





*As our guest, we want to provide you  
with the utmost experience.*

*While we strive to meet all your needs  
away from home,  
allow us,  
to fulfill one more.*

*We know most guests love to read before  
retiring for the evening, and we appreciate  
that everyone has different tastes.*

*From true crime novels to love stories,  
from history books to science articles,  
from horror stories to lighthearted fare,  
reading preferences are diverse.*

*Within these pages we submit several genres  
to accommodate your tastes.*

*Enjoy.*



## SWIZZLE STICK

The waitress asked if I wanted another drink.

"Mmhmph, no."

"What about the gentleman with you?"

"He'll be back in a minute," was all I could mutter. This was torture. I hope my eyes conveyed the true message - Don't remind me that my date will be returning soon, and please don't ask another question.

In this half-filled restaurant, I was trying desperately not to have any attention drawn to me. And I particularly didn't want to answer any questions.

Not that the questions themselves were hard.

The problem was, the answers were coming out muffled. Instead of what I really wanted to say, "He'll be back in a minute." I was sure it came out something like "Hm b ba n a mintut."

Why did I ever put this swizzle stick in my mouth?

It all started when I ordered a drink that came with a long, green swizzle stick. I was immediately warmed with a tropical feel.

A few minutes after the drinks arrived, my date excused himself to go to the bathroom. As I looked around the restaurant, I was giddy. I had my nicest outfit on, and it was two weeks after my last hair cut.



Life was good,  
things were great,  
my dates okay...  
but, hey...my tongue found what I thought was a  
piece of food stuck in one of my back teeth.

Determined to release this little devil before my date  
returned (I just know he would have seen it had I left it  
there), I picked up the swizzle stick and started  
discreetly using it as a toothpick.

Soon enough, the stick became caught in my teeth.  
I couldn't dislodge it. No longer was I the discreet  
social butterfly, but the geek in the corner with a big  
green parrot head sticking out of her mouth.

What a Lucy move.

My date was due back any minute, and the waitress  
looked as if she wanted to ask another question.

What was I going to do?

Hang a napkin on the parrot's head?

Act as if I intended to strike a new persona like  
Kojak and his lollipop?

Convince others in the restaurant to try a new fad?

Pretend it wasn't there?

Right.

Maybe I should pick up my coat and leave a coy note  
for my date that the evening wasn't progressing as  
well as I thought and...



oh that wouldn't do...  
he was coming back to the table.

As he maneuvered his way around the other diners,  
he gave a little smile.

I smiled back with the green parrot head bouncing  
up and down ("Aye, me bucko" immediately came  
to mind).

What a charming look.

I started toying with the idea of just leaving it there  
and not ordering any food. I'd pinch the top of the  
parrot head between two fingers and give the  
illusion I was twirling the stick.

Sensual? I don't think so.  
But a clever, sly, plan.

?

Then I fast-forwarded to leaving the restaurant; the  
ride in the car, the walk to the door, the separation  
of lips by a plastic green parrot head.

AGGGHHHH-POP!

At last.

I didn't smile much that evening and kept touching  
the sore spot with my tongue. Visions of what could  
have happened played in my head. Even with the  
swizzle stick dislodged, I still held onto it. I carried  
it in my head as surely as I had in my teeth.

Funny sometimes how the mind won't let one rest.  
Frustrating, too.



Had I kept the stick in my mouth, my quiet, distracted demeanor that evening would have been easily explained.

Now all I had was an image and an awkward embarrassment.

I mused all the way home that just when things seem to be going your way, life certainly has a way of throwing you for a loop...

or a swizzle stick...

or a mind cramp...

or a ...





## A VIEW FROM A TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR- OLD

### POTPOURRI

On a walk  
I stopped to talk  
to a passerby

We chatted for a while  
as we watched the world go by.

She asked me what my name was,  
where I came from  
what's my sign?

I said,  
"I am a Pisces.  
I'm French and  
English too,  
I'm Portuguese,  
Italian  
with a little  
French Sioux."

"Oh dear!" She said  
and chuckled.

"A mutt," I said,  
"that's me!"

"Oh, no!"  
she said with kindness,  
"My dear,  
you're  
potpourri!"





The TV and I are having a fight.

It's in one corner of the room.  
I'm in the other.

Admittedly I throw the first punch.  
To the power button.

The TV fights back with an immediate  
onslaught of visuals.

I attack with the clicker, and still the TV keeps  
producing sound rays that throw me off guard  
or visual images that put me in an hypnotic trance.

It won't outfox me.  
I go to turn the sound down, but just before I do the  
actress says something funny.

Witty even.

I wonder how she gets her teeth so white?

This is dumb. Does anything I watch have a  
redeeming quality? Oh sure the TV is a great stress  
reducer, yet after watching a full night of it, the next  
day I feel as if I've been tranquilized.

Could it ever be one-tenth as titillating as a good book?

Hello? What are you doing?

Arguing with myself over why I continue to watch  
this thing. So apparently I'm watching myself watch  
TV. I wouldn't recommend it as a hobby.



I've known some people who can just walk by a squawking TV without giving it notice.

I'm humbled by them.

Even in electronic showrooms, I'll stop to look at the hundreds lined up on the wall. Walking up and down the aisle, I'm gleefully taking in the changing pictures, textures and sounds. That is, until I spy a set with me on it. I soon realize that the store has set up a video recorder which captures shoppers on this big-screen TV.

I'm back to watching me watch TV again.

Very eerie.

I did throw the TV out last year.  
It was the best thing I could have done for myself.

Oh, it tried to come back in. There were propositions from friends who thought the reason I didn't have one was due to a lack of money; there were even free offers because, they insisted, I just had to see this new show.

I didn't budge.

Until recently.

It disguised itself as a gift – what a clever ploy!

It sat in the middle of my living room floor sending mute messages through the box:

Open me up, you can't disappoint your friends, think of the "Lost" series you haven't even seen once, just once, that's all you have to watch, just once.



Ah, shucks!

I opened up the box and put it in the corner of my bedroom on top of the wardrobe. See?

Then it insisted on being turned on.  
The last three nights I've obliged.

I'm back to watching people interact in ways that aren't normal, watching flashy commercials that appeal to my buying habits regardless of whether or not I know they are lying. And worse?

Watching news trivialize horrible life stories. The commentator is always saying, "And next we have..." As if the last 30 seconds he spent on the horrible desecration of 100+ people wasn't gruesome enough, they have another story that can top that. Of course, that story can only be told in a 30 second sound bite, too.

*Please.*

I'll keep watching and keep a vigil on my watching.  
I'll continue to ask the questions...

Why are you doing this?

Why don't you turn that TV off  
and pick up a book?

The voice in my head gets louder but obviously not  
as loud as the TV.

The TV and I are having a fight.

It's winning.

## RANDOM THOUGHTS

Jack Rehfuss once wrote:  
Oftentimes instead of drawing  
the line, we travel along with it,  
so as not to create  
a boundary,  
but to continue  
the quest  
without  
restrictions

Leap

26 letters in the alphabet  
a million, billion, trillion words  
26 letters  
Even with walls  
creativity exists

If it's complications you want  
I can't help you

When worries overwhelm,  
remember what true friends  
will tell you to do...  
change the scenery.

Good-bye!

**Piece:**

Swizzle Stick  
Potpourri  
T.V.

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