

1. A FAMILY AFFAIR

Today my parents came home with their new addition to the family. It was as if Bill and Hazel were bringing me a new baby brother. It was a John McCain sign which they proceeded to hammer in the ground as if they were pounding a stake into my heart. If anyone is Vlad the impaler, it has to be John McCain with his talk of a thousand years war. The old vampire himself wants nothing less than the sacrifice of young blood. I wished that the world had learned in 2001 with the death of 3,000 innocent people, but no way. It was just the beginning of the lurid offerings to a ruthless Moloch. Oh the wages of sin! When I was a kid, this was my bedtime story.

Bill and Hazel are brainwashed. Just like McCain himself, Manchurian candidates waiting for the dog whistle to blow and set them off in a vicious rampage. If they've turned the home front into a virtual battleground, they have been successful in the culture wars. Worse than the war on drugs, their new crusade is meant to be a direct hit on America's youth, and I am in the cross hairs. I need to go shopping. I need a nap. I need to do something!

The squeaky voices of the Fox News announcers echo in the living room. My so-called parents are mesmerized in the dark. I dare not disturb them in their mission from God. They have to learn what new techniques that they can pry to counter their daughter's mischief. After all, they're worried that I'll run off with the postman or that I'll drown my secret love child. I hate all this phoniness of grown ups. They're so good at pretending that they mean well. They can stuff it as far as I'm concerned.

A lot of my friends have their own form of narcosis. They don't even need a TV screen as they zone out watching the imaginary creatures dance before their eyes. They live in a permanent haze, untouched by the profound love of their Bills and Hazels. Tuck me in bed and kiss me on the forehead. But don't show too much affection. Remember when you go to the bank that it's Family First!

Bill's favorite expression is, "When things get tough, the tough get going." But so many hours of TV watching make this tough cookie into more of a zombie. When I was younger. I think that's what I feared most about horror movies. That the spirit of the dead would invade my own parents. And lo it has come to pass. I vaguely remember a day when it used to be different. When everyone around wasn't brainwashed. Now I just accept the fact that when I wake up in the middle of the night that they will be gnawing on my body parts. It's just a sign of affection.

JUST CRANK ONE OUT!

Bill works as an insurance investigator and Hazel is a nurse. Although the way that he tells it, he's an operative for the CIA. They met when Bill threw his back out and had to spend some time in the hospital. In his telling, the story resembles *A Farewell to Arms*. Here was Bill this injured war veteran who was flown back to the States in an emergency. And this lovely nurse fell in love with the helpless young man. Telling upon telling has enhanced the story with further exploits so that the man seems to have single-handed taken on a whole army. One of the biggest problems with his story is that the dates of his injury don't seem to match any active operation carried on by the United States Military. As well, no branch of the service has any record of him being a member. That doesn't prevent him from clipping on his flag lapel pin and talking like a loud mouth about what has to be done to every bum in this country.

Hazel has perfect her own version of the same story. In hers, liberal teachers have taken over the school curriculum and filled the libraries with deviant works of literature. It is the

mission of like-minded souls to rescue the community from this wave of filth. They are the perfect couple to lead the world through the new millennium.

Bill's and Hazel's crud would have been ideal if they had actually lived in the Eisenhower years and hid from their enemies in a fall-out shelter. As it is, the only real enemy that they have to deal with lives in an upstairs bedroom and is named Haley. I am the perfect candidate for a little mind-bending if only they could penetrate that thick skull of mine.

Those second-rate arguments might have worked if I lived in a bubble, had no computer, and watched as much television as they did. Just a little exposure to the world would convince anyone that the only thing that Fox News was good for was predicting a hurricane or a tornado. Even in those cases, they weren't much good unless there was easy money to be made. And I thought that the business for aluminum siding had been hit by its own private recession. We make house calls!

Roman Catholic parents might have been able to advance the New World Order by generalizing the theory of Immaculate Conception. This could clearly explain how children could be conceived without sex. Bill and Hazel lack that advantage. Down deep, they are disappointed that I turned out to be their only begotten child. But if they wanted to try again, they'd have to have sex again. I am sure what to make of all that. If they are doing the deed while watching Sean Hannity, this is something that I want to know nothing about.

Except for the labels on a soup can and the magazines sold at the supermarket check-out, Hazel never seems to read anything. It is a wonder that I turned into such a book-worm. There was many a day when I would read a book while walking along the side walk. In fact, I even enjoy walking. Hazel occasionally would give me a ride. But from early on, I craved the independence afforded by a bicycle. And I had little interest in soccer practice or swimming lessons. So Hazel hardly needed to bus me around. This seemed to accommodate me a lifestyle.

Governmental regulations mandates that Hazel needs to watch Fox New at all hours that she is not at work. She can even clean the house while glued to the TV. Anything that she misses will probably be repeated ad infinitum on the next half hour.

It is amazing how Bill and Hazel can attend twenty-four hours of the world suffering, and not bat an eyelash. Of course, show a puppy in a storm, and Hazel would cry a river. Much can be explained by the selective coverage of Fox. The world seems to be constantly subject to a rapidly moving catastrophe on the par with a weather pattern. Sometimes the disaster manifests itself as a raging river that floods everything in its wake. Other times, it's a thick monsoon that besets a defenseless countryside. If the chaos ever has a human face, it is some hydra-headed terrorist monster who is out to abuse children and set the American way of life in turmoil. Against these rampaging tornadoes, the public is always powerless. Governmental authorities are show in their magnificence. For those not blessed with needed assistance, the news anchors have a litany of accusations of looting and false insurance claims. Big corporations and intrusive police forces protect the individual against ever-present identity theft. Child-kidnaping rings abound. And suspicious parents are constantly catching their daughters with sex offenders. Is there nothing that we can do?

At first, I thought that Hazel's embrace of this vision was due to her overwork. I did all that I could to help. I would wash the floors, do the laundry, do the dishes. I was not a little naysayer simply protesting the abundance of Wal-Mart and Home Depot. But this did nothing to

alter her view. It just gave her more time to watch. It also informed her of more proficient techniques to snoop on me. I just need to cut the cord.

If Bill wants to watch a movie, she jumps in and makes him respond to some issue raised by Bill O'Reilly. For every second of the day the beacon of intelligence needs to be flashing in our living room

Occasionally, I can find those moments of golden silence when they are both at work. I am surprised that she doesn't place parental locks on the TV. Maybe that is too tricky for her. Or in her heart of hearts, she still leaves an ounce of trust for dear Haley.

Someone told me that the future looks like the Olympics in Beijing.

To most people that means Michael Phelps racing for another gold in his sleekly designed Speedo suit. Hydrodynamics in action! I know different. If it's a race, it's more like a race to lunch in an overcrowded lunch room.

I know that everyone likes to identify with the winner. Especially if he dons the red, white, and blue. Even better if he drapes himself in the flag after each victory. But there can only be one winner. And there's just one swimmer per lane so there's no one towing you into victory along with the gold medal wonder. I don't want to say that we're all alone in our solitary race in the universe. It's just that the Olympics hardly sounds like paradise to me. Even if I'm on the train with USA, what about the rest of the world. And who's going to pick us up when the cheering stops?

What was going on in the rest of Beijing while all the chattering fans were making their way to the Olympics events. I was told that a whole bunch of desirables got extradited from their home city. Atlanta did something similar to the homeless in 1996. This was just more thorough and systematic. None of those cats were running for the gold. For what little it matters, they probably did all that they could to hobble away from the security forces.

Right after the Olympics was over, I could hear Bill on the phone with his broker. He was investing all this money in China stocks. After all, the Chinese government was telling the world that they weren't going to take any shit from their citizens, most of all the disgruntled WalMart employees who slept in hovels and were living on a bowl of rice a day. (Although I know a lot of girls who might envy that diet.) The best part of all is these cretins who complain about how the Chinese put monitoring chips in our cell phones. As if the CIA needs help in bugging our citizens.

Holly told everyone we know how she'd like to hook up with Michael Phillips.

"I wonder if his dick tastes of chlorine!"

Sounds like a topic for philosophy class.

I have friends who have taken the starting buzzers at Beijing as the inspiration for an immediate make over. They trot their bodies out on the assembly line in the hope that the new self can compete more efficiently than ever. They believe that their liberation will result from physical exertion on measured track, so they pump those pedals and pull those oars and maximize those strokes in the hopes of turning the stop-watches backwards and deriving the most benefit from their increased efforts.

There is an even more profound belief that comforts them, that such direct effort really can be rewarded in the real world. This is their new religion, founded in the infinitesimal metrics of time. It shows in their tanned faces and toned bodies. Anything less would be un-American.

What do we have to complain about?

If they have attained the next level of enlightenment, their cell phones and computer screens react to the incrementalization of their life. Let the mp3 light up the ipod, let the text message glide across the screen, let the Facebook applications spark up the day.

The technological revolution sings in the bloodstream. If this electronic fabric really has no correspondence in anything real, don't point out the emperor's bad judgement in clothes designers. When there's a name imprinted on the fabric, you just know that it has to be good. My parents had this stupid game *Operation*. It gave the players a chance to poke the willing patient and remove the offending body parts. It was the polite way of playing doctor in their day. That must have been long ago. Now we have young boys with their copies of Gray's anatomy ready to discover a compliant victim for their game. It gets worse. Everywhere I look: porn, porn, porn. And all these pimps with their baseball caps turned backwards ready to show me the meaning of the deep dick. I should be thrilled. It's a nasty ritual just trying to negotiate the gauntlet. Popularity means putting out before getting out or getting out before putting out. In that balance is the heartache of youth.

All these little machos are ready to do their poking. And my body is for the taking. I know girls who take the challenge early on. They're weeding their gardens and pruning those flower beds. A big puff or a stiff drink always helps to get you ready in that direction. But you always know where that road ends. It's not really that fun to be the fodder for Monday morning gossip. And I don't relish having my body displayed wide open in an operating theater.

"Pull out the funny bone," screams some wise ass.

"I'm looking down there, but what I'm finding sure ain't funny."

Did I tell you that I wanted you diving down my raging seas looking for buried treasure.

"Doctor, can I put my clothes on."

This has gone way beyond I'll show you mine if you show me yours.

"Let me get my cell phone and I'll catch some photos for my friends."

Conquest now has an immediacy. A few clicks and the unsuspecting girl is the weekly model for the internet. And for some, that's just the resolution that they've been hoping for all along.

"I love your roses!"

You know what that means.

In ancient times, a kiss meant a proposal. Now a hand job isn't even enough to get you in any sort of exclusive club. You might as well do it in your first period class room. Amen!

For the time being, I'm trying to act like one of those Catholic school girls who only puts out for love. But what does that mean? They're not like the Bible-thumpers that I know. But let me tell you. They have their own rules. Having sex is like closing on home sale. All those forms to fill out in triplicate.

"I'll only kiss you if you're the one."

One of what? Where are the horns, you horny devil?

In my innocence, I think that I am getting a clearer picture of the New World Order. And I am expected to be lying on my back for a good part of the invasion.

Wonder boy always has the answer, "You think that I'm going to leave without getting something for my troubles."

I guess that I am supposed to be gracious, “I could suck you off.”

“You’ve done that sort of thing.”

“Not me. I watched this girl do it to her guy.”

I am informed, “It’s not that easy.”

“It looked a lot easier than algebra.”

“It has its technical side.”

This is always the part where I wake up. It’s also the beginning of Hazel’s nightmare. She’s flashing back to her own teen years. To my credit, I am more competent at algebra. I simply have a better understanding of the variables.

Some people talk about their hidden self as if it is the self that they know, but they hide from the rest of the world. For me it is more like my hidden elves. Freud had a trinity, three of them: the id, the ego, and the super-ego. Disney franchised Snow White’s seven dwarves. But just as I think that I know and have counted all my elves, a new hidden elf appears. Sometimes, these hidden elves make me do things that I don’t understand, and, other times, I line up my elves in an orderly fashion and off to work we go. Occasionally, I even catch one of my elves sneaking off to watch Fox News. But then I pull the little bugger aside and give him a piece of my mind.

From day to day, I’m not sure who’s going to wake me up in the morning. And if my evening has been more than a little taxing, I know that I will have to rely on that most resilient of my little fellows to tell me how I got here. Just as long as the mischief makes don’t get in a wrestling match as I’m trying to make my to school.

I know what it’s like. I can have all my elves in a row, and then one temptation sets one of them off. The next thing that I know, I’ve put myself in a pickle of a situation. It’s four in the morning on a Sunday night, and I’m stuck in the city without a ride. So much for mass transit in the ATL. If my parents did recognize that I was way beyond hope, they would pay for an analyst who would tell me that I meant to get in this predicament.

I am sure that I have an elf who tell me what to do when some jerk is coming on to me.

“The guy’s a dick. Kick him to the pavement.”

Then there is that elf that tells me to hold on until the jerk pulls out the wallet and buys me a drink. And the Fox News elf who says, “Don’t buy her a drink. She’s underage.” Of course, that elf is just in it for the party, until he realizes that it’s time for rehab and debriefing on getting born again. But maybe that elf has it all figured out. There’s always someone who can bail you out of a real pickle.

“What’s the hurry, I’m having fun?”

Recently, I developed a treatment to align all my elves together. It is based on a video game that I played when I was a kid. It involved a princess who has to hug all the elves. That is what I am doing; I am hugging all my elves.

Today I am dealing with a particularly nasty little elf. I was hanging out with some guy who I really don’t like that much. And I left my favorite CD in his car. I am trying to figure out how to get the CD back without calling him.

“If you talk to him, he’s going to expect something from you.”

“You could just break into his car. He’s going to see that his window is broken and have no idea that you did it.”

My elves have been working over time this morning. I decide to ask one of his friends to

do the dirty work for me. I'm going to come out on top.

At least, I'm better in control than some people that I know. I'm sure that my car is parked in the driveway. It was when you last looked. Next time, I'm going to do the driving. And for that chump, there isn't going to be a next time. Thanks you, elves.

Some day, I might write a book about my little friends. This time around, I'm satisfied with telling the story of Bill and Hazel and their crazy daughter Haley. And I am going to depend on my elves to make up some whoppers. On second thought, if I tell my story straight, it's going to send a lot of you back to fact check. So just the facts, man! Just the facts!

Roswell, Georgia has its seamy side, and I am ready to share that story with my loyal readers. I just wish that my little elves were a little better at test taking. I'm not going to cheat, but these are my elves, and I can bring them anywhere that I would like.

Here we are in a battle between the zombies and the elves. I am writing my story, and I wish that the world would read it. There was a time in Stalinist Russia where a book of this import would have been a hot item. With the KGB trying to shut down dissent, it would have been the first step to getting around the authorities. But in the New World Order, the people have assumed the role of the authorities. And we thought that there were enough authorities in the Stalinist era.

Perhaps if my book was a little more scandalous, it might have a wider readership. And this could be the beginning of the revolt against the zombies. What more can I do to find universal interest in my story. Here's a girl battling her elves—what's the point? It's all been done before.

I look at all the houses in my neighborhood. Each one must have at least four televisions. How many have their digital receivers directed toward zombie news. And what about the rest? Tuned to American Idol or Boy Model Reality TV. Maybe the more talented of our neighbors will pose for the roaming closed-circuit television camera, and we will have a local celebrity in our midst.

It takes a lot more to excite than a little flesh. In some ways, the appeal has gone in reverse. We are most taken by our own weaknesses. The Lord has his eyes peeled for these ships of fools for immediate rescue.

I guess that is my self-appointed task: to rescue the elves. Just a little hug before they indulge their most reprobate fantasies. I guess that was Bill's and Hazel's hope when they first tuned in to their favorite television show. A vigilante fellowship arose around the desire to rescue those poor children from their psychotic jailers. Someone has to stop the science teachers. They are like the hormone-injected milk of the mind. They make kids grow up too soon. Lord, watch over the eight year olds.

What is visual form of viagra that can bring the emotionally-numbed viewer to climax? For many years, I was led to believe that I was the bait to lure the deviants into the trap. This was the fate that Bill and Hazel had in mind for me. Only later on did I recognize that I was really not protected in this rat-trap. Even though the spring would snap the hammer down upon the rat, the vermin would still grab the cheese—ouch!

All the primping and posing was just getting me ready for that final moment of betrayal. I tried to play along until I became certain that the zombies were preparing my sacrifice. I had

friends who tried to rebel against the new order. But by the time the process was over, they too sat mesmerized before the new Moloch. They had given up. I was the only hold out. It was becoming more and more difficult to wage my battle alone. That was when my elves came in handy.

I have not stopped my resistance. I now recognize that even my protest against the master can be used against me. Sometimes I just let the elves run wild. They can monitor my hidden selves. But there are just too many elves to keep track of. Just as they think that they are beginning to understand me, one of the recalcitrant elves does something totally unpredictable.

“No, I’m not going home with that guy. He’s just getting me a drink.”

Do I really want to take it that far?

“Would you like to go to a party?”

“It’s a school night.”

“We can study while we’re at the party.”

“Good idea.”

I can hear my discussion with Hazel, “Where are you going, Haley?”

“I’m off to a study session.”

“Just be sure that one of the girls keep a record of what you actually covered. That way we can be sure that you’re not using the studying as an excuse to go party.”

“We do that all the time.”

If you want to fool Bill and Hazel, it’s going to take a system. Devising a system is going to take more work than actually doing my homework.

One night, I am hanging out with Chuck Romer.

“Haley, don’t you let anyone get close to you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“When I hold you, I feel like you’re somewhere else.”

“You’re expecting something that just isn’t going to happen.”

Chuck is getting defensive, “Do you just keep me around to get you drunk.”

“I don’t drink that much.”

Like a guy, he tries to humiliate me if I don’t return his affection. I don’t want hurt his feelings by telling him that I’m not into him. I like him around taking care of me. But I don’t like him that way.

I wonder if we are going to ride around in his car all night.

“I’ve got class early in the morning.” He does too. But he likes pretending that he has no obligations. We are different kinds of students. I thought that was cool. However, I also used it as my excuse to stay distant from him. I thought that this would always be a game between us. It was never amount to more than this.

“Why do you spend time with me, Haley?”

“You’re the perfect friend. You don’t ask for much.”

“Do you think that I’m a loser?”

“I like you a lot. I just don’t think it would be a good idea if we did anything more than just hang out.”

I didn’t want any drama. I asked him go drive me home.

Last night was last night. I don’t want to let it affect me. I’m in class. I’m sober. I can’t

worry about some petty emotions from the night before.

When I see Chuck that night, he's more aggressive.

"I'm tired of being used. Haley, you just look out for yourself."

"I just want to have fun."

"Haley, I've got feelings too."

"Chuck, have a drink and chill out."

I could use another girl to help out, maybe distract Chuck.

"I know a party that we can go to."

"I should have stayed home to study."

"Tonight's Thursday."

I'm a little desperate, "I've got a math test tomorrow."

"Do like I do. Cheat."

"You can't cheat this sort of thing. I have to show work for the problems."

Chuck insists, "There's always a way."

Chuck doesn't seem to be very good at helping me out.

"Chuck, you're not in honors math."

"You're not insulting me, are you?"

"It's just not like what you think."

"Explain!"

"It's like the difference between men and women. You try to explain it to a guy, and he gets all pissed off."

"You only try to explain it when you want to blow someone off. Otherwise, girls will accept the worst shit from a guy who they want to sleep with."

"Chuck, it doesn't work that way. So are we going to drive around all night again, or do you know where is the party?"

Chuck is supposed to be my system; I created him so that I could try to fool Bill and Hazel. But he wants too much from me. I need a different kind of guy, one who can find the party on the first try.

Chuck just goes off on me, "I'm sick and tired of your zombie shit, Haley. You don't even think that other people have feelings. You can't even talk to your own parents."

"I talk to Bill and Hazel. They're the ones who don't talk back."

"Just because they watch Fox News, that doesn't make them bad people. What's really that wrong with John McCain? He's a war hero. What makes you think that Obama is so special."

"For the record, the present administration has run up a record deficit. And when it comes to the world, they don't know their ass from a hole in the ground. And John McCain wants to keep that up if only he could!" I laugh. He gets angrier.

"Your Obama is just an elitist."

"Maybe he is. I don't even support him either. He's ready to duke it out with Pakistan. Chuck, if you want to argue international affairs, read a fucking book why don't you. You can't even find a damn party on a map in Roswell, your home town. I'm surprised the Republicans didn't choose you to run for President."

That should teach him for messing with a real woman! I'm stepping up! As for all those

zombies that think we'd rather be watching Gossip Girl, get a clue! If I wanted fashion tips from yuppies, I hang around all day at the mall.

Next time I'm driving. I call Rachel, and she tells me where the party is.

"Chuck, she's going to give me a ride back to my place. You don't have to hang around if you don't want to."

When I get to party, everyone looks as if they are ready to pass out. This should teach me for trying to find a party on a Thursday night.

"It's only the first week of school. It's not as if we have anything to worry." These words come from the lips of some kid who still hasn't made it through Algebra 1.

"How many tries have you had?"

"I've got a learning disorder."

"Yeah, T-H-fucking C."

If only I had an audience.

"You want a drag, little lady."

I tried dope long ago, and it did nothing for me. Give me scotch straight. And leave the bottle. It's going to be one of those nights.

I don't want to pretend that I'm a teen alcoholic. The stuff that I like is so expensive that I end up swearing off drinking all together. A pretty good mantra to get you through high school in one piece.

I think that I look at guys the same way. If you keep handing me PBR, I'll keep sending it back. I might look at a Glen Livett if it's a bad day. But otherwise, it's clean living, clear sailing, and no guys during the week. On weekends, I might consider offering some remedial tutoring. Note, I am a moody girl and at any time in the night, I might hop in my pumpkin and head home for my patch. You see I'm a bad witch, and don't forget it!

In a time of extreme frivolity, it no doubt pleases the powers-that-be that loads of kids lose themselves in mind-anaesthetizing video games. Would that it were true that every eighteen-year old is just a prime candidate for the party circuit. We wake up with our bottle of Jack Daniels under the bed and a line of coke cut on the night table. Such are the misfortunes of the casualties of war who suffer from an overdose of their own pleasures.

If you can blame the problems of the world on the victims, then they will remain powerless to ameliorate their condition. When parents can no longer force feed their children, they can simply abandon the obligations of their parenthood.. If Bill and Hazel abdicated long ago, I can hardly be held accountable for all the false turns on my part. Sure this is part of living, learning to make silly mistakes.

Some people wonder if the teen resident of Roswell needs to concern herself with anything beyond their own community. After all, every effort has been made to protect the adolescent in this cocoon. Anyone who might want to venture outside of this strict protection must realize that exile is fraught with the most extreme consequences. So the only hope for healthy development is to remain within the boundaries of this extended womb.

If parents can impress their buying habits on their children from an early age, they only need loosen the tether, and their fondest dreams will be realized. I'm not sure what was the source of my consumptive abstinence, but I never felt that liberation of the soul occurred in the check out line of Abercrombie and Fitch. I know that there are like-minded creatures like myself

out there. Moreover, this nasty overdose of consumerism is bound to backfire. There are loads of the walking wounded, the freakish bi-products of this behavioral programming. For many, it is simply a desire for more stimulation, something that barely can be satisfied with the meager array of consumer goods offered the feeble purchaser. Those who have committed themselves to the enhancement of their own arousal end up heating up the demand side of this equation. And in the interim, they have discovered that the subtle reprogramming of their brain chemistry yields an infinity of returns. But then such tampering ends up having its down side. The addled monstrosities recognize that they have attained a summit of pleasure. They will not easily relinquish such long sought-after goals. So they attempt to make a Shangri-la out of these earthly delights. And the returns quickly diminish as the users can no longer derive an eternity from such minimal portions.

In the revised version of consumerism, the soul is set adrift to seek its atonement. What follow is a series of misadventures that are finally settled by the demise of the searcher. And then there is me, Haley. I have all adapted all the trappings of this searcher, but I do not go in for the stinging consequences of this path.

If my elves cast their fate to the far reaches of the globe, then my psyche has clearly embarked on the advanced stages of colonialism. This development goes way beyond the idea of the world being my oyster. It more or less forces every remote territory into the single-mindedness of Haley. Except from the beginning, I have acknowledged the sheer independence of these elves. This is my own personal blowback. The world has decided to occupy a chunk of Haley.

At times I have craved the appeals of some exotic land. I am ready to mount some peak in Nepal. There is my rather feisty elf, with drink in hand, hanging from the top of the world. This is a forced reminder of the limits of my own desire. Try as I may, I cannot surpass the limits imposed from within.

The bounds of chaos theory might suggest another alternative. Instead of centripetal force trying together these loose psychic ends, my universe is heading in the opposite direction. Everywhere these volcanic eruptions disrupt the hopeful glimmer for a single resolution to my personality.

I have no intention of letting myself be ravaged by these anarchistic indulgences of the self. However, I am equally appalled by the rigid authoritarianism advocated by cable new. In the interests of the twenty-fifth hour of the day, I am ready to venture into new directions. Seeing that election season is in order, I think that a campaign speech is in order. I am outlining the details of such an endeavor. While I have no immediate desire for elective office, the thrust of my campaign will be the opening of new political alternatives.

As a committed student of history, I have noticed the American political landscape to be varied in form. And the history has reflected. Perhaps this is the moment to take to task the narrow political determination of the two political parties.

On a personal level, I draw my cue from Emily Dickinson. If her society of one included a community of elves, then my achievement of the age of majority goes way beyond the awareness of a singular personality. We are unified only to the degree that we, the United States of Haley, declares its absolute majority. Thank you, elves.

Somewhere in a darkened room, Bill and Hazel are gripped hypnotically by a crew of

misinformed new anchors. Together, they form no sense of majority. But they give Bill and Hazel the illusion that they have a mandate to cleanse the culture of its more harmful strains of expression. Strike at freedom, and you are walking on the fighting side of me.

The elves are ready!

It's dinner time. I feel mighty hungry. I am ready to scour the kitchen for the necessary ingredients for a lovely meal. While Bill and Hazel munch on microwaved cuisine, I will tempt my palate with the refined flavors of a well-prepared gourmet meal. This is how I make my stand as I ready myself for the counter attack. They will come, but when they arrive, all the traces of my operations will be wiped clean. Dishes put away, munchkin having abandoned the home front. The perfect guerilla operation.

Is nothing sacred? Not while I'm around. I'm sorry if I can't be more respectful. But it is already late in my struggle, and we have given in too much already. When I can, I will take my right to assemble. I will use my freedom of speech and the press. And I will even worship the false idols that have been offered me by my superior culture. You might think that I am some kind of elitist. But let you Philistines cast your first stone! What kind of gall do you have to think that the citizen wants to be fed the likes of Jerry Springer and the mockery of tabloid magazines. React as we may, we are nearing the twenty-fifth hour, and that bell is about to toll.

Wake up from the dream!