

# Refer Madness

*by* Dom Macchiaroli

There is an old Indian story which says that if a person inhales basil fumes, then scorpions will grow in the inhaler's brain. We have basil growing all over our garden, so this explains the absolutely stinging sensation I feel in my cerebellum after cutting the basil hedge when I hear Kim shout from the kitchen, "Pizza!"

But what do you feel after you've inhaled fumes from your own herb garden? Consider this is a rhetorical question, since agents from the DEA are watching through the window via drone aircraft.

NOTE: Residents of Washington, Colorado, and.....uh.....I forget.....need not fear that last sentence.

And legends like the Indian story had to be thought of by folks with not much else going on, apart from waiting for the conquistadors to come and take California, or trying to get a "medical" marijuana law passed in Sonora province.

Basil itself is still legally smoked in all fifty states, although Delaware is inexplicably considering a ban on the stuff after the Vice-President called it "icky".

But I thought I read somewhere that Cristobal Colon brought basil over from the Old World, scorpions too. His wife didn't come along, because after he called her a scorpion, she fairly insisted that he then sail for India in the deliberate wrong direction and stay the heck away from her.

I don't know about scorpions in my cranium, but there are many different kinds of fumes in life that can cause us joy or grief. There are real fumes, like the noxious stink emitted by stupid cigarettes that permeate my clothes and ruin my meals in restaurants, stupidly and selfishly smoked in public by, you know, stupid people.

Then there are the more ethereal fumes of memory, and the moments of our lives that we actually want to smell and enjoy. These, like the fumes of a rose or the bloom of a citrus tree, can be enjoyed for a short time and then they're gone. Good smells are like

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that, and like good times, sadly temporal. We don't have to take our clothes to the dry cleaners fifteen times to get these smells out.

Other fumes make people silly. The people who got pot legalized recently in different areas of the country demonstrate this. And when they do dumb things with the stuff, and because of the influence the stuff has on them, I guess we'll all get to pay for it.

As I get older, the fumes of my life have changed, along with my reaction to them. I am grouchier, less apt to see the other side of an argument, and less apt to care about said argument, assuming I listened in the first place.

But there is a moment there, actually less than a moment when my universe explodes in a kind of joy, the God-given kind that you're supposed to feel all the time. The fact that I actually feel it so seldom is a testament not only to my extreme shallowness, but to my serial inability to feel as I get older. Some would call this a type of mania. I would call it the result of too much free time.

The happy fumes of youth have now given way to the odd pains of middle age, and in addition to the ordinary concerns of everyday life, my back hurts now when I get up in the morning for no reason. But you won't see me lighting up a fatty of basil in compensation from the backyard.

But pizza will work; half-cheese, half scorpion.

