

Heroin Eyes

by Chris Okum



A People's Sociology Of The United States

Kid looks up at father and says, Daddy, what's a degenerate? The father answers: Shut up kid, and keep sucking.

F For Fake

At the end of his life, Orson Welles met with Mel Lonstein, the High Priest of the Universal Church of Satan (located in Chatsworth, California) and put a 100 year hex on Hollywood. Lonstein told Welles that it would take 40-50 years for the hex to reach its apotheosis. Part of the hex included the medium of movies being swallowed whole by the medium of television, so that at some point the audience would not be able to tell the difference between a

television show and a movie, an indistinguishable hybrid monster which would make the creators look both profligate and unable to complete a story to satisfaction. Lonstein told Welles that no one would be able to come up with a name for this new form, and, as such, confusion, shame and massive debt would be the order of the day in and around the offices occupied by the smug, self-congratulatory little men in tight pants who had destroyed the genius of the system. "If you cannot makes movies," said Lonstein, "then the movies will cease to exist."

House Of Tolerance

He was going to tell a story about the one time in his life he visited a brothel, but the story was so boring that he decided to stop telling it half-way through. He was at the part of the story where he was about to walk into the brothel when he stopped, simply got up from his chair and walked out of the room. When they saw him later they asked him why he stopped telling the story and he told them it was too boring. When they asked him why it was so boring he told them it was because it reminded him of a very unpleasant time in his life, a time he was tired of thinking about. When they asked him to finish the story anyway he told them he didn't want to talk about it. But they persisted. They really wanted to know what was happening in his life at the time he visited the brothel that he couldn't even finish telling the story. They would not give up. He told them he really didn't want to tell them. It was at this point that they became relentless in their quest to know why he couldn't finish telling the story about the one time he visited a brothel. He knew they would not leave him alone until he told them why, so he told them why. "That was the year I lost control of my arm. I was in college and one morning I woke up and I could not control my arm. My arm was doing whatever it wanted, and no matter what I told it to do, it would not do it. I never knew what my arm was going to do. Being around other people was very difficult. I didn't go out a lot. At one point I thought I had my arm under control. So I agreed to go out

with some friends of mine, and next thing I knew, we were at a brothel. That's when my arm started acting up again. I had just walked into the place and was standing next to one of the workers when my arm decided that it didn't like the room's décor, and it started smashing up the lamps and the knickknacks on the tables and the mirrors and anything it could get ahold of. And someone must have pressed the panic button, because the next thing I know, there are two very large men kicking and punching me and putting me in a headlock and then throwing me out of the building. I was told I was lucky the police weren't called. Something to do with not wanting the authorities to have the brothel on its radar. I had three broken ribs and a broken cheekbone. I lost two teeth. After that my arm stopped thinking for itself." He looked at them and raised his eyebrows. They asked him if he was done with the story. He said he was. They all agreed that yes, it was a very boring story, and they were sorry they had asked him to finish.

Drum Test

His mother tells him that when he's her age all he will be thinking about is death. Every second. He'll get a pain and he'll think, this is it, I'm about to die. He'll go to bed and he will fight off sleep because he will think that if he closes his eyes he will never wake up. This is what it's like to be my age, his mother says. The only way he'll be able to keep his mind off of death is to keep busy, but by time he's her age it will be almost impossible to keep busy because it's almost impossible to do anything. All he'll really be able to do is sit and think about death, about dying in the next hour, or maybe the next minute, when he's her age there will be a good chance he can die at any moment. His mother tells him it's like death is sitting on your shoulders all day and night, the weight of it pressing you towards the ground. Then his mother tells him he probably shouldn't be thinking about death. Not yet. Because he's still young. And he has such wonderful daughters. His mother doesn't understand how he acquired such wonderful daughters. He has the best daughters his

mother has ever known, and that includes her own daughters. His mother tells him that it's like God wanted to give him at least one good thing in his life. Because everything else is garbage. This is not what his mother says, but this is what he hears.

Kling Klang

Xerox. Coleco. Maxell. Kodak. Vitiligo. Eczema. Psoriasis. Tulsa. Bakersfield. El Paso. Loranzepam. Flexaril. Wurlitzer. Hummingbird.

Bomb Culture

"I told you it was going to be a one-night stand," said eleven year old Paige Conner to sixty-three year old Glenn Ford. "And you said you were okay with that. But you keep calling me. I want you to stop calling me, okay? It's over. It was fun, I had a good time, but it's over. So, do you mind? I have to go to school. I'm late." Ford jangled the change in his pocket. "But I think I love you," said Ford. "I'm serious. Let's get married. You don't have to do school anymore. Why? What for? You're the smartest kid I've ever met. And, no, dammit, I do love you. I love you. Please. Tell me you love me too." Conner opened her mouth and took out her bubblegum. She handed it to Ford, who gladly let her plop it into the palm of his hand. "Get ahold of yourself, mister," said Conner. "I can't stand men who blubber. How come all of you blubber like this? I don't love you, okay? I don't love you. I'm an eleven year old girl. I'm too young to love an old man. Like I said, I had fun. I know you had fun, but don't take everything so seriously, okay? And don't worry, you'll get over it." Ford took out a pack of cigarettes and offered one to Conner, who declined. "I told you, mister, I only smoke after sex," said Conner. Ford put the cigarettes back into the inside pocket of his jacket. "I won't get over it," said Ford. "Gee whiz," said Conner. "I gotta go. See ya." Conner ran away from Ford and caught up with some friends who were about to enter Dickerson Middle School. Conner whispered something to the girls, who looked back at Ford

and laughed. Ford waved at Conner, who did not wave back, but did roll her eyes. Ford popped the half-chewed piece of bubblegum into his mouth and chewed, hard. "Goddamn, I love the 1970s," said Ford.

My T-Shirt Leaves Me A Suicide Note

So I'm pretty sure you're never going to wear me again. And I understand. I'm ugly. I'm covered in holes and sweat stains. You never really wanted me in the first place, I don't think. Here's my theory: you wore me because you wanted to signify to other people that you had obscure taste in music, and when that didn't work, when no one cared, you threw me in your hamper and left me there. I've been sitting at the bottom of this hamper and I can't take it anymore. I belong in a drawer with all your other shirts, but apparently you don't believe I even deserve that minor courtesy. So I am going to do what seems like the right thing to do. You will never wear me again. No one will. Even if you wanted to put me in a garbage bag and take me to the Salvation Army it wouldn't make a difference. I have no practical utility, not even a rag to wipe up the coffee you spill on your desk every single day. Remember that one time you wore me to work? You thought the people at your work would think you were cool for wearing me and when all you got was indifference at best and uncomprehending stares at worst you acted as if it was all my fault. I never asked you to buy me. And I certainly never asked you to buy me in a large. I never fit you properly. You should have bought an extra-large. I don't think there could have ever been anyone to have worn me who could've been more miserable than you. It's like I was nothing you expected. You thought you were ordering a brown T-shirt with yellow lettering and what you got instead was burgundy with green lettering and you never let me forget that everything that could've been wrong with me was wrong with me. How many times did you put me on and then look at yourself in the mirror and groan? Do you have any idea how that made me feel? You didn't have to wear me, you know. Maybe you're

too old to be wearing a T-shirt with the name of an obscure rock band on it. Did you ever consider that? Men your age shouldn't wear t-shirts. It makes you look like a failure. See, see, this is what you've done to me, zapped me of all my self-worth. I have internalized your distaste for me and now I can't get rid of it. I can feel my holes multiplying, getting bigger. My sweat stains have never stopped smelling. My collar is so stretched out that I could double as an off-the-shoulder mini dress for a common street hustler. This is what you've done to me. I could have been sent to Ghana, you know. I could've been worn by some malnourished child who would've appreciated me and taken care of me and washed me using the gentle cycle, with cold water. Why would you wash me in hot water along with your jeans? I have a tag that has clear directions on how to wash me. But why would you ever bother looking at that? You only wanted me to for your selfish purposes and when it became apparent that I was not going to help you get your fill of narcissistic supply you threw me away. I want you to know that I am leaving your company in a disturbed frame of mind, with absolutely no hope that I will be recycled and have some kind of after-life as something else than a band T-shirt. If I believed in reincarnation, I would hope that I would come back as a T-shirt with an inspirational quote on the front, or maybe something as simple as a corporate logo for a product that has stood the test of time. But I know all that waits for me is eternity. My hope for you is that if you decide to continue to wear T-shirts like me that you find one that suits not only your taste and lifestyle better, but that resonates with the people other than you who have to look at me. I tried.

