

Sometimes Life is Just a Paul Thomas Anderson Film

(Or Maybe a Todd Solodnz one)... by Basil Joe Rocker...9/21/2003

Sunday Morning. I wake up- hot, miserable, drained. I feel as if I'd been sleeping in a sauna the night before. Completely belying my present physical demeanor, a nice delta breeze had in fact taken last night's outdoor temperature on the Farm down to a pleasant 57 degrees Fahrenheit. According to the National Weather Service, the humidity never topped 50% the previous night.

True, the absolute exhaustion of the last two days from triple-time forays around San Francisco and Los Angeles during the week had finally subsided, but my body still felt off, way off. The much younger and vital Rayquantum, in for a left coast visit from the A-town, had run my old bones ragged. *Mi huesos cansados viejos*. I was still cranky and in desperate need of an endorphin dose, perhaps an outright rush. I needed to feel my blood and heart pumping well above their normal rate.

So I put on my running gear and hit my neighborhood circuit. The neighborhood circuit went like this:

Down 27th from my apartment to Curtis Park;
Crossing the park to Sutterville Road;
On Sutterville, I head west until I get to the campus of Sac City College;
I cross the campus and then head north on Freeport back to 2nd Avenue;
On 2nd Avenue, I head back to the east to within a half-block of my home on 27th Street where I started.

This circuit is about three and a half miles. I creatively dubbed this, "the Big Circuit." I do the final mile and a half, for a total run of a little over 5 miles, on a smaller circuit that is concentric to the larger one. It's called, "the Small Circuit."

All is well at my start around 10am. The temperature is in the mid-70's according to the local paper's weather web page, and the sky is absolutely clear. Better get a move on. The high is expected to hit around 100 at about 2pm. Once noon hits, it's likely to be above ninety. Best finish before it gets too hot.

I'm greeted by the friendly black man at 27th and 2nd Avenue. He is shining his beige Mercedes. Looks like a mid-80's model. He's kept it in mint condition. His ample black beard and close cropped hair are generously spotted with shades of gray.

"Wish I could still do that," he says.

"I don't know how much longer I'll be able to do it," I respond. "After a few years, the knees start to go fast."

"Enjoy it while you can," he says as I make my way across 2nd Avenue and into the official confines of the Curtis Park neighborhood.

As I make the 27th Street zig-zag at Castro, I hear one of those annoying motorized razor scooters ahead of me. As soon as I finish the zag, I can see the guilty party dead ahead on 27th Street at the mouth of William Curtis Park. I can only wonder how many quiet Sunday mornings in this serene neighborhood are being shattered by this jerk with all the decency of a flea in butter.

When I reached the entrance to the oval shaped park, the flea was gone, and all was silent again. I wondered if anyone had ever bothered to tell the little idiot that people didn't buy million dollar homes by a park so they could listen to the incessant nattering of his tiny little scooter engine, a contraption that made way too much noise for its size and speed. Perhaps there was some sort of penile insecurity involved in riding one of those things. Perhaps it was tantamount to a dog's peeing on a tree, bushes, or car tires to mark its turf. I imagined that this was a dog that needed to be kicked, kicked very hard.

A Collie yelped at its owner in the middle of the open space on the north end of the oval Park. The owner taunted him with a tennis ball. If the Collie could talk, he'd say, "Why the fuck don't you just throw it, man. We're not getting any younger here, and remember how sharp my teeth are, okay."

The thought of the dog attacking its owner made me think of *Suspiria*, the Dario Argento film I had just purchased on DVD Friday night, along with Todd Solondz's *Happiness*, Lisa Cholodenko's *Laurel Canyon*, and Billy Wilder's classic, *Sunset Boulevard*. I was definitely pining for the gritty streets of Los Angeles after a couple of days there with Rayquantum, visiting some old A-town pals who were taking shots at the Hollywood scene, and catching Eddie Izzard at the Wiltern. That "bright guilty place," as Orson Welles called it, always has a sleazy allure for me. Looking at the size of LA, I'm not alone. The whole place is draped in a film of oddly enchanting dirt and seediness. It's a whore that seduces you, then steals not only your money, but your very soul. Strange thing is that you love every minute of it. This longing for the beguiling meanness of Hollywood, West Hollywood, Los Feliz, Silverlake, and even Hancock and Echo Parks, played no small role in the purchase of the latter two. As far as the first two, I definitely needed some horror in my life, and they filled the need quite well, especially the

The Basiljoe Rave List 9/21/2003

- 1) *Rock 'n' Roll*- Velvet Underground...can't stop dancing to the radio station.
- 2) *Waiting on the Moon*-Tindersticks... love and murder are a dangerous, but poetic mix.
- 3) *Laurel Canyon*... still can't get over the musical AC/DC shirt, and Frances McDormand as rock goddess.
- 4) *Yang Chow*...LA's best Chinese food. On Broadway in Chinatown. Forget it Jake, try the slippery chicken or the slippery shrimp.
- 5) *Zuet Lee*...SF's best late night Chinese Seafood.
- 6) *Eddie Izzard at the Wiltern, 9/16/03*...On his current "Sexie Tour," the world's favorite bloke-in-a-dress continues to make comedic history with his strategic use of, uh, history.
- 7) *Psychobabble, Los Feliz*.. the hippest place for coffee and a piss.
- 8) *Millie's, Silverlake*... this diner is god on Sunset Blvd. The Devil's Mess is the best southwestern b'fast west of Austin.
- 9) *It's Top's*... a literal hole in the wall on Market Street in SF's Castro District. The best damn late night diner on the west coast with pancakes that will induce swooning.

Solondz.

Suspiria's chiming theme began playing over and over again in my head. It stayed with me all the way through Sac City College and partially down Freeport.

At an intersection somewhere around Freeport and 4th Avenue, I approached a woman in a silver VW Jetta in a right turn lane, looking to turn right onto Freeport. She had left plenty of room in the crosswalk for me to pass. I made quick eye contact with her before proceeding through the intersection. She appeared to be talking on a cell phone, or dialing someone on it. Her bright blue eyes conveyed annoyance as they looked up at me.

10) *City Lights Bookstore*...50 years and still going strong. For avid readers, this is Mecca. Located in SF's North Beach District within sight of the Transamerica Pyramid Tower. If you haven't been here, you haven't been to a real bookstore.

I quickly trotted through the intersection to get out of the woman's way so she could make her right turn onto Freeport. When I was right in front of her, the car lurched about 3 feet and suddenly, I was on the hood. I looked through the windshield. She was looking left. She had no idea I was there.

I banged on the hood and the windshield. She stopped suddenly and the front of the car bounced up and down beneath me. The horror on her face far outclassed anything from Dario Argento. This was real horror. This was real terror- real fear. Though I was in fear for my life- being driven to god knows where on the hood of a mad woman's car - her fear somehow exceeded mine by many miles.

"What the fuck!" I screamed, quickly rolling off the hood, my feet hitting the street and making it to the sidewalk, before the madwoman in the automobile could attack me again.

"What the hell are you doing?" I was screaming through the closed passenger side window.

She looked at me like a deer caught in the headlights.

The passenger window rolled down, and a feeble, "I didn't see you," emanated toward me.

I stood my ground. This ridiculous comment made me angrier than actually being assaulted by an automobile.

"You didn't see me?" I screamed. "Dumb bitch. You looked right at me. What the fuck do you mean you didn't see me."

"I'm sorry," her voice trembled, "I didn't see you."

"What. Did I suddenly become invisible when I walked in front of your car? You looked right at me before I crossed. Am I invisible? Huh? Or maybe you're not looking you stupid cunt!"

By now I had walked back into the street and was yelling right into the passenger side window. The woman just stared at me in horror as if I was some kind of psychotic bastard, which I was.

"Listen," her voice cracked, "I didn't mean to hit you. You're not hurt or anything are you?"

"Fuck you. The point is that you *did* hit me."

"Please, please," She begged, "Stop yelling at me. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You're okay, right?"

"I'm gonna fucking yell at you. What the fuck do you expect, roses? When you fucking drive, you'd better fucking pay attention, you dumb stupid middle class bitch!"

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bump into you. I'm sorry. Do you need me to call 911?"

"What for you stupid middle class cunt, are you calling the cops on me? You assaulted me you fucking bitch!"

"No," she sniffled, "For an ambulance. Are you hurt?"

She began crying. Outright blubbing.

"Oh fuck," I thought, "What the hell have I done."

I looked into the sky, waved my arms and made a few circles. "Fuck! What the fuck. What the hell have I done," I muttered to myself, "Why the hell couldn't this lady just yell back and move on for Buddha's sake?" Now I had a dilemma to deal with. Great!

I knelt down at the passenger side window. My anger had come to a screeching stop, made a 180 degree turn, and had amazingly become empathy. I was mentally kicking myself. "You dick. You fucking angry psychotic asshole. Why were you taking all of your piss and vinegar out on this poor fucking defenseless woman who obviously had a mental lapse, and meant absolutely no harm to you? Now she's crying, you big fucking psychotic asshole lug. Now look what you've done."

"Listen. I'm sorry. I'm being a fucking asshole. I'm sorry. Really. It was a mistake. A mental lapse. I get it. I understand. Look, I'm okay. Look. Look at this."

I stood up and jumped up and down, and danced around the street to demonstrate.

I bent back down by the passenger side window, "See, I'm okay. Right as rain."

She continued to blubber.

"I'm sorry," she blubbered through tears and snot, her whole face now red against her jet black hair, "I've had a bad day."

There was a pack of tissues on the dash. I pulled one out and gave it to her. She wiped her nose and eyes, taking deep breaths in an attempt to compose herself.

"It's not even noon, and my boyfriend has broken up with me, and not two minutes ago, I got a call on my cellphone from my mom. My dad is dead. He had a heart attack. The dumb bastard. The angry asshole bastard had a heart attack while yelling at my mom about some stupid little thing.. Now I run over some stranger who won't stop yelling at me."

She cried uncontrollably. All I could think about now was how much of a fucking dick I was.

I walked around to the driver's side. Her window was rolled down.

I tried to calm her down by introducing myself.

"My name is Joe, " I said.

She blubbered about another minute before saying, "I'm... I'm...Carol," through her tears and sniffles.

A car pulled up behind her in the right turn lane, and honked. I waved him around.

"Get out of the fucking street, asshole, " the guy yelled.

"Get off the fucking planet, bastard" I yelled back.

The guy flipped me off as he went around and tore down Freeport. Like any normal male, I grabbed my crotch and yelled, "get a real dick!"

"I don't know what I'm doing," Carol blubbered-on, "I shouldn't be driving. I don't even live around here, and I have no fucking idea where I am."

"It's okay," I said, "Just calm down. It'll be okay. It's been a bad day, but it'll get better."

"Somehow, I don't believe that," she said.

"Listen, it will."

Another car pulled behind her Silver VW wanting to make a right turn. The person behind the wheel made a polite "beep beep!"

I waved the woman and her Toyota Camry around without incident.

"Is there anything I can do for you? Anything to help you calm down?"
She paused for a moment or two to gain her composure, staring out over the hood.

She mumbled something I couldn't clearly make out?

"What was that?" I politely asked.

"Did you leave any dents?" she asked.

I inspected the hood.

"Looks like I didn't, strangely enough."

She sat there for a few more silent moments.

Still looking at the hood, she flatly stated, "I need coffee."

Me too, I stated.

"We should go get coffee," she said, looking directly into my eyes.

"Clack clack" went the locks on the doors.

"Get in," she commanded. "Tell me where to go."

Just a few minutes earlier, I was telling this woman to go to hell. Now I was telling her how to get to Espresso Metro by Sac City College.

I have her number, and dinner at Balinese Asian Bistro is set for Tuesday night at 7pm. I've also been invited to dad's funeral on Wednesday in San Jose.