad, so sorry: not much you can do about it. Refrain from kissing people, please. You'll just have to wait till it passes, which it will in a week or ten days.

Why doesn't anybody coming to the "emergency room" seem to understand that an emergency means urgent?

Understood that ER workers are stressed to the max and that they have to make quick decisions about who needs care and when. But . . .

Back in the day before ACA, poor people here in the American Southwest used the ERs for medical care whenever their kids had a bad cold or flu and for conditions adults and children should have had treated in their GP's office. Phoenix has a large population of working poor and unemployed, many of whom live, shall we say, very close to the bone. And in those days, if you didn't have insurance, you couldn't even get in to see most doctors. An ER, on the other hand, is not allowed to turn you away. So, when someone without insurance or cash needed to see a doctor, they would go to the ER and sit there until they could finally get in. This meant waits for everyone that extended for many hours.



It was Christmas time. A flu epidemic was raging. And conveniently, my body chose that moment to develop appendicitis.

In terrible pain and throwing up, I persuaded my ex-husband to take me to the ER at a large regional medical center called St. Joseph's. It was late at night.

The ER was packed. The receptionist, overworked and miserable, was rude to me and gave me a dirty look when I threw up into the bucket I'd brought.

There was no place to sit down. The floor was truly filthy, so I didn't feel I could sit or lay down on the floor. Three hours later, I found myself sitting outside on a concrete bench, in the cold, next to a woman who was miscarrying and who had been waiting over four hours. We waited another couple of hours without anyone caring whether we lived or died.

Finally, I gave up. I figured if I was going to die, I'd rather die at home in my bed than in that place. I called a friend, waking her out of a sound sleep, and persuaded her to come get me.

At dawn I was in agony. I called the Mayo Clinic, where my old doctor was practicing. They told me to call 911 and have them bring me there. I said I thought they would take me back to St. Joe's and I couldn't withstand another fruitless, endless wait. She said no, they have to take you where you ask them to take you.

That, as it developed, was wrong. They would not take me to the Mayo —the twenty-minute drive would take them out of their area. I sent them away and called another friend, who kindly took me to the Mayo.

The Mayo, being in a more upscale part of town, was not crowded with people who couldn't afford to see a doctor. Within minutes after I walked in, they had me headed for surgery. By then I'd been suffering from acute appendicitis for over 13 hours. In the elderly, this may be life-threatening. Afterwards, the surgeons said the appendix was "a mess," one of the worst they'd seen.

On the one hand, my feeling is that I wouldn't be in the ER if I didn't have an emergency. Obviously, I needed to be seen in less than four hours. Obviously, I needed to be seen when I came in.

On the other hand, I surely understand that when everybody and his little brother and sister use the ER for routine medical care and show up when they have a bad cold or flu, the staff is overwhelmed and the likelihood that they will fail to recognize a true emergency is high. I also understand that an inner-city ER staff sees not only the routine heart attacks, strokes, accident, and appendicitis cases, but a steady flow of knifings, gunshot wounds, and drug overdoses, and so of course they do not have time to deal with people's colds and tummyaches.

With the ACA, this problem was somewhat relieved because more poor people could get insured. Once that goes away, though, we can expect those conditions to return. When people can't get insurance and doctors turn the poor away because they're uninsured and can't pay, then ERs will fill up again with folks who need routine medical care. And the next time you have a serious condition that really does need immediate attention, you may not be able to get it.

How did babies survive when there were no vaccines a long time ago?

They didn't. Until the discovery of microbial pathogens led to understanding of the importance of hygiene and to development of vaccines and antibiotics, about half of children would predecease their parents.

My dissertation addressed 16th- and early 17th-century English and Continental history. In the course of the research, I learned this to be the case. If you reached adulthood, you were pretty tough. If you were female and you survived the endless pregnancies to which you were subject, you were extremely tough. Most people who lived long enough to have families saw about half of their children die, many in infancy and early childhood. Large numbers of women died in childbirth or from infections following on delivery.

People who imagine they can do without vaccines delude themselves. Most of us would not want to go back to those particular good old days.

Politically Crazy



If you could say one sentence to President Trump, what would you say?

"Please get psychological help, sir."

If you could limit President Trump to four words tomorrow, what four words would you have him say?

"I resign. Good luck!"



Is life in Mexico bad enough to justify immigrating to the US illegally?



I'd like to hear from Mexican citizens, illegal immigrants, and other viewpoints. I think Americans discount their luck for being born here.

Yes.

I recently indexed a book of short memoirs by second-generation descendants of Mexican immigrant farm workers. Some of the authors describe the conditions their parents were fleeing.

What they came to, in the fields of California, were working and living conditions that those of us who are middle- and working-class Americans can't even conceive . . . but they were better than what people had to deal with in rural Mexico. And they had hope that their children could build better lives—something they did not have in Mexico.

The book, recently published through the University of Arizona Press, is titled [*Claiming Home, Shaping Community*](#). It is an amazing thing to read. You should watch for it and get a copy . . . it'll change your point of view on the immigration issue.



Why are you a feminist? Which aspects of the feminist doctrine do you consider most important? How would you define your own feminism? How would you define your own feminism?

When I was a child, I wanted to be an astronomer. At about the age of 12 or 13, I was informed that I would have to be a teacher or a secretary (this was in the late 1950s), but not to worry, "you can always have astronomy as a hobby."

After I graduated from college with a Phi Beta Kappa key, I interviewed for a job in a bank's management training program. The interviewer—ironically, a black man who one would expect might have had his fill of discrimination—said, in these words, "We don't hire

women into our management training program, but you'd be great in our secretarial pool!"

I am not a radical feminist. I personally feel the women's liberation movement and economic changes that ensued actually limit women's choices. We wanted to have the *choice* to pursue a career instead of or in addition to bearing children and caring for a man. Instead, we got the obligation to do so.

Now that it takes two salaries to keep a roof over your head, women still have no choice. Then, you had no choice to get a job. Now you have no choice *but* to get a job. In my ideal world, every worker—male or female—would earn enough to support a family, so that either parent would have the option of raising the kids at home.

Generally Crazy

Why do people back up into parking spaces?



First, because it's safer to pull forward out of a space than to back and fill to get out. The newer model cars with their dwarfish windows and bloated supports have huge blind spots. A mother with a pair of twins in a stroller could walk behind you and you wouldn't see them. And no, you couldn't see her on the useless back-up camera if you had your sunglasses on, because you can't see the screen through polarized lenses.

Second, because it's far, far less aggravating to pull forward when somebody's gigantic SUV or King-Kong-sized pickup is parked next to you than it is to try to back out around the thing. Here, too, it's much safer: you're more likely to spot someone coming up the aisle because you're eight or ten feet closer than you would be if you parked nose-end

first.

Third, because you're less likely to dent your neighbor's vehicle if you're pulling forward than if you're dorking around with backing and filling.

Fourth, because it saves gas over the long run. Backing and filling burns more gas than simply pulling straight out and driving away.

And fifth: if your habit is to drive through the marked spaces so as to park facing outward, you usually have to park a distance from the store to find two empty parking spaces adjacent to each other, nose-to-nose. This forces you to get some exercise. Even a few extra steps will add a little more exercise, which adds up over time.

Little things matter.

Why are people so rude to cigarette smokers?

We love you, but...some of us are not happy about chronic health risks brought on by parents who smoked heavily throughout our childhood, and we resent having still more of that garbage shoved into our lungs by other addicts.

We love you, but...some of us don't enjoy being reminded, in vivid detail, of the way a loved one died in hideous pain from the cancer brought on by smoking. The stink of a cigarette smells amazingly like the stink of a woman on her deathbed with cancerous fluids leaking out of her.

We love you, but...some of us resent the fact that corporations pushing a drug (nicotine) that is more addictive than heroin can enrich themselves legally on the suffering and death of millions of people. Including, to our despair, you.

And yeah: some of us don't understand how people can be so effing stupid.

Should I go on, or do you have the idea yet?



I was accused of plagiarism for an original work I wrote. I feel honored that someone thought my writing was that good. What do you think?

Strange response: to feel honored because someone thinks you're dishonest?

First, you need to know why: what specific passages or characteristics caused the reader to believe the copy was plagiarized? If (and only if) you can prove everything that you based on some source was properly cited and documented, then demand to know what passages the accuser believes were plagiarized and also that the person produce the source and highlight the allegedly plagiarized passages.

Second: consider the context. If you're an undergraduate or graduate college student and some professor decided you must have plagiarized something in a paper, you may be sure the person will tell his or her colleagues, giving you a fine reputation for dishonesty. If (and only if) you can prove your paper was not plagiarized and if the paper was marked down or you were failed out of the course because the professor unjustly believed you plagiarized, file a formal complaint against the person. This will raise hell and put a block under it, but sometimes that's what you have to do to defend yourself.

Why is it illegal to not wear your seatbelt? The only person it could endanger is yourself.

Because the rest of us end up having to foot the bill for someone who fails to wear a seatbelt.

We all pay the salaries of the police officers and firefighters who have to extricate you from the wreck that turned you into hamburger. We all pay car insurance and health insurance premiums to companies that cover the your unnecessary medical bills, which wouldn't have been incurred if you'd bothered to put your seatbelt on. We pay the salaries of the judges who have to adjudicate at trials over the liability for the accidents in which you were severely injured.

Nope. You're *not* the only one who is endangered when you drive around without a seatbelt.



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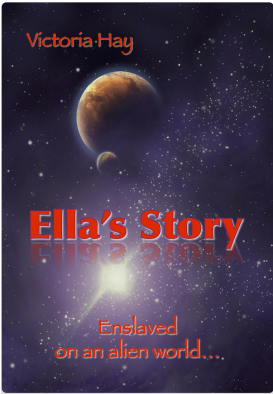
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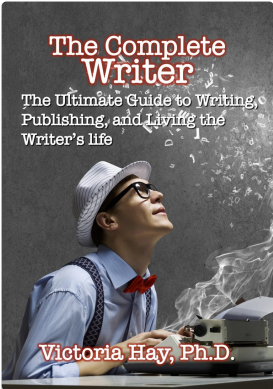
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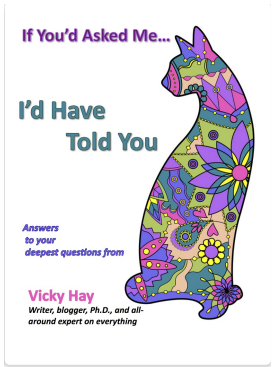
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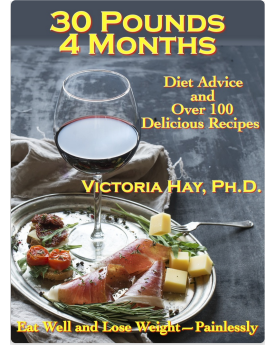
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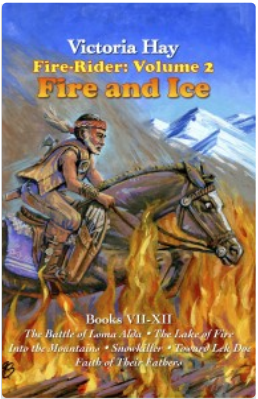
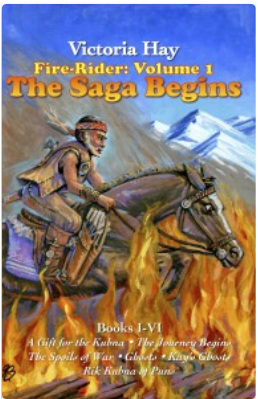
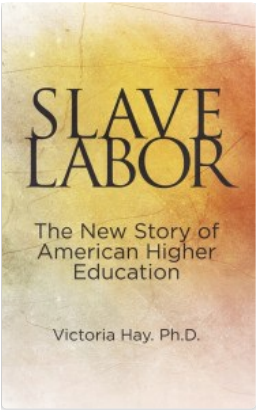


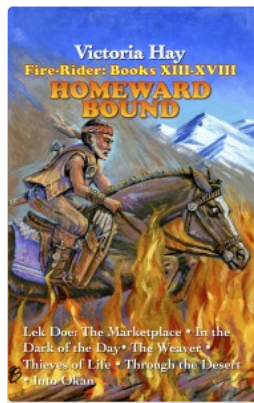
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