

WELCOME TO 2024: NEW LITTLE HABITS, NEW LITTLE HOPES

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

“Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, **we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes.** It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. **We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.**”

– D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928)

I let our side down yesterday observing the year’s first holiday. My mind has been chock full, too full to pull out anything cogent. I’m still not certain this essay will make much sense. It may look more like shards of stale cookies shaken out of an overstuffed jar.

Part of the challenge has been all that has happened this past year. There’s too much going on my life right now, an attestation to the craziness of the sandwich generation. Helping adult children establish themselves while helping elderly parents in their final descent can be a bit much. Hats off to all of you who’ve negotiated this stage of life without appearing in handcuffs on local or cable news because damn. I don’t know how you did it.

My sibling who has borne the brunt of caring for my parents has adopted a colorful label for the daily eldercare circus – a fuck show.

“What a fuck show,” they said, pounding their fist into their thigh as they punctuated what they’ve had to do to keep their sanity and avoid going postal. Every day is like a blow; every

day requires the distraction of self-administered pain to redirect one's focus.

When we got together this past month for a download on my parents' condition and what will happen next, my sibling brought a fifth of a funky flavored vodka they'd recently sampled with their young adult son. My nephew liked it as did his buddies, but at his age they'll drink almost anything without much discernment.

Sibling pulled out the bottle, asking me to try it and give my opinion. Smirnoff's Spicy Tamarind Vodka, the bottle read, a bright and colorful design wrapped around the entire bottle. What the hell, I thought. It offered a decent break from the ongoing hours-long discussion about my parents' version of the Divine Comedy. We arrived at the circle of hell where oddball alcoholic beverages might be welcome.

Welcome, but skeptically so. Tamarind is a popular flavoring used in Central and South America; the festive label's design reflected Mexican cultural with skulls – a Dia del los Muertos theme.

It was rather fitting, considering the topics we'd been discussing. Illness and death were prominent themes throughout the previous couple of hours, including including a goofy story about a local Catholic priest trying to encourage use of their church's cemetery over that of another parish.

Bring on the tamarind vodka, by all means.

It was funky – tart, a little tingly, a faintly herbaceous flavor which was both familiar and strange. We both agreed that unlike my nephew this wasn't something we could drink straight.

"But what the hell do you do with it? I've never heard of tamarind before," sibling asked. I'm more familiar with tamarind as a flavoring in southeast and central Asian foods, but not in any dishes or beverages I've prepared.

“What the hell do we have to lose?” I said. “Let me experiment with it.” I threw together a few things and ended up with a highly palatable beverage which lubricated our remaining now-darkly funny download.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a new cocktail:
The Fuck Show.

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice,
mix:

1 jigger hibiscus syrup
1-2 jiggers hibiscus tea
6 dashes cranberry bitters
1 jigger tamarind vodka

Shake and strain into a martini glass.

For a Fuck Show North, pour the above mixture over a highball glass filled with ice and top with lemon -flavored sparkling water. Stir and serve.

Yes, there's a Fuck Show North, a complement to Fuck Show South which my sibling handles. My father-in-law is a competitive son of a bitch, one who has refused his entire life to be bested without a fight. There was plenty to discuss about that gentleman's terminal velocity taking my household with him.

Sibling and I drank several of these newfangled cocktails and managed to laugh our asses off, looking more like those grinning death's heads on the tamarind vodka bottle.

I raise this fresh cocktail I've poured myself as a nightcap to my sibling whose thigh must be permanently bruised from each blow they've applied rather than take out their frustration on others.

This icy cold Fuck Show is for you, sib. May 2024 treat us better in spite of the reality that all things tend toward increasing entropy.

We live in hope.

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Look, we need to be frank with ourselves about the road ahead into 2024. It looks murky as hell.

There will be all kinds of prognostications claiming disaster is imminent on the other side of that murk for Democrats, documented by anecdotes obtained from people in flyover country.

The truth is disaster is certain if you fucking give up, if you buy into bullshit prepared by a failed media ecosystem which exists solely to make a profit and not to serve the public's best interests or further democracy through which it has prospered.

If you're going to give up, step aside and get out of the goddamned way.

The truth is far more complex than corporate-owned U.S. media will convey. Major outlets coverage of Trump's crooked behavior over the course of his lifetime superbly exemplifies their inability to effectively communicate threats to the public and their own interests. You've seen here at this site many examples of what they've not covered, omitted, or distorted.

George Santos is another example of Big Media's failings; the man should never have been elected to office but the biggest New York city and state newspaper couldn't be bothered. Rep. Elise Stefanik should have been and should still be hammered in the media for her support of Santos which legitimized him in the public's eye.

The rest of the corporate media's coverage is the same save for a few bright, brave exceptions.

The truth is there will be surprises the corporate media will do a shitty job covering because corporate media is locked into narratives, the same ones they have relied on for decades. Their business model increasingly under pressure by vulture capitalists, they stick to what has worked in the past because it's predictable.

Dig deeper. Read more broadly. Support smaller local media outlets like The North Shore Leader which covered Santos' sketchiness The New York Times ignored.

Don't overlook outlets abroad which had good reputations for thorough and unbiased reporting. In the age of the internet with translation capability at your fingertips, it's absurd not to look outside of the U.S. news rut for a different perspective.

No matter what you read, act. Make a plan and act. I've said it before a number of times here that it can be surprising how little it takes to become a leader – in this country's political system, they're the people who show up and do the work. That's it, that's all it takes to make change happen. Show up, do the work.

*But, but, but...*there are no buts. Find a way to show up. Can't do it physically in person? Then find a way to make calls, emails, send texts, bake and contribute goods for bake sales, whatever.

For Christ's sake, fucking lick envelopes. I have literally spent days stuffing and sealing envelopes for a Democratic Party club. Just show up, ask what needs to be done, and do it.

We are heading into the toughest part of an existential fight for this democracy. It's going to be an ugly, messy fuck show. Plan on it – bring gloves, sanitizer, wear safety glasses and masks and good walking shoes. And then do the work to beat back the fascists.

For some of us it really *is* a matter of life and death – how many women will die due to complications from a pregnancy they couldn't end? How many trans persons will give up because they are unable to live life as normal human beings with autonomy over their bodies? How many persons will die from COVID this coming year because of right-wing propaganda supported by elected GOP officials? How many futures will be shortened because children today may not get the food, health care, and education they need,

their families couldn't obtain shelter to protect them?

I'll repeat myself again, having said this after a painful election:

You want to keep your republic? I'll tell you what I tell my kids: YOU HAVE TO WANT IT BADLY. And then you fucking find a way to make a contribution beyond showing up to vote. Democracy isn't easy and neither am I.

Let's fucking go, people. Let's hit the road and tear into 2024 like we want a viable future badly.

This is an open thread.