

Written Six Weeks Before

by Nonnie Augustine

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My mail, e-mail, and phone calls go from the ridiculous to the sublime. Apologies for the cliché, but I can't resist its perfect applicability:

In my mailbox today yet another catalogue of boob jobs in bikinis and an invitation to explore the grandeur of Europe on Queens I or II. I am no more likely to buy a minute leopard-skin thong bikini and its transparent cover-up, (oxymoron, that, isn't it?) than I am to embark on a cruise on which I can expect to experience a personal sense of ease and well-being due in no small part to a phenomenal staff whose sole motive is to ensure my complete comfort at all times. This same staff will also present me with award-winning delicacies presented with a flourish, grace, and intimate knowledge that is the ultimate in civility.

An aging hippie like me would not relax among the privileged diners in tuxedos (silver-haired) and designer dresses, (always blond) even were she to win a state lottery. I did win an English football lottery apparently, but I didn't play fairly, looked up their address with Mapquest. I replied to them asking why their offices were in a discount clothing store. They told me they were in an annex to that building, but the jig was up, (it's cliché day) and our correspondence ended.

Does anyone buy from the telemarketers? I don't know anyone who does. I know pitifully few people here in Florida, so I'll just ask you. Do you even know anyone who knows anyone who buys from them? Of course not! They are to a man and woman loathed. People have been trying to squelch them since the day they began calling us at home and yes, I've lived long enough to remember a time before. Don't they know everything about us these days? Isn't that

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the going theory? Do they just plague us willy-nilly? Is it to stir discontent? What do all those courses colleges offer in marketing teach? Certainly the students don't pick up any useful information about selling to me.

Why does a middle-aged woman who is not fat, but not bikini material either get catalogues trying to sell her plunging flimsies and snob-appeal cruises when she has a by-pass scar between her breasts and collects cruising-prohibitive disability checks? Things weren't any more luxurious for me when I worked—I had the bad economic sense to choose modern dance, then special education and never did get much past paying what I think of as Everyman bills. That's not right is it? The homeless and the families in refugee camps don't pay mortgages, rent, telephone, dry-cleaning bills do they? So I suppose I'm wrong in thinking of them as Everyman bills. Damn. Duh.

However, I have spent these moments of whining distracted from my mother's sick room. I've vented about silly complaints with the world and moved off from my seriousness, sadness, helplessness. Mom is sleeping and seems to be comfortable so I've been tripping over some shoelaces, some foibles of modern life and gotten time off from thinking about death. Our watchdog minds, our tenacious grips, our stubborn souls come through for us just in time, just enough for the necessary lift, until we level. At least, that's our hope, isn't it?

