

A Bite-Sized Piece

by Smiley McGrouchpants Jr.

HOW TO REMOVE A LEECH:

1.) Do not attempt to remove a leech by pulling up on its middle section or by using salt, heat, or insect repellent

The one they called the Argyle Scot stared at me from across the table outdoors at the hip, new, would-be local Hard-Rock-Café-type place.

“How DARE she,” he was saying. “How DARE she.”

The Argyle Scot glared at me, his nostrils flaring — rather unattractively, I might add.

Not that I'm the type who usually goes for Scots — nor Brits, Welsh, nor the like — but somehow I found this person (*male*, of course — or, at least, *ostensibly*) had sat down at my table.

“No seats inside,” he said, perhaps specifically to me — or else, I suppose, to whomever happened to be listening and couldn't get out of conversation with him.

I, there, caught unawares in my knit sweater and sensible shoes[1] must have made an easy target for him: Off work, tired, bored, unfocused, and drained enough of energy as to be unable to resist this particular would-be “suitor.” (I should have seen it coming, but I was too exhausted to bother fending off any of the vulture-like males who can often descend at watering holes near business locales at happy hour, despite my obviously-unaccompanied status. I hadn't tried to hide it or fob off an excuse in time, and now he had alit in the seat in front of me. Damned “crowdedness inside!”)

. . . although, I will admit, I was all but transfixed by the near-hypnotic inlay of patterns on the argyle sweater which the Argyle Scot was wearing and thus, I supposed, gave him his name.

I looked up.

Apparently, he had been saying something.

I'm sorry, my dear sir, your sweater has, indeed, served its purpose and stolen my attention, against my better judgment. Now, what was that again?

"That GODDAMN BITCH!" he was saying. "She's wearing GOLD LAMÉ!"

2.) Identify the anterior (oral) sucker.

Boy, could he talk.

Blah blah blah.

Blah-*blah*-blah, blah-BLAH-blah, **BLAH!-BLAH!-BLAH!**, and, of course, the inevitable **BLAH DE-FUCKING BLAH!!!**

(*Yawn!*)

Here I was, at what was becoming another three-martini-lunch at *least*, if I'm *lucky*[2] and here he was again — yammering away — this time shooting my precious lunch hour to complete and utter shit. How did I get myself into this, again? By being ambivalent for half a second at a bar-slash-restaurant one night after work?

What was this *becoming*, anyway?

This guy doesn't think he's going to be my *boyfriend*, does he?

I scrutinized him closer.

Was that *dandruff*?

He must have noticed my eyebrows arch, or something. "Oh, so you think *300* is even any good at all, compared to *Roger Rabbitt*?"

(What on *earth* was he talking about?)

He glared at me as I paused. "You know, *300*, the cartoon movie? The Roman soldiers, and all?"

(*What?* . . . oh, um, that's a *movie* now?)

"That's a movie now?"

His glare became confused. "Yeah, a movie, a cartoon movie . . ."

A *cartoon* movie? Oh boy. "Well, I was never much of a Frank Miller fan, truth be told . . . "

A glazed look.[3] "What's that?"

"Frank Miller, you know, he did the *300* graphic novel . . . "

More glazedness. A deeper level, I think, if that's possible.

" . . . I never read it, nor was I particularly a 'fan' of the filmed version of *Sin City* . . . "

More glaze. Are you in danger of turning into a *ham* now, Argyle Scot?

" . . . but I have to admit, he did a really good job on the front cover of the recent edition of *Gravity's Rainbow* I bought."

Pause. "What's that?"

(*What's what?*)

"What's what?"

"A book?"

(*Huh?*)

" . . . yeah, by Thomas Pynchon . . . "

"You mean, *without* pictures?"

3.) Place a fingernail on your skin (not on the leech itself), directly adjacent to the oral sucker.

Masturbating that night, thinking of Philip Seymour Hoffman[4] fucking Marisa Tomei in the movie we saw tonight (which he refused to acknowledge was any good, most likely because he didn't *understand* it), I came so thoroughly and so well that at last all the tension I'd been carrying with me since I'd first arrived here three weeks ago broke, and I was able to think a bit.

What was I doing here? I'd heard Portland was a nice place to live — and that seemed to have been borne out by my experiences with the people around me — but for the most part, those people

were all part of a whizzing-by whirly-gig background, like the images on a merry-go-round you pass by while staying on the horse you're actually riding.

Was the Argyle Scot actually becoming my horse?

I shuddered at the thought.

It was so hard to reach out to other people, when I was stuck going places with him. It was like, once you got someone into your orbit — as a satellite or whatever — it could be harder to cycle other people in, with him or her present.

Particularly if *your* "satellite" has these weird, very "anti-" energy vibes that tend to keep other people away. When we went into the gelato place — which he didn't like — after the movie — which he didn't like — the people behind the counter and all around us seemed at tables to somehow know enough not to engage him in conversation beyond the basics, as opposed to the experiences *I've* had at similar places when I went all by myself — just by having, I suppose, a discernable-to-others willingness to talk.

The Argyle Scot.

Where did he come from, really?

And how had I ended up stuck with him?

4.) Gently but firmly slide your finger toward where the leech is feeding, and push the sucker away sideways.

I watched him, from across the table.

He had no idea, but tonight, our seventh dinner together[5], I had specifically prefaced by saying: "I don't have a lot of money, this time of month, due to rent and the timing of my bi-weekly paycheck, so I can't cover you, like I used to."

By which I meant: "I can't cover you, like I used to" rather than "I can't cover you like I used to."

See the difference? (Trust me, the Argyle Scot cannot; he hears what he wants to hear.) True enough, I deliberately left out the comma, so it's not like he had much of a chance . . . but *fuck him!* He shouldn't even *be* here in the first place! And God forbid he should ASK ME SPECIFICALLY what I meant by that, rather than taking a wedge of ambivalence in the spaces between my words — in whatever hesitation I might exhibit on one occasion[6] — and milk it for all it was worth (his standard M.O., of course . . .[7]).

So I sat across the table from him and watched the evening unfold. I purposely took him to a nice restaurant, mostly because I wanted to eat well for once rather than going to the obscure dives which he insisted we frequent for no other reason that I could discern other than some somewhat-arbitrary notion of "indie-cred" (or something . . .).

And — sure enough — tonight he was gorging himself on food of better quality than he ever could previously have imagined existed, which served both my purposes of lightening the conversation burden on me[8] due to his being distracted by his near-rapturous discovery of what life could be like if you weren't such a pointlessly obsessive little fucker and you could actually discern the distinctions that *matter* . . .[9]

. . . as well, of course, of insuring that his newly-discovered appetite for palatable food[10] would drive him, of course, to sink himself financially into a new relationship with the restaurant providing this oh-so-enlightening experience.

I wondered, bemused, how he would handle having responsibility shifted to him[11] when the bill came, as I sipped my coffee. He was halfway through his pie à la mode, taking wolfish bites and chewing dramatically, while periodically looking up, staring into space and[12] thinking his perpetual run-on thoughts about comic books[13] when I idly decided to run through his tab in my head:

- microbrew, to start.

Local, but chose the \$3.75 pint over the \$4.50 one available[14]

- **beer-battered onion rings for appetizer, \$5, certainly tasty-looking, anyway[15] and cheaper, sure enough, than the \$9 calamari (but, come to think of it, he probably would have found the squid intimidating as a form of food[16])**
- **\$9 burger, certainly well-prepared from the looks of it, \$2 less than the \$11 meatloaf[17], but still less manly than the \$15 soda pop[18] half-rack of boar ribs I'm chowing down on!**
- **(oops, I forgot, a \$4.50 pint to go with dinner after all, he found a \$5.75 Trappist ale on the menu that he missed earlier, which he could rule out and thus make his own choice more “moderate” by comparison[19])**
- **and the \$3.75 pie a la mode, certainly cheaper than I would have expected — and still, looks good, all the same[20] . . .**

The spell of my musings (and the Argyle Scot's newly-discovered Vanilla Bean ecstasy) is interrupted by the arrival of our waitress.

“Everything O.K. here?”

Fortunately — for *once* — being the designated point-person for the bill-bringer works in my favor.

“Fine, thanks, could you bring us separate checks? I've got to run, now, and I'd like to give my friend here time to finish his dessert.”

As much as I have to suppress the desire to evince a cringe at the point where I refer to the Argyle Scot as “my friend,” I do manage to get the words out pleasantly and quickly enough to produce the desired effect.

“Sure thing,” the waitress says, and moves on to the next table, where a baby is crying.

The look on the Argyle Scot's face is, as they say, priceless. His mouth doesn't really need to gape[21] in order for me to see this; his eyes, goggling, seem to gape in themselves.

He doesn't even know where to *begin* with this, and seems to be going through some sort of internal inventory of possible approaches which, thankfully, occupy him for the conveniently-brief period before the waitress returns with the two separate checks

(which — btw — is a *first* in our “relationship”[22] — by which point, of course, it's too late for him to say anything.

I review the check she hands to me and go through my purse, counting out the cash I was careful enough to bring with me tonight in order to insure a speedy escape. I find I am smiling to myself, not so much out of malice or spite towards the Argyle Scot[23] but with a curious sense of *relief*, and even *victory* — I managed to do what I wanted, for once! And the ribs, sure enough, were *delicious!*

Putting an undeniable crimp in the A.S.'s[24] system of perpetually-pushing-it-lest-I-risk-being-*“rude”*-and-spoiling-my-own-internal-emotional-balance is really only the icing on the cake, at this point.

I'm really less curious about how he'll come up with the money to cover the bill tonight[25] than how he'll try to act the *next* time he sees me, as if this had never happened[26].

I lay down enough for the bill and close enough to say, 19% for a tip. The service was good enough for my standard 15%[27], but I feel like tipping a little more, just for gratitude to the restaurant for granting me the venue to pull this off . . . but the waitress would remember if I overdid it, and I'd hate to do that and then come back some other time and have 15% seem like that much less in comparison . . .

Oh, I'm sorry, are you still sitting there, Argyle Scot?

He looks up at me.

The look in his eyes is truly pitiable — like a puppy dog or a small, lost boy — and I could be tempted to feel sorry for him if I didn't know the reasons for it *all too clearly*.

“Gotta go, Argyle Scot. I promised my mom I'd call her, and with the time difference, I'll be catching her just before her regular bedtime as it is.”[28]

“Oh, . . . um . . . ”

Trying to figure out how to ask [obviously]: “You mean, you're *not* going to pay for *everything?*”

But conversation, like music, is measured in beats, and he waits for more than one, and loses the moment. It's already too late for

him to figure out how he can ask me if he can just keep leeching off my company, my time, and my pocketbook[29] . . . so really, what more is there to say? It's not exactly a question you could ask *out loud*, you just have to keep making it happen *over* and *over* again as you go, without me *questioning* you, eh, Argyle Scot?

Again, I could feel sorry for him [as I mentioned] if he hadn't, in the process of doing so, also been cutting off the social equivalent of my oxygen and blood supply. Sorry you made it me or you, Argyle Scot, I wish it weren't so, but it certainly isn't going to be me left in the lurch as a result of this little *tête-à-tête* of entirely *your* creation.

"See ya."

I meet his eyes and that's it, I'm out the door. A gesture — cordial, what's required to maintain my own inner sense of being willing to look other people in the eye (if *nothing* else) — but *certainly* nothing more which could encourage him to call or drop by again, regardless of how the night went.

Outside, I pause under the awning, trying to keep out of the [apparently] near-constant Portland winter rain (I'll have to get used to that, I guess . . .), as I fumble in my purse for my American Spirit cigarettes and some matches.

When, whom should I espy through the street-side window but the Argyle Scot, talking with the waitress, nodding his head, reaching for his wallet, and pulling out— IS THAT A FUCKING *HUNDRED?* YOU *BASTARD!*

Enough of this.

Time to go home.

I need a smoke, a chamomile, a bath, and then I'll be fine . . .

5.) Displace the posterior (hind) sucker.

There's a knock at the door.

It's 2:30 p.m. on a Sunday, and of course I'm thinking: *who could it be at this time?*

I've managed to get enough of the requisite apartment chores done to feel like I'm started on the day, and — if nothing else — was enjoying the relative solitude of a quiet Sunday afternoon.

I mean, I certainly wasn't *expecting* anyone.

I hadn't talked to anyone in days, really — other than the requisite chit-chat at the office job I worked to pay the bills for this place — and I still hadn't had the chance to meet anyone I felt could qualify as a friend[30] — like, say, an opportunity to engage the "here-and-there" people I met around Portland who seemed promising enough but with whom I so far had only, say, ordered coffee from their shop while in the midst of a long line; exchanged a few words about the bus schedule with while waiting at the bus stop; *yadda-yadda-yadda* . . . certainly not enough to *expect* anyone would drop by . . . but, then again, who knows?

I look through the peephole.

It's the Argyle Scot — whadda surprise.

I consider my options at this point. If he's *this* stupid, to show up again after what happened on *Tuesday*, it *must* be because whatever's being going on in his head from the get-go[31] has reached a point of critical mass, after circling and circling and *circling* around obsessively for days[32] such to the point that it's now become a *totally*-detached-from-reality, self-perpetuating, internal circuit bringing him *here*, just because I am the icon of its alleged "inspiration"[33].

Ugh.

Not a pretty situation.

Why could some men be like this? I reflected.

It must be the boobs.

The price of being a “C” cup, I guess . . .

“Just a minute, Argyle Scot!”

“Leanna, I’ve got to talk to you . . . “

“Hold on, just a sec, I’ve got water boiling . . . “

Run to the bathroom, lock the door.

The outside door is locked, bolted, and however-much the Argyle Scot would *like* to think that he is anywhere *near* as “fit” as those Samurai he idolizes in the imported movies he watches, he himself, of course, has nary a nanofraction of their physical strength — nor the *will* to put it into *action* (should the occasion warrant).

I pick up my new Cricket cell phone and dial 411.

“Hello, Information, how can I help you?”

“Yes, I’d like the non-emergency line for the Multnomah County Police precinct closest to 12th and Division in the southeast quadrant?”

“Just a minute . . . I’ll get you the number . . . “

As I wait for the operator to come back on, I consider my approach. The Argyle Scot, by this point, could be heard alternately whimpering, complaining, or shouting to be heard — in other words, throwing whatever darts at the wall he thought would hit. **Either he’d**: refuse to leave by the time the police arrived[34], in which case . . . they’d show up, interested *only* in doing their job of clearing him out and then moving on.

If he tried to complain, or protest, all the better: he’d only make more of a case against himself than I ever could, just by the simultaneous insistence, over-reaching, and ridiculousness of whatever claims he might try to make.

Or: he’d leave before then, and I’d explain to the police upon their arrival that he’d taken off, giving me if nothing else a precedent for me to cite later on — if need be — that he’d been bothering me, to be kept on file with Those Who Serve and Protect . . . as well as

teaching the Argyle Scot, through his experience of yammering away at the door and receiving no response at all that, truly, his pleas fell on deaf ears if directed towards me — and thus constituted wasted effort, at best.

Or: he'd take one look at the police, realize the jig was up and I was seriously not someone worth messing with, and he'd clam up, recede into his cowardice, and all-too-compliantly-and-deferentially slink out the door.

Any way you cut it, I didn't see how I could lose.

6.) Dispose of the leech.

E-mail filter! It's that easy!

7.) Treat the wound.

Movie Madness, I thought, seemed a lot *more* attractive than the real madness I had been living through for the past [had it really been?] four weeks, so I decided to hop on the Belmont bus and find out what this (I *hoped*) aptly-named place was all about.

Sure enough, upon entry, I found the place to be *sublimely* ordered — at least compared to any video store *I* had ever been to in my twenty-four years.

Movies sorted by *director*! (And those, further, were *sub*-listed under the *more*-specific category of Country of Origin!) I all but swooned.[35]

I made my two selections[36], waited patiently in line, and laid them on the counter when my turn came.

The counter-person picked up my two without judgment or comment until he scanned them in and realized what they were.

And then — reservedly, as if he couldn't resist saying so:

“If you don't mind my saying so . . . ” (this with a half-smile) “ . . . this is probably the oddest double feature I've ever seen someone put together.”

A non-idiotic comment! I nearly swooned [again].

“Well, I've always wanted to watch these two back-to-back, as I feel they have an interesting, sort-of inverse relationship to each other.”

An arched eyebrow, at that.

“And what would that be?” Honestly curious.

“I think they have two of the most satisfying endings of any movies I've ever seen, for completely *opposite* reasons.”

[God, listen to me: I almost sound like Comic Book Guy from *The Simpsons*: “Most Satisfying. Endings. Ever.”]

“*Before Sunset* has the most *necessary* ending ever — ”

At that, he got it, and laughed. “Yeah, and *Dead or Alive* has the most *unnecessary* ending ever. Like he wanted to make sure there'd be no pressure to make a sequel, or so no-one *else* could make one . . . ”

“Literally no-one,” I chimed in. “There'd be no-one to make it *with*, if the ending were true.”

“Yeah, really . . . I never thought of it that way before. But I've never seen *Before Sunset*, though, you've now got me curious — ”

“It's awesome!” I say.

Too quickly.

“You should check it out, sometime.”

“Yeah, thanks, I might.” Bright smile. But then: “Do you have a card here?”

The line behind me had gotten long again, without my noticing.

Oh well. I gave him my I.D. and WaMu debit card, and filled out the paperwork.

He explained the usual business stuff to me: returns schedule, late fees, and all that, but then adds: “. . . and you get a free movie on your birthday . . . ”

“*What?*” Is he kidding?

Another smile. He can tell how easily pleased I can be, at simple things like this[37]. “Yup, every year . . . how much longer do you have to go?”

“Sept. 23rd. Exactly six months.”

“Well, then, regardless of whatever other presents you may or may not get then — or *like* or *not* like — you'll *also* get a free movie here.”

I LOVE this guy, at this point. He could probably take me home RIGHT NOW, if he wanted to.

But I play it cool: “Oh, that's awesome! Maybe Takeshi Miike will have a new one out by then . . . ”

“It's a good guess,” he confirms. “He's made as many as two a year before . . . ”

(*Really?*)

“Really?”

“Yeah. Or, you could just rent the sequel to this one . . . ”

What the? . . . “He made a sequel to this? How could he possibly?”

“Yeah, he went ahead and made a sequel, anyway. Same two lead actors, similar sort of relationship, I guess, but totally different characters and plot . . . ”

I had to laugh, at this. “You're kidding, right?”

Totally serious, now — in earnest: “No, no, not at all. I've seen the second sequel, but not, um, *Dead or Alive 3* . . . ”

Oh boy. “Wow. Impressive.” Pause. “That's so crazy. I don't know what to say.”

“Yeah.” Pause. (He clearly doesn't know what to say, *either* . . .) “You'll just have to see them, I guess.”

“You're right about that,” I say. Then I pay, he gets my stuff together, and I take the bag. “Bye.”

“Bye, nice talking to you.”

“You, too. Thanks for your help.”

“No problem. Take it easy.”

“Thanks, you too.”

Stepping outside, into the [for *once!*] Portland sunshine, I put my sunglasses on, check the bag he's handed me, and then light up [yet *another!*] American Spirit cigarette.

I exhale slowly, languidly, with more relief — I realize later — than I am conscious of at the time.

He's right, I think to myself. *What else is there to do, but see these things for myself?* It's a consoling thought.

The bus is late, but I don't mind.

*in loving memory of my great-aunt Jeanne Kelleher,
who read me Winnie-the-Pooh books as a child,
and, thus, got the whole thing started . . .*

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

1. Skirt, too, of course! My word!
2. And I don't usually drink Martinis; Cosmopolitan's my drink, if anything.
3. Does actually *citing* things apparently faze this guy?
4. I bet *he's* not Scot-ish, I thought.
5. On me, of course; that Argyle Scot, he certainly has a way with words (the way some salesman can have a “way” with their right foot, after you open your front door to their knock)!
6. Anything short of constant near-deity-level omnipotence, apparently . . .

7. Did this guy have any other “friends”? Did he *ever* have any friends? I wonder . . .
8. Meaning, of course, the extent to which I had to listen to his insistent nonsense.
9. Sorry you're learning your lesson this way, big guy! You should have tried living your own life instead of mooching off of others; maybe you could have found your own way here, and kept the knowledge you acquired, instead of being dependent upon someone who is about to leave you in the dust, just to save herself . . .
10. Not that it wasn't truly *good*, but compared to the holier-than-thou, weirdly-packaged-and/or-prepared crap he insisted on eating, it must have seemed like *manna* from *heaven*.
11. *At all!*, I thought.
12. (Knowing *him*, I'll warrant)
13. What was *with* that, anyway? Was he dyslexic, or something? You *can* get help for that, you know!
14. Remember, I told him I couldn't “cover him *like I used to*,” just for tonight, so apparently this was his way of making a concession to not tapping me out *entirely* . . .
15. Not that I'd touch *his* food, of course; breaking bread with him *that* conscientiously would be crossing a line you'd need a gun to get me to do (*if then!*).
16. Or, alternately, he would have misidentified “Calamari” as the name of some obscure Anime comic book artist.
17. How kind of you! Why, next I bet you'll be kind enough to tell me I can *skip the heels* when *shining your shoes* you FUCKING MOOCH WHO DRIVES ALL THOSE CUTE GUYS WHO GIVE ME ENCOURAGING LOOKS AWAY!
18. Yes -- I *know* -- “soda pop”! (It never would have occurred to *me*, either!) I *love* Portland!
19. Does this guy define himself *in any way* other than negatively, in opposition to other things (i.e., not quite as *awful?*)
20. Maybe I'll try it when I come back here either with a girlfriend or — could I hope? — one of those guys who, well, *tries* to make eyes at me, and could maybe even have a *job* . . .

(Which, by point of clarification, the Argyle Scot does, in fact, appear to have one of, himself.

(He *does* disappear for days at a time, and he doesn't have me paying his rent, phone, or car payments (at least *so far* — I guess the opportunity hasn't presented itself, as it hasn't come up in “conversation”), so apparently he can support *himself*. . . it's just that, his having a job (and thus, even *some* means of his own) has no bearing on our relationship, since “having fun” with me means I pay for everything (apparently, I'm like a “hobby” that pays for *itself*. . .))

21. Full of pie and ice cream as it is, that would *not* be a pleasant sight . . .
22. Did I *really* just use that word? Ugh!
23. Which would, of course, hardly be worth the effort . . .
24. Should I add an “S.” to those initials? The “Argyle Scot Sucks” would spell: “A.S.S.”!
25. He may very well have it — and plenty to spare — for all I know.
26. Which is precisely what he'll have to do if he plans on pulling the same bullshit he's been pulling thus far.
27. I should hope so!
28. A total lie, of course. My mom happens to be *quite* dead, fourteen years by now — not that the Argyle Scot ever asked about my mom in the by-now three-weeks of our “dating” (Ugh! Do I *have* to call it that?) — which is, of course, a case in point.
29. All the while, of course, driving any potential “prospects” (friends or otherwise) I might have, completely and utterly *away* . . .
30. Or (ahem) perhaps *more* . . .
31. Quite apart from *any* (other than incidental) input from me, of course . . .
32. With, again, neither any *real* input (nor outlet) to alter its course
33. Not actually *me*, of course . . . he might as well have had a picture of me obtained without my knowing — as though I were a celebrity — that he's been masturbating to every night, leading him to believe the relationship he's developed in his head with “me” — on *his own* — is something I'll somehow “understand” (*maybe you*

should try talking out loud about your feelings, big guy! Then, maybe someone else would have a chance of breaking into your self-imposed internal exile . . . not that — as I've learned by now — at least I myself am capable of offering an opinion worthy of his consideration, given that (citing examples, here):

(i.) There is NO SUCH THING as the ENTIRE FIELD OF LINGUISTICS; it's all just "dialect" [he actually said this, and if you can actually even hazard a guess as to what he means by this, please e-mail me! (seriously! it'd be a breath of fresh air, comparatively speaking!)]

(ii.) Haruki Murakami's *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, as a contemporary, modern "epic," doesn't, on the face of it, even merit consideration for comparison to the *Lord of the Rings* cycle by Tolkein [though I'm as convinced as I can be that — despite his insistent denials and oh-so-convenient ellipses regarding a work I myself have never read — he himself HAS NOT EITHER and is, instead, relying upon the Peter Jackson filmed version we all know and love to back up his "case"]

(iii.) Pagan Kennedy has "a stupid name" and, well, that's that, I guess . . .

. . . net result of all this being (as though I'm, like, *Scarlett Johansson*, or something) here he is at my door, with a mind totally (and — I might add — by this point: *irretrievably*) locked up in its self-created, self-referring system of referents about "me" that, in truth, have about as much to do with the *real* me as the person I am and the life I actually live as, say, my Social Security Number or vital statistics would "reveal," in and of themselves.

He might as well have taken my real name and written an entirely [*entirely* — in *every* sense] fictional novel and handed it to me, expecting me to believe it is more "me" than, say . . . oh I don't know: the life I've actually *lived*, the experiences I've actually *had*, the things I've actually *said*?

[Which — I realize *now* — is in fact what he has obviously done: it's just that the novel is *entirely* in his head.

[Memorized, for the most part, as though it were *gospel*, excepting the parts that don't fit the current situation or agenda of the moment in achieving what he wants from me . . . or, alternately, the parts he forgets, which he then alters at whim, as suits his immediate purpose (— my word! so innovative! the Argyle Scot could be quite the improvisational narrative raconteur if his mind were neither **(1.) a muddle nor (2.) entirely divorced from the outside world . . .**)]

34. To a domestic disturbance call placed by a woman complaining about some guy she went on a couple dates with (about the size of it, really; I'd be *overstating it*, if anything, in terms of any personal investment on my part . . .) coming to her door and not leaving her along despite her making it as clear as she politely could that *she was no longer interested* . . .

35. And no Argyle Scot in sight to dispute either my choices, the arrangement of films in the store, or, alternately, the color of the carpet they laid down!

36. Whatever I wanted! I felt like I could breathe again!

37. It must be pretty obvious at times, though, I *will* admit!

