

Mil Mania

The Official Newsletter of WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM



Welcome To The April Issue of Mil Mania!!!

When I switched to pdf for this newsletter last month, I have to admit I was a bit nervous if I'd be able to fill 8 whole pages (if you're not familiar with the format, I should explain pages can't merely be added one at a time; they're set up as double sided pairs for printing purposes). Only two issues in, however, here I am already faced with the dilemma of instead trying to somehow squeeze in all I have to say! Of course, the one thing that hasn't changed is finding time to say it (or rather, write it). So, once again, you're actually receiving this publication quite a bit later than planned. And, although I could have just gone ahead with another combined issue, I'd rather give everyone the full amount of reading material intended — and keep enforcing a deadline on myself to create more.

That said, I'm sure you've noticed even the space for this introduction has shrunk considerably — so I'll just let you find out for yourself all that's inside...and take what little room I have left to express the hope you're enjoying a beautiful spring season.

I already have a number of ideas brewing for the next edition. And, since we're well into the month bearing that edition's name, I'd better get started! In the meantime, here's hoping you enjoy this one.

Thanks for reading!

Mil



Shakespeare



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Volume 5, Issue 3, April 2009

ATTENTION

Mil Mania Readers:

Once more, I want to extend an extra special thanks to all current subscribers — and encourage you to share *Mil Mania* with your friends. Feel free to forward this issue and encourage signing up for future ones (plus, newcomers can check out all back issues on the subscription page: www.artistinsane.com/news_sign_up.htm .

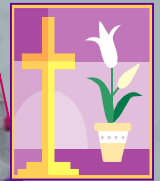
Let's make this a record year of readership!

Insanity's contagious — pass it on!!!

Newsletter Spotlight



HAPPY EASTER!!!



Celebrating

445 years of
Shakespeare

on

April

Much Ado About Nothing
23rd

Hamlet

Henry V

Macbeth



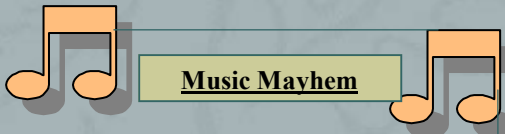
Member of...

American MENSA

and...

R.A.T.S.
Rat Assistance & Teaching Society





Brian Fitzpatrick recently hired a new booking agent — which, of course, means more live shows in the months ahead! The schedule already looks pretty full for May and is shaping up to include many summer dates as well. Also, Brian has announced a new monthly newsletter is coming soon, along with a newly redesigned and updated website. Looks like the Band of Brothers are a busy lot these days. And, that's great news!

Michael McDermott is currently on tour in Italy through mid-May. Upon his return, he's set to launch his own new website, and has a few shows lined up in the Chicago area throughout the following weeks. Also, his next album, *Hey La Hey* is now set for release in late summer. Here's hoping some East Coast performances come along in the meantime!

As always, feel free to drop by my "space" at

MYSPACE MUSIC

www.myspace.com/artistsinsane

AND

My Profile at

facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=711026302&ref=profile>

Newsflash

Writings From The Asylum

As introduced in the first issue of *Mil Mania*, this column presents the latest chapter in the "prequel" to my screenplay, *Taking the Fall*, which picks up on the adventures of musician Joshua Gray four years after a longtime girlfriend's suicide. The novel-in-progress being shared here deals with the immediate days and months following that act, and the struggles to pick up the pieces of his life and career. You can read the Prologue at

http://artistsinsane.com/of_julie_and_better_men.htm, and past chapters in the prior issues posted on the *Mil Mania Sign-up page* (www.artistsinsane.com/news_sign_up.htm).

It's occurred to me that I can't come up with what happens next to Joshua Gray because I believe this portion of his tale has reached its right and proper ending. You'll have to wait for the script picking up four years later to make its way from page to screen to see where he eventually winds up. In the meantime, I'll either put this column on hold or fill it with more madness yet to be determined!

Psycho Therapy

Disclaimer: I am not a "real" psychiatrist... nor do I play one on TV.

Dear Dr. Mil,

What does a girl do when they love someone but the person they are in love with won't give them what they need, not because they can not but because they won't?

Hoping "Won't" Will

Dear Hoping,

That's an excellent question, and one which taps into a host of psychological possibilities — and just plain practical questions, all their own. For example, is the "someone" in question merely afraid to commit? Is he holding back because he questions the intentions of the woman? Or is he merely too committed to his own habits and "wants" to put those of another person ahead of his own — or at least give them equal time?

I was watching an old episode of *Will and Grace* while pondering this question a few nights ago — the one in which Grace talks Will into a bathroom renovation that quickly proves something more like a major life restructuring for Will. As their friend Jack points out upon hearing of this shared bathroom plan, he'd never before thought of "Will" and "share" in the same sentence without "doesn't know how to" in between. As one would imagine, Will splutters his incredulous disagreement...only to acknowledge the truth of Jack's assertion as the renovation begins and Will's apprehensions rise.

Particularly when one has lived primarily in bachelorhood into his thirties or beyond, it's often argued he's become too set in his ways to make room for the needs and desires of another person — and, often doesn't even realize this might be the case. He may be perfectly capable of giving in friendship, and even to a significant other in sufficient degree that allows him to convince himself he's "just fine" and any complaints on the part of that other are her problems or her actually being the one who's too self-oriented.

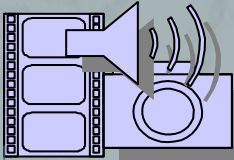
Of course, it's not a given that any woman who perceives the man as the problem is automatically correct. She may very well be making irrational demands, thereby providing sound reasons the man is unwilling to reconsider his position on giving more. Just as Will had no idea he was so inflexible, so it might well be both parties in any troubled relationship have blind sides that resemble his — meaning an honest self-examination is in order for both parties before any rash actions either end the relationship, or result in one losing him/herself completely by capitulating to the (perhaps unfair) demands of the other. If it's determined those demands are reasonable, however, and truly aimed at the personal growth of the partner as well as positive growth of the relationship, indeed one should keep fighting for the needed personal changes which will help see those demands eventually met.

Needless to say, neither the self-examination aspect of this equation or the determination to keep fighting is likely to prove an easy task...and not always is one successful in either endeavor. It should be noted, however, that humans are always capable of change. And, there's no greater impetus to provoke this change than true love. Even so, much determination is required to bring about this change — as Will ultimately learned. With this determination, however, the bathroom renovation moved forward, and the relationship he shared with Grace proved an even greater home improvement.

It should be noted, however, that lesson alone didn't signal all the rooms in the house that was their relationship were magically transformed. Sufficient battles yet lay ahead to provide many additional seasons of growth — and laughter. Here's hoping the relationship you're writing about knows many more years of both as well.

"Dr. Mil"

Comments on this topic or questions of your own? Send them to mil@artistsinsane.com. Thanks!



Ravings of a Mad Woman

This column corresponds with the Mad Ravings On... section of my website (www.artistsane.com/movie_madness.htm) and is dedicated to selected reviews of movies, television and books... most of which are unlikely to represent “the latest” in any of these categories, but rather a random selection that represents a new and/or noteworthy discovery to me

Purple Violets — It’s been mentioned in past issues of *Mil Mania* that I’ve long been a big fan of Edward Burns — and particularly the films in which he not merely acts, but also serves as both writer and director. Naturally, I was therefore thrilled when I ran across this title from 2007 which fits all of the above criteria. As usual, it’s another relationship tale, as well as an “ideas” movie — something the film both pokes fun at and on which it offers serious commentary...as it does various thoughts about people and their pursuits.

In the case of the protagonists, both are pursuing their dreams and goals as writers, and both are struggling — though in somewhat different ways. Former lovers from their college days more than a decade earlier, Patty and Brian reconnect through a chance encounter — at a point where each is in the midst of major life re-evaluations. It might be said their fortuitous meeting provides the catalyst for the changes that soon begin taking place...yet these occur much more as the result of their individual characters and places in life than who it is they are together. However, it’s the role each plays in the other’s life that provides a positive impetus to bring these changes about.

In addition, as is also often the case in Burns’ films, supporting characters — one of which is played by Burns himself — provide much bonus insight, largely delivered through clever wordplay and wonderfully sharp wit. For one so familiar with Burns’ catalog and the awareness his films have long flown just under the Hollywood “success” radar, it seems a wryly satisfying inside joke to watch Burns’ play something of a foil to the protagonist, spouting lines of misunderstanding and criticism surely Burns has heard himself far too many times. Still, the film itself is refreshingly unpredictable, and while it will surely make you think, it also highly entertains.

Enjoy.



Literary Lunacy

In honor of Shakespeare’s birthday, I’m sharing here a monologue from my one-act play *A Piece of Them*. As I’ve mentioned in the past, this is a prequel to *Hamlet*, wherein the major characters relate what’s on their minds at the time they enter the action of Shakespeare’s original work. The play was chosen as a finalist in a national playwriting competition, and I had the privilege of playing both Gertrude and Hamlet in subsequent productions of it. The monologue below gives a bit of insight into the villain’s side of the story — who, of course, sees himself as nothing of the kind.

CLAUDIUS

Where doth one begin a tale so wretched
 In its glory, so glorious in its
 Wretchedness? At last, I am Denmark's king -
 Brother of her once king, son of him before -
 Yet one more branch of this mighty river
 Of kingly blood that hath coursed through the ages
 To feed that great ocean of ambition,
 From whence the cream of all young princes
 Thereon cast adrift, do rise to grapple
 For their thrones.
 Ah yes, I know that luck hath favored
 Those few, who through no merit of their own,
 Have been blessed by order of their birth,
 And thereby do expect to occupy
 A seat for which they are, indeed, thought destined,
 A seat which will but posthaste be refilled
 Once the adulterous eye of lady luck
 Hath wandered to light upon another,
 Leaving for the firstborn the misfortune
 To be as well the first to taste of death. . .
 This, luck once more hath chanced to bring to pass,
 And she hath now taken a new lover,
 Who's proved to be none other than myself.
 Nay, 'tis but fantasy this speech of luck -
 To argue in a more temperate vein,
 'Tis not luck which directs the destiny
 Of men of strength, though, p'raps, those of weakness. . .
 Instead, a more steady hand doth choose
 Who is most aptly fitted for duty
 As a servant of the people he doth rule.
 Such speech speaketh this - by strength I've risen;
 'Twill take more than luck to make me fall.
 As Jacob surpassed Esau, and Ephraim Manasseh,
 So now doth stand Claudius.
 Furthermore, I have no son - nor daughter -
 And so the crown shall one day pass to him
 On whom 'twould but more directly have sat
 Had not a few small grains been let slip
 From the hourglass of eternity. . .
 Hamlet is yet a youth - not yet wisened
 In the lessons taught by maturity
 And the experience of battles won.
 He hath lived the peace-filled life of scholars,
 Not endured the hardships of warriors.
 How then would he face young Fortinbras,
 Whose ambition more than thrice outweighs his own,
 And, which would guide him swiftly to success
 In wresting the kingdom from Hamlet's grasp
 Should Fortinbras exert his weakest effort?
 But no - I have spared Denmark such grief,
 And bought her future ruler time to gain
 The knowledge he must come to possess

(cont'd on p.4)

Literary Lunacy (cont'd)

In order to retain the power
 One day to be delivered into his hands.
 That day, however, now stands afar off,
 And I am left to taste of my rewards -
 My father's country, and, my brother's wife. . .
 Yet, the place I do now occupy was not,
 As one might think, one on which my thoughts
 Were focused from my youth - on the contrary,
 As a child, I did love my brother well -
 As well I should; he was good to me,
 And to our father, and all who knew him.
 But as the clear red sky of boyhood's dawn
 Gave way to the hot noonday of manhood,
 Our futures suddenly came into view,
 With an ever more blinding clarity,
 Which showed the brightness of his star's increase,
 Whilst making plain the increase of darkness
 Shining forth from the void set aside for me.
 Had the kingdom been the only birthright
 To which my birth gave me no right,
 Perhaps this might I have borne with grace;
 Not so was I to bear losing my life
 By witnessing my brother wed my love. . .
 She knew not how her eyes to me did speak
 With each glance, in a tongue heard not by the ear,
 But by the soul of him who loved her best.
 I watched her rise from childhood ne'er hoping
 I might win her love - I was a mere prince -
 Fairytales do not with fairness tell the tale;
 To what purpose win a prince's love,
 When one might win that of a prince
 Who will be king?
 I know I would have won her for my own
 Had not the crown been placed between us
 To block her vision of my heart,
 Which burned for her alone from earliest youth.
 Indeed, hath not this theory now been proved
 By the commendably terrible speed
 With which she did, with joy, accept my hand
 Once the obstacle was removed from our midst?
 Yet, this victory beareth a hollow ring,
 For, still must I think on the unalterable
 Reality that hath allowed Denmark
 To be ruled forever by her offspring,
 But not mine. . . This punishment I ever bear,
 And from it shall not ever be set free.
 It is thus that I conclude that the end
 I have attained doth justify the means.
 I have only my life in which to live;
 My brother no longer living lives on,
 Through Hamlet, who in turn will, like as not,
 Live on in this way as well, and so it goes
 Forever. . .
 Yet, to what purpose direct my sight
 Toward a forever I shall not see?
 Instead I dwell on that which is,
 For this day do I rule, and this day
 Do I live.

Comments from *Mil Mania* readers on the February/March issue...

"I must compliment Keela on her conclusion to last month's issue. Just before reading Keela's column, I came across a version of the famous painting of Lilith with the serpent coiled around her body. Women and snakes, I don't know. Some trails in history just can't seem to be covered."

L.P.

"I found the madvice question interesting (and of course, nicely related) [to the Psycho Therapy topic]..."

"Anyway, thanks again!!"

A.R.

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 of gifts ...*



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 occasions.*



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Temporary Insanity

A Brief Tale of Fuel...Which Rhymes With Fool...

I was blissfully working on this newsletter in my head recently when the lawn mower I happened to also be operating suddenly started to splutter, and subsequently die. It's a relatively new machine and, although I was admittedly quite lost in my writing reverie at the time, I instantly recognized the problem: I had run out of gas — or, rather, I should say, I had run out of gas — again.

You may well be wondering why this would seem a sufficiently interesting circumstance as to justify its inclusion in this column. Unfortunately, there are surely few things that more accurately fall under this column's heading than a perfectly capable grown woman who, for whatever reason, just can't seem to grasp the simple concept that a quick look at the gas gauge is probably a good idea before setting out in any vehicle powered by this substance. I, however, seem to persist in a state of ignorance — that too often proves far from blissful — until such time as a definite reminder all too forcefully sets in. Of course, it almost always so happens this reality is magnified by the fact I'm invariably at the farthest point from where the gas cans are stored when it occurs. It's uncanny how an inanimate object can have such a perfect sense of timing — time and again. That said, when it happened in this instance I was literally in the exact opposite corner of a two-acre property — and, of course, with only about three more strips to mow. That is, I must reiterate, I had only about three more strips to mow. Now, I also had an afternoon's hike in addition, complete with sheepishly waving to passersby who glanced between me, the mower, and back to me again before offering a wave and extra kind smile. "Poor incompetent fool", I could hear them thinking. "And she isn't even blonde."



No, I may not be blonde — that's a joke, incidentally, so please don't write me with chastising comments about my follicle insensitivity. I'm well aware there are many very intelligent females of that hair color. Clearly there are also many highly intelligent females of other hair colors for whom this qualification is of no use when something under their hair goes haywire — as is what apparently happens regularly to me. Unfortunately, that knowledge doesn't prove particularly helpful in these circumstances. Nor did it carry the five gallon gas can back to the farthest point of the property for me. And, of course, the stilted walk that results from this effort

means the return trip in the sight of those aforementioned passersby is marked by the same extra kind smiles, though in the case prompted not by my obvious mentally challenged state, but my apparently physical one...which is hardly a mistake on their part by the time I arrive at the mower and ponder taking a nap right there before actually filling the tank and finishing the lawn.

I've wondered, on occasion, what it might be in my makeup that accounts for this short circuit. I've thought it might be genetic in that when I was a kid my dad always prompted my mom regarding the gas status in her car, usually ending up taking it to the station for a just-in-time fill up after doing so. Still, in all the places I traveled with my mom, I don't recall at any time actually having to walk along the road because of running out of gas. No, this one I most certainly can't blame on genes. This bit of insanity clearly belongs to me alone. Oh, goody.

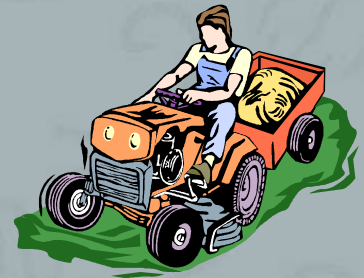
Ah well, ever the optimist I suppose I should look at the bright side. One can always use more exercise, and a little extra humility to keep the ego in check isn't so bad, either. All the same, I'd like to think I'm at least average in the aspect of human character that makes it possible for us to learn and evolve. I'd like to think I won't forever live up to the definition of insanity I've mentioned here so many times before: repeating the same behavior expecting different results.

Then again, I have thought of several solutions to the problem that surely represent progress — I mean, there are hybrid cars...can a hybrid mower really be all that far behind? Or at least, how about one with a larger gas tank? And, if all else fails, there's one rock solid solution. There's enough "green" in our world these days. I'm thinking one word: "condo".

Just kidding. I'll keep trying to remember to check the gas gauge before setting out...and most likely I'll also keep making the infamous gas can walk of shame. Once an artist insane, always an artist insane.

Wait a minute — what's that sound. Oh, it can't be. Not again...

Uh, I'll be back in a bit. And, if you need me in the meantime, just follow the limping gas can.



A Frenzy Over (False) Figuring

I became involved in a bit of a dispute in April over a price increase in the print version of the *It's A Rat's World* publication. Although each issue is only 12-16 pages (printed at home), the new cost is a whopping \$39.95/yr. What's more, this newsletter/magazine largely consists of written pieces and photos submitted free of charge by readers/subscribers. As has been documented in *Mil Mania*, I myself have contributed to 10 of the last 14 issues, including 10 full articles or reviews by Keela, plus a host of photos, new rat welcome announcements, etc. Naturally, both loving rats as I obviously do, and having invested at such a level, this publication and matters pertaining to it are very important to me... as I thought they might be to other readers/contributors. I therefore posted an inquiry on the IARW Facebook page, and that's where the fun began.

While I was completely honest in my question, the response from the business half of the couple who run the publication was clearly anything but. Perfectly illustrating the old adage, "Figures lie and liars figure," he went on and on with (imaginary) amounts of money he and his wife are "paying out" to keep the magazine going (based on subscription income alone)...only to add, in what amounted to fine print, that once advertising revenue and

Frenzy (cont'd)

pdf format sales are accounted for, they're actually making a modest profit. Of course, approaching it in a such a roundabout way, to many reading the post — and certainly those who responded to it (hugely indignant with me), it seemed I was the heartless witch who couldn't care less if he spent his last dime on the publication — rather than realizing he'd been betting on their ignorance of the fact advertising revenue, NOT subscription income, covers the bulk of costs for ALL magazines, and that the "Philosophy" page of its website makes it clear *IARW* is no exception. He therefore believed they'd be sucked right into his tale of "losses" approaching \$1000 per year...never realizing there's in fact a *profit* coming in of *three to four times* that amount (at the old prices — and, of course, it's further interesting he made sure to break that profit down into the smallest possible increments while magnifying the imaginary losses to the greatest extent). Unfortunately, in this bet it turns out he was correct. But that doesn't make him right.

Being someone who just can't let go of something when I know an injustice has occurred, the matter's still making me crazy — especially since the rat loving community is relatively small, and while I've never had time to make many friends in it, I find it sad to have gained even one enemy... through the offenses of another...who instead appears my "victim". Hence my need to "rant" about it here.

The thing is, it's such a silly point for him to have not owned up to in the first place. I guess he just didn't want to admit he'd found a way to cut the wages of an already unpaid staff (his subscribers/contributors) to increase his profits — even though the approach he took disrespected his advertisers terribly as well (who pay for 8-10 ads per issue, the cheapest of which is \$14 [1/8 page], with many costing MUCH more than that). Plus, I've never begrudged him (or his wife, who does most of the work...and beautifully) a profit to begin with. Lately, however, yes, I've had some doubts.

Want to hear the worst of it, though? Contrary to what one respondent accused me of, I don't want to start a new magazine because I think I "can do a better job" — if that had been the case, I'd never have given my best work to *IARW*. To tell you the truth, I'm still willing — and very much want — to keep giving it. People far too often misunderstand that fighting something doesn't mean hating it, but rather that one cares so very much — and, even more importantly, really believes that positive change is possible. Otherwise, one just throws up her hands and says, "Why bother?" And, this most certainly has been a bother — yet, one I don't regret. Just another proof, I guess, I truly am "insane". (P.S. You can follow the argument at this link: <http://www.facebook.com/board.php?uid=34889987065> [Click the "For All IARW Readers..." topic]. I warn you I'm aware my 2nd post was very harsh [and none sums up the matter as concisely as I did here] — but as the line from *Green Card* goes, "If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a liar!" Another's an armchair quarterback; hence, the reason for listing my own experience to back up my criticism.)

Pet Peeves and Paranoia

Last fall I here introduced a new member of our household, a dwarf rabbit named Ruckus, who was then living alone. About the same time, the article I wrote for the *Mensa Bulletin* was published, and among the feedback that garnered was a correspondence from a woman who had long raised and shown guinea pigs, with whom a lovely e-mail friendship ensued. Having none of these among our menagerie, but having admired them from afar — i.e. through the glass at the pet shop — for quite some time, I became particularly interested in the possibility of buying one. With space at something of a premium in our own little zoo, however, it wasn't entirely clear where such a creature might reside. Then, one day, a friend was visiting who was considering guinea pig adoption as well. Naturally, we began discussing this a bit, which led to the speculation that a member of this species might make an excellent companion for

Ruckus. As our friend noted, at least two of the pet shops in our area frequently house rabbits and guinea pigs together, leading to the conclusion the two species must get along. Of course, this door of possibility having once been cracked, it wasn't more than a few days before we embarked on a mission to determine if such an arrangement might work for us. And, after a bit of consultation with the staff of a particularly trusted establishment, from whom we learned that although males will most likely show aggression toward each other, opposite sexes will almost always live harmoniously, we quickly found ourselves heading home with a gorgeous ten-week-old female. And, having made this purchase on the weekend of a certain April holiday, it probably isn't too much of a surprise that she almost immediately became known as Easter.

Despite the assurances all would be well, we kept a very close watch when releasing her into Ruckus's pen (the lovely large two-story cage mentioned in the December '08 issue as what we thought perhaps, had once belonged to Molly). Although, initially, neither showed a great deal of interest in the other, thankfully no argument was presented. Within only a few hours, however, all that began to change...as Ruckus started grooming his new roommate — and before long was en route to becoming her constant protector and friend. Easter, likewise, began forming an attachment, soon manifested by a shrill whistle emitted whenever he went "downstairs", where her short little legs make it difficult for her to follow. And, she kept on whistling until he would return — a habit she's continued. Thankfully, Ruckus has become increasingly obedient to her calls, thereby ending the disruption to the entire household that initially ensued — as rats, mice and everyone else snapped to attention in fear of this potential predator. Now, of course, everyone perks up for only the merest moment before deciding, "Ah, that's just Easter," and proceeding on their way.

Ruckus, however, will surely never be the same — in the best possible sense. And, I'm quite certain Easter is equally grateful she only had to know a short ten weeks of life without her beloved pal. In fact, her pal will turn one year old on June 1st. But I can tell you without a doubt, they're already blissfully celebrating. So are we.

Welcome, Easter. As your name implies, truly you have marked yet another new beginning in our animal adventures. May you enjoy a long and happy life in our wonderfully "crazy" household.

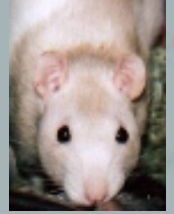


Molly Madvises



MOLLY

As per the precedent set by *Dear Abby* which syndicated column retained that title when passing to its originator's daughter, so this column continues to retain the name of its originator though now written by another. The "madvice" currently offered herein is that of Keela, one of the "noisy neighbors" Molly (introduced in the Dec. 2005 newsletter linked here... http://www.artistinsane.com/Mil_Mania--12-05.htm) spoke of frequently — and who, like Molly, knows a bit about life as learned by her adventures as a rodent single mom. Also like Molly, she has a strong mind of her own with much rat wisdom to share. I hope you'll enjoy her commentary.



E-mail your "Molly Madvises" questions to mil@artistinsane.com and I'll pass them on to Keela. Thanks!

That said, on to this month's question...

Dear Keela,

For years, I have been an admirer of the exceptional actor and extraordinary philanthropist Paul Newman. I think he was truly brilliant in all of his pursuits. Well, maybe he didn't quite get it right in one teeny-tiny area for me, "Newman's Own Lite Italian Salad Dressing." And I feel terrible for not liking it because I think the world of this grand soul. I should like it because it's his creation. See, I tend to eat a lot of salad and I do it up fancy at times. Three different types of lettuce, arugula, cilantro, carrots, cucumbers, grape tomatoes, squashes, peppers of all sorts, walnuts and almonds--toasted, seasoned or honeyed, sunflower seeds, cranberries, raisins, apple slices and cheese! Oh, I can't even list the varieties! So in a delightful combination of some of the above ingredients, a gentle drizzling of dressing tops it off perfectly. One salad into the bottle, I found it to be good, but not to my liking in the truest.

The next plate of vegetation the taste verdict was clinging on to the tail end of "okay." The next had me wanting to toss the bottle in the trash, but I gave it to my neighbor instead who accepted it gladly. I don't know what it was about this recipe that just did not suffice. I love so many of Newman's Own products (and especially support the charitable aspect of the product line). This being so, I wanted desperately to like it, almost forcing myself to do so. But I just could not. Loyalty is one thing, but fooling myself into contentment is not my style. But I still do wish I could have worked the slight of hand on this...because it was Paul Newman's work. He was amazing. Keela, I need the undressed truth on my issue. How do you toss this into some sense?

Wilted Over Wanting

Dear Wilted,

I'm sure I don't have to tell you I'm about to wilt myself, just thinking about all those wonderful foods you mentioned in your letter...sunflower seeds...cranberries...CHEESE — oh, my. I think I have to collect myself for a minute to focus on your question. But...squash...oh — I have to make a trip to the food bowl before I go on. I'll be back...

Okay, now I'm ready to tackle this meaty — or rather, *vegetable-laden* — issue. First, though, I have to say, no matter how much you appreciate someone there's nothing wrong with disagreeing from time to time. That's what being an individual's all about. And, if you ask me, anyone who blindly convinces herself *everything* anyone else does should be exactly what *you* want, too, then you're not exercising your individuality to anything close to a healthy degree. For example, I've talked before about the kiddie pool Mom and Dad have always kept in the living room for bringing us out to play in every night. Well, at first, that was kind of a strange environment, so we all stayed inside it and never tried to figure out whether we could maybe hop over the edge. Then we got used to the noises of the TV and had a few looks around the rim to make sure there weren't any predators roaming around. And, once we'd decided the surroundings were secure, we noticed there was a lot of nice cushy carpet to walk on, and some very interesting objects to hide under and explore, and a few of us decided it might be nice to go out for a creep to check things out up close and personal. Out of this came my nightly ritual of getting a little extra exercise by crawling over the edge, taking a stroll across the dining room, through the kitchen and eventually making a few laps that included a detour behind the couch (where I made a nice comfy bed for when I got too tired to make it all the way back to the pool) — and finally made the most wonderful discovery of being able to crawl in through a crack under the cabinets to a drawer full of perfectly shreddable soft napkins and a bowl just the right size for napping! (One can't have too many nice little hideaways for naps, you know.) Anyway, the first time I or any of my kids hopped out, Mom picked me up and put me back in the pool. And, the second time she did the same thing...and the third time. Of course she was only afraid that I might get lost or hurt. Finally, though, she realized we came back to the pool eventually on our own — or just tucked away someplace safe like my kitchen drawer (or inside the couch, in the case of my girls, Pepper and Monkey), and she stopped putting us back in at all. Instead, she merely made sure to round us all up at bedtime (usually with a treat of *whipped cream!!!!*) and never made a fuss about it again. She just let us be us, and everything was fine.

That's pretty much how I see your situation with the salad dressing. It's not an offense to this Mr. New-man hu-man that you don't like one of his products. Rather, it's a compliment to him that you really and truly love so many others. I certainly didn't hop out of the pool as some way of telling Mom and Dad I didn't love them — or that I didn't think most of the decisions they made on my behalf weren't very good ones (oh, boy, are some of the dinner decisions they make good — no, not even good — but *rat-astic*,

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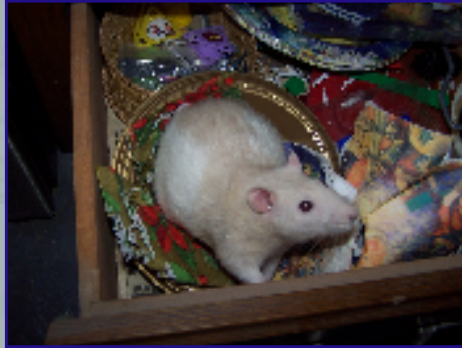
Molly Madvises (cont'd)

in fact!!!). But, I still need to be my own rat, and thankfully, this is something they completely understand...and encourage. And, I'd be willing to bet Mr. New-man would be more than understanding himself — not to mention pretty encouraged by your overwhelming support of his efforts.

Well, I think I'll go take a stroll around the house to work off all that food I ate before answering your question. Thanks again for writing!

KEELA

P.S. Here's a photo of that favorite drawer I mentioned....wait, do I smell whipped cream?!?!



AND — A few weeks ago I wrote Tor Seidler (author of *A Rat's Tale* and *The Revenge of Randal Reese Rat*) — and he wrote back! More on that in an upcoming issue.

See you next month!!!!

In A Nutshell

In honor of Shakespeare's April birthday...

“April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.”

William Shakespeare

“So is it not with me as with that Muse...
Making a couplement of proud compare...
With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare...”

William Shakespeare

“The April's in her eyes: it is love's spring...”

William Shakespeare

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Thanks for reading this issue of *Mil Mania*! And, remember, this is a work in progress, subject to various changes — all aimed at an improved publication. Please send me your thoughts, including all suggestions. Thank you!!!

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