

HATCHET PIECE (101 THINGS I HATE) – Alan "Pissed" Phoenix

My sweet dream was interrupted (1) by the alarm buzzer (2) that sends my brain-waves screaming. Why I haven't thrown the damn thing out is beyond me; I'm just your everyday Baltimorean who is too irrational right now to make logical decisions because of being awakened in the middle of a R.E.M. cycle (3). I try to do my early morning stretches (4) but fail miserably because my muscles are still saturated with the alcohol that I drank last night. I gave into peer pressure (5) from my friends while at the bar of one of the many local theme restaurants (6); at first it was a nice, honey lager, then it was a couple martinis and finally-something new (7) for me-two "Irish Car-Bombs" (8). That was the end. I was beyond friendly and tipsy; I was unfriendly and ready to vomit (9) all over my friends, so they drove me home and tossed me, unconscious, into my bed to soil my sheets (10).

As I prepare my breakfast, I accidentally knock a box of *Reeses Peanut Butter Puffs* over the counter and scream in terror as the little crispy droppings, like hail in slow motion, spill onto the floor. The dog (11) looks at me and I can see it scheming to lick up every bit of that sugary goodness as soon as I leave the kitchen to get the vacuum cleaner (12), which I can't find because this house (13) was built near the 1st Circle of Hell by the virtuous pagans and unbaptized children.

I curse aloud this place, doomed to an eternity of chaos and endless piles of laundry (14). I close the kitchen door to separate the dog from the food on the floor, something that my family wouldn't think to do, since they spoil that animal into stupidity. In fact, if my younger was a witness to this, she'd do either of my least favorite expressions; blame (15) or bitch (16) at me. Incidentally, I have decided to never again make conversation with the fourteen-year-old because so often she transfers all her life-induced-frustrations into a form of getting back at the world, and, unfortunately, I happen to be her most proximate victim other than her little brother or her mom. At first, her condescending bitterness (17) was genuinely hurtful, since little ol' me is highly sensitive (18). But now I've learned to just turn the other cheek and walk away, all while tossing back a subtle hand grenade of "*whatever*," something that teenagers can't stand to receive. And yet the cosmic irony (19) is that I can relate to her dreadfully rude attitude, since I remember my own angry adolescence (20), as I also toiled through years of awesome frustration at the unknown and unfair world (21).

Upon recovering from this flashback of my worthless past (22), I was at a loss to find the vacuum cleaner, so I settled with the old-fashioned way of getting on my hands and knees amongst the grime (23) and dog hairs (24) with a hand-broom

(25) and dustpan (26). Soon enough, the kitchen is back to normal, and I open the door so the dog will be able to pass through and out the back porch to do its steamy business of laying backyard land-mines (27) amongst the otherwise plush grass that I'd rather use for picnicking with girlfriends who eventually realize I'm not what they expected (28).

For the countless time already, I double-step up the stairway (29), looking to retrieve my drinking glass, when I hear the distinct sound of dog hooves coming from the third floor. I halt in my tracks below the banister to test the unsuspecting beast into giving away its awareness of my presence and the subsequent shame that I suspect may follow. The scheming beady-eyes look up at me, this time a little more nervous. Fearing the worst, I bolt up the stairs to discover two-not just one-but two piles of shit on the floor, one on a nice oriental rug. My sense of responsibility (30) clicks on, so I immediately trot downstairs and grab the dog by the choker-chain and lead the way toward the mess. Of course, it refuses to budge, (and this is a black Labrador with a lot of leverage,) so I release this full-grown-pup from my pull as to avoid an unsanctioned asphyxiation. Then I get behind and wrap my arms around the monster, lifting it in a wrestling (31) style hold and carry it helplessly to its fate.

While shoving its nose into each and every turd that flavors the air with the worst stench (32), I say “No! Bad dog! No.”

Having tortured the poor living, breathing, garbage-disposal, I let it go so I can quickly grab some paper towels and dispose of the refuse into the nearest facility before I retch (33). On the second flush, however, I notice water level rising a little too high, and so I whisper “F’r fuck’sake!” under my breath as I proceed to use a plunger to cure the clogged toilet (34). After hearing a strange gurgling sound in both the nearby sink and bath-drain, I am satisfied to watch the bowl and its contents empty before my eyes, knowing the filth will flush its way to the Backriver Sewage Treatment Plant (35) on the edge of Baltimore County. When I used to visit my Grandmother, I drove through the tons of methane gas that the sprawling complex spews forth over the highway and into nearby residential areas. The Plant is a fine example of the consequential magnitude of the world population (36), since it incinerates and treats the tons of shit from the majority of Baltimore City and County residents and washes it back to their mouths as chlorinated drinking water. Surprisingly, I don’t hate tap water, except when it’s warm (37).

Since my taste for little crispy brown things have been lost in my palette, I’ve decided to toast some fresh bagels for the millionth time in my life,

hoping that the serrated bread knife (38) won't saw off my thumb. I open the refrigerator and suddenly slam the door shut, cursing aloud, wondering if the karma (39) will reach whichever family member who decided to be a lazy bum and leave a large container with a couple drops of leftover orange-juice (40). I reach into the ice box and toss a can of concentrated orange-juice (41) to defrost on the lit gas stove. Soon enough, I have my breakfast, after stirring my own batch of juice with the only wooden spoon I could find. I chose to drink all of the sweet orange juice and leave just as much as I found this morning.

Then I toss my dishes in the dishwasher, even though my relatives throw their dishes into the sink (42), so I retaliate by running the dishwasher at night with or without their dirty dishes, so they have to eventually clean up their mess, even if I am left without dishes, my solution is to eat out during these times. And then I pass their empty soda bottles and half-empty gallon of sour milk (43) to stuff my own plastics and paper in their proper bags. Even though I feel good about doing it-and guilty if I don't-recycling (44) is so damn troublesome. Have you ever tried washing peanut butter out of a jar!?

Before I leave the house, I have to make my morning telephone calls. Let's just face it; friends don't call back (45),

and I tire of spreading myself thin (46) by calling scores of people. And I'll never again participate in what my first ex-girlfriend (47) guilt-tripped me into doing during our roller-coaster relationship (48) of possessiveness (49): "dead-air;" (50) the practice of wasting each other's time by saying nothing for the sake of each other's presence. God (51), if I ever get myself in a situation like that again, send a lightning bolt through the phone lines and put me out of my misery; kill the bitch.

When I'm not going to college (52), either because I don't have classes that day or I can't afford to go, and the government won't deal me in on the financial aid scheme (53), I work at an independent video store, none of that chain-store (54) crap with their limited and over-priced selections (55). On my way to work, sometimes I cannot avoid driving by where I went to middle school (56), the place where youngsters like my former self learned that they are fat and ugly and have no friends, so I relieve the tension by yelling obscenities about the public school system (57) to any stray administrators who I still recognize if they happen to be chain-smoking out front. Sometimes I add my qualms about this country's anti-socialistic health care system (58), if I'm in the mood.

I'm one of those strange fuckers who can function just fine in the morning, but come afternoon and evening, I need me some coffee (59). So I succumb to this shameful act. It's not that I don't like the nasty flavor of the black death beverage, but I am so addicted (60) to it that it gives me pleasure to gutter the bean-oil between my staining teeth and into my gullet. And once it's there, the caffeine molecules (61) creep their way into my blood vessels, sadistically constricting them. And finally making their way into my spine, they shoot up into my brain and hit my neurotransmitters in a manner of attack worse than cocaine (62).

I soon as I feel awake and alert, my stomach squeezes my heart up to my throat as I tap my foot on the brakes enough to pull a negative G; a cop and her cruiser has been waiting on the D.L. to lure unsuspecting motorists into her Venus speed-trap (63). I must avoid these encounters at all costs, but not because I want to speed. Since they drained that desire out of me with a history of tickets; parking violations (64) and ... driving with headphones on. (65) and humiliating myself in courts (66) as the naive but learning college student, I now dread the thought of getting pulled over and possibly having a point (67) tacked onto my license.

The first thing I do when I get home is turn on the TV (68).

The only reason why I really do this is to sit still long enough to work the caffeine out of my system. I only sit for several hours into the night because the cathode-rays (69) radiating from the tube were invented to hypnotize suckers like me into staring at advertisements (70) long enough to want to buy them, even if they are feminine hygiene products (71). As soon as I see Bob Saget (72) on reruns of *Full House* (73) and *America's Funniest Home Videos* (74), I squirm out of my seat and shut my eyes to avoid looking into his stare of forced happiness (75). As I blindly fumble for the remote control, I wonder about the truthfulness of your face getting stuck in a grossly silly shape. Or all those other urban myths (76), like checking for hairy palms (77).

Eventually, I build up enough nerve to turn off the TV, or at least look away to study my homework. I don't get it: I go to school and learn about the treasured history of the Holy Roman Empire (78), those hypocrites and their crusades (79), whose institution has now evolved into a modern racket, but everybody knows that, even its members. One time, I was ranting about this topic to my friends when an eavesdropping passerby (80) decided to tell me that I was going to Hell for blaspheming Catholicism (81). My friends looked at me, awaiting a response, so I gave into peer pressure again and flipped the poor bystander off.

Then I added that trendy new gesture that's so popular amongst the middle school kids; I slapped my crossed arms to my hips and brayed in high-pitched-delight, "suck it!" I figured I really wouldn't go to Hell, since religious people also give into peer pressure and bray about their beliefs. Look at Muslims, they pressure each other and bray. Actually, I don't mind Islam at all, since the religion is about peace, except for those holy wars some governments perpetuate. They throw Jihads (82) around like grand parties, in which, other than tearing apart their enemies, thousands upon thousands of innocent people die in the cross fire. But that's okay, because the religion believes that the innocent people will be guaranteed a place in Heaven. Now I don't know about you folks who are now staring at me as if I'm some hippie-freak jew (83) with my big, curly hair (84)... but then again I'm no Rastafarian. So, I'd rather take my chances out of the cross-fire and try to earn my keep in Heaven elsewhere. Of course, I'm not doing so well right now, but I'm young and naïve, so I can make my peace with you fuckers later.

You want to know what my problem really is? Alright... Sometimes I consider the notion that many of my peers, parents, and psychologists (85) have told me: I have problems with people (86). Call me anti-social. Maybe it's left over from my childhood.

Of course, I was a teenager only until a couple years ago. But people piss me off. Mostly everyone is ignorant (87) in some form or another, including myself. There are also plenty of judgmental people (88) to go around, those idiot mental-masturbators. And some of them we may remember as bullies (89), those who used to set me apart and pick on me. And when the bullies grow up, they become egoists (90)! These are the meanest jerk-offs and they belong with the falsifiers in the Ninth Circle of Hell. Speaking of falsifiers, I think of politics (91). But I'm not going to get into about bullshit. I can sum it up for you:

Greed (92), Instant Gratification (93), Imperialist Materialism (94), and I give you the apex of American Culture—our society's legacy—all we have to show for... The Gross National Product (95)!

Eventually, after the incessant barrage of thoughts (96) finally derail off my multi-track mind (97), I fall asleep and dream about my teeth falling out (98) or being a victim of flesh-eating bacteria (99) and my dick falls off (100). Then I wake up and do it all over again (101).

Kudos to John Waters for inspiring everyone to write their own "Hatchet Pieces"