

# Personals from *THE RECORD*

## Volume 2

**2000 thru 2003**

To provide a bit of levity in the paper when it was purchased in 1995 a few lines of satirical and comic comments were inserted into the Announcements section label as Personals. This project took on a life of its own as contributors joined in with responses and the Personals eventually became a separate section of the paper chronicling the fictional, wild adventures of the Zorq family and friends.

**2000.01.19**

Dear Helena, Bogash, family, and feathered and furry friends and foes,

Yes, I'm in that magnanimous, festive spirit wherein I can (at least for a second or two) wish every crawling critter on the face of this mud ball a joyous season.

Wasn't that twickling a sensation to be -- well -- sensed. Unless it is deemed by your Druid priests to be used only on occasions where the full moon and winter solstice occur on the same date, I plan to open a business down here which will feature karma awakening and consciousness grooming using twickling as the only method for reaching the divine altered state. I simply can't wait another 133 years for the experience to tweak me again.

Further, it will calm people's karma and we should have fewer hysterics attempting to free feathered critters from their rightful place in the universe. That place, as we well know, is on the dinner table or in the fighting ring.

On return from our festivities with your merry group, we were most dismayed to discover that the Turkeys Are Kin Eh, Opportunity Freedom Fighters (TAKE OFF) had picketed our local butcher and we were unable to obtain our traditional bird from that source. This is the crew which says it's not nice for us to sit about dining upon the sacrificed carcass of a fellow earthly critter which died upon the block to sate our base needs and pleasures. The TAKE OFF crew were armed with meat cleavers and hot cauldrons of boiling water and threatened to pluck every hair off our bodies if we crossed their lines. I rather like my body hair, so I declined the experience. Glendolyn and Sask were with us, and you might imagine their reaction.

Thank goodness a wise woman we know, in the northern woods just outside the more crowded realms of the city, was raising wild, free, fat birds herself, and we got one from her. She was doing this in secret, of course, so Rev. Canada and the Agri Canada animal husbandry examiners wouldn't find her. Sometimes you gotta wonder what kind of human goes in for the career of animal husbandry

examinations. Personally I think they'd be PLUCK or TAKE OFF proponents if the positions paid better.

By the way, I wonder if these PLUCK and TAKE OFF folks have had a talk with their dentist about their canine teeth. It's damn hard grinding cud with sharp ripping dents, you know. At least we are wise enough to acknowledge that some of our genetic make up just can't be changed over night.

Speaking of the night, did young Fenster ever come down out of the hemlock tree, or stop singing "Oh Where Are You Going, Said Milder to Moulder"? He seemed pretty set on playing the part of John the Red Nose and launching himself into the foggy sky, but I fear he was mixing up some roles. I do hope the finale was a good one, and regret I could not stay to see it all, but that youthful and renegade Druid Monk from Skara Brae was just too divine to turn down.

All the best for the New Year,

*Morgane di Millenium Madame*

## **2000.02.02**

Dear Morgane, Y2K Momma,

We were fortunate not to have the inconvenience of the TAKE OFF folk complicating our holiday festivities. They did come by here once a year or so ago on a recruiting drive and made the mistake of approaching Uncle Morton. He thought that TAKE OFF was a command and not an acronym and proceeded to take it all off for them in expectation of who knows what. Uncle Morton is no poster boy by any stretch of the imagination, and when in the buff barely tolerable to those of us who are well acquainted with his antics. For the rarefied and more patrician sensibilities of the TAKE OFF matrons it was too much to bear, or maybe bare, and they were last seen in a state of extreme alacrity heading for parts unknown.

Our feast this year was one of many fond memories. Helena broasted a brace of Marbled Murrelets, fresh from the coast, and Uncle Horton prepared a special pit bar-b-qued poached peacock served with a sauce made from blueberries stewed with wild mushrooms and frogs eggs. Sask and Glendolyn brought some homemade Kootenay Kooler, a matchless blend of mind enhancing elixirs and natural karmic amplifiers. There were also the usual assortment of fruit compotes in various stages of potency, and a selection of fine local herbal garnishes to round out the festive celebration.

Poor Fenster, alas, was absent from the gathering as he has been banished for a time as a consequence of his behaviour at the hallowed solstice rites which he so profanely desecrated. Just after your somewhat artful leave-taking with the young monk, Fenster came down out of the hemlock tree, bit a twickling stick in two, did the dance of the seven veils without the veils (or anything else), and plopped his posterior into the holy Pot of Phorduldae in the middle of the

ceremony of the body blue marking. It was too much for Dagenmorg who has sent the lad into the forest.

Warm regards,

*Bogash*

**2000.02.16**

Dear Morgane,

It has been awhile since the family has heard from you, no doubt you are involved in some esoteric adventure or another, the narration of which we await with bated (in Helena's case, baited) breath. Should you need assistance in raising bail, you can be assured that we will be there for you.

We had occasion to pass through Gold River the other day on our way to visit Helena at the floating fish farm and party barge, and found the residents there engaged in a visioning process for the future of the village. It is such a lovely place, and dear to our hearts, so we gathered together in a visioning circle with the appropriate accouterments and did our part to contribute to the process.

Gazing into the sacred Stone of Hu'puukachulth while sipping a special elixir of enormous sapient property and holding hands all around we saw the following for the year 2010:

After two seasons of dysfunctional responses to an ever increasing wave of legally challenged immigrants arriving in the area via low budget cruises from China and other distant Pacific neighbors, local authorities finally saw the light and built a huge receiving and detention facility on the old pulp mill site. Ever since then the services of this facility have been leased out to the federal government at premium rates, and several hundred jobs have been created in the facility and in surrounding support services.

Not to lose a good thing, the local Chamber of Commerce raised its dues and now uses the income to send periodic missions abroad to the more crowded Pacific Rim locations where they put on performances detailing the vast opportunities that are available to those who can find passage to our area. These missions have become partly funded by the commissions received from smugglers and ship owners who have made an arrangement to take bookings directly at the presentations.

One very remarkable spin-off from the immigrant industry is that now Gold River has found itself on Canada's cutting edge of East Asian culinary arts. The vast number of people being processed through the facility created a tremendous demand for persons talented in the regional cuisines of the Far East, and as one thing led to another the burgeoning community of master chefs led to the establishment of the Nootka Institute of Culinary Science.

Shortly following the construction of the immigration facility the Nootka Sound Economic Development Corporation in partnership with the

Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations was successful in obtaining a provincial permit to build a destination casino resort on the site of the old village at Ahaminaquus. The 400 room luxury hotel and world class gaming establishment attracts visitors from all over the Pacific region, a number of whom were able to visit with their less endowed relatives who work at the resort on a work-release arrangement from the detention facility while they await disposition of their cases.

The increase in traffic into the area created the opportunity for Air Nootka to expand its business, branching out into trans-Pacific charters using its new fleet of PBY's that have been radically redesigned and fitted with Rolls-Royce jet engines to become the first commercial jet propelled seaplanes.

Western Forest Products has also benefited from social changes and new directions in legal thinking over the past decade by expanding the definition of forest product to include much more than just trees. The Narcotics and Natural Herbal Act of 2004 that effectively lifted all criminal sanctions on natural stimulants and related substances, opened up new legal vistas for profitable operations. Today forest workers now pick specialty mushrooms and tend crops of other botanicals where once chainsaws roared, and WFP's soaring profit curve can best be characterized as groovy.

With the change in legal structures Gold River has also seen the rapid growth of small scale manufacturing led by such firms as Heber High Pharout Pharmaceuticals. HHPP employs 74 local workers and is a major customer for WFP's specialty forest products. It is a world class company with products that are high on the list of items being smuggled into the more repressive and backward United States.

If you have had a vision of our future, Morgane, it would make us warm and fuzzy to be able to share it with you.

Vaya con cerveza,

*Bogash*

**2000.03.15**

Dear Helena and Bogash, and assorted Feathered Friends,

I meant to send a postcard, really I did. When you hear the details of my long story, you will forgive me, I'm sure, if not wish you had accompanied me.

Shortly after my last letter to you, I thought to take a small holiday. After all, one can only suffer taking two to four showers a day for so long on the Wet Coast.

I rang up an old acquaintance, Circe, from my School of Sirens, Songs and Solicitations days, who currently resides in a state-of-the-art-deco cave on an unnamed Greek island, and I was off.

Things went swimmingly for a period -- nude dips in the bay at dawn, leisurely afternoon naps in the laps of ... well, I won't say -- Midnight Madness parties with the mermaids out to play with the dolphins, fish roasted over the coals while watching the sun set. Ah, just to remember those days.

Much to my shock, a ship rounded the point one afternoon, and Circe immediately leapt from the beach, where we were enjoying a pre-dinner special concoction cooked up by one former schoolmate Lucrecia B., who had joined us for the afternoon. Lucrecia and I alarmed.

Circe ran in circles, pulling at her hair and ranting madly about earthly men with no sense of timing, complete lack of morals and an unattractive character trait of compulsive behaviour.

Seems Circe had had a short fling with the captain of the ship some time back and the fellow thought the thing was forever. He had abandoned his wife, kiddies and home, and kept coming back. Circe had befuddled his mind with forgetfulness potion, another of Lucrecia's specialities, but the fellow just landed on every Greek Island until he located Circe.

Now, granted Circe is a captivating, curvaceous thing, but a 'no' is a 'no.' This Uselesseyes, the name of the undaunted, rammed his ship ashore. His men poured over the gunwales, armed to the hilt and seething for action. Circe by this time was in a rage. She looks even more enchanting in this state, and what happened next was certainly enchanting, but not what the lout Uselesseyes expected.

The men charged, aiming to take our fetching friend prisoner for their leader. Circe's eyes flashed, the lightning struck and instantly the men were changed into pigs.

We ladies were having great fun chasing the critters and wrestling them down, trying to catch the leader of the pigs in anticipation of a fine evening roast when our sport was interrupted. A great huge one-eyed hairy beast of a man surged from the sea, dripping with seaweed and swinging a club. His scent didn't do a thing for him either.

Old Psycholops was a bit ticked, it would appear from his cursings, because Uselesseyes and his merry band had dallied with his daughters when they landed on his island during one of the searches for Circe. A bit shortsighted on the part of Uselesseyes, eh wot?

Anyway, Psycholops was furious Circe had stolen his revenge, and he lit into we three innocent ladies as acceptable (in his mind) substitutes, cursing all Womankind as feckless and fickle. What a fight we put up!

Psycholops was good with his club, though, and landed a few glances on Circe's limbs. While he was whirling around winding up for a hit, a piece of seaweed slashed one of my eyes. Circe and I were rescued by the quick action of Lucrecia, who, when Psycholops fell over from the fierceness of his whirl, poured a potion down his capacious throat and turned him into a whale.

We pushed him into the sea, where he persisted for a time in surfacing, eyeballing us with his one large orb and shooting water spouts at us on the beach. His aim was not good.

I am currently recovering in a location much less prone to action. You would not normally catch me dead in a place like this, but the cool catacombs of the Vatican are proving an excellent retreat for recovery.

Lucrecia has supplied me with plenty of her Eye Enchanting Elixir drops, and I expect my sight to fully return soon. I yearn for my homeland island.

I have invited Circe and Lucrecia over in three months' time, telling them that the fun of feathered fights in your sportdome is better by far and has fewer side effects than mixing mythologies, however temporarily satisfying that may be.

By the way, how was it you lost the grant for your sportdome to this boring thing called a Hockey School. Did the government officials, in their winding wise ways, calculate that yours was the less violent activity, and therefore would bring in fewer spectator dollars? Too bad they traded crass for class, dear Boggie. My kisses for compensation.

Yours,

*Morgane di Momentarily Morgued*

**2000.03.29**

Dear Morgane di Morgued,

We read with much curiosity your account of your most recent sojourn abroad. We must admit, however, that much of it was Greek to us, so to speak. The lad Fenster remarked that he too had a tale about a Greek sea captain from his mariner days, but that is a story more appropriate for retelling around a campfire, and not in print where the Queen's law may cause some discomfort for the publisher, not to mention a cacophony of outrage and mindless babbling from a number of organized bigots wearing various vestments and assorted accouterments.

We hope that you are enjoying your stay in the labyrinth beneath the Vatican. We hear tell that many a mystery do be concealed in that wondrous place. Once we read in *Another Roadside Attraction*, a marvelous tome, that the most sacred of ancient bodies was there in repose. Have you knowledge of this or of the volume of which we speak?

As to your enquiry about the Rooster Dome and its usurpation by the Hockey School, things do not be as one may first assume. With the help of Morton and Horton we have come up with a proposal for a joint venture blending hockey with chickens in a considerably more exciting sport that will offer fans a much higher level of excitement than a few piddly body checks, the occasional whack between the eyes with a hockey stick or an intermittent skate up the wazoo.

In the new and improved sport there are no pucks, instead each team brings a rooster onto the ice. This rooster is called the “chuck” except in Australia where it is called the “chook,” and Alberta where it is just called sweetheart.

The object of the game is to protect your own chuck or chook while attempting to bat the other team’s into the net. You get one point for each time you can get their chuck into their net, two points for killing the chuck outright while doing so, and a bonus of five points for whacking its head off in one fell swoop. An extra five points if the head lands in the stands, and five more if it plops into a spectator’s beer.

There is no time limit to the match, play continues until one side or the other has lost ten chucks or has no players left standing. The winning team gets to bar-b-que all of the expired chucks.

Currently we are looking for the right name for this sport. Some have suggested “Chuckey,” others “Chockey,” and some “Hock-a-Chick.” We are still looking and any ideas that you may have in this area would be gratefully appreciated.

One of the draw backs about having Morton on this project with us is his predilection to turn prize game birds into fricassee and other culinary delights with reckless regard for their more intrinsic value. A tasty aberration, I must say, but costly. We have to watch him like a hawk.

I must take my leave now, Florence Nightenzorq has brought the plague to our house and left us wheezing and hacking in misery, and my energy is quickly waning.

We wait in anticipation for your reply with names or fowl recipes.

*Bogash Zorq*

Duke of Chook

**2000.04.12**

Dear Bogie, Duke of Chook and all other places whose waters drain into your Bay,

I was delighted to receive your swift reply to my delayed missive here from the combs, as I’ve taken to calling my temporary retreat. One loses all sense of time in a place like this.

Further, I was getting a bit peckish, so to speak, so you will forgive me for replying by the usual postal route. I know you will not miss one small feathered friend, especially since it was not of the chicken variety. The bird was delicious roasted by candlelight. And I mean that literally.

I have quite taken to this place. For the industrious forager, there is much to be had. Every evening after I hear the final tolling of the bells, I saunter upstairs, and low, the regular supply of candles has been lovingly replenished. So, I help myself

to a handful or two. I would also take some of the change lying about on plates and in boxes, but I really have no need to purchase anything just now, so I leave it for those more connected at the moment to earthy business dealings.

I have plenty of wine and bread wafers, though they are a bit tasteless. Occasionally I can find some fruit and candies stuck between the prayer books in the pews. The only thing I was missing lately was meat, and that desire was happily fulfilled by the arrival of your correspondence and correspondent.

By the way, I have read Another Roadside Attraction. Not only that, I was one for a short time at the dusty cafe bearing that very name somewhere at the ends of the universe. Or so it seemed to me at the time.

My attraction simply had to do with my dress -- tattered rags so thin they threatened to blow away with the next dusty gust of desert air. I had just completed a Great Walk of my own, so to speak (though the reason for this would demand another six pages of letter, and dear, I haven't the time just now). Anyway, the men in the cafe, drinking a brew they claimed was Cactus Juice, had an unduly strong response to my garb. They mistook me for some Madame Zola or Princess Xena or some such. I didn't pause to quite catch the name they shouted as I dashed to make good my escape, as I was endeavoring to spill not one drop of my Cactus Juice Cocktail. I was very thirsty at the time.

To get back to your letter -- yes, I have run into the most sacred of ancient bodies. He was in deep repose at first, but lately has risen to look most refreshed -- hardly ancient at all. He is, despite rumours, a barrel of laughs and full of adventure. I am, in fact, off on another holiday as his companion, though he insists on calling me a convert and found sheep. He has other peculiar speech mannerisms, which I forgive him, as he is so otherwise charming and a good raconteur.

He says we are going off on a crusade to a Holy Land. What fun! We get to take part in some real rowdy battles along the way, and even make a stop before we leave this boot-shaped country for a lion-wrestling contest. I shall be able to assess if all my faculties are back to full function on that one, for sure.

I will end a postcard this time. The sacred one says he will teach me to walk on water. Won't that be a great trick to pull at your next Pullet-Punching Feather Fest!

Don't you wish you were here,

*Morgane di Missionary*

**2000.04.26**

Dear Morgane, Peripatetic Pilgrim and Queen of The Desert,

So nice to receive your postcard from the Eternal City. I hope that your adventures with your new found friend are providing you with much entertainment. Helena says that there is a job waiting for you on the floating fish

farm and party barge if you master the art of sea strolling. She also advises caution with anyone who refers to you as a sheep, particularly if they hail from the Basque regions, Scotland or Australia.

Speaking of sheep, we have a cousin down in central Nevada, Renaldo Zorqcarra, who has invited us down for a clan gathering and all out family wing ding on his ranch. Morton and Horton are particularly fond of Nevada ranches, having collected match books and beer coasters from most of them, so we are certainly going to journey down there for this unbridled event. You are more than welcome to join us on the safari, and you can bring your friend too. There is plenty of desert to wander in, and Renaldo is famous for a special recipe Pisco Punch. Olé mi corazon!

sides the obligatory assortment of lamb dishes, Renaldo will no doubt serve up his renowned filet of rattlesnake cooked in juniper juice and desert oyster stew with sage and sunflower seeds. Helena is bringing a barrel of special vintage fermented squid paste and Horton is providing a crate of five flavour pemmican that has been aging in the chicken coop for eight years. Since the nearest neighbors to Renaldo's ranch are over forty miles away, upwind, we shouldn't have the kind of troubles that we had a few years ago when we had a similar party at Lake Tahoe.

Word has come in from Sask and Glendolyn that they are doing fine in the Kootenays and sweet Glendy has found herself in the family way. She has moved into a condo in Creston for the duration, but since tourist season is almost upon us, Sask is busy making foot prints around the remote campgrounds and clearing special vista points for fleeting glimpses. He also has a pretty full schedule filming for the brewery until June and a possible contract with Bill Kurtis to do a special for A&E.

Young Fenster is currently rehearsing for an appearance on the Jerry Springer show, an episode entitled "Secrets My Mother Should Not Have Told Me." This is going to prove to be rather interesting since the lad was abandoned at birth and raised by Celtic monks in a remote monastery in Idaho. Ah, but anything is possible in this family.

Warm regards, mon ami,

*Bogash*

**2000.05.24**

Dear Bottled Bogash,

Pemmican is young at eight years, and if it is not too late, I will attempt to join you at your desert rendezvous in central Nevada for the raunchy ranch ring-a-ling and bring along some pemmican which has really stewed. I need a good gathering to blow some steam and work up a fresh batch. Ole to you, too.

The pemmican I have in stock is at least 100 years old, having been stashed by my ancestor just outside York Factory in 1896, though how old it was when he stashed it our family can only guess. Old Andrew McAnderson was a thrifty old Scot, and a highlander to boot. He was a Chief Factor at the Hudson's Bay Fort at York, and felt the company was underpaying him (so he took the 120 lbs. of pemmican as his retirement fund), not to mention giving him unnecessary flack for having six wives and 55 children.

It wasn't the 55 children the company protested, as they offered ready, cheap labour for the Co., it was the six wives. The fort had recently celebrated the arrival of one Protestant minister who was so pure he kept no wife, only sheep. "Nearer my lord to thee" was his motto.

The fort also boasted the first Catholic priest in the region, who was interested in young boys in order to bolster the corps of church officers, or so he said. The HBC there declared itself doubly blessed. The residents of York Factory, as you may imagine, had other feelings on the matter.

Anyway, we were digging through family records and turfed up a faded old map, which showed the location of the pemmican. An old Cree relative up that way dug it up and posted it to us via Canada Post, which added seven months and 27 days to its age. Lucky he didn't declare the contents or we might never have seen it. Dangerous, explosive goods, as we know, are forbidden in the postal system unless you are talking about stale political mailouts, which are dangerous only in so far as they emit certain gases.

I will not be bringing my mysterious friend to your desert do. Mr. Miracle, who professed to be capable of walking on water, turned out to be both flake and fake. My lessons were on a particularly salty body of water known as the Mer Morte. I should have guessed by the monicker that something was amiss. I did very well there for a short while, but lost my balance and fell into the brine stew. It darn near burned the imp right out of me, not to mention my life. Hoots of laughter came from a congregation gathered on the shore and taunts of witchery were shouted. I remain uncertain to whom those were directed.

Nonetheless, I blew the joint and am o solo mio again.

Say hello to Helena. Tell her I'll have to pass on the job with the fish farm if it still requires the water walk trick. But, maybe I should settle there for the summer, taking on other tasks.

*Morgane di Mortified and Mollified, but Mobile again*

**2000.06.07**

Dearest Morgane, Mobile Mamma,

Grab your shears and sheep dip and prepare for one bodacious summer solstice at El Rancho Zorqcarra de Gallo Roja. Olé! The clan gathering is set for June 21

and a sitting stone in the Circle of San Geronimo del Pulque Bravo has been reserved in your name.

When I told my cousin Renaldo about your 100 year old pemmican it took us twenty minutes to control his drooling. To honor such an awesome offering he has been busily catching and skinning pocket gophers. The skins are for a special cape invested with the powers of the seventh Chu of the Hoguuk Linsho Temple and trimmed with nail clippings from the late master Li Wochu. The meat is being fermented for a special desert paté and the fat scraped off and rendered with select botanicals to create a rather unique ointment and love potion that can also serve as gun grease in a pinch.

Not to be out done Horton and Morton have made a special sauce out of desert pup fish fermented with prickly pear juice, June bugs and Jimson weed. Renaldo has given them dire warnings to not get near any of the live stock with their concoction and the State Department of Transportation has advised them not to be caught with it on a public highway.

Too bad about your mysterious friend not being what you had hoped for. I think that I dated his sister once. It turned out that she couldn't walk on water either, and she had the water into wine stunt reversed, but I must admit that she was sure good at it.

Perhaps you will fare better at the rancho. Renaldo has a brother, Ronrico, who is unattached at the moment and may prove to be of some passing amusement.

Ronrico is known locally as El Ron and has built up quite a reputation in mystic circles. He is an avid collector of an eclectic array of artifacts with spiritual and magical properties which he keeps in a holy cupboard which is referred to as El Ron's Cupboard. It is the blessed person indeed who has the good fortune to become familiar with El Ron's Cupboard and its many wonderful totems and other toys. Some say that not only does El Ron's Cupboard contain more pieces of the true cross than the Vatican, it is possibly the resting place of the Holy Grail and the hallowed stone that translates ancient languages into English, and an assortment of gold and silver tablets related to a variety of re-incarnations in various hemispheres. I am sure that you will be suitably amazed.

Helena send her love. Her squid paste is moldering nicely and will make a nice dip at the party. Fenster is currently in hiding from the Celtic Monks in Idaho. They were more than a little displeased when they heard that he was going to tell all on the Jerry Springer Show. No sense of humour, those boys and Springer was forced to drop Fenster from the list or face certain reprisals of a devious and disturbing nature or unnature as the case may have it.

We look forward to seeing you at the celebration. To find the rancho go east from Carson City on Highway 50 past Eureka and turn south into the desert when you reach the stream with the red water. The rancho has a unique olfactory signature and you should have no problem homing in on it if the wind is blowing from the south.

El Ron's cousin,

*Bogash*

**2000.06.21**

Dearest Bold Bogash,

You are always full of surprises. How was it you never mentioned this cousin El Ron of yours before? Holding back, or is it just that you have so many cousins you cannot possibly keep a running genealogy reference encyclopedia on them all?

Never you mind. Sounds like my kinda feller, what with all the paraphernalia in his cupboard, from the saintly to the sexy. Do introduce me when I arrive at my sitting stone of St. Gerry and his magical pulque tonic. If I have just arrived, you will find me very upright and resting my tootsies. If I am in the reclining position, you may take it I have been indulging in the pulque to take the edge of my travel thirst, and you may need to immerse me boldly and suddenly in whatever dipping pool you are currently using for the sheep.

What an idea! We should all jump in, au buff, as a cleansing ceremony before the real celebrations begin. It is always wise to start with a clean slate, my auntie Margarite used to say. And it will give me a good chance, providing I still have my eyesight, to take ccess of El Ron's other attributes.

Rendaldo will be happy to hear that there is pemmican for him, though I did have a time saving enough of it. Here's what happened: The Cree relative who dug the stuff up for us figured he should have a part, and in true family tradition, word got round about it and the whole tribe from Fort York arrived one Saturday while I was out piddling in the back 350, looking for an unusual herb to protect me from northern climate zombies. (There is currently one in our neighborhood ? cold-hearted things they are.)

But Old Albert LaNez can sniff pemmican at 500 yards, and it didn't take long for him to locate what he figured was partway his inheritance anyway. I arrived home in time to wrestle back some 50 lbs. of it, which should suffice for El Rancho Zorqcarra de Gallo Roja if we use it as an hors-d'oeuvre. Mixed with the pocket gopher fat love potion/gun grease, and smeared thinly on dried wings of June bugs, it makes a delightfully crisp snack.

Ritz tried to buy the recipe from my family years ago, but granny would have none of it, and the best simulation Ritz came up with was the round cheese cracker. Woefully pitiful compared to the real thing. None of the love bug kick. Nowhere near the crunch.

After saving the pemmican, I fed Old Albert and crew with some nicely-aged prairie pork and beans, and they blew themselves north again. I would have invited them to the El Rancho celebrations, but I was pretty peeved about the pemmican.

Ask Renaldo if I might try on the sacred cape during the festivities. I do love a good costume, and I will be bringing my own.

The summer solstice celebrations always hold a special half-acre in my heart, as it is the date of my grande entry into this world.

The rest of the crew in this neck of the woods have faded into the forest for the time.

Gwyned tried the Great Walk this year, and while finishing, whines that her fair feet are festering in pain. She insists on going daily to a brooding, muscular Oriental lad she claims gives the most rousing foot rubs in the universe. She won't pass over his name, in spite of the fact I wrestled her to the floor and sat on her, tickling her said fair feet for 15 minutes in an effort to get his business card. At least the maid is not fickle.

Nynaeve continues to haunt the highways of this island. Perhaps she's blown through your town and dropped in for a brew or two?

How now, is the fair Ariel?

*Morgane di MidSumma Momma*

## **2000.07.05**

Hola Mommacita Morgane,

How about that pulque? How about that pemmican? How about all of the wonderfully exotic culinary delights that Morton and Horton laid out for us at Renaldo's last week? Speaking of laid out, how about El Ron yodeling up all of the above all over Dagenmorg and the Sisters of St. Serendipity right in the middle of the Ritual of Cuajuanxocillo del Portal Verde? Awesome, or as our Aussie cousins might say, what a technicolor yawn!

I don't remember much for a couple of days after that event, I think that the special mushroom soup put me over the edge. There are some foggy recollections of you and Renaldo's sacred cape flitting around in the mists, but I can not quite connect the dots. Perhaps you will be able to fill me in.

When I finally did come round again there was only myself, El Ron and Renaldo left on the rancho. The place looked like Florida in the desert after a major hurricane. Fortunately El Ron's cupboard was intact, but someone filched the sacred stones of St. Geronimo and I hear rumours that they have been carved up into trinkets for the tourist trade.

The sheep dip was also gone, and there was a rather odoriferous trail leading from the vat out into the mountains, we thought that it might have been Fenster, who is disposed to guzzle anything that he can get his lips in, but it turned out to be some gnarled old geezer by the name of Albert with wild eyes who we couldn't make much sense of and who kept asking for the way to Manitoba. We put him on a bus to Winnipeg.

Fenster, it turns out, surfaced in the jail up in Ely charged with disturbing the peace and several other misdemeanors. How he got there no one knows, and the judge agreed to a discharge if we promised to keep him out of the county in the future. Strange thing is that he had Renaldo's sacred cape with him and stories of raven haired vixens breathing fire. Perhaps you could shed some light on that?

Haven't heard from Ariel in ages and fear that she may have had a cultural realignment. It happens sometimes. As for your problem with Gwyned, there are some esoteric techniques on extracting information that I learned from the monks of the monastery on Mt. Toitokoro many years ago during my sojourns in East Asia that may come in handy. I will pass them to you sometime when cosmic forces are auspiciously aligned.

*Bogash*

**2000.07.19**

Besotted Bibber, Boozy Bacchanal Bogash,

Waaaaaaa?

Something in the winds of that cape, I'll tell ya!

El Ron and I ended up swished off by a force stronger than the Concorde to a Grecian island the Goddess of Love herself calls home.

(I must have something for things Grecian, since I end up there in my meanderings so frequently. I will divine the nature of this attraction the next time I run into my Cree cousin, Swampy Marguerite Mowatt from Norway House, who is gifted in the readings of bear droppings, buffalo pies even when frozen or petrified, and seal entrails even when slaughtered by Caucasian Europeans out for a buck - and we don't mean the animal kind.)

I must beg off helping you with your connect the dots dilemma. Perhaps you could inquire from the old codger who showed up at the ranch late and passed on the soup. He seemed to be more or less cognus mentus, though he was inordinately fond of his pipe.

Someone (can't recall who) whispered that he was old Wizago Knawlechen, who from time to time shows up at world events which threaten to fade into blurry, fuzzy history unless there is a singular eye to see and a acute ear to hear. He later records the tales. Sounds like the feller you want. Funny we haven't run into him before what with all our cavorting.

You must have been out more than a few several days, since El Ron had returned to the ranch when you surfaced.

After dipping in the baths of the love goddess and enjoying the rich garden of fruits which border the sacred, cool pools (very tasty), El Ron and I attended a rendezvous with my rellies the likes of which will not be repeated this year.

I may well take up Black Powder Shooting, since I bagged myself several trophies in the women's department. El Ron got a little ticked and high tailed it when I dallied too long on the jiggling floor with a dark-skinned muscular mountain man, who because of the heat, had stripped down to his loin cloth.

Hope E.R. enjoyed his sulk; nobody else did.

Fenster must have been at the rendezvous too, and at least at one shoot, or how else would he have filched the sacred cape and carried tales of raven-haired vixens breathing fire. You tell him I'm coming for him, as I want the cape back. El Ron, in spite of his change of heart concerning moi, did give it to me with full affection at the scared love pools. And I am fond of souvenirs.

As for the vixens breathing fire, I suggest Fenster was still under the influence of the soup or pulque while viewing the shoot, and that if he is still suffering those effects, he'd best get his eyes checked. Thank those stars he didn't try a shot or two.

Please pass on the cure for Gwyned's glued gob. After the combined rancho and rellie rendezvouses, I need that man's number.

I wonder if we will ever see any royalties from old Wizago Knowlechen's scribblings? It might well be argued we were true actors on the stage of life. Perhaps we should form a union.

Waaaa Hooo,

*Militante Morgan di Mountain Maiden*

## **2000.08.16**

"Give me liberty, or give me beer." BZ

The Zorq family has embarked upon yet another adventure and will be recounting their recent exploits upon return, which may not be until after all of the wine in California runs out. Have a good end of summer and keep one step ahead of the process servers.

*Bogash, Helena, Fenster, Morton, Horton, Glendolyn, Sask, Renaldo, El Ron* and other assorted deviants to bizarre to mention in polite society

## **2000.09.06**

Dear Morgane, Militante:

The family has just returned from its summer sojourn and what an experience it was. There was an endless trail of shattered tires down the freeways of America,

some say caused by fire in stone. I guess if you drive on burning rocks something is bound to give.

The whole family had a good hoo har over your adventures with El Ron on a Grecian Island. Some how it seems appropriate that as you say you “were swished off” there. It certainly caught Fenster’s attention who is now eagerly anticipating his next visit to Renaldo’s where he plans to return the cape and no doubt plead pitifully for some indulgences that will more than likely involve El Ron.

We just heard from cousin Sterbolo Zorquolini down in Napa County. He is pretty disturbed with Mother Nature at the moment. Seems the latest geological realignment in the region happened just as he was finishing off several hundred gallons of this year’s batch of Vin di Buzzard Blood when the tremor tipped the whole thing over and it spilled into the creek. Even the feast of stewed trout and bull frogs that floated up in the local reservoir did not cheer him up, though he managed to eat his fair share.

The recent misadventures suffered by the local fish farm operators has Helena seriously considering dropping salmon farming from her repertoire. She feels that it may be giving her a bad reputation. Who knows what new enterprise she will come up with in replacement. One hears that wrestling in Jell-O may become the new rage.

Vaya con cerveza,

*Bogash*

Housat goingk all you Zork peoples?

Viktor here. I bets you didn thinks you wood ever hear from me again, heh?

You guyses can see I have made my name more Amerikan, heh? Andt, am I better with the Anglich and spellingk? Yous bets! I bin to the Knight Skools for poor illegals immegrunts. Did you knows you guys Canadian taxpayrs pay for this nise servise? Even for former internationle terrorists like me! Nise to be where churches peoples and governments thinks everybody deserve 25 chances to prove they okay, level one.

Never you mind! Bets you thought yous never hear from me again. Well, here I am! So you never pay me Amerikan bucks for the fat little bourgeoisieie lady Morgane when she was goingk to be sculptor modle and I kidnaps. I forgive. Viktor have big hart.

And you know how she bad treat me when I fall, boink, in luf with her. Walking out and makingk so much fun of me cryink. I think it show my big hart. But no, Morgane Amerikan type woman, she big macho. She laugh and spit and walk out. She more macho than those relatifs you send after me from Silisy. Trying to put me in concrit shoos.

You knows now we Russians knows better how to get guys bottom of sea. Put in army, put in sub, boom! Alas, we tryngk to rescew. Too bad. Not even need to be secrit. Even heads of state can particpate, and shoot some billiards and smoke cigars (best from Havana) while waiting pretend rescew. Anyway, not reason I write.

I get into country here when I find location of this rag paper where you peoples bin writing these letters about how Canada life is. I thinks, now I not terrorist any longer. I been to meditation place in gulag (old camps being developed as retreats from Russia economic department). Lots of nice quiet time to rethink thinks. Hey, I think, I know enuff this Canada and Canadians, women special. So, I floats over in lettel row boat my grandfather he had. During time when big rusty ships bringing lots of Chinese, so I figure Coast Guard forget leetle me. Not so.

Coast Guard rescue me. Give me hot soup with real chicken in it (maybe from youse farm, eh?), change of nice warm dry kloth. They ask, hey, you Chinese? You Korea?

Okay, happy visit, and they take me to nearest little vacation town on west coast Vancouver Island. But not Gold River. This Bamfield. I hitchhike, trade smokes some peoples call them First Peoples here, some vodka and land in Port Alberni with mill job. Say I don need talk too much just tow lines. Okay. So far, so good.

Now it time for me to joins you. Yous bin my inspirashion to come to free west, join dirty Kapitalists, find me tuff Kanada woman.

I know you nots on holidays, like you writes in paper. So now, tell true. We need to come make healing ceremonies together like I learn from First Peoples I hitchhike. I bring lots Russian vodka. Coast Guards culd only drink one bottle each.

Send to me at the mill, I likes to hear from you all friends,

*Viktor*

**2000.09.20**

Dear Boggie and family,

I hear old Victor is back in the environs. Won't that old vodka-soaked, rimy varmint ever get the message?

Don't give him my address, or I shall send a plague of no-see-ums your way the like of which you have not seen in decades. (Global warming has encouraged an unusual hatch in these parts - so if you have a good recipe which includes them, please forward).

Some of my distant relatives actually gave old Victor a ride to Pt. Alberni when he was hitch hiking to Gold River. The nerve.

We are currently incommunicado and I have made it clear to them that I will only forgive if they invite me to the next large potlatch, when my thirtieth-removed niece becomes a cedar skirt dancer under the Full Moon of the Fall Festival, which happens to coincide with the Chinese Moon Festival. Interesting about cultural archeology, eh what? It promises to be quite a show.

Anyway, the rellies swear we shall be allowed to use the cedar skirt branches after the ceremony to thrash each other with in the steaming sweat tents before we jump into the refreshing ocean. Hoo-hee. I can hardly wait.

I am trying to improve my mind these days by taking courses concerning culture and community. Occasionally I complement this with physical exertions.

Wish me luck,

*Morgane*

Hey yous Boggishoff,

Why you no invites me to this Summer Fest? I read in yor paper rags wen I looks to sees my letter. Nice you prints my letter. Thank all of yous brothers in arms. (Don't worry Fenster, it only expretion!).

But all salmon BBQ and big party with masks and maps? I learn to read maps too on way here in grandfather's rowboat. And I likes salmon. Even I learn how to eat smokit and dry in sun.

I having little sulk now. Hurrie and rite, this mill work for seagulls.

*Viktor*

**2000.10.04**

Dear Morgane, mon cheri,

Your old buddy Viktor is making a pest of himself looking for some adventure and hounding us for directions to your hidey hole. We figured that it would be more peaceful around here if we just handed him a map and sent him on his way, but then Uncle Morton had a better idea. He figures that you will pay us the big bucks to keep the drooling reprobate away from your abode, so for a small weekly retainer of several hundred shekels or an equivalent amount of juniper and huckleberry joy juice that you use in the Rite of the Seven Virgins at the time of the first new moon of autumn. It would be no great loss to you since it appears that that particular rite may be fading away. As it is we understand that last year's rite was cancelled because only four qualified virgins could be found, and two of those had somewhat dubious credentials.

You must report to us the details of the festivities held at the twining of the Fall Festival and Chinese Moon Festival. The karmic energy must have been strong

enough to facilitate bending steel rails with a single glance. Bringing out certain potions and the use of several incantations that I can think of at such a time is a cosmic risk that makes one tremble to contemplate. There would not be enough frog tongues and bat livers in the province to provide an antidote to some of the side effects should a careless moment redirect energy in an unfortuitous direction.

Helena has sold the floating fish farm and party barge to a couple of refugees from the Haight-Ashbury. The opprobrium of owning a salmon farm was too much to bear as many of her more enlightened friends were being less than polite in their avoidance of her company.

Currently she is in Mexico on a short assignment for a local pharmaceutical company that is interested in rare botanicals.

As always,

*Bogash*

**2000.10.18**

Boorish Bogash,

How could you use both 'mon cheri' and 'money' in the same breath. You know darn well what that means - you're after my cyber stocks, my special Midas-touch cybers, which, instead of taking the way to Davey Jones like all the rest did over this past year, shot for the stars like Voyager II.

You think I'd waste all those years I spent hanging out at paintball fields and video arcades with testosterone-charged teenies, their hair gelled pink and electric blue, cunningly gathering insider tips from their pubescent CEO lips, just to pass the bucks over to you.

You know how long and hard I had to actually JOG to wear off those bags and buckets of Doritos and cheese puffs and tins of Coke these guys consume at parties? Tins, I said. And yes, JOG.

Waste all those efforts just to pay you off so you won't sick ol' Vik on me?

I've dealt with him before. You see how you like it once you've had his garlic-and-vodka-soaked breath wheezing all over your collar for a couple of weeks.

Just to let you know how really royally Teed off I am, I will not pass on to you the location of our Sawhain fest this year. It's probably going to be one of the best, too.

Candace Savage is coming this year, and bringing with her old Mother Johnson from Lancashire and many of her friends. We have tracked down Sarah Viber and Edmond Robinson. They're incarcerated in a special underground cave below a magic midden right now.

On the night in question, we will be dressing them in pointed black hats, and serving them a finely-aged brew of rotted pumpkin innerds spiced with just enough spider venom and slug slime to let them know what a churning stomach means. After that we will lock them in the stocks and let the special guests of the night decide their fate.

Never fear, however, we know the limits of 'restorative justice' - our First Nations cousins taught us. Lots of build up, re-enactment and then a catharsis happy for all. Big party afterwards.

And, no, Fenster cannot come and pretend to be a familiar of Viber -- though she was reported to be a pretty young thing in her day - just to get in on the act.

Our planned feast thus far consists of pumpkin soup spiced by an ancient Mandarin madam (also attending), a highly-explosive apple cider which the ladies of the night from the Villingen-Schwenningen Schwarzwald area of Germany are bringing, and roasted suckling something or other, from our distantly-related cousins in Zeehan, Tasmania. They have sworn to customs already that the roasted item in question is not on the internationally endangered species list, but I've known them to bypass customs before with rather questionable delicacies. Must be that particular way they transfix the customs officer with their aboriginal eye.

I haven't invited my cousins on the coast here. After all, it was them who gave Viktor his ride to Pt. Alberni and fixed him up with a job at the mill. And you're not invited either.

Gnash your teeth! Thou hast offended me muchly.

*Morgane di Haughty Hi Ho*

**2000.11.01**

My Dear Cousins Zorq,

I plead with you not to make me persona non grata because of Viktor. It was not this coastal cousin who lead him to Port Alberni. I am so looking forward to your annual Sawhain.

I have just returned from exploring the autumnal beauty of our eastern province of Ontario. I must say after all that exploring, one gets a bit peckish. Checked out the local bistros and found that the food does not compare to the tasty fare of the Sawhain.

You can't blame my daughter Pandora either. She was away in Greece at the time, participating in the Pooh Stick Olympics. The event is kept in Greece and was not moved to Australia, probably because A.A. Milne was really a Greek. Doesn't everyone know about Aristotle Alexandrosopolous Milnopolous? And what about Christopher Robin? What was that all about? Probably some phonetic spelling error at immigration.

This year environmentalists stopped the Pooh Stick Event while protesting the re-arrangement of the river flow. It seems some creative mind added rocks to the river at the mid point, so that when the Pooh Sticks floated under the bridge, this little diversion added extra excitement when the Sticks flowed around the rocks.

The Green People howled in protest at the rocks and scolded the IOC for permitting such stream erosion. Pandora insists she had nothing to do with the rock rearrangement and was only there to throw her Sticks off the bridge. Why should I doubt Pandora? After all, she is a Gold Medalist in Pooh Sticks. The Greeks sure know how to do it up right. And so you should not think ill of her. She would not be involved with such a scoundrel as our cousin Viktor.

As for Viktor, I suggest we institute the annual Spanish festival of La Tomatina and have everyone pelt him with tomatoes. Just think, we could make this a new family ritual; the Annual Running of La Tomatinas with ousted family members running the gauntlet of solanum throwing crazed cousins. That would keep his vodka and garlic in check.

Awaiting your reply to this epistle,

Your coastal cousin,

*Anastasia Zorqopolous*

Dear Morgane di Tightwad,

Poor Bogash is in a snit since you hurt his feelings with your outrageous premise that he lusts after your filthy lucre pried from the hands of prepubescent cyber moguls and their like. He says that you should disabuse yourself of that particular fantasy before the creeping paranoia consumes your karma and leaves you defenseless to the evil amusements of the Vengrizzi sisters who it is rumoured have come to your fair island to acquire the sacred crystals of Noorgal Kandzulay which it is reputed that you obtained surreptitiously from a Taoist temple in Shensi Province some years back. The full story, we are told, is quite colourful should we ever get you to share it with us. Both Horton and I look forward to that eventuality, as does young Fenster, though such tales may be more than his young ears should have to bear.

As I write that foolish festival on the eve of All Saints Day is fast approaching and I am busy in my kitchen preparing an assortment of goodies for the treat bags. Chocolate coated chicken livers are a favourite of mine. It is such a hoot to watch the little demons chomp into one, particularly the uncooked version. Horton, however, prefers the Harbenero lollipops, although the local fire marshal has expressly forbidden him to make another batch this year after last year's little event. Of course it was not Horton's fault that the fire hall's Dalmatian ate almost a whole lug of them in two gulps. There was certainly a lot of action after that and Horton is sorry that the cab of the pumper truck had to be detoxified by a HazMat team before anyone could ride in it again. It was months before the

poor pooch could resume anything near a normal life. Talk about hot...., oh well, never mind.

We heard from Renaldo and El Ron the other day. Both are in good spirits since El Ron began experimentation on his revolutionary pulque immersion method for curing depression and Renaldo has gleefully signed on as a lab rat. What a pair.

Write soon,

*Horton Zorq*

**2000.11.15**

Dear Anastasia,

Your latter name change doesn't fool me one ounce (and that ain't vodka). You have as much Greek running through your veins as Conrad Black has blood. That first name gives it all away.

Dear Anastasia. Royalty plus Russian with a spike of neuroticism thrown in. I'll bet me moccasins that not only were you the one who chauffeured Viktor to his Pt. Albern rest stop, but you probably downed a bottle of 90 per cent potato liquor with him, too. (And stood up afterwards to walk away; you royal Russians can really hold your stuff.)

Now on to your other points: Me figures you just wanted to participate in Sawhain for the victuals. I can tell you they were yummy. The coup de grace was Nynaeve's salad of winter greens with ginger, arbutus and seasnake vinaigrette dressing.

The leftovers, she used as a body-rub oil in her therapeutic massage tent. Boy, what therapy! After ministrations we boogied the night away.

Young Fenster managed to make it up. By some devious means he located the site (perhaps his sniffer and Sawhain feast aromas combined), and became the hit of the dance floor as he slithered and slid, aided by the vinaigrette. You would have been amazed at his rap road acrobatics. He was last seen in the rosy light of Dawn sliding au naturelle down an abandoned river otter mud slide into the sea, a rather lithe young thing from Cornwall in attendance, and in same state of disrobbery. Ah, to be young again.

But tell me - I find your recent infatuation with Pooh Sticks confusing. This strikes me as terribly dull. But, I am open-minded. Is this a new way to empty the mind so as to better meditate?

If I hear well of you, I shall cast bones, and if they be of good fortune, I will consider putting you back upon the guest list for MidWinter Fest and the Celebration of Lumos. Meantime, consider concentrating on the percentage of

brain matter of your former partner and father of young Pandora as a means of approaching the value of absolute zero.

*Morgane di Mathematica*

Dear Horton,

I am so deeply offended by your accusations, and those of sulking Bogash, that you could not possibly plumb the depths of my outrage were you to find the bottom of Lake Titticaca.

It was clear Bogash was after cash. I had his mandella read upon receiving his blackmail note, and money, money, money was clinking round the hips of his little dancing voodoo dolly as it gyrated round the circle.

By the by, if you get to the bottom of the lake, please share some of the Inca gold you find there with me. A new venture capital company I bet on is swimming away with my profits.

Anyway, you can't scare me with threats of the weird Vengrizzi Sisters, even if they do have mustaches tickling their lips and grizzle and razor burns upon their chinny chinny chinny chin chin chins.

It was they, after all, who helped me cast Bogash's mandella and interview the little dolly.

It is true; by the way, the weird ones visited me to obtain the sacred crystals of Noorgal Kandzulay. However, I sent them away, happy with a few halide fakes, as the season was dry. When they encounter their first mineral-deprived cow they shall discover the ruse. And, I did not obtain them surreptitiously. A master monk at the temple gave them to me as a gift after we exchanged knowledge of certain religious and mythical sacred rites.

But dear Cuz, we must kiss and make up and cease this insult slinging. I need to be invited to your next fest, and am greatly desirous of trying El Ron's new pulque immersion for curing depression. I am assuming it works by osmosis and would love to be a lab rat too. You have my permission ahead of time to dunk me several times if necessary.

Yours in sweet anticipation,

*Morgane di Misfeasance*

**2000.11.29**

Dear Morgane di Cynicalus Maximus,

Whereas, Anastasia does proclaim her hidden identity and latter name change,

Whereas, Anastasia is in fact, Russian Royalty; and

Whereas, Anastasia thinks the lady doth protest too much.....

Greetings.

So my dear cousin, you seem to think I have indulged in too much potato liquor ("Ambrosia" as I prefer to call it) and have taken leave of my senses in regard to cousin Viktor. I beg to differ! Ah, but Pooh Sticks c'est tres amusant, ma cousine. You really should partake. However you have missed the boat (actually the bridge) and it is now passé. Perhaps your open mind has lent itself to losing a few Pooh Sticks and is now a few Sticks short of a load. But that is all history now, as is the Sawhain.

Young Fenster, the gate crasher, has seemed to put it all behind him. I'm happy to hear he got on swimmingly with the young duchess from Cornwall. It's interesting how all the young royals like to all get down and dirty. They would have done well to try my Ambrosia. Maybe next year.

Pandora is out right now sharpening branches with you know who. They are preparing for your MidWinter Fest and the Celebration of Lumos. She and you know who are making Snickerbobs for the celebrations. This year they are making a west coast statement and including cedar and salal leaves. I have warned them that the moonroot may be toxic in combination with salal. So easy does it. Perhaps we could add an educational element for the young ones at some future celebration.

Have you thought about a bursary for post-secondary education for our young Zorq's? We could have the youngsters read their essays "Why I Am Happy to be a Member of the Zorq Family." Or perhaps, "Zorq's Forever." Or what about "Zorq and Proud of It."

Your coastal cousin,

*Anastasia Zorq(opolous)*

P.S. Young Pandora did not like the slanderous mathematical mud slinging at her father and has threatened to open her box (and not the postal kind) of tricks in your direction.

Dear Morgane di Outraged,

Your ire at dear Bogash is surely unwarranted, particularly if you are relying upon those two nefarious twins Vengrizzi who wish among other evil intentions to unveil the sacred family rituals of the Zorq Clan and sell them to sleazy anthropologists for a fist full of filthy lucre. If you truly allowed them to help cast a mandella I would burn the sacred casting tablets and purify for fifty paces in each direction the ground where the casting was performed. Perhaps the atonal rites of Kulgon The Drooler will suffice to restore the karmic balance of your sanctuary, if not I will send brother Morton post haste with a prime chicken for the omnipotent rite of Mezramadubulgor. Of course an appreciative token of gold coin and a posy of rare pharmaceutical herbs would be in order for Morton's efforts.

You can not deceive us with your fallacious accounting of the sacred crystals of Noorgal Kandzulay, we know the true story as related to us by the itinerant monk Sharbalanga who passed this way several moons ago. We have revealing details about your so called exchanging of knowledge and certain religious and mythical sacred rites with the master monk. In fact, we even have a video tape, the possession of which violates the laws of at least seven states and four provinces. We shall not go into further detail here in the interest of the children, but we can say that we possess more than a little admiration for your displayed skills and esoteric techniques. The poor monk never had a chance. In fact we hear that since then he has been assigned as a hermit to one of the hallowed caves in the Shan Shui Range to commune at peace with the birds and spiders.

El Ron says come on down and test the pulque treatment for yourself. He still thinks fondly of you even after your adventure with him last season.

You are still on our guest list.

*Horton*

### **2000.12.13**

Seasons Greetings To All From The Zorq Family

The Winter Solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah & New Year

Whatever Turns Your Crank, Have A Good One

Eat Well, Drink Well and Drive Safely. The Chicken In The Road Might Be Morton's

### **2001.01.17**

Dearest Morgane, Mother of All Moon Maidens and Felicitous Anastasia:

All of us here on the remote chicken ranch send you greetings for the new millennium and the year of the Space Odyssey. Cousin Fenster, poor lad, thought that it was supposed to be a Spaced Out Odyssey, and got carried away in Dagenmorg's sacred mushroom meadow. Daggie's supply may not be sufficient to cover the vernal equinox celebrations, so Uncle Morton is working on a special paté recipe to fill in if required. El Ron has bottled a batch of his private reserve pulque which was used for an immersion event at one of Helena's Twelve Parties of Christmas soirees. You don't even want to know who some of the immersed were, although we have it from reliable sources that Morgane may know more than she is likely to let on.

Uncle Horton is hiding at the moment, as he is being sought by several Florida and Federal agencies for his role in the company that built the voting machines

for Dade and a couple of other counties. We think it pretty unusual that warrants should be issued for the catering service that supplied the lunches to the manufacturing outfit, but anything is possible where Horton is involved. The workers seemed pretty satisfied with the meals that were provided, and were quite disappointed when the DEA stepped in and seized the entire cafeteria and snack bar.

Helena is currently recuperating from her round of festivities. I think that it was the Circle of Drugyth ceremony that was held on the Sacred Rock of Chuuvumchuck during the first neap tide of the year that put the pin in her balloon. She seemed to be right up to speed until the point when Glendolyn and Sask mistakenly ate the fermented pilchard and oyster paste that had been prepared for the ritual of repulsing the four evil humors and three random fates. What got repulsed was the entire entourage when poor Glendie and Sask blew their cookies all over Helena and the two Acolytes of Arugonda who were conducting the event. We hear that it was a rather indelicate moment to say the least.

Do you remember Helena's old deck hand Figburt McDownrigg, he with the pierced lips? Turns out that he is a US citizen and Republican at that. He is off to Washington to do his part for the party during the transition period. He has put his name on the list for patronage appointments and things are looking pretty good for him since he has a lot of experience with fishy business. Should he succeed in his quest I am sure that there will be lots of spin off opportunities for the whole family and we will be sure to cut both of you in on some of the more lucrative deals.

The ritual of the Ground Hog is almost upon us so I must go now to prepare.

*Bogash*

**2001.01.31**

Dear Bogash and assorted:

Well, of course I know who some of the immersed in El Ron's reserve pulque were. Why do thoust thinkest it took me so long to get it together again to write! But then, I did so beg for dunking in full consent, if not full knowledge of what might happen after the event.

I found it quite refreshing, indeed rejuvenating, to relive old memories with El Ron, though obviously he didn't fill you in on all. The pulque isn't opaque for just any old reason. Even young Fenster's underwater video camera was confounded. Though, perhaps his vision was so mushroom mushed he was aiming at something no other earthly type could see. I do wonder, however, as his aim in all other cases that night was remarkably accurate.

You will remember, maybe, how Fenster won the Run the Ron Rum Gamut Game; he made the 27486 inch dash on his hands and knees, balancing a buxom, semi-clad maiden upon his shoulders and a two gallon bucket of the rum on his bottom. I was most impressed at the finish when, after rum-measurement, he quaffed the stuff in five seconds. The maiden did indeed have to take to heel to defend her virtue. Though Fenster was quick and those squeals from the underbrush were questionable. I suspect that Fenster and Ron may come up with a new recipe for pickled mushrooms as a result.

El Ron and I have made arrangements to visit Quince Mil for Carnivale and we have arranged with some suitably square and questionable Columbians to take with us 12 boxes of his pulque. Unfortunately this is as many as the Columbians have room for in their private jet - some other important cargo -- and they are demanding six of them just for transport costs. Two boxes have to go to the local priest (I pray for his unwitting community, which shall henceforth be very fertile I fear), which leaves a mere four for us and the revelers.

As you must certainly know, the site was just declared by the International Karma Diviners Integrated Politically Open Oligarchy -- Ikdi-poo for short - to be the newst hot spot for anybody who's anybody and wants to tingle to cosmic bell bongs. We think the experience might be tantalizingly tinkling. It is just downhill from Machupicchu, and I suspect some of the karma may have been dissolved in rain runoff, since with global warming, the place is getting more than its usual share of heaven's showers. It should be one ki-ikdi-poo party. Please consider this an invitation.

As far as the sleezy Vengrizzis and the other biz of the sacred crystals of Noorgal Kandzulay go, how much do you want for the video? I did so enjoy the little monk, but come to think of it, his performance did seem a little theatrical as he kept smiling to points in the various rooms we visited as though admiring himself in a mirror. Those in the service can be so vain at times. It helps them with their penance. That explains his exile to the hallowed caves in Shan Shui Range.

I on the other hand, suffer no pangs of guilt, and remain,

*Morgane di Muchos More, Ole*

Dear Bogash, Chronicler of All Things Zorq:

A most Merry Millennium greeting to you. With all your knowledge of the goings on with our family, I'm sure your chicken ranch isn't as remote as you claim! Are you sure you haven't been studying Wagnerian opera? We Zorq's do seem to have our share of adventures.

So Figburt McDownrigg is back. I didn't think I'd ever hear that name again. I guess reports of his death were greatly exaggerated. But maybe that is only because he is an American and a Republican, as you say. Well, I'm not surprised to hear he is in Washington. The reports of White House vandalism during the transition period had good ol' Figgy's name stamped all over it. Leave it to him

to remove all the w's from the computer keyboards and blame it on outgoing Democratic staff. Something is definitely fishy in the state of the Figgy's mind. Would you really want a patronage appointment brokered by someone who would remove the china, silverware, pillowcases and salt and pepper shakers from Air Force One and claim Chelsea took them for her trousseau? However, cut me in. I suspect resistance is futile.

We just got past the Millennium celebrations (for the second year) and now the Ritual of the Ground Hog is just around the next burrow. I'm delighted to tell you our very own Vancouver Island Marmot has been chosen as the next Nanaimo Nancy. With the passing of Wiarthon Willie, we here on the Island felt we needed our own foreteller of the spring. Were you aware that her burrow is actually a Royal Residence? When Her majesty QEII wants to get away from Government House, Nancy has offered her burrow. It has been graciously accepted by Her Majesty. I know Her Majesty is well known for sticking her head in the sand. Perhaps Liz will be popping up this year and declaring "Spring For All."

So my dear Bogash, I leave you with this query: How much ground could a ground hog grind, if a ground hog could grind ground?

*Anastasia*

**2001.02.28**

Dear Morgane, Sylvan Sylph:

I could tell you that the Noorgal video was priceless and that I would not part with it for any amount, however, that would be somewhat of a canard. The price was actually quite lucrative and you can look for it in selected theatres this spring. I would share the residuals with you, except that the folks who bought it do not go in for those kinds of arrangements, but I do have a bunch of lifetime passes to any outlet in their chain and would be happy to send a couple along if you desire.

Speaking of tingling bell bongs and tantalizing tinkling, you should be informed that El Ron has new employment, at least for a semester or two. He has been hired by the University of California School of Medicine in San Francisco as the laboratory specimen in their exotic STD department. I guess that the magical pulque mix does not fix everything. Renaldo, meanwhile, is busy working on a new concoction based on fermented mesquite beans and essence of yucca nectar along with a few faunal parts that he is keeping a closely guarded secret.

Fenster snuck a few shots from the vat before Renaldo caught him. He now has a lush growth of hair on his tongue and is taking advantage of the situation by appearing in a traveling sideshow until the effects wear off.

We haven't heard from cousin Anastasia for awhile, but understand from Helena, who was visiting her, that the Ground Hog Day bash was quite the event. No doubt when her karma returns from orbit and she is centered again she will be writing you directly with all of the details. Helena was vague on the salient points, which is quite out of character for her. It must have been truly impressive.

Horton and Morton celebrated the festivity in their own unique fashion as is their custom. Since we have no ground hogs on the chicken ranch their version involves gophers, of which we have plenty. Rather than waiting to see if the beast comes out and sees its shadow and goes back in its hole, Horton and Morton's version involves an old MKIII Lee-Enfield .303 which is used to pop the head off of every gopher that sticks it out between dawn and high noon.

The critters are then stewed with turnips and molasses and served over a bed of steamed collard greens. Tradition says that if anyone goes hungry the celebration gets carried over one more day.

Unfortunately the boys had too much special mushroom elixir the night before and they shot up half of the equipment and pets on the ranch. Cats, dogs and cockatoos are not as tasty as gophers

Siempre,

*Bogash*

#### **2001.03.14**

Bogash, you paltry, peevish, pernicious, parsimonious person, you!

Lifetime passes indeed!! The least you could have done was to give my correct name and contact information in case a sequel was wanted. As it is "starring a misty-eyed Maiden bound in the chains of a Morganatic Monkish Marriage" was just not there. And the chains, I will have you know, were entirely voluntary.

Enough of that! I do believe I will launch a suit. Other women, caught in my situation have been extremely successful following such public exposure, so to speak. Why, I could not only have my own line of handbags, but do dresses for Hollywood awards ceremonies, too! I would probably reap more rewards from that line than anything the court might consider adequate. And, I wouldn't pass on a call girl call from the judge, providing his monthly income was equal to or greater than the first month's take of the video.

Thanks for the info on El Ron being a specimen for exotic STD department. Wouldn't you know it would be the University of California, San Fran? I will watch for signs in myself. What exactly are they?

Fenster passed by en route to the Yukon diamond fields. He still thinks towns which spring up around wealthy strikes are like towns of the old, gold days. He feels sure that houses of a certain repute could well use a man with fur on his tongue.

As for the ground hog celebrations, no doubt Helena was silent, as she too was heavily involved. I await both her missive and that of the delightfully continental, cultivated, regal Anastasia. Tell them not to send postcards, however. My postperson has taken to purloining them for his personal collection. Local rumor has it he is wanted for some sort of stalking crime via the modern method of mailing.

Finally, I understand that, with the flurry of treaty talks and settlements, Glendolyn and Sask decided to form their own indigenous tribe and make their claim. They, along with some questionably hairy guys they located in the underbrush along some rail tracks, registered their claim for two small valleys at the headwaters of Boundary Creek, just past Deadwood and up Almond Mountain way. The valleys are located in the Monashee Mountains, but this is a debasement of the original name, Moonshine Mountains. Don't tell Fenster. Or Ron.

Things were progressing well until Sask's relatives from Tibet turned up. They felt their chances for a settlement in their adopted country could only lead to some cold and inhospitable jail cells. Besides, there was no election in the offing over there. Government negotiators here got into one hoo-hee argument over the definition of who might qualify as a Sask-qautch band member. Sask and Glendolyn claimed they should be the ones to say, as they'd had enough of the government pulling hair over their eyes for so many years, and began to quote lines from the 1763 Royal Proclamation.

Tempers flared all round, and the salmon mouse which was supposed to have been lunch hors-d'oeuvres, ended up helping to create new hairstyles for all. No new talks are scheduled.

Apologize and I may stoop to conquer,

*Morgane di Mater Malaco*

Dear Morgane,

'Tis I, your coastal cousin Anastasia. I understand from Bogash that dearest Helena didn't give you the dirt on my Ground Hog Fest. And there was lots of dirt to be had. But I must tell you, reports of cougar attacks here on the coast have set me to be cautious before any more frolicking with Nanaimo Nancy and Ned in their respective burrows. Cougars are no respectors of Royal Residences. "Bad kitties," I say.

Did you know that the rogue cougar in a northern village played five rounds of golf before collapsing on the golf and country club course? It seems it wasn't wearing the missing Gortex brand jacket and missed endorsement opportunities.

Apparently townspeople were wary and armed gangs of females were roaming the streets before its eventual demise on the course.

So let me just say this about the Ground Hog Fest...in vino veritas. Does that tell you about the general ambiance? Do ask Helena again.

As we approach Vernal Equinox, please give my best regards to Vern. I will be embarking on another of my sojourns to our eastern provinces and will miss the traditional rounds of celebratory activity. I have taken winter cabin fever into my own hands this year and will depart for snowier climes and claim that cabin. Upon my return, I expect to hear about Horton and Morton's latest escapades on the chicken ranch when they realize spring has sprung. An epic poem would do nicely.

Until then, I remain,

*Anastasia, Felis Concolor*

### **2001.03.28**

Dearest Morgane, Femina de Luna et Voluptas de Monasterium:

The folks that acquired the Noorgal video are quite impressed, the responses at the selected sneak previews were overwhelming, but then wonders about anyone who would pay money to see something titled Madame of the Monastery - Monking Around With The Kama Sutra. Anyhow, there may be a sequel and some lucrative endorsement offers. Two hand cuff companies and a cattle prod manufacturer are said to be interested already, and a distributor of chain mail underwear is reputed to have made inquiries.

Speaking of endorsements and such, Uncle Horton has just designed a translucent habit which he hopes to market to the Order of the Sisters of Saint Sylvus the Sybarite. He is wondering if you would be interested in modeling for him and a few select prospects at his health spa, the Artesian Whales of Sylvania, to kick off the product launch. My advice is to use caution here, Morton's friends are an unruly bunch at best and once they get in a kick off mode the product launch will probably turn out to be more of a catalyst than main event.

Speaking of the Sisters of Saint Sylvus, I have quite fond memories of my youth and my school years with them, although I never did get into the caning thing like some people did. I know that they had quite an influence on Helena during her adolescent years, and more than once she has come close to taking the vows and joining the order.

The equinox celebration at the chicken ranch went off all right. Dagenmorg dropped in for a visit and treated us to a traditional rendering of the Rite of Gwylphroc Cludrachae at the apex of the lunar orbit followed by the Morgalist blessing of the seven stones and three sacred herbs of the Alphordulic Covenant. Fenster was absent, the last we heard he had left the Yukon and was mixing

drinks at a gay bar in Port McNeill. Sask and Glendolyn also missed out this year. Their aborted attempt at cashing in on treaty settlements behind them, Sask has been hired by Tourism BC for yet another year of fleeting flashings in interior campgrounds and was required to attend some preseason Host training or some such thing.

Helena did make the event, and we are still trying to figure out the significance of what some might call a dynamic contribution to the rituals. Perhaps later when our perspective has mellowed we may be able to describe it. As always,

*Bogash*

**2001.04.11**

Dear Brooding Bogash,

Allow me to gloat. Unbeknownst to you and the 'folks' (as you persist in calling them) who acquired the Noorgal video, I have just received a swack of money in royalties from a pirated version, spiced up with hitherto unseen scenes, from an exotic Internet web site..

You will recall, if you keep up-to-date on recent news, that a certain company just got its domain back from some unsavory sorts who'd purloined it and were posting all kinds of rather explicit items on the net for public perusal with scandalous disregard for the sensitivities of surfers and other possible viewers. I believe the purloiner was a devout Taliban. In spite of their professed extreme religious adherence to justice, these folks (to use your phrase) do quite unthinkable things to women and lifeless statues and other human and animal creatures whom they regard as 'filthy dogs'. So, to steal big American website to use for own blessed-in-Heaven practices not sinful. You can read a lot about these folks at their official website: <http://www.ummah.net/dharb/> Too bad we can't get a direct line on the head of state.

In any case, the rightful owners of the site decided to tidy up their act and present more tasteful items for public digestion. Seemed they didn't care too much for the Kontorted Kaliban Konnection, as the purloined site became known to insiders. So, what better way to clean up their act than by offering Madam of the Monastery - Monking Around With the Kama Sutra. Sounds quite demure, eh what? And most of it was good, clean fun.

The creative intelligence behind the pirate video is a distant 75th cousin of mine, a Dakota from just south of the 49th, who learned his Internet arts via the blessings of a government grant at the Holistic Institute of Indigenous Internet Surfing and Skills -- HIISS for short in the File Hills. I provided him with the uncut scenes, which I wouldn't have normally released as I keep gems of this sort for my private collections, but that you went and sold the "other" video.

With the filthy dog lucre flooding in, I may just go into the movie biz.

As far as Uncle Horton's translucent habit, perhaps he could market it to some priests currently serving in Africa. I'm sure they could find a way to bend a few more consciences (especially their own) and make the habit de rigueur for servants of their brotherhood.

Please fill me in on Helena's dynamic contribution to the equinox ritual, once you get filled in on just what that was. I feel it may prove invaluable at our Summer Solstice Session. Since we will be obeying water restrictions for this event, we have been hoarding wine and other libations to use instead. I extend an open invitation, as it will also be the half-century anniversary of my fleeting life upon this ball of mud spinning through space.

Yours,

*Morgane di Mortal Mumbblings*

**2001.04.25**

Dear Morgane, Bogash, Helena et al,

As our very own Morgane says, "Allow me to gloat." Her pirated copy of the Noorgal video will pale in comparison with the deal I have in the works.

My recent trip to the eastern province and Big Smoke of Toronto was not entirely all pleasure, I might add. I have negotiated a book and movie deal of Moi's life. Wasn't easy bribing that screenplay writer and the producer with many martini's. Moi even got to sample Mr. Screenplay's martini olives. Oh the joy. Anyway I must start writing about being torn by love from the hot urban nightlife to go to the "oilpatch" or foothills on the northern steppes of Russia (I mean BC) before coastal living. The Pacific Island experience will be The Sequel. I will call upon my Muse to be with me as we show the world what real living is like!

Mr. Producer would like to turn the script into a musical--something like a Neil Simon version of Little House on the Prairie Meets the Sound of Music with Gregorian chants and a Monk's choir. Sounds all right by me. We'll just hope those Hollywood West types don't digitally alter this flick, stealing the great material from Hollywood North. I've even been tossing around some titles such as Gumbo to Geoducks. I'm talking North Peace oilpatch gumbo, not the Louisiana kind. Or maybe this headliner title, One Small Steppe For Anastasia. Maybe even Foothills and Fancy Free or First Steppes For Ana. More Simonesque would be Plaza Suite Steppes or Oilpatch Plaza or Barefoot in the Foothills. Can't you just hear those Gregorian chants alive in the foothills of the Rockies? Some have even suggested Disturbing the Peace would be more in keeping with my arrival on the steppes. Decisions, decisions. What's a girl to do? Art is long and life is short.

I personally would like to see Meryl Streep play the part of Moi and Liam Neeson as Moi's beloved. Don't know who might play our daughter's Pandora and Harpy. Do you think Meryl and Liam could handle the Busby Berkley extravaganza of my life? Can Moi handle the extravaganza? I'm already planning the book tour, author readings and signings, appearances on all the national news programmes and a documentary on the making of the movie. Just let the filthy lucre roll in! Of course we have to find the appropriate thespians to play your parts in this cinema verite. Later, in the sequel, we'll have to document all the fine rituals and fests the Zorq's are renowned for. I am awaiting Helena's tale of her contribution to the last equinox ritual. And it looks as if Morgane's Summer Solstice Session itinerary is well under way. My dear Morgane, think of your half century anniversary this way; living on this earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun. And besides, birthdays are good for you, the more you have the longer you live.

Well, I'm ready for my close up, Mr. Producer...

*Anastasia of the Steppes*

**2001.05.09**

Dear Anni di Steppi,

Well, I'm green. What I wouldn't do for a couple of martini olives just now. Well, maybe you don't want to know.

I look forward with some trepidation to the release of your various multi-media art extravaganzas. Sorry I don't recognize the names of your celebs - another generation, I guess. You always did like to hang with the young and reckless. Must be that Royal Blue Russian Blood

Have you heard anything from Helena? We've been waiting ages for her tales. This withdrawal for such a long time is unlike her. She can only hold off so long before regaling us with the finer details of her exploits, which frequently top anything we can envision. Let me know when she surfaces.

I have been practicing with various friends for my grande Midsummer Solstice celebrations. At Beltane, I and my retinue of womenfolk friends arose early. (To come to this event, you had to have known me for 25 years at least, kind of as a recognition of the age to which I hasten, so you were with us in youthful spirit.) We bathed our skins in the May Dew just as Dawn tip topped the snow crusted mountain peaks and washed the land with her rosy fingertips. We also washed our eyes with same - May Dew that is. Mrs. Pepys had most pressingly assured us that this was the true secret of eternal youthful complexion and her friend Mrs. Johnson suggested the eye bathing as a means of preserving vision into the secret beyond. Whatever. It was, if nothing else, a quick wake up.

Our skins were certainly softer and our joints more supple afterwards, as our Carthaginian masseurs often commented upon during the three hour total body massage and therapeutic toning contortions we all endured for the sake of youthful aging.

We then rolled in bubbling mud baths all afternoon before drowning decorum, sense and caution in some of the wine we had saved for showering (you recall we are on a water restriction). We had enough for showering too, and refreshed, we topped the night by bonfire-jumping and eating Yams roasted therein. The yams were imported from the source of the Blue Nile, and yam is May spelled backwards, as you know. There were some mystic powers in them tatties, let me tell you.

'Twixt the wine and the tubers we were pasted, and our jumps got lower until we scorched the legs hairs off our bared limbs. (At least we won't have to wax for a few months.) We took that as a warning and called it a night. Thus toned, tuned, envisioned, imbibed, pasted and lightly fried, we await Midsummer's with glowing anticipation and renewed vigor. You have an open invitation.

*Morgane di Metamorphped*

**2001.05.23**

Dear Morgane di Toasted Tootsies,

Well, the sun certainly spat morning on all your womenfolk friends at your practice for the Midsummer Solstice celebrations. Thank you for the open invitation. If the practice is anything like the forthcoming event, put me at the top of the list! I am familiar with bubbling mud baths, having been well oiled in the gumbo of the North Peace.

I presume you used only the best mud from the Dead Sea--lots of salt for pickling, preserving and pampering. And May Dew for morning ablutions... who would have thought? Mrs. Pepys and Mrs. Johnson are well beyond the half century mark themselves.

So I have no doubt they would most assuredly know the true secrets of a youthful complexion and preserved vision. No moss growing on these rolling stones.

Bonfire bonding is something I haven't done since my days hanging out with the "young and reckless" as an underground Sovietski Matryoshka (that's Girl Guide to you) before Glasnost. I'm not fond of my gams being roasted like the Blue Nile yams. Is this nouvelle cuisine? Alack, alack now roasted black, most piteously. However, it does give a rush to the Royal Blue Russian Blood.

To answer your inquiry, I have heard nary a peep nor a roar from our Helena. How unusual. And what about Horton and Morton? Viktor seems to have disappeared beyond the wild blue of Port Alberni.

This is just a brief missive to keep my finger on the pulse of my Zorq cousins. Does everyone have a pulse? These things are sometimes hard to tell.

Best regards,

*Anastasia*

Dearest Morgane, Moon Maiden:

I must write to inform you that we have just been paid a visit by your main squeeze, Viktor, and he was last seen travelling down the inlet with a boatload of Vietnamese clam diggers enroute to Tofino where has arranged to hook up with Morton and Horton who are currently attending a conference of Rastafarian Whale Worshippers sponsored by the Marijuana Party as a fund raiser for next year's municipal elections. Word has it that there will be a province wide effort to take control of local government with the campaign slogan of "Smoke the Buggers Out."

Who knows what the terrible trio may have planned after the conference, but it is fair to warn you that Viktor has come upon a copy of the Noorgal video which seems to have made quite an impression. Every time someone mentioned your name here his eyes glazed over and his respiratory cycle went into overdrive.

The party barge is still in motion, can't stay too long in one place without attracting Ministry of Environment officials and other less understanding characters like the Fisheries officer who went into a hissy fit when he caught cousin Fenster using blasting caps for fish bait. Luddite!

El Ron came by last week and traded some pulque for fermented sea urchin sauce and a ten pound block of Sea Otter pate. Unfortunately the pulque did not last his visit as we invited him to join us in our May Day Celebration featuring the Rites of the Seven Sea Sylphs. By sylph number three the pulque was gone as was El Ron's cape and a few other accouterments. From that point on the mists seem to form in my memory, and for some reason Fenster stopped speaking to me, then left a couple of days ago without even a civil adieu. I guess that there is just no pleasing some folks.

Bogash writes from the remote chicken ranch that the annual Pluckers Festival is scheduled for July 4 and all friends and family are cordially invited, particularly if they come bearing gifts. Events this year will not only include a chicken plucking contest, but also duck plucking and goose plucking. The last two pluckers standing will face each other in the Grand Pluck Off where they will pluck and Ostrich for the grand prize.

There will also be a Poultry Potpourri cook off which you won't want to miss featuring all of the plucked critters from the main events. When not out rummaging in some of the danker spots in the nearby woods for secret ingredients, Bogash says that he has been sequestered in the basement working on a new recipe for this event. He sorely wants to take the trophy away from Uncle Morton for a change, though it may be hard to craft a more creative

offering as Morton is a true genius with a stewpot. His dish last year of sautéed chicken tongues with horseradish over a bed of stewed peppermint and surrounded by little chicken haggises was a pièce de résistance.

Give my regards to Viktor.

*Helena Hanbasquette*

## **2001.06.06**

Dear Anni di Sovietski Matryoshka,

Bonfire bonding has nothing to do with the martyrdom associated with Girl Guides and other repressive capitalist pedagogical young women's organizations. Instead it is the pagan festival of burning of sins, of purification. Of damn near passing out and frying to a third degree scarlet, if truth be told.

However, we thought that we ought to try it, and it did have the benefit of sizzling the hairs on the calf and thigh. I have not waxed since and probably won't until well past Mid Summer's Fest. Heat flush, however, is a poor substitute for the rush one gets when cold puddle water splashes up the gown as one is riding side-saddle upon a powerful steed. Isolde can fill you in on those details. Or perhaps those coast guard ladies out in the wild Pacific, where the spray of the sea . . . . ahhhhhhh, the memories.

Anyway. May the sword melt in the purifying heat of the flames and the cold water splash upon the fertile earth forever! Many a medieval maid has shouted this forgotten motto of the Maids of Maeshowrn Midden and been richly rewarded by following the rites of fire followed by cold sea plunges au nude. Ooooh what a feeling! Perhaps this is one new ceremony we will try come Mid Summer's.

I am delighted you place yourself at the top of the attendees list. You will meet Isolde then if you have not already.

Our itinerary and menu thus far for the feast starts with a purifying morning shower of Liebfraumilch (you will recall we are using wine because of the water shortage, and so itinerary and menu are somewhat interchangeable). This will rejuvenate our vibes. We will breakfast on roasted tongues of Hummingbirds upon slabs of Ementhaler Kaese and Vollkornbrot sweetened with Erdbeeren Marmelade. Yes, we have gone sort of German on the fruhstueck. For those who favour a stronger start to the morn we have Handkaese Mit Musik. Don't ask -- just eat and experience. But watch the blowoff! Enough to provide power for all of Frankfurt, believe you me.

This leads into the next event of the day. We will do opera all afternoon, liberally lubricating our local vocals with more wine and other sweete liquors, preparing for the evening's Duos Duel: The Foremost Fecund Females versus the

Melodious Macho Males. To the death, darling, or die swooning. And you know how swooning opera can get what with those tight corsets and cleavage.

Winners left standing will indulge in the evening's feast: roasted giraffes and tapirs served up with the finest of chutneys from the back alleys of Calcutta during monsoon season, served over a bed of saffron and ruby rice. Hope you've had your shots.

The reason we went exotic this year is, what the 'ell, age, if truth be told. We wish to wallow in a half century of love, lust and longing and what a lot there is to wallow in. We would like to replace some of the memories with fresh material, so if you have any possibilities, please extend an invitation and haul them along.

The evening will finish in the bubbling mud baths of best boiling bung from the Dead Sea and the sacred pits of my aborigine rellies in Australia, mate.

And, of course, we are always open to suggestions. Hooooo Heeeeeee.

*Morgane de Millenium Momma*

Dearest Helena,

Hope you can make it, too.

Leave that deadbeat Vikto back in the mills of Port. Tell El Ron if he gives his cape away one more time, something nasty will happen to him out behind the woodshed. If he behaves in the next two weeks you may bring him to Mid Summer's. He must bring some pulque, however. And, a new cape for me - make it midnight blue with silver stars. Real silver too, none of this lamee stuff.

Sante, Prosit, Cheers and other Slange Va type greetings,

*Morgane di Liberal Libations*

## **2001.06.20**

The Zorq clan is on holiday celebrating the Summer Solstice. Watch this spot in future issues for further accounts of their family affairs.

## **2001.07.04**

Dear Morgane & Anastasia:

Just a short note to inform you that we are still alive up on the remote BC chicken ranch. Barely. The Solstice celebration was a success, at least for some. Viktor showed up and put the moves on Glendolyn. Sask was not amused and

now has an imprint of Viktors face on the sole of his right foot. Morton lost his wardrobe during the High Moon Dance, a matter of semantic confusion on his part, and is now clothed in a potato sack.

Speaking of potatoes, we are very busy at the moment preparing for the Pluckers Festival and the Poultry Potpourri Cook Off so must run now.

*Bogash*

**2001.07.18**

Dear Morgane & Bogash:

I am writing this column on behalf of Anastasia, as she is indisposed at the moment.

Without getting into the gory details, let me introduce myself - I am Walter Florenz DeMille and I am the one who is going to bring Anastasia's story to the silver screen! She has been here in the city of Toronto taking care of some business at the castle, but she is also in town to finish negotiations for the filming of her life story, and what a life it has been! We here feel that it is going to be one of the hottest new films for the Christmas season! Merle Streep and Liam Neesan are looking at first drafts of the story as I write this.

But enough about that, I just would like all you little people out there to know that Anastasia is about to begin work on the screenplay herself (Rumor has it that Mr. Neil Simon was approached and said he wouldn't even watch the movie if she didn't write it).

But fear not peoples, she has not been tied to the typewriter! We have been taking her around and introducing her to all the important people, and some not so important. She has embraced them all and they her (Rumor has it she was planning on attending the birthday of one of our city's biggest landowners and theatrical big-wigs, but will be out of the country on a rest weekend. After all, there is only so much a girl can take before tiring!).

With her winning smile and dancing feet, she has rhumbaed the night away in some of the swankiest dance halls. Sampled the excellent ethnic foods we offer, from some of the city's finest restaurant. But how else do you act when you are Anastasia? She is just following what her great Aunt Mame Dennizka said - "Life is a banquet, comrad, and most pour souls are starving to death!". So she is out there living before the parade passes her by.

In her spare time, she has been spending time working on Public Service Announcements for the local citizens. Is there nothing this woman will do? I think not! Her first one, which should begin airing in mid-August, is on the do's and don'ts of cougar attacks. But there hasn't been a cougar seen in this part of the country in years, one might say. Well there is always a first time and then you'll be ready. Anastasia is just looking into your future, with that insight of

hers, and preparing the local inhabitants of our Province for what may well be a future blight on our land.

Yours humbly,

*Walter F. DeMille*

Dearest Helena:

How I ended up at the Housesteads alter after MidSummer's Fest is anybody's guess. And, I would appreciate those who have a good guess writing me with all speed, so that if I need take precautions against being smitten with any unforeseen disease or other calamity, I might do so posthaste. (Though as one knows, that expression no longer carries much credibility.)

Perhaps I will even offer a reward to those who manage to strike true, and thus avert undue suffering on my part. After all, I'm sure I was drugged on some mind-altering substance or other and that the courts would find me not guilty on that basis. What did Ron put in that pulque he brought?

Drinking the pulque, during a break in the mud-slinging war in the sacred volcanic mudpit baths is about all I remember before my appearance at the altar.

Seems I willingly attended there with one Bryarian, who claimed I was one of the best dancing partners he'd ever met at any world MidSummer's Fest. I don't recall meeting him there, but since the dancing started after the mud war, when we were all suitably slimed and slippery (so he tells me) that's not surprising.

After plying me with a little more of Ron's pulque - and as the old expression goes, I am so pliable - Bryarian lavished upon me so many compliments and sang to me so many fair songs, I was quite smitten. He claimed then that I was as beautiful and potent a goddess as Alaisiages Beda, one of the goddesses to whom the alter had been dedicated.

Alas, I almost met the same fate as that now forgotten and disappeared lady.

Seems Bryarian was merely looking for slave labour, and had sized up my height, muscle and bone mass and flexibility whilst I was dancing and decided I was the slave for him.

After the dose of alter pulque wore off, I found myself high on the rooftops of Bryarian's castle in the black forests somewhere in the northern reaches of the Rhine. I could hear the cows of Holland, but no one could hear my maidenly calls for help.

There, I laboured in the sweltering hell-like heat of the burning sun for eight days, five hours and 26 minutes re-shingling this monster's home. He sat in the little patches of shade, drank beer and watched me work. Occasionally for entertainment he would throw various tools at me to test my reflexes and see if there was still enough ooomph in me to continue working into the evening.

Bryarian's excuse for abusing me thus was that he was told that in my secret former life as a general contractor, I had forgotten to suspend bouquets of evergreens from the roof rafters upon finishing a job, to ensure well-being and fertility of the household. Some scoundrel at one of Bryarian's drinking marathons suggested I had done the previous slovenly roof job at his castle. Seems the roof collapsed during one Teutonic Tempest, and destroyed Bryarian's alcohol cellar. This was an insult above all he would not tolerate. He didn't particularly care about the fertility part except as it pertained to grapes and hops.

I escaped before the final few sections of the castle top were done. Bryarian succumbed to a long bout of drinking while balanced in a spot of shade near one of the peaks. Ultimately he tipped, rolled and plummeted. I didn't stick around to see if he squashed, but judging by the cursing which rose on the wind as I rushed away, he remained mostly unhurt.

Please pass his name out over the Maidens for Modesty and Morality network, lest he strike again. May next year's MidSummer's Fest end more positively for me.

*Morgane di Much Maligned*

(I ache all over)

## **2001.08.01**

Dear Walter F DeM:

Nice to hear from you, and give our regards to Anastasia whose absence from this coast has left a gaping aperture in the cosmic aura of our fair region through which untold quantities of vital karma of various hues has escaped into the primordial soup of the galaxial nether regions. Even the sacred bag of esoteric talismans which Dagenmorg has often used with much success in the most challenging of situations has failed to produce an antidote to the malaise which Anastasia's absence has spawned amongst us. However, Dagenmorg reports that it has produced several anecdotes.

We wait with great anticipation for the completion of Annie's screenplay. Horton and Morton are stocking up popcorn for opening night, and Renaldo has been busily polishing his glass eye.

There may be some future employment for Annie should she wish to pursue her cinematic career beyond the confines of her own particular saga. The folks who acquired the Noorgal video have been scoping out the chicken ranch as a set for their next unique production, and are currently looking for multi-talented writers and other creative types with flexible social attitudes. Fenster has already made application for a position, but was turned down. I guess there is some limit to the degree of flexibility that will be tolerated.

The Autumn Equinox plans are in the development stage at present. The Grand Doolak of the Cigurzian Temple has been invited to perform the ceremony of blessing the first brew made from the annual harvest, and El Ron said that he too will be attending with a box car load of special reserve pulque.

Should you find time, yourself, dear Wally, you too are welcome to join us for this most festive occasion.

*Bogash Zorq*

Dearest Morgane, Milch Maden:

Hope that you have recuperated from your Bavarian adventure. Our Teutonic cousins sometimes do rub a little brutally against one's more refined sensitivities. Several years ago one of them, Waldo VonZorqenwald, stayed with us on the fish farm and party barge for a season. It was an unforgettable experience to say the least. He ate more bait than the fish did, and sucked up a year's supply of kelp beer in less than two months. Figburt was devastated.

Finally we off loaded him onto Horton and Morton up at the Artesian Whales of Sylvania Health Spa and Fern Bar. It earned us no points as the word is he ate one of the rare whales, not to mention the thing with the house maid.

We are making plans to visit the chicken ranch for the equinox. Will you be making an appearance with El Ron and the pulque?

*Helena Hanbasquette*

**2001.0.15**

Dear Anastasia:

I write on behalf of the clan to say that we are all counting the days until your return from the center of the world. How is Toronto, by the way? Uncle Morton is looking for a sales rep there to promote his line of salmon haggis on the cocktail circuit. Perhaps you would be interested? The pay is not great, but you can have an unlimited supply of those succulent stuffed salmon stomachs for your own consumption. They make a great breakfast on toast with strawberry jam. Morton prefers to serve them encased in a grape Jell-O mold, but then his tastes were always a little off the normal path.

Young Fenster has set off to visit you, and was last seen heading east for Alberta on a truck load of logs. I wouldn't get my hopes up too high If I were you. The boy tends to be easily distracted, and with all of those lonely cow pokes riding the Alberta range he may not make it as far as Medicine Hat. Rumour has it that Glendolyn may also be with him. If so, then we can expect a call for bail money before the summer is over.

Helena is having a difficult summer on the fish farm and party barge. First a plague of sea lice infested her smolts, then Figburt lost control of his SeaDoo and it ripped through three net cages before stalling. About 40 thousand fish were released which was unfortunate for Helena, but a bonus to the mackerel and assorted predators which had a feast. The downside is that there was so much growth hormones and anti-biotics in the smolts that now we are seeing 20 pound mackerel and kingfishers the size of hawks. Poor Spuzum, Helena's dachshund, fell off of the barge one day and before he could even wag his tail twice a giant mackerel had swallowed him whole.

Figburt figures that there might be some cash to be had promoting these superfish as a sporting adventure, and has approached Morton for a deal on stewing hens to use as bait. Morton decided that live ducks would probably work better and the last I saw of either of them was three days ago getting into Figburt's canoe with an assortment of fishing tackle, a small keg of kelp beer and a cage full of mallards.

I will be glad to get back to the remote chicken ranch next week. This high flying coastal life is more excitement than I can bear these days, and perhaps next year I will take a more subdued vacation, maybe down to Nevada to visit El Ron and Renaldo.

Caveat emptor,

*Bogash Zorq*

**2001.09.12**

Mr. Producer and Mr. Screenplay in Toronto following Anastasia's adventures

Dear Bogash,

The centre of the world is soft, chewy carmel cream, although some may regard Toronto as a crunchy hard centre. You may inform the clan that the weeks can be counted on one hand until such time as I return to cool coastal living after the living Gehenna, such has been the Big Smoke in Ontario.

Until then, have Uncle Morton send that salmon haggis for the cocktail circuit. I know Wally Flo DeM will adore it. Then again, so will the coyotes. Local residents have taken to keeping their cats locked inside as two precious friendly felines were found dead in the last two days.

A stray coyote has been blamed for the disappearance of poor Topaz and Yum Yum. The crafty canine has managed to elude the Animal Control trap. Could it have something to do with the garlic chicken that was used as bait? I suggest the salmon haggis with strawberry jam on toast might attract the rogue beast.

the public service announcement that I have made about cougar safety has been helpful to the residents here, as the cougars left this fair berg and descended upon

downtown Edmonton. But the PSA only seemed to encourage the coyotes to dine on the kitties as tasty tidbits.

Salmon haggis would make a delightful midway snack at the Canadian National Exhibition. Something else for the commoners to regurgitate as they twirl on the rides. Perhaps Young Fenster got distracted by the CNE carnies after he dumped the load of logs on the high prairie.

Helena and Figburt do seem to have their problems on the fish farm and party barge this summer, with the plague of sea lice and growth hormones raging in the mackrel. I'm glad that Figgy reconsidered his idea of using stewing hens as bait to capture the mackrel. I do believe the hens were used as a sentinel birds to local the West Nile Virus. On second thought, the hens were useless as the bluejays here gave their lives for the cause. Then again, I'm sure the way the team has been performing many people would like to take its lives. You can be assured that the birds are most sincerely dead and no longer with us.

Well, I must go don my party apparel. The Film Festival starts tonight and I must be ready to meet my colleagues. Unfortunately Meryl Streep and Liam Neeson won't be in attendance but word on the red carpet has it that Anthony Hopkins, Helena Bonham Carter and Mick Jagger will be here for the festivities.

In summary, the main advantage of being famous is that when you bore people at dinner parties, they think it is their fault.

Until next time, on the coast...

*Anastasia Di Carmine Carpet*

Dear Bogash, Anastasia, Helena, and all in between,

My summer certainly slipped out the back door without notice. You, Anastasia, however, must have hardly noticed, being betwixt the world of hot spot lights and night time mingling with high-rollers of the film world.

I hope while under the influence you did not make any contracts you will later regret. I know how you Russian Royals can shoot back that Vodka and become more than grandiose in your promises. Mind, I heard you gave one of your best performances after consuming a 26-er of the Kaiser-quality clear liquor in a shooter contest. Obviously you won.

That piece of news was delivered to me by my cousin Stewart Big Buffalo Bones Mowatt, who decided to hit Tarana to join a bunch of his fellow Norway House rellies protesting the recent world race conference happening in South Africa. Cousin BBB would have loved to attend the conference to protest in person, but the feds said all travel money for that kind of First Nations reps had already been burned by Coon Come and his entourage. I guess there's patronage of all kinds.

Cuz BBB was undeterred. He knew there would be something happening at the centre of Canada, because he saw it in a vision following his failed travel grant application. The vision said, 'see the movies in the making, don't wait for the

newsreels.' Apparently he caught a quick glimpse of your performance following your shooter night at the bar. He had nothing but praise, but was concerned at the volumes of clothing you threw off before free-falling on a bungy from the CN tower. He wonders if you ever trained for Cirque du Soleil.

Anyway, Cuz BBB went for a sweat afterwards, in part to prepare himself for the protest next day, and in part because he was still shaking from nerves following your performance. Guess who came to sweat, too? Viktoroff.

He claimed he was now First Nations by osmosis, having freeloaded himself across Canada through every reserve west of Thunder Bay, and needed to commune with fellow souls and borrow a little cash to apply for a job the next day. Says he was going to become a Russian-First Nations film liaison because he'd heard the movie industry was now hiring such nationals cheap, and he had to do his dual-citizenship duty and prevent exploitation.

Dear Anastasia, under no circumstances go to a business interview with anyone bearing the name Victor Vigorous VestViper-Smith. He changed his last name for ease of pronunciation, knowing he would be dealing with plenty of Americans. He also felt they would be partial to 'Smith' as it would remind them of guns.

Meanwhile, I am hitting books, studying the fine art of teaching. Prophets have gazed into their murky balls of mucus and foretell that spirituality is the next great trend. I want to be ready to make millions. I figure if I can pass myself off as a great teacher, and learn the techniques of appearing wise, no one will bother to look at the content and I'll do just fine.

I will be at the Festive Fall equinox, however. How could I miss it? I will bring dried blackberries, salal and the berries which grow with the dew - I have been hoarding these slow-growing devils for five years. And perhaps Glendolyn, if she is attending, will make up one of her smash wild berry-wild bird stuffings with which to plump up one or two of the sacrificed chickens.

I also heard, Helena, that you are planning to bring something called fermented farmed fish foam spread, which we are to use on our hors-d'oeuvre crackers. I hope you got a deal on the ingredients; I understand the market was glutted with the stuff.

Hallelujah for the Autumn Equinox,

*Morgane di Mystique Magi*

**2001.09.26**

Dear Bogash, Morgane, Helena et Toute Famille,

My, how word of my performances do travel! I have only just returned from Tarana and you have all noted the shooter contest and bungy jumping from the CN Tower.

I guess it does no good to explain that the shooter contest at the bar was part of “Blue Collar Babe Night” and I was doing my part to disguise my Royal Blue Blood. The bungy jump was a mere folly to add authenticity.

Who would have thought Cuz Stewart Big Buffalo Bones would witness my Fall from Grace, so to speak? Cirque du Soleil may be my only option left.

Anyway, returning to the Island was not an easy task. Initially I breezed through airport security with my diplomatic passport, satchel and salmon haggis sandwich. Then I was subjected to a hand search of my satchel. Perhaps it was the smell and not my Royalty that got me through the line expediently. What does airport security know about haute cuisine anyway, the gastronomic bigots that they are.

So, the Autumn Equinox and Fall Fest is upon us. Tempus fugit. Summer did “shoot” by didn’t it? I presume you, Dear Magister Morgane, will again be teaching us the finer points of Festival Spirituality.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon after the long, hot humid summer in Hogtown.

Your Cool Coastal Cousin,

*Anastasia, Royal Blue Babe*

Dear Morgane, Dew Dropper,

What was in the dew that those berries grew with? Morton and Horton are still comatose as of this writing, young Fenster locked himself in the outhouse for three days after the Equinox Rites, and my eyes are just now starting to focus. Only Helena, it seems, was immune to the mystical properties of those fantastic berries. Perhaps the gobs of fish foam that she dressed them with had something to do with it.

Glendolyn sends her regards and promises to forward the recipe for the Road Kill Ragout that you seemed to eat without end. So much to the extent that even Figburt remarked on your seeming endless capacity for that pungent dish. The caveat is that no recipe will be forth coming until Glendolyn is assured of a reliable supply of the magic dew dooies.

Speaking of fermented fish foam, Helena left two tubs of it here when she returned to the fish farm and party barge. The good news is that it is keeping skunks, weasels, process servers and other undesireable critters away from the chicken ranch. The bad news is that all the chickens have stopped laying and the cow’s milk is curdling in the udder. It is quite an experience trying to milk cottage cheese, let me tell you. So, would you be interested in taking posession of said foam? It may have some as of yet undiscovered industrial uses, and you could always send it on anonomously to your friend Viktor, or whatever he calls himself these days.

Preparations are now in progress for the feast of Saint Sylvia the Sybarite which is fast approaching. Keep in touch.

Bogash

**2001.10.10**

Dearest Bogash,

Dew berries are gathered at one time only in the year, that being on the evening of the first full harvest moon nearest the Fall equinox. The timing must be impeccable.

If you have never sipped that particular kind of dew from the crisp rose leaves as you gaily gather from the garden, I'd recommend you give it a whirl without delay. Oh, wait, make that next year.

This warning may well fall upon the deaf ears of young Fenster who has been sending me a virtual deluge of electronically stimulated and formatted vibrations enticing, pleading and downright begging for the location of my secret berry patch. You would be wise to tell him dew berries are out of season. If he were to sip the dew upon the rose in this most auspicious of seasons - i.e. during the one leading up to the All Hallow's - there is no telling what may become of his spirit, though I can give you a long list of various maladies which will most probably afflict his body. Trust me; he will never be the same. On the other hand . . . maybe we should take our chances.

Tell Glendolyn that if she sends me her most wonderful recipe for Road Kill Ragout, I will forward to her without delay mine for Menopause Mincemeat Meringue Miracle. I understand she has been suffering hot flashes lately. While I believe a simple newer and shorter hair cut might suffice in addressing her predicament, the flavour of my tasty treat is such that she could easily endure it as a practice run up to the time she really needs it. The only problem is the MMMM has a tendency to make one put on weight. How often we trade one sin for another!!!

Send on Helena's fish foam pate! I have recently been advertising myself as a new kind of guru specializing in consciousness acquired from stem nerve cell and newt research, and have acquired a fanatical following of (thankfully) filthy rich fellows who will swallow anything, if I am to judge by the pap they lap up in my consciousness-expanding workshops. I will serve it at our semester-end charity dinner (my school is the charitable recipient) and see what happens. Perhaps they will all become 'normal' again. Science is such fun!

Viktor has gone underground, as far as I can tell. I can only hope the federal labyrinth of grant applications and semi-sub civil servants swallowed him up during his quest for gold.

See you at All Hallow's. By the way, what will you be wearing this year?

Morbid and Mysterious,

*Morgane*

P.S. You may take that as a hint about what I will be wearing!

Dear Anastasia, Straight Shooter:

The clan is happy that you have returned from the Centre of the World to reside once more amongst us simple folk in the western forests. You are lucky to be able to fly home with salmon haggis in your luggage. El Ron tried to take some back with him to Nevada, but was stopped cold by airport security. The guards were quite miffed when their sniffer dog took one whiff of it, put paws over his nose and began howling and rolling around all over the check-in area. We heard later that the poor pooch was out of commission for a whole week. Pity.

El Ron of course was not favourably impressed when they took his valise into a bunker and blew it up with a chunk of C4. There was a couple of pounds of Helena's fish foam in the bag and the explosion caused it to gasify into a rather interesting compound. The security folks were not too delighted when they had to go into quarantine for 48 hours while the stench wore off. On the up side Helena now has a market for all of her surplus fish foam as the US government will be filling bombs and shells with it. Since the foam contains only natural ingredients this will be the first ordance in the US arsenal with eco-certification and the approval of at least four different environmental NGOs.

Morton wants you to know that he has a film of your bungy jumping event. He figures that the price for that adventure was literally the shirt off of your back. I guess you may have had a few too many shooters before going up the tower. In any event, he is willing to give up the film and all copies if you make him a decent offer. I wouldn't trust him, however, the current owners of the Noorgal Video have already put forward a sizeable chunk of cash for it, and no matter what he says they will probably wind up with a copy. Morgane can fill you in on these fellows, I am sure.

I must be off now to feed the chickens and pluck a few feathers for my All Hallow's ensemble.

*Bogash*

**2001.10.24**

Dear Bogash of Fowl Feathers,

Just wait until Morton and the owners of the Noorgal Video find out they have been hornswaggled (to use the vernacular)! I mean, really! Have you looked at that CN Tower bungee jumping video yourself? You must have feathers over your eyes my dear Bogash, if you believe I would lose my shirt in that bungee

jump. If you look carefully at the video, you will notice that size 9 is not me. I would have to check which security body double it was that day, but I'm sure if you talk with CSIS, they'll know.

You must remember how Morton tried to sell a photo of Morgane, supposedly taken at Woodstock with Joe Cocker and Jimi Hendrix. He 's still paying for that one. American courts can be tough.

I am happy to be back in the western forests after all that straight shooting. I am currently engaged in an enterprise to make salal and salmon berry torte and market it under the name Sarah Anastasia Zorq - Lee's Frozen Forest Treats. I feel I must keep up with the current family undertaking of creating canapés and dainties. Although I must admit, Helena's Fish Foam and Uncle Morton's Salmon Haggis are hard acts to follow. I, too, hope that I can get a lucrative contract like Helena did marketing her Fish Foam to the US government for bombs and shells. Once I have perfected the concoction ( I mean recipe) I will begin test marketing on all the good people of the Forest.

This is just a short epistle as I must go gathering berries for my new interest. I will gladly supply these tasty treats for the All Hallows Eve bash. Since Morton had difficulty recognizing me in the Tower Caper Video, it will be fun to don my latest couturier costume and let the game begin!

*Anastasia*

Dear Morgane, Femina Mysteria:

Too bad about the dew berries being out of season and all. Young Fenster had a rather rough withdrawal period after we broke the news to him. Practically had to tie the boy down there for a few days to keep him from plucking out his eyes, tongue and other body parts. Horton finally had to administer a pint of his seven herbs and four organ elixir which brought the kid around. One can't really say back to his senses since that would presuppose that he had any to start with, and even if he did it would be inaccurate to use the word sense in any positive way connected to Horton's potion which is outlawed in twenty-seven different countries and proscribed by both the Vatican and the Dali Lama.

The road kill situation has been pretty bleak around here lately. It looks like the area has been a victim of bio-terrorism. We can find plenty of places along the highway where obviously some tasty morsel was deposited for our culinary pleasure, but all that is left is ant tracks. This ant tracks thing is really getting out of hand. No possum puree poo-poops, no skunk stew with cabbage and maple syrup, no kitty quiche or juevos con pero. What a drag, and poor Glendolyn doesn't know what she will do for the big feast next week. Perhaps you might supply the Menopause Mincemeat Meringue Miracle recipe?

My All Hallows ensemble is almost completed, a rather plumacious get up it is too. You will love the festive chapeau, it is a milliner's delight and twelve naked roosters can testify to its authenticity. The cedar bark vest is one of a kind, and

the salmon skin trousers are most unique, as is the beaver pelt codpiece. You will be amazed.

*Bogash*

**2001.11.07**

Dearest Anastasia, Most Royal Russian,

I am wondering if your recent interest in salal and salmonberry torte can be traced to roots other than those of Russian royalty, and I caution you to tread softly in your new moccasins.

Perhaps you might consult a seer who can plumb the depths of your collective unconscious to find whether or not in some previous incarnation you braved that mysterious Northeast Passage. It is true this is a myth not highly regarded here in Kanata. And that is no surprise, since most do not even know of its existence. That has been carefully guarded for millennia by secret sects who would deny to the outside world the very possibility. Though, if anyone would put on their glasses, a short glance at a contemporary world atlas and pure logic would set them straight. (They should consult geographers and philosophers.) It was, of course, taken up as the Northwest Passage by Europeans, and the secret sects thought that might be the end of it as far as credibility went.

However, the existence of an ancient peoples myth concerning the NEP has been most recently resurrected by a group of anthropologists, archeologists and sociologists as well as friends in the Earth Sciences dept. of Simon Fraser University. Some, may I hint darkly, have not taken this kindly, and that might explain how an interdisciplinary research team went missing two years ago while kayaking across from Shemya Station to Attu near Cape Wrangll. Some, I hear, say it was the sect strongmen disguised as narwhales who capsized the kayaks. Others, I hear tell, say it was the Original Peoples dept of SFU itself, who fearing their funding might be redirected to the University of Alberta's Mongolian paleontology department for studies in the Gobi Desert, did in their colleagues before reports of the research dig on Amchitka Island could be reported to the outside world.

I fear the only thing I heard about the dig was that material lay scattered about a wide range of land more or less on the surface for the picking, indicating long and perhaps even current occupation. One strange piece of information was that salal and salmonberry torte was found frozen in the ice and that the research team indulged in a dessert on the night prior to their departure for Attu.

Anastasia, I put it to you that there is more to this interest in salal and salmonberry torte than you realize. Take care with your current capricious desire to cook. Consult pig entrails and consume a copious quantity of pumpkin punch before embarking on this new career. You may find you are related to Viktor. You may find salal and salmonberry transports the consumer into another

dimension. You may have to slave in kitchens for the rest of your life instead of jumping from the CN Tower. (Don't deny it was you).

Be cautious and careful, yours,

*Morgane di Modeste*

Dear Bogash,

Sorry Fenster took the news of dewberries so badly. Can you direct his addled mind towards next year? Have him count out days and mark the season on his 2002 calendar. That would not only give the lad something to look forward to, should his mind be capable of grasping the concept of future as opposed to the here and now, but it would also help him with his basic math skills.

I fear he needs some work in this field, as he surely must have got the proportion of ingredients wrong for the All Hallows Eve pumpkin punch. Not that I am complaining - what a punchy punch! It's just I was hoping he could pass on the recipe to me. I have been busy freezing buckets of pumpkin puree in the hopes of acquiring his potion notion. Tell the lad I will pick dewes for him alone if he can duplicate the pumpkin punch proportions. Delete any implication he may infer concerning romance.

Following the pumpkin punch indulgence, I must admit I have become be-charmed of a certain distant cousin from the depths of the Selkirk Mountains Glendolyn brought to the party. I never thought I'd fall for a mountain man, much less one so furry! I thought it was his costume at first and we spent our first dance wrestling on the floor while I tried to get a peek under his whiskers and wig. He forgave me, for he found the wrestle dance most invigorating. As did you all, I suspect, since the whole floor joined us almost as soon as we began our rumba rumble.

Well, another party here and gone. For me, it's back to the books to continue with my studies concerning the depths to which people will be gullible, as I prepare for the coming wave of interest in spirituality and quasi astrology (I know, I can hardly swallow that one myself!). I understand there will soon be upon us, a plague of flu such as the world has never seen, and perhaps there will be a market in my new studies for a Praise the Pigeon and Chicken Church. Horton and Morton should be interested. Tell them I will cut them in if they will sign a contract promising delivery of 5,000 chickens within 24 hours of an order.

In Pumpkin Punch Perpetuity,

*Morgane di Pickled and Tickled*

**2001.11.21**

Dearest Morgane, Pumpkin Princess:

Morton and Horton can't wait to be cut in on your Praise the Pigeon and Chicken Church gambit. You supply the pigeons and they promise to deliver all the chickens required, either still clucking or pre-plucked and ready for the deep fryer. Morton has even worked up a special recipe for ritual occasions, he calls it Jack-O-Chick. He makes it by hollowing out a pumpkin in the customary fashion, then stuffing it with a live Bantam hen and replacing the top.

Each pumpkin is an individual serving. When the diner lifts the top the hen leaps up. The trick is to grab it quick and bite the head off, Ranger style, then suck the blood from the neck. He says it is kind of like the chicken version of raw oysters, but personally I think that he has been delving into too much Teutonic social history lately which is affecting his thought processes.

Speaking of raw oysters, Helena stopped by the other day in transit from the fish farm and party barge to convocation that Glendolyn is holding north of Creston. We asked her what was the occasion, but she said it was strictly a chick thing and could not discuss it.

Morton piped up and said that he was particularly fond of chicks and would she like to try one of his pumpkin delights. It was quite a surprise to her when the hen leapt out with feet and wings flying in all directions and practically tore the nose off of her face. She let go with one of her famous pile driver back hands and smacked the poor chicken so hard into Morton's head that he was out for twenty minutes and then took another hour to clean the feathers and other less pleasant residue from his hair and ear.

Anyhow, that was Helena's brief visit before she climbed back on her Harley and headed east to whatever chick thing it is that Glendy has cooking, or more likely brewing, out in the Kootenays. Perhaps you have been invited also, and can fill us in at a later date.

I can tell you that Fenster has gotten over his pining for the dewberry delight and is off on a new adventure. A rock band got off of the beaten track the other day and arrived here at the ranch in their tour bus. Quite a scruffy bunch of guys with towels on their heads and beards so thick that some of Morton's hens starting nesting in them. We fed them and they played a few sets for the meal. Fenster was mesmerized and before you knew it, got himself hired on as the lead kazoo player.

Last we saw of him was on the bus, also headed east, with Mama Bin Longin and the Tali Band. Perhaps they will run into Glendolyn and the chicks somewhere around Kootenay Lake.

I heard from El Ron the other day, wants us to come down to Nevada for the ceremonial New Year's uncasking of the new batch of pulque. It may be just the thing to pass the time until the dewberries are in season again.

*Bogash "Chicken Charmer" Zorq*

Dear Morgane, Purveyor of Pernicious Pumpkin Punch,

You are a true seer and I need not go further afield (or pasture) to know that you are correct in your observations and knowledge. You have divined a hidden part of my royal heritage. Our ancestors came by way of the land bridge, across the Bering Strait and hotfooted it straight down the ice free corridor (well, as much as the mountainous terrain would allow a straight path with their cold feet). Anyway, they holed up in the Charlie Lake cave for a while and left a bead as evidence.

It was that crack team of Simon Fraser University archaeologists that not only discovered the evidence of my forebearers but put us on the map, so to speak. Since this was the ice free corridor, I submit that the salal and salmonberry torte became frozen as it was swept away in the ice flows to the west.

Actually, this is the theory put forth by Doctors Scott Hamiliton, David Burleyman and crew, after a night consuming a local potent beverage on the banks of the Peace River, during the Summer Solstice. That crew could dig until the cows came home. You have never experienced a five meter square as could be produced by that crew. I tell you, those young Indiana Jones wanna bees could dig their way to China. Or so they thought. They should have experienced some of that Pumpkin Punch instead of the fermented Peace River Elixir. "Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me I'm the digger man" could be heard echoing up and down the Peace River Valley.

I must take my leave now. I will look forward to hearing more about your buckets of pumpkin puree and how, with your talent in alchemy, you will turn them into buckets of pure gold, should you get that recipe from Fenster.

Your Coastal Cousin,

*Anastasia*

## **2001.12.05**

Dear Relatives, one and All,

I beg of you some assistance. The time of examinations of the most gruelling and offensive kind is upon me.

I have already been deemed capable of handling the stringencies imposed by the Round Table Department. I had to expose myself to the Drink Till You Drop indignation that required me to recite, in correct ritual order, all of the mediaeval Medici mumblings. Poisonous to the mind, I tell you.

The strict performance procedure was as follows: one mediaeval chant for the first drink I quaffed, two for the second, three for the third. Well, you get the mathematical progression. Strange, but the potions I popped seemed to purvey the peculiar perfume of Fenster's pumpkin punch.

Has the boy a pseudonym beginning with 'P' about which we are unaware? Has he become a member of the blackmarket economy and is he participating in academic ventures about which we know little? Is there more than we can imagine percolating in his pinhead? Send me any and all details of every little thing you perchance find.

Anyway, the examiners had to participate in this as well, and one is graded according to how many of the examiners are still left standing after you fall (the fewer, the higher the grade of the examinee). Need I tell you, after all my practice at our gatherings, in particular with regard to my stamina exhibited in the All Hallow's pumpkin punch performance, I passed with more than flying colours.

All my inquisitors tasted dust by the ninth mumble. But I, did I cease? Dearies, when have you ever known me to pass up a free drink? Not only did I continue imbibing, but honest soul that I am, I correctly and completely recited every last mumble. I did myself proud and congratulated myself accordingly with a final free toast, since there was no one else cognus mentus enough to do it for me.

The president of the college caught my performance on video surveillance camera and has awarded me my certificate in this subject.

I do wonder at some times about the qualifications of some of these academic salariats. Do they really earn their big bucks? Perhaps the system is merely established to ensure a redistribution of the wealth.

In any case, to my request: I have need of assistance on my last exam, a take home. Do you have any information which might help me answer this question: What were the Salian peoples famous for during the 4th Century, and how has this affected current beliefs in astrology and churches proclaiming to prevent noxious plagues through use of poor plucked pigeons and other fowl? (Further, advise me on whether or not you think this might be an academic trap to get me to disclose some of my future, and no doubt lucrative plans, with regard to the Praise the Pigeon and Chicken Church. You know how academics are always fearful of their future if they have not attained tenure.)

Finally, Anastasia: a strange think happened with my buckets of pumpkin puree. We had a thirteen hour, thirteen minute and thirteen second power outage here the other day. Fearing that my substantial store of puree would ferment, I opened a barrel and quaffed a quart. Based on my post-experience analysis of the effects, I think I have just discovered Fenster's secret. What a wonderful marketing trait: 100% natural and organic.

I look forward, as do we all, to blowing off some steam at the New Year's uncasking of the pulque in Nevada. Hope the Houses are open. I understand that some adventurous customer took the state to court for sexual prejudice based on the traditional business, and that the customer won. Houses now offer an Amsterdamian smorgasbord of selections. If the Mountain Man will not accompany me, I intend on shopping elsewhere. You know how the pressures of academic affect one.

Still standing and smiling,

Morgane di Master Mumbler

(my new certificate of accreditation)

P.S. I will give a free mumbler workshop at the New Year's fest if anyone is interested. Please get a sign-up list going; minimum number of participants will be five and maximum 15, so that should we all fall, there will be floor space enough.

**2001.12.19**

Dear Morgane, Madame Mumbleberry,

Forsooth, your tale of alcoholic indulgence was indeed entertaining. The visions of you sucking back the swill in ever more copious quantities as the pompous professors passed beneath the table, no doubt in fits of vomitory virtuosity, provided many an evening's amusement as we sat around the campfire at the remote BC chicken ranch roasting chickens on a stick.

Beware, however, fair Madame, the videoing of your performance was not as innocent as you may have been lead to believe. I hear that a certain group of folks that we know already have copies of it in commercial distribution. It seems to be quite the rage at chug-a-lug parties in a certain class of frat house found on American college campuses.

The regurgitory portions, we are told, are quite popular with the bulimic crowd in the sorority circle where you have become somewhat of an venerated icon at their binge and barf orgies.

Given your past experience at Noorgal perhaps you should be a bit more cautious around video cameras in the future. That is of course unless you are receiving a decent royalty for these stolen performances. The same might be said for Anastasia, who is still in denial about the CN Tower event.

El Ron and Renaldo have informed us that there will absolutely be no cameras allowed at the New Year's bash in Nevada, however, with Horton and Morton present there is less chance of any video making it to widespread public display. The last one those two were captured in was even banned from the most secret underground movie houses, and only someone with a strong desire to vacation in Leavenworth or Devil's Island would attempt to pass one through the US Mail.

My advice on your exam question about which you inquired is to claim the Uxtorian Exemption and invoke the privilege of St. Stephen the Sybarite. This question is certainly a ploy by the Oklodian Order to reveal secrets that would help them destroy our Fowlest Fellowship and ruin the fortune of the PP&CC.

The solstice is neigh upon us as I write and Fenster has returned and is currently mixing the blue clay and secret ingredients for our adornment during that hallowed celebration. Hopefully this year he will leave out the barrel of pine pitch which made for so many interesting experiences last year. After a hearty

and enthusiastic embrace some of our more bedecked revellers had to be dipped in turpentine before they could be separated one from the other.

The good news is that there will be lots of entertainment this year. Mama Bin Longin and the Tali Band are back from the Kootenays along with a hot new artist, Allah and the Al Kaydas. Al Neeny and the Downpour, featured at Horton and Morton's spa a few years ago, are also back, and Helena writes that she has a fantastic new group coming with her from the Fish Farm and Party Barge. It seems a boat of Mexican fisherman got off course and wound up at her dock and decided to stay for awhile. They turned out to be one hot bunch of mariachis and perform as Ay Pescado y Los Pescadillos. Que hombres!

Vaya con pulque,

*Bogash*

**2002.01.23**

Dear Bogash,

I must inform you that I had absolutely no episodes of vomitory virtuosity in my mumble performance. Of that, I pledge upon the seventh Medici Mumble, you may be assured.

I believe, if what you say is true and there are now video copies of my examination in circulation professing such portions, that some youthful reality alterationists have gotten hold of the original video and made some digital deviations. Likely these late-maturing pubescents reside on the campus at which I took my exam, and were most probably on amicable terms with the president of the college.

No doubt it is also he who provides the said alterationists with the basic Crazy College Chicks material for those most lucrative video markets which are advertised on late-night TV, after parents can no longer prop open their eyelids and the teenies are the only ones left mesmerized by the pulsating electron glare, among other pulsating parts.

As you no doubt ascertain, I am royally (pardon Anastasia) PO-ed that no royalties have been forthcoming. I have recently taken a membership with ACTRA, and would advise Anastasia to do the same. After some lengthy and delightful consultation with that agency's legal department (they drink at only the best of bars with an open tab, billed to their company which in turn is financed by the Canada Council for the Arts) we have launched a suit. The only problem is that we have yet to serve documents. Any help in locating the target of our desire is most heartily welcome.

As for your help with my take-home, it was no help at all. The institution at which I was examined professed to be advocates of the St. Columb the Confessor

and the only privilege they recognized was along catholic lines. Mind, you can only just begin to imagine what goes on in those confessionals.

I had the gayest of times when I decided to opt in favour of the confessional sort of exam and taxed my creative abilities both mentally and physically to the hilt. The examiners wanted specific and detailed examples. Needless to say I passed with an A+ average. My examiners had to postpone any relations with other examinees for a week just to recover.

That will explain, in part, my reticence in engaging in all the fun, frivolous and flirtatious activities which took place at New Year celebrations in Nevada. Too pooped to party, I was. I could barely give my mumble workshop. Lucky thing I was able to fortify my stamina thanks to Ron's pulque and a warm up exercise dance with the Ay Pescado y Los Pescadillos band Helena discovered. That kept me operational for the five required hours.

Alas, following that, I could not participate in the open House tour. That sounded like a stamina trial the likes of which I will never hear of again. Mind, we could always issue a challenge for 2002 and perhaps land a contract with the producer of Survivor, who I understand is looking for fresh new theme ideas.

While I didn't bring my Mountain Man to the Nevada celebrations in the end, I heard his family up its way had its own record celebration, believing this New Year to be the start of the true millennium. I must practice the ancient art of personality splitting and time travel. It would surely be a hit with the students in my Philosophy of the Phrenetically Phranchised classes.

Fatigue aside, I did so enjoy Mama Bin Longin and the Tali Band, though some members appeared to be devotees of your earlier mentioned Binge video workouts. The self-flagellation section of their act was particularly impressive. What sacrifice to the art! What devotion to the cause! If they are still alive, could you please book them in advance for the Mid Summer Solstice event, which I will host this year at my secluded ocean-side retreat. After all is said and done, and done again, we will have a plunge into the sea for purification. Already my students are begging for invitations and there is a black market on printed versions, though no originals have yet been issued. You are forewarned.

I promise to send you an original though, along with several quarts of my Pumpkin Punch, which I let thaw on purpose Jan. 7 so I could celebrate the deepest part of the year all over again according to the older and more true calendar calculations.

Yours

*Morgane di Millennium Mamma*

Post Seasonal Salutations Zorqs,

Well, who ever thought that Nevada was dry certainly hasn't attended El Ron and Renaldo's New Year's bash. I must say, Helena's Mexican guests from the Fish Farm and Party Barge added the hot spice to the evening as they devoured

almost all of the delectables , a good portion of Morgane's Pumpkin Puree and my newly discovered monastery fruitcake.

Ooh, the universal translator is offline. I am putting this through Morgabe's Mumbleograph. Who knows how it will come out. But watch out for 'Morgabe' as it translates as 'Morgabe'.\*

Anyway, I brought my new crudités to accompany Morgabe's Pumpkin Puree. The Monastery fruitcake was made by the Von Trappist Monks in Virginia. The hills are alive with the sound of fruitcake. Only the finest ingredients of fruits and nuts plus brine and wandy laced with batter. I think the Mumbleograph has had too much fruitcake.

And so, those spicy mariachis gobbled the fruitcake and washed it down with the pumpkin puree giving it all a good shake together as they bunny hopped around the room! What an indignity to the monastic cake! Of course, Helena has some explaining to do too. I don't know what the blue clay was mixed with this year but it strongly adhered to her friends and they were last seen stuck together bunny hopping back to their boat at the Fish Farm.

With all that behind us now, its time to move on to the Ground Hog Fest. I hear Punxsutawney Phil will have increased security this year. Wouldn't want the dear fellow blasted out of his burrow before giving the world his spring prognostications. He's been calling Miss Cleo is desperation and getting a non-stop busy signal. Perhaps Morgabe can give us some insight.

Until next time'

*Anastasia*

\*Translated from the original Russian by machinery.

**2002.02.06**

Dearest Morgane y Anastasia,

I must tell you that it is your faithful correspondence that provides the one island of sanity in my life here on the remote BC chicken ranch. Of course that fact alone may be more telling of the state of the rest of the family than of my own. Nevertheless, let it suffice you to know that you are anchors in an otherwise turbulent and random world where reason is oft not a companion as one spins wildly around on the eternal wheel of life. As the wise philosopher St. Delgado The Dipper once said, grasp any bottle in a bar fight.

We have just returned from an interesting trip to Vancouver Island where we visited with Helena on the fish farm and floating party barge and made an excursion to Strathcona Park to celebrate Ground Hog Day. Neither the park, the family, or the Vancouver Island marmots will ever be the same again.

Lacking proper ground hogs in the area, the local celebration centers around a stand in marmot named Strathcona Stewie. Legend has it that if Stewie sees his shadow and goes back into his hole there will be six weeks of confusion in the forest industry. Of course in February in higher elevations of Strathcona Park one is lucky to see six feet, never mind a shadow. But this year we will never know since poor Stewie never made it out of the burrow.

Mama bin Longin and the Tali Band tagged along for the adventure and began a set just before dawn. The riveting sounds of such ballads as Pasha the Magic Mullah and Stoning Your Cheatin Heart were probably too much for the sensitive critter even before Morton dumped a quart of homemade High Country Herbal Elixir down Stewie's tunnel. This brought a few burps and other assorted gastric noises from beneath the sod, but it all ended as Fenster lit a road flare to brighten up the scene and accidentally ignited the elixir, Morton, and Stewie's underground hide-a-way.

We managed to extinguish the flames on Morton by tossing him in a snow bank, leaving him not much worse for the experience, but without any more elixir. But poor Stewie, alas, became the main course in a deep pit BBQ, and was still steaming when we dug him out. Fortunately Fenster had brought some hot sauce so at least we had a tasty morning snack for our troubles.

We hear that down in the US there is a new legend for February 2. That is if Dick Cheney sees his shadow on that day there will be six more weeks of Enron scandals. Don't know how he made out, however.

On our way back to the remote BC chicken ranch we spent a few more days at Helena's, mostly eating pilchard pate and pickled Marble Murlet eggs. Fenster and Figburt had a good time skinny dipping off of the end of the barge until they became covered in sea lice from the salmon pens. Helena's special salmon delouser dip saved the day, fortunately, except that now the two lads are devoid of any body hair. Glendolyn was taking video of the whole event, and I expect there will be yet another interesting title making the rounds in the art houses before long.

Planning is underway for the upcoming Vernal Equinox festivity. Helena wants to host it at the fish farm and party barge and Glendolyn has offered the family caves up in the Kootenays. Mama BL and the boys are partial to caves, so it is still undecided where the event will be. Let you know later.

*Bogash*

**2002.02.20**

Dear Bogash,

Why, oh why, should you wish for reason, when in this universe of chaos and random acts of madness, there is none? Nor should be.

Mankind hath for centuries attempted to impose the most systematic of rules and regulations upon mountains and streams and vales, that he might better understand his universe, and to what has it all come? Gordon Campbell's Liberals and the swath of destruction. This only goes to show, again, that you may rely upon mountains and cricks and vales, but you may not rely upon politicians. That's a good thing at least in so far as we can count on a supply of spring water for El Ron's pulqué and Morton's secret elixir so that we might meet the next millennium in a fit state of befuddlement.

I am in a funk. How could you guess? My suggestion to the Premier is that he cut his salary and those of the swollen ranks of his ministers and deputy ministers and other tax-paid flunkies by three-quarters and put that sum directly to the payment of this mammoth debt he claims we in fun-loving BC have rung up under previous empires. Then he and the other rule-makers might experience first hand what living on limited income is like. He may even have to end up sending his wife and other female relatives and tender young lads out to work the strips in order to supplement the family coffer to pay for the family vacation to the Bahamas this year, and for his personal spring golfing trip to Maui. Says he, he understands. Say I, let the varmint experience. No better way to really learn.

I understand that Helena is likewise in a state of funk, though hers is fishy. The fish farm virus has hit her tender-fleshed flock in spite of their daily diet of El Ron's pulqué, featuring a different flavoured dose for every day of the week. She has heard that the BC government is indeed intent on seizing all infected fish under the guise of destroying them, but in fact selling them to the Japanese for sushi as the first step in corporate trade tactics. Brings new meaning to biological warfare, don't it? In her latest e-line communiqué to me (at a frequency as yet unmonitored by government and corporate officials), Helena said she would rather the fish swim to freedom than face the guillotine of government gaffery. I think she has become rather fond of the little slimy critters as they cluster, mouths agape, every morning and night for their squirt of pulqué.

On another cheery note, I have added a new sideline to my consciousness raising business and I need your assistance in my scheme to aid the world in reverting a little to the natural state of entropy.

It's a bit of a long story and it goes like this: I hit new high levels of income recently when I introduced a two-hour workshop in which participants sat in front of a mirror, gazing into their own eyes and chanting "I Love You" repeatedly. Some even became so emancipated they smooched their image repeatedly in most creative ways and mentioned divorce in loud whispers. Twenty and 50 dollar bills filled my tip jar as participants left, telling me they especially appreciated my guided-smooching comments about the ancient Greek connections to the god-legends concerning one Narcissus (whoever he was, they said).

I was feeling quite tickled with myself until I discovered that the entire male population of my workshop - and they were all males -- consisted of Liberal card-holders out on a sensitivity training session paid for through the government's

newly developed GCIU Personnel Strategy Skills Enhancement fund. My heels dug a hole six inches deep in my relaxation floor mat and I then and there devised a companion workshop entitled: “Create Inner Peace and Health and You’ll Never Need BC Med Again.”

All of the former workshop participants have since signed up and also signed up “buddies” who are coming, with names like Bill Smith, Bob Jones, and Joe Cool. Participants are most keen to be serenaded by music, so I am wondering if I can book Mama bin Longin and the Tali Band in addition to ordering three barrels of Morton’s elixir as a mid-workshop refreshment and health break. Perhaps a few explosive sets and the mind-altering effects of the elixir might rattle these Liberal Laddies up a tad and torque their vision of reality. At the very least, they might tip me heavily again, and I can add it to my secret retirement fund, which I hold offshore on a floating fish farm, though it is really the latest in international banking and investment offices.

Ah yes, the Vernal Equinox and all that goes with it! I’m feeling better already. Hope doth spring eternal though our fresh water supplies may dry up under the Free Trade Agreement and prove once again that negative entropy never did reign supreme.

With Spring Sincerity and Solicitations,

*Morgane di Meditation Mendicant*

### **2002.03.06**

Dearest Morgane,

The wish for reason spews forth from that same fount whereas comes the wisdom “hope springs eternal.” Although in my youth there was a saying amongst the members of a certain crowd that Hope springs eternal, but that is a subject best left to history as Hope is now quite a respectable and much admired role model in circles that know nothing of those days.

I am sure that you can understand that in a world with Horton and Morton and some of the other relatives, the quest for reason is nothing less than a quest for sanity. As you say, befuddlement may be the most sensible way to deal with all this, it is certainly the path of least resistance. However, such an attitude would deprive certain rituals of which we have become extremely fond of their greater meaning, and reduce us to admitting the baseness of what up until now we have smugly encased in a mantle of at least partial academic and philosophical respectability.

So, dear Morgane, the quest for reason must continue apace, and lead us hither and yon across the universe, wherever the vapour trail of karmic manifestation may choose to float through the three realities and seven sub-conscious states of

subliminal discovery. To wit, I have enrolled in yet another advanced course of mycological experimentation.

As to your inquiry about help with your new consciousness raising venture, I have checked with Mama bin Longin who said that she could put together a special arrangement just for your purposes as soon as she gets back from Caruthers, Texas, where she was called away to on some business of which she would give no details when the nice black helicopter took her away.

Morton has already hit the woods looking for a few special botanicals, and says if you can wait until after the equinox and the first night of the new moon thereafter, he will have a vintage that is guaranteed to knock off their socks, and probably a few other accoutrements.

Some of the names sound familiar to him, he says, and brings to mind a gig he did over a decade ago involving a Top Hat or something. He wasn't quite clear, but it sounds as if he knows your clientele pretty well. His most important advice is to get cash up front from these guys and be careful around them as they have a habit of doing private things to public parts.

We are sorry to hear about Helena's problems with the government and the proposed fish deal with Japan. We haven't been in touch with her for a few weeks. It is strange how attached she can become to those little critters, but then there are affinities there that prudence and good taste dictate we not delve into very deep.

We notice in a little publicized Order In Council last week that the government authorized the export of 95,000 barge loads of pâté rouge from the Broughton Archipelago. One source remarked that it was a convenient way to dispose of an embarrassing problem that had cropped up in that area.

*Bogash*

Dear Bogash,

Call me Anastasia...call me cursed, not that anyone cares. I never put much stock in the Zorq family curse, but here I am living it.

So I say: Beware the Ides of March, St. Paddy's Day and the Vernal Equinox. Simply refuse to wake up those days. I'm warning you.

I think I may need to take a vacation at your remote BC chicken farm. On the other hand, can I face those avian banshees? Mama bin Longin and the Tali Band would be a welcome distraction. So, has Helena decided to have the Vernal Equinox festivities at the Fish Farm and Party Barge or are we partaking of the event in the Kootenay caves with Gwendolyn?

I believe Morgane gave sage advice. I think I, at least, should join ACTRA before the next Mama BL Bash. Speaking of sage advice, we had turkey twice, recently. The first we swathed in a garlic and oregano blanket, which was intermittently strong but never cheeky. And yet it was smooth, yes as smooth as

cream cheese. However the next we permeated completely with two types of *salvia officinalis*. So here's my sage advice. Hold off on the variegated, it's almost, shall I say, raunchy.

Before we travel to the party barge or Kootenay caves, remember to bring your photo ID. My diplomatic passport has just expired and I must renew soon. However I do look absolutely fetching in my Yves St. Laurent babushka, circa 1977.

Bring only your best Russian caviar, I'll bring the crackers and leftover Monastery Fruitcake. Oh and does anyone have any really good barrels of Vodka lying around?

Forever Yours,

*Anastasia*

Babushka Babe

**2002.03.20**

Dear Bogash,

Hope is not rational. If we were to take those who fall in love, say (I choose this as an example since Spring has today just lighted on the budded bough), we would find hope, but no reason. Let us drop this discussion before we begin debating angels on a pin.

Instead, let me mention weather. If we believe the old adage "A snow year, a rich year" either Premier Campbell's predications of an economic miracle must be charging towards us with untold speed, or we will have a good harvest. I am taking bets online at <http://www.youbetchayourlife.com>. If you wish to make an e-deposit, just contact Helena once she's past the 200 mile limit. She'll know exactly what to do. If you wish to send bags of unmarked bills, however, simply contact the local Coast Guard and they will run it out to her for a cut so small, I don't even report it on my income tax, which I don't file anyway.

Unscrupulous, you think? I am simply making preparations for observing the premier's action plan, which specifies that independent citizens will become entirely responsible for their own birth, education, health care, environmental health, retirement, and death. At the same time, I am attempting to join the Premier's elite inner circle by actively practicing what his cronies do. If the Premier's plan is successful, it ought to free up ever so much more money for him and his colleagues to attend several conferences a year in Maui.

And speaking of politicians, I must thank you for your shipment of information and supplies resulting from your mycological experiments. Since I am dealing with the devil with regard to my recent consciousness-altering workshop participants (you will recall they are mostly members of the Cabinet incognito), I felt it wise to set my event upon an auspicious occasion, and so have chosen

today. By the time you read this, my participants should have just finished consuming the delights of a workshop lunch comprising stuffed mushroom gold caps to open, with spaghetti and mushroom sauce as the entrée.

I began the day with a morning ritual offering, at dawn, to the goddess of the same name and an invocation to Aphrodite and her son to keep workshop felicitations friendly. We followed with some starvation meditations and Yoga to make the participants all the more feverishly famished for the midday feast. These will be the easiest bucks I've ever made: fill 'em up and let 'em float. No doubt the results of this cross-cultural, cross-consciousness sensitivity training will have my phones ringing off the hook for registrations in my next set of workshops.

I am taking Morton up on his offer of new vintage for my Mid Summer Workshop series. It should be nicely aged by then, as should my participants! For today, I'm simply serving Okanagan Red plonk. Nobody will notice.

Please let me know when Mama bin Longin and the boys return from Texas. Do try to see what new portfolios in the Carlyle Funds they are bringing back, and pass the goods on to me. Don't fret about insider trading. It would all be in keeping with my plans to ingratiate myself with Campbell, and also join the international elite of Bushes, bin Ladens and other multinational corporates. As I mentioned, mind games are the way of the future, Bogash, my boy.

Yours in Mind Munchies,

*Morgane di Meditation Mama*

Anastasia, peripatetic princess,

The Equinox bash is on for the Kootenays, hosted by Glendolyn and Sask. We are gathering at the dock in Kaslo on the afternoon of the 19th and will be taken from there by boat across Kootenay Lake, then up into the high country by mules. The exact location must remain a secret to avoid any repeats of the last event which drew a number of reporters from the National Enquirer and other such publications. These heathens have no respect or understanding of the finer rituals, particularly the chicken rendering at midnight and the skinny dipping full service baptism and fire dance.

Especially for you this year Helena will be bringing a unique salmon caviar pickled in a limited vintage Siberian vodka which she acquired in a trade with some Russian sailors off of one of the fish factory boats that dropped by the fish farm and party barge. I wouldn't ask too many questions regarding the details as she seems somewhat evasive when queried about what was given in exchange for the aqua de Dios. I also would not recommend smoking or playing with incendiary devices anywhere within fifty feet of the dish.

Speaking of dishes, Horton did us proud for Saint Patrick's day, cooking up the traditional Irish chicken soup made from old laying hens, potatoes, cabbage, parsnips and a barrel of Guinness all stewed together until it reached the

consistency of thick gruel. What a lip smacker it was. Unfortunately that rascal Fenster slipped a pound of goose grease into the pot when Horton wasn't looking. The results were probably as bad as you can imagine.

See you in the high country,

*Bogash*

### **2002.04.03**

My Dear Bogey,

Of all the caves, in all the Kootenays, he had to walk into mine! You neglected to inform me that Viktor, dear vodka and garlic Viktor, had sniffed out the secret cave of the Equinox bash. Ill winds must have blown across the province when he crashed the party. And I do mean crashed.

Last we heard of him, he was in Port Alberni. Do I detect fowl play at your end of the remote chicken ranch? Maybe Helena traded the secret location information for the Siberian vodka from those visiting Russian sailors at her fish farm and party barge. I am willing to wager a few rubles it was Viktor, disguised in his old uniform from perestroika days or was is glasnost. No, make that kopecks. I don't want to squander those rosy rubles.

I think we can discourage Viktor from attending the next Zorq divergence. I think we should celebrate Cousin Victoria' Day in May on the Greek isles. You know how Viktor detests the Greek isles. He avoids the Greek police at all costs. Then again, I were him, I'd avoid them too. You know we have a standing invitation from shipping magnate Stavros Ostentatious to use his yachts or take over one of his islands for the weekend.

I can see it now. We can practice the fine art of skinny-dipping in the Mediterranean. Quaff that volatile vodka and down that paint thinner called Retsina. Just let him try to find us while we do the butcher's dance around and around. Our drachmas are welcome but Viktor is not.

So my dear Bogash, I'll gather up daughters Pandora and Harpy and see you in the sun!

Yasoo,

*Anastasia of the Isles*

Dear Morgane, Mater Fervida,

Spring has sprung, the grass is riz, we all wonder where our health care is. The realm's good people are alive with terror, reeling from El Gordo's rapacious New Error. And the beaten and down trodden are now truly afraid, for they have all lost their legal aid. But have no fear, we will get better quicker, since soon there

will be more available liquor. Instead of veggies, bread and stew, we can now raise our kiddies on buckets of brew. And for all of those inclined to bitch, the solution, says Gordo, is just get rich.

As you can see, dear Morgane, I have developed aspirations of becoming a poet. My hope was to enroll in a course at the Open Learning Agency, but I fear that like so many other public services it will be improved out of existence. Dagenmorg may be returning to the chicken ranch for a spell, however, and we may convince him to stay in residence this summer to teach the ancient art of martial polemics, so our literary desires may yet find fulfillment.

Mama bin Longin and the boys are back from Crawford, Texas with an interesting story. It seems GWB has retained Dan Quayle as his linguistic advisor and is working very hard to extend his command of English beyond words of three syllables or less. The Texas lifestyle wasn't to their liking. People are not allowed on the street without a blood alcohol content of at least .8, and swimming pools and toilet bowls are filled with either Tequilla or beer, depending on one's social status. Needless to say, Fenster, who accompanied the group, did not return with them, but has instead taken a position in Crawford as a plumber's helper. Morton and Horton may have to go on a mercy mission to rescue him, but that in itself may give rise to more problems than it solves.

The Equinox after shocks are just wearing off, and it is too soon to rehash those feelings. You, of course, must fully understand this dear Morgy.

*Bogash*

**2002.04.17**

Dear Bogash,

You have indeed become quite the poet.

I have taken the liberty of entering your composition in the 113th perpetual and annual Barfing Bard Barks Burlesque competition. Master Wil di Spur will be reading - excuse me - performing your piece as a multimedia, multidisciplinary, mixed media, mixed company experience. He is one of the last remaining true apostles of the hermaphroditic studies carried on to this day in the caves of the Love Goddess in Cyprus and so will appear solo for the occasion.

I understand he will be wearing a ravishing dress of red Peu de Chine from Shanghai and that Cosmo Girl will be reviewing the fashion aspect of the entire competition. Wil is hoping to score big-time in the fashion review, as he is launching his own line of any gender designer formal wear in hopes of removing sexual prejudice, poor taste and bare bosoms (male and female) from the Oscars by this time next year. He also hopes to eradicate gold chains from Italy, but that is a separate campaign. Big dreams for a small town writer from Stratford-on-Raving.

I hope, with his fascination with fashion, he will give all due respect to your literary genius. He was burbling about some Moulin Rouge version of Diamonds of his own as a grand finale for your piece which, of course, ends with riches and bitches. In order to inflame him to higher pitches of performance, I have purchased a block of ringside seats. Enclosed you will find 10 tickets to distribute as you will. Date: May 24. Time: 8 p.m. Place: a private palace in Bangkok. Meet me at the My Tai Fly bar and I'll take you there.

As for affairs on this continent, I understand there is a growing movement in the U.S. to reinstate Clinton. Seems the good citizens with the right to bear arms (and we don't mean the ones with fingers attached) feel it would benefit them more to have a president who drops his pants than one who leaves his prepositions dangling. Very weird species down south.

A New York choreographer has created a new dance for the movement to use in its TV commercials that involves costumes with waistlines which have dropped to the ankles, but the ad design company and camera operators complained there was too little dance action to make a strong impression upon viewers, and so re-opened the choreographer's contract and unilaterally renegotiated a termination. The choreographer is suing for injured feelings, the cost of the costume design and execution, and a fully-paid, six-week vacation to Jamaica (where de rum come from).

I hope you mentioned to the chicken ranch PR group that the Save a Tree - Pluck a Chicken movement has taken off, eh? Between the religious contingent and the environmentalists, the boys on the ranch should be rich by the end of this summer. When they throw their retirement party, I want to be there. I am practicing all my Latin dance numbers, including my own version of the Drop Your Panties, My Petunia New York tribute to Clinton.

*Morgane di Mucha-cha-chas Momma*

P.S. The reason Viktor turned up in the Kootenay Cave (my sources in the Port tell me) was that the LCB on the Wild West Coast was selling discount Matreshka dollies filled with shots of Vodka as survival food. Viktor apparently purchased several, if you know what I mean, and inside one was a special invitation to the Kootenay Krash, which had somehow gone astray. Was one of our specially hired printers also working for the government?

Anastasia mi Amiga:

Sorry about the Viktor thing, the Greek Isle bang up sounds like a good idea, and I know for a fact that Viktor is wanted by the Greek authorities on several different charges, none of which can be discussed in polite company, so he should not be a factor. If he is anyway, it shouldn't be too difficult to dispose of him, and then perhaps we could get the Greeks to allow us to watch the interrogation. I hear that Greek interrogation techniques are in a class all by themselves.

I am not too keen on retsina, reminds me too much of an experiment Morton did once trying to make beer from lodgepole pine sap. The high pine pitch content made for an unforgettable experience when emptying ones bladder, something, by the way, only the most foolish would do near an open flame. Someday when you are visiting the chicken ranch I will tell you the whole story of that adventure, might even dig out the video. Suffice now to only say that Jerry Lee Lewis was in attendance and found the experience inspirational.

In anticipation of the holiday Horton is working on a new recipe to present to our Greek hosts, a BC dolma. Instead of grape leaves he has substituted salmon berry leaves and stuffed them with a blend of chicken livers and salmon roe. He steams them then puts them to marinade in eulachon grease and kelp juice. The first batch is still aging, so we are not quite sure how they are going to taste, but I am sure that we will all find out during our Greek interlude.

I am glad that you mentioned the skinny dipping, although for some of us skinny is probably no longer the appropriate term. Flabby dipping doesn't have as nice a ring to it, however. There are some, we know, who don't have that problem, as we have seen from the CN Tower video.

Vaya con cerveza, hermana,

*Bogash*

## **2002.05.01**

Dear Morgane, Trouble Maker,

Thanks to you I am writing this from one of Sask's a secret caves somewhere in BC where I am hiding out from the vengeance of Wil di Spur and his gang of transvestite loggers and motorcycle gang groupies. It is not my fault that his rather creative performance of my poetry caused such a furor amongst the Cypriot intelligentsia that they seized him and forced him to endure the Turkish Trajectory, a medieval practice from the court of Sultan Omar Musthavit (known to history as Omar the Ogre). Needless to say, Wil's life style has been irrevocably changed by the experience and his fashion career brought to an abrupt halt.

The motorcycle gangs that were heavily invested in his budding apparel enterprise were not amused to see massive portions of their drug profits go up in smoke, so to speak, and have offered Wil his life for mine. Until the appropriate cousins can arrive here from Romania and Bulgaria to sort this out, I will remain persona non manifestus for the time being and will unfortunately not make the rendezvous in Thailand. Of course, neither will Wil, but I am sure that you will find some other suitable diversion to create fond memories of your journey. In fact, I happen to know a little place on Pat Pong Road where ... oh, never mind, I am sure you probably already know about it. Just say hi to Sulthip and Parnok for me.

We received a fundraising appeal from the Good Ole Boys Society (GOBS) in Little Rock seeking support in amending the US Constitution to allow Clinton to run for re-election in 2004. They think that it is better that the public be amused by lechery in high places rather than by the current and more bloody diversions with which George The Shrub is using to distract his fellow citizens. "Drop pants, not bombs" is their motto, and I hear that they are being secretly supported by The National Enquirer.

The summer solstice plans are still in progress, though this Wil di Spur thing may have an impact. We will keep you posted as to the venue and other plans. Horton wants to do it at the party barge while Fenster is more inclined to favour the Nevada desert. Renaldo and El Ron have offered an invite which made special mention of you, dear Morgie. I guess you left quite an impression last time. Anyhow, if you have any ideas on this let me know directly so the appropriate services may be booked. Dagenmorg needs to know soon.

Have fun Thai-ing one on,

*Bogash*

**2002.05.29**

Dear Bogash,

I have been neglectful in my correspondence of late. It is hard to write legibly when spinning around the top of the Tower.

I returned to my alma mater only to discover the revolving restaurant has taken a spin for the worse since my last culinary-cum-bungee adventure. I thought partaking of the nutritional supplements before my jump would impart stamina. Oh, Mon Cousin, this was quite the faux pas!

The chef was a striking Ontario civil servant and the repast offered up was nouvelle cuisine, to be sure. In between courses of the freshest baby dandelion salad and the pigeon liver pate, a tumbler of something called "Chease Wheeze" was offered to cleanse the palate. Le garcon assured me it was the finest fromage plastique available. Is this from a new region in France? Needless to say, this treat did not build bones seven different ways.

It was an omen, a portent to be sure, which I did not heed. I decided to undertake that for which I make my annual pilgrimage to the centre of the universe.

The lovely shade of green was not the trees of spring. It was the emerald of my visage under siege by fromage plastique wrapped in dandelions.

All I can say is I am ecstatic that the OPSEU workers have settled their contract. Maybe my stomach will settle now too. It ain't easy being green, one might say in the vernacular.

And so I have returned from the fair Eastern Provinces and find you still hiding in caves. Hopefully you will find your way out in time for the Summer Solstice soiree.

Your Topsy Turvy Tower Turning Cousin,

*Anastasia*

Dear Anastasia and Morgane:

I am finally recuperating from the May Day blow out, what an adventure it was. We were invited to a special celebration by our cousins on the Islet of St. Sylvia, named for St. Sylvia the Wanton, patron saint of our Irish branch.

St. Sylvia is a little known spot in the Caribbean first settled by refugees from Ireland in the 5th Century, AD, making it the first known European settlement in the so called New World, although there is some suspicion the Romans and even the Phoenicians also visited this hemisphere. Of course the history books skip over this part of our past, and probably for good reason, at least in the minds of certain prelates and other persons in high places.

The founding families of St. Sylvia were the O'Serpants and McVipers who were driven out of their homeland by St. Patrick. Legend has it that he drove reptiles from the Emerald Isle, but in reality it was our cousins that the word snakes refers to.

In due time West Africans fleeing slavery in the Caribbean colonies made their way to St. Sylvia and blended in to the population where an exotic religion combining both Druidism and Voodoo evolved. The key elements being the worship of a Sacred Oak guarded by a goat named Randee.

May Day is the main feast day for this sect, now known as the Drudooic Order of Perpetual Enchantment (DOPE). From this tradition can be traced the North American mating ritual of Prom Night, though the exact linkages have never been clearly established. Anyhow, on St. Sylvia the whole community turns out on May Day to celebrate the rites of passage into adulthood for those who attained their 16th birthday since the last ritual. A variation in West Virginia and certain parts of the Southern US use the 13th birthday.

Everyone turns out in their finest blue body paint and bone necklaces and little else, to dance around the Maypole, rend chickens in the cross roads, and partake of a special nectar brewed from a secret recipe of local fruits and herbs. The highlight of the event is the choosing of the Queen of the May and Keeper of the Oak from among the fresh crop of maidens, and the election from the lads of the Randee Spirit.

From there it gets too wild to relate in words, but Morton has the video which should be on cable TV this Fall.

Look for us all there, you will be amazed. Particularly notice my hair doo.

*Bogash*

**2002.06.12**

Dear Bogash,

You know what Thailand is like. I need not bother with the details of what a diversion it was thai-ing one on, since the time I have been absent speaks for itself.

Sulthip and Parnok say a Thai Hi, if you know what I mean. Both are going through sex change operations. The young ladies took a look at local history and decided far better to be a male and apply to America for something or other, than a female and apply for male entertainment privileges. If they remained where they are and who they are, the only American benefit they might get is an STD without offer of medical coverage. At least as a male, they hope to apply as foreign students to an American university, hit on the local blondes and gain landed immigrant status. The myth of mail order brides from the east is just that.

This does not mean they are in favour of Bush's foreign policies. In fact, they find this one more reason to vacate the Far East. They have heard rumors Bush plans on re-opening the Killing Fields as an American protectorate, mine out the calcium for fertilizer to nourish patent-protected American grain fields (much like the eastern U.S. 1800s businessmen did to buffalo bones following the prairie slaughters in hopes of wiping out the Indians) and then turn the valley into an American vacation playground.

Bush's advisors assure him the memory of the American public is short and no-one will notice that Bush is trying to one-up LBJ and make money on it. Disney has been mentioned. Real life paintball is a possibility. FBI and marine training session contracts are already signed.

By the way, Viktor made his way over at the same time as I did to the bar on Pat Pong Road, and promptly fell for Sulthip, who still retained his/her feminine charms as far as figure and face go. I suspect with the amount of Southern Comfort he consumed, he received little southern comfort later in the night.

I didn't stick around past the 10th shooter contest to find out, as I thought it an ideal time to escape further detection and make my way east, thinking to circumnavigate the globe, arriving back on the west coast in time for Summer Solstice.

Tell me all plans are in place. Did you get my postcard from the Taj Mahal? I swam in the turquoise pool with the maharajahs of Timbuktu and Balibababibble. Since I could not decide on either, I chose neither. However, their bribes for the pleasures of my entertaining tales of the west (among other entertainments) paid for the remainder of my trip home - First Class!

I rode part way back in the same compartment of the Orient Express in which Agatha's sad little detective discovered the murdered body of the man who ran afoul of the justice of nine good men and women. The dreams I had about what is true and just!!! I must write them down before they return to the land of mists.

I do hope The Tali Band has been booked for the June 21 fest. I have learned some interesting Eastern Dances, which I hope to teach to all so we can better commune with the divine during the solstice celebrations. Please book the east Nevada desert plain if the event is at El Ron's. If we are on the party barge, we will hold the practice on dry land so the possibilities of partier overboard are minimized. Mind, a group skinny dip would be a terrific sensory-elevating way to sober up half-way through Dagenmorg's Simmering Summer Solstice Succulent Sausage Shish-kebabs that he always conjures up as his contribution to the evening's feast.

Bogash, I do hope you will turn up in blue with suitable bone necklace. Anastasia, perhaps you too should do blue after your green adventure the second time off the tower. Moi, I am coming in a Mauve sari. It is the new power colour of the east. Down with White and Red, say the Queens (if you know what I mean).

Reply to my postal box in the Port or the usual Gold River digs. I am passing through north north-west to leave a false trail for Viktor, should he have managed a pursuit.

Mine, yours and everyone's,

*Magnanimous Mademoiselle Morgane di Magnificently Mauve*

**2002.06.26**

Dear Bogash and Morgane,

Who says UHF has it all? Sounds like Morton has captured all and more on his May Day Do video along with Bogash's hair doo! I must say, Fall television programming will never be the same for 2002. This video will 'out-doo' my Cousin Lilibet's Golden Jubilee Bash live simultaneous broadcast on the BBC by several Maypoles and May Queens. Can't wait for the ratings. Hope BBC One has the foresight to grab this hot commodity.

In the meantime, I think we must prepare for St. Swithin's Day. According to legend if it rains on this day, it will rain for the next 40 days. Well that certainly isn't unusual here on the coast. Let the rains begin.... You've got your Showers and Spitting, the Light Rains of spring. But then very quickly after the St. Swithin's Day Unpleasantness you've got the Cats and Dogs Rains followed by Hosing, Buckets, Puking Rain and Monsoons each in turn. I hope St. Swithin has a brolly and a sou'wester.

Would anyone have guessed that that tatty little Carl Faberge was right when he whined about keeping the Imperial Eggs out of damp atmospheres? The 1908 Crystal Palace Egg, you know the one with all the "pure" gold, I swear it's lost its lustre and I just know it's those pulp mills!

So if we are not washed away by the precipitation on the plateau and the rains on Spanish plain we should all enjoy the Solstice Day (Unpleasantness) party. Beware, I say, of the ides of the month and Morton's video camera.

*Anastasia Regina*

Dear Morgane, Mauve Maiden,

I post this enroute to the solstice bash. As you know by now it will be at El Ron's in the Nevada desert. I have decided to wear an electric blue union suit and pink gum boots. They are a gift from Fenster which he brought home from his last visit to the logger's boutique in Port Hardy. I will also be sporting a new necklace from Helena made from crab claws and kelp bulbs.

Fenster is coming in an otter skin thong and Trumpeter Swan head dress made special for the occasion. Since he has become a devout Buddhist these days, neither the otter or swan were harmed and both are still very much alive. It should prove very entertaining.

I have been assured that we will have an opportunity to visit El Ron's Cupboard to choose an assortment of special devices and potions to enhance the observations of the seven sacred rituals and four enchantments. El Ron himself will lead the Dance of the Blessed Vessel and the Moon Ring of Ransanor. Special blue clay has been imported from the Pyrenees for the occasion, as well as a temple maiden from Delphi.

The Tali Band has been booked along with Al Nino and the Downpour. There should be quite a jam session if they can get across the border past the INS. If not, then a local cowboy band is on standby and can fill in. It won't be quite the same, of course, but Cactus Clyde and the Raw Riders do put on a pretty wild show. Their rendition of Hung Up In My Harley is a classic.

See you soon,

*Bogash*

**2002.07.10**

Dear Anastasia:

Interesting that you should mention Lilibet's Jubilee celebration. Morton just received a copy of a tape titled Royal Revellers, The Low Life of The High Lives Behind Castle Walls. You would not believe some of this footage, particularly the segment on the Secret Rituals of The Knights of The Garter. Some garters! The little known initiation rites for The Knights of The Bath were pretty interesting too.

Morton ordered the tape via the Internet from a company in Lithuania with warehouses in Paraguay, Thailand and Barbados. How it got past Canada Post

is a mystery, perhaps a testimony to free trade and global commerce. There is a rumour that the royalties being collected on this production may be more royal than usual. I guess all of those castles and yachts and servants and what not require a lot of income to support.

The Solstice soiree was a success, at least by family standards. Nevada State Police may have another opinion on this, however. It will be interesting to hear Morgane's side of the story, the article in the Reno Road Apple only skimmed over some of the more interesting parts, leaving much to one's imagination. Perhaps the fact that the reporter got too immersed in the pulque tasting event about half way through the celebration had something to do with it.

Speaking of pulque, we managed to lose a number of folks as a result of Renaldo's new sport, bobbing for maidens. It is kind of like bobbing for apples, only it involves maidens, handcuffs and a wading pool full of pulque. A live chicken was tossed in for good measure. The local ambulance service got a workout from that one. You can imagine the scene.

I am not sure what has happened to Morgane. At midnight we had the Dance Of The Desert Delights, which was probably not one of the better ideas considering all the pulque ingested beforehand. The last that I saw of her was after the dance with a pair of fencing pliers pulling cactus thorns out of a couple of kazoo players from the Tali Band. That was shortly before the effects of El Ron's mushroom and mesquite nachos kicked in. I don't remember anything after that.

*Bogash*

**2002.07.31**

Dear Bogash and Anastasia,

Congratulations all on the Summer Solstice Celebrations reaching a new height in terms of fashion panache. Did you catch the clip Martha Stewart ran on the various togs touted by our giddy little group? Someone, and I have yet to discover whom, sent her various stills taken by a large format camera and some video shorts, of us in our attire as we performed the Dance of the Desert Delights near the end of the evening, or should I say, near the start of the next day.

I swear, if the ill fortune of my past fashion experiences with Wil di Spur and his gang of transvestite loggers and motorcycle gang groupies in Cyprus had not plagued me (pocket and reputation), I would apply for trademarks, open a factory in Bangladesh and commence production. I hear Rosy, Oprah and Jerry Springer are all vying with each other to see who is first to have us on their show.

They are having trouble locating Fenster, whom several claim is the photographer, producer and videographer with regard to the above-mentioned material. Personally, I find that hard to believe - not the 'having difficulty finding' part, but the photographer/producer/videographer claim - as Fenster hasn't been

seen since one of the maidens in the bobbing-for-maidens event unclipped her handcuffs and took Fenster under the pulque with such a mouth-sucking clasp as I have not witnessed since I was a teen at the Be-Ins in Stanley Park.

Further, the bobbing event took place far in advance of the desert dance, and aided in the effects a large consumption of pulque had upon us dancers. I doubt Fenster could have seen past his sucker, never mind focused enough to do pix.

But, I digress. Bogash, you were stunning in your electric blue union suit and pink gum boots. The blue so matched the tone of the sky at sunset and the pink, both the sun's dying rays and the rising red of various participants' eyeballs after we had chowed down Dagenmorg's Simmering Summer Solstice Succulent Sausage Shishkebabs and El Ron's mushroom and mesquite nachos, followed by appropriate numbers of buckets of pulque.

Tell Helena the crab-claw and kelp-bulb necklace was ravishing and it will be the first item I wish to produce once I find where I can buy myself a trademark and fake ID on the San Francisco black market. The necklace will both serve the outer fringes of rock band tastes and will also appear as a feature item in the gift shop of my sensitivity and quasi-occult retreats, which continue to bring me a tidy income.

I have, by the way, turned over day-to-day management to our fourth cousin twice removed, Philippa Phortuna from Venice, whose Sicilian relations will guarantee bills are paid on time and monies continue to flow even during the slow seasons. Philippa recently graduated with honors in the Business Administration program at Oxford. Her dissertation was entitled "The Implications of Modern Folk Philosophical Phenomena upon World Stock Markets." I feel my business will improve dramatically under her tutelage.

It was indeed me you saw pulling cactus thorns from the lips of the Tali Band kazoo players. They had heard that chewing a certain North American cactus button would heighten their religious experiences - nearer my god, to thee, and so on. They just didn't research the object of their desire very well, and after consuming only two mugs of the pulque each, bit into the nearest thing that looked to them, like the sought-after cactus button. Thus ended their kazoo playing for the night. An application of the pulque, post-pulling, seemed to reduce the pain, or perhaps it simply made them unable to perceive it.

Thank goodness Cactus Clyde and the Raw Riders were in attendance as a back up band. After they finished laughing their guts out at Tali Band's prickly predicament, I really appreciated their fine creative rendition of Hung Up in My Harley as Hung Up in My Parley. But I don't think Mamma Bin Longin and his boys quite got the barb.

I am taking a few weeks off to recover from my atrocious sinus problems following the Summer Solstice Celebrations, and will rejoin you in August. I am seeking aid in my endeavor from the famous Native Indian mystic Swampy Mary Cree Flett Mowat, whose family poultice recipe made of muskrat scent, beaver balls, gnat spit, mosquito tears, swamp grass and moose poop (a sure fire cure for

said sinus problems) will die with her unless some of her great-great-great granddaughters can persuade her to spill the beans. We plan on a few wet rawhide forms of persuasion when I visit back east for my treatment. I will send a postcard.

*Morgane di Malice Aforethought*

(but not enough thought afore malice)

**2002.08.14**

Dear Bogash,

While you were partying at the Solstice Soiree with the Tali Band in Nevada, I was having dinner with the King. No, I don't mean Czar, I mean THE KING. Viva Las Vegas, I say!

I dined on the Love Me Tenderloin as an entrée, a Clambake and the peanut butter and banana sandwich to cap the dining experience a la King. Can't say as I missed the pulque tasting event or the mesquite nachos much this year. Although it was the idea of partying in Nevada that reminded me of all those great shows by The King. So instead of watching the Flying Elvi you seem to have become the Flying Zorq's after the Dance of the Desert Delights.

And so I decided to follow the latest sightings of The King around the country and found myself in Ypsilanti Michigan for the Elvis Fest. Those Michiganders and the tribute artists sure no how to do the Jailhouse Rock. Of course I wore my royal Blue Suede Shoes not those red ones of Dorothy's. There were six pairs of those you know. I only own four. But I have the original pair of blues.

I tell you anyone who did not enjoy the tributes must be a Puppet on a String with a Wooden Heart. People were crying like Kentucky Rain the pelvic gyrations moved them so much. Fools Rushed into the Heartbreak Hotel and caught me All Shook Up, Crying in the Chapel. Fortunately I was able to give a Mona Lisa smile without looking too much like a Hound Dog. But I think they all have Suspicious Minds. Did they think I was the Devil in Disguise? Oh, Don't Be Cruel!

I decided it was Now or Never to watch the artists go From a Jack to a King. Sometimes it felt like I was caught in a trap and I couldn't walk out, they were all such Hunks of Burnin' Love.

Well, my dear Cousin, It's Time For You (I mean Me) to Go and hope that we can get together soon, perhaps in Blue Hawaii and you won't be Lonesome Tonight.

Thank you, thank you very much,

*Anastasia*

(who just left the building)

**2002.08.28**

Dear Anastasia y Morgane,

I just returned from visiting Helena on the floating fish farm and party barge. Went there after the Solstice bash to recuperate. Bad decision as Cactus Clyde and the Raw Riders were also there, hiding out it seems from some infraction or other that the Nevada police want to question them about. They are pretty vague about what exactly it is, and after several weeks on the barge with them I am of the opinion that it would be best not to know. For a bunch of desert rats they sure took on quick to the coastal life, at least low life that is.

It sounds like Anastasia had quite the time in Vegas, Morton requests the recipe for the Love Me Tenderloin as he wants to add it to his repertoire of entrées ala King. Currently his favourites are You Ain't Nothing But A Hound Dog stew and In The Ghetto gumbo. Helena, on the other hand, wants nothing to do with any musicians for awhile, the after effects of CRR will take months to wear off. CC wrote a special song for Helena during his stay, We Do On A Skidoo. The video release has been banned in sixteen countries and condemned by the Pope and Jerry Falwell.

Cousin Philippa Phortuna also stopped by the barge during my stay. She has taken the necklace thing seriously and was looking for suppliers. She was quite dismayed when she found out that the necklace was a sacred totem unique to the Hanbasquette Clan and unauthorized manufacture not a healthy idea. The point was reinforced when Helena's twin brothers Fricano and Fracolo arrived and fed Phortuna's body guard Guido to a passing shark.

I must say that I am happy to be back on the remote BC chicken ranch with Horton and Morton where fowl play usually only involves a stew pot or a BBQ. I look forward to you post cards.

**Bogash**

**2002.09.11**

Dear Anastasia y Morgane,

Preparations are under way for the gala autumn festival this year, one destined to become the stuff of legends around the fireplace for generations to come. The festivities will start two days before the equinox on the night of the harvest moon and will be an ecumenical one coinciding with the celebration of Succoth. In fact we will construct a traditional succah and adorn it with a variety of fruits and vegetables from Horton's garden and Morton's orchard. Following the Harvest Dance of Dalgrhedda and Culmultha these victual treats will be heartedly enjoyed by all. We will also be renting the succah as accommodation to guests for a few shekels per night.

Sunday will be a day of rest and relaxation. A special treat will be an evening of chamber music played by Al Nino and the Downpour. If you have never heard Bach performed mariachi style then you really should not miss this performance. Horton will be serving his special local mushroom and herb nachos to enhance our listening pleasure.

Monday will be the big day as we greet the equinox during the first hour of the day. Glendolyn will be attending and has promised to perform the Dance of the Sparrow Feathers. Video cameras will not be allowed. We will also commemorate the anniversary of the discovery of Neptune, which took place on this day in 1846, with a dinner featuring Morton's galactic goulash. We await your arrival, dear friends.

*Bogash*

**2002.09.25**

Dear Bogash and Morgane,

Well tempus fugit! I am just recovering from my tour ala King and you tell me its time for the Fall Festival. The planned events are sure to be winners.

I would like to add one further event. I have taken up funambulism using goat silk. My new hobby will shock and entertain those present. Bungee jumping from the CN Tower has become passé.

I am happy to hear video cameras have been banned from the festivities. I don't want to add to the Zorq family offerings already on the black market. "Anastasia Takes the Plunge" tangled in goat silk would not be a pretty sight! However, for a few coins of the realm I might be persuaded to try.

Tell Morton I will bring the recipe for the Love Me Tenderloin. I was able to purloin the secret recipe (the "love potion") but only after doing the Jailhouse Rock with the kitchen staff using all my available goat silk. Perhaps Morton can serve it (the Tenderloin not the goat silk) in tasty strips to accompany Horton's mushroom and herb nachos.

Oh Phortuna! Like the moon you are always changing, waxing now waning now, never the same for long remaining! Cousin Philippa didn't spin her wheels for very long at the Fish Farm and Party Barge I see. Will she be rolling in for the Fall Fest with a new bodyguard? Guido's untimely passing as shark fodder must have her on the move again.

As Caesar says, "Plutus, Pluto Plutatus, Plutonium" (enriched with flour).

*Anastasia*

And her High wire Hijinks

Dear Bogash, and extended family,

Sorry I have been out of touch, so to speak. I would love to skip over the painful memories and dance my fingers over the electronic word machine to tell of other tales. However, that was my problem, and thus, I must elaborate and confess.

Our outrageous summer affairs and celebrations were quiet the thing. I trace me unfortunate current circumstances and the drought of my correspondence to June 21 in Nevada. All would still ring in my memory, were my memory on full function alert. Alas, a combination of the pulque and age has done me in on that one and was a contributing factor in my current state. Which is to say, I had a complete black out of what followed 1:12 a.m. June 22.

When I surfaced some ? later, I was in a place unknown to me, surrounded by the most foul smelling excuses for humanity to whom I have ever had the displeasure to be introduced. They claimed to be friends of mine, or at least acquaintances from my past, my long past. I didn't know mine was so black and smarmy.

The dungeon, for that was where I was, once the gloom and pulque cleared from my eyes, was outfitted with the most up-to-date (Inquisition Years) forms of torture machines known to mankind. Helena's twin brothers Fricano and Fracolo would be tickled a pleasant Sicilian pink, or should I say, rose.

Suffice to say, the plasma blobs claiming a human heart turned out to be thugs sent by a former paramour to punish me for abandoning the long-lost love (which should have remained lost), and to beg me to return. I have a feeling it was that Teutonic count from some years ago who tried to force me into slave labour in his isolated and run down castle. Alongside every torture machine was a huge display of the most lovely and fragrant red roses I have ever seen outside of the Red Queen's garden in Sommerset.

Anyway, I refused to return and refused to submit to the roses, which put a thorn in the side of the slime balls, and they ultimately put the thumbscrews onto each and every one of my dainty fingies. I remained bound and thumb-tied for days, perhaps even weeks.

Eventually the scent of the rotting roses and a lack of imagination overwhelmed my torturers, who swooned and passed out. (Mind, it could also have had something to do with the three cases of pulque they purloined and drank all in one sitting.)

Because I had not eaten for some time, the thumbscrews had loosed. I was able to untie myself and escape. The reason it took me so long to return to the marvelous West Coast, was that I had no money, honey, and had to rely on the hospitality of my extensive round-the-world network. Needless to say, I spent time telling tales at each rest stop.

And so you find me. I am now recovered. There were three little scars left on my right fingers, but I have had them artfully converted into tattooed symbols of world magic. I hope they will serve to remind me to test my pulque on Fenster

before I sip at the next celebration. Even if Fenster were kidnapped, the boy would take great delight in his various adventures that would result.

I remain,

*Morgane di Digi-Inqui Quid Pro*

**2002.10.09**

Dear Morgane et Anastasia:

We have been called away to Victoria to consult with the government on creating the new Poultry Practices Code. Will bring you up to date on the experience as soon as we return.

*Bogash & Crew*

**2002.11.06**

Dear Morgane:

Just got a call from Fenster who is minding the Chicken Ranch in our absence. He informs us that there is correspondence from you and from some nut named Burt which requires attention. I will address those matters instantly that we return from our little adventure in government here in Victoria.

Discussions on the proposed Poultry Practices Code have been somewhat peculiar to say the least. Since cabinet ministers have been present at the proceedings we are forbidden by government regulations to talk about what is going on, however I can tell you these Liberals are no slackers when it comes to chickens and ducks. Horton picked up a couple of new practices that even his warped mind never dreamed of.

Sask and Glendolyn came by to see us a couple of days ago. Sask is on a promotional tour for his employer and is currently doing a little public contact work out in Goldstream Park. They said that they would swing by and visit you when the gig is finished.

*Bogash*

**2002.11.20**

Dear Record,

I want to know where all the scummy Zorq Family members and assorted creatures that affiliate with said genealogical menagerie have disappeared to.

Normally I would not support a freedom of the press, but in this day and age when all kinds of insane madmen and even more insane women are infiltrating our pleasant and quiet little backwater communities, we need to be on guard.

Gold Riveres - you need to be on guard against this undesirable tide. Guard your teenagers. If they show signs of interest in chicken farming, or even cooking cluckers - turn them in to the nearest public health psychiatric consultant. Send your bill to Campbell. Though he normally cuts support for mental health and turns patients to the street, he will back you on this one.

Furthermore, resist the temptation to use farmed fish. Though Campbell is giving these new-age farmers unwarranted power and financial tax cuts and perks, make no mistake about his misguided loyalties there. Men, venture into the kitchen. If your wife wants fish, you know what she's up to.

One of the ways I kept track of these unwanted, undesirable, no-goodnick anarchists was to purchase your paper ever two weeks at the outrageous price of \$1.25 and track their wanderings on my global satellite 3D war room map. (Normally I can find them in the garbage, but perhaps bird cage liners have been in short supply in recent months.)

Little does that renegade, loose female known as Helena of the Fair Hands know, but I have not only located her floating fish barge, but I have had an ex-navy scuba diver swim out under the cover of darkness, and in the guise of a farmed, escaped gigantic Atlantic Salmon and place an electronic tracking device upon her den of iniquity. The only problem there was that the lad Fenster was quick to get out his rod. What was he doing with flashlight and net in hand on that dark night anyway? My buddy suffered several nasty hook injuries, but the worst were the gashes made by the hook that lad wielded.

We will repay.

Further more, there is nothing wrong with opening the Killing Fields as a business enterprise, or even better, a Disney theme park. I understand our premier has personally invested in this enterprise. There is no doubt in my mind we citizens of BC will benefit from this man's foresight and several spin off business benefits.

Finally, that guy who lost his head with the large fish in your July 31 paper is a shameless way of promoting Helena's farmed fish. There is no doubt in my mind it was the lad Fenster posing with the fish and you simply de-headed him to protect his identity. Too bad for you you showed his running shoes. I have personally documented the kind of shoes 74.8 per cent of Gold Riveres wear, and I am closing in on the dangerous delinquent.

I dare you to continue the sordid saga of your debauched, degenerate disciples.

Yours,

*Burt Smith*

Dear Helena, Bogash and rellies,

So who is this Burt Smith? Sent me a letter to my fly-by-night postal box in your fair town and claims he wishes to expand his mind and join one of my consciousness-raising retreats.

Funny thing was he asked if there would be weapons training to improve night vision. I was about to refer him to the fellow in the States who does this kind of thing, but then had second thoughts.

Is it Viktor, still pursuing me? Is it a new blot upon the horizon? My crystal ball is in the shop for repair; do me a favour darlings, and enlighten me as to what is really happening in your fair town. As you know I have been on an international speaking tour, and have had little time to keep in touch. This will soon change, I hope.

*Morgane di Mucho Mund*

**2002.12.04**

My Dear Zorqies,

Burt Smith? Now who, pray tell, is that? And why does he miss us? It's nice to know our absence has been noted. You may tell him (though I can't imagine why it would be any of his business) that I have not disappeared into the "Wild BlueYonder."

Maybe we should have sea lice set upon him for having a buddy bug Helena's fish barge with an electronic bugging device. Perhaps his fate will be the same as the bodyguard who lost his head back in July. If it were done when tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly.

Why would this person (if we can call him that) be so disparaging towards Bogash's chicken ranch? Perhaps he doesn't understand the Poultry Practices Code whence, "Fair is Fowl and Fowl is Fair." So fowl and fair a day I have not seen.

It must be the winter monsoon coastal air currents causing the inhabitants of this fair isle to take leave of what senses they do possess. I have received a missive from my cousin and friend The Countess. She wishes to inform us about her latest undertaking. In great purple prose she says she has taken to committing murder on paper. Murder by proxy, so to speak. I think she has a pre-occupation with all things floral. Working titles include "Murder by FTD" and "Murder by Buttercup Bouquet." She will forward some chapters to me when she finds where she has stored them. She tends to hide things so well that she often has to consult some (cover your eyes/ears Bogash) chicken entrails to find them again. I'm sure that all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten her little hand. Again I say, so fowl and fair a day I have not seen. Out damned Papparazzi! Will not these pages be clean!

I hope that Morgane will soon regale us with stories from her international speaking tour during the Winter Solstice festivities.

Your Cousin

*Anastasia (MacZorq)*

### **2002.12.18**

The Zorq family and assorted hangers on are on vacation, winter solstice and all that, not to mention turkey rites, egg noggling and other assorted amusements, both discretionary and obligatory. Look forward to more tales of low adventure, strange relationships and assorted weirdness in the new year.

### **2003.01.15**

Dear Bogash and Assorted Family Members

I miss you everyone. With all my heart and soul I miss the revelries at the Mid Winter's Solstice and the debaucheries at Christmastide. I am glad I missed anything and everything else that has been passing in the world, though; we have a rotten introduction to Winter. We should be engaging in good, healthy party activities and chasing old Winter away. Instead, I have naught but bad news of scourges and destructions from my friends of all affiliations and geographical locations, whom I looked up as I was on my world speaking tour.

Perhaps it was a good thing we all took a breather, what with that Burt Smith skulking about in the background. Who knows who he is or was or will be. I have come to be wary. Too much bad karma and we will succumb to cancer or some other fish farm or bird disease cooked up by the federal and provincial Liberal parties.

I have, alas, been healing my hear for the past two months at Madame Fatima's Fast and Frenzied Fixing Shoppe for Female Affection Afflictions. I am on a fast-track recovery program because I want to be ready for romance come Mid Summer's Day and my very own birthday.

I will send invitations once I recover and put plans in place. It will be a party to bust the books of Guinness, I promise, since it must needs also blast away my romantic past of recent. Ah, yes, the Maiden Morgane was smitten and bitten.

It all started at a grand soiree in the Nederlaender in honour of my workshop in the descendants of gods there. My speech was entitled, What have Vikings got to do with Mugwort; the ramifications and philosophical musings of a modern mendicant thereupon.

I was wooed by one so blond and fair, it would knock the socks of even the Lady Galadrial, Alas, a virtual Legolas (with a few more sun wrinkles about the eyes and mouth) is upon the rampage. And, oh, but he is charming. He speaks about truth and love and commitment and integrity. What a lovely mouthful of words. What a lovely mouth. What a silver tongue. He speaks of following the True Path, and purity of spirit; he has vast and intricate knowledge of the ways of my Metis kin.

My ladies, he will bed you and bump you for the next line. He is thrusting his sword deep through the hearts of many maidens, and other parts, as well, as though collecting meat for his winter supply. And, he will butcher you with as much care.

Alas, that I was his first victim. And how could I, one of may astute facilities he held under such a spell? It was unfortunate that my Character Crystal was non-functional in Europe - the current demands there are different.

My cousin in Norway House is this instant working on a plague potion that has long-distance strength, to bring this false elf lord down. He seems to be fond of the West Coast at the moment and is haunting the women of this wilde place. Perhaps we taste sweeter than those of other climes?

Thus, not only have I been in treatment, but also in hiding doing research to aid my Norway House cousin with all due speed. Any hints from your special book *The Magic and Medicine of Plants* would be helpful. I will send you my new private crystal-cell number under separate letter once I find time to read the three-inch, easy-to-follow set-up instructions so that we can chat.

Now, I understand that Viktor has spent the last four months in goal due to his involvement in the ATM fiasco. What a hoot. And he, purported to have floated, penniless (albeit wit grand Vodka supply) onto our fair west coast in a rickety, water-sogged dinghy.

I hear he and other built the entire fleet of ATMs on an environmental recycling grant, using old mining machinery from burned out oil rigs, no not in demand since Campbell has endorse coal (much cheaper, but requiring different sorts of equipment).

I am thrilled that Anastasia MacZorq's counsin an friend, The Countess, has taken to writing *Murder Mystries*. She always had a bit of black about the brain, but it is a faire and goode thing that she puts her talents to entertaing, and not harmful use.

Please pass on sympathy for her forgetful state. I too found myself more and more in that foggy place as the year ended and the new began. I recently arranged my abode to secure certain precious and unmentionable valuables in newer, more secret and safer places. As of today, I am still searching for six of those precious things. May their powers sleep until I locate them!

I am sure our current malaise wittl pass. I understand that as the veils of Samhain opened this year, they let in not only an inordinate number of spirits,

but also swirled the cauldrons of Chaos and Danger with little more fervour than necessary. All things will aright themselves by Mid Summer's.

*Morgane di Meditating Maiden*

Dear Zorquies and Smorquies,

Have I wasted a whole \$1.25 on a subscription to your little rag? Print me details of your family activities and hunts or I will sue for false financial representation.

I also have an appeal to you sick supporters. I am having trouble finding prints of the running shoes of various missing examples for my file of that beheaded fisherman since it has been raining so darn hard in this hole-in-the-coast forsaken place. Anyone with good samples can send them to me at my private, anonymous postal box.

Most sincerely,

*Burt Smith*

**2003.01.29**

Dear Burt Smith,

(May I be so bold as to call you Burtram?) This is what you missed.

After getting clearance from the embassy and the royal family, I am permitted to inform you personally of the following press releases and events, translated into English from the various languages, (except for the Moscow Pravda article): Paris Match, London Times and Der Spiegel. You can check the ones from Australia and New Zealand on the family website.

The article in the Rangoon Herald is simply not true! Then there is the mix up of Cartier vs. Lalique gifts for Constantine's baptism - or was it Christmas? Anyway, I hope you no longer consider your \$1.25 wasted with all the information I have just provided. False financial representation might have the earmark of Morton and Horton (the young scallywags) but certainly not us old wizened ones of the clan. You would think that we know better. In fact, you should probably be charged double since I imparted my wisdom and press releases to you gratis.

You have revealed your whereabouts somewhat in your description of your location as a "hole-in-the-coast forsaken place." At least we know you are somewhere on Vancouver Island, or perhaps the Lower Mainland. Do you care to provide further details, such as a "hamlet-of -a-hole-in-the coast" or a small hole or large hole or a whole hole?

How can we possibly address any of your concerns if you don't have your GPS functioning? I'm afraid a "private anonymous postal box" just doesn't cut it, Mon Cheri.

Let me "cut to the chase" and "get down to brass tacks" as they say in the vernacular. Who are you and what do you want? I hope you are not looking for payola by scamming the family what with Bogash and the lucrative remote chicken ranch, Helena and her profitable Fish Farm and Party Barge, Horton and Morton's (somewhat questionable) enterprises, El Ron's popular pulque and my very own multimedia extravaganza of my life story (so far)?

I will forward you letter and concerns to the rest of the family. In the meantime; "kwityercomplaining."

Regally yours,

*Anastasia*

Dear Morgane et Anastasia,

I write on behalf of my brother Bogash who is busily preparing for the annual Ground Hog Extravaganza. As you know that this is the year of the Aloha Ascension which may provide some unique and beneficial advantages to those whose preparations are both timely and wise. Bogash is particularly hopeful that with the proper arrangement of herbs and potions the family may be able to extend its influence throughout the realms of chickendom. If not, then at least amongst the local practitioners of the poultry arts and fowl fetishes. In dedicated pursuit of this noble undertaking he has no time to correspond at the moment, something that he misses you may be assured. He does greatly enjoy your missives and has asked me to pass on his warmest regards and felicitations until such time that he is again able to respond in person.

*Bruzinnia Felderkramp*

**2003.02.12**

Dear Morgane,

Sorry to hear about your less than romantic romance with the fair Viking prince. That your heart is but one battle stripe painted on the bow of his dragon boat is a sad reminder that praeda non amor is often the ruling credo of this fierce clan of hirsute heroes.

My ancestor Bjorn Stavangersen, sometimes called BS by his close friends and family, often bragged of the trail of shattered conquests he left from Copenhagen to Amsterdam, Paris and Rome. It was in fact on one summer cruise up the Danube near the city of Novo Selo that he seeded the fair Vidosia Illevenesceau who bore him the child Anna who at 16 ran off with the mendicant friar Philduk Zorq.

Their offspring were more numerous than flies in a barnyard, and built a reputation of being driven out of some of the finest as well as mediocre and worst towns and villages across Europe and Asia. In fact Zorquim non admitto once was a common sign posted over gateways from Baku to Barcelona. But that was centuries ago and certainly I weary you with such esoteric drivel.

As to your enquiry about plants that may be of benefit in your quest for the perfect plague potion, I passed it along to Morton for consideration. He suggests that you make a gruel from the crushed seeds of the red elderberry mixed with sap from the common tar weed. To this stir in a fair quantity of overripe sauerkraut juice and oil of avocado, sweeten with ground prunes and raisins and a bit of honey, form into little droplets and seal them in a shell of fine milk chocolate. Send it with many phrases of praise and adoration to your object of desire and ask someone near them to video tape the show. It can be particularly exciting if you arrange to have the doors to all privies within a mile of consumption bolted shut. Best results are often obtained when devoured in the midst of a large gathering.

This next item may come as a shock to you, but Burt Smith has been unmasked. Fenster followed him into a steam bath on Castro Street down in San Francisco, and when all of the accoutrements were removed and the steam melted away the bodily enhancements, voila, you would not believe your eyes. Burt Smith is really Viktor in disguise.

Fenster, enterprising lad that he is and aware of the tidy sum offered in reward for the ATM affair, called the FBI directly and watched as they scooped a screaming Viktor for extradition back to BC. To get close enough to nab him before the wily scoundrel could vanish in the mists, the agents had to disguise themselves as bath patrons. A truly amusing sight, reports Fenster, and where they kept their badges shall remain a state secret we have been told.

The past little while I have been absorbed with the preparations for the celebration of Ground Hog Day, one of our clan's most sacred rituals. As sister Bruzinnia Felderkramp told you, we feel that this year of the Aloha Ascension may be particularly auspicious and rewarding. Accordingly I have mixed an extraordinary concoction of herbs and minerals along with a unique assortment of insect and animal parts which is now aging to perfection in a secluded location under the Seven Seals of the Seven Maidens of Segovia. (In Bjorn's diary they were referred to as the Seven Squeals of the Seven Maidens, but that is another story.) If the potion ripens as planned it should be ready for the Summer Solstice, and if so I promise a celebration that will become legendary for generations beyond numbering.

Anyhow, Ground Hog day itself was quite an event here on the remote BC chicken ranch. Since we no longer have any ground hogs, Horton stewed them all this winter, we used a chicken instead. Morton stuffed it down a hole in the ground before dawn, and we gathered around to watch it appear. Unfortunately the hole happened to belong to a badger who was in residence at the time, and all that came out was a few loose feathers and a burp. Dagenmorg, who had come

for the occasion, read the signs and proclaimed that it foretold six more weeks of fried chicken. Not to dispute the wisdom of a holy man, we repaired immediately to the ranch house and began frying. KFC or Keep Frying Chicken is our motto until Spring.

In amicitia,

*Bogash*

**2003.12.26**

Dear Anastasia,

Thank you so much for the tasty Valentine gift. A heart shaped carton filled with special fermented cabbage rolls stuffed with a mixture of bean paste and mashed turnips. We ate them all like hogs at the trough, washing them down with copious amounts of Morton's Aqua del Dios brewed from a secret recipe containing strawberries, cherries, elderberries and a couple of herbs that are a closely guarded secret, plus the usual spare chicken parts. To say that we had a moving experience is an understatement.

Hope to see you for the equinox.

*Bogash*

**2003.03.12**

Dear Bogash,

You are such a charmer, Cousin Bogash, saying all the right words about the Valentine treat I sent over to you and the boys. My only regret is that I was not able to partake of Morton's fine, shall we say, "elixir."

I would have delivered the feast myself but I was away visiting Helena at the Fish Farm and Party Barge. All this "to do" about fish farms and sea lice really must be upsetting to her although her visage shows no sign of any distress. Her judgment however is under question. I worried before about the dear when she invited all sorts to cavort on the Party Barge. Apparently Mama Bin Laden and the Tali Band was only the tip of the iceberg, if you will. When I arrived, I was greeted by a latter day hippie who referred to himself as "Dogfish Boy", because of his propensity to indulge in this delicacy and the resulting eau de cologne about him.

Not only were his gastronomic choices of question, he loped around the barge with a paper cup filled with something Morton has never seen and would never drink - pure aqua vitae from a mountain. Dogfish Boy was positively exhilarated and perhaps even overcome by the fresh sea air and the tasteless beverage. It

must have given him courage to regale us with stories of daring do. Afterward he carelessly tossed his spent accoutrement of fine dining into the sea. He was promptly charged with littering by the sea lice patrol. And you know how nasty they can get. You don't want to annoy them.

As he was hauled away, Dogfish Boy was heard muttering about "these diminutive damsels" he encountered on the Fish Farm and Party Barge. Should we be insulted? I never considered the Zorq family to be a clan of Hobbits as he so implied.

And then there is the matter of Burt Smith. I feel positively hoodwinked when Viktor revealed himself to be the perpetrator of all those letters. I would not want to be in his shoes (if he managed to escape with any from that steam bath) after the Feds caught up with him. If not the Feds, he must endure the wrath of this cousin!

St. Patrick's Day and the vernal equinox are almost upon us. I am considering a new recipe this year to celebrate the two events together. It is a mashed potato and turnip dish, green in hue, delicately sprinkled with grated tulip tubers and shamrocks to herald the spring. I will try to deliver this delicate dish in person this time to your chicken ranch and we can all do the chicken dance or turkey trot together.

Cousin Diminutive Damsel,

*Anastasia*

### **2003.03.26**

Dear Family All, Excepting that Morton,

The sole reason you have not been able to read my golden words of late belongs to that miscreant relative of mine and yours, Morton.

What, oh what, was he thinking when he suggested that recipe but a few weeks ago, to cure me of my love-sickness and to purge - so to speak - the chutzpah out of the Fair Viking Prince with no heart?

I am sure you, Morton, were aware of the possible powers this potion possessed, when merely by the process of osmosis as I was in the process of making it, I was myself potently pickled.

Do not - I repeat, do not - even remotely suggest that I was tempted by the chocolate ingredient in the recipe to test the mix before sending to the Vicious Viking! For what did I else get my degree in Herbology and Lab Safety Whilst Using Rare Ingredients in Bubble and Toil Temptations?

I remind you it was a long and difficult course and out of the 57 original registrants, only myself and one other graduated. The other damsel lives at the moment in Black Creek, and I consult her frequently before indulging in the

making of any new and possibly dangerous blend. And we all know, things which involve Love can be enormously harmful, if they be not delightful.

Thence, I suffered the pangs of purging for more than a week, locked in a sanitary, quarantined section of the local geriatric ward (there were no beds elsewhere). I was dragged there screaming, kicking, flailing and wheezing. These words merely begin to describe the torments I endured while Morton's concoction worked its way through my body and soul. I fear that I have shortened the lives of the other three women who shared the room with me due to the sheer terror my tantrums incited.

Anyway, Morton, I shall see you ere Midsummer's come and you had best have some welcome offering for me to settle this in a healing sort of way before I drag you off to the Dagenmorg's Court. It convenes, happily enough, June 22 this year in Travilah, Washington.

As for that Victor and Burt Smith and the steam room, I will reserve my comments for our Midsummer's meeting, if I see you not before then. My words are not fit for print.

*Morgane di Much Maligned*

Dear Anastasia,

Thank you for the wonderful St. Paddy's treat. Never have potatoes been more delightfully prepared as with your turnip and tulip mélange. Mélange du mort, Horton called it, but what does he know? Morton's special brew of emerald beer, well it was supposed to be beer, certainly helped to enhance the flavour. It worked neat for polishing brass, too.

The gala Chicken Dance, what can I say? Such scenes can not be put into print, at least not in this part of the world. Tales of the grand finale plucking of the feathers ritual will be handed down in the family for many generations yet unborn. Never before have feathers flew in such profusion or with such gaiety as they did that night.

Word comes from Helena at the Fish Farm & Party Barge that they are developing a new product, gourmet sea lice. The rationale was if you can't beat them, eat them. Fenster has been retained to promote the culinary delights of lice to restaurants up and down the coast, while Figburt is working on various ways to utilize sea lice by-products.

Helena is putting together recipes for a Lice of Life cookbook and encourages all who may have one or two favourites to send them in. Glendolyn divulged her secret concoction for Aqua Marine Salad featuring shredded bull kelp and sea lice puree. The ubiquitous sea lice and fish eye soup of course will be featured, as well as lice pudding.

One cousin from Port Hardy sent in a recipe for crab lice, but that was rejected. Fried lice is sure to be included, as well as curried lice, but Helena is not sure about lice and gravy, although she would be receptive to suggestions.

Easter is fast approaching and Horton is hard at work on a new project, an egg detecting machine. Hopefully it will work better than last year's attempt to build a bunny trap. Morton doesn't understand why he just doesn't raid the hen house. It is not as if eggs are a rare commodity here.

In the spirit of the season we are planning to hold a gala feast featuring grilled rabbit morsels on a hot cross bun topped with a poached egg and herbal cream sauce. Hopefully it will not be our last supper.

Just one of the flock:

*Bogash*

**2003.04.09**

Dear Morgane,

Sorry to hear about your experience with Morton's remedy. Morton himself is a tad bit perplexed as to why such a reaction occurred. In any event, he promises to make amends and is preparing a culinary delight to be presented in your honour at the annual Mayfest. I have no idea what he may be concocting, but be advised that he recently traded two crates of chickens to a local commune for an assortment of herbal extracts whose origins are shrouded in mystery. A large package has also arrived for him from a numbered company in Romania, and I notice that recently he has been exchanging correspondence with cousin Czruchik Dzdudwilli, currently residing in a remote monastery in the Carpathian Mountains.

Horton has abandon his egg detecting machine after we all complained about the debilitating effects that his experimenting and testing of prototypes was having on the chickens. Now, instead, he has taken on the task of organizing the May Day festivities. A cedar spar has already been cut for the May Pole and he is busily gathering coloured streamers for the dance.

There has been a bit of discussion about the appropriate attire this year. Morton thought that dirndls would be nice in honour of our Teutonic friends, but Fenster favours pink tutus as a tip of the hat to our good cousins in la belle France. The traditionalist amongst us however are still of the mind that the ritual is best performed in classic Celtic style. Buck naked painted with blue clay and a special local twist of decorative chicken feathers in the ears and other locations. What is your feeling on this?

Speaking of Fenster, he has really gotten into this sea lice thing. A number of restaurants between Anchorage and Portland have started to feature the critters on their menus, and our boy is becoming hard pressed to fill the orders. Whoever thought that one could make more money feeding salmon smolts to sea lice than in raising them to maturity? This trend may revolutionize the whole fish farm industry.

Fenster has formed a new gimmick for the promulgating of the gospel of sea lice, the Sea Lice Users Realization Program or SLURP. The idea is that you buy a franchise from Fenster to sell sea lice franchises to other people to sell yet more franchises to others, and so on. Everyone who sells a franchise gets a cut of all of the sales generated from that sale, and theoretically everybody gets rich. Somehow I don't think that this is a new idea.

Vado cum pullui,

*Bogash*

**2003.04.23**

Dear Bogash, Morgane, Fowl Friends and Foul Family,

How is it that this family seems to be bunny-hopping from one event or celebration to another of late? Who does Horton think he is? Peeping Beauty?

Egg detecting machine? Those poor Rhode Island Reds were a new shade of crimson I bet. I can visualize it now: Horton and Morton in Bantam of the Opera. I wouldn't be surprised if their future Easter project is to market the Aracana eggs as "Martha Stewart's own pre-dyed Easter eggs from the Easter Egg Farm." Au naturel, if you will. What a scam!

I am amazed at Fenster's audacity to promote SLURP, the Sea Lice Franchise to restaurants up and down the west coast. I'm surprised he hasn't taken advantage of Seven-Eleven stores and not slipped SLURP sea lice into Slurpy's. That may be more of Helena's area of expertise though.

I have two original recipes to contribute to Helena's Lice of Life cookbook. I think Lice A Roni and Chicken Fried Lice would add some "spice of lice" to her culinary endeavours. Perhaps Lice Crispie Squares would make a fine addition to the dessert section. Think of the protein one would get besides the guilt producing sugar.

So I will leave you with this thought: Pacific Lice are always nice.

Have a lice day,

*Anastasia*

**2003.05.07**

Dear Anastasia:

Thank you so much for the contributions to our Lice of Life cook book. The Lice A Roni will be a big hit, I am sure. All we need now is a colourful local community to sponsor it in our advertising as their particular treat. Perhaps we

should hold a contest to see who can come up with the best jingle and local feature to connect with the dish.

The Chicken Fried Lice recipe did not turn out too well. In fact it proved to be a bit of a disaster for the boys at the remote BC chicken ranch, so I hear. It seems that Horton thought that rather than frying the lice he was supposed to feed fried chicken to them. Over forty pounds of prime pullets were cooked and disposed of this way before Bogash put a stop to it. They now have the fattest lice around and Morton is working on a recipe for lice on the half shell.

Did you make May Day at the ranch? We were unable to attend this year, but hear rumours that Morgane appeared and did the wild thing. We eagerly await her recounting of that adventure.

We did hold our own celebration here on the fish farm and party barge. Due to space limitations we were not able to put up a proper maypole for the dance. Actually, the maypole was no problem, it was trying to dance out 15 feet of streamers on a nine foot deck that proved the insurmountable obstacle. So, we just let the streamers flap in the breeze while we sang songs, soaked up a barrel of Figburt's special May Day hooch, and enjoyed a box of delightful Kootenay Kookies that Sask and Glendolyn sent us.

Speaking of Sask, he has had a busy winter helping with the avalanche problems out there. Not to miss out on a little publicity, he says that the local business have got a grant from the BC government to do some tourist promotions using the theme "Avalanche Capitol of Canada." Their logo is an arm a leg and a ski pole sticking up from a snow pile.

Back on the fish farm and party barge our Figburt got carried away with the SARS thing. He thought that it meant Southeast Asia Recreation Syndrome and hopped a plane to Bangkok to see what it was all about. Said he hated to miss out on anything exciting.

Our cousin Chatapan Phudorn reported that he last saw Figburt in the Lucky Lotus Bar on Patpong Street examining some of the local wildlife. He said that Figgy was headed down to Phuket to visit cousin Dilt hop Chapalawong at the Hai Saylor beach resort and spa. We are currently looking for a good microbiologist in anticipation of his return.

Tuus in herbaria,

*Helena Hanbasquette*

**2003.05.21**

Dear Helena,

Alas, I did not make it to May Day festivities at the chicken ranch this year. My daughters Pandora and Harpy wanted a home celebration. Although I don't know why I ever agreed to it. Pandora was up to her usual tricks. She couldn't

leave well enough alone and may have single-handedly changed May Pole dynamics for all time.

The modern young woman that she is, she decided to use local resources for her nod towards this ancient custom. I'm surprised she is not in Her Majesty's hotel provided by the local constabulary. Cathedral Grove will have her imprint forever. Careful not to harm the environment she chose the brightest coloured flagging tape available here on the coast. Have you ever seen an old growth cedar festooned like O Tannenbaum in spring?

Harpy actually stood at the foot of the cedar and charged a greatly inflated sum to interested parties for the privilege of scaling the evergreen. And I don't mean grading the lumber. Gives a whole new meaning to flapping in the breeze.

I fear the cones don't fall far from the conifer. Pandora and Harpy seemed to have inherited certain attributes from cousins Horton, Morton and Morgane. This whole escapade is reminiscent of Horton and Morton's schemes and Morgane's love of doing the wild thing. The only element missing was some sort of fowl input.

I am delighted to have news of Sask and Glendolyn. We have not had word of their doings for a number of months. I guess they were snowed under.

So I must take my leave and get back to the Garden as they say...Must prepare my HAZMAT suit against the intestinal flora Figbert is sure to bring back from his Southeast Asian excursion.

In Moreabundantfloribunda,

*Anastasia*

**2003.06.04**

Dear Bogash,

Not much time to write at the moment, but I thought it wise to forewarn you that recent developments at the fish farm and party barge may have some bearing on the future of the chicken ranch. Figburt should be arriving at your place shortly with more details and some samples. This could be hot stuff.

Semper sitiens,

*Helena Hanbasquette*

**2003.06.18**

Dear Bogash, Anastasia, Helena and all the cousins and cousines,

Do I have news to tell you!

A lot to catch up upon since me fingsies were once again put out-of-commission due to an unfortunate incident on one of my wilderness, back-to-the-basics, find-yourself-you-were-never-lost, canoe expeditions.

My third cousin six times removed on my mother's aunts' side via their second grandfather's third marriage, from Norway House, and I decided to go up Muckaboo Creek, a rarely-conquered, minor tributary of the mighty Nass, though we were greatly tempted to try Konigus Creek just slightly north, purely due to the name. Well, what's in a name, we thought, it's all water under some bridge somewhere, and stuck to our original plan.

After all, we had filed with the international court of leave for herbalists, I had taken six weeks off from my new-found-love (fear not, it is no new Viking prince, but a learning of the art of Medieval Dance and Seamstressing, without the stress, for which I will gain extra academic credits toward the pursuit of my Seventh Circle Degree, the thesis of which will be: The Arcane and Arcanesse Artes of Alde Atlantis and How the Alchemists were Really on the True Path to All Awareness. It's kind of all tied into an extended Medieval Age Cycle; we are about to enter another intense period, if my astrologically astute cousin, twenty six times removed, down in the Yucatan - Manuaga Montoye Musrhymica Borgas, perhaps you know him? - is correct.) . . . Sorry, I burble on like the river. In short, we'd registered and taken leave and were out in the pristine hinterland, the extreme boundaries, of alter-cyberspace.

On our fourth morning out, we hit a particular exhilarating set of pure, white water rapids and since they were not overly challenging to navigate, but merely lengthy and serpentine, I decided to do the section au naturel, standing at the prow of said canoe, arms raised in celebration and honour to the Great Ones whilst singing "Here We Go A Wandering." Perhaps I was out of season, for a rogue wave knocked me off balance and I hit the frigid waters, arms flailing.

My cousin had trouble locating me amidst the churning white, since my hair has taken a turn in recent months. "I have a cunning plan," thought she, and proceeded to whack about with her paddle in an attempt to strike something which might be less hard than a rock but not quite as soft as one of the numerous large Atlantic salmon we'd seen in the tributary, towing strings of fattened sea lice behind them much like a Mother Nature Fisher Price toy, since the lice were too big to stay upon the salmon any longer and were indeed rivaling the size of the mother ship. (You know anything about this, Horton or Morton?)

My cousin struck my outstretched hands as I attempted to grasp her paddle. I was saved, but at great expense. She paddled, portaged and packed for the remainder of the journey, not to mention cooked. I was at the prow every gold-streaked, rosy dawn and singing my signature song in an awed and reverential kind of sotto voce: "Here We Go A Wandering." However, even, I, in my search for the extreme, remained seated, hands folded sedately on my lap like some kindergarten student waiting to be picked as special helper of the day.

My cousin is now returned to Norway House and I am having trouble finding a willing relative for my next wilderness sojourn.

I unravel like Martha Stewart's empire! I have but recounted the fortune of my fingies.

The rest in short: I recovered well enough for May Day dance celebrations - other celebrants simply wound the ribbons round my palms and taped them there for the May Pole Dance, and we concluded the day with a special Bind Me Unto Thee design in which we all ended up tied to the pole except one free agent, a baron, who pelted us with rose petals whilst skipping round us 13 times in one direction and 13 in the other. He then had his pick of the maidens or lads thereby bound up, after which we all engaged in rowdy festivities late into the night, supplied by three large jugs of something Figburt brought back from the Lucky Lotus Bar on his trip East. (He didn't stick around.) I would love to tell you more, but none of us can remember. We all awoke on some huge expanse of pasture north of Victoria. Luckily there were no bulls about, and we all picked our way out to the nearest highway and dispersed, hitchhiking in our various home directions.

Midsummer's is fast upon us. I have a particularly pretty and positively poetic party planned. Morton, I remind you of your need to smooth my ruffled feathers after that Cure for Lovesick Maidens Concoction recipe you sent earlier this year. I remind you of Dagenmorg's Court on June 22 if you fail to deliver. He has happily moved the court to Ladysmith this year, closer than Travilah, Washington, since he is boycotting all things American, and in any case thinks he will be in no traveling condition following my party to go further afield and still appear respectable and comprehensible. (As though he needs to be!)

Yours,

*Morgane di Maimidsum*

**2003.07.02**

Dear Helena:

Sorry that I missed you at the Midsummer's Festival, I was looking forward to the event, particularly the meeting of Morton and Morgane, but alas, my presence was required elsewhere. I was invited to speak at the annual Hoo Doo Hedonist convention at the Sagebrush Sunshine Naturist Resort in Alberta on June 27. It happened to be Emma Goldman's 134th birthday so I spoke on the politics of free love, fish farms and the emancipation of the working class. It was a pretty good speech if I may say so, and since I gave you a plug I expect that you will see an increase in visitors to the fish farm and party barge in the near future.

Figburt did arrive a couple of weeks ago with your latest invention, as promised. It was hot stuff, alright, but I suggest you go back to the lab and work on the formula a bit. Salmon Balm may become the latest craze in cure alls, but not as presently concocted. Horton rubbed some in his scalp and now has a head full of scales. Morton, unfortunately, used it as a condiment and the closest

approximation to its effects that I can remember is the time he ate the hot chili, sauerkraut, goose fat and prune soup. It was not pretty.

What Fenster did with a whole litre of it is beyond description aside from the fact that we are pretty sure that it was not legal in a number of jurisdictions. It wouldn't be approved by the BCMA either, and has certainly changed his demeanor for the time being. Suffice to say be prepared when you see him again. Be very prepared.

*Bogash*

**2003.07.16**

Cousins, All,

Wasn't it the Bard of Avon that said, "As the earth's stomach turned, it vomited up another day?"

Well that churning has led Pandora and Harpy to a new enterprise. They have embarked upon a Rubber Duckie Roundup. Seems that the container ship spill of toddler toys in the Pacific eleven years ago is making its way here to our fair coast.

Oh the tides of change are upon us! You can imagine what they are doing with 29,000 duckies, beavers, turtles and frogs. They are setting up a tourist booth right on the beach and flogging them as "Pandora's Pacific Flotsam and Jetsam" with numbered certificates of genuine authenticity. I think they might do better with the duckies than those odd sized, unmatched Nike's and gloves. Somehow, I don't think this is "Bard on the Beach" as it is meant to be.

Harpy will try to increase profits further by offering up her culinary talents to produce Kelp Smoothies and Sea Cucumber sandwiches for High Tea. Horton and Morton will no doubt want to take a leaf from her cookbook.

By the way, Prince William confided in me the other day. The Royal Manx cats, Fidelis and Braveheart, have taken a liking to hiding a half dozen or so freshly chewed mice in Grandma's coronation slippers. She was not amused. The cats are nowhere to be seen. However there were unsubstantiated reports that two tiny pikes could be seen with round furry objects on top of them (just behind the guard, but inside the gates of the Palace).

The SPCA were unable to find any traces that would lead them to conclude that Her Majesty was anything other than an animal lover.

And so my dear cousins, everything right now is just duckie. I will take my leave and see the sights at the seaside singing, "Rubber Duckie, You're the One" (with apologies to Bert) and in the case of the vinyl frogs "It Ain't Easy Being Green."

Your Cousin,

*Anastasia*

**2003.07.30**

Dear Boggie, Anastasia, Helena, offspring and others in the menagerie,

I was wondering what was going on with rubber duckies. One guest at my Midsummer's soiree brought me a 'prototype' gift item for my birthday (which also falls on Midsummer's - ain't that grand not to mention auspicious), assuring me it would be the hottest souvenir on the West Coast this summer. He said some were being painted with native designs on the wings especially for the German tourists, whose hands itch to get such items. The price of those was to be double the plain variety.

We set said duckie in the punch bowl and proceeded to bob for Bob, as we named the dear duck. By the time we were finished, we were darn near finished. Have you ever tried to grab a mouthful of rubber, primed to a slippery state? I don't know how those salmon ever get hooked with hoochies!

Now I find that these little punch party favours are the brainwaves, or Pacific waves should I say, of Anastasia's Pandora and Harpy. Such creative young entrepreneurs! They should apply to the feds for a grant or three and say they are dealing in Pacific Rim trade with major multi-national American companies. The feds, contrary to the opinion of their voters, positively salivate over anything to do with American trade. Contact the local MP immediately. Try cooking a little competition by talking to your MLA too. You might mention the premier's recent Hawaii connection and healthy life choices, but don't tell him about our duckie punch. (Or, perhaps do - it would make a great pix.) Toss in the bit about the native designs and you'll get an extra financial bonus. Bring the local band on board and throw a potlatch celebration party. Don't forget to invite me.

Anyway, with the present-opening starting off with such a bang, the party progressed from rowdy to riotous. We sang, danced, indulged, and made peace with enemies. Many of the partiers picked fights just so they could kiss and make up all over again we were having such fun. Professors of International Politics ought to take note - perhaps I'll invite one or two to my next event.

Morton and I are once again in the kind of questionable harmony most family members find themselves. The reason was that we shared a private bowl of Bob Bob Duckie Delight (the punch recipe changed throughout the night, so I am sorry I cannot forward it) to which Morton had added something that fizzed through the body like fireworks, but was chocolate-free and kind to the digestive tract.

I would deem the party a grand success. Morton ended up tied with surgical rubber to a tall pole, rubber duckies, frogs and turtles dangling about him. We danced around him, snapping a duckie or a frog when fancy took us, as he called for mercy. We gave him none. Glendolyn and Sask left with their hair curled in tight ringlets, a side-effect that is rather pleasing, I think, of one of the resurrections of the Bob Bob Duckie Delight punches. Many crawled under the nearest tree to sleep away the few remaining hours before dawn raised her rosy veil.

As for the next few weeks of summer, I am off to the Clinton Wars, where I will practise my developing art of Medieval Dancing and Seamstressing. I am going

to take a few more courses towards my degree, and have tentatively chosen two: Flirting with Fat Friars For Sport and Gain and Deceiving Dead Knights. The way my romantic life is going these days, flirting and deceiving are arts I need to brush up upon.

Until afterwards

*Morgane di MediMaid*

**2003.08.27**

Dear Morgane et al:

Morton thanks you for the tip on the rubber duckies and German tourists. It has led he and Horton to yet another exciting and lucrative enterprise, der Deutscher Duckie. The boys covered local content by fashioning the critter in the image of a Marbled Murrelet and catered to German sensitivities by building in a functioning intestinal system. It makes a great party item when stuffed with liverwurst which can then be squeezed onto crackers or whatever else one's imagination calls for.

Word has come from the Fatherland that our cousin Friedrich von Zorqholz is making a fortune on the duckies. He bought a truck load from Horton and is featuring a novel form of duck soup in his night club on the Kusdam. It is kind of like your bobbing for Bob, but with some Teutonic refinements.

Bob, now called Otto, is stuffed with braunschweiger and put in a pail of schnapps. The object is to dunk for Otto, bite him enough to squeeze out a dollop of the pate, then slurp it up with a healthy dose of the broth to boot. For those with a bit more adventuresome bent a few pickled herring, potatoes and cabbage are also tossed into the soup.

Sask and Glendolyn stopped by on their way home from your festivities, the tight ringlets were cute. Sad to say that they are gone now. It seems Sask got involved in fighting the fires that have been raging across the interior, and got too close to a flare up. He is alright, but the ringlets are gone and poor Sask looks like a plucked chicken whose pin feathers have just been singed.

Hope to see you at equinox,

*Bogash*

**2003.09.10**

My Rubber Duckie Dears,

It seems we have created a monster(s). Morgane has become the Rubber Duckie Diva of the flotsam flotilla. This doyenne of Punch Bowl diving has

given new meaning to Duck a l'orange. Have "Bobbing for Bob" and "Kusdam Kanards" become new Olympic sports?

I should not be surprised to hear how Horton cashed in on the flock with his Marbeled Murrelet creative critters. However, I am concerned for the financial future of Pandora and Harpy. After all, it was their beachcombing brainwave to rescue the bathtime quackers. They even spent copious amounts of time putting the duckies through their paces in preparation for world event races. Now their fully trained Canards a Canada have become Deutscher Duckies dispensing foie gras.

I think you will see that they will be demanding compensation from Horton in the future.

Perhaps even royalties or a franchise for every floater so flogged. Canadian content has gone down the drain, so to speak.

I will ask Pandora and Harpy to bring some of their found flotsam to the Equinox bash for all to experience. Maybe a liberal dose of Harpy's Kelp Smoothies will help to get everyone well floating. We'll also add Pandora's Sea Cucumber sandwiches as canapés (a la Canard of course) and as an entrée, Cassoulet Canadensis. And for dessert, Flaming Flotsam. We can only hope those environmentalists don't descend upon Pandora again as they once did for participating in Olympic Pooh Sticks.

By the way, that ship owned by Figburt, being chased down by the Australian, South African and American party spoilers, means we are not getting any Patagonian Tooth Fish for Christmas. I guess it's back to Caelocanth eggs with the Giant Squid Sauce and the endangered species Surprise of the Year.

I hope Sask and Glendolyn have recovered from firefighting. I am looking forward to exchanging pleasantries with my heroic cousins.

Autumnally yours,

*Anastasia*

**2003.09.24**

Dearest Anastasia et Morgane,

There is so much to write regarding the many curious events of the past two weeks, but a severe case of post Equinox exhaustion on the part of myself and the uncles, and assorted bacterial embarrassments the were acquired by Fenster and a few cousins, dictates that I must leave you anticipating the chronicles of our latest adventure. One thing that I can tell you is that the term "being pooped" has certainly taken on multiple meanings around here.

*Bogash*

**2003.10.08**

Ahoy! Bogash Me Hearty and Morgane Me Matey,

So, you are pooped on the poop deck Bucko Bogash. Maybe not so hearty after those so aptly described "assorted bacterial embarrassments." Did the Equinox party lead you to neglect International Talk Like a Pirate Day?

Our Pandora was suddenly and totally, besotted with the buccaneer barbarisms of speech. The genteel lass was heard to be addressing her peers as Me Lads, Lassies, Ladies and Maties. Her party boarded Helena's Fish Farm and Party Barge and completely ransacked the fish pens searching for doubloons and pieces of eight. I must say, Helena took the invasion very well knowing that our dear Pandora Pirate would only find sea lice. Indeed it was visiting Figburt that lost his tricorne hat in the scuffle and demanded that the young rascallions surrender their cutlasses and walk the plank over the pens while the crew planted the Jolly Roger.

Not to be outdone, Pandora, accompanied by her parrot Omar, ascended the yardarm and screaming at her crew to "Belay the Bilge Rat Figburt" at all costs so he could dance with Jack Ketch, leaped onto the poop deck, relieving a few years from the long life of her avian companion. Her crew in the meantime was more concerned about finding the treasures and left poor Figgy to scramble to safety hanging on to the gunwales and hanging the jib.

Needless to say the only treasure the boarding party found was the fish roe. But those buccaneers didn't even recognize the bounty, West Coast style. When they finally departed sans swag, Figgy emerged, boasting about his swashbuckling defeat of Pirate Pandora and her motely crew of scallywags. Pandora considers herself more of a Privateer, shall we say. Figgy had to consume copious amounts of grog that eve to erase the memory of the pirate patois he had swirling in his head. He could be heard well into the wee hours, me dear Bogash, singing the sea shanties of yore trying to reconcile the events of the previous day.

Pandora Pirate/Privateer was no worse for wear. Her infatuation with Pirate patina has faded but I expect it will be resurrected again in a year's time. However, Omar brought booty to meself and I must go count the coins of the realm....

West Coast Wench,

*Anastasia*

**2003.10.22**

Dearest Anastasia:

I would be much appreciated if you could pass the word to that wretched wench Pandora that though wild celebrations are a staple of barge life, her visitation on ITLAP Day surpassed all previous standards of debauchery and mayhem. As a result we find it necessary to invest some tens of thousands of dollars in capital repairs, not to mention the cost of dealing with the trauma to poor Figburt who

now is recovering from a biological and social embarrassment. Any financial assistance that her or her groupies might be able to contribute to this cause would be certainly appreciated.

*Helena Hanbasquette*

**2003.11.05**

My Dearest Helena,

Fortunately for Pandora, the Pirate patois has now peaked and passed. Pandora Pirate truly regrets the damage she and her cohorts made to the Party Barge. As for the trauma caused to poor Figburt, she says she cannot be totally responsible for his reaction to drinking all that grog that he keeps in a retro (uranium glazed) Fiesta Ware jug. You know the one to which I refer, the one with the bright orange emanations? When Figgy has his collection together the alarm goes off at the tracking station for nuclear materials proximity.

I hate to be the one to say it, but doesn't Augusta Meltin Syngyn-Smythe's wisdom appear appropriate to help everyone concerned? We all hurt for Figburt.

Pandora has cut a deal with cousin Crown Prince Faisal to have the barge repaired in Abu Dhabi with everyone chipping in. She will supply the gratuities. The remaining amount will come from sales from her royal Pacific Rubber Duck Line.

By the way, I have personally approached the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who was delighted and agreed immediately to allow us, the Zorq family, to use Manger Square for our December 25 exclusive use. No commoners will be permitted. The Mossad assures me there will be no "accidental" camel intrusions. The place will be at least as secure as the Party Barge. Her Highness insists on sending out the invitations on Buckingham Palace letterhead. So be on the lookout for the diplomatic courier in your area.

Gracefully yours,

*Anastasia*

**2003.11.19**

Dear Anastasia,

Alas, uranium glazed jugs are the least of poor Figburt's problems. In a way one might consider the jugs a type of radiation treatment for the more serious problem he acquired from the flaming floozies that accompanied Pandora on her assault upon the party barge.

Currently the health authorities have the young lad in quarantine until researchers can come up with an anti-biotic strong enough to arrest the progress of his infliction. The poor boy may never be the same after this.

Infectious disease control would like to know the whereabouts of Pandora and her crew. If you could provide them with that information a small reward would be forthcoming. Please also advise them to refrain from any direct contact with members of the general public until appropriate medical actions can be initiated.

We hope that you enjoyed the recent eclipse of the moon. We travelled to the remote BC chicken ranch and celebrated with Bogash and the boys there. We did not see Morgane, though, and wonder how she has been doing.

The eclipse celebration started off with the Dance of the Three Covergences around the sacred bonfire. It was too cold to do it in the traditional manner, attired only in a thin film of chicken fat, so we bedaubed ourselves with fresh bee's wax then rolled in a pile of chicken feathers until we were all warmly encrusted. Fenster was in charge of making the feather pile, and he just swept them out of the hen house without cleaning them. Feathers were not the only chicken product that we became encrusted with.

We had a lot of pumpkins remaining from the equinox festivities and harvest hoe down, so Morton cook up a special eclipse dish for the occasion. He stuffed a pumpkin with ground chicken bits, smoked salmon, pickled herring, duck eggs, marshmallows, licorice whips and assorted herbs and secret ingredients, and roasted it over the sacred fire.

I can't tell you too much about how it tasted as Horton provided some mushroom and blackberry cider that had been aging in a barrel since late August, and we enjoyed considerable portions of it prior to the pumpkin treat being served.

I think we will pass on Christmas in Bethlehem, Bogash found a stump in the forest in the likeness of the Blessed Virgin, so we plan on holding our celebration there this season.

Semper Excitatus,

*Helena Hanbasquette*

**2003.12.03**

Dear Mumsey, Helena, Figburt and Me Crew Mates,

Don your HAZMAT suits, I have returned!

Although I am not about to reveal my whereabouts, I can say that I was not responsible for the trampled gardens at Buckingham Palace. That, I believe, was the evidence left by the CIA after the arrival of George Bush and Company. And they weren't painting the roses red, shall we say?

Since my swashbuckling days are over for another year, I am free to move on to other celebrations. I am sorry to say I missed the recent eclipse of the moon and the subsequent lunacy that followed on the chicken ranch. However, it seems Cousin Fenster more than adequately contributed to the celebration in my place.

My sister Harpy has been looking after my west coast flotsam and jetsam business in my absence. She is a shrewd businesswoman but when one receives a text message that says "Salvage sunk and run amok. Come home soon", one has to wonder if the Liberal government hasn't decided to take on this lucrative enterprise, in a reverse cash grab.

Speaking of cash grab, has anyone heard from Morgane? I presume she is preparing to observe the many winter festivals that are now upon us. Perhaps I could assist her to find adequate apparel for the holiday season. I have many mismatched items of footwear in my inventory along with the finest of fishnets for stockings (and we're not talking about those ugly things hung on fireplaces at this time of year). I could also search my stock for appropriate accoutrements for her next Dance of the Dishevelled Damsels. Perhaps Morgane has lost her head in a shilling and little finger on a dime and is in hiding consumed by numismatic fasciitis.

Pleasingly Yours,

*Pandora Zorq*

**2003.12.17**

Dear Pandora,

It is a good thing that you are keeping you whereabouts concealed. A number of interesting parties have passed our way making indiscreet and not so indiscreet inquiries as to where they may find you. Unless you have a thing for guys in black suits you would be well advised to stay under whatever rock it is that you are presently residing beneath.

You particularly do not want to meet the brothers named Guido and Vincenzo. Morton suffered three broken fingers and two smashed toes plus a tooth extraction before they finally believed that he did not know anything. You owe that boy, picking his nose will be an awkward chore for a few months.

An interesting note, after they decided that Morton was on the up and up with them they became chummy and it soon came out that their last name was Zorqaggia which makes them distant relatives. The Zorqaggia clan rose to some prominence in 13th Century Italy when it was hired by the Pope to provide the Vatican with a number of commodities and services that you will never find in the official records. It was a business that they managed to expand to a number of royal houses in Europe and to an assorted number of lesser princes and more well to do officials.

It is not clear on whose behalf they are currently employed to locate you, my dear cousin, but knowing our cousins you can bet that there is a substantial reward of some kind in it for them.

The holiday season is scheduled to start off with a bang at the chicken ranch. Glendolyn and Sask are coming in for the opening Solstice rituals which should be an event long remembered. Kildonia O'Zorq and the Kildettes will be attending on behalf of our Irish cousins, and will perform the fabled Dance of the Thousand Pin Feathers. In order to get that many fresh pin feathers for that spectacle, of course, we will be hosting a chicken plucking contest, an ever popular activity around here.

In keeping with the Celtic theme Horton will be preparing a vat of chickens boiled with cabbage and potatoes. Unfortunately there is not a ready supply of Guinness in our area, but Fenster has solved the problem by mixing vodka with heavy drain oil and carbon dioxide. I doubt if even the most discerning will know the difference.

After Solstice of course we go into the Twelve Days of Christmas, always a fun time for us as each year we enact out that renowned song with a different set of lyrics. Fenster wrote the score this year and is keeping it under wraps. It would be deceiving to say that there is not a little trepidation amongst us on this account.

For New Year's Day we all plan to go with Helena to the party barge and fish farm for the annual polar bear dip. Since it is a fish farm we have our own unique little contest. Everyone appears on the barge in their birthday suit and we all leap into the bay for a five minute swim. Upon climbing back onto the barge the official sea lice count begins. The swimmer with the most sea lice on them gets an extra pint of New Year's grog and first crack at the sheep dip.

We will miss you at the festivities dear Pandora, but since Guido and Vincenzo will be attending it would not be wise for you to appear.

Semper Familia,

*Bogash*