

A Message from Upstate

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by Larry Strattner

I'm working on writing a best seller. My sentences are short. My temper is short.

My hair is so short it's under my scalp. An English teacher from the high school told me my work was one-dimensional. I hate him for it but he gave me pause to consider. Perhaps he had a point. I went back and took a look at my manuscript. I guess I can see where a guy getting laid two hundred times might not sustain interest over a low horizon story arc, particularly if the novel is two hundred pages long and the guy gets laid on every page. It worked for Jacqueline Suzanne and even to some degree in parts of the Bible. Why not for me?

After some heavy thinking I decided to try and give my hero more dimension and see if English really was my teacher pal's first language. While working on this new approach, writing on many levels, I construct the following protagonist:

At Street level the guy frequently looks like any other common dirt bag with sloppy jeans and a tee shirt. On the front of his tee shirt is a dark sphere with type curved to fit the underside edge of the sphere reading "Uranus" When he passes you, if you look back at him there is a much larger, darker sphere with type curved to fit the curve of the top edge of the sphere reading "Uranus in prison." All in all, the guy is slightly demented, shocking and offensive with little regard for the feelings of others.

At Penthouse level the guy shucks off his funky tee shirt and jeans and slips into silk pajamas, arranges a can of unsalted anchovies, sliced pears and an iced bottle of Rosé on a piecrust mahogany tea table next to his chair and sits down to read Solzhenitsyn's Cancer Ward. All in all, the guy is a sensitive, intellectual person with a taste for privilege and love of creature comfort. He is somewhat

Careful in his eating and drinking habits yet indulges in quasi-healthful excesses with little care for convention and no regard for the feelings of others.

On a Celestial level the guy is a genius with a penchant for stringing together minicomputers into huge distributed processing, supercomputer hives concealed in drab looking buildings out of which come astounding solutions to complex problems.

During work hours, while occupying the Celestial level, the guy dresses in Street level clothing including a tee shirt showing a bearded fellow diving sideways at a volleyball net with type reading "Jesus Saves." He frequently yells obscenities at the wire and cable guys working on the hive and berates people writing code. All in all, the guy is a pain in the ass, a self centered, egotistical prick and has no regard for the feelings of others.

So my protagonist becomes a man existing on many levels, a street person, an aristocrat, a genius. As my English teacher had posited, I began to see how these levels intertwine to render a personality of extraordinary depth and dimension. Yet with all his complexity, all his levels, at his core the guy remains consistent. True to himself. An asshole having no regard for the feelings of others.

I also see on at least two levels this guy could get laid a lot. Maybe on three levels if he wasn't overly particular.

This character I have wrought appeals to my Neanderthal or perhaps Cro-Magnon self. I like what he's about, and also what he's not about. I immediately send away for a home study computer course. I'm thinking, *I can be this guy, no problem*. I just never paid any attention to computers. Who wants to screw around with someone who only knows ones and zeros? I'd rather go to a porn site and try and pick the video clip where the guy and girl are really somewhat interested in each other. But that's all make-believe. Now I realize if you have the money part even the make-believe part just comes along; so to speak.

The tee shirts are a little tougher. I know I've seen them. Just try to find them. Online I hit pay dirt and find both on the same website.

The site is called bloatedintestines.com They are not currently accepting any unsolicited submissions. The shirts arrive in the mail. They actually *are* printed on high quality cotton. They do not appear to be Sanforized. Are things Sanforized anymore? I'm glad I got a Large. The only thing Sanforized in my house is my dick. I put on the Uranus shirt. *Does this make my ass look fat?* I wonder.

My wife's voice behind me says, "Where did you get that godawful, tee shirt?"

"Put a sock in it you painted hoyden" I reply. "Preferably a dirty sock. I'm off on a mystery trip and my real name is Mister Earl. I don't suffer bitch-fools gladly. I'm going make some money, go to Paris, get some models for wives."

"You're off on a trip all right, you flawless asshole." She says.

I don't know what the fuck she hit me with but I woke up in here. My goddamn hands and feet are tied down for chrissakes. She took off my Uranus shirt and dressed me in the Jesus one.

She must not have gotten the joke.

