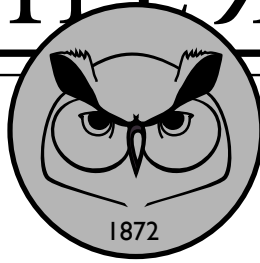


# PARAPHENALIA

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From: Bill  
To: W  
Re: Saddam

Dear George,

Hi, it's your old friend, Bill. We haven't been talking much since you stole 2000, but now that you're really President, I thought you might appreciate some advice from a man who's been there. Since you promised to restore "dignitude" to the Oval Office, I guess you don't want to hear about all the secret passages that are great for a late-night quickie. So instead I'll tell you my thoughts about Iraq, which is apparently the only thing you think about. Listen, George: it does not have to be you versus Saddam. I know you think that Saddam would rather die than step down, since he knows that some ex-leaders suffer fates worse than death—like being married to Hillary—but he doesn't have to worry about that. You might be able to compromise over Saddam's stepping down in a way that makes you both look good. After all, there are a lot of harmless jobs more fun than being supreme dictator. Of course, we'll need to give Saddam quite a few of them, because unless we find a way to keep him busy, he'll end up on "Celebrity Boxing" before you know it. So here's the plan:

Most importantly, do not try to send Saddam before The Hague. At first glance, this may seem like a good idea, and Chirac would probably support it, but you never listen to what he says anyway. (You couldn't if you wanted to—you don't understand French! Ha ha, I'm just bustin' your chops.) The problem with Saddam going before The Hague is that they'd probably end up sticking him in a cell with Slobodan, and together they'd form an alliance of evil that only the Justice League could stop, which is unfortunate because they don't exist.

First, Saddam should grow a beard. It didn't work for Al Gore, but neither did "Green Al," "Alpha-Male Al" or "Sensitive Guy Al." And I don't think Saddam could pull off "Man of the People Saddam" or "Statesman Saddam," do you? Besides, beards are all the rage in the Arab world: Osama has one, Mullah Omar has one. Saddam's just swimming against the current with that mustache.

Then, give "the new Saddam" a talk show. I'm trying that one myself, as a matter of fact. Maybe we could team up—Clinton and Hussein together at last! I would be like Barbara Walters on The View and Saddam would be that annoying Debbie Matenopoulos, but with weapons of mass destruction.

After the show gets cancelled, Saddam could always announce that he's found Jesus. I know this sounds corny, but before you did you were a cocaine-snorting, heavy-drinking playboy. Now you're leader of the free world, and much of the enslaved world, too. Ha ha! Unfortunately, Saddam would have to give up three of his wives and those twenty mistresses. Hey, that reminds me—have you ever noticed that Saddam only has two kids? At least we know what he's trying to make up for with his megalomania!

Hey, there's an idea: Saddam could top it all off by becoming spokesman for Viagra! This would work out great. I can see the ad already: "I could bomb the Kurds, repress my own people and murder anyone just because he looked at me funny. But there was one thing I had trouble doing. If you even think that I had trouble getting it up, you'll find out first-hand what happened to the .04% that voted against me in 1996. But let me just say that the four Mrs. Husseins are much happier now thanks to my little blue friend."

Anyway, George, if there are any other questions you have, feel free to ask. We've got more in common than the whole compassionate Southern maverick thing. We've both done a lot for the Republican Party. And we both know what "let's roll" really means. Besides, now is the time for us to join together against our common enemy—Hillary.

Always the loveable scamp,  
Slick Willy

—MARGOLIS

PARAPHERNALIA

WORKING TITLES FOR TELEVISION SHOWS

Most people can remember when *Two Guys and a Girl* shortened its title from *Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place*—but comparatively few know what an improvement that was over the original title: *Two Guys, a Girl, a Pizza Place, a Wacky Neighbor, a Precocious Kid, a Lovable Dog, a Crochety Landlord, and Abundant Sexual Tension*.

The *Record* staff used its network connections to uncover the original titles of some other favorite shows:

Wheel of Fortune	<i>Wheel of Terror</i>
The Bob Newhart Show	<i>Spongebobnewhart Squarepants</i>
The Love Boat	<i>Where in the World is Carmen Miranda?</i>
Third Rock from the Sun	<i>Earth</i>
M*A*S*H	<i>Korean War Good Time Family Variety Hour</i>
Full House	<i>The Jodi Sweetin Show</i>
The Dukes of Hazzard	<i>The Dukes of Gloucester</i>
Jackass	<i>Motherfucker</i>
Sabado Gigante	<i>Jueves Moderado</i>
Hogan's Heroes	<i>Nazis!</i>
Boy Meets World	<i>Boy Meets Much More Attractive Girl and Carries on Absurdly Protracted Relationship for Seven Years</i>
3-2-1 Contact	<i>14-13-12 Contact</i>
Everybody Loves Raymond	<i>Nobody Has Much of a Problem with Raymond</i>
Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman	<i>Dr. Quinn, Indian Killer</i>
Cheers	<i>Taunts and Insults</i>
Touched By an Angel	<i>Did Someone Just Grab My Ass?</i>
Dallas	<i>Fort Worth</i>
Family Matters	<i>A Dignified Portrait of 21<sup>st</sup> Century African-American Family Life</i>

—STAFF

ALTERNATIVE TITLES CONSIDERED FOR  
MARTIN SCORSESE'S *THE KING OF COMEDY*

<i>Ambassador of Amusement</i>	<i>Governor of Guffaw</i>
<i>Bishop of Buffoonery</i>	<i>Headmaster of Hilarity</i>
<i>Chieftain of Chuckles</i>	<i>Kaiser of Kidding</i>
<i>Czar of Zaniness</i>	<i>Minister of Merriment</i>
<i>Duke of Diversion</i>	<i>Potentate of Puns</i>
<i>Envoy of Entendre</i>	<i>Satrap of Satire</i>
<i>Foreman of Farce</i>	<i>Shah of Silliness</i>
<i>Fuhrer of Funniness</i>	<i>Warlord of Wit</i>

—LIPOFF



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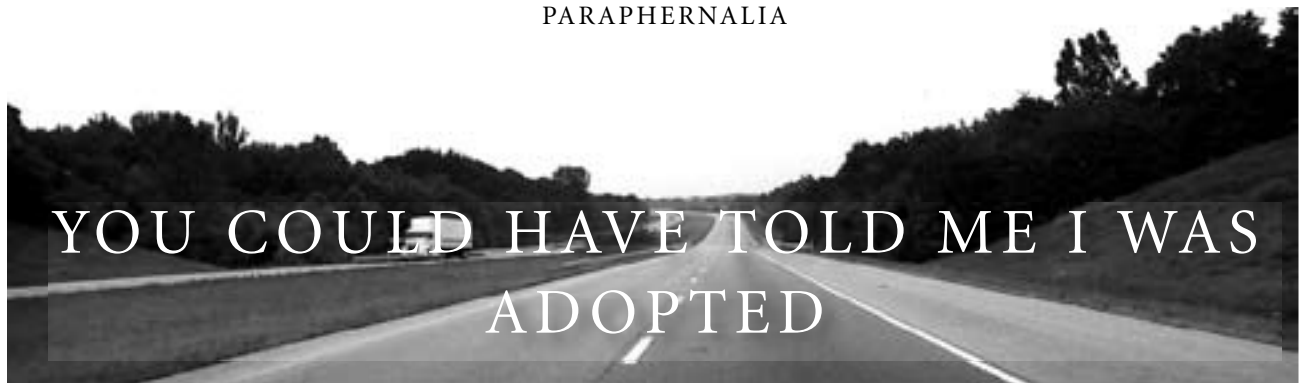
- Pizza ♦ Pasta
- Casseroles ♦ Subs
- Gyros ♦ Souvlaki
- Sandwiches
- Seafood ♦ Chicken
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Dear Mom and Dad,

Now that I'm older, we don't spend time together the way we used to. I guess that's to be expected, but I miss that closeness our family used to have. It's hard on me being here in New Haven with you two in Florida. But after last month, it's been even harder. Two Sundays ago, when you were headed back to the car after visiting me for the weekend, I accidentally overheard your conversation. You mustn't have realized that I could hear you. The words that came from your mouth, Dad, will forever be cemented into my mind: "Someday we'll have to tell him he's adopted." I'll be honest: I took it hard. That evening I sat outside, staring into the headlights of oncoming trucks and contemplating suicide. My life felt unusually worthless and flat. I prayed that I had misheard you, but then, suddenly in the darkness, I spotted a sign illuminated by the headlights: "This highway adopted by Pam and Larry Forgenstein." I don't know how I'd never noticed that before. For god's sake, Mom and Dad, I'm twenty years old! You could have told me I was adopted!

My memories from childhood are blurred, but now everything makes sense. I always found ways to justify to myself why I didn't quite fit in with the family. I couldn't help but notice—you, Dad, with your wavy, red hair, and me with yellow lines streaked across the two miles of my brow. You, Mom, with freckles all over your arms, and me with I-95 signs and exit reminders along my shoulders. I told myself it was genetic drift. Maybe I was blind to the obvious: both of you are much older than any of my friends' parents, and you're already retired, having left New Haven to live comfortably in your West Palm Beach condo. Maybe having a natural child was impossible. But couldn't you have just taken me aside one day and explained it to me? With your silence, you lied to me. Don't get me wrong, Mom and Dad, I appreciate everything you've done for me. If you hadn't been there to take care of my early accidents and clean up my litter, I might not have grown up to become the all important two-mile stretch of I-95 that I am. But I still can't help but feel like a lost highway.

I immediately began the search for my natural parents. Unfortunately, I've hit a roadblock. All I could find out is

that I was adopted in the state of Connecticut. Do you know who my real parents are or where they might be? The least you can do is help me in my search, after all these years of deception. When I have children someday, perhaps state or federal highway branches, I want to pass on the full and rich heritage I know I must have. I suspect that I may be related to I-195, I-295, I-395. We certainly seem to have some sort of connection, so I think I'm on the right track.

I can understand that perhaps I was born to a teenage mother unable to care for two, let alone three lanes of road in each direction. If I had been conceived twenty years later, I may very well have been aborted, with all the stronger zoning laws in place today to combat urban sprawl. Maybe I'm an awful memory to my natural mother, but I can't help hoping that she would be happy for me, proud of my cloverleaf exits and thick grassy medians. I think she would appreciate my well-supported guardrails and smoothly paved asphalt.

I know what you must be thinking. You're afraid you'll lose me as a son. Let me assure you that you have no reason to worry. You'll always be the parents who raised me and kept me going along the right path—but still, I am angry that you lied to me all these years. It's hard for me to accept the fact that I'm adopted. Just give me some time, and I think I can come to terms with it. But from now on, promise me that there will be no more lies. Show me that our relationship is more to you than just a means to promote New Haven tourism. I may be your adopted highway, but I deserve to be treated and respected the same as any naturally conceived road. I love you both deeply, but on this point, I just won't budge: it's my way or forget about the highway.

Love,  
Your Son,

*The two-mile stretch of I-95 outside of New Haven*

—LIPOFF

255 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,  
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose:  
Another side, umbrageous grots and caves

\* \* \* \* \*

255 This line intentionally echoes the Latin phrase *Nolo somnare de storea rigidus* (roughly translated, "I do not wish to dream of an inflexible rush mat"). Milton clearly intended for the passage to convey this secondary meaning.

255 "Irriguous"—not a real word.

255 The word "valley" occurs frequently in the Bible, which Milton is known to have read. (Cf Sngs 2:1: "I am a flower of Sharon, a lily of the valley." Cf also Num 22:30: "The ass said to Balaam, 'Am I not your own beast, and have you not always ridden upon me until now?'" That verse is not related, but isn't it funny?)

255 The word "store" is meant here in the sense of "cache" or "bounty," rather than in the more modern sense of "a place to buy things." A story about Milton regarding the latter type of 'store' appears in the diary of a contemporary, Jabez Horner, who wrote that he happened to encounter the poet at a local store, buying produce. Horner, a notorious prankster of the day, records the incident in detail: "I ask'd the Gentleman if he would hold for me a Chikken I had purchas'd whilst I drew out my Money-purse," wrote Horner, "tho' I neglected to mention that the Chickin was not yet dead." Milton obligingly took hold of the bird, but "He, being blind, was startl'd to feel it moving about in his hands. The Chick did beat its Wings, and poore John Milton was so surpris'd he fell down in the Street upon his Arse!" Horner recalls that he "Laugh'd so hard I fear'd I had bepiss'd myself." The event, while humorous, occurred 3 years after the publication of *Paradise Lost*, and therefore is unlikely to have influenced Milton's word choice here.

256 Editors have struggled for some time with the grammatical "error" presented by "all hue." Some have guessed that Milton included this "error" to represent the flawed nature of man, but it is more likely a reference to his blindness—the poet himself could see only one "hue," black, and therefore describes the flowers as having but one hue.

256 "The Rose," by Amanda McBroom, was a hit song for Bette Midler from the 1977 film of the same name.

257 "Another side" is probably an allusion to the English Civil War and the events which followed, up to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Milton, a Royalist, is here scornfully referring to Cromwell and his followers as "Another side."

257 "Umbrageous" and "grots"—not real words (see "irriguous," above). However, if one rearranges the letters of "umbrageous grots," the result is "gorgeous rat bums." Milton naturally expected his readers to recognize this as his true (if subversive) meaning.

257 "Caves" is a Latin word meaning "[you] beware."

Editor's Note: The above footnote is completely unhelpful.

\* paper topics:  
"good & evil in Paradise Lost"  
"light & dark in P.L."  
"Paradise Lost as Allegory"?

"Paradise Lost as Allegory"

"The Eschatology of P.L."

\* look up "eschatology"



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## POINTLESS HAIKUS

He stole my pencil!

At least I think he did. Can  
never know for sure...

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underrated, as both a  
snack food and a meal.

The Princeton Review  
guarantees a score boost in  
both Math and Verbal.

Every episode  
of *Law & Order* ends on  
a heartwarming note.

He scratches his chin.  
She runs fingers through her hair.  
ADHD sucks.

I have a sweatshirt.  
When new, it was nice and soft.  
Now it is too small.

—COHEN-WADE