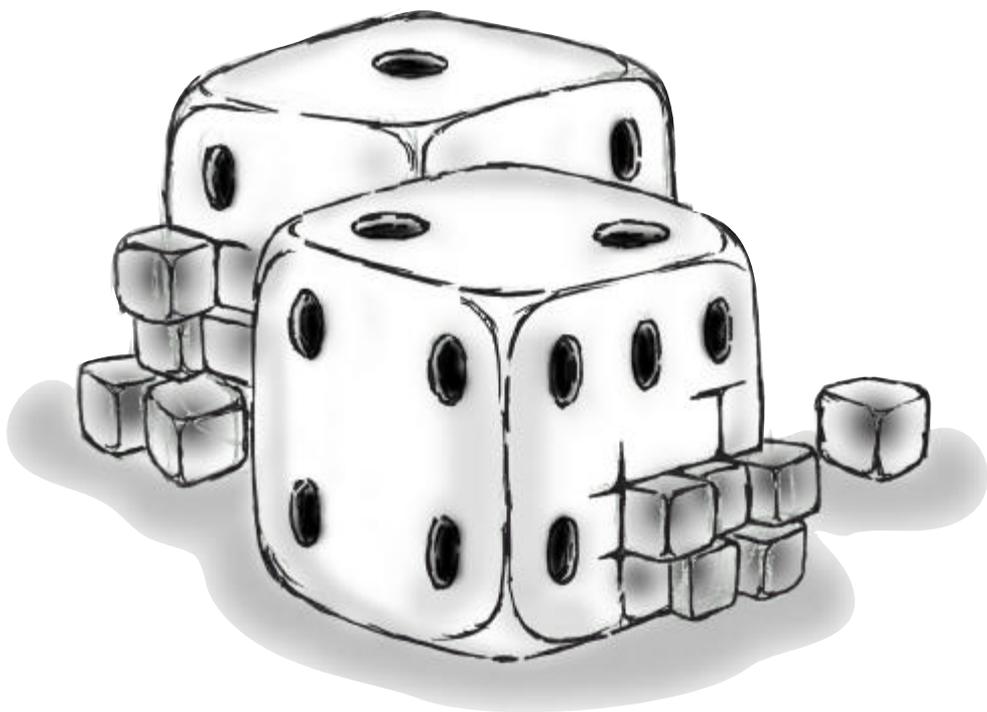




Octopus Army

Issue #2 · Secret and Imaginary Languages / Cryptography · August 15th, 2002



Free in NYC, everywhere else \$2.00

Dearest Reader,

Could it be two months already since Octopus Army first dragged its quivering and stinking carcass onto the shore of the collective consciousness? Yes, it could be, and it is. If this is the first octopus corpse whose slimy signs you are trying to decipher, you should know that between these covers we do not distinguish between fact and fiction. Which is not to say that some of our pieces might not be completely true. Then again they might contain lies at the crucial moment. I can't tell you because I don't know, and I'm the last reliable narrator you're going to meet here.

Sincerely Yours,
Agnieszka Krajewska, Text Editor

Octopus Army #2

Text Editor:

Agnieszka Krajewska

Layout and Graphics Editor:

Maggie Krzywicka

Octopus Army logo by **Gary Kwan**

Octopus Army

3739 Balboa Street #103
San Francisco, CA 94121

web: <http://octopusarmy.org>

general e-mail: contact@octopusarmy.org

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To receive your own free copy of Octopus Army, please visit our website for a list of locations where you may find it or send a 6x9 self-addressed stamped envelope.

Octopus Army merchandise can be procured through our website. You may give us donations to help cover the cost of paper and printing.

Donations of octopus related toys are also gladly accepted.

Submissions:

Now accepting submissions for issue #3, deadline is September 31, 2002. The theme is **Cars**.

We accept short original unpublished or previously published pieces for which you retain the copyright. No politics or pop culture references are allowed. We do not distinguish between fiction and non-fiction articles. Submission will not be returned unless you include a S.A.S.E. with proper postage. Compensation is in the form of free issues and glory.

Submissions by post: Include a print-out and a digital copy if possible on disk or CD. If submission is too large to include on disk (in case of digitally-created art), please specify a URL where it can be retrieved.

Submissions by e-mail: Send text submissions only in the body of the message to submissions@octopusarmy.org. Send art submissions in tiff, psd, or high-resolution jpeg or gif format to submissions_art@octopusarmy.org. Please specify in the body of the message the contents of the attachments.

If you are reading this after September 31st, 2002, please visit our website for the current theme and guidelines.

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Letterboxing: Secret Clues and Hidden Treasure

by Agnieszka Krajewska

Letterboxing is a simple yet delightful hobby, whose chief pleasure is derived from its secrecy. A letterbox consists of 1) a blank notebook 2) a stamp and 3) a waterproof box. Enthusiasts place the letterbox in a hidden location and later publish clues about the location of the letterbox. The clues are playful and cryptic, and sometimes written as poems or riddles. The process of concealing a letterbox is called planting, in the jargon of the hobby. Planting is the first half of letterboxing.

The second half is following the clues to find the planted letterbox. Each enthusiast has his own notebook and personal stamp. When he finds the concealed letterbox, he makes an impression of his stamp in the found notebook, and an impression of the found stamp in his notebook. Letterboxes may also contain post cards addressed to the planter, the planter's phone number or email address, information about the hobby (sometimes also

called "sport") of letterboxing, or even clues about finding another letterbox.

The stamp is generally hand carved, the preferred material being a white vinyl eraser. Some enthusiasts have their stamps made in rubber from original artwork professionally, at a cost of about \$10. Commercial, mass-produced stamps are not generally used. Stamps can reflect the place where the letterbox is hidden, commemorate a special occasion, honor a person, or simply be whimsical.

The hobby of letterboxing originated in the England in 1894 when James Perrott of Chagford placed his calling card inside a glass bottle along with a message inviting others who might find it to do the same, and hid it in the banks of Cranmere Pool in Dartmoor. Over time the practice evolved into its current form. In the UK clues for finding letterboxes are published in special semi-annual clue catalogues, passed on in pubs, and spread through friends.

Letterboxing spread to the United States only in the last ten years. It is at present most popular on the East Coast, but is spreading rapidly, since most people

who collect letterbox stamps also place letterboxes themselves. Further information about letterboxing in North America,

including a list of letterbox clues, may be found on the North America Letterboxing website, <http://www.letterboxing.org>.

Sources:

North America Letterboxing, website: <http://www.letterboxing.org>

Mirkwood's Letterboxing, website: <http://www.ruthannzaroff.com/letterboxing/>



Fragments from a Life in Cryptolinguistics

by Johnson Hal

illustrated by Maggie Krzywicka

i.

I remember my first encounter with the Proto-Aryan tongue, the ancient and never-recorded language that we now call, in the wake of Hitler's madness, Proto-Indo-European. My father's leather-bound *Surrow's English Etymological Dictionary* contained, at the eventual end of each tangle of an entry, a mysterious Proto-Aryan root, *bhegw-*, *pleus-*. An introduction, difficult for me to follow at age ten, explained that Proto-Aryan was the spring whence flowed all the languages my neighbors spoke: the guttural scowling Kraut at the meat shop, Officer O'Donough, our charming maid Jeanette, Mrs. Lopez the washer woman, even funny Mr. Ramakrishna. With visions of reconstructing this tongue that preceded Babel, I began carefully copying each root from the dictionary, together with the words it had become - in order to get a rough idea of the root's original meaning. Then I sought to arrange the roots alphabetically, generating, essentially, a Proto-Aryan dictionary out of an English one. Surely, this, the mother of all tongues, would, once brought to light (by my efforts), bring understanding to all the nations of the earth, harmony to the clang of their myriad tongues. After several months and the completion of the D section my father, finally understanding the nature of my project, presented me as a birthday present with Edmund Jones' nineteenth-century *Basic Aryan Lexicon*. He probably thought it would come as a godsend, but instead it shattered all my hopes. Ante-Babel had already been discovered. It had been known for decades and hadn't changed a thing. From that moment my life was predetermined: I would henceforth seek to only conceal and obfuscate our language, and hide it from prying eyes.

ii.

During the War, I did my part in our cryptography department. My great battles were with bureaucracy and the ineptitude of my colleagues; my great success (although not the one for which I will be remembered) was the development of a code that American POWs in the Pacific Theater could use to communicate with each other while befuddling the Japanese. Our servicemen were taught a simple variation of Morse Code with the syllable "la" substituting for the dot, "ra" for the dash. In this way, GIs could discuss plans for escape or boost morale with racy jokes while their Jap captors heard only "Ra ra ra ra ra ra ra..." "What silly people these Americans are," the Japanese said to each other in Japanese, "that they are ever singing nonsense songs, ra ra ra," none the wiser. La la la. Ra ra ra. La la la.

iii.

Much has been made recently of our wartime use of the Navajos as "code-talkers." They were chosen because they were the only large American Indian group not studied by any European linguist, and, therefore spoke the only "safe" language-but fears developed, as the war stretched on, that a certain Dr. Friedrich Einbar, that eminent German anthropologist who did field work among the Apache in 1911, may have jotted down a note or two on Navajo as well. Some officials demanded that a substitute language be found. Roosevelt himself had the idea, based on a rather sensational article he'd read in the Saturday Evening Post about twins who communicated in a secret tongue only to each other-surely such twins could be used to transmit and decode impenetrable messages. Perhaps the Dionne quintuplets could be drawn into the service! He handed me his eager proposal personally, in a leather envelope lined with black velvet. I bowed when I took it and he bowed back, deeply at the waist, without rising.

My subsequent investigation, sponsored by the US Army, found that twins do not and cannot, in fact, develop their own language. They merely develop a system of

substitutions, replacing all [p] sounds with [t] and vice-versa (for example) in a kind of oral cryptogram which may serve to stymie parents but is no harder to "break" than schoolboys' Pig Latin. By the time I had written up my conclusions I had to deliver them to President Truman. The Dionne quintts did a few promotional posters for the cryptography department, but it ended there.

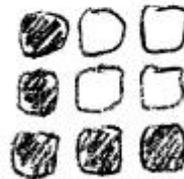
iv.

But if ever I served my country well, it was during the Cold War, when, working with the admirable Ridgefield team, I developed a coding device that confounded the Russkies for three long years, a record, I believe, in this century. The government introduced the device to Americans as a "toy" and backed with an artificially generated "fad" (to create a plausible reason for spies and servicemen to be seen carrying the damn things). We even invented the back story that it had been invented in Eastern Europe-how the Commies preened at this fiction! It was vulgarly known as the "Rubik's Cube," but we cognoscenti called it the Johnson Device.

It functioned thus: an agent in the field would set his cube in one of three hundred established starting positions. Then focusing on one of six sides (distinguishable by the color of its middle square), he would engage in a series of twists until a certain pattern emerged. The agent would then record not the pattern, *but the twists required to generate that pattern*. Which pattern would serve as the starting position for the next code element, engendered through another recorded sequence of twists; etc. Each type of twist had several interchangeable secret names: a horizontal quarter twist of the top row, for example, might be designated as L, V, or 7. When the message was sent, the decoder would use his own Johnson device to follow the transmitted instructions, twisting his cube to create pattern after pattern, wherein lay actual text. A skilled "cube-talker" could encode lengthy messages in a matter of minutes.

An elementary exercise from the top-secret booklet used in training is reproduced below.

7. Given a "solved" cube of all solid colors, generate these text faces and record the twist-path used.



Red cryptanalysts fumbled and stumbled, unable to discover our secret. In WWII, the Polish underground captured a German Enigma Machine, and a British study of its mechanisms enabled the Allies to crack the Nazi code. The Russians became convinced we had a similar machine, but as much as they searched our diplomats and agents, they could find

nothing. Oh sure, they often found Rubik's Cubes, but so what? They also found blue jeans. By the time the Reds stumbled across the solution (a careless clue left too prominently in an East Berlin embassy) the cube fad had become hard to maintain back home. The television ads, the free cubes distributed to public schools, were becoming expensive. Operation Johnson Device was canceled in 1982.

V.

Saussure (I learned from a book a senator presented me with at a banquet), after inventing modern linguistics, devoted his life to deciphering a nonexistent code he had hallucinated in the poems of Catullus. A *Sloan's Latin Grammar* in one hand, a copy of "Da mi basia" in the other, he published paper after paper detailing the progress he was making on the code, the secrets he was learning from Roman poets....About linguistics he never published a word. The book attributed to him was compiled by his students from class notes three years after his death.

I am aware that colleagues and my hec- toring wife now compare me to Saussure. But they have misunderstood my words- corrupt as my speech has become, an almost indecipherable slur since last winter's second stroke. As I sift through these brittle pages, left for eighty-five years tucked between two pages in the *Sarrow's English Etymological Dictionary* I inherited from my father, I am not seeking a code, or a solution to a code. I know full well nothing was encrypted in the pencil scrawls of my youth. When I said I sought meaning (it is too difficult to clarify this to them, who will not listen) I merely meant that I wanted to find, in these faded scraps of nostalgia, an echo of the dream of my youth-that the nonsensical babble of a thousand tongues could be quelled by the discovery of the Ursprache, that the true names of things could be stated, that for once and finally things could be said and they would have meaning. I sought the hope, the vain hope, that my vile life's work might yet fail.



Lingu

by Rose Bowden

On the 3rd of April, 1979, after much difficulty, Jonathan Arrenson succeeded in securing a child for his experiment. He preferred to call it a "guided lifestyle paradigm shift." The New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Service called it "playing god," child abuse, and other harsh invectives, but all that comes much later.

Aaron was not his child biologically nor legally, except perhaps in a feudal, 'purchased' sense. Jonathan cared well for Aaron, provided him with clothing, food, shelter, etc. He did not attempt to raise the boy in some newfangled way; he just wanted to test a hypothesis the only way he thought possible.

Jonathan would create a new language, better than all the rest because it would be synthesized through an unconscious human brain. That was the Achilles heel of all the other created languages. None of them would ever aspire any higher than a meager pidgin. To be truly speakable the language must be someone's native tongue.

Lingu would be Aaron's native tongue. Jonathan constructed the language from all the others: some grammar from Esperanto, some inflection and phonemes from Tolkien, a dash of Vulcan, a pinch of Klingon and then polished it with the principles in his linguistics textbooks. It was a masterpiece. All this was completed before Aaron was acquired. Jonathan had the patience, and the resources required to make the experiment all fall into place without being hasty.

Jonathan spent months of preparatory drilling on the structures and vocabulary of his chimera language. Despite Jonathan's worries, learning Lingu well enough to teach Aaron proved to be inconsequential. Mere months into Aaron's basic instruction Jonathan found himself referring to everything by it's Lingu name, and babbling to himself in a half English/half Lingu mish-mosh he whimsically dubbed 'Linguish'.

The first years were the hardest, and he found that Parenting Today and Good Housekeeping became his main support in raising a child by himself. There weren't many resources for single fathers, but he made do. As Aaron began scribbling Jonathan started teaching him the written language. Jonathan spent his free time perfecting it. He had begun writing his diary in Lingu, having dreams in the speech and forgetting the English words for common everyday items--especially items he used around Aaron. This made his trips to the supermarket particularly interesting; Jonathan began to carry around index cards of appropriate terms and phrases for use during his errands.

By year four Jonathan was fluent in Lingu. He felt the experiment had been completely proven in practice. Any lumps in the structure of Lingu had been smoothed out by Aaron's innate mental comprehension of grammar. If there was a word that Jonathan had not thought of, he needed only to invent the base word and Aaron took structure from there. All beautifully textbook regular, just like Jonathan had predicted. New Lingu double entendres formed to replace Jonathan's existing English ones. By contrast English seemed blocky and garish. Lingu appropriate idioms popped into his head, and Aaron became wittier from week-to-week, as Jonathan became more entrenched in the subtleties of the language.

When Aaron was seven it was no longer Jonathan's language. He watched as Aaron took each new translation and synthesized it, marveling at the capacity of the human mind. Now that he had succeeded with Aaron, he decided to repeat the experiment with a second child. The child welfare system had developed greatly in the eight years Jonathan had stayed at home. It was while procuring the second that Jonathan spoke too freely to the wrong sort of people, and the jig, as they say, was up.

Aaron still has an accent. He doesn't really understand plays on words in English. Aaron continues to dream in Lingu, and he breaks into it when upset or caught off guard. So does Jonathan





Codes, Killing & Cowardly Cops

by *Lainie Petersen*

How does a serial killer turn himself into a creature of myth: captivating public imagination almost three decades after his last confirmed killing? He goes on a multi-year killing spree, constructs a complicated cipher with which he blackmails the media, and then, (on a fairly regular basis) makes law enforcement look foolish. One more thing: he never gets caught.

Nobody was ever convicted of the Zodiac killings, and indeed, nobody is even sure how many people were actually killed, assaulted, or kidnapped by the Zodiac during his proverbial reign of terror. In a series of letters written the press and the authorities between 1967 and 1974, Zodiac claimed that he had committed as many as 37 murders between 1966 and 1970. This number is probably inflated, however the authorities are sure that he killed or tried to kill at least seven people. They also strongly suspect him in at least two additional killings, as well as a botched kidnapping. Numerous suspects have been investigated, but nobody has ever been charged with the Zodiac's crimes.

The Zodiac's first confirmed killing was in December of 1968, when two high school students were found murdered at a local "lovers lane". Then, in July and September of 1969, two other young couples were attacked: in both cases the women were killed, their male companions seriously wounded. The last confirmed Zodiac killing broke the pattern of Zodiac's attack on couples: a young cabdriver was found dead in October of 1969. (Ironically, the killer might have been caught, as there were plenty of witnesses and the police themselves probably saw him leaving the scene. Unfortunately, police bungling allowed him to slip through their fingers.) The Zodiac began sending his letters to the Vallejo Times-Herald, the San Francisco Examiner and the San Francisco Chronicle: each claiming responsibility for numerous killings going back as far as 1966. The killer also included ciphers with his letters, explaining that they would

reveal his identity: he also threatened additional murder and mayhem if his ciphers were not published.

The newspapers agreed to publish the ciphers, all of which were different, and



ultimately were found to be different parts of one message. Military and forensic experts were unable to "crack" the Zodiac codes, and authorities were on the verge of assuming that the code was just a ruse to slow down the case and taunt the police. Within a week of the ciphers publication, however, a high school economics teacher, Don Harden and his wife cracked the code. Harden explained that an egomaniac like Zodiac would surely have used "I" frequently in his communications, and so based his analysis of the cipher on that principle. While the first ciphers did not reveal his identity, they did reveal at least a part of his motive: he had an obsession with *The Most Dangerous Game*, a short story by Richard Connell about "hunting humans" for sport. Indeed, in at least one of the murders Zodiac had been wearing a bizarre, executioner-style hood. In the original message, Zodiac claimed that he would achieve immortality through killing, and would be served by his victims in death. While Harden was able to solve some of the ciphers, Zodiac's later ciphers have never been decoded. Whether the ciphers were actual ciphers or just gibberish is unknown.

The ciphers, plus the brutality of his murders, were all that was needed to solid-

ify the legend of The Zodiac. Police departments squabbled over jurisdiction in several of his murders, each withholding information from the other so that they could claim credit for solving the crime. A botched kidnapping in 1970 illustrated the depth of fear that the Zodiac inspired: a woman and her infant daughter entered a small-town police station after a man had tried to kidnap them. When the woman identified the Zodiac in a "wanted" poster as her kidnapper, the desk sergeant sent her and her daughter to a local café, as he was afraid of a confrontation with the infamous killer. Letters claiming to be from Zodiac occasionally show up at local police departments. One website hosts a mini-convention of Zodiac case "enthusiasts" every year, each bringing his or her own theory about Zodiac's identity.

Several of the ciphers have still not been solved, and remain as much of a mystery as identity of their author. You can easily find them at www.zodiackiller.com, if you are inclined to try your hand at solv-

ing what one forensic cryptographer has called "The Most Fascinating Code Case in American History . . ." . My own view is that the Zodiac killer's near "supervillian" (scaring armed policemen into shooing crime victims out of their own stations) status is the partial result of his use of "cipher". By presenting a seemingly impenetrable cipher to the press, he was playing a game of psychological warfare with the police and the public: forcing them to understand his mind and its workings, on his terms, if they hoped to stop the terror he was perpetrating on them. The frustration experienced by those who hoped to be responsible for his capture was carefully exploited by the use of a code that demanded their attention, but offered little satisfaction. The police never got their man, and the Zodiac, whether he is alive or dead today, has achieved at least a part of his goal: the immortality of legend, and the slavish devotion of some interested people who still pursue his case, his identity, and his code.

1. Zodiac had a habit of murdering people in "disputed" jurisdictions so as to pit police departments against each other.
2. USA TODAY. Ask the FBI: Codes, ciphers and cryptology. Thursday, Jan. 17, 2 p.m. ET

Lingu from page 9

Arrenson, who has become an underground hero of the linguistic world. They met again when Aaron turned eighteen, and the court appointed restraining order placed on Jonathan was no longer valid. Aaron, with Jonathan's assistance, intends to raise his children bi-lingual in Lingu and English. Jonathan has plans to write a textbook and a dictionary using his meticulous notes. There is talk of funding for the project at MIT, also of making Arrenson a professor emeritus. Lingu remains a living language.

Johnson Hal thinks you should read *The Secret History* by Procopius. In the sixth century, Procopius wrote several volumes of a contemporary history of Constantinople - and one volume he never published, a bitter, hostile, sustained rant against all the prominent figures of the day. In this, the true history of the city, Procopius reveals that General Belisarius is a dupe, the empress a harlot, and the emperor a demon.

How to Get a 1600 on the SATs

by *Davis O'Smartington*

Good day, all you young scholars out there. Davis O'Smartington here. Now I know that it's summertime, and the last thing you want to be thinking about is the SATs, but since I scored a perfect 1600 on said test and have since advanced to HARVARD University, naturally you should read what I have to say with keenest attention. I assure you that it is in your best interest.

Now, SAT study aids and guides have blossomed into a multi-billion dollar industry in recent years, but I guarantee that by following my seven easy steps, getting a perfect score will be as simple as 1,2,3 for even the dimwittedest of adolescents. Rather than take up time that I'm sure you would rather be spending body-surfing or in some other way enjoying your youth, I shall now present **THE SEVEN STEPS**:

Step One

The first and perhaps most important thing that you must do in preparation for the test is to locate the two people whose help you will require. First, the smartest student in your class. Research has shown me that every school in the nation sees at least one of its students score a perfect 1600 on the SAT each year. Find this student and befriend him. You will need to take him into your confidence, so if he seems resistant to your attempts, there are always methods of persuasion. If you are a female, bully for you! Simply use your wiles to gain his trust. Intelligent children are always desperate for female companionship. If you are male, or an ugly female, I suggest bribery. Slipping a Benjamin Franklin into a pocket protector has never failed, to my vast knowledge. The other person to locate is any student who is allergic to wasp stings. You need not befriend this person, nor even talk to him, so this should not be at all difficult. Just know his name and remember what he looks like.

Step Two

Learn to speak the language of the North American wasp. Many, I'm sure, already know how to do this, so if this is true in your case, you may skip this step. If, however, you do not know wasp, learning is simple enough. You have only to start with the pronouns and go from there.

Step Three

Acquire a pet wasp. All you have to do is go to the wasps' nest nearest your home or school and explain that you need a volunteer for a secret mission. Wasps love secret missions. If this is not enough to convince one to come along, tell them that the chosen one will be well fed and will be safely returned to his family at the mission's conclusion. (By the bye, if you are concerned about being stung, you should be aware that a wasp will never sting someone if that person speaks his language.)

Step Four

Take the SATs once, not to score highly, but for reconnaissance. Quickly fill out your test sheet with a predetermined pattern of random letters and use the remaining time to draw a diagram of the room in which the test is held. Mark down how many desks there are and the way they are arranged. Assign each position a number, with the student at the front of the leftmost row being number one, the student behind him being two, and so forth.

Step Five

Now that you have all the information you need, you are ready to take the test for real. Be sure to bring your pet wasp and at least two number two pencils. Once you are seated, note the position of your newly acquired intelligent friend and the allergic fellow. When the test begins, go through it and answer only the questions that you are **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN** you know the correct response to.

Step Six

Look at your test and the numbers of the questions you have left blank. Tell those numbers quietly to your wasp in his native tongue and release him from the jar or whatever it is in which you've been keeping him. Having seen the chart you've made of the positions of the desks in the room, the wasps will know exactly which students he must sting. For example, if you don't know the answer to questions sixteen, eighteen, and twenty-three, your wasp will sting the students sitting in those chairs. Undoubtedly, those students will cry out in pain, or in some other way make it known that they have been stung. Hearing them cry out in pain, your friend, having familiarized himself with your chart, will write down on a piece of scrap paper the answers to the questions you need. A quick note: should you be sitting in the desk that corresponds to a question that you don't know the answer to, you may, if you feel confident enough in your acting ability, cry out in pain without actually having your wasp sting you.

Step Seven

After having stung all the necessary students, your wasp will return to your desk, his mission accomplished. The room will undoubtedly be experiencing some commotion at this point, but try to act as though you are deeply focusing on your exam. Once the wasp has returned, tell him that you have one last mission for him, and send him to sting the allergic student. The sight of this person swelling up and gasping for breath will send the already distressed room into a panic. This panic will provide the distraction necessary for your friend to sneak over to your desk and drop off the answers you need. Fill in your blank spaces and go home smiling.

It's just that simple!!! I'll be seeing you at HARVARD.

Johnson Hal thinks you should read *The Empty Nest* by Evan Davidovich. This innovative short story collection is most notable for its structure - it starts with a wartime coming-of-age tale; partway through a character interrupts the action to tell a story of his own; a character in that story then starts a third story, etc. After a tenth, central, story, each story closes.

Agnieszka Krajewska thinks you should read *Weinstein's Evidence Manual: Student Edition* by Jack B. Weinstein. Close reading of this lively and entertaining manual reveals a subtext of Byzantine character studies, interspersed with understated jokes, for example: "The presence of blood, caused by either accident or assault, seems to create an automatic assumption of excitement. Whether non-sanguinary events qualify depends on the judge's assessment of the shock value of the events in question."

Agnieszka Krajewska also thinks you should read *Cruddy* by Lynda Barry. Roberta's father makes her pretend to be a mute and retarded boy and takes her with him on a multi-state killing spree where she is on numerous occasions accosted by perverts who fall for the act and desire to molest him/her. Equal parts blood, laughs, and horror.

Rose Bowden thinks you should read *Eunoia* by Christian Bök. Five chapters, only one of the five vowels per chapter. A feat at which to marvel, and an excellent read.

Rose Bowden also thinks you should read *Vicious Magnolias* by Henri Therrien. A superb example of turn-of-the-century French Surrealist prose. Insinuated sexual metaphors at their best. Ellen Merlich's translation is excellent.

The World Is Full of Secret Signs

by Agnieszka Krajewska

illustrated by Maggie Krzywicka

One morning a month ago I found a piece of wet crumpled up string in front of my door. It was white twine, of the sort normally used to tie up boxes with cakes or cookies. I ignored it and in the afternoon it was gone.

A few days later I saw the same string in another part of town, lying on the sidewalk next to a stop sign. I thought nothing of it.

Two weeks later I saw the string again. I looked at it more carefully and I thought that it might be a similar string, not the same exact one. I couldn't be sure, though. I started paying attention, and noticed pieces of white twine all over town. What are they from? What do they mean? Do they mean anything at all?

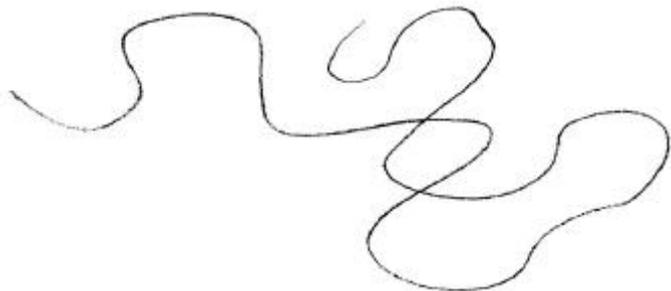
Children in Africa play a game with a piece of string formed in a loop, twisting it into various shapes and passing it back and forth between each other; maybe the string on the sidewalks of San Francisco is

some kind of game. The Incas did not have a writing system, but they had a system of notation using knots on a string. An official tied a pattern of knots, and a runner carried the message to another city. There, another official deciphered the message.

But if someone sent me a message in knotted up string it would be meaningless. I wouldn't know how to act upon it.

A secret message, which we cannot decipher, is not unlike a corpse. A dead person's life not in relation to those who knew him is like a book to an unlettered primitive. Not even a collection of indecipherable signs, but nothing, no sign, an object with no meaning except Unknown Object. Whereas when alive, we can have an impact even on those who do not know us, because we can make ourselves known, force the Other to acknowledge us.

Some day these words that I am writing will mean nothing more than crumpled string. If you're the one who sent me the messages on the sidewalks, and you're reading this, please resend in a different code. I got your letter, but I could not read it.



Davis O'Smartington thinks you should read *The Folks That Live on the Hill* by Kingsley Amis. It's a very funny book about a large cast of fools, drunks, and losers who have life-changing experiences and remain unchanged. Amis makes fun of all his characters and makes it clear why so many old people become curmudgeons.

Davis O'Smartington also thinks you should read *Goat's Head Soup is a Dish Best Served Cold* by A.J. Miller. If you're struck by lightning three times in one day, what's your next step? Why starting your own band, of course. This book, based on a true story, details the rise and fall of a young man who plays Wembley Stadium without having to plug in his guitar.

Homemaker's Corner

Recipes for the Adventurous: Crepes



Fun with the Dark Arts: Algebra

Did you know? Algebra is actually Satanic! Algebra, or in the native Babylonian, *al gibbroush*, was devised by black magicians who desired to defy the laws of Pythagorean mathematics and rend the veil of reality. While the pious Kabbalists shuffled the sacred Hebrew alphabet seeking the true name of G-d, the sacrilegious Babylonian performed unholy mathematical operations whose aim was to derive the secret laws of nature. Modern mathematics, and as a result modern science, has its roots in the devilish *al gibberoush* of the Babylonians.

Some scholars have argued that the explosion of atomic bombs was precisely what the Babylonian black magicians had in mind when they spoke of rending the veil of reality. Think of that, Gentle Reader, when you use the dread *al gibberoush* to convert your crepe recipes from four eggs to one!

Academia de la Mandaderos

by Kari S. Love

illustrated by Maggie Krzywicka

In the echoing corridors of the little-known Museo Postal y Telegráfico in Madrid, visitors can view letters that have lain dormant since the day they were written. Behind panes of glass, in climate-controlled boxes, rest centuries of letters undelivered, unopened and unread. Not a single word can be deciphered on these cryptic envelopes, but as visitors read the museum text the history of this unique collection unfolds.

The most well known applications of coded messages are military or occult in nature. However, during the 18th Century, cryptography became an intellectual proving ground, second only to astronomical theory. Determined to re-assert Spain's position as one of Europe's most elite court cultures, King Felipe V charged the royal messengers (known in Spanish as *mandaderos*) with the duty of ensuring delivery of coded correspondences of kingdom's scholars. This royal decree extended to cases in which even the name and address of the recipient were encrypted.

Perhaps even more curious than the origins of this policy of attempting delivery despite the use of coded addresses, is its continuation in the public realm. With the advent of a more efficient public postal system in 1855 incorporating the new railway technology to lower postal rates, suddenly this Spanish enthusiasm for codes and ciphers was further fueled by the parlor-intellectualism of the middle class. Inspired by the "new science" of Egyptology, envelopes in variations on Egyptian hieroglyphics proliferated. Because of the obligation to attempt delivery, the post needed to employ designated teams of cryptologists and Egyptologists simply to keep up with the demand.

Through the beginning of the 20th Century, Spanish citizens attempted again and again to stump the postal team with codes and ciphers of increasing complexity. Items deemed undeliverable due to unbreakable codes (or perhaps mischie-

vous gibberish masquerading as codes) were collected at the postal service's national headquarters.

When World War I raged across Europe, the Spanish government quickly put an end to the delivery of encoded letters to minimize perceived security risks. Additionally, the postal service's highly experienced code-breaking team was enlisted into military service. In the turmoil of the time, Spain's long history of civilian code writing fell instantly into obscurity.

This history may have been lost completely without the foresight of a visionary Post Master General. In 1904, Ángel García Rendueles undertook the recovery of the historical artifacts belonging to the Post, including the stockpile of undelivered mail, with the dream of opening a National Postal Museum. His vision was finally realized in 1980. Now visitors from all over the world are welcome to enjoy this vast collection of amateur codes, ciphers and hieroglyphics that may go forever unread at:

MUSEO POSTAL Y TELEGRAFICO
Palacio de Comunicaciones
Montalbán, s/n
28070 MADRID



A Beginner's Guide to Speaking Cantonese

by Angry Rabbit & Samantha Bong

| Phrase: | Pronunciation: | Characters: |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Do I have to pay tax on this? | Gau mehng! | 救命! |
| This is not fresh! | Yatgo sahnging naahmyan jukjyuh ngoh hai ngohge ngukkei hai luhksah-pgau saamsahp sei nghshap yih gaai. | 我被一个疯子囚禁在我的家里 在六九三四 五十二街 |
| Let's hope we don't have to drown another one. | Faaidi didihnwa bei chaaiyahn. | 求求你 替我报警 |
| Sorry, I don't speak English. | Keuih yihging sihk leuhng ge ngoh geukji hai tong. | 我的脚趾 两只已经被他吃掉了 |
| It's not sideways! | Keuih wah ngoh geukji wuih gakeung keuih chek geuk. | 他说我的脚趾会帮他的脚长得更强壮 |
| That's overpriced! | Keuih cheuhn wah keuih sehngyaht touhngo. | 他也说他常常在自己的裤子里拉屎 |
| I'm naming my son 401(k). | Ngoh hou geng. | 我真的很怕 |



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