

# Mil Mania

The Official Newsletter of WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM



## Welcome To The May Issue of Mil Mania!!!

Again an issue of *Mil Mania* is arriving well past its intended deadline, but as I said in April (uh, I mean, the April edition that arrived in May), I'd rather send a full month's worth of material a bit late than cut anything out by sending a combined one on time. Still, at some point I may have to take the combined route to catch up, but for now I'll stick with a series of trips back to the past. That said, in this issue you'll indeed find some May-specific material. But, you'll also find much that could as easily amuse, inform or otherwise prove useful on any day of the year.

Once more I've found it difficult to pack everything into a mere 8 pages, though, as usual, there's a bit of mayhem mixed with much insanity. And, new this time around are a few "Musings of a Mental Case". But, since this introduction space is short I'll let the contents speak for themselves, adding only that I'm glad you've chosen to bring me along on your summer vacation — or as a diversion to your workday. And, I hope you'll share your thoughts on the various topics covered, as well as suggestions for anything you'd like to see in future issues.

Lastly, once more I already have several ideas and bits of news to share in June — or, I should say, when we together revisit June in July. And, since that brings us back to where this intro began, I'll end it right here, so you can begin reading!

*Mil*

Volume 5, Issue 4, May 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](http://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 Mother's Day!



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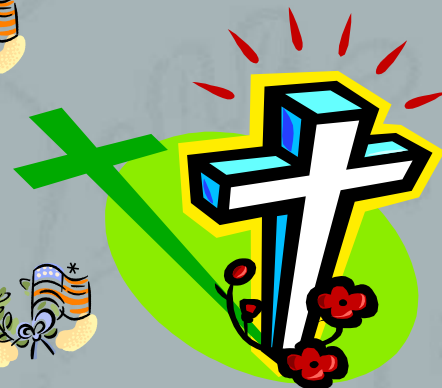
**R.A.T.S.**  
Rat Assistance & Teaching Society



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## Happy Memorial Day



Learn More About the History of  
Memorial Day Here...

<http://homeschooling.about.com/cs/unitssubjhol/a/memorial.htm>



## Music Mayhem

**Brian Fitzpatrick** continues to play live shows at various locations throughout New Jersey — which I continue to miss because of a particularly hectic schedule in recent months. But, I look forward to catching one as soon as time permits — and hope all goes well for Brian and his talented Band of Brothers in the meantime!!! Check out his page at [myspace.com](http://myspace.com) for upcoming dates.

**Michael McDermott** also continues to play selected live shows as he gears up for release of his new album later this summer. Watch for more news on this front — including updates on the brand new website in future issues. In the meantime, you can find Michael on [myspace.com](http://myspace.com), Facebook, the Pauper's Sky and a host of other internet locations.

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

**MYSPACE MUSIC**

[www.myspace.com/artistsinsane](http://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](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](http://www.artistsinsane.com/news_sign_up.htm)).

As noted in the Feb. issue, it's occurred to me 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, this column remains on hold until I can 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,

*I'm trying to figure out why kindness makes some people hostile. I have a friend who loves her job and works very hard at it. She is one who fully engages herself in everything she does, whether working with colleagues or sharing in a catch up conversation over an Asian dinner. In an instance of the former, she shared with me in the latter that a fellow manager told her that he hates when she is nice to him and that it only makes him want to be mean to her. She had no clue of this until this instance. It didn't defeat her affable true-self but left her puzzled. Me too. Where is this guy coming from?*

*Noodling Over Nonsense*

Dear Noodling,

In my own observations, I've long since arrived at the conclusion there really is no truer statement than the old adage, "Misery loves company." *Why* that should be, however, is certainly a much more difficult topic to tackle, and one undoubtedly filled with psychological possibilities and implications. Be that as it may, it would seem this basic premise is the precise concept at work in the situation you outlined above. Your friend is clearly a person at peace with herself and the world around her, and who wishes to share this peace wherever possible. The manager who expressed his resentment of this is obviously in a very different place, whether as a state he's chosen as a long term home or one he's merely passing through. Which ever may be the case, it's clearly a state he's not ready to leave, since it's obviously the inherent challenge in her cheer that's the true focus of his ire. Apparently, he's decided he's more comfortable in his discomfort than he would be trying to change it, and when faced with someone in a state so much more desirable than his own, he's faced as well with the most unwanted reminder that not only is change possible, but that it's up to him to make it start.

What's equally baffling, however, is why some people seem to reject the possibility of happiness in the first place — even before they've encountered any opposition. There are people I know — and I suspect ones you know, too — who actually work at creating unhappiness for themselves. These people are so steeped in their certainty something will go wrong that they construct a little bowling alley of potential failures; in the event the first pin falls without a hitch, they have another strategically set up behind to remain standing in the way unless hit in precisely the right manner. And, should that occur, there's yet another beside that, etc. etc. etc. — until the ball of their life finally ends up in the gutter as they expected to begin with. Should it not, be heading that way quickly enough, however, they'll usually find a way to help push it there directly...then, of course, bemoan their fate. But *why?* Theoretically, of course, the impetus is to prevent disappointment. If one never gets one's hopes up, they have no great height from which to fall. More significantly, though, I believe the impetus is to prevent blame from falling on them for a wrong move. After all, bad things just happen sometimes, right. "Sometimes" yes, but not always by any means. And, they're likely to happen a lot less if one takes responsibility for one's actions and puts a bit of effort into creating happiness. For that matter, just putting effort into *creating*, rather than worrying or tearing oneself or others or anything else down, is likely to lead to a surprising degree of happiness.

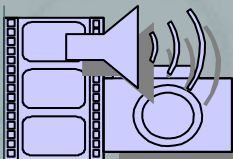
To revisit an analogy used earlier in this essay, the choice of living in a state of resentment toward peace-filled people like your friend does tap into matters of one's comfort zone. And, goodness knows, moving is never easy — not when one

## Psycho Therapy (cont'd)

moves to a new house or apartment (hey, sofas and refrigerators are *heavy*), or a new state of mind (which can involve some pretty heavy lifting itself...not to mention require a dumpster for throwing away an attic full of old habits and ideas). But, a new, clean living space can provide a beautiful, fresh start. And, once it really becomes “home” it can prove pretty comfortable as well.

“Dr. Mil”

Comments on this topic or questions of your own? Send them to [mil@artistsane.com](mailto:mil@artistsane.com).



### Ravings of a Mad Woman

This column corresponds with the Mad Ravings On... section of my website ([www.artistsane.com/movie\\_madness.htm](http://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

**Waitress** — I must confess this is one of those films that took a while to settle, if you will, before the various conflicting impressions it left melded into a simple answer to the question of, “Was it a good movie?” And, though, the answer I ultimately arrived at is a resounding yes. I’ll confess, given the means (heavily including adultery) leading to an end I won’t spoil for you here, I wrestled with that for a bit — despite the fact, I found the actual experience of watching the entire film wonderfully entertaining and couldn’t help frequently marveling at its obvious creativity. Finally, the more I thought about it, not only were these favorable images very strongly reinforced; more and more positive moments and implications crept in to join them until I likewise couldn’t resist sharing the experience with my readers.

The film takes place in a generic Southern town and revolves around a waitress named Jenna (played by Keri Russell), who has very little money and an even more greatly impoverished home life. Married to an abusive husband, she dreams of winning the \$25,000 prize from a pie baking competition and beginning life anew. But, when an unexpected pregnancy suddenly complicates her plans, all seems pretty hopeless to Jenna — until a new doctor and the support of some old friendships combine to help her see she has more in the way of true riches than she’d ever have imagined on her own.

While all of that might sound too mundane to make for very interesting cinema, the visuals are spiced up as we watch Jenna’s every mood and emotion literally sliced, diced and/or poured into a new variety of pie — each with a vividly descriptive corresponding name. So great is her culinary genius, in fact, it serves as a catalyst for both her most positive relationship with a member of the opposite sex, and for another that proves her most confusing. It might be said the latter heavily involves (though certainly isn’t limited to) the adage, “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” Yet it also involves an awakening of the possibilities for friendship to replace fear in romantic relationships, and the realization she not only wants, but deserves, and might even be able to have more in such a union than anyone has ever offered in the past.

Similarly, Jenna learns a great deal about herself as she uses the gift of a scrapbook that includes a section wherein an expectant mom can write a letter to her baby. Though she tries, at first, to use this as the book’s creators intended, it soon becomes a running commentary on her life and the reasons for her discontent. In a particularly amusing entry, she expresses her frustration via the greeting, “Dear Damn Baby...” which is followed by this expletive repeated throughout her explanation of her last remaining hopes being seemingly dashed by yet another effort at keeping the peace with her ever-volatile husband.

While the themes and situations the film deals with are very serious, all are handled with a deft creative sensibility that allows it to be both funny and touching, and which never makes light of its darkness. While morality may be challenged by the characters’ choices, it’s neither ignored nor ultimately spurned. What’s more, the acting is superb — particularly on the part of Nathan Fillion, who plays Jenna’s new doctor, beautifully juggling a mix of oddball nervousness with a hero’s calm — and to absolute perfection by Andy Griffith, the elderly owner of Jenna’s workplace, and who provides the real center to the supporting cast.

Another excellent performance is turned in by the film’s writer/director, Adrienne Shelly, who lends a heartwarming sensitivity to Jenna’s fellow waitress, Dawn — a fact I was unaware of until the credits rolled. Sadly, I watched this film in part out of curiosity sparked by a news story I’d seen, and subsequent conversations with a good friend about the event it related — the murder of this talented woman in her New York apartment in late 2006. While unfamiliar with her work at the time, I now see her passing in a new light — and personally feel the loss of a quirky, creative mind. Still, I’m grateful this sweet aftertaste lingers to follow such a bitter tragedy — and encourage you to savor it for yourself when time permits.

Do u give? I give with the help of [www.iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com). You can support your choice of nearly 47,000 charities just by shopping online and searching the web. And, it won’t cost you a dime. Over 700 merchants donate a portion of their earnings via this service. I joined in January and have already raised more than \$30 for the Rat Assistance and Teaching Society — without spending a penny more than I would have without being a member. Visit their site and start giving today!



## Temporary Insanity

Gym Dandy (or Not...)

I read an article recently about a rise in childhood obesity in recent years, and the assumption fewer hours spent in gym class during this period are, well... *largely* — to blame. Now, however, an extensive study has provided very strong evidence to suggest kids get both the same amounts and intensity levels of activity regardless how much of this takes place as part of an organized curriculum in school. In fact, those spending as little as 1.7 hours per week in gym class ended up with the exact same readings on the study's special monitors as those subjected to more than 9 hours of such abuse — uh, I mean, time spent in these classes.

Where, I ask, were these people when I was in school?

You may recall I touched on my athletic ability — or rather, *inability* — back when I announced my acceptance into Mensa...the point being we all have certain ways in which we compensate — and sometimes overcompensate — for shortcomings in other areas. My focus on academic prowess, therefore, has always carried with it a hope the glaring lack of achievement in anything sports-related might trail behind as unnoticed as possible...or, at least, unnoticed by others. For me, it remains a glaring red flag with streamers blazing that never leaves my view. Okay, maybe it's not quite that bad, but I must remind you of the fact I finished my public school days years ago, yet just joined Mensa within the past 18 months. Clearly, the ghost still haunts — and can still prompt shivers down the spine and hair standing up on the back of my neck. Yeah, to me, the words "phys ed" or "playing outside" possess Pavlov's dogs-like power. Unfortunately, no treat follows the bell — unless, of course, one counts the joy of that bell back in high school signaling it was time to move on to the next class. Algebra, German and advanced English were cakewalks next to gym. There's a reason I was photographed next to the "I'm giphted, what's your excuse?" poster in one of the classrooms. Some thought it because I soared so easily academically. But, I knew the truth...no one else was quite as outstanding — and I do mean no one *stood out* in one area (of abject failure) as I.

Surely, you think I'm exaggerating. Okay, maybe a tiny bit for literary effect, but sadly, that bit is truly microscopic. Even as a small child playing in the backyard with my older brother and the neighbor kids, I was somehow always the one who managed to get tangled in the jump rope, be sent sprawling by a rock lodged in my strap-on roller skates or (more often the case) trip over my own feet. I tried pitching softball for my brother once — and can still feel the blow to my solar plexus when his bat connected squarely to send it right back at me. In other words, even for miraculously tossing the ball somewhere in the — uh, ball-park — of where it was intended (i.e. the one athletic act I actually performed correctly), I was punished. Yup, me and sports were clearly a bad mix.

To get back to the study that opens this piece, I would have probably really liked school if they'd made this discovery back then and cut the time I spent being physically tortured—or phys ed-ically tortured, I should say, for one-seventh of every day I spent there. As it was, I had to figure out my own ways to legally reduce the time spent in the prison of the great outdoors at such fun-filled games as field hockey (geez, was that ball *hard*) or soccer (aren't people supposed to kick the *ball*, not the player cringing beside it?). Finally, I figured out that if I graduated early I could cut my sentence by a *whole year*. What's more, as a senior, I was able to attend physics lab twice a week to avoid playing hockey by playing legitimate hooky even more. Of course, it also made me look like a genius so my mom could brag about her (oh, *how*) special kid and all that good stuff. And, when anyone asked why I wanted to do this, I'd dodge, weave and bob with an adeptness sure to rival Michael Jordan or Muhammed Ali. "Well, I want to get a head start on college, you see"... or "It's family tradition. My dad graduated at 16, so I'm just carrying out my daughterly duty"... or "sometimes one has to make sacrifices to succeed in life."

Oh, yeah — and, if you ask me, sacrificing all that gym class adds up to some great success, indeed.

## Comments from Mil Mania readers on the April issue...

(On the Pet Peeves column...)

*"I always love the photos of the rats in their cute little outfits! I have been thinking of you because I am going to buy a couple of rats for pets next month and I was wondering if you have any tips you could give me for their care.*

*Take good care and thanks so much for your time."*

C.B.

*"Oh! How beautiful that you have a Guinea Pig. I must say that her coat is lovely, so you must be feeding her a superior diet. And what a wonderful story. I didn't know that rabbits and GPs were compatible. Aren't animals wonderful. What adorable pictures. I think of all of you often, and I never have seen a rat I didn't admire since hearing about your passion for [them] Many blessings to all of you."*

S.W.

*"I LOVE GUINEA PIGS!! I have had them since I was a kid. I brought my first one home on horseback. LOL A family had tons of them and a large cage set up in their yard with a sign that said FREE GUINEA PIGS. Mine, of course, was pregnant. I only have [one] right now. You can see his photo on [www.smallanimalfun.com](http://www.smallanimalfun.com) on the GP Agility page. We, of course, think he is a cutie!!"*

M.K.

(On the Frenzy column...)

*"As for what's his name from [It's a Rat's World], I just can't believe how proud he is. Proud of being such a money grubber. All those words and all he said was, 'Yes, we admit it, we want more \$.' Doing it for the love of it my foot. He knows nothing about 'small press publishing'... And, his PS is so belittling. What a walk around he did. Cleared it up in personal emails-- what, embarrassed to be pointed out as the money grubbers that you are?*

*Good for you that you posted...I've never been shy of speaking out on something I felt strongly about. I've just always felt that if my piece was spoken I was in a place for myself and that a different point of view is always welcome [for] debate. On that note... I'm glad you did it!"*

L.P.

## Musings of a Mental Case

### Memorial Day Matters

Given Americans celebrate Memorial Day in May, I thought it appropriate to create a column for something special relating to this holiday. I'll admit I hadn't really planned this from the outset, but rather was given the idea by a comment made during a recent interview on Larry King Live. His guest was Elizabeth Edwards, who was there to promote her new book, *Resilience*. And, indeed, if you've read much at all in the way of news over the past couple of years, you know she's endured circumstances throughout her life to surely qualify her as an expert on this topic, including marital infidelity by her husband, and a current battle with cancer that's been diagnosed as both incurable and currently in Stage 4.

But those topics aren't what caught my attention to inspire this piece. Rather, it was something she said while talking about the death of her 16 year old son, Wade, back in 1996. She shared a bit about the grief she experienced at the time, and the ongoing nature of not merely this loss, but more importantly, how even though he's no longer physically present, this son remains a part of her family. To provide an example, she shared a comment by one of her two younger children, both of whom were born after Wade's passing. Noting that his photos have always remained throughout the house among those of family members still living, and that he continues to be mentioned, his memories continue to be shared, etc., she said the elder of these children (an eleven-year-old girl named Emma Claire) came to her one day and said, "Mom, you know what I think's sad...I think it's sad Jack (her nine-year-old brother) never got to meet Wade." As Elizabeth went on to point out, neither had Emma Claire. Yet, this older sibling about whom she'd heard so much and whose face she'd seen so many times had become that much a part of her own reality, and her own sense of "family."



Similarly, my husband and I were talking about some aspect of gardening a few days ago, which prompted mention of my grandfather, who had always maintained a beautiful, large vegetable garden — merely one of his many and varied pursuits...and merely one of the many times his name arises on a regular basis. Somehow, this prompted my husband to observe, "Isn't it funny how your grandfather's been gone for so many years, and it never seems like that long ago. It's almost like he was just here. How can that be?"

How indeed? Of course, I thought immediately of what Elizabeth had said about Wade. And, though I'm sure circumstances differ for different people, I've always felt my grandfather remains close because he was so much a part of my life while he was here — and left such indelible images on my memory as to remain forever a large part of who I am — it takes no effort whatsoever to keep him close. And, though he would surely shake his head at all the new technologies and ways in which society has changed while he's been away, yet somehow here he still is, in the midst of them...and, somehow, he fits just fine.

Then, of course, there's Molly. While it may forever remain a mystery to non-rat-loving people how such a small, unobtrusive individual could so strongly impress one even during her lifetime, surely to remain a being so present and so highly influential well after she's departed mystifies even more. Yet, her enduring legacy is one these skeptics would most likely envy. After all, look what she started, in regard to care for, education, defense and just plain love for her species — and, of course, a love which ever remains strong for her as well. What's more, though I never mentioned it in this newsletter at the time, we spent our last Memorial Day creating the beginnings of a "memorial garden" to serve as a special place for our pet rats who've passed on...complete with plant life, a fountain, statuary and mementos to commemorate various individuals — including, of course, a miniature mailbox to recall where it all began.



I had a difficult time creating the spotlight section on the front page of this newsletter, as I wrote "Happy" Memorial Day, then erased it in search of a more appropriately reflective emotion...only to wind up with "Happy" again when the right word never came. And, to tell you the truth I still don't know if I'm entirely comfortable with that kind of cheer greeting readers without qualification...which is why I made the compromise of providing a link to the explanation of the holiday's somber beginnings — a time before Memorial Day became largely about cookouts and making sure the pool was opened in anticipation of summer feasting and fun. After all, it's called "Memorial" Day because it's purpose is to recall those who are not here to celebrate. Begun following the American Civil War, a major impetus was to recall those lost in battle — all the military personnel who have paved the way for the joys and freedom we all share. But, it soon came to include other loved ones who've passed as well. Yet, when I think of the examples that fill the first part of this essay, I realize in retrospect that maybe wishing everyone "Happy" Memorial Day isn't so inappropriate after all. Given the joy these people — or rather, these *beings* — managed to provide while still on Earth, perhaps to remember them in many forms of that joy multiplied is the best possible gift we can give them in return...while still keeping it ourselves.





Two of my photos (of beautiful Irises) were selected for inclusion in the May issue of *Magniloquence* — the monthly newsletter of my local Mensa chapter.

Thanks to the editor!

## Magniloquence

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## Pet Peeves and Paranoia

In the January issue I introduced my little pal, Austin, who shares the trait of exceptional bravery with his fictional counterpart, Despereaux Tilling. Despite this, I never expected our own little knightly rodent gentlemen to experience any adventures akin to being thrust from his home to the dark depths below. In a bit of what might best be described as three way déjà vu, however (given Desperaux ended up in the dungeon and the little field mouse we raised last year experienced the precise fate I'm about to explain), we arrived home a bit later than expected one evening last week to find Austin's happy little home upended on the floor, having been pulled from its rightful place on the dresser by a larger free-roaming pet who'd grown impatient for dinner and started to explore. And, of course, pool little Austin was nowhere to be seen. Panicked by a thousand possibilities, we first sifted through his aspen shavings to make sure he hadn't been tragically killed in the fall. Satisfied at last that he was simply missing, I started calling softly to him, hoping to coax him out of whatever hiding place he may have found — and in which he was most likely crouching in terror. Of course, being such a small creature, I had no way to know if he was even still in the room...or if he might have slipped out into another part of the house — perhaps even made his way to the basement...where it turned out our little friend from last year spent an entire week before being returned to her happy home with a little help from a live catch trap.

I should probably add here that you're most likely thinking I really am insane to be calling for my mouse as one might call a dog or cat. But, as I documented in the aforementioned January issue, Austin is no ordinary mouse. Not only is he so exceptionally brave as to attack rats, he's also exceptionally domesticated — to the point he will actually lie in my hand while I gently stroke his cheek, often closing his eyes and holding one tiny paw aloft as expressions of his ecstasy. And, because I take him out for visits on the couch every single night, he's long since come to look forward to this activity, and eagerly roams the ceiling of his cage waiting for me as the appropriate hour nears. Occasionally, however, he "oversleeps", on which occasions I scratch lightly on the ceiling of his "bedroom" (an instant oatmeal box with a small opening/awning cut into one side) and call his name. He invariably pokes out a sleepy head, climbs onto my hand and away we go.

In any case, no amount of calling proved successful in this instance, though he may well have been obediently peeking his nose out hoping I might spot him as both Andre and I scoured the room, flashlight in hand, desperate for a glimpse of a familiar tiny pink nose. Realizing the endless number of hiding places he might go (inside closets, under sinks, furniture, you name it) we finally gave up and I tried to busy myself with other necessary tasks, hoping he might come out as his usual playtime neared. Unbeknownst to me, however, Andre went back to look just once more just minutes later and almost immediately emerged holding my beloved little friend! And, upon spotting me, Austin leaped from Andre's hand onto my shirt, quickly running up the sleeve, down through the neck and snuggling up close against my waist — where he stayed for the next two hours. Normally a bit of a handful to keep track of, as he dashes onto the back of the couch or to explore behind a pillow, after this harrowing ordeal he wasn't taking any chances on getting lost again anytime soon. And, of course, his house restored once more to its normal state (and upright position!) by bedtime, he enjoyed what surely seemed the tastiest meal of his life, and retired at last for a restful night, probably wondering the next morning if it had all just been a dream. Thankfully, with the reassuring sight of Austin enjoying his breakfast to greet me, I was able to wonder the same thing — and to smile in gratitude that the three way déjà vu had come full circle, with all the characters involved living happily ever after, after all.

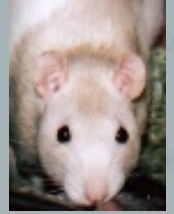


## Molly Madvises



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](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](mailto:mil@artistinsane.com) and I'll pass them on to Keela. Thanks!

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

Dear Keela,

*Yesterday I had a total miscommunication with a friend through email. I thought I was being clear and that she could pick up on my inflection as I heard it in my head and follow me on the matter easily. Well, I was wrong! She interpreted it in a way that was nowhere close. Then I interpreted her response as her being grouchy. She said that that wasn't the case at all! But it was all resolved fine in the end. Flat words on a computer screen can cause so much more trouble than lively words that could ring through in a conversation. So just now a different friend forwarded this crazy email to me:*

*"fi yuo ena raed tihs, yuo hvae a sgtrane mnid too.*

*Cna yuo raed tihs? Olny 55 plepoe out of 100 can.*

*i cdnuolt blveiee taht I chuod aulactly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in waht oedr the lteres in a wrod are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat lteer be in the rghit plcae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm.*

*Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? yaeh and I awlyas tghu-hot slpeling was ipmorantt! if you can raed tihs forwrad it "*

*I breezed through it in seconds flat, which, according to the explanation in the email means I'm strange or my brain is wired backwards or maybe that I just need some oatmeal to charge it up for better analytical reading capability...?? But, seriously. These two instances of processing flat words on a screen have me noodling on how tricky it is to communicate in a one dimensional mode. A dear friend who has known me so well for 20+ years can't track my rambling run-on thought process and I misgauge her stance. Then I can make complete sense out of a cluttered block of jumbled up words that simply state the matter. What might that say about our close relationships vs. those that really hold little or no regard to us?*

*Clear on Confusion but Confused by Clarity*

Dear Clearly Confused,

I'm not sure I can tell you exactly what all this means, but I can definitely tell you I'd try the oatmeal you suggested as a start. A little snack can be helpful in almost any situation! Seriously, though, I know all about misunderstandings and miscommunications. My species have been victims of these for centuries. And, in my experience, a big part of that problem relates precisely to the concept at work in the jumbled writing you shared. As you said, the key to deciphering the words is automatically tapping into preconceived notions of how they *should* appear... which is what people with no firsthand acquaintance with rats rely on in reacting negatively when they meet one of us. Of course, in the case of the jumbled words, the conclusion is based on something indeed *known*. With regard to rats, conclusions are drawn from what isn't, which is where pboerlms — uh, I mean, problems — begin. And, I'm talking more like 5 rather than 55 out of 100 people whose brains are so wired (or so open) as to read rat matters correctly.

As it happens, however, I have a little extra insight to add to the jumbled words topic — which has nothing whatsoever to do with rats. My mom wrote way back in the January 2006 issue of *Mil Mania* ([www.artistinsane.com/Mil\\_Mania--1-06.htm](http://www.artistinsane.com/Mil_Mania--1-06.htm)) about misunderstandings that have arisen from her name. — and I've been with her on a few occasions when these have occurred (not to mention felt her fur start standing up in frustration — or well, realize it would start standing up if she had fur — at having such a troublesome identity). Anyway, the point is, people aren't familiar with the name "Mil" so they forever try to change it into another name they know and which they're sure they must have heard instead — which only *exraterbates* the problem, because the first thing they think they heard is "Bill"...and, having no confusion that Bill's a boy's name, but Mom's a girl — well, they start getting pretty creative with what her name must be instead. Believe it or not, I've heard her called things as far from Mil as Marilyn or Mabel — not to mention the multitudes who try to fix it all with "Millie". And, wow, does Mom's fur start standing up at that one! Anyway, what I'm trying to say is it seems to me the jumbled words you mentioned would be a lot harder to read if they weren't all commonly used. Of course, that may raise questions as to how many people actually remember much of anything they've read even when it's been written correctly. Maybe so many can't recognize the words when they're scrambled like eggs (though scrambled eggs sure aren't hard to recognize — or *enjoy*) because they never really focused on them to begin with. Or maybe they didn't eat *their* oatmeal to keep their memories running properly.

Be that as it may, this is a whole separate topic from the misunderstanding you explained having with your friend. And, there are

# Mil Mania

Molly Madvises (cont'd)

at least a pantry full of possible reasons this might have happened. For example, how often when you're just chatting along in person with someone do they make a comment and you'll ask, "What do you mean?" or make some other automatic request for additional info. When a comment arrives as an e-mail message, though, you don't have this luxury. In fact, you may be reading it right after a message from someone else on a whole other topic that flavors this one, or so long after the topic was initially raised in a face-to-face conversation that it's been forgotten what was already said about it — or you may have been distracted by some tasty treat you were eating at the time. And, maybe a reply is sent hours or even days after that, and more confusion results from still more messages on other subjects having been sent or received or more forgetting having taken place in the meantime.

Thankfully, the great thing about close friendship is that it's always understood you can overcome miscommunications and confusion with the clear knowledge you're truly loved and that friends stand by each other no matter what. In the case of you and your friend of 20+ years, that truth speaks for itself by having made it to that number. That said, maybe the one word most important to never jumble is "forgive". Of course, it might also be said those who recognize this are the ones who know what friendship's "for" — which is to "give" our best to someone else...and remember there's no way to jumble the words for what we get in return...because you can't mix up what doesn't exist.

Thanks again for writing — and keep those letters coming!

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## In A Nutshell

Here are a few timeless quotes from an author born in May...

*"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the Stern Fact, the Sad Self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"Give all to love; obey thy heart."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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[WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM](http://WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM)

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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