

## **PATIENCE IS NO VIRTUE**

When Patience swallowed the TV remote control, we didn't think much about it. Jake pointed out it wasn't half as bad as last month, when she swallowed a golf ball, a six and one half pound roast beef, a pound of brie and a box of crackers for the brie. Over my protestation, he said, "No need for the Vet. She has as a stomach of cast iron. The remote is just PLASTIC." Subject closed. Jake abandoned our art deco sofa and stretched out within arm's reach of the tube to indulge in his favorite pastime – channel flipping.

"Why?" I asked him, five years ago when we met. "Why all the channel flipping?"

"It's mindless," he answered, zooming past the home shopping network. "Zen."

It is my opinion that Jake doesn't understand either mindless or Zen. Very few people can. Certainly not me.

It took the remote control a few days to work its way down, so it wasn't until the fourth evening that the TV started changing channels when Patience wagged her tail. Jake, who likes to be in control, wasn't impressed. He ordered Patience out of the twenty-five foot range. We thought that was the end of it until we woke up the next morning and found out that she'd turned on the VCR and recorded "Swamp Thing" over my copy of "Howard's End."

Jake and I are both kind of Howard's End wannabes, but we live in the real world and we both have jobs. Jake programs computers and I'm an assistant grip. Jake is dashingly gangly. He drives a pick-up truck with the license plate "Skinny Jake." He likes to think that when he drives down

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the street people say, "Here comes Skinny Jake." and as he goes by, they say, "There goes Skinny Jake." He doesn't linger. Just a series of ten-second attention grabbers.

I have been likened to Aphrodite lingering on a wave. One film director asked me "Why behind the camera, why not in front?" I don't know, except that I have to live with myself, which is pretty intense, what with the weight problem, and to see myself on celluloid would be too much. I'm Aphrodite who won't step off the clamshell until she has devoured the whole clam, with linguini sauce. In my spare time, I paint mood paintings that promote sleep. I call them alpha paintings, since I paint them in a trance, usually with my eyes closed.

It was Labor Day in Laguna, where we live, when the beautiful people play and the store people work. We decided to take Patience to the beach. "Do you think it will ruin her electronic part?" I asked.

Jake said Patience was waterproof. We put down the hood of the Corvette, put a cooler full of olives, tofu, licorice, and cheesecake in the truck, and headed for Suicide Point. Suicide Point is such a long stringy spit of land you could die trying to reach the end of it. Hence its name. As we drove, Patience's ears blew in the wind, and she sat at attention, taking her job as mascot to heart.

We strolled the boardwalk gauntlet of tee shirt stores, jewelry booths and the Salvation Army Store where the yuppie game is to find your neighbor's cast-off. There were so many feet heading down the boardwalk, they reminded me of the movie I just finished gripping called *Feet*. The movie was twenty minutes of shod, naked, bunioned, podiatrists' fixations. A cult film, or a Sesame Street special. Dr Scholl's. Andy Warhol. I don't know how they'll market it.

Patience snatched the remnants of a Big Mac, and gulped it down, wrapping included from the last garbage can before

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the sea. Then she raced into the water. She loves to swim. Jake and I smeared each other with forty factor and lay down for our tanless tanning. I love to listen to the waves. They remind me of something. I can't think what. Usually it'll come back to me later, and I'll screech, "That's what those waves remind me of." Jake loves it when I do that. It reminds him of the meditation resort in Santa Barbara, where the monks and nuns preached chastity and had sex all day and night. The mind is a mystery.

Patience came back and we thought she was dragging a tired whale, its great eyelid closed like a camera lens over a continental pupil. It's not true that whales don't sleep. They do. Luckily, it wasn't a whale, but a large garbage bag filled with electronic parts, the innards of computers, motherboards, electric clocks, train sets, keyboards, lamps, a treasure trove of probably illegal disposables, in short. People picked around it, seeing if anything was retrievable. Jake inspected the computer parts, and Patience was right there, sniffing, snapping things into her jaws as greedily as a banker fingers money. She was picky, though. What was going through her mind? The canine mind is mysterious.

"We really HAVE to take her to the Vet tomorrow, I said.

"Let's wait and see what happens," Jake, said. "Let's see if she starts ticking or spitting out secret data."