

One: The bet.

My father insists it is better to have loved and lost than to have to rise for the 3:00 A.M. feeding, and I must admit to having concurred. After all, I am a highly-trained, militant bachelor who has far exceeded any expectations my catch-and-release coaches may have harbored for me. I've dodged the "bride bullet" now for over two decades, with only one very near-miss by one of the bravest and most wonderful female humans I've ever met. I continue to consider myself quite young, though my best pal insists I recently passed the "half-dead" mark.

While I certainly am not fond of how that sounds, I truly dig the dickens out of the fact I am still able to report for duty on the best planet I've ever been to yet-as far as I know. I am a very lucky mammal, and it just seems to keep getting better and better! Hell, it's been fifteen years since I had to check into a mental hospital, and I daily trip over more blessings than I could possibly tally.

It has, ladies and Germans, been one amazing adventure, and you just never know how things are going to work out. Heck, if Mamma Cass had given that ham sandwich she supposedly choked to death on to Karen Carpenter, they both might still be alive today. What? They might.

Pardon my manners. My name is Shawn Michael Bitz, and I am not quite giddy to report I'm making a run at the often terrifying proposition of "settling down". I wonder if most folks just want to be someone's last, first kiss? Maybe not, but I'm beginning to wonder if my hourglass sand is running thin. I am forty-two-years-old, but I still remember my high school locker combination..

Whatever that means.

I live with three females: my mate, her teenaged daughter, and a basset hound. They are all extremely intelligent, highly trained manipulators, and I am usually outgunned at just about every turn. I do love them all wholeheartedly and consider myself to be a bliss-blessed lad; but holy bat copters they're a heaping handful!

I am a singer/songwriter with eyes on the evil industry's upper-middle class. I was "supposed" to attend law school and snag more brass rings than I could carry, but opted instead for the National Sun Tanning and Pot Smoking circuit in the early 80's. Had there been a marijuana smoking Olympic event, I would have likely been the team's captain. Believe me, I'm not bragging. I once attempted to jump-start a car with a Ted Nugent tape during a snowstorm

I was not hitting on all cylinders by any stretch of anyone's imagination!

. I did, however, burn and crash myself into a treatment center or three, and recently celebrated eighteen years of continuous sobriety and making music. I still keep a couple bags packed for the occasional and inevitable guilt trips I seem to take regarding my

failure to practice law, but I have managed (through the good graces of many humans) to eek out a musical “living” these past three years without finding it necessary to report to a “real” job!

Well, rock and roll ain’t law school, but at least it ain’t law school!

Why am I here? My best pal bet me I can’t or won’t write “a book” in five days, and my band-*Abby SomeOne*-is lying low for a bit while one of my brothers heals up from bypass surgery (We are *not* senior citizens!) and we attempt to “work” our single up the national radio ladder. I assure you, keeping a band together and working is like trying to herd hallucinating cats.. It’s about as tough as picking up an exploded elephant with chopsticks. It can be done, but you really need to pay attention! !

Looking for character development, plot and format continuity? Keep moving, there’s nothing to see here, folks.. If you’re looking for a giggle-gaggle, I may have your ticket. Here comes five days of writing, and I’m as curious as you regarding just where we may end up and down. Let’s skip the background information for now, other than I grew up and currently reside in the Black Hills of South Dakota, God’s favorite vacation spot! (HE even keeps a cabin on Pactola Lake, and Jesus is one heck of a barefoot water skier. Doesn’t even use a boat!) Oh, and I grew up watching my famous father tell jokes on television, which much more than likely urged me into the unforgiving jowls of show business.

We’re not talking about cutting edge drama here, folks. Just one guy’s snapshots as they are quickly developed and delivered. So, there you have it, and where you put it is entirely out of my paws.

The female mammals would be as good a place to start as any. I daily watch their hormones bounce around our cottage like goosed greyhounds, and every one of them is goofier than a heavy metal banjo solo. Don’t get me wrong, folks, I dig the dickens out of them, and I’m not breaking any sanity records myself. Three nervous breakdowns and one nervous breakthrough later-I continue to house bats in my belfry, although I am happy to report they now mostly fly in formation thanks to Big Ernie and the teachings of a whole mess of wounded warriors.

I’ve already ingested way too much caffeine.

Yep, they would be as good a place as any to start, but I’m facing a different direction: Stupid automobile operators! I’ve just returned from a run to the closest inconvenience store, and narrowly avoided death. Two teens, quite obviously operating under marijuana’s influence and some numbing and dumbing-down rap music, nearly sideswiped my perfect paint job! Kitty-quick reflexes and a *Van Halen* tune saved my life, and I’m not even thinking, let alone whistling, Dixie.

I must admit to a loss of cool, folks. I flipped Beevis and Butthead “the finger” The poor youngsters began to scream and threaten yours truly, and the driver missed

oncoming traffic by mere inches.

Yes, I almost killed two stoners with one bird! I'm still shaken, but so far, not stirred. I'll get the rest of this off my fingers and we'll be off.

Few folks use their friggin' blinkers in this town and it's starting to piss me all the way off! Or, if they do become aware of the mechanism and happen to engage their turn signal, it is usually twelve feet from where they execute this previously unannounced maneuver. I think some drivers sense my raged glare and signal halfway through a turn as if this trivial gesture will grant a cease fire from those of us searching below our seats for a lawn dart or semi-automatic weapon.

Of course, my spiritual program precludes any such acts of violence or carrying weaponry in my vehicle. Usually, when experiencing behind the wheel angst, I'll breathe deeply and offer up a prayer for the offending mammal. Just rising above the bumper din, brothers and sisters.

And, why does it take five friggin' seconds to respond to a green light in a turning lane which then only allows the two cars ahead of me to proceed? Are these Neanderthals just too busy attempting to locate their turn signal mechanism in order to engage it halfway through their turn? They remind me of a dog called to "go for a ride?" that becomes paralyzed by unbridled joy until the happy seizure passes, just shuffling and wagging in place.

It's not that I'm in a hurry to get anywhere specifically. The simple fact is a lot of drivers have the reaction time of a punch-drunk boxer hooked on barbiturates. Maybe they're just busy barking into cellular phones or balancing checkbooks. Maybe they're married, and simply have a lot on their minds.

You won't find an ex-pot smoker to be slow on the pedal, I will tell you that! When I was in college I simply used a knee to navigate while I drank beer, rolled and smoked joints, operated a sophisticated stereo system, played air guitar and drums, handled lead and backing vocals, and perpetually scanned the perimeter for female mammals and officers of the law. I'm not without skills and my comedian father is the only human on the planet who can shoot a rubber-tipped arrow from a Gibson J-200 acoustic guitar to knock a lit cigarette out of a rubber chicken's beak, at thirty paces. .

I come from damn good stock, but I digress.

While these examples of motor vehicle operation disabilities are mildly bothersome to me, some of you folks act like rabid drill instructors when someone or something delays you. Where are you going in such a hurry? Are you late for an oral sex contest? Are you rushing to deliver a donated organ to a scrubbed surgeon? Has your wife called to inform you she'll be working late and you suddenly remember she does not have a job?

Look, if you are living your life so close to the cuff that an occasional road delay

sends you into a hypoglycemic tantrum, you may want to inject Prozac into your temporal lobe and re-examine your human race. You'll save a fortune on brake pads, and a few of the worm-like veins pulsing on your forehead may actually retreat. Yeah, I'm the one that brought the whole shooting match up, but I'm able to maintain the whole calm, cool, and collected vibe. Unlike my hair-triggered lady who has actually sprained tonsils while screaming behind the wheel.

Speaking of, here comes my mate for her nightly stumble/stagger down the hallway to empty her bladder and refill her disturbingly large water container. She will soon emerge from the restroom to plop on my lap for what I like to call the "Feline Rub and Run". Before reaching me, half the water in the bucket she carries will be consumed, and I'll then receive instructions regarding just what body part I am to massage-head or feet. Refusing her in this phase of the F.R. & R can trigger a pout-and-whine ego storm of near-biblical proportion, and God help me if I stop too quickly.

We're talking *premature endulation*, folks. A recipe for a nightmare!

If you were to hear the animal noises made by this tiny female during rubdown the hair on the back of your neck would stand and salute. Cornered wolverine noises; released from the deepest recesses of her intestines. Not a pretty picture, but I have to get this stuff out where I can deal with it. The worst part of the entire *shebang* is always her abrupt dismount and departure the friggin' second I become aroused, leaving her scent and my derailed train of thought in her wake. .

Dames.

Ok. I just finished a foot rub and she's back in the sheets. It's not that I mind doing it. She works very hard managing a night club and asks very little of or from me. What I don't get is why I'm asked to drop anything and everything I may be doing. I just don't think that way. I would never come home from a long night of playing music and think to myself:

"She looks so calm and peaceful, curled up and reading the newspaper in her favorite chair I've been sweating in my shoes like Rush Limbaugh at a free buffet all night, and I'll bet she'd really appreciate it if I peeled off my soiled socks and dropped my stinky feet in her lap like a couple bricks!" (Why do I get the feeling my next rub duty will be doubled?)

Now her cell phone is ringing, and it's friggin' midnight. Why is it crucial for every adult human on the planet (other than myself and my grandmother) to carry a cell phone and/or beeper? I had lunch with a pal recently who received five and made four calls in thirty minutes. He doesn't have a job, a significant other or a family, for crying out loud! Nice, relaxing lunch we had. I doubt my pal has enjoyed a hot meal since the Clinton administration.

His right ear is now perpetually pasted to his skull, and don't get me launched on the

brain cancer waves. The day I own and carry a cell phone will be the day MTV plays music videos again! Which reminds me to ask if there is anyone who hasn't cut a rap record yet this year? The deadline's right around the corner, folks!.

I hated ringing phones before I moved in with three female mammals, and now I feel like I live in the Los Angeles Times newsroom! These birds are power-cluckers-let me tell you-and if the teen ever gets a cell phone, she'll need a month with a physical therapist in order to straighten her arm again.

My little brother actually takes cell phones away from humans in movie theatres, and can get away with such bravado because he's the size of a small Buick and can bench press a Taco Bell. I'd gladly perform such acts of bravado, but I am very frail and quite intimidated by physical confrontations of any kind. Anyway, please practice cell phone courtesy indoors, and if you absolutely cannot wait to make or receive a call, you are obviously too important a mammal to waste valuable time with us poor slobs who have nothing better to do than enjoy the event we are attending. Why don't you just hire someone to attend for you, and they can call and brief you later AND interrupt a dinner conversation.

Just a thought.

How in the name of Gideon's girdle did we manage to survive as a society before it was possible to reach any human on the planet in mere seconds? Dumb luck, I guess. Personal contact information is just a tad out of hand, is it not? Some folks sound like hyper-maniacal auctioneers when leaving messages until the answering machine gets tired and gives up.

"Hey. It's me, man. I NEED to talk to you so call me at home at (blah, blah), or my office at (blah, blah). My car phone is (blah, blah) and I'll be driving this afternoon, but if I don't pick up there, page me at (blah, blah), and if I don't answer right away I'm in the warehouse and can't hear the phone...so, um just fax me at (blah, blah) and I'll see the paper coming off the machine. I'll also be checking my voice mail messages and all the numbers I gave you route there. No. Wait. I'm an idiot! Just call my wife's cell at (blah, blah) and she'll come find me. We can have a nice, relaxing lunch and catch up on things. What I NEED to talk to you about is (Beep!)

Anyone who calls back to leave yet another message after being dismissed by an answering machine should lose phone privileges for two hours. Anyone who tries to call back immediately after being ignored by someone with call-waiting should be locked in a room with barking poodles for at least seven hours!

My mate refuses to part with call-waiting because she might (Gasp!) miss a call from one of her friends who daily dial her up twenty friggin' times. Do not misunderstand me, I enjoy being interrupted and tortured by obnoxious and repetitive clicking noises as much as the next mammal. I'm especially fond of the services that kill a signal entirely for a couple seconds and sound like a bug-zapping device. Call-waiting is no different

than having a stranger walk up and start tapping your shoulder repeatedly while you attempt to converse with another and a conversation under these circumstances is like trying to enter a jump rope game with bricks tied to your feet!

Give or take.

They'll call back, Honey. It's what these folks live for; to come up with any imaginable reason to punch numbers like obsessive-compulsive idiot savants! We don't need a "stranger tapping on our shoulder" feature in order to stay in touch.

Hell, I can't even reach a busy signal anymore without having some metallic voice chime in to invite me to hire a computer to ring the number until someone finally breaks free. What's next? Fishing poles that cast and call me when I've caught something? Hey, if I'm so busy I have to pay a machine to make calls for me, then give me a feature where another computer can handle the conversation and fax it to me later. A true time savor, if you will. Or, if you will not.

Man, I really have consumed too much coffee and if such an event is possible, I believe I just lapped myself. I have a pal who recently consumed so much coffee he actually tried to sell dope on Ebay. Well, maybe the dope's dope had something to do with the attempt as well, but you likely got the picture. Too much of anything can't be good, but I seem to have spent my life failing to disprove the theorem.

I've never excelled at moderation of mood-altering substances, brothers and sisters, and I'd have more luck trying to get Mike Tyson to redesign Microsoft's Windows software. I'd have a better shot at getting a getting a Calvin Klein model to finish her mashed potatoes. I might as well try to get early-sainthood for Mother Theresa, or win an argument with my lady before noon!

But, what really bothers me is why isn't OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) in alphabetical order? Yeah, I best take a bit of a break, and thanks for playing along.