

# Garbage in, garbage out

*by* Chris Miller

Sam tapped the stick against the small mountain of trash bags, a dull thud predictably followed by a dozen rats scurrying out of the mass. He's started to make a personal game of it — seeing how many he can kill with one whack; if he swings hard enough, and in the right spot, their little skulls pop like tiny firecrackers.

His body count stands at forty-five.

After the city sanitation department raised the pickup rates 20 percent without prior notice, Sam decided to take a stand. He canceled his garbage collection. Told the city he had moved, piling garbage bags in the back yard. He's a man of principle: it's not about the money; it's about the twisted bureaucracy. The creeps mismanaging local government that he believes are far more tolerable than a few mangy rats running around his property. Even the few that have gotten into the house are manageable. He's stacked the trash bags as neatly as possible over the past month, like soft bricks in a melting snow fort, but Sam's wife has recently left her suitcase in plain view, perhaps as a warning sign to end this standoff. So he comes out here to think, and smash up rats with his blood-stained stick.

Sam will refer to this time as the Great Garbage Strike of '11, despite the disgusted looks from his neighbors.

The porch door opened. "Time for dinner, daddy," said Emily, Sam's ten-year-old daughter. "And mommy said to put that filthy stick away." Sam smiled.

